



The Burning Bush

ISSN 0219-5984

July 2008

Volume 14 Number 2

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THE BURNING BUSH

Theological Journal of the
FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE

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Editor : Jeffrey Khoo
Publisher : Far Eastern Bible College
Website : www.febc.edu.sg
Permit : MICA (P) 056/03/2008
Printer : Chung Printing

The Burning Bush (ISSN 0219-5984) is published bi-annually in January and July, and contains theological papers, sermons, testimonies, book reviews, College news, and alumni reports. Articles are indexed in the *Christian Periodical Index*. The journal is distributed gratis to the FEBC family and Bible-Presbyterian churches, and available online at www.febc.edu.sg. Local/Foreign subscription rates in Singapore dollars: one year—\$6/\$12; two years—\$10/\$20; back issues—\$3/\$6 per copy. Make cheques payable to “Far Eastern Bible College.”

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POSTMODERNISM AND THE EMERGENT CHURCH

Jeffrey Khoo

The Bible tells us, “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*” (Matt 24:14). The signs of the times tell us that we are living in the last days, and that Jesus Christ is coming back very soon. Satan knows his time is about up, and so he spares no effort to destroy the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The gospel today is attacked like never before. As believers, we should not be surprised at this. The Lord had already warned us, “*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, ... Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: ... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; ... these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. ... But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” (2 Tim 3:1-13). The more Satan attacks the gospel, the more we must defend it. One way of defending the gospel is to expose error. One such error that must be exposed today is postmodernism.

Poison of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a philosophy or worldview that is difficult to define. Postmodernism grew out of modernism or rationalism (human intelligence and science is God). But modernism did not work; it did not make the world a morally better place. The modern world is certainly a more sophisticated world—a *space-age world but plagued with the same natural disasters and human cruelty*. Some have described postmodernism as an attitude—an attitude of *pessimism*. Self-confidence has been replaced by self-doubt. Such pessimism can be a good point of reference for Christians to reach out to the postmodern man. The Scriptures speak of man’s total depravity and hopelessness, and the only way for man to rise up to the spiritual standard God has set for him is to

believe in the Divine Intelligence/Reason which is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (John 1:1) who died for our sins, and rose from the dead according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:1-4).

Without Christ and His Word, the postmodernist will become a relativist. Where is Truth? What is Truth? Jesus Christ tells us His Word is Truth (John 17:17). But the postmodernist in his pessimism will conclude that truth is relative and subjective. There is no such thing as absolute or objective Truth. Truth can be anything and anywhere. Whatever claims to be true or truth is met with scepticism. Pragmatism takes over. Whatever works must be right and good. The end justifies the means even though the means to getting there is morally wrong.

The Emergent Church

Postmodernism has crept into Christianity through the Emergent Church. The methodology of the Emergent Church feeds on the philosophy of Postmodernism. They feed on each other. The Emergent Church methodology is perhaps best expressed in Brian McLaren's book called *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post-Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished CHRISTIAN*. Clearly, McLaren's "Generous Orthodoxy" is a mixed-up and messed up orthodoxy which is no orthodoxy at all. It sidelines God and His Truth, and uplifts the man and his feelings. It is "the more we get together, the merrier we'll be" kind of a thinking and practice.

Jason Carlson, Vice President of Christian Ministries International, in his testimony—"My Journey In and Out of the Emergent Church"—reveals that the Emergent Church is (1) ambiguous in doctrinal definitions, (2) inclusive and ecumenical, (3) tolerant of sin and error, (4) open to pagan forms of religious worship, (5) critical of biblical or conservative fundamentalism, and (6) low on evangelism but high on social action or interaction. Postmodernism is thus a part of the New Age, ecumenical, pluralistic worldview of contemporary society which has infiltrated the Church and caused her to lose her biblical and Christlike identity and remade her into something that will fit the One-World system of the Antichrist.

POSTMODERNISM AND THE EMERGENT CHURCH

Biblical Theological Seminary (Hatfield, PA) is now an Emergent seminary seeking to produce Emergent pastors who will plant Emergent churches. In 2003, Biblical Seminary decided to embark on a new course to become an emergent seminary for the emergent church with a new statement of vision, “To be the ongoing choice for training missional leaders for the emerging church of the 21st century and to be a catalyst for engaging evangelical Christians in dialogue with postmodern culture” (*A New Reality*).

The buzzword of Biblical Seminary and the Emergent Church is “missional.” There is nothing wrong with the word “missional.” In fact it is a good word for the Church is commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to evangelise the lost, to baptise those who believe, and to indoctrinate them with the whole counsel of God (Matt 28:18-20). But it is not enough today to know what an institution says; there is a crucial need to know what it means by what it says. More often than not, an institution is particularly vague and ambiguous on what it really is and what it truly believes. But there are tell-tale signs if one were to read their writings carefully and discerningly. As I see it, the whole Emergent Church philosophy and methodology is all about “accommodation” or “compromise.” It is precisely what Emergent Church guru, Brian McLaren, himself describes it—a “generous orthodoxy.” In other words, “If you can’t beat them, join them.” “Be user-friendly.” “Be seeker-sensitive.” “Be broad and accepting.” “Don’t criticise but syncretise.” “Don’t separate but cooperate.” “Love unites, doctrine divides.” In other words, the Church needs an extreme makeover. The ugly, narrow, out-of-date biblical fundamentalism must be replaced by the new, hip and in-fashion postmodern worldliness.

Ecumenism

The up and coming Emergent Church is actually the old Ecumenical Movement and the Neo-evangelical spirit but in a different guise or name. The Emergent Church, Neo-evangelicalism and Ecumenism despise these two things: (1) the Perfect Word of God, its present infallibility and inerrancy, and hence the sole, supreme, and final authority on all faith and life, and (2) the biblical doctrine and practice of separation which rejects the world and its ungodliness, and exposes all forms of apostasy and compromise in the church today. To the emergent churchman, the biblical doctrine of separation is a “sour doctrine.” The

mission of the church according to the Emergent Church is thus not the original mission of Christ which is to get sinners to be reconciled to the thrice holy God through the Gospel, but to help people to get along with one another and enjoy one another's company in the context of a "generous orthodoxy"—truth is subjective, uncertain, broad, and varied.

Many local churches are wittingly or unwittingly pursuing the emergent way with "let's get warm and cosy" programmes. The church is transformed into a club with "members-only" privileges. Sermons rebuking sin and error are deemed "unedifying." An edifying sermon is one that makes the church feel nice and comfy. Without a Perfect Bible, "I feel good!" is the new standard of ascertaining truth from error, right from wrong. Emergent churches seek pastors of the "please-all, nice guy" type or the effeminate "soft and mushy" type that fit the postmodern congregation. The Emergent church has no place for the "fire and brimstone" ministry of the prophets as found in the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul had already warned, "*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*" (2 Tim 4:3).

Antidote

In light of this new danger, what must we do? We must go back to the basics—return to the fundamentals of the Christian Faith! The Apostle Paul commands, "*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine (ie, the fundamentals of the Christian Faith); continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*" (1 Tim 4:16). That is why the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) spares no effort to teach "the doctrine" not only to its students training for full-time ministry, but also the lay people taking its "Basic Theology for Everyone" (BTFE) night classes. Good and sound theology is the only antidote against postmodernism, and every Christian must be a theologian if he wants to keep himself faithful and true to the Lord Jesus Christ. But Satan wants Christians to be weak in doctrine and worthless in service. Pray for more Bible-believing and Bible-defending churches to make inroads into Satan's world by strengthening the faith of the saints through an intensive, systematic study of God's Perfect Word without any mistake, impacting many lives to the glory of God.

Christians must also strive to walk in the strait and narrow way and practise separation if they want to combat postmodernism. Hear the

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words of our Lord, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt 7:13-14). “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:14-18).

Dr Jeffrey Khoo is academic dean of the Far Eastern Bible College.

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KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS: THE SCCC CONTRADICTS THE ICCC ON VPP

Jeffrey Khoo

The Singapore Council of Christian Churches (SCCC), which is the national affiliate in Singapore of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC), in its Reformation Rally of 2007 passed another statement¹ against the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures. This latest statement is clearly not in line with the ICCC resolutions on the Bible made in Amsterdam 1998 and Jerusalem 2000 which the SCCC claims to reaffirm. In the *Far Eastern Beacon* of Easter 2008, the SCCC quoted the ICCC resolution that “The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts—the Masoretic Text preserving the Old Testament and the Textus Receptus preserving the New Testament.”² This is what VPP affirms—the Hebrew/Aramaic words of the Masoretic Text, and the Greek words of the Textus Receptus are the very inspired and preserved words of God, and the Authorised or King James Version (AV/KJV) is a faithful translation of those divinely inspired and preserved original language words.

It is unfortunate that in the same paper, the SCCC misrepresents VPP by putting the cart before the horse claiming that VPP is KJV³ when VPP is the special providential preservation of the divinely inspired words of the Holy Scriptures in the original languages (i.e., Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words, and not English words or any other foreign language words in Bible translations or versions). It must be underscored that VPP recognises and requires the translation of true and faithful versions of the Bible into other languages that are based upon the God-preserved manuscripts or verbally and plenary preserved texts, namely, the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus from which the KJV has been faithfully translated as affirmed by the ICCC.⁴

KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS

It ought to be made known that the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) has been championing the ICCC resolution on the preservation of Scripture passed at its 16th World Congress in Jerusalem in the year 2000. The ICCC statement #11 affirmed, “Believing the OT has been preserved in the Masoretic text and the NT in the Textus Receptus, combined they gave us the complete Word of God. The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts.”⁵

In the same issue of the *Far Eastern Beacon* (Easter 2008), the SCCC also republished a 2005 letter by the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM) denouncing the doctrine and promotion of VPP which clearly contradicts what the SCCC has reaffirmed in the very same paper to be the ICCC position on Biblical preservation, the KJV and its underlying original language texts. The SCCC paper in the *Far Eastern Beacon* is inherently inconsistent and contradictory. Wittingly or unwittingly, the SCCC anti-VPPists have undermined the testimony of the ICCC and their own credibility by their very own words and actions.

It is worth noting that Dr Lynn Gray Gordon, former General Secretary of the IBPFM, in his commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith, states unequivocally that “The Holy Scriptures have been *miraculously* preserved down through the ages.”⁶ This is nothing less than the VPP of the Holy Scriptures by special or extraordinary, supernatural or miraculous providence (“by His singular care and providence”) as affirmed in the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 1, Section 8). But the SCCC says that the continuing preservation of the one Holy Scripture, the Bible, is merely “**general** [i.e. not special, non-miraculous, without direct, extraordinary divine intervention], **but not plenary** [i.e. not full, complete, 100% to the jot and tittle].”⁷ Is this Biblically correct, theologically sensible, and logically tenable? Is this the Reformed understanding of the Holy Scriptures and of *Sola Scriptura*?

How we thank God for the Biblical doctrine of the verbal and plenary preservation and the present infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures in the original languages (Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 24:35, John 10:35, 2 Tim 3:16-17)! Insofar as the KJV is concerned, Dr Gordon rightly disclaimed the KJV as an “inspired version” but nonetheless

upheld the KJV to be “free from error in thought, fact and doctrine.”⁸ VPP proponents say Amen to this.

The SCCC statement illustrates the fallacy of human logic and the fallibility of the words of men. Man’s writings are full of contradictions, discrepancies and errors, but God’s words are perfect, infallible, and inerrant, without any contradiction, discrepancy, or mistake to the last letter and syllable. It proves all the more that the words of God are forever infallible and inerrant, and always trustworthy, our sole and supreme authority of faith and practice. The logic of faith is the key to a consistent Bibliology. The logic of unbelief, on the other hand, produces illogical thinking and ungodly deeds. Dr Gordon rightly observed, “Sin is an irrational thing. It makes a man act not only wickedly, but foolishly.”⁹ It baffles the mind to see the SCCC holding a Reformation Rally only to undermine the Reformation Bible, the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus on which the KJV is based by denying and denouncing VPP. Even the Rev K C Quek—former General Secretary of the ICCC—himself testified that he does not “see ‘main contradictions’ between the clause 4.2.1 in the existing Constitution of our B-P Churches and the VPP theory.”¹⁰ Indeed, we see no contradiction whatsoever.

May the SCCC and its member churches retract all their statements against VPP before they do further damage to the testimony and credibility of the ICCC and the legacy of Dr Carl McIntire who believed without question that Psalm 12:6, 7 proves the perfect preservation of the words of God.¹¹

It is indeed truthful that VPP is a blessed doctrine which preserves godly paths to the glory of God alone. How true our Saviour’s words, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5)!

Notes

¹ The SCCC had issued an earlier statement, “Inspiration and Translations of the Holy Scriptures,” a resolution passed in its 49th AGM on October 29, 2005, and published in the November-December 2005 issue of the *Far Eastern Beacon*. See also Jeffrey Khoo, “Inspiration, Preservation, and Translations,” *The Burning Bush* 13 (2007): 12-13.

² “Re-affirming SCCC Stand on the Word of God,” “IBPFM Resolution on Bible Inspiration,” *Far Eastern Beacon* 39:1 (Easter 2008): 4.

³ *Ibid*, 5.

⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

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⁵ “ICCC 16th World Congress Statements,” *Far Eastern Beacon* (Christmas 2000): 13.

⁶ Lynn Gray Gordon, *The World’s Greatest Truths* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1999), 25.

⁷ “Re-affirming SCCC Stand on the Word of God,” 5. Emphasis in the original, but explanations in parenthesis are mine.

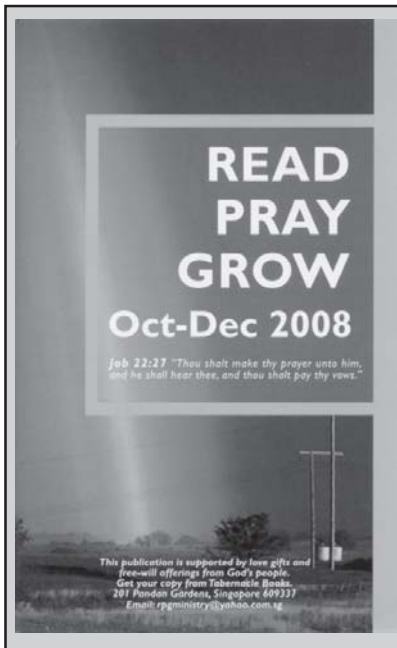
⁸ Gordon, 26.

⁹ *Ibid*, 174.

¹⁰ “A Founding Leader of the B-P Movement in Singapore Replies to a Query on the Church Constitution” (<http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/querycc.htm> accessed on June 19, 2008). The B-P Constitution 4.2.1 reads, “We believe in the divine, verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life.”

¹¹ Hear his sermon entitled — “Help, LORD!” (Psalm 12) — preached on January 11, 1992, accessible from www.sermonaudio.com.

Dr Jeffrey Khoo is academic dean of the Far Eastern Bible College, and an advisory council member of the Dean Burgon Society.



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Job 22:27 "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows."

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AN APPROVED WORKMAN

Dennis Kwok

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” In verse 15, the Greek word that Paul used for “rightly dividing” is *orthotomeo* which literally means “to cut straight”. In the context of this passage, an approved workman is one (1) who cuts a straight path with the truth, (2) who does not wander away from the truth, and (3) who leads people to the truth.

Cutting a Straight Path with the Truth

The Romans have a special liking for straight roads. Since ancient times, the Romans built their roads as straight as they could to make their troop movements as efficient as possible. Perhaps this was what Paul—being a Roman citizen himself—had in mind when he said that an approved workman should “cut a straight path” with the word of truth. To cut a straight path with the word of truth is to explain it accurately, and make it plain to others. The word of truth is a straight rule, or the yardstick, that is true and accurate. If handled correctly it will guide the traveller safely to his destination: which is the kingdom of God.

Notice that Paul is clear that there is truth, and not just a truth, but the truth. What is truth? The same question was asked by Pontius Pilate when he tried the Lord Jesus Christ (John 18:38). Today, we ask the same question. But most have answered the question with their own thinking of what they want the truth to be. “As long as I believe it is the truth, it is!” “All truth is God’s truth,” they say. What a lie! Let us not deceive ourselves. There is only one truth, and that is God’s truth, period. He has the only truth that we ought to know, and it is powerful enough to set us free forever.

Note that the Christian workman is to handle correctly or divide rightly the word of truth. We do not need to guess what is the truth or search the whole world for the truth: we have it here written down in

words. The truth that defines the straight path the teacher should follow is the Bible as we have it today. The Bible that you have in your hands. This is the truth.

From verse 15 of chapter 2, we find that for one to be an approved workman, it is not enough for him just to teach the truth, he must also live the truth. It is written, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” Teaching and lifestyle are intertwined throughout the epistle of 2 Timothy. So we see in verse 21 that the servant of God should sanctify himself so that he can be fit for the Master’s use. And we also see in verse 22 that the approved teacher should flee youthful lusts, such as ambition, self-indulgence, arrogance, sexual temptation, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Bad teaching will often show up in bad behaviour, and bad behaviour will lead to greater sins.

That leads us to the second point: an approved workman does not wander from God’s truth.

Not Wandering Away from the Truth

An approved workman is to cut a straight path with the truth, and he is not to deviate from that path. In verse 18, Paul mentioned two characters, Hymenaeus and Philetus, “who concerning the truth have erred.” They were the opposite of the approved workman. Instead of following the straight path marked out by the clear teaching of the Apostles, they made their own diverging path that wandered away from the truth. The problem was that their path did not go to the right place. Their error had overthrown the faith of some as mentioned in verse 18.

The particular error of these two was their denial of the future physical, bodily resurrection of believers. They taught that the resurrection of believers had already taken place in some spiritual sense. In other words they were teaching people, “That’s your lot, there’s nothing to hope for. The life here and now is all that there is to the Christian life.” But this is in direct contradiction to what the Bible teaches time and time again about a future day of resurrection and our eternal life with God.

The point is that Christianity is a revealed faith. It comes from God, not from us, and we are not at liberty to change the faith: to add to the

faith, to subtract from the faith, or to make it up as we go along. All of these constitute a wandering from the straight path of the word of truth.

There are all sorts of reasons why a Christian in the church might wander from the truth. Often it is a misguided attempt to make Christianity more “relevant” and “inclusive.” Sometimes, it is due to laziness or the failure to study the Bible diligently and reverently; it is simply easier to go along with what the world is saying, and much harder to cut the straight path.

It is common these days to deny the preservation of the inspired words of God. Of course no one would ever deny that the Scriptures have been preserved. Many are quick to affirm that the Bible is preserved but claim that there is no perfect Bible today. You have and yet you do not have. That is what they are saying. Do you have it or not? If you do not have it, what then do you have? I am not trying to play with your mind. But that is exactly what they are saying. They like to digress from the main issue. We say we have God’s Perfect Word today and that God has preserved His words in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus, which are faithful copies of the original manuscripts.

Having a loose tongue, some say there are scribal errors in the Bible. Do you think scribal errors are so easy to go undetected in God’s Word? Is the verbal and plenary preservation (VPP) of the Scriptures a “theory”? A brother came up with this analogy which I thought makes very good sense, especially for those who still cannot accept VPP. Concerning VPP, what if you believe in VPP and your belief is wrong, let me tell you, you are still right because by simple faith that is how you look at God that He is absolutely capable of preserving His words as He promised, right? Now, what if you do not believe in VPP and you are wrong? Let me tell you, you are finished! How are you going to answer to God? To be on the safe side, VPP is the wise position to take. We do not claim to know everything. But whatever we know from the Scriptures, we must not wander from it. We must believe it. We must obey it. The Bible is so plain and clear when we read, “The Law of the LORD is perfect ...” (Ps 19:7). How can we still argue otherwise? “God forbid: yea, let God be true and every man a liar ...” (Rom 3:4).

There is only one way; that strait path is the only one that leads to God. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). To teach otherwise is to wander from the strait path, and destroy the faith of some.

Bringing People Back to the Truth

We thank God for FEBC which has remained firm and unmoveable in the Word of God. The real test is given. Friendship with the world or faithfulness to God? I believe this is a good test for us. The battle for the Bible makes Paul's words to Timothy all the more significant for us. Verses 24 and 25 in particular are a challenge to us in our conduct, and they bring out the last characteristic of the approved workman. An approved workman leads people back to the truth. *"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."* We are to strive not about words to no profit as verse 14 says, and we are to avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they do gender strifes as verse 23 says. However, when matters of revealed truth are at stake, we are to gently warn in meekness instructing those that oppose in the hope of leading them back to the truth.

It is extremely easy to get heated up about these matters, but again matters of truth are intertwined with matters of conduct. The approved workman employs righteousness, faith, love, peace, gentleness and hope in the ministry of directing people to the strait path. Let us remember this always.

Conclusion

There is only one road that leads to life: the strait and narrow road. The approved workman must cut a strait and narrow path with the word of truth. He must not wander from it onto the broad way that leads to destruction, and he must do his best to turn every wanderer back to the narrow way.

When we humbly and faithfully follow after the wonderful truth of God's Word, it is like a garden with flowers bright and fair, and a deep well with hidden jewels rich and rare for every searcher there. God's Word is what we need today to contend for the faith as well as to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. May God help us. Amen.

Rev Dennis Kwok (BTh 01) is the pastor of Truth Bible-Presbyterian Church. The above sermon was preached on FEBC's opening Day of Prayer, January 2, 2008.

AN UNHAPPY MESSAGE

Richard Murcia Tiu

I am afraid I may be bringing a rather unhappy message with me this evening. Unhappy because we will be looking at a frightening scenario of what the ministry has become today; a scenario in which every faithful minister of the Word will find himself in. A scary scenario that every faithful Bible college student will face once he enters into the ministry. Let us read 2 Timothy 3:1-13 and see what this unhappy message is all about.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

Second Timothy is the Apostle Paul's final letter to Timothy before he was martyred during the great Christian persecution under the emperor Nero. At that time Paul was in prison and he probably knew that his own life and ministry was coming to an end. That was why he wrote to say that his departure was at hand, that he had finished his course and was looking forward to meeting the Lord (2 Tim 4:6-8).

AN UNHAPPY MESSAGE

And so the Apostle Paul wrote this second letter to the young pastor Timothy to encourage him (as well as all of us) to stand firm in the faith and in the integrity and surety of God's Word even in the midst of suffering and trials. Why? Because Paul had already anticipated that Christians who seek to live according to the Word of God are sure to face severe opposition and persecution.

Paul wrote in verse 12 of our text, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And he continued to say, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim 3:12-13). And so we must not be surprised that godly men and women in these last days, including churches and institutions that have remained faithful to the Lord, are under siege. For the times of peril, times of furious and exceeding fierce adversaries have come (2 Tim 3:1).

Nowadays wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and tornadoes strike with much greater intensity; and the Lord Jesus has warned us of these as signs of His soon return in Matthew 24. But aside from these foul weather conditions, we also have here in our text a list of the foul heart conditions of men that will prevail in the end times.

What Are the Signs?

What are the signs that these perilous times have indeed come (2 Tim 3:2-5a)?

- (1) These signs can be seen in the behaviour of certain men. We are given from verse 2 onwards a catalogue of characteristics that begins with what is essentially a definition of modern humanism – that "men shall be lovers of their own selves" (*philautos* – lover of self). And because of this they are by nature covetous (*philarguros* – lover of silver). They are boasters or boastful. And they boast of their riches, intellect, and position in society or church.

They are proud. Pride is the sin of the devil. Self-love and self-centred pride eventually lead to self-worship. Just like Lucifer who said in Isaiah 14:14, "I will be like the most High." They are blasphemers and they will speak evil of anyone and everyone who do not agree with them. They will resort to name-calling, unjust blaming, and to injure by their words those who stand opposed to them.

Then they are disobedient to parents. Children are supposed to obey their parents in the Lord: for this is right. That is what the Bible says (Eph 6:1). But nowadays children are becoming more and more disobedient to their parents. Not only that, they have distorted the Scriptures as well. Parents are now asked to obey their children; otherwise they get thrown out of the house. The same thing is true in the spiritual realm, is it not? Church fathers are now being asked to obey the demands of their spiritual children. And if you do not obey – out you go! A very unthankful and unholy attitude indeed as Paul describes it here.

- (2) Verse 3 says they are “without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good.” If this would have been a multiple-choice question in Dr Quek’s exam, you can be sure that the answer to this is “all of the above.” Natural affection can mean filial love but since these people are without it, it is of no surprise then that they are disobedient, rebellious, and unthankful towards their parents.

They are also “trucebreakers.” The same word is translated in Romans 1:31 as “implacable.” This word gives us an idea of someone who is unwilling to be reconciled. He will not enter into any treaty or agreement. And if an agreement does exist, such agreement will be utterly disregarded and he will refuse to honour whatever is stipulated therein.

Paul further identifies them as “false accusers.” This is definitely the work of the devil. Satan himself is called “the accuser of the brethren” in Revelation 12:10. What is true will be branded as false and vice versa. And there are many of them today falsely accusing and slandering Bible-believing Christians.

They are “incontinent” (that is, without strength to resist their passions), “fierce” (harsh, severe, even cruel people). And it is quite easy to spot them for we are told that they despise those that are good. One quality for church leaders found in Titus 1:8 is that he must be a lover of good men. But here we see the exact opposite happening and truly this characterises the evil age which we now live in.

- (3) Verse 4 mentions “traitors.” And whether you are a friend, relative, church member, or even a pastor, it does not matter to them. You

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will likely be betrayed as though you were a bitter enemy. They are heady, high-minded, puffed up, and conceited men who love and live for the pleasures of this world. Rather than to separate, they extend their hand of friendship to the world to unite with them. In James, they are described as adulterers and adulteresses that are at enmity with God.

- (4) Then verse 5 implies that these people can be found in the church and may even be sitting in leadership positions such as pastors, elders, or deacons. “Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.” It speaks of a person that seems to be spiritual on the outside but inside is a ravening wolf. This is that pharisaical attitude of false religiosity which I believe is the highest form of hypocrisy. And this tells us that the most heart-wrenching foes of Christianity come from within her – inside our churches, seminaries, mission boards, etc.

What Are We to Do?

What are we to do when we come across them in our churches and ministries?

- (1) Paul says in verse 5b, “from such turn away.” We are not to assent or agree with them and their teachings but to turn away from them. And one reason given in verse 6 is that this sort of people “are they which creep into houses.” It gives us an impression of a careful, calculated move to sneak into homes to propagate their errors and captivate “silly women.”

According to a commentator, Albert Barnes, “silly women” here simply mean weak-minded or weak-willed women. Such women are easily flattered and charmed by the graceful manners of religious instructors and thus they lend a willing ear to anything that has the appearance of religion.

And so these advocates of error usually follow Satan’s example by creeping into homes to attract and draw the weak-minded ones who are under the influence of sinful desires (“laden with sins”). And once they are convinced, they are led away with divers lusts or passions such as pride and the vanities of life. This is what makes them all the more easy prey to these deceivers.

- (2) Verse 7 describes deceivers as “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Now this is a very sad picture of someone who may be highly learned; an intellectual who may be well-acquainted even with doctrines and various philosophical theories of religion. But this person never gets to know what true religion is because he is blind to the truth.
- (3) And just like the ancient magicians called Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses (v8), people like this also resist and suppress the truth in order to advance their cause. Jannes and Jambres were said to be Egyptian magicians who tried to counter the miracles of God by coming up with their own. This was done in order to discredit Moses before the people of Israel and hinder their journey to the Promised Land.

In like manner, such people try to discredit faithful servants of the Lord by propagating untruths in order to hinder and if possible destroy the faith of some. And so Paul calls them “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.” We must turn away from them lest we get contaminated by their errors.

- (4) And look at verse 9. “But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.” So there is a certain point at which these men can go no further. Their cloaks would be uncovered and their evil motives and intentions exposed before all men. It means error can only advance up to a certain degree where it will finally be proven as falsehood and folly. Then it proceeds no further; and truth shall triumph and prevail in the end.

Is not this a wonderful promise in the Word of God? And so we must cling on to the truth as if our very lives depended on it. To separate from error is to ensure that we will not fall headlong into the shame and destruction of these false teachers.

But until such time that the devices and mouths of ungodly men be stopped, persecutions and afflictions will continue. And verse 12 will always be a reality in the lives and ministry of those who will remain faithful to the Lord. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” It is written by Paul here as a matter of a foregone conclusion. Not that we may or may not suffer but we will surely suffer if we live godly in Christ. And all means all. No one will be exempted.

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Now let me ask this question: Are you still happy after looking at this grim picture of the last days? Are you happy that you have worked and studied hard for so long only to be faced with such vexing conditions in the ministry? With the things that have been happening around lately, we can be sure that we are in the last of the last days. And so with all these persecutions around us, will we still be happy? Well, we better be because it can only mean one thing – we are striving to live godly in Christ Jesus.

This is the frightening reality that every minister, every student, and every true believer of the Word of God must face if he is to stand for the truth without any compromise. On the other hand, there is an easy way out. You can choose to be friendly with everyone, and anyone; compromise a bit here and a bit there and you will be alright. No persecution! How we must pray hard that the Lord will grant us grace to stand steadfast for the 100% perfect and preserved words of God; steadfast “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9)!

Bible-believing and Bible-defending Christians may be under siege; uncertainties abound and suspense hangs in the air. Maybe more persecutions are in the offing but we stand assured that out of them all, come what may, the Lord will grant deliverance. In fact this is the brightest note that we can find in our passage. That was the Apostle Paul’s testimony in verse 11 when he said, “Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me” (2 Tim 3:11). What a blessed assurance! If at all, this should be the reason why we are able to face our trials with joy. This should be the reason why we can still be happy today.

We do not know what lies ahead. What we do know to be a certainty is that the One who knows it and who holds it is also the One who holds our hands.

*I don't know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day.
I don't borrow from its sunshine for its skies may turn to gray.
I don't worry o'er the future, for I know what Jesus said.
And today I'll walk beside Him, for He knows what is ahead.*

*Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand;
But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know He holds my hand.*

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MARK THEM WHICH CAUSE DIVISIONS

Paul Ferguson

I refer to the paper “Mark Them Which Cause Divisions” written by the Rev Charles Seet and Elders of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore, published in January 2008.¹

It is with great sadness that we are witnessing the splintering of Singapore Fundamentalism and the unedifying spectacle of brethren resorting to naming godly men, like Dr Timothy Tow, Dr Tow Siang Hwa, and Dr Tow Siang Yeow who have stood for the Faith for more than half a century as “heretics.” It is deeply grieving to many believers around the world that the Board of Elders of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (hereafter referred to as “Life BPC”) should resort to such public statements in a legitimate disagreement over which brethren have a right to follow their own conscience concerning.

The word “heresy” is, as Life BPC state, derived from the Greek verb *haireomai* which means to “choose.” They go on to define it as “a chosen course of thought or action which is held dogmatically but varies from the true exposition of the Christian faith as prescribed by the Word of God.” I shall examine the dogmatic implication of this in respect of the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) position of FEBC in a moment, but it is first worth also considering other biblical principles that balance the use of such expressions in a public context.

It is clear that the mark of a godly spiritual church and leadership is that they are always innately cautious in using such loaded and volatile terms about fellow brethren and publish them on a website for the pagan world to gloat over. Life BPC would be advised to heed the consequences of the example of even a godly leader like Moses who, “spake unadvisedly with his lips” (Ps 106:33). The Apostle Peter also dares to say that Christians, like Life BPC, should speak as the “oracles of God” (1 Pet 4:11), when defending the faith before the public. Our Lord Jesus warned, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account

thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt 12:36, 37).

The expression “heretic” is commonly associated in most believers’ minds as meaning what Harold O J Brown in his book *Heresies* states as “someone whose teachings or beliefs extends beyond legitimate doctrinal difference to undercut the very basis for Christian existence.”² It is not good enough for Life BPC to hide behind Greek definitions to justify using a “loaded term” that creates the impression in the minds of their members that their founding pastor has started a new cult, like the Mormons, or has denied the doctrine of the Trinity. For Life BPC to irresponsibly label their founding pastor a heretic and a promulgator of “heresy” surely cannot be an acceptable, balanced, or a legitimate response. Their manifest inconsistency in this area can be clearly seen in that they stated on 8 November 2005,

However, for the sake of brotherly love and harmony, we do not want to discriminate against any persons who, on grounds of their own personal conviction, would choose to believe that the texts or copies underlying the KJV are an exact replica of the original autographs. We believe “there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ. And in all these, we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.” (Article 5.5, Constitution of the Life Bible-Presbyterian Church).

If Life BPC truly believes that the VPP view is a “heresy,” one must ask why would they exercise forbearance for over two years to their members to believe in a “heretical doctrine” and claim to be content that their pastor, Dr Timothy Tow, would continue to shepherd them when he believes and espouses “heresy.” The question must also now be asked: Does Life BPC permit any other heresies to be practised by their members and pastors? According to Titus 3:10, which they offer as a proof text for their statement to prove their claims they are to “reject” such a person as he “is subverted and sinneth” (v11) yet incredibly they are happy to have “open heretical sinners” in their leadership and membership!

John Owen comments on this passage that a heretic is one “that there is no hopes of a restoration or recovery; he is in a desperate condition, having opposed the person, or office, or sacrifice of Christ; having either trodden the Son of God underfoot, or counted his blood common, or done despite unto the spirit of grace; in either of which cases

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there is no more sacrifice for sin.” Is this how Life BPC now describe the Board of FEBC including their founding pastor? With a huge degree of irony, Life BPC state on their website that those who, “forcibly impose the new view on others (e.g. by name-calling or intimating that they lack saving faith) brings no glory to God, and will only discredit the Church of God.”³ Life BPC’s wholly inconsistent and unbiblical position only delineates their muddled up thinking on this issue. In addition, a clear exegetical understanding of Titus 3:10 delineates that this is a passage dealing with the discipline of an adherent of a local church *by the members of that local church*. As Life BPC admit in their statement⁴ of 25 January 2008: “The Board of Directors of the College now consists of members who are no longer in the Church,” what Scriptural mandate do they have for labelling the views of FEBC as “heresy” based on Titus 3:10?

Life BPC seek to justify their outlandish claim by defending it on three grounds that the VPP position of FEBC is “new,” “divisive” and “infectious.” It is true that Spurgeon, rightly said, “There is nothing new in theology save that which is false.” However, the fallacy of Life BPC’s position can be seen if we reverse the question on them and ask can they show a doctrinal formulated statement before the twentieth century that states that God had not and would not perfectly preserve all of His Words for His people in any Greek manuscript or printed text? It is clear that Spurgeon was not referring to doctrines such as VPP that have a legitimate Biblical interpretative base but false doctrines that have no possible Scriptural foundation. We can be confident that even Spurgeon would acknowledge that many of the doctrinal statements he placed in his Church Constitution were only formulated in “written form” during the second millennium after Christ, such as “independent church governance” and “immersion only baptism.” Naturally, he would argue that these were not heresies, but doctrines that had been practised by the church and believed throughout the centuries and based upon his understanding of the Word of God. Notwithstanding, the fact remains that such a doctrinal formulation was not seen until post-Reformation times.

In a similar vein, we can also be confident that Life BPC would not claim that the Body of Christ is so narrow that it only encompasses believers from the Reformed Premillennial Presbyterian background that they base their Church Constitution either. Does that make them

“schismatic” and “heretical,” according to their definition? We challenge Life BPC to show a Church Constitution that is exclusively based on their distinctives that has existed from the time of the Apostles until the nineteenth century. We could cite many other examples of “new,” but not heretical doctrinal formulations, by, for example, simply asking Life BPC to show us a Church Creed that expressly deals with the doctrine of inerrancy before the 1800s. Indeed, the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) expressly state that they have had to tighten up their doctrinal formulations as recently as 2005 because,

These paragraphs refer to the copies of the Holy Scriptures to be circulated by the Society and the beliefs of the Society’s members. However, they do not explicitly state the Doctrine of Holy Scripture. This was probably because in 1831, when the Constitution was drawn up, the humble, God-fearing supporters of the Society generally understood the historic Protestant doctrine of Holy Scripture and there was no need to express more than that which is contained in the wording of the Constitution. The history of the decline of orthodox Christianity over the last two centuries is only a reflection of the decline in spirituality of the Lord’s people.⁵

The consistency of Life BPC is shown to be hollow and merely empty rhetoric when we look at their current stands on this issue. For instance, Life BPC’s Church Constitutional position on Preservation is clearly different from that of BJU whose faculty openly state “that the text based upon the Alexandrian manuscripts is, as a whole, superior to the text based upon manuscripts of the Middle Ages.”⁶ Certainly, BJU’s view is “infectious” as seen by their proselyting attempts in their Greek classes and at the World Congress of Fundamentalists in 1999 with their book, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*, which Dr Bob Jones III stated from the platform was the, “most significant book for fundamentalism in this century.” The Rev Tan Eng Boo of Grace Bible-Presbyterian Church who, ironically, has signed a statement, “A Statement on the Theory of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP),” on the Life BPC website, has publicly stated, “Many newer manuscripts have been discovered since the days of Erasmus who used the Greek text which underlines the KJV... There are many good Bible versions today, like the New King James Version (NKJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV) etc.”⁷

So, let me clarify the problem for Life BPC. They currently fellowship and allow speakers who believe the following to use their sanctuary:

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- (1) Dr Bob Jones III whose university officially teaches, “Therefore, along with the great majority of conservative scholars, that the text based upon the Alexandrian manuscripts is, as a whole, superior to the text based upon manuscripts of the Middle Ages.” One of their staff members, Dr Samuel Schnaiter, in his 1980 PhD dissertation has even stated, “With regard to preservation, however, no Scripture explicitly declares anything of this sort of guidance to apply to the manuscript copyists as far as the precise wording of the text is concerned. Some have deduced such supernatural guidance from Scripture. They note passages that promise God’s Word shall never perish or be lost. However, such promises of preservation in view of the wording variations must apply only to the message of God’s Word, not its precise wording.”⁸
- (2) The writers of *One Bible Only?* from Central Baptist Theological Seminary who state “the doctrine of preservation was not a doctrine of the ancient church,” and “we might have lost a few words through negligence,” and “not only is Scripture without a verse to explain how God will preserve His Word, but no statement in Scripture teaches that God did preserve perfectly the original text of Scripture.”⁹
- (3) The Rev Tan Eng Boo of Grace Bible-Presbyterian Church who argues, “Many newer manuscripts have been discovered since the days of Erasmus who used the Greek text which underlines the KJV.... There are many good Bible versions today, like the New King James Version (NKJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV) etc.”
- (4) The Rev Colin Wong stated in his message, “Did God Write Only One Bible?” at Life BPC sanctuary on 28 October 2007, “Since the translation of the KJV or the Authorized Version of 1611 there has been more concrete manuscripts evidence that is available today, which is far superior to that which was available to the King James Version translators in 1611.”

However, Life BPC officially state that, “we believe that God has fully preserved His Word in the body of manuscripts (or texts or copies) after the original autographs were lost” and “We uphold the use of the KJV Bible, which is the best English translation of the Scriptures made by godly translators from the **best Greek and Hebrew texts**, which are

the closest to the original texts.”¹⁰ This position, for instance, is clearly different from the positions of BJU, Central Baptist, Revs Tan and Wong who believe that there are “better” extant Greek texts than these “best” Greek texts underlying the KJV. It seems that the Board of Elders of Life BPC are in total confusion as to any discernible and objective position on this issue. They want to live and preach as if they have a perfect Bible, but they refuse to admit it. Life BPC state that the words of God have indeed been perfectly preserved, yet they impliedly teach that no one can find them all at one time, and place them in one Book! It therefore follows, according to this view, that God’s words are not preserved in any real sense. They are not preserved enough to read in one Book. Life BPC does not believe a person can read, from Genesis to Revelation, every perfect word of God that was found in the originals today. How then can they call this “preservation?” Nevertheless, let them prove their view of preservation. How will they do it? Will they use a Bible that they claim is no longer 100% perfect?

It is clear to any reader who has a modicum of discernment that the above distinct positions cannot be reconciled no matter what “spin” is placed upon it. Each discerning member of the BPC Movement surely has a right now to ask Life BPC – which one of the above views are, “the true exposition of the Christian faith as prescribed by the Word of God?” Could Life BPC give us all a framework for judging whether all of these views are congruent with and Biblically prescribed by the Word of God? They clearly believe that they have discerned this in their condemnation of VPP, so it should be an easy task for them to share with us. Again, from their previous definition of “heresy,” we can only assume that the others must surely be a “new” invention, “divisive” and, at least, potentially “infectious.”

Dr Bob Jones III clearly has no problems apparently in being “divisive” and pouring scorn on Life BPC’s official view of preservation as “schismatic” and “confusing” as he said on the back cover of *God’s Word in Our Hands*, “Like a clean-edged sword, *God’s Word in Our Hands* cuts through the current confused and schismatic clatter on the subject of biblical preservation.”¹¹ The members of Life BPC surely have a right to especially demand that their Board of Elders issue a public rebuke against these persons and ban them from the sanctuary of the church forthwith as “heretics.” If they refuse to do so, then we can only

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conclude that they are not acting on principle after all, but are in reality engaged in a semantic exercise deliberately targeting FEBC.

A simple test to establish the integrity of the position that Life BPC has adopted would be for them to issue an agreed statement cataloguing the mistakes in the underlying text of the KJV (that they are so confident is there!). This must include testable, objective, and tangible evidence that makes it clear to all objective readers that (1) these mistakes are there and (2) they have a Scriptural framework for doing this. If Life BPC will not or cannot provide the evidence, then every congregational member has a right to surely question the validity of their statements and conclude they are being economical with the facts. The Rev Charles Seet publicly stated in Life BPC sanctuary in a sermon¹² on 28 October 2007 that, “the correct reading can be easily determined by comparing scripture with scripture” so I assume this should be a relatively easy task. Indeed, Life BPC would be doing the church at large the greatest possible service by releasing Rev Seet on a Sabbatical to produce this perfect text for us all – it would be the talk of the Millennium!

Life BPC wholly misrepresents the VPP position as a “new” concept when they say,

The new view became prominent only in the last 30 years in America and is held only by a small number of writers and institutions, e.g. Dr Donald A Waite. It is NOT held by the majority of fundamental, Bible-believing institutions, churches and writers (e.g. Trinitarian Bible Society, and G I Williamson, author of *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*). The first to propound this view was a Seventh-day Adventist, Benjamin G Wilkinson (1872 – 1968) with his book *Our Authorised Bible Vindicated* (1930). Wilkinson was also the first person to misapply Psalm 12:6-7 as though it were a promise of the preservation of the KJV. Notably, others such as James Jay Ray, David Otis Fuller and Peter S Ruckman have continued to use Wilkinson’s interpretation of this passage.¹³

This statement shows the poor scholarship and research of Life BPC who are clearly plagiarising the views of anti-KJV and anti-Preservation writers. A number of glaring inaccuracies are evident in this statement.

(1) It is not true that VPP is a “new” concept. William Aberhart (1878-1943), for instance, was a pastor, Bible school dean, radio Bible teacher, the principal of one of the most prestigious high schools in Canada, and a greatly beloved political leader—the Premier of Alberta from 1935-43—and he wrote in 1925,

I can still believe the Lord Jesus Christ, when he said: ‘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). If these words mean anything, they inform us that the Lord Jesus intended to see to it that the Bible, His Word, would be preserved for us in a perfect, infallible state.¹⁴

I hope Life BPC will immediately retract this manifest error.

(2) Life BPC claim that “Wilkinson was also the first person to misapply Psalm 12:6-7 as though it were a promise of the preservation of the KJV” and misrepresent the weight of evidence upon which this was based, “The vast majority of Bible commentaries do not interpret this as a passage on preservation of God’s Word.”¹⁵ However, many noted Christian writers believe it is referring to the “Words of God” such as John Wesley in his notes which were first published on June 5, 1765 says,

V. 6. Pure—Without the least mixture of falsehood; and therefore shall infallibly be fulfilled.

V.7. Thou shalt keep them—Thy words or promises: these thou wilt *observe* and *keep*, both now, and *from this generation for ever*.¹⁶

John Calvin implied that “some” in his day believed it when he said “Some give this exposition of the passage, Thou wilt keep them, namely, thy words;” Matthew Poole accepts it as a valid interpretation as he says it includes “Thy words or promises last mentioned.” Others, including Henry Martyn, G Campbell Morgan, and Kidner also take the same view.¹⁷

(3) Life BPC¹⁸ and others¹⁹ have been arguing, in a most misleading manner, that the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) position is in contradistinction/opposed to the position of VPP of FEBC. Notwithstanding, that the TBS has issued no public statement to this effect, let us compare the TBS official position with both Life BPC and FEBC. All of the following quotations have been drawn from “The Statement of Doctrine of Holy Scripture”²⁰ issued by “all the Members of the General Committee, the Vice-Presidents and the General Secretary” in 2005. The TBS state very clearly that:

In conformity to God’s purpose, promise, and command, faithful and accurate copies were made (Deuteronomy 17:18; Proverbs 25:1) and, through God’s special providential care, His Word has been preserved **in all generations** (Psalm 119:152; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; Luke 16:17; 1 Peter 1:25).²¹

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The TBS also state in the *Preface* that they hold to,

The Reformation Confessions such as the Westminster (1647), the Savoy (1658), and the London Baptist (1689), state regarding Scripture that, ‘The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the native language of the people of God of old,) and the New Testament in Greek, (which at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations,) being immediately inspired by God, and, by **his singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages**, are therefore authentical... (WCF 1:8).

So we can conclude from these statements that the TBS believe all the Words of God have been providentially preserved “pure” and “in all ages.” Also, the preserving of these Words has been done by God and not man so we cannot believe that this would be done carelessly or by accident. We cannot play semantics and say that “pure” only means really 99.9% as it can only rationally mean 100% and perfect as the WCF state that it was done by God, who cannot err as any impurity as “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” The question now is: where does the TBS state the “pure Words of God are?” They say,

The Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles received the preserved and standard Hebrew text of the Old Testament as *Scripture* (Luke 4:16-19, 21; 2 Timothy 3:16). This serves as our pattern for accepting the historically received text of the New Testament also as *Scripture* (1 Timothy 5:18 cf. Luke 10:7; 2 Peter 3:15-16)... These texts of Scripture reflect the qualities of God-breathed Scripture, including being authentic, holy, pure, true, infallible, trustworthy, excellent, self-authenticating, necessary, sufficient, perspicuous, self-interpreting, authoritative and inerrant (Psalm 19:7-9, Psalm 119). They are consequently to be received as the Word of God (Ezra 7:14; Nehemiah 8:8; Daniel 9:2; 2 Peter 1:19) and the correct reading **at any point** is to be sought **within these texts**.²²

So, these “texts” are to be received the same way Christ and the apostles received them i.e. as the perfectly preserved and inspired Scripture (2 Tim 3:16), as they are “pure, true, infallible, trustworthy, excellent, self-authenticating, necessary, sufficient, perspicuous, self-interpreting, authoritative and inerrant.” Therefore, we can safely conclude that the TBS believe that these “texts” can be said to be the perfect 100% inspired Words of God. Now, which “texts” are they referring to? The TBS state,

The Trinitarian Bible Society maintains that the providentially preserved true and authentic text is to be found in the Masoretic Hebrew and the

Greek Received Texts. In so doing, it follows the historic, orthodox Protestant position of acknowledging as Holy Scripture the Hebrew and Greek texts **consistently accessible to and preserved among the people of God in all ages**. These texts had remained in common use in different parts of the world for more than fifteen centuries and they faithfully represent the texts used in New Testament times.²³

So, the TBS state very clearly that the “true and authentic text” is “found in the Masoretic and Received Texts,” but only those from the Received text family. It adds a further limb of proof here which is important as it must only be in those texts that are “consistently accessible to and preserved among the people of God in all ages.” This would appear to expressly rule out any such concept of a “Majority Text” position that “preservation is throughout the ages in all the extant manuscripts, versions and the citations by the Church fathers.” However, how does the TBS define as the, “Masoretic Hebrew and the Greek Received Texts?”

The Society accepts as the best edition of the Hebrew Masoretic text the one prepared in 1524-25 by Jacob ben Chayyim and known, after David Bomberg the publisher, as the Bomberg text. The Greek Received Text is the name given to a group of **printed texts, the first of which was published by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516**. The Society uses for the purposes of translation the text reconstructed by F.H.A. Scrivener in 1894.²⁴

It should be noted carefully that the “Greek Received Text” is defined by the TBS as “the name given to a group of printed texts, the first of which was published by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516.” This clearly does not include any other so-called “Majority Text” from any other Byzantine Family manuscripts that are extant today that differ from any of the “printed texts.” We can only logically conclude that the TBS only accept these “printed texts” as having the “true and authentic text” of the “pure” Providentially Preserved Word of God.

Life BPC have tried to argue that the TBS statement does not mean this and that the TBS allow latitude of interpretation in that they believe all of the “Words of God” are preserved somewhere in the extant manuscripts within the “Byzantine Text” family. However, the TBS clearly state they only view the “printed texts” not the extant manuscripts as the “Greek Received Text,” which they also state is “definitive and the final point of reference in all the Society’s work.” However, in a final and surely decisive blow to the Life BPC position, the TBS also, in their

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definition of the “Majority Text,” expressly and definitively rule out any such view as Biblically valid,

Majority Text: A text based on the majority of manuscript witnesses. *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, edited by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad (1982), is a modern example of the Majority Text. Although close to the Received Text, there are a number of differences and some of these are significant (e.g. John 7:53-8:11; Acts 8:36,37). Furthermore, as no detailed collation of all surviving manuscripts has taken place, the exact majority text cannot yet be determined; and **even if one day that became possible, the resultant text could only be provisional and tentative, because the discovery of further manuscripts might change minority readings to majority readings, or vice versa. The doctrine of providential preservation, however, teaches that the Church is—and always has been—in possession of the true text of Scripture.**²⁵

In other words, the TBS have adopted a *faith-based* test for determining the exact words of Holy Scripture which is “the doctrine of providential preservation, however, teaches that the Church *is*—and always has been—in possession of the true text of Scripture.” What the TBS are stating here is that there is no further examination needed of extant texts within any of the textual families as we already have the exact words of the autographs in the “printed texts” of the “Greek Received Text.” In simple terms, it is crystal clear to anyone who reads with an open mind, that the TBS believe in VPP in the various editions of the printed Greek Texts of the *Textus Receptus*! This is very different from the Life BPC position that only holds to a nebulous and undefined view that “God has fully preserved His Word in the body of manuscripts (or texts or copies) after the original autographs were lost.”²⁶

By contrast, FEBC state that:

The infallible and inerrant words of Scripture are found in the faithfully preserved Traditional/Majority manuscripts and fully represented in the Printed and Received Text...that underlies the Reformation Bibles best represented by the KJV.²⁷

The TBS position, from the deductive and logical analysis above can only differ from FEBC in one marginal aspect; that they would change this statement to “fully represented in the Printed and Received Texts,” as they state “the scope of the Society’s Constitution does not extend to considering the minor variations between the printed editions of

the *Textus Receptus*.” It would also seem logical that the TBS would probably lean more to the view of FEBC as no doubt it makes more sense to assume that the KJV translators made the right choices with the greater evidence before them in determining the true text when comparing what the TBS say are “variations” that are “not of great significance and rarely affect the sense”²⁸ in the various printed editions of the Received Text.²⁹

Despite Life BPC accusations that FEBC is “divisive” on this issue, the reality is that FEBC readily embraces the TBS position as a legitimate interpretation and state,

FEBC concedes that others can differ with them “over the absolute certainty as regards the underlying texts or words” but as long as other VPP and KJV defenders “...maintain VPP in the lineage of Byzantine/Majority manuscripts and the Textus Receptus...” and deny the Westcott-Hort Text and also deny the existence of scribal errors, “...slight differences of opinion over the verbally preserved texts/words among KJV defenders should remain as non issues....”³⁰

(4) Life BPC claim that the conviction of VPP, “is not held by the majority of fundamental, Bible-believing institutions, churches and writers.” Notwithstanding, that their distinctives of Reformed Premillennial Presbyterianism is in a relative minority in these categories and they do not consider that a problem, a quick survey around the “Fundamentalist world” will show how worthless such an observation is. For instance, in the USA, it is reckoned that the number of independent Baptist churches is roughly 10,000 and most of these are pro-KJV and VPP. We will list just a few examples:

(i) Crown College of the Bible and Temple Baptist Church is an Independent Fundamental Baptist Bible College and Seminary in Powell, Tennessee with more than 1,000 students. The founder and President, Dr Clarence Sexton has spoken at many Free Presbyterian Churches in Northern Ireland and is a close friend of Dr Ian Paisley and have exchanged pulpits many times.³¹ The Reformers’ portraits line the halls of Temple Baptist Church. In 2007, Dr Sexton gave the opening address to the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International (FBFI) Annual Fellowship.³² His Church, Bible College and Seminary use the KJV exclusively and clearly state in their “Statement of Faith” on the Scriptures that,

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Bible, “as it is in truth, the Word of God...” (I Thessalonians 2:13). We

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believe in verbal, plenary inspiration in the original writings, and God's preservation of His pure words to every generation (II Timothy 3:16, Psalms 12:6-8). The Masoretic Text of the Old Testament and the Received Text of the New Testament (Textus Receptus) are those texts of the original languages we accept and use; the King James Version of the Bible is the only English version we accept and use.³³

(ii) Pensacola Christian College has 4,500 undergraduate students and has recently appointed Dr Lloyd Streeter as co-pastor of the Campus Church³⁴ who has published a book fully endorsing VPP in which he says,

We have no original language manuscripts for the book of Job except those copied in A.D. 900 by Massorite scribes. That is a gap of approximately 3000 years. Actually, we do not even know the language in which Job was originally written. Think of it, dear reader – 3,000 years with no manuscripts? How would you know that Job is God's Word if you had to depend on 'early manuscripts'? There is ONE way to know and that is by faith. God said He would preserve His Word and He kept His promise. ... So it means absolutely nothing that there is a "scarcity" of Greek manuscript evidence in the first several centuries of church history. Our confidence is in the God of the Bible Who said that He would not allow His words to fall by the wayside never to be known to man again. Early copies were worn out and destroyed (especially the best ones!) but the Word of God is indestructible and unalterable. God always saw to it that the best copies were copied. The Holy Spirit taught God's people to know and keep the words of God. ... Furthermore, ... trustworthiness of the King James Bible should be looked upon as a winnowing or refining process extending from Tyndale through 1769. God used such men as Erasmus, Beza, Stephanus, Tyndale, the translators of the English versions which preceded the KJV, the translators of the KJV itself, and those who corrected printing and spelling errors between 1611 and 1769.³⁵

(iii) David Cloud runs the *Way of Life* website ministry which has the largest list of subscribers and viewers of any Fundamentalist ministry. Cloud receives 2,500 and more personal letters and e-mails each month. Hundreds of Independent Baptist Churches are associated with him and listed in his Directory of Churches.

(iv) Singapore has a number of Independent Baptist Churches, listed in David Cloud's Directory that are clearly VPP.³⁶ For instance, Shalom Baptist Church states, "We believe that God preserved His Word in the Traditional Masoretic and Traditional Greek Text (the Textus Receptus)

and we hold the King James Version which is based on these texts as the best English translation of the Bible.”³⁷

(v) The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland clearly embrace the TBS’ position that all the “Words of God” have been preserved in the Received Text of the Textus Receptus editions. Speaking of the WCF, they disagree with the Life BPC interpretation and state,

Note how the Confession emphasises “in all ages.” The claim of biblical criticism is that manuscripts discovered over the past 150 years which were not used or available to the Church in the preceding 1500 years are more authentic than the standard text (often called the Received Text) which form the vast majority of available manuscripts which the Westminster Assembly spoke of as having been kept pure in all ages. This text is witnessed to by the general consensus of the Church in each generation. God has preserved the Scriptures down through the ages for the salvation of men and the edification and comfort of His church, not buried away secretly but *publicly in the usage of His Church*. It is significant that Isaiah 59:21 speaks of the Church’s continuous possession of the Word, this verse is, as John Owen, put it, “the great charter of the Church’s preservation of truth.” *Any close consideration of the following verses will show that the providential preservation taught in relation to the Word of God extends beyond its doctrines to all of its words*. Every word of the Scriptures as originally given was fully inspired of God and in the same way every word preserved by God is also fully inspired (See Matt. 5:18; Matt. 24:35; Matt 28:20; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; Luke 21:33; 1 Cor 11:23; 1 Pet 1:25; Rev 22:18-19).

Any Church that holds fully to the teaching of the Westminster Confession must recognise that the Bible teaches the full providential preservation of the text of Scripture. Not least because various parts of the wording and teaching of the Westminster Standards depend on verses that are *only in the Received Text* and have therefore been omitted in most modern versions (e.g. Matt. 6:13, 1 John 5:7).³⁸

(vi) Dr Ian Paisley is the Joint Chairman of the World Congress of Fundamentalists and Founder of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. The Rev Dr Ian Paisley MP, in his book *My Plea for the Old Sword (KJV)*, wrote:

Divine Revelation plus Divine Inspiration plus Divine Preservation equals the Divine Bible. These all, without exception, cover the whole field of every Word of God. There is no such thing as verbal Revelation without verbal Inspiration and there is no such thing as verbal Inspiration without

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verbal Preservation. *In all cases it is not partial but plenary i.e. full, complete, perfect. ...*

The Divine Revelation, put into writing the verbally Infallible Scriptures through Divine Inspiration, must have Divine Preservation in order to be available to all generations. The verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures demands the verbal Preservation of the Scriptures. Those who would deny the need for verbal Preservation cannot be accepted as being really committed to verbal Inspiration. If there is no preserved Word of God today then the work of Divine Revelation and Divine Inspiration has perished.

In such a case any Bible is as good as any other. Hence the multiplication and continuing changes of perverted English versions of the Bible on the market today.

Those who believe in a partial preservation are not much better. To say that God has preserved most of the Original Scriptures but not them all, robs us of every Word of God. Therefore we cannot live [by His every word, Matt 4:4]. This is but another way to pen-knife God's every Word.

Those who do not believe that God preserved His Word are really going down the path of final rejection of that Book of which the Lord Jesus Christ said, 'The Word of God cannot be broken.' Thank God, no potency can disintegrate this Rock.³⁹

Dr Paisley went on to defend the VPP of Scripture in the original languages and the KJV from Psalm 12:6-7:

Surely here we have the Doctrine of Divine Preservation divinely revealed. The preserved Scriptures cannot be lost or caused in any way to perish. As of the God who uttered them, so we can say, 'Thou remainest!'

It is interesting to note that the new Bibles vary the words of Psalm 12:6-7 and so eliminate the testimony of that verse to the Divine Preservation of the Scriptures. They insist that the 'them' of verse seven is not a reference to God's words but to God's people ... and destroy the text's testimony to the Preservation of God's Word.

God's providential preservation of His own Word ensured that the true Scriptures were not hidden away in the library of the Antichrist nor in a monastery of 'Greek Catholic' idolatry at the time when Tyndale prepared his Bible. Faithful and true copies of the originals were at hand for the Divine Bombshell (Tyndale's translation of God's Holy Word into English) which would smash the Roman Antichrist. He translated into English the Preserved Word of God, not the Perverted Word of God.

A return to the Apostolic Gospel comes as a result of Tyndale's work. A return to the Apostate Gospel comes as a result of the translation of Rome's

long hidden, perverted text and other such perverted texts in the Modern Perversions of the Scriptures.

The Authorised Version translated into English the Preserved Word of God and so preserved for the English speaking peoples of the World, the Word of the Living God, the only infallible Rule of Faith and Practice.⁴⁰

It is clear from these quotes that Dr Ian Paisley believes that the “true Scriptures” were only preserved in a “full, complete, perfect” manner in the “true copies of the originals ... at hand” which gave us Tyndale’s Version and eventually the Authorised Version. Will Life BPC denounce now the Joint Chairman of the World Congress of Fundamentalists, Dr Ian Paisley as a “heretic?” Will they do this also for the TBS, Crown College, Dr Clarence Sexton, Way of Life, hundreds (if not thousands) of KJV-defending churches across the world, and Dr Lloyd Streeter, co-pastor of the Campus Church at Pensacola Christian College? Will they issue a statement banning all of these groups from the premises of Life BPC for their “heresy?” In accordance with Titus 3:10 and their claim to practise in their Constitution “Ecclesiastical separation from all churches or groups of churches who are doctrinally impure,” will Life BPC “reject” and separate from the TBS, Dr Ian Paisley, the Free Presbyterians of Ulster and Scotland, Crown College, Pensacola Christian College, and the World Congress of Fundamentalists for promoting “heresy” and allowing “heretics” into leadership.

It is axiomatic, from all of the evidence presented above, that a “new formulation” of an historic doctrine is not necessarily characteristic of “heresy.” It is also clear that Life BPC have not even carried out the basic steps of collating the evidence properly and analysing it objectively. This was the very evidence that they used to act in a discriminatory, inconsistent and unbiblical manner in their inflammatory and unjust action. Unless they retract we can only conclude that they are simply willing to tolerate any view on preservation, save that of FEBC.

In light of the above evidence, we can only plead that Life BPC formally retract their visceral and clearly unfounded and unbiblical accusations against their founding pastor, Dr Timothy Tow and the Board of Directors of FEBC. Further delays will only compound the great wrong of these terrible slurs and slanders, which as they themselves stated, “brings no glory to God, and will only discredit the Church of God”⁴¹ for the infallible and perfect Scripture warns, “For with what

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judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt 7:2).

Questions for Life BPC

These questions which I have modified for the Life BPC context are based partly on some suggestions raised by Independent Baptist author, Kent Brandenburg.⁴²

(1) Do you believe **it is possible** that the underlying text of the KJV in Hebrew and Greek is an exact 100% copy of the autographs? If not, do you have a Scriptural framework and any objective textual critical framework for rejecting so that we all can “test” your bold assertions?

(2) How can you add or take away from something that isn’t settled? In other words, what difference does Revelation 22:18, 19 make?

(3) How is the Bible considered perfect if there are errors in it? If the errors aren’t related to the words, then what difference does verbal inspiration make? What is the Scriptural basis for errors in the Bible?

(4) Where does the Bible say there would be sixty-six books? If it doesn’t say, then how do we know there are not more or less? What are the reasons that Christianity rejected the Apocrypha and accepted the book of Revelation?

(5) What is the pre-19th century historic basis for the doctrine of the errancy of Scripture, that is, the history of assuming that we don’t know what the Words are or that there are errors in Scripture?

(6) What is the historic position on the preservation of Scripture?

(7) What is your developed Scriptural position on the doctrine of preservation that you have believed and believed before you began examining textual criticism?

(8) What was Paul telling Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 that was profitable for doctrine, correction, etc.? If every Word and all of them was necessary for thoroughly furnishing us to every good work, then how could we do that without all of them?

(9) When Jesus told us that man shall live by every Word in Matthew 4:4, should we assume that He meant that we would not have every Word?

(10) When something passes away like heaven and earth will pass away, does that mean that it will disappear? If God's Words are not going to pass away or jots and tittles are not going to pass away, does that mean that we are still going to possess them?

(11) Was the Critical Text available for believers from c.1525-1825? If someone, like BJU believes that this "new" text is closer to the autographs are they believing in "heresy" as their view is also "infectious" and "divisive?"

(12) Does Scripture teach anywhere that man was responsible for restoring a lost text?

(13) Can you show me physical, tangible evidence that the Ben Chayyim Hebrew Masoretic and the Scrivener TR are not the same words as the original manuscripts?

(14) How can a member of Life BPC be confident that prophecies are being fulfilled literally today, if he does not have all the words of the Bible available to him?

(15) Where does Scripture say that a miracle is a greater and more thorough act of God than providence? Is something that God does providentially less God than it is when God does something miraculously?

(16) Can you prove that all the words of the autographs were not available to the translators of the KJV as they were consolidated into a printed edition?

(17) In light of *Matthew 5:18*, can you provide any evidence that prior to Erasmus there was no agreement among the true remnant church as to the "preserved text" to the degree of "jots and tittles" having been preserved? Can you prove that all of the period of time before 1611 all of the "words" were not in one place at one time?

(18) Which of the following positions reflect your view?

(i) Every Word of God was inspired and has been preserved and is available today.

(ii) Every Word of God was inspired, but we're not sure that every Word has been preserved.

(iii) Every Word of God was inspired and has been perfectly preserved, but we're not sure that every Word is available.

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(iv) We don't have every Word of God today, and we may never have had it.

(19) What fundamental doctrine of Scripture and what dangers to the Church is there from the consequences of believing that God has perfectly preserved His Words today? Do you believe that doubt in a perfect Bible is the less dangerous position? How would you prove to a cult member or a non-believer that you have an infallible, inerrant Bible?

(20) In light of Isaiah 59:21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever," what words have departed from the mouth of believers in 2008? When did "for ever" end? Do you agree with John Owen who said on his commentary on this passage that it means the "Words" of God, "shall always continue with the church and her spiritual seed, such as are born in her, and brought up by her, throughout all successive ages, and to the end of time; and it may be observed, that after the conversion of the Jews, to which this prophecy has a special regard, they shall no more apostatise?" Do you agree with *The Pulpit Commentary* edited by H D M Spence and Joseph S Exell whose exposition on this section says, "The Spirit will be accompanied with certain "words" which will be put into the Church's mouth; and these words will remain unchanged and pass on from mouth to mouth, age after age, for ever. The "words" intended are probably those of the entire Bible—"all God's revelations" (Cheyne)—which the Church will maintain as inspired truth through all ages."

(21) Where are all the extant manuscripts of the New Testament? How does one look at every single one of them? Has Life BPC elders ever studied any of them – if so, how many?

(22) Do you agree with Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones' book, *God the Father, God the Son*, when he says that miracles are a sub-category of providence?

(23) Do Life BPC agree with Rev Tan Eng Boo of Grace Bible-Presbyterian Church that "We have in our hands the perfect Word of God.... We believe we have the perfect Bible, but not the perfect version!"⁴³ If so, can they state where this "perfect Bible" is?

(24) Do Life BPC believe God would providentially lead Samuel to “let none of his words fall to the ground” (1 Sam 3:19), yet He did today as we cannot find some of these Words? Does any Bible version tell us that God would preserve His words “out there somewhere” among thousands of variant readings and that it is up to the scholars, who never agree with each other and keep changing their minds every few years, to tell us where the true words of God might be found?

(25) If a member of Life BPC does not have access to all the “Words of God” today, will God hold him accountable on the day of judgment for rejecting and not receiving them (John 12:48) and not keeping His commandments (Luke 16:10; Rev 22:14)?

(26) Who is preserving the Words of God today – God or man?

(27) Can Life BPC identify absolutely all the Words of God today? Could they explain how they could do this? Rev Charles Seet said at Life BPC sanctuary in a sermon⁴⁴ that “The correct reading can be easily determined by comparing scripture with scripture” so this should be a straightforward task.

(28) In light of 2 Peter 3:2 which say, “That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” are we excused of this as we do not have all these words?

(29) As “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17), how can the members of Life BPC “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3) if we do not have all of that faith?

(30) Life BPC stated⁴⁵ in respect of Matthew 24:35 that “The words of Jesus will continue to be certain, valid and trustworthy even after the universe ceases to exist.” Can a member of Life BPC know today that all the Words of Jesus are “certain, valid and trustworthy” if they do not have them all?

(31) Life BPC stated⁴⁶ in respect of the words “kept pure in all ages” in the Westminster Confession, “If they had truly written it with the intention of proving perfect preservation of Scripture, more would have been written about it.” Can they show us any evidence from the writings of any of the Westminster Divines to prove that the basis of their interpretation of this is correct?

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(32) In light of the following quote in 1893 for *The Evangelist* by E D Morris,⁴⁷ expert on the Westminster divines, who contributed to Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, do you believe that the one-Bible-belief started in the 1970s or the mid-twentieth century?

As a Professor in a Theological Seminary, it has been my duty to make a special study of the Westminster Confession of Faith, as have I done for twenty years; and I venture to affirm that no one who is qualified to give an opinion on the subject, would dare to risk his reputation on the statement that **the Westminster divines ever thought the original manuscripts of the Bible were distinct from the copies in their possession.**

(33) In light of the following quote by Samuel Rutherford, in *A Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience*, in 1649, do you believe that we can separate the teaching of Scripture from the actual Words?

Though the Letter of the Scripture be not the Word alone, yet the Letter with the true sense and meaning of it, is the Word.... So if ye destroy the Letter of the Scripture, you do destroy the Scripture; and if you do deny the Letter, how is it possible that you should attain to the true sense thereof, when the Sense lies wrapped up in the Letters, and the words thereof?

We must say, we have not the clear and infallible word of God, because the Scripture comes to our hand, by fallible means, which is a great inconsequence, for through Scribes, Translators, Grammarians, Printers, may all err, **it followeth not that an [un]-erring providence of him that hath seven eyes, hath not delivered to the Church, the Scriptures containing the infallible truth of God.**

(34) In light of the following quote by Richard Capel, one of the divines, when he writes (*Capel's Remains*, London, 1658, pp 19-43), do you agree that God by His providence hath preserved all the words "uncorrupt?"

[W]e have the Copies in both languages [Hebrew and Greek], which Copies vary not from Primitive writings in any matter which may stumble any. This concerns only the learned, and they know that by consent of all parties, the most learned on all sides among Christians do shake hands in this, that God by his providence hath preserved them uncorrupt.... As God committed the Hebrew text of the Old Testament to the Jews, and did and doth move their hearts to keep it untainted to this day: So I dare lay it on the same God, that he in his providence is so with the Church of the Gentiles, that they have and do preserve the Greek Text uncorrupt, and clear: As for some scrapes

by Transcribers, that comes to no more, than to censure a book to be corrupt, because of some scrapes in the printing, and 'tis certain, that *what mistake is in one print, is corrected in another.*

Notes

¹ <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/markthem.htm>.

² Harold O J Brown, *Heresies* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 2.

³ <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/godlypath.htm>.

⁴ <http://www.lifefebc.com/ourstand/stmtrelations.htm>.

⁵ <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/statement.pdf>.

⁶ Bob Jones University. "Position of the Bible Department of Bob Jones University on the Scripture" (mimeograph). Office of the President, no date. Printed in *Standing Without Apology: The History of Bob Jones University* by Daniel L Turner (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, c1997). Appendix D, 322-3.

⁷ *The Perfect Bible or the Perfect Version?* at <http://www.truth.sg/response/pborpv.htm>.

⁸ Samuel Schnaiter, *Relevancy of Textual Criticism*, 1980.

⁹ Edward Glenny, *The Bible Version Debate*, 93, 95, 99.

¹⁰ <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/stmtfaith.htm>.

¹¹ James B Williams, ed, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* (Greenville: Ambassador Emerald International, 1999).

¹² Rev Charles Seet, "The Word that Endures Forever," preached at Life Bible-Presbyterian Church on October 28, 2007.

¹³ <http://www.lifefebc.com/ourstand/godlypath.htm>.

¹⁴ Cited by David Cloud from *William Aberhart, The Latest of Modern Movements, 1925* at <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/trusted-voices-on-translations.html>.

¹⁵ <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/godlypath.htm>.

¹⁶ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*.

¹⁷ A comprehensive list is at <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/fbns/fbns88.html>.

¹⁸ <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/godlypath.htm>. So desperate are Life BPC to buttress their misrepresentation of the TBS view that they have resorted to citing A J Brown, former editorial secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) in a 24-year-old document, "*Faith and Textual Scholarship*", *TBS Quarterly Record* (Oct-Dec 1984). They have acted, at best, carelessly in failing to study the clear statements of the latest "Statement of Doctrine of Holy Scripture" by the TBS. This error is compounded when the TBS has rejected the validity of the statements of A J Brown, as Mr David Larlham, the Assistant General Secretary of TBS, recently wrote to Dr Jeffrey Khoo of FEBC, "we

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would suggest that neither you nor the Rev. Wong should place any such reliance upon the comments of Mr Andrew Brown going back around 20 years.” David Cloud lists correspondence from Mr Brown (www.wayoflife.org/articles/majoritytext.htm) clearly endorsing the “Majority Text” position in the 1980s, but he states that Mr Andrew Brown was “dismissed from the Trinitarian Bible Society in 1991.”

¹⁹ <http://www.truth.sg/tbsnonvpp.htm>.

²⁰ <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/statement.pdf>.

²¹ Preface, Section 4.

²² Section 6.

²³ Note 1, page 6.

²⁴ Note 3, page 6.

²⁵ See definition of “Majority Text” in *Word List*, 9.

²⁶ <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/stmtfaith.htm>.

²⁷ Editorial, *The Burning Bush* 12 (2006): 2.

²⁸ “A Brief Look at the Textus Receptus” in Appendix 3.

²⁹ Indeed, the TBS state in Appendix 2, (footnote 4) that “the Society believes that the latest and best edition is the text reconstructed by F H A Scrivener in 1894.”

³⁰ *The Burning Bush* 12 (2006): 80.

³¹ <http://www.wbir.com/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=31306>.

³² <http://www.fbfi.org/content/view/61/29>.

³³ <http://www.thecrowncollege.com/Future/Faith.aspx>.

³⁴ <http://www.pcci.edu/CampusChurch/PastorBios.html>.

³⁵ Lloyd Streeter, *Seventy-five Problems with Central Baptist Theological Seminary's Book "The Bible Version Debate"* (LaSalle: First Baptist Church, 2001), 98, 99, 104.

³⁶ <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/churchdir!/churches.htm>.

³⁷ <http://shalom-baptist.com/index.html>.

³⁸ <http://www.fpchurch.org.uk/Beliefs/AuthorisedVersion.php>.

³⁹ Ian R K Paisley, *My Plea for the Old Sword: the English Authorised Version (KJV)* (Belfast: Ambassador, 1997), 102-3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 106.

⁴¹ <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/godlypath.htm>.

⁴² <http://www.kentbrandenburg.blogspot.com>.

⁴³ <http://www.truth.sg/response/pborpv.htm>.

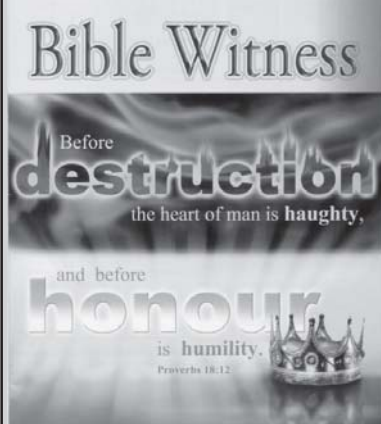
⁴⁴ Rev Charles Seet, “The Word that Endures Forever,” preached at Life Bible-Presbyterian Church on October 28, 2007.

⁴⁵ <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/godlypath.htm>.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ Prof E D Morris for decades taught the Westminster Confession at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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<p>MARCH - APRIL 2008 MICA [P] NO. 106/03/2008 ISSN: 0215-5384 Volume 8 Issue 2</p>	<p>Bible Witness is a magazine for the nurture of individual spiritual life, a magazine for every Christian home, and a magazine for Bible study groups. Visit the Bible Witness website for discussion questions based on the articles in the magazine. You may print out the questions and use them to facilitate discussion in family worship, Bible study groups, etc. You may also use them for individual study.</p>
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A REVIEW OF JACK SIN’S ARTICLE, “A GRAVE MATTER: VERITY, SAGACITY AND CLARITY IN THE TEXTUAL DEBATE”

Biak Lawm Thang

Introduction

“A Grave Matter: Verity, Sagacity and Clarity in the Textual Debate” is an article written by the Rev Dr Jack Sin, pastor of Maranatha Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore.¹ Rev Sin wrote this article with a concern over the textual issue being debated among Bible-Presbyterian churches in Singapore, which he sees as causing “grievous events,” “devastating disunity and heated disagreements within the churches, Christian families and kindred friends.” The problem caused by this debate, we are told by Rev Sin, goes beyond a local level and affects foreign missions. Under these circumstances, therefore, his purpose is to offer “an objective and biblical appraisal” of that textual debate. This is a noble goal, for the Christian must always be “objective and biblical” in his approach to all things, but whether Rev Sin himself has fulfilled this or not remains to be seen.

On “Honesty” in “Biblical Scholarship”

Rev Jack Sin called for “honesty” in “biblical scholarship” particularly in the area of the New Testament Greek Text debate. This is certainly commendable, and it may be added that honesty must be cultivated not only in this area but also in *all* areas of Christian living (Rom 12:17; 2 Cor 8:21; Phil 4:8; 1 Pet 2:12; Matt 5:37; 2 Cor 1:7; Jas 5:12).

But what does Rev Sin mean by “honest biblical scholarship”? An analysis of his entire paper shows that what Rev Sin means by “honesty” in the NT textual issue is to conclude that all the words of God are not preserved exclusively in the *Textus Receptus* (TR) underlying the King James Version (KJV) but in “all the providentially preserved Majority or

Traditional or Byzantine Greek manuscripts of over 5,000,” and his contention that the divine, perfect preservation of God’s words in the Greek New Testament underlying the KJV cannot be biblically or theologically proven.

Rev Sin believes that the Byzantine family of manuscripts, not the Alexandrian family, preserves the words of God. But it may be observed that when it comes to the Greek printed texts that represent those over 5,000 manuscripts, his commitment to “honesty” has made him unable to know or identify the inspired and preserved words in the various editions of the TR. At this point, he disagrees with Dr Edward F Hills whom he appears to follow since he quotes him frequently as an authority, for Hills had no problem identifying the *Greek Text of the KJV* to be God’s approved Text. A portion from Hills which Rev Sin failed to quote, though he should have in the quest for “honesty” in biblical scholarship, reads,

But what do we do in these few places in which the several editions of the Textus Receptus disagree with one another? Which text do we follow? The answer to this question is easy. We are guided by the common faith. *Hence we favor that form of the Textus Receptus upon which more than any other God, working providentially, has placed the stamp of His approval, namely the King James Version, or, more precisely, the Greek text underlying the King James Version.*²

It is a fact that there exists variant readings in the Greek manuscripts that number over 5,000 and that even in the TR editions there are a few minor differences. This is admitted by those who believe in the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) for it is a fact, and hence it is wrong to imply otherwise. Yes, Hills (and others as well) does recognise the existence of those variants and the difficulty in making a textual decision in certain cases, yet he does not stop there, for a specific identification of the text is necessary if every word of God is to be authoritative, and he did identify the KJV Greek Text to be the God-approved Text as the above quotation shows. For practical purposes, others like the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS), which has been quoted by the Rev Sin as another authority, also uses the KJV Greek Text as edited by F H A Scrivener.³ What the VPPists believe is no different. The VPPists believe that out of the several editions of the TR, the TR underlying the KJV is the best and purest for it *perfectly* preserves *all* the words of God originally given by divine inspiration. As such, holding the

TR of the KJV in our hands, we can say without apology, "This is the very Word of God." (Note that the issue is not about translations, but the Bible in the original languages.)

Such a Bible position means that there is no need for the Bible scholar to practise textual criticism. The Bible scholar or student can confidently use and devote his time to the sincere exposition of the truth of God's words, not doubting the text at all. Hills is thus an "honest" textual scholar, for though he recognises the difficulty in the textual issue, he calls on Christians to be guided by "the logic of faith" to identify specifically the Greek Text of the KJV to be the God-approved Text in the light of God's *special* providence. Is this not precisely what has always been taught by VPPists? "Honesty" in the textual debate should not fail to mention Hills's precise identification of the providentially preserved and authentic Text to be the Greek Text of the KJV.

Rev Sin's quotation of J W Burgon also appears to lack "honesty." Although he pays tribute to Burgon for his defence of "the historic faith and the Bible," his quotations contain only a few portions of Burgon's inconsistent statements on the textual issue. Many good points Burgon made about the TR in opposition to the Alexandrian manuscripts are not made known to the readers. "Honesty" in biblical scholarship should be *unbiased* in the assessment of the issue at hand by presenting the *necessary* facts so that the readers can judge for themselves.

On Plurality of Manuscripts and Singularity of Text

Rev Jack Sin provides a clarification of his and Maranatha BPC's position on the textual matter, which denies the VPP position. He believes that the perpetual preservation of God's words lies in the plurality of Byzantine-type manuscripts. He went on to say that **"the TR underlying the KJV does NOT fully represent the full body of the providentially and perpetually preserved Byzantine or Traditional (or sometimes called Majority) Text."** While this may sound appealing, it must be pointed out that this position essentially leads to uncertainty about textual variants, whereas the VPP position identifies exactly where and what the inspired *words* are by the logic of faith.

Moreover, this question must be asked: On what basis does Rev Jack Sin base his plurality of the Byzantine manuscripts position over the TR position? He has failed to provide even a single testimony in the

infallible Scriptures to support his plurality of manuscripts position which has *perpetually* failed to identify the precise text or words of God. This means that Rev Sin still has to play the subjective and rationalistic game of textual criticism before he can proceed to do his exegesis, at least in some areas. How then can he claim that his position is “objective and biblical”? A person may believe whatever he wants, but the important question is: Is it proven or justified by the Holy Scriptures? Having rejected the biblical passages of Psalms 12:6-7, 19:7, 119:89, Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 5:18, 24:35, 1 Corinthians 13:8 which teach the doctrine of VPP either explicitly or implicitly, Rev Sin is left without any biblical basis for his position. If this is so, then he has arrived at his conclusion by means of his *subjective* interpretation or view of the Greek manuscripts, and not on any objective, biblical or exegetical grounds!

The most important thing in the textual issue (and in all other matters as well) is that no one should build his faith on the fallible authority of men, but on the infallible authority of the Holy Scriptures. However appealing a certain position might appear, if it is not squarely built on or concretely substantiated by Scripture, then it is only an *opinion* void of authority. A child of God must rest his faith on the testimony of the infallible Scripture and on it alone. Is belief in the *present* or rather the *forever* perfection of the words of God biblical? These passages Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalms 12:6-7, 19:7, 119:89; Proverbs 30:5; Matthew 4:4, 5:18, 24:35; Luke 4:4, 16:1, 21:33; John 10:35 say “Yes.”

Failing to substantiate his position from the infallible Scriptures, Rev Sin appealed to human authority. The authorities he quoted include the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC), Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS), and Pensacola Christian College (PCC). It must be pointed out that no human authority is exempt from making mistakes. Admittedly it is not uncommon in theological debates to quote human authority, and it is certainly justifiable if the quotation is made within the boundaries of the Holy Scriptures which are our sole and supreme authority of faith and practice. But the question that needs to be raised is: Did Rev Sin quote correctly in the right context for the right purpose? One finds it difficult to say yes. For instance, the TBS identifies the texts it accepts as the true texts: “The Trinitarian Bible Society recognises and receives the Masoretic Hebrew and Greek Received Texts as providentially preserved

and authentic.” As to the qualities of these texts, the TBS says, “These texts of Scripture reflect the qualities of God-breathed Scripture, including being authentic, holy, pure, true, infallible, trustworthy, excellent, self-authenticating, necessary, sufficient, perspicuous, self-interpreting, authoritative and inerrant (Psalm 19:7-9, Psalm 119). They are consequently to be received as the Word of God (Ezra 7:14; Nehemiah 8:8; Daniel 9:2; 2 Peter 1:19) and the correct reading at any point is to be sought within these texts.”⁴ This is a fine statement based on Scripture and it does not contradict the VPP position. To insinuate otherwise would suggest a lack of “honesty” and a failure to be “objective.” A close study of the other authorities he quoted will find them to be quite in line with VPP.

On Other Language Bibles and Other Matters

Rev Jack Sin rightly notes that “no translation of one language to another will ever be perfect.” It should also be noted that no VPPist would assign perfection to a translation. The whole issue is all about the Bible in the original languages. VPP is not against other language Bibles which have been faithfully translated from the providentially preserved Masoretic Hebrew Text and Greek Textus Receptus.

Rev Sin’s admonition to avoid “excessively emotive” tone in the defence of God’s Word, however, is instructive and should be taken to heart. Words or tone, which may cause offence unnecessarily, when the truth can be presented otherwise without compromise, should be carefully avoided. The defence of God’s Word should be carried out by presenting the truth as clearly as possible without any compromise and yet in love, meekness and in all wisdom so that it may have its full effect (Eph 4:2; 1 Pet 3:15; Col 1:28). Caricature, insinuation, misrepresentation and disparagement should have no place, for they will only blind the truth, and thus do no service to the cause of the truth.

Rev Sin’s mention of the problem of “NPP” (New Perspective on Paul) and “the Human Quest for Perfection” is entirely irrelevant to the current textual debate. One wonders why such mention is made at all. Neither is Rev Sin clear about the reason why he brings up these two categorically different matters. Is it an attempt to put VPP in the same box? One hopes not.

Conclusion

Rev Jack Sin's expressed intention to assess the textual issue "objectively" and "biblically" with the spirit of "honesty" is surely commendable. Every theological issue must be appraised objectively and biblically. However, after analysis, the paper gives one the impression that the Rev Sin has fallen short of his noble goal, for he has no biblical authority for his own plurality of manuscripts position over against the *perfect preservation of words* position of VPPists which he is attempting to refute. Neither was he entirely fair in his quotation of the works of others nor unbiased in his presentation of the opposing view. His appraisal which is destitute of biblical proof, citing only human authorities with partial quotations, cannot be considered "biblical," or "objective" or "honest."

Since Rev Sin's position is without biblical proof, he should not put in a bad light the VPPists who are able to support their position from Scripture, for that is a disservice to the cause of Christ. He should not engage in the unfruitful and unedifying work of criticising and disparaging the doctrine of VPP which is built upon the infallible testimony of the Scripture itself, but should rather re-examine his own position whether it is really tenable or found wanting when weighed on the biblical scale. Any position which lacks basis from the infallible and inerrant Scriptures needs urgent and serious re-examination. Only God's Truth will stand forever, "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Cor 13:8).

Notes

¹ <http://www.maranatha-bpc.com>; [http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/Rev Jack Sin - A Grave Matter.pdf](http://www.lifebpc.com/ourstand/RevJackSin-AGraveMatter.pdf).

² Edward F Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines, Iowa: The Christian Research Press, 1984), 223, italics added. Take note also that Hills uttered these words at the concluding part of his treatise.

³ Trinitarian Bible Society, "Statement of Doctrine of Holy Scripture," <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/statement.pdf>, 6.

⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

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FEBC-TRUE LIFE 13TH HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE (MARCH 3-16, 2008)

Joshua Yong

Psalm 121:1-8 (A Song of degrees)

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Israel God's Chosen Nation

Israel is the only nation that has a land that is promised and given by God, a people chosen by God, and a law written and instituted by God. It is the only nation that has survived even when it was without its land. It is a land and country that is a testimony to the one living and true God.

Israel is a special nation only because of God and the spiritual significance it brings. Without God, Israel is nothing. If God does not preserve Israel, it would be a dead nation (as witnessed when Israel sinned against God). But God has promised to keep Israel, and He is the Almighty God, even the God who "shall neither slumber nor sleep." It is the same Almighty God whom we worship and as God has promised to preserve Israel, so has He promised to preserve us, His children. It is then a blessing to be able to witness the living testimony of God's blessings. But a warning is also to be heeded, for God has warned that if Israel were to disobey Him and worship false gods, God would punish them that they might repent. So it is with us. We can be sure that when we disobey God, God will chastise us that we may return to Him.

Knowing that Israel is a special nation, it is then a great blessing to be able to go on this pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Going as a student, it is a study trip. The study is of the land and geography, the people, culture and customs, world history, biblical history, church history and even theology. But most significantly as a Christian, it is the spiritual blessings and applications that are experienced on this trip that are most important. My thoughts are best expressed in the following paragraph written by the late Elder Eric Mahadevan:

Mere words will not justify the portrayal of the rich heritage and splendour of Holy Land, nor can the sacred and spiritual reawakening within oneself be fathomed, it is a profound experience of God-Lord Jehovah's infinite and sublime choice of the Promised Land, and His absolute sovereignty over all mankind. Yet in spite of my and your abject insignificance, and utter wretchedness; in reality, God's merciful redemption, His magnanimous salvation and His supreme atonement for you and me; is eminently experienced. Notwithstanding "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed."

God's Providential Hand upon Us

This trip has been most wonderful, for God was with us each step of the way. God has led all 43 of us including four children to the Holy Land, and brought all of us safely back. Indeed "*The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*" There is therefore much that I have to thank God for.

Firstly, I thank God for Rev Dr Timothy Tow who had the desire to lead a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. God first gave Rev Tow the burden to go in 1983 and this would have been his 13th Pilgrimage, but by God's leading and purpose, Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo was called upon to lead this trip instead. Thank God for the provision of this trip. The Lord has through the College and through Mrs Ivy Tow given me this opportunity to go, and through my parents who provided the means. God has been most faithful. By His grace, the trip went well without problems and complaints. We thank God that He was in control.

Pyramids, Sinai, Eilat

Secondly, I thank God for the very meaningful itinerary planned. We visited Egypt, Israel ("from Dan to Beersheba"), and Jordan. We landed and started our journey in Egypt. The two main places that we visited were the Egyptian Museum and the Pyramids of Giza. It was significant

that during the time of Moses, Egypt was a very powerful and rich country. The Museum showed us her wealth, her power, her military might and her fear of death and the life after death. The Pyramids showed us that Egypt was a country that had acquired a mastery of engineering, the sciences and the arts. They made their own paper with the papyrus plant, and they had the knowledge to make perfume. Egypt was feared by many but they could do nothing against the Almighty God of Israel. In this pagan land, we saw a most wonderful testimony of faith – the faith of Moses. Hebrews 11:24, 25 says, *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”* Seeing how wealthy Egypt was just showed us Moses’ faith in God and his desire to forsake power and wealth in order to obey God. May we learn to follow the example of Moses.

We travelled from Egypt through the Sinai Peninsula to the Holy Land. Thank God there was no wandering about in the wilderness and our security was assured with an Egyptian police officer with us on the bus, but we knew that there was a Higher Hand protecting us – God was with us. Reaching Israel’s border, we had to clear the immigration. It was a difficult time. Certain members were singled out for questioning, but everyone went through – another testimony of God’s keeping and preserving us each step of the way. Our first night in Israel was spent in Eilat, the southernmost city in Israel. We could immediately see a huge contrast between Egypt and Israel. Egypt was dusty and the traffic was disorganised, but the air in Israel was fresh, and traffic was smooth.

Ein Gedi, Dead Sea, Masada, Qumran

Travelling northward towards Ein Gedi, one geographical feature that often greeted us was the Judean mountain range. I was then reminded and I thought of Psalm 121:1, 2 – *“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.”* Of course, Jerusalem was a city on this Judean Mountain Range, and to the Psalmist it was a city in which the Temple was built, which housed the Ark of Covenant which was symbolical of the presence of God. The Psalmist kept looking to God and this comforted my heart and reminded me to do likewise (especially so when I

had many assignments to do and a thesis to complete – “my help cometh from the Lord”).

In the Dead Sea region, we visited Masada, a natural fortress, and we stayed in the Kibbutz of Ein Gedi. One of the highlights, a rather enjoyable one, was an afternoon spent swimming (or floating) in the Dead Sea. It is called the Dead Sea because there is no life at all in its water which is concentrated with salt and minerals. The Dead Sea is a sea with no outlet and it stands in huge contrast with the Sea of Galilee which is a sea of life. The Sea of Galilee receives its water from the melted ice of Mount Hermon and channels its water through the Jordan River to the Dead Sea. But the Dead Sea keeps receiving. The spiritual lesson that was learned here is to always share the blessings that we receive. We are not to be like the Dead Sea, which keeps on receiving and receiving without giving, but to be like the Sea of Galilee which shares its blessing thus giving it life. This is also the lesson taught by our Lord Jesus Christ – “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35).

Upward to Jerusalem

Around that area we visited Qumran to see the caves where the Dead Sea scrolls were found. We stopped for lunch in the city of Jericho. From this place we saw the Judean Wilderness (which was a mountainous area, not a flatland as one would normally think) where Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, and was tempted by the devil. From there we travelled up to the city of Jerusalem where we spent most of our time. Jerusalem means the City of Peace, but today there is much unrest in this city, with a shooting incident in a religious school during the week we were in Israel. Today, it is a city separated into four quarters – the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Armenian quarters. There is no peace in Israel today because Israel has disobeyed God and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. But God has not cast His people away and one day Christ the Messiah will come back bringing salvation and peace to Israel. During our pilgrimage, we sang hymns and the two hymns that warmed my heart were “*Yerushalayim, Messiah is Come*” and “*O Jerusalem.*”

This is one stanza of the hymn that was written by Rev Timothy Tow

*Yerushalayim, behold Messiah shall come
To save thy Land, when thou shalt cry to Him*

He comes on clouds, with awesome loud trumpet sound
To judge the earth – peace a millennium.
Yerushalayim, let peace and freedom ring,
To thee *Shalom!* To thee *Shalom!*
Yerushalayim, lift up thy voice and sing,
Messiah is come, Messiah is come!

In Jerusalem we visited the Mount of Olives, the Palm Sunday Road, the Garden of Gethsemane with its ancient olive trees, the palace of Caiaphas the high priest, the Wailing Wall, the Temple Area where the Dome of the Rock now stands, the Upper Room, the Pools of Bethesda, the Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrows) and the Yad Vashem Museum (Holocaust Museum). In Bethlehem, we visited the Church of the Nativity and we saw the Shepherd's field area reminding us of the announcement of the birth of Christ to the shepherds (Luke 2:8-11)

Caesarea, Carmel, Cana, Capernaum

Leaving Jerusalem we travelled northwards, stopping at "Caesarea by the Sea." We stopped by Haifa before going to Mount Carmel where Elijah challenged the 450 prophets of Baal. From there we saw the Jezreel Valley where the last battle – the battle of Armageddon will be fought (Rev 16:12-16). To us Christians it is an assurance of Christ's soon return and the eternal peace that the believers in Christ will experience.

In the North, we visited Capernaum where Jesus spent most of His time ministering to the people. We also went to Cana, Tabgha (the feeding of the 5000), the Mount of Beatitudes, Nazareth, Caesarea Philippi, and the Golan Heights. At the Golan Heights we saw the snow-capped mountains of Mount Hermon which brought to remembrance Psalm 133:1-3, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*" We had a good view of the mountain from the Golan Heights. There was no mist or fog, and the view was clear. It was told to us that it was a rare sight and we thank God for this blessing. We also spent half an afternoon on an ancient fishing boat (replica) on the Sea of Galilee where a passage of scripture was read.

We left the Galilee region and travelled to Jordan. A view of the Promised Land from Mount Nebo was the last sight that we had of the Holy Land. This was the mountain where Moses saw the Promised Land. As we look to the present land of Israel – which is not in its most beautiful state, we are reminded by the words of Rev Timothy Tow that we are to look to a better land—the New Jerusalem.

We're a pilgrim band now headed for the glory land of light.

We are travelling through the wilderness of night.

We've a home that's far away beyond the heaven and the stars.

In the New Jerusalem.

In that land of glory where the saints are gathered round the Throne.

Not a sigh or tear, no sorrow nor a groan.

But an everlasting song of victory flows from every tongue.

In the New Jerusalem.

We are heading nearer nearer for the land that's now in sight.

Will you join us to the City fair and bright?

Is your name forever written in the Lamb's book of Life?

In the New Jerusalem.

Worship in the Holy Land

Thirdly, it was a blessing to worship the Lord in two churches during our two weeks there. On our first Sunday, we worshipped with Baraka Bible-Presbyterian Church which is in Bethlehem. Rev George Awad is the pastor of this Church. It is always a blessing to gather with God's people – Psalm 133:1, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" – but especially more so when we can be an encouragement to them. Mainly Arab Christians attend the church, and with the difficult political situation in Bethlehem, it is an encouragement to see people still faithfully gathering to worship God, with a desire to serve God. Indeed as Dr Jeffrey Khoo said in his message, "We have come not to see dead stones, but living stones. We have not come to see places, but people." Thank God for this testimony of God's promises and a lighthouse of God's Truth in a country of unrest, turmoil and ignorance.

The second church we worshipped with was the Chinese Christian Church of Jordan – an outreach of Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore. The congregation is made up of Chinese nationals

who came to Jordan to make a living. There is a great need for the gospel in China which has a billion plus people – many of whom are still without Christ. The gospel is preached to the Chinese in Jordan that they might return home to spread the good news to their fellow countrymen. I was moved by how much the Chinese people needed the gospel (as I am Chinese as well). Dr Khoo spoke from Isaiah 49:1-12, and we saw from Isaiah 49:12 that God has not forgotten the Chinese: “*Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.*” It was a blessing to see the Lord working even in the Muslim country of Jordan. The Lord has also placed a burden on me to improve my Chinese that I may be more useful in the Lord’s Work.

Testimonies and Blessings

Fourthly, I thank God for the spiritual leadership of Dr Khoo. This trip would have been meaningless if there was no spiritual aspect to it. It would be a tour, an exposure, but not a pilgrimage. The morning and evening services gave this trip its meaning. These were times when testimonies were shared. There were many testimonies of God’s blessings, before and during the trip. Hearing different people testifying of God’s goodness, God’s working, God’s grace, God’s mercy, God’s love, God’s blessings and all the thanksgiving, deeply warmed and encouraged my heart. What a wonderful thing to speak of the goodness of the Lord.

During these hours of devotion, there were also spiritual lessons expounded from the Word of God (Heb 11:24; Ps 122; Isa 43:9-11; Luke 24; Rev 2:10, 11; Isa 2:1-4; John 6:1-14; Matt 27:19-25; Rom 11:19-26; Heb 10:1-25; Luke 4:16-32; Luke 5:1-11). These were passages which we meditated upon and it was so wonderful as they were applied relevantly to our visits and activities. The one that was most meaningful to me was the one morning (Sunrise) service we had by the Sea of Galilee. The passage meditated upon was Luke 5:1-11 which spoke about the calling of Christ’s disciples. During His earthly ministry, Jesus spent a lot of His time around the Sea of Galilee. Christ also had on many occasions gone up to the surrounding mountains to pray. It was a very beautiful and quiet but cold morning. To sing hymns and to meditate on Christ around the lake was a very wonderful time. The Psalmist also spoke of the importance of such morning prayers and meditation. “*My voice shalt thou*

hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up" (Ps 5:3). All such times of devotion and worship are very important as they reminded us to "look up" during our pilgrimage.

Fifthly, I thank God for the Christian fellowship that the pilgrims shared. There were no quarrels, or squabbles, but the Christian love being shared. When a couple fell sick during the trip, there was no lack of people who were concerned, and many sought to help in any way they could, providing medicine and advice. The four children who were with us were a bundle of joy – their desire to learn and how they kept singing the songs they learned were an encouraging sight. Seeing their love for God at such a young age, one is reminded of Christ's command to learn from them: "*Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt 18:3). The fellowship in Christ was sweet.

The Empty Tomb

Lastly, visiting the many places in Israel, I have been most troubled by the idolatry that filled the land – the statues and icons, the worship of the traditional sites and relics by a superstitious Church. So the most significant place for me in the midst of all the idolatry was the empty Garden Tomb and the service we had there that morning. This is the only site that the Greek Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Armenian Church have no hold on. I do not need to see the empty tomb to strengthen my faith, but it is the Biblical record of the resurrection that made this place so meaningful. We had a service there with the singing of hymns, and the reading of God's Word. With the partaking of the Holy Communion, we remembered the Lord's death, burial and resurrection that had made that morning all the more meaningful. Whether that was the exact tomb or not is of no importance, for whichever tomb it was, it is empty, for Christ has risen from the grave and by His resurrection, He has conquered death and sin and hell. Death has lost its sting. It was this blessed thought that gave meaning to this pilgrimage for if Christ had not risen from the dead, everything would be in vain. "*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor 15:57). This pilgrimage then is all about Christ.

I conclude with the words of hymn writer, Philip P Bliss:

I will sing of my redeemer,
And His wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross He suffered,
From the curse to set me free.

I will tell the wondrous story,
How my lost estate to save,
In His boundless love and mercy,
He the ransom freely gave.

I will praise my dear Redeemer,
His triumphant power I'll tell,
How the victory He giveth
Over sin and death and hell.



Joshua Yong (BRE 08) is a member of Truth Bible-Presbyterian Church, and a Master of Divinity student at FEBC.

College News and Notes

Far Eastern Bible College started its new semester on January 2, 2008 with a **Day of Prayer**. The Rev Dennis Kwok, pastor of Truth B-P Church, delivered the Lord's message to the college family. He spoke from 2 Timothy 2:15 and encouraged both faculty and students to be approved workmen of God by (1) cutting a straight path with the Word of Truth, (2) not wandering from the Word of Truth, and (3) leading people back to the Word of Truth. He also announced the launching of the **FEBC Alumni Fellowship** which is aimed at fostering close ties among graduates. The new full-time students in the new semester were Kiet Thaven (Cambodia), Lee Gwang Ho (Korea), Gloria Son Lee (USA), Leong Kwok Whye (Singapore), Peter Phoa (Singapore), and Puspa Shakya (Nepal). **Total enrolment** currently stands at 396 students from 16 countries comprising 96 daytime students (full- and part-time), and 300 night-class students.

The Far Eastern Bible College organised a **13th Holy Land Pilgrimage**, visiting Egypt, Israel, and Jordan, from March 3-16, 2008. There were a total of 43 pilgrims including FEBC students from four countries, Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore, representing six Bible-Presbyterian Churches, namely, Calvary Pandan, Calvary Tengah, Gethsemane, New Life, True Life, and Truth. The submission of a research project by the students and pilgrims earns two academic credits. This time the pilgrimage was led by Dr and Mrs Jeffrey Khoo.

The **Daily Vacation Bible College (DVBC)** course was held from April 28-May 3, 2008. The course titled, "The Bible Stands: Textual Reception or Textual Criticism" was taught by Dr Jeffrey Khoo. A total of 93 students registered for the course.

The **33rd Graduation Service** was held at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church on the Lord's Day, May 4, 2008. The Rev Dr Mark Kim Kyung Soo, Principal of the Bible College of East Africa, was the Lord's messenger, and he spoke on the topic, "Equipping Labourers for the Harvest" (Matt 9:36-38). Not only was he the graduation speaker, he was also one of the graduands. Dr Kim was conferred the **Doctor of Education** degree for his dissertation, "Equipping Labourers for the Harvest: The Establishment and Development of the Bible College of East Africa." A total of 45 graduands were awarded their certificates and degrees: **Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK)**: Anthony

College News and Notes

Cheng Chou Hwuang, Foo Chee Yong, Herbert Goh Guang Yang, Francis Lee Kek Gee, Lee Soh Kian, Rachel Lim Ai May, Lim Jun Sheng, Pauline Low Juat Hoon, Phan Narit, Victor Wong Chong Thiam, Franco Wong Pey Gein, Ye Zuyi; **Certificate of Biblical Studies (CertBS):** Andy Ho Yew Peng, Hor Ponlok, Lai Swee Fong, Vincent Pek How Sian, Lenny Su Chai Ling; **Diploma in Theology (DipTh):** Park Mi Oak; **Bachelor of Religious Education (BRE):** Albert Ben Kainesie, Lim Ren Muh, John Loo Lay Gee, Jose Maghanoy Mangco, Joshua Yong Boon Keong; **Bachelor of Theology (BTh):** Linda Yohana Kurnia, Chan Sopheak, Jeremy Christiansen Siregar, Le Vu Thien An, Kelvin Lim Cheng Kwang, Lyn Lornah Lawino Were, Liv Rotha, Thadeaus Veniceo Jr Brillo Galletto, Weerapong Harichaikul; **Master of Ministry (MMin):** Errol Dale Stone; **Master of Religious Education (MRE):** Anne Chiam, Ruth Low Mei Ern, Minh Saray, Dohar Santoso Siregar; **Master of Divinity (MDiv):** Dominino Tillor Dela Cruz Jr, Judah Pallangyo Kundael, Tan Nee Keng, Wong Chee Leong, Ejigayehu Alemu Zeleke; **Master of Theology (ThM):** Biak Lawm Thang, Dennis Capongcol Kabingue; **Doctor of Education:** Mark Kim Kyung Soo.

FEBC's **Annual Retreat** was held from May 5-7, 2008, at the Resort Lautan Biru, Mersing, Malaysia. During the retreat, the Rev Dr Mark Kim spoke about the Bible College movement in East Africa, and his ministry at the Bible College of East Africa in Kenya and Tanzania. Both faculty and students had a blessed time of worship and fellowship.



The first graduation service of the **Bible College of East Africa (Arusha, Tanzania)** was held on May 18, 2008. Seven students were awarded their Certificate of Biblical Studies after two years of studies. Dr Jeffrey Khoo was the Lord's messenger and he preached on "Faithful Shepherds" from Acts 20:26-35.

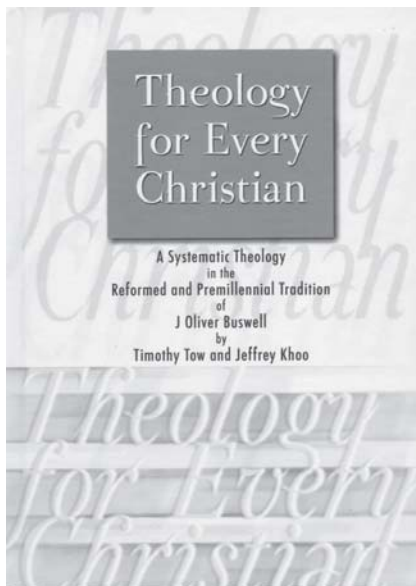


The **Bachelor of Ministry** courses offered at the Bible College of East Africa (Nairobi, Kenya) from May 12-23, 2008 were the Westminster Standards using Dr Lynn Gray Gordon's *The World's Greatest Truths* which is a commentary on the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. The lecturer was Dr Jeffrey Khoo who also conferred the BMin degree to nine successful students on May 24, 2008. The nine were Amos Kipkech (Pastor, Africa Inland Church, Kapkut), Christine Mwolyo (Deaconess, Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Machakos), David Lusala Aluvisia (Pastor, Glory B-P Church, Lenkejape), Jedidah Kalumu Muki (Evangelist, Kitui), Julius Mbole Ngao (Pastor, Africa Inland Church, Ngelani), Lazarus Munguti David (Pastor, Mitaboni), Stanley Musyoki Syengo (Pastor, Africa Inland Church, Ura), Stephen Chege Karago (Staffworker, Bible College of East Africa), Wilson Kipkorir Rotich (Pastor, Litein).



The **Basic Theology for Everyone** night classes (Jan-Apr 08) continue to draw many lay students from different churches packing the FEBC Hall to the last seat, and spilling into the dining area. The Monday night course on Job was taught by Dr Das Koshy, and the Thursday night course on Biblical Hermeneutics was taught by Dr Quek Suan Yew.

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“The new book *Theology for Every Christian* ... is very easy to understand and I can see a use for many applications. The Reformed Premillennial section is a big improvement in clarity over Buswell’s work and to me makes the work about indispensable.” *Howard Carlson (Lecturer, Faith College of the Bible, Kenya)*

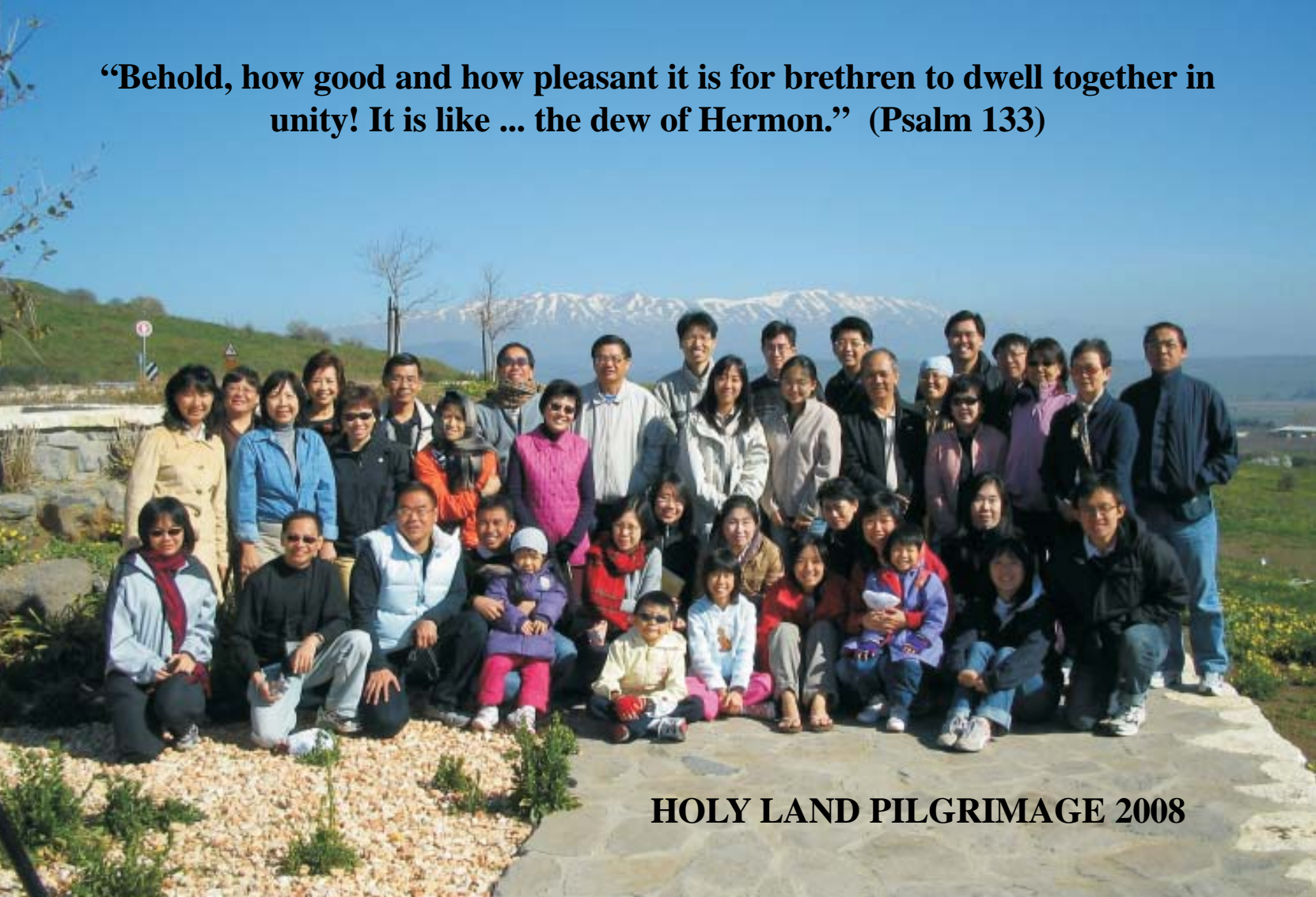
“I write to offer grateful thanks for the copy of your recent publication, *Theology for Every Christian*, which you kindly sent me. ... We trust this worthy edition will prove eminently useful in educating believers in those glorious truths we hold dear, especially the blessed inerrancy of the inspired Word of God.” *D P Rowland (General Secretary, Trinitarian Bible Society, London)*

“Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your new book, *Theology for Every Christian*. It is a most attractive volume, and I am confident it will bring blessing to all who read it.” *Homer A Kent (President Emeritus, Grace College & Theological Seminary, USA)*



*Far Eastern Bible College
Graduation 2008*

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like ... the dew of Hermon.” (Psalm 133)



HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE 2008