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Editorial 1

INSPIRATION, PRESERVATION, AND TRANSLATIONS: IN
SEARCH OF THE BIBLICAL IDENTITY OF THE BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4
Jeffrey Khoo

CAN VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRATION DO WITHOUT
VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION?: THE ACHILLES'
HEEL OF PRINCETON BIBLIOLOGY 25
Jeffrey Khoo

LOST WORDS IN OUR BIBLE? 44
Jeffrey Khoo

INSPIRED TEXTUAL CRITICISM? 50
Jeffrey Khoo

THE GLORY OF GOD AND EZEKIEL'S WHEELS 57
Paul Lee Tan

College News 63



THE BURNING BUSH

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Editorial

The Bible warns in 1 Timothy 4:1-2, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.*”

The Bible today is under attack like never before. The modernists through *The Da Vinci Code* tell us that the 27 books of the New Testament Canon are false and must be replaced by newly discovered Coptic manuscripts which speak of a more realistic down-to-earth Jesus stripped of all His deity and moral purity. They claim that the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, and other Gnostic Gospels are the true Gospels; and that these Gospels must replace the Canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Many evangelical Bible Colleges and Seminaries today teach that the Bible was only infallible and inerrant in the past, but no longer infallible and inerrant today. According to popular theology, the Bible today contains “insignificant mistakes,” “redundant words,” and so-called “scribal errors.”

It is significant to note that the Bible under constant attack by modernists and evangelicals is not the NIV, not the NASB, not the RSV, not even the NKJV, or any of the modern versions but the good old Authorised or the King James Version (AV/KJV). Why is the KJV under such attack? The KJV is under such attack because it is the Bible of the 16th century Protestant Reformation, and as the Reformation Bible, it stands against the tide of unbelief, apostasy, and compromise today.

A new book written by Bart Ehrman entitled *Misquoting Jesus* (HarperCollins, 2005) is fast becoming a bestseller. In his book, Ehrman attacked the KJV and the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures behind the KJV. According to Ehrman,

The King James Bible was based on corrupted and inferior manuscripts that in many cases do not accurately represent the meaning of the original text. The favorite Bible story of Jesus’s forgiving the woman caught in

adultery (John 8:3-11) doesn't belong in the Bible. Scribal errors were so common in antiquity that the author of the Book of Revelation threatened damnation to anyone who 'adds to' or 'takes away' words from the text.

In other words, in Ehrman's mind, if you quote from the KJV or its underlying texts, you are misquoting Jesus.

Bart Ehrman began as a fundamentalist at Moody Bible Institute but finally lost his faith at Princeton Seminary where he got his PhD. How did he lose his faith? Let me read Ehrman's tragic testimony on page 11 of his book. He wrote,

If one wants to insist that God inspired the very words of scripture, what would be the point if we don't have the very words of scripture? In some places, as we will see, we simply cannot be sure that we have reconstructed the original text accurately. It's a bit hard to know what the words of the Bible mean if we don't even know what the words are!

This became a problem for my view of inspiration, for I came to realize that it would have been no more difficult for God to preserve the words of scripture than it would have been for him to inspire them in the first place. If he wanted his people to have his words, surely he would have given them to them (and possibly even given them the words in a language they could understand, rather than Greek and Hebrew). The fact that we don't *have* the words surely must show, I reasoned, that he did not preserve them for us. And if he didn't perform that miracle, there seemed to be no reason to think that he performed the earlier miracle of inspiring those words.

In short, my study of the Greek New Testament, and my investigations into the manuscripts that contain it, led to a radical rethinking of my understanding of what the Bible is. This was a seismic change for me. Before this—starting with my born-again experience in high school, through my fundamentalist days at Moody, and on through my evangelical days at Wheaton—my faith has been based completely on a certain view of the Bible as the fully inspired, inerrant word of God. Now I no longer saw the Bible that way.

Let me just say this: If we do not believe that God has verbally and plenerily preserved His words, that we have truly the very words of God today—100% infallible and inerrant without any mistake—and are against the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words behind the KJV, we might just end up like Ehrman—an agnostic and a modernist.

It goes without saying that it is not enough for true Christianity to believe in the verbal plenary inspiration (VPI) of the Scriptures; it is equally important to believe in the verbal plenary preservation (VPP) of

Editorial

the Scriptures. *“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” (Ps 12:6-7).* The twin doctrines of VPI and VPP are our only sure defence against the attacks on the Bible today.

The Faculty and Board will soon take the Dean Burgon Oath as spelled out in the College Constitution which states:

- 1.1.1 We believe in the divine, Verbal Plenary Inspiration (Autographs) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (Apographs) of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the perfect Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:20-21, Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 24:35).
- 1.1.1.1 We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant.
- 1.1.1.2 We uphold the Authorised (King James) Version to be the Word of God—the best, most faithful, most accurate, most beautiful translation of the Bible in the English language, and do employ it alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.
- 1.1.1.3 The Board of Directors and Faculty shall affirm their allegiance to the Word of God by taking the Dean Burgon Oath at every annual convocation: “I swear in the Name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit that I believe “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.”

We have a fixed Canon and a fixed Text. We see no need for textual criticism and we reject higher criticism altogether. May the Lord protect and preserve FEBC as we stand fast on His forever infallible and inerrant words until we see Him face to face. Amen.

The word from Dr Jeffrey Khoo, the Academic Dean, as delivered at the 31st FEBC Graduation Service, Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church, May 7, 2006.

INSPIRATION, PRESERVATION, AND TRANSLATIONS: IN SEARCH OF THE BIBLICAL IDENTITY OF THE BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Jeffrey Khoo

THESIS

- (1) The Holy Scriptures are verbally and plenary *inspired* (VPI) by God in the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- (2) These VPI words in the original languages are verbally and plenary *preserved* (VPP) by God throughout the ages, and found in the Hebrew Masoretic Text of the Old Testament and the Greek Textus Receptus of the New Testament.
- (3) The King James or Authorised Version is a most faithful and reliable translation of these VPI and VPP Hebrew/Aramaic Old Testament and Greek New Testament words which are totally infallible and inerrant and hence supremely authoritative in all matters of faith and practice.

INSPIRATION

The Bible-Presbyterian (B-P) Constitution—Article 4.2.1—states, We believe in the divine, verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life.

Definitions

Let us now define the important terms found in the above statement of faith.

The term, “divine, verbal and plenary inspiration” (VPI) means that the Holy Scriptures are a product of God’s very own breath (2 Tim 3:16, *theopneustos*, literally “Godspiration” or “Godspired,” and accurately

rendered as “inspired of God” in the KJV) whereby God as Author supernaturally ensures that His inspired words as a whole (plenary) and in their parts to the last iota (verbal, cf Matt 4:4, 5:18) are not at all the words of sinful and fallible men but indeed the very words of the thrice holy and infallible God and thus entirely truthful and absolutely perfect, without any mistake or error (Ps 12:6, 19:7).

The divine VPI words are in the “original languages.” What are the “original languages”? They are the Hebrew and Aramaic words of the Old Testament Scripture, and the Greek words of the New Testament Scripture.

The words “inerrancy and infallibility” tell us that the Holy Scriptures by virtue of its very nature as God’s VPI words are without any mistake or error (inerrant), and incapable of error (infallible). The Bible is totally infallible and inerrant not only in matters of salvation, but also in matters of history, geography, and science.

The VPI Scripture being the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant, serves as the “Supreme and final authority” on all Christian beliefs and practices. In other words, what the Bible says rules and overrules all human theories and methods. God is always right, and man is wrong every time he disagrees with God (Rom 3:4). Every doctrine and practice of the church must be supported by the Scriptures and the Scriptures *alone* (not Scripture *plus* ...).

As such, Article 4.2.1 of the B-P Constitution is a fine statement of faith, and accurate on the 100% or perfect inspiration of the Bible not only as a whole (plenary inspiration) but down to its words (verbal inspiration) in the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The plain and natural reading of the statement assumes the *present* perfection of the Scriptures, that believers possess a 100% inspired Bible *in their hands* that is totally infallible and inerrant without any mistake and their sole and supreme authority of faith and practice.

Autographs Only or Apographs Also?

But in the present Bibliological crisis in the Singapore B-P Church, VPI as spelled out in Article 4.2.1 is interpreted by 11 pastors from 7 B-P churches (Galilee, Grace, Life, Nazareth, Olivet, Shalom, and Zion) to be applicable to the original “autographs” (ie, the very first scripts written by God Himself, or His prophets, or His apostles) without including the apographs (manuscript copies). They wrote saying, “We ...

wholeheartedly believe and affirm that the inspired Word of God has absolutely no error in the Original Autographs. However we reject ... Verbal Plenary Preservation."¹

This "Autographs Only" view of infallibility and inerrancy is also held by the Board of Elders of Calvary B-P Church (Jurong) who in their paper on their "Non-VPP Stand" made their position very clear that "Only the original autographs of the OT and NT are the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word."² Now it must be said that both evangelicals and fundamentalists affirm the VPI of the original autographs. There is therefore no issue here. This is also acknowledged in the Life B-P Church Sunday School paper of December 1, 2002 entitled, "Preserving Our Godly Path." In that paper it is clearly stated, "The debate concerning the "Perfect Bible" is NOT about the original writings (or the autographs) of the biblical writers (such as Moses, Peter or Paul)." We VPP advocates do not dispute the VPI of the autographs. The truth is VPP cannot stand without VPI and vice versa. Those who wish to preserve "godly paths" ought to realise that there will be no godly paths to preserve if God did not preserve His perfect words. *Perfect Bible first before godly paths* is theologically correct.

So what is the issue all about if it is not about VPI? The issue is all about this: Is the Word of God infallible and inerrant in the autographs and the *autographs only*, or is the Word of God infallible and inerrant in the *apographs also*? Simply asked: Is the Word of God perfect only in the past but no longer perfect today? Is the Bible of today a lost and broken relic or is it a precise and exact representation of the Original that God gave in the beginning by virtue of His perfect preservation of every jot and tittle of His inspired words in the Original?

Anti-VPPists argue from Article 4.2.1 of the B-P Constitution that the infallible and inerrant Scriptures are *only in the autographs*. But where does it say so? Nowhere! It must be underscored that it stands precisely written in Article 4.2.1 that the inspired Scriptures the B-P Church believes to be infallible and inerrant are the Scriptures in the "*original languages*" and not simply and only the autographs. Why do the 11 pastors alter the sense of the Constitution by interpreting the word "languages" to mean "autographs" if not to exclude what they consider as "theory" but what we see as "doctrine" that the Bible is *presently* infallible and inerrant?

Now if what the anti-VPPists say is true that the perfect and authoritative Scriptures can refer only to the autographs, then *where are the autographs*? Do they not agree that the autographs have already perished and are no more? And if so where are the fully inspired, totally inerrant, and absolutely authoritative Scriptures that Bible believers can use confidently and declare, “Thus saith the Lord”? If we only believe that God has only inspired but did not preserve His words, we will not be able to say we have God’s totally infallible, inerrant and supremely authoritative Word *today*.

Now, if we do indeed have the inspired words of God today, then where are they? This brings us to the divine and special providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures.

PRESERVATION

Do we have the inspired words of God today in the *original languages* (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek)? If we do, then where are they? That is the key question which the “autographs alone” advocates cannot answer. They confess that the autographs are long gone and no more. As such, how can a non-existent authority serve as our final authority? An authority must be existent, tangible, available right now, at this time, or else it can be no authority at all. It goes without saying that an appeal to the non-existent autographs as the Church’s supreme and final authority is both illogical and untenable.

The veracity and validity of the Biblical Covenant is undermined when the 11 pastors affirm VPI but not VPP. They confidently affirm the total infallibility and inerrancy of the non-existent autographs (which they do not have and cannot produce), but cannot believe in a verbally and plenary preserved and hence presently existing infallible and inerrant Scripture in the original languages (which they pejoratively call a “theory” and a “new doctrine”). They wrote dismissively, “we reject the theory of Verbal Plenary Preservation ... that the Greek and Hebrew copies immediately underlying the King James Version are an exact replica of the Original Autographs.” Note that they have no biblical basis whatsoever for their non-VPP position. It is purely their opinion, or may I also say only a “theory”? But by the logic of faith, we VPP believers declare that we indeed have God’s infallible and inerrant Word in our hands today, and identify the inspired Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words

behind the King James Bible to be precisely the words God has perfectly preserved.

Imperfect Hebrew and Greek Texts?

In a Life B-P Church “Statement of Clarification,” issued on January 19, 2003, the majority of the session (2 assistant pastors, 4 elders, and 12 deacons) and three preachers opposed their founding pastor—Rev Dr Timothy Tow—who affirmed the Bible to be “100% perfect without any mistake.” In their “Statement of Clarification” they wrote, “While agreeing wholeheartedly to the KJV Bible being the very Word of God and fully reliable, **the contributors of ‘Preserving Our Godly Path’ paper do not believe that the Hebrew and Greek texts that underlie the KJB are perfect**” (emphasis in the original). Question: How can they endorse the KJV as “the very (ie, complete, absolute, utter) Word of God and fully reliable” and yet “not believe that the Hebrew and Greek texts that underlie the KJB are perfect” (ie, complete, flawless, exact)? How can the KJV—a translation—be 100% without its source texts—the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures—being 100%? This is highly illogical and unnatural. As Jesus said, “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Luke 6:43).

Unlike non-VPP KJV users who say yes to the KJV but no to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words underlying the KJV, VPP advocates say yes to the KJV and yes also to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words behind the KJV. We believe the KJV to be the Word of God precisely because the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words underlying it are the very words God has inspired and preserved, and therefore 100% perfect, without any mistake. We say yes to the KJV, and a double yes to the original language Scriptures behind the KJV. Is this not biblically logical and consistent? Does it not instill faith and confidence in God and His Word for B-Ps who have always used and trusted the KJV as God’s Word?³

Lost Words?

The 11 B-P pastors’ rejection of VPP surely contradicts the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) to which every Reformed or Presbyterian Church (and certainly the B-P Church) subscribes. It is significant to note that the WCF speaks of the authenticity of the Scriptures in terms of the *original language* Scriptures, namely the “Old Testament *in Hebrew*” and the “New Testament *in Greek*” (note the

absence of the “autographs” in the Confession). Chapter I and paragraph VIII of the WCF states,

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 authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.

The affirmation “by His singular care and providence” clearly states that Biblical preservation is *God’s work* and not man’s. That is why this providence is a *special* one. That is why it has to be verbal and not just doctrinal preservation. If God is the One who single-handedly preserves His inspired words and keeps them pure, we can expect Him to do no less than a perfect job—*every word is kept intact and none is lost*. For biblical support, the Westminster theologians cited 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.” Does not the declaration that the Holy Scriptures are truly and presently “authentic” (ie, perfect, genuine, true) because they have been kept pure “by His singular care and providence” mean precisely “the divine, verbal and plenary preservation” of the Scriptures? How can God’s preservation of His inspired words in the Holy Scriptures be less than infallible, entire, total, complete, and full? But anti-VPPists speak of only “essential” (ie, partial) preservation—the doctrines, truths, claims are preserved (ie, conceptual or thought preservation), not the words (ie, verbal preservation) for in their judgement some words of Scripture have been lost and are no more (eg, 1 Sam 13:1, 2 Chron 22:2). They then assure us that in their scholarly opinion, these lost words of Scripture are unnecessary for our faith and will not affect our salvation because they are “redundant” and “insignificant.” Does this “lost Bible” or “lost words” view of preservation not contradict God’s own promise of jot-and-tittle preservation in Matthew 5:18 as cited by the Westminster divines?

Jot-and-Tittle Preservation

This anti-VPP “lost words” view does indeed contradict the promissory words of Jesus. How do anti-VPPists respond? They respond by saying, “We must reexamine what Jesus said in Matthew 5:18. Perhaps ‘jot and tittle’ does not mean literally ‘jot and tittle’, but is an exaggeration.” Is this what they mean by a “godly path” to God and His

Word? In “preserving our godly path” should we not reexamine our ignorant selves and our fallible thoughts instead? Should we not apply the infallible principle of the glory of God in our regard for our Lord and the interpretation of His Word (Isa 42:8, Jer 9:23-24, John 7:18)? Should we not take God’s Word literally unless it is clearly figurative? Surely God says what He means and means what He says. “God says it, that settles it, and we believe it.” This has always been the basic hermeneutical ethos of Biblical fundamentalists and inerrantists. Does not puny man know that the almighty God has magnified His Word above all His Name (Ps 138:2)?

It is crucial to know that the Reformers never thought of the perfection or infallibility of the Scriptures only in terms of the non-existent autographs but always in terms of the ever-existing apographs. According to Richard Muller,

The Protestant scholastics do not press the point made by their nineteenth-century followers that the infallibility of Scripture and the freedom of Scripture from error reside absolutely in the *autographa* and only in a derivative sense in the *apographa*; rather, the scholastics argue positively that the *apographa* preserve intact the true words of the prophets and the apostles and that the God-breathed (*theopneustos*) character of Scripture is manifest in the *apographa* as well as in the *autographa*.⁴

The Westminster divines in 1648 believed their Bible to be totally infallible and inerrant without any mistake. This is observed by William Orr who wrote,

Now this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was immediately inspired by God because it was *identical* with the first text that God has kept pure in all the ages. *The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the Textus Receptus of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith.*⁵

Which Hebrew OT text and Greek NT text did the Westminster divines use in their day? Was it not the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus that underlie the Reformation Bibles as best represented by the KJV? If the Westminster pastors and theologians did not think that the Bible they possessed in their day had any mistake, why is it so wrong and sinful for us today to also believe that the same Hebrew and Greek Scriptures the Westminster divines used are without any mistake?

VPI Without VPP is Useless

The question however remains: Does Article 4.2.1 deny the biblical doctrine of the 100% preservation of the inspired words in the original languages? It is obvious that the B-P Constitution in keeping to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Biblical doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of Scriptures wrote the words “original languages” and not “Original Autographs” for the Scriptures in the “original languages” apply not only to the autographs but also the apographs without which we have no infallible and inerrant Scriptures today to serve as our final and supreme authority of faith and practice. Although it may be argued that it is inspiration and not preservation of the Scriptures that is mentioned in Article 4.2.1, preservation is surely implied and only logical for why would God want to inspire a perfect Bible in the beginning without wanting to preserve it? Will a person apply hair tonic to his head if he wants to be bald?

Myron Houghton of Faith Baptist Seminary, though not a Textus Receptus or KJV man, was nonetheless honest and truthful in this observation of his,

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” [2 Timothy 3:16]. Another way of saying this would be, “all Scripture is God-breathed,” or “all Scripture comes from the mouth of God.” This means God is directly responsible for causing the Bible writers to put down everything that He wanted written without error and without omission. But what of the Bible I hold in my hand? Is it God’s Word? Can it be trusted? The answer is yes! Both truths—the inspiration and inerrancy of the original manuscripts and the trustworthiness of the Bible in my hand—must be acknowledged. To affirm the inspiration and inerrancy of the original writings while casting doubt on the authority of the Bible that is available to us is just plain silly. Can you really imagine someone seriously saying, “I have good news and I have bad news: the good news is that God wanted to give us a message and therefore caused a book to be written; the bad news is that He didn’t possess the power to preserve it and therefore we don’t know what it said!” A view of inspiration without a corresponding view of preservation is of no value.⁶

Ian Paisley, renowned leader of the World Congress of Fundamentalists and an ardent defender of the KJV and its underlying texts, observed likewise,

The verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures demands the verbal Preservation of the Scriptures. Those who would deny the need for verbal Preservation

cannot be accepted as being really committed to verbal Inspiration. If there is no preserved Word of God today then the work of Divine Revelation and Divine Inspiration has perished.⁷

Preservation: The Bridge Between Inspiration and Translation

But it is sad that those who are expected to champion the verbal inspiration of Scripture are so quick to deny its verbal preservation. Such a denial of VPP is seen in a statement issued on October 29, 2005 by the Singapore Council of Christian Churches (SCCC) entitled “The Inspiration and Translations of the Holy Scriptures”:

Recently some brethren in Singapore have been advocating that apart from the verbal plenary inspiration (VPI) and consequent inerrancy and infallibility of The Scriptures in the original languages, the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus manuscripts immediately underlying the King James Version are also verbally and plenary preserved being an exact replica of the Original Autographs. This Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) theory for the KJV’s underlying texts thus claiming “100% perfection” for the KJV, is without Biblical foundation. This has not been, and is not the position of the ICCC or SCCC or other ICCC-affiliated organizations. The SCCC therefore calls upon its members and all other Bible-believing brethren not to subscribe to this new, Biblically unfounded and unproven theory.⁸

The question I would like to ask is: Why did they not entitle their statement, “The Inspiration, *Preservation*, and Translations of the Holy Scriptures”? Why is there no “Preservation”? Without preservation, what is the use of inspiration? Without preservation how can there be translations? The fallacy of the SCCC statement is precisely due to this “missing link” which is “Preservation.” Notwithstanding the missing link of “Preservation,” the SCCC statement in its published form saw a quick “evolution.” The November-December 2005 issue of the *Far Eastern Beacon* published an “improved” version of its primitive forebear passed on October 29, 2005. Here is a comparison of the old and new statements of the SCCC against VPP:

Recently some brethren in Singapore and elsewhere have been ~~advocating~~promulgating that apart from the verbal plenary inspiration (VPI) and the consequent inerrancy and infallibility of ~~The~~the Holy Scriptures in the original languages, ~~the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus manuscripts immediately underlying the King James Version are also verbally and plenary~~ of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, “the words of the Received Greek and Masoretic Hebrew texts that

underlie the King James Bible are the very words which God has preserved down through the centuries being an the exact replica words of the Original Autographs originals themselves". This theory of claiming Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) theory for the KJV's underlying texts ~~thus claiming~~ "100% perfection" for the KJV and their exact identification with the Holy Scriptures in the original languages, is without Biblical foundation. This has not been, and is not the position of the ICCC or SCCC or other ICCC-affiliated organizations. The SCCC therefore calls upon its members and all other Bible-believing brethren not to subscribe to this new, Biblically unfounded and unproven theory.

The revised version continues to deny VPP. Many today believe in inspiration and translation but not preservation. Such a belief begs the question: How could the inspired autographs serve as the basis for any translation if they have not been preserved by God? *Without preservation there is just a great chasm with no bridge to cross from inspiration to translation.* Despite our many attempts to define and clarify what VPP means, and why this doctrine is vital for the protection of the Christian Faith, the safeguarding of the beloved KJV (which the SCCC claims to uphold), and the basis for faithful translations of the Scriptures into other languages, the SCCC remains insistent on denying VPP, even pugnacious in pushing for its rejection.

VPP is Honourable Not Heretical

In Calvary Jurong's "Non-VPP" paper, it is stated that the "ICCC (SCCC) calls on all Christians not to accept the VPP teaching."⁹ When did the ICCC pass a resolution against VPP or endorse the SCCC statement against VPP? What the ICCC did do however under Carl McIntire's presidency was to pass an excellent resolution not only in Amsterdam in 1998 but also in Jerusalem in 2000 affirming the superiority of the KJV over against the modern versions, and the Bible to be "Forever Infallible and Inerrant" with the following fine declaration of faith:

the O.T. has been preserved in the Masoretic text and the N.T. in the Textus Receptus, combined they gave us the complete Word of God. The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts.¹⁰

The ICCC clearly resolved to uphold the "forever infallible and inerrant" Scriptures which is nothing short of VPP, and identified the complete and preserved Scriptures to be the Hebrew Masoretic Text and

the Greek Textus Receptus from which the KJV has been faithfully translated. This is precisely the stand taken by FEBC and all VPP advocates. It goes without saying that the SCCC has seriously undermined the credibility of the ICCC by such an act against VPP, and the inspired and preserved Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words underlying the KJV. It even “calls upon its members and all other Bible-believing brethren not to subscribe to this new, Biblically unfounded and unproven theory.” Is it not strange for the SCCC to call on “Bible-believing” brethren to believe that the Bible they have in their hands today contains mistakes? What kind of “Bible-believing” faith is this? If the SCCC disagrees with but does not discriminate against VPP, that would not be unreasonable, but they intend to ban and silence VPP which is not only unfair but also unjust. Is this not an attempt at schism?

The SCCC (echoing the group of 11 pastors) claims that the “promulgation” of VPP is “schismatic.” Not so. *It is not the promulgation but the prohibition and persecution of VPP that is schismatic.* The anti-VPPists can go ahead to preach and write that the Bible is no longer infallible and inerrant since in their mind it contains some insignificant mistakes (whether God is pleased or grieved by this, and whether His people will accept it or be stumbled, should be left to the convicting work and judgement of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His saints); but why should they forbid and prevent VPP believers from declaring and defending the Bible they have in their hands today to be truly infallible and inerrant without any mistake?

If anti-VPPists feel that they cannot know whether the inspired words of God are perfectly preserved today, then they should be chagrined, but why cannot they rejoice with those who by faith are certain they have all of God’s inspired words and know exactly where all the inspired words are preserved—in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Scriptures underlying the KJV? Peter Masters of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle though not in total agreement with our position on VPP was at least honest enough to acknowledge that our position is an “honourable” one¹¹ unlike those anti-VPPists who maliciously label it “foolish,” “extreme,” “schismatic,” “heretical,” “cultic,” and even “Roman Catholic”!

TRANSLATIONS

Not everyone today can read the Scriptures in the original languages. There is thus a need for the Scriptures to be translated into the

common language of the people. The WCF shares this concern for the Bible to be translated,

But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope (I:VIII).

By the grace of God, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have been translated into many languages of the world. Insofar as the English translation is concerned, we are thankful to the Lord for the KJV, the best of all the good old versions of the Protestant Reformation. Today, the KJV is being challenged by the many modern versions that seek to usurp its rightful place as the only English version that can rightly be called “the very Word of God.” D A Waite, President of the Dean Burgon Society, has given four reasons why the KJV is superior to all the other English translations available in the world today. In his ground-breaking book, *Defending the King James Bible: A Fourfold Superiority*, he argued that the KJV is superior in terms of its (1) Texts, (2) Translators, (3) Technique, and (4) Theology.¹² Even non-fundamentalists are hailing the goodness of this grand old version in terms of its translational accuracy and literary beauty.¹³ The KJV was not only a translation that transformed a nation; it was *the* translation that transformed the world *literarily* speaking.¹⁴

Perfectly Flawless Translation?

At this juncture, let me deal with Calvary Jurong’s report on what the Rev Charles Seet wrote concerning my response to Gary Hudson’s “Questions for the KJV-Only Cult.” Calvary Jurong’s report is skewed in such a way as to make me look like (1) I am defending a “perfectly flawless Bible translation” (underlining in the original), and (2) I believe that there was “no Word of God prior to 1611.”¹⁵ The account totally left out my lengthy answer to Gary Hudson’s question. Without giving the proper context, it thus misleads the reader. Allow me to produce in full my answer so that the reader may judge for himself whether Calvary Jurong has or has not represented me correctly in its “Non-VPP” paper.

(1) Must we possess a perfectly flawless Bible translation in order to call it “the word of God”? If so, how do we know “it” is perfect? If not,

why do some limit “the word of God” to only one 17th Century English translation? Where was “the word of God” prior to 1611? [Note: This was Gary Hudson’s question, and not Charles Seet’s questioning of me as painted out in the Calvary Jurong report thereby making me look like a Ruckmanite.]

[Answer] We believe that “the King James Version (or Authorised Version) of the English Bible is a true, faithful, and accurate translation of these two providentially preserved Texts [Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text and Traditional Greek Text underlying the KJV], which in our time has no equal among all of the other English Translations. The translators did such a fine job in their translation task that we can without apology hold up the Authorised Version and say ‘This is the Word of God!’ while at the same time realising that, in some verses, we must go back to the underlying original language Texts for complete clarity, and also compare Scripture with Scripture.” (*The Dean Burgon Society, “Articles of Faith,” section II.A.*)

Every Bible translation can be legitimately called the Word of God if it is true and faithful to the original and traditional text. We refuse to consider heretical Bibles like the New World Translation of the Jehovah’s Witnesses as “the Word of God.” We also reject as unreliable all Bible versions (eg NIV, TEV, TLB, CEV ...) that are a result of the dynamic equivalence method of translation, and those (eg RSV, NASB, ESV ...) that cast doubt and/or omit verses based on corrupted readings of the Alexandrian or Westcott-Hort Text, and consider them unsafe for use.

Where was the Word of God prior to 1611? Well, the Word of God is found in the divinely inspired and providentially preserved Traditional and Preserved Text of OT and NT Scriptures used and recognised by the Church down through the ages, and in all the faithful and reliable translations that were based on those Texts, viz, Martin Luther’s German Bible (1522), William Tyndale’s Bible (1525), Myles Coverdale’s Bible (1535), The Matthew’s Bible (1537), The Great Bible (1539-41), and The Geneva Bible (1557-60).

It is significant to note that prior to the KJV, the English translations were largely individual efforts. The KJV on the other hand is a corporate work. In the words of the translators, the KJV was not produced “to make a bad one a good one; but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one.” For this purpose and with such devotion the KJV translation committee was formed, and they were careful to “assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them.”

INSPIRATION, PRESERVATION, AND TRANSLATIONS

The King James Bible is a product of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation. The providential hand of God was clearly at work at the time of the Reformation not only in the separation of the true church from the false church, but also in the invention of the printing press, the renewed interest in the study of the original languages, the publication of the Textus Receptus which finally culminated in the translation of the KJV. These products of the Protestant Reformation bear the divine imprimatur.

God holds His people in every age responsible for using the divinely inspired and preserved original texts and only the faithful and accurate translations of His Word. The KJV-only position (not Ruckmanism) does not limit the Word of God to only one 17th Century English Translation, but advocates that the KJV, being still the most accurate English translation based on the purest texts, should be the only Bible used by English-speaking Christians today. To use other Bibles when the best is clearly available would be to neglect our responsibility.¹⁶

Can the pastor and the elders of Calvary Jurong who object to my defence of the KJV kindly let me know which part of the above answer is not in line with the B-P stand on the KJV? Now the Rev Seet might possibly take issue with the word “purest” (meaning the best, without any mistake) to refer to the underlying texts of the KJV, for he believes that they are only “closest” (since he considers the underlying texts to contain “scribal errors” especially in places where there are absolutely none, eg, 2 Chron 22:2).¹⁷ It needs to be made known that I have no qualms with the word “closest” if it is taken to mean that (1) the Bible is entirely (100%) preserved and not just essentially (99.9%) preserved, (2) the Bible is verbally preserved and not just conceptually preserved, and (3) the Bible is indeed infallible and inerrant not just in the past but also today. But they speak adversely of those who take the Dean Burgon Oath,¹⁸ who believe that the Bible they have in their hands today have (1) no lost words and (2) no mistakes not only in its saving truths, but also in its numbers, names, dates, and places. Insofar as English versions are concerned, *the KJV is the closest to the purest Bible in the original languages that our all-powerful God has supernaturally preserved and His Spirit-indwelt Church has faithfully received throughout the ages.*

Perfect in the Original Languages

Since the Rev Seet has allowed his personal correspondence with me to go public,¹⁹ allow me then to share my email of June 27, 2002, written in reply to his concerns about why I switched from addressing a so-called “perfectly flawless translation” (Hudson’s caricature) to a perfectly

flawless text in the original languages (ie, the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words underlying the KJV):²⁰

[Charles Seet] **“1) I think some may take issue with the wording of the first paragraph,²¹ as it implies that the texts underlying the KJV translation are not only closest to the original (as stated in our positional statement) but they are in fact virtual photocopies of the autographs, since the word ‘flawless’ means ‘without defect’. Actually the first paragraph misses the point of the question, which is about ‘perfectly flawless Bible translation’ (not text).”**

[My Reply] Yes, I am quite aware of this (viz, that the [ie, Hudson’s] question had to do with translation not text). I did not want to be drawn into Hudson’s trap and fallacious reasoning. That is why I redefined the question and redrew the rules of engagement. I wanted to state our understanding of the text at the outset before going on to address the matter of translation which I did in my 2nd paragraph.

You are also correct to conclude that my statement meant that the texts underlying the KJV may be considered “virtual photocopies of the autographs.” The word “closest” as used in our position statement quoting the Dean Burgon Society should not be taken to mean that we only have a 99% pure text (1% error). I believe God has inspired and preserved His Word and words 100%. I can see how some may understand the word “closest” to mean “not perfect or exactly the same,” ie, we may have most of or essentially God’s words, but not all of God’s words in the texts underlying our KJV. I think we need to understand the context in which the statement was phrased. Westcott and Hort puffed up their cut-up Greek text as being “closest to the original” since they based it on the 4th century Alexandrian manuscripts, which manuscripts Dean Burgon has dismissed as “most corrupt.” Our use of the term “closest” seeks to *correct and counteract* Westcott and Hort’s view on the identity of the true text. The term “closest” also distinguishes between the autograph (past and “lost”) and the apograph (present and existing). We do not deny that the autograph and apograph *though distinct are the same*. The paper may be different, but the *contents* are the same.

Would the Rev Seet now kindly let me know in what way was my reply to him in defence of the KJV “heretical”? It was quite clear to him from the outset that I was not addressing a “perfectly flawless translation” but a “perfectly flawless text.” Knowing this, why is he giving people the impression that I am actually talking about a “perfectly flawless translation”? The **LIE** is spread that Jeffrey Khoo believes in “post-canonical inspiration”—that “the KJV was given by inspiration.” Why such deceit?

INSPIRATION, PRESERVATION, AND TRANSLATIONS

Another thing that baffles me is why the Rev Seet who claims to be strongly supportive of the KJV against the modern versions would launch such a campaign against VPP which is a precious biblical doctrine that actually protects and preserves the KJV? Why is all this done despite his assurance in 2004 that VPP should not be discriminated against? Why does he call me “extreme” if there should be no discrimination? Why is he and his supporters trying to silence VPP which safeguards the KJV which is the official Bible of the B-P Church since its founding? Why are anti-VPP/KJV men from BJU allowed to speak at his pulpit, but a ban is placed on certain B-P pastors who are VPP/KJV-defenders, even calling them “extreme” and “schismatic”? Why are enemies of the KJV promoted, but friends of the KJV cut down?

INSPIRATION, PRESERVATION, TRANSLATIONS: FOUR VIEWS

Is the B-P Church’s stand on the KJV a matter of “preference” or a matter of “principle or doctrine”? We believe our use of the KJV and our defence of its underlying original language texts (words) is a matter of principle or doctrine. As a matter of principle or doctrine, our KJV defence is not based on convenience but conviction. There are four views on the issue of inspiration, preservation, and translations. Of course, there are different shades of views in between, but which view is the biblically acceptable view?

Which position ought we to take as B-Ps? Biblically and historically, we have taken the fideistic (faith) position which is the Reformed and Fundamentalist position on Biblical inspiration and preservation, and the KJV as the *best* translation of the English Bible: “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom 10:17). Only the faith position has any biblical basis resting on Psalm 12:6-7, Matthew 5:18, 24:35, John 10:35, 1 Peter 1:25, and many other passages.²⁷ The various anti- or non-VPP positions have no biblical support whatsoever.

Regardless of the absence of biblical support for their non-VPP stance which is based on non-Scriptural and subjectively interpreted “evidence,” certain ones have accused FEBC of changing the doctrinal stand of the B-P Church on the Bible and the KJV. If a person would take a step back and look at the whole controversy objectively, he will see that FEBC is actually strengthening and not changing the original KJV position of the B-P Church. The B-P Church has always used the KJV as

the Word of God from the beginning. Our KJV position is strengthened by the doctrine of VPP which argues for the 100% purity of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures underlying the KJV over against the corrupt Westcott and Hort texts behind the modern English versions which are filled with errors.

VIEW QUESTION	Rationalistic ²² (Liberal)	Eclectic ²³ (Neo- Evangelical)	Deistic ²⁴ (Neo- Fundamental)	Fideistic ²⁵ (Reformed & Fundamental)
Inspiration 100%, VPI?	No	Yes & No	Yes	Yes
Preservation 100%, VPP?	No	No	No	Yes
Infallibility & Inerrancy?	Nowhere	Autographs only/partially	Autographs only	Autographs & Apographs
Bible Today?	Imperfect	Imperfect	Imperfect	Perfect
Biblical Basis?	No	No	No	Yes (eg, Matt 5:18)
What Preserved?	Nothing	Doctrines not words	Doctrines not words	Words & doctrines
Words Lost?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Discrepancies in Bible (eg, 2 Chron 22:2)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Westcott & Hort?	For	For	Neither for nor against	Against
English Version?	RSV/NRSV & modernistic versions only	NIV & modern versions mainly	NKJV & NASV mainly	Only KJV ²⁶

INSPIRATION, PRESERVATION, AND TRANSLATIONS

Who better to speak for the B-P faith than the founder of the Singapore B-P movement and FEBC himself—the Rev Dr Timothy Tow—who believes without equivocation “the special providential preservation of Scripture,” and “a 100% perfect Bible without any mistake”?²⁸ Rev Dr Timothy Tow—the only theologian at the founding of the B-P movement—is supported by Dr S H Tow—founding leader of the B-P Church in Singapore and senior pastor of the Calvary churches—who believes likewise, and has identified for us where precisely this “100% perfect Bible without any mistake” is:

1. Question: Can we identify these texts?
2. Answer: Absolutely. Our great God did not leave Himself without witness, but preserved perfectly a body of MSS: the Masoretic Hebrew Old Testament Text and the Received Greek New Testament Text (Textus Receptus). From these perfectly preserved copies of God’s inspired, inerrant, infallible Scriptures, is derived our KJB.
3. What is “VPP”? “V” is “Verbal,” meaning “word for word” (Websters Dictionary). “P” is “Plenary,” meaning “complete or absolute” (Websters Dictionary). “P” is “Preservation” meaning “kept from corruption or error.”
4. “VPP of Scripture” refers to the supernatural and special providential care of God over the ages (Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter I, VIII; see also Ps 12:6,7; Matt 5:18, 24:35; 1 Pet 1:25), safeguarding the transmission of the MSS by scribes or copyists, so that the body of texts (Masoretic Hebrew OT and Received Greek NT) have been kept pure as the “good tree” giving us the “good fruit,” the KJB.
5. As the attacks on God’s Word increase in intensity, God’s faithful remnant people also increase and intensify in their loyalty to God’s Word without which the Gospel’s entire foundation would collapse.
6. The inspired and preserved Word of God for the Bible-Presbyterian Church is upheld by a “threefold cord” which cannot be broken, namely: (i) Constitution 4.2.1, (ii) the VPP of God’s Word, (iii) the KJB, the Reformation Bible.²⁹

Dr S H Tow went on to issue this pertinent warning:

Mark these words: The present attack on the VPP will lead ultimately to a denial and betrayal of the KJB. This is a prediction worth watching. God bless all readers with spiritual discernment.³⁰

Notes

¹ “A Statement on the Theory of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP),” Life Bible-Presbyterian Weekly, September 25, 2005.

² “Explanation of Our Non-VPP Stand,” presented on Sunday, November 6, 2005 to the congregation of Calvary Jurong B-P Church by Rev James Chan Lay Seng, Pastor of Calvary Jurong B-P Church.

³ At this juncture, it needs to be made known that prior to putting forth his name as a subscriber to the “Statement of Clarification” in which the subscribers agree that the KJV is the “very Word of God and fully reliable,” the Rev Charles Seet in August 2002 wrote an article—“How I Understand the Preservation of the Word of God”—to point out what he considers to be translational errors in certain parts of the English KJV.

⁴ *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, sv “autographa” (emphasis mine).

⁵ William F Orr, “The Authority of the Bible as Reflected in the Proposed Confession of 1967,” as quoted by Letis, *The Majority Text*, 174 (emphasis mine).

⁶ Myron J Houghton, “The Preservation of Scripture,” *Faith Pulpit* (August 1999): 1-2.

⁷ Ian R K Paisley, *My Plea for the Old Sword* (Belfast: Ambassador, 1997), 103.

⁸ “Inspiration and Translations of the Holy Scriptures,” a resolution passed by the Singapore Council of Christian Churches (SCCC), at its 49th AGM on October 29, 2005 held at Life B-P Church, Singapore.

⁹ “Explanation of Our Non-VPP Stand,” 13.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 2001), 125-6. The ICCC resolution was originally published in the *Far Eastern Beacon*.

¹¹ It is reported in the October 2, 2005 True Life B-P Church Weekly (ed Timothy Tow) that Dr Peter Masters “did not think our VPP position to be in any way ‘heretical,’ but indeed ‘*an honourable one.*’ He also gave unreserved support and endorsement of FEBC, ‘*May I say that the ministry of FEBC under Dr Timothy Tow ... is a remarkable manifestation of the blessing of God in maintaining inerrancy, fundamentals, evangelism, sound hermeneutics and biblical separation. Your work is magnificent and encouraging in the highest degree.*’ In another letter, Dr Masters reaffirmed his remarks on the VPP of Scripture that ‘*it is a sincerely held view aimed at safeguarding the Word, and promoting integrity. Its advocates seek to proclaim and adhere to the Gospel and the historic doctrines of the faith. They seek to preserve an excellent translation of the Bible, and to oppose the corrupt W & H based translations ... the position is honourable. It is certainly not base, self-seeking, unfaithful, or heretical in the sense of denying any doctrine of the Christian faith.*’”

¹² D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 2nd ed (Collingswood: Bible For Today, 1996).

¹³ For example, Leland Ryken wrote, “The KJV is the greatest English Bible translation ever produced. Its style combines simplicity and majesty as the

INSPIRATION, PRESERVATION, AND TRANSLATIONS

original requires, though it inclines toward the exalted. Its rhythms are matchless.” *The Word of God in English* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 51.

¹⁴ See Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001).

¹⁵ “Explanation of Our Non-VPP Stand,” 2.

¹⁶ “KJV Q&A,” July 31, 2002 draft [words in square brackets not in original]. It is no secret that the Rev Charles Seet together with Rev Colin Wong declared that they could no longer take the Dean Burgon Oath at the FEBC faculty meeting of October 29, 2002. Rev Seet handed in his resignation letter to FEBC on November 15, 2002. In it he requested “not to be represented as a member of the FEBC faculty in any publication that is issued by the college from now on.” I respect his decision, and take full responsibility for all that I have written in defence of the KJV and its underlying texts. Rev Seet has every freedom to disagree with me, but he and his friends have no right to misrepresent and malign me and those at FEBC who defend the KJV and more importantly the Biblical doctrine of VPP and the perfection of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words behind the KJV.

¹⁷ Charles Seet, “A Positional Paper on the Doctrine of Inspiration and Preservation of the Holy Scriptures,” <http://web.singnet.com.sg/~sbseet/position.htm>, accessed on February 3, 2006.

¹⁸ The Dean Burgon Oath states, “I swear in the name of the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—that 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. So help me God. Amen.”

¹⁹ “Explanation of Our Non-VPP Stand,” 2.

²⁰ See Jeffrey Khoo, “Non-Ruckmanite Answers to Anti-KJV Questions,” at <http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/KJBible/answers.htm>.

²¹ In an earlier draft of “KJV-Only Q&A” dated July 18, 2002, I answered Hudson’s question in the following way: “The question is rather mischievous. Let us rephrase it: Can a flawed Bible ever be deemed the ‘Word of God?’ Can a perfect God ever give His people a less than perfect Bible? The answer is obvious. The Bible is God’s Word, and if God is perfect, His Word must be no less perfect. God assures us that His Word is ‘very pure’ (Ps 119:40), ‘perfect’ (Ps 19:7), ‘true and righteous altogether’ (Ps 19:9). All, not some or most, of Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16).”

²² B F Westcott and F J A Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Harper and Brothers, , 1882); Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²³ D A Carson, *The King James Version Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); James R White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1995).

²⁴ James B Williams, ed, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999); James B Williams and Randolph Shaylor, eds, *God's Word in Our Hands* (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald, 2003); Roy E Beacham and Kevin T Bauder, eds, *One Bible Only?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001).

²⁵ Paisley, *My Plea for the Old Sword*; D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible* (Collingswood: Bible For Today, 1996); Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *A Theology for Every Christian: Knowing God and His Word* (Singapore, FEBC Press, 1998).

²⁶ "A Doctrinal Positional Statement of Life B-P Church," states, "We do employ the KJV alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible." *50 Years Building His Kingdom*, Life Bible-Presbyterian Church Golden Jubilee Magazine, 2000, 67.

²⁷ See George Skariah, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Perfect Preservation of the Holy Scriptures," ThD dissertation, Far Eastern Bible College, 2005.

²⁸ Timothy Tow, "God's Special Providential Care of the Text of Scripture," *Bible Witness*, October-December 2002, 3-4.

²⁹ S H Tow, "Gospel Safeguard—VPP," *Calvary Pandan B-P Church Weekly*, January 1, 2006. See also his book, *Beyond Versions: A Biblical Perspective of Modern English Bibles* (Singapore: King James Productions, 1998).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

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CAN VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRATION DO WITHOUT VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION?: THE ACHILLES' HEEL OF PRINCETON BIBLIOLOGY

Jeffrey Khoo

Issue

The old Princeton theology has often been regarded as the scholarly orthodoxy that should characterise evangelical theology in the face of challenges posed by liberalism or modernism. Alexander, Hodge and Warfield are household names in evangelical-theological scholarship. They have become reference points of theological orthodoxy. Despite their noble attempts to articulate the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith, it is increasingly discovered that Princeton in its efforts to defend theological orthodoxy and gain a certain level of acceptability and respectability in the scholarly world had compromised the supreme and absolute authority of the Scriptures by adopting the textual critical methods of rationalistic scholasticism.

Textual criticism introduced by Princeton Seminary is the Trojan horse in Reformed, evangelical, and fundamentalist Bibliology today. No Reformed, evangelical or fundamentalist “scholar,” without wanting to look stupid or foolish, would dare affirm without equivocation that the Bible in our hands today is infallible and inerrant, without any mistake. This is the tragedy of compromise.

This paper seeks to expose the fallacy of the Princeton theology especially as regards its Bibliology, and warn of the dangers that it presents to God’s people as they face the incessant salvos against Christ and His Word by Postmodernism, Ecumenism, Neo-Evangelicalism, Neo-Fundamentalism, Open Theism and Neo-Deism today.

Archibald Alexander

The theology of Princeton was shaped by Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), the first professor of theology at Princeton, and by his successors, Charles Hodge and B B Warfield.¹ These men remain highly respected by reformed and evangelical scholars today. But before we decide to bow to their scholarship, we need to examine what they believed about the Scriptures.

Archibald Alexander promoted the Westminster Standards to be the orthodox expression of faith. He also upheld the power of human reason. What of the Bible in his hands? Well he believed that the Bible was indeed preserved “by God’s singular care and providence” as spelled out in the Westminster Confession of Faith quoting Matthew 5:18, but his human mind could not accept the idea that the apographs (ie, copies of the originals) could be infallible and inerrant. It ought to be noted that Alexander’s preserved text manifested no less than 60,000 scribal errors, but in his opinion, these did not affect doctrine in any way.² In his inaugural sermon at his installation as Princeton’s first professor of theology, he spoke positively of textual criticism, and posited the theory of conceptual preservation: “For though the serious mind is at first astonished and confounded, upon being informed of the multitude of various readings ... yet it is relieved, when on careful examination, it appears that not more than one of a hundred of these, makes the slightest variation in the sense, and that the whole of them do not materially affect one important fact or doctrine.”³

Alexander saw no contradiction between his opinion of scribal errors in the texts that he had in his hands and the Westminster Confession’s affirmation of the divine preservation of Scripture because he considered the perfection of the autographs and the purity of the apographs to concern merely doctrine and not words. In other words, these scribal errors do not affect any vital doctrine of the Christian faith, and there is no trouble even in seeing that God could have “inspired” these scribal errors in the lost autographs and that these same scribal errors could have been “preserved” in the apographs the church now has in her hands. It appears that Alexander had no qualms admitting that the autographs were not inerrant for he wrote, “it is even possible that some of the autographs, if we had them, might not be altogether free from such errors as arise from the slip of the pen, as the apostles [had] amanuens[es] who were not inspired.”⁴

The case of Alexander shows that a rejection of verbal preservation in favour of conceptual preservation could lead ultimately to a denial of verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. This was clearly what happened to Bart Ehrman (PhD, Princeton Theological Seminary) who had Bruce Metzger—Princeton's George L Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Emeritus, but known also as “Bible Butcher”⁵—for his mentor. In his book *Misquoting Jesus*, Ehrman testified how a Bible filled with scribal errors today became a problem for him:

If one wants to insist that God inspired the very words of scripture, what would be the point if we don't have the very words of scripture? ... It's a bit hard to know what the words of the Bible mean if we don't even know what the words are!

This became a problem for my view of inspiration, for I came to realize that it would have been no more difficult for God to preserve the words of scripture than it would have been for him to inspire them in the first place. If he wanted his people to have his words, surely he would have given to them (and possibly even given them the words in a language they could understand, rather than Greek and Hebrew). The fact that we don't have the words surely must show, I reasoned, that he did not preserve them for us. And if he didn't perform that miracle, there seemed to be no reason to think that he performed the earlier miracle of inspiring those words.⁶

It is significant to note that Ehrman began as a fundamentalist in Moody Bible Institute, but eventually succumbed to the “dark side” when he went to Princeton where he came under the mentorship of textual-critical Vader—Bruce Metzger—whom he calls his “Doctor-Father.”⁷

Edward F Hills had long warned that a denial or even a low view of the special providential preservation of the Scriptures would logically and ultimately lead one to a denial of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the same Scriptures.

Conservative scholars ... say that they believe in the special, providential preservation of the New Testament text. Most of them really don't though, because, as soon as they say this, they immediately reduce this special providential preservation to the vanishing point in order to make room for the naturalistic theories of Westcott and Hort. As we have seen, some say that the providential preservation of the New Testament means merely that the same “substance of doctrine” is found in all the New Testament documents. Others say that it means that the true reading is always present in at least one of the thousands of extant New Testament manuscripts. And

still other scholars say that to them the special, providential preservation of the Scriptures means that the true New Testament text was providentially discovered in the mid-19th century by Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort after having been lost for 1,500 years.

If you adopt one of these false views of the providential preservation of Scriptures, then you are logically on your way toward the denial of the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures. For if God has preserved the Scriptures so carelessly, why would he have infallibly inspired them in the first place? It is not sufficient therefore merely to say that you believe in the doctrine of the special, providential preservation of holy Scriptures. You must really believe this doctrine and allow it to guide your thinking. You must begin with Christ and the Gospel and proceed according to the logic of faith. This will lead you to the Traditional text, the Textus Receptus, and the King James Version, in other words, to the common faith.⁸

Taking Alexander's lead, Princeton began on a wrong footing as regards the verbal and plenary preservation of the Holy Scriptures which eventually saw its rejection of the Textus Receptus in favour of the Westcott-Hort Text. Alexander had laid the foundation for Charles Hodge (1797-1878) and B B Warfield (1851-1921) to pursue rationalistic textual criticism that was growing out of German scholasticism.

Charles Hodge and His Son C W Hodge

Charles Hodge was exposed to textual criticism when he studied in Germany from 1826 to 1828. Despite his studies in textual criticism and his knowledge of textual variants among the manuscripts, Hodge was careful not to engage in any form of conjectural emendation of the Biblical text which he considered to be wholly illegitimate. He urged rightly, "it would be exceedingly injurious as every critic would think himself authorized to make alterations and thus certainty and authority of S.S. [sacred Scripture] would be destroyed."⁹ Despite the textual critical theories he learned in Germany which sought to dethrone the Textus Receptus at that time, Hodge stuck to it and recognised its authenticity.¹⁰

Although Charles Hodge upheld the Textus Receptus, he did not defend it vigorously enough, and did not warn against the rationalistic textual critical views that were emerging out of Germany. He was contented with an essentially infallible but not totally inerrant Scripture for he admits that "the Scriptures do contain, in a few instances, discrepancies which with our present means of knowledge, we are unable satisfactorily to explain."¹¹

It was left to Hodge's son, C W Hodge, to pave the way for German-style textual criticism in Princeton Seminary. C W Hodge found no point addressing the inspiration of Scripture if the extant manuscripts were full of textual variations and scribal errors. He asked, "What are we to say of verbal inspiration when the Church cannot agree as to the words of the text?" He had accumulated no less than 120,000 textual variants (double that of Alexander) and even dismissed the Trinitarian text of 1 John 5:7 to be unworthy of Scripture. His rejection of 1 John 5:7 was due to Griesbach's dictum that "all readings favouring *orthodoxy* were to be immediately regarded as suspect."¹² (As noted above, this is also the textual critical mindset and method of Bart Ehrman.) Agreeing with Westcott and Hort, Hodge also rejected the authenticity of the last 12 verses of Mark (Mark 16:9-20) and the *pericope de adultera* (John 7:53-8:11).

B B Warfield

The Reformation cry of *Sola Scriptura* as the supreme and final authority of the Christian faith and life has always been understood to mean the infallible and inerrant Scriptures believers had in their possession. The Scripture that the Reformers accepted as infallible and inerrant were not the autographs but the apographs, and the preserved apographs had all the very words and passages (last 12 verses of Mark, *pericope de adultera*, Johannine comma, etc) which textual critical scholars today, following Griesbach, Westcott and Hort, say are not Scripture at all.¹³

Francis Turretin (1623-1687), pastor and theologian of the Church and Academy of Geneva, made it quite clear that the Reformers never thought of the infallible and inerrant Scriptures in terms of the non-existent autographs but always the available and accessible apographs. Turretin wrote,

By original texts, we do not mean the autographs written by the hand of Moses, of the prophets and the apostles, which certainly do not now exist. *We mean their apographs which are so called because they set forth to us the word of God in the very words of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.*¹⁴

Now, B B Warfield came into the scene two centuries later and changed all that by introducing his new theory of *Sola Autographa*, that the inerrancy of the Scriptures resides only in the autographs, the very

first scripts written by the original authors themselves.¹⁵ By so doing, he could straddle himself quite comfortably between the liberal and conservative camps. He would have had no qualms agreeing with the liberals who pounded on self-claimed “evidence” and “reason” that the Bible was indeed erroneous with many mistakes whether intentional or unintentional, divine or human. At the same time, he would have had no problems affirming with the conservatives that the Bible was truly inerrant because he thought of the Bible’s inerrancy only in terms of its autographs which of course no longer exist, and thus the inerrancy of autographs was really a matter of Faith and not Reason, end of discussion!

Princeton’s less than perfect view of the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures came full circle when Warfield accepted without question the textual critical theory and method of Westcott and Hort. Warfield promoted the critical text of Westcott and Hort soon after it appeared in 1881.¹⁶ Princeton historian David Calhoun was correct to note that Warfield’s “positive attitude toward textual criticism influenced many to appreciate the science and to value the new translations of the Bible based upon its work.”¹⁷

Letis observed that it was Warfield’s employment of German higher criticism and Westcott-Hort’s lower (textual) criticism that led him to reject the authenticity of age-old Bible passages like Mark 16:9-20.¹⁸ Like Westcott and Hort, Warfield accepted the “conjectural emendation” (ie, speculative correction) of the Scriptures.¹⁹ Warfield and all the higher and lower critics were thus advocating that the Bible the Church had been using throughout the centuries contained non-inspired and extra-scriptural material which God never gave and never intended His people to read! Did the Church Fathers and the Reformers all misquote Jesus, reading from the wrong Bible? God forbid!

It is thus no surprise that Warfield, given his sympathy to the liberal method, did not think that the doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures was indispensable. He wrote,

Let it not be said that thus we found the whole Christian system upon the doctrine of plenary inspiration. ... Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. ... ‘without any inspiration we could have had Christianity; yea, and men could still have heard the truth and through it been awakened, and justified, and sanctified, and glorified ... even had we no Bible; ...’²⁰

But what does the Bible say about itself and its relation to faith and salvation? It is written, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps 19:7). "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps 119:9). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). Does not Warfield realise that without the Scripture, there could be no Gospel? For did not the Apostle write, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day *according to the scriptures*" (1 Cor 15:1-4)? "According to the scriptures ... according to the scriptures" our faith must be, or else it is blind faith or no faith at all!

Warfield's erroneous thinking concerning the indispensable doctrinal and practical importance of the absolute inspiration, authority and sufficiency of the Bible is surely refuted by the Bible itself, for it stands written, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Bible as a whole and in all its parts to the last iota is precisely what we need, and all that we need, to know the living and true God, even Jesus Christ, the only way of salvation from sin and death, has been offered to mankind. We cannot separate Christ from His words. No Bible, no Christianity!

Warfield's dichotomy of Faith and Reason became the philosophical noose that slowly but surely strangled and finally shook and scandalised the very foundations of Christianity which are Christ's full deity and the Bible's absolute authority.²¹ Such a naturalistic and compromised approach to the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Faith introduced by Warfield has left believers utterly vulnerable and practically defenceless to 20th and 21st century assaults on their Lord and His Word by the Modern Versions, *The DaVinci Code* and the Gnostic Gospels.²²

Can Doctrines Do Without Words?

Is Princeton's "Plenary Inspiration" enough or is there a need to affirm "*Verbal Plenary Inspiration*?" In other words, does it really matter

if we do not have all the inspired words of Scriptures but just the fundamental doctrines of Christianity? Ryrie commented in his *Basic Theology* why there is a need to be very precise and strict in defining “Verbal Plenary Inspiration:”

While many theological viewpoints would be willing to say the Bible is inspired, one finds little uniformity as to what is meant by inspiration. Some focus it on the writers; others, on the writings; still others, on the readers. Some relate it to the general message of the Bible; others, to the thoughts; still others, to the words. Some include inerrancy; many don't.

These differences call for precision in stating the biblical doctrine. Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one's belief in full inspiration was the statement, “I believe in the *inspiration* of the Bible.” But when some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text it became necessary to say, “I believe in the *verbal inspiration* of the Bible.” To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, “I believe in the *verbal, plenary inspiration* of the Bible.” Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, “I believe in the *verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration* of the Bible.” But then “infallible” and “inerrant” began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the concept of “*unlimited inerrancy.*” ***Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching.***²³

It must be noted that the old Princeton theology did affirm that the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures must necessarily extend to the words (ie, verbal inspiration). Charles Hodge made it clear that it is not just the thoughts, concepts, or doctrines in the Scriptures that are inspired but their very words. He taught that doctrines of the Scriptures are to be sought in the words, the two are inseparable. He wrote,

If the words—priest, sacrifice, ransom, expiation, propitiation, purification by blood, and the like—have no divine authority, then the doctrine which they embody has no such authority.

... Christ and his Apostles argue from the very words of Scripture. Our Lord says that David by the Spirit called the Messiah Lord, i.e., David used that word. It was in the use of a particular word, that Christ said (John x. 35), that the Scriptures cannot be broken. “If he call [sic] them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken,” etc. The use of that word, therefore, according to Christ's view of the Scripture, was determined by the Spirit of God. Paul, in Gal. iii.16, lays stress on the fact, that in the promise made by Abraham, a word used is singular and not

plural, “seed,” “as of one,” and not “seeds as of many.” Constantly it is the very words of Scriptures which are quoted as of divine authority.

... All these, and similar modes of expression with which the Scriptures abound, imply that the words uttered were the words of God. ...The words of the prophet were the words of God, or he could not be God’s spokesman and mouth. It has also been shown that in the most formally didactic passage in the whole Bible on this subject (1 Cor. ii. 10-13), the Apostle expressly asserts that the truths revealed by the Spirit, he communicated in words taught by the Spirit.²⁴

Following the old but inadequate Princeton tradition, Presbyterian denominations and organisations have by and large affirmed merely the Scripture’s “plenary inspiration” but not its “*verbal* and plenary inspiration.” This is not to deny that some do indeed believe in verbal inspiration even without affirming the same. Nevertheless, the modernist/neo-evangelical versus fundamentalist battle for the Bible has so well developed the doctrine of the Bible that “verbal inspiration” has become an indispensable term for Biblical inerrancy in 20th century conservative evangelical and fundamental theology.²⁵ As such the doctrinal constitution or statements of faith of certain Bible-believing and Bible-defending churches or councils might require a much needed updating for the sake of clarity and precision in stating this Biblical truth.

Can Verbal Inspiration Do Without Verbal Preservation?

The Bibliological crisis that stems from Princeton theology has now led to the question of not just the Scripture’s verbal inspiration but also its verbal preservation. The modern opinion among reformed, evangelical and fundamental circles is that although the Scriptures are verbally and plenary inspired, they are not verbally and plenary preserved. As such the Church may be absolutely certain of the verbal plenary perfection of the Scriptures only in the past, that is in the autographs, but it may not be absolutely certain of the verbal plenary perfection of the Scriptures today, that is in the apographs.

One would think that the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture would naturally and automatically lead a person to believe in its verbal and plenary preservation, but sadly such logic is not so simple and obvious for such adherents who say,

We know for sure that the first Bible is perfect, but we cannot be so sure that the Bible in our hands today have no mistakes at all; and even if there

is such an errorless Bible today, we cannot know where it is because there are just too many different kinds of Bibles out there, and we just cannot tell which Bible is true and which is false.

Although we do not know where the perfect Bible is, we are dead against those who insist that they have in their hands a Bible that is 100% perfect without any mistake because of their belief that God has not only inspired His words 100% but also preserved His words 100% in the original languages to the last iota (Matt 5:18).

Pastors Charles Seet and Colin Wong, and others, in their paper, “Preserving Our Godly Path,” opposed the Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Holy Scriptures by quoting Rowland Ward, a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, who argued against verbal preservation and denounced the Textus Receptus as the best exemplar of the preserved text.²⁶ Ward believes that the Bible is infallible and inerrant to the “jot and tittle” only in the autographs, but denies that it is so infallible and inerrant in the apographs. Despite the Westminster Confession’s quotation of Matthew 5:18, Ward simplistically and illogically dismisses the special providential—“jot and tittle”—preservation of the Holy Scriptures supposing that

Matthew 5:18 (the jot and tittle passage) is not referring to the transmission of the text of Scripture but to the authority of God’s claims upon us. The transmission of Scripture is not such that the sources have been preserved with exactness in any particular manuscript but, as Owen noted, in all the manuscripts. And we cannot say that providence has preserved only some manuscripts since providence extends to all events and thus to the preservation of all the manuscripts. Nor can we say that providence tells us which manuscripts are the best ones: only manuscript comparison and analysis can do that. In short, “pure” does not mean “without any transcriptional errors” but it means something like “without loss of doctrines and with the text preserved in the variety of manuscripts.”²⁷

Several fallacious claims have been posited by Ward in his statement above. First, Ward claims that Matthew 5:18 concerns the authority and not the transmission of Scripture. This is a logical fallacy. The authority of Scripture is inextricably bound to its transmission and preservation by *providentia extraordinaria* or supernatural providence. The promise of the divine preservation of the inspired words of God to its last jot and tittle is true (unless one cares to spiritualise or explain away the Biblical text which is often the convenient route of escape by many who do not wish to face the truths of God’s Word plainly and literally due to certain

preconceived ideas or views). Equally significant is the Westminster Confession's employment of Matthew 5:18 as proof text for its statement on the special providential preservation of the Scriptures, highlighting in particular the Bible's *authenticity* and not merely its authority: "The Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek ... being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore *authentical*."²⁸ On the meaning of the word "authentical," J S Candlish rightly commented,

It is obvious that, as the question here is as to the text of Scripture, the word authentic is used, not in the modern sense in which it has been employed by many ... as meaning historically true, but in its more *literal* sense, attested as a correct *copy* of the author's work.²⁹

William Orr likewise noted,

Now this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was immediately inspired by God because it was *identical* with the first text that God had kept pure in all ages. *The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the Textus Receptus of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith.*³⁰

Surely the 100% authenticity (or infallibility and inerrancy) of the Scriptures in the apographs or copies is the very reason why the Bible is 100% authoritative on every matter of faith and practice. How can the non-existent and intangible *autographa* or imperfect and corrupted *apographa* serve as the supreme and final authority of the Christian Faith? Surely they cannot!

Second, Ward errs when he says that preservation must be in "all the manuscripts" without distinction or discrimination. The fact is *not all* manuscripts are pure or uncorrupted. There exist manuscripts that show a corrupt hand. Dean J W Burgon had proven without doubt the corruptions that abound in the Alexandrian manuscripts of Westcott and Hort which he summarily dismissed as the "most scandalously corrupt copies extant."³¹ Thankfully, by God's special providence, these corruptions or corrupted manuscripts are in the minority. The majority of Greek manuscripts belonging to the Byzantine Text and the Textus Receptus display essentially the same readings.

Third, Ward holds to a rather uncertain or agnostic view of divine providence which allows for the preservation of only the doctrines of the Christian Faith but not the very words of Holy Scripture that God had

originally breathed out (*theopneustos*, 2 Tim 3:16). In other words, he denies verbal preservation in favour of conceptual preservation. But this is again not only biblically but also logically untenable, for how can there be doctrines or concepts without the words to explain or express them. Ward cited Owen, but for sure the distinguished puritan theologian did not advocate conceptual preservation over against verbal preservation as Ward would have us believe. Owen clearly believed in the preservation of the *words* of Scripture (ie, verbal preservation), not just the doctrines (ie, conceptual preservation), for he wrote, “Nor is it enough to satisfy us, that the *doctrines* mentioned are *preserved entire; every tittle and iota* in the Word of God must come under our care and consideration, as being, as such, from God.”³²

How easily “\$1000” becomes “\$7000” just by adding one stroke to the number “1,” and a “tie” becomes a “lie” when the stroke of the “t” is removed. Instead of “Blest be the *tie* that binds,” shall we now sing “Blest be the *lie* that binds?” Indeed, the tie that binds modernists, neo-evangelicals, and neo-fundamentalists is the lie that the Bible is imperfectly preserved with missing jots and tittles, denying Jesus’ clear and precise promise in Matthew 5:18 of the infallible preservation of His inerrant words. Meanings and figures change when we add to or subtract from God’s Word, even though it may just be a little bit. Did God allow His words to be changed, corrupted, or lost? Never! God by His infinite power and wisdom has ensured that every corruption to His Word is rejected, and every copying or printing mistake corrected! God is His own infallible Textual Critic, and we trust in His special providential work of preserving and restoring every jot and tittle of His words especially in the days of the Great Protestant Reformation and the age of the Printed Text so that His Word as a whole and in its parts right down to the last iota remains infallible and inerrant, and supremely authoritative in the faith and life of the Church.

Faithful Resolutions

In the 21st century Reformation movement, the Lord has raised a number of Christ-honouring institutions to take a declared position on the Biblical doctrine of the Verbal Plenary Preservation of Scriptures and to promote the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus underlying the Authorised or King James Bible.

By the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC)

The ICCC is a worldwide fellowship of fundamental churches which are opposed to liberalism, ecumenism, charismaticism, and neo-evangelicalism. Led by Dr Carl McIntire, its founding President, the ICCC in its World Congress held in Jerusalem in the year 2000 declared,

Believing the Holy Scriptures on the originals to be fully inspired with its words and genders and being complete as God's revelation to man without error;

Believing that God not only inspired the Bible without errors in fact, doctrine and judgment but preserved the Scriptures in all ages for all eternity as the Westminster Confession of Faith standard says—"the O.T. in Hebrew and the N.T. in Greek ... being immediately inspired by God and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages are therefore authentic ... They are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come;"

Believing the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, gave us a supernatural gift, and both inspired and preserved it. By inspired we mean that the Holy Spirit moved in the hearts of its human authors that they recorded the very words that God wanted written in the Bible using the personality and background of its writers but without error. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." II Pet 1:21;

Believing God safeguarded the Bible in times past and will continue to do so in the future and all eternity. He preserved on Scripture, the Bible. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away;" Matt 24:35;

Believing the O.T. has been preserved in the Masoretic text and the N.T. in the Textus Receptus, combined they gave us the complete Word of God. The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts. Other good Protestant versions have been translated around the world in many languages based on the Masoretic and Textus Receptus until 1881 when Drs. Westcott and Hort used a shorter text removing many words, phrases and sections by following the eclectic watered down polluted Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts;

These manuscripts differ widely among themselves and with others amount to less than 5% of the manuscript evidence. God preserved the Textus Receptus in the majority text with 95%. This is called the traditional, or majority text. It is also called Eastern Byzantine text and also the manuscripts that have the longer and fuller texts; ...

We the International Council of Christian Churches meeting in Jerusalem, 8-14 November 2000 strongly urge the churches in their pulpits and people at large, to continue to use the time honoured and faithful longer translations and not the new shorter versions that follow in too many places the short eclectic texts. These are very similar to the shorter Westcott and Hort texts that remove or cast doubt on so many passages and words. Furthermore we are not against new versions as such but believe all true and faithful versions must be based on the traditional longer texts that the Holy Spirit preserved through the early century versions, the early church fathers and the faithful *Textus Receptus*.³³

By the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS)

The TBS, in its latest position statement on the Bible as published in its *Quarterly Record*, April-June 2005, affirms in no uncertain terms the special providential preservation of the Scriptures, and specifically identifies the underlying texts of the KJV to be its definitive texts:

“The Trinitarian Bible Society Statement of Doctrine of the Holy Scripture” approved by the General Committee at its meeting held on 17th January 2005, and revised 25th February 2005 declares:

The Constitution of the Trinitarian Bible Society specifies the textual families to be employed in the translations it circulates. The Masoretic Hebrew and the Greek Received Texts are the texts that the Constitution of the Trinitarian Bible Society acknowledges to have been preserved by the special providence of God within Judaism and Christianity. Therefore these texts are definitive and the final point of reference in all the Society’s work.

These texts of Scripture reflect the qualities of God-breathed Scripture, including being authentic, holy, pure, true, infallible, trustworthy, excellent, self-authenticating, necessary, sufficient, perspicuous, self-interpreting, authoritative and inerrant (Psalm 19:7-9, Psalm 119). They are consequently to be received as the Word of God (Ezra 7:14; Nehemiah 8:8; Daniel 9:2; 2 Peter 1:19) and the correct reading at any point is to be sought within these texts.

The Society accepts as the best edition of the Hebrew Masoretic text the one prepared in 1524–25 by Jacob ben Chayyim and known, after David Bomberg the publisher, as the Bomberg text. This text underlies the Old Testament in the Authorised Version.

The Greek Received Text is the name given to a group of printed texts, the first of which was published by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516. The Society believes that the latest and best edition is the text reconstructed by F.H.A. Scrivener in 1894. This text was reconstructed from the Greek underlying the New Testament of the Authorised Version.³⁴

By the Dean Burgon Society (DBS)

The DBS was founded in the USA in 1978 to defend the Traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus underlying the King James Bible. Dr D A Waite and Dr David Otis Fuller were among the original founding members.

In its “Articles of Faith,” the DBS states:

We believe in the plenary, verbal, Divine inspiration of the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments (from Genesis to Revelation) in the original languages, and in their consequent infallibility and inerrancy in all matters of which they speak (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). The books known as the Apocrypha, however, are not the inspired Word of God in any sense whatsoever. As the Bible uses it, the term “inspiration” refers to the writings, not the writers (2 Timothy 3:16-17); the writers are spoken of as being “holy men of God” who were “moved,” “carried” or “borne” along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21) in such a definite way that their writings were supernaturally, plenary, and verbally inspired, free from any error, infallible, and inerrant, as no other writings have ever been or ever will be inspired.

We believe that the Texts which are the closest to the original autographs of the Bible are the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text for the Old Testament, and the traditional Greek Text for the New Testament underlying the King James Version (as found in “The Greek Text Underlying The English Authorized Version of 1611”).

We, believe that the King James Version (or Authorized Version) of the English Bible is a true, faithful, and accurate translation of these two providentially preserved Texts, which in our time has no equal among all of the other English Translations. The translators did such a fine job in their translation task that we can without apology hold up the Authorized Version of 1611 and say “This is the WORD OF GOD!” while at the same time realizing that, in some verses, we must go back to the underlying original language Texts for complete clarity, and also compare Scripture with Scripture.

We believe that all the verses in the King James Version belong in the Old and the New Testaments because they represent words we believe were in the original texts, although there might be other renderings from the original languages which could also be acceptable to us today. For an exhaustive study of any of the words or verses in the Bible, we urge the student to return directly to the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text and the Traditional Received Greek Text rather than to any other translation for help.³⁵

By the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC)

The Far Eastern Bible College, founded by the Rev Dr Timothy Tow in 1962, in its Constitution states without equivocation its faith in God's forever infallible and inerrant words thusly:

We believe in the divine, Verbal Plenary Inspiration (Autographs) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (Apographs) of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the perfect Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Ps 12:6-7; Matt 5:18, 24:35);

We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant;

We uphold the Authorised (King James) Version to be the Word of God — the best, most faithful, most accurate, most beautiful translation of the Bible in the English language, and do employ it alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.³⁶

May God's people not adore and exalt seemingly great scholars or schools of the past and the present, and deem them infallible and inerrant, for only the inspired and preserved words of God in the Holy Scriptures are infallible and inerrant, pure and perfect in every way, and our sole and supreme authority of faith and life to the glory of God. Amen.

Notes

¹ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, sv "Alexander, Archibald," "Hodge, Charles," "Warfield, Benjamin Breckinridge," by M A Noll.

² Theodore Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 2000), 6.

³ Quoted by David Cloud, *Faith Versus the Modern Bible Versions* (Port Huron: Way of Life, 2005), 309.

⁴ Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 6, quoting Lefferts A Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 228.

⁵ A title he earned for being the General Editor of the *Reader's Digest Bible*.

⁶ Bart D Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 11.

⁷ *Ibid*, "Acknowledgments." Ehrman dedicated his book to Metzger.

⁸ E F Hills, *Believing Bible Study* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1977), 216-20.

⁹ Quoted by Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 8.

THE ACHILLES' HEEL OF PRINCETON BIBLIOLOGY

¹⁰ Charles Hodge, "Law of Criticism of the New Testament," as cited by Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 9.

¹¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986 reprint), 1:170.

¹² Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 11.

¹³ See Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd enlarged ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 119-146; Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 3-35; J Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 78-95; Daniel Wallace, "Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament," in *New Testament Essays: In Honor of Homer A Kent Jr*, ed Gary Meadors (Winona Lake: BMH, 1991), 69-102.

¹⁴ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992 reprint), 1:106, emphasis mine. See also Robert Barnett, "Francis Turretin on the Holy Scriptures," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Dean Burgon Society held at Calvary Baptist Church, Ontario, Canada, in 1995 (<http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/Preservation/barnett95.htm>, accessed on June 4, 2006).

¹⁵ See Theodore Letis, "B B Warfield, Common-Sense Philosophy and Biblical Criticism," in *Edward Freer Hills's Contribution to the Revival of the Ecclesiastical Text* (Philadelphia: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987), 62-89; Jeffrey Khoo, "Sola Autographa or Sola Apographa: A Case for the Present Perfection and Authority of the Holy Scriptures," *The Burning Bush* 11 (2005): 3-19; American Presbyterian Church, "B B Warfield and the Doctrine of Inspiration," in <http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/inspiration.htm>; and "B B Warfield and the Reformation Doctrine of the Providential Preservation of the Biblical Text," in <http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/preservation.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2006.

¹⁶ Warfield, in his review of the textual critical theory and text of Westcott and Hort, wrote, "We cannot doubt but that the leading principles of method which they have laid down will meet with speedy universal acceptance. They furnish us for the first time with a really scientific method." *Presbyterian Review* 3 (1882): 355. Letis has rightly judged that Warfield's glowing review of the Westcott-Hort Critical theory and text "would forever endear it to conservatives in the United States." *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 17.

¹⁷ David B Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony 1869-1929* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 113-4.

¹⁸ Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 19. For a most excellent defence of the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20, read J W Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the*

Gospel According to S Mark Vindicated against Recent Critical Objectors and Established (Oxford: James Parker and Co, 1871), which has been reprinted by the Dean Burgon Society (www.deanburgonsociety.org).

¹⁹ Warfield wrote, "It may be said here, again, that thus a wide door is opened for the entrance of deceitful dealing with the Word of Life. The danger is apparent and imminent. But we cannot arbitrarily close the door lest we incur the same charge." *Presbyterian Review* 3 (1882): 347-8, as cited in Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 19.

²⁰ Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 210-1.

²¹ The inconsistency of B B Warfield in separating Faith and Reason in his theological method was ably exposed by E F Hills, "A History of My Defence of the King James Bible," *The Burning Bush* 4 (1998): 99-105. For an excellent synopsis and analysis of modernism, rationalism, and naturalistic textual criticism, read Hills's, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1984), 62-86. This book is now available online without charge: go to http://www.john3-16.connectfree.co.uk/efhills/efhills_index.html.

²² For a Bible-based and faith-based defence of the Christian Faith and Scripture against Dan Brown's attack on the Canon of Scripture through *The DaVinci Code*, and Princeton's assault on the traditional text and the Textus Receptus through the Critical Text of Bruce Metzger et al, and the promotion of the Gnostic Gospels by Elaine Pagels, see my papers, "The Blasphemy and Deception of *The DaVinci Code*" (co-authored with Suan-Yew Quek), *The Burning Bush* 12 (2006): 14-24; "The Judas Gospel: Bad News of Betrayal," *Faith and Freedom* (May 2006): 2, 11, 12. Both articles are available online at www.febc.edu.sg.

²³ Charles C Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 67.

²⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986 reprint), 1:164-5.

²⁵ See Quek Suan Yew, "Biblical Polemics: A Critical Analysis of Four Major Modern Religious Movements Which Contribute to the Ultimate Formation of the One World Church in the Light of Historic Fundamentalist Theology," unpublished ThD dissertation, Far Eastern Bible College, 2005.

²⁶ Charles Seet and Colin Wong, et al, "Preserving Our Godly Path," a paper presented to the Sunday School of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church on December 1, 2002. See amended version published in <http://www.lifefebc.com/ourstand/godlypath.htm> (accessed on June 1, 2006) against believers who seek to preserve godly paths by affirming the divine preservation of all the godly words in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek language Scriptures underlying the Reformation Bibles best represented by the Authorised or King James Version, and denounce the corrupt Alexandrian or Westcott-Hort text underlying the modern Bible versions.

THE ACHILLES' HEEL OF PRINCETON BIBLIOLOGY

²⁷ Rowland S Ward, "Recent Criticisms of the Westminster Confession of Faith," in <http://spindleworks.com/library/wcf/ward.htm#c>, accessed on June 1, 2006.

²⁸ The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1:8.

²⁹ J S Candlish, "The Doctrine of the Westminster Confession on Scripture," as quoted in Theodore Letis, *The Majority Text* (Philadelphia: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987), 174, emphasis mine.

³⁰ William F Orr, "The Authority of the Bible as Reflected in the Proposed Confession of 1967," as quoted in Letis, *The Majority Text*, 174, emphasis mine.

³¹ J W Burgon, *The Revision Revised* (Collingswood: Dean Burgon Society, 1883), 16.

³² Quoted in Jeffrey Khoo, "John Owen on the Perfect Bible," *The Burning Bush* 10 (2004): 77.

³³ "ICCC 16th World Congress Statements," *Far Eastern Beacon* 32:7 (Christmas 2000):14, and cited by Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages: Recapturing the Authorised Version and the Doctrine of Providential Preservation* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 2001), 126-7. For a historical overview of Dr Carl McIntire's significant contribution to the defence of the historic Christian Faith, the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures, and the reliability of King James Bible in the Bible Presbyterian Church, read Mrs Frank Mood, "The Bible Presbyterian Church and Dr Carl McIntire," in *The McIntire Memorial* (Seoul: Truth & Freedom Publishing Co, 2005), 117-125.

³⁴ "Statement of Doctrine of Holy Scripture," 10-11. For the complete document, go to www.trinitarianbiblesociety.com/site/qr/qr571.pdf. See also the Society's online articles at <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/onlinearticles.asp>.

³⁵ Dean Burgon Society, "Articles of Faith, Operation & Organization," as adopted at the Organisational Meeting at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 3-4, 1978 (http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/DBS_Society/articles.htm, accessed on June 27, 2006). See also D A Waite, "The Dean Burgon Society Deserves Its Name: Ten Reasons Why," at http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/DBS_Society/deserves.htm, accessed on June 27, 2006.

³⁶ "Statement of Faith," *Far Eastern Bible College Prospectus* (2005-2009): 11. For FEBC's defence of the Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Holy Scriptures and the King James Bible, go to [http://www.febc.edu.sg/Doctrine of Perfect Preservation.htm](http://www.febc.edu.sg/Doctrine%20of%20Perfect%20Preservation.htm).

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LOST WORDS IN OUR BIBLE?

Jeffrey Khoo

Introduction

The Word of God is forever infallible and inerrant. The Church today has a 100% Perfect Bible without any mistake because God promised to preserve His inspired words to the last jot and tittle (Matt 5:18). Thus, (1) the inspired Scriptures were never lost but *always preserved* without any corruption or missing words; (2) the Sacred Scriptures are *always infallible and inerrant*, and *supremely authoritative not only in times past, but also today—Sola Scriptura!*

As Bible-believing Christians, there is a need to defend the preserved words of God not just in the NT but also in the OT. Today, our OT Scriptures are being questioned by some who do not believe that God has preserved every jot and tittle of His words in the OT, going against what Jesus promised in Matthew 5:18. They say that some insignificant or redundant words of the OT have already been totally lost and nowhere to be found. According to them, these “lost words” contribute to the so-called “scribal errors” in our OT Scripture.

This article seeks to assure all believers that the same God who had originally inspired His OT words has also continuously preserved all of His words to the jot and tittle (Matt 5:18). Christians can truly live by God’s every word (Matt 4:4) because every word of God has been kept intact without any word lost.

Jot and Tittle Preservation

The OT Scriptures were first given to Israel—God’s chosen nation. Romans 3:1-2 tells us that God had committed to the Jews the safekeeping and copying of the Holy Scriptures. Knowing well the divine nature of the Scriptures, that the words of the sacred pages were the very words of the Almighty God, they copied the Scriptures with great precision and accuracy employing very strict rules. For instance: (1) “No

LOST WORDS IN OUR BIBLE?

word or letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he must read and pronounce aloud each word before writing it.” (2) “The revision of a roll must be made within 30 days after the work was finished; otherwise it was worthless. One mistake on a sheet condemned the sheet; if three mistakes were found on any page, the entire manuscript was condemned.” (3) “Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter were omitted, an extra letter inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed at once.”¹ These very strict rules of transcription show how precious the Jews had regarded the inspired words of God, and how precise their copying of these inspired words must have been. Such strict practices in copying “give us strong encouragement to believe that we have the real Old Testament, *the same one* which our Lord had and which was originally given by inspiration of God.”²

The words of the Scriptures are important (Deut 8:3, Matt 4:4, Luke 4:4). God uses His words to communicate His Truth so that we might know who and what He is and how we might be saved through Him. The Bible clearly tells us that it is God’s written words (*pasa graphe*—“All Scripture”) that are inspired (2 Tim 3:16), and from these inspired words come all the doctrines that are sufficient and profitable for the spiritual growth and maturity of the believer (2 Tim 3:17). The Bible also clearly says that God Himself will preserve all His inspired words to the jot and tittle without the loss of any word, syllable or letter (Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 24:35).

Now if we have the inspired, infallible and inerrant words of God today preserved in the traditional and Reformation Scriptures, then how do we explain the differences or discrepancies found in the Bible especially those found in 1 Samuel 13:1, 2 Chronicles 22:2, and many other places. Can these be due to “scribal errors”?

Since God has preserved His inspired words to the last iota and no words are lost but all kept pure and intact in the original language Scriptures, we must categorically deny that our Bible contains any mistake or error (scribal or otherwise). But it is troubling that certain evangelicals and fundamentalists would rather choose to deny the present infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures by considering the “discrepancies” found in 1 Samuel 13:1 and 2 Chronicles 22:2 and other like passages to be *actual* instead of *apparent* discrepancies, and calling them “scribal errors.”

No “Lost Word” and No “Scribal Error” in 2 Chronicles 22:2

A denial of the verbal preservation of the Scriptures will invariably lead one to believe that some words of God have been lost and remain lost leading to a “scribal error” view of the OT Scriptures. For instance, W Edward Glenny denies that God has perfectly preserved His Word so that no words have been lost. He says, “The evidence from the OT text suggests that such is not the case. *We might have lost a few words ...*”³ Based on his “lost words” view of the Bible, he was quick to point out “obvious discrepancies” in the OT like 2 Chronicles 22:2. He pontificates,

In 1 Chronicles 8:26 [sic], the KJV states that Ahaziah was twenty-two when he began to reign; the parallel in 2 Chronicles 22:2 says that he began to reign at the age of forty-two. ... These *obvious discrepancies* in the KJV and the Hebrew manuscripts on which it is based show that *none of them perfectly preserved the inspired autograph*.⁴

Now, know that 2 Chronicles 22:2 reads “forty-two” in the KJV. A number of the modern versions like the NASV, NIV, and ESV read “twenty-two” instead. So which is the original, inspired reading: “forty-two” (in KJV), or “twenty-two” (in NASV, NIV, and ESV)? In making such a textual decision, we must have a perfect standard, and that infallible and inerrant standard is the inspired and preserved Hebrew Scripture, and not any translation ancient or modern.

It is significant to note that every single Hebrew manuscript reads “forty-two” (*arebba'im wushetha'im*) in 2 Chronicles 22:2. There is no evidence of lost words—every word to the letter is preserved, and reads precisely as “forty-two” as accurately translated in the KJV. If every Hebrew manuscript reads “forty-two” in 2 Chronicles 22:2, then on what basis do the NASV, NIV, and ESV change it to “twenty-two”? They change “forty-two” to “twenty-two” on the basis of the Septuagint (LXX) which is a Greek version of the Hebrew Scripture just like the NIV is an English version of it. In other words, they use a version or translation to correct the original Hebrew text! Should not it be the other way round?

Why do they do this? They do this because of their fallacious assumption that (1) God did not preserve His words infallibly, (2) lost words exist in the Hebrew text, and (3) 2 Chronicles 22:2 is an “obvious” discrepancy (cf 2 Kgs 8:26). Thus, Glenny and all such non-preservationists are quick to use a fallible translation (eg, LXX) to correct the infallible Hebrew Text! This is no different from someone using the

NIV today to correct any part of the Hebrew Text according to his whim and fancy! But Glenny calls it “conjectural emendation”⁵ which sounds scholarly but it is pure guesswork. Can a translation be more inspired than or superior to the original language text? Can a translation or version (whatever the language) be used to correct the Hebrew? Glenny’s method of explaining such “obvious discrepancies” in the Bible is troubling for it displays (1) a sceptical attitude towards the numerical integrity of God’s Word, (2) a critical readiness to deny the present inerrancy of Scripture in historical details, and (3) a lackadaisical approach towards solving difficulties in the Bible by conveniently dismissing such difficulties as “scribal errors.”

A godly approach is one that presupposes the present infallibility and inerrancy of God’s Word not only when it speaks on salvation, but also when it speaks on history, geography or science. “*Let God be true, but every man a liar*” (Rom 3:4). Such a godly approach to difficult passages is seen in Robert J Sargent who, by comparing (not correcting) Scripture with Scripture, offered two possible solutions to the so-called “problem” or “error” in 2 Chronicles 22:2. Sargent suggested that “forty-two” could be either (1) Ahaziah’s years counted from the beginning of the dynasty founded by Omri, or (2) the year in which Ahaziah was actually seated as king though anointed as one at “twenty-two” (2 Kgs 8:26).⁶ Whatever the answer may be, the truth and fact is: the inspired and preserved Hebrew reading in 2 Chronicles 22:2 is “forty-two” and not “twenty-two,” and no man has the right to change or correct God’s Word by “conjectural emendation,” taking heed to the serious warning not to add to or subtract from the Holy Scriptures (Rev 22:18-19).

No “Lost Word” and No “Scribal Error” in 1 Samuel 13:1

Now, let us look at the next text which is 1 Samuel 13:1 which the KJV translates as, “Saul reigned one year.” But the other versions read quite differently. The NASV has, “Saul was *forty* years old when he began to reign;” the NIV has, “Saul was *thirty* years old when he became king;” and the RSV has, “Saul was ... years old when he began to reign.” Which of the above is correct? The only way whereby we can ascertain the correct reading is to go to the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible since day one reads *Ben-shanah Shaoul*, literally, “A son of a year (was) Saul,” or idiomatically, “Saul was a year old.”

Now, the difficulty is: How could Saul be only a year old when he began to reign? Scholars and translators who do not believe in the jot-and-tittle preservation of Scripture say that this is an actual discrepancy in the Hebrew Text which they attribute to a “scribal error.” This is why Michael Harding in a mistitled book—*God’s Word in Our Hands*—wrote,

[I]n 1 Samuel 13:1-2 the Masoretic Text states that Saul was one year of age (*ben-shanah*—literally “son of a year”) ... Some ancient Greek manuscripts ... read “thirty years” instead of “one year,” ... On account of my theological conviction regarding the inerrancy of the autographa, I believe the original Hebrew text also reads “thirty,” even though *we do not currently possess a Hebrew manuscript with that reading.*⁷

Harding and those like him fail to apply the logic of faith to the promise of God that He will preserve and has preserved every iota of His inspired words. This leads them to conclude that a word is lost and 2 Chronicles 22:2 contains a “scribal error” even when there is no such error to begin with. They change the text when the text needs no changing. They replace divine words with human words. Instead of attributing error to the translation (LXX, NASV, NIV, RSV), they rather fault the inspired and preserved Hebrew Text and treat it as an actual discrepancy even when there is absolutely none. This has caused many Bible believers to doubt God’s Word: Do we really have God’s infallible and inerrant Word in our hands? Many are indeed stumbled by such allegations of error in the Bible, and are questioning whether they can really trust the Scriptures at all if there is no such thing as a complete and perfect Word of God today.

It must be categorically stated that there is no error at all in the Hebrew Text and no mistake also in the KJV which translated 1 Samuel 13:1 accurately. So how do we explain 1 Samuel 13:1? A faithful explanation is offered by Matthew Poole who wrote,

[Saul] had now reigned one year, from his first election at Mizpeh, in which time these things were done, which are recorded in chap. xi., xii., to wit, peaceably, or righteously. Compare 2 Sam. ii.10.⁸

In other words, the year of Saul was calculated not from the time of his birth but from his *appointment as king*; “Saul was a year old *into his reign*.” This meaning is supported by the Geneva Bible which reads, “*Saul now had beene King one yeere*.” Rest assured, there is no mistake in the Hebrew Text and in the KJV here. God has indeed inspired and

LOST WORDS IN OUR BIBLE?

preserved His OT words perfectly so that we might have an infallible, inerrant OT Bible in our hands today.

Conclusion

The inspired words of the Hebrew OT are all the words of the Hebrew Masoretic Text (Ben Chayyim). The Trinitarian Bible Society regards the Ben Chayyim OT Text underlying the KJV to be the preserved and definitive Text, and that the correct OT reading is to be found in precisely this Text.⁹

The Biblical doctrine of the jot-and-tittle preservation of the Holy Scriptures affirms a 100% infallible and inerrant Bible *today!* The Written Foundation of our Judeo-Christian Faith is sure and secure for “the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa 40:8). Amen!

Notes

¹ H S Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*, 4th ed (Houghton, Word-Bearer, 1947), 184-185.

² Ibid, 185.

³ Roy E Beacham and Kevin T Bauder, eds, *One Bible Only?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 121.

⁴ Ibid, 115.

⁵ Ibid, 114.

⁶ Robert J Sargent, “A Scribal Error in 2 Chronicles 22:2? No!” *The Burning Bush* 10 (2004): 90-92.

⁷ James B Williams and Randolph Shaylor, eds, *God’s Word in Our Hands: The Bible Preserved for Us* (Greenville: Ambassador Emerald International, 2003), 360-361.

⁸ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (McLean: MacDonald, nd), 1:542.

⁹ “Statement of Doctrine of Holy Scripture,” *Trinitarian Bible Society Quarterly Report*, April-June 2005, 10-11.

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INSPIRED TEXTUAL CRITICISM?

Jeffrey Khoo

Is the Biblical doctrine of the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures “inspired perfect textual criticism?” VPP advocates say “No!” But VPP detractors persist in painting a different and distorted picture of their opponents. The skewed depiction of VPP by its detractors is yet another straw man that has been conveniently and desperately erected to knock down the 100% inspiration and the 100% preservation of the infallible and inerrant words of God.¹

Let it be stated again that VPP believers do not believe in “double inspiration,” “post-canonical inspiration,” or “inspired perfect textual criticism.” As a matter of fact, these are terms alien to the VPP doctrine, and none of our VPP writings use such terms to explain or describe the doctrine.

VPP is Not “Double Inspiration” or “Post-Canonical Inspiration”

VPP concerns *preservation*, not inspiration. VPP is distinguished from VPI (Verbal Plenary Inspiration). VPI is the one-time act of God in the past when He breathed out (*theopneustos*) the original language words in the autographs of the Holy Scriptures. VPP, on the other hand, is the continuous act of God in preserving the very same original language words in the apographs (or copies) of the Holy Scriptures we have in our hands today. In the VPP doctrine, we are dealing with inspired *words* of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Scriptures, and *not* inspired men or methods, versions or translations.

Much as VPP believers hold the KJV in very high esteem, they do not believe in an “inspired KJV.” As such, they do not embrace a “doubly inspired” or “separately inspired” KJV. As a matter of fact, the Dean Burgon Society which believes in VPP and defends the KJV frowns upon any reference to the KJV as “inspired” or “given by inspiration.” The

INSPIRED TEXTUAL CRITICISM?

Dean Burgon Society clearly states its official position on the Bible's "Inspiration" thus,

Whereas, in all of the official documents of the Dean Burgon Society, the terms "God breathed," or "inspired" are never used when referring to the King James Bible, but, on the contrary, there is a clear avoidance of calling the King James Bible "inspired," and

Whereas, in all of the official documents of the Dean Burgon Society, the terms "breathed out," "inspired," or "inspiration" are reserved exclusively for the Words of the original Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek manuscripts or for the exact copies of those Words that God has been [sic] preserved for us today, and

Whereas, in all of the official documents of the Dean Burgon Society, the terms used for the King James Bible (or Authorized Version) are as follows: (1) a "true, faithful, and accurate translation," (2) a translation that "has no equal among all of the other English translations," (3) "the Word of God," (4) "an accurate translation of the true, inerrant, infallible Word of God," (5) the "true Word of God" in a faithful language translation, (6) "the God-honored, most accurate, and best translation," (7) a translation that occupies an "honored position," (8) a translation that has our "confidence," and (9) we "continue to recommend its continued use in Bible believing church pulpits, Pastors' studies, home, Bible School classes, and formal classes in Bible Institutes, colleges and theological seminaries," therefore

Be It Resolved, that all members of the Dean Burgon Society and members of the Executive Committee and Advisory Council particularly follow the teachings and references found in our official documents when referring either to the original language texts of Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek or to the King James Bible, especially regarding the technical distinctions that are made therein with regard to "inspire," "inspiration," and other terms.²

The allegation that VPP means an "inspired KJV" is blatantly false. Why cannot Anti-VPPists deal with the fact that VPP means *a presently infallible and inerrant Scripture in the original languages—the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus*—on which the KJV is based? Is it because they cannot deal with the truth? Or is it because they have not the faith to believe that God has indeed preserved His words infallibly to the jot and tittle (Matt 5:18)?

Ironically, it is not VPP but Non-VPP or Anti-VPP proponents who are calling the KJV "inspired." For instance, Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, which is against VPP and calls it "schismatic," even "heresy,"

says this about the KJV, “We must declare the KJV Bible to be nothing less than God’s powerful inspired Word.”³ Such a strong statement for the KJV could be misconstrued as Ruckmanism, and it would be better if Life Bible-Presbyterian Church sticks to the strict definition of Biblical “inspiration” (*theopneustos*) in Article 4.2.1 of her Constitution as meaning the Holy Scriptures in the “*original languages*” (2 Tim 3:16).

Now, if Life Bible-Presbyterian Church believes the KJV to be “nothing less than God’s powerful inspired Word,” why then is the Far Eastern Bible College and all VPP holders at fault for believing *the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words immediately underlying the KJV* to be nothing less than God’s powerful inspired words, infallible and inerrant? Those who condemn VPP believers for believing in a Perfect Bible in the *Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament behind the KJV* ought to do some self-examination: “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye” (Luke 6:41-42). Let us reason together: How can the KJV be “nothing less than God’s powerful inspired Word” if its *underlying Hebrew and Greek Texts* are imperfect and contain mistakes? How can the KJV be good when its underlying texts or words are no good or not so good? “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Luke 6:43).

VPP is not “Inspired Perfect Textual Criticism”

The phrase, “inspired perfect textual criticism,” is self-contradictory. Does a “Canine Feathered Cat” exist? Only in Aesop, one would think. It goes without saying that an “inspired perfect textual criticism” is a new and strange mythical creature of pure fiction.

As explained above, the word “inspired” is always used of the original language words of Scripture, not any man or method. All Scripture (*pasa graphe*) is God-breathed or inspired by God (*theopneustos*) as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16. Inspired Scripture or words is correct, but there are no inspired men, methods, translations, or textual criticism.

INSPIRED TEXTUAL CRITICISM?

Furthermore, textual criticism is far from being a perfectly objective science. The textual critical game is played with man-made rules. I wonder which textual critic on earth would be so foolhardy to claim infallibility for himself or his rules? A E Housman has judged correctly, “A textual critic engaged upon his business is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planets: he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas.”⁴

It must be put on record that believers of the 100% inspiration and the 100% preservation of the Holy Scriptures are not “estranged sons” of Benjamin Wilkinson (an SDA), as caricatured by Doug Kutilek, just because they share with Wilkinson the same belief here about the Scriptures. Such Kutilek logic and equation, if embraced, would make all monotheists like Jews and Christians “estranged sons” of Muslims! I eat rice, the Malays eat rice, am I therefore a Malay? What bad logic!

Alan McGregor of the Bible League (UK), hardly an SDA, agrees with Wilkinson’s belief and defence of the Special Providential Preservation of the Scriptures (*Providentia Extraordinaria* or VPP) and the complete trustworthiness and faithfulness of the KJV despite Wilkinson’s SDAism.⁵ It defies logic to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Enemies of the KJV and the VPP of Scriptures who castigate anyone and everyone who is Pro-KJV or Pro-VPP as holders of “double inspiration” or “inspired textual criticism” are theologically ignorant, blind, immature or hardened.

It is also alleged that VPP has “wrecked [sic] havoc and caused discord among brethren.” What a malicious allegation! The Bible teaches separation (as commanded by the Lord in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 and 2 Thess 3:6-15). Is the Biblical doctrine of separation therefore schismatic? Only neo-evangelicals and ecumenists would think so. Why are so-called “fundamentalists” or “separatists” singing the same tune?

Has separation caused havoc in the church? If there is havoc, it is caused by Anti-VPPists who persecute Biblical separatists for their defence of the good old Reformation Bible and Text against the modern corrupted texts and cut-up versions of Westcott and Hort. Separation is sometimes inevitable, and always painful, but to malign as schismatic those who had separated from the old church with nothing to start a new church from scratch so that they can believe in the truth and practise their faith in peace is unjust to say the least. The Rev Dr Timothy Tow—

founding father of the Bible-Presbyterian movement in Singapore and Malaysia, and founding pastor of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church—left peaceably the old church in 2003 to found a new church, True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, so that he might preach and teach without any hindrance the 100% perfection of Scripture without any mistake. He wreaked no havoc in Life Bible-Presbyterian Church which he had faithfully pastored for over 50 years. He simply refused to bow to the pressure put on him not to assert that the Bible today is 100% perfect. He simply wanted to remain true to the Dean Burgon Oath he had taken together with the faculty and directors of the Far Eastern Bible College, and to proclaim boldly and unequivocally that the Bible is 100% perfect without any mistake to the last syllable and letter, 100% inspired and 100% preserved in the original languages. As a Biblical fundamentalist and disciple of Dr Carl McIntire, he simply wanted to warn against the errors of Westcott and Hort, and the corruption that is found in the Alexandrian Text and in the modern perversions of the Bible.⁶ The Rev Dr Timothy Tow is ultimately a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he believes without equivocation the Lord's infallible words of promise, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33), and he believes the Lord fulfilled His promise in all the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words underlying the good old Authorised Version or the King James Bible of the Great Protestant Reformation.

For many who believe in the Biblical doctrine of the VPP of Scripture, it has given them great hope and joy. Among brethren who submit themselves to the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures, there is only great comfort and assurance to know that God's Word is presently infallible and inerrant to the last word, and to know with maximum certainty the precise location of God's infallible and inerrant words so that they might know how to live by God's every word (Matt 4:4).

Are non-TR, non-KJV believers or users "lacking in saving faith?" VPP believers are not so presumptuous as to deem whoever is non-TR or non-KJV unsaved. Dr Homer A Kent Jr, my highly esteemed NT professor at Grace Theological Seminary, under whose fine tutelage I excelled in my NT studies, is a godly, gracious, and gentle man. However, I cannot agree with his view that the TR and KJV are inferior, and the VPP of Scripture is non-biblical. Neither can I commend him for his role in the NIV. Notwithstanding my disagreement with him, I have never

asserted that he is not saved or has lost his salvation. God forbid! Whether a person is saved or not is for each individual to ascertain for himself based on the Holy Scriptures—God’s Perfect Yardstick on earth (Ps 12:6-7, 19:7). Let every man examine himself whether he be in the faith (2 Cor 13:5). Let every man be judged by Christ and His Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-4). God alone is the perfect Judge (1 Cor 4:3-5, Heb 12:23). Only God can see the heart (1 Sam 16:7, Ps 139:23-24, John 7:24). Furthermore, once a person is saved, he cannot be unsaved (Rom 8:28-39, Eph 1:13-14). “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9).

Nevertheless, I submit that a denial of VPP would logically lead one to a denial of VPI for if God did not preserve His words infallibly, how can we be sure that He had inspired His words inerrantly? What is the use of VPI without VPP? Anti-VPPists could learn a thing or two from today’s preeminent textual-critical guru—Bart Ehrman—who is thoroughly consistent and brutally honest, and a “happy agnostic” to boot!⁷ Make no mistake about it—Dr Ehrman lives and breathes textual criticism! Having attained textual-critical nirvana, it is no wonder that he is so gnostically high in agnostic bliss. Where is God? “Godisnowhere.” “Now here” or “no where?” God is no where and so is the Bible. How’s that for “inspired textual criticism?”

Notes

¹ For a Biblical defence of the doctrine of the special providential preservation or verbal plenary preservation of the Holy Scriptures, and the present infallibility and inerrancy of God’s Word in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus underlying the KJV, go to <http://www.febc.edu.sg>, <http://www.truthbpc.com>, <http://www.deanburgonsociety.org>, <http://www.biblefortoday.org>, <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org>.

² See D A Waite, “Bible Inspiration and the KJB” (www.deanburgonsociety.org/PDF/Bible_Inspiration.pdf, accessed August 13, 2006). See also D A Waite’s reply to Thomas Cassidy’s slander against Bible-Presbyterian pastors in Singapore, namely, S H Tow, Timothy Tow, Jeffrey Khoo, and Quek Suan Yew, concerning the KJV issue, and Cassidy’s disagreement with the DBS when it voted not to use the term “inspired” with reference to the KJV in 2001 (http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/DBS_Society/waite_reply.htm, accessed August 13, 2006).

³ “A Doctrinal Positional Statement of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church,” <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourchurch/docpos.htm>, accessed August 13, 2006.

⁴ Christopher Kelty, Alfred Housman, and Scott McGill, “The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism by A.E. Housman,” *Connexions*, April 23, 2004, <http://cnx.org/content/ml11803/1.2/>.

⁵ Alan J Macgregor, *Three Modern Versions: A Critical Assessment of the NIV, ESV and NKJV* (Wiltshire: The Bible League, 2004), 12-13.

⁶ Under the leadership of Dr Carl McIntire, the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) in Amsterdam (1998) and Jerusalem (2000) affirmed the Holy Scriptures to be “forever inerrant and infallible,” that “the O.T. has been preserved in the Masoretic text and the N.T. in the Textus Receptus, combined they gave us the complete Word of God. The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts.” (“ICCC 16th World Congress Statements,” *Far Eastern Beacon* [Christmas 2000]: 13). In 1998, the ICCC passed a statement on “Bible Versions:” “BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the International Council of Christian Churches, assembled in the historic English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, observing its 50th Anniversary, August 11-15, 1998, urge all Bible-believing churches worldwide to use only the Authorised or KING JAMES VERSION in their services and in their teaching ministry and warn the followers of Christ against these innumerable ‘new’ bibles which are not translations at all, but revisions conforming to the personal bias and views of those who have originated them and who are profiting by commercial sales of such.” (“ICCC 50th Anniversary Conference Statements,” *Far Eastern Beacon* [November 1998]: 1).

⁷ Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

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		<p>Two new booklets by the FEBC faculty exposing the falsehoods of <i>The Da Vinci Code</i> and <i>The Judas Gospel</i>. Available for free at:</p> <p>FEBC BOOKROOM 9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063 Tel: (65) 6254-9188 Email: febcbkrm@febcb.edu.sg Website: www.febcb.edu.sg</p>
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THE GLORY OF GOD AND EZEKIEL'S WHEELS

Paul Lee Tan

Introduction

It is an honour to participate in this joyful occasion of the graduation service of Far Eastern Bible College. I want to congratulate each of you graduates, as well as your loved ones, parents, and educational and spiritual mentors, for the wonderful achievement we all see today. You have all worked so hard in school, and you are special witnesses of what God can do for anyone by faith. We are all proud of you. However, we do not want to linger in the past. The future lies before you—new horizons, spiritual opportunities, unclaimed territories. As someone has said: “Success must continually be won—it is never fully achieved.”

In the Bible, many people were changed when they saw God’s love and mercy. Others were changed when they saw God’s power. But 2,600 years ago, Ezekiel the prophet was changed when he saw God’s *glory*. The *glory of God* is the main theme of the Bible. In fact, it can explain all in our life. Everything you see, all that ever happened in your life, all human & heavenly events, all can be explained under God’s glory.

And when we know how to glorify God, it can completely change our lives. We read in Ezekiel 1:4, “*And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.*” Ezekiel was trying to express something that was inexpressible. The glory of God was like fire, like bright cloud, like whirlwind. This chapter became the turning point of Ezekiel’s life—he saw God’s glory. It became the central theme of his ministry; he mentioned it 16 times in this book.

Although the glory of God is hard to express in this chapter of Ezekiel, we see some heavenly objects here which shows forth God’s glory. And from them, we can know what is the glory of God.

Let us confine our attention this evening to the heavenly object—*the wheels* (Ezek 1:15-20).

Vision of the Wheels

God is on His throne, surrounded by four archangels, and His throne is supported by the four wheels. What is the meaning of the wheels? Wheels mean “motion, progress, onward movement.” So, the four wheels mean God’s constant, mighty works on earth. Today, people everywhere are on alert due to terrorist threats, and the world is uncertain and stressful about the future. But remember: God is still in control. God’s works in heaven and on earth go on. He knows everything, and He protects His people.

Let us study further the wheels in this chapter, and be challenged and blessed. In Ezekiel 1:15-20, there are five descriptions of the wheels:

- (1) The wheels extend down to the earth.
- (2) The wheels look complicated; they are double-wheeled.
- (3) The wheels are full of eyes.
- (4) Angels go with the wheels.
- (5) The Holy Spirit is in the wheels.

The Wheels Extend to the Earth

“Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces” (Ezek 1:15).

Wheels connect God’s throne above with the ground below. This means that God is actively connected to earth. Some philosophers say: “God is dead; after creation, God let the earth go its own way.” But here, we see the wheels are connected from heaven down to the earth. God is not distant from us; God actively cares for us. God knows and hears us. As a crucial part of His calling to the ministry, God wanted Ezekiel to know that God is infinitely approachable.

About 50 years ago, when I was in Junior High, God called me into the ministry. I had struggled all year, that year, and finally yielded my life to Him. But at that time, I had a problem. I had failing grades in most of my studies. My report card looked like a Christmas tree. My mind was not opened. My classmates would look at me and smile a little when they heard that I wanted to be a pastor someday. One night, I prayed to God, saying, “Dear God, in the Old Testament is written of a young man to

whom you appeared and said: 'Ask me for anything, and I will give it to you.' And that man asked for 'Wisdom' and you gave him wisdom, as well as many other blessings." That was young Solomon. I continued and prayed, "Dear God, please ask me the same question—and I will ask for wisdom."

From that time on, I tried very hard in school; oftentimes studying through the night. And God proved faithful. It is all for God's own glory; we are utterly unworthy. Dear graduates, with man it is impossible, but not with God. Pray and make commitments with the Lord. Go into partnership with God. With God, all things are possible.

God cares—His wheels reach to the ground.

The Wheels Have a Complicated Design—a Double Wheel

"The appearance of the wheels and their work was like ... a wheel in the middle of a wheel" (Ezek 1:16).

For us who are not engineers and scientists, the double-wheel looks complicated. And yet it is very functional and unified. The double-wheel enables it to go forward in all 4 directions, without need to turn around or fall down. It works with order and purpose

Here we see two things about God at work: (1) God's works may oftentimes look complicated and incomprehensible; and (2) God's work always goes forward, it has no need to go back or turn around. Remember the story of Job? One day he was the richest man in the east, with children all around him, the next day, he had nothing. Job did not know that God was allowing him to be tested and tried; but God always put a hedge of protection around him; Satan could never take away his life. Finally, he earned everything back double.

Another example is the life Jesus Christ. Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us, dying on the Cross. Within a single day, Christ suffered through six unjust and cruel trials! Then He was nailed to the Cross, with unspeakable physical pain. All throughout the history of Israel, God had condemned the injustice of Jewish rulers, and God had protected the widows, the orphans, and the oppressed. But when His own Son was afflicted and died, God *was silent!* It was "for them" that Christ died. God ordained it to save the world.

Yes, God's wheels often look complicated and unexplainable. But it is always with a purpose and design—which is for God's glory.

The Wheels are Full of Eyes

Ezekiel 1:18 says, “... *their rings were full of eyes round about them four.*”

“Eyes” means wisdom and intelligence. If you look at a baby’s eyes, you can often tell if the baby is very smart or not. God’s wheels are full of eyes. That means God is all knowing and ever-present at all times. God is active at all times in every place. In the Bible, we see God is so great, that He is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent.

When we look into the microscope, we see billions of very small objects. When we look into the telescope, we see billions of very large objects. All of them in order and in motion, following definite natural laws. A heathen philosopher once asked a Christian, “Where is God?” The Christian answered, “Let me first ask you. Where is He not?” Let me quote from a few famous persons on this subject: (1) Said George Gallup, world-famed statistician, “I could prove God statistically! Take the human body alone. The chance that all the functions of the individual would just happen is a statistical monstrosity!”(2) Thomas Edison said: “No one can study chemistry and see the wonderful way in which certain elements combine with the nicety of the most delicate machine ever invented, and not come to the conclusion that there is a Big Engineer who is running this universe.”(3) Astronaut Eugene A Cernan: “I am convinced of God by the order out in space.”

Yes, the universe is filled with God and His glory—it is full of “eyes.”

The Wheels are Accompanied by Angels

“And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up” (Ezek 1:19).

Here we see God’s angels are always working in God’s works. The wheels and the angels always go together, following each other up and down the universe. Even today, as we worship here, there are thousands of God’s angels worshipping with us. Wherever and whenever we serve God in the Name of Christ, we can be sure that angels are going to be with us. Some people do not believe in angels. They say: “I do not believe anything I cannot see.” But this world contains many unseen things which we accept by faith. Gravity, electricity, atoms, etc, are

THE GLORY OF GOD AND EZEKIEL'S WHEELS

invisible naturally, but they do exist. This visible world has just three dimensions. But there is a fourth dimensional world—the world of angels.

I love the verse in Genesis 32:1-2, *“And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.”* At that time, young Jacob was traveling away from home. He was burdened with fear, guilt, and the unknown. That night, he discovered the angels of God journeying with him. And so, he called that place “Mahanaim” (or “two camps”). One camp is his own camp; the other is the camp of angels surrounding him. And this is what happens to every Christian in his earthly pilgrimage—seemingly lonely, but not alone. Remember the “Arithmetic of the Christian Life.” Always be sure to “plus one” (+1). You may feel lonely, but you are not alone.

In your prayers, ask God to send angels to help you. Do not pray directly to angels! Angels only listen to God and do God’s work—they are with the wheels. But, when we pray to God, God will send His angels to help us in our needs.

The Wheels are Filled with God’s Spirit

“Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; ... for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels” (Ezek 1:20).

The “Spirit” here means the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in the wheels. Everything in God’s universe is working according to the Holy Spirit’s power. Therefore, when we do God’s work at home, in the office, in church, we must constantly submit to the Holy Spirit, and trust Him to work through us.

As future pastors and teachers, people will expect you to teach them, to warn them of apostasy, to guard and guide them into future. The old English word for pastor is “parson” who lived in the “parsonage.” The meaning of this is that the pastor is the “person,” the one which the community look up to. As you go forth into the ministry, you will be very busy with 101 details of a large work. You will be minding other people’s business (so to speak). But let us not fall into the pitfall of “majoring on the minor.” Administration, schedules, even community service may be important, but your mission is to “Preach the Word.” That is your real calling—to teach the Bible. And our beloved founder and principal, Rev

Dr Timothy Tow, our dedicated staff, as well as the FEBC Board members, are your fine examples in God's service.

From among our graduates, soon, many churches and Bible classes will be started, many dedicated leaders trained and disciplined, new fellowship groups, Christian organisations, parachurch institutions will spring up. As a Biblically-trained spiritual leader, you can confidently motivate God's people to do God's work. The reason many people are discouraged in God's service and without power and strength is not because God's service is too hard. Perhaps it is because they are not trusting the Holy Spirit to lead them, to work through them, and to empower them. John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men, who fear nothing but sin, and want nothing but God, and together we will shake the world."

The Christian life is spiritual warfare, Christian work is spiritual warfare. We need to read the Bible, pray to God, and ask the Holy Spirit to help us as we do God's work. As we leave the portals of this illustrious school, and go into the worldwide mission field, in response to Christ's Great Commission, remember the four wheels in Ezekiel chapter one:

- (1) The wheels extend down to the earth: God cares for us.
- (2) The wheels may look complicated: but God's work is always going forward.
- (3) The wheels are full of eyes: God is all-knowing and all-present.
- (4) The angels go with the wheels: Pray to God to send angels to help you.
- (5) The Holy Spirit is in the wheels: Depend on the Holy Spirit's power to do God's work.

May God bless you!

Dr Paul Lee Tan (ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary; ThD, Grace Theological Seminary) is the Senior Pastor of Grace Chinese Church of Dallas (USA), and Grace Christian Church (Philippines). He is the author of The Interpretation of Prophecy, A Pictorial Guide to Bible Prophecy, and Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations. The above message was delivered at FEBC's 31st Graduation Service, May 7, 2006.

College News

The **Daily Vacation Bible College** (DVBC) course—“The Interpretation of Prophecy”—was taught last year, May 1-6, 2006, by **Dr Paul Lee Tan**, Senior Pastor of Grace Chinese Church of Dallas, and Grace Christian Church in the Philippines, and author of the award-winning book *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, and editor of the highly acclaimed *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*.

The **31st Graduation Service** was held at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church on the Lord’s Day, May 7, 2006. A total of 32 graduated with their respective awards: **Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK)**: Arporthip Chaita, Cheong Lian Neo, Andy Ho Yew Peng, Sarah Ng Li Jun, Ng Yew Chong, Timbagen Tarigan, Stephen Yap Thiam Teng, Peter Yeo Choon Seng, Yong Choon Leong; **Certificate of Biblical Studies (CertBS)**: Andrew Loh Kah Fai, Maung Cin Lam Mung, Poh Ee Huat, Sun Dawei; **Diploma in Theology (DipTh)**: Chhim Vanarith, Jung Eun Hee, John Ovung, Ram Kumar Shrestha, Yap Kim Chuan; **Bachelor of Religious Education (BRE)**: Kim Dae Youl, Heo Kyung Jin, Cho Yong Pyo; **Bachelor of Theology (BTh)**: Dominino Tillor Dela Cruz Jr, Febian Christopher Natanel Siregar; **Master of Religious Education (MRE)**: Janice Chen Ching Fun, Efendi Ginting, Warunee Harichaikul; **Master of Divinity (MDiv)**: Dennis Capongcol Kabingue, Ayanthung Murry, Elibariki Peter Nanyaro, Lal Lian Uk, Nelson Noel Ng’uono Were.

FEBC’s annual retreat was held from May 8-10, 2006, at the Resort Lautan Biru Mersing. Faculty and students had a blessed time of worship and fellowship. Dr Paul Lee Tan, our visiting professor, lectured on the subject of “Angels and Demons” as part of the residential course requirements for in-ministry students.

FEBC was the first Bible College in Singapore to be awarded accreditation by **CaseTrust for Education**, and with effect from January 25, 2006 is exempted from CaseTrust for Education.

The **3rd Bachelor of Ministry Graduation Service** in convocation at the Bible College of East Africa, Nairobi, was held on May 27, 2006. A total of 12 were conferred the BMin degree awarded by the Far Eastern Bible College: **Alfred Adjiambo Nyamiwa** (Pastor, Free Presbyterian Fellowship in Kenya), **Alfred Otieno Odoyo** (Evangelist, St Meschack’s Fellowship), **Macharia Joseph Mwangi** (Assoc Pastor, Calvary Baptist

Church, Nyeri), **Nelson A Kibira Absalom** (Blessed Church Bugoma), **Tesfaye Mells** (Teacher, Ethiopian Church), **Washington Obaje** (Preacher, St Meshack's Fellowship, Kisumu), **Charles Maina Macharia** (Glorious Worship Church, Karatina), **Judah Kundael Pallangyo** (Pastor, Africa Mission Evangelism Church, Tanzania), **Nicholas Oluoch Adika** (Teacher, Ogles Bible School, Kisumu), **Simon Kituva Kingondu** (Teacher, Mitaboni Divinity School) **Meshack Kwoma Chitiavi** (Pastor, Kericho Blessed Church), **Charles Musandu Wayayi** (Bible Baptist Church, Nyahururu). Dr Prabhudas Koshy was the graduation speaker. He also taught a two-week course on the Book of Proverbs, from May 15-26, 2006.

FEBC reopened with a day of prayer and registration on July 17, 2006. Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew spoke from John 15:18-21 on the world's hatred for Christ and His people, and encouraged the faculty and students to be prepared to face persecution for remaining faithful to the Lord and His Word. The new semester saw the matriculation of **21 new students from 13 countries: Australia:** Damien Choong; **Cambodia:** Hor Ponlok, John Saray, Phan Narit; **China:** Song Wei Liang; **Ghana:** Gideon Wuaku; **India:** Kam Muan Mung; **Indonesia:** Bernard Hutabarat, Fransiska Christin, Samson Hutagalung; **Kenya:** Lyn Lawino Were, Jonah Kipkorir; **Korea:** Han Joung Hee; **Myanmar:** Benjamin; **Nepal:** Puspa Shakya; **Singapore:** Samuel Kwong, Ng Boon Choo; **Tanzania:** Apasia Roman Moshi, Florent Paul Mtobwa, Judah Kundael Pallangyo; **Vietnam:** Le Thanh Tam. Total enrolment currently stands at **117 day-time students** (full and part-time) from **18 countries**. A combined total of **187 students** registered for the **“Basic Theology for Everyone” night courses**—“Life of Christ” and “Theology of Prayer”—taught by Dr Jeffrey Khoo and Dr Das Koshy respectively.

FEBC was represented at the **East Africa Christian Alliance** Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, August 28-September 1, 2006. Dr Jeffrey Khoo, FEBC's academic dean, spoke on “Discerning the Spirits by Asking the Right Questions.” Dr Khoo also preached at the inauguration service of the **Bible College of East Africa, Arusha, Tanzania**, and taught its first class on the “Theology of Salvation,” September 2-6, 2006.

The **FEBC Gospel Rally** was held on September 16, 2006 at the RELC Auditorium. Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew spoke on “Want to Trade Your Soul?”

FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE
31st Graduation Exercises
May 7, 2006





TRUE LIFE BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CAMP 2006

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1)