



# The Burning Bush

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# THE BURNING BUSH

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Edited for the Faculty

Rev Timothy Tow, MDiv, STM, DD  
Principal, and Lecturer in Systematic Theology

Mrs Ivy Tow, BTh  
Matron, and Lecturer in Greek

Rev Jeffrey Khoo, BTh, MDiv, STM, PhD  
Academic Dean, and Lecturer in New Testament

Rev Prabhudas Koshy, BSc, BTh, MDiv, ThM, ThD  
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Lecturer in Biblical Studies

Mrs Jemima Khoo, BTh, MA, MRE  
Lecturer in Christian Education

Miss Carol Lee, BBA, DipEd, MEd, MDiv  
Lecturer in Christian Education

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Please direct all correspondence to:



The Editor, *The Burning Bush*  
Far Eastern Bible College  
9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063  
Republic of Singapore

## Editorial

### The Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Sacred Scriptures

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF) states very clearly that the inspired Scriptures in the original languages are by God's "singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages" (WCF I:8). The Westminster divines used Matthew 5:18 as a proof text for this affirmation of the verbal plenary preservation (VPP) of the Scriptures. This proves that the doctrine of the VPP of Scripture is not just creedal, but more importantly *Biblical*.

The VPP of Scripture is a position of faith that is based solely on the Word of God. "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb 11:1). "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom 10:17). "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*" (Heb 11:6). It is a position that we must take if we are to weather and survive the onslaughts of postmodernism, pop-modernism, open-theism and neo-deism that seek to destroy the church today.

#### Definition of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP)

What does VPP mean? "Verbal" means "every word to the jot and tittle" (Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18). "Plenary" means "the Scripture as a whole with all the words intact" (Matt 24:35, 1 Pet 1:25). So VPP means *the whole of Scripture with all its words even to the jot and tittle is perfectly preserved by God without any loss of the original words, prophecies, promises, commandments, doctrines, and truths, not only in the words of salvation, but also the words of history, geography and science. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter is infallibly preserved by the Lord Himself to the last iota.*

What and where are the preserved words of God today? They are the inspired OT Hebrew words and NT Greek words the prophets, the apostles, the church fathers, the reformers used which are today found in the long and continuously abiding and preserved words underlying the Reformation Bibles best represented by the time-tested and time-honoured KJV, and **NOT** in the corrupted

Alexandrian manuscripts and critical Westcott-Hort texts underlying the liberal, ecumenical, and neo-evangelical modern English versions.

The Far Eastern Bible College upholds the VPP of Scripture and believes in the following tenets:

- (1) God has supernaturally preserved each and every one of His inspired Hebrew/Aramaic OT words and Greek NT words to the last jot and tittle, so that in every age, God's people will always have in their possession His infallible and inerrant Word kept intact without the loss of any word (Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33, John 10:35).
- (2) The "providential" preservation of Scriptures is understood as God's *special* and not general providence. Special providence or *providentia extraordinaria* speaks of God's miraculous intervention in the events of history and in the affairs of mankind in fulfilment of His sovereign will for the sake of His elect and to the glory of His Name. The divine preservation of the Canon (books) and Text (words) of Scripture comes under God's special providence.
- (3) The Bible is not only infallible and inerrant in the past (in the Autographs), but also infallible and inerrant today (in the Apographs).
- (4) The infallible and inerrant words of Scripture are found in the faithfully preserved Traditional/Byzantine/Majority manuscripts, and fully represented in the Printed and Received Text (or Textus Receptus) that underlie the Reformation Bibles best represented by the KJV, and **NOT** in the corrupted and rejected texts of Westcott and Hort that underlie the many modern versions of the English Bible like the NIV, NASV, ESV, RSV, TEV, CEV, TLB etc.
- (5) There are no mistakes in the Bible, period. If there are "discrepancies" in the Bible, the "discrepancies" are only seeming or apparent, **NOT** real or actual.<sup>1</sup> Any inability to understand or explain difficult passages in the Bible in no way negates its infallibility and inerrancy, applying the faithful Pauline principle of biblical interpretation: "let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom 3:4).
- (6) Knowing where the perfect Bible is is a matter of textual recognition and **NOT** textual criticism. In the field of textual recognition, Burgon is good, Hills is better, Waite is best.<sup>2</sup>
- (7) The Chinese Union Version (CUV) is the "Word of God" for the Chinese people today since it is the best, most faithful, most reliable, and most accurate version among the Chinese versions presently available. Great care

ought to be taken not to undermine our Chinese brethren's confidence in the CUV. Nevertheless, versions or translations are never superior to the inspired and preserved Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Scriptures; thus there is a need to consult these original language Scriptures for clarity and fulness of meaning, and to compare Scripture with Scripture.

### **Our Perfect Lord and His Perfect Word are the Foundation of Our Faith**

***“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”*** (Ps 11:3).

It is only when we have a 100% perfect, infallible and inerrant Bible can we say the Bible is our only and final authority, and foundation of faith. If there is no such an infallible and inerrant Bible today, then the so-called “scholar” becomes the supreme authority, and we have to kowtow to his subjective and speculative judgements on and corrections of the Bible. Some may want to trust the words of men, but we trust only the words of our Lord *who “died for our sins according to the scriptures ... was buried ... [and] rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4).*

The Bible itself which is our supreme and final authority of faith and practice clearly teaches its plenary inspiration, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God,*” and its verbal preservation, “*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*” (Matt 5:18), “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*” (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33). The doctrine of the 100% inspiration (VPI) and 100% preservation (VPP) of each and every word of the Bible is *as old as the Bible itself*. It is certainly NOT a new teaching or theory, and definitely NOT a false doctrine.

The twin doctrines of VPI and VPP must be received *by faith* (Rom 10:17, Heb 11:6). Our faith must be “according to the *scriptures,*” and **NOT** “according to the scholars.” “***Let God be true, but every man a liar***” (Rom 3:4). “***For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth***” (2 Cor 13:8). *Soli Deo Gloria!*

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> There are no mistakes or errors (scribal or otherwise) in such passages as Judges 18:30, 1 Samuel 13:1, 1 Kings 4:26, 1 Chronicles 18:3, 2 Chronicles 22:2 etc.

<sup>2</sup> John William Burgon, *The Revision Revised: A Refutation of Westcott and Hort's False Greek Text and Theory* (Collingswood: Dean Burgon Society Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, 2000); Edward F Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1984); D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Collingswood: Bible For Today Press, 1996).

## **THREE HEAVEN AND EARTH MOVING STATEMENTS FROM GOD'S MOUTH SETTLE THE QUESTION WHETHER HIS WORDS ARE PRESERVED**

Timothy Tow

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared three times in Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31 and Luke 21:33 the same words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." This settles the question whether His Words are preserved or not. Scholars who miss this statement but argue from other angles are missing the woods for the trees. If Jesus guarantees that His Words will remain longer than heaven and earth which He has created, its preservation will last longer than the creation.

Two instances in the Bible will illustrate our point. After God had written the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone, Moses broke them in anger when he came down from the Mount and saw the children of Israel worshipping instead a golden calf they had made. Then God said to Moses, "Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest" (Exod 34:1).

The second instance is recorded in Jeremiah Chapter 36. God told Jeremiah to write in a book words that He had spoken to him against Israel and Judah and all nations. Then Jeremiah called Baruch, his secretary, to write in a book Jeremiah's words from the Lord and read them to King Jehoiakim and all in the LORD's house. When the king heard it, he cut up the book with a pen knife and burnt it. But God's Words came to Jeremiah after all the words that were in the first roll had been burnt by King Jehoiakim. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah "all the former words that were in the first roll," which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words. God's Words cannot be broken (John 10:35) but only be preserved.

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*Rev Dr Timothy Tow is the principal of Far Eastern Bible College,  
and pastor of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church.*

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## GOD'S PURITY OR MAN'S PERVERSITY— WHICH?

Denis Gibson

My text is Proverbs 30:5-6, “Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

**When will men heed Wisdom's first as well as final word on God's inspired Words?** In Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32 we read this first word of warning “moved and seconded:” “Ye shall not add unto the word which **I command you**, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which **I command you** ... What thing soever **I command you**, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”

In Revelation 22:18-20 this warning is finalised and fixed forever: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.”

Furthermore, does not that warning re-occur repeatedly throughout the pages of the Scripture? We recall the Apostle Paul's **final** words to his successor Timothy: “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). Here Paul calls the Holy Scriptures nothing less than *ta hiera grammata*, not just sacred **words**, but “*the sacred letters*,” reminding us of Dean Burgon's “every letter,” for do not *sacred letters* result in *sacred words*?

There is also Wisdom's final word in the Book of Proverbs on how men should treat the Word of God. What we have in these verses, in germ, is expounded more fully elsewhere, as for instance in Psalm 12,

where the *polluted* words of the wicked (verses 2-3) are contrasted with the *pure* words of God. God's *Way* is *perfect*, and God's *Word* is *also perfect* (Ps 18:30). It is not tainted with the *deceit and flattery, the dross and perversion*, of sinful men!

## THE CONTEXTUALISATION

Consider the context of Proverbs 30:1-9. The last two chapters in the book of Proverbs seem to be an appendix to the whole Book. Generally speaking, the context, when expounding the individual proverbs, does not affect their meaning; each of the proverbs mostly stand alone, or in pairs, or in small groups. There are places, however, where the context does have significance, and we suggest the verses in Proverbs 30:5-6 appear to be so.

In the phrase, "*the knowledge of the holy*" (v3), where *holy* is plural, is there not an allusion to a certain *plurality* in the divine nature? This is understood by many as a name for *God Himself* (cf "the holy [One]," Prov 9:10). It was certainly used by Isaiah as a favourite designation for God, when he spoke of *the holy one of Israel*, and which he used some 30 times. Our God is the *Thrice Holy One* before whom the Seraphim covered their faces and feet, and before whom Isaiah fell in deepest conviction and confessed his own and his nation's utter uncleanness! With Moses, let us put off our shoes from off our feet, for we are standing upon holy ground.

Who Agur was no one can say for certain. Is it a name of one person, or are there four "unknown" men referred to here? The name "Agur" means "to gather" (6:8, 10:5), thus Agur may simply refer to someone who "gathered or collected" wise sayings. Agur is also referred to as *ben Jakeh*, the son of Jakeh. The root of *Jakeh* means "to preserve" from evil or fear, or to *be pious*, so is Agur "a pious son" who preserves proverbs? Some (Jerome and others) have conjectured that Agur was another name for Solomon himself, like *Qoheleth*, "collector," "preacher," or *Lemuel*, meaning "devoted to God," who is generally supposed to be Solomon himself. Undoubtedly, Solomon was a consummate collector or gatherer of all sorts of knowledge (Eccl 1:1, 2, 13, 16; 2:8). "It is well known that Hebrew names are always significant, and therefore it is not surprising that such an ambiguity should occur."<sup>1</sup> Derek Kidner also noted: "The ancient versions likewise eliminate the proper names here. It [their meaning] remains an open question."<sup>2</sup> Yet undoubtedly, whoever speaks



here does so as a man of God, endowed with the gift of prophecy (Hebrew *hammassa*, the burden of the Lord!), and his purpose is to teach us some valuable lessons.

The meaning of the names *Ithiel*, which literally means “with me is God” or simply “God is,” and *Ucal* which means “an able one,” have also been disputed. The RV (1881, marg) changed these names into verbs, but in this context may they not be taken as veiled references to Christ, the Son of God, with whom their meanings so well agree, for it is the Son’s name, as well as the Father’s, that is here inquired after: “*What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?*”

And *who can tell?* Yes, there is a Son in the Eternal Godhead, begotten from all eternity (cf Prov 8:22-30). Jesus Himself declared: “*No man knoweth the Son but the Father*” (Matt 11:27). Though for a while the Son’s Name was *secret* (Judg 13:18; John 3:2,13), and He was referred to as “*the seed of the woman*” and “*of the seed of Abraham*,” He had many names in the OT. He was “Shiloh,” “Immanuel,” “Wonderful,” “the Man,” “the Branch,” “the Lord Our Righteousness.” His Name, which is the expression of His Godhead, was not known by the light of nature, but only by “special” revelation (Job 11:7-9). “*But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son*” (Gal 4:4). His name is “Jesus,” “the Messiah (Christ),” “the Son of God,” “the Word of God,” “the Creator,” “the King of kings and Lord of lords,” “*Ho Erchomenos*.” Man could never have guessed the answer to the question: *What is his son’s name*, but God Himself sent us *the Answer in His Son!* “The hinge of history was on the door of a Bethlehem stable!” (Ralph W Sockman).

C H Spurgeon said: “Agur passed the greatest censure upon himself, that his hearers might not suffer their faith to stand in the wisdom of men.”<sup>3</sup> Could Solomon have uttered Agur’s words? Yes, for is not one of the marks of true wisdom an honest awareness of one’s own ignorance, especially in the presence of the God of the Bible? How *brutish* is man’s knowledge now compared to that of an un-fallen Adam (Ps 73:22). Before Agur would speak of such a God as he here describes, he must abase himself (Prov 15:33; Matt 23:12). Amos said, “I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son,” but what a prophet he was (7:14)! Should we not all do the same, and lie in the dust before Him *whose understanding is infinite* (Ps 147:5)?

So Agur, though his language is very strong, may simply have meant: “I did not learn wisdom, for I have *knowledge of the holy*” (marg

“know”), and, as we know, “action is the proper fruit of knowledge.” Insufficient by himself, Agur humbly points us to the Creator God, the One who controls the heavens, the winds, the seas and the earth. It is, therefore, none other than **this** God whose *every word is perfect* (vv5-6). It is none other than **this** God before whom Agur can truly acknowledge his *brutishness and ignorance*, and what God is to one saint He is to every saint. It is, therefore, none **other God** than **this God** whose every word is *pure* and can be trusted *implicitly*. Such, then, is the contextualisation of Proverbs 30:5-6, but there is more.

### THE INQUISITION

Yes, there is an inquisition in progress here as recorded in verse four. “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?”

It has a familiar ring to it. It reminds us of the questions God put so forcefully to Job (38-41), and also as He announces the coming redemption of His people (Isa 40:12-14, 18-28). This inquisition was intended to remind “man” of his puniness and proneness to forget who he is, on the one hand, and to counter the prevailing practice of forgetting who God is, on the other. Here, then, is the challenge to remember who controls the heavens, the winds, the waters, and the earth. Who has established all these things? *What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if you can tell?* Again, we ask, Who can tell? The answer is obvious. None but the Mighty-Creator-God of the Scriptures, and His Almighty Son, can resolve “the riddle” of Life. Jesus clearly referred to this passage when he said to Nicodemus: “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13). Did He not command the winds and the waves to obey Him, and did not the disciples cry out in amazement and fear, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (Matt 8:27).

### THE EXPOSITION

It is in **this context** and of **this God**, the God of Creation and Redemption, that we can now properly consider the Word of **this God** that is set before us in Proverbs 30:5-6. Will we trust the *pure* Words that **this** God has been pleased to preserve for us, or will we choose to follow the “guessing game” of those who will be reproved by **this** God and found to

## GOD'S PURITY OR MAN'S PERVERSITY—WHICH?

be liars (v6)? Let us now consider the Words of Him who holds the World, and all who are in it, in His unseen but omnipotent Hands.

### Its Perfection

“Every word of God is pure” (v5a). This reminds us of Paul’s, “*All scripture,*” and most surely includes *every word*, Old Testament as well as New Testament, *without exception*. The word “pure” refers to a process whereby precious metal is refined or smelted in a furnace to remove every particle of dross, thus producing the purest gold or finest silver. Psalm 12 says, “The words of the Lord ... purified seven times.” Seven is the number of completion, of perfection, and means that God’s Words are and can be nothing less than *the purest perfection*. There can be no misgivings or doubts about their purity. “Of what other book in the world can this be said? Where else is the gold found without alloy? *The word is tried*. It has stood all the trials, and no dross has been found in it. ‘Having God for its Author, it has truth without any admixture of error for its matter.’”<sup>4</sup> Another old commentator agrees: “There are no superfluities in the word of God. Every word of God is useful and holy, righteous and true ... Because the word of God is very pure, we ought to love it, and to believe it with all our hearts, and to trust in God, as he is revealed to us in it. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”<sup>5</sup> Why then should there be any misgivings, or any doubt as to their reliability, or any need for their “improvement” by the unholy hands of men? “To reject therefore one ‘jot or tittle is a sufficient demonstration,’ as Dr. John Owen admirably observes—*‘that no one jot or tittle of it is received as it ought.’*”<sup>6</sup>

### Its Protection

“He is a shield ...”. Does “shield” here (v5b) refer to God or to God’s Word? The Hebrew, we suggest, could be rendered either way, though most commentators treat it as referring exclusively to *God*. Certainly, there are many verses where God is called *a shield* to His people, but we take the *primary* reference here to be *every word of God*. Is not God’s Word just another way of referring to God Himself, Himself revealed, who is behind His every word? When we believe that *every word of God is pure*, that Word acts as a *shield to them that put their trust* [seek refuge] *in it*, that is, *in His Word* (in Hebrew “word” is masculine gender thus giving rise to “he”). It is *the word of faith* (Rom 10:8) to be *believed*, *the faithful word* to be *held fast* (Tit 1:9), and it is *that Word* that holds firm the one who trusts in it too! “Yes—if *the word of God be pure*,

it must be a sure ground of trust.”<sup>7</sup> Without his shield, would not the soldier, in the thick of battle, be in deadly peril from arrows or sword? Do not many Christians admit that those times of breakdown in their testimony were due mainly to their failure to use this divinely provided shield, the Pure, Preserved and Preserving Word of God?

### **Its Preservation**

“[It] He is a shield to them that put their trust in him [it].” Many evangelicals while paying lip service to *verbal inspiration* have difficulty with verse 6. A Hebrew professor of Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary states: “Verses 5 and 6 clearly go together, linked by God’s ‘words’, yet verse 6 is difficult to explain or even to accept, especially by people who write commentaries.”<sup>8</sup> “Difficult to explain or even to accept,” says this Hebrew professor, and no wonder, for these verses contain another clear and fearful warning not to *tamper* with God’s words. Our Lord Jesus said in His encounter with the Devil in the wilderness, “It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, *but by every word of God*” (Luke 4:4). The critics omit “*but by every word of God*” from this text. Why? Certainly it is not because it is “difficult to explain or even to accept,” but because of “the presuppositions” by which these textual critics operate. They prefer to trust a perverted minority text rather than the text that is supported by the vast majority of the manuscript evidence. They wilfully disregard God’s repeated warnings not to mix the pure gold of God’s words with the dross of human conjecture, for, in spite of all their claims to have superior manuscripts and the latest scholarship on their side, it all comes down in the end to “human conjecture” which is just a covert way of saying “man’s fallible guesswork.” “The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, but the Lord trieth the hearts” (Prov 17:3). Yet this removal of God’s inspired words is still going on in most modern versions. May we not say “all” modern versions?

Many insist on *separating* inspiration from preservation, leaving them free to add to or subtract from the *Words of God*. The historic Confessions all affirm that God “by His singular care and providence kept pure [His Words] in all ages.” If it is not inspired “it does not matter if the Bible has been preserved ... It also follows that if the Bible has not been preserved, it does not matter how it was inspired” (Dean Burgon Society on “Preservation”).

## THE CONCLUSION

“Add thou not unto **his** words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” “In certain parts of America the woodpecker is known by the name of *sapsucker*. We beg the honest woodpecker’s pardon for the liberty we take in applying the term *spiritual sapsuckers* to those who drain the Church’s vitality nowadays by preying on its very pith and marrow, the life-giving Word of the Lord.”<sup>9</sup> **Beware of these spiritual sapsuckers!**

Will not many textual critics of the pure words of God be proved to be *liars* in the Day of Judgment! Why, we may well ask, do these clever, highly trained, textual critics still refuse to heed the repeated warnings and to bow before God’s Pure-Preserved-Preserving Words? Why do so many pastors in “evangelical” pulpits glibly assure their congregations that “one version is as good as another,” that is, “all except that archaic KJV!”? No wonder that multitudes of “Christians” rush out to buy the latest version hot off the presses? Does not the reason for this mishandling of the Bible lie in the widespread indifference to *truth* in academia today, and in our society at large today? It has been well said that “the hallmark of modern humanity is its relentless emasculation of truth.” What is called *modernity*, that is, this so-called *more enlightened age of ours*, now determines *our value-systems*. David F Wells, no friend of Dean Burgon Society, pointed out that ours is “the therapeutic age” where preaching has been “psychologised,” and where the meaning of the Christian faith is now “privatised.” Belief in God or the Bible or Truth has become simply a matter of “what makes me feel good about [my]self.” Yes, North America is “self-absorbed,” but “the self is a canvas too narrow, too cramped, to contain the largeness of [the] Christian truth ... His [God’s] Word becomes intuition, and conviction fades into evanescent opinion. Theology becomes therapy, righteousness is replaced by a search for happiness, holiness by wholeness, truth by feeling good about one’s self ... All that remains is self ... And when people are no longer compelled by God’s truth, they can be compelled to believe anything, [even] the lure of the novel or the illicit.”<sup>10</sup>

How, then, are we to communicate in our time with those who openly reject ultimate authority, who ridicule the sacred, and who debunk absolutes?! Yet it is to such a people, to such an age as this, that we are called to proclaim “It is written!” Jacques Ellul, commenting on this present scene, observed: “Anyone wishing to save humanity today must

first of all save the *word* [of man].” How much more must we *save* the *inspired, inscripturated Word of God*.

Listen to this reminder from Louis Gaussen on the importance of a single word of God. “But above all the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, even in their smallest parts, is attested by Christians who have experienced their power, first in their conversion, and afterwards in the conflicts that followed. They bear one unanimous testimony. When the Holy Scripture, overmastering their conscience, made them lie low at the foot of the cross, and there revealed to them the love of God, what seized hold of them was not the Bible as a whole, it was not a chapter, it was a verse; ay, *a word*, which was at the point of the sword wielded by the very hand of God. It was an influence from above, concentrated in a single word, which may yet become for them, ‘as a fire, saith the Lord, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces’. In the moment of their need that Word seized their conscience with an unknown, sweeping, irresistible force. It was but a Word, but that Word was from God, and they knew it to be the call of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>11</sup>

The story is told of a young man defending his doctoral dissertation before a panel of academicians. When reprimanded for the number of allusions he had made to hearsay evidence, and challenged on the weakness of such a defence, he facetiously said, “Just because something is written does not make it any more certain, does it?” The chairman had a brilliant comeback. “All right then,” he said, “I just want you to know that we will be granting you the degree, but it will not be in writing. You can just take our word for it.” The candidate quickly complied with the documentary evidence demanded.

Luther wrote words that became “the battle hymn” of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, and they still carry power to this very day in which we live.

And tho this world with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.

The Prince of darkness grim, We tremble not for him,  
His rage we can endure, For lo his doom is sure,

***One little word shall fell him.***

***That word*** above all earthly powers No thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours Through Him who with us sideth:

Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still,

***His kingdom is forever.***

## GOD'S PURITY OR MAN'S PERVERSITY—WHICH?

Our Lord “felled” the Devil with “every word of God” still extant! Luther “felled” the Devil with “one little word” still extant! What if, from your “Bible” that “little word” was no longer extant?!

***“Every word of God is pure; he [it] is a shield unto them that put their trust in him [it]. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”***

Let this be our prayer: Lord, bow down our minds and hearts before Thy Pure, Preserved and Preserving Words to humbly *receive them, believe them, and strive to live them, for they are “the Scriptures of Truth.”*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> William Arnot, *Studies in Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1875), 561.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1964), 178.

<sup>3</sup> C H Spurgeon, Proverbs, in *The Biblical Illustrator*, ed Joseph Exell, (London, 1887), 669

<sup>4</sup> Charles Bridges, *Proverbs* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1846, reprinted 1983), 593.

<sup>5</sup> George Lawson, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1829, reprinted 1984), 837.

<sup>6</sup> Bridges, *Proverbs*, 594.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Robert L Alden, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 208, italics added.

<sup>9</sup> S M Houghton, ed, *Truth Unchanged, Unchanging* (Wiltshire: Bible League, 1984), 127

<sup>10</sup> David F Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 101, 183.

<sup>11</sup> Louis Gaussen, “Theopneustia,” *Trinitarian Bible Society Quarterly Record* (July 1965).

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*Rev Denis Gibson was an Instructor in Hebrew and Greek at Toronto Baptist Seminary for five years. He later became pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Brampton, Ontario, Canada, remaining there for 25 years, and retiring in 1997; he is the author of a commentary on the biblical book of Proverbs; he was also a regular contributor to the international devotional guide, “Read, Pray and Grow” (RPG). Over the years he has presented papers at the Annual Meetings of the Dean Burgon Society (DBS) of which he is a member of the Executive Committee. The above paper was presented at the 27<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the DBS held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, July 20–21, 2005.*

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## **THE BLASPHEMY AND DECEPTION OF *THE DA VINCI CODE***

Jeffrey Khoo and Suan-Yew Quek

### **Caveat**

Satan is a liar and a deceiver (John 8:44, Rev 12:9). Dan Brown's bestselling novel—*The Da Vinci Code* (Bantam Press, 2003; 593 pages)—is the latest Satanic attack against our Lord Jesus Christ and His inerrant Word. Brown seductively weaves a highly imaginative story in a vain attempt to prove that the Jesus believed by Christians today is not the same Jesus who lived in the first century. According to *The Da Vinci Code*, the true historical Jesus was only an ordinary man and not God at all.

The book is a most seductive and deceptive novel replete with hidden codes, murder, sex and intrigue. It seeks to debunk the common notion that the Holy Grail is the Cup of the Last Supper of Christ. The author asserts that the painting by Leonardo Da Vinci of the Last Supper reveals that the Holy Grail refers actually to Mary Magdalene who he says is the wife of Jesus Christ. Mary Magdalene is said to be pregnant when she was with Christ at His resurrection. Not only that, this lineage of Christ and Mary Magdalene continues to this very day. This is blasphemy in the highest degree.

Brown's attacks on Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures are not new. His blasphemous and deceptive views have been propounded for decades within the four walls of modernistic universities and liberal seminaries. Brown distills the academic jargon and weaves the views of liberalism into a mystery novel for the general audience, and for the money no less.

### **The Blasphemy of *The Da Vinci Code***

In his book, Brown attacks the inspiration, preservation, and canonicity of the Scriptures. The Bible he says, "is a product of *man*, ... Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man



created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book. ... [T]housands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a mortal man. To rewrite the history books, ... Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's *human* traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned."

As far as Brown is concerned, the historical and factual gospels have been destroyed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. What remains today are the spurious and fictitious Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that promote a mythical, godlike Jesus. So, all this while, Christians have been reading the wrong Gospels and believing in a false Jesus!

### **Truth of God's Perfection**

Does Brown's unbelief make the faith of God without effect? "God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom 3:4).

How do we know that the Bible today is truly the Word of God, perfect and without mistakes? Simply because God says so! The declaration, "Thus saith the LORD," or "Hear the Word of the LORD," or "The LORD spake ... saying," appears over 3,000 times in the Bible. Be not deceived, the Bible is altogether God's Word, not man's word. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (*theopneustos*, literally, "God-breathed") and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Bible was written over a span of 1,500 years by more than 40 different writers, and despite all its diversity, its miraculous unity is obvious. It goes without saying that though the Bible has many writers, it has but one Author—God Himself. That every one of the OT prophecies concerning Christ's first coming has been fulfilled precisely proves the Bible's authenticity (eg, Isa 7:14 cf Matt 1:22-23).

How do we know that the Scriptures that we have today are the true ones, and not those that have been lost for over a thousand years? We know this because God promised to preserve His words perfectly and perpetually. Psalm 12:6-7 says, "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

Jesus Himself promised, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt 5:18). “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33). “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

The true Bible can be easily identified. It is the one that has an unbroken lineage, fully and continuously preserved by God down through the ages, and always in the possession of His people. Thus, the perfect and true Scriptures are not in the lately found Alexandrian manuscripts underlying the modern corrupt versions (which incidentally present a less than divine Jesus preferred by Brown), nor are they in the newly discovered Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi codices (Gnostic manuscripts from Egypt) as mentioned by Brown, but in the long-existing, time-tested and Christ-honouring Hebrew and Greek Scriptures underlying the good old Authorised Version.

### **Certainty of Christian Conviction**

How can we be absolutely sure that the Scriptures we hold in our hands today are truly the infallible and inerrant Word of God? Faith is the answer! “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). The logic of faith is the key to certainty. God says it, that settles it, we believe it! We do not see to believe; we believe in order to see.

The Apostle Peter told the Church to trust in “a more sure word of prophecy”—the Holy Scriptures—as written by eyewitnesses: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man (and certainly not by the will of Constantine): but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet 1:20-21).

If we are truly born again and the Spirit of God dwells within us, we cannot but know and believe the Truth of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ... He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:13-14). “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not

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that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:27).

Historical and scientific evidences that prove the Scriptures may be helpful, but ultimately, the only basis of our faith and practice must be the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone. The Perfect Bible (and we have it today and know where it is) is our supreme final authority. *Sola Scriptura!*

In *The Da Vinci Code*, it is Satan’s voice one hears. True Christians will not follow. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they shall follow me: and I give unto them eternal life” (John 10:27-28).

We have experienced the good news and resurrection power of Christ in our life, and we cannot deny that our Lord and Saviour is indeed 100% God and 100% Man, and that His Word is 100% inspired and 100% preserved.

It goes without saying that *The Da Vinci Code* is truly Fiction. The Bible, on the other hand, is purely Fact. We have a Perfect Canon and a Perfect Text. May we never add to it, nor subtract from it (Rev 22:18-19), but love it and obey it (1 John 2:3-6)! “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps 11:3).<sup>1</sup>

### **The Deception of *The Da Vinci Code***

*The Da Vinci Code* is a Satanic masterpiece. It is utterly deceptive, and particularly so in Chapter 55. In this chapter, one finds the two talking snakes, Teabing and Langdon, seducing Sophie with their sophistry. Alas, the helpless lass is mesmerised, and the serpentine duo go for the jugular with their venom of lies.

#### **Deception #1: Da Vinci’s Fresco Tells the Truth, Not the Bible**

*The Da Vinci Code* assumes that Leonardo was telling the truth concerning who Jesus was and what happened in His life. Teabing pontificates, “In fact, Da Vinci painted the true Grail.” At the end of the chapter, Teabing again presses the point that Da Vinci’s fresco is truthful and not the Bible, “You will be shocked to learn what anomalies Da Vinci included here that most scholars either do not see or simply choose to ignore. This fresco [of the Last Supper], in fact, is the entire key to the Holy Grail mystery.”

### **Refutation #1**

It must be said that Da Vinci, born in 1452 and died in 1519, was not an eyewitness to the Last Supper. How can his painting then be regarded as an authoritative depiction of that event? We should rather trust in eyewitness accounts. Matthew and John who were there recorded what happened during the Last Supper in their respective Gospels. The truth is not in the painting of Da Vinci, but in the testimonies of Matthew and John, and of Peter and Paul as found in Mark and Luke, who wrote under divine inspiration (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:20-21).

One proof that Da Vinci's fresco is historically unreliable is that he painted Jesus and His disciples dining at a long and high table with some sitting down and others standing up. The people in those days did not have their meals in such a way. In those days, they had their meals in a reclining posture. This fact is accurately reported in the Four Gospels where we find Jesus and His disciples reclining on mattresses around a low table during the Last Supper (cf John 13:23, 25).

### **Deception #2: If You Believe in the Bible, You Must be Stupid**

In order to cause Sophie to doubt, Teabing made her read a couple of Da Vinci's sayings that demean believers of the supernatural and miraculous. Quotation of Da Vinci #1 reads, "Many have made a trade of delusions and false miracles, deceiving the stupid multitude." In other words, Sophie is made to think that anyone who believes that the Bible is a supernatural God-given Book, and that the miracles recorded therein are true, must be simple-minded and stupid.

### **Refutation #2**

People ought to realise that Da Vinci is but a creature, and not the Creator. Da Vinci is dead, but Jesus is alive (1 Cor 15:1-20). As such, it is not what Da Vinci says in his paintings that we should worry about, but what Jesus the risen Lord says in His Word.

Who are the fools in God's eyes? They are those who deny His existence and His miracles. Twice in the Psalms, God says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Pss 14:1, 53:1). The judgement of such fools as spoken of in Romans 1:18-22 applies to Teabing, Langdon, and not forgetting the author Brown himself, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the

invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” The truly blind are they who deny the miracle of creation, even the Creator God—the Lord Jesus Christ—Himself (John 1:3, Col 1:16).

**Deception #3: If You Believe in the Bible, You Must be Blind**

Quotation of Da Vinci #2 states, “Blinding ignorance does mislead us. O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes!” Teabing could be quoting Da Vinci out of context. Whatever the case may be, Teabing is trying to tell Sophie, “Don’t be blind! Don’t be misled! Stop believing in the Bible! Stop following Christ!”

**Refutation #3**

Da Vinci says “Blinding ignorance does mislead us,” and so it does. Jesus speaks against “blinding ignorance” as well, and calls on all to seek and know the truth. “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:6-9).

From where do we seek the Lord? “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail” (Isa 34:16). Why the book of the Lord? Because “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps 19:7-8).

How should we seek the Lord? We should seek Him by faith, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). We do not see in order to believe, we believe in order to see. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). We should seek Him with great reverence, “The fear of

the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Prov 9:10).

#### **Deception #4: The Bible is a Product of Man, Not of God**

Teabing tells Sophie, “The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book. ... More than *eighty* gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them.” Teabing lies to Sophie, “The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great. ... Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s *human* traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.”

#### **Refutation #4**

It is not true that the Four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—were 4<sup>th</sup> century inventions of Constantine and the Nicæan Council. The Four Gospels were written in AD 40-50 shortly after Christ rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. The Early Church Fathers—Papias (in AD 110) and Irenæus (in AD 180)—mentioned them by name and affirmed their Apostolic origins. It is thus not the over 80 gospels that Teabing mentioned that were the early and authentic Gospels but the Four that we have in the Canonical Scriptures today, totally inspired and entirely preserved to this day.

It must be pointed out that the over 80 gospels that Teabing regards as authentic do not paint Jesus as a mere mortal at all, but super-divine in a fairy-tale manner that can only come from the corrupt imaginations of unregenerate men. As a matter of fact, these false gospels deify Mary more than they do Jesus which eventually led to the Mary-worship that we see in the Roman Catholic Church today. It is no wonder that God’s people have always rejected those 80 gospels as spurious. A born-again, Spirit-indwelt Christian (John 14:16-17, 1 John 2:27) when reading about the boyhood of Jesus in these false gospels can easily tell that they are myths and not truth (read *The Lost Books of the Bible*, especially 1

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Infancy 14-15, about Jesus being bitten by a mad and demonised Judas, and Jesus being a proud and boastful show-off).

Teabing's claims that Constantine (1) was "a lifelong pagan who was baptized on his deathbed," and that he (2) financed a new Bible in AD 327 to consolidate his power as emperor, are lies. The truth is: (1) Constantine lived from AD 285-337, and became a Christian in AD 312—i.e. 25 years before his death! (2) The NT Canon as we know it today existed since the first century. By God's special providence, it was the Council of Carthage of AD 397 and not the Council of Nicaea AD 327 that settled the NT Canon; this happened 60 years after Constantine's death!

Brown says that the New Testament Canon is a human fabrication and thus should be dismissed or replaced. This attack must be refuted. It is vital that Biblical Christianity holds fast to the ancient Biblical Canon without change. The word "canon" refers to a measuring rod by which things are kept straight. It is used metaphorically in 2 Corinthians 10:12-18 to designate God's rule over our lives. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:12-18 wrote, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule (**canon**) which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line (**canon**) of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." The canonicity of the Bible is thus "the quality or character of the Scriptures by which they are our rule of faith and life, as the infallible Word of God. As such, the Biblical Canon constitutes the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures.

The Church did not make the words of man to become the words of God as Brown asserts. The Word of God stands on its own, and declares itself to be the Word of God. The Bible is its own infallible authority.

There is no higher authority than the Word of God itself. This is an acceptable tautological argument. In defense of this truth, J O Buswell correctly observed that “all factual existential statements may be regarded as circular. Why is a fact a fact, and why is it regarded as a fact? The only answer is, because it is a fact.”<sup>2</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith likewise states, “The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.”<sup>3</sup>

The Word of God was canonised the moment it was written. The canonicity of Scripture finds its basis in the inspiration of Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” The Church at that time received the canonical words of the Apostles as the very words of God and not the words of man. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 states, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” When heresies like Marcionism and Montanism arose, the pastors of the early church realised the need to identify the Canon so that their parishioners may know for sure the names and the number of the divinely inspired books. The Council of Laodicea (AD 363) listed the present number of 27 New Testament books. Athanasius also mentioned 27 in his Easter letter of AD 367 and these were recognised as the Canon at the Council of Hippo (AD 393) and the Third Synod of Carthage (AD 397). Since then, the New Testament Canon of 27 books was confirmed and fixed. The New Testament pseudepigrapha were all rejected as spurious and not as Holy Scripture. The identification of the Canon is the result of the special providential work of God through His Spirit-guided Church (John 16:13-14).

But Teabing says that the Scriptures “evolved,” and there is no such thing as a definitive version of the book. This is nonsense. The biblical doctrine of the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Scriptures tells us that we have an absolutely perfect and definitive Bible today as found in the infallible and inerrant Hebrew and Greek Scriptures underlying the Authorised King James



Version. E F Hills rightly said that the logic of faith is the key to such a certainty, “You must begin with Christ and the Gospel and proceed according to the logic of faith. This will lead you to the Traditional text, the Textus Receptus and the King James Version.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Deception #5: Jesus was Only a Man, and Not God at All**

Teabing says, “Jesus Christ was a historical figure ... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal. ... Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. ... A relatively close vote at that. ... Many scholars claim that the early Church literally *stole* Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power.”

### **Refutation #5**

The Council of Nicaea was convened to hear the case of Arius, a priest from Alexandria, who taught that Jesus was only half God and not fully God. Arius said that Jesus (1) was a creature and thus not the Creator, (2) had a beginning and thus not eternal, (3) was different from and not the same as God Himself. But God raised up a defender of the faith in Athanasius. In the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius argued from the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus Christ was fully God and fully Man (John 1:1, 14; Col 2:9; 1 Tim 3:16), eternally begotten of the Father, not created (John 1:3, 3:16, 18, 10:30; 1 John 4:9). Arius was declared a heretic. The vote was hardly close—315 for Athanasius and only 3 for Arius. Arius was defrocked and excommunicated.

Furthermore, Teabing’s claim that the deity of Christ was a New Testament invention is not true at all! It was not the New Testament that first spoke of the deity of Christ but the Old Testament. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19). The Old Testament prophetic Scripture had already made mention of a coming Messiah who would be none other than God Himself. Isaiah 7:14 was one such prophecy, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Jesus Himself fulfilled this prophecy in 5 BC as announced by the angel Gabriel. Jesus was Immanuel, “*God with us*” (Matt 1:22-23). It is significant to note that Isaiah’s prophecy of the virgin-born Son of God was given 750 years before Jesus came. It goes without saying that the lie that Jesus was never God but made God by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 was not Constantine’s invention, but Teabing’s.

Today, Arius' teaching is found in a cult called the Jehovah's Witnesses, and in the corrupt modern versions of the Bible (like the NIV) that are based on the Alexandrian text. It would be no surprise if Arius and his followers had altered the inspired text to create their own text to undermine the deity of Christ. It is indeed troubling to note that in the NIV, 1 Timothy 3:16 should read falsely, "He appeared in a body," which undermines His deity and humanity. The true reading is, "God was manifest in the flesh" (as accurately and faithfully translated from the original by the KJV) which tells us that Christ is *Theanthropos*—100% God and 100% Man. Deception abounds today not only in the cults that claim to be "Christian," but also in the modern versions that claim to be "Holy Bible."

### **Warning**

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim 4:1-2). In the face of such dangers, what must Christians do? The Apostle Paul exhorts, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim 4:16).

May the Lord protect His Church from falling into Satan's trap of deception.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> For further study, read Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *A Theology for Every Christian: Knowing God and His Word* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1998), downloadable for free at <http://www.febc.edu.sg/press.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> J O Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 1:196.

<sup>3</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, I:4-5.

<sup>4</sup> E F Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1984), 220. See also Jeffrey Khoo, "A Plea for a Perfect Bible," *The Burning Bush* 9 (2003): 1-15.

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*Dr Jeffrey Khoo is academic dean and lecturer in New Testament at Far Eastern Bible College, and Dr Suan-Yew Quek is pastor of Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church, and lecturer in Old Testament and Contemporary Theology at Far Eastern Bible College.*

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# **IS THE PRACTICE OF CHILD DEDICATION BIBLICAL?**

Timothy Okman Ki

## **Problem**

It is a well known that Presbyterians baptise infants. This practice has caused many contentions among the believers of Christ. Let me quote a typical statement made by the opponents of infant baptism. The late Dr William Pettingill in his article, “Infant Baptism: Its History and Its Harm,” said that “infant baptism is responsible for sending more people to Hell than any other cause. From my point of view it is a dreadful thing to baptise a baby and let him grow up believing that by that baptism he has been saved and is on his way to Heaven.” Such statements have caused misunderstandings among the believers of Christ that the Presbyterian practice of infant baptism is wrong.

Anyone who uses such a baseless argument against the Presbyterian belief of infant baptism is simply revealing his ignorance. What people like Dr Pettingill do not know and understand is that Presbyterians do not believe in baptismal regeneration. The level of ignorance of non-Presbyterians concerning the Presbyterian practice of infant baptism is amazing. By baptising infants, no Presbyterian minister will say that the children have just secured their places in heaven.

The purpose of this article is not to talk about infant baptism, but to examine the alternative practice for newborn babies within non-Presbyterian circles called “Child Dedication.” Non-Presbyterian churches have practised child dedication as a biblical practice for infants over against infant baptism. Let us examine its practice and grounds.

## **Child Dedication or Parent Dedication?**

What is the meaning of child dedication? One church defines it thus, “Child Dedication is a public testimony by parents acknowledging that their child is a gift from God and that they are responsible to instruct the

child in the Word of God, that they will guide the child in Christian living and they will lead the child to seek a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is an opportunity for family and friends as well as the entire congregation to acknowledge publicly their support of the parents in fulfilling their vows.” Here is another definition with a proof text, “The dedication of a child is a commitment of the parents to raise their child in the ways of the Lord—verses found in Deuteronomy chapter six. Child dedication has its roots in the Old Testament, where first-born males were to be brought to the temple and dedicated to the Lord. Dedication does not mean that the child is automatically going to Heaven—it is simply an expression of the parent’s commitment to raise their children in the ways of the Lord.” Another church understands child dedication as child celebration, “Because a dedication of one’s life to Jesus is a personal decision, we want to celebrate the birth of a child and dedicate the parents to the task of raising their child in the Lord.”

In all the above cases, child dedication is actually not child dedication but parent dedication. It is the parents’ public acknowledgement that God has given them a child and their promise to raise their child in the Lord. At the same time, their families, friends, and the entire congregation likewise make a promise that they would help the parents fulfill their vow.

In view of what child dedication means and how it is defined, we discover that what pro-child dedication people have practised is not a practice of child dedication but parental commitment to the Lord. It is quite clear that the meaning of child dedication is as follows: (1) to give parents of young children an opportunity to recognise God’s gift of a child to them (Ps 127:3), (2) to hear the parents’ declaration of their intent to raise their child in a Christian environment (Deut 6:5-7), (3) to challenge the parents to guide and educate their child religiously (Eph 6:4), (4) to call parents to lay a foundation of learning about God. Therefore, even though they use the term “child,” the whole dedication ceremony involves the dedication of the parents, not the children.

### **Child Dedication in 1 Samuel 1:27-28?**

It is argued that a number of Scripture passages support child dedication. Let us deal with the most frequently quoted Scriptural references. The first passage that pro-child dedication people use is 1 Samuel 1:27-28, “*For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me*

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*my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.*” It is important to understand the above passage in the light of its context. First of all, Hannah made a vow to the Lord in verse 11, “*And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.*” Therefore, Hannah’s dedication in verses 27-28 was a fulfillment of her vow. Not all parents make vows to God before their babies are born. Therefore, they need to make sure they keep the vows they had made before their child was born through so-called child dedication services.

Secondly, Hannah’s prayer was for Samuel to serve as a lifetime Nazarite. Hannah’s offer of Samuel to the Lord was not like one of these child dedications today, but consecration to a lifetime of service in the temple of God. It must be understood that not all parents had this privilege in the Old Testament. Consecrating a child to the Lord for full-time service was not for everyone, but for those who were called to do so. It was not Hannah’s vow to bring up her son in the Lord but to give him to the Lord for His full-time service. Therefore, if parents follow Hannah’s example for their children’s dedication, then they must give their children to lifetime ministry to the glory of God. They will be consecrating their children to the Lord for life. Child dedication, on the other hand, is the parents’ commitment to the Lord concerning their childrearing.

Hannah and Samuel’s story may not be used as an example of child dedication. If it is the meaning of child dedication, then it is my prayer that all my fellow believers will dedicate their children to the Lord for full-time service. Then, the Lord’s work will flourish. One of the problems in today’s churches is that there are too few who are consecrated to the Lord’s work, and not too many parents are willing to give their children to any lifetime ministry for the Lord. However, if there is a misuse of Hannah’s example, then do think again.

### **Child Dedication in Luke 2:22-24?**

The second passage often quoted for child dedication is Luke 2:22-24. “*And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses*

*were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”*

Child dedication promoters have said that the parents of Jesus brought Him to the temple for His dedication. But this is untenable on two counts. One, there is no word for dedication in the passage. The dedication of the child Jesus to God cannot be found in the context. Two, the real crux of this passage is found in verse 22. This verse is about Mary’s purification according to the law of Moses. She and Joseph came to Jerusalem to fulfill her purification requirements. According to verses 23 and 24, they came to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice according to the law. Thus, they offered a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. This particular law is found in Leviticus 12:2-6, *“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days. And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest.”* In ancient Israel, if a woman delivered a baby boy, she was unclean for 40 days. After 40 days of impurity, she would have to offer a sacrifice for her purification.

As far as the baby Jesus was concerned, in fulfilment of the Mosaic law, two things were performed on and by him: (1) He was circumcised, and (2) He paid the redemption money through His parents. Luke 2:23, *“As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord,”* is a quotation from Exodus 13:2. This teaching is continued in Exodus 13:11-15, *“And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, That thou shalt set apart*

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*unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD's. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.”* When a male child was presented to the Lord, there was a payment of a ransom fee. Since Jesus was the firstborn son (Luke 2:7) and did not belong to the tribe of Levi, five shekels of silver needed to be paid as “redemption money” in obedience to God’s law (Num 3:45-51).

Having studied the background of Luke 2:22-24, there are three things that pose as challenges to child-dedication promoters. First, if there was any dedication of the child Jesus, it was done through circumcision. However, child dedicators do not see any relation between child dedication and physical circumcision. If so, it may be asked, what then is the relevance of this law to their practice of child dedication? Second, when Jesus was presented to the Lord in the temple, the redemption money was paid through His parents under the covenantal relationship God has with His people. If there is such a covenantal relationship between God and His people, what then is the relevance of child dedication if child dedication has nothing to do whatsoever with the concept of covenant between God and the parents of the child as seen in Luke 2? Third, there is no indication that the payment of the redemption money was supposed to encourage parents to make a commitment to childrearing. This law was a part of the requirements of the sin offering. Therefore, it is difficult to see any connection between Luke 2:22-24 and child dedication.

### **Child Dedication in Mark 10:16?**

Another popular verse among child dedication proponents is Mark 10:16 which says, “*And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*” What a beautiful picture it is to see Jesus taking

the little ones into His arms and blessing them. It is our desire to be blessed by Him. However, the issue here is whether this verse can be used to justify infant (or child) dedication service.

There are a few problems when we use this verse for child dedication. First of all, Mark 10:13 says, “*And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.*” The purpose of bringing children to Jesus was that He might touch them. The manner of this touch is explained in verse 16. Jesus took them up in His arms and put His hands upon them and blessed them. This was done so that the children might receive a blessing from the Lord. Matthew 19:13-15 complements the Markan passage by stating, “*Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.*” The laying of hands for blessing was used since patriarchal times (Gen 48:14). However, child dedication as noted is for parents to publicise their commitment to bring up their children in the Lord. As such, it does not have any direct relationship with Mark 10:13. Second, the beneficiaries of Mark 10:13 were the children themselves. However, in child dedication, they are basically excluded as seen in the following church statements, “Child Dedication-Parent Commitment Services is viewed as a confirmation between the parents and the church to raise the child in a godly way until the child is old enough to make their decision and accept Christ as their personal Saviour.” “The dedication of a child is a commitment of the parents to raise their child in the ways of the Lord ... Dedication does not mean that the child is automatically going to Heaven—it is simply an expression of the parent’s commitment to raise their children in the ways of the Lord.” Third, the parents did not make any commitment to the Lord in this context, which is an integral part of child dedication. Therefore, it may be safely concluded that Mark 10:13 has been misused to justify child dedication.

### **Dedication in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, there are eleven occurrences of the word, “dedication” and they relate to the following items: (1) **The altar** was dedicated. Numbers 7:84 says, “*This was the dedication of the altar, in the day when it was anointed, by the princes of Israel: twelve chargers of*



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*silver, twelve silver bowls, twelve spoons of gold”* (cf. Num 7:88; 2 Chron 7:9). (2) **The Temple of God** was dedicated. Ezra 6:16 says, *“And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy”* (cf. Ezra 6:17; Ps 30:1; John 10:22). (3) **The wall of Jerusalem** was dedicated. Nehemiah 12:27 says, *“And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.”* (4) **Idols** were dedicated by the heathen. Daniel 3:2 says, *“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up”* (cf. Dan 3:3).

The verb, “dedicate,” occurs four times, in Deuteronomy 20:5, 2 Samuel 8:11, 1 Chronicles 26:27, and 2 Chronicles 2:4. In these verses, a house, the temple, or material things were dedicated. “Dedicated” occurs 24 times in 20 verses (1 Kgs 8:63, 15:15; 2 Kgs 12:4, 18; 1 Chron 18:11, 26:20, 26, 28; 28:12; 2 Chron 5:1, 7:5, 15:18, 24:7, 31:12; Ezek 44:29; Heb 9:18) and “dedicating” only twice in Numbers 7:10-11. It is interesting to note that in the Old Testament, there is not a single instance where a human being was dedicated to the Lord. There were no ceremonies for child dedication or adult dedication whatsoever. Nevertheless, child dedication proponents argue that their practice is well grounded in the Bible, and has its root in the Old Testament. But where in the Old Testament is the practice of child dedication found?

### Child Dedication Reexamined

In light of the above study, let us examine the following explanation of child dedication and see whether it is biblical: “Child dedication is the act of giving back to God the gift he has given you as parents. It is an act of worship, thanksgiving, dependence, trust, and commitment. The practice of child dedication has been modeled throughout the Bible. The Israelites brought their eight-day-old children to the priest for blessing. Hannah (1 Sam 1:24-28) brought her long-awaited son Samuel to the priest Eli, to dedicate him to the Lord. Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the temple for his dedication.”

By now, it may be readily seen that the above explanation is untenable in the light of the Biblical passages we have just studied for the following reasons: (1) Israel's babies were not presented to the priests on the eighth day for blessing, but for circumcision. (2) Hannah did not bring Samuel to the tabernacle for dedication but consecration. (3) Mary and Joseph did not bring Jesus to the Temple for dedication but to fulfil the Mosaic Law. As such, there is no biblical justification for the practice of child dedication.

### **What about Infant Salvation?**

How do child dedication proponents explain the destiny of infants when they die at infancy? The general consensus is this: "Salvation is granted to children who die in infancy or before the age of accountability (understanding). This belief is based not on specific scripture, but on an understanding of the nature of God as revealed in Christ. Since an infant does not have the power of self-determination, he does not have personal guilt. He has not yet come to the age when he can, of his own free will accept or reject Christ. Therefore, Christ's atonement covers all who die young before reaching the age of accountability." But such a view begs the question: How about original sin and its effect? The question of the destiny of infants who die early can be answered only by the Presbyterian way of understanding the Bible and the Biblical covenants (see the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters VII-X).

### **Concluding Testimony**

A few years ago, I attended a local Baptist church for a few months. I do not have a problem fellowshiping with fundamental Baptists. I have many Baptist friends and graciously they have offered their right hand of fellowship to me and asked me to preach for them. One day I had an opportunity to spend some time with the pastor of the church. He told me that he was pleased with my conviction on Biblical separation. In fact, when I was about to leave that place, he offered me an opportunity to preach at his pulpit, which to me was an honour. However, he said that there was one thing that he could not understand about me and that was why as a fundamental Bible believer, I had to be a Presbyterian. He has a problem with Presbyterians over infant baptism. He told me that infant baptism was unbiblical but child dedication was thoroughly biblical. This led me to examine the practice of child dedication, to see if the Bible

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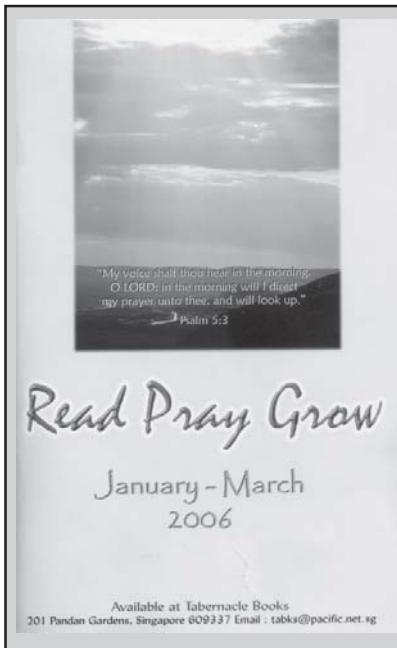
really supports it or not. Having looked into the supposed biblical basis for child dedication, it is my conclusion that child dedication is a practice that is void of strong biblical support. As such, the judgmental and condemnatory attitude of fundamental Baptists against Presbyterians who practise infant baptism needs to be checked.

The purpose of this article is not to deny the rights of child dedication believers to practise what they believe to be true, but to examine whether child dedication is a more biblical practice than infant baptism as claimed. In the light of the fact that child dedication does not have strong biblical support whatsoever, non-Presbyterians who practice child dedication may want to reexamine their position, and also reevaluate their emotional and premature judgments against Presbyterians over infant baptism.

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*Rev Dr Timothy Okman Ki is a missionary of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, USA, and pastors Hope Bible-Presbyterian Church in Adelaide, Australia.*

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## **MOSES, A FAITHFUL SERVANT OF THE LORD**

Arthur E Steele

### **Our Call is a Holy Calling**

An inward call to serve God is a call from the Creator of the universe, the sovereign Creator of the heavens and the earth. When we grasp this fact we have a stabilising conviction in our ministry.

When God first called Moses to serve Him, Moses appeared to live in the palace of Pharaoh's daughter. He received his education in Egypt—Acts 7:22, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words [an able speaker], and in deeds [a leader]." He, to some degree, was aware of his calling of God. "By faith" he refused to be adopted into the royal Egyptian family—Hebrews 11:24, "By faith Moses when he was come of years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." His life seemed to be in focus and ready for God to use him, but in God's eye, he was not ready. He witnessed a struggle between an Israelite and an Egyptian. He took matters into his own hands and killed the Egyptian. When he was discovered, he thought that his fellow Israelites would have realised that God intended to use him to deliver them—Acts 7:25, "For he [Moses] supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not." The Israelites were not ready and Moses was not ready for God's burning bush call. The fact that Pharaoh sought to slay Moses and that he feared the people, were the reasons Moses fled to the land of Midian. Moses took a rather common job there taking care of sheep for Jethro, who became his father-in-law.

In God's plan, Moses, 40 years later, led his sheepfold to the backside of the desert to the foot of a mountain in Horeb. While there, God called Moses, then about 80 years old, in a most unusual way, out of a fire in a bush that was not consumed. The burning bush caught the attention of Moses—Exodus 3:4-5, "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and

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said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I. And he [God] said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground.” Your call to serve the Lord is a “holy calling.” Remember always that your call is not from an earthly source, but is from the sovereign God who created the heavens and the earth.

About 1500 years after the call of Moses, the Apostle Paul wrote 2 Timothy 1:9—God “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Our holy calling is the result of God’s grace, and according to His purpose. The immediate response of Moses to God’s call is understandable, humanly speaking—Exodus 3:11, “And Moses said unto God, [1] Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh,” and “[2] that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

While Moses was in Egypt he had been somewhat brazen and somewhat self-assured but well-educated, according to Acts 7:22. Now after 40 lowly years in Midian, no longer feeling self-sufficient, he very naturally said, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” God understood completely every detail concerning every Egyptian and every Israelite, including Pharaoh, and He knew Moses whom He chose to call. God said concerning the Israelites—Exodus 3:7, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry ...”—Exodus 2:24-25, “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*.”

God was preparing Moses during his 40 years in Midian, in strange and unfamiliar surroundings in God’s way, for the ministry to which God called him. Moses came to the place where he realised that he was unable in himself to accomplish the call. You know the rest of the account; the meetings with Pharaoh, the miraculous signs, and the amazing change of the attitude of the Egyptians, and the Passover event.

Moses was well-educated according to the educational standards of Egypt, which education may have been helpful to him in attending to details as he led about 2 million Israelites from Egypt to the entrance of Canaan—Acts 7:22, “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and in deeds.” The very basic and

most important qualification for the leadership of Moses and for us all is that we believe and obey God's words. Exodus 4:14 states, "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses." Moses, after receiving God's call did not readily believe that God would equip him with the ability to speak God's Word. God had just said in Exodus 4:12, "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

God gave an important answer to a question Moses asked—Exodus 3:13-14, "And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." In verse 15, God said, "this is my name for ever"—I AM THAT I AM. God is saying that He is what He is without anything or without anyone else. In other words, He IS what He IS, and as Matthew Henry said, "He is what ever He was and ever will be." The writer of Hebrews said, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day and for ever" (Heb 13:8). Matthew Henry also said, "Being self-existent He cannot but be self-sufficient, and therefore all-sufficient and the inexhaustible fountain of being and blessing." Our God, who calls us, enables us and accomplishes His purpose through us as our Sovereign Lord—Colossians 1:16, "all things were created by him and for him." He is our God, the Creator: the I AM who has called us unto His service. Our call is a holy calling.

### **God Means What He Says**

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament refer to Moses as a faithful servant of the Lord—Numbers 12:7, "My servant Moses ... is faithful in all mine house." Hebrews 3:2, referring back 1500 years also identifies Moses as a faithful servant, says, "Moses was faithful in all his house." We learn much from the Life of Moses. God took special notice of the daily activities of Moses—Numbers 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all men which were upon the face of the earth." God said in Numbers 12:8, "With him will I speak mouth to mouth." Here is what Matthew Henry states, "Moses was a man of great integrity and tried fidelity. He is faithful in all his house. That is put first in all his character, because grace excels gifts, love excels knowledge, and sincerity

in the service of God puts a greater honor upon a man and recommends him to the divine favor more than learning abstruse speculations and an ability to speak with tongues.” Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, which we know as the Pentateuch and the Torah. Jesus said, “he [Moses] wrote of me” (John 5:46). Note also the words of Philip under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in John 1:45, “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Jesus said in Luke 24:27, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Paul reminds us in Romans 15:4, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

Moses had seen the greatness of God so often over the years, since his call at the backside of the desert. God’s miraculous power was revealed constantly, the parting of the Red Sea, the supply of manna and the quails, the military victories, the healing of the serpent’s bites, etc. These are recorded for our learning today. God’s grace and care for His people were daily in evidence to the children of Israel.

I would like to refer to two accounts in the leadership of Moses that God chose to record, which were recorded I believe for our learning and warning as ministers of the Word of God.

### **The Sending Out of the Spies at Kadesh Barnea**

The Israelites had completed a very difficult 11-day trip from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea. Especially note that God had led the way miraculously with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God had a clear command with a specific promise through Moses to the people—Deuteronomy 1:21, “Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.” God had already led them all the way from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea, nevertheless, the elders of the people said, according to Moses, Deuteronomy 1:22, “And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again *by what way we must go up*, and into what cities we shall come.” This was an amazing request by a delegation of elders in light of God’s clear command to Moses. God’s miraculous way was the best way. It was visible and supernatural. God’s Word also records the disappointing response of Moses—Deuteronomy

1:23, “And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe.” Moses went along with the delegation, instead of taking a stand for the Word of God. God allowed them to go their way, knowing the hearts of the committee.

The account in Numbers chapter 13 begins with God, surely knowing the consequences, telling them to go ahead. “And the Lord spake unto Moses saying,” and verse 2, “Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel.” The 12 spies after 40 days brought back their reports. There were 10 that brought back an “evil report,” which affected the whole congregation. Numbers 14:2, “And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron.” Numbers 14:4, “And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” They did not believe that God meant what He said. They contradicted God’s Word. He as a result decreed that any man over 20 at that time would not enter the Promised Land. In Numbers 14:29, God said through Moses, “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me.” Numbers 14:33, “And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.” Numbers 14:34, “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.” The punishment was severe and actually took place. God’s Word was clear. The unbelief and murmuring were real. The majority of the people were wrong. Joshua and Caleb were right.

The majority of the Israelites and likely all the elders of the congregation liked the suggestion that a select group be designated to study the next step in moving into the land of Canaan. As I have read over the years, debates and discussions over ecumenical issues, the tendency of organisations is to form a committee to “study and analyse” problems. In committees that deal with problems there is a real inclination to seek peace at any price. Moses at the time was pleased with the suggestion that the delegation of elders made to spy out the land and determine the best way to enter the land. God was not pleased with the analysis of the report that the 10 delegates made, which encouraged the unbelief and the murmuring of the people. God’s displeasure with the unbelief of His Word resulted in the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness until all



those who were over 20 years old at the time had died. This became the reason Moses spoke and wrote the book of Deuteronomy. Hebrews 3:17 says, “But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?” Hebrews 3:18-19, “And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

### Smiting the Rock at Meribah

Numbers 20 recorded a lesson Moses learned the hard way. He failed to believe that God meant exactly what He said. He failed to believe God’s words. The account begins with Numbers 20:7-8, “And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron, thy brother, and **speak** ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.”

The next two verses record the partial obedience of Moses to the very words of the Lord—Numbers 20:9-10, “And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them (note the human tone of the next words), Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” At that time Moses and Aaron were no doubt upset with the murmuring of the people. They called the people “ye rebels” which they were. But then they focused the attention on themselves. “Must **we** fetch water out of this rock?” Numbers 20:11 records the result of the reasoning of Moses, “And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.”

Why did Moses **smite** the rock rather than **speak** to the rock as the Lord specifically commanded. In today’s language many would say “no big deal.” Moses could have reasoned first of all that the Lord created the special rod that he held and besides he remembered that God instructed him to smite the water of the Egyptian river (Exod 7:17) and He also instructed him to smite with the rod the dust of the Egyptian land (Exod 8:16). After all, Moses could have also reasoned that God had ordered him to smite the rock in a similar situation in Horeb (Exod 17:6) to provide water for the people. Therefore to them there really was no

significant difference between the words speak and smite and that the Lord probably meant smite when He said speak—of such is the logic of the natural man. Furthermore, Moses and Aaron could claim that they were under pressure by the unbelief, the murmuring and charges brought by the people. Numbers 20:3 says, “And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!” The first blow to the rock by Moses produced no water. That was his effort. With the second blow, God produced His miracle. This account reveals that here was a time Moses focused attention on himself as he was ministering to the people. Moses and Aaron both were, spiritually speaking ready to take credit for the miracle. They said, “must **we** fetch you water out of this rock?” The Lord revealed their sin when He said—Numbers 20:12, “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron. Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” They took to themselves personal glory and failed to glorify the Lord. “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” What a temptation it is to take just a little credit for the miracles the Lord performs in our ministries. God means what He says.

Moses had lessons to learn that he did not know that he needed to learn. Moses wanted deeply to enter the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That desire was ever with him together with the consuming desire to obey and serve God. We must read the heartfelt request of Moses as the children of Israel nearly completed the 40 year journey and were close to entering the Promised Land—Deuteronomy 3:25-27, “I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that *is* beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold *it* with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.”

Moses felt God’s punishment deeply, but he knew and declared that God was “right.” Moses said in his last words to the people in Deuteronomy 32:4, “Just and right is he.” God’s way is always the best way. Even though Moses did not enter the Promised Land, the God of creation personally buried his body and assured him of eternal life in

glory. We see the assurance of this when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in the land, on the Mount of Transfiguration. We too shall be with the Lord. "The Bible tells me so." God means what He says.

### **God is Great and God is Right**

God commanded Moses to write a song which would be a testimony of God's attributes, care and judgement, contrasted to the indifference of His people, the Israelites. God especially desired that the below age 20 group at Kadesh Barnea, now 40 years older, would read and memorise the song, the last words of Moses to the people. God said in Deuteronomy 31:19, "Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel." Deuteronomy 31:22 tells us, "Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel;" and Deuteronomy 31:30, "And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended."

Moses introduced his words as the words of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Deuteronomy 32:1 says, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." David said in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." The words of David are similar to the heartfelt expression of Moses in the introduction to his song.

Moses then expressed the need for the Word of God daily in our lives. Deuteronomy 32:2 says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." All of us, whether in the pastoral ministry or not, daily need the light rain, the dew, and the showers that come from God's Word. Moses perhaps reflecting on his own ministry is saying that God's Word by his mouth, the doctrine, must drop on everyone just as the small rain falls on the tender herb and as a shower of rain falls upon the grass of the field. Our preaching of the Word must be from a personal conviction from the heart as well as from the head. Moses states his settled conviction in Deuteronomy 32:3, "Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God." He resolved at Meribah never again to fail to sanctify [glorify] the Lord in the eyes of the people.

Moses also in the introduction of his song said of God, "He is the Rock." Jesus who is God manifest in the flesh is also called the Rock. The

Apostle Paul said, referring to the children of Israel on their 40-year journey—1 Corinthians 10:4, “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” The Jesus whom Paul preached was God “manifest in the flesh,” the same God whom Moses said was great, who was right, and who was just. He referred to God as the Rock, speaking of His unchanging sovereignty, our sure foundation, and the Author and Preserver of His Word. Moses after 40 years serving God, said in his last words to the people—Deuteronomy 32:3, “ascribe ye greatness unto our God.” God is great, God is just, and God is right.

Moses spoke clearly and with conviction to the assembled children of Israel. He especially wanted the 60-year old and younger crowd to hear his song. Note the next two statements he made after calling God “the Rock”—Deuteronomy 32:4, “his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgement.” What an accurate and important statement! In our ministries, questions are raised from time to time, that tend to reflect on the attributes and sovereignty of God. We are aware of the spiritual problem and so did Moses. He rested in the knowledge that God’s ways are always perfect and that his ways are always according to his infinite knowledge and always according to His accurate and infallible judgement. Isaiah, the prophet of God, referring to the Word of God emphasised the difference between the thoughts and ways of God and the thoughts and ways of man. Isaiah 55:9-11, “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts ... So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.”

Moses also in the introduction to his song called God a “God of truth” (Deut 32:4). Jesus made essentially the same statement in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” God through the Son created everything that exists in the universe. As the Designer and Creator, He alone knows everything about everything all the time and all at the same time. As the Creator, He alone can say, “I am the truth.” What a privilege and what a fact that we are called personally by the Creator of the universe and called according to His grace to accomplish His purpose.

As Moses arrived near the entrance to Canaan Land, I am sure that he reflected on the divine intervention of God during the 40-year journey. He was quick to declare to everyone that God’s work is “perfect” and that

*MOSES, A FAITHFUL SERVANT OF THE LORD*

always “just and right is He.” God is Great and God is Right. Moses was a faithful servant of the Lord.

Our calling to serve the Lord is a heavenly calling. It is a call by the sovereign God, Creator of the heavens and the earth. God means exactly what He says. His words are eternal, unchanging, settled in heaven, preserved, and committed to us today as faithful stewards.

Our God who calls us means what He says. He is sovereign, He is great, and He is right, always. What a privilege and honour to serve Him. What a blessed hope we have. The day will come when we will actually be with our Lord, which is “far better.”



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*Dr Arthur Steele is Chancellor of Clearwater Christian College, Florida, USA. The above message was delivered to graduating class of 2005 at the 30<sup>th</sup> Commencement Exercises of the Far Eastern Bible College, held at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church, on the Lord's Day, May 8, 2005.*

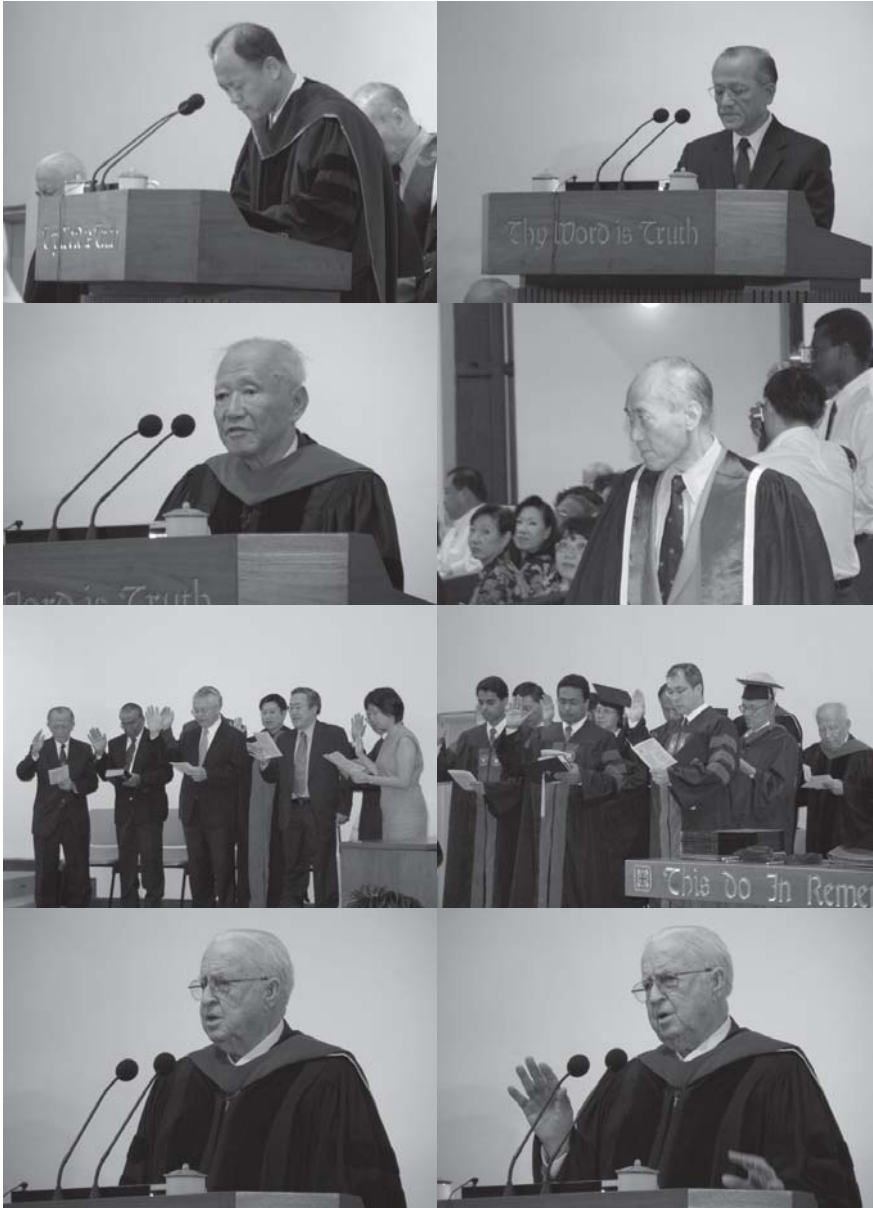
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## **FEBC 30<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service (May 8, 2005)**



From top, left to right (zig-zag): 1<sup>st</sup> two: at the foyer before processional; our guests worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness; processional led by the president of the Board of Directors—Dr Tow Siang Yeow; FEBC choir singing the college anthem; next two: committing the convocation to the Lord in prayer.

*FEBC 30<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service (May 8, 2005)*



From top, left to right (zig-zag): Invocation by Rev Dr Mark Kim (principal of the Bible College of East Africa); Dr Tow Siang Yeow (President of the FEBC Board of Directors); Rev Dr Timothy Tow (FEBC Principal); Dr S H Tow (Chairman of convocation service); FEBC Board of Directors and Faculty taking the Dean Burgon Oath of allegiance to God's Perfect Word; our honoured speaker—Dr Arthur Steele (Chancellor of Clearwater Christian College, USA).

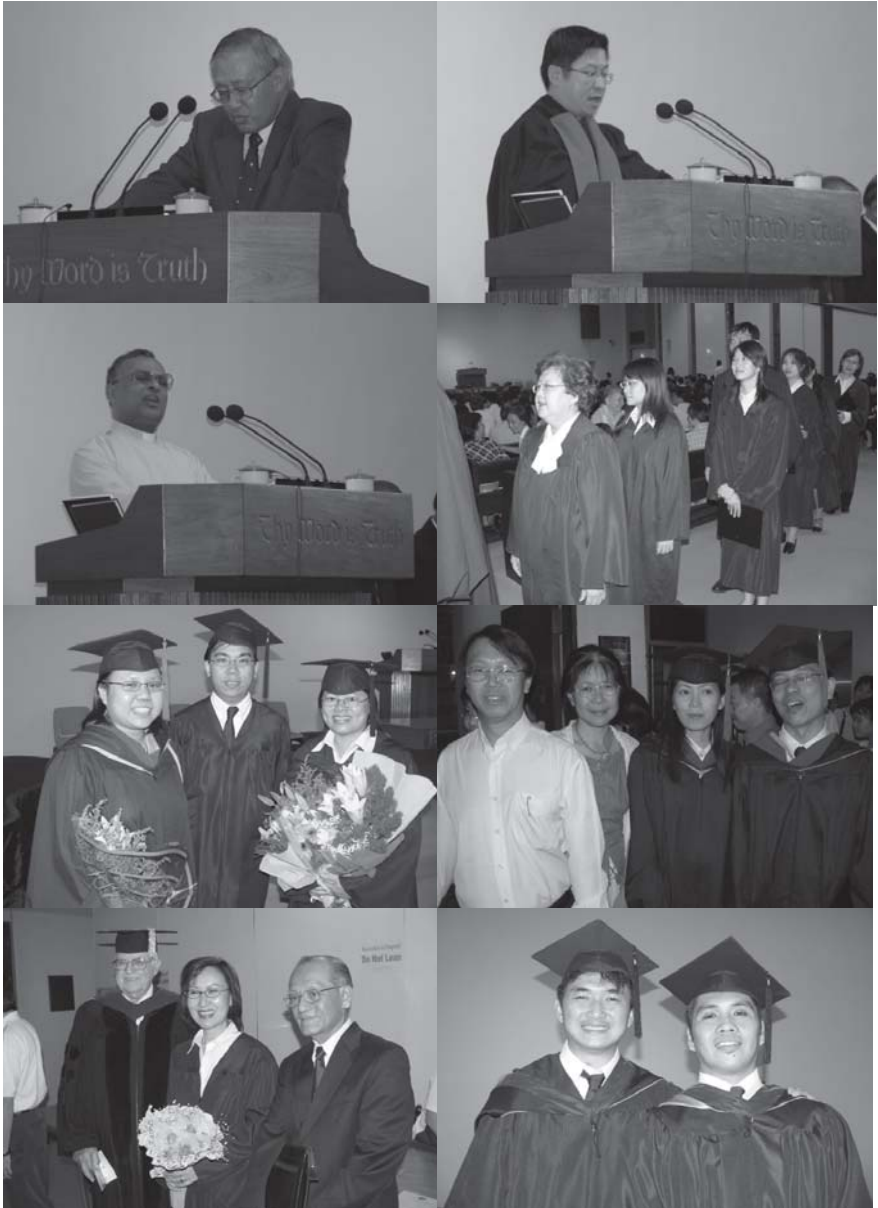
*The Burning Bush 12/1 (January 2006)*



From top, left to right (zig-zag): Lim Seo Young (BRE); Leonard Chong (BTh); Peck Choon Khim (BTh); Richard Tiu (BTh); Wiwin Sunarto (BTh); Karen Chan (MRE); Eben Yoon (MDiv); Peter Yoksan (MDiv).



*FEBC 30<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service (May 8, 2005)*



From top, left to right (zig-zag): Mr Wee Hian Kok (FEBC director and honorary treasurer); Dr Boaz Boon (FEBC director); Bishop Dr M K Koshy giving the benediction; recessional; Theresa Yip (MDiv), Micah Yap (DipTh), Peck Choon Khim (BTh); Peter Yoksan (MDiv) & wife Pipit (MRE) with Dr & Mrs Maurice Chew; Deborah Mae (CertRK) with Dr Arthur Steele & Dr Tow Siang Yeow; Richard Tiu (BTh) & Rio Espejon (BTh) from the Philippines.

**FEBC's Inaugural Conferment of the Doctor of  
Theology (ThD) Degree at her 30<sup>th</sup> Graduation  
Service, May 8, 2005**



FEBC introduced her Doctor of Theology programme at her 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2002. In view of the rapidly declining theological standards not only in evangelical but also fundamental colleges and seminaries around the world, FEBC felt it a duty to offer conservative Bible scholars the opportunity for advanced theological studies in order to train a new generation of faithful leaders for the Bible College movement. There is a vital need to train more principals and professors of theology who are fully committed to the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) and the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of Scripture (Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 2 Tim 3:16, 1 Pet 1:23-25), and to the biblical doctrine and practice of Personal and Ecclesiastical Separation (Deut 7:1-11, 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, 2 Thess 3:6-15). This is in keeping with the Pauline injunction, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).

*FEBC's Inaugural Conferment of the ThD Degree*

The ThD programme was officially launched in July 2002 with three students—Rev Prabhudas Koshy, Rev Quek Suan Yew, and Mr George Skariah. All three have proven themselves to be capable teachers and defenders of the Word of God within the total spectrum of Biblical and Systematic Theology, and are proficient in the three biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. They have succeeded in writing and defending their respective dissertations:

**Prabhudas Koshy**, *A Teaching and Counseling Manual for Pastors from the Book of Proverbs* (380 pp).

**Quek Suan Yew**, *Biblical Polemics: A Critical Analysis of Four Major Modern Religious Movements Which Contribute to the Ultimate Formation of the One World Church in the Light of Historic Fundamentalist Theology* (486 pp).

**George Skariah**, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Perfect Preservation of the Holy Scriptures* (368 pp).

The examining committee comprised FEBC's founding principal—Dr Timothy Tow; the academic dean—Dr Jeffrey Khoo; and two distinguished Christian leaders from USA—Dr Arthur Steele, Chancellor of Clearwater Christian College, and Dr D A Waite, President of the Dean Burgon Society.



*The Burning Bush 12/1 (January 2006)*

In a letter to the academic dean, Dr Waite wrote, “May our God continue to bless your important ministry in training men to pass on to other generations the needed truths of both perfect inspiration and perfect preservation of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Words underlying our King James Bible. I hope that this will be only the FIRST of many other Th.D. candidates who successfully graduate from your institution from all over the world. We need many, many more to stand on these important doctrines. If we in the United States are slow to produce such, perhaps the Lord will continue to use you brethren in Singapore to succeed in this task.”

It goes without saying that if FEBC is to contend earnestly for the Once-For-All-Settled Faith (Ps 119:89, Jude 3), she can and must only do so in the strength of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—the Author and Finisher of our Faith (Heb 12:2). We will continue to walk in the narrow way (Matt 7:13-14). May the Lord keep and preserve FEBC true and faithful to His Great Commission and to His Forever Infallible and Inerrant Word until the day of His Second Coming.

*Soli Deo Gloria!* To God alone be the glory!



*FEBC's Inaugural Conferment of the ThD Degree*



From top, left to right (zig-zag): The 3 doctoral candidates; hooding ceremony; Das Koshy is conferred the ThD; Quek Suan Yew is conferred the ThD; George Skariah is conferred the ThD and congratulated by Dr Steele; recessional; Rev Dr Das Koshy with the academic dean; Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew with family and relatives.

## **Ordination of Tan Kian Sing**



The ordination of Preacher Tan Kian Sing into holy office was held on April 24, 2005 at the Sunset Gospel Bible Fellowship Hour, Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church.

Tan Kian Sing was born in Singapore in 1957. He is married to Swee Luan. They have 4 children: Grace Tan Shu'en (17 years), Joel Tan Wei'en (14 years), Joshua Tan Rong'en (13 years), Faith Tan Xin'en (8 years). He accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour in 1974 and was baptised in 1978. He graduated with an engineering degree in 1982 and worked for 17 years as a professional engineer before the Lord called him to fulltime service. He entered Far Eastern Bible College in 1998 and graduated with a Master of Divinity in 2001. Since 2001, Preacher Kian Sing has been pastoring Berean Bible-Presbyterian Church. In 2004, he began lecturing in the Far Eastern Bible College.

### **Preacher Tan Kian Sing's Testimony of His Call to Fulltime Ministry**

During the Life Church Camp at Awana in 1996, when Rev Tow called for those who felt convicted to offer themselves to the Lord for

full-time service, I felt compelled to go forward. But I stopped when I wondered how my family would be supported. I was already a father of three children then. Altogether I had six mouths to feed including my parents. How could I just leave all and go? With the livelihood as a full-time servant would I be able to support my family and dependants? Such cares of life held me back. I felt sad for not having taken the step of faith. However, the desire to serve the Lord full-time persisted in my heart.

Towards the end of 1997, again the thoughts of whether I was living a life in accordance with His will flooded my mind. I was in deep search for God's will for my life whether I should be serving God than serving men. Soon after, there was a call to join a mission trip to Myanmar. I responded without any hesitation. During the trip to Myanmar, the Lord gave me opportunity to seek the counsel of His faithful servants. When I heard Rev Jeffrey Khoo sharing with a brother on God's call to serve Him in full-time ministry, I was very interested and joined in the discussion. Later, I also had the opportunity to share with Rev Das Koshy concerning serving in full-time ministry. I thank God that through the sharing by both servants of the Lord I was given very wise and encouraging counsel from them on God's call and service in full-time ministry. Rev Das Koshy shared from the Word of God, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5:10) when he was counselling me. He prayed with me committing me to the Lord. I was thrilled because, the Word of God he shared from Luke 5:10 was also highlighted by Rev Tow in Life weekly. He wrote, "Who knows, some might also hear the Master's call? Will one of my 20-member contingent come full-time into His service? 'Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men' (Luke 5:10)." After seeking the counsel of both Rev Khoo and Rev Koshy, I asked the Lord to give me a third counsel just as He charged Peter thrice to feed His lambs and called Samuel thrice in his sleep. Praise and thank God for His providence. He answered my prayer. While we were waiting at the departure hall of the airport on the last day of the mission trip, Rev Tow walked up to where I stood and encouraged me by saying that it is always wonderful to serve the Lord. He then quoted the Word of God, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt 11:30).

After the Myanmar mission trip, I continued to search the will of the Lord earnestly. In order to be very sure and to confirm God's call, I spent more time seeking the Lord in prayer and in searching His Word seriously. The more I sought His will and confirmation, the more He

convinced me from the Holy Scriptures that I should let the world go and follow Him fully. The Lord so wonderfully revealed to me His will through many passages from His Holy Word clearing all my fears, doubts and excuses. He specifically revealed to me His call as I prayed to Him for a particular revelation one late night on 19 June 1998 at 11.30pm. He spoke to me from His word, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet 2:21). "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). As I continued to seek Him through His Word in the early hours of 20 June 1998, He led me through the Scriptures to affirm His call. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (Luke 9:23-25). "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26). My heart was so at peace but excited. I could not sleep till 3am on 20 June 1998. As I woke up early in the morning, the verse 1 Peter 2:21 was on my mind. I was humming the song "Follow Me" in my heart.

The Lord continued to confirm His call by providentially leading godly men and women to encourage me in very special ways. The Lord brought to me these godly men and women so that I could seek their godly counsel. Many of the messages preached over the pulpit by preachers of the Word seem to speak to me specifically on the matter of serving God in full-time ministry. On Sunday 15 Mar 1998, just before worship, I prayed to the Lord to speak to me. The Lord answered my prayer right then. Rev Tow actually chose to read John 21:15-22 on the account of our Lord asking Peter three times to feed His lambs and to follow Him. I was so encouraged. Also pastor's sermon was on Romans 12:1-2 in which he challenged us to offer ourselves to serve God as a living sacrifice. Many of the Christian books I was reading seem to apply directly to me and add to the conviction in my heart. I thank God for the timely publication of John Sung's revival sermons from which I have received deep conviction. I have never felt His providential guidance so real before. I could feel the peace of God that passes all understanding ruling in my heart. I realise that I could not hold back any longer but to



## *Ordination of Tan Kian Sing*

yield to His call. “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col 3:15).

The Lord is good. As He confirms His call, He also assures my family and myself that He will take care of all our needs as we serve Him in full-time ministry. The words from an RPG work-book have helped us cast away our worries and to take God at His Word. “Now we who belong to the household of faith have God to be our Father. He who cares for the common things, the flora and fauna at large, shall He not care for His own? What need is there to fuss and fret over daily necessities? These things ought not to dominate our thinking. ‘But rather seek ye first the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.’ The promise is also a challenge: put God and His Kingdom first; strive your utmost to promote it, at all times, with all your means, and for all your life! God says: I will supply all your daily necessities with no lack!”

The words of a favourite hymn “Living for Jesus” said it all for me as I answered God’s call to serve Him in full-time ministry. “Living for Jesus who died in my place, Bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace, Such love constrains me to answer His call, Follow His leading and give Him my all. O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee, For Thou, in Thy atonement, Didst give Thyself for me; I own no other Master, My heart shall be Thy throne, My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.”

### **The Ordination Charge**

The charge to  
Rev Tan Kian Seng  
made on behalf of the ordaining council by the  
Rev Quek Suan Yew  
on the occasion of his ordination to the ministry at  
Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church  
on April 24, 2005, by the hands of  
Rev Dr Timothy Tow (presiding minister),  
Rev Dr S H Tow, Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo, Rev Prabhudas Koshy,  
Rev Ronny Khoo, Rev Wee Eng Moh, and Rev Quek Suan Yew

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith. ... Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee,

which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim 4:12-16).

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim 4:1-5).

Brother Tan Kian Seng, as you seek to make full proof of your ministry, may you endeavour to serve the one living and true God, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by:

- (1) Fervently preaching the Gospel of Christ which “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16).
- (2) Faithfully teaching the whole Counsel of God which is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17), and
- (3) Fearlessly defending the Truth which is His inspired and inerrant Word, to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

May you remember Berean Bible-Presbyterian Church which God has called you to nurture with the Word of God, and defend the Faith and the Far Eastern Bible College which has established you in the most holy faith, and trained you for the sacred ministry of His Word. Do not forget to pray for them and to hasten to their aid in time of need, doing all in accordance to God’s will and to the glory of His name. Amen.

## **FEBC-BCEA 2<sup>nd</sup> Bachelor of Ministry Graduation Service**

The **2<sup>nd</sup> Bachelor of Ministry Graduation Service** in convocation at the Bible College of East Africa was held on July 9, 2005. Seven were conferred the BMin degree by the Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew who also lectured on Biblical Polemics to the BMin students from June 25-July 10,



2005. The following are the testimonies of the graduates on how the BMin programme has blessed them:

“The BMin programme has opened my heart and mind to know how important it is to apply God’s Word to my personal life before teaching it to the church. The Christian theology I learned has challenged me not to allow any false teachings to mislead me or the church. Through the BMin

programme, I learned to use the correct translation of the Bible, the KJV, which I had never used before. The lecturers have encouraged me so much to preserve the purity of the Word of God, and not depart from the truth (Ps 12:6-7).” *Silas Chemjor, Africa Inland Church, Kapchepkulei.*

“The BMin programme has helped me a great deal in my personal spiritual life and ministry. Firstly, the course on the doctrine of Biblical Separation has helped me to identify the false teachers of these last days especially those who teach new revelation. Secondly, the course on the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of Scripture taught me how the Lord God has preserved His Word throughout the ages.” *Charles Chepkwony, Africa Inland Church, Kapkarin.*

“The BMin programme is surely a blessing from the Lord for His servants who are labouring in difficult conditions in Kenya. I have benefited from the many books made available to me at an affordable price. The books are rich in doctrinal content, and have enabled me to identify myself as a fundamentalist. I have been able to stand before other servants to give a talk on various Biblical issues based on the books I have read. The doctrine of the verbal preservation of Scripture is one I strongly hold to with great conviction from the Lord.” *Philip Githinji, Bible Baptist Church, Nyahururu.*

“In the BMin programme, I have been blessed by memorising the Dean Burgon Oath which concerns the Bible. I have also been blessed by the course on Pastoral Theology which I shared with 325 pastors in a seminar, and it was fruitful to all.” *Duncan Gitonga, Kihuyo Secondary School, Nyeri.*

“The BMin programme has made me to be disciplined in my faith. I have learned to wake up early in the morning for prayers because I need this to strengthen me for my ministry. The lessons on the inspiration and preservation of Scripture have helped me to see how the Bible has been preserved in the original languages and that the King James Version is truly translated from the preserved manuscripts with no words omitted.” *Jane Metto, Africa Inland Church, Kapchepkulei.*

“The BMin programme has helped me much to teach the church more about the Word of God especially the doctrine of Biblical Separation. God is opening more doors, and many churches are inviting me to go and teach more about what I had learned from the BMin courses. God is using the BMin programme of BCEA and FEBC to spread the gospel in Kenya and elsewhere.” *Patrick Mutua, Africa Inland Church, Mukuru.*

“The BMin programme has helped me so much spiritually, and in defending the truth of Bible and the right version (KJV). The Word of God is Truth and unchangeable at all times.” *Geoffrey Ngeno, Africa Inland Church, Arokyet.*

## Class Notes

Rev Dr **Burt Subramaniam** (DipTh 79, BRE 96), senior pastor of Bethlehem Bible-Presbyterian Church, was called home to be with the Lord on April 20, 2005, at the age of 56.

**Cheah Fook Meng** (CertBS 94), pastor of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, was called home to be with Lord on August 30, 2005.

Rev **Jack Sin** (MDiv 96) has successfully completed his Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree programme at Pensacola Theological Seminary, Florida, USA, and was conferred the degree in *absentia* in July 2005. The title of his dissertation: “The Development of a Curriculum/Manual to Equip Seminarians/Pastors to Train Deacons for the Lay Ministry in the Bible Presbyterian Church in Singapore” (213 pp). His book—*Reformation: Retrospect, Introspect, and Prospect*—has been translated into the Falam Chin language, published and distributed by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

**Tram Epoi** (BTh 98) is a district superintendent of Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) in Kuching, Sarawak, and oversees 8,000 Christians in 137 longhouses. His address: No 26, Iris Garden, Jalan Tong Wei Tah 93250, Kuching, Sarawak. Email: tram93@hotmail.com. Tel: 082-612605 (home), and 082-230729 (office).

**Wong Chin Woon** (BTh 98) and his wife **Srithorn** (DipTh 89, BTh 98), after a 4-year stint with the Korea Seaman’s Mission in Incheon, South Korea, are now serving in a Chinese Church in the United States. Their new address: 4713, Jeanne Street, Apt.104, Virginia Beach, VA 23462, USA; tel: 1-757-456-0390, email: amosw@hotmail.com.

**Joseph Lee Byong Sang** (BRE 00) graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Golden Gate Baptist Seminary on May 20, 2005. His email: soteria02@hotmail.com.

**Sun Sokha** (DipTh 02) and **Nam Soon** (DipTh 04) in a letter to the college dated June 11, 2005 wrote, “I’d like to give thanks to the Lord for the chance to be trained in FEBC. Now we are training our youths so that they can help in many parts of the Lord’s ministry here, such as teaching

and evangelising to their friends, family, and the villagers too. The Lord has also blessed both of us with a lovely daughter two weeks ago. It is a marvelous blessing from our Mighty God. What we can do is just to give thanks, praises, honour and glory to His Name, and commit our lives to be used by Him, that's all. We are the clay and He is the Potter. We can do nothing without our Lord (John 15:5)." Their address: #358, Group 28, Kompong Krobey Village, Suay Por Commune, Battambang District, Cambodia.

**Paul Losute Kendagor** (BTh 02) studied at the Biblical Graduate School of Theology (BGST) after he graduated from FEBC. He is currently back in Kenya and serving in Bible Christian Faith Church, P O Box 179, Kapenguria, Kenya. Email: losute@yahoo.com.

**David Mwendwa Mulyungi** (BRE 02) heads the Gospel Furthering Bible School (GFBS) and has students from different denominations. He also serves the Mbondoni GFBC church as the senior pastor. His address: P O Box 67, Mwingi, Kenya.

**Reggor Galarpe** (DipTh 03) is a missionary preacher of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Mission Church worshipping at 261 Don Mariano Cui St, Capitol Site, Cebu City, Philippines 6000. The church celebrated her first anniversary on July 3, 2005 with Rev Dr Das Koshy, the supervisory pastor, speaking at the thanksgiving service. Reggor's email: rega14jesus@yahoo.com.

**Khadga B T Magar** (BTh 05) is pastor of Zion Methodist Church in Dharan, Nepal. His address: Post Box #18, Dharan 10/32, Munal Path, Sunsari, Koshi, Nepal. Email: khadga\_magar@yahoo.com.

Dr **George Skariah** (ThD 05) has founded a new Bible-Presbyterian Church in Bangalore named Covenant Bible-Presbyterian Church. Justin Paul (MRE 05) is co-labouring with him. They were both commissioned by Maranatha Bible-Presbyterian Church (Rev Dr Jack Sin). Their address: House No 2281, 16 Cross, 24 Main, Sector 1, HSR Layout, Bangalore 34, Karnataka, India. Email: covenantbpci@vsnl.net.

**Ajin Thu** (DipTh 05) is serving the Lord in Pontianak, a city in Borneo, Western Indonesia. He started his ministry in February 2005, and through evangelism every Monday and Thursday, he now has 8 new people worshipping in church. He conducts a Bible study for them every Wednesday and Friday, and has a visitation ministry on Tuesday. He says, "What I learned from FEBC, I apply in Pontianak." His email: ajinthu@yahoo.com.sg.

## College News

**The Daily Vacation Bible College (DVBC)** course—“An Overview of the Book of Revelation”—was taught last year, May 3-7, 2005 by **Rev Stephen Khoo** (BTh, MDiv, MA), pastor of Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church, Melbourne, Australia. A total of 130 students (76 credit, 54 audit) signed up for the course.

The **30<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service** was held at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church on the Lord’s Day, May 8, 2005. Altogether 35 graduated with the certificates, diplomas and degrees: **Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK)**—Deborah Choi Kyoung Ae, Lim Bin Hwee, Oh Sung Hwa, Vincent Pek How Sian, Priscilla Puah Li Choo, Tan Hwee Kien, and Zheng BeiFang; **Certificate of Biblical Studies (CertBS)**—Linda Foo Kui Ping, Park Eun Hyung; **Diploma in Theology (DipTh)**—Ajin Thu, Serena Tan Hwee Khim, Yap Yee Kin, Joshua Yong Boon Keong; **Bachelor of Religious Education (BRE)**—Jeon Mi Kyung, Lim Seo Young, Warunee Harichaikul; **Bachelor of Theology (BTh)**—Leonard Chong Wei Leng, Khadga Bahadur Thapa Magar, Peck Choon Khim, Richard Murcia Tiu, Rio Lequin Espejon, Wiwin Sunarto; **Master of Religious Education (MRE)**—Karen Chan Kah Wai, Justin Paul V J, Pipit Magareta Jong, Viswanathan; **Master of Divinity (MDiv)**—Eben Yoon, Kiantoro Lie, Peter Yoksan, Theresa Yip Moh Chung; **Master of Theology (ThM)**—Michael Kipyegon Arap Koech, Vo Thanh Phan; **Doctor of Theology (ThD)**—Prabhudas Koshy, Quek Suan Yew, Georgekutty Skaria. The service was well-attended by 1,200 relatives, friends and visitors.

The college **annual retreat** was held from May 9-11 at Resort Lautan Biru, Mersing, Malaysia. A total of 88 lecturers, students, and friends participated. It was not only a time of recreation (fun and games) and good “makan,” but also worship, thanksgiving, and testimonies. The students produced a hilarious skit about life at FEBC, imitating their lecturers. Dr Arthur Steele, Rev Stephen Khoo, Dr Quek Suan Yew, and Dr Das Koshy were the Lord’s messengers.

*The Burning Bush 12/1 (January 2006)*



From top, left to right (zig-zag): Dr Arthur Steele with Rev Stephen Khoo; Carol Lee, Jemima Khoo, Judith D'Silva, Deborah Mae; praising the Lord in the worship hall of Mersing Resort; Dr Steele giving the main address; Korean students with song item; a duet by Deborah and Judith; supper table; Bible devotions in the morning.





From top, left to right (zig-zag): Rev Koa Keng Woo with his flute; Vietnamese students; next four: fellowship at the "makan" table; praising the Lord; Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew; Rev Dr Das Koshy, Rev Stephen Khoo.

The College has enlisted **Dr Raymond Saxe** to serve as one of the external examiners for the **Doctor of Theology programme**. Dr Saxe is pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. He has the following earned degrees: BA, Wheaton College, MA, University of Michigan, ThM, ThD, Dallas Theological Seminary, DMiss, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.



The **Bible College of East Africa** has published a Kiswahili edition of Rev Dr Timothy Tow's book—*The Jesus Saves Clock of the Sevenfold Will of God—Yesu Aoko* *Yenye Mitazamo Saba Ya Mapenzi Ya Mungu*, 2005. For copies, write to BCEA, PO Box 41140, Nairobi, Kenya.

FEBC is the first Bible College to achieve **CaseTrust for Education accreditation**. CaseTrust for Education accredited institutions possess good student welfare practices and high quality standards with clear fee policies, well-defined student redress practices and systems, disclosure of commitment to quality, and well-trained academic and administrative personnel. The most important benefit from this accreditation is the right to enrol foreign students. This enables the college to continue in her God-given work of training pastors, preachers, missionaries, and Christian workers in fulfilment of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).

FEBC reopened with a **day of prayer and registration** on July 18, 2005. Rev Dr Das Koshy—the Dean of Students—spoke on the importance of servanthood using David as an example (Acts 13:36). There were 15 new students from 7 countries—**Ethiopia**: Ejigayehu Alemu Zeleke; **India**: Limhathung Lotha; **Indonesia**: Arnold Rajagukguk, Rommy The; **Kenya**: Richard Kiprono Kirui, Philip Kipsaat Lagat; **Myanmar**: Biak Lawm Thang, Mung Hau Khup, Ton Soung Kao; **Philippines**: Eliezer Saycon Ortega; **Singapore**: Cheong Chin Meng, Ko Ling Kang, Jeremiah Sim, Peter Sim, James Tan. Total enrolment currently stands at 114 day-time students from 16 countries. A combined total of 221 students registered for the “Basic Theology for Everyone” night courses on NT Introduction and the Book of Exodus taught by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo and Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew respectively.

FEBC has published a new **Profile**, a revised **Prospectus**, and an updated **Student Handbook**, all of which are found at [www.febc.edu.sg](http://www.febc.edu.sg). Alumni are hereby encouraged to write in for copies of the Profile and Prospectus for distribution to prospective students.



# TRUE LIFE

## BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE" PHIL 2:16



**Pastor:**  
Rev (Dr) Timothy  
Tow Siang Hui

### **Worship Service:**

10.30 am every Lord's Day  
at RELC Auditorium  
Regional Language Centre (RELC)  
30 Orange Grove Road  
Singapore 258352

### **Ministries:**

Sunday School  
Filipina and Indonesian Bible Study  
Children's Ministry  
Church Choir  
Evangelism/Missions  
Fellowship Groups

### **CONTACT US:**

**True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church**

*Mailing Address:*

P.O. Box 141, Newton Post Office  
Singapore 912205  
Republic of Singapore

Telephone: (65) 6250-2138

Website: <http://www.febc.edu.sg>

E-mail: [febc@pacific.net.sg](mailto:febc@pacific.net.sg)

### **Fellowship Groups:**



*Ladies Fellowship*



*Young People's Fellowship*



*Family Bible Study Fellowship*



**FEBC Annual Retreat  
Resort Lautan Biru, Mersing  
May 9 – 11, 2005**