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THE BURNING BUSH

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PREMARITAL COUNSEL FROM THE BIBLE

Jeffrey Khoo

Biblical Premarital Counsel

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen 2:24).

In an age of rampant promiscuity and immorality, young people ought to “take heed to themselves, lest in the slippery period of their age, the lust of the flesh should impel them to many crimes. For, at this age, greater licence everywhere prevails, so that no moderation restrains youths from shameful conduct.” (John Calvin). There is much ignorance, confusion, and rebellion against God’s good institution of marriage today. As such it will be good for all wedding couples and all who intend to marry to get ready for the big day by paying attention to the doctrine of marriage as taught in the Bible.

Divine Institution of Marriage

There is a real need today to return to God’s original intention and purpose for marriage and restore the sanctity of marriage. This is because sin has brought a great deal of distortion and destruction to male-female relationships and the marriage institution. There is rampant lasciviousness and promiscuity today. Pornography is just a click away. Premarital intercourse, cohabitation, abortions, divorces, sexual crimes etc. are on the rise.

The Bible commands, *“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart”* (2 Tim 2:22). Young people have to beware of sexual lusts and all forms of sinful desires. Those already married should heed this warning as well, *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”* (Heb 13:4). So first things first: What is marriage?

A Covenant Relationship

Marriage is a sacred institution created by God (Gen 1:26–28). God created the man and the woman together. Man was made from the dust of the earth and the woman from man’s rib (Gen 2:21). *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. ... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man”* (Gen 2:7, 21–22). Note that it was God who brought the woman to the man. It was something good.

God is Matchmaker and Marriage Counsellor. As such, He must always be in the picture in a marriage relationship. Marriage is thus not a bilateral but a trilateral relationship. Three is not a crowd when God is the third. *“Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken”* (Eccl 4:11–12). The problem today is that God is taken out of the picture. A breakdown in marriage is usually due to a breakdown in one’s personal walk with God.

Calvin said that marriage “is a covenant consecrated by God.” Malachi 2:14 speaks of marriage as a covenant: *“Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.”* What then is a marriage covenant? A marriage covenant is a solemn agreement before God between a man and woman to be each other’s loyal and loving companions for life. A covenant has rules. These rules are set by God. If we want a blissful marriage and be blessed in our marriage we must play by God’s rules. A marriage breaks down when we break the covenant by violating His rules.

God’s rules are found in His Word. All courting couples as well as married couples should be studying the Bible constantly and together. Here is wisdom: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Ps 119:9–11). *“Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy*

children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever” (Deut 4:40).

For Companionship

In Genesis 2:18–25, we find God creating marriage. In the Garden of Eden, God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”* (Gen 2:18). So He made for Adam a helper—a companion—a wife. He beautifully designed and carefully made a woman, and presented her to him (Gen 2:22). A perfect fit!

Woman was created to be man’s helpmeet, i.e., a helper suitable for him but not inferior to him. Both men and women are created equally valuable by God. Although they are equal as human beings, they each have their respective and distinctive roles. The man has his God-given role as leader and head of the household; the woman was made to help the man to fulfil this role. Ephesians 5:22–33 says, *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church ... Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”* Such a spiritual and harmonious partnership will result in great productivity. Indeed, one will chase a thousand, and two will put ten thousand to flight (Deut 32:30).

However, when the God-given pattern for family unity and harmony is turned upside down—when the woman wears the pants and the man dons the skirt—confusion and chaos in the family arise. When male and female roles are distorted or reversed, you will find broken marriages, broken families, and broken societies. Marriage is not a necessary evil, but a necessary good within God’s ordained plan and purpose. Society is only as strong as the marriage/family bond. But pornography, adultery, polygamy, homosexuality etc. will destroy marriage and family and bring about society’s downfall.

For Procreation

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:27–28).

Newly-weds, when they are married, leave their parents to set up a new family unit. *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen 2:24).* This is not an abandonment of parents, but rather the establishment of a new family which comprises father, mother and children. Persons who marry should be interested in children, and should plan to have children. *“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Ps 127:3).*

A Lifelong Commitment

“But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:6–9). The word “cleave” (Gen 2:24, Mark 10:7) in the Hebrew original is a very strong word for joining or binding. It has the idea of soldering two metal pieces together to form one piece. It is a permanent fixture.

This tells us that marriage is supposed to be a lifelong union and lifetime commitment. Hence the vow, “till death us do part”. Divorce should never be an option for the Christian; it should never be in the Christian’s vocabulary. Married life may not be easy, and staying married may be difficult, but God says He is there to help. Jesus tells us, *“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Matt 19:26).* When the husband and his wife grow more and more like Christ as they live together, their marriage would become sweeter and sweeter. God makes it possible. It is no wonder that the great German reformer Martin Luther said, “The life of a married couple, if they are in the faith, deserves to be rated higher than those who are famous for miracles.” Indeed, a blessed and successful marriage is better than miracles.

A Heterosexual Monogamy

Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created man “male and female”. Take note that it is between a man and a woman, and take note of the singular—*one* man and *one* woman. Only one Eve was made for Adam, not many. Thus, a marriage should be monogamous. Also, it should only be between a male and a female. Homosexual relationships are an abomination to God: “*Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination*” (Lev 18:22, see also Gen 19:1–24; Rom 1:23–24).

Yes to Courtship

Traditionally, parents were deeply involved in finding a spouse for their children. Abraham for example initiated the search for Isaac’s wife and did so according to God’s will and covenant that he would have many children (Gen 15:4–5).

There is wisdom in parental involvement. Calvin said, “Wherefore the wantonness of youths is to be restrained, that they may not rashly contract nuptials without consulting their fathers.” In the past, children were happy to have their parents involved. Now, this is not about prearranged or forced marriages, but marriages where parental counsel is sought and children’s consent obtained. There is this mutual trust between parents and children. This good relationship and interaction is premised upon God’s command for children to honour their parents and to heed their wisdom. Proverbs 1:8–9 says, “*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.*” When parents are loving and careful guardians of their daughters, suitors will come with honourable intentions.

Know that matchmaking and courtship was instituted at the beginning when God made for Adam a wife and then brought her to him. Even now, God is involved in bringing a man and a woman together in holy matrimony. God is the perfect Matchmaker for sure and one can never go wrong when the believer seeks God’s will and wisdom in finding a spouse.

Now, biblical courtship should not be confused with pagan matchmaking where marriage is forced upon children based on the superstitious or unilateral decisions of parents. Parents should be involved in their children’s marriage but they should not force their

children into marriage. On forced marriages, Calvin rightly said, “Let no father compel his children to such a marriage as seems good to him except with their good will and consent.” Parents must know that although it is their office “to settle their daughters in life, they are not permitted to exercise tyrannical power and assign them to whatever husbands they think fit without consulting them.” Children likewise should be mindful of their parents and not make independent decisions without consulting them. There should be mutual regard.

It ought to be emphasised that only believers should be sought for a spouse. The very first criterion is that the other party must be truly born again, just as Abraham declared that Isaac’s wife must not be a Canaanite but a believer of the same faith (Gen 24:3–4). Calvin warned against starting a close relationship with an unbeliever, “but if we approach nearer, so that a greater intimacy should arise, we open the door as it were to Satan... Those, therefore, who mix with idolaters, knowingly and wilfully devote themselves to idols.”

Finally, in determining who is to be one’s spouse, according to God’s specific will, the Co-operative Will of God comes into play. In the case of Isaac and Rebekah, the servant’s prayer for a sign (Gen 24:12–14) was answered immediately (Gen 24:15). God is very pleased to co-operate with His children when they pray and He can answer them immediately especially when they are in crucial situations and need His help.

No to Dating

Dating is a 20th century invention and phenomenon. It comes from the modern age of rebellion against authority. Young people want to be free from parental supervision, free to sow their wild oats. They want to experiment with sex and to experience sex with as many partners as they can in their quest for a suitable mate. They think that good sex equals good spouse. It is utterly selfish and carnal, dangerous and destructive.

God’s Word, Not World’s Way

It is important for men and women to know how to conduct themselves in courtship so as to maintain a healthy relationship. 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4 says, *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”*

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In a courtship, one should conduct himself or herself in a chaste manner. Motives in a courtship must be pure and kept pure. The motive is not to exploit each other's body but to edify each other's life. A healthy courtship is one that causes the couple to grow in faith, not in lust. It is a time when two believers seek God's will and direction for their lives. Proverbs 3:5–8 says, *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.”*

Abstain from Fornication

Fornication comes from the Greek word *porne*. That is where we get the word “pornography”. Fornication refers to all kinds of immoral sexual behaviour, and pornography stirs up all kinds of perverse sexual desires. Since we are living in a pornographic age, it is vital we heed the commands of 2 Timothy 2:20–22 which says, *“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”*

Courting couples should keep their bodies pure and chaste. They should not play husband and wife before they are properly married and should avoid all forms of sexual immorality. Note the command to *“flee ... youthful lusts”*. The command to “flee” does not mean a one-time fleeing but a continual fleeing from sin and temptation. It is like the metal and the magnet. The further the magnet is away from the metal, the lesser its power to attract it. We need to stay clear and keep far away from such immorality so that we might be clean vessels fit for God's use. Courting couples should avoid any physical contact that stirs lustful thoughts and feelings. They should pursue after godliness, which is *“righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”*

Obtain Sanctification

Sanctification comes from the Greek word *hagiazō* which means “to make holy”. It is the process by which a believer becomes more and

more like Christ. It is the constant pursuit of personal holiness and moral perfection. Courting couples should aim towards spiritual maturity and Christlikeness, and that means their courtship should be conducted in a godly and honourable way that glorifies God.

1 Thessalonians 4:4 says that the man “*should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.*” The “vessel” here refers to the woman (cf. 1 Pet 3:7). The man must have honourable intentions when courting a lady. He should not do so in such a way as to defile, pollute or contaminate her. The man must treat a woman gently and gentlemanly. There should be godly behaviour and proper conduct in a courtship. The man ought to excise all lustful desires and exercise great care in preserving chastity. The woman on the other hand should present herself not as a sex object to be exploited, but a chaste treasure to be protected. Be careful how you dress.

Holy Word, Not Hollywood

Traditional courtship which is parent-centred is today replaced by the try-your-luck, score-your-points “dating game”. “Dating” is all about the world and not the Word. 1 John 2:15–17 warns, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*”

The way of the world is all about “*the lust of concupiscence* [i.e., inordinate sexual desires], *even as the Gentiles which know not God*” (1 Thess 4:5). It is about polluting and not protecting the fairer sex. 1 Thessalonians 4:6 warns, “*That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.*” To defraud is to steal, to take away something that belongs to another. In this case, it defrauds a father of giving away a virgin daughter, and her future husband is defrauded of a virgin bride. The godly ideal and divine standard is for the bride to be presented as a chaste virgin (cf. 2 Cor 11:2). Contrary to God’s way, the way of the world as presented by Hollywood is both exploitative and corruptive. It is the way of the thief and robber.

Believers should marry believers and not unbelievers. 2 Corinthians 6:14 commands, “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:*

for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” There is nothing spiritually in common between a Christian and an unbeliever. In Deuteronomy 7:4, God forbade the Israelites from marrying the Canaanites, *“For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.”* The unequal yoke will result in a backsliding, or even a falling away from the faith.

Danger of Unequal Yoke

The tragedy of Solomon’s marriages is a case in point: *“But king Solomon loved many strange women, ... And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.... And the LORD was angry with Solomon”* (1 Kgs 11:1–9). God split his kingdom because of his sin.

Another bad example was Ahab who married a very good looking but a most wicked woman in Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31): *“And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.”* At the end, it was said of Ahab, *“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up”* (1 Kgs 21:25). God was blasphemed and good people died because of his unequal yoke. It is dangerous to be unequally yoked.

Beware the Beauty and the Beast

The sin of the unequal yoke is both great and grave. It destroys faith and invites the judgement of God. So, when you choose a spouse, make sure he or she is a believer. 1 Corinthians 7:39 speaks of marriage *“only in the Lord”* (i.e., only a believer). It is also prudent to marry a godly believer and not one who is carnal and worldly. Be wise in your choice.

In choosing a wife, physical beauty should not be the main criterion. Proverbs 31:30 says, *“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”* Calvin said, *“marriage is a thing too sacred to allow that men should be induced to it by the lust of the eyes. ... [O]ur appetite becomes brutal, when we are so ravished with the charms of beauty that those things which are*

chief are not taken into account.” Thus the woman we look for should be one who possesses the qualities of a *“chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair; and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price”* (1 Pet 3:2–4).

Beware the Jezebel—she is a beauty but also a beast. A potent and deadly combination!

Father’s Privilege

“But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better” (1 Cor 7:36–38).

1 Corinthians 7:36–38 concerns the father and his daughter. The father has the privilege and responsibility to give his daughter away in marriage. The Apostle Paul here says it is good for a father to give his daughter away in marriage, but it is better if he does not if there is no necessity to and if the daughter is pleased to remain single. According to Paul, marriage is good, but singlehood is better. Since time is short and the Lord will come back soon, it is better to devote oneself single-mindedly to the service of the Lord, *“So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.”* (1 Cor 7:38).

Engagement First

If a father chooses to give his daughter away, then there should be a period of engagement. The Bible speaks of “betrothal” where a couple makes a promise to marry before the actual wedding (Deut 20:7). Here, parents are involved and God’s will is sought. Engagement comes about upon proposal, when both sets of parents and children agree before wedding plans begin. There must be consensus. The engagement is not marriage and the man and the woman are not yet husband and wife. They should not be living together nor have any sexual relations with

each other. Cohabitation in the days of the Reformation was a criminal offence—the penalty was imprisonment for three days.

Wedding Next

The wedding should follow soon after the engagement. Wedding invitations should be sent in the name of both sets of parents. The parents, not the wedding couple, are the ones who invite. The wedding should reflect godliness and not worldliness. The service is to be a sacred and solemn ceremony since lifelong vows will be made before God and man. This is not the time for jocularly or frivolity. The bride's wedding gown should reflect chastity and modesty and be white in colour.

A Christian Home

Now that you are husband and wife, you are going to embark on a new journey with new experiences and challenges. You no longer walk alone or do things alone—you now have each other to think of, to consider, and like it or not, you are stuck with each other (super-stuck) for life, “till death us do part”. As Genesis 2:24 says, “*Therefore shall a man ... cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*” This cleaving speaks of an inseparable union that must last a lifetime.

How to have a happy, healthy, harmonious married life? God tells us how in Genesis 2:18 when He said, “*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*” It is vital to understand what the role of man is in the family and why God made the woman for the man. Many marriages break down because people reject their God-given roles as husband and wife. Take note of these three principles:

Husband the Leader, Wife the Helper

The husband is the leader and the wife is the helper. The best partner and helper the man can have is the woman. The woman is not man-made but God-made. Our God is perfect Maker and Matchmaker. “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above*” (Jas 1:17). Proverbs 18:22 says, “*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.*” As such the husband should regard his wife as someone very important and very precious. She is going to help him be the spiritual leader God meant him to be.

God has conferred authority upon the man to lead. As Christ has authority over the Church, the man has authority over his wife.

1 Corinthians 11:3–10 says, “*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man ... For this cause ought the woman to have power [i.e., authority] on her head.*” 1 Timothy 2:12–13 says, “*But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve.*” When the Bible forbids a woman to teach, that does not mean she does not or cannot teach in any and every situation. We know that the Bible commands the older women to teach the younger women, and mothers are required to teach their children (Tit 2:3–5). The teaching prohibition here has to do with *authoritative* teaching that comes from a divinely ordained ministry given to the man by God whether it be at home or in the church (cf. 1 Tim 2:7).

Husband the Provider, Wife the Homemaker

The husband is the provider and the wife the homemaker. If the man is the leader, then he must also be the provider. The head of the house must work hard to provide for his family. This is taught in 1 Timothy 5:8, “*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*”

The duty of the woman as a wife and mother is to be the homemaker. This is taught in 1 Timothy 5:14, “*I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.*” Titus 2:5 calls on the young women “*To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.*”

When the children come, parents should do their best to teach their children. Proverbs 22:6 says, “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” The father teaches, but the mother teaches even more since she is there in the house fulltime, to “guide the house” and is the “keeper at home.” Do not despise this good work of being a full-time mother and teacher at home. Proverbs 31:27–28 promises a blessing for full-time homemakers, “*She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*”

Husband the Lover, Wife the Follower

Husband is the lover and wife the follower. Husbands are commanded to love their wives. Ephesians 5:25 says, “*Husbands, love*

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your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Verse 28 says, “*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.*” Adam said, “*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh*” (Gen 2:23). It is to the man’s benefit if he takes good care of his wife. The love the man must have for his wife must be total, 100%. That was how Christ loved His Church—He gave His life for her. Likewise the husband must love his wife that much—he must be willing to lay down his life for her. When a man loves his wife this way, he will keep himself from committing adultery and will not think of divorce.

Wives are commanded to submit to their husbands. Ephesians 5:22 says, “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*” The submission entails obedience. Consider what 1 Peter 3:5–6 says, “*For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.*”

The wife’s attitude towards her husband must be one of deep respect. Respect him and the decisions he will make. This does not mean the wife cannot express her thoughts and feelings, but she should let him have the final say. If a decision is not contrary to Scripture or ethics, submit to him, and let him take the lead. He is ultimately responsible and accountable to Christ. Christ is his Head and Christ will lead and guide him. She follows him because he follows Christ. This is the biblical pattern that makes for a happy marriage.

“Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD” (Ps 128:1–4).

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TOWARDS A HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE DOCTRINE OF BIBLICAL PRESERVATION (PART FOUR)

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In the previous three parts, this writer has attempted to show (1) how the 17th century post-Reformation saints fought to defend the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*, which placed the authority of the Holy Scriptures over the traditions of the Church. The doctrine of Biblical preservation played a significant role in safeguarding this principle, and (2) how today, post-Warfield, very few in evangelical Christianity care to acknowledge this aspect of the doctrine of Scripture, namely the special, providential preservation of the apographs as *the* historical position of Protestant Reformed orthodoxy in their Systematic Theologies. In contrast, the vast majority of Protestant theologies choose to emphasise the doctrine of Biblical inspiration without having a doctrine of Biblical preservation – or at best, a nebulous and false notion of Biblical preservation of the Holy Scriptures. Hence, the present discussion will look at some false notions of the doctrine of providential preservation and examine how some fundamentalists' recent views of Bible preservation have significantly reinterpreted this doctrine from the one which embattled Reformation and post-Reformation saints clung on to.

Misinterpreting the Historical Doctrinal of Biblical Preservation

The question is asked: What could have happened to cause such a change in position in the last 150 years from that of historic Christianity of the 16th and 17th centuries? According to Douglas Taylor, apart from the Reformation position, there are two major ways of reinterpreting Providential Preservation.

The first way is to assert that it is not the words themselves but actually the doctrines that have been providentially preserved: doctrines, not words, are the object of God's singular care and special providence.

Those who argue for this view usually also maintain that it does not matter which words are used, so long as the Divine Author's intended meaning is conveyed.

During the 17th century, such a view was favoured by those who felt that if vernacular translations could be used effectively to teach doctrines, what did it matter if the Scripture in the original used different words, so long as the doctrine was unchanged in the translations. In support of their view, some even cited the NT use of the Septuagint. It was noted earlier how Puritan scholars like John Owen refuted this view using the doctrine of the Divine preservation of Scriptures. Modern proponents of this view also seem to think that it does not matter which manuscripts are consulted, as long as the fundamental doctrines of Scripture remain intact. Regarding this apparent paying of lip-service, Harvard textual scholar E F Hills elucidated:

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.¹

This leads us to the second and more serious reinterpretation of the doctrine of providential preservation, namely, eclecticism. Unlike the sacred criticism practised by Erasmus and others in and prior to the 16th century (which is considered a "pre-critical" era), the eclecticism practised today by the majority of modern textual critics rather finds its roots in 18th century rationalism; despite their claims to scholarship and reason, human judgment is almost always held up as the final determining factor; pure, unbiased eclecticism is seldom ever practised by textual critics, not even by those who use computer software to aid them.

Concerning eclecticism, liberal scholars appear the most brutally honest about their "art". Renowned textual critic Eldon Jay Epp seemed to express overall skepticism that modern textual criticism will ever accomplish the feat of giving us the inerrant, perfect autographs as a final product because of "the lack of 'objective' criteria for determining the originality of readings"² More than 35 years after Epp's 1976 essay, veteran textual critics Klaus Wachtel and Michael Holmes themselves candidly admit that

there is no possibility of proving that the reading that brings the most weight onto the scales of textual criticism really renders the original wording of the author. Can this ever change? The original manuscripts as they left the authors' desks are lost. Even if we had them, we would still not be able to check the extent to which the authors themselves may have introduced variants into the transmission. We have to face the categorical gap between authorial and initial text again. We also need to be aware that textual criticism cannot measure and weigh its evidence like physical objects but has to understand and interpret it: it is an art, not a science, to paraphrase Metzger's well-known dictum. We have to base our conclusions on probabilities rather than on deductive logic (à la Lachmann). Hence, Epp insistently reminds us of the fact that text-critical decisions are part of the hermeneutical process and that "the exegete becomes the final arbiter."³

As earlier contended, the doctrine of special, providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures in the autographs as well as the apographs neither embraces a vague, general notion of preservation of the Holy Scriptures (just any other piece of literary work), nor does it advocate the eclectic approach adopted by modern textual critics in attempting to recover or restore the pure autographic text. In a curious way, both of these notions begin with the rather deistic assumption that God's inspired word was perfect initially, but that this perfection could not be maintained through the intervening centuries. The former group, however, simply make-do with all the uncertainty through a kind of mystical notion (eg, those of neorthodoxy, that one can hear God's voice nevertheless through what they, Barth and Brunner, have likened to defective vinyl records; or through the Roman Catholic Church which believe the infallible authority of the church is then additionally required to establish the *true* reading and interpretation of Scripture); the latter group seem to think that the written Word, which, in theory, was once inspired and pristine, is now akin to a corrupted computer hard-drive from which, despite all the supposed technological advances in the field, it is only possible to retrieve a high-percentage of the original data, down to a very small, irreducible margin of error. They maintain that the rest of the original data has been irretrievably lost, and no one can ever be sure where and which words those are. Are God's words lost and uncertain? The critics say, "Yes! Deal with it." What these critics really mean is that God *never* intended for an errorless record of all His words to reach our present generation, or any generation for that matter, except perhaps to some in the first century NT church – but even *that* is debatable, as some are wont to argue.

Hence, a rejection of the former misconception of preservation, (ie, a notion of essential or general preservation elevating the preservation of doctrines *over* the preservation of words, and holding that universals *rather than* particulars have been transmitted, so that one should remain either content with uncertainty or else wring one's hands in despair by turning to agnosticism) by insisting on the absolutism of 100% perfect, special providential preservation kicks away the crutch of *tradition* on the issue of authority, especially in places of uncertainty. Moreover, a rejection of the latter misconception of preservation (ie, eclecticism based on modern textual-critical methodology), through a fideistic belief in a Divinely-superintended transmission and propagation process (something perhaps bordering on the miraculous) which also has made it possible for the true church to retain God's exact original inspired words, becomes a veritable stumbling-block in the anti-supernaturalistic minds of textual critics, and consequently, a threat to the authority of *modern* scholarship. Either way, by the simple, fideistic insistence of an absolute standard (both verbally and plenarily) of the perfectly-preserved text underlying the KJV of 1611, one does unequivocally choose to denounce the powers that be: *both* of "Church" tradition *and* of modern scholarship.

Interestingly, one finds a strikingly similar line of reasoning presented in the post-Reformation era in Enlightenment writings of 17th century Protestant scholar and polemicist, Francis Spanheim. An ardent admirer of the Oratorian priest Richard Simon (also hailed "father of the higher criticism"), Spanheim wrote in 1682:

The great alterations which have happened ... to the Copies of the Bible since the first Originals have been lost, utterly destroy the Protestants' ... principle, who consult only these same Copies of the Bible as we at present have them. If the truth of religion remained not in the [tradition of the Roman Catholic] Church it would be unsafe to search for it at present in Books which have been subject to many alterations, and have in many things depended upon the pleasure of Transcribers.⁴

Here, Dutch Calvinist (and by today's standards, Reformed) writer Spanheim appears to be decrying the present perfection of the Bible; he argues that since the Bible has been thus declared hopelessly "unsafe", then, according to the above argument, a logical conclusion one might draw without any reliable source of authority, would be that Protestants should resubmit themselves to the infallible tradition of the "Church" as *the* authorised interpreter of God's word. Otherwise, one could perhaps

sit and idly wait until textual criticism declares the written word of God “safe” again.

Hence, one sees the implications of a protective doctrine such as Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) in tackling the challenges posed to *Sola Scriptura* by these two formidable external giants of “Church” tradition and modern scholarship. These challenges manifest themselves to a corresponding degree in the doctrine’s negation of general preservation and eclecticism respectively. More ironically, the obstacles which have historically beset the doctrine are often further exacerbated and controverted by gainsayers from *within* the Protestant camp. All this represents a radical departure from old style evangelicalism and what fundamentalism once stood for.

Fundamentalism and Reformed Scholarship

A fundamentalist can be defined as a person who believes his religion in its pure form. Between 1910 and 1915, *The Fundamentals* was published, and the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures was embraced by groups of evangelicals which considered themselves as “fundamentalists”.⁵ Fundamentalism, says Peter Masters, refers to what might be considered “an irreducible minimum of Truth” which is founded on “the first principles of the Oracles of God” (Heb 5:12). This “irreducible minimum amount of Scripture Truth” is a non-negotiable *sine qua non* for fellowship in the Truth, as fundamentalists also practise Biblical separation.⁶

It has been noted that the circumstances under which the Reformation position of the doctrine of Providential Preservation had been established was the widely-held view among the Reformers that God had indeed preserved the very words of Holy Scripture in their original languages, down to the very jot and tittle. Indeed, the original Reformation doctrine or position affirmed uncompromisingly that the Scriptures alone were the sole supreme authority and final court of appeal for all matters of faith and practice. Could those 17th century puritans who upheld the inerrancy and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures and were considered “fundamentalists” also be interested in *scholarship*? Masters certainly thinks so:

What kind of scholarship are we talking about? Fundamentalists have always vigorously engaged in scholarship, but always in believing scholarship. ... Was there ever a greater period of studiousness and depth

in the entire history of the Christian Church than the ultra-fundamentalist age of the seventeenth-century Confessions and the Puritans? All around the world today there are fundamentalist seminaries and Bible colleges teaching large numbers of people. Are we to say all these dislike study? ... While fundamentalists are traditionally great lovers of *biblical* scholarship, they are highly suspicious of *unbelieving* scholarship. In fact they reject it entirely.⁷

Fundamental Christian scholarship in the American Presbyterian church reached its zenith at the turn of the century, during which Princeton was immediately synonymous with true Reformed scholarship. It stood unflinching against the tides of liberalism and modernism, which threatened many a formerly-sound Christian institution. Yet the basic problem as discussed earlier lay in how the Bible's inerrancy and infallibility were predicated *only* in the non-existent originals. In attempting to establish the historic position of Reformed theology and protestant orthodoxy, the "Old Princetonians" (A A Hodge and Warfield) embraced only a general, limited view of the doctrine of providential preservation. It was their view that the Bible has been preserved to this very hour but preserved not in any one text but in *all* the texts. In their mind, textual criticism would in future provide the church a perfect text. Warfield pontificated:

The inerrant autographs were a fact once; they may possibly be a fact again, when textual criticism has said its last word on the Bible text. In proportion as they are approached in the processes of textual criticism, we do have an ever better and better Bible than the one we have now.⁸

The above statement by Warfield perhaps epitomises the common mistaken assumption the "Old Princetonians" embraced: believing in God's promise, yet staggering at the manuscript evidence before them, they were ever hopeful of greater 'progress' to be made by modern criticism. An implicit belief in the value of eclecticism provided the foundations for current evangelical thought on the issue, though some are beginning to realise the significance of re-establishing the orthodox view of Biblical preservation.

Today, in the evangelical camp, there are exceptions like Norman Geisler who have correctly identified the authentic Reformation position of historic Protestantism (or Evangelicalism) on the doctrine of providential preservation, but these tend to be few and far between.⁹ Yet, as far as systematic theologies go, it is an absence or a nebulous, vague notion of Biblical preservation that pervades. Very few theologies

depict the doctrine of providential preservation in *antithesis* to modern textual criticism. As with the case of Warfield, since he took a favourable view of textual criticism, he could only hold to a *general* view of providential preservation, alluding to certain statements in the Westminster Confession with respect to its (1) distinction from VPI, (2) degree of providential action or “safe preservation of the Bible” and (3) the “adequate transmission” of Holy Scriptures.¹⁰ One American Presbyterian writer observed how:

Warfield’s thinking was not entirely unified. Through his mind ran two separate trains of thought which not even he could join together. The one train of thought was dogmatic, going back to the Protestant Reformation. When following this train of thought Dr. Warfield regarded Christianity as true. The other train of thought was apologetic, going back to the rationalistic viewpoint of the 18th century. When following this train of thought Dr. Warfield regarded Christianity as merely probable. And this same divided outlook was shared by Dr. Warfield’s colleagues at Princeton Seminary and by conservative theologians and scholars generally throughout the 19th and early 20th century. Even today this split-level thinking is still a factor to be reckoned with in conservative circles, although in far too many instances it has passed over into modernism.

Dr. Warfield’s treatment of the New Testament text illustrates this cleavage in his thinking. In the realm of dogmatics he agreed with the Westminster Confession that the New Testament text had been “kept pure in all ages” by God’s “singular care and providence,” but in the realm of New Testament textual criticism he agreed with Westcott and Hort in ignoring God’s providence and even went so far as to assert that the same methods were to be applied to the text of the New Testament that would be applied to the text of a morning newspaper. It was to bridge the gap between his dogmatics and his New Testament textual criticism that he suggested that God had worked providentially through Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort to preserve the New Testament text. But this suggestion leads to conclusions which are extremely bizarre and inconsistent.¹¹

Thus, even a great Reformed scholar as B B Warfield seemed instead to think of the preservation of the Holy Scriptures as in the entire body of extant MSS and not any single ‘family’ or ‘stream’ of MSS, because the eclecticism that he held and practised was in antagonism to his belief in Biblical inerrancy and preservation. Like a Trojan horse finding its way into the very heart of the evangelical academy, modern

textual criticism has served to introduce incipient eclecticism through the writings of B B Warfield and to hardwire the principles of modern criticism in the minds of the subsequent generations of Bible scholars, including fundamentalist pastors and scholars.¹² With these principles comes the espousal of a false or counterfeit notion of providential preservation, namely, eclecticism.

At this juncture, it is worthwhile considering the *real* agenda of the textual critics (Tregelles, Westcott and Hort) of the late nineteenth century in setting up a committee for a revised version and establishing a critical text underlying it. This process is seen by some as a counterfeit-remaking of the Great Protestant Reformation in the battle for the Bible. In Christian Pinto's 2012 documentary *Tares Among the Wheat* it is posited that this was (and is) an extension of that Counter-Reformative effort launched by the Roman Catholic Church since the mid-16th century Council of Trent, albeit conducted in reverse order: (1) beginning at the destabilization of the KJV, leading to (2) the establishment of a new critical text, and (3) multiplication of modern English versions.¹³

Oddly enough, even secular historian Jonathan Sheehan thinks along the same lines, when he notes of the considerable tumult that attended the Great Reformation and which subsequently led to the need for what he terms "stable vernacular Bibles" in the Reformed thought of the 16th and 17th centuries:

Stable Protestant theologies and stable Protestant theocracies needed stable vernacular Bibles. Given the urge to keep chaos at bay, it is not surprising that the vernacular Bibles produced by Luther and the King James translators retained their place in the sun of the new century. And once the theological imperative to translate was gone, the interest in the actual text of the Bible—the urge to produce better original versions through manuscript research—waned as well, either because these texts represented a kind of religious dynamite better left untouched or because these texts were simply seen as stable fixtures around which an entirely new form of biblical scholarship ... could take place. As a result, as the end of the seventeenth century approached, the Bible seemed a fairly familiar and established entity. The vernacular texts that shaped the Protestant reforms had become ingrained in popular religious life. They were sufficient enough in the minds of most, scholarly and unlearned alike, to teach the faithful the ways of God, transparent enough that the theological teachings of the Protestant churches would shine clearly. Scholarship was comfortably busy with biblical histories and chronologies; the texts of the Old and New Testament seemed

unchanging and unchangeable. The Bible was alive, its significance guaranteed by Protestants who put the Word of God at the heart of their theological systems.¹⁴

Hence, without these three important historic and Reformed orthodox events to underpin them, Protestant theology or dogmatics would foreseeably, over time, be increasingly confused, stifled and frustrated by the babel of all the modern versions. The alteration and dilution of doctrines introduced by the advocates of the purportedly better (by being closer to the autographs) evolutionary CT than the traditional texts underlying the KJV, would eventually result in the need for an authoritative voice – not surprisingly, none other than the voice of the Roman Church and the infallible authority of tradition and of the Papacy that she stands for. Those who imbibe this misinformation and place their trust in the scholarship of evangelical textual critics are unwittingly playing into the hands of the ecumenical masterminds who are supported by the Jesuits in the Roman Catholic Church. So, if Pinto's premise and hypothesis are true, then this is *real* the Battle for the Bible – shall the *neo-evangelicals and counter-Reformers* win?

Modern Fundamentalism's Attack on Preservation

Those who espouse eclecticism in fundamentalist circles tend to think that God has preserved His words in fallible texts, because, to them, compelling manuscript evidence seems to suggest this. Thanks to better methods of modern textual criticism, they believe it will soon be possible to approximate these imperfect manuscripts down to a very narrow margin of error to obtain the autographs. Eclectic text critics are of this view "that the true reading is always present in at least one of the thousands of extant New Testament manuscripts."¹⁵ Stated another way, the true text of Scripture has been preserved, yet is *presently* inaccessible to believers because it is dispersed throughout *all* the manuscripts which survive to this day. Consequently, many an influential fundamentalist writer like the late John Gerstner also continued to think along similar lines, asserting that "God leaves us to a fallible transmission of the text ... has not seen fit to keep the infallible originals absolutely ... [and] obviously expects us to get along without them, to do the best we can in approximating the originals."¹⁶ In effect, Gerstner here alleges that God fallibly preserved His words, because He never intended for us to have a tangible copy of them at any time; at best, for now, according to Gerstner's logic, one would do well to be satisfied with an 'eclectic text' like the critical Nestle-Aland.

If words are not important but only doctrines matter, and if the true, inspired text of Scripture can never be identified, then how does one know with certainty how to judge the weighty matters of faith and practice? The tragic result of these reinterpretations of providential preservation is schism and seeming-agnosticism among Fundamentalists with respect to the text of Holy Scripture. Both inspired and perfect in the past, they assert, but neither inspired nor perfect now. Various fundamental groups holding a significantly reinterpreted view of the doctrine of providential preservation – that of a limited/partial preservation or none at all – have unwittingly yielded themselves to embrace a low view of Scripture. What a far cry from the Reformers’ high regard of the pure sources in the original languages which God *both* inspired *and* preserved. Can the Bible *still* be trusted because mistakes abound in the source text one uses for translation work? Would not the resultant degree of error be exponentially increased?

Yet there are evangelical institutions and writers who attack, exhibiting zeal without proper knowledge. Commentators like Kutilek, Price, White and Combs would conveniently set up a strawman to denigrate all groups who uphold and defend the KJV as cults or heretical sects. It is true that many bona fide cultists respect and even quote from the KJV, from which Scripture may be twisted and knowingly misinterpreted to suit their private agenda or aberrant teachings, but the charge of “cultism” for every preservationist group which uses the KJV is not only unjust but libelous.

Fundamentally speaking, something more costly than inerrancy is at stake: the entire text of the Bible is in danger of being dismissed along with its canonicity as something “inherently improbable”. For instance, Anglican Bishop Montefiore dismissed Biblical inerrancy thusly,

The doctrine of biblical inerrancy seems inherently improbable, for two reasons. Firstly, the Scriptures contain what seem to be evident errors and contradictions (although great ingenuity has been applied to explain these away). Secondly, the books of the Old and New Testaments did not gain their place within the “canon”, or list of approved books, as soon as they were written. The Old Testament canon was not closed until late in the Apostolic age, and the New Testament canon was not finally closed until the fourth century. *If all the Bible’s contents were inerrant, one would have thought that this would have become apparent within a much shorter period.*¹⁷

Thus, in the long term, this erosion of “The Fundamentals” in terms of the loss of the fidelity to the “old-fashioned” Reformation doctrine of providential preservation bodes not well for Fundamental Christianity. Every age of Christian history has had its unique battles to fight: Spurgeon in his day fought the Baptist Downgrade; back then, as is now, the issue has been about the Bible. But if history, like a schoolteacher, has repeated herself before many times, she will be even harsher when one does not heed her lessons. Failure to notice or recognise the dangers of letting an important doctrine as the providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures slip or to be defectively reinterpreted subsequently leads to a low view of Scripture.

Yet, by persisting in such anaemic views of the doctrine of Bible preservation or denying preservation altogether (albeit affirming their stand *only* in verbal and plenary inspiration), many fundamentalist groups appear to have unwittingly sold themselves short; oblivious to the self-deception involved. Some even proceed to warn other groups while appearing to be dispensing sagely advice. Furthermore, certain of their writers create the impression that the doctrine of providential preservation is held by nearly all pro-KJV advocates. Thus, attacking from within the fundamentalist circles, this fact is soundly exploited by feuding parties who wish to split healthy churches, as pointed out by that incisively-written paper by supposedly fundamentalist, independent researchers Douglas Chinn and Robert Newman.¹⁸ Their purpose appears to be wishing to expose those who use the KJV/TR as a pretext for a private agenda; their allegation is that those who are pro-KJV/TR are (1) resistant to change, or (2) anti-intellectual, loudly shouting down all those who advocate change because they themselves are afraid to kowtow to *genuine* scholarship.¹⁹

It would be necessary to consider the Amsterdam 1998 and Jerusalem 2000 statements of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) on the use of the KJV in order to maintain a true and pure faith. Surely a uniting body of true, Bible-believing Christian churches of more than 50 years could not be asking its members to split up their own churches over the Council’s supposed preference for the KJV for use in worship among its adherents? But then, the rather sad reality of our times is the position statement of the Singapore Council of Christian Churches (SCCC), the local chapter of the ICCC, on the KJV which has now somewhat been shaken by events which have

transpired in Singapore within the last decade or so. One wonders if the import of Chinn and Newman's paper is really coming to pass in this present generation of fundamentalists, particularly among supposedly-fundamentalist churches of the Far East.²⁰

Looking back at the doctrine of special, providential preservation one could either choose to agree with those of the likes of Chinn and Newman (along with the SCCC-member Bible-Presbyterian churches in Singapore), by chortling with them that it is indeed high time for change and for the antiquated KJV to be replaced; or, instead, one could choose to confess our adherence to Reformed orthodoxy once again, as the 17th century Protestants did with the Westminster Confession and Helvetic Consensus Formula – and by so doing, to re-articulate that age-old doctrine which polemicists from a forgotten era characterised by intense religious persecution resorted to when their sole source of authority was threatened. This urgent need of the hour should cause slumbering ones to awake from their apathy and join in the great battle that is being fought today – the Battle for the Bible.

Fundamentalist Feud over Doctrinal Formulation

Evangelical-turned-agnostic NT critic Bart Ehrman perhaps wondered at one point about the issue of Biblical preservation. Ehrman questioned why Dean Burgon's view of preservation differed from that of Warfield's; similarly, how it appeared that Hills' doctrine of Divine preservation is presumably different from that of Waite's. Whose, then, should be adopted as the best statement deserving of a twenty-first century expression of orthodox Protestant Christianity?²¹

It is suggested that one could consider the following three vital considerations or aspects when formulating a particular position of the doctrine of special providential preservation: (1) linguistic, (2) technological, and (3) temporal. In the linguistic aspect, concerning the languages which are involved in special providential preservation, the writer is aware of pro-KJV groups which have risen up to defend the KJV translators' choices without realising the need to adhere to original languages. Basically, some preservationists have urged that God can still providentially preserve His words without exclusively utilising the original Biblical languages Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. If one were to consider the following excerpt concerning Erasmus' alleged back-translation of the last few verses in Revelation of Latin into Greek:

Even if he [Erasmus] did translate from the Latin into Greek it would have no bearing on the doctrine of biblical preservation. Preservation simply demands that God has kept and preserved the words throughout the generations from the time of their inception until this present day and even beyond. It does not demand that these words be preserved in the original languages only.²²

One would notice that such apologetics (however well-intended) are decidedly unhelpful to a correct formulation of a doctrine of VPP. If languages which were involved in *special* providential preservation are indeed so interchangeable, then perhaps one might as well concede the possibility that Ruckman was correct in propounding his double or latter-inspiration view of the KJV. Hence, it is important in any formulation of a specific doctrine of special providential preservation to emphasise the exclusivity of the original languages found in that particular Greek text of Scripture that underlies the KJV.

A second consideration, namely the technological, would be the invention of the printing press and its contribution towards providential preservation. That is one area in which Hills seemed to have felt that Burgon's view of the TR which had developed as a result of the invention of the movable-type press was wanting, and, according to Hills, even "illogical". According to Hills, Dean Burgon had no trouble with

the New Testament quotations of the Church Fathers, most of whom had been bishops. To him these quotations were vital because they proved that the Traditional New Testament Text found in the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts had been authorised from the very beginning by bishops of the early Church, or at least by the majority of these bishops. This high Anglican principle, however, failed Burgon when he came to deal with the printed Greek New Testament text. For from Reformation times down to his own day the printed Greek New Testament text which had been favoured by the bishops of the Anglican Church was the Textus Receptus, and the Textus Receptus had not been prepared by bishops but by Erasmus, an independent scholar. Still worse, from Burgon's standpoint, was the fact that the particular form of the Textus Receptus used in the Church of England was the third edition of Stephanus, who was a Calvinist. For these reasons, therefore, Burgon and Scrivener looked askance at the Textus Receptus and declined to defend it except in so far as it agreed with the Traditional Text found in the majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts.

This position, however is illogical. If we believe in the providential preservation of the New Testament text, then we must defend the

Textus Receptus as well as the Traditional text found in the majority of the Greek manuscripts. For the Textus Receptus is the only form which this Traditional Text has circulated in print. To decline to defend the Textus Receptus is to give the impression that God's providential preservation of the New Testament text ceased with the invention of printing. It is to suppose that God, having preserved a pure New Testament text all during the manuscript period, unaccountably left this pure text hiding in the manuscripts and allowed an inferior text to issue from the printing press and circulate among His people for more than 450 years. Much, then, as we admire Burgon for his general orthodoxy and for his defense of the Traditional New Testament Text, we cannot follow him in his high Anglican emphasis or in his disregard for the Textus Receptus.²³

It is instructive to consider the words of Hills here. This apparent inconsistency in Burgon's stance on the Textus Receptus is one that many critics of the Textus Receptus have held up against its special providential preservation. It is *not enough* just to state that the doctrine of providential preservation was a doctrine held by the Church Fathers, only to have it cease with the end of the manuscript period and that the true text is still residing somewhere within the body of the Traditional Text – a view akin to that held up by Zane Hodges and some Majority Text (and anti-Textus Receptus) advocates. This writer therefore concurs with Hills on how the Reformers' and Post-Reformation saints' identification, choice and widespread usage of Erasmus' and Stephanus' Greek New Testament as the Textus Receptus is vital to a consistent apologetic for the doctrine of Divine preservation of the text underlying the KJV as the autographic text. Concluding his discourse with some points on the significance of the printing press on the TR, and his point of departure from Burgon, Hills averred:

For the *Textus Receptus* is the only form which this Traditional Text has circulated in print. To decline to defend the *Textus Receptus* is to give the impression that God's providential preservation of the New Testament text ceased with the invention of printing. It is to suppose that God, having preserved a pure New Testament text all during the manuscript period, unaccountably left this pure text hiding in the manuscripts and allowed an inferior text to issue from the printing press and circulate among His people for more than 450 years.²⁴

Previously, at least one VPP advocate may have unwittingly brought to focus certain "contrasting" historical issues regarding the impact of the printing press on the doctrine of special, providential preservation

without any reference to the above passage by Hills. An example of this can be seen in the following extract:

From church history this issue was ironed out and crystallized for us when the early church fathers fought for the purity of God's word in the English language. The English language is the world language. This again is no accident. ... it was well known once upon a time that the sun never sets on the [British] Empire. Through their conquest of the world they also brought with it the gospel message through their many missionaries. They carried with them the Word of God in the English language. Hence we can say that the battle for the Bible was fought within the arena of the English language. Battle after battle has been fought. ... Hence we see many doctrines ironed out for our benefit today through the many who gave their lives for the purity of God's Word and its related doctrines. The doctrine of preservation was sealed when the printing press was invented ending centuries of laborious scribal copying of God's Holy Word. All these factors climaxed in the 17th century when the English Bible known as the King James Version (KJV) was translated.²⁵

In concurrence with Hills, Michael Koech observed:

As it exists today in many human languages it was divinely inspired in the original autographs, and then divinely preserved in the apographs or copies in the original languages. For centuries these were copied by hand until the invention of the printing press, which coincided with the global movement of the Protestant Reformation. By God's special providence the Scriptures have been supernaturally preserved and passed down from generation to generation in the copies.²⁶

On the issue of the printing press' invention (which took place shortly after the mid-15th century), Khoo similarly wrote:

In light of God's providence that nothing happens by chance and that history is under His sovereign control, in the fullness of time—in the most opportune time of the Reformation—when the true church separated from the false, when the study of the original languages was emphasised, and the printing press invented (which meant that no longer would there be any need to hand-copy the Scriptures thereby ensuring a uniform text)—God restored from out of a pure stream of preserved Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, the purest of all Hebrew and Greek texts—the texts that underlie our King James Bible—that accurately reflect the original autographs.²⁷

Nevertheless the point which Khoo makes seems clear enough: the invention of the press was *but* one important contributing factor;

nevertheless, special providential preservation did *not* abruptly end with the development of “the purest of all Hebrew and Greek texts” – or did it? This brings us to the third and final consideration, namely, the issue of time or timeliness in the development of the doctrine of providential preservation. This consideration, in the writer’s opinion, presents the most crucial aspect in the formulation of a consistent doctrine of VPP—the temporal aspect.

David Cloud and most other pro-KJV/TR preservationists (including all those mentioned from FEBC) appear unanimously to view providential preservation as a process culminating at some definite point in history along with the establishment of the perfect text (in the original languages) which underlies the KJV of 1611, in contradistinction to most neo-evangelicals’ and Warfield’s notion that preservation goes on indefinitely in the large body of more than 5,000 extant manuscripts today. The latter view appears to be a corollary of eclecticism, being based on the empirical weighing of manuscript evidence and an ever evolving eclectic text. Advocates of this latter static view urge that God preserves and keeps His words to this very hour in this very way (ie with scribal errors) till the end of time.

Yet, the question remains unanswered as to exactly *when* the autographic “virtual photocopy” of the text underlying the perfect Bible was established. This question appears to pose a ‘no-brainer’ to the would-be framers of a consistent VPP position, though it can be very easily explained by the fact that God often works in epochs, as one observes in the Bible, using the analogy of faith argument. Perhaps, too, at the risk of over-simplification, this writer would here offer an explanation that, God, being sovereign, is not obliged to keep to any ‘uniform’ preservation of His inspired and infallible words through secondary causations in the way that human beings would expect; therefore, variants and textual corruptions have also occurred non-uniformly (except where deliberate doctoring by heretics was systematically carried out). But, having orchestrated the events of history and for the right people to influence the events of history at the right place at the right time as Khoo has mentioned, God has also made it possible for His providentially preserved texts to be put together, recognised and received as the authentic autographic texts.

Overcoming the Flaw of Fundamentalism

Yet, too, perhaps one may generally trace the present crisis facing Christian fundamentalism as one arising from the many “warrior children” that it has birthed.²⁸ Just as the bittersweet heritage of Machen’s spiritual offspring, so too, is the experience of McIntire’s legatees in the Bible-Presbyterian Church (BPC), particularly of those in the Far East. Khoo makes the following important observations and statement of position:

The veracity and validity of the Biblical Covenant is undermined when the 11 [Bible-Presbyterian] 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.*

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.

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. 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.

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”?²⁹

It is high time for the leaders of these fundamentalist groups to realise their ignorance and folly in the past. Awakening to the reality that they might have embraced old lies as “truth” means going back to the root of the problem and addressing pertinent issues afresh. It means, for the most part, humbly and openly acknowledging and forsaking any previously-held, mistaken notions of the inspiration and preservation of Scripture, and ultimately returning to the historical position of 17th century Reformed orthodoxy – to the view which the Bible takes on its own preservation, for that is the only consistent view. It means both a recovery and a rediscovery of the old-as-the-Bible doctrine of special providential preservation in its fullest sense, no less. Time is ripe for a new movement, a “21st Century Reformation”, to go back to the Perfect Bible – back to *Sola Scriptura*.

Summary and Findings

In attempting to establish a more prominent historical background of the doctrine of special providential preservation, this research acknowledges the contributions of at least three prominent post-Reformation saints (Whitaker, Owen and Turretin) to our understanding of this doctrine as it was articulated in the post-Reformation period. This was also the period which the Westminster Confession was formulated. Admittedly, though their writings may appear to some as just another post-Tridentine Protestant polemic which safeguarded *Sola Scriptura*,

the doctrine of special providential preservation was *not* something innovated in the works of post-Reformation Christians. Instead they simply articulated anew, or confessed, an old fundamental doctrine, one held by believers from the time of writing of the Bible. Moreover, it has been noted that at least three other historic Reformed creeds allude either directly or indirectly to the special providential preservation of the Scriptures. Puritan theologians objectively confessed to the purity of the sources of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and the special role which Providence played in perfectly preserving those same sources for the benefit of God's people. Guided by the Holy Spirit into the truth of the common faith, E F Hills described in his book how those uncorrupted textual sources were always received by genuine believers through the ages. This leads towards the recognition of the twin doctrines namely inspiration and preservation; and preservation, is a necessary corollary to inspiration. Like a set of conjoined twins, the doctrines of VPP and VPI are inextricably linked and vital to each other. Scripture loses its divine authority if there was inspiration but no special providential preservation to ensure the safe transmission of the words of the Holy Scriptures, the God-breathed words would have perished long in history and not reach us today; conversely, if there was perfect preservation but no inspiration, it would then resemble a photocopier printing numerous copies of an uninspired (and possibly error-ridden) document. Either way, Scripture's authority would be severely undermined, impinging upon many other important Biblical doctrines such as salvation. Furthermore, the doctrine of special providential preservation was not a new doctrine to the Reformers and Reformation saints; for, just as inspiration is a biblical doctrine, so too, is preservation.

Although the Old Princetonians (such as Hodge, Green, Warfield) did commendably in upholding the doctrine of total inspiration and inerrancy, perhaps one error they committed was to lower their guard with respect to the doctrine of Biblical preservation due to their firmly entrenched belief in the value of textual criticism. The Warfieldian view that the Bible is somehow imperfect now though perfect in the originals (*Sola Autographa*), has caused textual criticism to take a hold of many an evangelical and fundamental seminary today and this has certainly undermined the Reformed doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*.³⁰

When one reviews the 17th century writings (of Whitaker, Owen and Turretin) on the doctrine of Scripture, one finds not only a consistently

high regard for the God of the Bible, but the loftiest regard for the Holy Scriptures themselves. Indeed, one might conclude that they not only assumed the Bible was inerrant and preserved, but they also *insisted* upon it. In contrast, a glance at several Systematic Theology texts written in the last century reveals how this doctrine of special providential preservation in the Reformed thought of the 16th and 17th centuries has been somewhat reinterpreted over the last 300 years. The vast majority of the modern systematic theologies do not mention special providential preservation as a doctrine; if it is discussed at all, the doctrine is articulated with what appears to be a neo-evangelical “bent” aimed at reconciling textual criticism with a general providential preservation – a significantly different view of preservation bearing the marks of Warfieldian theology. Even in the most ardent “inerrantist” writings, like those of Geisler, which do cite Turretin’s *Institutes*, there almost always appears to be some degree of scepticism about the preservation of the apographs: inerrancy, according to neo-evangelicals, can never be predicated of their preservation. Moreover, there were significant reinterpretations or erroneous notions of their view on preservation.

The present writer has attempted to briefly address the historical issues surrounding fundamentalism’s current debate over the doctrine of Scripture and modern Bible versions. Lamentably, it is noted how fundamentalism has also gradually warmed up to the advances of textual criticism. As long as unbelieving scholarship is held up as *the* solution to the problem of the Bible’s transmission, the doctrine of special providential preservation will be mitigated to mere theory, and its historic role as *Schutzlehre* (or protective teaching/doctrine) diminished and/or dismissed. Thus, it appears that the teachings of Warfield will have indeed been thoroughly perpetuated.

Nevertheless, in contending for the perfect preservation of the apographs of Holy Scripture, it must be mentioned that the doctrine of special providential preservation does require an element of faith in what might be termed an *informed* fideism. Fideism does not simply arise from naïve and uninformed notions or blind creedalism that reposes on a mere traditional rendering of Biblical preservation as some ancient dogma of the Church. Embracing the “100%” or perfect view of the special providential preservation of the Scriptures requires a corresponding high view of the Scriptures and the God of the Scriptures. It is not solely based on intellectual arguments; rather, it is akin to “believing in order

to see” and not “seeing to believe”. While a theoretical understanding of doctrines like Biblical inspiration and special providential preservation may be helpful to some believers in strengthening their faith, by itself, it will not likely convert an *unbeliever*. Yet, in a curious way, the present writer has found that a more precise understanding of doctrine of Biblical preservation does *somehow* make the believer a *better* fundamentalist.

Just as William Taylor pleads, “Let the Church heed the Reformer John Knox’s call: “Return to thy Pastor and Spouse”, so too, it is the hope of the writer that any believer who has embraced the error of Warfield’s teachings on Biblical preservation may be drawn to the truth that is there in the Bible itself – a truth that is in line with the common faith of believers throughout the ages. And, prayerfully, through “believing Bible study” and sound Biblical axioms, erring ones may once again be led towards the truth by the Holy Spirit. Let one not resort to rationalistic textual critical methods to ‘conjure’ up the lost autographs! As Khoo testifies,

The seven biblical axioms ... helped and guided me to know for sure which is, what is, and where is the inspired Bible that God has preserved. It has freed me from the shackles of uncertainty and unbelief. It gives me full confidence in God’s totally inspired and forever preserved infallible and inerrant words which are my sole, supreme and final authority of faith and practice. Jesus promised, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32).³¹

Thus, when consistently applied, the Biblical axioms can lead those who through faith find full assurance in the incarnate Word (ie, Jesus Christ) and maximum certainty in the inscripturated Word (ie, the Bible). Simply put, it is by the simple logic of faith that we are convicted of what we possess to be the enduring, pure and perfect words of God. This has been made possible through God’s extraordinary, singular care and providence of His words throughout the ages.

What could justify an unfounded urge to denigrate all others who wish to maintain their fideistic standpoint? Should one simply stand with arms folded and allow the non-VPPists to dictate their thinking based on flimsy presuppositions and precarious hermeneutics? The writer hitherto acknowledges the hasty, bitter dispute and contentious spirit attendant to this controversy: many others like the writer have been derogatively labeled KJV-Onlyist, preservationist, anti-intellectual obscurant, bigot,

and heretic – to name a few labels. Apart from the name-calling is the notion that people who wear these labels are ultra-conservative, separatist-extremist “funny-mentalists” and “unlearned men”. If that is the least one can do to bear the reproach of the Lord Jesus Christ the incarnate Word, by exalting His infallible Word – the very voice of Him who sits upon the Throne, that Perfect Bible which has been given to us – then, the writer feels it would have been worth every bit of inconvenience and vilification. “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (Gal 1:10).

The Biblical fideism to which the writer is referring is neither incredulous nor proud. It is a necessity; for it spells life and death for any of the church’s members. Will God not deal with such people who tout their *own* authority over the authority of the Bible; and, how does one even begin to address the nameless dread that grips the hearts of God’s people when the very foundations of their faith are undermined by the ones responsible for ministering God’s Word to His flock? Contrary to popular belief in a blind-leap, embracing fideism, at worst, means to err on the side of caution: “Let God be true and every man a liar.” (Rom 3:4). One thing is for certain – God cannot lie or seem to deceive. True fideism is not founded in man’s perfect ability to reason, but in God’s perfect revelation. The vociferous exhortation of Dean Burgon would be appropriate to close this paper:

“No, Sirs! The Bible (be persuaded) is the very utterance of the Eternal;—as much GOD’s Word, as if high Heaven were open, and we heard GOD speaking to us with human voice. Every book of it is inspired alike; and is inspired entirely.... [T]he Bible, from the Alpha to the Omega of it, is filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit of GOD: the Books of it, and the sentences of it, and the words of it, and the syllables of it,—aye, and the very letters of it.”³²

Historic faith, creedal, authoritative and orthodox statements, and arguments on ink and paper *per se* cannot breathe life into hearts hardened by unbelief, for genuine heart-change is *alone* the work of God’s Holy Spirit. There is yet Battle Royal to be done “for the word of God, and for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9). Nevertheless, for now it suffices the writer to say: the Word of God stands sure; it has never perished in the past, and will *never* perish! The Perfect Bible endures forever. Amen.

Notes

¹ Edward F Hills, *Believing Bible Study* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1977), 239.

² Eldon J Epp, “The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism: Solution or Symptom?” *Harvard Theological Review* 69 (1976): 211–57.

³ Klaus Wachtel and Michael W Holmes, eds, *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 10–11.

⁴ Friedrich Spanheim, *A Critical History of the Old Testament in Three Books: With a Supplement, Being a Defence of the Critical History, in Answer to Mr Spanheim’s Treatise against It* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1682).

⁵ Peter Masters, “Are We Fundamentalists?” (London: Sword and Trowel, 2003), 7. *The Fundamentals* was originally a 12-volume series of booklets, and is available as a slightly abridged one-volume edition published by Kregel.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4–10. As Masters notes, the use of the term “fundamentalist” today is almost always derogatory, to label someone as “a religious bigot, or a political militant inspired by religious fanaticism.” To discredit old-style evangelicals for “tactical self-advantage”, says Masters, neo-evangelicals often use the term “fundamentalists”. One recent caricature of fundamentalism comes from the late John R W Stott (1921–2011), in *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1988). Stott claimed that fundamentalists have “[a] general suspicion of scholarship and science, which sometimes degenerates into a thoroughgoing anti-intellectualism.” And, as if to add insult to injury, Stott further caricatured fundamentalists as holding to “a naïve, almost superstitious reverence for the King James’ Version of the Bible, warts and all, as if it were quasi-inspired, which leads to a neglect of textual criticism” (90–1). The present writer reckons that nothing could be further from the truth about fundamentalism.

⁷ *Ibid.* The term “Fundamentalism” should not be restricted to the period after 1920 only, especially with sweeping reference to “the claim that fundamentalists are suspicious of scholarship, while evangelicals are open to it”.

⁸ Warfield, 557.

⁹ Geisler, *Introduction*, 411–12. Geisler extensively quotes the views of Francis Turretin on Scripture’s preservation; he also notes how “[a]ccording to Turretin, God would not inspire what He did not preserve” and superintended the entire transmission process of the copying of Scriptures through His special providence. Geisler reminds us that the “copies are not inspired...This does not mean that the copies are perfect”. Though it does appear elsewhere that Geisler also attempts to harmonise Turretin’s views on providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures – “the purity of the Sources” – with his own belief (as did Warfield) in the continued efficacy of textual criticism to eventually give back Christendom the inspired autographs.

¹⁰ Warfield, 594.

¹¹ American Presbyterian Church, “B.B. Warfield and the Reformation Doctrine of the Providential Preservation of the Biblical Text: A Paper by the American Presbyterian Church,” in *True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church’s Weekly*, <http://www.febc.edu.sg/VPP83.htm> (accessed April 25, 2014).

¹² Taylor, 8.

¹³ Christian Pinto, *Tares Among the Wheat* (Mt Juliet: Adullam Films, 2012), <http://www.adullamfilms.com/TaresAmongTheWheat.html> (accessed March 19, 2014).

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¹⁴ Jonathan Sheehan, “The Vernacular Bible: Reformation and Baroque,” in *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2005), 25.

¹⁵ See Jeffrey Khoo, “A Plea for a Perfect Bible,” *The Burning Bush* 9 (2003):10.

¹⁶ Gerstner, 147.

¹⁷ Hugh Montefiore, *Credible Christianity: The Gospel in Contemporary Society* (London: Mowbray, 1993), 5.

¹⁸ Douglas S Chinn and Robert C Newman, “Demystifying the Controversy Over the Textus Receptus and the King James Version of the Bible,” in *Research Report No 3*, Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1980. In this damning critique of the KJV/TR position (which in the writer’s opinion is not only treacherous to fundamentalism but, indeed, one that has done more harm than good) the speculation of Chinn and Newman is that KJV/TR advocates are anti-intellectual Luddites who wish above all to see perfectly-sound fundamental churches split up over seemingly trivial and personal issues. Nothing could be further from the truth. So far, the writer is not aware of any written responses from any fundamentalist groups to this paper, and a well-documented response to Chinn and Newman’s critique alone could be material yet for another thesis.

¹⁹ Previously, the writer would direct them to the Amsterdam 1998 and Jerusalem 2000 statements of the ICCC on the use of the KJV. Surely a uniting body of true, Bible-believing Christian churches of more than fifty years could not be asking its members to split up their own churches over the Council’s supposed preference for the KJV for use in worship among its adherents? But then, the rather sad reality of our times is that the SCCC’s (the local chapter of the ICCC) position on the KJV is now somewhat shaken by events which have transpired within the last decade or so. One wonders if the import of Chinn and Newman’s paper is really coming to pass in this present generation of fundamentalists, particularly among supposedly-fundamentalist churches of the Far East.

²⁰ See “Purified Seven Times: In Thanksgiving for God’s Preservation of the King James Bible and the Far Eastern Bible College”, *The Burning Bush* 21 (2015): 66–160.

²¹ Cited by Ferguson in Wilbur Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1977), Appendix A from a copy sent to him personally by Bart D Ehrman, “New Testament Textual Criticism: Search for Method” (MDiv thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981), 44.

²² Thomas Holland, *Crowned with Glory: The Bible from Ancient Text to Authorised Version* (Lincoln: Writers’ Club Press, 2000), 170.

²³ Hills, 192. It is worthwhile noting that there is a subtle difference here in the concept of special providential preservation held by Dean Burgon and E F Hills, and that is concerning the particular view of the Textus Receptus held by Dean Burgon. Burgon indeed was an advocate of Traditional Text, but not of that specific edition of the Textus Receptus which underlies the KJV. Hills reckons this difference might have stemmed from a denominational distinctive, since “Dean J.W. Burgon, Prebendary F.H.A. Scrivener, and Prebendary Edward Miller were not Protestants but high Anglicans.”

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Quek Suan Yew, “We Have an Inerrant Bible Today!” cited in Wendy Teng, “Biblical Inspiration and Preservation and Their Relation to the Perfect Preservation of the Apographs,” (MDiv thesis, Far Eastern Bible College, 2003), 57.

²⁶ Michael Koech, “Is the Preservation of Scripture a Doctrine Worth Dying For?” in *Forever Infallible and Inerrant*, ed Jeffrey Khoo (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College,

2011), 21.

²⁷ Jeffrey Khoo, "The Providence of God," <http://www.febc.edu.sg/VPP24.htm> (accessed March 20, 2014).

²⁸ John M Frame, "Machen's Warrior Children," in *Alister E McGrath and Evangelical Theology*, ed Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 143.

²⁹ Jeffrey Khoo, "Inspiration, Preservation and Translations: In Search of the Biblical Identity of the Bible-Presbyterian Church," *The Burning Bush* 13 (2007): 7–8.

³⁰ 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.

³¹ Khoo, "Seven Biblical Axioms in Ascertaining the Authentic and Authoritative Text of the Holy Scriptures," 94.

³² Burgon, 76.

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*contacts here in the city. Nevertheless, **God always provides** some precious soul that I can still witness to, and be a testimony for Christ.*

It was good to see brother Yamazaki again, with Dr. Lagapa, Dr. Khoo, and their respective families, but I'm afraid that I was in no physical condition to do them justice and show them proper hospitality in welcoming and guiding them along their journey. Please understand and forgive.

*I've never been in Singapore, except at the airport one hour in and the next hour out—and that is not Singapore! But I do have the fondest memories of fellowship in correspondence with our beloved Dr. Timothy Tow and other precious brethren who hold fast THE historic BIBLICAL-FUNDAMENTAL-SEPARATIST stand "...for the Word of God, and for the Testimony of our Lord Jesus (**THE**) Christ"!*

Thank you for any possible remembrances in prayer. The dear brethren returning to you will explain. The will of God be done, as always (Phil 1.21).

*May our gracious God continue to bless you with His love, mercy, protection, and **truth**. "Hold fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown...and having done all...**STAND!**"*

A brother in Christ, (bk)

THE NEW TESTAMENT OF THE PEKING COMMITTEE BIBLE EXAMINED UNDER THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS AND THE KING JAMES BIBLE

Jianwei Zhu

The Holy Bible is the only Book through which God speaks to man. The Bible says exactly what God wants it to say. In the past, God spoke to men directly and through visions and dreams. However, such means of communication had ceased with the completion of the 66 books of Canonical Scripture (cf. 1 Cor 13:8–10). It is the Word of God, the sole and supreme standard for Christian faith and practice.

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic in the Old Testament (OT), and Greek in the New Testament (NT). Not everyone can read the Bible in the original languages. As such, an accurate and faithful translation of the Bible is important for people at large. It is extremely important for every Christian to have a trustworthy Bible to read, study, and obey.

God is good and perfect, and His Word which speaks of Him must be good and perfect as well. The Holy Bible is the truth and it stands for ever (1 Pet 1:25). Not only has God inspired the Bible (2 Tim 3:16), He has also preserved the Bible (Matt 5:18). Even though the originals (*autographa*) are no longer extant, the copies (*apographa*) still exist and they fully reflect the original Hebrew words in the OT, and Greek in the NT. These original language words are found in the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) and the Greek Textus Receptus (TR) underlying the Authorised Version or King James Version (KJV). The KJV is the most accurate and faithful translation of God's Word in English. It is superior to the modern translations of the Bible in these four 'T's: Text, Translators, Technique, and Theology.¹

There are very few Chinese Christians who can read Hebrew and Greek. The vast majority of the Chinese Christians depend on the

Chinese translation of the Bible. There are many Chinese translations of the Bible such as the Scotus Chinese Version (used by the Roman Catholics), Today's Chinese Version, New Chinese Version, Chinese Living Bible, Pastoral Bible, Chinese New Living Translation, New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, Chinese Standard Bible, Chinese NET Bible, Chinese Union Version, and Peking Committee Bible. Most of the modern Chinese translations of the Bible are based on the WH text, and they carry the corruptions of the text with them. Among all these Bible versions, the Chinese Union Version (CUV) is the predominant translation of the Bible that is used by Chinese Protestants both in mainland China and overseas. Unfortunately, the CUV is translated from the corrupt WH text whose editors were heretical.² However, it ought to be noted that the CUV though based on the WH text does not follow it slavishly.³

Most of the modern Chinese translations of the Bible are based on the corrupt text of Westcott and Hort (WH). The Peking Committee Bible (PCB) is the only Chinese Bible that is translated from the Hebrew MT and the Greek TR. There are very few books or materials that give information on the PCB. In fact, this Bible has been forgotten by most of the Chinese-speaking people due to the great popularity of the CUV. It is very rare to see this translation even within Chinese churches in mainland China. This translation, as the only Bible that was translated from the most trustworthy and faithful original texts, should not be ignored. If this translation is truly a faithful translation of the Hebrew MT and Greek TR, then every Chinese-speaking Christian should embrace it.

This reviewer is Reformed in terms of Bibliology. He believes in *Sola Scriptura* and that every word of the Bible is given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16). God not only breathed out every word, but also preserved each one perfectly to the jot and tittle. Jesus declared clearly and authoritatively in Matthew 5:18, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Every letter of God's Word will never pass away. The entire Bible is perfectly inspired and preserved, and it contains all that is necessary for man's salvation and His service to God. It is important therefore that God's children have in their possession a translation of the Bible that is closest to the perfectly inspired and preserved Bible in the original languages to read, to study and to obey.

By God's providential leading, the writer was directed to the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) for full-time training to be a minister of God's Word. There, he learned the importance of studying the original languages of the Bible. With this knowledge, he could evaluate the PCB. This paper seeks to evaluate the PCB NT in the light of the four 'T's.

Background of the Peking Committee Bible

Language

The Chinese language is one of the most ancient languages still in use today. An evaluation of the PCB requires a proficiency in the Chinese language.

Chinese is one of the ancient languages of the East. No one knows exactly when the Chinese writing originated. The earliest known inscriptions contain 10 to 60 characters incised onto pieces of bone and tortoiseshell. These were usually used for oracular divination, and can be dated from the Shang dynasty (18th – 12th centuries BC). By the 12th century, the inscriptions were highly developed, and essentially similar to its present form.

The highly developed stage of Chinese writing can be seen in the *Guwen* (古文), which can be found in the inscriptions of the late Shang dynasty (c 1123 BC) and the early years of the Zhou dynasty after the Shang. During the period of the Zhou dynasty, the language was improved. The main script was the *dazhuan* (大篆), which was also known as *Zhou Wen* (周文).

Although the Chinese script was invented as early as the Shang dynasty, it was only fixed in its present form during the Qin dynasty (221–207 BC). The earliest characters were schematic pictures of what they represented. The basic character or graph for man resembled a standing figure, while the graph for woman depicted a kneeling figure.

The relation between the written Chinese language and its oral form is very different from that of English. In Chinese many different characters can be expressed by the same sound pattern, and each of those words is distinguished only by the distinctive visual pattern. The written Chinese text can, therefore, be difficult to understand when it is read orally due to the large number of homophones in the Chinese language. The written text, on the other hand, is free from such ambiguity.

In order to make the Chinese script easier to read, a system of transcribing the Chinese script into the Roman alphabet was adopted in 1958. This was not intended to replace the logographic script but to indicate the sounds of the graphs in dictionaries and to supplement these graphs. A second reform resulted in simplified characters by reducing the number of strokes used in writing them. This became known as Mandarin.⁴ For instance, the traditional word for righteousness is 義 (literally “a lamb over me”), but the simplified form is “义”. As can be seen, the simplified character is easier to write, but the meaning of the word cannot be seen in the character itself.

Owing to changes in pronunciation over the years, the complex signs of the characters no longer reflect their original sound pattern. Consequently, as the relation between the characters and what they represent are largely unknown to readers and writers of the language, the graphs are seen as groups of lines and angles that make up repeated visual units. Therefore, a literate Chinese person would know perhaps about 4,000 of the most important characters.

Chinese characters are classified in dictionary entries according to the radicals of which they are composed or with which they are traditionally associated. The 214 radicals are arranged in modern dictionaries according to the number of strokes used in writing them.⁵

The Chinese language often comes across as a difficult language to study for many foreigners. It is not only due to the presence of intonation that distinguishes the different words, but also because of the unique feature of each word. Modern Standard Chinese, for instance, has four tones, while the more archaic Cantonese language uses at least six tones, as did Ancient Chinese. Each Chinese character is also unique. Adding or subtracting a small stroke to the character will change the meaning of the word completely. For example,

Luke 22:48, 耶稣说、犹太、你用亲嘴来卖人子么。

Luke 23:37, 说你若是犹太人的王、可以救自己。

The word 大 and 太 looks very similar, but their meanings are very different. 大 means big, large, great; 太 means too, over, too much.⁶ These two words look similar, yet their meanings are totally different. When these two words are used with 犹, the meaning is also very different. 犹太 means Judas; 犹太 means Jews. Only one stroke makes their meaning completely different. There are many more complicated

but similar words in the Chinese language. Therefore, the writer must be very careful in his checking of the PCB, especially since it is God's Word. The accuracy of every single word is important, and it must be rightly translated and typed.

History

The PCB is a Chinese translation of the Bible based on the faithfully preserved Hebrew MT and the Greek TR. It was translated by five missionaries with the help of some local Christians in the late 19th century. The five missionaries were John Shaw Burdon, William Alexander Parsons Martin, Henry Blodget, Joseph Edkins and Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, and they functioned as the main translators of the PCB in the Peking Translation Committee.

In 1862, Samuel Schereschewsky was sent by the American Protestant Episcopal Mission to Peking as a missionary. He was very gifted in languages. In those days, there was a great need for a Chinese translation of the Bible in the official language, ie Mandarin. On his way to Peking, he passed by Tianjin, and met Henry Blodget there. Later on, Joseph Edkins, WAP Martin, and Samuel Schereschewsky gathered in Peking. Finally, in 1864, the translation committee for the PCB was officially formed.⁷ It was said that these five men were very good in Mandarin, *Guan Hua* (官话), and the original languages of the Bible, ie Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. They produced not only a literally accurate translation, but also an idiomatic reading that preserves the intent and meaning found in the Scriptures.⁸

They translated God's Word directly from the Hebrew MT and the Greek TR. The Peking Committee published the NT in the year 1872, and published the OT two years later. This was followed by a revision in 1899 for the OT and 1902 for the NT. The latest edition is the Committee's second revision and final work as a unit, as many of the members died shortly thereafter.⁹

It ought to be noted that on the matter of the term used for Deity, the Peking Committee deliberately chose *Tian Zhu* (天主) instead of *Shen* (神) or *Shangdi* (上帝). The reason they gave was that it was the best expression of *Theos* in Greek and *Elohim* in Hebrew. Although the Committee had hoped that this term for God would be accepted by all Christians, there was still a big controversy over its use.¹⁰ The Peking Committee nevertheless upheld the use of *Tian Zhu* for the name of God

although it has an inseparable association with Roman Catholicism (天主教). Christians should be aware of this association. As far as the writer knows, no Protestant would use the term *Tian Zhu* for God. The word *Shen* or *Shangdi* are terms clearly distinguished from Catholicism, and they are deemed to be the appropriate terms to refer to God.

The PCB preceded the modern Chinese translations by more than 30 years. It was highly regarded by the Chinese in those days, in the same way the KJV was by the English. Translators of the modern Chinese versions have often referred to the PCB in their work of translation. The PCB is one of the best translations, which no other Chinese translations could replace until the publication of the Union Version in 1919. Even after that, the PCB still sold very well until the Bible societies ceased to print it any more. The cessation of its sales was also due to social and political causes. Slowly, the PCB disappeared from the scene.

It was only recently that an American pastor rediscovered the PCB. This pastor and his co-workers reprinted the PCB in 2011 and 2014. They tried to keep to the original work of the Peking Translation Committee by preserving every word of the Bible to the best of their abilities, making only some necessary changes concerning punctuation. For instance, they made a distinction between the male and the female in the choice of words used, which was not distinguished in the original. They also changed the PCB's complex Chinese characters (繁体字) into simplified Chinese (简体字).

Evaluation of the Peking Committee Bible

The Bible exhorts believers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). That faith which has been delivered unto the saints is the objective faith—the Written Word, the Holy Scriptures which was given by the inspiration of God, and has the power to make one wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 3:15–17).

It is important that we have the perfectly inspired and perfectly preserved Scripture for the salvation and blessing of our soul. However, having the perfectly inspired and perfectly preserved Scripture in our hands is not enough if we are not able to read the perfectly inspired and preserved Scriptures in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. A translation is, therefore, necessary to help one to read God's Word in his vernacular tongue, so that he too may know God and God's will for him. It must

be a faithful translation, translated from a faithful source using faithful methods by faithful men of God.

Among the many Chinese translations which provide Chinese Christians God's Word in their own language to read and to study, the PCB can be considered one of the best translations available today. However, one cannot simply assume that it is *the* best of all the translations without putting it under a proper and thorough examination. Like all translations, it should also be scrutinised objectively by considering the Text that it uses, as well as its translators, translation technique and the theology guiding the translation work. This chapter will, therefore, focus on the evaluation of the PCB by using the four 'T's, namely Text, Translators, Technique, and Theology.

Text

The text used in the translation of God's Word is extremely important. This is because a corrupt or an inferior text cannot bring about a faithful translation of superior quality. As the Lord Jesus has said, "every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt 7:17–18). The same principle applies to the use of the Text in the work of translation. The trustworthiness of the text from which the PCB was translated is crucial. It was the text used and authorized by the Lord Jesus Himself (Matt 4:4; 5:17–18; Luke 24:27, 44).¹¹ The Hebrew MT is the underlying text of the KJV as well as the PCB.

The most trustworthy Greek TR is used in the translation of the PCB. The TR has been received as infallible Scripture by God's people throughout the ages. It is the best printed representation of the Byzantine manuscripts which were used by numerous Church Fathers in the early centuries. The TR was compiled from a number of Byzantine manuscripts by numerous editors from the early 1500s, viz Erasmus, Stephens, Beza, the Elzevir brothers, Mill and Scrivener. These editions differ slightly from one another but still are regarded as the same basic text. It is the text underlying the Reformation Bibles like the KJV.¹²

Many of the modern scholars promote the WH text which is based on the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus underlying most if not all of the modern translations. Note that editors WH were founders of a ghostly guild and followers of the heresies of Evolutionism, Freudianism and Romanism.¹³

They had erroneously thought that since the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are the earliest manuscripts, they must be the most accurate and trustworthy ones. Contrary to what they had thought, these manuscripts are the most corrupt. Dean Burgon, having examined the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, declared both manuscripts to be among the “most scandalously corrupt ... most shamefully mutilated ... depositories of the largest amount of fabricated readings, ancient blunders, and intentional perversions of Truth — which are discoverable in any known copies of the Word of God.”¹⁴

The PCB is thus a superior translation because of its superior Hebrew and Greek texts.

Translators

The spiritual and literary qualifications of the translators play a very important role in translating the Bible. The work of translating the Bible is no ordinary task. It is different from all other works of translation. This is because the Bible is a divine and spiritual Book, and it is the Book of books. The words found in the Holy Scriptures are given directly by God through inspiration. One must acknowledge that the work of translating the Holy Scriptures is a spiritual work, and must therefore, require translators to be, first of all, men indwelt by the Spirit and possessing spiritual qualities. The translators must be born again, and live a godly and pious life. Unclean vessels are unworthy of God’s holy work.

Besides the spiritual qualifications, the translators must be very skillful and proficient in both source languages (ie the language that is to be translated), as well as the target language (ie the language in which the text is translated to). They must master these languages well to take on the important task of translating God’s Word faithfully and accurately. In the translation of the PCB, it involves not only the languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, it also involves the Chinese language. Having a good proficiency of languages is extremely important. They must be able to convey the exact and precise meaning of the original languages into the Chinese language. At the same time, the translation that they produce must be clear, understandable, accurate, and beautiful. This writer will evaluate the translators of the PCB in this section with these points in mind.

The PCB was translated mainly by five missionaries in the Peking committee, namely Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, John Shaw Burdon, Henry Blodget, William Alexander Parsons Martin, and Joseph Edkins.

Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky

Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky was the chief figure in the translation work of the PCB. He was born in Tauroggen, Russian Lithuania, and learned his original languages under his mentor Samuel H Turner in General Theological Seminary in America. He went to Shanghai in December 1859, and was ordained to the priesthood in a mission school chapel, later known as the Church of Our Saviour.¹⁵

When Schereschewsky was in China, he was very closely involved in the work of translating the Bible (one in higher Chinese, one in lower Chinese and one in the common vernacular). His name was mentioned in the title page of several editions. Some of the editions were known as “Schereschewsky’s Translation”. This reveals his linguistic abilities.¹⁶

Schereschewsky was Hebrew by birth, which made him a very suitable candidate for the work of translating the OT from Hebrew. As a result of his studies in a Rabbinical school in Zhitomir, he became very well acquainted with the OT.¹⁷ He was greatly gifted in languages, and was able to understand the profound Chinese Classics after only two years in China. He was a man of great discipline, and was able to concentrate on his work of translating the Bible even when he was paralysed.

It was said that his Chinese translation of the OT shows two obvious aspects of his abilities: (1) He was extremely familiar with the contextual meanings of Scripture, and as such chose to preserve the actual meaning rather than any pet view popular at that time. (2) He had an excellent command of the Chinese language and employed idioms and sayings with ease. His co-labourer William Alexander Parsons Martin commented on his Chinese, “through successful study, he already become a Chinese. There is no one who can compare with him in speaking *Guanhua* in his time.”¹⁸

There is no doubt that Schereschewsky was a man fit for the task of translating God’s Word. He had the highest regard for the traditional Hebrew MT, and rejected the Septuagint and other spurious manuscripts popular in his day.¹⁹

John Shaw Burdon

John Shaw Burdon was a missionary, and a bishop of Victoria, Hongkong. He was a Chinese scholar, and he was very fervent in missions work in China. He was also heavily involved in ministering to different cities of China. As he was very proficient in the Chinese

language, he was called to join the work of translating the Bible into Chinese in September 1865.

Burdon had a very good command of Chinese. He also had a thorough understanding of the Chinese culture. This can be seen in an article he wrote in defence of the term *Tian Zhu* in the PCB. Besides the work of translating the Bible into Chinese, he together with Schereschewsky also translated the Book of Common Prayer.

Burdon had also attained a very high level of proficiency in the original languages. Although he may not have the help of the advanced technologies that missionaries have today, he was able to accomplish much more work than many others. His mastery of languages qualified him highly for the work of translation.²⁰

Henry Blodget

Henry Blodget was also a learned man. Although his Chinese was not as good as Schereschewsky, he was still able to communicate with the native Chinese very well. He had no difficulty in preaching in *Guan Hua*, and the people could understand his Chinese without any problem.²¹ He had translated numerous Chinese literature, including a hymnal. He had a desire to translate the Bible into the Chinese, but could not carry it out until he joined the Peking Committee. His piety and proficiency in languages would make him qualified for the work he would do in the translation Committee.

Having a very good understanding of the Chinese language and culture, Blodget was the one who convinced Schereschewsky that *Tian Zhu* was the best term for the name of God.²² He was able to present convincing arguments with grace and was able to bring the entire Committee into agreement with him.

Joseph Edkins

Joseph Edkins was born into a pious Christian family, and his father was a pastor. After his ordination as a pastor in 1847, the London Missionary Society sent him to China, where he spent 57 years as a missionary. Out of 57 years, 30 years were spent in Beijing, the capital city. He was an adventurous pioneer evangelist, translator, philologist, and author. He was also an expert in the Chinese language, culture, and religions.²³ Not only was he very gifted in languages, he was also well versed in Chinese literature. He wrote many books, most notable

of which were *A Vocabulary of the Shanghai Dialect*, *A Grammar of Colloquial Chinese*, *Introduction to the Study of Chinese Characters*, and *The Evolution of the Chinese Language*.²⁴

Not only did Edkins master the Chinese language, he also learned well the English, French, German, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, and Korean languages.²⁵ He was also actively preaching God's Word in different provinces. He had a very high view of God's Word. Out of all his literary contributions, his most outstanding work is the translation of the Chinese Bible. He was involved in two Chinese translations of the Bible, one of which was the PCB, and the other is the *Shen Wen Li* version. The former had greatly influenced the Chinese Christians in mainland China.

William Alexander Parsons Martin

The last of the five translators in the Committee is William Alexander Parsons Martin. Martin was born in Indiana, and was the son of an evangelical Presbyterian pastor. Having learned of missionary work in China through reports from missionaries in 1845, Martin decided to go to China as a missionary. In 1849, he applied to the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board, and was ordained a teaching elder in the Presbyterian church. The same year he and his wife joined other Presbyterian missionaries in Ningbo.

Martin and his wife lived among the people as he desired to be near them. He criticised missionaries who stayed in big houses far away from the people, who had no genuine concern for the people. He was engaged in the work of preaching and teaching in churches and schools. He spoke to large numbers, even to the educated ones. He spent a lot of time writing and translating a variety of books and pamphlets. When Martin was serving in Ningbo, he participated in the translation of the NT into colloquial Ningbo language.²⁶

Martin was considered the most influential missionary in China because of his contribution in many areas, so much so that he got the attention of the high officials and the educated scholars who recognized his language ability. He was editor of the *Peking Scientific Magazine* which was published in Chinese from 1875 till 1878. He also published quite a number of books in the Chinese language.²⁷

When Martin was stationed in Beijing, he joined the PCB team to translate the Bible to *Guan Hua*. However, due to his other commitments

and duties, he did not contribute much. He mainly worked on translating the Gospel of John and in collaborative work with the other committee members. Nevertheless, it has been observed that Martin's support of the PCB was evidence that the Committee did not produce a "second-rate" translation, but a real "Chinese" translation.²⁸

All those five missionaries in the PCB were spiritual men who had devoted themselves fully to the work of the Lord in China. They were highly qualified men in terms of their linguistic and spiritual qualities. In terms of their mastery of the Chinese language, none was better than them in those days. In fact, few missionaries could attain such high level of proficiency as them. The PCB which they had translated was such a superior translation that it set a foundation for all subsequent translations, even the Union Bible. It was said,

The Committee unanimously agreed to use the same source manuscripts that underlie the KJV: The committee comprised men who all spoke Chinese (classical and vernacular), understood Hebrew and Greek, and were fluent in English, which would have assured they were not ignorant of the common threats of the day, such as German Higher Criticism: Their work, unlike many other translations, was not criticized by native speakers, but was rather lauded as a literary masterpiece. The Chinese authors Ba Jin, Hu Shi, and Lu Xun, all refer to this Bible positively: Their work produced fruit during some of the most trying times, especially during the Boxer Rebellion: Their volume was honest, their footnotes always showed any alternative translation, and had never corrected the manuscripts that underlie their work.²⁹

Every member in the Committee of the PCB was greatly used by the Lord. They also had the assistance of Chinese brethren in their translation work, who worked alongside them. Their goal was to bring God's Word to the Chinese, and thereby bring the way of salvation to the Chinese. Their work is worthy of honour.

Technique

Both texts and translators are very important factors in determining the quality of a translation. The five members in the translation Committee of the PCB were highly qualified for the work. However, the technique adopted for the translation work is also very crucial. Without a proper technique or method in translating the Bible, an inferior translation might result. Every translator in the Committee was

in charge of translating certain books. The entire OT was translated by Schereschewsky himself, and published in 1875.³⁰ The Gospel of John was mainly translated by Martin.³¹ The rest of the NT was translated by Bodger, Edkins, and Burdon.

Although these five missionaries were each proficient in their linguistic skills, they did not check each other's translation. The lack of a cross-checking could be due to manpower and language constraints. This has resulted in certain verses not translated accurately. The following are some examples of these inaccuracies found in the PCB:

John 20:26

TR: Καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας **ὀκτώ** πάλιν ἦσαν ἔσω οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ Θωμᾶς μετ' αὐτῶν· ἔρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων, καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον, καὶ εἶπεν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.

KJV: And after **eight** days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

PCB: 了七日、门徒又在屋里、多玛也在那里、门关了。耶稣来站在当中说、愿你们平安。

The Greek word ὀκτώ means “eight”; in Chinese (C), 八. This is retained even in the WH text. However, the PCB translators translated this word as “seven” (七). This was an obvious translation mistake and is unacceptable.

Mark 4:14

TR: Ὁ σπείρων, **τὸν λόγον σπείρει·**

KJV: The sower **soweth the word.**

PCB: 撒种的就是传道的人。

The phrase τὸν λόγον σπείρει in Greek means one sows the word; in C, 一个人撒道. The PCB translators had translated it as “a preacher/one that preaches the word” (撒种的就是传道的人). This phrase is an interpretation and not a translation of the original text. Although the interpretation is not wrong doctrinally, it is not how the Greek reads. The literal translation is “the sower is sowing the word”. The sower of course is the preacher, but this is best left to the commentator or expositor to explain its meaning or application.

John 21:15

TR: Ὅτε οὖν ἤρισθησαν, λέγει τῷ Σίμωνι Πέτρῳ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Σίμων Ἰωνᾶ, ἀγαπᾷς με πλεῖον **τούτων**; Λέγει αὐτῷ, Ναὶ Κύριε· σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε. Λέγει αὐτῷ, Βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου.

KJV: when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than **these**? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

PCB: 人吃完了、耶稣对西门彼得说、约拿的儿子西门、你比**这些人**更爱我么。彼得说、主、是的、你知道我爱你了。耶稣对他说、你喂养我的小羊。

The Greek word *Τούτων* means “these” (people or things); in C, 这些 (人或事物). The PCB translated this word as “these people” (这些人). Grammatically, it is not wrong. However, in the context of John 21, it is possible that Jesus could be referring to things (ie, fish and fishing). Peter was a fisherman before Jesus called him, and he went back to fishing after Jesus’ death. When Jesus appeared to him at the shore of the sea of Tiberias to restore him, Jesus reminded Peter to love Him more than his earthly occupation or possessions. Following a literal translation of the original Greek word found in the TR, it should be translated as “these” (KJV), in C, 这些. This will make the translation accurate to the text, leaving the interpretation of whether “these” refers to people or things to the exegete.

Acts 18:10

TR: διότι **ἐγὼ εἰμι μετὰ σοῦ**, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπιθήσεται σοὶ τοῦ κακῶσαί σε, διότι λαὸς ἐστὶ μοι πολὺς ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ.

KJV: For **I am with thee**, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

PCB: **我必保佑你**、决没有人下手害你、因为在这城里、我有许多的民。

The clause *ἐγὼ εἰμι μετὰ σοῦ* literally means “I am with you”; in C, 我与你同在. The PCB has it as “I will protect you” (我必保佑你). Although the context may suggest this idea, but it is not what the text says. The phrase *ἐγὼ εἰμι μετὰ σοῦ* speaks of God’s presence. Presence may imply protection but not necessarily so. Even if God’s presence implies His protection, it is surely more than just that. It could also include

His assurance, His blessings, His grace etc. Again, a translation should remain a translation, and to leave the interpretation of what the text means to the exegete or expositor.

In Romans 15:33, the clause $\acute{\omicron}$ δὲ Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν (KJV: “Now the God of peace be with you all”) also speaks of the presence of the God of peace. The PCB translated it as “the God of peace shall protect you all” (愿赐平安的天主、保佑你们众人). Again this is a subjective interpretation, and not an objective translation of the original text.

There are many conjunctions, prepositions and personal pronouns that are not translated in the PCB, such as *therefore*, *for*, *but*, *and*, *yea*, *he*, *she*, *they* etc. Every word in the Holy Scriptures is the Word of God, and plays a very important part in each sentence. Translators might think that these words are not important, but it is not for them to decide whether they are important or not (cf. Rev 22:19).

It was said that the translators of the Peking Committee Bible were honest in their translation. They were careful in adding words to the original meaning for fluency of text or a clear definition of subject, and each time they did so, they would indicate the additional words that were not found in the original text in italics, which was also the pattern of the King James translators. This is commendable.

It is of no doubt that the PCB translators had extraordinary knowledge of the Chinese language. They had reached a peak in the study of Chinese linguistics that compelled them to use the most accurate words in their translation. However, if the method that they adopt in their translation is not the best, it will also affect the quality of the translation. The method that should be adopted for the translation of the Scriptures is the verbal and formal equivalence method which the KJV translators adopted. It is a word-for-word translation (ie translating the meanings of words and phrases in a more literal way) keeping literal fidelity.³² The literal translation transfers the linguistic form of the original to the translated language, whether or not this is the natural and most clearly understood form.³³ The grammatical and textual order of the language can thus be well retained in the use of such a technique.

The inaccuracies found in the PCB as seen above seem to suggest that the PCB translators had used the dynamic equivalence method of translation, which is a sense-for-sense instead of a word-for-word translation of the original text.³⁴ Although the literary style of the PCB is

excellent, it is still criticised for deviating too liberally from the original.³⁵ While the thoughts and concepts of the original languages of the Holy Scriptures are rightly conveyed in the PCB, it is nevertheless *not* a word-for-word translation that carries the meaning of the original Scriptures as literally as possible into the translated language. A proponent of the PCB once said, it is the concepts attributed to words that allow proper carriage of the Gospel message to the regions beyond.³⁶ It is possible that the PCB translators had adopted the dynamic equivalence method, at least in some portions of the PCB. That would explain why there are so many verses in the PCB that fail to follow the literal translation of the original Scripture.

The poor translation technique employed for certain parts of the PCB has affected its quality.

Theology

The last but not the least of the four ‘T’s in evaluating the PCB is its Theology. How is theology affected in Bible versions? D A Waite says in two ways: Either the *paraphrase* found in the versions causes doctrinal changes, or the basic *text* of the original language is in error.³⁷ The original texts of the PCB are the Hebrew MT and the Greek TR. These two basic texts of the PCB are the inspired and preserved texts and hence superior texts as discussed earlier.

Now, how does a paraphrase in a translation result in doctrinal changes? It must first be acknowledged that the majority of the doctrines of the NT have been well presented in the PCB. In fact, the PCB translators are to be commended for rightly translating 1 John 5:7, which is an important proof text on the doctrine of the Trinity. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (KJV); 在天上作见证的有三、就是父、与道、与圣灵。这三乃是一。(PCB). Most of the modern Chinese versions, including the CUV, have omitted this verse completely.

Although the PCB is translated from the best texts, there are some doctrines that have been affected due to poor or inaccurate translating

Doctrine of the Blood Atonement

Matthew 27:6

TR: οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς λαβόντες τὰ ἀργύρια εἶπον, Οὐκ ἔξεστι βαλεῖν αὐτὰ εἰς τὸν κορβανᾶν· ἐπεὶ **τιμὴ αἱμάτων** ἐστι.

KJV: And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is

not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is **the price of blood.**

PCB: 祭司长拾起银子来说、这是卖性命的价银、不可放在库里、

The phrase τιμὴ αἵματός means “the price of blood”; in C, 血价. The PCB translators rendered this phrase as “the price of life” (性命的价银). They have changed the meaning of the word αἵματός from blood to life. Blood can refer to life, but it does not necessarily mean that. There is a difference. The PCB translators have mistranslated the word αἵματός as life. Some modern English versions have the word “blood” removed from Bible, or replaced it with other words. The popular New International Version (NIV) is one such version.³⁸ The replacement of blood with life undermines the biblical understanding of the blood of Christ. It lends to John MacArthur’s erroneous teaching that it was not the literal blood of Jesus that saves, but His death, thinking that the blood merely means the taking away of life.³⁹ It must be affirmed that the blood of Jesus is powerful and effective for salvation. It must be emphasised that Christ’s atonement is not just the giving of His life and the shedding of His blood, the salvific qualities of His actual blood which is the blood of Him who is uniquely God and Man in one Person must be highlighted as well (Acts 20:28, 1 Pet 1:19).

Doctrine of Salvation

1 Timothy 6:19

TR: ἀποθησαυρίζοντας ἑαυτοῖς θεμέλιον καλὸν εἰς τὸ μέλλον, ἵνα ἐπιλάβωνται τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς.

KJV: **Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**

PCB: 如此、为自己积蓄善事作根基、预备将来可以得永生。

The verse ἀποθησαυρίζοντας ἑαυτοῖς θεμέλιον καλὸν εἰς τὸ μέλλον, ἵνα ἐπιλάβωνται τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς means “laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life”; in C, 为自己积成美好的根基、预备将来、叫他们持定永生. The PCB translators have translated this verse as “Therefore, store for yourselves good works as foundation, prepare to get salvation in the future.” This verse translated in the PCB gives the meaning that good works is required for a person to obtain salvation in the future. This wrong translation has resulted in a wrong teaching. Man can never obtain

salvation through good works. Ephesians 2:8–9 clearly states, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The phrases “not of yourselves” and “not of works” emphasise the truth that salvation is in no sense the work of man.⁴⁰

The PCB translators as Protestants surely did not intend to translate this verse in such a way that would suggest salvation by works. At any rate, whether it was intended or not, the verse is a gross mistranslation and thus unacceptable. Here is a suggested translation: 为自己积成美好的根基、预备将来、叫他们持定永生 which is the Chinese equivalent of what is translated in the KJV, which is faithful and accurate to the original text.

Doctrine of Inspiration of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16

TR: **πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος**, καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἔλεγχον, πρὸς ἐπανάρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ,

KJV: **All scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

PCB: **经都是天主所感动的人作的**、与训诲、督责、使人归正、教人学义等事、都是有益的、

The clause **πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος** means “All scripture is given by inspiration of God”; in C, 圣经都是神所默示的。In the PCB, it is translated as “All Scripture is given by men who were moved by God” (圣经都是天主所感动的人作的)。This is not an accurate translation. It is true that holy men were moved by God as His instruments to record His words. The Greek word for “inspiration of God” is **θεόπνευστος** (a biblical hapax).⁴¹ Literally it means “God-breathed.” It describes the Holy Scripture as the breath of God. The phrase **天主所感动的人** as used in the PCB gives a mistaken idea of biblical inspiration. Firstly, the word “men” is not in the original text. Secondly, it can be misconstrued that God is still moving men to write, and that Scripture is still incomplete. It is important to note that the verse speaks not of divinely inspired men but of divinely inspired *words*.

The abovementioned translation mistakes in the PCB which are not many have affected certain doctrines. If the PCB is to be recommended without reservation, corrections and improvements must be made.

Conclusion

The translation of the Holy Bible is different from any other translation work. The Bible is the very Word of God. Not only must the translators be spiritually born-again, they must have the fear of God in their hearts to translate the Bible with great care and accuracy. They must know the source and target languages well, and employ the formal word-for-word method when translating God's Word to ensure all the words in the original text are translated with accuracy so that readers might be led to the path of righteousness. Thank God the Peking Committee members all agreed to use the Hebrew MT and Greek TR as their source texts. This is foundational for any translation.

After examining the PCB, the writer is amazed by the linguistic talent and skill of the translators. Although they were all foreigners, yet they love the people of China, and gave their lives to do God's work in China. They knew the Chinese language and culture so well and for the most part translated the Bible with accurate and precise terms which are understandable to the Chinese. The PCB was so good that it became the basis for subsequent Chinese versions, even the CUV.

Nevertheless, there are some obvious translational weaknesses in the PCB as shown above. This writer acknowledges his limitations. Although he has tried his best to improve on some of the verses, there is still more work to be done. The solution is not to translate a new Chinese Bible, but that God may raise up men and women of faith and ability who are fully devoted and committed to God and His Word to improve on this good old translation which is based on the good old inspired and preserved Hebrew and Greek texts so that the Chinese both in the Mainland and overseas can have the Bible in their hands, and hold it up with full assurance and say, "This is the Word of God!"

Notes

¹D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible: A Fourfold Superiority* (Collingswood: The Bible for Today, 1992).

²D A Waite, *Heresies of Westcott and Hort* (Collingswood: The Bible for Today, 1979), 15–37.

³Jeffrey Khoo, *KJV Questions and Answers* (Singapore: Bible Witness Literature Ministry, 2003), 40.

⁴David R Olson, "Chinese Writing." <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-writing> (accessed October 10, 2018).

⁵James Lane, "The 10 Most Spoken Languages in the World." <https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/the-10-most-spoken-languages-in-the-world> (accessed April 2, 2018).

⁶ Ding Guang-xun, ed. *A New Chinese-English Dictionary* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Company, 1985).

⁷ Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* (Hong Kong: International Society, 2002), 138.

⁸ Nicolas R Dunn, *1902 Peking Committee Bible: A Brief History and Explanation of Translation Including Defense of Terms Used and Clarification of Intent*. <https://jingweiben.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Explanation-of-Translation-1.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2018).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible: God's Word Kept Intact in English* (Collingswood: The Bible for Today, 1996), 34–5.

¹² Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages: Recapturing the Authorised Version and the Doctrine of Providential Preservation* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, 2001), 65–66. See also J W Burgon, *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels* (Collingswood: Dean Burgon Society, 1896), 69–122.

¹³ S H Tow, *Beyond Versions: A Biblical Perspective of Modern English Bibles* (Singapore: King James Productions, 1998), 114–115.

¹⁴ J W Burgon, *The Revision Revised: A Defense of the Authorized Version* (Collingswood: Dean Burgon Society, 1883), 1–110.

¹⁵ “Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Isaac_Joseph_Schereschewsky (accessed March 13, 2018).

¹⁶ “The Men Who Translated the Peking Committee Bible.” <https://pekingcommitteebible.com/articles> (accessed March 13, 2018).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Zetzsche, 144.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ John Burdon. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Burdon_\(bishop\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Burdon_(bishop)) (accessed April 3, 2018).

²¹ “The Men Who Translated the Peking Committee Bible.” <https://pekingcommitteebible.com/articles> (accessed April 3, 2018).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Laura Mason, “Joseph Edkin”. <http://www.bdconline.net/en/stories/e/edkins-joseph.php> (accessed March 13, 2018).

²⁴ “Joseph Edkins”. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Edkins (accessed April 3, 2018).

²⁵ Li Yading, Ai Yuese, “Joseph Edkins”. <http://www.bdconline.net/zh-hans/stories/by-person/a/ai-yuese.php> (accessed March 13, 2018).

²⁶ Martha Stockment, “William Alexander Parsons Martin”. <http://www.bdconline.net/en/stories/m/martin-william-alexander-parsons.php> (accessed March 14, 2018).

²⁷ “William Alexander Parsons Martin.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Alexander_Parsons_Martin (accessed March 14, 2018).

²⁸ “The Men Who Translated the Peking Committee Bible.” <https://pekingcommitteebible.com/article> (accessed March 14, 2018).

²⁹ “The Men Who Translated the Peking Committee Bible.” <https://pekingcommitteebible.com/articles> (accessed March 14, 2018).

³⁰ S I J Schereschewsky, *The Bible, Prayer Book, and Terms in Our China Missions*. <https://pekingcommitteebible.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Schereschewsky-on-Term-Question.pdf> (accessed March 14, 2018).

³¹ “The Men Who Translated the Peking Committee Bible.” <https://pekingcommitteebible.com/articles> (accessed March 14, 2018).

³² “Dynamic and Formal Equivalence.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynamic_and_formal_equivalence (accessed March 14, 2018).

³³ John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God with Scripture and Topical Indexes* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1988), 25.

³⁴ Dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence are terms coined by Eugene Nida, and they are two dissimilar translation approaches, achieving differing level of literalness between the source text and the target text, as employed in biblical translation. Dynamic equivalence is a sense-for-sense translation (translating the meanings of phrases or whole sentences) with readability in mind. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynamic_and_formal_equivalence (accessed March 14, 2018).

³⁵ Irene Eber, *The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible: S.I.J. Schereschewsky* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 1999), 181.

³⁶ Nicolas R Dunn, *1902 Peking Committee Bible: A Brief History and Explanation of Translation Including Defense of Terms Used and Clarification of Intent*. <https://jingweiben.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Explanation-of-Translation-1.pdf> (accessed January 10, 2018).

³⁷ Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 131.

³⁸ The NIV removed the word “blood” from many verses, eg. Matt 9:20, 16:17, Mark 5:25, 5:29, Luke 8:43, 8:44, Gal 1:16, John 1:13, and Acts 17:26, etc.

³⁹ John MacArthur, *Hebrews*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 237.

⁴⁰ Homer A Kent, *The Glory of the Church: Studies in Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody, 2005), 31.

⁴¹ George W Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 446.

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GREAT IN WHOSE EYES? REFLECTING ON THE MINISTRY OF THE LATE BILLY GRAHAM

Jeffrey Khoo

Billy Graham who died on 21 February 2018 is hailed by many as a “great Christian leader”. *The Straits Times* on February 23, 2018 featured two articles on Billy Graham; one of which was Joe Scarborough’s with this headline, “Today’s evangelicals could learn a lot from Billy Graham”. Scarborough was full of praise for Graham, he also mentioned that Graham has also been criticised by others. For pointing out the flaws and failings of Graham, he charges Graham’s critics for “a lack of grace”. But what does the Bible say about righting wrongs and correcting errors? Proverbs 27:6 says, “*Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*” We judge righteous judgement when we judge on the basis of God’s Law and Truth. Every shortcoming and transgression of mankind will be judged by God on the last day (Rev 20:11–13). However when a man repents and confesses his sins right now and believes in the Gospel of grace, God is gracious to forgive and cleanse (1 John 1:9).

Scarborough went on to lament the moral decline of evangelical leaders today. He says, “Dr Graham’s death leaves a void in a movement already shaken by the moral decline of its most prominent leaders. One can only hope that the great preacher’s passing will cause some in that community of faith to re-examine their priorities. Taking a closer look at Billy Graham’s example would be a good place to start.” He is right. Sexual scandals abound not only in the political and entertainment world, but also in the religious world. There is a moral decline today not only in Catholic but also in evangelical leadership. The moral decline in evangelicalism is really due to the abandoning of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith. This decline began in the mid-1900s, and Scarborough would do well to know that Billy Graham was party to it.¹

Is Billy Graham a good example of a great Christian leader? Many like Scarborough may think so. But what does Jesus think? Jesus tells us what

He thinks in Matthew 5:18–19, *“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. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matt 5:18–19). The greatness of a man is thus not measured by numbers, titles, awards, honours, or accolades by earthly presidents and princes, or by kings and queens, but by how faithful he is to the Lord Jesus Christ and how obedient he is to the Holy Scriptures.

Billy Graham is lauded by many and may be great in the eyes of the world, but let me share with you one that is truly great in the sight of God and who truly loved the Lord and suffered greatly for His sake. This humble and courageous Christian leader is none other than the late Rev Wang Ming Tao of China.

Wang Ming Tao (1900–1991) was one of China’s greatest saints. During the early years of his ministry at the Christian Tabernacle, Wang Ming Tao was already extremely unhappy over the spiritual state of the Chinese churches. He said, “I became ... aware of the darkness and corruption in the churches. I felt strongly that the church needed a revolution and that the mission to bring about a revolution was entrusted to me.” Wang Ming Tao, thus, spared no effort and minced no words in denouncing the hypocrisy of many so-called pastors “who simply regarded preaching as a means of earning a living. He labelled them as ‘regard-piety-as-the-path-to-profit’ preachers”. He further said, “To talk to people like this about reforming the church was like ‘asking a tiger for his skin’.” Many an unconverted pastor filled the pulpit. They ruin the faith of the people by teaching heresies. His ministry of warning was met with much opposition. He was extremely disliked by these false pastors. But Wang Ming Tao rather pleased God than man. He said, “I prefer to be attacked by men than to call forth the wrath of God”

Wang Ming Tao took an uncompromising stand when he refused to join the churches who sought Japanese help when the British and American missionary societies withdrew their support during World War II. He said, “By seeking help from the Japanese, the churches gave the Japanese an opportunity to use them. They (the leaders of the churches) should have looked only to God and not seek help from the Japanese”.

More importantly, “God had forbidden me to be yoked together with unbelievers. Many of the members of those churches had not yet truly

repented and believed; moreover there were even pastors who had never repented and believed. God would not allow me to be yoked together with them”.

Neither would Wang Ming Tao link himself with the “Three-Self Patriotic Movement” spearheaded by the Chinese Communists. He said, “I have strongly maintained that the church could not allow its activities to merge with worldly customs and that God’s workers cannot cooperate with false prophets and false teachers. I have always maintained that churches which stand for the truth ... cannot be affiliated with associations or groups that do not believe these truths.” For refusing to sign the communist Manifesto which contained a clause demanding that the church give unquestioning loyalty to the government, and render absolute obedience to the communist party, he was persecuted and sent to prison for 23 years.

He remained strong in spirit though weak in body during his final years. He did not budge an inch in his conviction that the church must remain separate from all forms of unbelief and apostasy. One evidence of his separatist stand was his refusal to entertain Billy Graham when he was in China. Graham’s visit to China was hosted by the communist-controlled China Christian Council (CCC). The American evangelist’s visit to Wang Ming Tao, according to analysts, “made the evangelist acceptable in the eyes of many house-church leaders and could cast the evangelist as a bridge-builder between the CCC and the independents”²

What has Wang Ming Tao to say to this? How did he regard Graham’s visit? Did he compromise? The Rev Pang Kok Hiong who visited Wang Ming Tao and his wife in Shanghai in December 1988 asked him concerning Graham’s visit. The following is a translation of the interview:

Rev Pang: Recently, Billy Graham visited you. Did you invite him to come?

Pastor Wang: He wanted to see me, but I did not want to see him.

Rev Pang: Why?

Pastor Wang: Because if he comes, he would probably come as a guest of the “Three-Self” churches. That is why I was not willing to have any discussion with him. But one day, he came himself.

Rev Pang: You did not invite him to come?

Pastor Wang: I said I did not want him to come. This is because even if I did agree to see him, it would be very difficult to talk. He was invited by the “Three-Self” churches; that is why the situation was very difficult. But one day, he suddenly came with an interpreter.

Rev Pang: So, you do not support them?

Mrs Wang: That's right. Because of their visit, we were put into a very difficult position. At that time, we not only told them once or twice but three times not to come because ... those pastors, those who are close to him, are those who have betrayed the Lord. Before Billy Graham left, Wang Ming Tao admonished him with this verse from Revelation 2:10, "be thou faithful unto death."³

Clearly, Wang Ming Tao wanted no part in Billy Graham's compromise with those who had betrayed the Lord. 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17, 18 commands, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Leslie Lyall in his biography of Wang Ming Tao remarked that Wang spared no effort in warning Christians against the dangers of theological modernism in every form.⁴ Wang Ming Tao was a true Christian and defender of the faith right till the very end. He was indeed "faithful unto death" (Rev 2:10).⁵

Notes

¹ For an excellent historical account of this downslide, read Duke University Professor George M Marsden's *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Eerdmans, 1987). Read also Dr Harold Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible* (Zondervan, 1976) which is an inside story of the tragedy that happened in Fuller Seminary and the apostasy that followed. See also American Council of Christian Churches, "Statement on the Death of Billy Graham", <https://acc4truth.org/2018/02/23/statement-on-the-death-of-billy-graham> (accessed on October 4, 2018).

² "Billy Graham in China: Building Bridges," *Christianity Today*, June 17, 1988, 52.

³ Jeffrey Khoo, *Biblical Separation: Doctrine of Church Purification and Preservation* (Singapore: Bible Witness Literature / Reformation Banner, 2004), 83–5.

⁴ Leslie Lyall, *Three of China's Mighty Men* (Singapore: Agape Books, 1974)

⁵ Read Wang Ming Tao's autobiography, *A Stone Made Smooth*, trans Arthur Reynolds (Hants: Mayflower Christian Books, 1991).

The Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo is the Principal of Far Eastern Bible College and Pastor of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church.

College News

FEBC started its new academic term with a day of prayer on July 16, 2018. The Principal delivered the opening word by sharing with the students these three fundamental principles of success in biblical-theological scholarship: (1) The glory of God must be first and foremost in our mind and ultimate aim (Matt 6:33, Jer 45:5, 1 Cor 10:31, Mark 8:36), (2) Calvin's three rules of theology—"humility, humility, humility" must be constantly applied in the study of God's Word (Matt 16:24, Prov 15:33), and (3) remember Timothy Tow's adage, "Self help with God's help is the best help" (Phil 2:12, 3:14, 4:13).

Eight new full-time students joined us this semester—(1) Abigail Sarah George (India), (2) Jansel Lisman Dachi (Indonesia), (3) Melody Khong (Myanmar), (4) Nguyen Ngoc Thien Kim (Vietnam), (5) Petrus Germond Johson (Malaysia), (6) Timothy Tan (Singapore), (7) Thang Deih Piang Gideon (Myanmar), (8) Thessa Lagapa (Philippines). Six who had graduated have returned for further studies: (1) Cing Sian Lian (BTh), (2) Li Yahui (MDiv), (3) Maritus (MDiv), (4) Mega Tuti Mawarniat Zega (MDiv), (5) Murniwati Mendrofa (MDiv), (6) Samuel Joseph (ThM).

Total enrolment this semester (Jul–Nov 2018) is 595: 68 day students (fulltime: 46, part-time: 22), 303 students in the Basic Theology for Everyone (BTFE) night classes, and 224 distance learning students. **Students enrolled from these 15 countries:** Australia, China, England, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The lecturers/tutors and courses offered this semester are: **Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo:** Systematic Theology III (Soteriology), Calvin's Institutes I, Greek Exegesis I; **Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew:** Old Testament History III, Contemporary Theology I, Hebrew Reading I; **Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy:** Homiletics, Pastoral Theology, Lamentations; **Rev Stephen Khoo:** 2 Samuel; **Rev Dr Koa Keng Woo:** Bible Geography IV and Church Music II; **Rev Tan Kian Sing:** Galatians; **Mrs Ivy Tow:** Greek Elementary I; **Mrs Jemima Khoo:** Teaching Methods, Beginner Pianoforte; **Miss Carol Lee:** Youth Christian Education; **Dr Jose Lagapa:** New Testament Introduction; **Mr Clement Chew:** Hebrew Elementary I; **Mr Dennis Kablingue:** Greek Reading I; **Mrs Anne Lim:** English Intensive I; **Mrs Irene Lim:** English Intermediate I; and **Eld Han Soon Juan:** English Advanced I.

FEBC's 20th Holy Land Pilgrimage was conducted from November 18 to 30, 2018. Dr and Mrs Jeffrey Khoo led a total of 40 pilgrims on this study trip to Israel and Ethiopia. Students earn two credits when they submit a research project after the trip. Flying Ethiopian Airlines, the pilgrims took advantage of a lengthy stopover to visit FEBC alumni Ephrem Chiracho and Engida Tefera and the work of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Missions Church in Ethiopia.

FEBC alumnus David Im Seong Ho (BTh 92, MRE 98), Director of Korean International Seamen's Mission (Inchon) visited the College in October 2018. Here is a photo of him flanked by the Matron Ivy Tow and Principal Jeffrey Khoo.



Dr & Mrs Jeffrey Khoo with Dr & Mrs Jose Lagapa and children (Theya, Thessa, Biboy) visited Dr Robert Kluttz of Hokkaido Bible Centre (Sapporo, Japan) from 26 June to 4 July 2018. FEBC student Tadahito Yamazaki was there to guide us around. Dr Kluttz has been a missionary to Japan since 1953. He is now 92 years old and still in active service. He is a good friend of FEBC. Here is his letter to us in Singapore dated 3 July 2018:

Dear Singaporean Brethren,

Many thanks for your generous gift for continuation of the ministry in Hokkaido. We don't get many like that—so all the more appreciated. Not able to get out and around as before (publicly and house-to-house) but mostly limited to personal witness on a one-to-one basis with daily

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**Missionary Dr Robert Kluttz (3rd from right) of Hokkaido Bible Centre, Sapporo, Japan
After the Lord's Day Service at the Ambition Pavillion, Hokkaido University, 1 July 2018**