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# The Burning Bush

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# THE BURNING BUSH

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## **A PERFECT BIBLE: DREAM OR REALITY?**

Jeffrey Khoo

In January 2003, I published a seminal paper entitled “A Plea for a Perfect Bible” in *The Burning Bush*—the theological journal of the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC).<sup>1</sup> It was met with great opposition from those who believe the Bible to be inerrant only in the past when it was first given but is not so inerrant today. They consider the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of Scripture which argues for a presently existing perfect Bible a “new” and “deviant” doctrine. The hatred for this doctrine was so great that they filed a suit against me in the Supreme Court of Singapore.<sup>2</sup>

Recently, I read a paper by Ronald Hendel entitled “The Dream of a Perfect Text”.<sup>3</sup> Hendel a PhD from Harvard is Professor of Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies at the University of California Berkeley. He is a practitioner of textual and historical criticism which seeks to deconstruct and diminish the Scriptures Christians believe to be divinely inspired—the infallible and inerrant Word of God. He is no friend of Biblical inerrancy and says that Christians today can only “dream” of a perfect Bible; to him the 100% infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture past and present is but a mirage, a myth.

I would like us to consider again my appeal to a perfect Bible. Does a perfect text exist or is it merely a “dream”?

### **A Perfect Text**

Hendel’s paper is quite revealing. Despite his unbelief and scepticism of a perfect Bible, his description of the faith and convictions of the Reformation saints and scholars is significant and useful. Hendel highlighted the fact that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Reformation saints and scholars did not see their Hebrew and Greek Scriptures to be fallible and full of mistakes. They always presupposed they had a perfect text in their hands. Their perfect text was the original language Scriptures. Agostino Steuco for instance held the Hebrew Masoretic Text in his day to be “the

unchanging and perfect original text.”<sup>4</sup> In 1529, he used this perfect text to correct the erroneous readings of the Vulgate (Latin translation of the Bible). Hendel says, “the assumption that one text of the Bible was correct and all the others corrupt was widespread in Steuco’s time.”<sup>5</sup> This is extremely important: **The view that there is only one Bible that serves as the perfect standard and authority over against corrupt manuscripts and versions is not new and novel but the common and consensus view of the Reformation saints and scholars.**

Opposed to the Reformation common and consensus view were the Roman Catholics who denied the existence of a perfect original text. Instead of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, they held the Latin Vulgate to be the “inspired text and thus flawless in every respect.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, the translation is better than the original text! As such, the Catholics did not see the need to know the original languages. They ridiculed the Reformers’ plea to study the original languages and the original language Scriptures as something “completely insane” and “smacks of heresy”.<sup>7</sup>

Sound familiar? The same malicious charge was levelled against FEBC. We at FEBC like the Reformers believe in VPP and a perfect text, ie the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus over against the ever-changing and evolving critical texts of the modern versions. This is the good old Protestant and Reformed view of the divine inspiration and perfect preservation of Scripture. But today, we have professing fundamentalists who like the Catholics dismiss the present infallibility and inerrancy of a perfect text as “foolish” and “heresy”.<sup>8</sup> Instead of the Biblical and textual certainty of “a more sure word” in a VPP text, they prefer the liberal and agnostic textual criticism and the ever-changing and uncertain modern critical texts. This is tragic!

### **Catholic Ruckmanism**

In the years 1546-1600, the debate on textual inerrancy and authority became even more intense. The Reformers advocated a perfect original text, but the Catholics regarded the Vulgate translation to be so. The Proto-Ruckmanites in the Council of Trent (1546) denounced as heresy the Reformers’ view of a perfect original text and declared the Latin Vulgate to be the authentic and authoritative text. John Calvin in 1547 wrote a critique of the Council of Trent entitled “Acts of the Council of Trent: With the Antidote”, and commented,

The sacred oracles of God were delivered by Moses and the Prophets in Hebrew, and by the Apostles in Greek.... [Those] who are acquainted with the languages perceive that this version [the Vulgate] teems with innumerable errors; and this they make manifest by the clearest evidence.<sup>9</sup>

To further undermine the perfect original text position, the Catholics went on to say that the Hebrew and Greek originals cannot be trusted because they have been “corrupted by Jews and other heretics”.<sup>10</sup> It is no wonder that Calvin deemed the Council of Trent to be not just “erroneous” but “barbarous”.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Scribal Error Attack**

In 1586, the Catholic apologist Robert Bellarmine attacked the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Interestingly, Bellarmine disagreed with the Tridentine formulators that the Hebrew Scripture was corrupted by the Jews. Nevertheless, he averred that the Hebrew Scripture contained “scribal errors” and errors in the vowel-points and was thus not preserved “absolutely intact and pristine”.<sup>12</sup> If there are indeed such “scribal errors”, then the appeal to a perfect text is untenable and flawed. Who then can settle the question of scribal errors in the text? As far as Bellarmine was concerned, it had to be the “inerrant” Catholic Church which to him could do no wrong.<sup>13</sup>

The Protestant theologians refuted Bellarmine’s subtle attack by reaffirming the absolute infallibility and inerrancy of the self-authenticating and self-interpreting Scripture which be the sole, supreme and final authority of the Church’s faith and practice. It is the Scripture that validates the Church and not the other way round. In 1588, William Whitaker, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, rebutted Bellarmine and the Catholic scholastics by declaring in no uncertain terms that the Scripture is totally infallible and inerrant, “Say they, the church never errs; the pope never errs. We shall shew both assertions to be false in the proper place. We say that scripture never errs.”<sup>14</sup> In his book *Disputations on Holy Scripture*, Whitaker powerfully argued for a perfect Bible,

The books of scripture are called canonical, because they contain the standard and rule of our faith and morals. For the scripture is in the church what the law is in a state, which Aristotle in his Politics calls a canon or rule. As all citizens are bound to live and behave agreeably to the public laws, so Christians should square their faith and conduct by the rule and law of scripture. ...

Hence it plainly appears why the scriptures are called canonical;— because they prescribe to us what we must believe, and how we ought to live: so that we should refer to this test our whole faith and life, as the mason or architect squares his work by the line and plummet. Hence, too, we may perceive that the scripture is perfect, since otherwise the title of canon or rule could hardly be applied to it.<sup>15</sup>

Hendel is right to point out that

Whitaker extended the inerrancy of Scripture to include the detailed perfection of the Hebrew text. He argued that the Vulgate is a tissue of scribal and translational errors, while the Hebrew Bible is unblemished. He responded point by point to Bellarmine’s examples of scribal errors in the MT, arguing in each the Hebrew is correct.<sup>16</sup>

It ought to be noted that Whitaker powerfully argued for a divinely preserved perfect text not only in its consonants but also vowel-points, not only in matters of salvation but also history, geography and science. Similarly, Amandus Polanus in his *Systematic Theology* of 1615 wrote, “The Old Testament Scripture was transmitted by God through the prophets, not only with respect to the sense, but also with respect to the words, and therefore also with respect to the vowels, without which the words cannot be clear.”<sup>17</sup> This is in keeping with what Jesus Himself promised 2000 years ago, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matt 5:18); “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matt 24:35).

It is for this reason that we who hold to the Reformed view of a VPP text do not see scribal errors in 2 Chronicles 22:2 (cf 2 Kgs 8:26), 2 Chronicles 36:9 (cf 2 Kgs 24:8), 1 Chronicles 18:4 (cf 2 Sam 8:4), 2 Kings 25:17 (cf 1 Kings 7:16), 1 Samuel 13:1, and Judges 18:30.<sup>18</sup> We eschew any attempt to amend or revise the Hebrew Masoretic Text by means of the Septuagint, or the Arabic or the Syriac etc versions.<sup>19</sup> It must be emphasised that God promised to preserve a perfect original text, not any version or translation.<sup>20</sup>

### **Against Textual Criticism**

Hebrew scholar Johannes Buxtorf affirmed the truth of a perfect text. He said that the Hebrew Bible is not to be tampered with in any way, and spoke against textual criticism for it is not in keeping with *Sola Scriptura*. Hendel rightly observes,

For Buxtorf and the orthodox Protestant theologians, the attribution of

error of any kind opened a theological abyss. As Laurentius Fabricius wrote in a letter to Buxtorf in 1625, “Variants are arts of the devil.”<sup>21</sup>

The devil did not rest after that though. He continued to undermine the perfection of the Scriptures, this time through Louis Cappel who was not Catholic but Protestant. Now, an enemy from within! In 1634, Cappel dismissed “the concept of one manuscript as the perfect text” and insisted that the perfect text that the believers in those days upheld as infallible and inerrant was tainted with scribal errors and that it is for the textual critic to correct these scribal errors. To Cappel, it is not divine authority that is needed to determine the original text but human reason. Thus, he invented and introduced a new method of textual criticism.<sup>22</sup> Hendel comments,

This injected a human dimension into the biblical text that was unsettling to the orthodox. Further, it meant that theologians had to cede some of their authority to scholars.<sup>23</sup>

The Protestant and Reformed theologians resisted Cappel’s new view and invention as a “most pestilential poison”.<sup>24</sup> They responded with a statement of faith called the Helvetic Consensus Formula in 1675 which in no uncertain terms affirmed VPP and a perfect text. The first three Canons of the Formula state:

**Canon I:** God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have his word, which is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believes” (Rom 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the Prophets and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care from the time it was written up to the present, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore the Church justly ascribes to it his singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world (2 Pet 1:19), a “sure word of prophecy” and “Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim 3:15), from which though heaven and earth pass away, “the smallest letter or the least stroke of a pen will not disappear by any means” (Matt 5:18).

**Canon II:** But, in particular, The Hebrew original of the OT which we have received and to this day do retain as handed down by the Hebrew Church, “who had been given 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 by God. It thus forms, together with the Original of the NT the sole and complete rule of our faith and practice; and to its standard, as to a Lydian stone, all extant versions, eastern or western, ought to be applied, and wherever they differ, be conformed.



Canon III: Therefore, we are not able to approve of the opinion of those who believe that the text which the Hebrew Original exhibits was determined by man's will alone, and do not hesitate at all to remodel a Hebrew reading which they consider unsuitable, and amend it from the versions of the LXX and other Greek versions, the Samaritan Pentateuch, by the Chaldaic Targums, or even from other sources. They go even to the point of following the corrections that their own rational powers dictate from 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 text, other Hebrew Originals. Since these versions are also indicative of ancient Hebrew Originals differing from each other, they thus bring the foundation of our faith and its sacred authority into perilous danger.<sup>25</sup>

The Helvetica Consensus Formula rightly warned that textual criticism that sought to change the perfect text denies the Bible's total infallibility and inerrancy, and "brings the foundation of our faith and its sacred authority into perilous danger". **Hence, we reject textual criticism and all the modern versions and perversions of the Bible today which are based on corrupt manuscripts produced and promoted by humanistic and rationalistic textual critics of this apostate age.** We should have no confidence at all in textual criticism. Indeed, Hendel himself admits,

The dream of a perfect text is simply that, a dream. None of our texts are perfect and textual criticism is not an inquiry that yields perfect results. ... Textual critics do what we can, but it is wrong to expect or demand a perfect text. If a doctrine of biblical inerrancy requires a perfect text, then this requirement cannot be met by textual critics or a modern critical edition.<sup>26</sup>

Hendel as an unbeliever is of course not bothered by the absence of a perfect text. But believers appreciate the perfection of God and the consequent perfection of His words: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2:12-14).

There are professing fundamentalists who say the Bible is infallible and inerrant only in its doctrines but not in its words, who say there are some mistakes in the Bible but they are insignificant. Swiss Reformed theologian Francis Turretin (1623-1687) in his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* refuted such a view,

Unless unimpaired integrity is attributed to Scripture, it cannot be regarded as the sole rule of faith and practice, and a wide door is opened to atheists, libertines, enthusiasts, and others of that sort of profane people to undermine its authority and overthrow the foundation of salvation. Since error cannot be part of the faith, how can a Scripture which is weakened by contradictions and corruptions be regarded as authentic and divine? Nor should it be said that these corruptions are only in matters of little significance, which do not affect the fundamentals of faith. For as soon as the authenticity of Scripture has been found wanting even if it be a single corruption that cannot be corrected, how can our faith any longer be sustained? If corruption is conceded in matters of little importance, why not also in others of more significance?<sup>27</sup>

Hendel is correct to conclude that “Turretin’s orthodoxy requires an inerrant text.”<sup>28</sup> A perfect text in our hands today is most vital for the credibility of the Christian Faith in this present apostate age. As Christians we are assured by the Author of the Bible Himself that the Bible He has given to us was and still is 100% perfect without any mistake regardless of what the liberal, Catholic and fundamentalist textual critics today might say; “yea, let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom 3:4). “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” (Ps 119:89).

### **FEBC and VPP**

That Christians have a perfect text in their hands is precisely what FEBC has been advocating since 2002 in the face of Fundamental Baptists in the United States and certain Bible-Presbyterians in Singapore who deny VPP and promote textual criticism, who say that the perfection of the original text lies only in the autographs (the inspired originals or initial manuscripts) and not the apographs (the divinely preserved copies of the inspired originals). Is the autographs-only view the old historical view? No, it is a new, modern view. It is important to note that the good old high orthodoxy of the Protestant Reformers as regards a perfect original text has to do mainly with the apographs and not merely

the autographs. Richard A Muller, Zondervan Professor of Historical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, states the case most succinctly,

The Protestant scholastics do not press the point made by their nineteenth-century followers that the infallibility of Scripture and the freedom of Scripture from error reside absolutely in the autographa and only in a derivative sense in the apographa; rather, the scholastics argue positively that the apographa preserve intact the true words of the prophets and the apostles and that the God-breathed (theopneustos) character of Scripture is manifest in the apographa as well as in the autographa.<sup>29</sup>

It must be emphasised that this is precisely the VPP position of FEBC as stated in its Constitution, “We believe in the divine, Verbal Plenary Inspiration (Autographs) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (Apographs) of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the perfect Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:20-21, Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 24:35).”<sup>30</sup>

The Rev Dr Timothy Tow, founding pastor of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (LBPC) and founding principal of FEBC believed in VPP and upheld the perfect Bible to be the Traditional, Reformation, and Received Text upon which the 1611 Authorised Version (KJV) is based.<sup>31</sup> In the years 2002 and 2003, his high Biblical orthodoxy was met with great opposition by his two assistant pastors and their supporters who have been in one way or another influenced by the Fundamental Baptists of Bob Jones University, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, and Temple Baptist Seminary.<sup>32</sup> After pastoring LBPC for over five decades, the Rev Tow finally resigned from LBPC because he could no longer take, in his own words, “their lambasting without a drop of brotherly love.”<sup>33</sup> Although the Rev Tow resigned as pastor of LBPC, he remained as principal of FEBC. LBPC then targeted FEBC.

In 2007 and 2008, LBPC demanded that FEBC cease and desist from teaching VPP or face eviction.<sup>34</sup> FEBC refused to accede. “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29). On 15 September 2008, LBPC filed a suit in the Supreme Court of Singapore to evict FEBC from her birthplace and home at 9/9A Gilstead Road.<sup>35</sup> But they failed totally. God protected FEBC. You can trust the God of the Bible 100%. Our God is faithful and true and will always keep His promise to preserve

His people and His words, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” (Ps 12:6-7). FEBC’s victory and vindication is a testimony to that. The Court of Appeal (the apex court) in 2011 not only dismissed the claims of LBPC but also declared VPP to be in keeping with Article 1.8 of the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith which speaks of the Bible being “kept pure in all ages”.<sup>36</sup> What can we say but this: “I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods [kings and judges] will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” (Ps 138:1-2).

### **We Believe and Therefore Know**

As believers of the Lord Jesus Christ and adherents of the Protestant and Reformed Faith, we deny that the present perfection of Scripture is only a “dream”. Like the Protestant Reformers who grounded their faith in the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of Scripture by divine miracle and special providence, we affirm that Scripture is forever infallible and inerrant and believe in an existing, visible, tangible and identifiable perfect Bible.

**Which Bible? By virtue of the common faith and the logic of faith, it must be the Bible of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Reformation, ie the Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek Textus Receptus the Reformation saints and scholars upheld to be totally infallible and inerrant, divinely preserved and absolutely authentic, their sole, supreme and final authority of faith and practice.** Textual criticism is eschewed. We who believe in VPI and VPP uphold the same—“For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” (2 Cor 13:8). The perfect Bible is a reality, not a dream. We have it; it is in our hands.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” (Jer 6:16).

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Jeffrey Khoo, “A Plea for a Perfect Bible”, *The Burning Bush* 9 (2003): 1-15.

<sup>2</sup>Life Bible-Presbyterian Church v Khoo Eng Teck Jeffrey and others and another suit [2010] SGHC 187.

<sup>3</sup>Ronald Hendel, “The Dream of a Perfect Text: Textual Criticism and Biblical

Inerrancy in Early Modern Europe” in Joel Baden et al, eds, *Sibyls, Scriptures and Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 517-41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 518.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, 519.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 520.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> “Why We Do Not Accept the Doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP)”, and “Mark Them Which Cause Divisions”, in <http://lifebpc.com/about-us/our-stand>, accessed on 3 February 2017.

<sup>9</sup>Hendel, “The Dream of a Perfect Text”, 523.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 525.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 526.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, 529.

<sup>15</sup>William Whitaker, *Disputations on Holy Scripture* (Orlando: Soli Deo Gloria, 1588), 27-28.

<sup>16</sup>Hendel, “The Dream of a Perfect Text”, 529.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, 530.

<sup>18</sup>For biblical solutions to these apparent discrepancies, see Chester Kulus, *Those So-Called Errors: Debunking the Liberal, New Evangelical, and Fundamentalist Myth That You Should Not Hear, Receive, and Believe All the Numbers of Scripture* (Newington: Emmanuel Baptist Theological Press, 2003); Chester Kulus, *One Tittle Shall in No Wise Pass* (Cleveland: The Old Paths Publications, 2009); Floyd Nolen Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2009).

<sup>19</sup>For a critique of the “scribal error” position of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, see Jeffrey Khoo, “Bearing True Witness” in [http://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/article/bearing\\_true\\_witness](http://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/article/bearing_true_witness), accessed 14 February 2017.

<sup>20</sup>Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *A Theology for Every Christian Book I: Knowing God and His Word* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1998); Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2001).

<sup>21</sup>Hendel, 531.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, 532.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 533.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 534.

<sup>25</sup>Martin I Klauber, trans, “The Formula Consensus Helvetica (1675)”, *Trinity Journal* 11 (1990): 103.

<sup>26</sup>Hendel, “The Dream of a Perfect Text”, 541.

<sup>27</sup>Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols, ed James T Dennison (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992), 1:71.

<sup>28</sup>Hendel, “The Dream of a Perfect Text”, 538.

<sup>29</sup>*Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, sv “autographa”.

<sup>30</sup>“The Statement of Faith of the Far Eastern Bible College”, in [http://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/statement\\_of\\_faith](http://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/statement_of_faith), accessed on 3 February 2017.

<sup>31</sup>Timothy Tow, “God’s Special Providential Care of the Text of Scripture,” *Bible Witness* (October-December 2002): 3-4; “The Truth of How We Are Now Become True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church”, in [http://www.truelifebpc.org.sg/about\\_us/history](http://www.truelifebpc.org.sg/about_us/history), accessed on 3 February 2017.

<sup>32</sup>James B Williams, ed, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999); James B Williams and Randolph Shaylor, eds, *God’s Word in Our Hands* (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2003); Roy E Beacham and Kevin T Bauder, eds, *One Bible Only?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001); James D Price, *King James Onlyism: A New Sect* (np: 2009); William Combs, “The Preservation of Scripture”, *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (2000): 3-44. See my review and critique of the above publications: “Bob Jones University and the KJV: A Critique of *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*”, *The Burning Bush* 7 (2001): 1-34; “The Emergence of Neo-Fundamentalism: *One Bible Only?* or ‘Yea Hath God Said?’” *The Burning Bush* 10 (2004): 2-37; “Bob Jones University, Neo-Fundamentalism, and Biblical Preservation”, *The Burning Bush* 11 (2005): 82-97; “*King James Onlyism: A Review Article*”, *The Burning Bush* 11 (2009): 52-57; “Errors in the King James Version? A Response to William W Combs of Detroit Baptist Seminary”, *The Burning Bush* 15 (2009): 101-127.

<sup>33</sup>Jeffrey Khoo, “Church and College Together”, True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, 11 October 2015.

<sup>34</sup>“The Battle for the Bible between Far Eastern Bible College and Life Bible-Presbyterian Church: Chronology of Events,” *The Burning Bush* 18 (2012): 86-108.

<sup>35</sup>Arul John, “Church Sues Bible College Directors”, *The New Paper*, 16 December 2008.

<sup>36</sup>*Khoo Jeffrey and others v Life Bible-Presbyterian Church and others* [2012] SGCA 37.

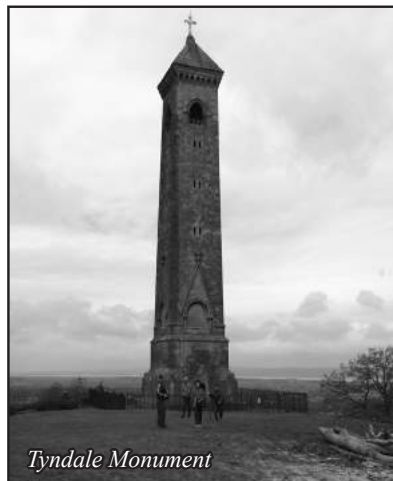
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*College News continued from p64*

**FEBC embarked on its 4<sup>th</sup> Reformation Pilgrimage** led by Dr and Mrs Jeffrey Khoo, 10-22 May 2017 in commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. A total of 30 pilgrims from seven churches visited the cradle and the crucible of the Reformation—England and Scotland respectively. There was a stopover in Amsterdam, Holland enroute to London. Two credits to all who submit a substantive research paper.



*Tyndale Monument*

# TOWARDS A HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE DOCTRINE OF BIBLICAL PRESERVATION (PART ONE)

Samuel Tze-Liang Eio

## Introduction

As recently as the early 1990's few Christian groups in Singapore or Malaysia, if any, thought that the preservation of the Scriptures was ever a problematic issue within Reformed circles or, at least, within the fundamental Bible-believing local churches which subscribed to the Westminster Standards; most pastors and church lay-leaders would not have pondered upon the reason for the formulation of that (by now famous) clause, stating the Holy Scriptures to be by God's "singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic" that can be found in the first chapter (in the eighth section) of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In fact, throughout the centuries of Church history, much has indeed been written by conservative Christian scholarship concerning the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, attesting to their trustworthiness and authority. Despite this, a good number of modern evangelical scholars still remain unconvinced that any serious theological discussion had ever arisen pertaining to their authenticity. Rather, they have questioned the purity and inerrancy of the Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek *Textus Receptus*, alleging that mistakes abound in these very sources from which the revered KJV or Authorised Version is derived. Some allege that there is no basis for a doctrine of the divine preservation of Scripture, since no one from the first century right up till the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century—specifically, until the time of the Westminster Assembly in 1643-1648 had ever taught it as a doctrine. It was later reaffirmed by the Helvetic Consensus Formula which was drawn up in 1675, 111 years after Calvin's death, by Prof John Henry Heidegger of Zurich, the Rev Lucas Gernler of Basle, and Prof Francis Turretin of Geneva.

Denying totally any doctrine of Biblical preservation is evangelical New Testament scholar Daniel B Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary who asserted that (1) no doctrine of Biblical preservation predated the Westminster statement; and that, (2) by implication, the Westminster Divines' idea of Scripture's preservation (amounting to a novel doctrine previously unheard of) together with their citing as proof text Matthew 5:18, was something the members of that illustrious Assembly had most probably engineered at the spur of the moment sometime around 1646.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the problem to be considered may be restated more succinctly this way:

The biblical doctrine of Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) is clearly taught in many an evangelical Systematic Theology textbook, and the term VPI explicitly describes what biblical inspiration means in the context of the liberal/neo-evangelical versus fundamentalist battle for the Bible in the last century. However, there is hardly any teaching on Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) in the Systematic Theology textbooks of the last century—post-Warfield. Many evangelicals today do not believe that God has promised to preserve His inspired words. VPP to them is not taught in the Bible. The Bible to them was only inerrant in the past but is no longer inerrant today.”<sup>2</sup>

Firstly, in light of recent interest in the various Reformed creeds and confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, this paper seeks to investigate if indeed the foregoing assertion by Wallace (and others like him) is *historically* valid, ie no Reformed writer, pastor or teacher from the time of the Protestant Reformation in Europe (16<sup>th</sup> century) to the period prior to Westminster Confession (17<sup>th</sup> century) had ever expressed or articulated any statement of faith concerning the special providential preservation of Holy Scriptures.

Secondly, a comparison of modern Systematic Theologies written in the last two centuries will be undertaken, in an attempt to trace the doctrine's continued development (if any at all) until recent times. Where possible, the primary sources of these systematic theologies would be listed, so providing a little theological antiphony as well as an interesting counterpoint for comparison—a “fast-forward” (or time-travel as it were) into the status of such a doctrine in theological systems, after nearly four centuries since its purported inception in 1646 into Reformed circles.

Thirdly, how these notions of Scripture's verbal and plenary preservation (if indeed they are new) have come into, or, (if they are



not new) have been retained (if at all) in the understanding of Reformed scholarship in the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, focusing on its status as formal doctrine (as the Westminster Assembly regarded it then) and not just an *a priori* (as how textual critics like Daniel Wallace prefer to render it in the present)—mere private intellectual “baggage” which one ought to disregard in light of new, compelling manuscript evidence. This will be followed by concluding thoughts on this topic, including a plea for the God-honouring, fideistic presuppositions (or Biblical Axioms) which undergird the doctrine of the VPP of Scriptures—the historic position held by the Reformers and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Puritans—not as something divisive to be rejected, but as a lasting legacy of Reformed orthodoxy to be received by the Church.

### **Qualifications**

Two necessary caveats to avoid potential misunderstanding: (1) This paper is not about the biblical validity or establishment of proofs (by internal evidence from the Scriptures themselves) concerning the doctrine of VPP. That has already been ably demonstrated and meticulously documented by George Skariah in his doctoral dissertation at the Far Eastern Bible College.<sup>3</sup> (2) This paper is not meant to advocate “King James Onlyism” in any form that can be construed as double-inspiration, post-canonical inspiration or Ruckmanism. This paper follows, rather, the attitude of Dean Burgon, with the highest view of Holy Scripture as God’s revelation to man.<sup>4</sup>

Essentially, this paper deals with the issue of Biblical preservation and will focus on the development of ecclesiastical dogmatics during the time of writing of the great confessions of faith in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries—a period which coincided with the making of the King James Version (KJV) or Authorised Version of the Bible—in particular, with respect to the doctrine of Biblical preservation. Hence, the writer’s survey will necessarily entail some aspects of church history, as well as a comparison of the treatment of the doctrine of Biblical preservation found in various Reformed Systematic Theologies published during the last 150 years or so. The primary aim is to establish an accurate historic presence of the doctrine or dogma of VPP in the *apographs* (with respect to the Reformers’ identification or choice of the sacred text) and the Reformers’ subsequent justification of their choice and vindication thereof against the gainsayers. These can be found in post-Reformation Protestant

creedal confessions and/or catechisms, anthologies and sermons. For it is to these Reformers that one is indebted in terms of their rich legacy of practical theological insight honed through the crucible of experience. Some questions to be answered are: What role does the development of dogma play in the reformed church's understanding of the doctrine of the Scriptures? Was there any mention or writing regarding preservation of the Scriptures (*apographs*) before the time of the Westminster Assembly? If so, in what doctrinal context was it usually found? What was the contention (or heresy) then about? Indeed, one wishes to learn how the Reformers viewed the Scriptures and whether there was any doubt in their mind that the transmission process had somehow gone amiss so that the authority and reliability of their Scriptures became a problem for them.

Yet another aim would be to observe the treatment of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, in particular, the issue of special providential preservation as a Biblical doctrine, described or explicated by the various Systematic Theologies closer to our time, and to note the implications of those views—their natural and legitimate conclusions, if these views are to be followed through—for our times as believers living in these last days. The implication for believers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century seems obvious. If the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Reformers and post-Reformation Christians held on to their view of the Bible as the Word of God seriously enough to creedalise their belief in the Scriptures as the preserved and pure words of God in the original languages and in their hands, then why should believers today be made to believe that these pure words have been lost and/or have become irretrievably corrupted?

### **Approach and Reasons**

The present writer will revisit the historical context leading up to the time of the Westminster Assembly of 1643-48 and after. Here it is noted that the Assembly during an unprecedented period in the history of the church produced a dogmatic and confessional theology against a polemical and bloody backdrop of the Thirty Years' War between Protestants and Catholics (1618-1648). Through understanding the underlying historical factors, one can then better appreciate the background of the controversy and the deep issues debated during that period of church history. It is important to know whether the Reformers took the preservation of Scriptures for granted, unlike the prevalent

attitude of many evangelical leaders today; also, it is important to distinguish what is meant by the inerrant Scriptures contained in the autographs *only* or in *both* the autographs and apographs—taken as a whole.

In addition, though more briefly, the situation in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries would be considered with respect to the development of the doctrine of Biblical preservation before the coming of age of modern textual criticism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Finally, these historical developments will be linked to the notions of the doctrine of Biblical preservation of evangelical scholarship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century even into the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where we are now. This writer will also briefly attempt to examine the doctrine of Biblical preservation in the Singaporean context, the current trends, and the outlook for Bible-Presbyterian churches in the region. Indeed, it is apparent that problems faced today by certain fundamental Bible-believing churches do not happen overnight, but are the result of conscious and deliberate choices, based on misinformation and firmly-held presuppositions on the issue. By appealing more to history, and to what might be termed as sanctified common sense, the present writer would like to speculate on where the current debate on the Bible's preservation and modern English versions is likely to lead to.

Principal Jeffrey Khoo of the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) has recently published *Seven Biblical Axioms in Ascertaining the Authentic and Authoritative Texts of the Holy Scriptures*.<sup>5</sup> This writer is of the opinion that the very same set of “God-given principles” (as opposed to any “man-made rules”) should serve as an appropriate starting point and subsequently underlie any investigation of textual evidence and historical events. All this can be similarly applied to one's epistemology when establishing fideistic presuppositions.<sup>6</sup>

### **Definition of Terms**

**Apographs.** Transcripts, or copies of the originals of Holy Scripture; these can usually be considered “a perfect copy, an exact transcript” (though often copied by hand as manuscripts and papyri and later bound together as codices).

**Autographs.** These refer to the God-breathed, Divinely-inspired originals written by the human authors themselves. Through antiquity these have been lost, but there are numerous copies of them which are extant

(discovered to be still surviving) as apographs used over the centuries.

**Critical Text.** The text based primarily on the Alexandrian manuscripts purportedly of more ancient origin than the Byzantine. Westcott and Hort advocated the use of this family of manuscripts during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the Nestle-Aland edition published by the United Bible Societies (UBS) is the foremost critical text used by contemporary textual critics everywhere, and underlies virtually every modern English Bible that is being published.

**Doctrine.** A statement or teaching about the beliefs of the Christian religion. It is based on Holy Scripture (which attests of itself as supernatural revelation) and cannot be proven on the basis of natural (or neutral) science.

**Dogma.** A doctrinal statement based on the Holy Scriptures or the teachings of a religious body (eg an assembly or a synod) that is considered authoritative.

**Dogmatics.** The study of the arrangement and statement of religious doctrines, especially of the doctrines received in and taught by the Christian church. Also known as Biblical Dogmatics, Dogmatic Theology, or more commonly, Systematic Theology.

**Ecclesiastical Dogmatics.** According to James Boyce, they are “authoritative statements of doctrine put forth by some body of Christians claiming to be a church of Christ. These are to be found in creeds, symbols, decrees, apologies and resolutions.”<sup>7</sup>

**Inerrancy.** Freedom from error; so by implication, a text does not contain any mistakes.

**Infallibility.** Incapable of error; as such, “infallibility” may be deemed a stronger term for the perfection of Scripture than the term “inerrancy.” If the Bible by nature is incapable of error, it goes without saying that it must also be totally free from error.

**Inspiration, and Verbal and Plenary Inspiration (VPI).** Principal Jeffrey Khoo defines VPI as “the whole of Scripture with all its words to the last jot and tittle is perfectly inspired by God without any error in the original languages and in all its prophecies, promises, commandments, doctrines, and truths. These inspired and inerrant words are not only the words of salvation, but also the words of history, geography and science. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter is infallibly inspired by the Lord Himself to the last iota.”<sup>8</sup>

**Majority Text.** A Greek New Testament Text based largely on the Byzantine text-type and therefore quite closely related to the *Textus Receptus* (TR).

**Masoretic Text (MT).** The textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible preserved and passed on carefully by scribes called Masoretes in the first millennium.

**Preservation, Providential.** In this case, the ancient manuscripts (apographs or copies of the original) that survived through means of secondary causation, ie through ordinary human means, rather than by God's direct, miraculous intervention.

**Preservation, Doctrine of Special Providential, Biblical/Divine or Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP).** Recently, William W Combs, Academic Dean and Professor of New Testament at Detroit Baptist Seminary, himself a decided KJV-critic, admitted that "there is a doctrine of preservation of Scripture, taught by Scripture itself", recognising it as "a theological necessity—Scripture must be preserved because Scripture itself promises its own preservation" and opines, "Evangelicals have, I believe, commonly affirmed belief in a doctrine of preservation."<sup>9</sup> Though Combs is by no means the last word on the Bible preservation debate, it is interesting that the following points mentioned on the doctrine of Divine preservation are those which according to Combs have been "commonly affirmed" by Evangelicals, ie that this doctrine (1) is taught by Scripture itself; (2) is a theological necessity; (3) implies the Scriptures' "imperishability".<sup>10</sup>

More importantly, the doctrine of VPP first requires a faith in a God who must keep or guard His inspired words from loss. Hence, the specific doctrine held by FEBC "is a position of faith that is based solely on the Word of God," and states that "VPP means the whole of Scripture with all its words even to the jot and tittle is perfectly preserved by God without any loss of the original words, prophecies, promises, commandments, doctrines, and truths, not only in the words of salvation, but also the words of history, geography and science. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter is infallibly preserved by the Lord Himself to the last iota."<sup>11</sup> The Bible is not just imperishable, it is incorruptible.

**Textus Receptus (TR).** The Received Text first published by Erasmus, then with slight modifications by Stephanus, Beza and Elzivir, upon which the KJV is based. It follows the vast majority of the

Greek manuscripts as opposed to the editions based on a minority of manuscripts.<sup>12</sup>

### **Biblical Preservation: *Sola Scriptura* Pre-Westminster**

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Protestants did battle royal “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9) against the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). The RCC, represented by her Magisterium, regarded Scripture as “infallible” *per se*, yet averred that it *nevertheless* was an incomplete and imperfect authority but for an infallible Church tradition. The RCC had subscribed to its traditional system of dual-authority: Scripture *plus* Church Tradition. Yet the Reformation’s denouncement of venerable RCC dogma in favour of the allegedly “new” tenet of *Sola Scriptura*—the Scriptures only—seriously threatened to destabilise revered “church” traditions, with infinite detriment to the established *status quo*. It was, in essence, a battle for authority, in which Protestants all across Europe and England rallied around regardless of denomination, with their insistence on the authority of the original language text.<sup>13</sup> Such an insistence was based on the unshakeable belief “that the words of the text in these languages alone were finally and ultimately authoritative”.<sup>14</sup> There was no need for the Pope or churchmen to continue to place their stamp of approval on what Scripture said for Scripture spoke plainly. By itself, Scripture was the supreme and final court of appeal for all matters of faith and practice.

The RCC fought back fiercely to recover lost ground in what would be known as the Counter-Reformation, forming the Jesuit order to oversee this effort. Rome’s counter-offensive was launched on at least three fronts: (1) using apologetics, the Jesuit order at first attempted to undermine the Protestants’ vital tenet of *Sola Scriptura*, with mixed results. Noting the popular spread of vernacular translations, particularly in England, Rome (2) tried to introduce its own English translation based on the Clementine edition of the Latin Vulgate, which it claimed was *the* most authentic text. But when the Douay-Rheims Bible was soundly refuted by Puritan scholars, and the Catholic scholars’ pro-Latin Vulgate agenda exposed in favour of the translations from the original languages, Rome (3) then refined its arsenal of textual criticism (initially built on the study of the original languages and exegesis, but now wielded as a weapon) against the written Word, questioning the very inspiration and the accuracy of its contents, the integrity and purity of its source texts. It

was against this backdrop of heightened controversy following a bloody period of political turmoil, that the Westminster Assembly met in 1646 and codified their doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; it would be before this very Assembly that the issues of Biblical inspiration, preservation and translation—when met with new challenges posed by textual criticism, with all its potentially devastating consequences on the Scriptures’ authority—would finally be addressed at length. Muller observes drily: “Seventeenth-century orthodoxy was hard put to maintain the once simple argument of the Reformers in the face of the complexity of the textual problem.”<sup>15</sup>

It is thus necessary to trace briefly the historical development of the concept of Biblical preservation of the Scriptures as represented in the *apographs* by identifying it as a central teaching of the Reformers following the Renaissance in Europe (ca 1500-1565), and in the days of the post-Reformation saints until the time of the Westminster Assembly (1646). This paper will briefly touch on some of the writings of the earliest church fathers to puritan scholars who lived just before the time of the Westminster Assembly. Based on the respective historical contexts over each period, the reader may infer how these saints and writers embraced the written Word through the logic of faith, in affirming the Scripture’s infallibility. The doctrine of the special providential preservation of Scripture is evident in how the Reformers regarded the integrity and transmission of Scripture as wholly reliable, and Scripture itself as divinely authoritative, hence the battle-cry of the Reformers—*Sola Scriptura!*

Nevertheless, as pointed out by textual critic Daniel Wallace, there does appear to be a lacuna of historical evidence for the existence of the doctrine of preservation before the year 1646. Since later works of Protestant orthodoxy (eg Owen and Turretin) may be labelled as scholastic expositions of this doctrine, post-Westminster, some have been led (*a la* Wallace) to think that the doctrine was an innovation, or a theological *a priori* “canonised” into doctrine by the Westminster divines (and developed by later writers). Though the period of controversy during and just after the Reformation has been documented by Paul Ferguson in an earlier article,<sup>16</sup> it behooves the present writer to survey the history of the text again—the text which eventually came to be known as the *Textus Receptus* which led to the translation of the KJV. Regarding the writer’s motivation for such a historical investigation, Woodbridge notes how

since the time of even the patristic fathers in the early church, to Luther and other Reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to French Reformed pastors in the 17<sup>th</sup>, Christian theologians have tended to associate doctrinal innovation with heresy. They have struggled with the problem of determining whether a development in doctrine is *a healthy clarification of the biblical data or a dangerous departure from evangelical orthodoxy*. If a doctrine has a long history of acceptance by their church, or by “the Church,” Protestants along with Roman Catholics generally give it serious consideration.

As time and space in this paper may not permit excessive detail, the writer shall attempt to fill in only those areas hitherto unmentioned or mentioned in less detail but nevertheless important to a better understanding of this historical sketch of events before and after the Great Reformation of 1517: the Council of Trent (1547-1563), the Douay-Rheims Bible (1582), the King James Bible (1611), the Westminster Assembly (1646-1648), and the Helvetic Consensus Formula (1675), almost through to the 18<sup>th</sup> century will be treated.

In attempting to interpret the historical record, the writer anticipates the charge of “anachronism”; ie when critics make facetious remarks they often fail to see that it is equivalent concepts and not modern theological terms that are being sought. According to Nichols and Brandt, “[o]ne should be looking for the same concepts in these historical figures. The historical record reveals those same concepts... [not unlike the modern expressions of plenary inspiration, inerrancy, etc] to be present in the early church and Reformers”.<sup>17</sup> The irony is that critics are often themselves guilty of espousing their own anachronistic notions when they criticise others for doing exactly the same.

### **The Church Fathers, John Wycliffe and the Doctrine of Biblical Preservation (ca 100-ca 1400)**

Not much hitherto has been written about how the church fathers viewed or what they thought of the Bible’s preservation and infallibility, and it appears one would simply take it for granted they did presume the Bible to be perfect, entirely preserved and infallible. During the patristic period, the church fathers seemed to believe in the Divine, errorless quality of Scripture. So, as one reads patristic literature in general, one cannot help but observe (1) their closely-guarded sense of Scripture’s unity and reliability, (2) their cognisance of the superiority



of the Scriptures in their original languages and consequently, a need to validate all translations against the manuscript copies which they had (ie apographs), and (3) their fundamental assumption of the infallibility of Scripture even though the apographs they had might not always have appeared “impeccable”—or indeed, perfect in the eyes of critics of secular literature. New Testament textual scholar Wilbur Pickering notes the following concerning the earliest fathers who lived during and right after the time of the Apostles:

Starting out with what they knew to be the pure text, the earliest Fathers did not need to be textual critics. They had only to be reasonably honest and careful ...

... That there was strong feeling about the integrity of the Scriptures is made clear by Polycarp (7:1), “Whoever perverts the sayings of the Lord ... that one is the firstborn of Satan”. Present-day critics may not like Polycarp’s terminology, but for him to use such strong language makes clear that he was not merely aware and concerned; he was exercised.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, Pickering notes how the earliest Fathers

insisted that they had received a pure tradition. Thus Irenaeus said that the doctrine of the apostles had been handed down by the succession of bishops, being guarded and preserved, without any forging of the Scriptures, allowing neither addition nor curtailment, involving public reading without falsification (Against Heretics IV. 32:8).

Tertullian, also, says of his right to the New Testament Scriptures, “I hold sure title-deeds from the original owners themselves ... I am the heir of the apostles. Just as they carefully prepared their will and testament, and committed it to a trust ... even so I hold it.”<sup>19</sup>

It was John D Woodbridge, veteran church historian and inerrantist, who published an unrefuted critique of the Rogers/McKim proposal.<sup>20</sup> The latter had alleged “that the church fathers did not hold to complete biblical infallibility”. Referring his readers to an ancient witness (of a letter possibly written less than a hundred years after the last Apostle died), Woodbridge writes:

In addressing the non-Christian Autolytus, Theophilus of Antioch (second century) spoke directly about the accurate quality of the prophets’ writings: “Moreover, it is said that among your writers there were prophets and prognosticators, and that those wrote accurately who were informed by them. How much more, then, shall we know the truth who were instructed by the holy prophets, who were possessed by the Holy Spirit of God! On the account all the prophets spoke harmoniously

and in agreement with one another, and foretold the things that would come to pass in all the world. For the very accomplishment of predicted and already consummated events should demonstrate to those who are fond of information, yea rather, who are lovers of truth, that those things are really true which they declared concerning the epochs and eras before the deluge: to wit, how the years have run on since the world was created until now, so as to manifest the ridiculous mendacity of your authors, and show that their statements are not true.”<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, the import of this excellent apologetic by Theophilus of Antioch deserves further consideration, especially if one were to charge the early Fathers with not having any notion of the doctrine of Divine preservation of Scripture since they were written. The second century apologist is conceptually making an oblique reference to the doctrine of Divine preservation, at the same time, claiming Scripture’s Divine authority and superiority above all secular works. For him to have access to the prophets’ writings (not likely the autographs of the Old Testament, but the copies thereof) nearly five centuries after the last prophet, Malachi, and to write with such conviction, it must have required a firm intrinsic belief in the endurance and truthfulness of God’s Word. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for Theophilus to establish such bold claims as to the Scripture’s reliability, veracity and harmonious overall consistency.

Sometime in the late fourth century, church father Chrysostom emphasised the infallibility and importance of the Scriptures’ precise wording—extending to the very syllables of biblical names. In his own words, Chrysostom contended:

It was not without reason these points came in for mention, not in vain I spoke to you about them. My reason, in fact, was that some men are like robots: when they take told of the divine books, and find in the pages a heap of dates or litany of names, they pass them by without a thought, meeting any objection with the remark: They are only names, nothing useful in them. Do not utter such infamy. God speaks, and you have the effrontery to say, “Nothing useful in what is said.” I mean, if you merely have the chance of laying your eyes on an inscription come to light—tell me, do you not eagerly pore over it and examine the wealth it contains? But why talk of dates and names and inscriptions? Note the force of the addition of one single syllable, and stop despising the whole names. Our patriarch Abraham ... was called Abram which has the meaning “migrant.” But later his name was changed to Abraham and with this he became father of all nations; and it was the addition of one syllable

that entrusted this upright man with such a glorious destiny. In other words, just as kings hand out to their officials golden ledgers as a sign of their authority, so God on the occasion gave that just man for sign of his importance a syllable.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, according to Chrysostom, the Divine inspiration of every syllable found in biblical names and the immaculate preservation of such apparently insignificant particulars were for every believer's learning.

The famed Bishop of Hippo, Augustine Aurelius, also took a fideistic and absolutist view of Scripture, so evident in his correspondence with Jerome: "Therefore everything written in Scripture must be believed absolutely"; and, elsewhere in that same letter Augustine averred, "I have learned to yield this respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error."<sup>23</sup> Such a firm statement reveals Augustine's reverential attitude towards the sacred text. Augustine confesses that before his conversion, how he had pondered over the unity of the Scriptures:

With great eagerness, then, I fastened upon the venerable writings of thy Spirit and principally upon the apostle Paul. I had thought that he sometimes contradicted himself and that the text of his teachings did not agree with the testimonies of the Law and the Prophets; but now all these doubts vanished away. And I saw that those pure words had but one face, and I learned to rejoice with trembling.<sup>24</sup>

Woodbridge observes how for Augustine, "if the Scripture's records were not true, then no hope of salvation for humankind remained."<sup>25</sup> This crucial *a priori* of the complete trustworthiness of Scripture also affected one's hermeneutical methodology with the gospel accounts, for which Augustine seemed of the opinion "that if the time sequence of events described by the Evangelists are known, then the interpreter should attempt to reconcile any potential "time sequence" problem":<sup>26</sup>

For this reason, therefore, when the order of times is not apparent, we ought not to feel it a matter of any consequence what order any of them may have adopted in relating the events. But whenever the order is apparent, if the evangelist then presents anything which seems to be inconsistent with his own statements, or with those of another, we must certainly take the passage into consideration, and endeavour to clear up the difficulty.<sup>27</sup>

Edward F Hills noted in his section on "The Ancient Versions and the Providence of God" that

God during this period providentially guided the church away from readings which were false and misleading and toward those which were true and trustworthy ...

Among the Latin-speaking Christians of the West the substitution of Jerome's Latin Vulgate for the Old Latin version may fairly be regarded as a movement toward the Traditional (Byzantine) Text. The Vulgate New Testament is a revised text which Jerome [in 384 AD] says that he made by comparing the Old Latin version with "old Greek" manuscripts.

...

There are also a few passages in which the Latin Vulgate has preserved the true reading rather than the Greek Traditional New Testament Text. ... these few true Latin Vulgate readings were later incorporated into the *Textus Receptus*, the first printed Greek New Testament text, under the guiding providence of God.<sup>28</sup>

Jerome's Latin Vulgate was the only Bible—the official Bible of the Church—which was used for nearly a millennium. Textual scholar and Bible translator James D Price who has criticised FEBC's particular position of Scripture's special providential preservation nevertheless notes in his book how the true Biblical text was preserved by providence through ancient Bibles, lectionaries, translations, and in the quotations of the church fathers.<sup>29</sup> This observation from Price concurs well with Hills' that Jerome's Latin Vulgate somehow did preserve "the true reading", which, according to Hills, eventually found its way into the *Textus Receptus* and subsequently into the underlying text of the KJV.

It is without question that despite the sacking of monasteries and scriptoria, the survival of the Scriptures was due to the providentially-orchestrated safe transportation of the sacred texts by those who rescued them. How medieval monks virtually "saved the Bible from total extinction" is a fact smugly attested by not a few Catholic apologists today. Take, for instance, this essay by Henry Graham:

The Bible on its human side is a perishable article. Inspired by God though it be, it was yet, by the Providence of God, written on perishable parchment with pen and ink; liable to be lost or destroyed by fire, by natural decay and corruption, or by the enemies, whether civilized or pagan, that wasted and ravaged Christendom by the sword, and gave its churches and monasteries and libraries to the flames. Who, I ask, but the men and women, consecrated to God by their vows and devoted to a life of prayer and study in monasteries and convents, remote from worldly strife and ambition—who but they saved the written Word of God from

total extinction, and with loving and reverent care reproduced its sacred pages, to be known and read of all, and to be handed down to our own generation, which grudges to acknowledge the debt it owes to their pious and unremitting labors?<sup>30</sup>

Without according excessive credit to the labours of the monastics, yet approaching the facts of church history from a fideistic worldview, Hills rightly declared: “It must be that down through the centuries God has exercised a special, providential control over the copying of the Scriptures and the preservation and use of the copies, so that trustworthy representatives of the original text have been available to God’s people in every age.”

In England, nevertheless, it was the Latin Vulgate Bible that John Wycliffe translated into English, much to the displeasure of the Roman prelates. To safeguard her own authority, the RCC held and still holds that the Bible is only *one* source of authority, but never the sole source. John Wycliffe himself declared, “The Bible is therefore the only source of doctrine that will insure the health of the Church and the salvation of the faithful.”<sup>31</sup>

Twentieth-century writer William Mallard notes how John Wycliffe viewed the Bible’s importance and complete trustworthiness (that so brought upon him the ire of the Church), stating how Wycliffe “is thoroughly scornful of theologians who slight Holy Scripture. If any such persons find contradictions or errors in the Bible, their own ignorance is at fault rather than the sacred text.”<sup>32</sup> Mallard further observed how Wycliffe viewed not just the safe transmission but the *complete truthfulness* of Scriptures:

According to the most learned doctors of the tradition, Holy Scripture contained not only all Christian doctrine, but all truth generally. It was a “divine encyclopedia,” a summa of the wisdom of God. The Bible included mathematics, philosophy, and natural history. Although the core of Scripture could be grasped by the simplest peasant, the most learned scholar could use all his knowledge in penetrating the hidden truths. Wycliffe supported the idea of a “divine encyclopedia.”<sup>33</sup>

Despite his training as a Catholic scholar, Wycliffe has been commonly named the “Morning Star” of the Reformation. Very likely, Wycliffe regarded the doctrine of special providential preservation *both* as a dogma of the church and a teaching of Scripture; nevertheless, the point the writer wishes to underscore is that the doctrine of special

providential preservation (together with the unshakeable belief that Scripture was perspicuous and infallible in all matters, not just those pertaining to salvation) had existed at all times within the “common faith” of true believers from the time of the church fathers right through the Middle Ages.

Regarding this “common faith” of believers held even before the fourth century council of Carthage, Hills again notes how the church father Origen in his (third century) letter to Africanus had exclaimed, “Are we to suppose that that Providence which in the sacred Scriptures has ministered to the edification of all the churches of Christ, had no thought for those bought with a price, for whom Christ died?” That God must have preserved His inspired words is a legitimate conclusion which one must draw from a natural reading of the church fathers. Thus, in the next section, the writer looks at the era of the Reformation and how the Reformers and post-Reformation saints before 1646 again appealed to the doctrine of the special providential preservation of Scripture, as a continued expression of “the faith of all” of the historic Church.

### **Special Providential Preservation in 16<sup>th</sup> and Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century Reformed Thought (ca 1500-1600)**

The Dutch humanist scholar, Desiderius Erasmus, began work in 1512 on translating the Greek, working initially to improve on Jerome’s Latin Vulgate.<sup>34</sup> Quite often Erasmus’ critics have sometimes caricatured him as a vainglorious and profit-seeking Catholic scholar who, based on a handful of his own manuscripts, teamed up with Froben only to have his mistake-ridden first edition of the Greek New Testament published at Basel, in order to beat Cardinal Ximenes’ Complutesian Polyglot to the press. Such is the interpretation that some evangelical critics with a decidedly anti-*Textus Receptus* and pro-modern versions agenda have proffered. What were Erasmus’ purposes for his edition of the Greek New Testament? As David Cloud explains, it is true that Erasmus, like John Wycliffe and William Tyndale, never “formally left the Catholic church.”<sup>35</sup> However,

Much that can be said of Erasmus can also be said about John Wycliffe and William Tyndale. These are fathers of the English Bible, but neither of them formally left the Catholic Church. Both were ordained catholic priests to their death. Wycliffe continued to exercise the office of a priest in Lutterworth until his death in 1384. Before Tyndale was martyred in 1536 outside the castle walls in Wilvoorde, Belgium, the authorities

excommunicated him and disbarred him from the priesthood. Of course, both men had long rejected most of Rome's dogmas, and the same is true of Erasmus.

In addition, like Wycliffe and Tyndale before him, Erasmus too had questioned the official dogmas of the Catholic Church ("including the mass, confession, the primacy of the Pope, and priestly celibacy", even writing openly about Rome's errors, and desiring that the Scriptures be read by all and not just the clergy. In the preface to his Greek and Latin New Testament of 1516, Erasmus expresses his particular motivations in the Summons (or *Paraclesis*) to his readers:

Indeed, I disagree very much with those who are unwilling that Holy Scripture, translated into the vulgar tongue, be read by the uneducated as if Christ taught such intricate doctrines that they could scarcely be understood by very few theologians, or as if the strength of the Christian religion consisted in men's ignorance of it ... but Christ wishes His mysteries published as openly as possible. I would that even the lowliest women read the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles. And I would that they were translated into all languages so that they could be read and understood not only by Scots and Irish but also by Turks and Saracens. ... Would that, as a result, the farmer sing some portion of them at the plough, the weaver hum some parts of them to the movement of his shuttle, the traveller lighten the weariness of the journey with stories of this kind! Let all the conversations of every Christian be drawn from this source.<sup>36</sup>

The first edition of Erasmus' Greek New Testament had "typographical errors" but Hills noted that these misprints were soon eliminated by Erasmus himself in later editions, and by later editors; hence, these "are not a factor which need to be taken into account in any estimate of the abiding value of the *Textus Receptus*."<sup>37</sup> However, it was Providence that so enabled Martin Luther to obtain Erasmus' second edition of the Greek New Testament, from which he translated the Bible into German. Hills has this to say to the critics of the *Textus Receptus*, regarding the higher hand of God, even in these details:

But those who concentrate on this way on the human factors involved in the production of the *Textus Receptus* are utterly unmindful of the providence of God. For in the very next year, in the plan of God, the Reformation was to break out in Wittenberg, and it was important that the Greek New Testament should be published first in one of the future strongholds of Protestantism by a book seller who was eager to place it in the hands of the people and not in Spain, the land of the Inquisition, by the Roman Catholic Church, which was intent on keeping the Bible from the people."<sup>38</sup>

Cloud adds: “The errors that were in the first edition of the Erasmus Greek New Testament were corrected in later editions are therefore a non-issue today and should not enter the textual debate.”<sup>39</sup> Cloud also refutes one popular allegation that Erasmus only relied on a handful of manuscripts, as highlighted by Frederic Kenyon and D A Carson, and more recently Daniel Wallace.<sup>40</sup> According to Cloud, this is “the standard line that is given by textual critics and parroted by those who support textual criticism”<sup>41</sup>; he lists at least four arguments against this allegation made by critics, stating that Erasmus (1) had knowledge of many manuscripts other than those he used for his first edition; (2) he knew about the variant readings that are known to modern textual critics; (3) he had textual evidence from patristic writings and ancient Bible versions; (4) he knew that the manuscripts he selected reflected the reading of the common text, and he was guided by this “common faith.”

Finally, the allegation itself is a “smokescreen” for the critics who do not wish to admit the rather inconvenient truth regarding the superiority of Erasmus’ manuscripts for which “the exact number of manuscripts has no relevance to the issue whatsoever.” Charles Ellicott, chairman of the English Revised Version committee, admitted in 1882 that those

MSS which Erasmus used differ, for the most part, only in small and insignificant details from the bulk of the cursive MSS. The general character of their text is the same. By this observation the pedigree of the Received Text is carried up beyond the individual MSS used by Erasmus.... That pedigree stretches back to a remote antiquity. The first ancestor of the Received Text was at least contemporary with the oldest of our extant MSS, if not older than any one of them.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Reformers on the Divine Character of Holy Scriptures**

Martin Luther and the Protestants believed that salvation is not received through the RCC but through Christ alone. This teaching marked a significant break away from the trappings of tradition that enshrouded the Church for centuries; there was uncertainty in the Church’s teaching that one could not know wherein one’s salvation lay. In the midst of all these momentous times, Reformers like Luther did however hold to a common set of beliefs on the Scriptures’ trustworthiness and Divine Authority. Harold Lindsell said,

Luther believed and taught that the Bible was infallibly true in all its parts. Of that there can be no doubt. But it is useless to look in his



writings for a developed thesis to support Biblical inerrancy. He believed it; it was not in dispute.<sup>43</sup>

Luther solemnly affirmed, “One letter, even a single tittle of Scripture, means more to us than heaven and earth. Therefore we cannot permit even the most minute change.”<sup>44</sup> Elsewhere, Luther has stated: “Consequently, we must remain content with them [words], and cling to them as the perfectly clear, certain, sure words of God which can never deceive us.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, for Luther, the importance of the Scripture’s authority extended to its very words and this authority was predicated on its immutability and present perfection. A logical extension of his statements reasonably leads one to conclude that he believed also in their safe and providentially-superintended transmission.

The French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) maintained the divinely-sanctioned authority of the Scripture against the view that it is the Church which sanctions Scripture. This fundamental issue of *primacy* or rather *supremacy* of authority was an important point in the ongoing polemic with the RCC: Did the Bible’s authority come from the Church or did the Church’s authority come from the Bible? Are the Scriptures authoritative in and of themselves? The Reformers appeared to deny the former but to affirm the latter two questions. In Calvin’s Institutes one finds the following spirited defence of the truth:

A most pernicious error has very generally prevailed – viz. that Scripture is of importance only insofar as conceded to it by the suffrage of the church; as if the eternal and inviolable truth of God could depend on the will of men. With great insult to the Holy Spirit, it is asked, “Who can assure us that the Scriptures proceeded from God? who [can] guarantee that they have come down safe and unimpaired to our times; who [does] persuade us that this book is to be received with reverence, and that one expunged from the list, did not the church regulate all these things with certainty? ...

Nothing, therefore, can be more absurd than the fiction, that power of judging Scripture is in the church, and that on her nod its certainty depends. When the Church receives it, and gives it the stamp of her authority, she does not make that authentic which was otherwise doubtful, or controverted, but, acknowledging it as the truth of God, she, as in duty bound, shows her reverence by an unhesitating assent....

Truth so well founded, so firmly established, so gloriously renowned, and handed down by sure succession from the days of the apostles. But he nowhere insinuates that the authority that we give to the Scriptures

depends upon the definitions or devices of men....

Add, moreover, that, for the best of reasons, the consent of the Church is not without its weight. ... Being transmitted to us with such an earnest, who of us shall not receive it with firm and unshaken conviction? It is therefore no small proof of the authority of Scripture, that it was sealed with the blood of so many witnesses, especially when it is considered in bearing testimony to the faith, they met death, not with fanatical enthusiasm (as erring spirits are sometimes wont to do), but with firm and constant, yet sober godly zeal.<sup>46</sup>

Calvin underscored the importance of Biblical authority by virtue of the Bible's own self-attesting, self-authenticating character (*autopistos*), and argued that the Bible could not have had this authority if it first needed the approval of the church or her councils. Dutch Reformed scholar Henk Van Den Belt notes how typical it is for John Calvin to describe the self-convincing character of Scripture as something intimately connected with the *testimonium* of the Spirit. In his 1559 edition of the Institutes, Calvin described as *autopistos* or *autopistia* of Scripture as "the self-convincing character of Scripture as the written Word of God, whereby Scripture itself causes believers to find rest in it, independently of any other authority, through the witness of the Holy Spirit".<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the Scripture's intrinsic purity depended on no man, yet many godly men would calmly and willingly lay down their lives to safeguard the integrity of the Scripture's words. The church was to receive the words of Scripture as authentic and authoritative. It was Scripture that judged the conduct of the Church, not the other way round.

Commenting on 1 Timothy 3:15, John Calvin wrote about how the RCC's dogma that *both* Scripture *and* men's traditions (including the word of the Pope as well as the magisterium, or Councils) tended towards a dual-source of authority, for (as the illustration goes) without the "shoulders of men" to support it, Scripture would "fall to the ground". Therefore to this baseless notion, Calvin retorted that "it is shocking blasphemy to say that God's Word is uncertain until it obtains a certainty borrowed from men."<sup>48</sup> Effectively dethroning the authority of the Popes and Councils, the Bible's authority lay in its own Divinely-inspired character and present perfection, for it is none other than the voice of God whose unchanging Word is Truth. This applies to the textual-critical idolatry today where the VPP of Scripture and its textual certainty and authority is surrendered to the textual-critical academy of faith-denying scholars.

## Textual Development for Calvin and the Reformers

Samuel Tregelles describes the esteemed and established status of the *Textus Receptus* during the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation:

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.<sup>49</sup>

Did the development of the printed Greek New Testament and the 'alternatives' available during the Reformation influence their view of textual variants and other text sources? Paul Ferguson observes,

Despite the revisionist argument that Calvin and Beza had no other option but to use the Received Text, the facts are that they did have alternative options but deliberately rejected them. They may not have had the quantity of evidence, but they were aware of the diversity of the variant readings thrown up by the textual critics today. Instead, they chose the path of Sacred Criticism which simply studied the texts to see what was received by the Church through history rather than the rationalistic "restoration" of the text by Enlightenment Criticism. They recognised that copies and editions differed because of variants, but trusted the Holy Spirit and the common faith of God's people. Beza made it clear, "that he was very unwilling to amend the basic text and was interested largely in readings which confirmed it."<sup>50</sup>

Considering the Reformers' writings thus far, a common thread appears to be their emphasis in embracing the certainty and sureness of God's word which they possessed. For the Reformers, reference to the "original text" of Scripture was definitely not a reference to non-existent autographs, but to the apographs they had then, in particular, what would eventually become known as the *Textus Receptus*. Ferguson insightfully states,

The Reformers did not take their creedal stand against Rome upon a utopian inerrant original autograph. To them, there was an identifiable and existing text in use by the Greek-speaking Church which had been transmitted from a handwritten manuscript form to a printed form. Likewise, they did not advocate a radical individualism where every man decides for himself which words are genuine and would have rejected the current state of textual criticism, where every man is a textual critic with horror. It is true, that unlike Luther, John Calvin did not initially uniformly base his readings on the text of Erasmus and "had an affinity

for a renegade edition published by Simon de Colines (1534).” This text included a number of variant readings from critical text manuscripts and from Rome’s Complutensian. However, in later life Calvin rejected this view to return to the TR preferring the common readings by faith.<sup>51</sup>

These facts lead one to wonder if the anti-Catholic polemical and harsh political climate of England at the turn of the Century in turn had exerted a profound influence on the English development of a Reformed doctrine of Scripture, as compared to the Reformed school on the Continent. The latter appears to have focused its efforts on identifying the Greek text which the King James translators, in turn, would rely on in their work from 1604-1610, and ultimately, that “independent variety of the *Textus Receptus*” which the 1611 edition of the KJV is based on. It is the considered opinion of learned men like Hills, Cloud, and Waite and also the Trinitarian Bible Society that one should look no further than that text “published in 1881 by Cambridge University Press under the editorship of Dr Scrivener” which has also been published by the Trinitarian Bible Society and the Dean Burgon Society. Hills thankfully concluded that “in the providence of God the best form of the *Textus Receptus* is still available to believing Bible students.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Post-Reformation Saints and the Doctrine of Scripture’s Preservation**

Post-Reformation saints from the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century till about the early 18<sup>th</sup> century fought and defended the attacks on the word of God—both the texts they used for translating their vernacular Bibles and the Bibles themselves. In the process, the post-Reformation saints rediscovered, as it were, the doctrine of the special providential preservation; how, as a *schutzlehre* (protective teaching) for the doctrine of Divine inspiration of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts as had been received, the doctrine of Biblical Preservation could serve essentially as a safeguard to the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Richard Muller, having done extensive research into the theology of this period, speaks of it as being “the final codification of orthodoxy”.<sup>53</sup> Commenting on the contributions of the Reformers and the Reformation saints, Muller observes: “Whereas the Reformers painted with a broad brush, their orthodox and scholastic successors strove to fill in the details of the picture.”<sup>54</sup>

Hence, in the Post-Tridentine period, the theologies of both Roman Catholics and Protestants became so increasingly explicit that “the

polemical lines that resulted tended increasingly toward the opposition of an infallible Roman Catholic pope over against an infallible Bible.”<sup>55</sup> Political and ecclesiastical events near the turn of the century, particularly in England, seemed to bring the debate over authority between Roman Catholic and Protestant apologists towards such an increasingly hardened polemic. Consequently, attacks by the Jesuit order centred on those two sources which the Protestants had identified as their authority by which one can have knowledge with certainty: (1) the Holy Spirit (*principium cognoscendi internum*) and (2) the Holy Scriptures (*principium cognoscendi externum*).<sup>56</sup>

Against the RCC’s post-Tridentine charge of heresy and sedition, a first-tier of English post-Reformation saints held up the Sacred Scriptures and alluded to the doctrine of special providential preservation. After a period of intense persecution and involuntary exile under Mary and Philip’s bloody reign (1553-1558), a Protestant apologetic had been more thoroughly hammered out by the Church of England. Ferguson notes that one of them, Bishop of Salisbury and eminent Divine, John Jewel (1522-1571), who was a strong apologist against the Church of Rome, also made 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.<sup>57</sup>

Jewel’s other sermons also exhibit a similar bent: “There is no sentence, no clause, no word, no syllable, no letter, but it is written for thy instruction: there is not one jot but it is sealed and signed with the blood of the Lamb ... no word, no syllable, no point or prick thereof, but it is written and preserved for thy sake.”<sup>58</sup>

## **Post-Reformation Proliferation of English Bible Translations**

One major skirmish in the great apologetic battle between the mid-16<sup>th</sup> and before the turn of the century was on how the RCC held up its Latin Vulgate translation as the authoritative Scriptures, as it had gravely articulated in the Tridentine canons: “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.”<sup>59</sup>

Attempting to win back the unapprised laity particularly from the Church of England, the Church of Rome had introduced the Douay-Rheims Bible based on its “authoritative” Latin Vulgate to compete with the English translations. Concerning this English Counter-Reformation tactic, Ferguson observes:

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.” 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.”<sup>60</sup>

The controversy then was also over where the authoritative source of Scripture could be found. Rome alleged that there were corruptions in the texts from which the vernacular Protestant Bibles were derived and therefore they should turn to Rome’s authorised, ancient, tradition-attested and therefore ‘purer’ source of the Vulgate. As one probes into the scholarly debate, the watershed issue then was basically one of textual criticism (though as yet untainted by rationalism). Moreover, Ferguson observes, during this period, how even

Queen Elizabeth (1533-1603) was so concerned of the threat to English unity by the Jesuit Rhemist Bible that she sent to Beza for assistance to

refute this perversion of the Received Text.” It is recorded that he told her, “that one of her Majesty’s own subjects was far better qualified to defend the Protestant cause against the Rhemists; and this person, he said, was Thomas Cartwright.” 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.”

Cartwright’s biographer, Benjamin 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.<sup>61</sup>

Thomas Cartwright observed about the Scriptures’ divine preservation,

Woe unto the churches, if the Scriptures, the charters and records of heaven be destroyed, falsified, or corrupted. These divine charters were safely kept in one nation of the Jews; and though they were sometimes unfaithful, yet they kept the keys of the Lord’s library: but now, when many nations have the keys, it is altogether incredible that any such corruptions should enter in, as the adversaries unwisely suppose. If the Lord preserved the book of Leviticus, with the account of the ancient ceremonies, which were afterward abolished, how much more may we conclude that his providence has watched over other books of Scripture which properly belong to our times and to our salvation? Will not the Scriptures bear witness to the perpetuity of their own authority? “Secret

things belong to God;” but things revealed belong to us, and to our children forever. Jesus Christ said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” Notwithstanding the sacred writings were disregarded, and even hated by most persons, they had been preserved entire as they were the first day they were given to the church of God. More than fifteen hundred years had elapsed, during which not any one book, nor part of any book, of canonical Scripture had been lost: and it was evident not only that the matter of the Scripture, but also the words; not only the sense and meaning, but also the manner and form of speech in them remained unaltered.<sup>62</sup>

Apparently, Thomas Cartwright had not been alone in this endeavour, being assisted by the learned Puritan divine, William Fulke (1538-1589), who in 1582 also rose up to defend the Reformation’s English Bibles and expose the insidious agenda of Rome. Fulke wrote in his dedicatory Epistle to Queen Elizabeth, of the “insincere purpose” of men like Gregory Martin, who “in leaving the pure fountain of the original verity, to follow the crooked stream of their barbarous vulgar Latin translation, which (beside all other manifest corruptions) is found defective in more than a hundred places.” Yet this Latin Vulgate was held up by the “Rhemists” as the “only authentical text”.<sup>63</sup>

Against the allegation of Martin that the Hebrews had wilfully altered the genealogical records, Fulke alluded to the special providential preservation of the Hebrew Masoretic text:

And very like [*sic*] it is, that this corruption was not crept into St Luke’s text in his time ... it is without perhaps, or peradventure, that not one iota or prick of the law of God can perish by the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, Matthew 5. And if you will believe Arias Montanus,... in his preface to the [G]reat [B]ible by him set out, with diligent observation of all the accents and Hebrew vowel points, which Christ (saith he) will never suffer to perish.... yet there is not one word, nor one letter, nor point, that is mentioned to have been of old time, which is not found to have been safely kept in the most rich treasury, which they call the Mazzoreth.<sup>64</sup>

Fulke wrote his Preface to his final work *Confutation of the Rhemish Testament* published the same year he died (in 1589); in this essay, he demonstrates profound knowledge of the textual criticism of his day, and soundly debates his Jesuit opponents who claimed that their Latin translation could be used to correct *back* the original Greek:



Your first argument is, that most of the ancient heretics were Grecians, which did corrupt the scriptures in Greek. A feeble reason, as though the Providence of God, which caused the New Testament to be written in Greek, either could not, or would not, preserve it from the corruption of the heretics, in Greek as well as in Latin. But some of the corruptions (you say) remain in the Greek books unto this day: it may be in some copies they do, which yet are convinced by other copies. But that you deny ...<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, Fulke remained unwavering in his stance on the text of the Greek New Testament:

The Greek text of the New Testament needeth no patronage of men, as that which is the very word and truth of God. The sincerity of our translations, against your frivolous cavillations, has hitherto, thanks be to God, been so strongly defended, as you have no list any more to assail it. ... Well, if you know the Greek text that now is, to be sincere, where any of us hath but suspected or judged it to be corrupt: and we have proved it to be sincere, where you have slandered it to be corrupt. There is no reason why you should not acknowledge it to be very perfect ... true and authentical.<sup>66</sup>

Other noteworthy examples of post-Reformation saints who taught Scripture's doctrine of special providential preservation include William Whitaker and William Ames.

During the Elizabethan era the conducive climate for polemical debate with the Jesuit scholars escalated into a full-scale defence of English Bible translations, invariably alluding to the historic doctrine of special providential preservation. Under such unique conditions, the Reformers developed what might be called a fideistic or presuppositional approach to their study of the doctrine of Scriptures. Thus, these post-Reformation saints applied the logic of faith, ie the presuppositional faith in the promises that God had preserved His inspired words for them in understanding and defending what they stood for. If there were supposed errors in the "divine oracles of God unto our times" and if significant passages of Scripture could be held in serious doubt, then the Bible could not be viewed with certainty as being divinely authoritative of itself. Indeed, the Bible itself certainly carries an authority that is not derived from any ancient church tradition, but surpassing it; and the Church, as the Reformers rightly noted, was simply a handmaid, a witness, a custodian to that authority.

## **Review and Conclusion**

As mentioned at the beginning, Daniel Wallace has asserted that the doctrine of special providential preservation was an invention of the Westminster Assembly in 1646. If indeed true, such an assertion would run contrary to the many witnesses and literary evidences before 1646 presented thus far. Furthermore, if both the doctrines of Scripture's Divine inspiration and preservation (and therefore its infallibility) were held right from the time of the earliest church fathers right to the time of the English puritan divines, pre-Westminster, then the doctrines of inspiration and preservation may uniquely be considered as old as the Bible itself. Though one may choose to view the abovementioned events and the quotations in the way that denies the biblical doctrine of preservation, this writer recommends a better approach, using the logic of faith. The Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*—that it is Scripture alone which binds one's conscience—if allowed to reach its legitimate conclusion, not only adheres to an unshakeable belief that God has inspired His word, but also extraordinarily preserved it for the benefit and blessing of His church, such that Scripture can and should be held up as the sole and supreme judge of all matters of faith and practice.

Using the logic of faith, too, one sees God at work throughout the history of the church, orchestrating events and raising up men and women to defend His truth from corruption. The polemical battles that were fought in the era during and just after the Reformation are still being fought today (albeit in a somewhat altered context) against that ancient enemy of the truth—"Yea, hath God said...?" Nevertheless, within the common faith spanning all ages, it is ever so vital to recognise this grave threat and to take an unflinching stand for the Word of God, as will be considered in the next segment.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Daniel B Wallace, "Inspiration, Preservation and NT Textual Criticism", in *New Testament Essays*, ed Gary T Meadors (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1991), 84. Also in *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (1992): 21-50. In his article, Wallace states: "the doctrine of preservation was not a doctrine of the ancient church. In fact, it was not stated in any creed until the seventeenth century (in the Westminster Confession of 1646)."

<sup>2</sup>Jeffrey Khoo, "Errors in the King James Version? A Response to William W Combs of Detroit Baptist Seminary", *The Burning Bush* 15 (2009): 101-102.

<sup>3</sup>George Skariah, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Perfect Preservation of the Holy Scriptures," ThD dissertation, Far Eastern Bible College, 2005.

<sup>4</sup>John W Burgon, *Inspiration and Interpretation: Seven Sermons Preached before the*

*University of Oxford* (London: J H and Jas Parker, 1861), 76, under Sermon III entitled “A Remonstrance. Nature of Inspiration Illustrated”, Burgon vociferously defended, “No, Sirs! The Bible (be persuaded) is the very utterance of the Eternal;—as much GOD’s Word, as if high Heaven were open, and we heard GOD speaking to us with human voice. Every book of it is inspired alike; and is inspired entirely ... [T]he Bible, from the Alpha to the Omega of it, is filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit of GOD: the Books of it, and the sentences of it, and the words of it, and the syllables of it,—aye, and the very letters of it.”

<sup>5</sup>Jeffrey Khoo, “Seven Biblical Axioms in Ascertaining the Authentic and Authoritative Texts of the Holy Scriptures,” *The Burning Bush* 17 (July 2011): 74- 95.

<sup>6</sup>Other similar Biblical and fideistic presuppositions include those from Paul Ferguson as stated in his article “Preservation of the Bible: Providential or Miraculous? A Response to Jon Rehurek of The Master’s Seminary,” *The Burning Bush* 15 (July 2009): 67-100.

<sup>7</sup>James P Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Louisville, KY: Chas T Dearing, 1887).

<sup>8</sup>Jeffrey Khoo, “Errors in the King James Version?” 102.

<sup>9</sup>P J Williams, “Bill Combs on divine preservation,” in *Evangelical Textual Criticism*, March 27, 2006, <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.sg/2006/03/bill-combs-on-divine-preservation.html> (accessed November 4, 2013).

<sup>10</sup>William W Combs, “The Preservation of Scripture,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (2000): 9. Combs says that “the doctrine of preservation of the Scriptures affirms, however, that the preservation of Scripture was always assured even though God carried out His will to preserve the Scriptures primarily through the actions of human wills.” This writer begs to differ: by focusing on human agency, Combs seems to totally ignore the plain promise in Psalm 12:6-7 and God’s “singular care and providence” in the Westminster Confession in keeping His words completely intact.

<sup>11</sup>Jeffrey Khoo, “Errors in the King James Version?” 102.

<sup>12</sup>Curt Daniel, “Some Important Latin Theological Terms,” extracted from Richard A Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), <http://www.faithbibleonline.net/MiscDoctrine/LatinTerms.htm> (accessed November 4, 2013).

<sup>13</sup>Richard A Muller, “Biblical Interpretation in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed Donald K McKim (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>Richard A Muller, “The Canon of Scripture and Its Integrity,” in *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy ca 1520 to ca 1725*, Volume Two: *Holy Scripture: the Cognitive Foundation of Reformed Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 397.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Ferguson, “Preservation of the Bible: Providential or Miraculous? A Response to Jon Rehurek of The Master’s Seminary,” *The Burning Bush* 15 (2009): 67-100.

<sup>17</sup>Stephen J Nichols and Eric T Brandt, *Ancient Word, Changing Worlds: the Doctrine of Scripture in a Modern Age* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 77.

<sup>18</sup>Wilbur N Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV*, 61, under “General Resources,” <http://www.cspmt.org> (accessed March 14, 2014).

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>John D Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 15.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, 32-33.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 44.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, 43.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, 42.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Edward F Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1984), 146-147.

<sup>29</sup>James D Price, *King James Onlyism: A New Sect* (np, 2006). Price makes his case on the merits of textual criticism alone when he compares the texts underlying the KJV to the English; however, it is interesting how he can in a sense also be said to be VPP (see Jeffrey Khoo's essay "Price Agrees with Me on VPP," in FEBC's tome, *Forever Infallible and Inerrant*, 342), thereby effectively arguing against non-preservationists like Dan Wallace on the historic basis of the doctrine. In Chapters 7-9, James Price deals with how the true Biblical text was preserved through ancient Bibles (125-152), ancient translations (153-174) and in patristic quotations (175-180). All these can be interpreted as evidence of how the doctrine of special providential preservation was continually regarded in the Ancient Church right throughout the Middle Ages.

<sup>30</sup>Henry G Graham, "History of the Catholic Bible: Our Debt to Catholic Monks," in [http://www.veritasbible.com/resources/articles/Our\\_Debt\\_to\\_Catholic\\_Monks](http://www.veritasbible.com/resources/articles/Our_Debt_to_Catholic_Monks) (accessed March 4, 2014).

<sup>31</sup>Quoted in Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 47.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, 47.

<sup>34</sup>David Cloud, *Answering the Myths on the Bible Version Debate* (Port Huron: Way of Life Literature, 2006), 102. Cloud notes that "humanist" in the Renaissance and Reformation period does not have the atheistic connotations of its modern usage; in fact, it was simply someone interested in classical literature, culture and education. A curator at the Erasmus Museum near Brussels confirmed that it denoted a "lover of learning and personal liberty and that [Erasmus] refused to depend strictly on the 'church's' authority but wanted to go back to original source such as the Greek for the New Testament."

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 109.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 107, quoting from John Olin, *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings of Erasmus*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

<sup>37</sup>Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 202.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Cloud, *Answering the Myths*, 112.

<sup>40</sup>Daniel Wallace, "Why I Do Not Think the King James Bible is the Best Translation Available Today," in <https://bible.org/article/why-i-do-not-think-king-james-bible-best-translation-available-today> (accessed March 14, 2014).

<sup>41</sup>Cloud, *Answering the Myths*, 112.

<sup>42</sup>Charles Ellicott and Edwin Palmer, *The Revisers and the Greek Text of the New*

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*Testament, By Two Members of the New Testament Company* (Oxford: Macmillan and Co, 1882), 11-12.

<sup>43</sup>Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 25-26.

<sup>44</sup>Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 53. The quote is extracted from the *Weimar Ausgabe*. Luther himself stated, “The Scriptures have never erred” (XV:1481), and, “The Scriptures cannot err” (XIX:1073), “It is certain that Scripture cannot disagree with itself” (XX:798).

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid*, 53.

<sup>46</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 1, Chapter 7, “The Testimony of the Spirit Necessary to Give Full Authority to Scripture: The Impiety of Pretending That the Credibility of Scripture Depends on the Judgment of the Church,” (para 1 and 2), 68-9, 71, and Chapter 8, “The Credibility of Scripture Sufficiently Proved in so far as Natural Reason Admits,” (para 12 and 13), 82.

<sup>47</sup>Henk Van Den Belt, “Trusting the Truth”, in *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 303.

<sup>48</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, trans John King, Christian Classics Ethereal Library in <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom43.html> (accessed March 17, 2014).

<sup>49</sup>Samuel Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament with Remarks on Its Revision upon Critical Principles* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1854), 33-35.

<sup>50</sup>Paul Ferguson, “Preservation of the Bible: Providential or Miraculous?” 80-81.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid*, 88. See also Theodore P Letis, *The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate*, (Edinburgh: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987).

<sup>52</sup>Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 220, 223.

<sup>53</sup>Richard A Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol 1: Prolegomena, 38, quoted in Hugh L Williams, “Francis Turretin: Institutes of Elenctic Theology,” *British Reformed Journal* 3 (July-September 1993): 25.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>55</sup>Arthur C Piepkorn, “What Does ‘Inerrancy’ Mean?” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 36 (1965): 578.

<sup>56</sup>Without either of them, no one can truly know God (*principium essendi*). In reformed thought, each of these three principia are active sources (not passive *fontes*), both self-attesting and self-convincing realities. See <http://theologiainvia.wordpress.com/2010/03/01/tcl-principium-cognoscendi-externum> (accessed November 11, 2013).

<sup>57</sup>“A Treatise of the Holy Scriptures, gathered out of certain sermons which the reverend father in God, Bishop Jewel, preached at Salisbury: AD, 1570,” a posthumous publication, cf *The Works of John Jewel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1848), 7:291, <https://archive.org/details/ofjohnjeweljel07jeweuoft> (accessed March 14, 2014). Cited in Ferguson, “Preservation of the Bible: Providential or Miraculous?” 85.

<sup>58</sup>Douglas Taylor, “Pure Words, Preserved Words: The Doctrine of Providential Preservation,” *British Reformed Journal* 8 (October-December 1994): 11, quoted from *The Works of John Jewel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850), 1175.

<sup>59</sup>J Waterworth, *Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 19.

<sup>60</sup>Ferguson, “Preservation of the Bible: Providential or Miraculous?” 82.

<sup>61</sup>Benjamin Brook, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Cartwright* (London: John Snow, 1845), 258, 276.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 274-275.

<sup>63</sup>William Fulke, "The Answer to the Preface," *A Defence of the Sincere and True Translations of the Holy Scriptures into the English Tongue, Against the Cavils of Gregory Martin*, ed Charles Henry Hartshorne (Cambridge: The University Press, 1842), 54-55.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 54-55.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 36. See *New Testament Confutation 1589* (London: Deputies of Christopher Barker, 1589), <https://archive.org/details/FulkeNewTestamentConfutation1589> (accessed March 17, 2014).

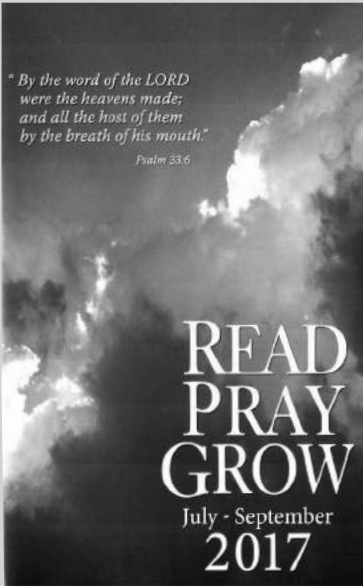
<sup>66</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>67</sup>See William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture: against the Papists, Especially Bellarmine and Stapleton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1588).

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# BE ZEALOUS FOR GOD'S SAKE

Leonard Chong-Teck Ngui

## Introduction

In every age, especially in the dark periods, there are few servants of God who are faithful, righteous, and zealous for God's sake. We might be able to see from their faithfulness and their actions that these servants are indeed chosen by God. From the time of Exodus, Judges, Kings and Prophets, we can clearly see that many of God's people turned to other gods, and forsook the living and true God. They suffered the oppression of their enemies because they turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to the spiritual things of God. Yet our God is a merciful God and He is a God who keeps His Covenant, not because of how good the people are but for His own Name's sake.

God shows mercy to His people. He would raise His servants up to deliver them out of dangers and provide His Word for their spiritual health. Throughout history, God has never changed, but those who professed to be believers kept repeating the same mistakes of the past, walking astray from God. Even today, the ecumenical movement headed by the World Council of Churches seeks to form a one-world religion. Many have forgotten the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation. Some today say that the Reformers made a mistake to separate from the Roman Catholic Church. How tragic!

Who is on the Lord's side? Who is zealous for God to take a stand and speak for Him in this evil and wicked world? How about us? Are we going to stand up to preach the truth of God even though thousands may be offended when their sins and evil deeds are rebuked and exposed? Or do we just sit on the fence and do nothing? May the Lord have mercy upon us, and open our spiritual eyes to see the needs and the dangers that we Christians have to face in this current world.

I pray that today's meditation will help us realise that our current situation is exactly the same as that of Numbers 25:1-13. The idolatrous

and sinful state of the world must not cause us to lose sight of what God wants us to be, and we must respond in the way pleasing to God – knowing that our God is a jealous God.

### **Reason for God’s Jealousy**

“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.” (Num 25:1-3). Our God is a jealous God. He is jealous of what belongs to Him; worship and service belong to Him alone. God does not allow sin and idolatry among His people. If we understand the jealousy of God, it will prevent us from sinning against God. We will hate sin as God does and love the things that God loves.

The word “zealous” is mentioned twice in this passage (Num 25:11, 13) and “jealousy” is mentioned once (Num 25:11). In the Hebrew, the words “zealous” and “jealous” are the same word, and both words have the same meaning here. They speak of establishing the divine honour. God forbids any connection of His chosen people with an idolatrous race. A man who loves his wife would never allow her to prostitute herself to strangers. Jealousy describes the attitude of a husband towards his wife when she is unfaithful. Likewise the jealousy of God for His people is just like that of a husband for his wife. Such a jealousy is valid and legitimate. The nation of Israel belongs to God and God is jealous over her. At the same time God is a “consuming fire” when evil is present. Holiness, righteousness and love are part of who God is. He is loving and merciful but He also judges and punishes.

While the Israelites were encamped at Shittim, in the plains of Moab, the daughters of Midian enticed the men of Israel to their idolatrous services and activities which included heathen rituals, eating food offered to idols, and prostitution. God does not tolerate the sin of idolatry and the sin of fornication. The wrath of God was kindled against the Israelites and He sent a terrible plague which killed 24,000 people.

At that time, the Lord commanded Moses to take serious action against all guilty individuals. All those who were involved in this sin must die, even the leaders of Israel. The Lord told Moses, “Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel” (Num



25:4). The implication was that they all had to bear responsibility for what had happened. Whether they were the ringleaders who led their men off to Moab or had failed to exercise their proper authority and discipline those who did actually transgress; whether by commission or omission, the princes failed in their duties and must face the consequences of their neglect of biblical responsibility. However, it was not easy for Moses alone to execute all the ringleaders as well as the Israelites who had transgressed. So, in verse 5, Moses commanded the judges of Israel, "Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor."

Moses and the congregation of Israel gathered at the door of the Tabernacle and wept over the judgment of God. In fact, they cried out to God in their great sorrow both for the sin and for its tragic effects. And yet, at this very serious moment, Zimri who was a prince of a chief house in the tribe of Simeon openly and shamelessly brought a Midianitish woman Cozbi into the tent for immoral purposes in the sight of Moses and all the children of Israel (Num 25:6, 14-15). Zimri showed he had no regard for the situation and despised Moses and the judges. He blatantly displayed his sinful lusts with that Midianitish woman at this time. It was outrageous!

### **Response to God's Jealousy**

When Phinehas the grandson of Aaron who was just a young man at that time saw his grandfather the high priest and his own father Eleazar a priest and Moses himself and the elders and judges doing nothing about the sin of Zimri (because they were probably overwhelmed with grief), he was filled with the jealousy of God and took a javelin and went into the tent of Zimri, and slew both Zimri and the woman and stopped the plague (Num 25:7-9)

As a priest, it was not the office of Phinehas to punish this transgression, but in this instance, while all others held back, he was no doubt moved by the Holy Spirit to execute the judgement. Phinehas' action was not something a common Israelite would do. But he had the consuming zeal for God, and could not allow the sin to be committed without judgement. Phinehas' example is a good one for us to learn. One might think "It is not his job because instructions were given to Moses and the judges, not the priest. Is he trying to glorify himself?" We have to be mindful that we must not be "zealous" in the wrong way, to go around trying to become somebody by usurping the roles of the rightful

leaders in the church, or to show how smart we are, to influence others to follow us. This type of zealousness is hypocritical. Phinehas was definitely not trying to show how smart or brave he was. Phinehas surely did not promote himself for being zealous for God. He stood on the side of the Lord, even if it meant he might lose his life for the sake of God's holiness. Zeal for God must be guided by spiritual prudence and directed by God's authority. We ought to be filled with zeal for God's sake. We ought to feel indignation against sin because we are His children.

Does this mean that churches have the right to punish sinners for their sins by killing them? Most certainly not! I am not advocating killing people in the name of religion, which is what certain extremists in this present world are doing. Many people may find it difficult to understand why God allowed Phinehas to slay them. One thing we must know is that at that time Israel was a theocracy (a nation governed and directed by God). However, the Church is not a nation like Israel. The Church being a spiritual institution and not a nation has no right to capital punishment or to execute sinners. That is the God-given duty of the State, not the Church (Rom 13:1-4).

Although the Bible does not record for us the response of the people after Phinehas killed both the Israelite and Midianitish woman, is it possible that he could have suffered some form of "persecution" for being zealous for God? I am not trying to add something to Scripture, but this might be a scenario for us to consider. When God works, Satan also works. Why do I say this? Whenever God's servants try to do His work, there will always be wicked opposition. For example, the Israelites wanted to kill the prophets of God because the prophets were faithful in preaching God's Word. Therefore, I was thinking Phinehas might also face some form of persecution. The tribe of Simeon for instance might not let Phinehas off easily because Phinehas had killed their leader and might seek to get back at him in word or deed.

So we ask ourselves: Are we prepared to do what Phinehas did, to be brave enough to stand on the Lord's side, to feel indignant about sin and do something to remove it quickly and immediately? Are we prepared to bear the possible persecutions when we are zealous for God's sake? Or do we delay and hesitate or even become numb to the sins in our lives and of this world?

### **Result of God's Jealousy**

By now Phinehas had killed Zimri and Cozbi, and 24,000 had died in the plague. In Numbers 25:10-11, God told Moses that it was because Phinehas had been courageous in stemming the evil and had manifested great zeal on His behalf that His anger had been appeased. God assured Phinehas that he would receive a covenant of peace (Num 25:12). God acknowledged what Phinehas had done (his zeal for God), and made a covenant of peace with him and his seed after him, that the priesthood of Aaron would continue through Phinehas' descendants. This covenant of peace meant that nobody could harm or destroy Phinehas and God Himself would preserve him. This covenant is a reminder to us, that not only Phinehas and his descendants must have a heart of zeal for God, but also all who are God's children. This is required of those who serve the Lord, especially full-time servants of God. Those who are zealous for God will experience His covenant of peace. God will protect all who are zealous for Him. God will strengthen and enable them to continue to stand for Him, even when there is persecution or sufferings in life. We have such an assurance from God.

God gave Phinehas the covenant of an everlasting priesthood (Num 25:13). The everlasting priesthood given to Phinehas by God means that Phinehas and his priesthood would continue until the Messiah comes. The everlasting priesthood belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's priesthood is a unique and unchangeable one, and is not passed from one person to another. Also, Phinehas made atonement for the children of Israel; he reconciled the Israelites to God. This is mentioned also in Psalm 106:30, "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed."

The account does not end here. It is recorded for us in Numbers 31:1-11 that Moses commanded 12,000 men and appointed Phinehas as leader to lead them to fight the Midianites. God made sure the Israelites won the battle. It was later discovered that Balaam was the one who gave the evil counsel which caused Israel to sin against God at that time. Balaam succeeded in his wicked plan and Balak need not send any soldier to kill the Israelites, because the Israelites themselves caused their own downfall through their lust of the flesh. Despite Balaam's wicked plan, everything was under God's sovereign control. God used this incident to teach a precious lesson to the Israelites as well as to us. We must know that God is a jealous God, and we must be zealous for God's

sake. For this is a very basic requirement in God's service.

Today, church leaders must realise that this same jealousy of God is essential and needed among the leaders and ministers of God. We must have the same zeal as Phinehas had for God; otherwise how can we serve God? Do you recall a Bible passage that teaches us that we cannot serve God because He is a holy God, a jealous God? In Joshua 24:19-20 we read, "Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good." If God, who is holy and jealous, does not forgive us our transgressions, all our so-called service will not be acceptable to Him. Let us not think that just because we have good Bible knowledge or good doctrine we will automatically be acceptable to God. If we do not serve God with true zeal, we are no better than the Pharisees, doing things outwardly for self-righteousness' sake! Unfortunately, nowadays many ministers of God lack the jealousy of God. They choose not to discern the truth or know what the Bible says. In fact, how sad it is that many church leaders are no longer obedient to God's Word, but have compromised by joining hands with liberal and Roman Catholic and New Evangelical and Charismatic churches, even cults and other religions. They falsely claim that all are the same, that all believe the same God, and are one big family. Today's ecumenical movement is worse than the trick of Balaam, because this movement is preparing the way for the Antichrist to come.

Nowadays when you stand up to rebuke the falsehood of the ecumenical movement, others and even Christians think that you are extreme. Even worse, they may call you a heretic and call you all sorts of names to destroy your character. Can we say God is too extreme because He hates all sin? God forbid, we cannot say that. The standard of God's holiness is way higher than what we sinners can imagine. Do you think the Prophets of God and Apostles of Jesus Christ were extreme when they stood for the truth? I am sure they would be seen as extreme by those in their time. The reason why others say we are extreme or heretics is because they hate the truth, so they try their best to do all sorts of things to stop the truth even God's Word. This was what the Roman Catholic Church did to the Reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Let us remember what God's Word says, "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Cor 13:8).

## Conclusion

Therefore, the example of Phinehas reminds us that we need to be zealous for the honour of God in the church and in the world. His example, understood and applied in terms of the jealousy of God, challenges Christians to stand up, speak out and live forth a Christian life that is God-pleasing. We are not being taught to take up a javelin to punish sins in our own hands, but to be zealous for God's sake is what every church needs. The weapons of our warfare are spiritual, and we must have the same heart of zeal as Phinehas in order to stand firm and defend the truth of God's Word for the glory of God in these very last days. Perhaps, we may be sincere and hardworking in serving God or studying God's Word, but without the jealousy of God and without having the genuine, consuming zeal for God, then what we do is only an outward appearance for others to see us, to show how good we are, which is not for God's glory.

Today, the servants of God should serve with fear and trembling, especially those who are serving God full-time. They must resolve to be right in God's sight, to hate what God hates, and love what God loves. It is because if we lose the heart of God's jealousy, we are no longer as zealous as God is. This would also mean that we would have lost the privilege to serve the God Almighty. So let us all bear this in mind, and never forget. And may the Lord help us to be zealous for His sake. Amen!

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*Leonard Ngui is a DipTh graduate of the Far Eastern Bible College. The above sermon was preached in the homiletics class last semester.*

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**In the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Reformation**, we commemorate the Seven Stars of the Protestant Reformation, namely, Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Tyndale, and Knox. They were God's messengers in an apostate age—"The seven stars are the angels (*angeloi*, ie messengers) of the seven churches" (Rev 1:20). Download lecture notes from FEBC website ([www.febc.edu.sg](http://www.febc.edu.sg)), under "Publications").

## WHY “MUSIC IS NEXT TO THEOLOGY”

Timothy Tow

The greatest service we can offer the Church is the Sunday Service. ... Not only the sermon, which must be ever fresh and enlightening, not like some reheated overnight fried rice, but also the choice of hymns. Martin Luther says, “Music is next to theology.” The introduction of some new hymn or chorus every now and then and the singing of Psalms with a lively tune will bring reviving of spirit. The pastor is both theologian and musician. “Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt 13:52).

In the matter of Church music, there are two extreme positions. On one hand we have the diehard Reformed school that sing only Psalms with their mouth (or throat), and on the other hand there are the charismatics that use drums and cymbals and hit them to the thud of rock music. We believe in supportive piano and organ playing with a Sankey touch. The story is told that when Moody and Sankey his song leader visited Scotland, they deeply deplored the pompous pipe organ that sounded like the firing of the battleship’s 16-inch guns. Sankey brought with him a small pump organ. As the sacred strains, soft and tender, accompanied the preacher’s appeal, tear-gates were opened and souls yielded to the Saviour’s touch. How the pianist and organist play can make or break at a worship service. Remember Sankey!

The importance of music to the pulpit, notice I say to the pulpit, and not to the Church generally, is of utmost importance. This is what Martin Luther meant when he said music is next to theology. Says Dr Philip Schaff in the History of the Christian Church, “He placed music next to theology. He valued it as a most effectual weapon against melancholy and the temptations of the Devil. The heart, he said, is satisfied, refreshed and strengthened by music. He played the lute, sang melodiously, and composed tunes for his hymns, especially the immortal *Ein feste Burg* which gives classic expression to his heroic faith in God

and the triumph of the Gospel.”

We believe in choirs spiritually trained, singing the old classicals, but we are also for modern compositions insofar as they will stand the test of time, and become standard in days to come. We believe the training of children’s choirs (the joy of parents) can add to church growth, as it is said, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength...” (Ps 8:2). When these singing children grow up they form themselves into the “Young Pilgrims” choir. The regular choir of course is the church choir where there is no age limit. Do you know who is the progenitor of church choirs? King David, the inventor of Hebrew poetry, who is also called “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam 23:1; 1 Chron 25).

Music played a vital part in the composition of the Psalms of David, so that he earned the title of “the sweet psalmist of Israel”. In Psalm 108:1–3, David reveals how he sings praises to God with “psaltery and harp”. In Psalm 98:5-6, the Psalmist further declares, “Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King”.

From composing Psalms with the help of the “psaltery and harps”, David further organised a choir for the Temple Services.

“Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was: Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king. Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD. ... So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight.” (1 Chron 25:1–3, 7)

Isn’t music next to theology also to David?

That music has a therapeutic effect on the soul of Elisha “the prophet of water” is evidenced by his calling for a minstrel to calm his soul in the midst of confusion and commotion. An unholy alliance was

formed between the kings of Israel, Edom and Judah to fight the king of Moab. Were it not for the sake of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah's plea to Elisha, he would refuse even an audience to the three kings.

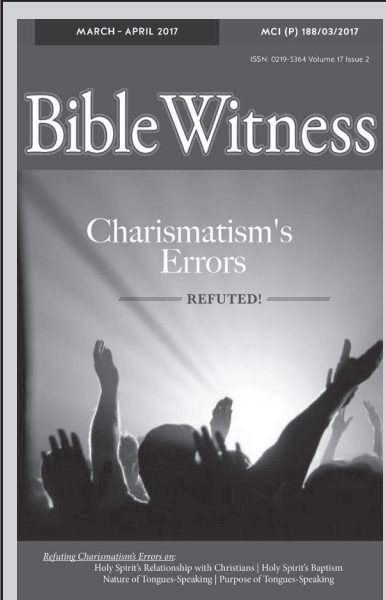
“And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.” (2 Kgs 3:14, 15)

The power of music must first come upon the preacher is what I mean by “the importance of music to the pulpit”. So, I have said to the organist and pianist, to the choir, that when they play well and sing well (the congregation too) I would preach better. Thus, music becomes half of John Sung's ministry. How by the singing of the choruses he composed himself, but mostly from the treasury of the Church, he preached with double power. In this respect, not only the lyrics, but also the tune is of utmost importance.

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*The Rev Dr Timothy Tow was founding pastor of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (1950) and True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (2003), and founding principal of Far Eastern Bible College (1962).*

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# Bible Witness

## Charismatic's Errors

REFUTED!

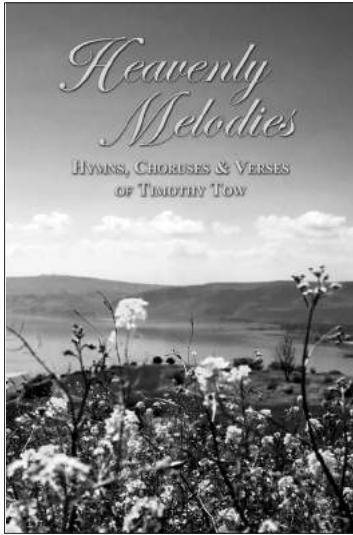
*Refuting Charismatic's Errors on  
Holy Spirit's Relationship with Christians | Holy Spirit's Baptism  
Nature of Tongues-Speaking | Purpose of Tongues-Speaking*

**Bible Witness** is a magazine for the nurture of individual spiritual life, a magazine for every Christian home, and a magazine for Bible study groups. Visit the Bible Witness website for discussion questions based on the articles in the magazine. You may print out the questions and use them to facilitate discussion in family worship, Bible study groups, etc. You may also use them for individual study.

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## HEAVENLY MELODIES: HYMNS, CHORUSES AND VERSES OF TIMOTHY TOW



*Heavenly Melodies: Hymns, Choruses & Verses of Timothy Tow.* Singapore: True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, 2017. Pp xi + 417. ISBN 978-981-11-2548-5.

### Foreword

“Music is next to theology” said Martin Luther. This was often quoted by the Rev Dr Timothy Tow when he taught the Bible and Theology at the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC). I was a student there from 1985 to 1989. The Rev Tow truly believed this, and used music to teach the Bible and Theology to his students. I remember him teaching “Old Testament History in Song”. The biblical accounts were put into song sung to the tune of familiar hymns. He used music as a teaching tool to help his students remember God’s Word—an effective way of hiding God’s Word in our heart, “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*” (Ps 119:11).

The hymns reflect his twofold ministry as pastor and theologian. As a pastor, he wrote hymns like “Our God Is a Loving Father” and “Courage, Weary Sons and Daughters” to comfort and encourage the battered and sorrowing heart. These hymns remind believers to look up to their Heavenly Father always for all their material and emotional needs. They are spiritually therapeutic. He also wrote hymns on the Second Coming of Christ. He believed that the Lord Jesus was coming back very soon, and that believers have everything to look forward to when Jesus returns. Hymns like “In the New Jerusalem” and “Jesus Christ Is Coming” speak to that. The lovely thoughts in these hymns are sure to lift

the reader and singer out of discouragement or depression. The return of Christ is our blessed hope (Tit 2:13).

As a theologian, he was a strong and uncompromising defender of the Christian faith. He wrote to warn against false doctrines and called people to separate from unbelief and apostasy, *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”* (2 Cor 6:14, 17, 18). In his effort to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3), he wrote such hymns as “Living Faith”, “Come Out from the Church Apostate”, “The King James Version versus the Hundred Versions”. His hymns on doctrine sought to teach and defend God’s Word and Truth, to warn against false Christs and false prophets especially in these last days, and to encourage believers to live a faithful and successful Christian life to the glory of God.

Selected John Sung choruses and Chinese hymns by Dr Calvin Chao, Dr Chia Yu Ming, Miss Chiau Wei Chen, the Rev Jason Linn, the Rev John E Su, and the Rev Newton Y T Tsiang translated into English by the Rev Dr Timothy Tow are found in this volume. Also included are hymns by Dr Chan Kay Heem, Miss Gloria Ho, the Rev Lek Aik Wee, Mr Christopher Tan, Dr S H Tow, and one other who have in one way or another been influenced and blessed by the ministry of the Rev Dr Timothy Tow.

Many thanks to editors Miss Joycelyn Chng, who researched into the hymns to discover the history and anecdotes behind them, and Mr Christopher Tan for the arrangement and typesetting of the hymns. Many thanks also to Mrs Ivy Tow and Mrs Jemima Khoo for contributing photos of the Rev Dr Timothy Tow, to Mrs Catherine Tan for her photos of the Holy Land, to Jose Trinipil Lagapa (Biboy) for his drawings, and to Miss Judith d’Silva, Mrs Jemima Khoo, Mrs Jacelyn Goh and Miss Katherine Go for proofreading the drafts.

The Rev Dr Timothy Tow was called home to be with the Lord on 20 April 2009. Now home with the Lord, he is no doubt singing heavenly melodies in holy worship of his God even his Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. We urge all who have a copy of this historical and commemorative hymnbook to use it regularly, *“Let the word of Christ*

*dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col 3:16). Singing such heavenly melodies is a prelude to what we will do when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back. We will all be singing “a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9, 10).*

*Soli Deo Gloria!*

Jeffrey Khoo

Pastor, True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church

Principal, Far Eastern Bible College

### Notes from the Editors

#### Christopher Tan:

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col 3:16).*

I count it a great privilege and honour to be given the opportunity to typeset and edit the hymns of the late Rev Timothy Tow. I am extremely thankful to Pastor Jeffrey Khoo for assigning me this task and also for encouraging me in the good tradition of hymn writing. Special thanks to Mrs Jemima Khoo, Joycelyn Chng, Judith d’Silva and everyone who has contributed to this most worthy project in one way or another.

Rev Tow did not go through formal music education and training but that did not stop him from writing many beautiful original hymns, choruses and verses. This clearly shows his heart and theology and demonstrates how the Holy Spirit had worked so powerfully in his life. He reminds me of the great “father of English hymnody”, Isaac Watts, who was both a theologian as well as a hymn writer. Indeed, Rev Tow will be remembered for being both a great theologian and hymn writer!

I am forever indebted to Rev Tow for the Biblical doctrines that he defended so fervently. The very first time I stepped into the Far Eastern Bible College night class was in 2002, when Rev Tow was teaching Calvinism. He taught the precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints – “Once Saved, Always Saved”, which brought great relief and saved my troubled soul. There are many apostate and false churches



today which teach false doctrines and a false gospel. In contrast, Rev Tow preached and defended the true gospel of Christ in its entirety, including the inspiration and preservation of Scripture. We are forever grateful for his life and ministry.

**Joycelyn Chng:**

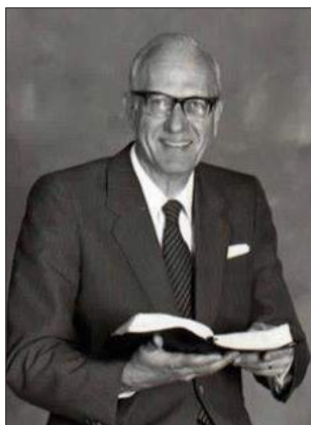
The time spent researching into the history and theology behind Rev Timothy Tow’s hymns has been a most rewarding one. In the process of trawling through Rev Tow’s writings in the old issues of the weekly bulletin dating way back to the 1960s, I was given a fresh glimpse into his life and ministry. Rev Tow had been my pastor ever since I was a little girl. Nonetheless, working on this songbook has helped me to appreciate anew the courageous defender of the Christian faith that he was. He was full of zeal for his Lord and Saviour, and was loving, yet uncompromising, in the ministry that the Lord had entrusted to him.

Unearthed from the treasure trove of weekly bulletins are a number of beautiful “new” hymns and choruses by Rev Tow, such as “Jesus Is Coming Again”, “O Israel, Give Ear to Isaiah” and “He Came for Me”. All these compositions, together with some lesser known traditional hymns that Rev Tow had published for congregational singing, can be found in this songbook.

Presenting the background of the hymns in the own words of Rev Tow where possible, it is our prayer that the reader will catch a glimpse of his love for the Lord, His work and His people. May many hearts be ministered unto and lives be devoted to the cause of Christ, to the glory of God alone.

<p><b>The FEBC Bookroom</b> serves both the college students and the Christian public. It carries not just FEBC Press books and textbooks, but also other theologically conservative books and Biblical reference tools. It has a wide selection of the King James Bible (KJV), and specialises in books defending the KJV and its underlying original language texts.</p> <p>Opening hours: Mon-Fri: 9 am to 6 pm <i>(till 7.30 pm on Mon &amp; Thurs night classes)</i> Sat: 12 noon to 6 pm Sun &amp; Public Holidays: Closed</p>	 <p>Office &amp; Bookroom</p> <p> <i>upstairs</i></p>
<p><b>FEBC BOOKROOM</b> 10 Gilstead Road, Singapore 309064 (Beulah House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Storey) Tel/Fax: (65) 6254-9188 Email: febcbkrm@febc.edu.sg</p>	

## **A BELIEVING JEW OF GREAT FAITH: OBITUARY OF DR RAYMOND H SAXE**



Dr Raymond H Saxe, BA, ThM, MA, ThD, DMiss (December 6, 1922 – January 23, 2017)

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Dr Raymond Hyman Saxe was born December 6, 1922 in Chicago, Illinois, to missionary parents, Israel and Elizabeth Saxe, and spent his childhood in the metropolitan Chicago area. He had a distinguished academic career graduating with honors from Wheaton College in 1944, and subsequently from Dallas Theological Seminary, with highest honors, earning a ThM and ThD in 1947 and 1954, respectively. He continued his studies, receiving a MA from the University of Michigan in 1972 where he then served as an adjunct instructor in the mid-1970s. In 1991, he studied Hebrew at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel. At the age of 72, being the consummate student, he earned his second doctorate from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1993. He continued to read and study throughout his entire life.

Dr Saxe began his missionary work in Soweto near Johannesburg in 1948. He and his wife, Vivian, whom he married in 1953, then served together as missionaries in South Africa with the South Africa General Mission where he founded and became the first principal of Johannesburg Bible Institute. They also served in Kenya with the Africa Faith Mission founding the Mombasa Bible Institute. Dr Saxe, along with his wife, continued their ministry to South Africa throughout their lives, returning almost yearly from 1970 to 2010. In addition, their overseas ministry included Europe, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the Philippines,

India, Japan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

Dr Saxe also served as pastor, either full or part time, at Crown Point Bible Church in Crown Point, Indiana; Minco Presbyterian Church in Minco, Oklahoma; Immanuel Baptist Church in Bedford, Massachusetts; and Grace Bible Church and Fellowship Bible Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

He taught courses at Dallas Theological Seminary and Dallas Bible Institute, and he was the Director of Missions at Philadelphia College of the Bible. He also served as Academic Dean of the Capital Bible Seminary in Washington, DC. His Bible-teaching ministry has been shared with the Body of Christ worldwide.

Dr Saxe has authored three books: “Partial or Perfect: The Cessation of Signs and Completeness of Scriptures,” “Israel’s Future Triumph: An Exposition of Zechariah 12–14,” and “Andrew Murray: Pastor and Spiritual Statesman of South Africa.” He has also contributed articles to numerous Christian periodicals.

Dr Saxe is recognized as a scholar, theologian, expositor, pastor/teacher and author, but more than anything, he was a man who had a tremendous love for God’s Word, and a sincere passion for Christ so others would come to know Him as he did. It was this passion, gracious heart and love for people that had a dynamic impact to many all over this world. Those who knew him knew of his deep love and burden for the Jewish people, which was his heritage. He and his dear wife traveled to Israel 22 times, where he led tours and connected with family while there. His family had survived and moved to Israel after the Holocaust.

In addition, many can testify to his love for the people of South Africa. His equipping and edifying ministry to the Johannesburg Bible Institute, Evangelical Bible College in Cape Town, Durban Bible College, Evangelical Bible Churches and the Brethren Assemblies has left an indelible mark upon many lives – for eternity.

All who knew him know he was never seen without his loving wife at his side, his Bible in hand ready to give the Word. In a letter to his sons, Dr Saxe wrote that he and his wife shared a single aim, “which is to glorify God, win souls and help believers grow in grace. This is really all that is worthwhile for us. We hope to die serving the Lord.”

His love for the Word of God and for people did not diminish even

in the end. He prayed for the saints, witnessed to and prayed for the faithful nurses and aides, and he attempted to encourage believers on the phone, assuring them of his love and prayers. Finally on January 23, Dr. Saxe, beloved husband and father, peacefully took his last breath in his son's home in Carmel, Indiana. His faithful and devoted wife of 63 years was at his side, as she has been nearly every step of his earthly journey. His family joined her as she recited the Scripture, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

He is preceded in death by his parents, Israel Isaac and Elizabeth (Boerman) Saxe, his two sisters, Florence May Caldon and Ruth Esther Bugler, and his son Timothy Israel.

Surviving family include his loving wife of 63 years, Vivian (Brumley) Saxe; sons, Jonathan Mark (Susan), Stephen Joel (Kim) and David James; grandchildren, Sarah (Jordan) Hollen, Jonathan, Benjamin (Jaclyn), Hannah, Josiah, Noah, Kenan and Micah; great grandchildren Lydia, Judah and Selah; and loving nieces, nephews and cousins.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be given to Project TIM (Training Indigenous Missionaries). This tax-deductible foundation was established in memory of their first son, Timothy Israel. Project TIM emphasizes the execution of the indigenous principle of missions. Project TIM is designed to support the believing National that they in turn, "shall be able to teach (and reach) others also." (2 Timothy 2:2). Checks may be made out to and sent to Project TIM, c/o Mrs Vivian Saxe, 10569 Iron Horse Lane, Carmel, IN 46032.

A graveside service took place January 25, 2017 at Mount Emblem Cemetery Elmhurst, Illinois, where an intimate gathering of family and close friends honored the home going of a husband, father and faithful servant.

The Memorial Service is to take place at 11 am on Saturday, February 25, 2017 at Willis Baptist Church. Willis Baptist Church, 8687 Bunton Rd, Willis MI 48191.

Obituary taken from: <http://www.hultgrenfh.com/home/obituary/4093535>.

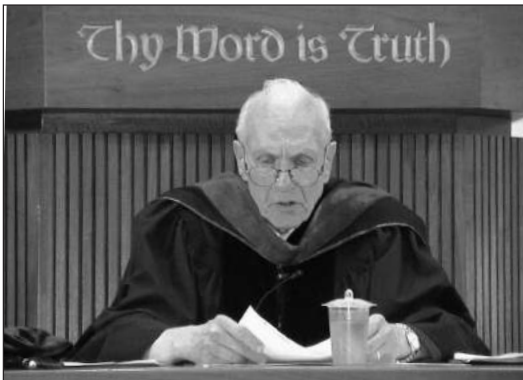
### **A Good Friend of FEBC**

Dr Raymond Saxe was a good friend of Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC). We remember fondly his lecture stint at the Far Eastern Bible College in 2004. He was the honoured speaker at FEBC's graduation

service that year. A video of that graduation and his message is found in FEBC's YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/ipagrKz9D3o>.

Like FEBC, he believed the Lord and loved His Word deeply. I remember him saying most emphatically, "The Bible says it, that settles it, I believe it." He told his hearers to note the order: "that settles it" comes before "I believe it". God and His Word must always have first place not any man.

I am especially grateful for Dr Saxe's encouragement and support of FEBC during the time when FEBC fought a good fight of faith for the verbal and plenary preservation (VPP) of the Scriptures. Dr S H Tow who had been in constant contact with Dr Saxe wrote in his church weekly, 25 December 2011, "Dr Saxe has been keenly interested in FEBC's welfare, enquiring regularly after the progress of the problem with Life Church, and was overjoyed when the Supreme Court Judges ruled in favour of FEBC, upholding its stand on VPP."



Dr Saxe believed in the infallibility and inerrancy of the Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek Textus Receptus underlying the Authorised Version (KJV). He personally shared with me how those from the other side had tried to persuade him against VPP with their many arguments (one even travelled all the way to Michigan to do so). He felt sorry for them and lamented that they failed to understand history and did not know what they were talking about. Dr Saxe was truly a man of great faith. May the Lord raise up more faithful servants like him. *Editor*



## College News

**FEBC started the New Year with a day of prayer on 3 January 2017.** Board, Faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends gathered together in the sanctuary of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church which is within the College's Gilstead campus to pray with and for the College. The Rev Dr Park Seung Kyu (PhD, Kyung Hee University; ThD, FEBC), Principal of the Bible College of East Africa (Tanzania), delivered God's Word from Romans 1:1–7. He spoke on how as servants called of God, we are "separated unto the gospel" and need to be united in doctrine and spirit to serve God harmoniously. He is thankful that his wife Chae Won (who holds a PhD and just quit her job as an accounting professor in a Korean university) and daughter Jong Hwi (who just turned 16 and passed her high school exams with flying colours) have enrolled as students of FEBC to prepare themselves for future ministry and missionary work. College Matron Mrs Ivy Tow who has been with FEBC since its founding in 1962 (54 years ago), encouraged the students to persevere in their studies and claim the promises of God in Joshua 1:8–9, Psalm 34:10, Deuteronomy 3:22, Proverbs 3:5–6, 12, Isaiah 41:10, 13.

**In the January–April 2017 semester FEBC had a total enrolment of 571 students:** 107 day students (full-time: 54, part-time: 53), 288 students in the Basic Theology for Everyone (BTFE) night classes, and 176 distance learning students. **The students come from 14 countries:** Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam. **There were 11 new full-time students**—seven Koreans (Choi Jeong Geun, Im Joseph, Kim Mi Kyung, Kwak Ji Hye, Park Jong Hwi, Ra Chae Won, Sim Myung Hyun), three Indians (Aron Paiva, Priyakumar Butti, Sujitha Henry Moses), and one Singaporean (Li Qicheng Kelvin) from Berith Bible-Presbyterian Church.

**FEBC's online in-ministry programme was officially launched** on 3 January 2017. The online in-ministry programme for the Bachelor of Ministry, Master of Ministry, and Doctor of Religious Education degrees are designed for FEBC alumni who are currently in full-time ministry to earn their higher theological credentials. Our pioneer students are as follows: **BMin:** Park Jung Il (Korea); **MMin:** Romeo Faustino Larano (Philippines), Rajan Shrestha (Nepal), Tann Heng (Cambodia); **DRE:** Michael Koech (Kenya), Jonathan Langat (Kenya), Nguyen Gia Hien (Australia), Park Jong Gyoo (Korea), Nelson Were (Kenya).

**The following courses were offered in the January-April 2017 semester:** Systematic Theology IV: Eschatology, Greek Exegesis II (Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo); Genesis, Contemporary Theology II, Hebrew Reading II (Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew); Homiletics, Isaiah (Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy); Church History I (Rev Stephen Khoo); Bible Geography I and Cults I (Rev Dr Koa Keng Woo); 1 Timothy (Rev Tan Kian Sing); Greek Elementary II (Mrs Ivy Tow); The Christian School, Beginner Pianoforte (Mrs Jemima Khoo); Adult Christian Education, Thinking and Study Skills, Women in Church History (Miss Carol Lee); Book of Acts (Dr Jose Lagapa); Hebrew Elementary II (Mr Clement Chew); Greek Reading II (Mr Dennis Kablingue); Hymnology I (Miss Joycelyn Chng); English Intensive II (Mrs Anne Lim); English Intermediate II (Mrs Irene Lim); English Advanced II (Eld Han Soon Juan).

**The Daily Vacation Bible College (DVBC) on “Seven Stars of the Protestant Reformation”** in commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation was held at Resort Lautan Biru (Mersing, Malaysia), 1-4 May 2017. There were 80 participants. Besides the lectures by the Principal, seven videos on the life and times of the Reformers were screened.

**FEBC’s 42<sup>nd</sup> Graduation Service** was held at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church on 7 May 2017. The Rev Errol Stone—an FEBC alumnus and pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church (Perth)—was the Lord’s messenger. He preached on the topic “Loving God by Shepherding His People” (John 21:1-17). About 700 came to rejoice with the College. The College graduated the following 29 students: **Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK)**: Cornelius Koshy, Elizabeth Ong-Chen, Samuel Gan Ken En, Gideon Phua Kim Huat, Tai Dae Ern, Joelson Tang Sheng-Hui, Phoebe Tay Hui Min, Liz Thng Yin Lian; **Certificate of Biblical Studies (CertBS)**: Chew Yee Fong, Lee Yu Jie, Lim Ah Sang, Jason Lim Ghim Leong, Rachel Leong Ann Lee, Tan Choon Keng, Tay Bee Heng, Benjamin Tan Woo Leong; **Diploma in Theology (DipTh)**: Leonard Ngui Chong Teck; **Bachelor of Religious Education (BRE)**: Choi Jeong-Geun, Choi Soon Ok, Li Chunjing, Yang Conghui; **Bachelor of Theology (BTh)**: Chan Choy Leng, Eric Luis Rellota Delina, Samuel Goh Yong Li, Stefanie; **Master of Religious Education (MRE)**: Elisabet, Khoo Peng Keong, Sujith Samuel; **Master of Divinity (MDiv)**: Zhu Jianwei.

*College News continued on p12*



**SEVEN STARS OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION**

Daily Vacation Bible College

Resort Lautan Biru, Mersing, 1-4 May 2017

# O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

**FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE**

**42<sup>nd</sup> Graduation Service**

**Class of 2017**

