



# The Burning Bush

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# THE BURNING BUSH

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## **FEBC IS SAFE! TO GOD BE THE GLORY GREAT THINGS HE HAS DONE**

*“The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad”*  
(Ps 126:3).

On 2 July 2008, Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (LBPC) sent a letter to Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) stating:

As of the date of this letter, FEBC has no lawful status nor any right to remain on the Church Premises and are therefore trespassers. The Church will commence action to recover possession of the part of the Church Premises used by FEBC, if it fails to peaceably vacate the premises forthwith. ... the FEBC is not to advertise nor hold any public lectures in our premises from 1 July 2008 onwards. If you ignore this notice, you will be held liable for misleading the public and instigating them to trespass into our premises.

On 16 September 2008, LBPC commenced Suit 648 to evict FEBC from 9 and 9A Gilstead Road. The High Court on 30 June 2010 ruled in favour of LBPC. We appealed. Our appeal (Jeffrey Khoo v Life Bible Presbyterian Church [2011] SGCA 18, Civil Appeal No 126 of 2010/J) was heard by the Court of Appeal Judges—the honourable Chao Hick Tin, Andrew Phang, and V K Rajah on 3 December 2010.

The Court of Appeal on 26 April 2011 allowed our appeal and dismissed the claims of LBPC. The Appellate Judges declared that (1) the premises of 9, 9A and 10 Gilstead Road are impressed with a charitable purpose trust not just for the Church but also for the College, (2) the College is independent and free from Church control, and not a ministry of LBPC, and (3) the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) is not a deviant doctrine but according to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In *The Straits Times* of Saturday, 21 May 2011 under the heading, “Church Fails to Evict College over Doctrine Row”, law correspondent K C Vijayan reported:

The three-judge appeals court, led by Judge of Appeal Chao Hick Tin, said the case ‘raised the thorny question of what happens when a religious charity is alleged to have deviated from the fundamental principles upon which it was founded’.

But it said it did not see how the fact that the college has now embraced the different doctrine ‘makes it any less of a religious charitable entity’.

The court ruled that the college was meant to serve the needs of all Presbyterian churches in Singapore, which were divided as far as the two doctrines were concerned. It found that the college has not deviated from the fundamental doctrines and tenets of the Presbyterian Church and was entitled to use the premises.

Both church and college shared a special and close relationship, but the college was not meant ‘to be subordinated to the church in either administration or doctrine’, said the court.

College principal Jeffrey Khoo said yesterday: ‘We are very thankful for the judgment by the Court of Appeal and that our birthplace and home in Gilstead Road is protected by a charitable purpose trust.

‘We have over 300 students from 14 countries, and they are very glad to know that they have a school to come back to when term reopens in July. The judgment could not have come at a better time, this year being the 400<sup>th</sup> year of the King James Bible.’

We are grateful to the Lord for He has protected and preserved the FEBC and her birthplace and home at Gilstead. What LBPC sought to do was against the biblical law of Proverbs 22:28, “*Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.*” God is faithful to His promise and we His people respond with heartfelt thanks and praise, “*I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*” (Ps 138:2).

God’s people from all over the world have been praying most fervently for FEBC all these years. They rejoice with us. Here are some letters thanking God for what He has done:

**Dr D A Waite (President, Dean Burgon Society, USA):** “Praise God for this victory for FEBC! The Lord has answered all of our prayers and your diligent and documented work in your appeal. Interesting that the three appeal judges could see that the Westminster Confession allowed for both VPI and VPP. Truth has prevailed in FEBC in Singapore in the vital doctrine of Bibliology. Would that God would permit this

truth to prevail in the fundamentalist schools in our United States of America as it has in Singapore. As I wrote you a few years ago, because of your clear teaching on the verbal plenary preservation of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Words underlying our King James Bible, at FEBC and at your local church, you are leading the entire world in this important area of Bible truth. May God continue His blessings upon you for honoring His Words and His promised and fulfilled preservation of them.”

**Rev Dr Mark Kim (Principal, Bible College of East Africa, writing from London):** “I have read the judgment and am amazed that they studied the issues quite thoroughly. Thank God for His grace and mercy upon us. Really thank God for all He has done for us. I’ll pray for you that God may give special wisdom for the future. Thank you for the GOOD NEWS. We’re blessed.”

**Rev Michael Koech (Principal, Bomet Bible Institute, Kenya):** “We received the news on FEBC with great joy. We have been praying all along and the Lord has answered our prayers. His will greatly encourage you to be always steadfast and unmovable in the service of the Lord. I read all the 55 pages of the judgement. Their argument about VPP was particularly interesting because it came from an independent observer. The judgement also goes down the annals of history of the judiciary in Singapore and it will be a testimony for generations. We will continue to uphold you in prayer and may the Lord bless all your labours and those of His departed servant Rev Timothy Tow.”

**Rev Kiantoro Lie (Pastor, Calvary Batam Bible-Presbyterian Church, Indonesia):** “I first heard the news through sms, but it was not clear. I called you. Confirmed! I was so excited. It was such a relief. I have always been thinking if FEBC were to lose, where can we go? Where to find lodging for those students? I always think about your comment, that you have no plan but only to trust the Lord. I believe the Lord helped FEBC because of this statement of faith, which means total dependence upon the Lord.”

**Dr Wee Tiong Soon (Deacon, Kemaman Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Malaysia):** “My heart leapt up when I heard FEBC won the appeal. Praise God. The battle is won, the war is ongoing. May the Lord continue to bless FEBC.”

**Dr George Skariah (Pastor, Covenant Bible-Presbyterian Church, Bangalore, India):** “Bessy and I rejoice with you and thank the Lord for the latest development at FEBC. Eld Boaz Boon visited us at Covenant on Tuesday (April 26), as he was in Bangalore for business, and shared with us about the court verdict. Yesterday I logged on to the internet and read the entire judgement. We are overwhelmed by this—the Truth of God shall forever stand, and no mortal being can ever prevail against it. All glory to God. We continue praying for you all.”

**Philip Cherian (Librarian, Jubilee Memorial Bible College, India):** “I heard that FEBC won the court case. Thanks be unto God. Our prayers have been answered. Truth is truth. God is truth. The battle belongs to God, even the victory.”

**Rev Hien Gia Nguyen (Pastor, Brisbane Bible-Presbyterian Church, Australia):** “I am much more encouraged and thankful to the Lord for honouring our humble faith in His sovereignty and providence and graciously answering our humble prayers. Praise the Lord! That is why I was so happy and thankful to the Lord when I received the good news from Rev Koshy, and gave thanks to our living and true and faithful God!”

**Bao An and Nha Uyen (FEBC alumni, Vietnam):** “Truly the LORD is preserving FEBC for His own glory and purpose. We are so happy to hear this good news. We and our church will continue to pray for FEBC.”

**Sun Sokha and Nam Soon (FEBC alumni, Cambodia):** “I’ve just received the news today that FEBC has won the law case. We’d like to say thanks and glory be to our God and we pray that the Lord would continue to bless and use our school to be a training centre for the pastors and missionaries to spread His messages of life far and wide.”

**Sopheak (Preacher, True Gospel Bible-Presbyterian Church, Kampot, Cambodia):** “Praise and thank God for delivering the FEBC. I heard from Tann Heng that FEBC won the case. Thank God for answering our prayer.”

**Rev Robert Peh (Pastor, Christian Home of Love, Chiangmai, Thailand):** “Praise God! We have heard that FEBC has won the appeal. May the Lord continue to shower His blessings upon FEBC! *‘Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto*

*thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered' (Ps 40:5)."*

**Rev Biak Lawm Thang (Pastor, First Bible-Presbyterian Church of Yangon, Myanmar):** "Yesterday, with greatest joy and thankfulness to the Lord, Lal Lian Uk and I learned the good news that the court has ruled in FEBC's favour. How we praise and thank God! May all honour be to Him, for He is faithful, and is still on the throne. He has not forgotten his people. Truly He answers prayers. We would like to let you know that we share your joy and thankfulness, and we pray that the Lord will be pleased to continue to uphold, preserve and use FEBC for His own glory until the very end."

**Xian Fang Lou (PhD candidate, Murdoch University):** "I just heard news about the court verdict and am jubilant with the results! I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the board of FEBC and many others who have worked and contributed so much to achieve this result. Well done and may the FEBC continue to serve the Lord in educating and preparing future leaders and teachers of Christ!"

**Degu Genffe (FEBC alumnus, Ethiopia):** "*The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.*" (Nah 1:7). Indeed God has His own plan and purpose to accomplish His will in due time. For human beings God seems late but He is always on time. In my personal devotion time I commit the FEBC to God, and truly He is faithful not because of me but because of His forever inspired and preserved Word. Today He has delivered FEBC from the evil one. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to say God bless those who have been praying for FEBC. So let us keep on upholding this school of prophets to produce many men and women for the expansion of God's Kingdom. Amen!"

**Dr Jose Lagapa (FEBC student):** "We join you and all the saints in praising the Lord! *'I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who*

*among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.’ (Ps 89:1-7).”*

**Ling Ling (Library Assistant, FEBC):** “*“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.’ (Job 23:10). Indeed the Lord has blessed FEBC to ‘come forth as gold’. Not just that we have won, but the Lord Himself has won, His Name is preserved. Happy with FEBC. Praise the Lord. Sola Scriptura.”*

**Hong Hao (Singapore):** “Thank God for His precious Word. I thank the Lord that FEBC has stood firm in the midst of all these trials and persecutions. I thank God for FEBC and all the lecturers teaching us God’s Word. I’ve been much blessed by the night classes and it is wonderful to be able to continue to study God’s Word at FEBC. Pray that the Lord will continue to preserve and bless FEBC, and also continue to use you and all other lecturers to teach His people His truths. All praise, honour and glory be to God!”

**Tee Jiam (Singapore):** “We rejoice with you that the Lord has defended His Name, Word and Works. May the Lord continue to use FEBC to defend His Word with courage in this last days. Joshua 1:9.”

**Jason Liew (Singapore):** “Even as another semester draws to an end, God has crowned the academic year with His goodness and given victory to FEBC. Job 23:10, *‘But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.’* Thank God for giving closure to the trial as FEBC approaches its golden jubilee academic year. His timing is perfect. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”

**Dn Tai Mern Yee (Singapore):** “Thank God for the favourable judgment! Truly, the Lord never fails in His promises to His children, and He found FEBC worthy to undergo a period of trial and testing. All the more now we would need the Lord’s wisdom and guidance on the next steps.”

**Dr Paul Ferguson (Pastor-designate, Calvary Tengah Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore):** “Thank God for the court result. FEBC stood for the truth and told the truth on witness stand. God has chosen to honour that by His providential intervention.”

**Dr S H Tow (Senior Pastor, Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore)** wrote this in his church weekly of 5 June 2011:



### **1. Church-College Conflict Concluding**

As the 21<sup>st</sup> Century dawned, FEBC's teaching of "*Verbal Plenary Preservation*" or VPP became a "*bone of contention*" between Life B-P Church and Far Eastern Bible College. What had been a "*domestic issue,*" hopefully containable by virtue of a previous Agreement drawn up between Church and College in 1970, erupted in the Gilstead grounds of Nos. 9 and 9A, escalating into a lawsuit ("*Church versus College*") in the High Court in 2008. The resulting judgment was in favour of Church, which required College to move out of the Gilstead Road property. (Meanwhile, Rev Timothy Tow was called Home by the Lord on 20 April 2009).

The College Board, believing (like its Founder the late Rev Tow) that 9 and 9A Gilstead Road was "*heritage and home,*" lodged an appeal against the judgment. The College's appeal is now granted by the Court of Appeal whose judgment was released on 26 April 2011. In it the Judges stated: "... *we allow the appeal.*" Thanks be unto God for His great deliverance.

### **2. Grounds for Judgment by Court of Appeal**

Studying the Court's Judgment (of 55 pages) I have identified the grounds on which the Judges came to the conclusion that: "*For the above mentioned reasons, we allow the appeal,*" (page 54), meaning to say, "*No eviction: FEBC stays.*" What a relief that deliverance has come, at last. The judgment has brought to an end FEBC's "*7-year tribulation.*"

From the pages of the legal document, I have excerpted some lines for readers' interest: a) Touching on the controversial doctrine VPP, the Appeal Judges noted: "... *half of the B-P Churches believe that the VPP doctrine is consistent with the Westminster Confession*" (page 52). b) Concerning the funds raised over the years: "... *the appeals for donations were made in the joint names of the Church and the College ... it would be natural and reasonable to infer that the donors intended their donations to benefit both the College and the Church*" (page 53). c) Against the allegation that FEBC had become a new College: "*in the light of our finding that the College has not deviated from its fundamental doctrines/tenets, it is entitled to continue using the Premises*" (pages 53, 54). d) "... *the College's status as a beneficiary under that purpose trust over the Premises was not conditioned on its continued doctrinal alignment with the Church*" (page 54).

For the foregoing reasons, the Judges ruled that there were no grounds to require the College to vacate the Premises.

### **3. Conclusion of the Court of Appeal and our Response**

We quote the Court's judgment: "*For the above mentioned reasons, we allow the appeal ... In order to avoid further controversies, the parties may consider it necessary to draw up a more detailed arrangement than that set*

*out in the 1970 Agreement, as to how the Premises are to be maintained and used by the parties” (pages 54, 55).*

What is our response to the matter? Such legal action is unprecedented in the history of our B-P Church. It was unthinkable that this sort of “*family tussle*” could ever escalate into a lawsuit. But, as the saying goes, “*We live and learn, and we never stop learning.*”

Recall our Lord’s words: “*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father ... And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household*” (Matt 10:34-36).

Reflecting on the long drawn conflict, I marvel at the unspeakable relief brought to the B-P Churches by action of Singapore’s Court of Appeal, the highest legal authority of the Land. Readers may be interested to know that I have a more than casual connection with FEBC. In the beginning it was by my suggestion that the name “*Far Eastern*” was adopted by my Brother, who also asked me to be College President for 12 years, during which time, I helped to initiate and draft the “*1970 Life Church-FEBC Agreement*” (besides other services rendered as part of repaying my Gospel debt).

#### **4. A Blessing in Disguise**

I believe with all my heart in the teaching of Romans 8:28 “*...that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” For the same reason we believe that the legal case did not happen by chance, but truly it was purposed of our all-wise God for our good. So we subscribe to the Apostle Paul’s conviction that times of suffering bring seasons of blessing, as he said, “*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*” (Romans 5:3-5).

In conclusion, we can surely share in the Apostle’s godly words expressing his deep gratitude to his Lord for sustaining him through tribulations exceeding anything we may have experienced.


Let us conclude with “*Praise and thanks to the God of our salvation*” who also called us into this glorious ministry. And what better than to express our heartfelt desire in prayer and supplication to our gracious God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Thus we pray: “*Most gracious God, our Father in Heaven, May Thou be pleased to accept our grateful thanks for delivering our beloved FEBC from the lion’s mouth. For the years of patient endurance through suffering, we thank Thee. Thy mercy and grace exceed our utmost*

*FEBC IS SAFE!*

*expectation and hope, for Thou hast blessed us Thy unworthy people and unprofitable servants. Heavenly Father, may Thou call someone from among us to respond to Thy call: 'Who will go for us?' May all glory, honour and praise be unto Thee and Thee alone. In the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen."*

Indeed, the verdict could not have come at a better time—just before our end-of-term thanksgiving service, our 36<sup>th</sup> graduation service, right on time for our commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the KJV. We look forward to FEBC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary—our Golden Jubilee—next year (DV). We thank all those who have prayed for us, who have helped us and encouraged us in word or in kind. The Lord bless you all richly. Truly, *"The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad"* (Ps 126:3).



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## **SEVEN BIBLICAL AXIOMS IN ASCERTAINING THE AUTHENTIC AND AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES**

Jeffrey Khoo

### **Introduction**

*Which Bible?*<sup>1</sup> This question raised by Dr David Otis Fuller in 1970 when he published his book by that title remains a pertinent question. There are over a hundred modern versions of the Bible and over 5000 Greek manuscripts today. The scholars are telling us, “No two manuscripts are alike.” We are told that we do not have the inspired originals, the autographs have long perished. What we have today are copies of the copies of the copies ... of the autographs. And the over 5000 copies we have today are full of errors; there are hundreds and thousands of mistakes they say.<sup>2</sup> Evangelicals today who have embraced such a view of Scripture are telling us that the Bible was only infallible and inerrant in the past—in the beginning, but it is not so infallible and inerrant today. This can be applied to the Bible texts and versions as well. No two are the same. In fact, some read very differently. They have caused a whole lot of confusion in the Church. Where is God’s Word? Which one is God’s Word? Do we have a clear and certain answer? Do we have a “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19)?

Does the answer come from the textual scholars and their rationalistic rules of textual criticism? The answer is no! These critics and their conjectures have only brought us to a dead end of unbelief and uncertainty. I have been schooled by such textual critics and learned their textual critical rules when I was in seminary. I might appear very scholarly when I use them, but ultimately I have found them to be incompatible with biblical faith and doctrine. Instead of building up my faith in God’s Word, they cause me to question and doubt the words of God. Do we really have all the words of God today? I found that I could not affirm the present perfection of God’s words through textual

## SEVEN BIBLICAL AXIOMS

criticism. It is impossible to identify God's words through such critical methods and rationalistic presuppositions. The true biblical scholar should be "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5).

What we need are God-given principles and not man-made rules in our identification of the authentic and authoritative Scriptures the Lord had inspired and preserved. Allow me to submit to you seven biblical axioms which would guide us in our thinking and determination of what are precisely the authentic and authoritative source texts of Holy Scripture.

### **Epangelical Axiom**

God has promised many things to His people, and one of the most important promises besides the promise of salvation is the promise of Scripture, that His inspired words once given will be forever preserved. We know this from Psalm 12:6, 7, "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

Those who deny that the Bible teaches preservation are wont to disagree, saying that verse 7 refers to the preservation of His people, not His words. They say that verse 7 points back to the people of verse 5, but the switch from the first singular pronoun "I" in verse 5 and second singular pronoun "Thou" in verse 7 could indicate a shift in thought, from the preservation of people in verse 5, to the preservation of words in verse 7. We do not doubt at all that God has promised to preserve His people, but I believe by a synonymous parallelism, the author in verse 7 was thinking of the preservation of the words that he had just declared as perfectly pure and purified in verse 6. Note that not just the pronouns for God do not agree, "I" in verse 5 and "Thou" in verse 7, the pronouns used with reference to the objects of preservation also disagree, it is "him" in verse 5 and "them" in verse 7. Now, "him" in verse 5 is in italics, ie the pronoun is supplied and is not in the original. Why did the King James translators not use the pronoun "them" but "him"? It is possible that the King James translators did so to distinguish between the people and the words, to show that verse 7 must naturally follow verse 6 and not verse 5, and that the preservation of "them" refers to the "words"

that were mentioned in the previous verse, God's promise to protect "him" (the poor and the needy in verse 5) notwithstanding.<sup>3</sup>

It is significant to note that Dr Carl McIntire the founding pastor of the historic Bible Presbyterian Church in Collingswood understood verse 7 to mean the preservation of the divinely inspired words of God. In a sermon he preached in 1992, entitled "Help, LORD!", from Psalm 12, he said,

Now come verse 6, 'The words of the LORD are pure words,' not one of them is mistaken, 'as silver tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times.' All the dregs are out. Here is a marvelous affirmation and vindication that God's Word is perfect. ... Now, 'The words of the LORD are pure words.' And then verse 7, how I love this: 'Thou shalt keep them O LORD,' that is, keep His words; 'thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.' No matter what happens, one generation comes and another passes away, God is going to preserve His words ... from one generation to another. The words of God will be preserved throughout all the generations.<sup>4</sup>

Another clear text that proves the doctrine of biblical preservation is Matthew 5:18 where Jesus said, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." This was the proof text cited by the Westminster theologians when they stated their belief in the extraordinary providence involved in the verbal and plenary preservation of God's Word. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1:8) 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 authentical; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them."<sup>5</sup> The Helvetic Consensus Formula likewise affirmed,

God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have His word, which is the "power of God unto salvation to every one 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 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).<sup>6</sup>

## SEVEN BIBLICAL AXIOMS

Thus, we believe in God’s promise—every word is preserved, no word to the last letter and syllable is lost. We believe God is Truth and truthful. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” We believe God kept His promise to preserve all of His inspired words.

### **Linguistic Axiom**

The inspired words that God has preserved are the original language words of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The divinely inspired (*theopneustos*, 2 Tim 3:16) Scriptures are the Hebrew/Aramaic Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. Strictly speaking, the divinely inspired or breathed-out words are not the translated words but the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words originally penned by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles. The sole, supreme, and final authority of the Christian Faith rests upon these very words of God in the original languages, not any other foreign language words be they English, Chinese, Spanish, Korean, etc. Although the King James Version is a most blessed translation of the Bible in the English language being very faithful and true to the inspired original language texts, it is not an “inspired” translation, and not superior to its underlying Hebrew and Greek texts.

The Dean Burgon Society is clear in its position as regards the verbal and plenary inspiration and preservation of the Holy Scriptures as found in the Traditional and Reformation texts as spelled out in its Articles of Faith II.A,

#### II. ARTICLES OF FAITH

Acknowledging the Bible to be the inerrant, infallible, plenary and verbally inspired Word of God, among other equally Biblical truths, we believe and maintain the following:

A. THE BIBLE. We believe in the plenary, verbal, Divine inspiration of the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments (from Genesis to Revelation) in the original languages, and in their consequent infallibility and inerrancy in all matters of which they speak (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). The books known as the Apocrypha, however, are not the inspired Word of God in any sense whatsoever. As the Bible uses it, the term “inspiration” refers to the writings, not the writers (2 Timothy 3:16-17); the writers are spoken of as being “holy men of God” who were “moved,” “carried” or “borne” along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21) in such a definite way that their writings were supernaturally,

plenarily, and verbally inspired, free from any error, infallible, and inerrant, as no other writings have ever been or ever will be inspired.

We believe that the Texts which are the closest to the original autographs of the Bible are the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text for the Old Testament, and the traditional Greek Text for the New Testament underlying the King James Version (as found in “The Greek Text Underlying The English Authorized Version of 1611”).

We believe that the King James Version (or Authorized Version) of the English Bible is a true, faithful, and accurate translation of these two providentially preserved Texts, which in our time has no equal among all of the other English Translations. The translators did such a fine job in their translation task that we can without apology hold up the Authorized Version of 1611 and say “This is the WORD OF GOD!” while at the same time realizing that, in some verses, we must go back to the underlying original language Texts for complete clarity, and also compare Scripture with Scripture.

We believe that all the verses in the King James Version belong in the Old and the New Testaments because they represent words we believe were in the original texts, although there might be other renderings from the original languages which could also be acceptable to us today. For an exhaustive study of any of the words or verses in the Bible, we urge the student to return directly to the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text and the Traditional Received Greek Text rather than to any other translation for help.<sup>7</sup>

Dr Lynn Gray Gordon, a Bible-Presbyterian minister and former General Secretary of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM), in his book *The World's Greatest Truths*, rightly said, “Although the King James Version is free from error in thought, fact and doctrine, that is not to say this version is the ‘inspired version.’”<sup>8</sup> We agree. We reject the “inspired version,” “advanced revelation,” and “super superiority” position of Peter Ruckman and Gail Riplinger. Although the King James Version is not an inspired version, we nonetheless uphold it as the Word of God because it is such a faithful, accurate and reliable translation of the originally inspired and providentially preserved words of God, and has blessed many millions of God’s people throughout the 400 years of its existence. This is no fluke, but God’s approval of the work of godly and faithful translators in the time of the Reformation. So, as English readers and speakers, we are wont to stick to the good old version, the King James Version, and its good old underlying texts.



## *SEVEN BIBLICAL AXIOMS*

This biblical position on the preservation of the inspired words of God in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus, and the goodness and faithfulness of the King James Version was affirmed by the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) under the late Dr Carl McIntire back in 1998 and 2000. The ICCC at its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary World Congress in Amsterdam in 1998 passed a resolution urging

all Bible-believing churches worldwide to use only the Authorized KING JAMES VERSION in their services and in their teaching ministry, and warn the followers of Christ against these innumerable ‘new’ bibles which are not translations at all, but revisions conforming to the personal bias and views of those who have originated them and who are profiting by commercial sales of such.<sup>9</sup>

In the year 2000 in Jerusalem, the ICCC, in a resolution on the Bible titled, “Forever Infallible and Inerrant”, they rightly declared,

[T]he O.T. has been preserved in the Masoretic text and the N.T. in the Textus Receptus, combined they gave us the complete Word of God. The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts.<sup>10</sup>

The Lord calls on all His people to stick to the good old paths, “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer 6:16). The good old Traditional and Reformation Texts underlying the King James Version bear the marks of these old paths that faithful believers in the past had walked in, and we today want to walk in the same way with them.

### **Temporal Axiom**

The authentic Scriptures are the Scriptures that show the marks of continuity, being always available and easily accessible to God’s people. Jesus promised three times, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, and Luke 21:33). God has promised to preserve every one of His inspired Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words perfectly to the jot and tittle so that His people in every generation and at all times would possess all of His words and all of His truths in the 66 books of Canonical Scripture which serve as the sole, supreme and final authority of all Christian beliefs and practices.

The Westcott and Hort Text of 1881 and all the critical texts that followed, based primarily on the scandalously corrupt manuscripts like the Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, were not the texts that manifest the marks of continuous and perpetual preservation. They might be old fourth century manuscripts, but they were not the texts that have been continuously and perpetually available and accessible to God's people down through the ages. In fact, God made sure that these manuscripts were kept away from His people precisely because they were corrupted manuscripts. The authentic manuscripts would be the manuscripts that have been faithfully transmitted and passed down from generation to generation, always read, used, and studied by the believers throughout the ages, and held up as the sole, supreme, and final authority of their faith and practice. Those Scriptures were the faithfully and continuously used Traditional Text and not the Westcott and Hort Text which appeared in 1881 and scissored away no less than 9970 words from the Traditional Text.<sup>11</sup> If we say that the Westcott and Hort Text is the authentic and authoritative text, then we are saying that God has failed in His work of preservation, for it would mean that the Church for 1800 years have been using the wrong text, and if so, her faith in the Word of God as found in the Traditional Text has been totally misplaced! This surely cannot be, for God is true to His Word and to His saints, and by virtue of His promise, we can see that it is the continuously preserved Traditional Text that bears the marks of an unbroken lineage as promised by our Lord, "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). As such, Dean Burgon was absolutely correct to say,

I am utterly disinclined to believe—so grossly improbable does it seem—that at the end of 1800 years 995 copies out of every thousand, suppose will prove untrustworthy; and that the one, two, three, four or five which remain, whose contents were till yesterday as good as unknown, will be found to have retained the secret of what the Holy Spirit originally inspired. I am utterly unable to believe, in short, that God's promise has so entirely failed, that at the end of 1800 years much of the text of the Gospel has in point of fact to be picked by a German critic out of a waste-paper basket in the convent of St. Catherine; and that the entire text had to be remodeled after the pattern set by a couple of copies which had remained in neglect during fifteen centuries, and had probably owed their survival to that neglect; whilst hundreds of others had been thumbed to pieces, and had bequeathed their witness to copies made from them.<sup>12</sup>

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We not only celebrate the 400 years of the King James Version, but more significantly the 4000 years God has preserved His words to the jot and tittle so that in every age, God's people might have His every word to believe and live by.

### **Ecclesiastical Axiom**

The Church that God has called out and is faithful does not critique or criticise His Word but receives it by faith. It is not the rationalistic but the faith approach that pleases God. Romans 1:17 says, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Faith pleases God. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Faith takes God at His Word—"God says it, that settles it, we believe it." This is not to say that faith is void of reason. Our faith is a very reasonable faith and it is only so because it is based on the Truth. What is Truth? God's Word is Truth (John 17:17).

The spirit of faith causes faithful saints to receive the Word with childlike humility, believing all that it says without any doubt or question. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and He indwells the saints. The Bible is the Word of Truth and can only be appreciated and understood if we have the Spirit of Truth. That was why Jesus said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13). "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2:11-14).

Having received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, we are able to discern truth from error, right from wrong. We are able to tell whether it is our Saviour who speaks or Satan, and will follow Christ and not the devil. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and

they follow me” (John 10:27). Consider how the New Testament saints received the Word: They received the Word of God (1) gladly and obediently (Acts 2:41), (2) studiously with a ready mind to know the truth (Acts 17:11), (3) unwaveringly despite great opposition and persecution (1 Thess 1:6), and (4) without doubting that it is 100% perfect without any mistake (1 Thess 2:13).

This certainty that Christians have concerning the Holy Scriptures that God had inspired and preserved, infallible and inerrant is something stated most clearly in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1.5),

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.<sup>13</sup>

The Holy Scriptures that the Reformation Church held up as their sole, supreme and final authority were the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus on which the King James Bible and all other Reformation Bibles were based. They are the authentic and authoritative texts the Church has received down through the ages as the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant. Dean Burgon averred,

The Church, remember, hath been from the beginning the ‘Witness and Keeper of Holy Writ.’ Did not her Divine Author pour out upon her, in largest measure, ‘the SPIRIT of Truth;’ and pledge Himself that it should be that SPIRIT’S special function to ‘guide’ her children ‘into all the Truth?’ ... That by a perpetual miracle, Sacred Manuscripts would be protected all down the ages against depraving influences of whatever sort,—was not to have been expected; certainly was never promised. But the Church, in her collective capacity, hath nevertheless—as a matter of fact—been perpetually purging herself of those shamefully depraved copies which once everywhere abounded within her pale.<sup>14</sup>

But the apostate spirit of this age seeks to counterfeit and replicate and fake the Christian Faith by means of fallacious methods and false texts. This spirit finds its origins in the apostate periods of increasing unbelief found in liberalism, neo-evangelicalism and postmodernism of

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the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries respectively. But one thing is for sure, the Lord knows those who are His. Despite Satan's many attempts to confuse and corrupt the Gospel and the Bible, the Lord will keep His people safe for the Holy Spirit will guide them into all truth. His people will be able to recognise His voice and receive His words and will follow His truth that is found in the inspired and preserved Scriptures.

### **Evangelistic Axiom**

The Great Commission which is Christ's first commandment to His New Testament Church tells us to preach the gospel of salvation in Christ, baptise in the name of the triune God, and teach the whole counsel of God to "all nations" (Matt 28:18-20). To do this, the Holy Scriptures are essential and indispensable. In fulfilment of the Great Commission, God and His chosen instrument—namely His Church—would see to it that the Holy Scriptures would be faithfully copied and carefully translated, multiplied, and made available and accessible to the whole world. In keeping with Jesus' prophetic words to His disciples just before His ascension, the gospel and the Scriptures have truly gone out, not only in Jerusalem, but also Judea and Samaria, even unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Gospel can be read in over 2000 languages, and the Bible has been translated into the world's major languages, and more can be done. The Trinitarian Bible Society has been admirable in doing this—translating, publishing, and distributing faithful and trustworthy Bibles which have been translated from the inspired original language Scriptures God has preserved, namely, the Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek Textus Receptus.<sup>15</sup>

By virtue of the Great Commission, we can expect the authentic Scriptures to be those found in the majority of the manuscripts or what has been known as the Byzantine text. It is a fact that the majority of the New Testament Greek manuscripts bear remarkable uniformity and harmony. The scribal errors and corruptions have been minimal. This however was certainly not true of the minority manuscripts of Westcott and Hort. Using the Textus Receptus as the standard, Burgon compared the Westcott and Hort uncials to see how much these manuscripts agree with the Majority Text as represented by the Textus Receptus. This was what he found when he compared the Gospels of the Textus Receptus with those of the five Westcott-Hort codices: "the serious deflections of A from the Textus Receptus amount in all to only 842: whereas in C they

amount to 1798: in B, 2370: in [aleph], to 3392: in D, to 4697.”<sup>16</sup> Of the 5255 extant Greek manuscripts (as of 1967), 5217 agree with the Textus Receptus, and only 45 agree with the corrupt Westcott-Hort Text.<sup>17</sup> This shows that these so-called “oldest and most reliable manuscripts” are very different from the Traditional Text used by the Church down through the ages. Burgon was absolutely correct to conclude, “With regret we record our conviction, that these accomplished scholars [ie, Westcott and Hort] have succeeded in producing a Text [ie, Minority Text] vastly more remote from the inspired autographs of the Evangelists than any which has appeared since the invention of printing [ie, the Textus Receptus]”.<sup>18</sup>

It is necessary to add that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is seriously undermined in the Alexandrian manuscripts and the Westcott-Hort Text. Two examples are enough to prove the point. In John 1:18, the original and traditional reading as found in the Textus Receptus is “the only begotten Son,” but the Westcott-Hort Text reads, “the only begotten God”. The latter reading is clearly heretical, a reading favoured by the Gnostics and Arians. Dean Burgon had traced this corruption of the Holy Scriptures to the heresiarch Valentinus who denied that Jesus Christ was the *Logos* (“Word”) of John 1:1 and 14, and declared that the *Logos* and the Son were actually two distinct beings and hence not the same. It is thus no surprise that Arius whose heresy is today held by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, favoured the corrupt reading “the only begotten God” over against the original and traditional reading.<sup>19</sup> If Jesus was in any way less than God as Valentinus and Arius would have it, then He could not be our God and Saviour and we would still be in our sins and of all people most miserable.

The second example is 1 Timothy 3:16. The Textus Receptus reads correctly as “God was manifest in the flesh”, but the Alexandrian text has it as, “who was manifest in the flesh.” According to Dr E F Hills, the original reading, “God was manifest in the flesh,”

was altered by the Gnostics into the Western reading, *which was manifest in the flesh*, in order to emphasize their favorite idea of mystery. Then this Western reading was later changed into the meaningless Alexandrian reading, *who was manifest in the flesh*.<sup>20</sup>

The translators of the New International Version (NIV) have adopted the corrupt reading and by so doing have undermined (1) the deity of Christ by removing “God” and replacing it with just “He,” and (2) the humanity of Christ by replacing “the flesh” with “a body” (a body

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may not be necessarily be of “flesh and blood”). The word in the original is *sarx* (“flesh”) and not *soma* (“body”). The corrupt reading of the Westcott-Hort Text and modern versions like the NIV seriously undermine the doctrine of Christ—His perfect deity and perfect humanity—and this is invariably detrimental to the Gospel of Christ.

Therefore, we are moved by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to go with the Byzantine manuscripts and the Textus Receptus that consistently bear the marks of Christological-evangelistic orthodoxy.

### **Doxological Axiom**

Every biblical scholar must study the Holy Scriptures with the glory of God foremost in his heart and mind. This is in keeping with how God Himself regards His Word. Such a doxological spirit was found in David when he said, “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Ps 138:2). It was also the attitude of John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30). This doxological spirit was also seen in our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, for when He was on earth He sought only to glorify His Father in all His words and deeds (John 17:4). As such, it behoves the biblical scholar to promote truth and orthodoxy in his interpretation of Scripture. Any interpretation that leads to a glorification and exaltation and the very highest view of God and His Truth must be accepted, and any that results in a diminished or lesser view of God and His Truth rejected. “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom 3:4).

By virtue of this axiom, the textual critical approach to the Scriptures must necessarily be rejected for it denies the doctrine of the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures, and rejects the theological or theocentric approach in identifying and ascertaining the inspired and authentic texts. The modern textual critics say that the theological approach is non-scientific and unintelligent and therefore invalid. They denounce as obscurantists and even heretics those who employ the logic of faith to the whole matter of determining the autographic text of Scripture by way of receiving the very apographs of Scripture that God has supernaturally preserved down through the ages which leads to a certain and tangible fixed text and not an arbitrary and intangible fluid or evolving text. It is thus no surprise that evangelical scholars who have abandoned the theological approach and embraced the

rationalistic approach of textual criticism have also abandoned the inerrancy of Scripture and advocate an inerrancy that is confined only to a Scripture that they aver no longer exists (ie, the autographs). Hence to them the Bible today is not 100% infallible and inerrant—the Bible was only infallible and inerrant in the past, but it is no longer as infallible and inerrant today. Such a view takes away the glory of God and reduces the Bible to a mere human book stripped of all its divine and absolute authority as the Word of God. The textual critic and his rules become the authority and it is he who has the know-how and is the know-all on what the Church is to believe or not believe about God's words. Who is glorified in the whole textual critical exercise? Not God but man.

Has the Church at large become more godly and Christ-honouring with the introduction of textual criticism since the 19<sup>th</sup> century? No, in fact it has become more deadly. Many churches after a century of textual criticism have already died, and become synagogues of Satan. The only way the Church is going to be revived is to reform the Church and teach her to think and act doxologically—the glory of God must always be first and foremost in the thinking and conduct of the Christian and of the Church—“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt 6:33). Isaiah 42:8 says, “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another.”

Let us pay heed to the Apostle Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31,

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of



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the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Dr E F Hills was absolutely correct to say, “We must make God and Jesus Christ His Son the starting point of all our thinking.”<sup>21</sup> But there is great resistance even rebellion today in many a Bible college and seminary which instead of teaching students to begin with God and His Word, they teach their students to begin with the thoughts and methods of men, many of whom are unbelievers. In the field of textual criticism, I was told by my college and seminary professors, “Go to Metzger, go to Aland, Westcott and Hort are good and godly.” But I discovered that these men were unbelievers and apostates. According to Hills, the unqualified recommendation of unregenerate scholars and their scholarship is destructive.

Hills offered the only approach which is God-honouring and soul-saving. “If we are Christians, then we must begin our thinking not with the assertions of unbelieving scholars, and their naturalistic human logic, but with Christ and the logic of faith.”<sup>22</sup> He explained how the theological-doxological approach works.

For example, how do we know that the *Textus Receptus* is the true New Testament text? We know this through the logic of faith. Because the Gospel is true, the Bible which contains this Gospel was infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit. And because the Bible was infallibly inspired, it has been preserved by God’s special providence. Moreover, this providential preservation was not done privately in secret holes and caves but publicly in the usage of God’s Church. Hence the true New Testament text is found in the majority of the New Testament manuscripts. And this providential preservation did not cease with the invention of printing. Hence the formation of the *Textus Receptus* was God-guided.

And how do we know that the King James Version is a faithful translation of the true New Testament text? We know this also through the logic of faith. Since the formation of the *Textus Receptus* was God-guided, the translation of it was God-guided also. For as the *Textus Receptus* was being formed, it was also being translated. The two processes were simultaneous. Hence the early Protestant versions, such as Luther’s, Tyndale’s, the Geneva, and the King James, were actually varieties of the *Textus Receptus*.

And this was necessarily so according to the principles of God's preserving providence. For the *Textus Receptus* had to be translated in order that the universal priesthood of believers, the rank and file, might give it their God-guided approval.

In biblical studies, ... and in every other learned field we must begin with Christ and then work out our basic principles according to the logic of faith. This procedure will show us how to utilize the learning of non-Christian scholars in such a way as to profit by their instruction. Undeniably these unbelievers know a great many facts by virtue of God's common grace. They misinterpret these facts, however, because they ignore and deny God's revelation of Himself in and through the facts. Hence our task is to point out the inconsistencies and absurdities of unbelieving thought and then to take the facts which learned unbelievers have assembled and place them in their proper framework of biblical truth.

For example, if we begin with Christ, then we will understand what language is, namely the medium in which God reveals the facts unto men and also Himself in and through the facts. And if we adopt this basic position, then the study of Greek grammar, and especially the history of it, will prove immensely profitable to us and will strengthen our faith, for then we will see how God in His providence has preserved the knowledge of Greek grammar from the days of the ancient Alexandrian grammarians down to the time of Erasmus and the Protestant Reformers and even up until now. Such a survey certainly increases our confidence in the King James translators. Judged even by modern standards, their knowledge of the biblical languages was second to none.

Begin with Christ and the Gospel and follow the logic of faith. This is the principle that must guide us in our graduate studies, especially in the biblical field. If we adhere to it, then everything we learn will fit beautifully into its place in the Christian thought-system. But if we ignore Christ and adopt a neutral approach to knowledge, we will soon lose ourselves in a wilderness of details and grow more and more chaotic in our thinking.<sup>23</sup>

### **Historical Axiom**

The God of the Bible is not a God who is absent. He is very much present and at work, controlling and directing all the events of the world and in the Church to fulfil His predetermined and perfect plan of salvation. His plan of salvation is fully revealed in His Written Word—the Holy Scriptures. In them, we find many prophecies and promises, and we see them being fulfilled and kept by God to the last detail. The only way whereby God's people may know His mind and will is through His Book of prophecies and promises, and these prophecies and promises

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inscribed in Scripture must necessarily be preserved intact and without amendments or corruptions, or else we would be left very unsure and confused about the intent and contents of God's prophecies and promises, whether they are actually the original prophecies and promises or whether they have been altered or changed along the way. Unless God did exactly what He promised to do, that is to preserve His words infallibly so that every word, syllable and letter would be precisely what He had originally given, we would be thrown into all kinds of confusion and uncertainty with regard to what God has bequeathed to His people in the two Testaments of Holy Scripture.

In history, God proved that He has always been mindful to preserve and keep His words pure and uncorrupted. There are at least two biblical precedents of God's preservation of His words. The Rev Dr Timothy Tow ably explained this in his article, "God's Special Providential Care of the Text of Scripture",

There are two accounts recorded by Moses on the giving of the Ten Commandments. The first is in Exodus 19:16-21:26; 31:18-32:28; 34:1-4. The second is recorded in Deuteronomy 5:1-29; 9:10-21; 10:1-5. Deuteronomy means second giving of the Law. Deuteronomy is Moses' instruction to the children of Israel at the end of his life and of what greater importance is the giving of the Ten Commandments? For brevity, I have chosen to discuss from Deuteronomy and not Exodus.

The delivery of the Ten Commandments was made on the top of Mount Sinai, over 7,000 feet above sea level. The whole process took forty days and forty nights, amidst thunder and lightning, fire and smoke, the blowing of trumpet and the voice of Almighty God speaking to men. Then God wrote the sentences of the Ten Commandments with His own finger over the two tablets, front and back. In the climax of the forty days and nights, rebellion to God's promulgation of the Ten Commandments arose from the ground. The people had made a golden calf to substitute for Jehovah saying this was their god, whereupon Moses' wrath was kindled. When he was confronted by this golden calf, he became so angry that he threw the two tablets of law to the ground. Symbolically, God's Commandments were broken. The golden calf the children of Israel had made was ground into fine powder and mixed with water for Israel to drink, which was their punishment. Can puny man rebel against God's Word with impunity?

To re-establish the giving of the Law, God commanded Moses to hew another two tablets of stone and bring them with him back to the mountain top. "And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the

midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me. And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me” (Deuteronomy 10:4-5).

The Ark of the Covenant is the only holy furniture kept inside the Holy of Holies. God’s sacred commandments, intact and written on both sides of the two tablets so nothing can be added and nothing can be subtracted, were kept secure from any human intrusion. “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

The restoration of the two tables is to show that heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away. Not one letter or even the cross of a ‘t,’ and the dot of an ‘i.’ “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.” Jesus says, “The scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

To doubly confirm that heaven and earth shall pass away but God’s words shall not pass away, we have the record in Jeremiah 36 of how the prophet asked his secretary Baruch to write words of condemnation against the House of Judah and caused them to be read to Judah. When the roll Jeremiah dictated to Baruch was read before Jehoiakim, king of Judah, he cut it up and burned it wholly in the fire. Did God’s Word become ashes? God told Jeremiah to repeat His Words to be written by Baruch again and add more words for the punishment of King Jehoiakim. Can puny man rebel against God’s Word with impunity?

This leads us to the doctrine of God’s special providential care of the text of Scripture. This is affirmed by the Westminster Confession. It states that the Scripture is “kept pure in all ages.” This is doubly attested by David in Psalm 12:6-7, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” The doctrine of the special providential care of the text of Scripture, however, is denied by even some fundamentalist scholars. Dr. Carl McIntire has this commentary to make: “What is interesting about all this is that, in talking about the mighty acts of God and trying to make out of our God a great and powerful God, they have produced for us a God who is unable to give us a record that is true! They believe in the infallibility and inerrancy only in the autographs, but not in the subsequent copies.”

We believe the Textus Receptus (Received Text) upon which the KJV is based, is preserved intact for the church so that we can say we have the Word of God in our hands. But those versions that are based on Westcott and Hort who supplant with their corrupt text have made changes and deletions in 9,900 places in the New International Version (NIV). The text

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underlying NIV is not as the Westminster Confession says, “kept pure in all ages.” God has preserved for us a pure Bible as He preserved the Ten Commandments for us to this day. Let me say it again, it is the Textus Receptus on which the KJV is based.<sup>24</sup>

It ought to be noted that God’s providential preservation of His Scripture is not ordinary but extraordinary, not a hands off but a hands on preservation of His words. The deistic heresy that God inspired His Word but did nothing to preserve it must be rejected. Dr Timothy Tow rightly said,

If Deism teaches a Creator who goes to sleep after creating the world is absurd, to hold to the doctrine of inspiration without preservation is equally illogical ... inspiration and preservation are linked one to another. Without preservation, all the inspiration, God-breathing into the Scriptures, would be lost. But we have a Bible so pure and powerful in every word and it is so because God has preserved it down through the ages.<sup>25</sup>

I believe God providentially guided the King James translators to produce the purest Textus Receptus of all. The earlier editions were individual efforts, but the Textus Receptus underlying the King James Version is a corporate effort of 54 of the most outstanding biblical-theological, and more importantly, Bible-believing scholars of their day. And as the Scripture says, “in a multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov 11:14). The King James translators had all the various editions of the Textus Receptus to refer to, and they made their decisions with the help of the Holy Spirit. I believe the Lord providentially guided the King James translators to make the right textual decisions. As such, I do not believe we need to improve on the Textus Receptus underlying the King James Version. No one should play textual critic, and be a judge of God’s Word today. God is His own Textual Critic. I accept God’s special providential work in history during the great 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Reformation.

Now the question remains: Why the Textus Receptus underlying the King James Version and not Luther’s German Bible, or the Spanish Reina Valera, or the Polish Biblia Gdanska, or the French Martin Bible, or some other language Bible? Now we do not deny there are faithful and reliable versions that are accurately translated and based on the Textus Receptus, nor do we discount the need for foreign language Bibles, but here is Dr Hills’s reply to the question:

God in His providence has abundantly justified this confidence of the King James translators. The course of history has made English a world-wide

language which is now the native tongue of at least 300 million people and the second language of many millions more. For this reason the King James Version is known the world over and is more widely read than any other translation of the holy Scriptures. Not only so, but the King James Version has been used by many missionaries as a basis and guide for their own translation work and in this way has extended its influence even to converts who know no English. For more than 350 years therefore the reverent diction of the King James Version has been used by the Holy Spirit to bring the Word of life to millions upon millions of perishing souls. Surely this is a God-guided translation on which God, working providentially, has placed the stamp of His approval.<sup>26</sup>

This is in keeping with Jesus' words, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ... Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt 7:17-20).

I believe the purity of God's Word has been faithfully maintained throughout the whole transmission of the Traditional/Byzantine/Majority/Received Text, and is fully represented in the Apographs of the Hebrew Masoretic Text for the Old Testament and the Greek Textus Receptus for the New Testament underlying the King James Version. E F Hills rightly concluded, "We are guided by the common faith. Hence we favour 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."<sup>27</sup> I also agree with Hills who warned, "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."<sup>28</sup>

As regards the Traditional Text being a "virtual photocopy" of the original, G I Williamson did write to this effect in his commentary on the Westminster Confession concerning preservation,

This brings us to the matter of God's 'singular care and providence' by which He has 'kept pure in all ages' this original text, so that we now actually possess it in 'authentic' form. And let us begin by giving an illustration from modern life to show that an original document may be destroyed, without the text of that document being lost. Suppose you were to write a will. Then suppose you were to have a photographic copy of that will made. If the original were then destroyed, the photographic copy would still preserve the text of that will exactly the same as the original itself. The

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text of the copy would differ in no way whatever from the original, and so it would possess exactly the same ‘truth’ and meaning as the original. Now of course photography was not invented until long after the original copy ... had been worn out or lost. How then could the original text of the Word of God be preserved? The answer is that God preserved it by His own remarkable care and providence.<sup>29</sup>

Concerning what the Westminster theologians meant when they declared that the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament “being immediately inspired of God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authenticall,” we have another commentary from Prof William F Orr of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary who wrote,

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 had kept pure in all the ages. The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the Textus Receptus of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith.<sup>30</sup>

Is there a historical precedent that tells us that God’s special providential work can involve a closure, a terminus? The answer is yes. All the inspired New Testament books were completed by AD 100 when the Apostle John wrote the last book of Revelation, and God warned against adding to or subtracting from His Word in Revelation 22:18-19. However, we know that in the first few centuries, there were heretical men who penned spurious gospels and epistles, and passed them off as Scripture. Some of these were the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Epistle of Barnabas, etc. Nevertheless, none of the inspired books of Scripture have been lost or obscured in the canonical process. By the special providential guidance of the Holy Spirit, God’s people were led to identify the 27 books to become our New Testament Canon, no more, no less. There was a terminus to the canonisation of Scripture at the Council of Carthage in 397.

In like manner, the Lord allowed copyist errors to enter into the transmission process through the pen of fallible scribes. Nevertheless, His providential hand kept His inspired words of Scripture from being lost or corrupted. In light of God’s providence, that nothing happens by chance, and that history is under His sovereign control, I believe that in the fulness of time—in the most opportune time of the Reformation when

the true church separated from the false, when the study of the original languages was emphasised, and the printing press invented (which meant that no longer would there be any need to handcopy the Scriptures thereby ensuring a uniform text)—God restored from out of a pure stream of preserved Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, the purest Hebrew and Greek Text of all—the Text that underlies our King James Version—that accurately reflects the original Scriptures.

### **Conclusion**

The seven biblical axioms (viz, epangelical, linguistic, temporal, ecclesiastical, evangelistic, doxological, and historical) above have helped and guided me to know for sure which is, what is, and where is the inspired Bible that God has preserved. It has freed me from the shackles of uncertainty and unbelief. It gives me full confidence in God's totally inspired and forever preserved infallible and inerrant words which are my sole, supreme and final authority of faith and practice. Jesus promised, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32). Paul said, "*For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.*" (2 Cor 13:8). Truth never fails, it always prevails! To God be the glory great things He has done!

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> David Otis Fuller, ed, *Which Bible?* (Grand Rapids: Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> Bart D Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 10, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Suan Yew Quek, "Did God Promise to Preserve His Words? Interpreting Psalm 12:6-7." *The Burning Bush* 10 (2004): 96-98.

<sup>4</sup> Hear his sermon entitled, "'Help, LORD!' (Psalm 12)", preached on January 11, 1992, accessible from [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com).

<sup>5</sup> *The Constitution of the Bible Presbyterian Church: The Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline* (np: General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church, 1989), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Martin I Klauber, trans, "The Formula Consensus Helvetica (1675)," *Trinity Journal* 11 (1990): 103.

<sup>7</sup> "Articles of Faith, Operation and Organization," as adopted at the Organizational Meeting of the Dean Burgon Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 3-4, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Lynn Gray Gordon, *The World's Greatest Truths*, vol 1 (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1999), 26.



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<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages: Recapturing the Authorised Version and the Doctrine of Providential Preservation* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2001), 128.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

<sup>11</sup> D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev ed (Collingswood: Bible for Today, 2006), xii.

<sup>12</sup> J W Burgon, *The Causes of Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels* (Collingswood: Dean Burgon Society Press, 1998 reprint), 11, 12.

<sup>13</sup> *The Constitution of the Bible Presbyterian Church*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> J W Burgon, *The Revision Revised: A Refutation of Westcott and Hort's False Greek Text and Theory* (Collingswood: Dean Burgon Society Press, 2000 reprint), 334, 335.

<sup>15</sup> Trinitarian Bible Society, "Statement of Doctrine of Holy Scripture," *Quarterly Record* 571 (April-June 2005): 6-15.

<sup>16</sup> Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 52, 53

<sup>18</sup> Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, 25, 26

<sup>19</sup> Burgon, *The Causes of Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels*, 215-218.

<sup>20</sup> E F Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1984), 137, 138.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 113, 114.

<sup>24</sup> Timothy Tow, "God's Special Providential Care of the Text of Scripture," *Bible Witness* (October - December 2002): 3, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *Theology for Every Christian* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2007), 89.

<sup>26</sup> Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 216.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 223.

<sup>28</sup> E F Hills, *Believing Bible Study* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1977), 83.

<sup>29</sup> G I Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964), 15.

<sup>30</sup> William F Orr, "The Authority of the Bible as Reflected in the proposed Confession of 1967," as quoted by Theodore Letis, ed, *The Majority Text* (Philadelphia: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987), 174.

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## **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORD OF GOD**

Gia-Hien Nguyen

How can you and I know God correctly, besides His general revelation in Nature, without God's Word, the Holy Bible? How can you and I know that God is eternal, sovereign, all-powerful, all-wise, holy, righteous, faithful, loving, good, merciful and perfect without God's Word? How can you and I know God's will, commandments and instructions without God's Word? How can you and I know God's judgment and the condemnation of sin in hell without God's Word? How can you and I know our perishing state and God's salvation for us in the Saviour Jesus Christ, who truly came into this world, died for us, rose again for our justification and will come again for our complete redemption, without God's Word? How can you and I live "by every word of God" without the Holy Bible? How can you and I be sure that the revelation of God is complete, sufficient and authoritative without God's Word? How can you and I discern what is truth and falsehood when we hear a message or read an article without God's Word? How can you and I wholeheartedly believe and contend for God's Truth in this world full of deception, misleading human philosophies and theories, and all kinds of false doctrines without the very perfect Word of God in our hands today? Has God not known all about this and cared for His Word, and perfectly preserved His inspired Word so that you and I can wholeheartedly trust in His Word without any doubt? Surely the almighty, sovereign, holy and faithful God has, and even magnified His Word above all His Name (Ps 138:2).

### **The Holy Spirit's Teaching**

It is a great blessing for you and me to read a book with the author beside us to teach us and explain his writing to us. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author of the Holy Scriptures, but sadly many do not humbly trust in Him but in human reasoning and rationalistic methods to understand God's Word! No wonder, they cannot see or understand God's Truth.

The Holy Spirit, the Divine Teacher, comes to “teach” us “all things” (John 14:26). If you and I have any difficulty understanding a portion of the Scriptures due to our limited understanding, we should not quickly judge God’s Word, but just go to the Holy Spirit with a humble, meek, prayerful and teachable heart, and He will guide and help us to understand His Truth from other passages of the Scriptures as well, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Ps 25:9); “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. ... But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:20, 27).

This however does not mean that you and I do not need faithful servants of God to teach us as “he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Eph 4:11). Thus, we can learn a lot from God’s true servants. I really thank God for guiding me to the Far Eastern Bible College to learn His Truth from faithful and godly teachers. However, only the Holy Spirit can make me see the Truth personally with such a strong conviction that I will not want to lose it or compromise it for anything else. So with the help of the Holy Spirit, keep studying His Word diligently, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).

### **The Holy Spirit’s Guidance**

The Lord Jesus taught and guided His disciples to know the Truth, and He promised them that after His ascension another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, would come to teach and guide them, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13). Here we see that although there are three distinct Divine Persons in the Trinity, none acts independently of the other two without their mutual trust and honour. The Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself but only speaks what He hears from God the Father and God the Son. Jesus Christ does the same, saying, “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). Therefore, the words that the Lord Jesus and the Holy

Spirit speak are from God the Father. If you and I despise Jesus' words or the words the Holy Spirit inspired and guided His servants to write, even the Holy Scriptures, we despise God the Father! How serious it is!

The Holy Spirit will guide you and me into not just some truth but "all truth." All the truth that you and I need to know about God and about Jesus Christ, about His creation, about man, about His salvation for man in Christ, about His divinely inspired and preserved Word, about His future kingdom, judgement, new heaven and new earth, etc. have been recorded in the Holy Scriptures. In other words, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will guide you and me into all the Holy Scriptures, which is God's Truth. Thus, the Holy Spirit will never approve the corrupt Bible texts and versions where His Truth is twisted, omitted or modified.

The Holy Spirit not only guides you and me into all truth but also into God's will: what we should say or do and where we should go according to His will, providence, and direction (Matt 10:19-20; Acts 8:28, 39; 16:6-10).

### **The Holy Spirit's Illumination**

The natural man, no matter how intelligent or clever or scholarly he is, can never see, know, understand or discern spiritual things and God's Truth, and even regards them as foolishness, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). Why? The level of life and nature of animals, even monkeys, is far lower than that of human beings. They cannot understand our talk, our writing, our discussion, our plan, our project, etc. Similarly, unbelievers cannot understand God's Word, God's Truth, God's plan, or God's way, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). That is why you and I must be "born again" and "partakers of the divine nature" and receive the revelation and illumination from the Holy Spirit, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2:10), and "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:17-18).

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The Greek verb *photizo* means “to give light” (Rev 22:5), “to enlighten” (Eph 1:18), “to illuminate” (Heb 10:32), “to make one see or understand” (Eph 3:9). Then, you and I have to humbly set aside our human pre-understanding, prejudices and arguments when we come to God’s Word as only the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,” is able to make you and me to see, know and understand God’s Truth, His plan of salvation, and His glorious inheritance for us. The Holy Spirit, the Divine Author of the Holy Scriptures, has revealed His Truth to His Prophets and Apostles and used them to write it down, so when you and I read the Scriptures, we must humbly pray to the same Divine Author, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Ps 119:18). It should be noted that the illumination does not give a new revelation. The revelation of God is complete in the Holy Scriptures, and God does not allow any addition to or subtraction from His Word (Rev 22:18-19).

### **The Holy Spirit and Interpretation**

In order to understand and interpret the Holy Scriptures properly, you and I must be born again, sanctified, and illumined by the Holy Spirit. Next, you and I must humbly submit to the Holy Spirit and the authority of the inspired and preserved Scriptures in the original languages. Then you and I must use the most faithful and correct translation of the inspired and preserved Scriptures, and diligently study the Scriptures with a reverent, prayerful and teachable heart and with sound biblical doctrines.

How to interpret the Scriptures properly? The following are some basic principles of biblical interpretation:

(1) Humbly seek the illumination of the Holy Spirit in prayer. Those who trust in their intelligence without seeking the Holy Spirit fail to interpret properly.

(2) Diligently read and meditate on the Bible text as many times as possible to get the intended meaning before consulting the commentaries. Read the Bible text with faith and reverence because it is God’s Word.

(3) Read with the context of the Bible text in mind, the parts preceding and following the text, bearing in mind that Christ is the Centre of the Scriptures.

(4) The Bible has only one meaning and one sense. Even when there is a deeper sense, it still does not constitute a second sense or meaning. For example, Caiaphas the high priest prophesied, “it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” The deeper sense is that “Jesus should die...not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” (John 11:50-52).

(5) Use Scripture to interpret Scripture. For example, the word “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 means precisely “virgin” and not “young woman” as found in the RSV. Matthew 1:22-23 is the inspired commentary on Isaiah 7:14, pointing to the virgin birth of Christ.

(6) Be well grounded in the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. This will guard you from interpreting the Scriptures in such a way that would undermine the historic Christian Faith.

(7) There is only one fulfilment in prophecy. However, in a single prophetic text, there may be two prophecies requiring two fulfilments. For example, there are two prophecies in Joel 2:28-32, one was fulfilled at Pentecost (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2) and the other will be fulfilled when Christ returns (Joel 2:30-32; Matt 24:29).

(8) Apply the literal or normal interpretation of Scripture. “When the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense”. The premillennialists have a proper interpretation of the Second Coming of Christ that Christ must return to establish His kingdom on earth for a thousand years based on a literal understanding of Revelation 5:10 and 20:1-7.

(9) Know that there are types and symbols in the Bible. For example, “the seven golden candlesticks” (lampstands) is used to symbolise the seven churches in Asia (Rev 1:11, 12, 20); and “the serpent was lifted up” is a type of Christ who was crucified for our salvation (John 3:14-15).

(10) Scripture does not contradict Scripture. Any contradiction is only apparent and must not be regarded as actual discrepancies. We need to humble ourselves and admit our limited knowledge and understanding so as to guard ourselves from an arrogant judgement and criticism of God’s Word. “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom 3:4).

(11) Knowing the biblical languages is a great advantage. Carefully use Hebrew and Greek lexicons, grammars, concordances, theological

dictionaries and wordbooks, etc with much discernment to find out the meaning of root words, phrases, syntax, structures, tenses and moods, etc. This can help with a more precise understanding of the Bible text.

(12) Use Bible encyclopedias and dictionaries with responsibility and discernment (as not all are sound) to know the historical and cultural background of biblical times in order to interpret the Bible in the light of its historical context.

(13) When necessary, use Bible commentaries with much discernment, responsibility and prayer to get some good biblical explanation from godly, Bible-believing scholars. The interpretation must be biblical and should not contradict any fundamental doctrines of the Bible.

(14) Study the Bible with the commitment to apply or obey the principles and injunctions of the Bible in our lives today.

(15) The Holy Scriptures alone must be the sole, supreme and final authority of our faith and practice, not circumstances, not experiences, not human intellect, not the church, not any person, institution, or movement.

### **The Holy Spirit and the Inspiration and Preservation of Scripture**

The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author of God's Word, the Holy Bible. He chose His servants—the Prophets and the Apostles—to write exactly what He wanted them to write so that the final product is the very inspired Word of God free from any mistake or error although their personalities and styles might be reflected in their writing (2 Pet 1:20-21). Thus, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” or is “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). The Holy Spirit inspired not only the contents of Holy Scripture, whether they be spiritual matters, or matters of history, geography or science but also every word.

Since God's Word is so vital for mankind to know the Truth about God and His will for them, Satan has spared no effort to attack and distort God's Word since the beginning (Gen 3:1-5). Sadly, Eve fell into Satan's trap, and then Adam listened to Eve, and both sinned against God and were cursed, and death entered into the world. It is really dangerous to depart from God's Word! Satan is still working hard to attack God's Word today, and many, even so-called “Christian scholars” have fallen into his

trap without being aware, thinking they are “scholarly” with their historical and textual criticisms! It is sad that many blindly listen to these men instead of God’s Word just like Adam, who listened to Eve.

The foundation of Christian faith is Christ and His Word. Satan attacks the faith by sowing the seed of doubt in the hearts of many who will eventually doubt Jesus Christ and His Word. Many argue that God’s Word is only perfect in the original manuscripts (autographs), and since the original manuscripts are no longer existing, they conclude that God’s Word is no longer perfect. They fail to acknowledge and believe that the sovereign, holy, true, almighty, faithful and perfect God has all power to preserve His inspired Word to the very last word for His people as He promised, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever” (Ps 12:6-7).

The Lord Jesus Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit, and He never doubted God’s Word but lived by God’s Word (Luke 4:1-4,18-21) and confirmed the perfect preservation of God’s Word to the jot and tittle although He had only copies of the Scriptures (apographs) in His day, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt 5:18). Jesus’ apostles were later filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), and they never doubted or criticised God’s Word in their preaching and writings! In the true revivals throughout Church history, Spirit-filled believers thirsted for God’s Word and never doubted or questioned God’s Word!

### **The Holy Spirit and the Traditional and Received Texts**

How can you and I recognise which Bible is God’s Word today since there are so many Bible translations and versions, all claiming to be the most faithful and correct translation of God’s Word from the original languages? Now, before we can answer this question, we need to understand certain things.

First, it should be noted that the Holy Spirit inspired His saints to record God’s Word in Hebrew and Aramaic for the Old Testament and in Greek for the New Testament. Therefore, the doctrines of verbal and plenary inspiration (VPI) and verbal and plenary preservation (VPP) of the Scriptures refer to the original languages of the Scriptures, and not the translations, even the King James Version (KJV).



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Next, the copies of Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament with 39 books have been confirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ, His apostles and His Church since the first century (Luke 24:44).

As there were many false gospels and corrupt manuscripts in Greek circulating, the Spirit-filled saints who were guided by the same Divine Author were able to recognise their Shepherd's voice (God's true Word) to identify the 27 books of the New Testament as Canon at the Council of Carthage in AD 397.

Then, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Holy Spirit raised up His reformers to bring His people back to God's Word from the spiritual darkness under the Roman Catholic Church. By God's sovereignty and providence, in the days of the Protestant Reformation, God's people were guided by the same Divine Author to identify and confirm God's Word in the Traditional and Received Texts, and other faithful versions.

Many argue that it is impossible to have the inspired Bible to the jot and tittle today in the original languages because none of the original manuscripts exists, no man is perfect and the process of transmission was done manually by men, not by printing machines like today! Many others are clever to hide their unbelief by saying that God did preserve all His teachings or doctrines regarding the salvation of His people, but not every word of His Scripture. Many others just compromise and accept all kinds of texts and versions. They are not serious to choose the right text or version that God wants them to read. How about you?

The heart and mind of man are corrupt, sinful, doubtful, proud, deceitful, rebellious and wicked (Jer 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; Rom 1:28-32). In the days of Jesus, so many did not believe He is God Himself and that His Word is true despite His powerful preaching with so many miracles authenticating His Person and His Word. When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, he got that revelation not from himself but from God the Father (Matt 16:16-17). You and I must be illumined to see the Truth!

The same Holy Spirit, the Divine Author of God's Word, who helped and guided the Reformation saints and the KJV translators to recognise the preserved texts and to reject the corrupt ones will help and guide you and me to do the same. Do you seriously prefer the translations based on the modern critical texts with thousands of Greek words omitted and modified? What do you think about the name of "Christ" omitted

more than 30 times in the New Testament (Rom 1:16; Phil 4:13; etc), “God” replaced with “He” (1 Tim 3:16) and many other omissions including the Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7)? Unregenerate and sinful men cannot understand the importance of God’s perfect Word from the holy and perfect God, who hates sins, mistakes and errors and magnifies His Word above all His Name (Ps 138:2).

The almighty God is able to preserve all His Words as He promised (Ps 12:6-7) “for with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). Nothing is impossible with God including the preservation of His Words! Thus, with the logic of faith in our sovereign, almighty and faithful Holy Spirit, we trust that we do have God’s inspired and preserved Word in our hands today in the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts underlying the KJV and all other versions based on those same Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. As far as English versions are concerned, the KJV is the most faithful, most accurate and most reliable of all.

### **Conclusion**

The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author of God’s Word, the Holy Bible. If the same Holy Spirit, who was sent by the Lord Jesus Christ and who indwelt the prophets and apostles, is dwelling in you and in me and controlling our hearts, minds and thinking, we shall do the same: magnifying God’s Word (Ps 138:2), living by God’s Word (Matt 4:4), trusting in God’s Word (Ps 119:42), holding forth God’s Word (Phil 2:16), preaching God’s Word (2 Tim 4:2), and contending for God’s Word (Jude 3) without any doubt, question or criticism, “He that saith he abideth in him (Jesus) ought himself also so to walk, even as he (Jesus) walked” (1 John 2:6). If you and I do otherwise, we are not truly filled with the Holy Spirit, and neither are we in Christ. May the Lord graciously help you and me humbly submit to the Holy Spirit and the authority of God’s Word always, “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18) so as to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) for our heavenly Father’s glory (John 15:8). Amen.

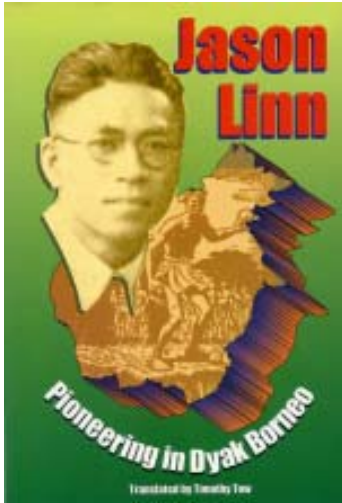
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## ***PIONEERING IN DYAK BORNEO:*** **A BOOK REVIEW**

Helen Gek-Suan Lee



*Pioneering in Dyak Borneo* (authored by the Rev Jason Linn and translated by the Rev Dr Timothy Tow, published by the Far Eastern Bible College Press in 1997) is an autobiographical account of a Chinese missionary, Jason Linn, who spent fifteen years of his life preaching the Gospel in the riverine jungles of interior East Borneo—“an epochal undertaking in the annals of Chinese missions”.

The following is a quick summary of his labours in the South Seas. Although he first felt his call was to Northwest Kwangsi, China, Linn eventually went to

Dutch East Borneo, going “inland to open up work amongst the half-civilised Dyak tribes.” In his 15 years of Gospel labour, he turned 3,000 mountain tribesmen to the Lord and built over ten churches. After the Japanese surrender, he left for Java and established the first Cantonese Christian Church in Djakarta, the Indonesian capital.

In his Foreword, Philip Teng, speaking of a general awakening in the Chinese churches all over the world, gave credit to the author: “Many factors have contributed to the spreading of this flame, one of which is certainly the influence of Rev Jason Linn’s fifteen years of pioneering missionary work among the native Dyaks in interior Borneo.”

In the words of the Rev Dr Timothy Tow who translated the book from Mandarin to English, “this book deserves to be read because it is the first Chinese missionary thriller ever to be published in English.” I fully agree with him because the book makes for absorbing and exciting

reading. The translator did a fine job of retaining the “flavour” of Chinese philosophy, folklore, wit and humour. This book is “commended ... to the Chinese church as a Christian classic.”

A humble man, Linn, the pioneer missionary had felt unworthy of writing an autobiography for he regarded himself as an “unprofitable servant” (Luke 17:10). However, his hearers in the aborigine jungles had benefitted much from his preaching and felt that a record of his life and mission experiences would challenge others, especially young believers, to preach the Gospel in foreign lands. Another objective of the book is to tell readers that “foreign missions” is not the monopoly of Western missionaries and that “many might know the unchangeable God who still works miracles in these last days”. Certainly, this book was written with God-honouring objectives; it is a call to the dauntless to serve not in some comfortable city parish, but to go to the uncivilised tribes; it encourages the younger generations to dedicate their lives for the Master’s service in the regions beyond for “this great and difficult enterprise cannot be undertaken by two or three men.” With this in mind, the author had hoped that it would appeal to “our Christian brethren in China for the people of the Southern wilds”.

This is certainly a book to be read by those who are entering the mission field especially to the unevangelised and uncivilised lands. In the book, the author shares not only his successes but also failures. His frank testimonies, I believe, will help prepare pioneer missionaries for the challenges and demands of evangelising the lost in “the hard places.”

It was thoughtful of the author to provide many pictures in the book—of the family, co-labourers, and the people he ministered to—which give the reader deeper insights and understanding of his work among the savage tribes. Also included are interesting pictures of Dyak one-piece coffins, an ox totem which formed part of the ox-spearing rite, “Pegantar”—a potpourri dance. How true it is that a picture speaks a thousand words!

I find it interesting that in the first three chapters, the author wrote about himself, especially his childhood in an indirect way, often in the third person. He referred to himself as “the silent, speechless boy” who “could not even cry for his food”.

The author portrayed to the reader in a clear and amusing way, the sharp contrast between the intelligent elder brother and the younger

brother (the author himself)—“the tiny tot of a dullard”. Exasperated, the parents gave all their attention to the elder son, and “saw as wasted effort any struggle to nurture one who gave them such little promise”. The father died when the boy was 12. The grieving widow, believing that “winter’s cold would bring in the warmth of spring, the dark night soon yield to a bright day” plodded on and struggled with all her might to bring up her children. However, one by one, her children died. The only survivor was “that big good-for-nothing” who later survived a drowning and a severe attack of appendicitis.

Describing the hospital episode, the author, writing with a sense of humour and dramatic irony, said, “At the age of seventeen, he almost died of appendicitis. He literally lay on the hospital bed for one whole month, so much so that the doctor wagged his head in despair for him. At that time there were three such cases in hospital. The two lighter cases had ended up in being carried to the ‘dark room.’ How much more this boy in a graver condition? However, he walked out of the hospital’s front door after one month and returned to his house in peace beyond man’s expectations.”

The book clearly depicts God’s grace upon this young “good for nothing” who “had no gift of speech or tact.” Truly, “this boy who had gone through a thousand trials and come back to life from the dead must have been a vessel kept for the Lord’s own use”. How wonderful that the Lord chose to call “such a stammering fellow” for the glorious service of preaching the Gospel and winning souls: “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor 1:27-29). In this fascinating way, the author successfully conveyed to the reader God’s special work of grace upon one so dull and despised. We are thus reminded not to despise the weak and base things of the world for the Lord may call such to serve Him. Those whom He calls, He enables by His grace to be made useful for His glory so that no man may “glory in His presence.”

Missionaries, especially those from the West, are often highly regarded as God’s servants who have sacrificially given their all for the Gospel’s sake. This book, however, opens the eyes of the reader, to the

true colours of those self-promoting “servants of God” who “came to China in style,” and possessed “that white man’s superiority”. Serving self rather than others, “they made it a palace like Herod the Tetrarch’s—to rule over their parishes” and had many servants to wait on them. The author called them “the haughty sons of heaven” whose doctrines “were far removed from Bible truth”.

The author personally shared his struggles in the ministry—his “explosive temperament.” He knew full well such a state of affairs was detrimental both to his status and work as a minister of the Gospel—marital conflicts, irregular hours, undernourishment, illness, separation from family, persecutions, financial hardships (“due to lean stipends”), and constant temptation. He shared, “All the young girls of marriageable age who met a new comer, whether they knew him well or not, would unshamefacedly seek love from the dauntless visitor”. Through all these trials, the pioneer missionary had to practise discipline and keep himself from sin. Let all who are intent on pioneer work take heed of these warnings from one who had gone before.

It is encouraging to read the interesting accounts of how the author and his wife made the most of their difficult circumstances; “poverty begets adaptation, and adaptation understanding”. To cope with the small stipend, they reared fowls, planted crops, fished “with book in one hand and fishing rod in the other,” and “picked firewood and made their own furniture.” He used this latter skill to teach the Dyaks “in house construction and building churches”. Truly, necessity is the Mother of Invention. From this, we learn that God works in a wonderful way to teach His servant and to use him to teach others.

Another useful skill the missionary couple acquired out of necessity was that of midwifery which they used to help many during their ministry with the mountain tribes: “Thanks be to God, I got a secret midwifery formula, and with God’s unseen help I have not only had an expeditious record, but also an attainment of seeing all deliveries each one growing in health and loveliness.”

It was not easy to win the simple-minded, docile Dyaks to the Christian faith. Amongst other things, the pioneer missionary had to contend with “Pilihan”—a heathenistic tribal ceremony, their promiscuous culture, “their irregularity of character”, “traitors from within”. However, the book encourages the reader with testimonies of the

## PIONEERING IN DYAK BORNEO: A BOOK REVIEW

Dyaks' faith. One incident concerned a village chief who "was so scared by the deaths that he tempted some dangerously ill with the prospect of giving up their faith or of secretly exorcising the evil spirits and demons." Rejecting his offer, the believers replied: "Our lives are in the Lord's hand. Life and death are predestined. How could we take such unconscionable and unreasonable measures for the sake of our temporal bodies and sin against the Lord—to drop out half-way, to lose the everlasting bliss of our souls? We are getting nearer heaven now. Please don't disturb us, lest we be found wanting." Praise God for the great faith of these simple tribal folk!

In chapter nine aptly entitled, "Kinsmen According to the Flesh," the author recalled with fondness, his wonderful relationship with a young Hokkien couple, Mr Gui Beng Kim and his wife who proved by their "loyalty, sense of righteousness and ... respectful treatment of others" that they were true friends. Linn paid them this tribute: "In all the world there was only this young couple who could receive correction from one of another province with such indulgence and obedience." We can all learn lessons of humility from these lovely young friends of Linn.

In the last chapter, the author very aptly lamented the poor efforts of the Church towards the Great Commission. The Gospel has come to Asia, yet the saving of souls is viewed as "some secondary and unessential thing ... Thus, countless perishing souls who daily follow after their carnal lusts are tragically drowned in the abyss."

The book ends with a wake-up call and a challenge to young believers "excellently endowed to be messengers of the Gospel" to "give yourselves whole-heartedly to the Lord" and "with one heart and soul to receive this Great Commission to preach the Gospel to the whole world".

This is one missionary story that is well worth reading. This book will be an excellent reference for those who have been called by the Lord to serve Him in foreign mission fields. May the Lord use it for His glory and the blessing of His people. Amen.

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*Helen Lee is the wife of the Rev Wee Eng Moh, Pastor of Berith Bible-Presbyterian Church. Pioneering in Dyak Borneo is available from the FEBC Bookroom (febcbookroom@febc.edu.sg).*

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## **“TO EVERY THING THERE IS A SEASON”**

Su-Shiang Lo



“To every thing there is a season” (Eccl 3:1a). There is a time to work and a time to relax. After FEBC’s whole semester of hard work, a week of Daily Vacation Bible College in commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the King James Bible and the celebration of FEBC’s 36<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service, the school headed for Mersing Lautan Biru Resort for her 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat. The once-a-year retreat is a time of spiritual feeding, fellowship, relaxation and recreation. When our Lord Jesus was on earth, after a whole day of hard work, He said to His disciples: “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while” (Mark 6:31).



*“TO EVERY THING THERE IS A SEASON”*

The four-day camp with a total of 76 campers started on Monday 9 May 2011. After praying to God for journey mercy in FEBC compound, the FEBC family set out at 8.30 am heading north to Mersing. Two buses were hired to bring the campers to the resort. The travelling took approximately four hours from FEBC to the resort. The Lord was gracious to answer our prayer and to protect our going out and our coming in. We arrived at Mersing in time to have our lunch. After lunch was a time of settling down followed by a time of singing praises to the Lord. In this camp, we sang through the “Old Testament History in Song” and the “Magna Carta of God’s Saving Plan (Romans I to XI in Song)” written by the late Principal Rev (Dr) Timothy Tow. These special singing sessions throughout the camp saw us singing through a total of 245 stanzas of songs. It was quite an accomplishment when we finally completed it!



The camp officially began on Monday night with the Principal’s address, special items prepared by students, the President’s address followed by the watching of a video. The theme of the camp was taken from Philippians 2:16 and Titus 1:9: “Holding Forth the Word of Life” and “Holding Fast the Faithful Word”. The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat was truly a time of great rejoicing with the final verdict of the Court of Appeal in favour of FEBC. Indeed, truth never fails; it always prevails. “For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” (2 Cor 13:8). Man may fail but the truth of God never fails. We thank God for His faithfulness to His children “for He is faithful that promised”. Therefore, “let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” (Heb 10:23).

By God's providential leading, the Tuesday night video "Candle in the Dark" was screened on Monday. To me, the movie marked the beginning and set the theme for all the subsequent messages and morning devotions. The spiritual lesson God impressed upon my heart throughout this camp is summed up in Hebrews 12:1, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us". Christians are the light of the world because we are the only people who have the Truth. No man lights a candle and hide it. We who have the Truth cannot hide the truth for ourselves. We are commanded to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt 5:16). The thematic messages were based on the cloud of witnesses of Daniel and his three friends (Dan 1-3). Having been exposed to the truth, they purposed in their hearts not to defile themselves with the worldly way of life. Their inner determination was translated into action to stand up for the truth they had believed. Similarly, believers constrained by the love of Christ must have a purposeful heart to be faithful to Him from the beginning till the end. Having purposed in our



*“TO EVERY THING THERE IS A SEASON”*

hearts, we must maintain our purposeful heart. Our lives must be consistent with the theology we believe in. Without proper theology, we would not be able to withstand the fiery furnace of persecution. The purposeful heart must be translated into every aspect of believers' life including Boy-Girl Relationship (BGR). In this camp, there was a special workshop on BGR for full-time workers. Through which, the lecturer also shared a part of his private life with the students.



Closer to the modern day, we have a great cloud of witnesses of the early missionaries such as William Carey who sailed to India in 1793. He brought his reluctant wife and two children together with his wife's sister. Words fail to describe the extent of suffering he went through both without and within. Besides the hardship of a new culture, new language, new environment and the tough mission work, William Carey also had to face the consequences of mistrusting his friend. Within his home, he had to face the blames of his unsupportive wife for the hardship he brought to his family and for the death of his son. For six long years William Carey



toiled in such hard ground and loneliness. Yet, he never abandoned his mission and his calling. Facing insurmountable odds, he pressed on and ran the race before him with patience and endurance. William Carey demonstrated how a purposeful life dedicated to God and obedient to His calling can have a profound influence even in this unbelieving world.

There is also a great cloud of witnesses of men raised by God to protect the Bible, the indestructible book, and to carry its message of hope and salvation throughout the centuries. There was the witness of John Wycliffe who stood against the host of opposition in his time. There was also a great cloud of reformers during the time of reformation. We also witnessed the mighty power of the Bible. Just a single copy of the Gospel of John which came to the Hmar tribe of Northeast India transformed “the worst head-hunters” to become harmless and loving people. We had the witness of Chawnga who influenced his son Rochunga to go to the outside world with the sole purpose of acquiring education in order to translate the Bible for his tribal people. We had the witness of Rochunga’s endurance and dedication in finally completing the translation of the Scriptures into the language of the Hmar tribe. With such a great cloud of witnesses, let us all lay aside our sins and everything that would hinder us from our race. Let us run our race faithfully to the end for God’s glory.

In this camp there was much laughter from the three skits put up by the students. Tears were shed when the seven graduates shared their testimonies. We the FEBC family rejoice with them in their success and weep with them in their sorrows. We thank God for the whole camp, and for bringing us back in time for the inspection of Beulah House. With the semester now officially ended, we look forward to the new semester where we would “expect great things from the Lord and attempt great things for the Lord” (William Carey). May God’s name be praised!

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## **IN THE STEPS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL: FEBC'S FIRST BIBLE LANDS PILGRIMAGE, TURKEY AND GREECE, 21-31 MAY 2011**

Suan-Yew Quek



Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew and  
mosaic painting of the  
Apostle Paul

The 1<sup>st</sup> FEBC Bible Lands Pilgrimage in the steps of the Apostle Paul (Turkey/Greece) was led by Dr and Mrs Jeffrey Khoo from 21 to 31 May 2011. A total of 46 pilgrims from eight Bible-Presbyterian churches participated in this trip. It was a blessed time of biblical study and spiritual retreat as the pilgrims retraced the steps of the Apostle Paul on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 16-18).

The trip was exciting for me for many reasons, and one of the reasons was that this was my first pilgrimage with FEBC. The departure from Changi airport at two in the morning was a thrill but a tiring one. We arrived in Doha via Qatar Airlines. With more than eight hours of waiting time before the connecting flight to Istanbul, we went on a guided tour of Doha. Doha is five hours behind Singapore.

### **Doha**

The city tour brought us to an equestrian centre. We saw many horses, and learned that the difference between an Arabian horse and a European horse was in their size and stamina. The Arabian horses are smaller with longer necks and thinner bodies and can run a longer distance like a marathon runner whereas their European counterparts are built with more muscles like a short distance sprinter. Christians can be likened to the Arabian horses running with endurance in a marathon race.

We were also brought to a camel market. Camels are prized for their running ability and production of milk which possesses a cleansing agent that cleans and protects the stomach and is good for food. A camel costs between US\$2,000 to US\$10,000. It is usually bought as food for a wedding because it can feed many. A camel used for sport can cost up to US\$2.5 million. When it is very thirsty it drinks between 30 to 40 litres of water. This reminds us of the ten camels that Abraham's servant brought with him. Rebekah gave to the camels water from the well until they had enough to drink (Genesis 24). This was the sign that Abraham's servant prayed for in order to know who was to be Isaac's bride. Rebekah could have given up to 400 litres of water to the ten camels. It was indeed no ordinary task. This was thus a sign-miracle that the LORD gave to Abraham's servant to find a wife for Isaac to continue His blessed plan of salvation for mankind.

### **Istanbul**

The next day, we went on a tour of Istanbul. According to our Turkish tour guide, the name "Istanbul" is a corruption of the word "Islambul" which means "a city of Islam." It is a city with many names. It was called "Byzantium" during the Grecian period. It was renamed "Constantinople" in the fourth century when Emperor Constantine made it his capital. In the sixteenth century when the Ottoman Turks captured the city, it was renamed "Istanbul." Any vestige of conservative Christianity in Turkey (called Asia Minor in the Bible) that was introduced by the Apostle Paul during his first missionary journey has tragically disappeared. It is now a nation with many Muslims and the only sect of Christianity is the Greek Orthodox Church which promotes the worship of icons. The Greek Orthodox Church broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in the eleventh century. The head of the Greek Church is called the Patriarch who is a counterpart of the Pope in the Roman Church.

Travelling by bus across the border into Greece was a long and arduous one. By the time we arrived at our first destination, Alexandroupolis, it was around nine at night. This city is located near the border of Turkey and Greece. It is located along the shores of the Marmara Sea. The next morning we visited Neapolis (Acts 16:11), now called Kavala, Philippi and Thessalonica (or Thessaloniki).

## **Philippi and Thessalonica**



Ancient city of Philippi in ruins

It was most interesting to visit Philippi, where Paul was imprisoned and when the earthquake struck freeing him and all the prisoners.



By the river where Paul preached to Lydia  
(Acts 16:13, 14)

However, not one prisoner escaped and Paul stopped the keeper of the prison from killing himself. He heard the gospel and he and his household were saved. The church in Philippi is familiar to all of us who have studied the book of Acts and the epistle to the Philippians. What struck me was the size of the agora where

Paul preached the Word of God. It was a rectangular building. It was full of merchants, sellers and buyers when Paul preached the Word there. Many heard the gospel and were converted. Now, what remains are ruins. It is so easy for a church to die. All it takes is to have a hireling for a pastor who cares not for the flock, and elders who are self-glorifying. The church will die. In Thessalonica (the second largest city in Greece) we viewed the old city ramparts and the Galerius Arch that rises over the Via Egnatia. Thessalonica was the city where Paul was accused of turning the world upside down by preaching Christ (Acts 17:3-6).

### **Berea**

By day four, we were traversing Macedonia and visited Berea (now called Veria), Meteora and Kalambaka. Berea was the city where the believers checked the doctrines they heard from the Apostle Paul with their Old Testament Scriptures to see if his teachings were true. The Lord commended them for their high regard for God's Word. Meteora is a city



Mosaic painting of the Apostle Paul preaching to the noble Bereans  
(Acts 17:10, 11)



## *IN THE STEPS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL*

with spectacular mountain-top monasteries. The monasteries were built with labour that was overwhelming. These awesome structures are architectural marvels. Tonnes of stones were hauled up sheer cliff walls that even an ant would find hard to climb. These monasteries testify of man's genius in ancient engineering and architecture. However, these are citadels of idolatry based upon a distorted understanding of Holy Scriptures. No matter how great they look, they are still dead stones!

### **Patra in Achaia**

Day five began with a long seven-hour drive across the border of Macedonia into Achaia, another province south of Greece. We arrived at the third largest city of Greece called Patra. The journey was long but never dull. The spectacular sceneries were breathtaking! Tunnels built in the mountains considerably reduced the journey time around the mountains. Coastal roads brought us to the shores of the Great Mediterranean Sea where the Apostle Paul once sailed across from



Bridge connecting Northern Greece to Southern Greece (Peloponnesus)

Turkey to Macedonia on his second missionary journey, including his long and eventful trip as a prisoner for the faith on his way to Rome where he experienced his shipwreck. The Mediterranean Sea was a remarkable sight as we reflected how her waters reached nations as far as Europe and Africa. The beauty of the greenish blue waters was amazing to behold as I contemplated how many of God's servants, including Jonah who tried to escape the will of God and was swallowed by a big fish, and how many wars were fought and how many thousands perished in these waters in days of old. It was a Sea with a great depth of history.

### **Corinth**

On day six, we visited Corinth. The ancient city of Corinth was a decadent city known to have 1,000 prostitutes serving the worshippers in the Temple of Aphrodite located on the Acrocorinth, a hill two miles above the main city of modern Corinth. Aphrodite was the goddess of love. Corinth was a city with many hardened hearts. Paul met two Jewish



Stone with inscription "Erastus the Chamberlain" (Rom 16:23) found in Corinth



Mars' Hill (Acts 17:22)

believers, husband and wife Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. Paul and Aquila were both tent-makers. He abode and worked with them in making tents. Paul preached in the synagogues every Sabbath to both Jews and Greeks. After Silas and Timotheus came from Macedonia to join him, he was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews even more.

He preached to them that Jesus was the Christ. They opposed Paul and blasphemed. Paul shook his raiment as a sign of his rejection of them and declared, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Perhaps Paul was afraid for his life in the city of Corinth and he wanted to leave the city. However, the Lord spoke to Paul to encourage him to stay. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). Paul remained in Corinth for the next 18 months preaching and teaching God's Word.



The *bema* or "judgement seat" where Paul stood before Gallio (Acts 18:12)

The church in Corinth was founded, like many churches today, in a very hostile and immoral environment. However, the power of God prevailed and nothing could stop the might of God in saving souls. The impact of the gospel was so great that the enemies of God allied together against Paul. Paul had to defend himself before the judgement seat (*bema* in Greek) in Corinth. The *bema* was a platform about three

metres above the ground. He would be very visible to the general public as he stood on the *bema* in front of the judge. This ancient site helps in understanding better the situation of life which the Apostle Paul had to



**Parthenon, Athens**

## *IN THE STEPS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL*

face. We left Corinth and arrived at Athens. We visited the museum in Athens. This museum was designed according to and in honour of the Parthenon, the famous temple located on the top of the Acropolis and dedicated to the goddess Athena.

### **Ephesus**

Days seven to ten were spent on a cruise across the Aegean Sea where we visited many beautiful Greek islands. On day eight we visited the ancient city of Ephesus in Turkey and the island of Patmos.

Ephesus was a sea port that is presently located six miles inland from the sea coast. In the days of the apostle, it was a large city vibrant with trade and many people. The guide told us that what had been unearthed was only 10% of the ancient city. Ephesus had an amphitheatre that could seat 24,500 people. The goddess Diana (or Artemis) was worshipped in Ephesus. The Temple of Diana was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens.



Library of Celsus in Ephesus

The account of Paul's travel to this great city is recorded for us in Acts 19. It was here that Paul met the disciples of John the Baptist and they were converted to followers of Christ. Paul preached in the synagogues for three months. He continued to teach the disciples in the school at Tyrannus for the next two years. Paul faced much opposition in Ephesus but he remained and preached the word in this great city and the church of Ephesus was founded.

Ephesus was one of the strongest churches that Paul founded by the grace of God. In Acts 20, Paul warned the elders of Ephesus whom he gathered to meet him in Miletus about six miles from the coasts of Asia Minor. Commentators surmised that in those days, Miletus could have been reached by a circuitous route from Ephesus by land. But it has to be reached by sea today. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus that after his departure, grievous wolves would come to devour the flock of Christ and men will rise from within the church to lead men away after themselves. Paul reminded them that he had warned them of this for three years every day and night with tears. It was a touching moment for me to walk in that large amphitheatre in Ephesus where Paul might have visited.

### **Patmos**



Grotto of the Apocalypse, Isle of Patmos

Many devotees pray to God in the cave.

The island of Patmos was mountainous. A certain cave was said to be the cave that John the apostle was praying in when he received the book of Revelation from the Lord. It has become a tourist attraction as well as a religious site for the Greek Orthodox Church. Legend says that the crack on the ceiling in that cave was where the lightning struck when the voice of the Lord spoke to John.

Patmos is now inhabited by many people and some of them have built villas perched on the mountain slopes overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. It was a beautiful sight to behold especially when these buildings have to be painted white and constructed no more than two storeys high. The mountains were dotted by these beautiful white

washed houses. However, in the days of the Apostle John, Patmos was an island where criminals were exiled. It was on this lonely island that John received the book of Revelation from the Lord. Whether it was that particular cave that was shown to us that John received the Book of Revelation is not the point. It is not the place that gives the island significance but the Word of God itself. Patmos must have been a cold and isolated island and very lonely for John. One of the most difficult things for the servant of God to endure was not to be able to be with God's people especially on the Lord's Day for worship. Servants like Paul and John were forcibly removed from the people they loved. They always went where the Lord placed them and in the case of John it was to be exiled in Patmos.

### **Spiritual Lessons**

My first pilgrimage of 11 days of long travel was tiring but fruitful and blessed. Some of the lessons learned are as follows:

#### **Strength of Paul**

We travelled in an air-conditioned bus from city to city but the apostle Paul travelled on foot most of the time and over mountainous terrain without any knowledge of where the next destination would be. He plodded on for the sake of Christ. We slept in comfortable hotels every night whereas Paul slept in the open.

#### **Courage of Paul**

At Philippi, I asked if we could climb up a hill to have a better perspective of the ancient city. The guide said that we could as the gates were opened during this time of the year. However, many snakes, some of them poisonous, were out that time of the year! We were advised not to climb. However, Paul had to endure not only snakes but other wild animals that roamed the mountains. He faced them by faith trusting in the Lord to protect him.

#### **Ancient Cities**

The ancient cities were like our cities today. The cities we visited were once vibrant and alive with many making a living from trades that were brought in from distant lands. Paul preached to them at the risk of his own safety and life. He did not allow these little inconveniences to stop him from doing the work of God. He faced many temptations. The common denomination in all these ancient sites was the worship of idols.

The immorality in those days was not too different from our time. Paul had a burden for lost souls in these cities. His time of service is over. Soon our time would also be over. He impacted the lives of these people in these cities with the gospel. I asked myself, “How have I impacted the lives of the people that God has brought into my life?” When it is my time to leave this world, what would be my service unto the Lord who had saved me and died for me?

### **Cities in Ruins**

These vibrant cities were once full of life thronged by many men, women and children full of hopes and aspirations like me. Tourists come and go taking back with them hundreds of pictures and videos of these sites that are now nothing but broken stones and ruins that once boasted great engineers, artisans and architects. The cities that we live in today will also be like these cities one day. The glorious and magnificent buildings that the ancients took pride in are now gone forever. What is the point of owning bricks and mortar and taking pride in the works of man’s hands knowing that they will all end up like these ruins one day! Nothing on this earth lasts. They perish with time. However, the works of God through men like Paul and John remain till this day. Why would I, a Chinese living in Singapore, travel to see these places if not for the work of the gospel in my heart! Paul and John are remembered even though I do not know them personally and have never met them. Their work for the Lord touched my life though we are separated by 2,000 years.

### **Pilgrimage to Remember**

This was my first pilgrimage. It was a blessed pilgrimage. The lessons learned through the sharing of God’s Word by Dr Jeffrey Khoo were precious. I thank God for salvation so richly and freely given to us by the Lord. Amen.

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*The Rev Quek Suan Yew is Pastor of Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church and the Academic Dean of Far Eastern Bible College.*

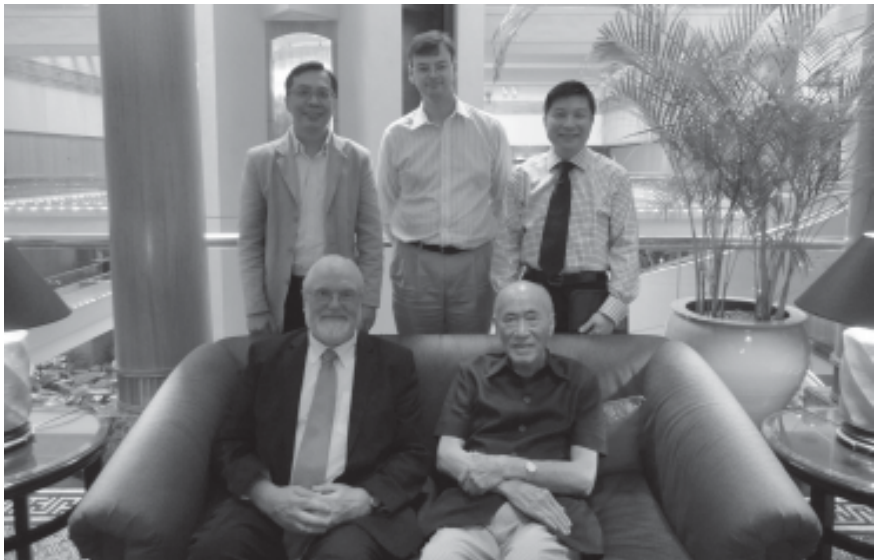
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## College News

**In the January-May 2011 semester**, the College had a total enrolment of 376 students comprising 106 day-time students (52 full-time, 54 part-time) from 14 countries (Australia, Cambodia, China, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam); and 235 lay students in the “Basic Theology for Everyone” night classes on Monday (Hebrews by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo) and Thursday (Ecclesiastes by Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy); and 35 online students taking distance learning courses.

**In commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King James Bible**, FEBC conducted a series of lectures on “The History and Legacy of the King James Bible” (Daily Vacation Bible College course, May 2-7, 2011). The main lecturer was Dr Paul Ferguson. Other lecturers were Dr



***“For the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9)***  
**Seated: Mr D P Rowland (General Secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society)**  
**with Dr S H Tow. Standing (L-R): Dr Jeffrey Khoo, Dr Paul Ferguson,**  
**Dr Boaz Boon**

Jeffrey Khoo who spoke on the Bible of the Bible-Presbyterian Church, Dr Phil Stringer on the history of the English Bible (DVD), and Mr D P Rowland, General Secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) on why the KJV is the most faithful and trustworthy translation of the English Bible. Seventy-six students registered for the course.



**The 36<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service** was held at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church on the Lord's Day, May 8, 2011. A total of 24 graduated with their respective awards: **Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK)**: Candice Tan Xue' Ai, Jenny Lee Lai Song, Judy Lee Lai Har, Marc Peter Gerard Vrambout, Michael Lim Lian Boh; **Certificate of Biblical Studies (CertBS)**: Cheng Chou Hwuang Anthony, Irene Lim Gek Mui, Kamalamangai d/o Adhynarayanan; **Diploma in Theology (DipTh)**: Alice Kee Luan Keow, Bernard Hutabarat, Daniel Koh Kian Wei, Kiet Thaven; **Bachelor of Theology (BTh)**: Charles Kipyegon Sang, Damien Choong Mun Lok, Kim Jong Hyun, Kim Seung Hun, Tran Thi Kim Hoa, William Goh Boon Kai; **Master of Religious Education (MRE)**: Eliezeri Hura, Ibrahaim Njuguna Kiarie; **Master of Divinity (MDiv)**: Cheong Chin Meng, Eileen Chee Siew Juan, Ho Xiao Wei, Peter Phoa Ang Hiok. About 800 members and well-wishers attended the graduation service.



**FEBC's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat @ Resort Lautan Biru, Mersing,  
9-12 May 2011**



*"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11)*

**Pilgrims in Berea  
FEBC's First Bible Lands Pilgrimage in the Steps of the Apostle Paul  
Turkey and Greece, 21-31 May 2011**