



# The Burning Bush

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# THE BURNING BUSH

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## **“SET FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL”**

S H Tow

### **Text: Philippians 1:12-17**

On this day of holy Convocation, the twenty-sixth, convened for the conferment of letters, may all honour, praise, and thanksgiving be unto our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. To our graduating students, during your time at this College, your teachers have equipped you with the necessary tools for the unfinished task, the furtherance and defence of the Gospel. May you go forth into your respective mission fields not by might of man, nor by power of intellect, but by the Spirit of God, to win precious souls for God’s everlasting Kingdom.

For your example and encouragement, I have chosen the writer of the Epistle to the Philippians. From his Roman prison cell he declares his unflinching resolve to press on with the Gospel work, committed to him by the Lord himself on the road to Damascus, to bear His name before Gentiles and kings and to suffer great things for His name’s sake (Acts 9:15-16).

The Apostle was no stranger to suffering and persecution. His arrest and imprisonment was a discouragement to the church, but not to Paul. He reckoned that the things which happened had fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel (Phil 1:12). To the bondservant of Jesus Christ, only one thing mattered: the Gospel. Recall that Paul had come to Rome by way of Jerusalem, gripped by an unshakeable resolve: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

Now in prison he wrote, with joyful confidence “... in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:20-21).

From the day that the Lord appeared to him, and called him, he was enrolled in the school of the Holy Spirit to be thoroughly instructed, and equipped for the task ahead. In the Spirit he learnt new truths and eternal values, and to appreciate the everlasting worth of the Gospel, and the inspired, inerrant, invincible Word of God. Henceforth he would serve the ever living Author of that Word for the rest of this earthly life without reserve. Having the Lord, he had found his all in all. Hence he could write: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil 3:7-8).

Toward the end of his ministry, he wrote “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim 4:6-8). Death was an ever looming prospect, drawing nearer by the day. But to Paul – and to every fully committed servant of the Gospel – to be “absent from the body,” is to be “present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8), a glorious and welcome prospect. Shortly after, Paul’s earthly life was snuffed out by Nero’s sword, but his letters remain and the light of the Gospel burnt on. Even through the thousand years of the Dark Ages, it was not altogether extinguished.

### **John Wycliffe**

A thousand and three hundred years after Paul, God raised another man of faith, John Wycliffe of Oxford University, England. He was the Morning Star of the Reformation.

England was in darkness without the Word. People were at the mercy of a corrupt priesthood. John Wycliffe caught the vision: his people needed the light of God’s Word. He set himself to translate the Bible from Latin into English so that ordinary men and women could read God’s Word for themselves. Without the Word of life, souls would forever be lost.

Those were the days before printing was discovered. It took one man 10 months to make a copy of the Bible. Wycliffe gathered young men, fired them with the same zeal for souls. Then he taught them four things:

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- (1) He taught them how to live honestly, humbly and honourably, to work hard and never to beg or become a parasite.
- (2) He taught them the Word, the Gospel message, and how to refute the priests and their false teachings.
- (3) He taught them to reproduce, to commit the Word to faithful men who would be able to teach others and to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:2-3).
- (4) Finally, he taught them how to die. Imagine hundreds of young men converted by the preaching of John Wycliffe, who willingly offered themselves for training, being told that the end result of that training was the prospect of death – being bound to the stake and burnt alive, for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In the years following, hundreds of Lollard preacher boys endured the flames, with Wycliffe Bibles hung from their necks. But the glory of the Gospel was stronger than the fire of Rome. Wycliffe’s teaching and his English Bible spread throughout England, and even up to Switzerland and Prague, where Lollard preachers became a thorn in the side of Rome. His influence was such that it was felt for over 100 years after his death!

“They loved not their lives unto the death.” (Rev 12:11)

### **William Tyndale**

A hundred and forty years after Wycliffe, God raised William Tyndale of Cambridge and Oxford Universities, a genius of language. With consuming love of the Word, he gave his life to the translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into his native English. By 1525, 18,000 copies of the New Testament had come off the press. England was aflame with the Word of life.

But the long arm of the Church caught up with him and Tyndale was burnt at the stake near Brussels in 1536. But by then he had translated the bulk of the Old Testament. Our King James Bible (1611) is “80 per cent Tyndale.” How great a debt do we owe to Tyndale!

Heroes of the faith like the Apostle Paul, John Wycliffe and William Tyndale (and John Rogers who took up the work after Tyndale, to suffer the same fate at the stake in 1555) leave us a legacy: the Gospel is worth more than life itself. The pain of death by fire did not quench the flame of love of the truth which burnt on in the hearts of God’s people. By the

lives and deaths of these and thousands more who willingly went to their deaths, we have an indestructible heritage.

The same Roman power which condemned unnumbered thousands of men and women to “fire, dungeon, and sword” has now extended beyond the boundaries of Europe to the ends of the earth. Its message might send a chill down the spine of those who hold fast to the Word of God. Consider these words from the Pope’s Twelfth Encyclical Letter:

(1) “... the Catholic Church affirms that the office of the Bishop of Rome corresponds to the will of Christ ...”

(2) “... leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another keeping before us only the will of Christ ...”

(3) “The Catholic Church ... holds that the communion of the particular Churches with the Church of Rome ... is – in God’s plan – an essential requisite of full and visible communion.”

(4) “... lack of unity among Christians contradicts the truth which Christians have the mission to spread and, consequently, it gravely damages their witness.”

(5) “A Christian Community ... full and visible unity ... is ... an imperative which admits of no exception ... Ecumenism is ... for all humanity; to stand in the way ... is an offence against ... his plan to gather all people in Christ.” (Excerpts from *Ut Unum Sint*, 12<sup>th</sup> Encyclical Letter by the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II in *Catholic International* 6/8 [1995]: 394-395. See [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25051995\\_ut-unum-sint\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html)).

The same power which sent preachers of the Gospel to their death – the Apostle Paul, John Wycliffe’s Lollards, William Tyndale, John Rogers, and countless other martyrs of the Reformation and Inquisition has declared: *all Churches must return to the Roman fold. Not to do so is to oppose “God’s plan” and the “will of Christ.” The imperative to return to “full and visible unity is an imperative which admits of no exception.”*

The instruments for judicial enforcement are in place: in the EU Parliament, the UN and the International Court.

Truly the perilous times spoken by Paul (2 Tim 3:1) are upon us. But the Comforter of promise, the One who sustained Paul and enabled him to say, “... none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto

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myself,” and from his prison cell to declare, “I am set for the defence of the gospel” – He is with us and abides in us for ever.

Are we troubled? Alarmed? Dismayed? Can we press on and persevere in the gospel work, to fight the good fight, to finish our course, and to keep the faith, come what may? This question you must ask yourself. God help us.

May the Apostle’s words bolster our spirits: “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Tim 4:18). Also, the words of John: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Finally, may our Lord’s words from heaven allay any anxious thoughts: “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev 1:17-18). All power is with our Lord Jesus, not with any man. Amen. And we are set for the defence of the gospel till He comes.

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*Dr S H Tow is senior pastor of Calvary Bible-Presbyterian Church.  
The above message was delivered at the 26<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service of  
the Far Eastern Bible College, May 13, 2001.*

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## **IS MODERN TECHNOLOGY A THREAT TO CHRISTIANITY?**

Charles Seet

There is no doubt that modern technology is an issue that you and I will have to face in this new era. The world is changing at a rapid pace. All around us we hear of new developments in technology: Microelectronics, cybernetics and artificial intelligence – perhaps very soon computers will not need people to programme them, since they will be able to programme themselves and correct their own errors! Communications have reached such a high level through the use of the internet and email that E-commerce is fast becoming the defined standard for all commerce and business. People are already anticipating the day when the world will become one big market and all the world's trading houses and exchanges will be consolidated into two or three (Europe, America and Asia) in which large volumes of trade will take place at a dizzying rate!

Another realm where modern technology is rapidly growing is biotechnology – the application of technology to medical science. You have probably heard of the use of laser technology in surgery, the gamma knife, which can destroy lesions in the brain as small as the size of a pea, and can do it without affecting the surrounding healthy tissues. Medical technology has made such progress. The genetic DNA code is now being decoded. Some scientists even believe that we are close to discovering the secret of immortality – and those who have the means will be able to prolong their own life indefinitely. Soon, parents-to-be may be able to design their own children – to choose the sex of the child that will be born to them, as well as all the physical features such as the colour of their children's hair and eyes!

Babies may soon be born with built-in immunity to all kinds of diseases, and hence will not need to go through the tedious and painful immunisation process we all had to go through! It is claimed that diseases

like high blood pressure, diabetes and even cancer will be eliminated. Out of all this, a perfect race of people who are strong, healthy and intelligent can be genetically constructed by combining the best features of every race.

Lately we have been hearing of things like: Genetic Screening, Genetic Therapy, Eugenics, Genetic Engineering, Nuclear Transplantation, Egg Fusion, cloning of organs and human beings, prenatal diagnosis, and in-utero fetal surgery. Just a few weeks ago it was announced that man now even has the technology to create life! Therefore the first principle we need to know is:

**We Should be Cautious Not to Accept Every Option that Modern Technology Makes Available to Us**

The fact is: Modern Technology is proceeding at such a rapid rate that it is presenting society with more options than we can handle. Things which were never issues before simply because they were impossible, have suddenly become issues today. And one danger we face is that these increased options we have may cause us to trespass into forbidden territory – To break God’s commandments or to usurp prerogatives that belong to God alone.

Hence, Christians must not accept the fruits of technology uncritically. We must keep a close watch on the ethical issues raised by these technological advances, and not allow ourselves to be carried away by the tide of progress. For example, we must reject any new technique of child-bearing that does not involve the union of cells from a living man and a living woman who are married to each other. This includes in-vitro fertilisation that uses an unknown donor’s cells. This must be considered to be immoral, violating the seventh commandment.

We must also oppose any technique of cloning a human being from one other human being. This bypasses God’s sacred institution of marriage and family life and thus it diminishes the fifth commandment. We must also oppose any efforts of technology to breed a superior race of perfect people.

The world has seen the horrible implications of this during the Second World War in Hitler’s attempt to breed a pure race to rule the world. This clearly violates the biblical principle that all human beings are equal in God’s sight.

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Let us remember that Technology is a double-edged sword, which cuts both ways. It can accomplish much that is good, but in the wrong hands, it can accomplish much evil! For example, we all know that nuclear technology can be used to generate enough electricity for whole cities, and also to diagnose and treat illnesses through medical radiology. But it can also be used to destroy whole cities and incapacitate people who are exposed to radioactivity.

One danger associated with new options made available by modern technology is that in a humanistic and utilitarian framework, children will be treated as commodities that differ in value and dignity according to some measure of perfection. J Kerby Anderson, a Christian scientist wrote,

Like any technology, it can bear both good and bad fruits. Christians must seek to bring a careful critique to this growing area of science ... "We cannot expect people who do not accept the notion of human sinfulness ... to protect society from disaster. Christians must participate in the policy-making process. If Christians are not involved, then disaster is imminent ... We must seek His wisdom as we travel down the dangerous path of the genetic age.

Thus, Christians must not be indifferent to the changes that are taking place in society through technology, but should speak out against certain unacceptable technological developments. But when we take such a stand, we must also be prepared to face strong reactions from the world. We may be ridiculed and labeled as Obscurantists, Spoilsports, and Killjoys and be reviled for trying to stop man's progress toward higher levels of perfection. Christians have often been accused of opposing science and hindering technology throughout history by superstitious ignorance.

When we utter words of caution against certain trends in technology, we must be prepared to be accused of being like the church in 1632 when Galileo the Italian astronomer was put on trial and sentenced to life imprisonment for teaching that the sun did not revolve around the earth.

This and many other similar examples are used as excuses by the world at large today, to turn a deaf ear to the warnings given by God's people.

## **We Should Not be Totally Opposed to Modern Technology**

On the other hand, we must not become so skeptical about modern technology as to regard it as a worldly and sinful thing that we cannot touch at all. That would be going to the other extreme. There are some today who have a phobia for technology. They see it as a threat and an enemy to the church. In the eastern part of the United States there is a group of Christians who are like that – the Amish people.

They believe that since the scriptures command separation from the world, followers of Christ must therefore not use electricity, and not have radios, televisions, computers, cars or any machines. They still use horses and oxen for farming and oil lamps for light at night. They are opposed to technology, which to them, is part of the ungodly system of the world which will come under God's awful judgment.

Now there are others who may not go to the same extreme extent as the Amish people, but who claim that we must have absolutely nothing to do with computers, ATM machines, and cashless electronic payments, because these are all of the Antichrist! I have read one book that claims that the antichrist will be a computer! They may issue warnings against every new invention and innovation of modern technology because they see it as an idol or a modern Tower of Babel. Let us be careful not to swing to this extreme. Having seen the two extremes to avoid, let us now look at modern technology the way we should see it – from a biblical perspective.

## **We Should View Modern Technology from a Biblical Perspective**

What does the Bible have to say about technology? Firstly,

### **Technology is the Outcome of God's Mandate to Man**

We must understand that there is nothing inherently evil in the nature of technology. It is the natural outcome of the mandate which God gave to man in Genesis 1:27-28 – “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.”

And thus man has developed science and technology in response to God's commands to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion over creation. Science is man's attempt to observe, understand, and explain the operation of the universe and its inhabitants. Technology is the practical application of the knowledge gained by science for mankind's benefit, bringing portions of the universe under his control. We are stewards of all of God's creation, and as such we are responsible to Him for both the preservation and the productive use of all the world's resources to the benefit of man, and for the glory of God. This brings us to the second perspective of Technology from the Bible:

### **Technology is to be Used for Man's Benefit and for God's Glory**

The first technological feat recorded in the Bible is the building of the ark, a huge wooden structure that God commanded Noah to build. This ark benefited not only the human race but also all the species of air and land creatures that God had made. It also brought glory to God – manifesting His mercy and grace to sinful man. The next technological feat recorded in the Bible however, was designed only for man's benefit, and not for God's glory. The tower of Babel was built by men for the purpose of making a name for themselves. It was an attempt at self-glory and perhaps even self-deification. Thus, it fully deserved the curse of God. The last book of the Bible tells us that there will be another instance of this in the time of the Antichrist. And I believe that the Antichrist will use some aspects of technology for his own ends and not for God's glory (Rev 13:1-18). And therefore when he is finally revealed, Christians must be careful not to participate in his ungodly use of technology.

But there is nothing wrong with a godly use of technology. Do you know that some of the greatest advances of modern technology have been pioneered by godly men whose aim was both to benefit man and to glorify the Lord? Let us look at a few of them.

### **Blaise Pascal**

The first is Blaise Pascal, a Frenchman (1623-1662), who invented the first mechanical calculator, the syringe and the hydraulic press, and discovered many important principles of physics (e.g. Pascal's principle) and mathematics (still used by statisticians and insurance people today). He was a devout Christian who wrote this prayer:

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Almighty God, who gave your servant Blaise Pascal a great intellect, that he might explore the mysteries of your creation, and who kindled in his heart a love for you and a devotion to your service: Mercifully give us your servants, according to our various callings, gifts of excellence in body, mind, and will, and the grace to use them diligently and to your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

### **Samuel Morse**

Another godly pioneer of technology was Samuel Morse, an American, born in 1791, the son of a pastor. He invented the first long-distance communications system using electricity – known as the telegraph. It is interesting to note that in his first telegraphic message that Morse sent from Washington to Baltimore on May 24, 1844, he spelled out only four words: “What God hath wrought.” He did this in order to acknowledge before the whole world that this great step, which would revolutionise world communications, was a work of God because God constituted all matter in the form of electrons, but He left the likes of a Samuel Morse to figure out how to use those electrons to send messages.

### **Michael Faraday**

The third godly pioneer of technology we want to consider is Michael Faraday (1791-1867), an Englishman, who was described as a “deeply Christian man.” Faraday was a chemist, physicist and one of the greatest scientists. He was the one who developed the science of electricity, and became known as the “Father of Electronics.” He made this famous statement: “The book of nature which we have to read, is written by the finger of God.” Dr Bence Jones in his biography of Faraday, wrote: “His standard of duty was supernatural. It was formed entirely on what he held to be the revelation of the will of God in the written word, and throughout all his life his faith led him to act up to the the very letter of it.”

### **Benjamin Franklin**

A fourth well-known Christian pioneer of modern technology is Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), an American. He was a scientist, inventor, and statesman. And his inventions include: bifocal lenses, the metal cooking stove, the urinary catheter, the lightning conductor, and the odometer. Listen to what Franklin wrote in his autobiography: “And now

I speak of thanking God, I desire with all humility to acknowledge that I owe the mentioned happiness of my past life to His kind providence, which led me to the means I used and gave them success.”

The lives of these pioneers show us that modern technology is good and useful when it glorifies the Lord. And this is especially so when their inventions help to promote God’s work on earth, in things like missions, biblical archaeology, and Bible study. The ease of travel and communications which we enjoy today have facilitated the sending and supporting of missionaries.

Just look at the many mission trips that have been made by Lifers over the past year to far off countries like Cambodia, Vietnam, Brunei, Thailand and Myanmar. These were made in nice comfort in a matter of hours. In the days of the Apostle Paul, such trips would have taken days or weeks and were fraught with all kinds of dangers. Internet communication has made it possible to keep in constant touch with all our missionaries. Through their email accounts, we get not only reports and prayer requests but also pictures of the Lord’s work.

Perhaps the most important invention that has facilitated the Lord’s work on earth is the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1450. One of the first books to be printed on his printing press was the Bible. The invention of printing has been one of the greatest blessings to the Lord’s work. Everyone of us can now easily own a personal copy of God’s Holy Word and distribute copies of it to others. We can also have access to good Christian literature and articles through the printed page.

And now technology has also made it possible to have all that without having to buy shelves and shelves of voluminous books – simply by having an electronic library, and access to Christian websites. Our own church and Bible college website has plenty of useful information and resources. A person who is now a member of Life Church happened to find our church website one day, and as he read the articles posted there, he decided to visit our church. And when he came, he immediately felt that this was the church that the Lord was leading him to. He began to correspond with me by email, to clarify many questions he had on the Bible, and two months ago, he was received into church membership and is now actively involved in the Evangelistic Band Fellowship.

And thus we have seen two perspectives from the Bible about technology: Firstly, it is the outcome of God's mandate to man to subdue the earth. Secondly, it should be used both for man's benefit and for God's glory. Now we come to a third and important perspective we must have on modern technology:

**Technology Must Never Replace God as the Object of Our Trust**

Psalm 20:7 brings this out very well: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."

Chariots were one of the proud accomplishments of ancient technology and were used both in transport and warfare. No weapon was regarded in ancient wars to be more formidable than the chariot. And thus many kings and generals put their full trust in chariots to guarantee their victory. But the Bible presents at least two instances when chariots proved to be useless.

When the King of Egypt tried to pursue Israel with 600 chariots, he was defeated by the descending waters of the Red Sea (Exod 14:23-25). And when Sisera led his forces of 900 iron chariots against Israel in the Kishon valley, he was defeated by an untimely rain and flood. In both of these instances, Israel's trust in the Lord proved to be the source of their victory over their superior technologically-equipped enemies.

Therefore we must be careful not to have a misplaced trust. Our trust always be placed in God who will never fail us. Technology has been known to fail countless times because of human mistakes. The greatest demonstration of this is the millennium bug. This was due to the short-sightedness of a past generation of computer programmers who used only two digits to represent the data for the year. And while our present generation may accuse them of making such a silly mistake, the fact is, that we too are probably making mistakes in present technology that may have grave consequences on future generations!

Modern man mistakenly thinks that he does not need God anymore because he has now achieved a relatively high measure of security in life through technology. It has become like a god to him! The fact is that technology is not worthy of our trust because it is imperfect, and it will always remain imperfect, as long as man is imperfect. There are also definite limitations to what technology can accomplish, and we must not be held spellbound by the illusion of omnipotence that it sometimes has. For only God has unlimited power!

Thus, when we are faced with any problem in life, it is most important that we seek the Lord's help first, above whatever available technological solutions which are often costly. It is true that the Lord may choose to use technology to deliver us, just as He used the ark to deliver Noah, but without God, all the technology in the world cannot help us at all.

And let us be careful not to become addicted to technology, filling our lives with all the latest gadgets and devices that open up new experiences and possibilities for us. One of the disadvantages of living in a high-tech society is to get so carried away with constant exploring of all the wonderful things one can do with the latest upgrades and inventions on the market, that we have no time left for the things of God. While every additional piece of technological equipment is supposed to enable us to do more things, and to have more time, very often we may find ourselves spending too much time: in trying to learn how to use all the fascinating and sophisticated capabilities of each equipment, in maintaining them in good working condition, and in looking for the latest upgrades or enhancements for them!

It is ironical that with all the wonderful time-saving devices of our present age that are supposed to free us for more important things, people are spending less and less time with their families and friends, and have no time for God! Instead, young people are spending most of their time surfing the internet and creating their own webpages. And older people are spending more time listening to digital recordings and watching video CDs on their flat-screen TV. The temptation is for us to think: "Since I have already spent so much money on this thing, I really must get my money's worth out of it by using it and exploiting it fully." And then we make ourselves slaves to technology!

John Naisbitt, a social critic, in his *High Tech High Touch*, observed that we are trapped in a "Technologically Intoxicated Zone." He says that people today are "softened by the comforts technology brings to our lives, fascinated by its gadgetry, reliant on its constant companionship, addicted to its steady delivery of entertainment, and seduced by its promises."

What then should we do? We should always remember that modern technology is a good servant, but a terrible master. Therefore, we should make good use of technology as a tool for God's glory, and we should not let it use us and distract us away from God. Obey the Word of God, which

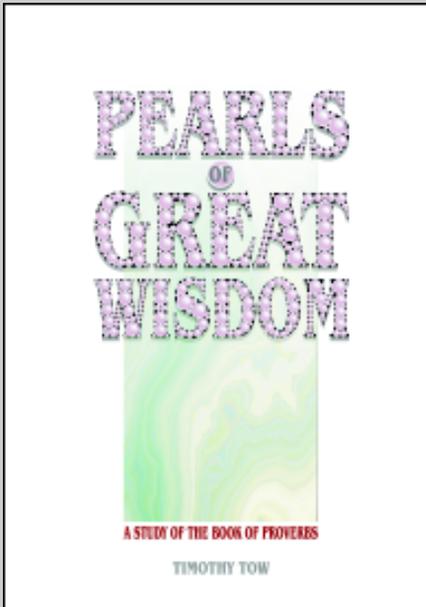
*IS MODERN TECHNOLOGY A THREAT TO CHRISTIANITY?*

is given in Colossians 3:1-2, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." May the Lord help us to do His will.

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	<p><b>Pearls of Great Wisdom: A Study of the Book of Proverbs</b></p>
<p>ISBN 981-04-2067-6 Price: \$6.00</p>	<p>"The Proverbs of Solomon, far from being a collection of sayings of the Hebrew people, are a crystallisation of the wisdom God has given him. They are divinely inspired and take their place among other books of the Bible. Hence they are justly called <i>Pearls of Great Wisdom</i>.</p> <p>"By his God-given wisdom, Solomon, with one stroke of his psychological sword, solved the case of the contending mothers. None of today's learned judges could have done that. Thus, wisdom is the principal thing. It is the key to all life's intricate problems. It is far above the price of rubies. It shines brighter than diamonds." <i>Rev Dr Timothy Tow</i></p>

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## **THE CHRISTIAN VIEW ON POKEMON AND HARRY POTTER**

Charlene Lim

### **On Pokemon**

#### **Introduction**

In a recent press release from the Vatican, the Pope formally gave his blessing on Pokemon, a game that has captivated the interest of millions of children worldwide. The game was described by the Pope as “full of inventive imagination,” based on “ties of intense friendship,” pushed players to think creatively to conquer challenges without violence, and was devoid of “harmful moral side effects.” Such praises, coupled with the cute and innocent-looking Pokemon creatures on the card games, will easily persuade all and sundry that the game is indeed beneficial to children. However, it needs to be pointed out that Pokemon contains strong occultic and anti-Christian elements with pernicious albeit insidious effects on the children. Since our only source of authority and yardstick is the Bible, I shall first discuss the biblical view on occult and other evil influences that Christians should eschew. Based on this starting point, I shall then show how Pokemon is occultic and evil in its sources, objectives, values, practices and tactics.

#### **What Does the Bible Say?**

Christians are clearly instructed to abhor that which is evil (Rom 12:9) and not to give the devil a foothold (Eph 4:27). We need to be vigilant and stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:11) who is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:8). We have to guard our action, speech and thought so that we can do all for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). Among the many forms of evil influences, one of the gravest sins is to dabble in the occult. In Deuteronomy 18:10-12, the Lord issues this warning:

## *THE CHRISTIAN VIEW ON POKEMON AND HARRY POTTER*

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Anyone who indulges in sorcery, wizardry and other occultic practices “wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger” (2 Kgs 21:6). The severity of this sin is seen in God’s judgement against the practitioners: “I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers” (Mal 3:5), “I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people” (Lev 20:6), and “shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them” (Lev 20:27). Knowing how sinful and subtle these evil influences can be, Christians must prove all things (1 Thess 5:21), be circumspect about how we occupy our minds (Prov 4:23) and subject every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5). Parents are especially responsible for training their children in the ways of the Lord (Prov 22:6, Deut 4:9-10) lest they become “a stubborn and rebellious generation (Ps 78: 8), “which knew not the Lord” and “did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim” (Judg 2: 10-11).

### **What is Pokemon?**

The modern day “Baalim” is Pokemon which has ensnared many children with its occultic and evil influences. First created in 1995 in Japan, Pokemon stands for “Pocket Monsters” which is a role-playing card game. There are altogether 150 Pokemons classified under 7 types which are 7 different “energies” (Grass, Fire, Water, Lightning, Psychic, Fighting and Colourless). The player plays the game by using his Pokemon to conquer other Pokemons with sorcery and violent means such as poisoning and slashing. The game also allows other Pokemons to “evolve” by summoning powers, and heal the wounded Pokemon fighters magically using “super potion.” We shall further examine Pokemon’s sources, objectives, values, practices and tactics to prove that they are antithetical to Christian principles.

### **Sources**

What is the origin of Pokemon and who is the maker of the game? Originated from Japan, Pokemon is highly influenced by Japanese

mysticism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Hinduism and New Age philosophies. For example, the concept of reincarnation is taught as individual Pokemons can “evolve” into more powerful creatures. A Pokemon Master (one who catches other Pokemons) is modeled after the martial arts masters in ancient Japan where victory was gained through violent extermination of their enemies. The maker of the game is “Wizards of the Coast,” the same company that produces “Magic: The Gathering” and “Dungeons and Dragons,” heavily occultic games for adults and teens.

### **Objectives**

The objectives are clearly spelt out in the Pokemon ditty as follows: “I will travel across the land, searching far and wide, each Pokemon to understand, the power that’s inside. Gotta catch them all!”

The New age influence is seen in the “power that is inside” each Pokemon, and since this is a role-playing game, the power is in turn possessed by the player himself. Rather than looking up to God who is the only source of power, Pokemon teaches the children that they can possess supernatural powers with the “energy card” that can make their Pokemon (and indirectly themselves) bigger and more powerful. Author and researcher Berit Kjos reports of an actual incident where a school boy, while discussing his Pokemons with his friends, proudly exclaimed: “I’ll just use my psychic powers.” The game maker also intends to get the children addicted to the game as they must “catch them all.” Hence this game can easily become an obsession; an idol which substitutes God in the hearts of the children.

### **Values and Practices**

More insidious are the occultic and anti-Christian values the children are unconsciously embracing in their obsession with the game. I have earlier pointed out that Pokemon shares the same producer as “Magic: The Gathering.” Indeed, a comparison of the two games will show that there are parallel similarities in promoting the occult. While Magic contains 3000-plus monsters with the adult players role-playing using sorcery, spells and witchcraft, Pokemon has 150 monsters with the children role-playing using magic and psychic powers. This is not far from actual occultism where real demons possess participants using the above mentioned methods of witchcraft and sorcery.

## *THE CHRISTIAN VIEW ON POKEMON AND HARRY POTTER*

Occultic spells disguised as innocuous Pokemon names are also printed on the cards. For example, two cards, “Abra” and “Kadabra” forms a well-known occultic word (Abrakadabra) which, according to Webster’s dictionary, is a “magic spell or formula,” “used in incantations.” There are also occultic symbols on Pokemon Kadabra such as the pentagram on his forehead and his Satanic salute with his left hand. The players are encouraged to “summon powers” using “stones” (thunder, water, moon, fire and leaf) in order to enable their Pokemons to “evolve” into something more powerful. As this is being done when the player role-plays, the child is unwittingly summoning the evil spirits. This has already been reported in the States: “He (a boy) told her (his mother) that during recess on the playground the children would “summon” the forces on the cards they collect by raising sticks into the air and saying “Spirits enter me.” They call it “being possessed.”

Another concern is that the Pokemon fan may proceed to other role-playing occultic games such as “Dungeons and Dragons” and consequently develops a curiosity and fetish in the occult. It is no secret that Pokemon websites have links to these sites as well as New Age sites. Researcher Rich Deem documents some of the ways in which Pokemon can open the door to demonic oppression: possession of occultic records, tapes, books, pictures, charms, tools and games, seeking or giving consent to occultic power or occultic revelation, fascination with occultic power, occultic revelation, or psychic phenomena, chanting or other occultic forms of worship etc.

The senseless use of violence, another anti-Christian value, is the only way for a Pokemon player to annihilate his enemies. These violent means include gnawing, slashing, smash kick, fire blast, seismic toss and electricity. How are “ties of intense friendship” promoted, as asserted by the Pope, when Pokemons like Weepinbell “spits out poison powder to immobilise the enemy, and then finishes the enemy with a spray of acid”? The propensity to violence only fills the mind of the child with violent thoughts and malice with a low regard for life, instead of friendship and love towards his neighbour.

Many anti-Christian values and practices are also transmitted when the Pokemon characters in the video games, comics, cartoons and movies glorify undesirable traits. For example, Ketchum is “too competitive,” Misty is “headstrong” and “stubborn,” Brock is “most hormonal” with his “fascination with the opposite sex,” Gary is “a real jerkself-centred,

vindictive and obnoxious,” and Jessie and James are “stuck up, fashion conscious, and prone to cross-dressing.” These are certainly not characteristics that we want to see in our children. Yet by constantly exposing themselves to these role models, the children may emulate them and forsake the correct values and practices established in the Bible.

## **Tactics**

Some people, including the Pope, may protest that Christians are over-reacting to the dangers of Pokemon as it is after all “only a game.” People who hold to this view are in fact not aware of the cunning strategy of Satan. The Bible describes Satan as “transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14) and reminds us that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against ... spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). This is guilefully used in Pokemon where the effects are subtle but deadly. The Pokemon maker deliberately blurs the line between reality and fantasy by describing the Pokemons as real. In the Pokemon booklet, it says:

But what is a Pokemon, you ask. “Pokemon are incredible creatures *that shares the world with humans,*” says Professor Oak, the leading authority on these monsters. There are currently 150 *documented* species of Pokemon ... Carry your Pokemon with you, and you’re ready for anything! *You’ve got the power in your hands, so use it!*

A child who role-plays and takes the game seriously (as millions do) could readily regard these Pokemons as real friendly monsters possessing magical powers. This explains why many are dabbling in occultic practices (using their psychic powers, summoning the powers) without realising the danger.

Another subtle tactic is to slowly manipulate the child psychologically to develop new habits and patterned responses to certain stimuli. This may ultimately result in a personality change and many parents have confirmed that their children’s interest in ordinary family life had withered away. Far from being “only a game,” Pokemon is a tool used by Satan to ensnare and lead children down the path of occult and sinful practices which are condemned by God.

## **Conclusion**

It is a tragic mistake for the Vatican to praise Pokemon as a game “without violence,” no “harmful moral side effects,” “full of inventive

imagination” and promoting “ties of intense friendship.” We have seen that the contrary is true. Pokemon contains occultic and anti-Christian sources, objectives, values, practices and tactics. May every discerning Christian do his part to sound the trumpet against the Baalim of modern day – Pokemon.

“Gotta *smash* them all!”

## On Harry Potter

### Introduction

It is irksome to allude parts of the story to some deeper, darker meaning and really ridiculous to accuse it of promoting witchcraft when it is all make-believe, just like cartoons (Danika Oh, *The Straits Times*, September 4, 2000).

The Harry Potter books stimulate the imagination of the readers, which is clearly much needed in Singapore (Kelvin Tan, *The Straits Times*, August 15, 2000).

Is religion not also about enchantment and magic? Is it not a belief in things not seen? (Kelly Fu, *The Straits Times*, August 16, 2000).

... develop courage, loyalty, and a willingness to sacrifice for one another – even at the risk of their lives. Not bad lessons in a self-centred world (Charles Colson, *Breakpoint* radio broadcast, November 2, 1999).

The above are some of the common comments defending Harry Potter in the media recently. A quick survey of the articles posted on the internet and letters written to the press will reveal that Harry Potter has more supporters than detractors. Sadly, many liberal Christians writing in publications such as *Christianity Today*, *World Magazine* and *The Christian Century* have publicly praised Harry Potter books and derided conservative Christians who have condemned the books. So are those Christians who speak out against Harry Potter a group of over-reacting, over-critical, myopic and book-bashing freaks? Any judgement made for or against Harry Potter must be based on the Bible which is our only source of authority and standard. I will first discuss the biblical view on occultic practices before proceeding to do a quick review of Harry Potter books. This will be followed by point-by-point rebuttals of the four major arguments listed above in defence of Harry Potter.

### **What Does the Bible Say?**

Christians are clearly instructed to abhor that which is evil (Rom 12:9) and not to give the devil a foothold (Eph 4:27). We need to be vigilant and stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:11) who is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:8). We have to guard our action, speech and thought so that we can do all for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). Among the many forms of evil influences, one of the gravest sins is to dabble in the occult. In Deuteronomy 18:10-12, the Lord issues this warning:

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Anyone who indulges in sorcery, wizardry and other occultic practices “wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger” (2 Kgs 21:6). The severity of this sin is seen in God’s judgement against the practitioners: “I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers” (Mal 3:5), “I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people” (Lev 20:6) and “shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them” (Lev 20:27). Knowing how sinful and subtle these evil influences can be, Christians must prove all things (1 Thess 5:21), be circumspect about how we occupy our minds (Prov 4:23) and subject every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5). Parents are especially responsible for training their children in the ways of the Lord (Prov 22:6, Deut 4:9-10) lest they become “a stubborn and rebellious generation (Ps 78: 8), “which knew not the LORD” and “did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim” (Judg 2:10-11).

### **What is “Harry Potter” About?**

It is a series of four out of seven books written by J K Rowling which have sold more than 40 millions copies to date. Harry Potter, as the protagonist, is an orphaned wizard brought up by abusive “muggles” or non-wizards. The books chronicle his adventures in the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry where he and his friends meet all kinds of supernatural and mythical creatures such as wicked wizards, ghosts, spirits, goblins, elves and flesh-eating giant spiders. Being wizards and

## THE CHRISTIAN VIEW ON POKEMON AND HARRY POTTER

witches, Harry and his coterie constantly use spells, magic, charms, potions and other occultic practices to get their way. Although the above are written in an entertaining and riveting fashion, it is palpable that the author is promoting witchcraft and other occultic influences which are explicitly condemned in the Bible. A quick survey of the four books will reveal many occultic and anti-Christian elements throughout Rowling's writings.

In the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Rowling reverses reality by presenting wizards and witches as normal, morally upright and superior while non-wizards and non-witches (the "muggles") are generally abnormal, cruel and unscrupulous. Harry and his parents were the nice wizards/witch misunderstood and ostracised by their non-wizard relatives, the Dursley family. Mr Dursley is described as having "hardly any neck" and their spoilt son a "pig with a wig." Harry was informed by a fellow wizard that "Yer mum an' dad were as good a witch an' wizard as I ever knew. Head Boy an' Girl at Hogwarts in their day!" Such glorification of wizards and witches is further perpetuated in the highly respected, popular, powerful and kind headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, of the school of witchcraft and wizardry that Harry attends. His credentials include "First Class Grand Sorcerer," "Chief Warlock" and "International Conference of Wizards," professions (sorcerer, warlock, wizard) which are abominable before God. Anti-family value is subtly advocated as Harry is abused and unhappy in his adopted home of the Dursleys which, with self-serving parents and an over-indulgent and obnoxious son, is far from being the ideal family unit. More insidious is Rowling's blurring the line between good and bad. While the Bible unequivocally censures all wizards and witches, the author identifies some of them as good, being guided by their own code of ethics from the "Improper Use of Magic Office," while others have gone bad. The chief evil wizard is Voldemort who is the villain of the story and the archenemy of Harry Potter. By doing so, the reader is led to sympathise with Harry and all the good wizards and witches and concludes that witchcraft and wizardry are not always bad. Traces of violence are already visible here, with a ghost who has his head dangling and Voldemort killing and drinking the unicorn's blood.

In the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, more graphic descriptions of violence are portrayed. Harry and friends saw grotesque pictures of people suffering from magical curses – a man was

turned inside out and another with extra arms protruding from the head. The whole school was also haunted by a bloodthirsty murderous creature, and giant flesh-eating spiders abounded in the forest. More occultic practices and violence are introduced in the third book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. For example, Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, is a shape-shifter, someone who practises the much coveted transformation of turning himself into a werewolf. Azkaban, the wizard jail is guarded by "dementors," sightless, soul-sucking fiends which leave the victims "worse than dead." The fourth and latest book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, is the most potent and aggressive in promoting witchcraft and wizardry. Researcher Berit Kjos gives a detailed account of these found in the book: witchcraft, sorcery, spellcasting, communicating with the dead and astral travel, using spells, charms and hexes, transformations, demonic creatures and dark forces, the battle between the "good" and "dark" side of evil and dark powers sucking out the soul. Once again, gratifying violence is manifested in the first-ever death and a disturbing scene of torture.

### **Rebuttals of Major Arguments Supporting Harry Potter**

#### **Argument 1: Harry Potter is only make-believe**

It is irksome to allude parts of the story to some deeper, darker meaning and really ridiculous to accuse it of promoting witchcraft when it is all make-believe, just like cartoons (Danika Oh, *The Straits Times*, September 4, 2000).

This argument is also raised by Christians such as well-known author Charles Colson who declares that the magic and sorcery in the books are "purely mechanical, as opposed to occultic ... they don't make contact with a supernatural world ... (it's not) the kind of real-life witchcraft the Bible condemns." Mrs Dorothy Francis, principal of CHIJ (Ponggol) in Singapore, confidently avers that children "are capable of differentiating between reality and fantasy, and they cannot be cocooned forever" (*The Straits Times* August 12, 2000). The author Rowling herself was more emphatic when she announced in a CNN interview that not a single child out of the thousands she has met has told her that he wanted to be a wizard. According to her, her books describe "a fantasy world and they (the children) understand that completely."

However, it is obvious to any casual reader that occultic symbols, themes and language fill all the Harry Potter books. As the books are

targeted at children who are impressionable and naive, it is easy for the children to imitate the protagonist and develop a natural curiosity and even fetish for the occult. This is already happening in real life, contrary to what Rowling herself claims. There are many reports of children who want to be witches and wizards, such as Gioia Bishop, age 10, who remarked: “I was eager to get to Hogwarts first because I like what they learned there and I want to be a witch.” The Pagan Federation which practises witchcraft has to deal with an average of 100 inquiries a month from youngsters who want to become witches. Rowling herself must have noticed that many children who came for her book-signing turned up in wizard cloaks and sported lightning-bolt scars on their foreheads, like Harry Potter. She herself conceded in a *Newsweek* interview that she got letters from children who wanted to be admitted into Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry; in her own words, “it is not a joke, begging to be let into Hogwarts, and some are really sad ... they want it to be true so badly they’ve convinced themselves it’s true.”

### **Argument 2: Harry Potter promotes imagination and creativity in children**

The Harry Potter books stimulate the imagination of the readers, which is clearly much needed in Singapore (Kelvin Tan, *The Straits Times*, August 15, 2000).

Some link this point to another reason why Harry Potter should be applauded – the books encourage children to read. The argument here is that Harry Potter books help the children to cultivate the habit of reading and develop their creative and imaginative powers. While imagination and creativity, together with reading, are important skills in themselves, it is important to identify the subject matter involved. Research has shown the central role of imagination in effecting and sustaining spiritual transformation. A study on Harry Potter and “Dungeons and Dragons” role-playing games concludes that these “transformative images” can change beliefs and behaviour, causing the children to turn to paganism and occult and reject biblical principles. Surely parents do not want their children to be imaginative and creative at the expense of their morality, sanity and well-being. It is also worth noting that imagination and creativity could be cultivated *without* relying on Harry Potter books which exalt occult. A parent, Ms Athena D’Souza, wrote to the press to share that her son who chose not to read Harry Potter books “because he

felt uncomfortable about its theme and contents,” is a top student who “does not lack in any creativity or fantasy skills” (*The Straits Times*, August 15, 2000).

### **Argument 3: Christianity involves magic and fantasy as well**

Is religion not also about enchantment and magic? Is it not a belief in things not seen? (Kelly Fu, *The Straits Times*, August 16, 2000).

This argument is more expressly mentioned by another writer who professes to be a Christian: “If you do not allow your children to imagine a child doing wondrous things with supernatural abilities, how then do you expect them to believe in the parting of the Red Sea?” (Daniel Goh, *The Straits Times*, September 4, 2000). Another Christian goes one step further by asserting that Christianity and magic have been intricately linked for several centuries. Alan Jacobs, Wheaton College professor, attributes the right to use magic to Calvinism:

In sixteenth-century Europe you would find Christians who were deeply involved in astrology largely because they were Calvinists. And it was understood at the time that there was a close connection between a predestinarian theology and astrology because astrology confirms or supports a predestinarian theology by suggesting that the outcome and direction of our lives is fixed before our births ... Other Christians ... were very much engaged with magic.

The rebuttal to the above assertions is to go back to the Bible as our only source of authority. Christians should believe in supernatural accounts such as the parting of the Red Sea as long as they are recorded in the Bible. For the same reason, we abhor supernatural but occultic practices like Harry casting spells and his godfather transforming into a werewolf because these are categorically condemned in God’s Word. As for the purported link between magic and Calvinism, John Calvin himself did not advocate such a preposterous idea and would certainly disapprove any association with astrology. In fact, the Bible lists “an observer of times,” i.e. an astrologer, as one of the abominations before God (Deut 18:10-12). Jacobs has also overlooked the different and opposing *sources* of supernatural powers in Christianity and magic. For the former, it is solely from God; for the latter as defined in Longman dictionary, it calls on “spirits, secret forces, etc.” to control events.

#### **Argument 4: Harry Potter promotes many virtues for children**

... develop courage, loyalty, and a willingness to sacrifice for one another – even at the risk of their lives. Not bad lessons in a self-centred world (Charles Colson, *Breakpoint* radio broadcast, November 2, 1999).

There is no doubt that some admirable characteristics are found in Harry Potter and other characters. But we must not forget that Satan is described as “transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14) with his beguiling and insidious ploys. Just as a little arsenic could contaminate a whole glass of fresh milk, subtle anti-Christian values and practices have infiltrated the books. I have earlier pointed out some undesirable influences such as anti-family value, use of violence and moral ambiguity with “good” witches and wizards. Discerning readers will also notice the use of foul language, disobedience to authority, lies and breaking of rules. Drug-taking is also lightly glossed over when Harry made and took the transformation potion which contained thujone, a psychedelic/hypnotic drug banned by the States since 1915. Rowling herself has made no apology for these negative elements and has even announced that each book will get darker and harsher. When asked whether she will tone down the violence for six year-old children, she responded egocentrically: “I cannot write to please other people. I can’t. When I finish book seven, I want to be able to look in the mirror and think, I did it the way I meant to do it” (*The Straits Times*, August 26, 2000).

#### **Conclusion**

The craze over Harry Potter is not expected to dissipate with time. In fact, the opposite is true – consumers can expect more Harry Potter paraphernalia to come with the Hollywood movie such as puzzles, games, computer games and video games. There will even be a 700-question Trivial Pursuit for pre-teens and a “levitation game” this year. This means that more children will be addicted to Harry Potter and be more enthralled by the occultic themes. I applaud the wisdom and courage of Mr Peter Tan, the principal of Anglo-Chinese (Junior), for banning the books from his school. May more Christians be forthcoming in denouncing the occultic influences of Harry Potter and protect our children from the wiles of the devil, even if it means that we will be perceived as “a group of over-reacting, over-critical, myopic and book-bashing freaks.”

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## **BIBLICAL MOTHERHOOD (II): THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS IN THE LIGHT OF PROVERBS 31:10-31**

Carol Lee

This paper is a study of Proverbs 31:10-31 with the aim of deriving principles that would be useful in guiding Singapore Christian mothers to determine their role in contemporary Singapore society.

### **Introduction to the Book of Proverbs**

The authorship of the book of Proverbs is attributed to Solomon (Prov 1:1), “the wise” (Prov 22:17), Agur (Prov 30:1), and King Lemuel (Prov 31:1).

As Solomon reigned from 970 BC to 931 BC, the date of his writing is therefore set in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC. In addition, Proverbs 25:1 indicates that “the men of Hezekiah king of Judah” were involved in the copying of Solomon’s writings. This puts the compilation of the book of Proverbs around the date 700 BC.

The five purposes of the book of Proverbs as found in Proverbs 1:2-4 are as follows: (1) to know wisdom and instruction (Prov 1:2), (2) to perceive the words of understanding (Prov 1:2), (3) to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice and judgment, and equity (Prov 1:3), (4) to give subtlety to the simple (Prov 1:4), (5) to give knowledge and discretion to the young (Prov 1:4).

In addition, Solomon also revealed the purpose of his proverbs in Ecclesiastes 12:11-14. The proverbs act as goads and nails to admonish the Christian. They are not meant to be mere head knowledge but are meant to affect and influence the way Christians live their lives, and the motivation for this is God Himself.

The Christian is to realise that his duty is to fear God and keep His commandments. The fear of God refers to the reverence and respect that the Christian must have for his Lord and Saviour. Keeping God’s

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commandments require the Christian to actually live out his Christian faith, to act on his knowledge of God's Word, to put into practice what he learns from the Bible. His experiential knowledge of God Himself must lead him to understand what are right and what are wrong in the sight of God and be willing to obey His instructions. The proverbs, being words of wisdom from God, are therefore meant to instruct and guide the Christian to walk on earth in the fear of God that He may be pleased with him. It would do the Christian good to heed these words of wisdom and to walk in the knowledge of these proverbs.

Proverbs 31:10-31 is an alphabet-acrostic poem which must not be read or applied in a wooden manner or in a way that disregards its Israelite context. Such a literal application of this poem "may leave many wives and mothers feeling inadequate."<sup>15</sup> The poem must be studied with its original context in mind and then principles that are universal and God-honouring can be derived from this poem for present-day application.

### **A Verse-by-Verse Study of Proverbs 31:10-31**

The description of the woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 is, according to Proverbs 31:1, "the words of king Lemuel" as taught to him by his mother. The mother of king Lemuel wisely teaches her son what a model wife is like. The description is a general picture of a model wife. Its application is not to be limited to a woman who is to be the wife of a king because Proverbs 31:23 refers to her, not as the queen, but as the wife of a man "known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land."

The model wife as taught to king Lemuel is therefore a model that can be followed by any Christian wife and a model that can be used by any Christian man in his search for a life partner. It is the character traits that the Christian must pay attention to that will provide the useful application. And these character traits transcend time, culture and social and economic standing. They are godly traits included in God's Word for the Christian's learning, emulation and instruction. A Christian in any situation or time period can find application in this model of a Christian wife. A study of Proverbs 31:10-31 is therefore of practical value to both Christian men and women, even in twenty-first century Singapore.

### **Proverbs 31:10**

אִשְׁת־חַיִל מִי יִמְצָא וְרָחֵק מִפְּנֵינִים מִכְרָה:

An able woman who can find? For her value (is) far above gems.

This marks the beginning of the passage on the Proverbs 31 woman. It speaks of a woman who is “able” and whose worth is beyond the worth of precious stones. חַיִל carries with it the meaning of “ability,” “efficiency,” usually involving the moral worth.<sup>16</sup> It does not just refer to the ability to do things but also the idea of strength of character or integrity. Thus the King James Bible translates this word as “virtuous.” The connotation of אִשְׁת־חַיִל (“an able woman”) therefore is a woman who has the ability to accomplish, and is actively accomplishing, many things as well as having a high moral standard.

This אִשְׁת־חַיִל can be contrasted with the woman described in Proverbs 12:4b who is “rotteness in his bones.” The woman who lacks strength of character or integrity or who has a low moral standard is one who is a constant nag and problem to her husband right down to the core of his bone.

אִשְׁת־חַיִל מִי יִמָּצֵא (“an able woman who can find?”) is an interrogation implying that the virtuous woman is a rarity and therefore difficult to find. Bridges suggests an interesting possible reason for her rarity: that she is “so seldom sought. Too often is the search made for accomplishments, not for *virtues*; for external and adventitious recommendations, rather than for internal godly worth.”<sup>17</sup>

In the case of precious stones, the rarer they are, the more precious and valuable they are too. In considering the virtuous woman’s value to be “far above gems,” the poet is effectively saying that the virtuous woman is not to be compared with precious stones because she is priced even above them. And not just gems, she is more precious than any precious earthly possessions. The search for such a woman therefore is worth any man’s effort and time.

The description of her that follows ought therefore to be studied by both women and men. By women because she is a worthy example for them to emulate. And by men because she possesses the qualities which men should look for in a wife.

The description, however, may not conform to the world’s view of women but the purpose here is not to conform to the world but to see clearly what God’s Word considers a virtuous woman to be and to set her

up as a standard and model given by God and therefore worthy of Christian attention.

### Proverbs 31:11

בַּטַח בָּהּ לֵב בַּעֲלָהּ וְשָׁלַל לֹא יִחְקַר:

The heart of her husband trusts in her so that he shall have no need of gain.

Her husband trusts her fully and completely. This must mean that she looks after his needs well and in a responsible manner and has therefore earned his trust. The virtuous woman's chief concern and main business therefore is the needs of her husband and how best she can meet them to please him. She does this so well and contributes so much to him that the result is that he is fully satisfied with her and therefore does not need to look elsewhere for "gain." שָׁלַל ("gain") comes from the root verb שָׁלַל ("to spoil, to plunder"). שָׁלַל therefore carries the connotation of gain through unjust means. The virtuous woman's husband has no need of obtaining gain by unjust means or of something inferior to meet his unsatisfied needs as he is already fully satisfied. In order for her to gain the trust of her husband, the virtuous woman must be a loving, caring, giving and selfless woman.

Delitzsch insightfully points out that if שָׁלַל refers to "the continual prosperity of the man on account of his fortunate possession of such a wife ... then the poet should have said שְׂמֹחַת שָׁלַל ... There is here meant the gain, profit, which the housewife is the means of bringing in."<sup>18</sup> The husband's state of no lack of spoil or gain does not come from his mere possession of a virtuous wife but stems from his virtuous wife's own doing in creating that state for her husband. This is an extension of the idea in verse 10 that she is an able woman, a woman of accomplishments. Her accomplishments are not for self neither are they at the expense of her husband but are of benefit to her husband.

### Proverbs 31:12

גְּמַלְתָּהּ טוֹב וְלֹא־רָע כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ:

She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

Her life is viewed in terms of what she גְּמַלְתָּהּ (root: גָּמַל), accomplishes or performs, for him. She spends her life accomplishing, that is doing and succeeding in doing, what is good for him. She does not abuse her husband's trust (v 11). She responds to his trust positively. Her

concern is not with her own self, how best she can fulfil her own needs or satisfy her own desires. Her role is that of doing him good and not evil. She lives in submission, not passively but actively seeking to fulfil his desires and to meet his needs for his good. “All the days of her life” implies that she does good to her husband consistently, constantly and faithfully. It is not dependent on her own state or on her husband’s. Neither is it dependent on her mood or emotional state. It requires her to have a heart attitude of love and submission in order for her to be able to “do him good ... all the days of her life.” Without that proper heart attitude, she will not be able to sustain her effort. The right heart attitude will allow her to derive from it the strength and consistency to accomplish or perform (גַּמַּל) that which is good for her husband. This requires her to be a woman of perception, anticipation, thought, initiative and wisdom.

What is considered “good”? What follows in the next few verses (Prov 31:13-27) are descriptions of the good that this virtuous woman (whose price is far above precious stones) does for her husband.

### **Proverbs 31:13**

דְּרָשָׁה צֹמֶר וּפְשָׁתִים וַתַּעַשׂ בְּחֶפְזָן כַּפְיָהּ:

She seeks wool and flax and works with delight (with) her hands.

The Jews used sheep’s wool as the chief material for making clothes.<sup>19</sup> Flax, which is harvested in March and April, is used to make linen cloth and rope.<sup>20</sup> This virtuous woman is on the lookout for these raw materials not that they are difficult to find but that she looks out for them in order that they be of good quality and that she can buy them at a good price. דְּרָשׁ (“seek”) does not denote the outward action of seeking only. It refers to a seeking that comes from a purposeful mind focused on performing the action. דְּרָשָׁה (“she seeks”) shows therefore that she is intent on finding the best quality at the best price. This is an indication of her diligence and her desire to do a good job. She is not a miser, neither is she careless with her money.

Then she works on the wool and flax. As וַתַּעַשׂ (“and works”) is followed by כִּי (“with”), what comes after may represent the area of work. The verse can therefore be translated as “she works with her hand’s delight or pleasure.” Her work to her is a delight or pleasure, not done grudgingly or considered a chore. Such a work attitude is a good indicator of results of high quality.

## BIBLICAL MOTHERHOOD (II)

This verse paints the picture of a woman who is frugal, industrious and happy with what she is doing. She is not careless with her money and she is not afraid of hard work. She is willing to work hard and she goes about her work in the home cheerfully and happily, not grudgingly or in a complaining way. Her heart attitude towards her role as a homemaker is seen in the cheerful way in which she goes about doing her tasks.

Bridges points out that working with one's hands "in olden times was the employment of females in the highest ranks."<sup>21</sup> He cites the cases of Sarah (Gen 18:6-8), Rebekah (Gen 24:18-20), Rachel (Gen 29:9-10), the daughters of the Prince of Midian (Exo 2:16), and the daughter of a king (2 Sam 13:5-9). The point, however, is not the station of the woman or the association of the work involved, but rather the point to be learned is the character traits that are being portrayed: the good traits of cheerful industriousness and of thrift.

As pointed out earlier, the poet Lamuel was a king (Prov 31:1) and the words in Proverbs 31 were taught to him by his mother. These are words taught by a king's mother. The virtuous woman described however is not a queen neither is she a woman of poverty. This verse does not imply that she is forced to work with her hands in order to feed herself and her family. Rather, this verse is used to show her industrious and self-denying character in ministering to the needs of her husband.

### Proverbs 31:14

הִי־תָהּ כְּאֶגֶיזִית סוֹחֵר מִבְּרֶחֶק תְּבִיאֵי לַחֲמָה:

She is like the ships of the merchant, from afar she brings her food.

A merchant's ship has the function of going to a faraway land in order to bring back produce that are cheaper or that are not available in the home country. The virtuous woman is likened to a merchant's ship in that she goes out of her way, beyond her immediate neighbourhood, to look for items that are value for money and that her household needs. This reinforces the picture of her as a frugal and hardworking woman who cares so much for her household that she is willing to take the trouble to do more than expected in order to satisfy the needs of her household. In addition, it shows that she is a woman full of initiative, courage and enterprise.

### Proverbs 31:15

וַתִּקֶּם בְּעוֹדֵר לִילָה וַתִּתֵּן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֶק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ:

She also rises while (it is) still night and gives food to her household and a portion to her maidens.

The description of the virtuous woman rising early shows her diligence in running her household. In order to be able to give food to her household, her rising early must mean rising earlier than everyone in the house. In this is seen her self-sacrificing attitude. She puts the needs of her household above her own. Delitzsch humorously points that *לְמַדְרֵי* does not mean that the household members “stand round about her, and that each receives from her a portion for the approaching day.”<sup>22</sup> Rather, she gets up early to plan and prepare in order to be able to provide her household with food for the whole day at the appropriate time.

And she takes care of the welfare of her family members and servants alike. She ensures that they start the day right by preparing them their food. What she gives to her servants is described as *כֶּסֶף* meaning a “prescribed portion.”<sup>23</sup> This “prescribed portion” may refer to a prescribed portion of food or of work. With reference to food, it shows that the virtuous woman does not mistreat her servants by giving them less than what is prescribed. This is an indication of a heart that is just and full of love and care for the people around her regardless of whether they are masters or servants. There will therefore be no cause for her servants to complain that she has been mean to them.

With reference to work, the virtuous woman must rise early in order to plan the work of her servants before she can assign them their “prescribed portion” of work for the day. This shows that she is an organised person who is forward looking and fair. She is ready to sacrifice her own comfort or pleasure so as to carry out her responsibilities.

The virtuous woman is not one to be tardy just because she has servants. She does not allow herself to be idle or to while away her time. She has a strong work ethic and ensures that she can do even more as a result of having household help.

It is to be noted that “maidens,” that is female servants, are mentioned here specifically, thereby excluding the male servants. This indicates that she is a woman of propriety. She leaves the handling of the male servants to her husband. Despite her industry, she does not seek to do that which is beyond her realm of authority or duty. She knows her proper place and performs well within the boundary.

## BIBLICAL MOTHERHOOD (II)

This verse also shows that it is not wrong to employ household servants when one has the means to do so. The virtuous woman can have certain housework delegated to servants to perform. However, she does not abdicate all her responsibilities in the home and leave her servants to perform them. Instead, she uses her servants to allow herself to better fulfil her responsibilities in the home. At the same time, she ensures that her servants are also well looked after. She shows consideration and compassion for those working for her.

### Proverbs 31:16

זְמַמָּה שָׂדֵה וַתִּקְחֶהּ מִפְּרֵי כַפֶּיהָ נִמְעַ [נִמְעָה] כָּרֶם:

She considers a field and buys it, with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

She buys a piece of land. There is no mention of her reselling it showing that her purchase is for the family's use. זְמַמָּה (the Perfect: “she considers”) precedes וַתִּקְחֶהּ (a waw consecutive with the Imperfect: “and buys it”) expressing a temporal sequence or result. Consideration comes before purchase. Her purchase is not done at the spur of the moment but with much consideration. This is consistent with verse 14 and 15 in that she is frugal and careful with her money. She must have put much thought into the matter of purchasing this piece of property and have carefully considered all factors before purchasing. She is not a compulsive or impulsive buyer.

This is also consistent with verse 11 in that her husband trusts her enough to let her decide on the purchase of this large, expensive item. A virtuous woman consistently makes good judgment so that she can be relied upon. Her husband does not require her to get his permission or approval. He can safely trust her (v 11).

She then decisively turns the land into a vineyard. She plants a vineyard with the fruit of her hands. The picture of her planting a vineyard “with the fruit of her hands” shows that she has laboured and obtained some profit before and now she puts this profit to good use by purchasing vines and planting them on the land. The land becomes an asset and not a liability. The vineyard does not come about because she borrowed money to obtain it. This shows that she is not a woman who drains her husband's financial resources but rather she is one who is able also to contribute to the financial well being of the family.

In addition to her sound judgment and decisiveness, her work on the vineyard shows again that she is hardworking and willing to work with her hands that her household may benefit from her labour.

### **Proverbs 31:17**

הִגְדָּה בְּעוֹז מְתַנֶּה וְהִסְמִיךְ זְרְעוֹתֶיהָ:

She girds with strength her loins and strengthens her arms.

Girding her loins with strength and strengthening her arms are figures of speech that express her energetic preparedness and willingness to take on the tasks that she has to perform. This reinforces the point that she is an extremely hardworking person.

The figures also give the idea that she ensures her own physical fitness and hardiness in order to take on the many tasks ahead of her. She knows how to take care of her health so that she does not fall ill easily. She is always ready to give of her all and to work with all her might.

Her preparedness indicates a woman of foresight and balance. She does not work so hard that she neglects her health and allows her own body to run down till it renders itself useless. While she is industrious, she sees to it that her “loins” and “arms” are kept strong so that she can continue to be productive and useful to her family, thereby able to fulfil her responsibilities.

### **Proverbs 31:18**

מְעַמָּה כִּי־טוֹב סְחָרָהּ לֹא־יִכָּבֵד בַּלַּיִל [בַּלַּיְלָהָ] הַנֶּרְהָה:

She perceives that her merchandise is good, her lamp does not go out by night.

מְעַמָּה (“she perceives”) has the root טַעַם meaning to taste, to perceive. In tasting or perceiving her merchandise, there is a certain amount of contemplation. When the merchandise is considered good, the contemplation is with satisfaction and pleasure. There is nothing wrong in deriving satisfaction and pleasure from one’s labour or from the fulfilment of one’s duties and responsibilities. It is legitimate and reasonable.

From her contemplation, the virtuous woman knows that she has succeeded in ensuring that her buys are all good buys, that she obtains value for money or that she makes a profit from it. This further reinforces her frugal and careful character.

## BIBLICAL MOTHERHOOD (II)

Her success, however, does not lead her to rest on her laurels. Instead, it spurs her on to work even harder by working into the night. The next verse speaks of her work in the night.

### Proverbs 31:19

יָדֶיהָ שֶׁלְחָהּ בְּכִישׁוֹר וְכַפֶּיהָ תִּמְכּוּ פָלֶךְ:

She stretches out her hands to the distaff and her palms hold the spindle.

יָדֶיהָ שֶׁלְחָהּ (“her hand she stretches out”) suggests the reaching out of one’s hand to take up a piece of work and תִּמְכּוּ (“to hold”) suggests the “handling of the instrument of work.”<sup>24</sup> This fits the description of the distaff spinning technique that was used during biblical times before the spinning-wheel was invented in Germany in the sixteenth century. The women would “attach wool or flax to the *distaff* (a rod or stick), and then use a *spindle* to twist the fibers into threads.”<sup>25</sup> וְכַפֶּיהָ (“and her hands”) implies hands that are skilful and that produce successful work.<sup>26</sup>

This verse shows that the virtuous woman does not only purchase the wool and the flax (v 13), she personally works on them, even late into the night, to produce what her family needs. She does this herself despite the fact that she has servants. It is an indication that she does not find it a chore but rather a joy to be able to spin and weave clothing for her loved ones. And she does it skilfully too. It is no wonder that her husband safely trusts in her (v 11), as caring for her loved ones is a joy to her. He knows that they will be well looked after by her, that she will not neglect their needs.

### Proverbs 31:20

כַּפָּה פָּרְשָׁה לְעֵנִי וַיָּדִיָּה שֶׁלְחָהּ לְאִבְיוֹן:

She stretches out her palm to the poor and she reaches her hands to the needy.

Moving away from her immediate household, the virtuous woman is equally loving, compassionate and caring to those outside of her household, in particular, the poor and the needy.

Her hands do not labour for her own loved ones only. Her hands are also extended to the poor and needy. The figures of stretching and reaching out with her hands show her initiative and earnest intent to care for these people. The poet intentionally uses שֶׁלְחָהּ (“she reaches out”) which is the Piel, the intensive form, to describe her manner of reaching out to the needy. Her charitable spirit calls her to take the initiative to

reach out to these people willingly and cheerfully. She does not only serve those who are around her and close by, perhaps her neighbours, she also extends her hands to those who may not be too nearby. She will stretch and reach out to them. Distance is no barrier to her good works.

Delitzsch insightfully points out that the use of כַּפָּה (“her palm”) here is not to be taken to merely mean the giving of gifts or alms. Rather it means the offer of “sympathy and readiness to help ... as if saying: place confidence in me, I shall do whatever I can — there thou has my hand!”<sup>27</sup>

The use of יְדָיִם (plural: “her hands”) paints a picture of the virtuous woman reaching out with both her hands to the needy, getting herself physically near enough to the needy that they may take hold of her outstretched hands in theirs to experience her warmth and sympathy. This kind of giving contrasts with the giving of gifts or alms that can be done in a cold, condescending manner, given from a distance or given through an in-between, without the personal warmth and personal touch as portrayed here by the outstretched palm and hands.

The virtuous woman does not cocoon herself in her own household and minister to its needs only. Her work with the poor and the needy shows that her world includes those outside of her household. She sympathises with those who are in misery or who are in poverty. Without this sympathy, “she, so good and trustworthy and industrious, might indeed be pleasing to her husband, but not to God.”<sup>28</sup> The virtuous woman is one who does not only please her husband but also pleases God.

It may be easy for a woman to do everything to please her husband especially when he loves her dearly. But it is not sufficient. It takes a virtuous woman to please both her husband and her God. Her extension of her care to those outside of her home pleases her God.

It is noted that there is no mention of gratitude or thanks on the part of the poor or needy in response to the virtuous woman’s helping hands. The virtuous woman is not concerned with receiving appreciation or thanks for what she does. The responses of those she helps are of no importance to her. It is enough for her to know that she has helped. Knowing that a person has been helped is reward enough for her.

### **Proverbs 31:21**

לֹא־תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשְׁלֹג כִּי כָל־בֵּיתָהּ לֶבֶשׂ שָׁנִים:

## BIBLICAL MOTHERHOOD (II)

She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed (with) scarlet.

The confidence of the virtuous woman that her household will be warmly clad in the event of snow lies in the fact she has already prepared the warm clothing for them. Her love and care for her household makes her think ahead and plan for its needs. Again, others in her household, besides her immediate family members, are also cared for. She is forward looking and she plans to take care of their needs. She truly has their welfare in her heart. Such thoughtfulness on her part further leads her husband to trust in her.

The clothing is described as שָׁנִים, “scarlet,” a colour that is supposed to absorb and retain heat. Such clothing is functional and appropriate for winter. The physical needs of her household are well looked into.

Not only has the virtuous woman prepared clothing that is practical and functional for use in winter, the clothing is also in an attractive colour, beautiful and smart looking. In the Old Testament, the colour scarlet is often mentioned together with fine linen or gold. It is a colour that signifies richness and good taste. Therefore, the virtuous woman is also a woman with a good sense of beauty and taste. She ensures that her household is smartly attired and looks presentable in public.

### Proverbs 31:22

מְרַבֵּדִים עֲשֶׂתָּהּ לָהּ שֵׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּמָן לְבוּשָׁה:

She makes coverings herself, her clothing is fine linen and purple.

“Coverings” or “coverlets” have the dual function of making the beds soft as well as to add to their aesthetics. The virtuous woman’s home is not merely functional but also tastefully done up and decorated, making it an attractive, restful and comfortable place for everyone in the family. עֲשֶׂתָּהּ לָהּ (“she makes herself”) does not imply the making of coverings for her own bed but that she makes the coverings herself for her household. Making her own “coverings” is in line with her thrifty character and her appreciation of beauty as described above.

In her care for others, she does not neglect herself. Her own clothing is described as “fine linen and purple” which are both fine and expensive fabrics. Tyre, the Phoenician city, was known to export these expensive purple fabrics. The virtuous woman takes care of her own physical appearance and does not bring shame or embarrassment to her loved ones

by a dowdy or unkempt appearance. Her physical appearance must have been neat and pleasant, but not ostentatious nor unduly over-adorned. With her good sense and taste, her husband must be proud to be seen with her in public.

This verse shows that despite her thrifty nature, the virtuous woman is not a miser nor is she a penny-pincher. She is willing to pay for things of good quality, beauty or aesthetic value.

### **Proverbs 31:23**

נודע בשערים בעלה בשבתו עם זקני ארץ:

Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.

This verse turns to describe the good reputation of the virtuous woman's husband. After several verses of description of her character and deeds, the good reputation of her husband described in this verse must be seen to indicate that it is partly a result of her already described good character and deeds.

Her husband has a seat of leadership "at the gate." "The city gates were centres for conversations and commerce ... Because the elders often transacted business at the gate, to 'sit at the gate' meant to attain a certain social eminence."<sup>29</sup>

Inadvertently, the virtuous woman's role in the home has great influence and impact on her husband's career and reputation outside the home. The way she looks after her household has resulted in him having full confidence in her and therefore he is able to fully concentrate on his work without any worries as to household matters. The way she takes care of his physical needs in the home (which includes dressing him decently, appropriately and tastefully) is reflected in his physical appearance outside the home. His trust in her gives him a relaxed and peaceful demeanour. His whole carriage and appearance indicates to others that he has a caring, loving and supportive wife at home.

In helping to promote her husband's good standing outside the home, the virtuous woman does not strive to obtain that seat of reputation outside the home for herself. It is satisfying for her just to know that her husband has that respect and position outside.

### **Proverbs 31:24**

סדין עשתה ותמכר וחגור נתנה לכנעני:

## BIBLICAL MOTHERHOOD (II)

She makes linen garments and sells (them), and she delivers girdles to the merchant.

This poet now reverts back to describing the virtuous woman. Besides clothing her own household which is her priority, she is able to make extra for sale to the merchants. לְכַנְעָנִיךָ means literally “to the Canaanite.” The Canaanite is a generic name used to refer to all merchants or traders.<sup>30</sup> This indicates the virtuous woman’s industrious character. She is able to help her husband increase the family’s income through her extra sewing at home. It is to be noted that her trading activities are not carried out at the expense of her household responsibility. They do not take top priority. They are carried out without neglect to the needs of her household.

In trading with the Phoenician merchants, she could have obtained from them the fine fabrics mentioned in verses 21 and 22 which she used for the needs of her household and herself.

### Proverbs 31:25

עֹזֶהְרָר לְבוּשָׁהּ וְתִשְׁחַק לַיּוֹם אֲחֵרֹן:

Strength and dignity (are) her clothing and she laughs in time to come.

Strength is the virtuous woman’s clothing. She is therefore not easily shattered, moved or tossed about but this strength in her keeps her stable. Dignity is also her clothing. This is a state where she is assured of her position or station in life and where she is contended with her lot. As such, the virtuous woman is a joyous woman even during times of adversities because she is clothed with strength and dignity. Being a virtuous woman, she knows the right thing to do. This thought gives her a certain calmness and strength to bear with any difficulties that may come her way.

Her joy will remain with her “in time to come,” that is, in the future. Her joy is not a fleeting emotion in her life that is dependent on her life situation or station. It is a stable and constant part of her life. When she is old, joy will still be with her. She knows that she has lived a fulfilling and rewarding life and that she has made her contribution to those of her household as well as others who are in need. This virtuous woman will turn out to be a joyful and satisfied old lady.

### Proverbs 31:26

פִּיהָ פִּתְחָהּ בְּחִכְמָהּ וְתוֹרַת־חֵסֶד עַל־לְשׁוֹנָהּ:

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the law of kindness is (on) her tongue.

This verse switches the focus from the deeds of the virtuous woman to her speech. She is not only an industrious, forward-looking and frugal housewife who looks after the physical needs of her household well and is careful with her finances. In addition to doing the right things, her speech is well seasoned with wisdom and kindness.

The preposition **בְּ** (“with”) of **בְּחָכְמָהּ** (“with wisdom”) is “that of means: when she speaks, then it is wisdom pressing itself from her heart outward, by means of which she breaks the silence of her mouth.”<sup>31</sup> Her speech is normally and constantly characterised by wisdom. Her words of wisdom are not just an occasional flash of wisdom but are a hallmark of her speech. As the sources of wisdom is God and His Word, her wise words show that she loves God’s Word, is knowledgeable of God’s Word and has allowed God’s Word to work in her life affecting her speech. Her speech shows her spiritual maturity. She is not one to engage in foolish talks. Her speech shows her godliness and a heart that is in tune with her God.

In all her communication, whether with her husband, children, servants or merchants, she regulates her tongue with the law or teaching of kindness as found in God’s Word. She does not allow herself to speak any evil or untruths about anyone or anything. She controls her tongue. Kind words, loving words, encouraging words, spiritually uplifting words, comforting words that heal the wounded and the hurting, wise words dispensed to those facing difficulties, words of compassion, etc flow naturally from her mouth. She is not harsh with her words, gossipy or slanderous, causing disharmony in or outside the home. Even when she has to discipline, chide or rebuke, the law of kindness guides her words. The words of her mouth are testimonies of the law of kindness in her heart. They show her love for those around her as a result of her love for and godly fear of her God.

This verse does not automatically imply that a virtuous woman must necessarily be a woman of few words or that many words are definitely bad. It is not the quantity but the quality of words that is the focus here. The virtuous woman is wise enough to know when words are necessary and she is not afraid to speak up at those times. And when she does speak up, she speaks with words of wisdom.

**Proverbs 31:27**

צוֹפֵיָה הַלִּיכּוֹת בֵּיתָהּ וְלֶחֶם עֲצֵלוֹת לֹא תֹאכַל:

She looks well to the ways of her household and she does not eat the bread of idleness.

צוֹפֵיָה הַלִּיכּוֹת בֵּיתָהּ is translated: she is “watching the doings of her house-hold.”<sup>32</sup> צוֹפֵיָה is “she keepeth watch,”<sup>33</sup> that is she watches carefully. The virtuous woman watches carefully over her family members and servants and is on hand to respond to them. She is aware of her husband’s needs and meets them because she “looks well” to his ways. She responds to her children with words of encouragement or chastisement as and when the occasion calls for it; or to restrain any action that is potentially damaging. She relates to her servants to ensure that work is done and at the same time that their needs are also met.

All these keep her occupied all the time. Verse 27 continues by stating the obvious that “she does not eat of the bread of idleness.” This doubly reinforces the message that she is never idle or doing nothing. She does not while away her time. Nor does she engage in idle talks or idle activities. She spends her time serving her household members and ministering to their needs. Not only does she serve and minister to the needs of her household, she serves and ministers well. She does this to the best of her ability that her household may be truly and fully satisfied.

She does not keep herself busy with activities outside the home or with work outside the home to the detriment of her household. To keep watch carefully over the ways of her household implies that the virtuous woman’s main concern is the needs of her household. This is her priority in life. Her work to supplement the family income (v 24) takes on a lower priority.

**Proverbs 31:28**

קָמוּ בָנֶיהָ וַיְשַׁרְרוּהָ בְּעֵלְהָ וַיְהַלְלֶיהָ:

Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband (also), and he praises her.

The result of the virtuous woman’s dedication to her family is seen in her loved ones’ assessment of her. Her children, perhaps grown up by now with children of their own, call her blessed. Their adult remembrance of her loving care for them in physical and emotional ways, as well as her necessary discipline and chastisement of them when they were young,

which results in them calling her blessed is a testimony of her godly motherhood. They are appreciative of their mother's labour of love. Children who are appreciative of mother's love are usually also appreciative of God's love. The assessment of her children indirectly reflects their own spirituality. The virtuous woman's children turn out to be filial children and godly ones too.

Her own husband's praises of her show his pride in her as his wife and mother of his children. Speaking well of his wife indicates his love and appreciation as well as approval of all that she has done and is doing.

קָמוּ ("rise up") carries with it the idea of reverence, respect or honour as one would rise from one's seat when a person of honour enters a room or when about to make a formal speech. The virtuous woman's children and husband bless her in such a reverential or respectful manner.

The virtuous woman's lifelong devotion to her family bears fruit as the good opinions of her loved ones around her testify.

### **Proverbs 31:29**

רבות בנות עשו חיל ואת עליית על-בָּקָה:

Many (are) the daughters who have done ably, but you rise over all of them.

The switch to the second personal pronoun as seen in עליית indicates that verse 29 is the praise of the virtuous woman by the husband mentioned in the previous verse.

עשו חיל ("have done ably") here does not signify material gain. It has such a "signification only when connected with ל of the person."<sup>34</sup> Instead, the meaning here is one of courage and energy of a moral nature, the capacity to work, serve or achieve in accordance to one's calling. It is an ability that goes beyond the mere ability to do or accomplish things. It is an ability that includes the soundness of her moral judgment which is reflected in her daily decision-making in all aspects of her life.

The able "daughters" (בנות) here are to be contrasted with the able "woman" (אשה) in verse 10. There may be many who are able but they are called "daughters" which implies that they still have much to learn, grow and mature in their faith and trust in God.

The able or virtuous "woman," on the other hand, "excellest them all." Her excellence is seen in her character and deeds as described in

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verses 10 to 28. She possesses all that are described there. The husband of the virtuous woman knowing his own wife so well can truly praise her for he has in her all that any man can want in a wife.

### Proverbs 31:30

שָׂקַר חַסֵּן וְהַקֵּל חַיִּי אִשָּׁה יִרְאַת־יְהוָה הִיא תִתְהַלָּל:

Favour (is) deceitful and beauty (is) vain, (but) a woman who fears the Lord she shall be praised.

The switch back to the third personal pronoun as seen in *הִיא תִתְהַלָּל* (“she shall be praised”) indicates that it is now no longer the virtuous woman’s husband speaking. The virtuous woman does not only receive blessings and praises from her family (v 28) but her virtues are seen and praised by those outside of her household.

*חַסֵּן* is favour or grace of form or appearance of a woman.<sup>35</sup> A woman who is willing to bestow “favour” is one who is willing to do as told or requested in outward form or appearance. It does not say anything about her own willingness or her own desires. Bestowing favours is passive in that it is done in response to a request, not necessarily done out of the woman’s own desire or wish. This contrasts with her doing something out of her own initiative which is then considered active. Though there is nothing wrong with a woman who bestows favours, yet favour is considered “deceitful.” It is considered deceitful because, by itself, one cannot tell the condition of the heart of such a woman.

Similarly with “beauty.” There is nothing wrong if God has made the woman physically beautiful. Yet, beauty is considered “vain” in that beauty by itself does not tell us anything about the character or deeds of the woman. Nor does it say anything about her heart condition. In addition, beauty is of a transient nature. It will fade away because it is at the mercy of nature’s process of wear and tear.

What is considered the most important factor is the fear of God in the woman’s heart. This fear of God will motivate the woman to live her life in accordance to God’s Word. It will mould her character and her deeds to what are described in verse 10 to 29, thus making her a virtuous woman. Henry very aptly describes it as “the fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the soul.”<sup>36</sup> The truly god-fearing heart or character behind the woman’s exterior is the true measure of her worth. Beauty in outward appearance, charming ways and winning works without a truly

god-fearing heart and character are misleading and will lead only to deceit and vanity. The virtuous woman's good works "flowed like a stream to refresh a desert neighbourhood; but the fountain which fed it was her heart's trust in God."<sup>37</sup>

The virtuous woman with her god-fearing heart and character "shall be praised." Delitzsch<sup>38</sup> recommends a jussive rendering to הַיָּא תִּתְהַלֵּל ("Let her be praised") in view of the continuation in verse 31.

### **Proverbs 31:31**

תַּגְּדֹלָהּ בַּמְּפְרֵי יָדֶיהָ וַיְהִלְלוּהָ בַּשְּׁעָרִים מִנְּעֻמָּהּ:

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

"The fruit of her hands" shows that her virtuous life will bear fruit. Good will come out of her virtuous life and others will benefit from her life. To "give" her the fruit refers to an added dimension and that is that she, not just other people, would also enjoy the fruit of her virtuous life.

The מֵן after תַּגְּדֹלָהּ ("Give her") is a partitive מֵן meaning to give to her part of the fruit of her hands. This part of the fruit is not the full reward for her because the better reward is when "her works praise her in the gates." Her works will be seen by all around her as implied by the phrase "in the gates." Her life itself will be a testimony of her godliness. She does not have to go around telling people of her own virtues or asking for praises, others will extol her virtues. This public recognition and the public honour given to her for the way she lives her life would be her reward.

### **Principles Derived from Proverbs 31:10-31**

The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 is God's revealed model for married Christian women. It may not be compatible with the world's idea of a successful woman. But what is most important to a Christian woman is not what the world thinks of her or how the world ranks her ability or success. It must be what God thinks of her and how she measures up to the woman that God wants her to be. And God's preceptive will for the married woman is stated in Proverbs 31:10-31. The godly Christian woman must strive to make the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 her model that her Lord God may be pleased with her.

Some principles derived from this study of the virtuous woman are as follows:

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- (1) She is a spiritual woman. She loves God's Word, studies God's Word and allows God's Word to affect and change her life.
- (2) As a mother, she sees that her primary role is one of wife and mother. Her ministry is in the home. She looks into the welfare of her household.
- (3) She ministers to her household in a loving and selfless manner.
- (4) As a wife, her role is to minister to all her husband's needs faithfully as best as she can.
- (5) She earns the trust of her husband through her actions.
- (6) As a homemaker, she is thrifty. She is careful with her money.
- (7) She is industrious. She is not afraid of "dirtying" her hands or of physically demanding tasks. If necessary, she is ready to work into the night and get up early in the morning.
- (8) She takes good care of her health.
- (9) In the running of her household, she is diligent and well-organised.
- (10) As an employer of household servants, she looks into their welfare. She is considerate and compassionate towards them.
- (11) She uses her initiative and talents to help supplement the family income whenever she has fulfilled her primary role of ministering to the needs of her household.
- (12) She is prudent and wise in the use of the supplementary income that she makes.
- (13) She is a charitable person. She ministers to the needs of those outside her household as well.
- (14) She has a good sense of the aesthetics. Her home is tastefully done up and is a place of peace, harmony and comfort for her household.
- (15) Her person and actions are assets to her husband and promotes his good standing outside the home.
- (16) She has spiritual and moral strength that help her to remain composed in times of difficulties.
- (17) She guards her tongue. Her speech is full of wisdom and love.
- (18) She has a genuine fear of the Lord in her heart that affects her character and her actions.

From the above principles, one can see that the truly virtuous woman's relationship with her husband is one where she does not merely accept her husband's leadership over her. More than that she affirms her husband's leadership and through her actions she further strengthens his leadership.

The virtuous woman's submission to her husband is a heart attitude rather than the mere following of a list of do's and don'ts. Her right heart attitude leads her to decide as to what actions or responses are considered appropriate in different situations and in different cultural context. Her right heart attitude will also lead her to have the disposition to yield to her husband's authority and to follow and affirm his leadership.

### Notes

<sup>13</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 73.

<sup>14</sup> The Hebrew root word for "desire" in Genesis 3:16 is the same as that in Genesis 4:7 where it is used to describe how sin will desire to control Cain.

<sup>15</sup> Greg W Parsons, "Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming the Book of Proverbs," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993):163.

<sup>16</sup> BDB, 298.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Bridges, *Proverbs* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 620.

<sup>18</sup> F Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, translated by M G Easton, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1966), 10:481.

<sup>19</sup> J I Packer and M C Tenney, eds, *Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), 476.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 267-8.

<sup>21</sup> Bridges, *Proverbs*, 623.

<sup>22</sup> Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 10:483.

<sup>23</sup> BDB, 349.

<sup>24</sup> Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 10:484.

<sup>25</sup> Packer and Tenney, *Illustrated Manners*, 478.

<sup>26</sup> Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 10:484.

<sup>27</sup> Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 10:485.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 10:485.

<sup>29</sup> Packer and Tenney, *Illustrated Manners*, 412.

<sup>30</sup> W J Deane and S T Taylor-Taswell, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1977), 600.

<sup>31</sup> Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 10:488.

<sup>32</sup> BDB, 237.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 859.

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<sup>34</sup> Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 10:489.

<sup>35</sup> BDB, 336.

<sup>36</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary of the Whole Bible* (Virginia: MacDonald Publishing House, nd), 3:976.

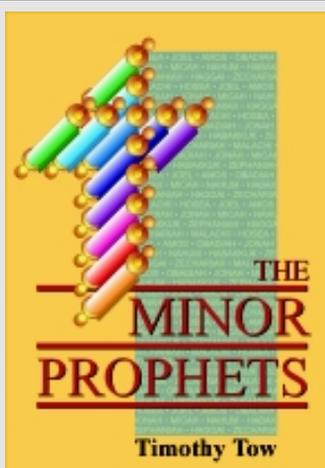
<sup>37</sup> William Arnot, *Studies in Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978), 580.

<sup>38</sup> Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 10:490.

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*This is the second of three articles on "The Role of Christian Mothers in Contemporary Singapore Society in the Light of Proverbs 31:10-31." Carol Lee lectures in the area of Christian Education at Far Eastern Bible College.*

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**“THE MINOR PROPHETS**, numbering twelve, are so-called not because they are of less importance than the four Major Prophets. They are called Minor Prophets because they are shorter in length than the Major Prophets, viz., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. ...

“What are the characteristics of the prophetic ministry? The prophets are primarily spokesmen of God. They were raised of God to denounce the sins of God's people, the children of Israel, for their grave apostasy and to cause them to repent. The prophets were revivalists to the wayward Jewish church.

“However, God being a covenant God, would forgive them for the promises made to their fathers. Hence the prophetic utterances looking forward to the time of their final Restoration. Israel will be delivered from the dispersion to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem will rise again to the top of the world. David's Greater Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will sit upon the throne of His father and rule the earth for a thousand years of peace.” *Rev Dr Timothy Tow*

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## **THE FALAM-CHIN KJV BIBLE**

**Robert Thawm Luai**

After 20 years of translation by many Bible scholars and sages, the Lord has given us the opportunity to print the Falam-Chin KJV Bible with help from Life B-P Church. The previous versions of the Falam-Chin Bible were corrupt, translated from the Today's English Version (TEV) with errors and omissions.



Rev Thang Hup and Rev Thawm Luai

The translation of KJV Falam-Chin was begun by Rev Joseph Thang Hup, BD, STM (Dallas Theological Seminary), in 1980 under the Bible International (BI) mandate. In the course of time, the BI's consultant changed his mind and suspended the KJV translation, saying that he preferred the New International Version (NIV) rather than KJV. We, the fundamental groups, though diffident about bearing the burden of the unfinished work, undertook the whole project of KJV translation by faith alone. With God's mighty hand leading us, we finished the first draft by 1987. When Rev Dr Patrick Tan visited us in 1987, we reported the matter to him. He not only encouraged us to go ahead with the work, but also gave a report about it in the Life B-P Church bulletin on December 28, 1987.

As a result, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (EPCM), at its annual general assembly of 1987-88, voted to form a committee to supervise and oversee the translation work. Thus the new checking committee was formed on May 20, 1989, and Rev Robert Thawm Luai was chosen as its chairperson. The Committee comprised a good number of elderly people and experienced men from different backgrounds and denominations. The final checking was completed in



1993. In fact, I gave my work reports to Rev Tow twice, in 1988 and 1989. We were silent about this matter for a long time because we were fully engaged in the construction of our college (FEFST) building and in the church planting works of the EPCM.

The Lord has never failed to give me a new opportunity. In February 1999, when Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo, academic dean of Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC), visited the Far Eastern Fundamental School of Theology (FEFST) for the MMin programme, I informed him about the

translation work. He responded enthusiastically and advised me to print it before the end of the millennium. After Dr Khoo left, the FEFST faculty undertook the final checking and revision, which was done verse by verse. Then we computerised it. The translation was done by the verbal equivalence method. Beginning with the Gospel of Matthew, we worked consecutively through the NT, using as our guide the books, *A Textual Key To The New Testament*, *A List of Omissions and Changes* written by G W and D E Anderson of Trinitarian Bible Society, and “The KJV-NIV Debate” lecture notes of Dr Jeffrey Khoo.

The whole project, in my annual report of May 12, 1999, was given to Rev Dr Timothy Tow. He gladly accepted it. God in His sovereign will causes all things to work together for good (Rom 8:28). In fact, in 1998, Rev Tow, on behalf of Life B-P Church, offered to give us a brand new Heidelberg Offset Printing Press 46 QM, costing SGD\$87,000. With it we could easily undertake the printing of the Falam-Chin KJV Bible.

By the grace of God, the NT was published and dedicated by Rev Tow on the occasion of the Eighth Graduation Exercises of the Far Eastern Fundamental School of Theology, January 28, 2001. The OT is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year, God willing.

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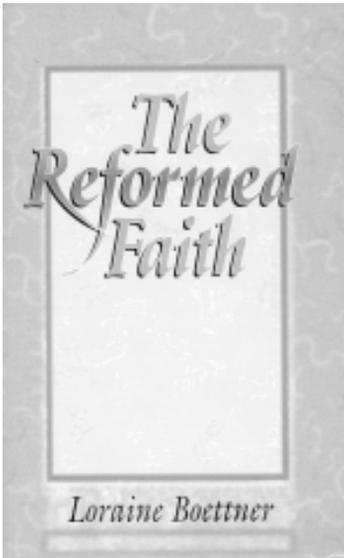
*Rev Robert Thawm Luai is principal of FEFST and pastor of the Emmanuel Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Yangon, Myanmar.*

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Jeffrey Khoo

*The Reformed Faith*, by Loraine Boettner. Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1983. 28 pages.



Loraine Boettner's booklet—*The Reformed Faith*—published locally by Old Paths Publishing House has recently been reprinted by New Life Bible-Presbyterian Church under a new title—*Biblical Faith*. This booklet seeks to present “the basic differences between the Calvinistic and the Arminian system of theology.” Boettner has rightly observed that “Calvinism is the purest ... embodiment of the religion of faith.” Any attempt to promote the Reformed or Calvinistic Faith accurately ought to be applauded. Boettner's booklet is to be applauded for its excellent synopsis of the Reformed Faith. However, it is regrettable that in Part 5 of his booklet, Boettner adopted a hyper-Calvinistic interpretation

of 2 Pet 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Boettner wrote that the words “any” and “all” do not mean “all mankind without exception.” This supports the hyper-Calvinistic denial of the doctrines of (1) common grace, (2) the free offer of the gospel, and (3) the desiderative will of God. Hyper-Calvinists would refuse to preach “God loves you, and Christ died for you.” According to them, God loves only the elect, and has no desire whatsoever for the salvation of the non-elect. They affirm God's decretive, but not His desiderative will.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Being Calvinists, we want to hear from Calvin himself. How did Calvin understand 2 Pet 3:9? Did Calvin believe in God's (1) common grace, (2) free offer of the gospel, and (3) desiderative will? Commenting on 2 Pet 3:9, Calvin wrote, "This is *His wondrous love towards the human race [His common grace]*, that He desires all men to be saved [*His desiderative will*], and is prepared to bring even the perishing to safety. ... It could be asked here, if God does not want any to perish [*desiderative will*], why do so many in fact perish [*decretive will*]?" My reply is that no mention is made of the secret decree [*decretive will*] of God by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His loving-kindness [*desiderative will*] as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There *God stretches out His hand to all alike [the free offer of the gospel]*, but He only grasps those (in such a way as to lead to Himself) whom he has chosen [*decretive will*] before the foundation of the world" (italics and parentheses mine). It is quite clear that Calvin believed in all three. Calvin recognised that though God had decreed the salvation of only the elect, He nevertheless genuinely desires the salvation of all, and sincerely offers the gospel even to those whom He has not decreed to save.

Boettner defines God's love for the world as one that is "without distinction" and not one that is "without exception." In other words, God loves only the elect whether they be Jew or Gentile; and cannot be said to love every single human being in this world, elect or reprobate. For this reason, hyper-Calvinists would not preach, "God loves you, Christ died for you." In their mind, God loves only the elect, and Christ died only for the elect." If "you" are not elect, then God does not love you, and Christ did not die for you. God has absolute hatred for all who are non-elect. With such a view on God's love and the gospel, is it no wonder that hyper-Calvinism has often degenerated into non-evangelism?

Did Calvin see the world at large to be outside the love of God, and that the gospel ought to be offered to only the elect? On the great gospel verse of God's love and salvation—John 3:16—Calvin commented, "The outstanding thing about faith is that it delivers us from eternal destruction. For He especially wanted to say that although we seem to have been born for death deliverance *is offered* to us by the faith of Christ so that we must not fear the death which otherwise threatens us. And he used a general term [i.e. 'whosever'], both *to invite indiscriminately all* to share in life and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also significant in

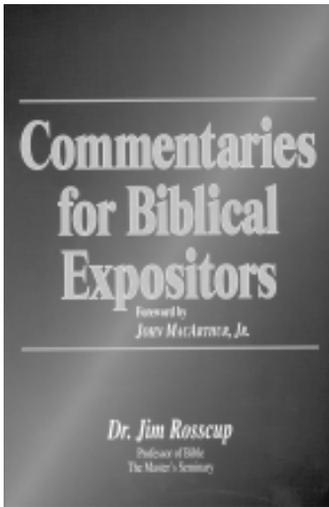
the term ‘world’ which He had used before. For although there is nothing in the world deserving of God’s favour, He nevertheless shows *He is favourable to the whole world when He calls all without exception* [note: *not ‘all without distinction’*] to the faith of Christ, which is indeed an entry into life” (italics and parentheses mine).

Let it be said that on the universalistic passages, Calvin is right, Boettner is wrong.

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*Commentaries for Biblical Expositors*, by Jim Rosscup. Sun Valley CA: Grace Book Shack, 1993. 314 pages.

*The Complete Bible Commentary*. Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999. 1831 pages.



A reliable commentary on commentaries is a resource every studious Christian should have in his personal library. Such a commentary serves to provide an overview of the various Bible commentaries, old and new, available in the market. Such introductory information will help one to know the general theological persuasion of the author, and to decide on whether it is a book worth buying. Considering the fact that Christian books today are pricey (no thanks to the profiteering motivations of some publishing houses, book stores, and the weaker Singapore dollar to the US dollar or Sterling pound), it pays for the Bible

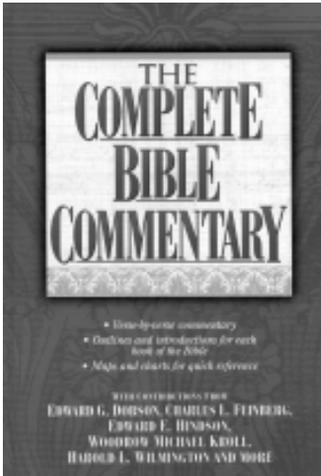
student to do some research before buying a certain book.

One such commentary on commentaries I can recommend is *Commentaries for Biblical Expositors* (314pp) by Dr Jim Rosscup, Bible professor at The Master’s Seminary in California. Published in 1993, it is fairly recent and up-to-date. Rosscup is a conservative evangelical scholar. He speaks highly of Calvin. On Calvin’s Commentaries, he wrote, “Calvin was not only a great theologian but also a great expositor, and his insight into Scripture contributed to his grasp of doctrinal truth.

## BOOK REVIEWS

His commentaries are deep in spiritual understanding, ... and refreshing in a devotional sense ... [Calvin] has very contributive perception on passages and doctrinal values edifying to the believer.” In terms of his eschatological viewpoint, Rosscup is a pro-Israel premillennialist.

In his book, Rosscup discusses both single and multiple volume commentaries on the whole Bible, as well as commentaries on the individual books of the Bible. One plus point about Rosscup is that he tells his reader whether a certain book is conservative or liberal. Also, since prophecy occupies a sizable portion (a quarter) of the Scriptures, he saw it fit to inform his readers the eschatological view of certain books whether amillennial, postmillennial, premillennial, or dispensational (or pro-Israel) premillennial.



Readers ought to note that the *Liberty Bible Commentary* (1983) mentioned by Rosscup on page 19 has been reissued by Thomas Nelson Publishers as *The Complete Bible Commentary* (1999). I consider this one-volume commentary to be the best among the one-volume commentaries available today. It is fundamental, KJV-based, and excellent in terms of offering a “premillennial perspective on long-range prophecy as in the Major Prophets, Minor Prophets, Matthew 24-25, the Thessalonian Epistles, and Revelation.” The authors of this commentary also

wrote the study notes for *The King James Study Bible*.

Rosscup’s *Commentaries for Biblical Expositors*, and Nelson’s *The Complete Bible Commentary* are both available at our FEBC Bookroom. Every serious Bible student would do well to equip himself with these very helpful volumes. No well-equipped library can afford to do without them either.

## College News

The **new college semester** opened on January 2, 2001 with a day of prayer and registration. Nineteen new students joined the college family from 9 countries: *Ethiopia*—Gete Sisay; *Indonesia*—Feily Sofian; *Kenya*—Violet Mukavali Malongo, Nelson Noel Nguono Were, Alex Nasongo Wugu; *Korea*—Jung Eun Hee, Kim Hyoung Sik, Kim Jin Seung, Lee Nam Soon, Park Jeoung Hun, Sin Mi Sook; *Malaysia*—Teo Yock Kui; *Nepal*—Khadga Bahadur Thapa Magar; *Singapore*—Zacky Choo; *Thailand*—Warunee Harichaikul, Supaporn Kamonthakapai, Suksit Theparee; *Vietnam*—Nguyen Doan Hau, Vo Thanh Phan.

Four **evening courses** were conducted during the January-May semester: (1) *Eschatology* by Rev Dr Timothy Tow, (2) *1-2 Peter* by Rev Das Koshy, (3) *Parenting* by Rev Dr Goh Seng Fong, and (4) *Baby Greek II* by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo.

Our principal—Rev Dr Timothy Tow—successfully led his **10<sup>th</sup> Pilgrimage to the Holy Land**, March 8-23, 2001. A total of 50 pilgrims including FEBC students enjoyed a 16-day journey covering Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. Students earn two credits upon completion of a study project.

The **FEBC Gospel Rally** was held on March 31, 2001. Rev Das Koshy—lecturer in Hebrew and Biblical Studies, and pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church—spoke on “Christ Died That We Might Live.”

**Singapore Missions and FEBC** were featured in the *Evangelical Times* (UK), March 2001.

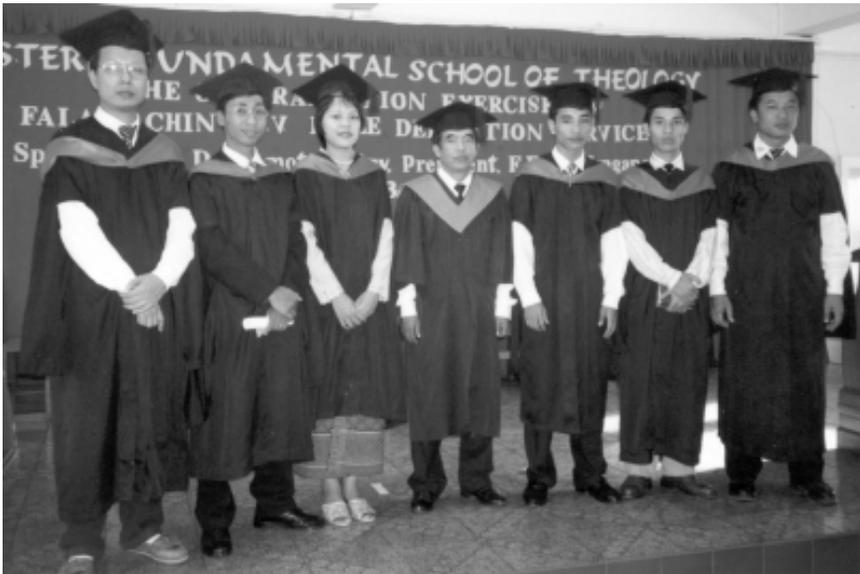
FEBC will conduct a **Bachelor of Ministry** (BMin) programme for DipTh graduates of the Bible College of East Africa (BCEA), Nairobi, Kenya. The FEBC faculty will lecture at the BCEA campus twice a year. BCEA was founded in 1965 by the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM; Rev Edward Pauwe is General Secretary) of the Bible Presbyterian Church, USA. FEBC alumnus—Rev **Mark Kim Kyung Soo** (DipTh '90)—is BCEA's 5<sup>th</sup> principal. He holds a BAgri from Seoul National University, MA from Pensacola Christian College, and an honorary DLitt from Siloam Evangelical Seminary. He has also done additional studies at Faith Theological Seminary (Korea). Other FEBC alumni serving as lecturers in BCEA are: Rev **Stephen Masila** (BTh '83, MDiv '00), Rev **Geoffrey Lidodo** (BTh '93), Rev **Alex Wugu** (BTh '99), and **Francis Onyango** (BTh '01).

## Bible College of East Africa, Nairobi, Kenya



L-R (zig-zag): Rev & Mrs Mark Kim (principal) with Dr & Mrs Howard Carlson from Faith College; BCEA faculty and their spouses; Administration building; Campus church; Church sanctuary; Dining hall; Rev Stephen Masila (academic dean) with editor; Rev & Mrs Kim with Maasai Christians of Lenkejape Glory B-P Church.

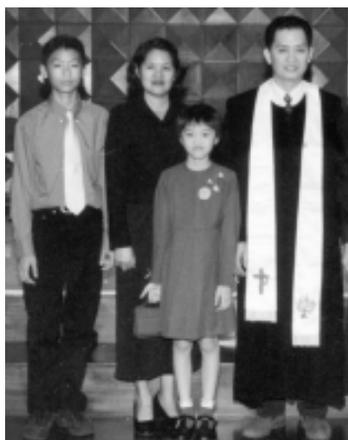
**The Far Eastern Fundamental School of Theology** (Yangon, Myanmar), at its 8<sup>th</sup> Graduation Exercises, January 28, 2001, conferred the Master of Ministry degree to six who successfully completed the two-year programme under the tutelage of FEBC lecturers. The MMin recipients were: William Pau, Marvin Tha Luai, Martin Ci, Biak Lawm Thang, J Lal Lian Uk, and Thawng Nei Kim. Rev Dr Timothy Tow was the graduation speaker. In appreciation of his role in Myanmar missions, Rev Robert Thawm Luai—principal of FEFST—presented Rev Tow with a certificate and medal on behalf of the Standing Committee of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, and Board of FEFST.



MMin graduates (L-R): William Pau, Martin Ci, Thawng Nei Kim, Rev Thawm Luai (Principal), Biak Lawm Thang, J Lal Lian Uk,

**Basic Theology for Everyone** evening courses for this semester (July-November, 2001) are: (1) Monday: “Systematic Theology I: Theism” by Rev Dr Timothy Tow, and (2) Tuesday: “Book of Hebrews” by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo.

## Class Notes



**Daniel Arianto** (BTh '86) was ordained as a minister of the gospel by the Gereja Pemberita Injil on the occasion of its 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary, March 7, 2000. In his letter of December 4, 2000, Rev Arianto wrote about his mission trip to Samarinda in East Kalimantan, "I went inland to visit our gospel station for two weeks. There I conducted revival meetings, baptised, and encouraged our co-workers and church members. The mission trip was so wonderful and challenging. It reminded me of how our church founder—Rev Jason

Linn—went to remote places to preach the good news to the Dayak people. I am grateful to my alma mater—FEBC—for training me to be a faithful minister and I would like to thank my principal—Rev Dr Timothy Tow—who taught me sound and solid doctrines which I could not receive from other seminaries. His pastoral life and teaching have influenced my life and my ministry. I pray that the Lord may give him more years to serve Him." You may learn more about Rev Arianto's ministry from his church website at <http://www.gepembri.org>.

**Goh Ngiam Heng** (BTh '87) is now assisting Rev Dr K C Quek in the Mandarin service of Faith Bible-Presbyterian Church, Serangoon Gardens, Singapore.

Rev **Michael Koech** (BTh '87), the principal of Bomet Bible Institute, is also acting principal of Faith College of the Bible, Nairobi, Kenya.

**Sandra Chay** (DipTh '88) graduated with a Master of Divinity from Singapore Bible College on May 12, 2001.

Dr **Jeffrey Khoo** (BTh '89) lectured at the Bible College of East Africa (Nairobi, Kenya) from March 9-23, 2001. He offered two courses: (1) Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology and (2) Biblical Separation. Dr Khoo also preached to the Maasai congregation of Lenkejape Glory B-P Church in Namanga, Kenya.

**Lawrence Chan** (BTh '90) is missionary of New Life Bible-Presbyterian Church to Kenya. He works at the Kiluani New Life Secondary School

where Miss Lilian Lee is principal. Mailing address: P O Box 215, Namanga, Kenya. Email: glorynl@swiftkenya.com.

Rev **Jeong Un Gyo** (BTh '92) is studying for his Master of Sacred Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Rev **Kiantoro Lie** (BTh '92, MRE '98), pastor of Calvary Batam Bible-Presbyterian Church, has been appointed a lecturer in religious studies at Batam International University.

Rev **Jack Sin** (MDiv '96), pastor of Maranatha Bible-Presbyterian Church and lecturer in Church History at FEBC is studying for his Doctor of Ministry degree at Pensacola Theological Seminary, Florida, USA.

**Bae Kyung Sik** (BRE '99) returned to FEBC for a brief visit, from February 28-March 1. She is currently a Master of Divinity student at Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul, Korea.

**Lee Ji Hey** (BTh '99) is a MSc student in educational administration at Pensacola Christian College.

**Samuel Kunjumone** (BRE '00) received his Master of Divinity from East Asia School of Theology, Singapore, on June 9, 2001.

**Calvin Loh** (MDiv '00), preacher of the Chinese congregation of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, was married to Ong Chin Ping on January 1, 2001 at Life B-P Church.

Rev **Leonard Musyoka** (BTh '00) is the pastor of Kalundu Independent Presbyterian Church in Kitui, Kenya. He has recently been appointed chairman of the Theological Education Committee by the synod of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Kenya.

**Thang Vel Kam** (CertBS '00) is studying for his Bachelor of Religious Education at the Alliance Bible College, Manila, Philippines.

**David Weng** (BTh '00) and **Susan Suryati** (BTh '01) were united in holy matrimony on November 18, 2000 at Calvary Bible-Presbyterian Church, Pandan Gardens, Singapore.

**Mathews Abraham** (MRE '01) and his wife **Ratchanee** (DipTh '01) are serving at Moriah Bible-Presbyterian Church under Rev Dr **Bob Phee** (BTh '77) who was conferred the DPhil by Oxford Graduate School, USA, last year.

**Esther Chew** (BTh '01) is serving at the Baraka Bible Conference Centre, Bethlehem, Israel. Baraka is a mission station of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, USA.

## FEBC 26<sup>th</sup> Graduation Exercises (May 13, 2001)

The 26<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service was held on May 13, 2001 at Calvary Bible-Presbyterian Church, Pandan Gardens. Dr S H Tow, senior pastor of Calvary B-P Church and former president of the FEBC Board of Directors, was the Lord's messenger.

The following 35 graduated: **Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK)**: Daniel Chew (Elder/Preacher, Calvary Toronto BPC, Canada), Zacky Choo (Calvary Pandan BPC, Singapore), Mary Chua (Calvary Pandan BPC, Singapore), Ng Keng Tiong (Life BPC, Singapore), Ong Chin Ping (Life BPC, Singapore), Poh Ee Huat (Sunday school teacher, Calvary Tengah BPC, Singapore), Xie Ping (Calvary Pandan BPC, Singapore). **Certificate of Biblical Studies (CertBS)**: Aguni (Kindergarten ministry, GAPPI, Batam, Indonesia), Jean Lee (Secretary, Calvary Pandan BPC, Singapore), Nguyen Thi Thu (Preacher's wife, Vietnam), Joshua Pinto (Helping Hand ministry, Batam, Indonesia), Saman Preechawong (Thailand), Charlene Sia (Singapore). **Diploma of Theology (DipTh)**: Ng Boon Choo (Youth ministry, Calvary Jurong BPC, Singapore), Park Jong Gyoo (Preacher, Korean Mission Church, Singapore), Ratchanee Ritnatikul (Missionary to Thailand), Shachendra Shrestha (Nepalese ministry, Sharon BPC, Singapore). **Bachelor of Religious Education (BRE)**: Chai Muei Huying (Preacher, Moriah BPC, Singapore), Joshua Cheng (Missionary to China), Im Ha Young (Missionary to India), Karuna Sitthisakthanakul (MRE student, FEBC). **Bachelor of Theology (BTh)**: Ephrem Chiracho (MDiv student, FEBC), Dennis Kwok (Preacher, Calvary Jurong BPC, Singapore), Jonathan Langat (MDiv student, FEBC), Francis Onyango (Lecturer, Bible College of East Africa, Kenya), Phairot Songsawadwong (Military service, Thailand), Susan Suryati (Preacher's wife, Maranatha BPC, Singapore), Tan Bee Choo (Chinese ministry, Life BPC, Singapore). **Master of Religious Education (MRE)**: Mathews Abraham (Missionary to Thailand), Sakunee Krianchaiporn (Lecturer, Thailand Baptist Theological Seminary, Bangkok), Henry Tan Kiat Siong (BASC director, Life BPC, Singapore). **Master of Divinity (MDiv)**: Han Jae Seog (Pastoral ministry, Pusan, Korea), Samson Hutagalung (Preacher, Calvary Batam BPC, Indonesia), Sim Peng Sin (Preacher, Rawang/Tangkak BPCs, Malaysia), Tan Kian Sing (Preacher, Berean BPC, Singapore).

*The Burning Bush 7/2 (July 2001)*



Recipients of the CertRK/BS, L-R (zig-zag): Joshua Pinto, Ng Keng Tiong, Poh Ee Huat, Zacky Choo, Mary Chua, Ong Chin Ping, Jean Lee, Charlene Sia.

*FEBC 26<sup>th</sup> Graduation Exercises (May 13, 2001)*



L-R (zig-zag): Swearing of allegiance to the Bible by faculty/directors; African song presentation; Recessional, Dr Timothy Tow and Dr S H Tow; Miss Carol Lee, and Rev Quek Suan Yew; Karuna, Im Ha Young, and Joshua Cheng; Sim Peng Sin, and Samson Hutagalung; Sachen Shrestha, Ratchanee, and Park Jong Gyoo; Ho Chee Lai (MDiv student).

*The Burning Bush 7/2 (July 2001)*



L-R (zig-zag): African students and graduands; Park Jong Gyoo, Im Ha Young and Han Jae Seog with Korean friends; Dn Henry Tan and family; Rev Colin Wong flanked by Dn Henry Tan and Han Jae Seog; Thai graduates Sakunee and Phairot; Mathews Abraham and Ratchanee with Mrs Tow; Tan Bee Choo; Ng Boon Choo with Rev Quek Suan Yew.



L-R (zig-zag): Dr and Mrs Timothy Tow (Principal and Matron); Dn Henry Tan, Rev Charles Seet, and Dr Jeffrey Khoo; Joshua Cheng and parents with Dr and Mrs Tow; Sim Peng Sin (MDiv graduate); Mr and Mrs Ephrem Chiracho with Rev Das Koshy and family; Susan Suryati with husband and friends; Tan Kian Sing and Berean BPC; Members of the Board of Directors and their spouses.

# **O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness**

**Far Eastern Bible College**

**26<sup>th</sup> Graduation Exercises**

**May 13, 2001**

