

ISSN 0219-5984 January 2014 Volume 20 Number 1



The
Burning
Bush

Theological Journal of the Far Eastern Bible College



THE BURNING BUSH

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Editor : Jeffrey Khoo
Publisher : Far Eastern Bible College
Website : www.febc.edu.sg
Permit : MICA (P) 031/03/2013
Printer : Ee Tai Press Pte Ltd

The Burning Bush (ISSN 0219-5984) is published bi-annually in January and July, and contains theological papers, sermons, testimonies, book reviews, College news, and alumni reports. Articles are indexed in the *Christian Periodical Index*. The journal is distributed gratis to the FEBC family and Bible-Presbyterian churches, and available online at www.febc.edu.sg. Local/Foreign subscription rates in Singapore dollars: one year—\$8/\$16; two years—\$15/\$30; back issues—\$4/\$8 per copy. Make cheques payable to “Far Eastern Bible College.”

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ISSN 0219-5984

January 2014

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THE “GOD” OF KONG HEE

Jeffrey Khoo

Kong Hee, the pastor of City Harvest Church, said that God spoke to him and told him He was sorry. God is quoted as saying, “My son, Kong ... I am so sorry ...”. His sermon containing God’s “sorry” statement was on Youtube and has since gone viral.

Kong testified how he felt so depressed and disappointed with God, *“Father, Father, why, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me and thrown me to the dogs?”* He said he was finally lifted from depression when God spoke to him: *“For the first time in eight months, God, I heard Him cry. And he said ‘My son, Kong, thank you. Thank you for going through this. I need you to go through this alone, so that you and City Harvest Church can be the man and the ministry I call it to be. I’m so sorry, but you need to go through this by yourself, to bring a change to your generation.’”*

Did God really speak to Kong? Did God really say those words to him? I submit to you that if it was God who spoke to Kong, then this “God” is not the God whom we have come to know from the Holy Scriptures. It is someone else. I say this because the God of the Bible has never said things like this and will never say things like this. We know that God is truthful and consistent in all His ways, and it is impossible for God to contradict Himself.

There is a whole lot of bad and wrong theology in Kong’s sermon and testimony, words he had attributed to God who he claimed spoke to him. Now, let us examine Kong’s claims in the light of the Holy Scriptures.

God Does Not Apologise for His Deeds

It is not in God’s nature to ever apologise or be sorry for anything that He does or wills to do. That is because God is absolutely sovereign and wise in all His ways, and He makes no mistakes. Numbers 23:19 says, *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that*

THE "GOD" OF KONG HEE

he should repent (Hebrew nicham, to be sorry): hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" God neither regrets His decisions nor His actions. He is always holy and perfect, righteous and good in all His ways. He does no evil and does no wrong. Since God is all-powerful and all-knowing, it is impossible for God to fail or to err (Heb 6:18).

Now, from Kong's testimony, it does seem like God is saying sorry to Kong because God has forsaken him and has thrown him to the dogs. However, Kong has since explained that he is not saying that God has apologised to him in the sense that God was admitting guilt, but that it was God's word of comfort to him, like someone saying, *"I am so sorry for your loss."*

Nonetheless, even if this was the case, is God ever sorry for all the sufferings that His children go through for His sake? The answer is no. God is not at all sorry for that. In fact God has already warned His children to expect suffering in this life. In Acts 14:22 we are told, *"we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."* 2 Timothy 3:12 says, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* Jesus Himself tells us in John 16:33, *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*

How does God comfort His children who go through suffering on account of Him? Not with a "I am so sorry", but a "You are so blessed". Matthew 5:10-12 says, *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."* 1 Peter 4:12-14 likewise assures us, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."*

God blesses His people who are suffering for righteousness' sake, and expects His people to be happy when they go through such trials

and tribulations. *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* (Jas 1:2-3).

But here, we find the “God” of Kong so sorry for Kong’s suffering, speaking in such a way that is so out of character with the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is happy when His children suffer for His sake, and tells them to be joyful when they go through trials and tribulations because such experiences will build them up in the faith.

God Does Not Need to Thank His Servants

The word “thanks” is used a hundred times in the Bible, and not once is it used of God thanking man, but man thanking God. For instance, 1 Chronicles 29:13, *“Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.”*; Ezra 3:11, *“And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel.”*; Psalm 75:1, *“Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks.”*

If God is pleased with His servants, He would commend them, not thank them. If God were to thank His servant, that would make God inferior to His servant. God is not below us, He is always above us, our Superior. In fact, He is not just Superior, He is Supreme. Consider what Jesus taught in Luke 17:7-10, *“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”*

It is only God who is indispensable, not man. It is man who cannot do without God, and not vice versa. As such, it is man that has to thank God and not the other way round. But here we have God thanking Kong, *“My son, Kong, thank you. Thank you for going through this. I need you ...”* The “God” of Kong appears to be subservient to Kong, and cannot do without Kong. The “God” of Kong is very different from the God we find in the Scriptures.

God Does Not Leave Us Alone

God does not leave His children and servants alone either. He has promised to be with them until the end of the age. In the Great Commission, Jesus promised, *"lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* (Matt 28:20). God told Joshua, *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."* (Josh 1:5). God assured Israel, *"But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."* (Isa 41:8-10).

God would never abandon His children even when they backslide or stray away from Him. As a loving Father, He would chastise them, *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."* (Heb 12:6-8). You see, our loving heavenly Father does not leave us alone. He applies His disciplining rod to get us back on the right track. God only leaves the reprobates and apostates (ie, those who are not His children, but children of the devil) alone. His children, on the other hand, are always under His constant watch and care, and sometimes we get His "sugarcane" for our own good.

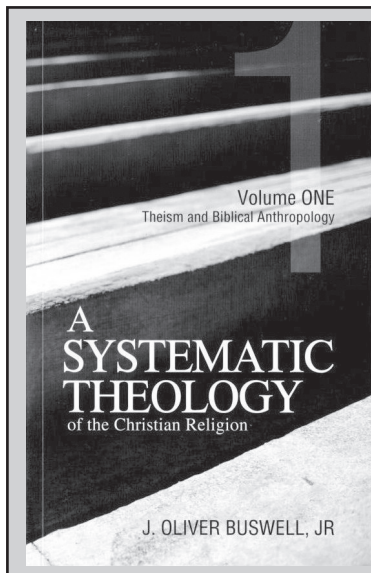
When the Apostle Paul asked God to take away his "thorn in the flesh", a certain physical ailment he had which brought him tremendous pain and suffering, the Lord said to him and encouraged him three times, *"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Cor 12:9). God did not remove Paul's pain but promised him His grace, His strength. God never leaves us alone to suffer the trials and tribulations, hardships and difficulties we face in life. He is always there to help us. Psalm 46:1 says, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*

Kong said that God wants him to go through his sufferings alone so as to bring about a change to his generation. What is this change that Kong will bring to his generation? Is it the whole new way of looking at

Christ and Christianity that he and his wife are trying so hard to promote? Is it the carnal and worldly Christianity of his “Crossover Project”? Is it the sensuous and seductive “China Wine” of his wife? The Bible is clear that it is not in God’s holy nature to employ such ungodly and worldly means and methods to win people into His Kingdom. Jesus never wooed and wowed people into following Him through money and sex; that is what Satan does, not God. Satan tempted Jesus once in such a way, “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (Matt 4:8-10). Here again, we see the “God” of Kong to be so different from the God of the Bible.

In light of these three biblical reasons, we cannot but conclude that the “God” of Kong is not the God that we know from the Bible. He is another “God”. “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matt 13:9).

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A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion by J Oliver Buswell (1895-1977) is reprinted by Tabernacle Books as a two-volume paperback edition: Volume 1: Theism and Biblical Anthropology and Volume 2: Soteriology and Eschatology.

Buswell’s Systematic Theology is Reformed and Premillennial—the theological system of the Bible-Presbyterian Church.

Available from:

Tabernacle Books

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FEBC Bookroom

9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063

THE CROSSOVER PROJECT OF CITY HARVEST CHURCH

Wai-Ho Yap

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt 28:18-20).

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 is a commandment by our Lord Jesus Christ for born-again believers to make disciples of all nations. The scope of evangelism is thus universal and encompasses the sharing of the Gospel to all unbelievers. The primary motive for the preaching of the Gospel should thus be obedience to our Saviour, and love for the unsaved. However, in plain contradiction to the pure preaching of the Gospel and the belief of the Holy Spirit’s work of convicting the hearts of sinners to repentance, many churches have sought to make the Gospel more “attractive” as though the Gospel and the Spirit in and of themselves are not powerful enough to save. In so doing they have adopted worldly methods to promote the cause of the Gospel which contravene scriptural principles. This article seeks to examine and evaluate, on a scriptural basis, a so-called “evangelistic” method, namely, the “Crossover Project” of the City Harvest Church (CHC).

The City Harvest Church

CHC is one of the megachurches in Singapore. It was founded by Kong Hee and his wife Sun Ho in 1989. It has a current congregation size of about 23,000. About 45% of its church members are below 25 years of age, with the average age of the congregation being 30. Most of its members are young urban professionals and CHC seeks to project an image of a young vibrant church. CHC is a member of several inter-

church organisations including the National Council of Churches, the Festival of Praise Fellowship and the Evangelical Fellowship of Singapore. CHC also has about 50 affiliate churches worldwide in countries including Malaysia, Taiwan, India, Indonesia and Australia.

Although CHC claims to be non-denominational, its core values are based on Charismatic and Pentecostal teachings. The ministry of CHC takes its reference from Matthew 22:37-40 and is built upon three aspects, “the Great Commandment” to love God wholeheartedly; “the Great Commission” to love people fervently; and “the Cultural Mandate” to engage culture creatively and to be light and salt in the market place. Among CHC’s manifold ministries are the drama ministry which produces drama and plays for its worship services, the marketplace ministry which is an outreach to working people, the strikeforce ministry which teaches youth rhythm and dance, and community services which caters to social needs.

CHC also operates a school of theology and claims to have trained over 5,000 students. It adopts the “health and wealth” or prosperity theology which teaches that financial blessing and physical health is the will of God for Christians. The Church also uses contemporary Christian music with a wide range of modern electronic instruments in its worship services.

CHC has from the beginning used a seeker-sensitive approach towards promoting church growth. This is based on a philosophy that seeks to fashion the church into a society that the unconverted can feel comfortable in so as to increase church attendance. Their worship services for instance are conducted in a worldly manner by using contemporary Christian music that has a rock beat and tune, and with musical instruments and dancers that are common in rock concerts.

In their services, sermons are watered down and hard Christian doctrines are not preached for fear of antagonising the congregation. Instead, the prosperity gospel that God is someone who is interested only in blessing believers with health and wealth is preached. Popular psychology is used to make people feel good about themselves without regard for sin.

The Crossover Project

The Crossover Project is based on one of CHC’s objectives called “The Cultural Mandate”. It is an extension of their seeker-sensitive

approach, with the emphasis of building a “church without walls”. The primary goal of the Crossover Project is to reach out to the unchurched in society and get them into church. One way to do this is to use secular entertainment to draw people in.

In 1999, Kong Hee preached in Taiwan and found the youth ministry there to be lacking. He claimed that he received the Holy Spirit’s instruction to bring about revival in Taiwan and to evangelise the Chinese-speaking world. The following year, when he revisited Taiwan, he observed that the people were not interested in his sermons, but in the music and the singing led by his wife. It was then that he discovered the potential power of secular entertainment to reach the unsaved, especially the youths. Although he admitted that this was an unorthodox approach, he subsequently claimed that God in a series of personal experiences gave him four confirmations to embark on this new approach to reach out to the world. He claimed that the final confirmation was scriptural. It came from his mentors Phil Pringle, Ulk Ekman and A R Bernard who all quoted the same verse to him, “Let us cross over the other side” (Mark 4:35). From this verse, Kong Hee named the new approach as the Crossover Project. The Crossover Project started in 2002.

The practical approach of the Crossover Project is to organise and conduct pop concerts in public places such as stadiums, concert halls etc. The programme of the concert would be interspersed with evangelistic sharing and personal testimonies. The Crossover Project sought to achieve two goals: (1) to share the Gospel with the unchurched especially those who are resistant to the idea of visiting a church and (2) to encourage Christians in the entertainment industry to proclaim their faith. After a decade of using this approach, CHC claims that thousands have been saved through this ministry and that many in the entertainment industry have thrown in their support.

A Worldly Church

The Crossover Project uses a worldly approach to evangelism. A worldly approach to evangelism is certainly not taught in the Bible, certainly not in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). It attracts people for the wrong reasons.

When our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ministered on earth, we find the multitudes following Him but for the wrong reasons. Some followed Him because He could heal. Others followed Him because they

wanted to be entertained by miracles. Still others followed Him because of free food especially after He fed the 5000 (Matt 14:13-21). In fact, many who at first followed Him later left Him after He preached to them about their need for spiritual salvation and their need to repent of their sins (John 6:66). Our Lord certainly did not use worldly methods to preach the Gospel.

The approach of the Crossover Project denies the sufficiency of Scriptures and the sovereignty of God. By using worldly means, the power of the Word of God (Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:16) and the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11; 1 Cor 6:11; Tit 3:5) in convicting and converting souls are denied and undermined. In many of the spiritual revivals of the past, many souls were saved just by the simple and plain preaching of God's Word. There was no need for worldly gimmicks and fleshly methods to lure and entice people to believe.

The approach of the Crossover Project violates the doctrine of biblical separation. Romans 12:2 commands all believers not to be conformed to this world. 1 John 2:15-17 reminds us not to love the world or things that are of the world for in it lies the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. The word "world" is taken to mean any system of values, thought or practice that goes against God's Truth. This certainly includes anything deemed sinful or worldly in the light of God's Word. This definitely includes the pop and rock songs, and the culture that the world promotes. Sun Ho has portrayed herself as the pop-star wife of a pastor. In her bid to be trained as a pop singer, she has associated herself with Hollywood, the epitome of worldliness and ungodliness. Her actions have brought disrepute to Christianity in general and Christ in particular. The Bible says that friendship with the world is enmity with God and whoever is a friend of the world is an enemy of God (Jas 4:4).

The Crossover Project takes a very shallow view of salvation. Belief is simply paying lip service to Christ. The Gospel is diluted with little or no mention of repentance from sin and the judgement to come. This is done in order not to offend the hearers. Herein lies the danger. Many may think they are saved when in actual fact they are not. Indeed our Lord says in Matthew 7:21, "*not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*". Not every professing Christian is saved, but only those who have truly repented of their sins and accepted

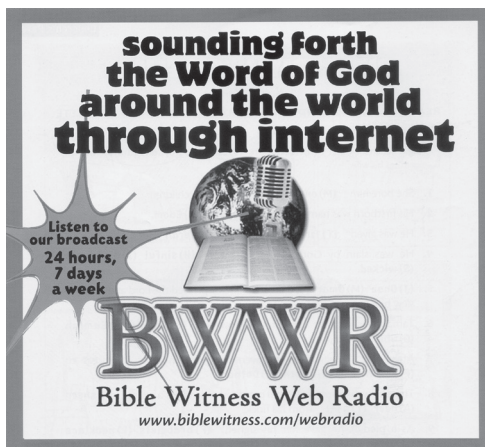
THE CROSSOVER PROJECT OF CITY HARVEST CHURCH

Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and show the fruits of repentance in their lives.

The Crossover Project is primarily about numbers. For seeker-sensitive churches, reaching out to the world is about numbers and statistics with little care or concern for the genuine salvation of the individual. Often these figures are published in their church website as an “advertisement” to show how successful they are and to encourage unbelievers to attend their services. Indeed many of these churches also have the wrong notion that large numbers means blessing from God. They fail to realise that success is measured by one’s faithfulness to God and His Word and not by the size of one’s church or congregation.

In an attempt to promote church growth, many churches today have adopted a principle based on the idea that successful evangelism requires bridging the gap between the church and the world so as to make the church acceptable to the world. This has resulted in the church today looking very much like the world. The church today talks like the world, walks like the world, sings like the world! The Bible clearly says that the church, though in the world, must not be of the world. By using a secular and worldly approach to evangelism, the Crossover Project has clearly violated the biblical mandate of Christ in His Great Commission to His Church.

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THE HISTORIC VIEW OF THE PERFECT PRESERVATION OF GOD'S INSPIRED WORDS

Paul S Ferguson

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

Rome claimed sacred status to the ecclesiastical editions of the Latin Vulgate, whereas Protestants by biblical presuppositions ascribed sacred status to the ecclesiastical editions of the Greek New Testament of the Greek-speaking Church and the Protestant Reformation, and the Hebrew Old Testament of the nation of Israel and her Jewish synagogues. However, both predicated their respective claims of authentic texts centered upon ecclesiastical editions that were historically sanctioned by ecclesiastical use. Reformation and post-Reformation dogma was predicated on the doctrine of perfect preservation. The Reformers rejected Rome's tradition and its corrupted texts, and held fast to the Received Text readings, which they knew evoked the wrath of Satan and had

triggered the great Protestant Reformation during which tens of thousands of true believers perished by flame, famine and torture. The Reformed arguments always proceeded from the theological principle to the empirical proofs; which have today been overthrown by textual criticism. Protestant theologians asserted in their confessions that the autographs and the apographs in the original languages were both inspired and preserved by God. Rome used a handful of copies in which numerous variants existed in an attempt to refute the principle of *Sola Scriptura*.

An important point to note was that the debate as it existed between Romanists and Protestants was over ultimate and infallible authority. The positing of *Sola Scriptura* of the inspired Scripture was to assert subordination of the authority of the Church and its uninspired tradition. The Reformers did not regard the tradition of the true Church of having no role to play in receiving and recognising the true text and books. Therefore, this was not a simplistic argument of Scripture against non-Scripture, as Rome also affirmed the Bible was the inspired Word of God. However, Rome's posited doctrine was derived from the Vulgate and interpreted through tradition. The Reformers attacked not just the tradition but the text that it was based on. For instance, Luther's initial challenge on Roman doctrine was on the textual issue that the Lord commands us to repent, not do penance. The Reformers, by contrast, had absolute faith in a God that has demonstrated that preservation is not a problem for Him (Jer 36).

As a consequence in this presupposition, the early Reformers trained their ministers in Latin, Greek and Hebrew to enable them to defend and exegete the Received Text and produce translations into the vernacular tongues. That is why their cry was *Sola Scriptura* and their Confessions such as the Westminster demanded that the text in these languages was the sole and supreme authority for their generation. So strictly did the Reformers see this issue of providential preservation through the "perpetual consensus of the Church universal" that in Geneva, Calvin refused to ordain a minister, Sebastian Castellio who, despite being orthodox in all other matters, rejected the Song of Solomon within the canon of Scripture.¹ Douglas Wilson explains why the witness of the Church to the Canon and the Text is theologically important,

This witness is not offered by the Church as "something to think about" or as a mere "suggestion." The testimony of the Church on this point is submissive to Scripture, but authoritative for the saints. For example, if an

elder in a Christian church took it upon himself to add a book to the canon of Scripture, or sought to take away a book, the duty of his church would be to try him for heresy and remove him immediately. This disciplinary action is authoritative, taken in defense of an authoritative canonical settlement. This does not mean the Church is defending the Word of God; the Church is defending her witness to the Word. As the necessity of discipline makes plain, this witness is dogmatic and authoritative. It is not open for discussion. God does not intend for us to debate the canon of Scripture afresh every generation. We have already given our testimony; our duty now is to remain faithful to it.²

Commenting on Isaiah 59:21, Matthew Henry affirmed his belief in the perfect preservation of all the Words of Scripture in every age in the true Church,

The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age who, *believing with the heart* unto righteousness, shall *with the tongue make confession unto salvation*. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church; for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language and profess his holy religion. Observe, the Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up. For the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit does his work by the word and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firmly, and shall stand for ever, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.³

The 17th century Confessions focused in on the doctrine of special providential preservation, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Helveticus Consensus Formula, as a direct response to the attack of the Council of Trent on the Received Text. The Council of Trent solemnly affirmed in the following words,

Moreover the same Sacred and holy Synod, considering that no small utility may accrue to the Church of God, if it be made known which out of all the Latin editions now in circulation of the Sacred Books is to be held as authentic, ordains and declares that the said old and Vulgate edition, which by the lengthened usage of so many ages has been approved of in the Church.⁴

The Reformers asserted as a counterpoint to the Vulgate that the Received Text was the "authentic" text, with the focus of biblical authority being the apographs not the Church. This was not from neutral

science of textual criticism but in their presuppositional faith in the promises that God had preserved His Words for them. They knew that an inspired Bible that no one could see was no use to them, for as Calvin said on his commentary of 2 Peter 1:19 that, “without the Word, there is nothing left but darkness.” Textual-critical advocates, Woodbridge and Kantzer, admit, “It is true that in the seventeenth century a good number of Christians esteemed the Bibles they had in their hands as infallible.”⁵ The liberal historian, Joseph McCabe, accepted that the Reformers had no time for rationalistic textual principles,

The reformers, indeed, extended little patronage to the exercise of reason in religious matters; they denounced it and its fruit, philosophical speculation, as an evil not to be tolerated; and Luther went so far as to assert (even to the disgust of the Church of Rome) that a proposition may be true in theology and false in philosophy.⁶

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

Beza's text was during his life in very general use among Protestants; they seemed to feel that enough had been done to establish it, and they relied on it as giving them a firm basis. ... After the appearance of the texts of Stephanus and Beza, many Protestants ceased from all inquiry into the authorities on which the text of the New Testament in their hands was based.⁷

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

Thou knowest, Zwingli, that the Holy Scripture is such a complete, compacted, true, infallible, eternally immortal speech, that the least letter or tittle cannot pass away in this book.⁸

So strongly did the Reformers and their heirs fall back on the Textus Receptus (TR) that textual critics such as Richard Bentley in 1716 derided it as “the Protestant Pope Stephens,” but admitted that “Stephens’ edition, set out and regulated by himself alone, is now become the standard. The text stands, as if an Apostle was his compositor.”⁹

Although the Reformers were accused of “bibliolatry” it was not the Bible they worshipped but the Author of it who has chosen to reveal Himself empirically in His written Word. Despite the revisionist argument that Calvin and Beza, had no other option but to use the TR, the facts are that they did have alternative options, but deliberately rejected them. They may not have had the quantity of evidence, but they

were aware of the diversity of the variant readings thrown up by the textual critics today. Instead, they chose the path of Sacred Reception which simply studied the texts to see what was received by the Church through history rather than the “restoration” of the text by Enlightenment Criticism. They recognised that copies and editions differed because of variants, but trusted the Holy Spirit and the common faith of God’s people. Beza made it clear, “that he was very unwilling to amend the basic text and was interested largely in readings which confirmed it.”¹⁰ One Reformed critic of the TR, Greg Bahnsen admits many Reformers held this historic position,

Some Protestants have argued for the inspired infallibility of the vowel points in the Hebrew Old Testament (e.g., the Buxtorfs and John Owen; the Formula Consensus Helvetica more cautiously spoke of the inspiration of “at least the power of the points”). The errorless transmission and preservation of the original text of Scripture has been taught by men such as Hollaz, Quenstedt, and Turretin.¹¹

Challenge of the Vulgate

Initially, all of the various Protestant Confessional statements (such as the Westminster, the Philadelphia etc) contain statements about the preservation of Scripture that were written in response to textual critical problems and challenges of the Counter Reformation. Cognisant of the role the TR had in damaging the Romanist cause and giving authority to the Protestant cause, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) declared Erasmus a Pelagian heretic, rejected his New Testament and decreed that only Jerome’s Latin Vulgate was the authentic Bible.¹² Trent’s argument was that the Scriptures are corrupted at the fount and we need an infallible church to determine the Word of God, as one can never be sure of the true text of Scripture. The Reformers argued the opposite and maintained that the Scriptures guide the church, as we have, by God’s providence, the uncorrupted fount, “by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages.” Ironically, now many Fundamental Protestants are positing that Rome was right when it sought to undermine our doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* on the basis of the variants they showed in their manuscripts. They argue that notwithstanding Rome’s other errors in theology, they were right about the Scriptures, and the post-Reformations dogmatists were wrong. As A W Pink observed,

The Papacy was shrewd enough to recognize that the authority of God’s Word must be undermined and its influence upon the nation weakened,

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before she had any hope of bringing it within her deadly toils. There is nothing she hates and dreads so much as the Bible, especially when it is circulated among the common people in their own tongue, as was clearly shown in the days of Queen Mary, of infamous memory. The organization of the Bible Societies, with their enormous output, was a rude shock to Rome, but she promptly countered it through "Modernism," by discrediting the inerrancy of the Scriptures. The promulgation of the so-called "Higher Criticism" has done far more for the spread of infidelity among the masses than did the coarse blasphemies of Tom Paine; and it is among those who have no settled convictions that Rome wins most of her converts!¹³

To try and influence the English people back to Rome, the Jesuits prepared an English New Testament translation in 1582 based upon the Vulgate which was immediately sent to England, and secretly distributed through the country. As one historian observed, "The English Papists in the seminary at Rheims perceiving that they could no longer blindfold the laity from the scriptures, resolved to fit them with false spectacles; and set forth the Rhemish translation in opposition to the Protestant versions."¹⁴ The preface to this Rheims translation expressly states its purpose,

It is almost three hundred years since James Archbishop of Genoa, is said to have translated the Bible into Italian. More than two hundred years ago, in the days of Charles V the French king, was it put forth faithfully in French, the sooner to shake out of the deceived people's hands, the false heretical translations of a sect called Waldenses.¹⁵

Benjamin Brook records that "The principal object of the Rhemish translators was not only to circulate their doctrines through the country, but also to depreciate as much as possible the English translations."¹⁶ He also recounts that,

The Rhemish translators found great fault with all the Protestant versions, as containing partial and false translations, and wilful and heretical corruptions, according to "erroneous men's fancies" but this translation was intended as a substitute, and to put away those which they called "impure versions."¹⁷

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

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

Greek, because they will suddenly answer, “the text is not so,” and “that translation is false.”¹⁸

Queen Elizabeth (1533-1603) was so concerned of the threat to English unity by the Jesuit Rhemist Bible that she sent for Beza for assistance to refute this perversion of the TR. It is recorded that he told her “that one of her Majesty’s own subjects was far better qualified to defend the Protestant cause against the Rhemists; and this person, he said, was Thomas Cartwright.”¹⁹ It was said of Thomas Cartwright (c 1535-1603), that he regarded the Vulgate as, “the Version adapted by the Rhemists ... that all the soap and nitre they could collect would be insufficient to cleanse the Vulgate from the filth of blood in which it was originally conceived and had since collected in passing so long through the hands of unlearned monks, from which the Greek copies had altogether escaped.”²⁰ Brook records that,

Mr. Cartwright defended the holy Scriptures against the accusation of corruption, and maintained that the Old and New Testaments written in the original languages were preserved uncorrupted. They constituted the word of God, whose works are all perfect, then must his word continue unimpaired; and, since it was written for our instruction, admonition, and consolation, he concluded that, unless God was deceived and disappointed in his purpose, it must perform these friendly offices for the church of God to the end of the world. If the authority of the authentic copies in Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek were lost, or given up, or corrupted, or the sense changed, there would be no high court of appeal to put an end to disputes; so that the exhortation to have recourse to the law, the prophets, and the New Testament would be of very little effect. In this case our state would be worse than theirs under the law, and in the time of Christ; yea than those who lived some hundred years after Christ, when the ancient fathers exhorted the people to try all controversies by the Scriptures. Their own Gratian directs us, in deciding differences, not to the old translation, but to the originals of the Hebrew in the Old Testament, and of the Greek in the New.²¹

Thomas Cartwright observed this about preservation,

Woe unto the churches, if the Scriptures, the charters and records of heaven be destroyed, falsified, or corrupted. These divine charters were safely kept in one nation of the Jews; and though they were sometimes unfaithful, yet they kept the keys of the Lord’s library: but now, when many nations have the keys, it is altogether incredible that any such corruptions should enter in, as the adversaries unwisely suppose. If the Lord preserved the book of Leviticus, with the account of the ancient ceremonies, which were

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afterward abolished, how much more may we conclude that his providence has watched over other books of Scripture which properly belong to our times and to our salvation? Will not the Scriptures bear witness to the perpetuity of their own authority? "Secret things belong to God;" but things revealed belong to us, and to our children forever. Jesus Christ said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Notwithstanding the sacred writings were disregarded, and even hated by most persons, they had been preserved entire as they were the first day they were given to the church of God. More than fifteen hundred years had elapsed, during which not any one book, nor part of any book, of canonical Scripture had been lost: and it was evident not only that the matter of the Scripture, but also the words; not only the sense and meaning, but also the manner and form of speech in them remained unaltered.²²

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

Now we, not doubtfully or only with some probable shew, but most certainly, know that this Greek edition of the New Testament is no other than the inspired and archetypal scripture of the new Testament, commended by the apostles and evangelists to the Christian church. ... If God had permitted the scripture to perish in the Hebrew and Greek originals, in which it was first published by men divinely inspired, he would not have provided sufficiently for his church and for our faith. From the prophetic and apostolic scripture the church takes its origin, and the faith derives its source. But whence can it be ascertained that these are in all respects prophetic and apostolic scriptures, if the very writings of the prophets and apostles are not those which we consult?²³

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

Now the Hebrew edition of the old, and the Greek of the New Testament, was always held the authentic scripture of God in the Christian churches for six hundred years after Christ. This, therefore, ought to be received by us also as authentic scripture. If they doubt the major, we must ask them, whether the church hath changed its authentic scripture, or hath not rather preserved, and commended to all succeeding generations, that which was in truth authentic from the very first? If it lost that which was published by the prophets and apostles, who can defend that negligence, who excuse so enormous a sacrilege?²⁴

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

Besides, if the Jews had wished to corrupt the original scriptures, they would have laid their sacrilegious hands specially upon those places which concern Christ and confirm the faith. But in those places these fountains run so clear that one feels no lack: nay, they sometimes run far clearer than the Latin streams.²⁵

He also showed how God protected the Scriptures through the ages,

God protects the scriptures against Satan, as being their constant enemy. Satan hath frequently endeavoured to destroy the scriptures, knowing that they stand in his way: but he hath never spent any trouble or thought upon these unwritten traditions; for he supposed that his whole object would be gained if he could destroy the scriptures. In pursuance of this plan he hath raised up such impious tyrants as Antiochus, Maximin, Diocletian, and others, who have endeavoured utterly to quench the light of scripture. Now, if religion could remain entire even when these books were lost, it would be in vain for Satan to labour with such furious efforts to remove these books.²⁶

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

By the space of so many thousand years, the word of God passed by so many dangers of tyrants, of Pharisees, of heretics, of fire, and of sword, and yet continueth and standeth until this day, without altering or changing one letter. This was a wonderful work of God, that having so many, so great enemies, and passing through so many, so great dangers, it yet continueth still without adding or altering of any one sentence, or word, or letter. No creature was able to do this, it was God's work. He preserved it, that no tyrant should consume it, no tradition choke it, no heretic maliciously should corrupt it. For His name's sake, and for the elect's sake, He would not suffer it to perish. For in it God hath ordained a blessing for His people, and by it He maketh covenant with them for life everlasting. Tyrants, and Pharisees, and heretics, and the enemies of the cross of Christ have an end, but the word of God hath no end. No force shall be able to decay it. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.²⁷

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

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

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of the Fathers, and of the adversaries themselves; that the Scriptures in the Hebrew tongue are pure, and unspotted of all corruption.²⁸

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

We believe, as is our duty, that the providential care of God has always watched over the original and primitive texts of the canonical Scriptures in such a way that we can be certain that the sacred codices which we now have in our hands are those which existed at the time of Jerome and Augustine, nay at the time of Christ Himself and His apostles.²⁹

English Presbyterian clergyman, John Flavel (1627-1691) argued in response to a question: "What was the end of writing the word?" answered, "That the church to the end of the world might have a sure, known, standing-rule, to try and judge all things by, and not be left to the uncertainty of traditions."³⁰

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

If the authority of the authentical copies in Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek fall, then there is no pure Scripture in the Church of God, there is no high court of appeal where controversies (rising upon the diversity of translations, or otherwise) may be ended. The exhortations of having recourse unto the Law and to the Prophets, and of our Saviour Christ asking "How it is written," and "How readest thou," is now either of none effect, or not sufficient.³¹

The great Puritan Thomas Watson (c1620-1686) makes clear, The devil and his agents have been blowing at Scripture light, but could never blow it out; a clear sign that it was lighted from heaven. ... The letter of Scripture has been preserved, without any corruption, in the original tongue.³²

Another Puritan, John Owen, adopted the same stance,

It can, then, with no colour of probability be asserted (which yet I find some learned men too free in granting), namely, that there hath the same fate attended the Scripture in its transcription as hath done other books. Let me say without offence, this imagination, asserted on deliberation, seems to me to border on atheism. Surely the promise of God for the preservation of his word, with his love and care of his church, of whose faith and obedience that word of his is the only rule, requires other thoughts at our hands.³³

Owen did not accept every "obscure private copy ... to be admitted as a various lection" or Rome's textual critics views of variants, as Owen

explained,

Let it be remembered, that the vulgar copy we use, was the public possession of many generations; that upon the invention of printing, it was in actual authority throughout the world, with them that used and understood that language...men may, if they please, take pains to inform the world, wherein such and such copies are corrupted or mistaken, but to impose their known failings on us as various lections, is of course not to be approved ... [t]he generality of learned men among Protestants are not yet infected with this leaven ... And if this change of judgment which hath been long insinuating itself, by the curiosity and boldness of critics, should break in also on the Protestant world, and be avowed in public works, it is easy to conjecture what the end will be. We went from Rome under the conduct of the purity of the originals, I wish none have a mind to return thither again, under the pretence of their corruption.³⁴

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

From the extremity of the East to the extremity of the West the word of God is read with one mouth and in one manner; and in all the books that there are in Asia, Africa, and Europe, there is discernible a full agreement, without any difference whatever.³⁵

John Woodbridge notes of Rome's influence in this attack and states, "Cappel was able to publish one of these works only with the help of the Roman Catholic apologist, Jean Morin."³⁶ Martin Klauber also notes the staunch defence of the Hebrew Masoretic Text by the Reformers, "Reformed scholars of the mid-seventeenth century, following the lead of Buxdorf, considered all other versions of the OT as subordinate to the Masoretic text. ... Cappel's theories were generally rejected in Reformed circles."³⁷ Reformed Protestants understood well the importance of linguistic continuity by perfect preservation. This is clearly delineated with the strength of their defence of the Canon, the Received Greek Text, and the authenticity of the vowel points in the Masoretic Text.

A typical presuppositional approach based on providential preservation was that of the Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Robert Rollock (1555-1599). He argued for the "the preservation of the divine oracles of God unto our times"³⁸ and the retention of many disputed passages such as 1 John 5:7, Mark 16, John 8 based on the fact that these are, "our Greek books, which we hold for authentical, have

this verse and our Church receives it.” He rejected all the textual critical assaults of Rome on the Received Text by summarising,

Thus we see then the adversaries cannot prove by these places that the Greek edition of the New Testament is corrupted, and so act authentical. Wherefore it resteth that the Hebrew edition of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament is only authentical.³⁹

Henry Walker in 1642 also discerned the wiles of the Jesuit plot and argued that the supposed textual problems were “vanity” and “inventions” as, “the Pope is glad of these distractions amongst us, and would now take the opportunity to snatch away the Bible from us; he would fain take our religion away; but we hope to send him back to Rome again with a powder.”⁴⁰

Dr Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713), Provost of the College of Dublin and later Archbishop of Armagh wrote against one sceptic who attacked the Hebrew Masoretic Text,

It may be suspected, that the intention is to bring it into doubt, whether we have any such thing, as a true Bible at all, which we may confide in, as God's Word ... However, I doubt not, but that, by God's Providence, as the Hebrew Text hath hitherto stood firm, so it will stand on its own bottom to wear out all assaults against it, and be, what it always was, received as the undoubted Word of God, when all the arguments and objections against it are vanish'd into smoke.⁴¹

The Rhemist version was later revised by Richard Challoner in the mid-18th century. He was an English convert from Protestantism who knew well the nuances of the King James Version and deliberately sought to revise the *Douay-Rheims* into closer conformity with the diction of the King James Version.⁴² Notwithstanding, so successful was the Authorised Version and Cartwright's rebuttal of the Rhemist version that the devil was forced to change his strategy and attack not by the Latin but by the Greek.

It was about another century before Rome refined a weapon to combat *Sola Scriptura* at the hands of Romanist priest, Richard Simon (1638-1712) through “Textual Criticism”. Baird tells us, “Simon sharpened historical criticism into a weapon that could be used in the attack on Protestantism's most fundamental error: the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*.”⁴³ Indeed, Simon himself explains plainly his purpose, “the great changes that have taken place in the manuscripts of the Bible—as we have shown in the first book of this work—since the first originals

were lost, completely destroy the principle of the Protestants ... if tradition is not joined to scripture, there is hardly anything in religion that one can confidently affirm.”⁴⁴ They assembled many of the variant readings into Polyglots to aid this attack. The *Cambridge History of the Bible* accepts the universal standard of the TR amidst the Reformed Churches,

In creating the phrase *textus receptus* they had confirmed acceptance of the third edition of Estienne and Beza’s recension of it as the standard version. Effective awareness of the significance of textual criticism for the ancient versions of the biblical text may be said to begin only with the *Biblia Polyglotta* of Bishop Walton in 1657.⁴⁵

Even Dan Wallace accepts that, “New Testament textual criticism was born as a polemic against Protestants, intended to show that they couldn’t really trust the Bible!”⁴⁶ Thus under the influence of Romanism, textual criticism emerged from enlightenment and humanistic grounds and would culminate in the Revised Version.

When the Reformers urged, *Ad Fontes* (“Back to the Sources”) it was to the extant Hebrew and Greek texts in hand to which they were pointing. This *a priori* view of preservation held sway until the 19th century and an attempt to accommodate rationalist textual criticism with belief in inspiration due to the attack of liberals. This new position was also a faith-based presupposition, but this time it was not in God but rather in man’s rationalistic abilities to let science tell us what the text probably is.

In contrast, the Reformers never set the apographs against the autographs, nor did they embrace scientific neutral principles that Providence must adhere to. They were biased against Rome and its Vulgate Bible, and they explicitly approached the whole issue theologically. Adam Fox cites the textual critic Curcellaeus (1586-1659) lamenting that “the great majority of theologians acquiesce in the ordinary editions as if they were perfect.”⁴⁷ Beza is accused by Critical Text (CT) advocates of neglecting the Alexandrian Text manuscripts such as Codex Bezae which he had in his possession because they “differed too frequently from the printed texts⁴⁸.” In other words, Beza held fast to the TR because of a presuppositional commitment rather than a scientific one per se. As a consequence, all of the Bible translations produced during the Reformation and post-Reformation eras were translations of this Received Text, not some hypothetical reconstruction of lost original

autographs.

The Reformers did not take their creedal stand against Rome upon a utopian inerrant original autograph. To them, there was an identifiable and existing text in use by the Greek-speaking Church which had been transmitted from a handwritten manuscript form to a printed form. Likewise, they did not advocate a radical individualism where every man decides for himself which words are genuine and would have rejected the current state of textual criticism, where every man is a textual critic with disdain. It is true, that unlike Luther, John Calvin did not initially *uniformly* base his readings on the text of Erasmus and “had an affinity for a renegade edition published by Simon de Colines (1534).”⁴⁹ This text included a number of variant readings from CT manuscripts and from Rome’s Complutensian.⁵⁰ However, in later life Calvin rejected this view to return to the TR preferring the common readings by faith.⁵¹ The facts of history are that Rome accused Protestants of having a “paper pope” by judging all matters religious with the Scripture. Ironically, 500 years ago a man positing this kind of accusation would be called a Romanist heretic but today he is called an enlightened fundamentalist! Indeed, TR critics even attack preservationists today by equating heresy with faith in an inerrant Bible.

Westminster Confession of Faith

A good example of the Reformation view on preservation is the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) of 1646 written in response to Tridentine Romanism and early rationalism. The Confessional understanding of the doctrine of Holy Scripture was a dyke to keep out the deadly waters of disbelief in God’s Word. Like the early Reformers, the Divines looked first at the history of manuscript transmission to see what God had done, rather than the manuscripts to see what man had to do. The Westminster Divines never argued for the preservation of a copy, but the preservation of the words, because that is what the Bible teaches. That took a presuppositional approach to this issue. They knew that if there is another authority (whether it be our individual determination of trustworthiness or the authority of an ecclesiastical leader) by which we are to determine and believe that the Bible is the Word of God, then that authority itself would be the ultimate authority. Is it up to the reader to discern which portions of the Scriptures are inspired and which are not. Hence the WCF (1:4) states, “The authority of Holy Scripture, for which

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

Douglas Wilson explains the Confessional approach,

We receive these Scriptures on their own authority. They are the Word of God, and they speak to us as such. Nevertheless, God has given us an earthly testimony concerning them. Luther used the apt picture of Christ and John the Baptist. In no way did John bestow any authority upon Christ when he said “Behold, the Lamb of God.” At the same time, John’s witness was important. In the same way, submissively and authoritatively, the Church points to the sixty-six books of the Bible. During the Christian aeon, the Church is responsible to keep and preserve the same kind of testimony concerning the entire Bible that we gave in our younger years, when we had been entrusted only with the Old Testament books. When modern groups and sects point to other books than what God has given (e.g. Mormons point to the Book of Mormon, Romanists point to the Apocrypha, etc.), they are exhibiting more than just their unbelief. They are also showing their radical detachment from the ancient and historical Church.⁵²

A crystallisation of the opposition to textual and historical criticism is stated in positive terms in the WCF. It should be noted that the Confession first deals with the canon of Scripture before it turns to discuss the doctrine of inspiration and authority and preservation. There is then a refutation of the canonicity of the Apocrypha before the Confession deals with the declaration of providential preservation. This understanding of cause and effect in respect of canonisation will be an important principle to remember when we consider the preservation of the Scriptures. This seems to have been a reasoned and logical presuppositional unfolding as they are implicitly stating that the same methodology for determining canonicity must be extended to the individual words of the canon. Canonicity was recognised by the true Church (not Rome) and the corollary of this must be that the canonised words must be recognised by the true Church and not Rome’s texts or apostate textual critics such as Westcott, Hort, Aland, Metzger and others like them.

The WCF is a constitutional document and must be interpreted in the light of its historical context. Chapter one and paragraph eight of the Confession should not be read in a vacuum of history; it is a presuppositional setting forth of statements which identify the canonical

text, and disclaims the apocryphal as being non-canonical. Unmistakably, the Westminster Divines claimed to possess the authentic text, and all critics should candidly acknowledge this rather than attempting to reinterpret it to conform to the fluid tradition of modern textual criticism.

The Divines were men of prodigious learning and were aware of many minor textual disagreements going back to the days of the Early Fathers. Yet this awareness did not diminish their unshakable conviction that they continued to hold in hand an indestructible authentic text. They knew it was the Church's treasure and rock of defence against Rome and not one to ever casually or carelessly surrender. Given this approach, we are left with one of two choices: either the text they used is the "authentic text" or their claim was false. The Confession requires an acceptance of the Reformation Text as the authoritative court of appeal or else it is meaningless. Indeed, so seriously did the Westminster Divines view even spelling errors in various printings of the Authorised Version as "dangerous to religion," that they moved Parliament to outlaw the importation of bootleg reprints from Europe.⁵³

William Orr in his commentary on the Confession makes clear,

Now this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was immediately inspired by God because it was identical with the first text that God has kept pure in all the ages. The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the *Textus Receptus* of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith.⁵⁴

Reformed writer, Andrew Sandlin also accepts that,

For the Reformation heritage, it is the preserved text in the church, not the long-lost autographs, that constitutes the infallible word of God. A single authoritative text undergirds a single authoritative theology and single authoritative dogma and therefore a single Christian authoritative Christian commonwealth.⁵⁵

He also argued,

We do not choose our Faith any more than we choose our parents. We are baptized into a religion, affirm a creed, and preach a gospel with specific orthodox boundaries, and to alter those boundaries is to alter the very Faith itself ... The text handed down to us is the text providentially preserved in the church. To contend for the providential preservation of Christian truth in orthodoxy while denying the providential preservation of The Truth in the text of Scripture defies reason and faith.⁵⁶

Indeed, the Westminster Divines clearly cognisant of textual critics positing naturalistic and man-centered doctrines of preservation explicitly state that the doctrine of preservation must be hedged by the Scripture alone (1:4, 10): “The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.” The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

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

Until the seventeenth century divines had assumed that Providence had miraculously guarded its inspired books. From this torpid belief they were at length roused by the controversies on the date and origin of the vowel points of the Hebrew text between the Buxtorfs and Morinus and Cappell, and by the discovery of a vast number of variations in the manuscripts and printed books of Scripture—Kennicott’s Hebrew Bible, published from 1776 to 1790, gave 200,000 variations. Thus a door was opened to a certain reverent kind of criticism.⁵⁷

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

The response by Protestants was swift, though perhaps not particularly well thought out. In 1646, the first doctrinal statement about God preserving his text was formulated as part of the Westminster Confession. The problem is that what the Westminster divines were thinking of when they penned that confession was the TR. By virtually ignoring the variants, they set themselves up for more abuse.⁵⁸

Swiss-Italian Protestant theologian, Francis Turretin (1623–1687) expounded on the early confessional doctrine of Biblical preservation and clearly understood it to mean “entire preservation,” “Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired men, would not take care of their entire preservation.”⁵⁹ Turretin

also unambiguously rejected the idea that the essential doctrines are preserved, but the exact wording of the text as well for as he argues,

Unless unimpaired integrity characterize the Scriptures, they could not be regarded as the sole rule of faith and practice, and the door would be thrown wide open to atheists, libertines, enthusiasts, and other profane persons like them for destroying its authenticity ... and overthrowing the foundation of salvation. For since nothing false can be an object of [saving] faith, how could the Scriptures be held as authentic and reckoned divine if liable to contradictions and corruptions? Nor can it be said that these corruptions are only in smaller things which do not affect the foundation of faith. For if once the authenticity ... of the Scriptures is taken away (which would result even from the incurable corruption of one passage), how could our faith rest on what remains? And if corruption is admitted in those of lesser importance, why not in others of greater? Who could assure me that no error or blemish had crept into fundamental passages? Or what reply could be given to a subtle atheist or heretic who should pertinaciously assert that this or that passage less in his favor had been corrupted? It will not do to say that divine providence wished to keep it free from serious corruptions, but not from minor. For besides the fact that this is gratuitous, it cannot be held without injury, as if lacking in the necessary things which are required for the full credibility ... of Scripture itself. Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired ... men, would not take care of their entire preservation. If men use the utmost care diligently to preserve their words (especially if they are of any importance, as for example a testament or contract) in order that it may not be corrupted, how much more, must we suppose, would God take care of His Word which He intended as a testament and seal of His covenant with us, so that it might not be corrupted; especially when He could easily foresee and prevent such corruptions in order to establish the faith of His church?⁶⁰

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

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

Referring to these types of statements, Capel immediately writes,

These be terrible blasts, and do little else when they meet with a weak

head and heart, but open the door to Atheism and quite to fling off the bridle, which only can hold them and us in the ways of truth and piety: this is to fill the conceits of men with evil thoughts against the Purity of the Originals: And if the Fountains run not clear, the Translation cannot be clean.⁶¹

Another of the original members of the Westminster assembly, John Lightfoot, writes,

The same power and care of God that preserves the church would preserve the Scriptures pure to it: and He that did, and could, preserve the whole could preserve every part, so that not so much as a tittle should perish.⁶²

J S Candlish rightly observed in 1877 that, “the word *authentic* is used, not in the modern sense in which it has been employed by many ... as meaning historically true, but in its more literal sense, attested as a correct copy of the author’s work.”⁶³ Indeed, the Reformers would have no grounds to oppose the Vulgate as deviating from the fountain of the originals if their text was also corrupted and uncertain. It is also notable that the Westminster Confessional documents, including the Bible version used in conjunction with the Annotations, all quote the Authorised Version including so-called problematic passages such as 1 John 5:7.

Reformed church historian, Richard Muller summarised the post-Reformation Reformed view of the providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures,

By “original” and “authentic” text, the Protestant orthodox do not mean the autographa which no one can possess but the apographa in the original tongue which are the source of all versions. The Jews throughout history and the church in the time of Christ regarded the Hebrew of the Old Testament as authentic and for nearly six centuries after Christ, the Greek of the New Testament was viewed as authentic without dispute. It is important to note that the Reformed orthodox insistence on the identification of the Hebrew and Greek texts as alone authentic does not demand direct reference to autographa in those languages: the “original and authentic text” of Scripture means, beyond the autograph copies, the legitimate tradition of Hebrew and Greek apographa.⁶⁴

Douglas Wilson concurs,

According to Westminster, the originals that were the final arbiter were the apographic texts, not the original autographs that nobody has. The apographs were the Word of God in both substance and words. The translations were the Word of God with regard to substance. The modern (and common) statement of faith that the Bible is inerrant in the autographs

would have been considered by them as hopelessly irrelevant. What good is an inerrant Bible that nobody has? You might as well affirm the inerrancy of the one copy of the Bible in heaven that Jesus has in His Library.⁶⁵

Other Confessions

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

CANONS

I. God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have His word, which is the “power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore the Church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world, a “sure word of prophecy” and “Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass” (Matt. 5:18).

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

III. Therefore we can by no means approve the opinion of those who declare that the text which the Hebrew Original exhibits was determined by man’s will alone, and do not scruple at all to remodel a Hebrew reading which they consider unsuitable, and amend it from the Greek Versions of the LXX and others, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Chaldee Targums, or even from other sources, yea, sometimes from their own reason alone; and furthermore, they do not acknowledge any other reading to be genuine except that which can be educed by the critical power of the human

judgment from the collation of editions with each other and with the various readings of the Hebrew Original itself—which, they maintain, has been corrupted in various ways; and finally, they affirm that besides the Hebrew edition of the present time, there are in the Versions of the ancient interpreters which differ from our Hebrew context other Hebrew Originals, since these Versions are also indicative of ancient Hebrew Originals differing from each other. Thus they bring the foundation of our faith and its inviolable authority into perilous hazard.

There are many other Confessional writings exhibiting TR-only readings. For instance, the influential Particular Baptist *Confession of Faith* of 1644 cites Acts 8:37 and the disputed long ending of Mark. The Particular Baptist *Second London Confession of Faith*, originally printed in 1677 references 1 John 5:7 to prove Trinitarianism and references the long ending of Mark three times.⁶⁶ The General Baptist *Orthodox Creed* of 1679 writes out 1 John 5:7 in the text and references it five times. The Baptist New Hampshire Confession (1833) also concurs,

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is an infallible and inerrant treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter ... and therefore is, and *shall remain to the end of the world*, the true centre of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.⁶⁷

To reject perfect preservation, one is essentially arguing that believers from 1500 to 1800 only possessed something which approximated to the Word of God, and that they did not possess the pure word of God. Therefore these eminent Divines were in fact wrong in claiming to possess the authentic Word of God. The TR is the only text whose adherents even mention scriptural presuppositions and is the only one the church received, agreed upon, and settled on.

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²⁵ *Ibid*, 162.

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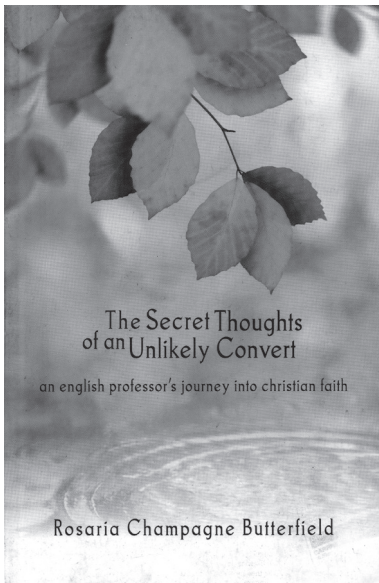
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THE SECRET THOUGHTS OF AN UNLIKELY CONVERT: A BOOK REVIEW

Eileen Siew-Juan Chee



Are homosexuals unlikely candidates in God’s salvation plan? In her book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Pittsburgh, USA: Crown and Covenant Publications, 2012, 153 pages), former radical feminist, community activist and lesbian – Dr Rosaria Champagne Butterfield – testified how she as “an unlikely convert” was saved from her sinful lifestyle. She likened her conversion experience as “a train wreck”. In other words, her life was completely overhauled by God. This happened at the height of her career as a tenured English professor in a large university, when she was 36.

“That same year, Christ claimed me for himself and the life that I had known and loved came to a humiliating end”. This book is a searching testimony of how she came to know Jesus Christ as her personal Lord and Saviour. In her book, she plainly revealed what “secret” thoughts she as an intelligent homosexual had to grapple with, and how finally she submitted to God’s love and holiness as presented in the Gospel. However, she did not stop there. Picking up from this “train wreck”, she related her journey as a new person in Christ, giving up her cherished past, embracing the femininity that God has given to her, and working hard to be a godly wife and mother.

Rosaria’s testimony is divided into five parts: (1) Conversion,

(2) Surrender, (3) Sanctification, (4) Marriage and (5) Motherhood. Written in reflective style rather than a retrospective one, it is hard not to contemplate along with her the issues she faced in each part of her Christian journey – issues that we so commonly brush off. Moreover, the context of her questions and inquiries was vividly brought out as she engaged her readers in a little storytelling of the events that befell her.

This book is valuable, not just for its account of a lost sheep found, but also for some issues which Rosario had put in here to serve as food for thought.

Christian Apologetics

One thing that turned the pre-converted Rosaria away from Christianity was the inability of Christians to respond judiciously to issues and questions the world faces today. She perceived Christians as “bad thinkers ... bad readers” (4) and “anti-intellectual” (5), as she had encountered many who simply dished out Christian catchphrases and clichés in conversations, without truly processing what these mean in context. On a broader level, she also saw that “the church does not know how to interface with university culture because it comes to the table only ready to moralize and not dialogue”, preferring to be traditional rather than being relevant. What Dr Rosaria pointed out as an unbeliever then (and even now as a believer) could well be an honest and true appraisal of how Christians fare in their interactions with the people around them. Christians need to engage, not disengage. So when her postmodern presuppositions were challenged by a pastor, she was able to accept the possibility that God is real, more willingly.

This brings to mind what the Apostle Peter exhorted in 1 Peter 3:15, “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*”. The phrase “give an answer” is from the Greek *apologia*, from which we get the term “apologetics”. It is used eight times in the New Testament with reference to the apostolic defence of the faith before kings and scholars. Apologetics is the art and science of giving reasoned statements and arguments, where one labours to present his case well. John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards and other theologians also followed in the footsteps of the Apostles.

In this time and age of postmodernism, ideas, theories and philosophies are constantly churned out to challenge objective truths. It

has become very necessary for Christians to keep abreast of, as well as confront current debates and controversies instead of shying away from them. Christians need to study and know how to answer questions. Yet, such readiness seems to be lacking in the church today, and how many have been turned away by our want of careful thought on issues that matter. This does not mean that reason is superior to faith. We are saved by faith, and spiritual things are to be spiritually discerned. Quoting the author, “The Bible makes it clear that reason is not the front door of faith ... but how do we develop spiritual eyes unless Christians engage the culture with those questions and paradigms of mindfulness out of which spiritual logic flows?” Christians need to start emerging from their caves and give the world a reason for their faith, and that faith must find its paradigms of mindfulness and spiritual logic from the Word of God alone, namely, the Holy Scriptures.

Homosexuality

There are basically two facts that can be seen from her testimony: (1) What homosexuality is not. Her friends had suggested to her that her sexual orientation was a sickness, or a mistake. There was no need to turn to Christ, for there were other options such as Buddha and Yoga. Indeed, this is the tune that the world sings today, ie homosexuality is anything but sin. Yet, the Bible states it as clear as day that homosexuality is a sin (Rom 1:24-28). Rosaria’s admission of her sexual orientation as sin stands as God’s witness to this truth.

(2) What homosexuality is. How did the sin of homosexuality come about? Rosaria searched the Scriptures to understand more about this sin, and discovered that homosexuality stemmed from a myriad of sins such as pride, materialism, lack of mercy, lack of modesty as found in Sodom (Ezek 16:48-50). She concluded, “Importantly, we don’t see God making fun of homosexuality or regarding it as a different, unusual, or exotic sin. What we see instead is God’s warning: if you indulge in the sins of pride, wealth, entertainment-lust, lack of mercy, and lack of discretion, you will find yourself deep in sin – and the type of sin may surprise you. That sin may attach itself to a pattern of life closely or loosely linked to this list. While sin is not contained by logical categories of progression, nonetheless, sin is progressive. That is, while sin does not stay contained by type or trope, if ignored, excused, or enjoyed, sin grows and spreads like poison ivy.” (31).

Her study meant that anyone can fall into the sin of homosexuality. It is a manifestation of an indulgence in sins. Still the blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse all sins, including the sin of homosexuality. Homosexuals are not without hope of salvation. The testimony of this ex-lesbian ought to give readers the courage to witness boldly to friends who have fallen into this sin.

Sin and Repentance

Rosaria was clearly articulate about her *process* of repentance – something which is absent from most testimonies of salvation. Her process gives ample insight that the forsaking of sin cannot be simply settled in a prayer. Repentance begins by knowing what sin is. The penitential soul will reflect and recognise that sin permeates its entire being. In her own words, “sin roots not in outward behaviours, but in patterns of thinking” (33). Her homosexuality was a result of life experiences, thinking and research and that it was what made her to be who she was. It was basically her life. To repent means to die – no more reliance and remembrance of the old life. The new life starts with a clean slate; it is like a new sheet of white paper for a new story. For instance, King David prayed, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me*” (Ps 51:10).

It is encouraging to read how she first stepped onto the road of repentance by praying for the strength “to repent for a sin that at that time didn’t feel like sin at all – it felt like life, plain and simple”. All she knew was that she had to obey her Saviour, and that ranked above her feelings. So began her painful but sure attempts to cut off her old life. She broke up with her partner, changed her dressing, altered the course of her teaching subjects, jeopardised her career, transformed her thoughts and speech etc. Repentance has to be thorough, or else it cannot be counted as repentance.

With this, Rosaria sounded an alarm of a dangerous trend in today’s Christianity. It is called “easy believism” – a term she used to sum up the modern evangelical culture. This culture is perpetuated by the purpose-driven movement spearheaded by Rick Warren. It refers to the belief that converting to Christianity involves no repentance from sin, dying to self, and forsaking the world to trust in Christ fully and follow Him wholeheartedly.

This is a timely warning, and a much needed one today. So many

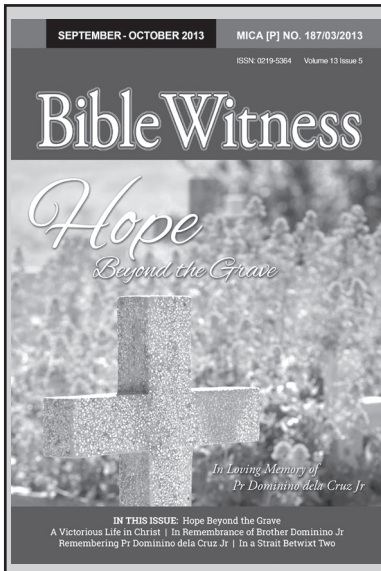
A BOOK REVIEW

professing Christians have failed to understand what Jesus said in Luke 9:23, “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*”, or identify with Paul, “*I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*” (Phil 3:8). Easy believism is a real threat to the church. The doctrine of sin and repentance must be preached and emphasised even more today!

Conclusion

Rosaria’s story is a testimony that is worth reading, for it is all about how God and His Word can save and turn the life of a homosexual around. Unlikely converts are not impossible converts, for the grace of God reaches to all. Now this lady is happily married to a pastor, and as Mrs Butterfield, she does her part in helping people in her community come to know the same Saviour she has come to trust. New life in Christ is indeed abundant and free.

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SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2013 MICA [P] NO. 187/03/2013
ISSN: 0219-0264 Volume 13 Issue 5

Bible Witness

Hope *Beyond the Grave*

*In Loving Memory of
Pr. Dominino dela Cruz Jr.*

IN THIS ISSUE: Hope Beyond the Grave
A Victorious Life in Christ | In Remembrance of Brother Dominino Jr.
Remembering Pr. Dominino dela Cruz Jr. | In a Strait Betwixt Two

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MY PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

Carol Lee

My first visit to the Holy Land was from 4 to 14 September 2013. I recall the fun of having a Dead Sea mud facial (“Surely my skin felt smoother after that?”), the physically challenging 800-step hike up Ad Deir, “The Monastery” in Petra, the sense of accomplishment (“We made it!”) when we finally reached it. Yet, much more than these vivid memories of the flesh, the spiritual blessings and lessons from the Lord that touched the heart are most precious. What has the Lord impressed upon me during this pilgrimage? Below are three of my many precious recollections:

From Jordan into Israel

We spent the whole of 6 September 2013 in Petra, a desert city of the idolatrous Nabataeans carved out of mountain rocks in southern Jordan and a world heritage site today. We walked for miles in this dry, barren, desert city “museum” under the scorching sun, seeing the many intricately carved giant structures on cliffs and hill sides, with almost no vegetation in sight.

The following day, as we left Jordan to enter Israel (via the Allenby Bridge crossing, just north of the Dead Sea), our Jordanian guide pointed out to us Mount Nebo (in Jordan) and in the distance Jericho (in Israel). Between these two places, I saw (on the Jordanian side) stretches and stretches of dry, parched, barren, hilly terrain.

The Petra region to Mount Nebo to Jericho: Was this not the last leg of the wilderness wandering of Moses and the children of Israel before they entered and conquered Jericho? What was it like for them to travel in such harsh terrain? Moses and the children of Israel continued following God despite the harshness of the land, expecting to arrive in the land that God had promised them. And arrived they did.

The dry, barren desert terrain of the Petra and Mount Nebo regions really hit me! I too am on a journey on earth, following God, and I expect

MY PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND



Trekking to Petra



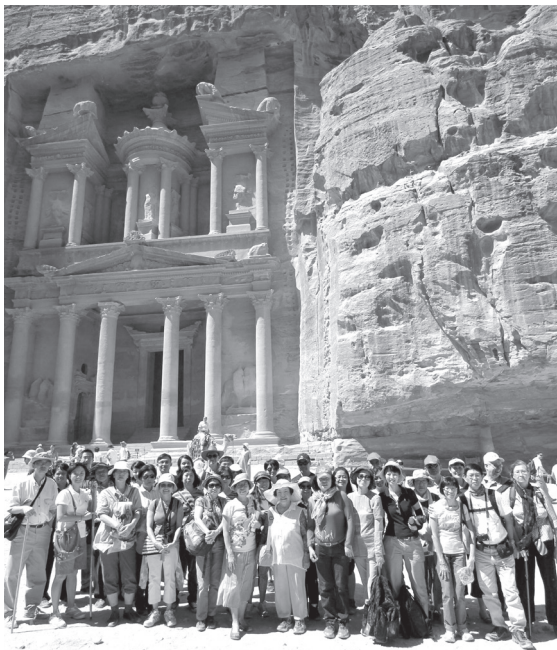
Veteran Pilgrim - Mrs Ivy Tow



Menorah



Mustard Tree



Petra

to arrive in the “land” that God too has promised me. And my spiritual terrain may be harsh too: dry, barren and hilly. Will I grow tired and weary from following God? Will I murmur and complain in the face of hardships? Or will I persevere following my Lord till I arrive at my “promised land”? Just as Moses and the children of Israel persevered, my prayer is that I may, by God’s all-sufficient grace, persevere too even when the going gets rough and tough, that I may say as Paul, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (2 Tim 4:7).

Sunrise Service on the Shore of the Sea of Galilee

On 9 September 2013, we had a sunrise service by the Sea of Galilee at Kibbutz Nof Ginosar. The Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo preached from John 21:1-14.

John 21:14 tells us, *“This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.”* The third post-resurrection appearance of Jesus took place *“at the sea of Tiberias (or sea of Galilee)”* (John 21:1). Instead of fishing for men, the seven disciples of Jesus had gone back to fishing for fish, but *“that night they*

MY PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

caught nothing” (John 21:3).

“But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore...” (John 21:4), and He instructed them to cast their net on the right side. And then He performed two miracles.

Verse 6: *“..now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”*

Verse 11: *“...an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.”*

They caught 153 fishes! And yet the net was not broken! Jesus took care of everything!



Sunrise Service at Sea of Galilee

There I was: on the shore of the same Sea of Galilee, on a cool morning, with the sun peeping through the horizon. To think that 2,000 years ago this was where Jesus performed those two miracles, I am reminded that He is still *“the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”* (Heb 13:8). Just as He took care of the fishermen disciples miraculously 2,000 years ago, He still takes care of us today.

What are my fears? Why do I fear? When I know His will for me, and do His will His way, He will take care of me. He will provide the “153 fishes” and my “net” will not be broken! What comfort fills my heart!

Matthew 6:33: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

Holy Communion Service at the Garden Tomb

On 11 September 2013, we had a Holy Communion service at the Garden Tomb, Jerusalem. Scripture reading was from 1 Peter 1:14-25, 2:21-25. What a most appropriate reading to challenge our heart!



Jesus arrested and taken to the High Priest



Western or Wailing Wall

MY PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

I had just seen the supposed Golgotha (“*the place of a skull*”) where Jesus was crucified. And the supposed empty tomb (where Jesus was buried) was just a stone’s throw away from where our Service was held. In the serenity of this beautiful garden, how spiritually beneficial it was to pause and to be reminded (through God’s Word) of: (1) the sufferings and death of Jesus, (2) what it means to be a believer, and follower, of Jesus, and (3) what God’s will is for me who calls Him my Lord and Saviour.



Holy Communion at Garden Tomb

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet 1:14-25).



City of David



Tombs of House of David

MY PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Pet 2:21-25).

Indeed, I have been redeemed not by *“corruptible things”* but *“with the precious blood of Christ ...Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.”* I am to *“live unto righteousness.”* His will for me is to live a holy life, separated wholly unto Him. As a child of God, I am to *“love... (others) with a pure heart fervently.”*

Seeing Golgotha and the empty tomb with my physical eyes surely must lead me to weep more for my sins and must draw me to love my Lord and Saviour more that I may, by His grace, live in obedience to Him, never for self-glory but for His glory. For truly, *“all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.”*

The significance of the places I visited and the sights I saw in this pilgrimage must lie in their place in the Bible and in the difference they must make to the way I live my life. Otherwise, I will be no different from the Roman Catholics who idolise the physical, just as a rock (believed to be the rock that Jesus leaned on to pray to His Father while in the Garden of Gethsemane) takes centre stage in the Church of All Nations (also called Basilica of the Agony), a church located right next to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Photographs and memory may continue to remind me of my time in the Holy Land. But may God keep His blessings and lessons ever fresh in my mind, and heart, and life. May God help me. And may our Lord enable you too to draw many valuable spiritual lessons for yourselves when you make your pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Amen.

Carol Lee (BBA, PGDE, MEd, MDiv) is a lecturer in Christian Education at Far Eastern Bible College and a full-time staff of Truth Bible-Presbyterian Church.

IN THE INTERESTS OF THE CHURCH

A Response to Life BPC's "Pastoral Announcement"

The Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (Life BPC) Weekly of 14 July 2013 (<http://lifebpc.com/index.php/church-weeklies-2013/618-14-july-2013>) contained this notice:

Pastoral Announcement:

During the ACM held on 28 Apr 2013, members were informed that the Life B-P Church ("the Church") may have to resort to the law to protect and guard the interests of the Church in dealing with FEBC. Regrettably, the Church has filed a Writ of Summons in the Subordinate Courts and served it on FEBC to seek recovery of a sum of S\$250,000.

As you are already aware, the Court of Appeal has ruled that FEBC is a separate and independent unincorporated association and not one of the Church's ministries.

FEBC had previously offered to pay the sum claimed as part of their obligation to contribute towards the past maintenance and upkeep of the premises at 9&9A Gilstead Road. While the Church was of the view that the amount offered by them is inadequate to reimburse the actual costs which the Church has incurred and is entitled to be reimbursed, the Church was prepared to accept the amount offered as an amicable compromise. However, despite our many requests, FEBC failed and refused to honour their commitment to make such payment. Therefore, the Church has, on the advice of our lawyers, decided that commencing legal proceedings against FEBC is necessary.

Please pray along with the Session that notwithstanding our filing of the Writ of Summons, this matter will be resolved expeditiously and amicably, without the need for adjudication by the Courts.

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

Can the Church really be protecting its interests if it institutes a lawsuit against fellow Christians? How about God's interests and His good name? What does God's Word say about Christians who sue fellow believers for money? 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 says, "*Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.*"

Life BPC's 1st Lawsuit

This is Life BPC's second lawsuit against FEBC. Despite preaching in its Weekly of 13 July 2008 that "1 Cor 6 teaches us not to take fellow Christians to court", Life BPC commenced its first lawsuit against FEBC on 15 September 2008. That lawsuit was to evict FEBC from her heritage and home at 9 & 9A Gilstead Road since its founding. FEBC had pleaded with the leaders of Life BPC not to do this quoting Proverbs 22:28, "*Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.*" But they were not moved. In a letter dated 2 July 2008, Life BPC threatened to commence legal action if FEBC fails to vacate the premises immediately.

Since all Charities are under the protection of the Attorney-General, FEBC applied to him to either commence appropriate proceedings himself or to grant permission to certain directors of the FEBC to seek the High Court's declaration that the lands at 9, 9A & 10 Gilstead Road were impressed with a charitable purpose trust for the benefit of both Life BPC and FEBC. Although Life BPC through its lawyers made representations twice to the Attorney-General not to accede to FEBC's request, permission was granted by the Attorney-General on 8 October 2008 to the three FEBC directors to do so and their originating summons filed on 6 January 2009 was consolidated with the suit commenced earlier

by Life BPC to evict FEBC. The consolidated suit went all the way up to the Court of Appeal. On 26 April 2011, the apex court ruled that the two pieces of land, 9 & 9A Gilstead Road as well as 10 Gilstead Road, were held on trust for the joint benefit of FEBC and Life BPC.

Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP)

What caused Life BPC to sue FEBC in the first place? It is because FEBC believes in the present perfection of the Holy Scriptures. FEBC believes that God has infallibly preserved His inspired Words in the original languages as promised in Psalm 12:6-7, Matthew 5:18, 24:35, and other like passages. As such, FEBC believes that the Holy Scriptures today are 100% infallible and inerrant, absolutely authentic and authoritative, and these Scriptures are the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures on which the good old Authorised Version or the King James Version (KJV) is based. This is opposed to the modern versions which are based on the corrupt manuscripts and texts of Westcott and Hort and the modern textual critics.

Why do the pastors and leaders of Life BPC reject the present perfection of the Scriptures? It is because despite believing in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, they do not believe that the same inspired Scriptures have been infallibly preserved. As such, they believe that the Bible was perfect in the past, but it is not so perfect today as it contains some mistakes. For example, they claim scribal errors in 2 Kings 8:26/2 Chronicles 22:2, 2 Kings 24:8/2 Chronicles 36:9, 2 Samuel 8:4/1 Chronicles 18:4, 1 Kings 7:16/2 Kings 25:17, and Judges 18:30.

The Faculty and Board of FEBC, on the other hand, deny that there are any errors in the Bible. An admission of errors in the Bible undermines the very foundations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the historic Christian Faith. It goes against what the Lord Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:18, *“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”*, the very proof text the Westminster Divines used to affirm the present perfection and supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures in the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646, *“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.”* (Chap I, para 8).

Symbiosis

Although not apparent in Life BPC's "pastoral announcement", the High Court Judge ruled that FEBC "was not a ministry of the Church but was an independent organization which the law recognizes as an unincorporated association". The Court of Appeal accepted this and opined: "... we do not think that there is any basis to seriously argue that the College is a ministry of the Church."

FEBC was founded as an independent institution free from ecclesiastical control and functioned as such since the day it started. Although Life BPC and FEBC are independent and separate entities, they had a symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship from the outset. Life BPC willingly supported FEBC and FEBC likewise supported the Church. The symbiotic relationship broke down when Life BPC opposed FEBC's belief and defence of VPP which was also held and upheld by the Rev Dr Timothy Tow who was Life BPC's founding pastor and FEBC's founding principal (see Pastor Tow's article, "Reformation into the 21st Century", in Life BPC's publication, *50 Years Building His Kingdom*, pp 84-85). FEBC's defence of VPP was meant to undergird the KJV which Life BPC has upheld as the "very Word of God". It is baffling why FEBC's championing of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures underlying the KJV should be so detested by a church which claims to love the KJV. Anyway, Life BPC's attack on FEBC and incessant lambasting of their founding pastor at Session meetings eventually led to the latter's resignation as its pastor in 2003 after 53 years of faithful service. Life BPC subsequently sought to evict FEBC.

FEBC's Contribution

Life BPC's allegation that FEBC is under a legal obligation to contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the premises at Gilstead Road is without basis. FEBC from its inception has used the premises at Gilstead Road without charge. Life BPC had provided regular financial assistance to FEBC. FEBC had likewise contributed to Life BPC, with students maintaining the cleanliness of the grounds and FEBC contributing financially, including extending to it in 2001 an interest-free loan of \$200,000 which was returned only in 2007. The use of FEBC's name also brought in substantial funds for land purchases and building projects which have benefitted Life BPC.

On 17 July 2007, Life BPC wrote to FEBC saying that it no longer

sees the College as a ministry it wants to support. In view of this, FEBC felt that it should then contribute to its share of utilities. On 3 August 2007, FEBC wrote a cheque of \$205,000, with \$200,000 meant as a lump sum contribution to past utilities, and \$5,000 as the first monthly sum of the College's voluntary contribution towards the utility and maintenance of the property at 9 & 9A Gilstead Road as co-user.

However, on 28 January 2008, Life BPC returned all of FEBC's five cheques (totaling \$225,000) and told FEBC not to tender any further cheques as it was "prepared to let the College occupy the Premises free of charge for this extended period." Later, on 15 September 2008, Life BPC commenced a lawsuit to evict FEBC from 9 & 9A Gilstead Road. Having failed in its first suit, Life BPC now sues FEBC for \$250,000, which includes the sum of \$225,000 they had of their own accord given back to FEBC in 2008.

Threats and 2nd Lawsuit

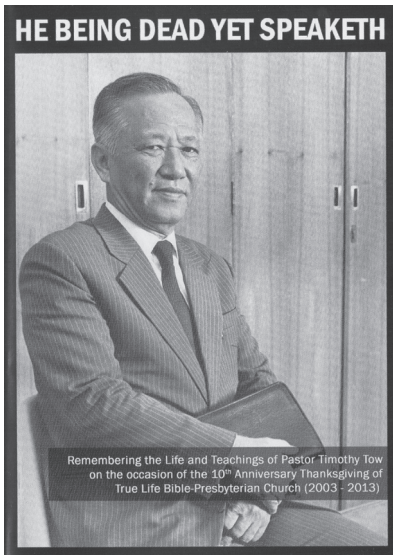
Contrary to Life BPC's "pastoral announcement", there was no indication from Life BPC that it intended to accept an "amicable compromise". The letters from Life BPC's lawyers dated 25 January 2013, 4 February 2013 and 12 March 2013 contained no unambiguous or amicable offer "to accept the sum previously tendered". As a matter of fact, the letters were not written in the form of a request, but a demand coupled with threats of legal action.

While there is no basis for Life BPC's demands, the FEBC Directors have attempted to resolve the matter amicably with Life BPC, but this has been rejected by Life BPC. Life BPC eventually filed its new suit against FEBC on 27 June 2013.

The above was originally published in the True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church Weekly, 11 August 2013.

HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH

Remembering the Life and Teachings of Pastor Timothy Tow
on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary Thanksgiving of
True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (2003-2013)



“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Hebrews 13:7, 8)

The Rev Dr Timothy Tow (1920-2009) was the founder of the Bible-Presbyterian Church and Movement in Southeast Asia. He was saved during the Singapore Pentecost in 1935 under the great Chinese revivalist—Dr John Sung. He received his theological training from Spiritual Training Theological Seminary in China and Faith Theological Seminary in the USA. He was founding pastor of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church from 1950 to 2003. He founded the Far Eastern Bible College in 1962 and led the College as principal until 2009. In 2003, he founded True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church and served as her pastor until 2009 when he was called home to be with the Lord at the age of 88.

The Rev Dr Timothy Tow was a pastor and theologian par excellence, a man of God. He has left behind a wealth of teaching from God’s Word. Much can be learned from his articles found in his Church Weekly, his books published by the FEBC Press, and the hymns and

songs he composed. Do not miss the candid telling of his life-story when he was interviewed by the Oral History Centre of the National Heritage Board, and the many other memorable items contained in this publication; “... *by it he being dead yet speaketh*” (Heb 11:4).

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 - ii. Interviewed by Ms Low Lay Eng, 13 December 1984, 59 minutes
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7. *Life Bible-Presbyterian Church Vision (1986-1987)*
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HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH

Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (1950-2000)

9. *New Beulah House Development: Life Bible-Presbyterian Church 52nd Anniversary CD (2002)*
10. *In the Steps of Our Saviour: Sabbatical Jubilee of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (2003-2010)*
11. *Faith Theological Seminary Catalog (1981-1983)*
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13. *Training Labourers Together with God: Silver Jubilee Magazine of Far Eastern Bible College (1962-1987)*
14. *Passing on the Torch, Silver Jubilee Celebrations Programme (August 30 – September 6, 1987)*
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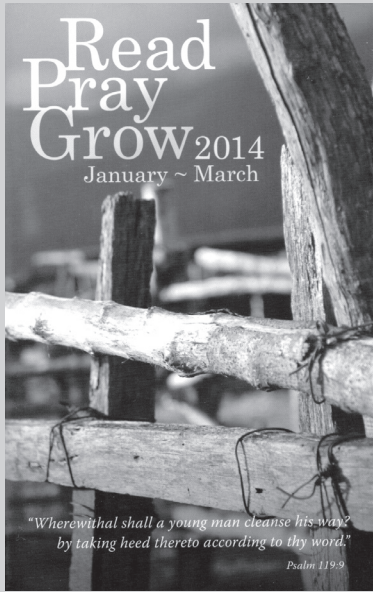
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**Read
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January ~ March

*"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed thereto according to thy word."
Psalm 119:9*

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College News

FEBC started another new term on 15 July 2013 with a day of prayer on campus grounds. The first day of the new term is always a happy day when faculty and students come together for fellowship and prayer after a two-month break. This time we welcome six new students from as many countries: Yang Conghui (China), Sim Dara (Cambodia), Sujith Samuel (India), Thang Muan Huam (Myanmar), Eric Luis R Delina (Philippines), and Kim Jong Heon (South Korea).

In the July-November 2013 semester we thank the Lord for a total of 488 students: 89 day students (46 full-time and 43 part-time), 268 night class students, and 131 distance learning (online) students. They come from 13 countries: Australia, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

FEBC's Basic Theology for Everyone (BTFE) night classes continue to attract a good number of lay students who desire to know God's Word deeply and accurately. Many are working towards their Certificate of Religious Knowledge (20 credits) or Certificate of Biblical Studies (40 credits). We had 239 students signed up for the Exodus class held on Monday nights, and 140 for Calvin's Institutes II on Thursday nights. Our BTFE courses, academically and devotionally taught, are appealing to a new generation of believers who realise their need to know and understand God's Word deeply to face the many spiritual challenges of this modern-day decadent and destructive world that is so idolatrous and immoral.

FEBC was pleased to house Presbyterian missionaries to Japan—John Evans, Dan Iverson and Daisuke Kimura—in our guestroom (“The Mousehole”) gratis when they made a brief stopover in Singapore from 4-6 September 2013. *“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”* (Heb 13:2).

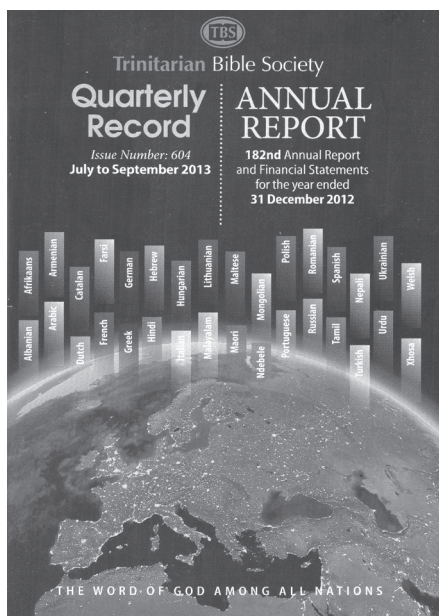
FEBC conducted her 17th Holy Land Pilgrimage from 4-14 September 2013. Dr and Mrs Jeffrey Khoo led a total of 39 pilgrims from 11 churches and six countries. We praise the Lord for another blessed

time of studying the Bible in an open classroom right where all the events recorded in the Bible happened. It was a truly memorable and spiritually enriching experience. Two credits to every student who submits a research project on the Holy Land.

Dominino dela Cruz Jr (BTh 06), missionary of Gethsemane BPC in Bogu, the Philippines, was called home to be with the Lord on 7 July 2013. He was 46 years old. For about three years, he battled with a rare form of cancer around his stomach. Dominino established two mission churches in Bogu and San Antonio, and a children's outreach in Libjo in a short period of one year. He was also an able and faithful expositor of the Word. His demise is a painful loss to his dear wife, Sis Sharon and their young son, Nehemiah, and to the young churches he planted, and to all of us who loved him and co-laboured with him in the Lord's vineyard. It has pleased the Lord, his Saviour and Master, to call him to His glorious presence. "*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*" (Ps 116:15).

Lazum Lonewah (BTh 96) graduated with the degree of Doctor of Ministry from Temple Baptist Seminary, Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA on 4 May 2013. The title of his dissertation was "Multilingual Ministry of Oakland Burmese Mission Baptist Church: A Case Study." Dr Lonewah serves as Pastor of Oakland Burmese Mission Baptist Church in California. His wife Jae Eun is also a graduate of FEBC (BTh 96), and they have two children, Lillian and Roselyn.

FEBC graduates are involved in Bible translation work. The Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) in its *Quarterly Record* 604 (Jul-Sep 2013) reported on the Waray-Waray and the Kalenjin translation of the Holy Scriptures. "Waray-Waray is one of the ten officially recognised regional languages in the Philippines. In 2012, the Society was brought into contact with a native Waray-Waray man with significant abilities in several languages, including Biblical Greek. As there is currently only a poor Waray-Waray Bible available—based on the Critical Text and dynamically translated—he has embarked on a new translation from the Hebrew and Greek in partnership with the Society. Work commenced earlier this year in the Gospel according to John. A second native Waray-Waray speaker, a pastor, is also involved. Both workers are self-supporting, and have said that they do not need any material or monetary support, only prayer!" Dennis Kabinque (MDiv 06, ThM 08) who is Greek tutor at FEBC is involved in this work.



The TBS also reported, “In the providence of God we have been led to a group in Kenya, who since 2001, have been revising the existing Critical Text-based Kalenjin New Testament so that it conforms to the Scrivener Greek Received Text. The process of evaluating their work using the Society’s standard analytical tools is in hand.” Jonathan Langat (BTh 01, MDiv 03) who wrote his BTh thesis on “Examining the Kalenjin Bible in the Light of the Textus Receptus” is assisting in this work. Jonathan currently serves as pastor of Bomet Africa Gospel Unity Church and lectures at the Bomet Bible Institute in Kenya.

We thank the Lord for using FEBC students to promote “the Word of God among all nations” using the correct text (Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek Textus Receptus underlying the KJV) and employing the right translation method (formal or verbal equivalence over against dynamic equivalence).

Here is a letter in response to an article in the last issue of *The Burning Bush*:

Dear brother Ferguson:

I read your recent article on modern fundamentalists and their attacks on the KJV in *The Burning Bush*. Amen and Amen. I know some of those men and even grew up with one of them.

Please do not consider the fundamental Baptist movement in America to be representative of the individuals or institutions you so accurately referenced. It is my considered opinion that the CT crowd within the fundamental Baptist movement in America comprises about 10% of the whole. The vast majority are KJV people. Unfortunately, that includes the Ruckman and Riplinger crowd, but even they are not a large proportion.

BTW, the CT Baptist seminaries you referenced are all struggling with enrollment and finances. God does not bless that kind of position.

There remains a good number of fundamental, independent Baptist schools which uphold the traditional text and the KJV including, Pensacola Christian College and Seminary, West Coast Baptist College, Ambassador Baptist College, Golden State Baptist College, Midwestern Baptist College, Calvary Baptist College, Master's Baptist College, Heartland Baptist Bible College, Crown College and a host of others.

Regarding the attacks from the CT crowd about a “fideism” presupposition regarding the verbal preservation of the Bible, I am reminded of II Corinthians 5:7 “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” The CT arguments are based entirely upon rationalistic, humanistic philosophy whereas the verbal preservation position is based completely upon Scripture. I will by faith take Psalm 12:6, Psalm 19:7, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 24:35, Matthew 5:18 and a host of other promises to base my conviction of verbal preservation.

Incidentally, have you read my book *God's Perfect Book*, based upon Psalm 19:7? I go into considerable detail regarding the various defective theories of preservation (or lack thereof) by the CT crowd. I also have a book coming out early next year which will link adherence to the CT with shifting from a fundamentalist position to the evangelical mainstream.

Anyway, thank you for sending *The Burning Bush* to me.

In His service,

Dr David Sorenson

Northstar Baptist Church

Duluth, MN

FEBC's Principal, Dr Jeffrey Khoo, lectured on the topic “Identifying God's Inspired Words: Textual Reception or Textual Criticism?” at a Bible Conference held at the Word of Life Seaside Bible Camp, Opol, Misamis Oriental, the Philippines, 9-12 December 2013.

Holy Land Pilgrimage 2013

On Mount Precipice in Nazareth Overlooking the Jezreel Valley



“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” (Ps 122:6)
FEBC's 17th Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, 4-14 September 2013

