



# The Burning Bush

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# THE BURNING BUSH

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# HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF BIBLE-PRESBYTERIANISM: REFUTING THE REVISIONIST BIBLE-PRESBYTERIANS

**Jeffrey Khoo**

*“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).

With the passing of the founding fathers of the Bible-Presbyterian Church (BPC) of Singapore, namely, the Rev Dr Timothy Tow (d 2009), the Rev Quek Kiok Chiang (d 2015) and Dr S H Tow (d 2019), the next generation of Bible-Presbyterian (BP) leaders and members need to uphold the good old faith by imbibing the founding spirit and ethos of their pioneering forebears and appreciating the roots and fruits of their BP faith and practice.

Sadly, a new generation is emerging that seeks to undermine the beliefs and practices of our founding fathers especially those of Timothy Tow and S H Tow. These BPs who were at the centre of the controversy that resulted in the split of the BPC and the dissolution of the BP Synod in 1988 had just released a book called *Heritage & Legacy of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore* to tell “their side of the story”.<sup>1</sup> It is really their attempt to rewrite history and redefine doctrines.

Can we keep quiet and say nothing? We are reminded of the words of Mordecai, *“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (Esth 4:14). We cannot be silent!

Thankfully, our founding pastors and leaders had bequeathed to us a trove of books and articles and other documents which reveal clearly their beliefs and convictions.<sup>2</sup> It goes without saying that as true BPs, there is a need to revisit and revive the history and theology

of our good old BP faith—to address and defend BPism in the light and authority of the Holy Scriptures, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” (Heb 13:7–9a). The Apostle Paul told young Timothy, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” (1 Tim 4:16). We can do no less.

## **History of Bible-Presbyterianism**

### **The Bible-Presbyterian Church**

The four major church denominations in Singapore are the Anglican, Methodist, Brethren, and Presbyterian—known as the “Big Four”. Out of the fourth arose the BPC. In the history of Singapore Churches, the BPC figures prominently. Singapore Church historian Bobby Sng wrote,

In the 1950s, four new groups made their appearance: the Lutherans, Baptists, CNEC and the Bible-Presbyterians. By 1964, these four had initiated a total of 222 other new congregations, two more than the Big Four. This growth was all the more remarkable as, unlike the Big Four, this new generation of churches did not have any previous network of churches to rely on. They had to start from virtually nothing. They succeeded in growing because their more vigorous evangelistic efforts enabled them to tap the vast potential among the younger generation. A casual visit to any one of these churches in the 50s would have impressed one with the high proportion of youths in their midst—sometimes as much as 95% of the congregation.<sup>3</sup>

Another reason for the BPC’s prominence was the battle for the faith against liberalism. Sng recounted,

The end of the War brought about a kaleidoscopic change in the church scene. It saw the emergence of a new generation of Christians who were not only theologically alive but who also refused to remain passive. Compelled by a burden to remain true to the Word of God, they chose to challenge the liberals.... By the early 50s, the battle for truth had exploded in Singapore with a ferocity that surprised many.<sup>4</sup>

It was the BPC which took the lead in the battle for truth. Sng wrote,

Among the many people who responded to the gospel at John Sung’s meetings in 1935 were two young boys, both China-born and coming from godly family backgrounds. Few realized then that within 20 year

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[sic] these two young men would be blazing a trail in the church's fight against liberal theology, affecting the lives of hundreds of Christians.<sup>5</sup>

The two young men were Timothy Tow and Quek Kiok Chiang.

As can be seen above, the spiritual success of the BPC was due to the application of the double-edged Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God itself (Heb 4:12). And the two edges consist of (1) the Gospel and its evangelism (Matt 28:18–20) and (2) the Truth and its defence (Jude 3). Keith Hinton, former lecturer at Singapore Bible College, wrote,

... in 1950, Timothy Tow, influenced by the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC), broke from the Presbyterian Church to form the new and rapidly growing Bible Presbyterian denomination. By 1971 it had 13 congregations and 828 members, increasing by 1983 to 27 congregations and 4,105 active members.<sup>6</sup>

Hinton further wrote,

In 1950, Rev Quek Kiok Chiang and Dr Timothy Tow formed the first Bible Presbyterian Church. Their strong drive, convictions on doctrine and separation, mission and evangelism, have enabled them, from their position of executive power, to build, direct and discipline a denomination that in 32 years has grown...<sup>7</sup>

The BPCs in Singapore have increased in number since. In 2021, there are a total of 43 churches in Singapore (35 English, 7 Chinese, 1 Tamil) with about 20,000 members.<sup>8</sup> Such phenomenal growth in conservative and fundamental churches is not without precedent. Dean Kelley of the United Methodist Church and former Director of Civil and Religious Liberty at the National Council of Churches (USA) observed that in America,

the fundamentalists and Pentecostals increased their numbers at about the same rate as the mainline churches' decrease.... These groups not only give evidence that religion is not obsolete and churches not defunct, but they contradict the contemporary notion of an acceptable religion. They are not 'reasonable,' they are not 'tolerant,' they are not ecumenical, they are not 'relevant.' Quite the contrary!<sup>9</sup>

The BPC's history and theology is a most worthwhile study in view of the (1) Past: We need to know who we are (identity) and what we are in God's providence (history) and in the light of God's Word (theology), (2) Present: The undermining of BPism by a new organisation called "Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore" (BPCIS) and its new book

*Heritage and Legacy of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore* edited by Chua Choon Lan (general editor), Quek Swee Hua and David Wong, and its attempt to revise the history and doctrine of the BPC, and (3) Future: The need for this generation and future generations to know their spiritual forefathers and their biblical-theological foundations so that they will be able to discern between what is and what is not BPism. “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).

### **Roots of the Bible-Presbyterian Church**

The Rev Dr Timothy Tow, founding father of the BPC in Singapore, said that the BPC has seven roots: (1) French (John Calvin), (2) English (English Presbyterian Mission), (3) Scottish (William C Burns), (4) German (Dr Rudolf Lechler), (5) Chinese (Dr John Sung), (6) American (Dr Carl McIntire), and (7) Singapore.<sup>10</sup> For our present study which seeks to connect theology with history, I will just focus on five of the seven roots viz 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7.

#### **French (John Calvin)**

The BPC traces its roots back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Reformation. Tow wrote,

The Bible-Presbyterian Church of Singapore is first of all a Protestant Church. That brings us back immediately to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation when our spiritual forefathers broke the shackles of Rome to return to the apostolic faith; to the faith of an open Bible, liberated from all erroneous and tyrannical traditions of a man-made system.<sup>11</sup>

The Reformation produced two main schools of theology: Lutheran and Reformed. “Insofar as the Bible-Presbyterian Church is concerned, we trace our roots to that branch of Protestantism known as the Reformed Faith on the European continent, and as Presbyterianism in the British Isles.”<sup>12</sup> The Reformed school is the Calvinistic school. John Calvin (1509–1564) was a French theologian and pastor, and the leader of the Reformed Faith. The biblical essence of Reformed theology is seen in Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

As a Reformation and Reformed denomination, the BPC upholds the Five Solas of Protestantism: *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, *Solus Christus*, *Sola Scriptura*, *Soli Deo Gloria*. It also upholds the five points of Calvinism (TULIP): Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement,

Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints. Calvin's *Institutes* is taught in two parts at Far Eastern Bible College (the flagship school of the BPC), and compulsory for all students, four credits total. To facilitate the study of Calvin's *Institutes*, the Rev Dr Timothy Tow abridged Calvin's *Institutes* for easy assimilation,

The writer of this Abridgment was first introduced to Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* while a student of Faith Theological Seminary, USA. What was offered as an elective, he discovered to his delight to be a gem of the greatest price. This led him to pursue through the voluminous work on his own, and to re-study it in latter years. Through Calvin's inspirational teaching (his emblem is a heart offered to the Lord) of 'the true and substantial wisdom which principally consists of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves,' this writer has found a new, radiant confidence for living in perilous end-times like these. For, Calvin has taught, as no other theologian, that 'salvation is **of the Lord**' (Jonah 2:9).

Reading Calvin's *Institutes*, however, is like going through a ten-course Chinese dinner. The feast he spreads is so sumptuous that it takes no little time to imbibe. In order to render the *Institutes* more assimilable to students of Far Eastern Bible College, the writer has made this Abridgment for their guidance, chapter by chapter.<sup>13</sup>

### **English (English Presbyterian Mission)**

The English Presbyterian Mission is Reformed in faith, and sent missionaries to our ancestors in South China especially in Swatow and Amoy. The English Presbyterian Mission established Swatow Hospital where Tow Keng Kee (Timothy Tow's father) received his medical training and earned his licence to practise medicine in 1911. When the Tow clan migrated to Malaya and later Singapore, Tow Khi Hien (Timothy Tow's grandfather) became an evangelist of the English Presbyterian Mission and later became a pastor of an English Presbyterian Church at Upper Serangoon Road and even pastored Glory Presbyterian Church—the oldest Chinese Church in Singapore—for a season.<sup>14</sup>

Like the English Presbyterian Church, the BPC subscribes to the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) with its Larger and Shorter Catechisms (1643–46), "which are the standards of the B-P Church as well as of many other Bible-believing Presbyterian Churches around the world. Nevertheless, it is the Bible, the infallible and inerrant Word of God, that is our supreme rule of faith and practice. Hence the name

Bible-Presbyterian.”<sup>15</sup>

As Presbyterians and as affirmed in the WCF, the BPC holds to Covenant Theology and not Dispensationalism.<sup>16</sup> As a Confessional Church, the BPC upholds the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures as affirmed in the WCF Chapter 1.8, “The Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek ... being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic, so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.” With the modern attack on the present infallibility and inerrancy, authenticity and authority of the Scriptures by textual criticism and the modern versions, BPCs which believe and defend VPP with the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) affirm the present perfection of the Holy Scriptures thusly:

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).

We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant.

We uphold the Authorised (King James) Version to be the Word of God—the best, most faithful, most accurate, most beautiful translation of the Bible in the English language, and do employ it alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.

On account of the above statement of faith, Life BPC, in an attempt to evict FEBC from 9A Gilstead Road, sued its Board of Directors in the year 2008. Life BPC claimed that FEBC is a new College with a new doctrine which they say is “heresy” and thus had no right to remain in the premises. In “*Khoo Jeffrey and others v Life Bible-Presbyterian Church and others [2011] SGCA 18*”, the Court of Appeal in Singapore ruled judiciously that “the College in adopting the VPP doctrine, has not deviated from the fundamental principles which guide and inform the work of the College right from its inception, and as expressed in the Westminster Confession.... It is not inconsistent for a Christian who believes fully in the principles contained within the Westminster Confession (and the VPI doctrine) to also subscribe to the VPP doctrine.”<sup>17</sup>



From the English Presbyterians was inherited the Presbyterian form of Church government. The Church is governed by a plurality of teaching and ruling elders.

The special characteristic of the English Presbyterians is their Non-conformist stance vis-à-vis the established Church, ie the Church of England with her bishops and Archbishop. Since our English forebears believed that the Church should be governed by elders or presbyters according to the Scriptures, and that the Episcopal system (rule by bishop) is a later development in Church history, they were not unwilling to pay the price of being expelled by the Act of Uniformity of 1662 whereby 2,000 English ministers lost their position and pension in the State Church for their Presbyterian Faith. The second English root makes us Presbyterians vis-a-vis the Anglican system.<sup>18</sup>

### **Chinese (Dr John Sung)**

In 1935, Singapore was visited twice with a revival whereby 2000 nominal Christians were soundly converted through the preaching of Dr John Sung, PhD, a mighty evangelist God had raised for China and Southeast Asia. Under his ministry the founding fathers of the BPC were not only saved but also called to full-time service.<sup>19</sup>

The BPC is premillennial in eschatology. Although this is a doctrinal distinctive of the American BPC under Dr Carl McIntire and Faith Theological Seminary, the founding fathers of the Singapore BPC got it first from Dr John Sung.<sup>20</sup> The Rev Dr Timothy Tow recounted,

A thorough student of the Bible, John Sung knew the Old Testament as well as the New. His sermon texts ranged through every book of the Bible. A Premillennialist, believing in the soon coming of Christ, he would expound Daniel or Revelation in his follow-up 'spiritual nurture' meeting after every revival campaign. These Bible-study sessions, like the revival meetings, would last two hours each session, three times a day.

Though the Bible was his only textbook, John Sung could have used a Scofield Reference Bible, as reflected in the dates of authorship and other dates in his Homilies on the whole Bible. If he had consulted the Scofield Bible, he did not show any trace of Dispensationalism in his teachings. He strongly emphasised the holiness of God by quoting the Ten Commandments, and denounced sins by their families under each Commandment. And since the wages of sin is death, he spoke often on the theme of Heaven and Hell.<sup>21</sup>

Dr John Sung was Arminian in his theological position but according to Tow, he rejected the doctrine of sinless perfection, and had no quarrel with Calvinism and Predestination.<sup>22</sup> However, Sung was dead set against liberalism which he experienced firsthand.

It is evident from a study of John Sung's life that God had sent him to Union Seminary, to taste the bitterness of liberal theology that he might find the grace and truth of the living Saviour the sweeter. From a failure to obtain salvation in the sages and sutras of the Orient, it made him treasure all the more the Word of God. Through all his conflicts with a false Christianity on one hand and human religions on the other, John Sung's solution to the problems of life, now and beyond, was the Bible. More than ever a fundamentalist after conversion, believing the Bible to be the infallible and inerrant Word of God, he took a strong stand against higher critics. Once when he was confronted by missionaries who denied the truthfulness of Genesis and the efficacy of the Blood of Christ, he quoted Confucius by way of contrast. Confucius (551–478 BC) said, "If I hear the Truth in the morning, I am prepared to die in the evening." Commented John Sung, "Had Confucius lived in Christ's day, he would have become a Christian." With his former encounters with Fosdick, it was an old game to cross swords with liberal missionaries in the fields.<sup>23</sup>

From Dr John Sung, Tow saw the dangers of liberal theology, and the need to build a school to defend the Faith. Eventually, he founded the FEBC. Tow said, "A College that is called a Bible College is called to defend the Bible." He referred to FEBC as a "spiritual SAFTI". SAFTI stands for "Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute."

The Rev Dr Timothy Tow had made another observation of John Sung's homiletics and that is the employment of music. "If Martin Luther has regarded music as being next to theology, John Sung made it at one with theology. For every message he preached he would have an appropriate chorus to sing at intervals."<sup>24</sup> The hymns that Rev Timothy Tow wrote are published by True Life BPC in an anecdotal hymn book called *Heavenly Melodies*.<sup>25</sup>

The new BPCIS say that music is a non-essential. They say that decisions on type of music should be left to individual churches. They say contemporary songs of worship with which the younger generation readily identifies should be allowed. They also say that electric guitars and drums are not objectionable.<sup>26</sup> However, going with our Reformation fathers and the John Sung revivals, where music and songs must be

solidly biblical and theologically accurate and should assist in doctrinal education, the traditional and conservative BPs resist the modern, neo-evangelical, and charismatic crowd in ditching the good old hymns for the sentimental and rock-and-pop choruses and songs of today.

The BPC practises baptism by sprinkling or pouring. However, BPs do not take issue with baptism by immersion, and respect the Baptists for their practice of immersion. This is in keeping with the spirit of Dr John Sung. The Rev Dr Timothy Tow commented on John Sung's mode of baptism,

As to the mode of baptism, he naturally sprinkled.... In Hong Kong, however, he went under the water in a Baptist Church to identify himself with the Baptists,... Now that he was immersed, the missionary of that Church asked him to baptize twenty-one women and twelve men, which he did. ...badgered by controversialists on both sides of the Baptism question, I can see him with that impish smile, "Well if you want it from me, More faith, less water; less faith, more water."<sup>27</sup>

The BPs do not require Baptists to be rebaptised if they want to become members of a BPC. However, they should understand and accept the biblical reasons for sprinkling and infant baptism, and be willing to subscribe to the WCF and our other statements of faith.

The BPC has a zeal for missions and evangelism. This was inherited from the Dr John Sung. Tow recounted,

John Sung was ever confident of a big catch of souls every time he preached. He preached for decision, which was helped by his moving appeal to receive Christ openly. After we were delivered, we were challenged to join the Preaching Bands, covenanting with God to go out at least once a week, most appropriately on the Lord's Day afternoon, to witness for Christ. The Preaching Bands truly became the hands and feet of the Church. Many souls were brought into the kingdom through a new wave of witnessing.<sup>28</sup>

### **American (Dr Carl McIntire)**

The BPC originally began in USA in 1937 under the Rev Dr Carl McIntire who spearheaded the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation Movement. From McIntire, Timothy Tow inherited the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation spirit to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3).

When Timothy Tow Siang Hui, founding pastor of the B-P Church was called to prepare himself for his life's calling, he first learned under Dr Chia Yu Ming, doyen Presbyterian theologian of China in Nanking, and Dr A B Dodd, missionary to China... [Through them] he was introduced

to Faith Theological Seminary, USA. Being an independent Seminary, nevertheless established by leaders of the Bible Presbyterian Church... in the old Princeton tradition, its more outstanding distinctive was its separatist position vis-à-vis the rising Ecumenical Movement under liberal and modernist leadership.

Dr Carl McIntire, president of the Seminary Board and a founding father of the Bible Presbyterian Church, USA, was particularly articulate in speaking against Protestantism's sliding back to Rome. So, he sounded a clarion call for a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation, which became organized as the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) in Amsterdam in 1948. The same year the Ecumenical Movement was established in the same City as the World Council of Churches. (Note that the WCC is not Christian!)....

When the challenge to join the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation was given by Dr McIntire to Faith Seminary students, the founding pastor of the B-P Church, Singapore, Timothy Tow, then a junior, felt God's call to join the movement.... Thus, in our Stand for the Faith, we can trace to Dr Carl McIntire, leader of the Bible Presbyterians and president of the ICCC, who must be acknowledged our American Root.<sup>29</sup>

A biography of Dr Carl McIntire penned by Rhoads and Anderson titled *McIntire: Defender of Faith and Freedom*<sup>30</sup> gave the reason why a biography of McIntire was necessary,

Although esteemed around the world, even by many heads of state, Dr. Carl McIntire was one of the most criticized men in his own country. Americans are well known for their love of fair play, so we want to tell another side of the story. This biography is written with the encouragement, cooperation and written contributions of many who knew Carl McIntire best—members of his congregation, family, and friends—in an attempt to set the record straight for posterity.<sup>31</sup>

The Rev Dr Carl McIntire lived from 1906–2002 and he led the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) of which the BPC was a part from 1948 to 2002. When McIntire passed away, a large book in memory of him was published. This book is accessible from the Timothy Tow Memorial Library of FEBC.<sup>32</sup>

The BPC can trace its Reformed heritage back to John Calvin of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Reformation and Carl McIntire of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation Movement. Sadly, the term “Reformed” is rather nebulous today. This is because those who claim to be Reformed are not really so. Church historian George Marsden wrote,

‘Reformed’ has numerous differing connotations. In the United States alone there are about a dozen Reformed denominations and perhaps another half-dozen with a Reformed heritage. Within each of the Reformed denominations varieties of meanings are given to being ‘Reformed.’ These may reflect European traditions, such as Scottish or Dutch, or continental neoorthodox, as well as a variety of American developments. Each such type includes differing subtypes. For instance, within the Reformed Church in America alone, ten distinct approaches to the Reformed faith have been identified. Differences across denominational lines may be sharper. A strictly confessional member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (Covenanters) might be most unhappy with the preaching at Robert Schuller’s Crystal Cathedral. A fundamentalist Bible Presbyterian would refuse fellowship with almost any member of the United Church of Christ. And within most of the larger Reformed denominations, conservatives and progressives are locked in intense struggles over the true meaning of the faith.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, the BPC in Singapore suffers the same malaise. The name “Bible-Presbyterian” has all but lost its meaning and significance when certain parts of its history, doctrines and ethos have been revised and redefined by the more liberal or neo-evangelical parties within its denomination. For instance, a number of BPCs (seven to be exact) have anomalously called themselves “The Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore” (BPCIS).<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that the main leaders of this group of churches—the Rev Dr Quek Swee Hwa and the Rev Dr David Wong—played a significant role in the dissolution of the BP Synod in 1988 because of their compromising views on Bible versions, tongues-speaking, and biblical separation. Dr S H Tow, Senior Pastor of Calvary Pandan BPC, rightly observed, “What’s a ‘B-P’? The name of the game today is to play by rules of one’s own making. Time-honoured names continue to be worn by those who play a different game.”<sup>35</sup>

It is important that one of the main distinctives of the BPC is its belief and practice of biblical separation from all forms of apostasy and compromise. In a book of quotations from Dr McIntire’s ministry titled ‘Freedom Is My Business’ compiled on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, New Jersey, October 1, 1933 to October 2, 1983, there are found the following statements on the BPC vis-à-vis the apostasy from which it separated:<sup>36</sup>

- (1) When our church was formed in 1937, the word “Bible” was placed in front of the name ‘Presbyterian’ because the great fundamentalist-modernist controversy had centred around the Bible.
- (2) Distinctions which give birth to the various branches of the visible church are valid and cannot be minimized, for they are based upon the solid conviction that there is such a thing as truth and that it is the duty of God’s people to search it out.
- (3) The Bible Presbyterian Church is a militant church in the defense of the faith.
- (4) The Bible Presbyterian Church is a Bible preaching and evangelistic church.
- (5) The Bible Presbyterian Church is a confessional church. It accepts the historic Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.
- (6) We are in the midst of a 20<sup>th</sup> century reformation which will do to a large sector of the Protestant church, with its departures from the confession of Peter, exactly what the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation did to the Roman Catholic church in its misrepresentation of the confession of Peter.
- (7) The Neo-Evangelicals have deserted the battle to preserve a militant church.
- (8) Believers and non-believers cannot have Christian unity.
- (9) A false love is Satan’s tool to promote compromise and disobedience to Christ’s command.
- (10) The independent-agency structure which the Bible Presbyterian Church maintains has produced a decentralization and a genuine liberty which enables the faithful and non-political promotion of true doctrine.
- (11) The [Neo]-evangelicals who work and hold fellowship with the modernist unbelievers are more abusive and do more harm to the cause of the Gospel and the purity of the church than the liberals themselves.
- (12) The Church of Christ simply cannot be preserved without emphasis upon separation from the world and from apostasy.
- (13) The churches need first reformation or separation, before evangelism.
- (14) The marks of a true church are faithful preaching of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of discipline. The means of grace for the blessing and the strengthening of the people of God are the Word of God, prayer, and the sacraments.

The BPC was known for its opposition to Billy Graham and his neo-evangelicalism and ecumenical evangelism. Carl McIntire said that Billy Graham had become “a cover for the apostates.”<sup>37</sup> The Rev Dr Timothy Tow likewise saw the danger in the compromises of Billy Graham and took a stand against him. He was sorely persecuted by his own for that. Tow recounted the dissentious spirit in the years 1968 and 1969 when he warned against Graham,

Hitherto, the witness of separation from modernistic unbelief and ecumenical apostasy had received full support of the Church. However, when “evangelical” leaders like Dr. Billy Graham began to fraternize with the apostate ecclesiastical powers for the sake of “cooperative evangelism” and the pastor pointed out the unscripturalness of such a relationship (2 Cor. 6:14–18), one or two Session members who differed with the pastor introduced a dissentious spirit in the Church,... On and off the problem of Dr. Billy Graham cropped up while the *Far Eastern Beacon* serialized J.A. Johnson’s book on Billy Graham—“the Jehoshaphat of Our Generation”. The historic position of Life Church and of the Bible-Presbyterian Church movement in this respect was libelled even by the Taiwanese assistant of the Chinese Service. The opposition in Life Church Session against the pastor increased from one or two dissenters to several...

The spirit of dissension against the uncompromising, separatist stand of the Church manifested itself in the new building project. When plans for the three-storey Church-and-College extension incorporating a kindergarten were approved in February 1968, the same Session members, who were unhappy over the Billy Graham issue, opposed the launching of building operations. This opposition was of no avail, for God’s good hand was upon His own work.... The three-storey [extension] Block was completed in exactly one year.<sup>38</sup>

“Birds of a feather flock together”. Now, the new BPs mainly from the “Mountain” churches (especially Zion and Carmel) in their recent book *Heritage and Legacy* (146–148) have resumed criticising our founding father Timothy Tow and his stand against Billy Graham.<sup>39</sup> They favour Graham and oppose Tow. It reveals their neo-evangelical colours which brought about the schism in the past and the division in the present.<sup>40</sup> The fall of Billy Graham into neo-evangelicalism and ecumenism is ably exposed and well documented by the following authors—J A Johnson, Ian Paisley, Brad K Gsell, Wilson Ewin, Ian Brown, and Robert Kofahl.<sup>41</sup>

The dissenting BPs deny that they had compromised or are compromising the faith. They appeal to their “right of private conscience”.<sup>42</sup> True BPs have never denied anyone their right to their personal conscience, but whether that conscience is governed by God’s Spirit and God’s Word is altogether another matter. The Bible warns against having a bad one—one that is seared or defiled (1 Tim 4:2, Tit 1:15).

Dr Carl McIntire had to defend his biblical viewpoint over and over again reminding people, “What men believe determines what they do and where they stand.... Separation is a Bible word, it is a Bible command, it is a Bible doctrine.”

Yet those who engage in compromise are the strongest in their denials that they are compromising. Like King Saul, they assert [that they have obeyed] “the commandment of the Lord,” and when Samuel questions, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” the answer is, “The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God.” The testimony of the Lord remains the same throughout the centuries, “Hath the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.”<sup>43</sup>

How can these dissenting BPs claim to be “original” BPs when they speak so differently from and disparagingly of their Singaporean and American founding fathers?

Another distinctive of the biblical separation of the BPC is its total abstinence from tobacco and alcohol—strictly no smoking, no drinking:

Practical Separation is grounded in, flows from, and is impossible apart from, Ecclesiastical Separation (II Cor. 7:1). This means that we believe Christians should lead holy lives of moral purity, separated from worldly activities that stimulate the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:15–17). Because certain things clearly defile the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, it has historically been, and continues to be, our strong conviction that the drinking of beverage alcohol, and the use of tobacco in any of its forms is sin. (“What We Believe”, <http://thebiblepresbyterianchurch.org/what-we-believe-a-summary>).

However, the new BPs will not “impose singular conformity through a top-down or high-handed way” the following: (1) gambling, (2) cinemas, (3) modern dance between sexes, (4) alcoholic beverages and



tobacco, and (5) pubs and night clubs. They say that Christians should be discouraged from these worldly practices in a “graded fashion and tone [since] there will be divergent views among members.”<sup>44</sup> But what does God’s Word say? Consider Romans 12:1–2, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

Another doctrinal distinctive of the American BPC is premillennialism (ie Christ will return to judge this wicked world and then reign on earth for a thousand years).

Disputes about dispensationalism revealed two distinct camps within the leadership of the OPC [Orthodox Presbyterian Church]—one side Old School Presbyterian in outlook, the other fundamentalist. The Old School party, led by Machen, consisted of the majority of Westminster’s faculty, many of whom came from non-American Reformed traditions such as Scottish Presbyterianism (John Murray), and Dutch Calvinism (Cornelius Van Til, Ned B. Stonehouse, and R. B. Kuiper). This group was characterized by a high regard for the Westminster Confession, Presbyterian polity, and Reformed piety (e.g., liberty in various matters such as beverage alcohol and tobacco,...). The fundamentalist party was led by Carl McIntire, J. Oliver Buswell, and Allan MacRae,... Though Buswell and MacRae disavowed the dispensationalist label, this group was premillennialist... They also... promoted a form of piety that featured abstinence from liquor, tobacco, movies, dancing, and cards.<sup>45</sup>

J Oliver Buswell’s Systematic Theology demonstrates the biblical grounds for premillennialism. See Jeffrey Khoo’s “Dispensational Premillennialism in Reformed Theology” which was presented at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 15–17, 2000 in Nashville Tennessee, USA.<sup>46</sup> It is important to note that the premillennialism of the BPC sees a distinction between Israel and the Church. BPism affirms Covenant Theology and the Reformed tenets of divine sovereignty and covenant faithfulness for sure. As such, it sees consistency in God’s covenant promises not only to His Church but also His chosen nation Israel (Rom 11:26) in contradistinction to amillennialism, postmillennialism and so-called historic premillennialism.

## **Singapore (Rev Dr Timothy Tow)**

The BPC and movement in Singapore and Southeast Asia is due to the Lord calling and using its founding pastor and first theologian—the Rev Dr Timothy Tow (1920–2009). Upon his graduation from Faith Theological Seminary in May 1950, Life Church (*Say Mia Tng*) invited him to start an English service (October 20, 1950). The English church grew to become a denomination comprising 43 churches in Singapore today, and many more in ASEAN, even Australia, Canada, China, England, India, Korea, Kenya and Tanzania. Our founding pastor testified,

When the challenge to join the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation was given by Dr McIntire to Faith Seminary students, the founding pastor of the B-P Church, Singapore, Timothy Tow...felt God's call to join the movement. Fired with a crusading zeal to defend the Faith, he wrote Elder Quek Kiok Chiang, then of the Teochew-speaking mother church (*Say Mia Tng*) at Prinsep Street to join the ICCC. Like David and Jonathan, the two leaders of this B-P Church in embryo began to impart the spirit of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation to the congregation that gathered after them....

We have other founding members rising to bear the torch of the separatist stand and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation movement. One who took a firm stand with us from the beginning...is Rev Silas C T Hsu. A younger member who has arisen since the coming of Dr Billy Graham, foremost ecumenical evangelist, to Singapore in 1978 is Dr Tow Siang Hwa. Seeing through the deadly leaven of neo-evangelical 'cooperative' evangelism and neo-evangelical 'scholarship,' Dr Tow has added his voice to the older founding fathers by publishing the B-P Banner, for many years the official organ of the B-P Church of Singapore. ...

Though our founding fathers belong to the migrant generation, having come to make their home in Singapore in the 1920s and 30s, they are nevertheless citizens of a new Singapore, like sons of the soil, having been domiciled here almost all their life. They may be called a 'bridge' generation, with cultural roots plucked up from the Chinese mainland, but are now firmly transplanted here. They are loyal and patriotic citizens of the new Singapore (independent from British rule since 1965), but even more fervent in the service of God's Kingdom worldwide. These are our Singapore Roots.<sup>47</sup>

The new BPs in their book *Heritage and Legacy* malign and defame the founding pastor of the BPC when they said, "...the strong-willed personalities tend to enforce their rules on the rest. Hence, within the first

decade, ministers and Session members were considered ‘dissenters’ for disagreeing with the founding pastor, even though they represented the majority view.”<sup>48</sup> Their statement that they represented the majority view has no supporting evidence or documentation whatsoever.

Many who knew the Rev Dr Timothy Tow would aver that he was a most gentle and generous man of God. He had very strong and firm convictions for sure, for he was given totally to His Lord and His Word and would not compromise his faith no matter what, but He was selfless and sacrificial when ministering to God’s people. His life motto was taken from Mark 8:36, “*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*” (a verse given to him by Dr John Sung). He sought neither fame nor fortune—only the glory of God, earnestly contending for the faith (Jude 3). “*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*” (Gal 1:10). Evidently, the populists, moderates and compromisers are not pleased.

The doctrines of the fundamental and conservative BPCs follow mainly the Statement of Faith of FEBC, especially its statement on the inspiration and preservation of the Holy Scriptures. The FEBC Statement of Faith as found in Article 4 of its Constitution reads as follows:

The Statement of Faith of the College shall be in accordance with that system commonly called “the Reformed Faith” as expressed in the Confession of Faith as set forth by the historic Westminster Assembly together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. In abbreviated form, the chief tenets of the doctrine of the College, apart from the Doctrinal Position Statement of the College, shall be as follows:

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).

We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant.

We uphold the Authorised (King James) Version to be the Word of God—the best, most faithful, most accurate, most beautiful translation of the Bible in the English language, and do employ it alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.

The Board of Directors and Faculty shall affirm their allegiance to the Word of God by taking the Dean Burgon Oath at every annual convocation: “I swear in the Name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit that I believe “the Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme.”

We believe in one God existing in three co-equal and co-eternal Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut 6:4, 1 John 5:7).

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and is true God and true man in complete and direct fulfilment of Isaiah 7:14 (Matt 1:20–23, John 1:1, 14, Col 2:9).

We believe God created the whole universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) by the Word of His mouth, and all very good, in the space of six literal or natural days (Gen 1:1, Exod 20:11, Ps 148:5, John 1:3, Col 1:16, Heb 11:3).

We believe that man was created in the image of God, but sinned through the fall of Adam, thereby incurring not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and become sinners in thought, word and deed (Gen 1:26–27, Rom 3:19–20, 5:12, 6:23).

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died a propitiatory and expiatory death as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who repent of their sins and believe in Him are justified before God on the grounds of His shed blood (Rom 5:8–11, 1 John 2:2, 1 Pet 1:18–19).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His ascension into Heaven, and in His exaltation at the right hand of God, where He intercedes for us as our High Priest and Advocate (1 Cor 15:1–4, 15–19, Phil 2:9–11, Heb 3:1, 4:14–16).

We believe in the personal, visible and premillennial return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to judge this world, restore His chosen nation Israel to greatness, and bring peace to the nations as King of kings and Lord of lords (Jer 3:17, Zech 14:9, Acts 1:6, Rom 11:26, Rev 20:1–7).

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith alone, not by works, and that all who repent and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become the children of God (Rom 5:1, 8:14–16, Eph 2:8–10, 1 Tim 2:5, Tit 3:5).

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We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and to convict and regenerate the sinner, and indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service (John 16:7–14, Rom 8:1–2).

We believe that Christ instituted the Sacrament of Baptism for believers and their children and the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, which sacraments shall be observed by His Church till He comes (Matt 28:19, 1 Cor 11:23–26).

We believe in the eternal security, bodily resurrection and eternal blessedness of the saved, and in the bodily resurrection and eternal conscious punishment of the lost (John 10:27–29, 1 Cor 15:51–53, 1 Thess 4:13–18, Rev 20:11–15).

We believe in the real, spiritual unity in Christ of all redeemed by His precious blood and the necessity of faithfully maintaining the purity of the Church in doctrine and life according to the Word of God, and the principle and practice of biblical separation from the apostasy of the day being spearheaded by the ecumenical movement, charismatic movement and other false movements that contradict the Holy Scriptures and the Historic Christian Faith (2 Cor 6:14–7:1, Jude 3, Rev 18:4).

Besides the above Statement of Faith, pastors and preachers of fundamental and conservative BPCs take the following doctrinal positions of FEBC:

I do dismiss the JEDP theory, and source/form/redaction criticism as products of modernistic scholarship, and do consider them to be illegitimate and destructive means of interpreting the Pentateuch, and the Synoptic Gospels. See Jeffrey Khoo, “Wrongly Dividing the Synoptic Gospels: A Critique of the Historical-Critical Methodology” in *The Gospels in Unison* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1996), 211–219.

I do reject the neo-evangelical hermeneutic of Walter C Kaiser, namely, the Analogy of Antecedent Scripture, as fallacious. See Jeffrey Khoo, “The Hermeneutics of Walter C Kaiser Jr” in FEBC’s 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Magazine (1962–1992), 15–16, “The Sign of the Virgin Birth” *The Burning Bush* 1 (1995): 5–33.

I do reject Hyper-Calvinism in its denial of God’s common grace, and of the free offer of the Gospel. See Timothy Tow, “Calvin’s Clock of the Sevenfold Will of God,” *The Burning Bush* 3 (1997): 84–88, “Lopsided Calvinism” in *The Story of My Bible-Presbyterian Faith* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 1999), 93–100; and Jeffrey Khoo, “Hyper-Calvinism in the Light of Calvin,” *The Burning Bush* 3 (1997): 89–96.

I do believe in the biblical doctrine and practice of personal and ecclesiastical separation from all forms of unbelief and apostasy, viz Romanism, Ecumenism, Modernism, Charismaticism, and Neo-evangelicalism. See Jeffrey Khoo, *Biblical Separation: Doctrine of Church Purification and Preservation* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 1999).

I do reject as false the tongues-speaking, demon-casting, faith healing, dreams and visions, words of wisdom/knowledge/faith, prophecies, slaying of the Spirit, holy laughing and dancing of the Pentecostal, Charismatic, or Vineyard Movement. See Jeffrey Khoo, *Charismaticism Q&A* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 1999); Timothy Tow, *Wang Ming Tao and Charismaticism* (Singapore, Christian Life Publishers, 1989); and “The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error,” *The Burning Bush 2* (1996): 15–29. **[Heritage & Legacy says that there are two kinds of tongues—tongues that are human languages and tongues that are ecstatic utterances, and that there are two views on cessation—tongues have either ceased when the NT canon was completed or at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ.<sup>49</sup> Take your pick!]**

I do believe God created the universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), and do regard Genesis 1:1 as an independent clause stating the first creative act of God (cf John 1:3, Col 1:16, Heb 11:3). Read Quek Suan Yew, “Creation *Ex Nihilo* is Genesis 1:1,” *The Burning Bush 3* (1997): 107–117. See also John C Whitcomb, *The Early Earth*, rev ed (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986).

I do believe God created all things perfectly and very good in six literal or natural, and not figurative or poetic, days. See Whitcomb’s *Early Earth*. Arguments: (1) numerical adjective (Gen 1:5,8,13,19,23), (2) “evening and morning” (cf Dan 8:26), (3) 4<sup>th</sup> commandment (Exod 20:11), (4) “days” and “years” (Gen 1:14).

I do believe the Genesis Flood was global or universal, and reject all other views which attempt to limit the geographical extent of the Flood. See John C Whitcomb and Henry M Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1961), and John C Whitcomb, *The World That Perished*, rev ed (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988). Arguments: (1) universal terminology (Gen 6:17), (2) mountains covered (Gen 7:19), (3) ark itself, (4) rainbow covenant (Gen 9:8–17), (5) Peter’s commentary (2 Pet 3:6–7).

I do believe Isaiah 7:14 is a strictly messianic prophecy historically fulfilled only by Jesus Christ who was conceived supernaturally in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit as announced by the angel (Matt 1:22–23, Luke 1:26–35). See Jeffrey Khoo, “The Sign of the Virgin Birth,” *The Burning Bush 1* (1995): 5–33.

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I do subscribe to the premillennial view of eschatology that recognises a distinction between Israel and the Church. See Timothy Tow, *Prophescope on Israel* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1992), *Visions of the Princely Prophet: A Study of the Book of Daniel* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1995), *Coming World Events Unveiled: A Study of the Book of Revelation* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1995).

I do reject the so-called “Biblical/Christian Counselling” of today (as taught by Gary Collins, Larry Crabb, Frank Minirth et al) that is influenced by Freudian or humanistic methods which essentially question the sufficiency of Scriptures, and the power of the Gospel. See Timothy Tow, *Counselling Recipes* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1994).

I do reject the modern-day Church Growth movement (as promoted by George Barna, Bill Hybels, C Peter Wagner et al) which advocates worldly techniques or carnal methods to increase church membership. See Timothy Tow, *Forty Years to Church Growth* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1993).

### “FOCUS I”

In *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, it was revealed that a “B-P minister” (unnamed) “shook the faith of the Church” in his teaching material called FOCUS I—THE BIBLE, published in 1974.<sup>50</sup> In the Foreword, the B-P minister exhorted “Sunday School teachers, youth and adult leaders” to “Please go through these materials and try to make use of some of them in your classes and meetings. You play a vital part in our Focus Programme”. In his notes on “FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE”, he wrote on (1) Chronology:

“The period covered by the Bible cannot be known, since it is virtually endless. The Bible began with the condition of the universe before the creation (Gen. 1.2)...

“Nevertheless the period within which the 66 books were written can be known. Moses, who lived about [sic] BC 1450 (or possibly BC 1230), was the first writer...

“The dates of the earlier part of Genesis are difficult to determine, especially the age of the patriarchs. We can state the problem in this way:  
a. The O.T. is not alone in recording the longevity of ancient men. The Babylonians, Egyptians, Hindus, and others also have such traditions. b. Our conclusions are either that men really lived that long or that there must be some other explanation for ‘years’ in Genesis. E.g. if years = months, then Noah’s 950 years were in effect 950 months and he was 80 years old when he died.” (bold and underlining mine)

(2) Historical and Geographical References:

There are some matters which **cannot be ascertained because we have no way of determining the facts of the case.** Among some of these are: the precise location of Eden; where is Noah's Ark today? **Was the Flood over the whole world or only a part of it?**" (bold and underlining mine)

The author of that material (ie FOCUS) is now revealed to be Quek Swee Hwa. In *Heritage & Legacy*, Quek said that the questioning of what he wrote in FOCUS are "flimsy claims against me".<sup>51</sup> Concerning (1) Chronology, Quek protests that he was merely quoting Halley's *Pocket Bible Handbook* when he referred to years being months, and "I clarified that it is not my view." There are a couple of problems with his explanation: First problem is that there is no mention that he was quoting and no source was given. Second is the fact that he did not state in his notes that it was not his view. A plain reading of his material shows that he was presenting an alternative view which he considered tenable. Quek also allowed for the late dating of the Exodus (13<sup>th</sup> century), a view propounded by Liberals and Neo-evangelicals for they do not accept the historical inerrancy and authority of the Bible.

On (2) Historical and Geographical References, Quek rightly observed that there are certain things for which we have no answer, but certainly not the Flood! In his notes, he clearly opened the Genesis Flood up for questioning. There is no question that the Bible is utterly clear with regard to the geographical extent of the Flood—it was global! Quek now says he is of the opinion that the flood was universal. That is good. But the question remains: What does he mean by "universal"? Is it global in the geographical sense or in the anthropological sense? There is a difference. It is still not clear what his position is.

As far as true BPCs and FEBC are concerned, we teach the Bible strictly and authoritatively—the Bible means what it says and says what it means. With regard to biblical and theological scholarship, Fundamentalists teach with a Yes and Amen; Liberals teach with a No and Never; Neo-evangelicals teach with a Yes and No—their equivocation is such that you can never be sure what they are really saying or not saying.<sup>52</sup>

### **Secondary Separation**

The BPCIS and new BPs not only do not teach certain fundamental doctrines correctly, they also depart from the doctrine and practice of



biblical separation. They deny “Secondary Separation”.<sup>53</sup> Secondary or so called second-degree separation is taught in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 13–15, *“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.... But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”*<sup>54</sup>

### **Charismatic and Contemporary Worship**

The conservative and fundamental BPCs reject Charismaticism and its contemporary styles of worship and music.<sup>55</sup> The BPCIS and new BPs, on the other hand, accept them. They ask, “[S]hould we ... allow contemporary songs of worship that the younger generation more readily identifies with? ... should we also allow other instruments since music is a powerful force that shapes the worship experience through contemporary songs? Our Presbytery has left such decisions to the discernment of individual churches.” They say it is “subjective” to insist on “piano-organ only, without electric guitars and especially drums.”<sup>56</sup> Our warning is this: Beware of offering strange fire to God (Lev 10:1).<sup>57</sup>

### **KJV Not Modern Versions**

The BPC from the start has used the King James Version (KJV) as the primary Bible for worship and study. The KJV is the traditional Bible for fundamental and conservative churches since the Protestant Reformation. The use of the KJV is based on the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) which concerns the divinely inspired Hebrew and Greek Scriptures on which the KJV is based. VPP is taught in Psalm 12:6–7 and Matthew 5:18 among many other verses, and in the WCF I.8.<sup>58</sup>

The BPCIS and new BPs however affirm the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures but only in the autographs (the original or very first writings or manuscripts which they do not have and cannot produce). Nevertheless, they believe “the Scriptures have been preserved for us to read and understand sufficiently and we do not take the position of Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Scriptures in any of the Textus Receptus editions or in the King James Version”.<sup>59</sup> As for the English Bibles, they promote the New International Version (NIV) and the English Standard Version (ESV) which are based on the corrupt Westcott and Hort text

or so called eclectic text. By denying VPP and promoting the modern corrupt versions and their underlying critical and corrupt texts, the BPCIS and new BPs have contradicted (1) the Reformed Faith, (2) the WCF, and (3) the Bible on which the BPC was founded and has used since its founding. As such, they should cease and desist from any claim that they are the “original” BPs.

### **Burial Not Cremation**

The BPCs traditionally bury their dead based on Romans 6:3–5 (cf 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, 42–44). The planting or sowing metaphor used by the Apostle Paul points to burial and not cremation. This agrees with the gospel of Christ. Just as Christ was buried and rose from the dead according to the Scriptures, so ought every believer to follow the Lord and the Scriptures—to be buried and to await the resurrection.<sup>60</sup>

The BPCIS and new BPs say they exercise “the right to be practical and has allowed member-churches to decide between burial or cremation. ...the reality on the ground today is that more and more members are opting for cremation over burial...”<sup>61</sup> It goes without saying that as Christians, we should not decide on spiritual matters on the grounds of expediency (ie convenience) or utilitarianism (ie practicality). Our grounds for faith and practice must always be biblical—the Bible is our sole, supreme and final authority of faith and practice. The doctrines of baptism and resurrection point to burial. Furthermore, Jesus was buried; He set the Example and we follow Him. Burial serves to highlight the gospel, our faith and our testimony in life and in death.

These new BPs in the newly formed BPCIS who disagree with the founder of the BPC, his teachings and ethos should withdraw from the BPC and start their own and call it by another name. That would have been the honourable thing to do. They should not undermine the original biblical-theological foundations of the BPC. Further, by badmouthing the founding pastor and trying to undo the good work he had done, they violate the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Choon Lan Chua, gen ed, *Heritage and Legacy of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore* (Singapore: Finishing Well Ministries, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story* (Singapore: Life Book Centre, 1995), and *The Story of My Bible-Presbyterian Faith* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1999), among others found in “He Being Dead Yet Speaketh: Remembering the Life and Teachings of Pastor Timothy Tow on the Occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Thanksgiving

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of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (2003–2013), CD Rom, [https://www.truelifebpc.org.sg/he\\_being\\_dead\\_yet\\_speaketh](https://www.truelifebpc.org.sg/he_being_dead_yet_speaketh), accessed 20 May 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Bobby Sng, *In His Good Time* (Singapore: Graduates' Christian Fellowship, 1993), 241.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 244.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Keith Hinton, *Growing Churches Singapore Style* (Singapore: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1985), 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 128.

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, sv “Bible-Presbyterian Churches (Singapore)”.

<sup>9</sup> Dean Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 25.

<sup>10</sup> Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, 9–18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 9–10.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Tow, *An Abridgment of Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, 1997), vi.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy Tow, *Son of a Mother's Vow* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, 2001), 31, 57–59.

<sup>15</sup> Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, 10.

<sup>16</sup> See Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter VII. See also Timothy Tow, *The Law of Moses and of Jesus* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1986) which was his Master of Sacred Theology (STM) thesis at Faith Theological Seminary.

<sup>17</sup> See *To Magnify His Word*, Far Eastern Bible College, Golden Jubilee Yearbook, 2012, 264–278. See also Wikipedia sv “*Khoo Jeffrey and others v Life Bible-Presbyterian Church and others*”, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khoo\\_Jeffrey\\_and\\_others\\_v\\_Life\\_Bible-Presbyterian\\_Church\\_and\\_others](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khoo_Jeffrey_and_others_v_Life_Bible-Presbyterian_Church_and_others), accessed on 21 May 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, 10–11.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 15. For a full account of Timothy Tow's conversion (and of the others), read “The Singapore Pentecost” in Tow's autobiography *Son of a Mother's Vow* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, 2001), 63–84.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy Tow, *Asian Awakening* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, 1988), 38–39.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Tan and Joycelyn Chng, eds, *Heavenly Melodies: Hymns, Choruses and Verses of Timothy Tow* (Singapore: True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 515.

<sup>27</sup> Tow, *Asian Awakening*, 40.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>29</sup> Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, 16–17.

<sup>30</sup> Gladys Titzck Rhoads and Nancy Titzck Anderson, *McIntire: Defender of Faith and Freedom* (USA: Xulon Press, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, Preface. A biography critical of McIntire was written by Markku Ruotsila focusing on how McIntire impacted American politics especially his fight against Communism. The book is called *Fighting Fundamentalist: Carl McIntire and the Politicization of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> *The McIntire Memorial* was published in 2005 by the Executive/Standing Committee of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) edited by John Dekker, Ovid Hepler, Edwin Ormeo, Frank Mood, and KC Quek.

<sup>33</sup> David F Wells, ed, *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997), 1.

<sup>34</sup> See Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 510–517

<sup>35</sup> Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, 220.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 41–44.

<sup>37</sup> New York Times News Service, *Chicago Tribune*, March 23, 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Timothy Tow, *Disciples of McIntire* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 2002), 60–62.

<sup>39</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 146–148.

<sup>40</sup> For a critique, see Jeffrey Khoo, “Biblical Separation of Bible-Presbyterianism”, *The Burning Bush* 25 (2019): 66–76.

<sup>41</sup> J A Johnson, *Billy Graham—the Jehoshaphat of Our Generation?* (Bangalore: Berean Publications, nd). Ian R K Paisley, *Billy Graham and the Church of Rome* (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1972). Brad K Gsell, *The Legacy of Billy Graham* (Charlotte: Fundamental Presbyterian Publications, 1998). Wilson Ewin, *The Assimilation of Evangelist Billy Graham into the Roman Catholic Church* (Canada: Quebec Baptist Missions, 1992). Ian Brown, *Billy Graham: Custodian of the Faith or Figure of Compromise?* (Londonderry: np, 1991). Robert E Kofahl, “Billy Graham Believes Catholic Doctrine of Salvation Without Bible, Gospel, or Name of Christ,” transcript of the interview of Billy Graham by Robert Schuller (<http://www.biblebb.com/files/tonyqa/tc00-105.htm>).

<sup>42</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 445.

<sup>43</sup> Rhoads and Anderson, *McIntire*, 229.

<sup>44</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 508.

<sup>45</sup> D G Hart and John Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight* (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1995), 46–47.

<sup>46</sup> The paper was first published in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001): 697–717, and later republished in Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *Theology for Every Christian: A Systematic Theology in the Reformed and Premillennial Tradition of J Oliver Buswell* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2007), 470–505.

<sup>47</sup> Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, 17–18. The life and work of the Rev Dr Timothy Tow is found in his autobiography *Son of a Mother's Vow* (Singapore: FEBC Bookroom, 2001). See also “*He Being Dead Yet Speaketh*”: *Remembering the Life and Teachings of Pastor Timothy Tow on the Occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Thanksgiving of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church* (2003–2013) in CD-ROM). Available from the Timothy Tow Memorial Library, Far Eastern Bible College, 9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063.

<sup>48</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 98–99.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 398.

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<sup>50</sup> Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, 219.

<sup>51</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 427.

<sup>52</sup> This is a trait of Neo-evangelicalism. Refer to Ernest D Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise: The Origin and Impact of New Evangelicalism* (Greenville: Bob Jones University, 1994).

<sup>53</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 518–521.

<sup>54</sup> For an exegetical exposition of the text, see Jeffrey Khoo, *Biblical Separation* (Singapore: Bible Witness Literature, 2004), 56–57, and Charles Seet, “The Principle of Secondary Separation”, *The Burning Bush 2* (1996): 40–48.

<sup>55</sup> For biblical reasons, see Jeffrey Khoo, *Charismaticism Q&A* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1998), 79–84.

<sup>56</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 515.

<sup>57</sup> See John MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (<https://www.gty.org/library/strangefire>).

<sup>58</sup> See *Forever Infallible and Inerrant: Remembering God’s Extraordinary Providence in Preserving His Inspired Words through the Traditional and Reformation Texts Underlying the King James Bible* (<http://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/assets/pdfs/vpp/foreverinfallibleinerrant.pdf>), and the many books and articles published by FEBC.

<sup>59</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 511.

<sup>60</sup> For more reasons why we should bury instead of cremate, see Jeffrey Khoo, “Burial or Cremation?”, *The Burning Bush 9* (2003): 44–49.

<sup>61</sup> Chua, *Heritage and Legacy*, 516.

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# THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A DISINTEGRATING WORLD

Seung-Kyu Park

*“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”* (2 Tim 4:1–2).

## Introduction

The topic for today’s message is “Theological Education in a Disintegrating World.” Throughout the year of 2020, we have been using many new terms which were previously unfamiliar to us. Last year, terms like “COVID-19”, “pandemic”, “quarantine”, “sanitiser”, “social-distancing”, “online worship service”, “prayer meetings and fellowships via Zoom”, etc were unheard of. Today, we live in what is called a “new normal.” What is this new normal? People use this term to normalise what is, in fact, an abnormal situation which we experience in the present time. Scholars say that we may not be able to return to the old normal any time soon.

In such difficult times, how can we continue on with theological education? Where can we get it? Of course, we find our answers to these questions in the Word of God. To address these questions, let us meditate on the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:1–2. We find, in this passage, the words of the Apostle Paul at the end of his life. As his last letter to his co-worker and spiritual son Timothy, he gave an advice that must never be forgotten!

The Apostle Paul declares in 2 Timothy 4:1–2a, *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word”*. This advice and command came from his life’s experiences. As a missionary, pastor, and theologian, Paul had done many things for the Word of God, for the Church and for God’s people. I am sure that Paul

would have desired to communicate many things to Timothy. Here, Paul concisely and solemnly charged Timothy. This command is not a joke, but a very serious charge! Let me give you a scenario: What are you going to say to your children and your co-workers at the last stage of your life? Will you be making a joke at that time? I am sure that you will be serious and careful because it is the last opportunity to express your heart's desire and advice for them.

So, we see here the Apostle Paul sternly commanding Timothy, and all servants of the Lord. We, who are called God's servants and workers, must take heed to Paul's charge, "*Preach the word.*" Remarkably simple! "*Preach the word.*" This is what we must do in ministry. Please do not forget to preach the Word!

Next, what kind of message or word do we preach? Can we preach whatever that comes to mind? No! The Bible explicitly mentions the *nature* and the *quality* of the Word. We see the conjunction "therefore" in verse 1. Interestingly, this conjunction is only found in the *Textus Receptus* and the King James Version. We do not find this conjunction in the *Textus Criticus* and most of the modern English versions. As you know well, conjunctions play a role in connecting the preceding content with the latter content. The nature and the quality of the Word, as mentioned by Paul, are found in the previous chapter. The Apostle Paul described the nature of the Word and called it "*the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim 3:15). The quality of the Word is likewise mentioned in the next verse, "*All scripture is **given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2 Tim 3:16). This tells us that the Word which we must preach is the Holy Bible which is given by inspiration of God!

### **Let Us Do What We Must Do: Preach the Word**

Firstly, let us do what we must do, which is to preach the Word! Dear friends, we must continue to preach and teach the words of the Holy Scriptures in the Far Eastern Bible College. There are many Bible colleges and seminaries in the world today. We can say that there is a kind of "theological training" taking place in those schools. However, students who enrolled with a fiery passion to know God more have become cold as ice after graduation. After graduation, students who have entered to become evangelists lose the zeal for winning the lost

and become salaried workers. After graduation, these students become teachers who no longer believe the Word of God as the Truth and have become agnostics.

Do you know the reason for this catastrophic change? There are many reasons, but I think the main reason is that those Bible colleges and seminaries no longer teach the Bible as the Word of God. It is worth remembering the saying, “What is not biblical is not theological” (*Quod non est biblicum, non est theologicum*). The only theology we should teach is the theology which helps us learn, understand, preach, and teach the Bible faithfully, correctly and deeply.

The Bible does not exist for theology; rather theology exists for the Bible. It is exceedingly difficult today to find the preaching and teaching of the Word of God – that is without compromise – in Bible colleges and seminaries around the world. This is the cause of all the problems within Christianity. During the Middle Ages, many scholars studied theology and obtained a “Doctor of Theology” degree. Many of them did not read the Bible at all, and so they became fools concerning the Bible. When I first learnt of this scholarly stupidity, I laughed a lot and mocked them in my heart. But as time went by, I realised that this is also happening in Bible colleges and seminaries in the Protestant camp today!

God’s workers need two callings. Firstly, God’s workers need the call to salvation. The second calling is the call to ministry. Every student entering the Bible college must submit testimonies of both salvation and ministry. However, sometimes, we have doubts about our students’ calling. In fact, some of them will say that the calling to the ministry has “expired”. If a calling expires, was the calling truly genuine?

As I understand it, the Bible college has two functions. One is to train and equip God’s workers who have a true calling for the ministry and the other is to redirect those who claim to have a calling for the ministry but actually do not go to the right path. In both cases, they need God’s Word. Just as in a local church, wherein we find that not all in the congregation are saved. There may also be unbelievers within the student body. We do our best to sieve out such students with God’s Word, and to win them with the Gospel. In this regard, I personally express my gratitude to the Far Eastern Bible College. My two daughters said they came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour while studying God’s Word in this Bible College. As a father, I had done everything I could to hand over the wisdom of salvation to them. By God’s grace,



they heard the systematic teaching of God's Word, and finally, they believed in Jesus as their personal Saviour and Lord. Praise the Lord!

Some say there are no miracles in the present day. But I believe that miracles still exist. How can a Bible college student believe in Jesus while studying theology in a seminary? Yes, this is a miracle. God is alive and works mightily through His Word, which has the power to save sinners. Therefore, let us learn, teach, and preach God's Word diligently. The Holy Scriptures are able to make our students wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. The Bible has the power of salvation because every letter in the Bible is inspired and God-breathed. The Bible has the power of life. God's Word is still alive. This Word makes the man of God "*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Tim 3:17).

The late Rev Dr Timothy Tow, the founding principal of the Far Eastern Bible College, said to his students, "You have to serve the Lord unconditionally." I would like to apply these words to today's message.

### **Let Us Do What We Can Do: Be Instant in Season, Out of Season**

Let us do what we can to preach and teach the Word in season and out of season. In the current COVID-19 situation, there are many things we are not allowed to do. We are restricted from gathering to worship on the Lord's Day. Our students who returned to their home countries during the holidays cannot come back to the College premises in Singapore. Yet, there is something we can do. We are worshiping online on the Lord's Day. Brethren who are thousands of miles away, like those in Africa, can participate in this worship service as well. Our online prayer meetings allow brethren from all over the world to join.

Many students are able to listen to the lectures with the live streaming of our day and night classes. During the last vacation, four subjects were offered in the online Daily Vacation Bible College. In the last semester, 12 subjects were live streamed. I am incredibly happy with this. There are some students in the Bible College of East Africa, who wanted to fly to the Far Eastern Bible College to study, but the immigration doors were closed. Of course, the best solution is still for African students to come over to Singapore and learn directly from the professors. But if that is not possible, why not we find another way to do it? I believe that we have found the way already because of COVID-19.

Now we can use all the lectures available online to teach and train our students all over the world.

The reason we love the Far Eastern Bible College is because of the faithful teaching of the Word of God, and not because of the benefits of Singapore. The Word of God has the power, not buildings and systems. If there is a way to preach the Word of God, we must do it, and continue to do it!

Let me introduce you to another saying of the Rev Dr Timothy Tow. He said, “The four walls of the church cannot contain me.” Let us not keep the faithful teaching of the Word of God within the four walls of Far Eastern Bible College, or within the shores of Singapore. Up till today, there are people around the world who earnestly long for God’s Word correctly proclaimed. There are those who desperately desire to learn the faithful teaching of the Far Eastern Bible College. If they cannot come here, should we not go to them? Please remember the Word: *“Be instant in season, out of season.”*

I believe the situation we live in today, with COVID-19 still as a looming threat, is an example of “out of season”. The full swing of activities in most churches has slowed down. Some have completely stopped worship services. But even in such out-of-season times, we still have to preach the Word! As we have been admonished, *“Preach the Word, in season and out of season”*.

We thank God for establishing and sustaining the Far Eastern Bible College. May the Lord use this Bible College mightily for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Let us preach the Word and be instant in season, out of season. Amen.

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# THE DIVISION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: A SCRIPTURAL RESPONSE TO CALVIN'S VIEW

Shermaine Tan

## Introduction

Calvin stated in his *Institutes* that there is a divine purpose in the division of the Moral Law (ie The Ten Commandments) into two tables. According to Calvin, God has purposed for the commandments of the first table to instruct man of his duties towards the worship of God; and those of the second table to instruct man of his duties towards fellow men.

We see clearly that God has divided His law into two parts, the first part assigned to the duties of religion, particularly worship of His majesty. The second part, He has assigned to the duties of charity, which respect men... Our Lord summarily comprised the whole law in two principal points — that we love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength; and that we love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt 22:37–40; Luke 10:27). Of the two parts in which he comprehends the whole law, we see how He directs one towards God, and assigns the other to men.<sup>1</sup>

This paper agrees with Calvin that there is a divine purpose in the division of the Ten Commandments. There in the Ten Commandments lies the generalisation of all the laws of God.<sup>2</sup> The Lord has taught that all the laws of God can be summarised into two main principles (Matt 22:36–40; Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:25–28).<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is scripturally supported that the Ten Commandments may be rightly divided to fit the two principles.

However, in the same chapter, Calvin speaks of a controversy regarding the division of the Ten Commandments between the two tables. Which of the Ten Commandments are directed to the worship of God, and which are in reference to one's duties towards fellow men. For Calvin, he supports the Four-Six division.

While there is no controversy over the law's division into ten, the question is not concerning the number of the precepts, but concerning

the manner of dividing them...Others reckon four in the first table; but the first commandment, they consider as a simple promise, without a precept. *I regard what they make the first precept to be a preface to the whole law. This is followed by the precepts, four belonging to the first table and six to the second.* This division was mentioned by Origen as if it were universally received, and by Augustine Josephus, according to the common opinion of his time, assigns five precepts to each table. This is repugnant to reason, because it confounds the distinction between religion and charity; and is also refuted by our Lord who, in Matthew, places the precept concerning honour to parents in the second table.<sup>4</sup>

In line with Calvin's understanding, the division of the Ten Commandments does carry theological implications. A Four-Six division implies that the fifth commandment is to be considered as one's duty to fellow men. While a Five-Five division would imply that the fifth commandment is implicit to the worship of God. In other words, the division of the Ten Commandments does have a direct impact on a Christian's understanding of the fifth commandment. Is honouring one's parents part of the worship of God, or is it part of one's duties towards fellow men? Arguably, a Christian's obedience to all the laws ought to be done in a worshipful spirit unto God. However, the nuance involved is as Calvin writes, a matter of "religion" versus "charity". It may be a subtle nuance, but not an unimportant one.

According to Calvin, the Five-Five division is a common opinion belonging to Josephus' time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, while the Four-Six division has since the time of Origen (2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century) been the opinion "universally accepted". Josephus wrote in his *Antiquities* (AD 93), "he [Moses] shewed them the two tables, with the ten commandments engraven upon them: five upon each table: and the writing was by the hand of God."<sup>5</sup> However, it is found that the differing opinions drive deeper than what Calvin surfaces in his *Institutes*.

(1) The Jews, from Philo to the present, divide the "ten words" into two groups of five each. As there were two tables, it would be natural to suppose that five commandments were recorded on each tablet, though the fact that the tablets had writing on both their sides (Ex 32:15) would seem to weaken the force of the argument for an equal division... (3) Calvin and many moderns assign four commandments to the first table and six to the second. This has the advantage of assigning all duties to God to the first table and all duties to men to the second. It also accords with our Lord's reduction of the commandments to two (Mt 22:34–40).<sup>6</sup>

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The term “Commandments” had come into use in the time of Christ. (Luke 18:20) Their division into two tables is not only expressly mentioned but the stress is upon the two leaves no doubt that the distinction was important, and that answered to that summary of the law which was made both by Moses and by Christ into two precepts; so that the first table contained Duties to God, and the second, Duties to our Neighbor. There are three principal divisions of the two tables: **1.** That of the Roman Catholic Church, making the first table contain three commandments and the second the other seven. **2.** The familiar division, referring the first four to our duty toward God and the six remaining to our duty toward man. **3.** The division recognized by the old Jewish writers, Josephus and Philo, which places five commandments in each table.<sup>7</sup>

The Jews and Josephus divide them equally. The Lutherans and Roman Catholics refer three commandments to the first table and seven to the second. The Greek and Reformed Churches refer four to the first and six to the second table. The Samaritans add to the second that Gerizim is the mount of worship.<sup>8</sup>

It would seem that the Five-Five division was only that held by Jewish people, but has since been replaced by modern Christian theologians. Importantly, it is attested by Calvin that only the Four-Six division is founded on theological grounds and hence to be regarded as reformed theology. However, there is a scriptural basis for a Five-Five division of the Ten Commandments and it can be founded on theological grounds as well.

This paper will first look at the support available for the Four-Six and Five-Five division of the Ten Commandments.<sup>9</sup> This is for the purpose of examining major lines of interpretation present today, as opposed to the claims that the Five-Five division finds support only during the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Thereafter, this paper will turn to a study of pertinent scriptural passages to examine the theological basis of a Five-Five division of the Ten Commandments. This paper will not examine the Three-Seven division of the Ten Commandments. Such a division is usually held by the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> In agreement with Calvin, it is deemed that such a division is based upon improper suppositions, and hence inaccurate to the Truth of Scripture.<sup>11</sup>

## **The Split in Dividing the Ten Commandments**

### **The Support for the Four-Six Division**

As seen in his *Institutes*, it will be noted that Calvin's main scriptural support for the Four-Six division lies in his interpretation of the Lord's words in Matthew 19. A detailed argument of Calvin can be found in his commentary on the fifth commandment found in Exodus 20:12.

Although charity (as being "the bond of perfectness," Col 3:14) contains the sum of the Second Table, still, mutual obligation does not prevent either parents or others, who are in authority, from retaining their proper position. Nay, human society cannot be maintained in its integrity, unless children modestly submit themselves to their parents, and unless those, who are set over others by God's ordinance, are even reverently honored. But inasmuch as the reverence which children pay to their parents is accounted a sort of piety, some have therefore foolishly placed this precept in the First Table.

Nor are they supported in this by Paul, though he does not enumerate this Commandment, where he collects the sum of the Second Table, (Ro 13:9); for he does this designedly, because he is there expressly teaching that obedience is to be paid to the authority of kings and magistrates. Christ, however, puts an end to the whole controversy, where, among the precepts of the Second Table, He enumerates this, that children should honor their parents. (Mt 19:19.)<sup>12</sup>

It is noted in the commentary that Calvin further provides Romans 13 as scriptural support for the Four-Six division. While the supposed scriptural support will be examined in a later section, it will now be observed that Calvin is not alone in contending for the Four-Six division. Chapter 19 of the Westminster Confession of Faith states, "This law... was delivered by God upon mount Sinai in ten commandments, and written in two tables; the first four commandments containing our duty towards God, and the other six our duty to man."<sup>13</sup> Transpiring across denominational lines, John Wesley's comment on Exodus 20:12 also assigns the fifth commandment to the second table of the Law.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it is common to find commentators holding the same interpretation of Matthew 19 as Calvin.

Honour thy father and thy mother:... This, as it is the first commandment with promise, so *the first of the second table*, and yet is here mentioned last; *which inversion of order is of no consequence*: so the "seventh" command is put before the "sixth", and the "fifth" omitted...And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; which is not a particular distinct

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command from the rest, or an explication of the tenth and last, not mentioned; but a recapitulation, or compendium, and abridgment of the whole, and is said to be a complement and fulfilling of the law.<sup>15</sup>

Three things we may observe: 1. *There are no commandments mentioned but those of the second table.* 2. *Nor are they reckoned up in order.* 3. The tenth commandment is expressed by, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”; which elsewhere our Saviour calls the second great commandment, and makes comprehensive of all the commandments of the second table. We must not from our Saviour’s order here, in the enumeration of the commandments, either conclude that the precepts of the second table are greater than those of the first, or that it is enough to keep them in order to eternal life: nor yet, that the fifth commandment is lesser than the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, because it is put after them.... As concerning the order in which they are enumerated, it was not our Saviour’s business here to show which was the greatest commandment; that he hath elsewhere determined, calling, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c., the first and great commandment”: *here he is not solicitous about the order.*<sup>16</sup>

Notably, a common comment of these theologians is the claim that the order in which the commandments are mentioned by the Lord is not critical to the passage’s interpretation. In other words, the fact that the fifth commandment was mentioned last holds no importance to the message intended in Matthew 19. However, this paper posits the contrary and contends that such a twist in order should instead draw attention to a careful consideration of its intended purpose.

A final commentary noteworthy to the discussion is taken from MacLaren’s interpretation of Exodus 20:21. Conforming to the common Four-Six division, but yet recognising a stark qualitative difference between the fifth commandment and the rest from the second table, MacLaren painstakingly seeks to provide a unique intermediary position for the fifth.

*The fifth, which is the first in this division, belongs in substance to the second half, but its form connects it with the first table.* It is like the preceding ones in having a reason appended, and in naming ‘the Lord thy God’; while the following are all bare, curt prohibitions. *The fact seems to be that it is a transition commandment,* and meant to cast special sacredness round the parental relationship, by paralleling it, in some sense, with that to God, of which it is a reflection. Other duties to other men stand on a different level from duties to parents. ‘Honour,’ which is to be theirs, is not remote from the reverence due to God. They

are, as it were, His shadows to the child. The fatherhood of God is dimly revealed in that *parting off the commandment from the second table, and assimilating it in form to the laws of the first.*<sup>17</sup>

It would hence be generally observed that the supposed scriptural based Four-Six division posited by Calvin is not without its difficulties in terms of explanation. Pointedly, there are some areas of explanation which almost seemed as a forced fit.

### **The Support for the Five-Five Division**

Contrary to the claim of Calvin, a careful collation of scholarly opinions would find that support for the Five-Five division is not limited to the period prior and during the time of Josephus. Instead, considerable support is found beyond the first century saints.

The contents of each table.—If, as suggested, the original commandments were single clauses, it is most natural to suppose that they were evenly divided between the two tables—five in each. This view is adopted without hesitation by Philo, and it is not contradicted by our Lord's division of the Law into the love of God and the love of one's neighbour. *It would be difficult to class parents in the category of neighbour, whereas the reverence due to them was by the ancients regarded as a specially sacred obligation, and was included, by both Greeks and Romans at any rate, under the notion of piety.*<sup>18</sup>

None of the formal institutions escape the rule and involvement of God, including that of family. The fifth command enforces the parent-child relationship as one of obedience of the latter to the former. *Father and mother represent God to a child. And as children should honor God in all they do, so should they honor their parents as well...* The next five commands involve man's treatment and relation to his neighbor.<sup>19</sup>

Honour thy father, &c. Philo well observeth, that this fifth commandment, which therefore he maketh a branch of the first table, and so divides the tables equally, is a mixed commandment, εντολη μικτη; and differs somewhat from the rest of those in the second table. They consider man as our neighbour, in nature like us: *this, as God's deputy, by him set over us, and in his name, and by his authority, performing offices about us.*<sup>20</sup>

A common line of argument is observed to be running through the support for the Five-Five division. And that has to do with the position of authority God has appointed all parents on His behalf over their children. It is argued that when children honour their parents, who are God's representatives over them, they are in fact honouring God by way of



the association. Such an explanation is scripturally supported and hence makes the Five-Five division viable.

## **The Testimony of the Scriptures**

### **The Form of the Fifth Commandment**

The first scripture-based argument this paper puts forth finds its link to the commentary of MacLaren as noted above. The fifth commandment is first given in Exodus 20:12, *“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”* Later, it is declared again in Deuteronomy 5:16, *“Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”* An objective description of the contrast between the fifth commandment and the rest, from the sixth to the tenth commandment, must surely arrive at the same observation made by MacLaren. There is a clear qualitative difference to the fifth commandment when compared to the rest.

However, it should be noted that such a qualitative difference is significant beyond just a change in “form”. It is critical that one pays attention to how the fulfilment of God’s covenantal blessings upon Israel is tied to the obedience of the fifth commandment. The word “that” is the particle לְמַעַן in the Hebrew Scriptures, and is here used with the verb אָרַךְ in its imperfect form. As such, it should clearly be interpreted here as a purpose clause.<sup>21</sup> That is to say, in order for an Israelite to enjoy God’s covenantal blessings upon the land, one must first fulfil the condition of giving due honour to one’s parents. This is also attested by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:1–3 of New Testament believers, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise:) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”* Indeed, the fifth commandment is a special commandment to which the promises of God’s covenant are tied, for the very reason that parents represent God.

Thus to an Israelite, dishonouring one’s parents is seen as dishonouring God who had brought them out of Egypt. A lack of filial piety to one’s earthly parents is a lack of piety towards the Heavenly Father, and a failure in the worship of Him. Notice the association between the honouring of one’s parents and the worship of God highlighted in Matthew 15:3–9,

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Parents have a preeminence over their children that is appointed by God Himself. They are not to be regarded as any other fellow men in one's life. They are authoritative figures who are appointed by God, to be regarded by children as His earthly representatives. This is also taught by Calvin in his *Institutes* regarding the fifth commandment.

The end of the precept is, that since the Lord God desires the preservation of the order He has appointed, the degrees of pre-eminence fixed by Him ought to be inviolably preserved. We should, therefore, reverence them whom God has exalted to any authority over us, and render them obedience. To those, to whom He gives any pre-eminence, He communicates His own authority for the preservation of that pre-eminence. We ought to recognise in a father something Divine, for he bears one of the titles of the Deity; while our prince, or our Lord, enjoys an honour somewhat similar to that which is given to God.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, based on the promise attached to the commandment and the corresponding authority of parents over their children, it is contended that the fifth commandment should not be perceived as a mere duty towards fellow men of the same standing, but as a conclusive commandment to the theme of the first table, which pertains to one's duty in the worship of God.

### **The Interpretation of Matthew 19**

Nonetheless, the strongest contention of Calvin comes from the account found in Matthew 19:16–22. The parallel passages being Mark 10:17–22 and Luke 18:18–23. The Bible records the interaction between Jesus and a rich young man who wanted to know the way to eternal life.

*And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if*

## THE DIVISION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

*thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

It has been seen earlier that contenders of the Four-Six division like Calvin, would find support from this passage that the fifth commandment is here included by the Lord as part of the second table. However, a deeper consideration of the passage is necessary, especially on the fact that the Lord had intentionally inversed the order of the commandments here. Is there a deeper purpose to the Lord's words here to the rich young ruler?

This young man was full of self-confidence claiming complete ability to keep all the commandments of God, and thought of himself as having fulfilled all the outward requirements of the commandments (ie not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing, not bearing false witness). However, the Lord intentionally left out listing the tenth commandment of not coveting to highlight the fact that by treasuring earthly possessions, he had in fact broken the tenth commandment.

Notwithstanding, attention should be drawn to the Lord's teaching point to this young man which is in the emphatic placement of the fifth commandment. The purpose for doing so must be to cause the young man to realise how all the outward display of obedience to his fellow men does not change the inward state of his heart's condition. One that was still not in submission before God, one that was still not in genuine repentance before God. It was as though the Lord was asking him rhetorically, "Have you truly honoured God?" For that is the only way to salvation and eternal life.

Indeed, it is as Calvin has taught, that without the fulfilment of the first and great commandment, there can never be a genuine obedience to the second. Although there is no religion without charity, it is also true that there is no charity without religion. In fact, the truth is that religion must come before charity. Thus, contrary to the opinion that this passage seals the Lord's distribution of the fifth commandment to the second table, this paper contends that it actually lends support to the first.

### **The Support of Romans 13**

Lastly, a pertinent scriptural passage that must be examined in light of the discussion is Romans 13:1–10. This is also a passage used by Calvin to provide support for the Four-Six division. It is said that the last three verses (ie 8–10) stand as a summary to Paul’s exhortation for Christians to fulfil their duty to fellow men by first ensuring that they obey the fifth commandment of honouring those in authority, which to Calvin lies at the top of the second table.

However, such an interpretation is very much subjected to Calvin’s already biased perception of the Ten Commandment’s division. Objectively speaking, Romans 13:1–7 could very well be seen as a separate exhortation, given that the rest of Paul’s exhortation from Romans 12 to 15 is also segmented into portions. Furthermore, arguing from the perspective that the fifth commandment belongs to the first table, it can also be posited that Paul’s exhortation in this passage transits from one’s duty to God, to one’s duty to men. Again, that would be a subjective interpretation of this passage. Thus, this writer disagrees with Calvin that there is ample support from this passage regarding the Four-Six division of the Ten Commandments.

### **Conclusion**

Calvin asserted his disagreement with Josephus’ division of the Ten Commandments in his commentary of Exodus 20:12,

Josephus indeed rightly enumerates the Commandments themselves in their proper order, but improperly attributes five Commandments to each table; as if God had regard to arithmetic rather than to instruct His people separately in the duties of charity, after having laid down for them the rules of piety. For up to this point the rule of rightly serving God has been delivered, *i.e.*, the First Table embraces a summary of piety; and now the Law will begin to show how men ought to live with each other, otherwise one Table would have been enough, nor would God have divided his Law without a purpose.<sup>23</sup>

It is noted that Calvin’s disagreement with Josephus’ division was based upon an arithmetic perception rather than a theological one. But should the arithmetic basis be without merit? As has been discussed, the basis for the Five-Five division is far from being just a matter of numbers. In fact, there can be scripturally grounded support for such a division, founded on the theological principle of all authority as the appointment of God (Rom 13:1–2). Parents are God’s representatives and children are to

submit to their authority (Eph 6:1, Col 3:20). When children honour their parents, they honour God, and when they dishonour their parents they dishonour God. As such, the fifth commandment should belong to the first table, and not the second.

Indeed, the placement of the fifth commandment holds little importance compared to the main tenets of Calvinism, and this writer is in full agreement with the reformed faith. However, the nuanced implications of placing the fifth commandment in the first half of the Ten Commandments should be taken seriously in light of reformed theology. Quoting Calvin, “The best rule of interpretation... will be that the exposition be directed to the design of the precept; that is regard to every precept, it should be considered for what end it was given.”<sup>24</sup> To what end then was the fifth commandment given? It is the conviction of this writer that the fifth commandment is part and parcel of man’s duty towards God, that it is to be obeyed as part of man’s worship of and service to God. This is not to say that parents are to be worshiped or served as gods, but that our reverence of them and submission to them is done unto God alone so that we might please Him.

The controversy between the Four-Six or Five-Five division of the Ten Commandments would perhaps continue throughout the ages. After all, Calvin is the “theologian of the Reformation”, and the Westminster Confession of Faith is a highly regarded article of the Christian faith amongst Bible-believing, God-fearing saints. However, there is one compromise that should never be made. Regardless of the placement of the commandments, one who is born-again should view these Ten Commandments as equal in importance, in terms of striving towards perfect obedience to every commandment, even to every word of God. Amen.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Tow, *An Abridgment of Calvin’s Institutes of The Christian Religion* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1997), 133.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *Theology for Every Christian: A Systematic Theology in the Reformed and Premillennial Tradition of J Oliver Buswell* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2007), 184.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 22:36–40, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

<sup>4</sup> Tow, *Abridgment*, 134. Emphasis added.

<sup>5</sup> William Whiston, *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus the Jewish Historian: Translated from the Original Greek, According to Havercamp's Accurate Edition*. Accessed May 8, 2020, <https://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup> John Richard Sampey, "Ten Commandments," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Accordance 11. 2. 5.0).

<sup>7</sup> William Smith, "Ten Commandments," *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Accordance 11. 2. 5.0).

<sup>8</sup> M. G. Easton, "Ten Commandments," *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Accordance 11. 2. 5.0).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.keithhunt.com/jesse/10com-count.htm> offers a good tabulation of the different numberings posited by the various denominations.

<sup>10</sup> "The Romish Church assigns only three commandments to the first table, and seven to the second. She unites the first and second commandments together, in order to make it appear that only the worship of false gods and images of them is forbidden, while the images of the true God and of saints are not excluded from the instruments of worship; and, in order to keep up the number, she divides the tenth into two — making the first clause the ninth commandment, and the remaining clauses the tenth." A A Hodge, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: A Commentary*, <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/aahodge>. Accessed May 8, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> "Those who divide them, so as to assign three to the first table, and leave the remaining seven to the second, expunge from the number the precept concerning images, or at least conceal it under the first. In order to make up the number, they improperly divide the tenth into two. This method was unknown in purer ages." Tow, *Abridgment*, 134.

<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, "Exodus 20:12", *John Calvin's Verse Commentary*, (SwordSearcher 7.2).

<sup>13</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College), 29, [https://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/assets/pdfs/febc\\_press/The%20Westminster%20Confession%20of%20Faith.pdf](https://www.febc.edu.sg/v15/assets/pdfs/febc_press/The%20Westminster%20Confession%20of%20Faith.pdf). Accessed May 8, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> John Wesley, "Exodus 20:12", *John Wesley's Notes on the Bible* (SwordSearcher 7.2).

<sup>15</sup> John Gill, "Matthew 19:19", *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* (SwordSearcher 7.2). Emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Poole, "Matthew 19:18, 19", *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible* (SwordSearcher 7.2). Emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> MacLaren, "Exodus 20:12", *MacLaren's Expositions of Holy Scripture* (SwordSearcher 7.2). Emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> James Hasting, "Ten Commandments", *James Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible* (SwordSearcher 7.2). Emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> Glen S Martin, "Exodus 19–20", *Holman Bible Commentary* (Accordance 11.5.2.0). Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> John Trapp, "Exodus 20:12", *John Trapp's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (SwordSearcher 7.2). Emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> Ronald J Williams, *William's Hebrew Syntax* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 185.

<sup>22</sup> Tow, *Abridgment*, 143.

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<sup>23</sup> John Calvin, "Exodus 20:12", *John Calvin's Verse Commentary* (SwordSearcher 7.2).

<sup>24</sup> Tow, *Abridgment*, 132.

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# SONGS IN THE NIGHT

Joycelyn Chng

Here are fourteen “songs in the night” that the Lord gave me when I was battling cancer in 2018. The hymns flowed from a most thankful, grateful and joyful heart. They tell of God’s faithfulness, mercy and love, and testify of our Lord’s ever-abiding presence and all-sufficient grace to see us through our trials and afflictions. *“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”* (Ps 28:7). May our eyes be turned heavenward as we await the future glory promised in Romans 8:18, *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

## Yet I Will Rejoice

Hab 3:17-19

Versified by J. Chng

ST. ANNE



1. Al - though the fig tree shall not bloom, Nor fruit be in the vines;
2. And though the fields shall yield no meat; The flock cut from the fold,
3. Yes, in the LORD I find my joy, I will re - joice in God.



The lab - our of the o - live fail, Yet I'll re - joice in God.  
E'en there no herd be in the stalls, Yet I'll re - joice in God.  
He Who is my sal - va - tion, strength, Who'll lift my feet once more.





# Be Merciful Unto Me, O God

Psalm 57:1-2

Versified by J. Chng

J. Chng

Be mer-ci-ful un-to me, O God, Be mer-ci-ful un-to me;

*FINE*

For my soul trust-eth in Thee, O God, My soul trust-eth in Thee.

1. I will make the sha-dow of Thy wings, My re-fuge safe and sure;  
2. I will cry un-to the God most high, My great, Al-might-y God;

*D.C. al FINE*

Till these ca-la-mi-ties pass, Un-til these ca-la-mi-ties pass.  
Who per-form-eth all things for me, God per-form-eth all things for me.

## Early Will I Seek Thee

Psalms 63:1-8

Versified by J. Chng

J. Chng

1. Ear - ly will I seek Thee, O God: My soul thirst - eth for Thee;  
2. Ear - ly will I seek Thee, O God: Thy glo - ry and pow'r to see;  
3. My lips shall praise Thee, O my God, I'll bless Thee while I live:  
4. Safe in the sha - dow of Thy wings, I will re - joice in Thee,

The first system of music consists of a vocal line in treble clef and a bass line in bass clef. Both are in 4/4 time with one flat (B-flat). The vocal line begins with a quarter rest, followed by a series of quarter notes and eighth notes. The bass line provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

'Tis dry land where no wa - ter is, My flesh, yea, long - eth for Thee.  
And as I've seen Thee in Thy house, E'en now, show Thy face to me.  
For lo - ving-kind-ness bet-ter than life, Is Thine and Thine to give.  
For Thou hast been my help, O God; My soul will fol-low af-ter Thee.

The second system of music continues the vocal line and bass line from the first system. It concludes with a double bar line. The vocal line features a melodic phrase that ends with a quarter note and a half note. The bass line continues with a steady accompaniment.

## When God's with Me

J. Chng

J. Chng

1. When God's with me I need not fear;  
 2. Let tri - als come, I'll not dis - may;  
 3. Eyes fixed on Christ, I on - ward go,  
 4. When God's with me, I can be strong,

What - e'er be - fall me He is near.  
 Though sor - rows fall, with Him I'll stay.  
 Not look - ing at this mire be - low.  
 Life's jour - ney does - n't seem so long.

He keeps me safe, none o - ther can,  
 For God's with me, His voice I hear,  
 If God's with me, I can press on,  
 For soon I'll see Him face to face,

For He up - holds me by His hand.  
 His Word to com - fort and to cheer.  
 No mat - ter in the calm or storm.  
 Till then I'll smile and run the race.

## God Hath Heard

J. Chng

J. Chng

1. O ve - ri - ly, ve - ri - ly, God hath heard me;  
2. The mer - ci - ful Lord, to the right - eous in - clines;  
3. The Lord is nigh to all who call up - on Him,  
4. Be - cause Thou hast loved me and saved me from death,

At - tend - ed to my prayer did He.  
He o - pens His ears to their cry.  
To all who in truth seek His face.  
I'll praise Thee as long as I live,

And bless - ed be God, Who hath not turned a - way  
To hearts that are bro - ken, and spi - rits con - trite,  
He'll grant the de - sire of them who doth fear Him:  
And love Thee for Thou hast now e'en heard my prayer:

My prayer, nor His mer - cy from me.  
The Lord sees and He will be nigh.  
Their heart's cry He'll hear and He'll save.  
I'll call on no o - ther but Thee.

Scripture references: Ps 66:19-20; Ps 34:15, 18; Ps 145:18-19; Ps 116

## In Everything Give Thanks

J. Chng

J. Chng

1. In e - very - thing give thanks, For 'tis the will of God.  
2. In e - very - thing give thanks, Where - 'er God leads us go:  
3. In e - very - thing give thanks, Though day seems dark as night.  
4. In e - very - thing give thanks, Un - cea - sing prayers shall be

The first system of music consists of a vocal line in treble clef and a bass line in bass clef, both in 4/4 time. The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note chord of C4-E4-G4, and then a series of quarter notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass line begins with a whole note chord of C4-E4-G4, followed by a half note chord of C4-E4-G4, and then a series of quarter notes: F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2.

In sick - ness or in health we'll still re - joice for e - ver - more.  
It may be on the moun - tain high, Or in the val - ley low.  
The dark - ness God en - ligh - tens for Our can - dle He will light.  
Our theme in trou - ble e'en till death, Till comes e - ter - ni - ty.

The second system of music continues the vocal line in treble clef and the bass line in bass clef, both in 4/4 time. The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note chord of C4-E4-G4, and then a series of quarter notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass line begins with a whole note chord of C4-E4-G4, followed by a half note chord of C4-E4-G4, and then a series of quarter notes: F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2.

## A Good Path

J. Chng

J. Chng  
Ed. J. d'Silva

1. It's a good path when it's Christ who leads the way;  
2. On this good path there will tri - bu - la - tions be;  
3. From this good path I must ne - ver go a - stray;

The first system of music features a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The bass line is a simple accompaniment of chords and single notes.

I can safe - ly rest in Him and not be 'fraid.  
For God's Word has said from these I'll not be free.  
Christ must keep me faith - ful, 'tis the on - ly way.

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are aligned with the notes in the treble clef.

And I'll lean not on the arms of flesh so weak,  
But com - plaints and mur - murings they must ne'er be found,  
Fol - low Him and hide His Word with - in my heart,

The third system continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are aligned with the notes in the treble clef.

But will trust in Christ Who is my guide in - deed.  
When with Christ I walk, His peace must needs a - bound.  
On to heav'n re - joi - cing, what a bless - ed path.

The fourth system concludes the piece with a double bar line. The lyrics are aligned with the notes in the treble clef.

## Praise in Affliction

J. Chng

BLAENWERN

1. I will praise Thee, so - vereign Fa - ther; Thou Who made the  
 2. I will praise Thee, strong De - li - verer; Thou Who rules the  
 3. I will praise Thee, wise Pro - vi - der, Thou Who clothes the

earth and heav'ns: And cre - at - ed man up - on earth, Stretched the  
 ra - ging sea: Sit - test King up - on the wa - ters, Thun - dering  
 li - lies fair. And the lit - tle spar - rows feed - eth, By Thy

sky from east to west. So I'll praise Thee, though af - flict - ed,  
 voice o'er floods so deep. So I'll praise Thee, in af - flict - ion,  
 gra - cious, lov - ing care. So I'll praise Thee, through af - flict - ion,

Bow - ing 'neath Thy might - y hand. I've no cause to  
 While a - round the tem - pest rage. Peace - ful rest, 'tis  
 For Thou know - est all my needs, Gi - vest grace that's

fear nor mur - mur, Rest - ing in Thy so - vereign plan.  
 what Thou giv - est; Till the storm be stilled, I'll wait.  
 all suf - fi - cient: I can rest con - tent in Thee.

## Our God Is Good

J. Chng

J. Chng

Our God is good, He's to be praised, Let us e - xalt His name.

The first system of music consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is written in the bass clef. The lyrics are placed below the treble staff.

1. His might - y acts we must de - clare, That men to all might share.  
2. O'er all His works His kind - ness seen; His prai - ses we shall sing.  
3. A strong - hold in the trou - blous day; In Him a - lone we're safe.  
4. For He up - holds us when we fall, And keeps us, one and all.  
5. O we are blessed, who trust in Him, who knows our ev - ery need.

The second system of music consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is written in the bass clef. The lyrics are placed below the treble staff.



## My Father's Plan Is Best

J. Chng

J. Chng  
Ed. J. d'Silva

1. My heav'n-ly Fa-ther's plan is best, And naught sur - pri - ses Him.  
2. My heav'n-ly Fa-ther's plan is best: His thoughts high - er than mine.  
3. My heav'n-ly Fa-ther's plan is best: In suf - ferings 'tis still true.  
4. My heav'n-ly Fa-ther's plan is best: He proves it o'er and o'er.

The first system of music consists of a vocal line in treble clef and a bass line in bass clef, both in 4/4 time. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a series of quarter notes: B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass line begins with a quarter note G2, followed by a quarter note A2, and then a series of quarter notes: B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4.

The bound - ary for the sea He sets; Com - mands the waves and winds.  
In times when I can't com - pre - hend, I'll yield to God most High.  
The wis - dom of the world re - ject; My God works all things good.  
So as His child I'll sim - ply rest, And trust His way to show.

The second system of music continues the vocal line in treble clef and the bass line in bass clef. The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a series of quarter notes: B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass line begins with a quarter note G2, followed by a quarter note A2, and then a series of quarter notes: B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4.

## Never Doubt, but Only Trust

J. Chng

J. Chng  
Ed. B.H. Tay, C. Tan

1. When af - flict - ed some may ask,      Why me, Lord, to suf - fer thus?  
2. By God's Word all came to be,      All or - dained by His de - cree.  
3. So it is when we are tried,      God we ne - ver must de - ny.  
4. Full sub - mis - sion un - to God,      Gives us joy what-e'er our lot.

But we must not ques-tion why,      For He's God Who reigns on high.  
So in tri - als big or small,      Sure - ly God must know it all.  
Kneel-ing hum - bly 'fore His throne,      Find-ing in His mer - cy, hope.  
As we wait for heav'n-ly rest,      Serve Him whilst He gives us breath.

*Refrain*

Nev - er doubt, but on - ly trust,      God knows what is best for us.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

# Even So

J. Chng

J. Chng

1. The sky seems o - ver - cast and grey, And thick the fog,  
2. And as I jour - ney on this road, Sur - roun - ded by  
3. I need not know what lies a - head, By faith, o - bey -  
4. For Christ has suf - fered more than we Can e - ver know:  
5. He'll make it clear and plain one day, In His own per -

ob - scures the way. The path a - head may thorn - y be,  
the dark un - known. 'Tis what I know; His truth de - clares:  
ing step by step. For if my Lord, this path has shown,  
and all for me! All strug - gles then are known to Him;  
fect time and ways. That day may come on yon - der shore,

But e - ven so, my Lord, He leads.  
That e - ven so, my Lord, He's there.  
Then e - ven so, I'll on - ward go.  
Thus e - ven so, to Christ I'll cling.  
And e - ven so, I'll trust my Lord.

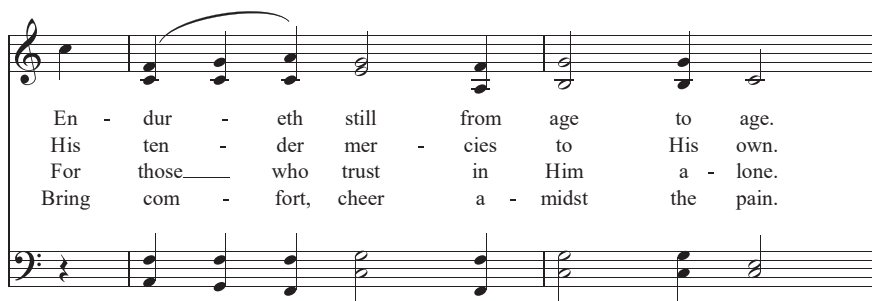
## God's Tender Mercies

J. Chng

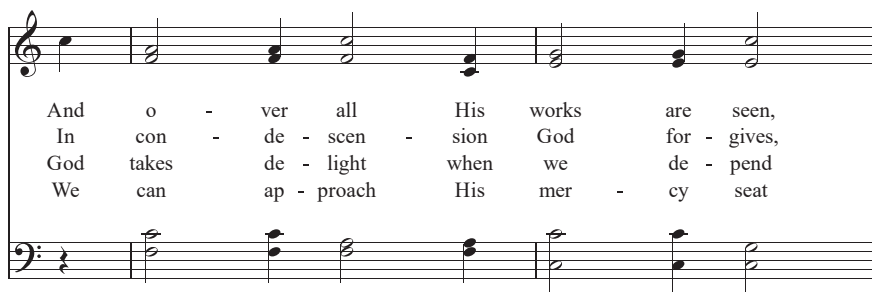
J. Chng



1. God's ten - der mer - cies, they are great,  
2. Though un - de - serv - ing, God still shows  
3. In God's great mer - cy there is hope,  
4. God's ten - der mer - cies, new each day,



En - dur - eth still from age to age.  
His ten - der mer - cies to His own.  
For those who trust in Him a - lone.  
Bring com - fort, cheer a - midst the pain.



And o - ver all His works are seen,  
In con - de - scen - sion God for - gives,  
God takes de - light when we de - pend  
We can ap - proach His mer - cy seat



The mer - cies of God in - deed.  
The sin - ner who cries to Him.  
On Him, not on our own strength.  
Through Christ, to find help in need.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

# Rejoice, My Soul

J. Chng

J. Chng

1. Re - joice, my soul, re - joice and sing,  
2. Re - joice, my soul, re - joice and sing,  
3. Re - joice, my soul, re - joice and sing,

The first system of music features a treble and bass staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The melody is simple and accompaniment consists of chords. The lyrics are repeated three times.

And praise thy great Re - deem - er, King;  
And all thy cares to Je - sus bring.  
Though for a sea - son pain may sting.

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: "And praise thy great Re - deem - er, King; And all thy cares to Je - sus bring. Though for a sea - son pain may sting."

For all the great things He has done:  
Hope thou in Him Who is thy all,  
The gloo - my clouds will soon pass o'er,

The third system continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: "For all the great things He has done: Hope thou in Him Who is thy all, The gloo - my clouds will soon pass o'er,"

O to be called His lov - ed one.  
He'll wipe a - way the tears that fall.  
Then will the sun shine through once more.

The fourth system concludes the piece. The lyrics are: "O to be called His lov - ed one. He'll wipe a - way the tears that fall. Then will the sun shine through once more."

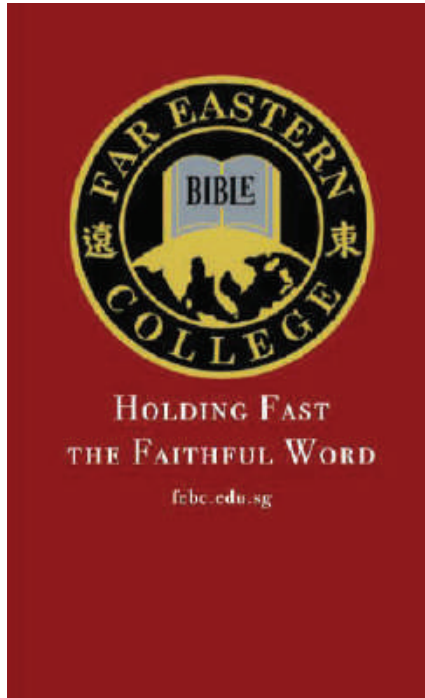
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*Joycelyn Chng is a tutor in Church Music at Far Eastern Bible College where she earned her MDiv. She serves as full-time staff of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church and ministers to the women inmates at Changi Prison.*

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## College News

### Pulpit Banner



FEBC has a new pulpit banner with the college logo and theme verse hung over the pulpit to remind all of the FEBC's purpose—to hold fast the Faithful Word (Tit 1:9). For the Word to be faithful, it must necessarily be preserved. Indeed, the Lord has not only inspired His Word but also preserved it (Ps 12:6–7, Matt 5:18). And if we are to be students and teachers of His Word, we must be faithful to believe in that Faithful Word which He has verbally and plerarily inspired and preserved (“every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter” according to Dean Burgon, and “kept pure in all ages” by His singular care and providence as stated in the Westminster Confession).

### Day of Prayer

FEBC reopened in the New Year with a day of prayer on Monday January 4, 2021 at the FEBC Hall. The Principal spoke from James 1:2–4 on why

God sends trials and testings into our lives, *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* He shared three trials that God sent to FEBC to try us in our faith. The first was in 2005 when the authorities required private colleges including Bible colleges to be Casetrust accredited in order to enroll foreign students. With much effort, FEBC achieved Casetrust for Education accreditation, the first Bible College to do so.

The second was the lawsuit by Life BPC to evict FEBC (2008–2015). The Board of Directors had to defend the charitable purpose trust impressed upon the properties at Gilstead Road. The Court of Appeal ruled that FEBC has every right to occupy the land. The Court even declared that the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of Scripture was not a deviant doctrine as claimed by Life BPC, but a doctrine that is in line with the Westminster Confession of Faith to which the College subscribes. God used the Court to promote His truth and protect His school—a clear case of divine providence at work! The third is the Covid-19 pandemic. Thank God for helping the College to overcome the challenges and hardships due to the “Circuit Breaker” lockdown.

### **Total Enrolment**

Total enrolment last semester (Jan–Apr 2021) was 633—29 full-time residential students and 604 part-time students (day classes 223, night classes 219, distance learning 162)—from 13 countries: Australia, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. There were three full-time students: Chew Teong Kean (DipTh programme), Jose Trinipil Lagapa II aka Biboy (CertBS programme), and Samuel Sim (CertRK programme).

### **Courses On-Campus and Online**

Twelve day and night courses were offered online last semester (Jan–Apr 2021)—nine were livestreamed (Acts of the Apostates, Names of God, 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Contemporary Theology II, Women in the Bible II, 1 Chronicles, Systematic Theology IV, Systematic Theology II in Chinese), and three video-screened (Heresies and Orthodoxy, Numbers, Calvinism Old and New).

The lecturers/tutors (and courses) last semester were: Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo (Life of Christ II, Heresies & Orthodoxy), Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew (Hebrew Reading II, Homiletics, 1 Chronicles, Numbers), Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy (Systematic Theology IV: Eschatology, Names of God), Rev Stephen Khoo (Survey of Revelation), Rev Dr Koa Keng Woo (Bible Geography IV, Church Music II), Rev Tan Kian Sing (2 Thessalonians, Titus), Mrs Jemima Khoo (Sacred Music Through the Ages, Beginner Pianoforte), Miss Carol Lee (Adult Christian Education, Women in the Bible II), Rev Dr Jose Lagapa (Acts of the Apostles), Rev Clement Chew (Hebrew Elementary II), Rev Zhu Jianwei (Systematic Theology II: Anthropology [Chinese]), Pr Samuel Joseph (Greek Reading II), Pr Joshua Yong (Contemporary Theology II), Pr Ko Ling Kang (Calvinism Old & New), Mrs Irene Lim (English Intermediate II), and Mrs Patricia Joseph (English Advanced II).

Joshua Yong, tutor in Contemporary Theology, has enrolled as a ThD student at FEBC. Zhu Jianwei, tutor in Systematic Theology (Chinese), was ordained a Minister of the Gospel at True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church on January 3, 2021.

### **Daily Vacation Bible College (DVBC)**



Three DVBC courses were offered during the college vacation from May 10 to July 2, 2021, to facilitate ongoing theological education: (1) Angels and Demons by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo, (2) The Epistle of Jude by Rev Dr Jose Lagapa, and (3) Jesus the Master Teacher by Carol Lee. The courses were taught on campus with live streaming. Full-time residential students



took the courses on campus at the FEBC Hall while part-time or lay students took the courses online. There were a total of 420 students from 66 churches and 17 countries.

### 46<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service

FEBC's 46<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service was held on the Lord's Day, 9 May 2021, at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church. The Principal Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo was the graduation speaker. He spoke on "Spirituality in Ministry" (1 Cor 13:1–8).

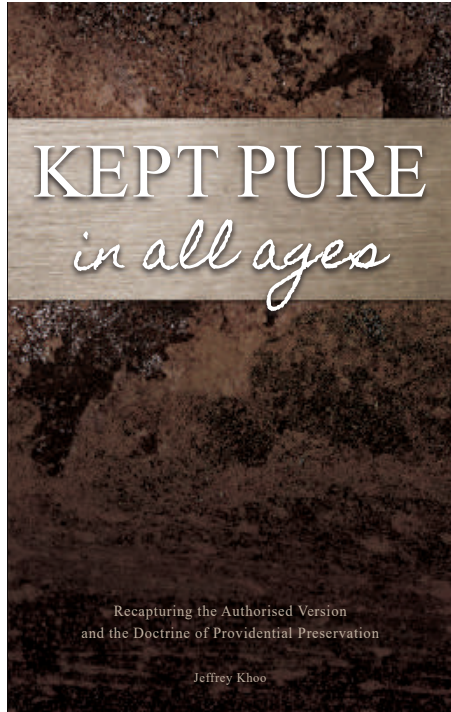
Nineteen graduated with their hard-earned certificates: Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK): Aw Beng Teck, Chew Zhu En Hannah, Chong Shu Mun, Choy Lai Ying Catherine, Pang Yee Hong, Peck Ern-Min, Siew Shun Zhang Joshua, Wong Keng Seong; Certificate of Biblical Studies (CertBS): Kai Kai Ye (Jian Huiyi), Helen Lee Gek Suan, Ng Siew Gek Adelene; Diploma in Theology (DipTh): Priyakumar Butti; Bachelor of Religious Education (BRE): Crisa Jane Guanzon Zagado; Bachelor of Theology (BTh): Cing Sian Lian, Park Jong Hwi, Stephen Magbanua Gillegao, Theya Ba-a Lagapa, Wong Pei Yu Crayson; Master of Religious Education (MRE): Nguyen Ngoc Thien Kim.

### Homegoing



Mrs Jemima Khoo (nee Tow)—the beloved wife of the Principal—was called home to the Lord on 11 May 2021. The homegoing service was held on May 12 at the FEBC Hall. Burial was at Choa Chu Kang Lawn

Cemetery. “*The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*” (Job 1:21). All love gifts collected went to the Far Eastern Bible College.



*Kept Pure in All Ages: Recapturing the Authorised Version and the Doctrine of Providential Preservation* published by the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) Press in 2001 was revised and republished in 2021 by The Old Paths Publications (Cleveland, Georgia, USA). This second edition was in response to the Rev Christian McShaffrey (Pastor of Five Solas Church) who requested for the book to be made available for a “Kept Pure in All Ages” Bible conference held in Reedsburg, Wisconsin on March 26 and 27, 2021.

**FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE**  
**46<sup>th</sup> Graduation Service**  
**Class of 2021**





"The Bible is none other than  
the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne.  
Every book of it, every chapter of it,  
every verse of it, every word of it,  
every syllable of it, every letter of it,  
is the direct utterance of the most High.  
The Bible is none other than the Word of God,  
not some part of it more, some part of it less,  
but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth  
upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme."  
~ The Dean Burgon Oath

