



The Burning Bush

ISSN 0219-5984

July 2009

Volume 15 Number 2

OBITUARY AND EULOGY 65

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR
MIRACULOUS? A RESPONSE TO JON REHUREK
OF THE MASTER'S SEMINARY 67

Paul Ferguson

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION? A RESPONSE TO
WILLIAM W COMBS OF DETROIT BAPTIST SEMINARY 101

Jeffrey Khoo

College News 128



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) 064/03/2009
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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OBITUARY AND EULOGY

"The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want..." (Psalm 23:1)
"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith..." (2 Timothy 4:7)
"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord... Yes, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Revelation 14:13)



**The Reverend (Dr)
TIMOTHY TOW SIANG HUI**
Age : 88

Founding Pastor (1950) Life Bible-Presbyterian Church and related Bible-Presbyterian Churches in Singapore and Malaysia
Founding Principal (1962) Far Eastern Bible College, Singapore
Founding Pastor (2003) True Life Bible- Presbyterian Church, Singapore
was called home to rest on Monday, 20 April 2009.

A Tribute to My Beloved Late Tutor-Mentor

*He walked the corridors of Gilstead,
Yet he filled the spaces of our spiritual homestead;
Clutching his black Bible high up and close to his heart,
He was sure footed and simple smart.*

*He looked his pupil in the pupil,
Yet not dismissing the disciple like some people;
He was a man of small stature,
But seemed a giant, a godly creature.*

*He smiled, just a measured little,
Enough to tell that you are not a mere tittle;
He evoked awe and reverent fear,
All froze in mid sentence in silence to seer.*

The Burning Bush 15/2 (July 2009)

*A man not known for many words,
Yet he spoke in volumes in many goodly works;
A simple man, looking like a caretaker than a principal and pastor,
Pomp and pride was never his character.*

*Like his Master once mistook for a gardener,
He too paced the place in like manner;
He came to lecture just his Bible and his mind,
All his notes embedded somewhere in this godly kind.*

*Words unknown spilled and thrilled,
Learning English with theology our minds were filled;
His voice vivid and clear still ringing in ear,
Though time has passed year after year.*

*Time has passed yet he speaketh,
His voice still heard, his life still meaneth;
Many have gone near and far with his fire,
In heavenly desire and die to retire.*

*To have known him and to have caught him,
Is to be his kith and kin humming a grateful hymn;
In praise to God for a servant true and right,
A model to follow for dill and the bright.*

*Now laid to rest after doing his humanly best,
His work goes on with the faithful rest;
His life lives on with his children not his born,
Father of many, still true but few, with some gone.*

*His memory soon forgotten,
But a stone in a building block, a token;
As is the case with those passed into glory,
A mere passing reference not knowing the full story.*

*But he will be known as he walks the heaven's garden,
Meeting and greeting myriad saints the pardoned;
His grave may settle but we will remember,
Till the day in body we soon will slumber.*

*God forbid the praise of a man, yea, even our own,
But he was a man in whom Christ was known;
His name is **Timothy Tow**,
To many of us, just **Reverend Tow**.*

*So till we meet again, dear teacher,
Rest in Peace, sir!*

Brutus Balan, 24 April 2009
Hobart Tasmania, Australia

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS? A RESPONSE TO JON REHUREK OF THE MASTER’S SEMINARY

Paul Ferguson

Introduction

In Spring 2008, *The Master’s Seminary Journal* published by The Master’s Seminary in California contained an article titled “Preservation of the Bible: Providential or Miraculous? The Biblical View” by Jon Rehurek.¹ In this article, Rehurek rejects any Biblical doctrine of perfect preservation of the Words of God and concludes that

an examination of exegetical evidence from commonly cited biblical texts supports only a general promise of preserving the truth of God’s message to mankind, not a particular version of the Bible. Many verses—including some related to immutability, infallibility, and preservation—have been incorrectly interpreted and applied to preservation. The preservation of God’s revelation is the lesson in many of the passages, but no explicit indication applies them directly to written Scripture or to how and when a promise of general preservation would be fulfilled. Since historical evidence demonstrates that scribal errors exist in every extant manuscript, the conclusion to be drawn is that the Bible has been providentially preserved by means of secondary causation through the plethora of available manuscripts and not through miraculous preservation of particular manuscripts and versions. God Himself is faithful and true and His Word reflects His character; His decrees are absolutely immutable and infallible. Although the Scriptures themselves strongly assert that truths contained in it are firmly established and will endure forever, the case for providential preservation must rest upon theological grounds through the historical (i.e., canonicity) and manuscript evidence (i.e., textual criticism) rather than upon exegetical grounds.²

Jon Rehurek’s conclusions are wrong on both exegetical and historical grounds. The truth is that every believer, using either Biblical or philosophical presuppositions, is led to some conclusion as to the content of the original autographs. The Scriptures do not simply promise the

preservation of God's "truth" or "message" but the Words. The Church has historically held fast to these promises concerning the Words of God; not only in respect of divine inspiration, but also in regard to perfect providential preservation throughout the ages. However, since the Enlightenment, Protestantism has granted science increasingly independent authority and has surrendered the Bible's authority whenever any supposed conflict arose between the two. The Enlightenment brought the age of the "sovereignty of reason" which attempted to verify everything in Scripture by modern critical methods of historical research. Just as in the case of creationism, until the eighteenth century the Church held to the historic doctrine of the perfect inspiration and preservation of the Words of God in all ages.

The *zeitgeist* of our contemporary apostate age now demands a "new and improved" version of everything including the Scriptures. Our places of worship have dropped the name "Church," reduced worship to entertainment, and promoted effeminate "preacher gurus" in Hawaiian shirts to share the latest psychological fad. We have also now a marked subservience to scientism as the dominant cultural standard. Did the Church make such a gross error in over 500 years of interpretation? What has primarily changed since the Reformation is the way man defines and uses science. Modern scientific opinion has been elevated to the status of general revelation giving it an absolute *a priori* veto over how we interpret Scripture. So much for singing, "Immortal, invisible, God only wise!" Textual criticism is built on the intolerant foundation of prejudice against the promises of Scripture. Modern man always seeks out a way of removing His Creator from the source of truth, as autonomous man aspires to fill the vacancy.

Jon Rehurek's facile position is not the historic position of believers and the Reformation and his objections are mere hand-waving. Critical Text (CT) advocates, such as Rehurek, have no ultimate and certain standard for determining objective truth. Without the Biblical doctrine of perfect providential preservation, we are left with non-answers in these areas. This is not a minor shift but one of seismic proportions. Fortunately, most CT advocates of the past were better believers than theologians and have been able to live with the inherent contradiction of their system by simply declaring the gospel from the *Textus Receptus* (TR). They were incapable of following their own premises out to the end of the road they were on. This has now been challenged by the belligerent approach of the new breed of CT adherents and proliferation of translations and the latest edition of their evolutionary Greek Text.

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

Rehurek's error is sadly perpetuated by contemporary fundamentalist teachers and writers, many of whom have obtained their graduate degrees at neo-evangelical seminaries. These men might preach great sermons on preservation but ultimately have no way of ever coming up with a real text! Some prize examples of semantic gymnastics can be found in the statements of modern fundamentalism. Speaking of God and the preservation of Scripture, Central Baptist Theological Seminary President, Kevin Bauder, tries to argue the Lord is indifferent as to His Words as Bauder claims, "He might preserve some words and He might permit some to be lost, depending upon His own purpose."³ Bob Jones University (BJU) professor, Stewart Custer, speaking at Marquette Manor Baptist Church in Chicago in 1984 said that God preserved His Word buried, "in the sands of Egypt."⁴ Larry Oats of Maranatha Baptist College in Wisconsin, an institution that formerly argued for the fact of the preserved Word of God in the King James Version, claims, "God could have preserved His Word but history proves He did not."⁵ William Combs of the fundamentalist Detroit Baptist Seminary boldly asserts, "The Bible does not teach its own perfect preservation, and it is a serious error to claim otherwise."⁶

The CT position is a fallacy as it claims to reach conclusions that conform to the Bible, which are not derived from the Bible. It is true that some CT advocates talk about "preservation" but only by investing in their exegesis of preservation passages such as Matthew 5:18 entirely new meanings. In effect, they act like Humpty-Dumpty who retorted scornfully to Alice's ignorance of his meaning, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."⁷ Their position is not some imaginative or honest attempt to follow the truth where it leads, but radical interpretations of biblical texts based on Enlightenment premises. These fundamentalist and evangelical "scholars" need correcting for when theologically educated men make absurd statements they are no less absurd than when the lay person makes them. We reject their arguments because they are fundamentally illogical, and believers should not utilise unsound arguments nor appeal to unbelievers to place their confidence in them. True fundamentalists, especially those of the Reformed faith, will not surrender our historic faith for the gods of Enlightenment thinking just to be seen as acceptable by "progressive evangelicals." The objections to the doctrine of perfect preservation are rooted in philosophical pre-commitments and not exegetical concerns. Like Ezra we will prepare our hearts "to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it" (Ezra 7:10) whatever the cost.

The Bible and Preservation

Reformed Theologians have always regarded Reformed doctrines such as the Sovereignty of God as the most consistent expression of Biblical Theology. As such, the starting point is that the Bible is the propositional revelation of God and hence it alone can be the ultimate test for truth and knowledge. As Cornelius Van Til argues, “It is the genius of Protestantism to make the God of the Scriptures the final reference in all predication.”⁸ Believers are mandated to presuppose the Scriptures in all of their thinking and practice as the ultimate criterion of truth, whereas unbelievers resist this obligation in every aspect of thought and life. To stand for perfect preservation is arrogantly dismissed and those who still hold to it are subject to ridicule as adopting the Bible’s faith-view in order to escape from the “fact” that textual criticism has shown that God did not preserve all of His Words and make them available in every generation.

CT advocates will ridicule anyone who exalts the authority of the written Word over the authority of liberal “scholarship.” Many adopt the methodology of the evolutionists who figured that the best way to insulate their doctrines from scrutiny is to prevent a debate from ever beginning in the first place by ridiculing their opponents as “fideistic” and demanding that “religious presuppositional” views must not mix with “science.” These critics are removing the “ancient landmarks” concerning preservation and replacing them with a rationalistic system of logic. Although they cry “fideistic presupposition” at us, we may point out that they are presupposing that God has not done what He promised to do with their unbiblical and revisionist logic. Despite disclaimers, they have not abandoned faith in their approach, just switched supreme norms. However, our faith is not blind or irrational as it is conformed to the highest norms of thought in Scripture. CT advocates have replaced faith in God with that in man through supposedly neutral, scholarly, and scientific means to restore as closely as possible what the original text of the Bible was. It is ironic that one side of the debate is unfairly accused of engaging in fideism, when the reality is that both sides are working from presuppositions in their differing supreme norms. Despite their bombastic approach, CT advocates are like the rhetorician in the story who wrote in the margin of his notes, “Argument weak. Shout here.”

CT advocates inconsistently look presuppositionally to the Church for authority in receiving the Canon, and establishing the Creedal and Confessional basis of our faith but now reject it for the canonised words.

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

This seems to be a curious way of proceeding. CT advocates need to logically explain why the Epistle of Barnabas, a treatise against a Jewish interpretation of the Law, which dates from the late first or early second century is included in the New Testament canon of the fourth century manuscript Codex Sinaiticus. Did God lead His people to recognise the Words here but not the Canon? Ultimately, we could never have even begun to argue from Scripture had not the Church received it and handed it down to us. Indeed, if we had been given a different canon or a tampered translation we would not know the difference. We would simply argue from that which we were given. Douglas Wilson illustrates the inconsistency,

Unbelieving criticism says that words, verses, pericopes, and books are all up for grabs. To grant this legitimacy with the first three, while drawing the line to keep 66 inspired books, is like being a little bit pregnant. 2 John has 301 words while the last twelve verses of Mark have 260. At what word count does the authority of science becomes illegitimate?⁹

Cornelius Van Til rejects such casuistry by making clear, “We cannot choose epistemologies [theories of knowledge] as we choose hats ... [as if] a matter of taste.”¹⁰ David Norris also observes, “To profess verbal inspiration and at the same time to subject the Scripture texts to rationalistic critical methodology is to live in a crazed schizoid world, denying on the one hand what is confessed on the other.”¹¹ By rejecting the Biblical presuppositional approach to the text, CT advocates reinterpret preservation promises in light of textual criticism. This invariably opens the door to all forms of pernicious Biblical Criticism, which can be witnessed in the lives of men like Bart Ehrman who correctly observed that once you adopt naturalistic premises it is wholly consistent not to let it guide you on other doctrines such as inspiration, inerrancy etc. After all, if it is irrational to believe that God preserved all His Words, it is equally irrational to believe He inspired them.

Samuel Schnaiter of BJU critiques Wilbur Pickering’s Majority Text position by making the deeply disturbing critical observation, “Finally, although Pickering has avoided an excessive reliance on theological presuppositions in his presentation, it is nevertheless clear that a theological presupposition essentially undergirds his entire purpose.”¹² According to Schnaiter’s fulminations it is acceptable and even necessary to have theological presuppositions about the resurrection, but it is unacceptable to hold theological presuppositions about the historical sources that the belief in the resurrection is based upon. Anti-preservationist Daniel Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary concurs, “A theological *a priori* has no place in

textual criticism.”¹³ Interestingly, Bishop Westcott also rejected such an approach to studying the text, as he wrote to Hort,

I hardly feel with you on this question of discussing anything doctrinally or on doctrine. This seems to me to be wholly out of our province. We have only to determine what is written and how it can be rendered. Theologians may deal with the text and version afterwards.¹⁴

Leading contemporary textual critic, Bart Ehrman, concludes,

The fact that Warfield and Burgon both affirmed a doctrine of general preservation, and yet held antithetical views of how the text was preserved suggests that the doctrine is inappropriately used in support of any particular view of the text’s transmission history. Instead such affirmations can only be made subsequent to the assessment of the evidence for the progress of the history of transmission. The evidence must lead to the doctrine, not vice versa—else the doctrine will simply be adduced to support a certain set of historical conclusions.¹⁵

Such a statement shows the depth of rationalistic and unbiblical thought that is now prevalent in modern fundamentalism. For an experienced Seminary Professor like Schnaiter to implicitly reject both the existence and need of a Biblical presupposition concerning a Biblical doctrine is frankly astounding. Like the Deists, this view is premised on the belief that nature is the only light needed by man in his search for God and His truth. The same failure to renounce the intellectual autonomy of man outside the revealed promises of God was at the centre of man’s fall into sin. The Scriptures explicitly warn that man as a finite creature is forbidden to test God’s Word (Deut 6:16; Luke 4:12). Nowhere in Scripture does God separate so-called “spiritual” truths from “secular” ones. By contrast, it is emphasised that “all wisdom and knowledge” is found in the revelation of Christ, who is God in the flesh (Col 2:3). The Psalmist makes it clear, “In thy light shall we see light” (Ps 36:9). Unbiblical presuppositions will therefore “oppose themselves” (2 Tim 2:25) as their fundamental beliefs will fail to properly integrate because of inherent contradictions.

This uncertain “certainty” position of modern evangelicalism and fundamentalism is in marked contrast to what the Lord spoke through Solomon about the inspired Words (Prov 22:20-21). All of our doctrines must be from the Bible (2 Tim 3:16) as it is self-attesting (1 Cor 14:29, 32, 37; Matt 18:19). How we view our world is not how God views it and believers are mandated to think God’s thoughts after Him (Isa 55:9), which requires a scriptural presuppositional approach to the textual problems. A believer must study to show himself “approved unto God” (2 Tim 2:15). As

Cornelius Van Til puts it, “The Bible is thought of as authoritative on everything of which it speaks. And it speaks of everything.”¹⁶ We are to receive these promises by faith (Heb 11:13; Matt 13:23; Rom 1:17).

Biblical Presuppositions to Determine the True Text

(1) God revealed the Scriptures so men could know His will both in the Old and New Testaments and in the future (Deut 31:9-13, 24-29; 1 John 1:1-4, 2:1-17; 2 Tim 3:14-17; 2 Pet 1:12-15). Certainly the Bible makes clear that no Scripture was intended for only the original recipient (Rom 15:4, 16:25-26; 1 Cor 10:11). God intended for those writings to be recognised and received by the Church as a whole (e.g., Col 4:16; Rev 1:4). These Words were to be guarded (1 Tim 6:20-21) as a “form (pattern) of sound words” for the church (2 Tim 1:13-14) and to be used to instruct the future Church (2 Tim 2:2).

(2) The Bible promises that God will preserve every one of His Words forever down to the very jot and tittle of the smallest letter (Pss 12:6-7, 33:11, 119:152, 160; Isa 30:8, 40:8; 1 Pet 1:23-25; Matt 5:18, 24:35).

(3) The Bible assures us that God’s Words are perfect and pure (Ps 12:6-7; Prov 30:5).

(4) The Bible promises that God would make His Words generally available to every generation of believers (Deut 30:11-14; Isa 34:16, 59:21; Matt 4:4; 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 1:17). (This is general availability, not necessarily to every person on the planet.) Certainly, we are told that for around two millennia in history only one small nation had the true and pure Words of God, “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD” (Ps 147:19, 20 cf. Rom 2:14).

(5) The Bible promises there will be certainty as to the Words of God (2 Pet 1:19; Luke 1:4; Prov 1:23, 22:20-21; Dan 12:9-10; 1 John 2:20).

(6) The Bible promises that God would lead His saints into all truth, that the Word, all of His Words, are truth (John 16:13, 17:8, 17).

(7) God states that the Bible will be settled to the extent that someone could not add or take away from His Words (Rev 22:18-19; Deut 12:32). Indeed, the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:2 warned the saints of his day to be mindful of the “Words” of the Old Testament writings (v2a) and the New Testament writings (v2b), which would be absurd if some of these Words had been corrupted or lost.

(8) The Bible shows that the true Church of Christ would receive these Words (Matt 28:19-20; John 17:8; Acts 8:14, 11:1, 17:11; 1 Thess 2:13; 1 Cor 15:3).

(9) The Bible implies that believers would receive these Words from other believers (Deut 17:18; 1 Kgs 2:3; Prov 25:1; Acts 7:38; Heb 7:11; 1 Thess 1:6; Phil 4:9).

(10) The Bible shows that Bible promises may appear to contradict science and reason. In Genesis 2 we see that a newly created world may look ancient. However, the Scriptures remind us that “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man” (Ps 118:8).

(11) Christ implied the preservation of His very Words as a Standard of future judgment (John 12:48). He also warned of the vanity of ignoring His actual Words (Matt 7:26). Christ emphatically declared, “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). In Matthew 22:29 Jesus rebuked, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.” If the Scriptures were only accessible in the Originals then why would He chide them for being ignorant of Words that were not available? Believers are commanded to contend for the faith (Jude 3) and this faith is based upon the Words of God (Rom 10:17). Note that concerning the end-times, the Lord Jesus warned, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8 cf. Amos 8:11; Lam 2:9).

Here are other Bible evidences that guide us:

(1) God also has established Biblical precedents which show that He keeps and protects His Words. For instance, when Moses broke the original copy of the tables of God, they were replaced very soon afterwards and not hundreds of years later and Scripture makes the point that these second tablets were written “the words that were in the first tables” (Deut 10:2). In the book of Jeremiah, God responded to the burning of His inspired Words by preparing Baruch to record in it “all the former words that were in the first roll” (Jer 36:28).

(2) Jesus preached from the existing scrolls and we are explicitly told they were “scripture” (Luke 4:21). Jesus also explicitly said the “Scripture” that they were reading was “spoken unto you by God” (Matt 22:31 cf. Mark 12:24-26). Indeed, Christ said to His audience that when they read the Scripture they would see that which was written by Daniel the prophet himself (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14). Other New Testament passages argue from the Old Testament text based on a phrase (as in Acts 15:13-17), a word

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

(Matt 22:32), or even the difference between the singular and plural form of a word (as in Gal 3:16).

(3) The Bible warns that there would be those who would “corrupt the word of God” (2 Cor 2:17; Jer 23:29) and handle it “deceitfully” (2 Cor 4:2). The Apostle Paul warns of those who “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” as heading towards apostasy (Rom 1:25). There would arise false gospels with false epistles (2 Thess 2:2). Jesus taught us that if a tree is corrupt, the fruit will be corrupt (Matt 7:17). False prophets and false teachers corrupt the Scriptures (2 Pet 2:1-3). We must understand that there will always be a line of perversion as there will be of preservation. We are mandated to verify this fruit based upon the premise that if a man’s doctrinal belief is in error invariably he will do the same to the Scriptures (2 Cor 2:17). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7); so all knowledge of the Words of God is rooted in God.

(4) God utilised fallible but Spirit-filled human writers to pen His divinely inspired Words of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21). A fallible but Spirit-filled John the Baptist could point infallibly to Christ. As much as a fallible but Spirit-filled Church can recognise and receive the infallible Canon, so can she also recognise and receive the infallible Words of this Canon (John 10:27). Canonicity was recognised by the true Church (not Rome) and the corollary of this must be that the Canonised Words must be recognised by the true and faithful Church and not Rome’s texts or apostate textual critics such as Westcott, Hort, Aland, Metzger et al.

(5) The Church at Antioch has a noteworthy position in Scriptures in contrast to Alexandria. Antioch is the first place where the born-again believer is called a Christian (Acts 11:26). It is also interesting to see that where both Antioch and Alexandria are mentioned in the same passage, Antioch is listed as a place of service, while Alexandria is listed as a place of disruption (Acts 6:5-10). Egypt is for the most part associated with ungodliness in the Bible (Isa 19:14, 30:1-3; Acts 7:39; Rev 11:8). Most of the New Testament books were written originally to cities in the Byzantine Text area and none written to Alexandria. However, it was precisely in Alexandria that corrupters of the true text dominated.

Kent Brandenburg summarises from these presuppositions,

We know that God uses mathematical probability to bring certainty in the way of fulfilled prophecies. He makes predictions and they all come to pass like He said. The one hundred percent fulfillment is evidence. This relates to evidence

for verbal, plenary preservation of Scripture in two ways. First, every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. What believers agree are God's Words are not just men's opinions but the Spirit bearing witness, testifying to truth. A four to five hundred year agreement on the *textus receptus* and Hebrew Masoretic stands as evidence based on Scriptural presuppositions. Do we really think that we can say that all those believers for all those years were wrong? In this one area, Scripture, they were all deceived? And yet, at the end of that period of time, unbelieving textual critics were actually enlightened?

Second, the promises of preservation are like the prophecies that God fulfilled. Are we going to say that God fulfilled all of the prophecies, including the detailed dozens in Daniel and the amazing many in Isaiah, but He didn't fulfill His promises to protect His Word unto perfection? The fulfillment of prophecy says that God keeps His promises. The power of their fulfillment extends to the trust in God's promises of perfect preservation and availability of all His Words. One hundred textual critics, mostly unbelieving, can't be trusted with a holy book written by a holy God.¹⁷

Westcott and Hort

The Bible's whole existence is due to the unique event that it is entirely inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16). From the first inscripturation we are confronted immediately with the reality and involvement of the supernatural, as well as its absolute authority. Therefore, those who reject the Bible on its own premised overview will invariably treat it as any other ancient book. Its uniqueness resides in the fact that while humans have been the vehicle of its production, it never ceases to be the Word of God, communicated by Him, developed, transmitted and preserved by Him. The question then is who or what is the vehicle of agency that God providentially leads to receive these Canonised Words. As Douglas Wilson argued in his debate with CT advocate James White,

Given human agency, either the Church authoritatively recognizes the text, or some other entity does, or there is no text. We both accept the Bible as the self-authenticating Word of God—therefore we agree there are canonical books (along with canonical contents). That leaves us with the first two options in our recognition of this canon. I am maintaining that the Church has the responsibility to recognize that canon through her discipline (e.g., defrocking a minister who claims that Romans is spurious). Now if you deny that the Church has this authority, it means that you must grant it to some other entity. What is that entity?...the science of autonomous textual criticism, far from establishing verity, has only managed to establish thousands of variations and increase a generally destructive confusion about the text of Scripture.¹⁸

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

God does not preserve Scripture using men and methods rooted in a denial of what He has said. A textual position that is predicated on the theories and conjectural emendations of men of the character of Westcott and Hort must be rejected. Apostate textual critics should be accorded no higher authority than evolutionary biologists discussing Genesis or existential French philosophers on ethics—with a barrel of salt! To take a position that an unregenerate man can reason correctly and cogently independent of Scriptures as determination of God's Words invariably sets man up as the ultimate epistemological authority over what is true. However, having ethically separated himself from the only source of knowledge, a text-critical unbeliever seeks to suppress truth in order to interpret everything without reference to God (Rom 1). Indeed, many false and pagan worldviews have emerged from false conclusions about God from general revelation. We cannot turn to unbelievers for truth about Scripture as each has differing and contradictory ideas. This is why the Divines in the Westminster Confession did not put the doctrine of God in their first chapter as they had to first establish the source of knowledge.

It is also clear that a Christian cannot divorce the spiritual nature of the battle from the battle itself. An unbeliever is not neutral as to textual facts and interpreting them (Matt 12:30; John 3:19). We are warned to avoid “walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, sitting in the seat of the scornful” (Ps 1:1). Robert L Thomas argues,

Sin has distorted man's ability to receive truth. If the vessel for receiving truth has a depraved mind, whatever it does by way of processing and reproducing that truth will be lacking. It may lack more in some instances than in others, but a blinding by sin will always exist.¹⁹

All truth does not possess the same authority, as the only absolutely certain truth is that of inspired revelation. General revelation must always be subordinate to special revelation. God's Word must be the final arbiter in all truth claims. Milton Terry warns of the attempt to undermine this doctrine,

Others have attempted various methods of “reconciling” science and the Bible, and these have generally acted on the supposition that the results of scientific discovery necessitate a new interpretation of the Scripture records, or call for new principles of interpretation. The new discoveries, they say, do not conflict with the ancient revelation; they only conflict with the old interpretation of the revelation. We must change our hermeneutical methods, and adapt them to the revelations of science. How for the thousandth time have we heard the story of Galileo and the Inquisition.²⁰

He continues,

Hasty natures, however, indulging in pride of intellect, or given to following the dictum of honoured masters, may fall into grievous error in either of two ways: They may shut their eyes to facts, and hold to a delusion in spite of evidence; or they may become the obsequious victims of “science falsely so called.” That certainly is a false science which is built upon inferences, assumptions, and theories, and yet presumes to dogmatize as if its hypotheses were facts. And that is a system of hermeneutics equally false and misleading which is so flexible, under the pressure of new discoveries as to yield to the putting of any number of new meanings upon an old and common word.²¹

Cornelius Van Til provides an insightful illustration that delineates how foolish it is to turn to unbelievers to determine the Words of God by rationalistic methods,

The intellect of fallen man may, as such, be keen enough. It may be compared to a buzz-saw that is sharp and shining, ready to cut the boards that come to it. Let us say that a carpenter wishes to cut fifty boards for the purpose of laying the floor of a house. He has marked his boards. He has set his saw. He begins at one end of the mark on the boards. But he does not know that his seven year old son has tampered with the saw and changed its set. The result is that every board he saws is cut slantwise and thus unusable because it is too short except at the point where the saw first made its contact with the wood. So also whenever the teachings of Christianity are presented to the natural man they will be cut according to the set of sinful human personality. The result is they may have formal understanding of the truth, mere cognition but no true knowledge of God.²²

Sad to say many fundamentalists do not agree. Mark Minnick of BJU argues in the book *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*,

a textual critic may be an unbeliever when it comes to the Bible’s doctrinal truths. But when it comes to the Bible’s text—to this question of the Bible’s words—a textual critic is initially little more than a reporter. . . . Following this initial reporting, a textual critic becomes an interpreter of this data.²³

This is not the historic position of Bible-believing saints. Autonomous theories of knowledge are riddled with problems. Apart from the revelation of God in nature and in His Word, man is unable to rightly interpret reality. We must always start with God in all our thinking or we will become fools in attempting to rationally justify any knowledge claims, especially on spiritual issues. As Paul warned Timothy, the approach must be presuppositional in respect of the Word of God, “keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so

called” (1 Tim 6:20). Minnick’s theory is simply a Kantian “wall of antinomy” between the phenomenal and noumenal world of epistemology, which ultimately led Kant to a logically fallacious and self-refuting scepticism. Van Til points out, “even to say that there are some facts that can be known without reference to God, is already the very opposite of the Christian position.”²⁴ He goes on to make a pertinent observation to those advocating “neutral textual criticism,”

Hence the difference between the prevalent method of science and the method of Christianity is not that the former is interested in finding the facts and is ready to follow the facts wherever they may lead, while the latter is not ready to follow the facts. The difference is rather that the former wants to study the facts *without God*, while the latter wants to study the facts in the light of the revelation God gives of himself in Christ. Thus the antithesis is once more that between those for whom the final center of reference in knowledge lies in man, and those for whom the final center of reference for knowledge lies in God, as this God speaks in Scripture.²⁵

A typical historic view is that of Joseph Philpot, Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford, and editor of *The Gospel Standard* who in 1857 argued against a revision of KJV because the Biblical scholars of that day were “notoriously either tainted with popery or infidelity.”²⁶

Reformers and Preservation

Martin Luther sparked the Reformation on three pillars: faith, grace and Scripture. The final pillar of *Sola Scriptura* predicated the Bible as the only objective Protestant source of all authority available and was to be regarded as God’s last Words to mankind. It effectively dethroned the pope and enthroned the Bible. The Reformers were cognisant that the reason for the darkness of the Medieval Period was a result of the Roman Church losing sight of the true text in the original languages. They were also equally clear that the dissemination of the Received Text through the printed editions had sparked the Reformation and not the rise of nationalism, corruption in the Roman Church, or even the Renaissance. Since the autographs were not available, the Reformers knew that we must have a reliable tradition or bridge of some sort which connects us to the original autographs. This bridge must be undergirded with faith in a God who controls the flow of all historical events through the true Church and not apostate autonomous textual critics. The Reformers looked to ecclesiastical consensus in textual issues in the same manner they had in Canonical, Trinitarian and Christological issues.

The leading Reformers rejected Rome's tradition and its corrupted texts, and held fast to the Received Text readings, which they knew evoked the wrath of Satan and had triggered the great Protestant Reformation during which tens of thousands of true believers perished by flame, famine and torture. Rome had used a handful of copies in which numerous variants existed in an attempt to refute the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. The Reformers were well aware of the corruptions of the texts of Alexandria and regarded the variant readings in the minority texts as either intentional or inadvertent corruptions. The seventeenth century Confessions focused in on the doctrine of special providential preservation, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Helvetica Consensus Formula, as a direct response to the attack of the Council of Trent on the Received Text. The Council of Trent solemnly affirmed in the following words,

Moreover the same Sacred and holy Synod, considering that no small utility may accrue to the Church of God, if it be made known which out of all the Latin editions now in circulation of the Sacred Books is to be held as authentic, ordains and declares that the said old and Vulgate edition, which by the lengthened usage of so many ages has been approved of in the Church.²⁷

The Reformers asserted the counterpoint to the Vulgate that the Received Text was the "authentic" text; as the locus of Biblical authority was the apographs not the Church. Their view was not derived from the supposedly neutral science of textual criticism but in their presuppositional faith in the promises that God had preserved His Words for them. They knew that an inspired Bible that no one could see was no use to them, for as Calvin said on his commentary of 2 Peter 1:19 that, "without the Word, there is nothing left but darkness." Textual critics, Woodbridge and Balmer admit, "It is true that in the seventeenth century a good number of Christians esteemed the Bibles they had in their hands as infallible."²⁸ The liberal historian, McCabe, accepted that the Reformers had no time for rationalistic textual principles,

The reformers, indeed, extended little patronage to the exercise of reason in religious matters; they denounced it and its fruit, philosophical speculation, as an evil not to be tolerated; and Luther went so far as to assert (even to the disgust of the Church of Rome) that a proposition may be true in theology and false in philosophy.²⁹

As we search the Reformation writings this fact becomes quickly apparent. Samuel Tregelles notes,

Beza's text was during his life in very general use among Protestants; they seemed to feel that enough had been done to establish it, and they relied on it

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

as giving them a firm basis.... After the appearance of the texts of Stephanus and Beza, many Protestants ceased from all inquiry into the authorities on which the text of the New Testament in their hands was based.³⁰

Even the Anabaptist leader, Balthasar Hubmaier, took this position and wrote in 1526,

Thou knowest, Zwingli, that the Holy Scripture is such a complete, compacted, true, infallible, eternally immortal speech, that the least letter or tittle cannot pass away in this book.³¹

So strongly did the Reformers and their heirs fall back on the TR that textual critics such as Richard Bentley in 1716 derided it as “the Protestant Pope Stephens,” but admitted that “Stephens’ edition, set out and regulated by himself alone, is now become the standard. The text stands, as if an Apostle was his compositor.”³²

Although the Reformers were accused of “bibliolatry” it was not the Bible they worshipped but the Author of it who has chosen to reveal Himself empirically in His written Word. Despite the revisionist argument that Calvin and Beza had no other option but to use the Received Text, the facts are that they did have alternative options but deliberately rejected them. They may not have had the quantity of evidence, but they were aware of the diversity of the variant readings thrown up by the textual critics today. Instead, they chose the path of Sacred Criticism which simply studied the texts to see what was received by the Church through history rather than the rationalistic “restoration” of the text by Enlightenment Criticism. They recognised that copies and editions differed because of variants, but trusted the Holy Spirit and the common faith of God’s people. Beza made it clear, “that he was very unwilling to amend the basic text and was interested largely in readings which confirmed it.”³³ One Reformed critic of the TR, Greg Bahnsen admits,

Some Protestants have argued for the inspired infallibility of the vowel points in the Hebrew Old Testament (e.g., the Buxtorfs and John Owen; the Formula Consensus Helvetica more cautiously spoke of the inspiration of “at least the power of the points”). The errorless transmission and preservation of the original text of Scripture has been taught by men such as Hollaz, Quenstedt, and Turretin.³⁴

Challenge of the Vulgate

Cognisant of the role the Received Text had in damaging the Romanist cause and giving authority to the Protestant cause, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared Erasmus a Pelagian heretic, rejected his New Testament, and edicted that only Jerome’s Latin Vulgate was the authentic

Bible.³⁵ Trent's argument was that the Scriptures are corrupted at the fount and we need an infallible Church to determine the Word of God, as one can never be sure of the true text of Scripture. The Reformers posited a rejoinder by maintaining that the Scriptures guide the Church, as we have, by God's providence, the uncorrupted fount, "by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages." Ironically, now many fundamental Protestants are positing that Rome was right when it sought to undermine our doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* on the basis of the variants they showed in their manuscripts. They argue that notwithstanding Rome's other errors in theology, they were right about the Scriptures, and the post-Reformation dogmatists were wrong.

To try and influence the English people back to Rome, the Jesuits prepared an English New Testament translation in 1582 based upon the Vulgate which was immediately sent to England, and secretly distributed through the country. As one historian observed, "The English Papists in the seminary at Rheims perceiving that they could no longer blindfold the laity from the scriptures, resolved to fit them with false spectacles; and set forth the Rhemish translation in opposition to the Protestant versions."³⁶ The preface to this Rheims translation expressly states its purpose,

It is almost three hundred years since James Archbishop of Genoa, is said to have translated the Bible into Italian. More than two hundred years ago, in the days of Charles V the French king, was it put forth faithfully in French, the sooner to shake out of the deceived people's hands, the false heretical translations of a sect called Waldenses.³⁷

Catholic priest, Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623), in his *History of the Council of Trent* recalls,

On the contrary, the major part of the Divines said, that it had been necessary to account that translation, which formerly hath been read in all the churches [Latin Vulgate], and used in the schools, to be divine and authentical, otherwise they should yield the cause to the Lutherans, and open a gate to innumerable heresies ... The Inquisitors will not be able to proceed against the Lutherans, in case they know not Hebrew and Greek, because they will suddenly answer, "the text is not so," and "that translation is false."³⁸

Queen Elizabeth (1533-1603) was so concerned of the threat to English unity by the Jesuit Rhemist Bible that she sent to Beza for assistance to refute this perversion of the Received Text. It is recorded that he told her, "that one of her Majesty's own subjects was far better qualified to defend the Protestant cause against the Rhemists; and this person, he said, was Thomas Cartwright."³⁹ It was said of Thomas Cartwright (c. 1535-1603), that he

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

regarded the Vulgate as, “the Version adapted by the Rhemists ... that all the soap and nitre they could collect would be insufficient to cleanse the Vulgate from the filth of blood in which it was originally conceived and had since collected in passing so long through the hands of unlearned monks, from which the Greek copies had altogether escaped.”⁴⁰ Brook records that,

Mr. Cartwright defended the holy Scriptures against the accusation of corruption, and maintained that the Old and New Testaments written in the original languages were preserved uncorrupted. They constituted the word of God, whose works are all perfect, then must his word continue unimpaired; and, since it was written for our instruction, admonition, and consolation, he concluded that, unless God was deceived and disappointed in his purpose, it must perform these friendly offices for the church of God to the end of the world. If the authority of the authentic copies in Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek were lost, or given up, or corrupted, or the sense changed, there would be no high court of appeal to put an end to disputes; so that the exhortation to have recourse to the law, the prophets, and the New Testament would be of very little effect. In this case our state would be worse than theirs under the law, and in the time of Christ; yea than those who lived some hundred years after Christ, when the ancient fathers exhorted the people to try all controversies by the Scriptures. Their own Gratian directs us, in deciding differences, not to the old translation, but to the originals of the Hebrew in the Old Testament, and of the Greek in the New.⁴¹

Thomas Cartwright observed this about preservation,

Woe unto the churches, if the Scriptures, the charters and records of heaven be destroyed, falsified, or corrupted. These divine charters were safely kept in one nation of the Jews; and though they were sometimes unfaithful, yet they kept the keys of the Lord’s library: but now, when many nations have the keys, it is altogether incredible that any such corruptions should enter in, as the adversaries unwisely suppose. If the Lord preserved the book of Leviticus, with the account of the ancient ceremonies, which were afterward abolished, how much more may we conclude that his providence has watched over other books of Scripture which properly belong to our times and to our salvation? Will not the Scriptures bear witness to the perpetuity of their own authority? “Secret things belong to God;” but things revealed belong to us, and to our children forever. Jesus Christ said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” Notwithstanding the sacred writings were disregarded, and even hated by most persons, they had been preserved entire as they were the first day they were given to the church of God. More than fifteen hundred years had elapsed, during which not any one book, nor part of any book, of canonical Scripture had been lost: and it was evident not only that

the matter of the Scripture, but also the words; not only the sense and meaning, but also the manner and form of speech in them remained unaltered.⁴²

Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, William Whitaker (1548-1595), wrote the one extensive work on the subject of the Bible written by an English Reformer. In a classic riposte to the Romanist translation posited perfect preservation as an absolute necessity,

Now we, not doubtfully or only with some probable shew, but most certainly, know that this Greek edition of the New Testament is no other than the inspired and archetypal scripture of the new Testament, commended by the apostles and evangelists to the Christian church.... If God had permitted the scripture to perish in the Hebrew and Greek originals, in which it was first published by men divinely inspired, he would not have provided sufficiently for his church and for our faith. From the prophetic and apostolic scripture the church takes its origin, and the faith derives its source. But whence can it be ascertained that these are in all respects prophetic and apostolic scriptures, if the very writings of the prophets and apostles are not those which we consult?⁴³

Whitaker went on to say he accepted the Received Text handed down by faith,

Now the Hebrew edition of the old, and the Greek of the New Testament, was always held the authentic scripture of God in the Christian churches for six hundred years after Christ. This, therefore, ought to be received by us also as authentic scripture. If they doubt the major, we must ask them, whether the church hath changed its authentic scripture, or hath not rather preserved, and commended to all succeeding generations, that which was in truth authentic from the very first? If it lost that which was published by the prophets and apostles, who can defend that negligence, who excuse so enormous a sacrilege?⁴⁴

Whitaker also cleverly rejected the argument that the Masoretes had corrupted the Hebrew Text,

Besides, if the Jews had wished to corrupt the original scriptures, they would have laid their sacrilegious hands specially upon those places which concern Christ and confirm the faith. But in those places these fountains run so clear that one feels no lack: nay, they sometimes run far clearer than the Latin streams.⁴⁵

He also showed how God protected the Scriptures in the ages, God protects the scriptures against Satan, as being their constant enemy. Satan hath frequently endeavoured to destroy the scriptures, knowing that they stand in his way: but he hath never spent any trouble or thought upon these unwritten traditions; for he supposed that his whole object would be gained if he could

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

destroy the scriptures. In pursuance of this plan he hath raised up such impious tyrants as Antiochus, Maximin, Diocletian, and others, who have endeavoured utterly to quench the light of scripture. Now, if religion could remain entire even when these books were lost, it would be in vain for Satan to labour with such furious efforts to remove these books.⁴⁶

Bishop of Salisbury and eminent Divine, John Jewel (1522-1571), who was a strong apologist against the Church of Rome, also makes clear the need of perfect preservation,

By the space of so many thousand years, the word of God passed by so many dangers of tyrants, of Pharisees, of heretics, of fire, and of sword, and yet continueth and standeth until this day, without altering or changing one letter. This was a wonderful work of God, that having so many, so great enemies, and passing through so many, so great dangers, it yet continueth still without adding or altering of any one sentence, or word, or letter. No creature was able to do this, it was God's work. He preserved it, that no tyrant should consume it, no tradition choke it, no heretic maliciously should corrupt it. For His name's sake, and for the elect's sake, He would not suffer it to perish. For in it God hath ordained a blessing for His people, and by it He maketh covenant with them for life everlasting. Tyrants, and Pharisees, and heretics, and the enemies of the cross of Christ have an end, but the word of God hath no end. No force shall be able to decay it. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.⁴⁷

Cambridge-educated Puritan preacher, Nicholas Gibbens, also retorted in 1602,

For by these authorities it may seem apparent, that the Hebrew Text has been corrupted by the Jews: which if it be; where is the truth the Scriptures to be found, but either perished, or only remaining in that translation which the Papists so greatly magnify. For answer whereunto, we affirm and testify by the authority of the Scriptures themselves, (which is the voice of God) of the Fathers, and of the adversaries themselves; that the Scriptures in the Hebrew tongue are pure, and unspotted of all corruption.⁴⁸

Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688), the German Lutheran dogmatician, argued,

We believe, as is our duty, that the providential care of God has always watched over the original and primitive texts of the canonical Scriptures in such a way that we can be certain that the sacred codices which we now have in our hands are those which existed at the time of Jerome and Augustine, nay at the time of Christ Himself and His apostles.⁴⁹

English Puritan and theologian, Edward Leigh (1602-1671), explained why we needed confidence in a pure text for our Bibles,

If the authority of the authentical copies in Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek fall, then there is no pure Scripture in the Church of God, there is no high court of appeal where controversies (rising upon the diversity of translations, or otherwise) may be ended. The exhortations of having recourse unto the Law and to the Prophets, and of our Saviour Christ asking “How it is written,” and “How readest thou,” is now either of none effect, or not sufficient.”⁵⁰

The great Puritan, Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686), makes clear,

The devil and his agents have been blowing at Scripture light, but could never blow it out; a clear sign that it was lighted from heaven.... The letter of Scripture has been preserved, without any corruption, in the original tongue.⁵¹

The prodigious Puritan scholar, John Owen, who entered Oxford at 12 years old, adopted the same stance,

It can, then, with no colour of probability be asserted (which yet I find some learned men too free in granting), namely, that there hath the same fate attended the Scripture in its transcription as hath done other books. Let me say without offence, this imagination, asserted on deliberation, seems to me to border on atheism. Surely the promise of God for the preservation of his word, with his love and care of his church, of whose faith and obedience that word of his is the only rule, requires other thoughts at our hands.⁵²

Swiss Hebraist, Johannes Buxtorf (1599-1664), defended the preservation of even the Hebrew vowel points against the attack of Louis Cappel with studies published in 1624 and 1650. Buxtorf also affirmed the purity of the Received Text in 1620,

From the extremity of the East to the extremity of the West the word of God is read with one mouth and in one manner; and in all the books that there are in Asia, Africa, and Europe, there is discernible a full agreement, without any difference whatever.⁵³

John Woodbridge notes of Rome’s influence in this attack and states, “Cappel was able to publish one of these works only with the help of the Roman Catholic apologist, Jean Morin.”⁵⁴ Martin Klauber also notes the staunch defence of the Masoretic Text by the Reformers by noting, “Reformed scholars of the mid-seventeenth century, following the lead of Buxdorf, considered all other versions of the OT as subordinate to the Masoretic text. ... Cappel’s theories were generally rejected in Reformed circles.”⁵⁵

A typical presuppositional approach based on special providential preservation was that of the Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Robert Rollock (1555-1599). He argued for “the preservation of the divine oracles

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

of God unto our times” and the retention of many disputed passages such as 1 John 5:7, Mark 16, John 8 based on the fact that these are, “our Greek books, which we hold for authentical, have this verse and our Church receives it.”⁵⁶ He rejected all the textual-critical assaults of Rome on the Received Text by summarising,

Thus we see then the adversaries cannot prove by these places that the Greek edition of the New Testament is corrupted, and so act authentical. Wherefore it resteth that the Hebrew edition of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament is only authentical.⁵⁷

Henry Walker in 1642 also discerned the wiles of the Jesuit plot and argued that the supposed textual problems were “vanity” and “inventions” as, “the Pope is glad of these distractions amongst us, and would now take the opportunity to snatch away the Bible from us; he would fain take our religion away; but we hope to send him back to Rome again with a powder.”⁵⁸ Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713), provost of the College of Dublin and later Archbishop of Armagh, writes against one sceptic who attacked the Hebrew Masoretic Text,

It may be suspected, that the intention is to bring it into doubt, whether we have any such thing, as a true Bible at all, which we may confide in, as God’s Word.... However, I doubt not, but that, by God’s Providence, as the Hebrew Text hath hitherto stood firm, so it will stand on its own bottom to wear out all assaults against it, and be, what it always was, received as the undoubted Word of God, when all the arguments and objections against it are vanish’d into smoke.⁵⁹

The Rhemist version was later revised by Richard Challoner in the mid-eighteenth century. He was an English convert from Protestantism who knew well the nuances of the King James Version and deliberately sought to revise the *Douay-Rheims* into closer conformity with the diction of the King James Version.⁶⁰ Notwithstanding, so successful was the King James Version and Cartwright’s rebuttal of the Rhemist version that the devil was forced to change his strategy and attack not by the Latin but by the Greek.

It was about another century before Rome refined a weapon to combat *Sola Scriptura* at the hands of Romanist priest, Richard Simon (1638-1712), through “Textual Criticism.” Baird tells us, “Simon sharpened historical criticism into a weapon that could be used in the attack on Protestantism’s most fundamental error: the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*.”⁶¹ Indeed, Simon himself explains plainly his purpose, “the great changes that have taken place in the manuscripts of the Bible—as we have shown in the first book of

this work—since the first originals were lost, completely destroy the principle of the Protestants ... if tradition is not joined to scripture, there is hardly anything in religion that one can confidently affirm.”⁶² They assembled many of the variant readings into Polyglots to aid this attack. The *Cambridge History of the Bible* accepts the universal standard of the TR amidst the Reformed Churches,

In creating the phrase *textus receptus* they had confirmed acceptance of the third edition of Estienne and Beza’s recension of it as the standard version. Effective awareness of the significance of textual criticism for the ancient versions of the biblical text may be said to begin only with the *Biblia Polyglotta* of Bishop Walton in 1657.⁶³

Even the ecumenical textual critic, Dan Wallace, accepts that, “New Testament textual criticism was born as a polemic against Protestants, intended to show that they couldn’t really trust the Bible!”⁶⁴ Thus under the influence of Romanism, textual criticism emerged from enlightenment and humanistic grounds and would culminate in the 1881 Revised Version.

The Reformers did not take their creedal stand against Rome upon a utopian inerrant original autograph. To them, there was an identifiable and existing text in use by the Greek-speaking Church which had been transmitted from a handwritten manuscript form to a printed form. Likewise, they did not advocate a radical individualism where every man decides for himself which words are genuine and would have rejected the current state of textual criticism, where every man is a textual critic with horror. It is true, that unlike Luther, John Calvin did not initially *uniformly* base his readings on the text of Erasmus and “had an affinity for a renegade edition published by Simon de Colines (1534).”⁶⁵ This text included a number of variant readings from critical text manuscripts and from Rome’s Complutensian.⁶⁶ However, in later life Calvin rejected this view to return to the TR preferring the common readings by faith.⁶⁷ The facts of history are that Rome accused Protestants of having a “paper pope” by judging all matters religious with the Scripture. Ironically, five hundred years ago a man positing this kind of accusation would be called a Romanist heretic but today he is called an enlightened fundamentalist! Indeed, TR critics even attack preservationists today by equating heresy with faith in an inerrant Bible.

Westminster Confession of Faith

A good example of the Reformation view on preservation is the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) written in response to Tridentine

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

Romanism and early rationalism. The Confessional understanding of the doctrine of Holy Scripture was a dyke to keep out the deadly waters of disbelief in God's word. Like the early Reformers, the Divines looked first at the history of manuscript transmission to see what God had done, rather than the manuscripts to see what man had to do. The Westminster Divines never argued for the preservation of a copy, but the preservation of the Words, because that is what the Bible teaches. That took a presuppositional approach to this issue. They knew that if there is another authority (whether it be our individual determination of trustworthiness or the authority of an ecclesiastical leader) by which we are to determine and believe that the Bible is the Word of God, that authority itself would be the ultimate authority. Is it up to the reader to discern which portions of the Scriptures are inspired and which are not? Hence, the WCF (1:4) states,

The authority of Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

A crystallisation of the opposition to textual and historical criticism is stated in positive terms in the WCF. It should be noted that the Confession first deals with the canon of Scripture before it turns to discuss the doctrine of inspiration and authority and preservation. There is then a refutation of the canonicity of the Apocrypha before the Confession deals with the declaration of special providential preservation. This understanding of cause and effect in respect of canonisation will be an important principle to remember when we consider the preservation of the Scriptures. This seems to have been a reasoned and logical presuppositional unfolding as they are implicitly stating that the same methodology for determining canonicity must be extended to the individual words of the canon.

The Confession is a constitutional document and must be interpreted in the light of its historical context. Chapter 1.8 should not be read in a vacuum of this history, which is presuppositionally set forth in the prior statements which identify the canonical text, and disclaim the Apocrypha as being non-canonical. Unmistakably, the Westminster Divines claimed to possess the authentic text, and all critics should candidly acknowledge this rather than attempting to re-interpret it to conform to the fluid tradition of modern textual criticism. The divines were men of prodigious learning and were aware of many minor textual disagreements going back to the days of the Early Fathers. Yet this awareness did not diminish their unshakable

conviction that they continued to hold in hand an indestructible authentic revelation. They knew it was the Church's treasure and rock of defence against Rome and not one to ever casually or carelessly surrender. Given this approach, we are left with one of two choices: either the text they used is the "authentic text" or their claim was false. The Confession requires an acceptance of the Reformation Text as the authoritative court of appeal or else it is meaningless. Indeed, so seriously did the Westminster Divines view even spelling errors in various printings of the Authorised Version as "dangerous to religion," that they moved Parliament to outlaw the importation of bootleg reprints from Europe.⁶⁸

William Orr in his commentary on the WCF makes clear, "Now this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was immediately inspired by God because it was identical with the first text that God has kept pure in all the ages. The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the TR of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith."⁶⁹ Indeed, the Westminster Confession divines clearly cognisant of textual critics positing naturalistic and man-centred doctrines of preservation explicitly states that the doctrine of preservation must be hedged by Holy Scripture alone:

IV. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God

X. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

The WCF notably does not argue that Scripture is established by the prior and superior authority of modern textual criticism, but that the perfectly preserved TR (as cited in the WCF), sits in judgment upon textual criticism. The liberal writer, McCabe, writing in 1897 agrees that the Westminster divines had assumed the special providential preservation of all the words by sneering,

Until the seventeenth century divines had assumed that Providence had miraculously guarded its inspired books. From this torpid belief they were at length roused by the controversies on the date and origin of the vowel points of the Hebrew text between the Buxtorfs and Morinus and Cappell, and by the

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

discovery of a vast number of variations in the manuscripts and printed books of Scripture. Kennicott's Hebrew Bible, published from 1776 to 1790, gave 200,000 variations. Thus a door was opened to a certain reverent kind of criticism.⁷⁰

Leading contemporary textual critic, Dan Wallace, admits that the Divines based their doctrine of perfect preservation on the TR,

The response by Protestants was swift, though perhaps not particularly well thought out. In 1646, the first doctrinal statement about God preserving his text was formulated as part of the Westminster Confession. The problem is that what the Westminster divines were thinking of when they penned that confession was the TR. By virtually ignoring the variants, they set themselves up for more abuse.⁷¹

Swiss-Italian Protestant theologian, Francis Turretin (1623-1687), expounded on the early confessional doctrine of Biblical preservation and clearly understood it to mean "entire preservation," "Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired men, would not *take care of their entire preservation.*"⁷²

Richard Capel, one of the Westminster Divines, warned concerning those who undermined the preservation of Scripture when he wrote in 1658,

And to the like purpose is that observation, that the two Tables written immediately by Moses and the Prophets, and the Greek Copies immediately penned by the Apostles, and Apostolical men are all lost, or not to be made use of, except by a very few. And that we have none in Hebrew or Greek, but what are transcribed. Now transcribers are ordinary men, subject to mistake, may fail having no unerring spirit to hold their hands in writing.

Referring to these types of statements, Capel immediately writes, These be terrible blasts, and do little else when they meet with a weak head and heart, but open the door to Atheism and quite to fling off the bridle, which only can hold them and us in the ways of truth and piety: this is to fill the conceits of men with evil thoughts against the Purity of the Originals: And if the Fountains run not clear, the Translation cannot be clean.⁷³

Another of the original members of the Westminster assembly, John Lightfoot, writes, "The same power and care of God that preserves the church would preserve the Scriptures pure to it: and He that did, and could, preserve the whole could preserve every part, so that not so much as a tittle should perish."⁷⁴

J S Candlish rightly observed in 1877 that, "the word *authentic* is used, not in the modern sense in which it has been employed by many...as

meaning historically true, but in its more literal sense, attested as a correct copy of the author's work."⁷⁵ Indeed, the Reformers would have no grounds to oppose the Vulgate as deviating from the fountain of the originals if their text was also corrupted and uncertain. It is also notable that the Westminster Confessional documents, including the Bible version used in conjunction with the Annotations, all quote the Authorised Version including so-called problematic passages such as 1 John 5:7. Reformed church historian, Richard Muller, summarised the post-Reformation Reformed view of the providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures,

By "original" and "authentic" text, the Protestant orthodox do not mean the *autographa* which no one can possess but the *apographa* in the original tongue which are the source of all versions. The Jews throughout history and the church in the time of Christ regarded the Hebrew of the Old Testament as authentic and for nearly six centuries after Christ, the Greek of the New Testament was viewed as authentic without dispute. It is important to note that the Reformed orthodox insistence on the identification of the Hebrew and Greek texts as alone authentic does not demand direct reference to *autographa* in those languages: the "original and authentic text" of Scripture means, beyond the autograph copies, the legitimate tradition of Hebrew and Greek *apographa*.

The case for Scripture as an infallible rule of faith and practice and the separate arguments for a received text free from major (non-scribal) error rests on an examination of the *apographa* and does not seek the infinite regress of the lost *autographa* as a prop for textual infallibility.⁷⁶

Other Confessions

The Formula Consensus Helvetica (1675), which was drafted amidst the rising tide of text-critical challenges is even more explicit that we have all the Words of God perfectly preserved for us today to the jot and tittle. It extended the doctrine of inspiration and perfect preservation to the very Hebrew vowel points and argued that those who accept variant readings, "bring the foundation of our faith and its inviolable authority into perilous hazard,"

CANONS

I. God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have His word, which is the "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore the Church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world, a “sure word of prophecy” and “Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass” (Matt. 5:18).

II. But, in particular, the Hebrew Original of the Old Testament, which we have received and to this day do retain as handed down by the Jewish Church, unto whom formerly “were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2), is, not only in its consonants, but in its vowels—either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points—not only in its matter, but in its words, inspired of God, thus forming, together with the Original of the New Testament, the sole and complete rule of our faith and life; and to its standard, as to a Lydian stone, all extant versions, oriental and occidental, ought to be applied, and where ever they differ, be conformed.

III. Therefore we can by no means approve the opinion of those who declare that the text which the Hebrew Original exhibits was determined by man’s will alone, and do not scruple at all to remodel a Hebrew reading which they consider unsuitable, and amend it from the Greek Versions of the LXX and others, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Chaldee Targums, or even from other sources, yea, sometimes from their own reason alone; and furthermore, they do not acknowledge any other reading to be genuine except that which can be educed by the critical power of the human judgment from the collation of editions with each other and with the various readings of the Hebrew Original itself—which, they maintain, has been corrupted in various ways; and finally, they affirm that besides the Hebrew edition of the present time, there are in the Versions of the ancient interpreters which differ from our Hebrew context other Hebrew Originals, since these Versions are also indicative of ancient Hebrew Originals differing from each other. Thus they bring the foundation of our faith and its inviolable authority into perilous hazard.

There are many other Confessional writings exhibiting TR only readings. For instance, the influential Particular Baptist *Confession of Faith* of 1644 cites Acts 8:37 and the disputed long ending of Mark. The Particular Baptist *Second London Confession of Faith*, originally printed in 1677 references 1 John 5:7 to prove Trinitarianism and references the long ending of Mark three times.⁷⁷ The General Baptist *Orthodox Creed* of 1679 writes out 1 John 5:7 in the text and references it five times. The Baptist New Hampshire Confession (1833) also concurs:

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is an infallible and inerrant treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter ... and therefore is, and *shall remain to the end of the world*, the true centre of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.⁷⁸

Conclusion

It is axiomatic to even the most ardent critic of the KJV that the recovery of the “autographic text” is outside the possibility of recovery simply by a neutral textual scientific methodology. Even the leading exponents of textual criticism candidly concede this. By eliminating God’s work of preservation, they have left the Church disarmed, vulnerable and in total confusion. They are like those of old of whom God says in the last verse of the book of Judges, “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25). These multi-versionists have no final authority, save for their own reasoning or outsourcing to a scholar to tell them what God probably said.

When CT advocates appeal to an authoritative Bible from their evolutionary text they are functioning as an illusionist. Their infallible Bible is lost in a vaporous philosophical cul-de-sac and they are desperate for others not to possess one either. They believe that the Bible emerged from a “big bang” and then it was lost. Thanks to an evolutionary path which will culminate one day through liberal scholarship it may theoretically reappear in the future, although they do not think so. However, God has promised preservation in the minutiae, and not simply in the main. Although the Bible is not exhaustive in setting forth every detail of the preservation of God’s Words, when and where it speaks, it speaks with God’s authority. This authority does not extend to all competing and contradictory theories of the mode and methodologies of preservation. We should never be tempted to surrender the clear promises of God’s Word (1 Cor 4:6) amidst the capricious waves of textual critical theories.

The Scriptures explicitly teach that preservation is a work of God and offers no encouragement to those who seek a compromise with rationalistic textual criticism. There can be no question as to what God did, as He never acts contrary to what He promised. Even the contemporary agnostic textual critic, Bart Ehrman, accepts the TR advocates are the only consistent group on preservation,

One cannot read the literature produced by the various advocates of the Majority text without being impressed by a remarkable theological concurrence. To one degree or another, they all (to my knowledge, without exception) affirm that God’s inspiration of an inerrant Bible required His preservation of its text.⁷⁹

Ehrman also accepts as fallacious the logic of those who argue that God was involved in preservation but this was just “general,” as he argues, “If

PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

one affirms God's involvement in the transmission process in any way at all, is it anything but high handed to claim that He was generally, but not fully involved?"⁸⁰

The disciples of Westcott and Hort have now for a century disturbed the Protestant world by making merchandise of the Church implicitly arguing that all along Rome has always been right. This deadly poison once confined to the corners of dusty German university philosophy classrooms has now routed a whole generation of churches and seminaries. Theological rationalism and textual criticism spread like ivy, the growth stages of which have been described as sleeping, creeping, and finally leaping. Textual criticism has proven to be liberalism and Romanism's destructive child. It emerged from the same graveyard of unbelief as liberalism, Deism, and Darwinism. It is interesting to note that the latest United Bible Societies Text descended from the Westcott and Hort family boasts, "the new text is a reality, and as the text distributed by the United Bible Societies and by the corresponding office of the Roman Catholic Church (an inconceivable situation until quite recently) it has rapidly become the commonly accepted text for research and study in universities and church."⁸¹ The United Bible Societies Vice-President is Roman Catholic Cardinal Onitsha of Nigeria. On the executive committee is Roman Catholic Bishop Alilona of Italy and among the editors is Roman Catholic Cardinal Martini of Milan. Patrick Henry happily claims, "Catholics should work together with Protestants in the fundamental task of Biblical translation ... [They can] work very well together and have the same approach and interpretation ... [This] signals a new age in the church."⁸²

In 1943, the Papal encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* encouraged a new ecumenically translated Bible as it said, "These translations [should] be produced in cooperation with separated brothers."⁸³ Indeed, the Introduction in that Catholic Bible says,

In general, Nestle's-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece* (25th edition, 1963) was followed. Additional help was derived from *The Greek New Testament* (editors Aland, Black, Metzger, Wikgren) produced for the use of translators by the United Bible Societies in 1966.⁸⁴

In 1924, the liberal paper *The Christian Century* said clearly that "the Bible of the fundamentalist is one Bible: the Bible of Modernism is another."⁸⁵ Today, we have the same Ecumenical Greek Text for the modernist, liberal and Romanist Bibles. Just as Christ was hated by the world and despised by the conservative religious leaders in His day (Matt

12:14, 24, 15:12, 27:18), so the perfect Written Word is similarly attacked today. Indeed, a telling evidence for the truth of the TR can be seen by simply observing the text that the modern scribes envy, fear and mock the most. When once Protestants looked to the Received Text as the final court of appeal in faith and practice, they now look to Rome and apostates to adjudicate over what the Words actually are of the evolving text. We are being led by Rome and apostate textual critics (Semler, Griesbach, Lachmann, Metzger et al.) in this “enlightened” approach to text criticism, which simply continued Rome’s agenda but under a different banner. Through these fifth columnist “allies,” Rome’s assault against the despised “Protestant Pope” has swept the field. Yet sadly so many fundamentalists have embraced such a corrupted source as their “infallible rule of faith.”

In our supposed postmodern age which opposes certitude of truth and morality, the “buffet style” approach to the true text will lead the churches back to Rome in a “Deformation” and finally to the certainty of the authority of the Antichrist. By relegating God’s Providence outside of His Words they have robbed Him of His glory and urged us to be thankful for the elevation of man’s autonomous reason. However, our Reformation history and consequent revivals testify that God is not indifferent to His Words. Protestants rejected the authority of the Popes, because of their clear contradictions with one another; so we reject Rome’s critical textual position which results in the same nebulous position. Despite their worship of the contemporary gods of modern textual criticism, we will not embrace the idols of Enlightenment modernity. Conservative CT advocates, such as Jon Rehurek, would rather believe the textual history cobbled together by mainly unbelieving textual critics than the promises of Scripture or the historical doctrinal statements of our forefathers.

It is amazing that Reformed believers who believe in the depravity of unregenerate man and the degeneration of man and the world system in general, have accepted that scientific rationalism and classical education have somehow “evolved” to the point where apostates and liberals are more qualified to “discover” and “translate” God’s Word today than in 1611. Michael Maynard makes a pertinent observation in his work *A History of the Debate Over I John 5:7-8*, “Received Text advocates are still waiting for the fundamentalists minority text advocates to explain why they trust four liberals and a Jesuit, who is in line to become the next pope, with the identity of the New Testament.”⁸⁶ What a tragedy!

Notes

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⁴ Jack Moorman, *Forever Settled* (Collingswood: Bible For Today, 1985), 90-95.

⁵ M H Reynolds Jr, "Dangerous Misconceptions Concerning Satan," *Foundation Magazine* (May-June 1996), Editorial.

⁶ William Combs, "The Preservation of Scripture," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (2000): 38.

⁷ Lewis Carroll, Through the looking-glass, and what Alice found there (*with fifty illustrations by John Tenniel*) (London: Spark Educational Publishing, 2003), 219.

⁸ Cornelius Van Til, *The Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 10.

⁹ Douglas Wilson, "Discerning the Manuscript Traditions," *Credenda* 10/1 online at <http://www.credenda.org/issues/10-1disputatio.php> accessed 20 April 2009.

¹⁰ Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, Vol 2 (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1932), Introduction.

¹¹ David W Norris, *The Big Picture: The Authority and Integrity of the Authentic Word of God* (Cannock: Authentic Word, 2004), 294.

¹² Cited in "Textual Criticism and the Modern English Version Controversy," *Biblical Viewpoint* 16 (April 1982): 72.

¹³ "The Majority Text" by Daniel Wallace in Bart D Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1995), 309.

¹⁴ Arthur Westcott, *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott* (London: Macmillan, 1903), 393.

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¹⁶ Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 2.

¹⁷ Kent Brandenburg, "The Erroneous Epistemology of Multiple Version Onlyism," online at http://kentbrandenburg.blogspot.com/2009/03/erroneous-epistemology-of-multiple_30.html accessed 31 March 2009.

¹⁸ Douglas Wilson, "Discerning the Manuscript Traditions," *Credenda* 10/1 online at <http://www.credenda.org/issues/10-1disputatio.php> accessed 20 April 2009.

¹⁹ Robert L Thomas, "General Revelation and Biblical Hermeneutics," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 9 (1998): 5-23.

²⁰ Milton S Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, 2d ed (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, nd), 533.

²¹ Ibid, 534.

²² Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, 71.

²³ Mark Minnick, "Let's Meet the Manuscripts," in *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*, ed James B Williams (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999), 71.

The Burning Bush 15/2 (July 2009)

²⁴ Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁶ Joseph Charles Philpot, "The Authorized Version of 1611," *The Gospel Standard* (April 1857).

²⁷ J Waterworth, *Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 19.

²⁸ John D Woodbridge and Kenneth S Kantzer, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 219.

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³⁰ Samuel Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament with Remarks on Its Revision upon Critical Principles* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1854), 33-35.

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³⁷ Gerald Lewis Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation 1526-1707* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2004), 366.

³⁸ Paolo Sarpi, *History of the Council of Trent*, trans by Nathaniel Brent, (London: 1629), 156.

³⁹ Benjamin Brook, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Cartwright* (London: John Snow, 1845), 258.

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PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE: PROVIDENTIAL OR MIRACULOUS?

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⁶⁸ Frederick Scrivener, *Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), 25.

⁶⁹ William F Orr, "The Authority of the Bible as Reflected in the Proposed Confession of 1967," as quoted by Letis, *The Majority Text*, 174.

⁷⁰ McCabe, *Modern Rationalism*, 46.

⁷¹ Wallace, "Is the Bible a 'Paper Pope' for Protestants?" online at <http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2007/08/is-the-bible-a-paper-pope-for-protestants/> accessed 4 February 2009.

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⁷³ Richard Capel, *Capel's Remains* (London, 1658), 19-43.

⁷⁴ John Lightfoot, *The Whole Works of Rev John Lightfoot* (London: J F Dowe, 1822-25), 408.

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⁸² Patrick Henry, *New Directions in New Testament Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 232-234.

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Continued from page 128

The **Annual College Retreat** was once again held at the Resort Lautan Biru, Mersing, Malaysia, 11-13 May 2009.

FEBC's founding principal—the Rev Dr Timothy Tow—was called home to be with the Lord on 20 April 2009. In a Board of Directors' meeting on 1 May 2009, the Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo was appointed the new principal. The Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew is the new academic dean.

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION? A RESPONSE TO WILLIAM W COMBS OF DETROIT BAPTIST SEMINARY

Jeffrey Khoo

Introduction

The Westminster Larger Catechism says, “The Holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God.”¹ The question is raised: Is it a sin and a heresy for a Christian to esteem the Holy Scriptures so highly as to regard the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) and Greek Textus Receptus (TR) underlying the King James Version (KJV) to be the very Word of God without any mistake, without any doubt? William Combs, Professor of New Testament of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (DBTS), in his article “Errors in the King James Version?” thinks so; he maliciously calls it a “new heresy...., a heresy that has now invaded fundamental circles.”²

VPI and VPP

Besides the false and malicious accusations by anti-KJVists like Combs, there appears to be considerable ignorance and misunderstanding as regards the nature of the Holy Scriptures in the original languages, the verbally and plenarily inspired Scriptures which God has verbally and plenarily preserved, namely the Hebrew MT and the Greek TR and the translations that come from them, especially the KJV. The biblical doctrine of Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) is clearly taught in many an evangelical Systematic Theology textbook,³ and the term VPI explicitly describes what biblical inspiration means in the context of the liberal/neo-evangelical versus fundamentalist battle for the Bible in the last century.⁴ However, there is hardly any teaching on Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) in the Systematic Theology textbooks of the last century—post-Warfield. Many evangelicals today do not believe that God has promised to preserve His inspired words.

VPP to them is not taught in the Bible. The Bible to them was only inerrant in the past but is no longer inerrant today.⁵

VPI demands VPP. For what good is it to the Church to have only a Bible that was infallible and inerrant in the past but no longer infallible and inerrant today? That is why the Statement of Faith of Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) does not stop at VPI but goes on to affirm VPP, “We believe in the divine, Verbal Plenary Inspiration (Autographs) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (Apographs) of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the perfect Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Ps 12:6-7; Matt 5:18, 24:35).”⁶

Definitions

What is VPI? Here is my definition:

VPI means the whole of Scripture with all its words to the last jot and tittle is perfectly inspired by God without any error in the original languages and in all its prophecies, promises, commandments, doctrines, and truths. These inspired and inerrant words are not only the words of salvation, but also the words of history, geography and science. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter is infallibly inspired by the Lord Himself to the last iota.

Now, what is VPP? I define VPP as follows:

VPP means the whole of Scripture with all its words even to the jot and tittle is perfectly preserved by God without any loss of the original words, prophecies, promises, commandments, doctrines, and truths, not only in the words of salvation, but also the words of history, geography and science. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter is infallibly preserved by the Lord Himself to the last iota.⁷

If the Scriptures are verbally and plenary inspired and we have them today, every last word of the Scriptures to the jot and tittle, then where are they? Combs and DBTS come short here when they identify the infallible and inerrant text to be only the Autographs which scholarly consensus admits are no longer existent.⁸ And if the original text is non-existent, there is really no way whereby Combs and his colleagues can assuredly ascertain to what extent the copies or the translations reproduce exactly or accurately the original text. It is just not possible based on their naturalistic text-critical presuppositions and hypothesis of a lost or non-existent original text. This is acknowledged by the leading textual critics themselves.⁹

Identification

In the light of Reformed theology and Reformation history, the FEBC by the logic of faith identifies where and what is the original text that God has initially inspired and providentially preserved, infallible and inerrant: “We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant.”¹⁰

As far as English translations of the Bible go, we consider the old to be better than the new. “We uphold the Authorised (King James) Version to be the Word of God—the best, most faithful, most accurate, most beautiful translation of the Bible in the English language, and do employ it alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.”¹¹

Does the KJV of the Holy Scriptures contain errors then? Combs in his paper titled, “Errors in the King James Version?,” argues for errors in the KJV.¹² He also went on to say that all copies and translations, being not the original manuscripts or autographs, must “have mistranslations, miscopying, or misprinting, however minor, and are not therefore inerrant.”¹³ He considers a believer who regards the KJV as the very Word of God without any textual and translational error to be a heretic, and even names D A Waite, President of the Dean Burgon Society, as one.¹⁴ To Combs, the only believers who are sound and sane, godly and orthodox are those who believe that all texts and translations today contain errors! It would do well for Combs to read more Reformed theology and Reformation history before he plays the pope to denounce as heretics all who believe in the present infallibility and inerrancy of the inspired Scriptures and identify those inspired Scriptures to be the providentially preserved Hebrew MT and Greek TR underlying the Reformation Bibles best represented by the KJV.

Qualifications

Before we discuss further, we need to qualify and explain our terms especially as regards the KJV as “the Word of God,” lest we be misunderstood or misrepresented.

Firstly, when we speak of “the Word of God,” we are referring to either one of two things: (1) the Holy Scriptures in the original languages in both the autographs (originals) and apographs (copies), and/or (2) the Holy Scriptures in the versions or translations which come in different languages

whether ancient or modern. Having said this, we agree with the DBTS doctrinal statement that translations partake of inspiration in an indirect fashion only “to the extent that they reproduce the text of the original manuscripts.”¹⁵

Secondly, it goes without saying that the 100% perfect Word of God must be the divinely inspired or God-breathed (*theopneustos*) Hebrew and Aramaic words of the Old Testament and Greek words of the New Testament as penned by the specially appointed prophets and apostles without any mistake or error (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21). These same inspired words in the original languages have been preserved by the special providence of God through the ages so that in every generation God’s people might have all of God’s words available and accessible to them for their spiritual life and growth (Ps 12:6-7; Matt 4:4, 5:18; 2 Tim 3:17). By the logic of faith, based on the twin doctrines of VPI and VPP, we identify the Hebrew and Aramaic words of the MT and the Greek words of the TR to be the infallibly and inerrantly inspired words that God has single-handedly preserved by *providentia extraordinaria* (extraordinary or special providence).¹⁶ By the logic of faith, we further consider the divinely inspired and preserved Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words underlying the time-tested and time-honoured KJV to be completely authentic, authoritative and definitive.

Thirdly, it must be emphasised that God’s infallible and inerrant nature demands that His inspired and preserved words be infallible and inerrant as well. God is perfect and makes no mistakes. The inspired and preserved words of God likewise must also be perfect and without any mistake. These infallible and inerrant words are thus *strictly* the originally inspired and providentially preserved Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words and not translated words in other languages. We however agree with Combs when he says that “translations can be said to be inspired in a limited, derivative sense.”¹⁷ We also agree that as a whole “they cannot be said to be inerrant in any full sense.”¹⁸ We also reject the notion that a translation can be superior to the original language Scriptures. Only the original language Scriptures can be deemed absolutely and totally infallible and inerrant. This is articulated by the Dean Burgon Society in their “Articles of Faith” II.A, which states,

the King James Version (or Authorised Version) of the English Bible is a true, faithful, and accurate translation of these two providentially preserved Texts [Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text and Traditional Greek Text underlying the KJV], which in our time has no equal among all of the other English

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION?

Translations. The translators did such a fine job in their translation task that we can without apology hold up the Authorised Version of 1611 and say ‘This is the Word of God!’ while at the same time realising that, in some verses, *we must go back to the underlying original language Texts for complete clarity, and also compare Scripture with Scripture.*”¹⁹

Therefore, although the infallible and inerrant words are strictly the original language words God has inspired and preserved, the translated words in other languages may be deemed “inspired,” “preserved,” “infallible,” and “inerrant” but only in a derivative and qualified sense, insofar as they agree with the words in the original languages. So, the translations do not stand independently but are dependent on the original language Scriptures, and faithful and accurate translations of them are to be highly esteemed. As such we do not think it pastorally wise to cast doubt on the trustworthiness and reliability of faithful and accurate translations like the KJV as many an agnostic and deistic scholar today are wont to do. The late Lynn Gray Gordon, a faithful Bible Presbyterian minister and former General Secretary of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM), had rightly disclaimed the KJV as an “inspired version,” but nonetheless upheld the KJV to be “free from error in thought, fact and doctrine.”²⁰

Furthermore, we believe the Reformation versions of the Bible like Tyndale’s, Coverdale’s, the Geneva, and the KJV due to their underlying texts (Hebrew MT and Greek TR) and word-for-word (formal or verbal equivalence method) translation are to be regarded as the “Word of God,” the best of which is the time-tested and time-honoured KJV. The faithfulness and accuracy of the Reformation versions notwithstanding, it is important that the original language Scriptures be the Scriptures that determine the precise and fulness of meaning of the words of God. As such, we disclaim the pejorative label “KJV Onlyism” hurled indiscriminately by anti-VPP/TR/KJVists at Reformed and Reformation saints who defend the KJV based on the Traditional and Reformation Texts that God has providentially and supernaturally preserved as promised in the Sacred Scriptures and affirmed in our Reformed and Reformation creeds. Let it be known that we see ourselves rather as “KJV Superiority” than as “KJV Only” defenders. Waite, who holds a ThD degree from Dallas Theological Seminary and a PhD from Purdue University, has written a most timely book that defends the “KJV Superiority” position calling for Christians to retain or return to the good old KJV by arguing for its superiority in four areas—superiority in its (1) texts, (2) translators, (3) technique, and (4) theology.²¹ We reject the extreme

“super superiority” of the KJV-Only position propounded by radicals such as Peter Ruckman.²²

Fifthly, the inspired Scriptures that God has preserved must mean that the sole and supreme authority of Christian faith and practice must rest only on these very infallible and inerrant Scriptures or Source Texts (i.e. the autographic text as found in the preserved and uncorrupted apographs) which we aver are in our hands today. This is apparent in the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy:

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God’s written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

...

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God’s witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God’s own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God’s instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God’s command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God’s pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture’s divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible’s own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.²³

In light of the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy, it can be readily seen that the authority of the Bible is inextricably tied to its inerrancy. Contemporary evangelical scholars claim the Bible to be inerrant only in the past but no longer inerrant today. They believe that since the inerrant

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION?

autographs no longer exist and no two copies of surviving manuscripts are identical, all extant manuscripts, texts and translations today contain mistakes and are corrupted to some degree or other, there is simply no such thing as a Perfect Bible today. It goes without saying that such a view or teaching undermines the total inerrancy and absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures, and consequently destroys the very foundations of the Christian Faith.

FEBC believes that the autographs are not lost; they exist today in the faithful and trustworthy apographs or copies (and copies of the copies, and copies of the copies of the copies ...) of the autographs that God has providentially preserved throughout the ages. These autographs are today found in the uncorrupted apographs which may be deemed “the autographic text” (or the “authentic” text in the WCF) which is the totally infallible and inerrant text, verbally and plenary inspired and preserved, and consequently the Church’s sole and supreme authority of faith and life.

Now, article 10 of the Chicago Statement says,

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.²⁴

However, the question remains: how do we identify or ascertain the autographic text? Is it through the supposedly “scientific” method called “textual criticism,” or the theological method which is “textual reception” (Acts 2:41, 8:14, 11:1, 17:11; 1 Thess 1:6, 2:13)? The Chicago Statement is rather ambiguous here. If the Chicago Statement allows for the so-called scientific method of textual criticism in ascertaining the autographic text, then it would contradict its very first article which states, “We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.” The dependence on the textual critics today and their rationalistic textual-critical method is one such “human source.” Textual critics and textual criticism undermine the very authority of the Holy Scripture the Chicago Statement seeks to protect. The framers of the Chicago Statement in their exposition of the Statement unfortunately speak of the need for textual criticism and by so doing contradict their very own statement on the inextricable link between biblical inerrancy and biblical authority.²⁵ It appears they have not thought through enough the doctrine of divine providence and biblical preservation.

As far as Combs is concerned, he does not believe that God has infallibly or inerrantly preserved His inspired words to the jot and tittle by special providence as promised in Matthew 5:18 and many other like passages.²⁶ He said without equivocation, “the words of the autographs have not been inerrantly preserved.”²⁷

This paper thus seeks to refute Combs’s allegation of errors in the Bible we have in our hands today. It is a defence of the total inerrancy and absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures in the original languages as faithfully recognised and received as the inspired words of God by the Reformers and Reformation saints, namely, the Hebrew MT and the Greek TR which are so readily available and easily accessible today because of God’s infallible preservation of His inspired words. This paper is also a defence of the KJV and any faithful and accurate version/translation in whatever language that is based on and accurately translated from those original language texts which we deem by the logic of faith to be the autographic Old Testament and New Testament texts.²⁸

Now, let us deal with the three types of “errors” Combs has found in the KJV: (1) textual errors, (2) translation errors, and (3) transmission errors.

Textual Errors?

Combs begins by defining what he means by “textual errors.” He says, “By textual errors I mean those where the reading found in the translation is not in agreement with that of the autographs.”²⁹ Now this definition by itself is quite inane because it begs the question, “Where are the autographs?” Combs believes that “the autographs are not available, ... the original scrolls and codices have long since perished.”³⁰ Now without the autographs, the original scrolls, how is Combs going to identify textual errors in the KJV, or for that matter any other version? How does he know whether a textual error is truly a textual error if he does not know what the original text is in the first place? But Combs has what he thinks passes for an answer; he assumes that “most reasonable people would be willing to concede that where all extant manuscripts are in agreement, we can safely conclude that we *do* have the text of the autographs.”³¹ Combs went on to say, “Based on this criterion, the KJV does contain indisputable [textual] errors, since ... it contains readings that have no basis in any manuscript.”³² But the question remains: How does he know that all extant manuscripts are in agreement when he himself says that in the over 5,000 manuscripts no two are alike?³³ Furthermore, not all manuscripts have been studied and there are manuscripts still uncovered or

yet to be discovered. Combs's criterion, based on his own reasoning without any biblical premise, is thus disputable.

Isaiah 13:15

Nonetheless, Combs tries to prove his point by citing Isaiah 13:15 as an example of a textual error. In light of what he is trying to prove, Isaiah 13:15 is a strange example indeed. This is because there are no textual errors in Isaiah 13:15 to begin with. All manuscripts agree including those who affirm the inerrancy of Hebrew text underlying the KJV. The critical *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and the traditional MT of Ben Chayyim read the same as regards the Hebrew word in contention which is *saphah*. The KJV translates the word *saphah* as "joined" which Combs says is a "textual error." According to Combs, "There is no support for this reading in any Hebrew manuscript, text, ancient version, or rabbinic tradition."³⁴ Now Combs is not making sense here, for the question here has nothing to do with the text but the translation. Combs assumes that the KJV translators mistook the word *saphah* for *saphah* which is not found in any manuscript since they translated the word as "join" (*saphah*) instead of "capture" (*saphah*), and so to Combs "an indisputable error" in the KJV.

Based on Combs's definition of "an indisputable error," it is clear that there is no textual error here, and there is no translation error here either. The autographic text indeed reads *saphah*, and *saphah* means to "sweep," "snatch away," "catch up."³⁵ *Saphah* also has the sense of joining together. R D Patterson in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* commented, "The basic image of the root seems to be that of sweeping—both the process of *heaping things together* and of sweeping them away." He went on to add that "The root is usually used in a hostile sense, particularly in contexts of judgment."³⁶ *Saphah* is found in precisely such a context of judgement in Isaiah 13:15b, "every one that is *joined unto them shall fall by the sword.*" As such, the rendering "joined unto them" certainly fits the meaning of the word *saphah*, for it has the connotation of putting things together for the purpose of judgement. Nineteenth century Presbyterian theologian Albert Barnes for example certainly understood it this way for he commented,

*Every one that is joined unto them. Their allies and friends. There shall be a vast, indiscriminate slaughter of all that are found in the city, and of those that attempt to flee from it. Lowth renders this, 'And all that are collected in a body;' but the true sense is given in our translation. The Chaldee renders it, 'And every one who enters into fortified cities shall be slain with the sword.'*³⁷

John Calvin likewise commented,

... the verb *saphah* signifies likewise *to add*, ... that it denotes companies of soldiers, as in taking a city the soldiers are *collected together* in the form of a wedge, to ward off the attacks of the enemy. But it will perhaps be thought better to understand by it the confederates or allies who were *joined* to Babylon, and might be said to be *united* in the same body, in order to show more fully the shocking nature of this calamity.³⁸

Harvard scholar Edward F Hills wisely advised,

We must be very cautious therefore about finding errors in the text of the King James Version, and the same holds true also in the realm of translation. Whenever the renderings of the King James Version are called in question, it is usually the accuser that finds himself in the wrong.³⁹

Revelation 17:8

Combs then went on to deal with “textual errors” in the TR. He brought up two examples from the Book of Revelation, namely, 17:8 and 16:5 in that order. For Revelation 17:8, he says, “No manuscript reads, ‘and yet is’; all have ‘and shall come.’”⁴⁰ Combs overstates for it is not true that “no manuscript” reads “and yet is.” Paradoxically, Combs himself contradicts this by admitting there is at least one manuscript (Codex 1r)—the actual manuscript Erasmus used—though the actual text was embedded in the commentary of Andreas of Caesarea, somewhat like the Study Bibles we have today. It is significant to note that Erasmus used that manuscript because he saw it as a very old manuscript possibly from the time of the Apostles for the manuscript bore the name of Hippolytus of Rome (AD 200-250)⁴¹ who was a disciple of Irenaeus. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp and Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John. In light of God’s special providence, there could be an apostolic tradition here that has preserved the autographic text of Revelation, the Spirit guiding Erasmus to the correct text.⁴²

Combs says that it is “an indisputable error” in the KJV if all extant manuscripts are in agreement. Well, all extant manuscripts are not in agreement here. There are at least four variant readings: (1) *kai parestai*, (2) *kai parestin*, (3) *kai palin pareste*, and (4) *kaiper estin*.⁴³ Combs who favours the Critical Text prefers *kai parestai*, while those who favour the TR will go with *kaiper estin* which is the reading found consistently not only in the Greek text of Erasmus, but also Stephenus, Beza, Elzevir, and Scrivener. Interestingly, the two other variants namely *parestin* and *pareste*—both the present tense of *pareimi*—are closer to the reading of the TR than the

Critical Text. There is thus more than meets the eye, and Combs assumes too much to conclude that Revelation 17:8 contains “an indisputable error.” Even Hills whom Combs cites was not very sure himself that it is a mistake.⁴⁴ If it was indeed “an indisputable error” as Combs thinks, that *kai parestai* was mistaken for *kaiper estin* in the first edition of Erasmus’s Greek Text, then surely it would have been corrected in the second, but it is interesting to note that all subsequent editions of Erasmus read the same as either *kai per estin* (with the space between *kai* and *per*) or *kaiper estin* (without the space), both meaning the same. It looks like Combs is faulting the TR for a textual error which was not there in the first place, for the reading of Codex 1r was not *kai parestai*, but *kai per estin* or *kaiper estin*.⁴⁵ Neither should the reading of *kaiper* as one word (without the space) be seen as an error for in classical Greek literature it often appears as one word, especially in Greek Tragedy.⁴⁶

Hoskier after his collection and collation of over 200 manuscripts for the Book of Revelation had this to say about Erasmus’s Text, “I may state that if Erasmus had striven to found a text on the largest number of existing MSS [manuscripts] in the world of one type, he could not have succeeded better.”⁴⁷ I agree with this observation of Dean Burgon Society scholar Jack Moorman, “Here then is a powerful example of God’s guiding providence in preserving the text of Revelation.”⁴⁸ In light of God’s special providential preservation of His inspired words, we reject Comb’s claim that Revelation 17:8 as found in the TR is a textual error.

Revelation 16:5

Combs says there is “an indisputable error” in Revelation 16:5 where the KJV reads, “And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.” He says the words “shalt be,” should read “holy one.” He says there is no evidence whatsoever for the reading “shalt be” which translates accurately the Greek *esomenos*. According to Combs the right word should be *hosios* (“holy one”) and not *esomenos*.⁴⁹

It ought to be noted that Beza said he was certain about the reading *esomenos* in Revelation 16:5 in light of the internal evidences and the ancient manuscript he had in his possession. To be sure, Beza was not a Bible corrector but a Bible believer and defender of the Faith. As such, he would have known only too well the warning of Revelation 22:18-19 against adding to or subtracting from the Holy Scriptures. There must have been

compelling reasons for him, with a high view of Scripture, to restore to the Holy Scriptures the true reading which his predecessors had apparently overlooked. He gave his reasons as follows,

“And shall be”: The usual publication is “holy one,” which shows a division, contrary to the whole phrase which is foolish, distorting what is put forth in scripture. The Vulgate, however, whether it is articulately correct or not, is not proper in making the change to “holy,” since a section (of the text) has worn away the part after “and,” which would be absolutely necessary in connecting “righteous” and “holy one.” But with John there remains a completeness where the name of Jehovah (the Lord) is used, just as we have said before, 1:4; he always uses the three closely together, therefore it is certainly “and shall be,” for why would he pass over it in this place? And so *without doubting the genuine writing in this ancient manuscript, I faithfully restored in the good book what was certainly there, “shall be.”*⁵⁰

Besides the ancient Greek manuscript that Beza had, it ought to be noted that Beatus of Liebana in the eighth century, in his compilation of commentaries on the Book of Revelation has the Latin phrase, *qui fuisti et futures es*, for Revelation 16:5 which was found in the commentary of Tyconius which goes back to the fourth century.⁵¹ It is entirely possible that there were either early Greek manuscripts or Old Latin versions as early as the fourth century which contained the reading *esomenos*.

It is also significant to note that the reading *hosios* preferred by Combs is a harder reading. Robert L Thomas, Professor of New Testament at The Master’s Seminary, citing Swete commented, “Taking *hosios* as parallel with *dikaios* creates an intolerable harshness, however, and taking the adjective as a predicate adjective with *ho on* and *ho en* breaks the pattern of the Apocalypse in not assigning the expression a predicate nominative or adjective.”⁵² We note that the reading *ho esomenos*, the future participle of *eimi* in its masculine, singular, nominative form with the definite article fits well the pattern of the Apocalypse and functions well as an adjectival participle to describe *dikaios*—the Righteous One who shall soon come to judge a most wicked world.

Although it is admitted that *ho esomenos* is not the reading found in the Majority Text, we are wont to agree with Hills that such minority readings “seem to have been placed in the Greek TR by the direction of God’s special providence and therefore are to be retained.”⁵³ It is also admitted that the reading of *ho hosios* in Stephen’s edition of the TR differs from Beza’s *ho esomenos*. So what do we do with the rare occasions when the several editions of the TR differ from one another? Hills replied,

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION?

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.⁵⁴

The reading of Revelation 16:5 in the Greek Text underlying the KJV is thus not proven as “an indisputable error” as Combs would have us think. There are enough reasons for us to receive it as an authentic reading in the light of God’s special providence as seen in both the internal and external evidences.⁵⁵

Romans 7:6

Combs says another “indisputable error” is found in Romans 7:6. This has to do with the reading *apothanontos* (genitive singular) vis-à-vis *apothonontes* (nominative plural). Stephen’s TR reads *apothanontes* modifying *katergethemen* (“we are delivered”), whereas Beza’s and Scrivener’s read *apothanontos* modifying *apo tou nomou* (“from the law”), which is the reading underlying the KJV. It must be said that the King James translators in their translating work checked with other editions of the TR, and knew of other readings in that tradition. It is clear that they did not always follow Beza because as Scrivener noted they did depart from Beza on some occasions because they were intent on making the best choice.⁵⁶ In this case, they chose to follow Beza for reasons not made known to us. We unfortunately do not know nor have many of the manuscripts used by them. It is quite possible they had Greek manuscripts and/or ancient versions which supported Beza’s reading. They probably took into account the context of Romans 7 which says that law as our husband has died so that we might be married to another (Rom 7:1-4).⁵⁷ The law and its curse have died so that we might be married to Christ for life. Calvin understood verse 6 thusly, “The law, as far as we are concerned is abrogated, so that we are not oppressed with its intolerable burden, and do not find its inexorable rigour overwhelming us with its curse.”⁵⁸

Theologically speaking, the reading *apothanontos* is hardly “an indisputable error.” It is “an indisputable error” only to Combs because of his text-critical presuppositions, but if one adopts a theological *sola fide* approach to the text based upon the biblical doctrine of VPP and special providence, there is no reason why we cannot receive the reading underlying the KJV as authentic.

Acts 9:6

The final example of “an indisputable error” in the Greek text underlying the KJV that Combs brought up is found in Acts 9:6. He says that the words, “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him,” “are not found in any Greek manuscript,” and therefore should not be in the Bible.⁵⁹ Combs claims that Erasmus himself said he inserted that reading on the basis of Acts 26:14. But Acts 26:14 hardly reads the same as Acts 9:6. It is unlikely that there was any conjectural harmonisation on the part of Erasmus here considering the internal evidence. As for external evidences, Erasmus’s reading finds support in Greek Codex 221c which dates back to the 10th century and the Greek/Latin Codex Ottobonianus 629 which is 14th century. The reading is also found in the Old Latin manuscripts (ar, c, h, l, p, ph, t) which date back to the second century, and in the Latin Vulgate manuscripts which date back to the fourth and fifth centuries. It is also found in the Old Syriac, Coptic, Georgian, Slavonic and Ethiopic versions, and in the fourth century writings of Church Fathers like Lucifer of Cagliari (370), Ephraem (373) and Ambrose (397).⁶⁰ It is possible that these ancient versions were translated from Greek manuscripts which had those words. Many Greek manuscripts have yet to be studied and their contents revealed, and whether those will be studied and revealed without bias by the pro-Alexandrian critical scholars remains to be seen. We do not hold our breath.

As far as we are concerned, guided by a biblically-based worldview, we agree with Harvard theologian and textual scholar E F Hills who was astute to observe that the relatively few Latin Vulgate readings

which though not part of the Traditional Greek text, seem to have been placed in the Textus Receptus by the direction of God’s special providence and therefore are to be retained. The reader will note that these Latin Vulgate readings are also found in other ancient witnesses, namely, old Greek manuscripts, versions, and Fathers.⁶¹

Therefore, our confidence in the TR lies not in the work of the textual critics but in the special providence of God who had throughout the ages kept His inspired words pure in the Byzantine or Majority manuscripts, and then in the Printed Texts of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation which have been received by the faithful church to be the infallible and inerrant, authentic and authoritative words of God to this day.

Translation Errors?

Combs proceeded next to criticise the KJV for its translation errors. He pointed out three examples which to him are “clear errors, which no amount of finessing can mitigate.”⁶² Let us now examine these “errors” so called.

Hebrews 10:23

Combs says the “most indisputable translation error” in the KJV is found in Hebrews 10:23 where the word “faith” should actually be “hope.”⁶³ He points out the actual Greek word is *elpis* (i.e. “hope”) and not *pistis* (i.e. “faith”). This is not denied by KJV defenders. The inspired and preserved, infallible and inerrant word is the Greek *elpis* which occurs a total of 54 times in the New Testament and is translated as “hope” in the KJV on 53 occasions (not 52 as Combs says), and once as “faith” in Hebrews 10:23. The old translations like Wycliffe, Bishop, Geneva, and Tyndale render it as “hope.” In view of this, Combs concludes that the KJV translators made a mistake here but says he does not know why the KJV translators failed to notice the error.

In response, let me raise a couple of questions: (1) Is it possible that Combs himself due to his prejudice against the KJV is mistaken (as he is with regard to the number of times *elpis* is found in the New Testament), and (2) can “faith” be an acceptable translation of *elpis*? Both questions can be answered in the affirmative.

Instead of looking at it as a translation error, it is possible that the KJV translators purposely departed from the usual word “hope” and translated it as “faith” because they saw in “faith” a better term than “hope” in the context of Hebrews 10:23. All grammarians know that the meaning of a word is determined by how it is used in its context. Now, in Hebrews 10:23, the genitive *elpidos* modifies *homologian* (“confession” or “profession”). I submit that it is precisely because of the noun *homologian* that the KJV translators chose to render *elpidos* as “faith” rather than “hope” for we do not normally confess or profess hope, but faith (Rom 10:9-10; 1 Tim 6:12). Furthermore, hope itself might not include faith, but faith certainly encompasses hope for Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Contextually, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 10:12-21) and His promises (Heb 10:23) is what gives us the sure and steadfast hope of salvation. The Puritan writer, Matthew Poole, expressed this thought well when he commented,

The profession of our faith; an outward exhibition to the world both in word and deed, as we have it sincerely in our hearts, solemnly owning it in the ordinances of God in his church, of the hope we have in Christ our High Priest, and of all that he hath purchased for us, and promised to perform in us and to us, chap. iii. 1, 6; iv. 14; vi. 11; Rom. x. 9, 10; 1 Pet. i. 3, 21.⁶⁴

Although it may be legitimate to render *elpis* as “faith” in Hebrews 10:23, does the word itself etymologically allow for it? I believe it does. Consider the verb form of *elpis* which is *elpizo* which has been rendered by the KJV translators as “trust” 18 times (Matt 12:21; Luke 24:21; John 5:45; Rom 15:12, 24; 1 Cor 16:7; 2 Cor 1:10, 13, 5:11, 13:6; Phil 2:19; 1 Tim 4:10, 5:5, 6:17; Phlm 22; 1 Pet 3:5; 2 John 12; 3 John 14), and “hope” 13 times (Luke 6:34, 23:8; Acts 24:26, 26:7; Rom 8:24, 25; 1 Cor 13:7, 15:19; 2 Cor 8:5; Phil 2:23; 1 Tim 3:14; Heb 11:1; 1 Pet 1:13). As can be seen, *elpizo* is not only rendered “I hope,” but also “I trust” which certainly has the sense of faith. According to Spiros Zodhiates, a Greek scholar who is Greek himself, “*Elpis* may be defined as desire for future good, accompanied by faith in its realization.”⁶⁵ It is thus entirely legitimate for *elpis* in Hebrews 10:23 by virtue of the verbal noun *homologian* to which it is connected to be understood precisely as trust or faith—a trust or faith which is full of hope since it is based solely on the Lord Jesus Christ and His promises.⁶⁶ As such, it is hardly a “most indisputable translation error” as Combs would like us to think.

Acts 19:37

Combs cites Acts 19:37 as another problem. He says that the word translated “robbers of churches” in the KJV “is simply an erroneous translation,”⁶⁷ it should be “robbers of temples.” There is no dispute that the inspired and preserved word is *hierosulos* and found not only in the Greek TR but also all other manuscripts. It is also without dispute that *hierosulos* literally means “a temple robber.” It is certainly not erroneous to translate *hierosulous* in Acts 19:37 as “robbers of temples,” but is it indisputably erroneous to translate it as “robbers of churches” taking into consideration that “temples” and “churches” may be understood synonymously as referring to sacred places of worship?

Let us first of all look at how the word *hierosulos* is used in ancient Greek literature. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says that the word has been used of (1) “the removal of gold vessels from the Jerusalem temple by Lysimachus, 2 Macc. 4:42,” (2) “anyone who steals sacred books or funds from the Jews,” (3) “those who destroyed the golden

eagle above the temple gate,” and together with (4) those who are thieves, kidnappers, adulterers and murderers.⁶⁸ This tells us that the word has a wider sense than just a robber of pagan temples.

Let us now look at how the Reformation translations rendered this verse. The Wycliffe Bible has it as “for ye han brouyt these men, nethir sacrilegeris, nethir blasfemyngye youre goddesse;” the Geneva has, “For yee haue brought hither these men, which haue neither committed sacrilege, neither doe blaspheme your goddesse;” and Tyndale’s Bible reads, “For ye have brought hyther these me whiche are nether robbers of churches nor yet despisers of youre goddes.” The KJV agrees with Tyndale’s. It is significant to note that whereas the KJV translators followed Tyndale as regards “robbers of churches,” they did not follow likewise for “despisers of youre goddes” but instead rendered *blasphemountas ten thean humon* more literally as “blasphemers of your goddess” following the Wycliffe and Geneva Bibles. I believe this shows that the KJV translators (1) were mindful of the Greek text, (2) consulted previous translations, and (3) did not follow Tyndale slavishly.

Why then did the KJV translators render *hierosulous* as “robbers of churches” and not “robbers of temples”? It is possible that the KJV translators in their considered opinion or for some exegetical reason saw *hierosulous* not just in the narrow sense of pagan temples but also other religious places of worship which include churches. The word can also refer to any sacrilegious act or person (so Wycliffe and Geneva). Insofar as Acts 19:37 is concerned,

the town clerk takes the apostles under his protection. They are neither *hierosuloi* nor do they blaspheme Artemis. Here the term is general. They are not offenders against religion, and have not committed sacrilege.⁶⁹

Therefore, *hierosulos* is not as narrow a term as Combs thinks, and can thus be translated in a number of ways, “a sacrilegious person,” “a robber of temples,” or “a robber of churches.” The meaning that Acts 19:37 is trying to convey is that Paul was not a sacrilegious person for he had neither desecrated nor robbed from sacred places be they temples or churches.⁷⁰ Some might consider “robbers of temples” to be a better translation than “robbers of churches,” but the latter is hardly “erroneous.”⁷¹

The KJV translators would only be in error if they had translated *hierosulous* in Acts 19:37 as “robbers of banks” or “bank robbers.” Did they even come close? God forbid!

Acts 12:4

Combs went on to cite what he considers “another clear example” of a translation error in the KJV, this time in Acts 12:4. He criticises the KJV for translating *pascha* as “Easter.” According to Combs, what happened in Acts 12 “has nothing to do with Easter, the Christian celebration of Christ’s resurrection,” but a pagan festival in honour of “Esotre,” the goddess of spring.⁷²

However, there are others who think otherwise. Nick Sayers, for instance, explains,

In most languages the word for Easter is exactly the same as the word for Passover, so the relationship between the feast of Passover, and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is directly linked. A few examples are; Latin *Pascha*, French *Pâques*, Italian *Pasqua*, and Dutch *Pasen*. All these words mean both Easter and Passover, only the context formulates the difference. With the exception of English and German, all other European languages do not have separate words for Easter and Passover, but simply use a single term derived from *Pesach*, the Hebrew word for Passover.

In one way, this is an advantage to the believer, who immediately associates Jesus Christ as the Passover Lamb. Whether reading the New or Old Testaments, the association between Christ and the Passover is clearly seen. This was also the case in the original Greek language which uses the Greek word *Pascha* for both Passover and the resurrection of Christ. This has been the same for 2000 years in the Greek. Even if you look up a modern Greek dictionary it will tell you that *Pascha* means both Easter and Passover.

...

Tyndale was responsible for the insertion of both Easter and Passover in the English Bible. In his 1525 New Testament, Tyndale used the English word Easter to translate the Greek word *Pascha*. *Pascha*, being formerly transliterated in Wycliffe’s version, was for the first time in a Bible translation, translated into a unique English word.

...

Until 1611, English-speaking people had always associated the word *Easter* with the celebration of Passover and the prophetic implications which occurred at Christ’s death and resurrection. They saw that the Old Testament shadow was the Passover and that the New Testament fulfilment was Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection called *Easter*. The King James Bible finalised 86 years of change in the use of *Easter* and *Passover*. After seeing what Tyndale had begun and the refining of the word *Easter* within almost a century of various translation attempts, the KJV translators caused the semantic range of *Easter* to be translated only once as *Easter* in Acts 12:4. This was because

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION?

in every instance in the New Testament except Acts 12:4, the Greek word *Pascha* represented the pre-resurrection Passover, i.e. the Jewish celebration. In other words Christ had not yet died as the Passover lamb for the whole world. But in Acts 12:4 it is a post-resurrection Passover, where Christ had died and was risen. Since the time of the King James Version until the early twentieth century, the term *Easter* was commonly identified by believers solely as the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Before Tyndale, *Easter* was the chief word used for the Jewish Passover by Christians. This is because Easter and Passover are the same season, Jews celebrating the shadow, and Christians celebrating the fulfilment. The word *Easter* has illustrated to the Englishman much more than simply the Passover celebration, but through Tyndale's addition of *Easter*, construction of the word *Passover*, and later with the King James' translators correctly re-applying *Easter* only once in Acts 12:4, it gives significant insight into revealing the fulfilment of the Passover in Christ. It exalts Jesus Christ's death and resurrection above all.

...

Luther's translation was a strong influence on Tyndale's New Testament. Because of persecution in Catholic England, Tyndale left England for Germany. It is strongly believed that he met with Luther in Germany in 1525, as many of Tyndale's beliefs were, in essence, Lutheran. By the end of the year, Tyndale had printed the New Testament in English. It is likely that Tyndale's use of *Easter* in his New Testament is also indebted to his knowledge of Luther's German translation, which uses *Oster* (pronounced *Ouster*) in the same way as Tyndale uses *Easter*. Because the English Anglo Saxon language originally derived from the Germanic when the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes came to England in the 5th and 6th centuries, there are many similarities between German and English. Many English writers have referred to the German language as the Mother Tongue! The English word *Easter* is of German/Saxon origin and not Babylonian as Alexander Hislop falsely claimed, The German equivalent is *Oster*. *Oster* (*Ostern* being the modern day correspondent) is related to *Ost* which means the rising of the sun, or simply in English, east. *Oster* comes from the old Teutonic form of *auferstehen/auferstehung*, which means resurrection, which in the older Teutonic form comes from two words, *ester* meaning *first*, and *stehen* meaning *to stand*. These two words combine to form *erstehen* which is an old German form of *auferstehen*, the modern day German word for resurrection. The English *Easter* and German *Oster* go hand in hand.

Tyndale with his expertise in the German language knew of the *Easter-Oster* association. Luther obviously defined *Oster* both as a synonym for the Jewish Passover and a phrase used for the resurrection of Christ.

...

The etymology of *Easter* is easily traced to the German word for resurrection, not to some fabricated pagan goddess, for which there is not a crumb of evidence.⁷³

Since there is no true English equivalent for the term *pascha*,⁷⁴ I consider both “Passover” and “Easter” to be equally acceptable translations, taking into consideration how both terms have developed through time. Whichever term is used, it is for the exegete to explain the anachronism and the meaning of the term within the etymological, historical, and theological contexts of the divinely inspired and preserved word in the original language.

I echo the sentiments of Sayers against those who spare no effort to undermine the faithfulness and accuracy of the KJV,

What a shame that believers devote so much time arguing against Easter, something that Christ himself instituted, or waste so much time attacking the KJV Bible.

It also seems strange if not blasphemous that we as Bible-believing Christians could think that the King James Version translators would insert the name of a pagan deity in place of the word *Pascha*. ...

To think that the world’s most famous translation could get it so wrong here is sheer ignorance on our behalf. To believe that Tyndale, Cranmer, Martin Luther, Coverdale, Matthews, the translators of the Great Bible, and the Bishops’ Bible, the King James Bible, were referring to a pagan god of the spring called Ishtar is so absurd that it becomes humorous when examined.⁷⁵

Transmission Errors?

In this section, Combs took pains to highlight “a number of well-known printing errors in various editions of the KJV over the years.”⁷⁶ KJV-Superiority defenders do not deny that there were/are printing errors in the KJV. These printing errors do not impinge upon the infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures since the infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures are strictly tied to their inspiration (VPI) and preservation (VPP) by God in the original languages, and we identify these original language Scriptures to be the Hebrew MT and the Greek TR of the Great Protestant Reformation.

KJV critics often ridicule the KJV by calling it the “Adulterer’s Bible” and “Murderer’s Bible” because of printing mistakes in the 1631 edition which omitted the word “not” from the commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14), and the 1795 edition which read “Let the

children first be killed” instead of “Let the children first be filled” (Mark 7:27). I am glad Combs brought this up because it illustrates how the Bible is still infallible and inerrant despite the printing or copying mistakes. Man makes mistakes but not God, and He has infallibly preserved His inspired words to the jot and tittle “by His singular care and providence” (Matt 5:18, WCF 1:8). It is only when we have a Perfect Standard—a presently infallible and inerrant Bible in the original languages—that such human mistakes are easily and quickly detected and corrected so that today the KJV is no longer an “adulterous” or “murderous” Bible. Since 1611, other necessary corrections have been made to the KJV, and most were done by 1769. It goes without saying that with new editions, new mistakes could appear, and corrections would have to be made again. For instance, in the first printing of *The Defined King James Bible* in 1998, the word “bondwoman” was erroneously printed as “bondman” (Gal 4:23, 30, 31).⁷⁷ This of course has been corrected in subsequent printings.

Now, although Combs is quick to see printing errors in the KJV and is able to correct them to make them right, he is clueless about identifying the words God has originally inspired since he avers that God did nothing miraculous in preserving His inspired words.⁷⁸ Combs went on to say that “we presently possess over 5,000 copies, or partial copies, of the Greek NT, and no two of these manuscripts agree exactly.”⁷⁹ Historically, the saints prior to the text-critical era never thought of the Scriptures in such a way. They never thought of the original language Scriptures that they had in their hands, namely the apographs, as imperfect, fallible or errant.⁸⁰ That would be fatal to their cause, for it would have destroyed the very foundational doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, not to mention *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, *Solus Christus*, and *Soli Deo Gloria*. The view that only the autographs are infallible and inerrant and nothing else is a new doctrine conceived by 19th century Protestant scholastics of whom B B Warfield was chief.⁸¹

The Reformed pastors and scholars in Reformation and Post-Reformation days had always believed and affirmed the infallibility and inerrancy of the autographs as well as the apographs, the very Scriptures they had in their possession which be the sole and supreme authority of their faith and practice as opposed to the Roman Catholic view of papal infallibility and supremacy.⁸² Francis Turretin, 17th century Professor of Theology in Geneva, made it very clear what the Reformation saints believed to be the inspired Scriptures,

By the original texts, we do not mean the autographs written by the hand of Moses, of the prophets and of the apostles, which certainly do not now exist. We mean their apographs which are so called because they set forth to us the word of God in the very words of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁸³

Historical theologian Richard A Muller of Calvin Theological Seminary wrote in no uncertain terms,

The Protestant scholastics do not press the point by their nineteenth-century followers that the infallibility of Scripture and the freedom of Scripture from error reside absolutely in the *autographa* and only in a derivative sense in the *apographa*; rather, the scholastics argue positively that the *apographa* preserve intact the true words of the prophets and the apostles and that the God-breathed (*theopneustos*, q.v.) character of Scripture is manifest in the *apographa* as well as in the *autographa*.⁸⁴

By the same doctrine and spirit, we oppose the modern assault on the present infallibility and inerrancy of Scriptures by the text-critics and their rationalistic rules of textual criticism. Warfield's appeal to textual criticism and textual critical scholarship is a return to the Romish days and ways that only the "ecclesiastics" and "scholars" are qualified to determine what is and what is not God's word. The denial of the present infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures effectively destroys the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* and Biblical authority, and makes the text-critical college the authority over the inspired Scriptures God has single-handedly and supernaturally preserved to the jot and tittle (*providentia extraordinaria*). We deny that the textual critics and their man-made rules of criticism have any authority over the Holy Scriptures God has verbally inspired and verbally preserved.

An Errant Scripture Cannot Be Authoritative

Combs not only maliciously labels as heretics all who believe in the present infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures and identify the inspired and preserved Scriptures to be precisely the Hebrew MT and Greek TR on which the Reformation Bible—the KJV—is based, he went on to advocate that there is nothing wrong with believing that the Bible is no longer totally infallible and inerrant. He says, "There is nothing deceptive or hypocritical about referring to our Bibles as authoritative Scripture, even though they are not absolutely perfect."⁸⁵ Combs's thesis is utterly deadly. Let me say that it is the height of deception and hypocrisy to claim that the Bible is absolutely authoritative without it being totally infallible and inerrant.

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION?

The battle for the Bible today is the battle for its present infallibility and inerrancy and absolute authority. Without the Lord infallibly preserving His inspired Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words by special providence to the last jot and tittle, the Reformation, Evangelical and Fundamentalist claim of Biblical infallibility, inerrancy and authority is empty and in vain. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps 11:3). But glory be to God who “has magnified His Word above all His name” (Ps 138:2); “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul” (Ps 19:7); “The Word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa 40:8); “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).

We cannot and dare not deny nor be uncertain about the Bible nor the Christian Faith by being agnostic about the present perfection of the Holy Scriptures which be our sole, supreme and final authority of faith and practice. If we do, how then can we preach with authority, “Thus saith the Lord,” “It is written”?

There is a vital need today to re-live and recapture the faith of the Reformers and the spirit of the Reformation in this postmodern, emergent and neo-deistic church age. Unless and until we are sure and certain about the very Foundations of our Faith—the Living Word and the Written Words of God, we have no *apologia* against the constant attacks on the Historic Christian Faith by the likes of Dan Brown, Bart Ehrman, Brian McLaren, and a host of neo-orthodox, neo-evangelical, neo-fundamental scholars today. Worst of all, we will have no gospel to preach. The bright side is, the victory is already won, as Calvin was wont to say, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31); “For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (2 Cor 13:8).

Notes

¹ *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Q 157.

² William W Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (1999): 162.

³ E.g. J O Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 1:185-8; Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 162-6; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 73-76. Charles Ryrie explains well the process by which the term VPI came to be in *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor, 1986), 67.

⁴ See Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), and George M Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1987).

⁵ According to Daniel B Wallace, in his article on “Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament Textual Criticism,” *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (1991): 43, “the doctrine of the preservation has neither ancient historical roots, nor any direct biblical basis.”

⁶ Constitution of the Far Eastern Bible College, Article 4.2.1.

⁷ Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *Theology for Every Christian* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, 2007), 77-8. This is a restatement and reaffirmation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 1 and paragraph 8 which states, “The Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek ..., being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic.”

⁸ Combs agrees that the autographs are not available, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 154.

⁹ See E Jay Epp, “The Multivalence of the Term ‘Original Text’ in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999): 245-81.

¹⁰ Constitution of the Far Eastern Bible College, Article 4.2.1.1. For articles on how we arrive at this conclusion, see Jeffrey Khoo, “A Plea for a Perfect Bible,” *The Burning Bush* (January 2003): 1-15; “*Sola Autographa* or *Sola Apographa*?” *The Burning Bush* (January 2005): 3-19; and “Inspiration, Preservation, and Translations,” *The Burning Bush* (January 2007): 4-24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Article 4.2.1.2.

¹² William W Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 (1999): 151-64.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁴ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 151, 162. He wrote these condemnatory words, “My only reason for pointing out these particular errors in the KJV is ... to disprove this new heresy on a perfect, inerrant translation.” He maliciously accuses D A Waite and the Dean Burgon Society for this new heresy. It is clear that D A Waite, the President of the Dean Burgon Society and those connected to that Society do not espouse the heretical views of certain fundamentalists who believe the KJV to be doubly inspired, advanced revelation, and superior to the original language texts.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ “A ... distinction can be made between (1) *providentia ordinaria*, ordinary or general providence, by means of which God conserves, supports, and governs all things through the instrumentality of secondary causes in accord with the laws of nature; and (2) *providentia extraordinaria*, extraordinary or special providence, according to which God performs in his wisdom special acts or miracles (*miracula*, q.v.) that lie beyond the normal possibilities inherent in secondary causality and that can, therefore, be termed either *supra causas*, beyond or above causes, or *contra causas*, against or over against causes. *Providentia ordinaria* corresponds with God’s ordained power (*potentia ordinata*, q.v.) and *providentia extraordinaria* with God’s absolute power (*potentia absoluta*, q.v.)” *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, s.v. “*providentia*,” by Richard A Muller.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 152-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁹ Dean Burgon Society, “Articles of Faith, Operation, and Organization,” http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/DBS_Society/articles.htm, accessed on February 11, 2009. Emphasis mine.

²⁰ Lynn Gray Gordon, *The World’s Greatest Truths* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, 1999, 26.

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION?

²¹ D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 3rd rev ed (Collingswood: Bible For Today, 2006), xi.

²² Ruckman says, “the King James Authorized Version of the Bible is superior to any set of Greek or Hebrew manuscripts, including the so-called ‘originals.’” Peter Ruckman, “The Super Superiority of the King James Bible,” *Bible Believers’ Bulletin* 32 (January 2008): 2.

²³ “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978),” http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Chicago_Statement_on_Biblical_Inerrancy, accessed on February 27, 2009.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ According to them, “Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission.” See “Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy with Exposition,” in <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>, accessed on April 11, 2009.

²⁶ See George Skariah, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Perfect Preservation of the Holy Scriptures,” ThD dissertation, Far Eastern Bible College, 2005.

²⁷ William W Combs, “The Preservation of Scripture,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (2000): 37.

²⁸ For an exposition of the Biblical doctrine of the verbal and plenary preservation of the Holy Scriptures, see Tow and Khoo, *Theology for Every Christian*, 77-118 and Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages: Recapturing the Authorised Version and the Doctrine of Providential Preservation* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 2001). See also Dennis Kwok and the Faculty of the Far Eastern Bible College, *VPP of the Bible: A Course on the Doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation*, ed H D Williams (Cleveland: Old Paths Publications, 2008) which is freely downloadable from http://www.biblefortoday.org/VPP_Course/course_introductaion.htm.

²⁹ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 154.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 160.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁵ BDB, s.v. “*sapah*,” 705.

³⁶ *TWOT*, s.v. “*sapa*,” by R D Patterson.

³⁷ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament, Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950 reprint), 1:255. John D W Watts commented, “*Each [joined] to his own people* presumes a population that has migrated to the great cities in search of jobs or buyers for goods or as mercenaries. They return to their villages in times of trouble.” *Isaiah 1-33*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 24:198.

³⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 reprint), 1:424.

³⁹ Edward F Hills, *Believing Bible Study* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1977), 83.

⁴⁰ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 155.

⁴¹ Henk Jan De Jonge, “*Novum Testamentum A Nobis Versum*: The Essence of Erasmus’ Edition of the New Testament,” *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 35 (1984): 409.

⁴² Combs called Erasmus a “Roman Catholic” in an attempt to cast doubt on his credibility. Well, Luther was a “Catholic” too, but opposed to the false teachings of Rome. Erasmus was opposed to Rome too, and it is said of both of them in their Reformation work, “Erasmus laid the egg, but Luther hatched it.” See S M Houghton, *Sketches from Church History* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980), 78.

⁴³ See the critical apparatus of Constantin Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Lipsiae: Sumptibus Adolphi Winter, 1859), 656.

⁴⁴ Hills was uncertain and simply suggested that it “seems to be a misprint” (emphasis mine). Edward F Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1984), 202.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ LSJ, s.v. “*kaiper*,” 859.

⁴⁷ Cited in J A Moorman, *When the KJV Departs from the “Majority” Text*, 2nd ed (Collingswood: Bible For Today, 1988), 16.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁹ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 156.

⁵⁰ As cited in Thomas Holland, “Manuscript Evidence,” http://www.purewords.org/kjb1611/html/rev16_5.htm, accessed on 9 March 2009, emphasis mine.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* See also Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 211, for information on Beatus of Liebana.

⁵² Robert L Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 255-6.

⁵³ Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 200.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁵⁵ See also Moorman, *When the KJV Departs from the “Majority” Text*, 102.

⁵⁶ F H A Scrivener, *The New Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1881), 648-55.

⁵⁷ “The evidence we do have tells a lot about the work but not enough to clear up all mysteries about how the work was done; speculation and guesswork will be unavoidable as we try to establish just how the text [i.e. KJV] was created.” David Norton, *A Textual History of the King James Bible*, 4.

⁵⁸ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians*, in *Calvin’s Commentaries* trans R Mackenzie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 reprint), 141.

⁵⁹ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 157.

⁶⁰ Kevin James, *The Corruption of the Word* (Williamsburg: Micro-Load Press, 1990), 210; and Moorman, *When the KJV Departs from the “Majority” Text*, 61.

⁶¹ Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 200.

⁶² Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 157.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁶⁴ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (Peabody: Hendricksen, nd), 3:856.

⁶⁵ *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s.v. “*elpis*,” by Spiros Zodhiates.

⁶⁶ According to Liddell, Scott and Jones (LSJ), *elpizo* can mean the “reason to expect or believe,” *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “*elpizo*,” 537. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker (BAGD) say that *elpizo* can come with the indication “of the person or thing on whom (which) the hope is based,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “*elpizo*,”

ERRORS IN THE KING JAMES VERSION?

252; also Louw and Nida (LN), “*elpis* ...: derivative of *elpizo* ... that which constitutes the cause or reason for hoping—the basis for hope, the reason for hope.’,” in *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “Hope, Look Forward To,” 1:296.

⁶⁷ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 158.

⁶⁸ *TDNT*, s.v. “*hierosulos*,” by Gottlob Schrenk.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ See John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles 14-28*, in *Calvin’s Commentaries* trans John Fraser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991 reprint), 166.

⁷¹ This writer rejects Peter Ruckman’s view that the KJV presents “advanced revelation” in Acts 19:37. See Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?” 158, footnote 21.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷³ Nick Sayers, “Why We Should Not Pass-over Easter,” *Contending Earnestly for the Faith* (March 2008): 2-7, available at <http://www.christian-witness.org/pdf/cecf/cecf43.pdf>, accessed on 15 April 2009. Noteworthy is Sayers expose of the false link between “Easter” and paganism as popularised by Alexander Hislop. See also Thomas Holland, *Crowned with Glory: The Bible from Ancient Text to Authorized Version*, Swordsearcher Version 5, Brandon Staggs, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, 2005; also available at http://av1611.com/kjbp/faq/holland_ac12_4.html, accessed on 15 April 2009; Jack Moorman, “Easter, or Passover,” in <http://www.feasite.org/Tracts/fbconies.htm#Easter>, accessed on 15 April 2009; Will Kinney, “Is ‘Easter’ an Error in the King James Bible,” in <http://www.geocities.com/brandplucked/Easter.html>, accessed on 15 April 2009. Terence H Brown of the Trinitarian Bible Society however is of the opinion that “Passover” is to be preferred to “Easter,” see his article “The Use of ‘Easter’ in Acts 12:4,” in <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/articles/easter.asp>, accessed on 15 April 2009.

⁷⁴ *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, s.v. “Pasch, Paschal Controversy,” by Thomas M Finn.

⁷⁵ Nick Sayers, “Why We Should Not Pass-over Easter,” 7.

⁷⁶ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 159.

⁷⁷ *The Defined King James Bible* (Collingswood: Bible for Today, 1998), 1542.

⁷⁸ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 160.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ See my article, “*Sola Autographa* or *Sola Apographa*?: A Case for the Present Perfection and Authority of the Holy Scriptures,” *The Burning Bush* 11 (2005): 3-19.

⁸¹ See my article, “Can Verbal Plenary Inspiration Do Without Verbal Plenary Preservation?: The Achilles’ Heel of Princeton Bibliology,” *The Burning Bush* 13 (2007): 25-43.

⁸² Geoffrey Chapman, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Cassell Imprint, 1994), 205.

⁸³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992), 106.

⁸⁴ *Dictionary of Greek and Latin Theological Terms*, s.v. “*autographa*,” by Richard A Muller.

⁸⁵ Combs, “Errors in the King James Version?,” 163.

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College News

FEBC commenced its **new semester** on 2 January 2009 with a Day of Prayer and Registration. About 80 in the FEBC family gathered for a time of worship and fellowship at the Shalom Chapel, Calvary Tengah Bible-Presbyterian Church. Missionary to Tanzania, Eld Tan Nee Keng (MDiv 08), spoke on the need to be likeminded and respectful in the Lord's service using Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples (Phil 2:19-25).

The **January-April 2009 semester** saw the matriculation of seven new students from six countries: Degu Genffe Guyola (Ethiopia), Eliezeri Hura (Indonesia), Huynh Ngoc Chan (Vietnam), Lo Su Shiang (Malaysia), Joseph Poon (Singapore), Leon Wong (Singapore), and Youn Wan Wook (Korea). The College had a total enrolment of 278 students comprising 96 day-time students (56 full-time, 40 part-time) from 14 countries and 182 lay students in the "Basic Theology for Everyone" night classes.

The **Daily Vacation Bible College (DVBC)** course on the Epistle of Jude was taught by Dr Jeffrey Khoo from 4-9 May 2009. A total of 94 students registered for the course.

FEBC's **34th Graduation Service** was held at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church on the Lord's Day, 10 May 2009. The honoured speaker was Bishop Richard Kivai of the Africa Church, Kenya, who is also President of the East Africa Christian Alliance (EACA). He spoke on "Serving the Lord with Clean Hands and a Pure Heart" (Ps 24:3-6). A total of 28 graduands were awarded their certificates and degrees: **Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK)**: Arvind Kumar Pawa, Chew Yiming Clement, Chng Siew Hwee Jacelyn, Chng Siew Miang Joycelyn, Hoe Ghee Yong, Josias Camporedondo Llego, Liaw Sok Hui Alethea, Liaw Sock Pheng Audrey, Lim Hong Kim, Tan Choon Keng, Tan Eik Chor Christopher, Wong Siew Leng Miriam; **Certificate of Biblical Studies (CertBS)**: Daisy Susanty Tehupeiry, Div Vanna, Lim Bin Hwee, Park Moon Sook, Puspa Shakya; **Diploma in Theology (DipTh)**: Tjung Joan Manling; **Bachelor of Theology (BTh)**: Eliezer Saycon Ortega, Ko Linggang, Tan Tat Yong James; **Master of Religious Education (MRE)**: Cheng Heng Fook Paul, Jeong Hyeon Heni, Le Thanh Tam, Rebecca Evelyn Laiya; **Master of Divinity (MDiv)**: Le Vu Bao An, Titus Kilonzo Nzoka; **Master of Theology (ThM)**: Peter Yoksan.

Continued on page 100



Vigil and Funeral Services of the Rev Dr Timothy Tow at Calvary Pandan BPC, 20-23 April 2009, and burial at the new Chua Chu Kang Christian Cemetery on 23 April 2009. *“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints”* (Ps 116:15).



Rev Dr Timothy Tow (1920-2009)
Founding Principal, Far Eastern Bible College
*“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim 4:7)*