



# The Burning Bush

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# THE BURNING BUSH

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## Editorial

The Far Eastern Bible College believes in the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures—every word of Scripture is *theopneustos*, God-breathed. “All Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable . . .” (2 Tim 3:16, KJV). We oppose the English Revised Version (RV) of Westcott and Hort (and all like versions) which rendered 2 Tim 3:16 thus, “Every Scripture inspired of God *is* also profitable . . .” By placing the copula “is” *after* the words, “inspired of God,” instead of *before* it as in the KJV, the RV has made 2 Tim 3:16 to mean that *certain parts of Scripture are not inspired of God*; only those portions that are inspired are profitable. The KJV placed the copula “is” right after “All Scripture.” This leaves no ambiguity whatsoever that *all of Scripture, to its jot and tittle, is inspired of God*.

The Far Eastern Bible College rejects and opposes all modern versions like the New International Version (NIV) that are a result of the dynamic equivalence method of translation which licentiously add to, subtract from, and manipulate the Scriptures, and those that cast doubt, and/or omit verses based on corrupted readings of the Westcott and Hort Text. We fully concur with the recently passed Bible Resolution of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) which met at its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, August 11-14, 1998. The Bible Resolution reads,

WHEREAS despite the fact that there are over 150 so-called “versions” of the Bible extant around the world today, there have been no new discoveries of ancient texts to legitimize this plethora of modern “versions” pouring off the presses and being sold as the “latest” Bible, and

WHEREAS a single exception to this has been the discovery of the now-famous Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1940’s in caves on the Judean mountain range and contained in clay jars with the texts written on leather and papyrus, and

WHEREAS fragments of all the books of the Hebrew Bible (except Esther) confirm almost to the letter the accuracy of the Authorized King James Version of the Old Testament, and

WHEREAS most of the modern versions are based upon the discredited and perverted Westcott and Hort transcription and not on the Textus Receptus (The Received Text) attested to by scholars for over 300 years, from which the Authorized King James Version was translated by the greatest theologians and textual critics of 17<sup>th</sup> Century England, who were academic experts, indeed, in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, and

WHEREAS self-styled theologians who reject the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures have gone so far as to make a looseleaf notebook and tear out those passages they do not accept, even organizing what they designate as “Jesus Seminars” across the United States in which they declare that Jesus never did and said the things recorded in the four Gospels; and that the Gospel of John is the worst and is 90 percent fiction, and the obedient secular press quotes them from coast-to-coast, and

WHEREAS this same KING JAMES VERSION has been used around the world by an overwhelming majority of Christian Clergymen, Evangelists, Bible Teachers, Missionaries and Youth Leaders to bring millions of people to have a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ for more than three centuries,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the International Council of Christian Churches, assembled in the historic English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, observing its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, August 11-15, 1998, urge all Bible-believing churches worldwide to use only the Authorized KING JAMES VERSION in their services and in their teaching ministry, and warn the followers of Christ against these innumerable “new” bibles which are not translations at all, but revisions conforming to the personal bias and views of those who have originated them and who are profiting by commercial sales of such.

Is there any who calls himself a fundamentalist that will scoff at this resolution? There are indeed “fundamentalists” who simply pay lip-service to the doctrine of biblical inspiration and preservation. In the same breath they say yes and no to the Word of God they claim to uphold: “Yes to the KJV; No to the Textus Receptus.” Dr Carl McIntire, President of the ICCC did well to quote J Gresham Machen in the January 17, 1957 issue of the *Christian Beacon*, “The worst sin today is to say that you agree with the Christian faith and believe in the Bible, but then make common cause with those who deny the basic facts of Christianity. Never was it more obviously true that he that is not with Christ is against Him.” How can those who claim to believe in a verbally inspired Bible support Westcott and Hort—the Bible and Christ denying progenitors of our modern English versions? Westcott and Hort were modernists and

Mariolators, supporters of Freud and Darwin. They applied the scissors to the traditional and preserved Greek Text of God's Word used and accepted by God's people down through the ages. These unregenerate duo hoodwinked the Church into accepting their mutilated text, save Dean J W Burgon who in righteous indignation rose to debunk Westcott and Hort in his masterly 600-page treatise—*The Revision Revised*.

Therefore, fundamentalists who continue to promote the Westcott-Hort Greek text which is now renamed "Eclectic," and all the corrupt English "Bibles" that flood the Christian market are not fighting against Satan, but against Christ. I repeat the words of Machen, "The worst sin today is to say that you agree with the Christian Faith and believe in the Bible [viz, the KJV], but make common cause with those [viz, Westcott and Hort] who deny the basic facts of Christianity. Never was it more obviously true that he that is not with Christ is against Him."

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa 59:17). "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Cor 13:8). "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim 2:19).

J K

## **THE UNFINISHED COMMISSION (MATT 28:18-20)**

Timothy Tow

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

When Sun Yat-Sen, Father of the Chinese Republic, toppled the Manchu regime in 1911 and became its president, he called on his followers: “The Revolution is not yet finished. Let comrades struggle on” (革命尚未成功，同志仍须努力。). The Great Commission, which our Lord gave to the Church 2,000 years ago, is an Unfinished Commission. There remains much land to be conquered, and untold millions have yet to hear the Gospel. With the Return of our Saviour looming nearer each day, this Unfinished Commission must be accelerated. This is mandated to us in the Olivet discourse, “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*” (Matt 24:14). What have you and I done to speed this Unfinished Task? We must confess we have done very little. “*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*” (Rev 2:5). If we do not repent from our Laodicean lukewarmness to serve the Lord fervently, God will give our candlestick to another that will fulfil His purpose. And has not our Lord given it to the Korean Church that has sent thousands of her sons and daughters to 120 countries in the world? And if it is true there is a Chinese restaurant wherever you go in the world, it is also true wherever you go in the world there is a Korean church.

Despite our cold-heartedness, He Himself will bring it to fruition. And though the Great Commission is unfinished, His power over heaven

## THE UNFINISHED COMMISSION

and earth and His presence with His devout disciples will finish it. We believe in a sovereign God.

Now, the Unfinished Commission is a full-four Commission. Many works in the Name of the Lord by para-church organisations stress one or two points, but it is a full-four Commission. It is:

- (1) Go! This is the **Missions** emphasis.
- (2) Teach (*matheteusate*), ie, to make disciples. This is the **Evangelistic** emphasis.
- (3) Baptise. This is the **Church Planting** emphasis.
- (4) Teach (*didaskontes*). This is the **Indoctrination** emphasis.

When we diligently carry out these four points of the Unfinished Commission, we will be attended with divine power and blessed with His holy presence. “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. . . . and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*” How often the Great Commission is misquoted, leaving out the all-pervasive power of God in us, around us and behind us to thrust us forward. No wonder the little headway we make in our own strength.

### I

The Unfinished Commission begins with Go. Notice these are the first two letters that spell Gospel. The Gospel must be on the Go. Missions is the First Commandment to the Church. This is clearly exemplified in the Acts of the Apostles. And what the Apostles did for the early Church becomes our infallible pattern. Paul says, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (1 Cor 11:1).

Let us learn a lesson from the earliest churches. The church in Jerusalem was the first to be founded. It began in AD 33 with Pentecost, Though it continued for a full year in the Apostles’ doctrine it was not until a great persecution came upon it and scattered it abroad, that the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4).

Some of those scattered abroad travelled as far as Antioch. They preached to the Jews but others to Grecians and a great multitude believed. This Antioch Church drew the attention of Jerusalem which sent Barnabas to exhort them. To add more power to the Church, Barnabas departed to Tarsus to bring Saul in. Now, as the leaders of Antioch prayed, the Holy Ghost said, “*Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the*

*work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3). Thus was opened officially the Door of Foreign Missions. The pattern for us to follow between Jerusalem and Antioch is the latter one. Go with the Gospel is indeed the First Commandment to the Church.*

Now, I come as one representing the mission field. My roots run deep to the year 1859 when my great-grandfather was converted in Swatow, South China. He was saved after William Chalmer Burns, Scots missionary sent by the English Presbyterian Mission. My great-grandfather became the first Swatow pastor in 1882. He gave his daughter to my grandfather because he also was a pastor. My father who became a doctor trained by the English Presbyterian Mission Hospital, was an elder. And now, me, whom the Lord has graciously accepted from my mother’s womb that I should follow in their steps.

My theological roots also reach back to China. I studied under Dr Chia Yu-Ming, ICCC Vice-president for China and Dr A B Dodd, missionary of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. From China, the Lord transplanted me to Faith Seminary, Wilmington, Delaware. After I graduated in 1950, I was ordained by the hands of the Philadelphia Presbytery at the Second Congress of the ICCC in Geneva. I returned to Singapore where I was called by my Mother Church to start an English Service.

In order to separate from our Mother Church which was linked to the National Council and the World Council of Churches, we established the Life Bible-Presbyterian Church. Rev Dr K C Quek, then an elder, stood firmly with me.

Now, in the matter of missions, we did not have a Mission Board to guide us. Our young, inexperienced Church, was our Mission Board. The four walls of our little church, with a congregation of 50, could not contain us. We went everywhere preaching the Gospel, especially to next door Malaysia. In four years we founded a station in South Malaysia, and in seven years we established two branch churches in Singapore. By God’s grace, Life Church has grown today to 48 churches and institutions (such as Far Eastern Bible College) all over Southeast Asia, with a dozen missionaries. This does not include the branch churches’ extended churches.



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We have no overall mission board. Each B-P Church is its own mission board. The B-P Churches of Singapore, though now each on its own after our split in 1988, has become a missionary movement that has encircled the earth: in Southeast Asia, Burma, India, Pakistan, East and West Africa, England, Canada, Saipan, China, Australia. This is the Lord's doing. Without a mission board each church handles its own accounts, so the cost of running missions is nil.

As to financial support there is not the leniency of the American government which allows deduction for Income Tax. Ours is pure giving, after paying all the taxes. A good number pay their tithes and some much more above the sacred tenth. And when others outside our church are touched by the good reports of our missionaries, they channel their gifts to us. I say all this as a testimony to the Lord's blessing on our home grown missionary movement.

But the pastor himself must be the ever outgoing one. Like the Israeli commanders, the generals and colonels must be prepared to lead at the forefront.

Furthermore, we encourage the formation of laymen's missionary societies, so that young people are attracted to mission trips on their own. Out of these trips have gathered smaller groups who go out at regular intervals to speak at children's and youth meetings, and sometimes at church services. This quickens the growth of young churches in the mission fields. Insofar as Life Church is concerned, our Missions Fellowship publishes its own literature and runs its own accounts.

## **II**

The second point in the Unfinished Commission is the need to make disciples, to evangelise. This the pastor must emphasise and apply in his weekly sermon. The pastor must be a soul winner. He must make every effort to hold evangelistic meetings. The dissemination of Gospel tracts is a silent auxiliary to evangelism. Some of these from his own pen add a personal touch. The Sunday School and children's ministry must also be geared to the saving of souls. The members added to the church by baptism each year is a barometer of its growth.

Soul-saving is also the main task of our missionaries. The failure of missionaries is their lack in winning souls. Hence the quick resignations from the fields, or if they hang on, it's a chore and a job, not a joy.

Missionaries of this calibre are quick to assert their rights but slow to perform their duty.

We have a most outstanding example of a missionary. A graduate of Far Eastern Bible College, he is sent by my brother's church, Calvary B-P Church, to the island of Saipan, former Japanese territory in the South Pacific now under American mandate. For six years he has had a most illustrious ministry to the garment sewers, mostly women from mainland China. With a vigorous emphasis on repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he has baptised 600 in six years. His converts are born again in tears of repentance. Though we do not expect every missionary to measure up to him, he has set the pace for others to follow, to the glory of God.

A collateral in the advancing of missions is the support of nationals. These are chosen from foreign graduates of Far Eastern Bible College. For example, Rev Robert Thawn Luai, graduate from an Indian Bible College, came for a semester's refresher course at FEBC. Having proven his worth as leader of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Burma, we supported his work by building a four-storey Bible College, costing half a million. Nearly a hundred have graduated from this College since 1987. Many of the graduates have become pastors who have added to the growth of his denomination, from 22 to 55 churches.

We have supported several other national leaders and are pleased with their steady progress, not only in Burma but also in Indonesia and Malaysia. With their natural fluency in the vernacular they have instant access to the hearts of their own people. This method of missionary work is most cost-effective.

### III

The third point in the Unfinished Commission is baptism, which is missed out by para-church organisations. Calvin defines a Church to be one that preaches the Word regularly on the Lord's Day and that administers baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is the foundation of the local church.

It is important for believers to be baptised and be joined to the local church. And it is this sacrament and the Lord's Supper that builds it up to be a branch of the universal Church. Being baptised as a member, he has obligations to fulfil. He not only attends church regularly according to

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Hebrews 10:25, but also gives of his substance to support the work of the Church. The tithe is the test.

When Life Church was branching out to build a new church, we did not rely on man's method of raising funds by jumble sales, garage sales, fun fairs, concerts, etc. We preached tithing and free-will offerings. One weapon, very effective, is interest-free loans.

Baptism is normally given to the catechumens who attend catechism classes for an extended period. To those who receive Christ on sick beds, it must not be delayed. Once baptised the family which often is non-Christian, will submit to the Lord. The power of baptism over heathens is to be experienced by western pastors.

Evangelism and baptism is the only way to solid church growth. Not by the display of charismatic gifts, the slaying of spirits, and speaking in tongues. Nor social programmes catering to the flesh. But by the slow but steady process of winning them to the Lord, one by one.

### IV

The fourth point of the Unfinished Commission is "*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" This is where full indoctrination comes in. Although the Sunday School is a powerful auxiliary to imparting Scripture knowledge to members, we need the Bible College or Seminary to train pastors, teachers, and missionaries. The secret of growth of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore is the Far Eastern Bible College, founded 1962. Over 350 have come out of its classrooms and many scores have been ordained who are now serving in many parts of the world.

Our students have also to be trained to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Being in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Reformation Movement, we have taken a stand against the many "isms" that try to undermine the Church: liberalism, modernism, neo-evangelicalism, charismaticism, ECTism (Evangelicals and Catholics Together), the total denial of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation.

There is now a concerted attack also on the Bible. The hundred versions of the English Bible, beginning with the Revised Version of 1881, have swarmed out of the Westcott and Hort Pandora Box, so that our vision of Truth is blurred. For a century a conspiracy of silence on the evil character of the two masquerading angels of light in textual criticism

have prevailed. Faith Seminary and Dallas Seminary, for example, had sheepishly bowed to their dictates. In Faith Seminary, I was taught all that Westcott and Hort had revised of the beloved King James Bible was Gospel Truth. Ten thousand alterations and deletions were accepted by us students, such as the passage of Jesus pardoning the woman taken in adultery, the last 12 verses of Mark, and the Johannine *comma*—1 John 5:7-8. These were declared later interpolations. As much as the equivalent of 1 and 2 Peter were scissored.

But now the true colours of these so-called Greek experts are revealed, the best part of it all, by the sons of Westcott and Hort. Do you know that Westcott and Hort were liberals and modernists of the deepest dye? They detested the doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures, denied the Virgin Birth of Christ, His Blood atonement and resurrection. They derisively declared the Creation, Temptation and Fall to be myths. They were secret worshippers of Mary. They were friends of Darwin, Freud (called a Fraud by *The Straits Times*) and Carl Jung, all enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Westcott founded the Hermes Club at Cambridge, which was reputed to be a homosexual club. He branched into the Ghost Club with Hort and others. Scoffers called it the Bogey Club. Bogey means Devil. They practised necromancy, ie, communicating with the dead, which is abominable to the Lord (Deut 18:11,12).

They were the architects of revision of the KJB, but where is the Revised Version of 1881 now? It died a diseased death. *“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire”* (Matt 7:19). Now, the hundred new versions that have swarmed out of Westcott and Hort are emanations from their corrupt text, in one way or another.

*“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him”* (Isa 59:19). While God has used Dr Carl McIntire to raise the ICCC Standard, there was a fellow student of his in the early days of the founding of Westminster. He was McIntire’s friend and his name is Edward F Hills (ThD, Harvard). He took a brave stand against Westcott and Hort. Before him was David Otis Fuller. At one of the ICCC Congresses I heard Dr Fuller’s impassioned appeal to stand up for the KJB. Then arose Dr D A Waite (ThD, PhD), president of the Dean Burgon Society, who testifies how when a student at Dallas he was as much taken in as when I was in Faith Seminary. Following him is

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# The Unfinished Commission

T. Tow

Thuringian Folk Song

1. Go in - to the world, in - to all the wide world,  
2. For you I have sent in - to all the wide world,  
3. But first re - ceive po - wer, the Spi - rit of God,  
4. Go ye in - to all, in - to all na - tions,

The first system of music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a bass line on a bass clef staff. The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note chord of F4-A4-C5, then a quarter note G4, and continues with a melody of quarter notes: A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords and single notes.

And tell the joy - ful news to ev' - ry pe - rish - ing soul,  
And you shall be my wit - ness - es from Je - ru - sa - lem,  
And you'll go through Ju - de - a, Sa - ma - ri - a all the earth,  
And make them My dis - ci - ples, and bap - tise them for Me,

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The vocal line features a melodic phrase of quarter notes: D4, C4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass line continues with chords and single notes.

And tell the joy - ful news to ev' - ry pe - rish - ing soul.  
And you shall be my wit - ness - es from Je - ru - sa - lem.  
And you'll go through Ju - de - a, Sa - ma - ri - a all the earth.  
And teach them all My Word, for I'm with you to the end.

The third system concludes the piece. The vocal line ends with a melodic phrase of quarter notes: D4, C4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass line concludes with chords and single notes.

Scripture: Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46; Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19,20

raised up another, David W Cloud, with his *O Timothy* monthly. Though G A Riplinger has been questioned for accuracy here or there in the exposure of Westcott and Hort in her book *New Age Versions*, she has done yeoman service in ripping off the masks of Westcott and Hort (Riplinger's book has sold 100,000 copies). Last but not least is my brother, Dr S H Tow, whose latest defence of the King James Bible, *Beyond Versions*, is just off the press and to him is added the full weight of FEBC's faculty. (Last but not least is the Resolution on the Bible by the International Council of Christian Churches at her 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting in Amsterdam, August 11-15, 1998, supporting the KJB against the hundred versions.)

### **Conclusion**

The Unfinished Commission is encumbered with so many wiles of the Devil, especially in Satan's last attack on His Holy Word. "*Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him*" (Isa 59:15,16). Truth must prevail! "*For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*" (2 Cor 13:8).

The words of Sun Yat-Sen, Father of the Chinese Republic, that the Revolution he led to topple the Manchus was unfinished, and comrades must continue to struggle on reminds us that the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ is also far from finished. Let us go forward to carry out its fourfold programme of Missions, Evangelism, Church planting, and full theological indoctrination with increasing acceleration until our Lord comes again. Even so, Come Lord Jesus.

We are in the closing chapter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Reformation. In no time we will enter the new millennium, and will there be a 21<sup>st</sup> century Reformation?

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*Message delivered by Rev Dr Timothy Tow to the 62<sup>nd</sup> Synod of the Bible-Presbyterian Church, Lakeland, Florida, USA, August 7, 1998, and to the ICCC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, English Reformed Church, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, August 13, 1998.*

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## **“FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS” (ESTH 4:14)**

J C Maris

Mr Chairman, delegates, observers and visitors, brothers and sisters in our common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:

It would seem common ground to tell like-minded people that we are living in “such a time as this!” You will have realised, however, that the expression is borrowed from the Bible. According to the Book of Esther (2:5) it was used “by a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai.” He had adopted his niece Esther, when her father and mother had died. Because of her beauty she had been brought to the house of the Persian world ruler Ahasueros who came to love her “above all the women . . . so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen” (2:17). But then we read the sad story of Haman, who was set by the king above all the princes and all the king’s servants bowed and revered him. However, Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence (3:2). When he heard that, Haman was “full of wrath” (3:5). And being told that this man Mordecai was a Jew, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, including the people of Mordecai (3:5-6).

The king was influenced by this evil man Haman, and letters were sent into “all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, *in one day*, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey” (3:13).

The story is well known, but I remind you of it, so that all of us may realise this lethal threat against the chosen people of God, and indirectly against its promised Messiah Jesus Christ. We should be aware of this satanic plot against God and His people. It is not a novel, it is no fiction, but reality, and it repeats itself throughout history. Antisemitism, as we have lived to see in our century, has the same roots, and every wave of persecution, up to and including the rage of Antichrist, as well as every symptom of hatred and enmity in the personal sphere, is of the same

nature. If you realise this, and maybe have undergone it in person, you will be able to fathom the depth of the crisis behind these words “for such a time as this.”

Quite naturally, the expression may be applied to every epoch of human history. We always live in “such a time as this!” It will be understood that the word “time,” which is used here, does not indicate any given course of time, but that it denotes the actual period to which the context refers, as it is characterised by its special features and circumstances. We are now using the word in this peculiar sense. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples: “It is not for you to know *the times or the seasons*, which the Father has put in His own power” (Acts 1:7). In other words, God chooses and makes a special time for some special work He is going to do. “Times” are of God’s own making and choosing! They are “providential,” not “accidental,” and this has a particular emphasis when Paul writes in his epistle to the Galatians that God sent His Son “when *the fullness of the time* was come.” The Son of God could not have come into the world “at any time!” So then, it must have a specific and personal meaning that we are born in the twentieth century, and not a hundred years earlier! David, in Ps 31, says: “*My times are in Thy hand*,” and that means rest and comfort, even though he had to face enemies and persecutors!

Whatever happens, the Lord reigns! He is on the throne. Even when it seems that His enemies will conquer, we know, says Paul, “that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). In the providence of God the ICCC is part of history in these closing years of the twentieth century. This implies that our attitude should not be *conservative*. I think it is not superfluous to establish this. The more so, since we want to represent the biblical “conservatism” that is in accordance with the everlasting Word of God. It is, however, not our calling to stick to the past unchanging. In other words, our conservatism is not the mere opposite of *modernism*, which in the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* is defined as “a mode of theological inquiry in which the traditions and doctrines of Christianity are examined in the light of modern thought.” Walking in the light of God’s eternal Word, the believer enjoys the lamp, shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in his heart (2 Pet 1:19). And this is the light that “shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov 4:18). Such is the progress that can only lead to a reliable philosophy of



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life and of history. And when using the phrase “for such a time as this,” it is the prospect of the perfect day that can warrant this expression. Mind you, devoid of God’s revelation in His Word, science can only resort to the hypothetical view of evolution. But *evolution* has no acceptable *beginning* and no satisfactory *end*, and certainly not an end that can be compared to the teaching of the Bible. The “end of the world” is spoken of in the Bible as “the consummation of the age,” and consummation is not just “cessation” or “stop.” It equals the notion “completion”—God’s plan will be fulfilled! When we lay this to heart, the wording “a time as this” receives its special meaning in the context of history, which aims at “the end of all things” (1 Pet 4:7), and the word translated by “end” is “*telos*,” which is like saying: the goal, the purpose has been attained. “Such a time as this” then indicates this phase of the world’s history, which constitutes its specific meaning that brings us nearer to the consummation.

This means that we shall have to appraise our time in the context of the past and the future. The Lord Jesus once rebuked His disciples, saying: “Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” (Matt 16:3). It is our calling, then, to realise the days in which we are now living!

In a sense, history repeats itself, and we do well to lay its lessons to heart. It contains many a warning to future generations. I repeat the question of the Preacher: “Is there a thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It has been long ago, in the ages which were before us” (Ecc1 1:10). History, also the history of the Church, should teach us, and warn us. At the same time we do well to realise that we are living in the last days (2 Pet 3:3), which means that we should look at our time in the light of the prophetic word, which involves looking forward to the coming of the Son of Man!

No religion offers you this prospect, which makes it possible to look forward in expectation. It is not superfluous in these days of ecumenical blending and blinding to shed light upon this outlook. The difference between the ICCC and the WCC does not only bear on our lives on earth, but it constitutes an everlasting partition. There is a separation here on earth between believers and unbelievers, and it is decisive for our eternal destination. Generally speaking, the ecumenical movement embraces a great variety of churches and it even maintains relations with so-called in-Christian religions. All of these churches and religions seem to be of the

opinion that it is possible unitedly to represent the Christian message in a non-Christian world, even though there is no fundamental, biblical oneness among themselves. The result is a poor, bloodless double-talk that has no power to save. What is left is nothing but reflections on certain aspects of human life on earth. It is not a message with a promise! The Bible speaks of men whose portion in life is of the world (Ps 17:14). In the same way, the Apostle Paul, speaking of their past, when they were Gentiles, that at that time they had *no hope, and were without God in the world* (Eph 2:12). It is striking to note the connection: Man without hope is man without God!

It would be worthwhile to think this out in a positive way, but that would take too much time. Just draw the conclusion for yourself: Faith in God implies hope for the future. Having no hope means to be without God in the world. Living in such a time as this, about two thousand years after Christ's emphatic prediction of His coming again, this is of paramount importance, also in the issue between ecumenicity and the true Church of Christ.

When applying the phrase "for such a time as this" to ourselves and our contemporaries, it tells us that the time that precedes the Lord's coming is by now shortened by nearly 2000 years. The logic thereof can only be that we are now much closer to the end of the world and the coming of Christ. This infers that our lives should be more influenced by the rapidly approaching future than by the past that slips from our grasp. An added motivation is that the past falls down behind us, whereas the future is coming upon us every next moment. The past is gone; it cannot be changed any more. The future is a blank, and as such it is a challenge to every man's desire and responsibility. The blank will have to be filled out!

In this respect there is a gap between the believer and the unbeliever. Whereas natural man is heading for an *unknown destination*, the believing Christian knows whither he goes, and he knows the way (cf, John 14:4-6). It may take some time, and some religious experience, but he may entrust himself to Jesus' word: "where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). That is the Christian's future in a nutshell! It may be worked out in accordance with all that the Bible reveals to us in regard to our future state. When saying this, I do not mean to make eschatology our main message, but I do recommend that it should ring through the whole of our testimony. Over against defective modern theology and preaching our

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witness should resound Paul’s conviction: “If we have only hope in Christ *in this life*, we are of all men most pitiable” (1 Cor 15:19). The whole of our preaching and of our public statements should be imbued with such awareness. If ever there was a time when this was needed, it is now. If the coming of the Lord was “at hand” (Jas 5:8) 2000 years ago, how much more now! Let us lay to heart what Peter wrote to the believers of his day: “what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” (2 Pet 3:11-12).

I am not going to quote more passages—you are familiar with them. What I want to come through to you is the urgency of “such a time as this.” The question is, first of all, whether as Christians our lives are fixed upon Jesus, who is coming quickly. This expression is used emphatically in the last book of the Bible. We find it not only in Rev 3:11, but also in the last chapter of this last book of the Bible. It occurs *three times* on the last page in Rev 22, and Jesus’ closing word is (v20): “I come quickly.” The last word! And when we close our Bible, it rings in our ears: “I come quickly!”

I know very well that even in the days of the Apostles there were those who were *shaken* and *troubled* “as that the day of the Lord is just at hand” (2 Thess 2:2). I do not overdraw the biblical prospect, but I do ask the question whether the Church of Christ in our day loves Him in such a way that His appearance would be our greatest joy. It cannot be said of Twentieth Century Christianity that it is stamped by a balanced knowledge of Christ. There is in our churches a presentation of His redemptive work, and we want to be sure of our personal salvation. The question is, however, whether the Christian message has also developed a living and loving relation to the Person of Jesus, so that we experience His drawing power, which causes us to look for His appearance, when we shall see Him even as He is (1 John 3:2).

It would be normal if the Church of Christ, when we see “the day drawing near” (Heb 10:25), would more and more concentrate on His coming. Instead, there are large sections of Christianity that have lowered the Christ of the Scriptures to an inspiring leader, without any possibility of knowing Him and of experiencing the mystic union with Him. Present-day Christendom seems to think that the widest possible organised union of all the churches, irrespective of their creed, will solve the problems of

today's world. This is the dramatic miscalculation of the ecumenical movement. Its unbiblical idealism will just come down to a fatal dechristianisation that in the end can only fall victim. to the antichristianisation of the end-time.

Let me repeat that: dechristianisation paves the way to antichristianisation. And antichristianity develops under the influence of *Antichrist*. This is a process in the course of history. I remember very well that in my youth the notion "Antichrist" was seldom used. Of course, we knew that the word occurred in the Bible, but we were not familiar with it—evidently it had to do with the end of the world, but in our idea that was far away.

However, by now we have become accustomed to the appearance of a decay that resulted in a practical neglect of eschatological values. Large sections of humanity, including many nominal Christians, have become secularised and socialised. The term "Social Gospel" reflects that mentality. Over against such mutilation of the gospel the ICCC should represent a balanced biblical proclamation of the Lord's coming. It simply is part of the Word of God. Although there are minor differences in regard to this subject, we should continue to let the world know that Jesus Christ is coming, and what this means to the believer. It is so important for a Christian to find the balance between *faith and hope*, without losing ourselves in eschatological details and theological speculations. The world should hear that we are looking forward to the *appearance of our Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven*. Whatever the differences may be in regard to eschatological details, we should tell the world that "we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2) , and "we shall be like Him!"

Differences of opinion concerning attendant circumstances will completely vanish when we see Him Who filleth all in all (Eph 1:23). This prospect is simply all-embracing, to such an extent that Jesus Christ Himself is called "our hope" (1 Tim 1:1). This "lively hope" (1 Pet 1:3) is essential to the Christian faith and hence to our testimony, especially when we see the day approaching (Heb 10:25).

If it was true in the days of the Apostles, how much more in our time! We have come nearer to the day of our Lord by nearly two thousand years. The signs of the times to which the Lord Jesus referred (Matt 16:3) have to a large extent been perceptible. We may well ask whether the message of the Church and the hope of the believers has deepened. At any

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rate, it should! I do realise that it is not easy to find the balance between our present-day life and the future that is promised to the people of God. According to Rev 1:4 our daily grace descends from Him “which is, and which was, and which is to come.” In Him our past, our present, and our future are interrelated. In the measure we have come to know Him in the past, we shall walk with Him in our present, and look forward to meet Him in our future. Jesus Christ connects our past, our present, and our future! Knowing this as saving truth should incite us to anticipate His coming in glory. “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). This is why even in the Old Testament we find the testimony of Job who said that he would see God: “Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, *and not another*” (Job 19:27).

This presupposes the believer’s interrelation between his faith and his hope, his present and his future. This connection cannot be broken. Therefore, we must reject every theology and every view that casts doubt on the eschatological teaching of the Bible. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor 15:19).

Two thousand years after the first coming of Christ there is every reason to anticipate His second coming as the fulfilment of the work that the Father gave Him to do (cf, John 17:24). Every theology that falls short of the eternal completion of Christ’s redemptive work will have to be condemned as a perversion of the Word of God.

When Mordecai used the expression, “for such a time as this,” Esther knew what he meant to say. It was the time that her nation, the people of God, was subjected to the world power of the Persian king Ahasueros. But providentially this beautiful girl had drawn the attention of the world ruler. And now her nation was threatened in its existence, and its future by the evil intentions of Haman. Exactly at such a time Esther had come to the kingdom. And her uncle linked her royal position to the extermination that Haman had meant for her people. But her people were the people of God!

Mordecai was a man who had learned to discern the circumstances of life. Whereas most people live as though things happen by accident, he was a man who had learned to look behind the scenes! He believed in God. He believed in the Kingship of the God of Israel, the only true God. He believed in the providence of the Almighty.

We often dare to have hope when the prevailing circumstances are favourable. But a believer knows that the Lord God rules. Beloved, there is reason for a Christian to have faith in God when the sky is dark and the future alarming. But hear that man saying to his cousin: “who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this.”

Beloved, there are times and circumstances in which God’s children discern the power and the guidance of God. Humanly speaking, there was not much reason to see a link between Haman’s evil thoughts and Esther’s position. Who could withstand the king’s design? And, what about Esther herself? She did not see a way out! Mordecai, however, believed in God’s providence. And he had every reason to do so. His people had been chosen by God. The promises of God rested upon them. So they must have a future. Such is Mordecai’s conviction. If he followed the line of human thinking, he would not have said a thing like this. But he knew that the people of God were at stake! And he knew about the power of God. He knew about God’s promises. And all that is behind his words to Esther.

Beloved, when we do not have any other outlook than what is called “horizontal,” we will never speak like Mordecai. But he believed in God, in spite of Haman’s threat and Satan’s wrath.

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*An Address delivered at the International Council of Christian Churches, on the occasion of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by Dr J C Maris, General Secretary, August 12, 1998, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.*

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# **PETER'S EXHORTATION TO THE ELDERS**

## **(1 PET 5:1-11)**

Tow Siang Yeow

### **Text: 1 Peter 5:1-11**

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Introduction**

Imagine yourself under Japanese occupation during the Second World War. Those of us who had gone through that period would have many bitter memories of being ruled by the Japanese Military Regime with a rod of iron! Many, suspected of being anti-Japanese, including Christians, were imprisoned and tortured. Many were killed. People in Singapore lived through that harrowing period in fear and uncertainty. They could only hope and pray for liberation and freedom from the shackles of the Japanese rulers.

Going back to the time of the Apostle Peter, a somewhat similar situation existed; there was bitter persecution of Christians under the cruel rule of the Emperor Nero. The Apostle Paul had been killed, and Peter's own life was in danger. Believers lived in fear for their lives, and their faith in the Lord Jesus wavered. Peter realised that the early church needed encouragement badly during this dangerous and difficult period. Leaders in the churches in Asia Minor needed strengthening so that they could effectively feed the flock of God and give them guidance and direction.

And so for this specific objective, Peter wrote the fifth chapter of the book of First Peter. In verse one, Peter addressed the elders of the church as "fellow elders" as a mark of humility in lowering his status to that of an elder. But now he spoke with the authority of an Apostle, and affirmed that he had been a witness of Christ's sufferings, and would be sharing the glory that should be revealed! In mentioning this, Peter made the point that those who share in Christ's sufferings will also share in His glory.

### **Peter Emphasises the Duties and Responsibilities of the Elders**

Peter exhorts: "Feed the flock of God which is among you!" Here, Peter compares God's people to a flock of sheep with the Lord being the Chief Shepherd. And, all elders and pastors are shepherds who are to look after God's flock. The shepherds have many tasks to perform: They have to teach and preach to the flock from God's Word so that they can grow spiritually. They have to protect them from false preachers and teachers. They have to lead and guide the flock. If they go astray, they have to seek them out and bring them back on to the right path again. If the sheep are rebellious, causing turmoil in the church, the shepherd will have to discipline them firmly, but lovingly. If at any time the sheep has an urgent need, they should not hesitate to give prompt and undivided attention. The shepherd has to supervise the flock under his care.

The shepherd is also one of the sheep amongst God's flock. And so the effective shepherd needs both relationships: First, he must be among his people so that he could get to know their problems and difficulties. But he also needs to "oversee" or supervise his people so that he can lead them and help them in times of trouble. In other words, the shepherd not only preaches from the pulpit, but also interacts and has personal rapport and empathy with the sheep. The shepherd should be available at all times



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to help when a sheep meets with an emergency. Looking after the flock should not be by constraint, but done willingly. In doing God's work, that should be the shepherd's guiding principle. He performs his duties with a willing heart, knowing that what he is doing is in the will of the Lord, and for the spiritual benefit of the sheep under his care. In other words, he serves the sheep because he loves them and not because he is forced to do it.

Shepherds should not seek after filthy lucre, but be of a ready mind. In other words, they should not be "money minded." It is perfectly in order that a pastor be paid an adequate salary so that he will not be plagued by financial worries. However, if the main motive of his joining the ministry is to "make money," then he is not a true shepherd, but a mere hireling! I know of a certain young pastor who complained that his salary is low compared with that in the private sector. This could be true, but think of the Apostle Paul who not only did not draw a salary, but supported himself by making tents whilst zealously labouring for the Lord. In Phil 4:19 he assured the believers, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." And so, those who work full-time in God's vineyard can be assured that God will meet all their needs if only they will trust in Him. In verse 3, Peter says, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." This is the key towards harmony and cooperation in the local church. The shepherd should not lord it over the sheep. He should lead but not drive the flock as one drives cattle! He should not use force or threats to get things done, nor issue orders as is done in the army. It would be disastrous for the shepherd of God's flock to adopt such a kind of "bossy" attitude. He needs to have sensitivity and tact. He needs to discuss, motivate and set a good example for the sheep to follow if he wants their full and willing cooperation.

"Being examples to the flock" implies that shepherds, besides being godly and morally upright, also have exemplary conduct and orderly behaviour. In 1 Cor 14:40 Paul tells believers to "let all things be done decently and in order." "All things" include little things such as being trustworthy, not slothful, not procrastinating, being gentle and polite and sensitive to others' feelings. Hence, to be a good example to the flock, shepherds have to observe not only the "Big" but also those "small" things which go to shape a person's character.

At this juncture, Peter encourages shepherds to continue serving God faithfully, as there is a reward awaiting them. He assures all faithful shepherds that they will receive a crown of glory that does not fade away, when the Chief Shepherd appears.

### **Humility**

Younger believers are to submit to the elders out of respect for their age and spirituality. However, all believers, young and old, should be “clothed with humility” submitting to one another even as they submit to God. Being “clothed with humility” is an allusion to the Lord’s putting on a towel to be as a servant by washing His disciples’ feet. But we can never be submissive to one another until we are first submissive to God. Hence, Peter adds, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”

On the other hand, God hates pride and is opposed to the proud and arrogant. “God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jas 4:6). We have the sad example of King Nebuchadnezzar. He was a great king, and had many achievements. But he did not give any glory to God; instead, he boasted of his own power and might in building up the mighty Babylonian Empire. God punished him by taking away his reasoning power. He became mad and behaved like an animal, eating grass in the field like an ox for seven years. It was only when he realised his sin and repented that God restored him to sanity.

### **Casting Your Cares upon the Lord**

Peter, knowing that the Christians in Asia Minor were living under very difficult and trying circumstances, gives them this timely advice: “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” All their anxieties and troubles can be turned over to the Lord because He truly cares and is genuinely concerned about their welfare.

Although believers in Singapore are not suffering persecution or great hardships, we also have our cares and problems, including the severe economic downturn and social and political turmoil in countries around us. It is said that most Singaporeans’ priorities have been drastically reduced to just having enough funds to tide them over these tumultuous times! But take heart! In Matt 6:33 the Lord assures us, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things

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shall be added unto you.” The Lord will give us the courage and strength to face the future, and to see us through all our trials and tribulations.

### **The Wiles of Satan**

Belief in the sovereignty of God and His fatherly concern for us should not make us complacent. Peter warns the leaders of the church to be sober and vigilant, because our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour. The devil, or Satan, is always active and seeking for an opportunity to trip us up and overwhelm us. He does this by sowing discord in the church as well as in the home, by breaking-up the close fellowship of the saints. He promotes slandering, backbiting and rumour-mongering. He stirs up strife in the church by accusing the leaders and fellow-saints falsely. Rev 12:10 calls Satan “the accuser of our brethren.”

Sometimes, Satan may tempt us when we are off our guard to take part in sinful activities. Peter tells us to resist the devil, and be steadfast in the faith. In Eph 6:17-18 Paul says, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” We are thus to stand firm in the Word of God and with fervent prayer. Let us refuse to be moved no matter how tempting or exciting the offer to sin is made to us. Peter ends his exhortation with a benediction, assuring believers that God is in complete control no matter how difficult or dangerous the situation may be.

### **Conclusion**

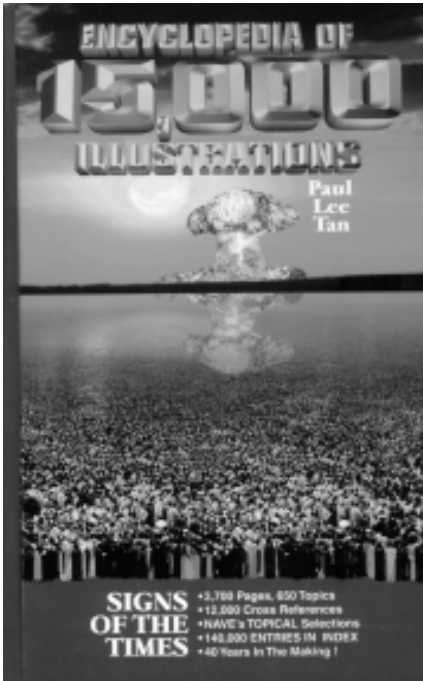
God’s Word in Second Timothy tells us, “In the last days, perilous times shall come!” We believe we are living in these last days! There is turmoil all around us, and perilous times are looming ahead! Many believers’ hearts are troubled and their faith may be wavering. As shepherds we must heed the cry of the sheep. Their hearts are fearful and there is spiritual famine. They need to be fed with the Word of God. Feeding the flock of God, hence, is our most important task and responsibility. Shepherds have to set good examples for the sheep to follow. We need to live blameless and godly lives. We need to be humble. We need to search ourselves to see where we have fallen short. We need to hand over all our cares to the Lord. Finally, we need to be sober and vigilant so as not to fall into the wiles of Satan.

Our pastors are the beloved shepherds of God's flock. They have a heavier responsibility in looking after the sheep during this time of peril and uncertainty. They have to guard our souls from the evil one. We have the responsibility to uphold them and lighten their burden by our prayer support, by serving in the various ministries of the church to the best of our ability, and by our material support. May God grant us much wisdom and discernment as we labour together in His vineyard to save precious souls for His Kingdom!

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*Dr Tow Siang Yeow is the President of the FEBC Board of Directors. He also serves as an Elder of New Life Bible-Presbyterian Church. The above message was preached on May 10, 1998, at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Graduation Service of the Far Eastern Bible College.*

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## REACHING OUT TO THE CHINESE COMMUNITY

Pang Kok Hiong and Christian Wei

*“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom 9:1-3).*

The Apostle Paul was greatly grieved when he remembered his “kinsmen according to the flesh,” that is, the Israelites, who were not saved in Christ. He even wished that he were accursed from Christ for their sakes. Are we Singaporeans similarly grieved for the unsaved millions of Chinese? For though we are Singaporeans by nationality, we are Chinese by race, and all Chinese people, whether in Singapore or mainland China or elsewhere, are truly our “kinsmen according to the flesh.” God brought our ancestors out of China so that we, their descendants, might have the freedom to hear the gospel of Christ. Therefore we must consider it our duty to bring the gospel back to the Chinese.

May we have the zeal of Paul for the salvation of our brethren. In Rom 10:1-3, Paul testified, *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”* The Chinese also have a zeal for God, but like the Jews, their zeal is not for the true God, having no knowledge of God’s righteousness in Christ.

Let us remember Esther, the Jewish slave who became queen. When the opportunity came for her to help her race, she was at first apprehensive. But her foster father—Mordecai—reminded her thus: *“Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. 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?"*

Truly, who knows but that God has brought us to Singapore for such a time as this? Look at the opportunities that exist for us to reach out to the Chinese. China uses the simplified-form Chinese which we also use in Singapore, unlike Taiwan and Hong Kong where the long-form Chinese is taught and used. Our Singapore government maintains a very good relationship with the Chinese government, and many of us travel to China freely on business or for pleasure. Many Chinese nationals are also now working or studying in Singapore. If we hold our peace, and will not reach out to the Chinese despite all these factors in our favour, then be assured that God can use others, like the Koreans, to save the Chinese. Many of the Korean brethren have demonstrated their love for the Chinese by ministering the gospel to the Chinese. For example, Pastor Lee Man Yue—Rev Pang's 80 year-old co-labourer in the Chinese Christian Church of Saipan—is a Korean by race but has worked amongst the Chinese for most of his ministry. When the Lord uses others to save our own brethren, would we not be ashamed then?

How then are we to preach the gospel to the Chinese? Let us first consider some characteristics of the Chinese. By Chinese here, we mean both the Singaporean Chinese who still abide by Chinese traditions and the mainland Chinese.

- (1) The Chinese are a very materialistic people. They think that money is the way to a comfortable life. They hanker after material things like the 5Cs—car, condominium, country club, credit card and cash.
- (2) The Chinese are a very superstitious people. They subscribe to several beliefs such as Buddhism, Taoism and geomancy. But in effect, they do not truly believe, but are interested only in how these religious forms may be “used” to earn more money for them. They view Christianity as the foreigners' religion.
- (3) Chinese parents like to be honoured. One of their main contentions against Christianity concerns ancestral worship. They worry that the Christian Chinese would not “worship” their deceased parents.

In China, most of the people are atheists and believe firmly in evolution. Such atheistic leanings are much stronger in the mainland

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Chinese than the overseas Chinese. We find often that the hearts of the overseas Chinese are hardened against the gospel. In comparison, the mainland Chinese, having never heard the gospel before, are genuinely interested when the Good News is told to them.

How to reach out to the Chinese? We will approach this topic by considering two different groups of Chinese. The first group comprises the general population with the equivalent of secondary level or less education, whilst the intellectuals form the second group.

Let us consider the first group. The main issue here is not methodology, but whether we have a heart of love for the Chinese. If we have love, then there will be sheep. If we do not have love in our heart for them, then they will be frightened away by us when we witness to them. If we feel a burden for their souls, then even without knowing the “how’s” we will be able to start reaching out to them. Many overseas Chinese despise the mainland Chinese, and resent them as competitors taking away job opportunities. How do you feel towards them?

When witnessing to the Chinese, the direct method, especially when witnessing to complete strangers, is not very effective. It is better that we first befriend the Chinese unbelievers, let them know us and understand us. Love them and help them as they settle in Singapore. But do not entice them with the promise of material benefits when they believe in the Lord. We must do as the Apostle Paul did—to know and preach only Christ and Him crucified. In our witness, concentrate on the conviction of sin and salvation through Christ’s death. Do not use our own wisdom, but rely completely in the power of His Word. It has been observed that once they are saved, the Chinese believers will zealously bring their family and friends to the Lord. They do not keep the Good News to themselves, but are eager to broadcast God’s loving grace to their brethren.

As for the second group, let us look at John 3 to see how the Lord dealt with the intellectuals. Nicodemus was an intellectual, a Pharisee. In John 3:2, he went to see Jesus and told Him that “*we know thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*” In the same way, our lives are on show to the intellectual Chinese. Are we able to show them that God is a true God in our lives? Do we demonstrate the miracle of sinful lives being changed to moral, holy lives? Nicodemus was able to see God in Christ’s life. Are the Chinese intellectuals able to see that God has transformed our lives?

When our lives are transformed, others will be attracted to God by our lives, and will be willing to listen to us. If we live in sin, why should unbelievers listen to what we preach?

We also note that when approached by Nicodemus, the Lord gave him the Word. Christ concentrated on the Scriptures when responding to Nicodemus. Similarly, we must also use the Bible when witnessing to the intellectuals for it is the power of God. We need to tell them what the Bible says. We must therefore know the Bible well. We need to study the Bible carefully and diligently, so that we are able to tell others the whole counsel of God.

Lastly, we learn from the Lord's example of using the wind to explain the rebirth that we need. It is necessary to approach the intellectuals in ways they can understand. Thus, when witnessing to the intellectuals, use scientific laws and factual knowledge to explain the gospel to them. However, realise that witnessing to the Chinese intellectuals is not an easy task. Do not expect quick results.

The most important issue here is whether we are truly Christ's followers. Are you willing to be an evangelist to the Chinese? May the Lord burden you to be willing, to have a heart for China.

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*A message preached at the Life B-P Church Missionary Fellowship's 8<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Thanksgiving Service, June 28, 1998. Rev Pang Kok Hiong is an FEBC graduate and Calvary B-P Church's missionary to Saipan, and Rev Christian Wei is president of Chinese for Christ International, and pastor of the Chinese Bible Church in Greenville, South Carolina, USA.*

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# **CHARISMATICS AND HERMENEUTICS**

Jeffrey Khoo

There are many good books on charismaticism, but very few start off with a critique of its method of interpreting Scripture. A critique of charismatic hermeneutics should be done at the very outset. If we can prove that the charismatic method of interpreting Scripture is fallacious, then we have made our case against their doctrines and practices. A building with a weak foundation will not and cannot stand (cf, Matt 7:24-27). It will be shown that the charismatic movement is built not on rock but on sand.

## **Why is Bible Interpretation Important?**

It is essential to consider how charismatics interpret the Bible. This is because in discussing charismaticism, we are discussing the Bible, and what it says concerning its doctrines and practices. It goes without saying that our practices are based on how we understand the Scriptures. The question is: Have we understood the Scriptures correctly? What makes certain practices right, and others wrong? How can we be sure about what is right and what is wrong? Can the charismatics be right after all? Or are we correct in warning against modern-day charismatic teachings and practices? It all boils down to how we read and study the Scriptures. So it is important for us at the outset to understand what Scripture is all about, and how to study it.

## **The Nature of the Word of God**

Let us first of all deal with the nature of God's Word. The Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God (2 Tim 3:16). When we read the Bible it is not man's words that we are reading but God's Word. As Paul said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The Bible is literally "God-breathed." As such it is no ordinary book. It is an extraordinary, supernatural book. It is the sole authority of our faith and practice. Our doctrines and practices should not be based on human opinions,

traditions, or experiences. Our doctrines and practices must be founded on and governed by God's Word. Opinions, traditions, experiences have very little authority outside of God's Word. Only God's Word is fully and absolutely authoritative, and its authority is independent of human opinions, traditions, and experiences.

It is required of every Bible student to interpret the Word of God correctly. In the Old Testament, we find Ezra not only reading, but also giving the sense or meaning of the Scriptures, thus causing the people to understand the Scriptures (Neh 8:8). In the New Testament, we find the Apostle Paul exhorting young Pastor Timothy to do the same: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). The Bible has only one meaning. It is our duty to study the Bible to understand what it truly means. There is a need to interpret the Scriptures accurately.

### **Principles of Bible Interpretation**

Knowing how to interpret God's Word accurately is particularly necessary when dealing with the charismatics. How many times have you tried to explain what God's Word means only to hear the retort: "Well, that is your interpretation?" This happens especially when one's interpretation or explanation is unacceptable to the other. So how should we interpret Scripture? What are the principles of interpreting Scripture?

### **The Analogy of Faith**

The Westminster Confession of Faith presents the biblical approach to Scripture interpretation: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly" (I.9). This approach of using Scripture to interpret Scripture is also known as the analogy of faith or the analogy of Scripture. No other book is infallible as the Bible is infallible. As such, the Bible is its own infallible authority and commentary. Note that the Westminster Confession also states that there is but one meaning to the Scriptures: "the true and full sense of any Scripture . . . is not manifold but one."

### **Scripture Interprets Scripture**

The Bible interprets itself. For an example, turn to Daniel 2:31-45. In verses 31-35, we have the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, and in verses 36-45, we have Daniel's interpretation of the vision. God gave the vision and its meaning. There is therefore no question about what the vision means, and we ought not to create meanings other than that which God had intended. Another example would be Isaiah 7:14. Here we have the wonderful prediction of the virgin birth of the Messiah. Who is He? When was it fulfilled? Matthew 1:22-23 explicitly tells us that this prophecy was fulfilled in none other than Jesus Christ at the time when Herod the Great was king (Matt 2:1).

### **Interpreting Scripture in Context**

In the interpretation of Scripture, context is important. What is context? Context is that part of the text that leads up to and follows the text in question. Many false teachers claim to base their doctrines on the Bible. But under close scrutiny, we find that many of these "proof-texts" are really taken out of context. For example, an atheist can claim that the Bible supports his view that there is no God. He can cite Psalm 14:1 which does say, "There is no God." But this statement when read in its context means something quite different: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." When we quote someone, we want to quote him within context. Nobody likes to be taken out of context, including God!

### **Scripture Does Not Contradict Scripture**

In Bible interpretation, Scripture must not be made to clash with Scripture. If my interpretation of a certain verse or passage of Scripture goes against what is clearly taught in other verses or passages of Scripture, then my interpretation must be wrong. For example, Jesus said in John 14:28, "my Father is greater than I." If I interpret this to mean that Jesus is a lesser god than God the Father, then I would be contradicting other statements where Jesus equates Himself with God (cf, John 1:1, 8:58, 10:30). Moreover, we have many passages from other parts of Scripture that speak of the absolute deity of Christ (eg, Acts 20:28, Phil 2:5-11, Col 2:9). A single text that appears to go against many other passages of Scripture must be interpreted in the light of the majority. In this case, majority wins. The obscure text must be read in the light of the clear.

## **Theology Guides Interpretation**

We must not forget theology in our interpretation of Scripture. The body of faith has once for all been settled in the canonical Scriptures comprising just 66 books. It is essential for the Bible interpreter to know Christian Theology well. He must be very familiar with the doctrines taught in Systematic Theology under the basic headings of Theology Proper, Biblical Anthropology, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. Theology serves as a fence to keep us from going astray or off the mark in our interpretation of Scripture. For example, Mark 16:16 reads, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” If I come to the conclusion that this verse teaches that a person must not only believe in Christ, but must also go through the waters of baptism in order to be saved, then I would be going against the whole tenor of Scripture which spells out in no uncertain terms that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone, and not by works (Rom 1:17, 5:1, Eph 2:8-9, Titus 3:5).

## **Charismatic Twisting of Scripture**

When interpreting Scripture it is important to realise that the Apostles were infallible in their preaching and writing of the Holy Scriptures (1 Thess 2:13, 2 Pet 1:20-21, 2 Tim 3:16), and in their administration of the churches (Acts 5:1-11, 19:13-17, 2 Cor 13:2-3, Gal 1:8, Jude 17). A failure to appreciate this may lead a Bible interpreter to conclude that the Apostles were wrong in those areas of their ministry which seem contradictory. For example, there are charismatics who in an attempt to prove that signs and wonders are necessary for evangelism say that Paul failed in Athens because he merely preached the gospel without performing miracles. This led him to change his method to that of signs and wonders when he was in Corinth, which brought success. The text used to support this is 1 Corinthians 2:4 where Paul said, “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Today’s Wimber-style power evangelists often quote this text to support their method of doing evangelism. This view of the Apostle Paul and 1 Corinthians 2:4 is erroneous because the Apostles were infallible in their ministry of the gospel. Moreover, that Paul had made a mistake in Athens receives no scriptural support whatsoever. In the light of Acts 17-18, it is evident that there was no difference in the way Paul went about preaching the gospel

in those two places. Luke in Acts 18 tells us that Paul in Corinth went to the synagogues and there “reasoned,” “persuaded” (v4), and “testified” (v5) to the Jews and the Greeks that Jesus was the Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, Paul clearly states that the simple preaching of the gospel of Christ is the power of God, not signs and wonders (see also Rom 1:16). This was exactly what Paul did previously in Athens. There was no change in his evangelistic method.

### **Charismaticism and Experience**

The fundamental fallacy in the charismatic method of interpreting Scripture is its promotion of experience over against Scripture as the primary basis for faith and practice. Instead of reading their experiences in the light of Scripture, charismatics subject the Scriptures to their experiences. It is not an overstatement to say that charismatics base their faith and practice not on the Bible but on an extra-biblical source, namely, their experiences. Their experiences have blurred them from the truth taught in the Scriptures. (A clear example would be Rev Alfred Yeo’s article, “Me, Slain by God?” in *The Singapore Evangel* [Apr-Jun ’95]: 13-14, where he argued for the slaying of the Spirit based solely on his experiences. No scriptural verses were cited except one, Acts 1:13, and that, inaccurately.)

A typical charismatic argument against relying on Scripture alone as the basis for all our faith and practice is this: “I don’t need the Bible to tell me what is right or wrong; I have the Holy Spirit, and you have no business questioning my spiritual experiences if you yourself have never experienced them yet.” Is this a valid argument? Actually the above statement is quite contradictory and unbiblical. We *do* need the Bible to tell us right from wrong. The Apostle Paul, for example, commended the Berean Christians for searching the Scriptures daily to ascertain whether the things Paul taught were true or not (Acts 17:11). This vital need for searching the Scriptures is even more acute today. Paul had warned, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:3-4). In order to protect ourselves from being deceived by false teachers, Paul instructed Timothy to know the Scriptures “which are able to make thee wise . . . All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Is it correct to say that since I have the Holy Spirit, I do not need the Bible? No, it is not correct at all to say that. The Holy Spirit does not work independently of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit works through God’s Word. The Word of God is called the Sword of *the Spirit* (Eph 6:17). The Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of Truth (John 15:26). Jesus said, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). The Truth of God is not found in experiences but in the Word of God. Jesus said, “Thy Word is Truth” (John 17:17).

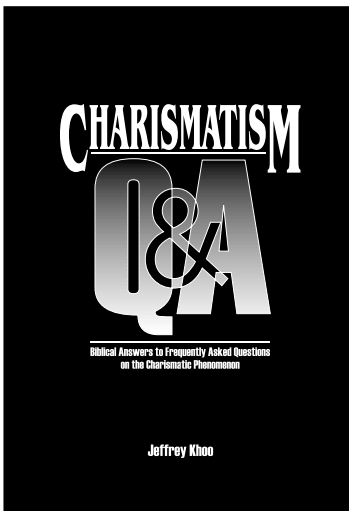
The problem with charismatic hermeneutics is that it is not based on Scripture but on sentiment. The operating principle is not “I know this is true because God’s Word says so,” but “I know this is true because I feel so.” “It must be right because I feel good about it.” Indulging in sinful pleasures may make us feel good, but that certainly does not make it right.

In saying that experience should not be the primary basis of our faith and practice, I am not saying that experience is unimportant in the Christian life. I believe the Christian religion is a religion of experience. The Bible is replete with accounts of both joyful and painful experiences of God’s people in their spiritual pilgrimage. The Scriptures tell us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). When we give of our substance to the Lord, we are told to give cheerfully (2 Cor 9:7). We are told to weep with them that weep (Rom 12:15). Experiences are part and parcel of Christian living, but they are not the basis for establishing biblical truth. Experience must be subject to Scripture, not vice versa.

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# **HOW TO TRY THE SPIRITS (1 JOHN 4:1-4)**

Charles Seet

## **Text: 1 John 4:1-4**

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

## **Introduction**

It is good to be back home in Life Church again. I returned from the Philippines just a week ago and I have been looking forward very much to coming home to serve the Lord here.

When I was in the Philippines, I had to get used to many things. One of these things was to be careful when purchasing certain items, that I did not get cheated into buying things that were not genuine. This can be difficult because sometimes the fake item looks almost like the real thing. And it can be quite a frustrating experience to think that one has bought the real thing only to realise later on that it was a fake! The logos and names printed on these products look almost like those of well known brands. One of our co-workers told us that she bought a calculator which she thought must be good because it had the name of the well-known brand—“Sharp”—on it. But after she had taken it home and scrutinised it closely, she saw that it was not “Sharp” at all, but “Shrap.” The letters ‘R’ and ‘A’ were switched. Needless to say, it did not last for very long.

Once we even heard on the news that certain medicines that were sold in the pharmacies there were actually fakes. Imagine what can happen if you were very sick and needed medicine and then spent your hard-earned money to buy it. After taking it your condition does not

improve at all because what you had taken was just fake medicine. And I am sure when you hear this, you will say, “How wicked it is for people to do such things. How awful it is that people would take advantage of others like this.” But that is just the way that things are and will continue to be in this sinful world. And the only way that we can deal with this problem is to be careful and to learn how to discern well enough between what is genuine and what is counterfeit. We must learn to look out for certain little details and even perform certain tests.

### **The Need for Discernment**

Dearly beloved, this is where I want to make the point that just as we need discernment in the physical realm, *we also need discernment in the spiritual realm*. And this is because there are also fake and counterfeit things in the spiritual realm—counterfeit teaching, counterfeit gospels, false religion, cults, false teachers, and false prophets. And these can sometimes appear so impressive, and so much like the real thing, that people are fooled into believing that they are genuine. But how frustrating and disappointing it is to find out one day that they are not! When a person is deceived in the physical realm, he only loses his money. But when one is deceived in the spiritual realm, *he may lose things that are far more valuable and precious*: his time, his misdirected energies, and most of all, his own soul.

This is the reason why strong warnings are given in God’s Word, telling believers to be careful, and to take necessary precautions to *try the spirits and not be deceived by them*. Let us turn our Bibles once again to the passage of Scripture in 1 John 4 and read the warning that is sounded out loud and clear to us here in the first verse: “Beloved, *believe not every spirit*, but *try the spirits* whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

One of the main reasons why John the Apostle wrote this epistle was to deal with the growing problem of false teachers facing the church of Jesus Christ in the first century. These false teachers had *crept in unawares* into many churches. They did not come in bearing a label saying, “I am a false teacher.” They were like the tares or weeds that the devil sowed in the wheat fields to destroy them. They *appeared* to be true believers at first, testifying to God’s work and power in their lives. But their true colours began to emerge as they claimed to be more spiritual than others and to know more than the rest. And then they slowly



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propagated their views, ideas, opinions and beliefs, that sounded very logical and appealing. There was an air of wisdom in the things that they said but it was *mixed* with doctrinal error.

Some of them said that Jesus could not possibly have been God, because God is a spirit, and could never come into contact with physical matter at all. The *spiritual and material cannot mix*.

Others were saying that Jesus was God, but He did not really take on a real physical body. He just *appeared* to have a body. But it was just an illusion. Then according to church history, there was one false teacher named Cerinthus who taught that God came and took over the body of a man named Jesus at his baptism and then left his body just before he was crucified.

As these teachings spread, many became quite confused about the truth. Some thought that these men were *of God*, that they had been specially sent by God to reveal wonderful *new divine mysteries* that God had kept hidden before from man's knowledge. And so the Apostles now had to *expose* them. In Col 2:8, the Apostle Paul issued the warning "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." The Apostle Peter called them "false teachers who bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Pet 2:1). The whole epistle of Jude was also written to expose these false teachers as "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now let us consider 1 John 4:2-6 to see how John the Apostle exposed them. And as we read this I would like you to observe the words "of God" that are repeated six times in these five verses: "Hereby know ye the Spirit *of God*: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is *of God*: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is *not of God*: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are *of God*, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are *of God*: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is *not of God* heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

Can you see what the writer was emphasising here? He was making the point that there must be certain details you must look for in order to tell if the label “of God” can rightly be attached to a person. Firstly he must not deny that *Jesus* was God who *became a man* like us (vv2,3). Secondly he must *not be of the world*, or have a worldly lifestyle and spirit (vv4,5). And thirdly, he listens to and accepts only *the teachings of God’s Word* that was given by the authority of the Apostles (v6).

If you look carefully you will also observe that these five verses begin and end in almost the same way: “*Hereby know ye the Spirit of God . . . Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*” The first “hereby” is the writer saying “*I am going to tell you how you can discern if someone is genuinely of God or a fake.*” The second “hereby” is the writer concluding by saying “*I have just told you how you can tell if someone is genuine or a fake.*”

Dearly beloved, we need to pay full attention to what the Word of God says here. If the Christians living in the time of John the Apostle needed to know this because of the problem of false prophets then, how much more do we need to know this, since Christ Himself has already given *advance warning* to us in the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew that shortly before He comes, “there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

As we now draw *nearer and nearer* to the time of our Lord’s return we find that there are an increasing number of things in the world today that have the label “*of God*” prominently displayed on them. And some of them are truly of God and rightly bear that label. But others have the label on only to hide the truth about them underneath: the words “*of the world.*” And perhaps even to hide the words “*of the devil.*”

So let us look at the *three ways* of testing the spirits, according to God’s Word in 1 John 4:2-6 to see if they are truly of God or not. The first is:

### **What Do They Teach about Jesus Christ and His Work?**

Let us look again at verses 2 and 3, “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.”

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These verses show us that the most important way to determine if a teacher or movement is of God is to find out what they teach about Jesus Christ. Any teaching that is truly of God will always exalt the deity of Christ and His completed work of salvation. If you come across any teaching that in some way, *demotes* Christ, or *reduces* the importance of His work to save us, then that teaching must be rejected.

This is true of all the cult groups like the Mormons and Jehovah's witnesses who make Christ less than God. In the Philippines the Mormons and another cult known as the *Iglesia ni Cristo* have built the largest and most beautiful buildings for their services. They also have a good public image of being quite dignified, well-organised, and prosperous. One of the ways used by them to convince people that they are of God, is to say that their impressive image and big churches are obvious evidences of God's approval and blessing upon them.

But before you accept such an argument from them you must ask this question: Some of the most impressive, grand and prosperous civilisations and movements in history have been *ungodly* kingdoms and nations. Does this mean that God has blessed them and showed His approval? Obviously not. Therefore we cannot use growth, achievements, prosperity or success to evaluate if something is truly of God or not. As long as anyone *does not fully acknowledge the deity* of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is not of God.

So whenever you come across any book, teaching or preacher that claims to be *of God* but says that Christ was only the highest archangel, or that He was just one of the many divine messengers God sent into this world, or that He was nothing more than a great prophet, you can immediately and entirely dismiss its claim to be *of God*. There is no need at all for you to make any further inquiry or apply any other tests of genuineness. They have already failed the most important one.

Then there are other groups that do acknowledge the deity of Christ, but have *reduced the importance or sufficiency of His Work*. They say that the death of Jesus on the cross was not sufficient to bring full salvation from sin. The sufferings of the saints must be added to the pool of Christ's sufferings. And even then, only certain kinds of sins can be fully forgiven through this. Other kinds of sins require us to add acts of penance to merit God's forgiveness. They also deny that Christ's present ministry of interceding for us before God is sufficient by adding to it the

ministry of the saints and of Mary. That is what Roman Catholics are taught. And the Roman Catholic church claims to be *of God* because it traces its origins all the way back to the Apostle Peter to whom Christ had entrusted the keys of the kingdom, according to Matthew 16.

A number of years ago a new group came into Singapore teaching that those who believe in Jesus are *not saved* until they are *baptised*, and that if they stopped doing good works they will lose their salvation. They have *added* baptism and good works to the completed work of Christ. This group claimed to be *of God* and confused many young people, including some from our church. And it was necessary to expose them as a cult.

Dearly beloved, nothing *can* be added, and nothing *must* be added to the work of Christ that saves us. To do so is to make His work *incomplete* and to *rob* Him of the full glory that He deserves for our salvation. Once we add something, no matter how small, to the *complete work of Christ* to save us, that *added thing* becomes the most critical part of the salvation process, giving us firm grounds to *claim some credit* for our own salvation. God's Word plainly tells us in Eph 2:8-9, "For *by grace* are ye saved *through faith*; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: *not of works* lest any man should boast." And also in Tit 3:15: "*Not by works of righteousness* which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

So whenever you encounter any new teaching that does not deny the deity of Christ, you must not stop there, but ask if it denies *the sufficiency of His work of salvation*. And once you discover any claim that you must add something extra to complete your salvation, you do not have to make further inquiries, but can confidently put it aside as a counterfeit.

Having seen how we may apply the first way of trying the spirits we go on now to look at the second way. And this is to ask:

### **Are They Worldly in Their Character and Appeal?**

Let us look at verses 4 and 5 of our text: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you than he that is in *the world*. They are *of the world*: therefore speak they *of the world*, and *the world* heareth them." If you read this carefully you will notice that the key phrase in these two verses is the phrase, "*the world*."

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It is mentioned four times here, and only in connection with those who are not of God, in order to highlight their *worldly character and appeal*.

Their teaching appeals to the world because it follows the world's values of *self-love, self-exaltation* and *self-reliance*. That is one reason why false teachers often draw large crowds of people to themselves. Do not be deceived when you hear that their rallies and meeting halls are packed to overflowing. People love to hear this kind of teaching rather than the Word of God that teaches us to repent of our sins, *humble* ourselves, *deny* ourselves and emphasises *loving God, exalting God* and *relying on God* alone. The whole world is ready to listen to someone who teaches a worldly "health-wealth gospel," a teaching of self-esteem, positive thinking, and offers special power to deliver oneself instantly from all the ills and inconveniences of this life. All of this is nothing but the means used by Satan, the prince of this world, to draw men away from God.

Dearly beloved, if we are seeking after these things, we are not of God, but of the world. If God is truly dwelling in our hearts, we would resist and overcome the worldly appeal of many false teachers, and not be deceived by them.

And very often the worldly appeal of many false teachers is also accompanied by worldly character. They exalt themselves with an expensive lifestyle. They engage themselves secretly in worldly and immoral pursuits that are sometimes exposed as scandals. And when we want to evaluate whether certain well known teachers or speakers are of God or not, we must examine their lives. Do they live and conduct themselves in a Christ-like manner? If they do not, do not follow them.

And if they exalt themselves, demanding more and more loyalty, commitment and allegiance to themselves than to Christ, they are also to be *rejected*. Some time ago there was a case of an impressive preacher from England who came to a church in Singapore and became their regular speaker. His books were printed and distributed. Some claimed that his writing and preaching was in the style of the Puritans and invited people to come and listen. A friend of mine invited me and I was impressed by his preaching. But later I was told that he took over the church leadership and in fact caused that church to split. Then news arrived from his home church in England that he was being disciplined

for having an extra-marital affair. And many realised that he was *not of God*.

Dearly beloved, there are many in this world who can speak with great power, captivate their audiences, and move crowds even to tears and to action. But not all of them are of God.

Please be very careful of those who speak more of *themselves* than of Christ, betraying their *worldly character*. Please be careful also of those whose teachings have a *worldly appeal*. They are not of God.

Now we must go on to consider the third way of trying the spirits, and that is to ask:

### **Do They Accept the Holy Bible as Their Only Authority?**

Let us look at verse 6 of our text: “*We* are of God: he that knoweth God heareth *us*; he that is not of God heareth not *us*. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and of error.”

In this verse the key words are the pronouns “we” and “us” and they refer to no one else but John and the rest of the Apostles. The teaching of the Apostles was the final authority that must be used to evaluate any teaching. It had to be received and accepted by anyone who claims to be *of God*. And anyone who does not receive or accept what the Apostles have taught, or teach something *different* from what they have taught, is very clearly and definitely not of God.

Well, the Apostles are no longer with us today, but they have left behind the Holy Scriptures which have the same *final authority* that the Apostles had when they were alive. And so anyone who does not receive or accept what is written in the Scriptures or teaches something *new and different* from what is written in it, is very clearly and definitely not of God.

So if someone comes and tells you that they have seen angels or have received new teachings from them that must be received and accepted, *we must not accept them as final authority*. Very often these new revelations actually teach things that are vastly different from the Holy Scriptures. For example Joseph Smith claimed to have seen an angel called Moroni who led him to the Book of Mormon. Another well known example is Mohammed who claimed to have received revelations from the Angel Gabriel which eventually became the Quran.

## HOW TO TRY THE SPIRITS

In the Christian world today, there seems to be a *resurgence of new revelations* that are claimed to be of God. In some churches people are more excited to hear the latest “*word of prophecy*” that some have received than to hear what God has already given in His Word.

And because these modern day prophets claim that the word they receive has the same apostolic authority as the written Word, we now have *many new and strange terms, teachings and practices* that are spreading around the world today: being slain by the Spirit, corporate anointing, holy laughter, prophetic prayer, prayer walking, inner healing. One of the latest strange practices in worship is “*banner raising*.” It is claimed that the raising of banners during worship service is a prophetic sign to believers of deliverance and triumph and also a sign to the evil forces that the Lord of hosts is rising to defeat them.

I do not think many of us here have even heard of these things before, and that’s because they are not taught in the Scriptures. But what makes them appealing is that they are new, they are *novel* and *different* from what we are used to hearing. One of the favourite slogans in some Christian circles is “*The Lord is doing a new thing*.” Although this phrase occurs in three verses in the Bible, it is used only to describe *specific events* like the earthquake that swallowed up some rebellious Israelites (Num 16:30), the physical restoration of Israel (Isa 43:19), and the miraculous birth of Christ (Jer 31:22). To use it as an excuse for accepting every new revelation, teaching or practice, is to remove it from its context.

We must be careful not to readily accept *all things that are new* even if they are accompanied by extraordinary or miraculous events. Many so called miracles are actually psychological. Some are proven to be fraudulent. But there are also some genuine supernatural phenomena. Take, for example, those who saw apparitions of Mary. The records of these are quite impressive and it can be verified that extraordinary things have actually happened. But the important thing is *the message* that is received. *If the teaching or message in any way detracts from the what God has taught in His word, it is not from Him at all!* Messages from these apparitions glorify Mary and make her a better mediator than Christ. This is clearly against Scripture. Acts 4:12 says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” God’s Word in 2 Thess 2:9-10 tells us that Satan can perform signs and lying wonders, deceiving people,

because they do not love the truth that God has already revealed in His Word.

But someone may then ask: what if a modern-day prophet *does not at all contradict* the teachings of Scripture, but just *gives more specific details*, like what is God's will for a certain person, or foretelling what the outcome of events will be, or the date for Christ's return. There is one test prescribed in Deut 18:21-22 for things like this: If *even one of his prophecies should fail*, and things do not happen exactly the way he predicted, then he is *not of God*. A good example of this is the recent Vineyard (Signs and Wonders) movement of John Wimber. Because many of their prophecies actually failed, they now teach that prophecies do not have to be 100% accurate, and that contradicts God's Word given in Deut 18, showing clearly that they are *not of God*.

### **Conclusion**

All that you have heard in the message this morning really boils down to this: the written Word of God is the *final acid test* for trying the Spirits. We have seen that anyone or any teaching that contradicts what the Scripture teaches about *Christ's deity and complete work of salvation* is not of God. Secondly, anyone or any teaching that contradicts biblical teachings against *worldliness, selfishness and sin* is also not of God. And thirdly, anyone or any teaching that is *new and different* from the Word of God, is also not of God. And all of these are true regardless of whether or not the person or movement appears to be increasing, to be popular, successful, powerful, amazing or miraculous. If they fail to follow God's Word faithfully, they are *not of God*.

This itself tells us what we need to do in order to discern between true and counterfeit, between genuine and fake in the spiritual realm. *Study the Word of God thoroughly*. Know it very well. An expert on money was once asked how he was able to recognise the false notes and coins so well. Did he spend a lot of time studying counterfeit notes and coins? "No," he replied, "I spend most of my time studying the *genuine* notes and coins." Let us spend more time in the study of God's Word.

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*Rev Charles Seet is assistant pastor of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, and lecturer in Biblical Studies at Far Eastern Bible College. The above sermon was preached at Life BPC on the Lord's Day, March 29, 1998.*

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# **THE PASTOR AND HIS CHURCH**

Quek Suan Yew

## **A Pastor's Responsibility**

The pastor's responsibilities are myriad. He has to be preacher, teacher, counsellor, administrator, follower, leader, etc to his congregation. Amidst the busyness of his schedules, in caring for the flock, he must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Pastors who fear the flock, who feel that they are there to please the flock or that their duty is to tickle the ears of the hearers will not declare the whole counsel of God. Not so the Apostle Paul. As he was saying farewell to the elders of Ephesus, sincerely believing that he would not see their faces anymore, the Apostle testified that he was pure from the blood of all men because he had "not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). "All the counsel of God" refers to the whole Bible, ie, all the doctrines, whether they be easy or hard to digest.

Sometimes truth hurts. It rebukes, warns, and exhorts us to holy living. The pastor is called to preach against sin. Certain teachings in the Bible are unpleasant, but the pastor must teach them nonetheless. Pastors who fail to teach unpopular doctrines have failed to teach all the counsel of God. The fear of man has disqualified them from faithful service. When that happens the blood of their congregations will be upon their heads.

## **A Pastor's Burden**

A pastor who has been called by God will fear God. He will without fear preach all the counsel of God. It is most difficult. It is a very heavy burden to discharge. Yet every pastor worth his salt realises that he must obey God and do it with every ounce of his energy. He knows that he is not omnipresent and he cannot be with the flock forever. When he leaves, the flock will come under attack. The Apostle Paul knew it only too well. He admonished the elders in Ephesus and us today to "take heed therefore

unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The attackers will infiltrate in the very midst of the flock like wolves in sheep’s clothing. They may look and talk like sheep but they are very much wolves. These will cause many to stray, whose faith will be ship-wrecked.

How do they succeed? They appear very friendly and helpful. They have a very nice demeanour. They will please all men in all things and will sit on the fence on many issues. Very cunningly they will work on our egos and inflated pride. Very soon we will be eating out of the palms of their hairy wolf-like hands. The burden of the pastor is to warn the flock and watch over the flock that these wolves be kept out and very promptly dealt with in the church. Some of these wolves could very well be our “friends.” It is indeed a heavy burden.

How does the pastor carry such a heavy burden? By taking heed to the words of our Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt 11:28-30).

### **A Pastor’s Joy**

How does a pastor evaluate what ought to be his greatest joy? The Apostle Paul reveals to us his greatest joy. It is when people who have come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ grow in faith and love in the Lord (1 Thess 2:19ff). Paul calls it the “crown of his rejoicing.” In order to achieve this, the pastor preaches all the counsel of God, trusting in Christ as he discharges this heavy burden. This he will gladly do. His greatest joy is to see the flock grow in faith, and their knowledge of God increase. For the more they know Him the more they will trust Him. The more they trust Him the more they will love Him. The more they love Him the more they will love one another.

Pastors! endeavour to teach all the counsel of God to God’s glory. Members! expect all the counsel of God from your pastors. It is the pastor’s responsibility, burden and joy to fulfil that which Jesus Christ the Head of the Church has commanded all His faithful servants to do till He comes!

### A Member's Query

A member of our church asked if it was all right for him to change to another Bible-Presbyterian (B-P) church which was located very near to his new flat. He had attended the church on a few occasions and had spoken to the pastor. To this member, everything seems fine. The similarity in name, and it being another B-P church, made the desire to change even more appealing.

It must be said that not all B-P churches are the same today after the dissolution of the B-P Synod. Some have rejected the KJV and replaced it with the NIV. Members, who are called into full-time ministry, are sent to attend neo-evangelical Bible Colleges, not the Far Eastern Bible College of the B-P church. Speakers and pastors of the neo-evangelical mindset and persuasion are manning the pulpits. Students in institutions of higher learning are involved in the Varsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ, and Navigators which are neo-evangelical parachurch organisations.

“Do not judge a book (church) by its cover (constitution)!” must be applied when we look for a church. Your spiritual growth, how your tithes and offerings are used, your souls and that of your children's depend on your choice. Choose wisely. Do not attend a church just because it is convenient! Be sure that the church *practises* what she declares in her constitution. If not, then it is a hypocritical church.

### The Changing Face of Christendom

The health of the church is getting from bad to worse. This should not surprise discerning believers. For God has revealed in the Scriptures that before Christ returns, there will be a falling away first (2 Thess 2:3). The word for “falling away” is “*apostasia*” which is the root for the word “apostasy.” In the context of Christianity, it is more than just a turning away from the orthodox faith; it is a departure in a hostile sense. It is a rebellious abandonment of the Faith. This falling away does not refer to other religions but Christianity.

The rebellion has already occurred. The Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT 1994) declaration, signed by 39 scholars and Christian leaders—Roman Catholics and neo-evangelicals—has been followed by ECT II of 1997 signed by 19 neo-evangelicals and 16 Catholics. One of the signatories is Bill Bright, the founder and president of the Campus

Crusade for Christ (others included Charles Colson, J I Packer and Os Guinness). His deceptive and smooth double-talk has cleverly pulled wool over the eyes of thousands of his followers.

Bill Bright was queried by his followers on why he signed the ECT 1994 declaration. His three-page reply speaks volume about the delusion of the day. I quote Bill Bright in his testimony, "Why I Decide to Become a Signatory on the Document:" "To non-Christians and the non-believing world who know nothing about Christianity and who may think Protestants and Catholics worship a different God, this affirmation should be a great testimony to the Lordship of Christ and the truth of His Word." Do Protestants and Catholics worship the same God? Church history argues against it. We are called Protestant because we came out of the Roman Catholic Church. Remember the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation! How can a mixture of truth and error testify to the Lordship of Christ?

The Bible categorically teaches that there is no other name under heaven whereby man can be saved except through Jesus Christ! Bill Bright's gospel is another gospel. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*" (Gal 1:8). It must be noted that the mere mention of the name of Jesus Christ does not save the person. His declaration of Jesus Christ must be based upon the Jesus as revealed to us in the Bible.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Bill Bright admits, "While there was agreement only on the above four doctrinal areas (viz, the Lordship of Christ; Justification by grace through faith in Christ; all who accept Christ as Lord and Saviour are brothers and sisters in Christ; and that Christians are to teach and live in obedience to the divinely inspired Scriptures), there was acknowledged disagreement on ten specific issues that have traditionally separated evangelicals and Catholics. These include the purpose of the Lord's Supper, devotion to Mary, and eight others." Some of these eight others include: the meaning of baptismal regeneration (salvation by works), the Eucharist (transubstantiation) and the sacramental grace; diverse understanding of merit, reward, purgatory, and indulgences; and the possibility of salvation for those who have not been evangelised (ECT II, 1997). How can there be cooperation between Reformation churches and

the Roman Catholic Church when such fundamental differences between the two continue to exist?

### **Love Must Be in Truth**

Can we concur with the ECT I and II declarations based upon love alone? To do so would be a most cruel thing. If a house is on fire, and I, knowing a family of five is sleeping in it, were to keep quiet because I do not want to wake them and disturb the neighbours by shouting, I would probably be called a mad man! The loss of precious physical lives is nothing compared to the damnation of souls in hell for eternity because they die in their sins without Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of the world. What could be worse than not preaching the gospel to a soul who is dying without Christ; a soul deceived into believing that he is saved when in reality he is still damned in his sins (cf, Matt 7:22-23)? He dies and finds himself in hell and not heaven!

Dear readers, no church or pastor or Bible teacher should be excused from biblical scrutiny. The expression of our Christian love must be in truth or else that love should be considered hatred and a lie! For the sake of your soul, and those of your loved ones, be like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to see whether those things (the teachings of Paul) were so (Acts 7:10-11). B-P churches and pastors are not exempted!

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*Rev Quek Suan Yew is pastor of Calvary Bible-Presbyterian Church (Pandau), and lecturer in Old Testament and Contemporary Theology at the Far Eastern Bible College. The above is taken from the Calvary Weekly of May 24 and June 7, 1998.*

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## **DO YOU HAVE TRUE REST? (MATT 11:28-30)**

Shim Eun Ju

Many people go abroad for recreation during their holidays. They want to leave everything around them for a moment. They would like to enjoy leisure. We can say this is proof that the modern living is tough and hard. They make time and leave for freedom from their busy and giddy environment. They want to forget troublesome and complicated questions at least for that time. They call this rest or repose.

Even though a man lives in great splendour, if he loses rest of his mind, he is a miserable man. True vital power of our lives comes not from physical health and peace, but from spiritual. Therefore, rest of mind is the vital power of human life; a very important key for a successful life.

Dear brothers and sisters! Are you heavy laden? At such a time, how do you resolve the problem in your heart? Don't you want to have lasting rest of mind? In our text, the Lord Jesus says, "Come unto me." He promises us His gift of rest if we come to Him.

What does coming to the Lord Jesus mean? It means trusting in Him and depending on Him totally. Whoever comes to the Lord Jesus will discover and experience the wonderful fact that the Lord removes all the elements that disturb his peace of mind. When a person's relationship with God is restored, peace comes into his mind which has formerly been troubled with guilt. He is freed from a fear of death and starts a new life. He lives toward the everlasting life. If we come to the Lord he does all these things for us.

After a man believes in Jesus Christ he gets peace of mind. He is released from troubles. Some people think it is merely temporary. However, the rest of mind our Jesus Christ gives to us is not like that. Temporary help in quieting people's worries can be found in Buddhism or other religions. But the peace or rest of our Lord Jesus Christ is permanent. It is not a temporary pain-killer. This world may give us temporarily outward delight, rest and honour. But they soon disappear,

## *DO YOU HAVE TRUE REST?*

and the peace of mind as quickly fades away. However the inner rest Jesus gives to our heart is absolute peace and rest. This rest is based on the confidence of salvation and trust in the gracious Lord Jesus. It is deep inner peace of our soul. At the moment when we believe the fact that the living Christ rules over our lives, we can experience it.

My dear friends, is there a person who has lost his first faith and love so that he loses the peace of mind and often feel uneasy and full of worry? Why can't the peace of mind be maintained continually in those who have received Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour? Can we possess this rest of mind just because we study theology and gain the knowledge of the Bible? The answer is No! Even though we study theology, it cannot by itself give us the peace and rest of mind we want. We know many professors and preachers deny the existence of God even though they have the degree of theological doctor through the study of God and the Bible. They are the liberal theologians. Our theological study and knowledge cannot give us any peace and rest whatsoever if we do not have a personal relationship with Christ.

Our text in verse 29 shows us the secret of maintaining this rest or peace of mind. Verse 29 says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls." The secret of having peace of mind is the following: Firstly, you have to take the yoke of Jesus on your shoulders. Secondly, you have to learn of Jesus by carrying the yoke. If you keep to these facts firmly, rest of mind which the Lord gives to you will never depart from you. Enjoying rest and peace of mind does not mean that we don't do anything. On the contrary, it is rest that we can experience even in the midst of much work. It is rest not from a state isolated from the evil world, but from the experiences of coping voluntarily with any environment with the Lord's help. This rest is truly the one that we need everyday. Therefore in order to enjoy this blessing we have to bear the yoke of Jesus and learn of Him.

We have to take the yoke of Jesus in order to gain and maintain rest of mind. What do you think taking the yoke of Jesus means? It means to walk in accordance to the will of the Lord. It means that if the Lord commands us to go through the narrow road, we go there. It means that if He commands us to be faithful until death, we are faithful to Him until death. It means that if He commands us to live apart from sin and evil, we try to live a pious life. Taking the yoke of Jesus means we follow His

orders. If you want to live a peaceful life, you must take the Lord's yoke, to live according to His Word.

Verse 30 says that the Lord's yoke is easy. How can the yoke be easy? In order for the yoke to be easy, it has to fit the neck of the ox. If a yoke shaved smoothly fits the neck of the ox, the ox can perform even quite difficult things. But if the yoke does not fit the neck of the ox, the neck will bleed even when carrying a small load. It will be very painful.

The reason why the yoke of the Lord is easy is because the yoke of the Lord is good. The yoke is easy because the Master is good. Even in this world, if the chief is a good man, we can work joyfully even under pressure. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the best Chief. He is meek and humble. He is neither violent nor arrogant. He is the merciful Lord who does not break a bruised reed. The Lord is good, and so His yoke is not difficult. It is a joyful thing to carry His yoke. Do you know deeply this Lord Jesus?

The reason why the yoke of the Lord is easy is also because of love. To a couple who love each other deeply, their wedding rings are not heavy no matter how big they are. The rings pose no hindrance to them. In Rom 8:35, the Apostle Paul confessed that he was not afraid of tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword because God's love toward him was so great, and his love for the Lord was also great. Love wins everything. If we love the Lord and his love touches our hearts and minds deeply, His yoke is not difficult. This is the power of love.

Jesus tells us to learn of Him. To learn from the Lord is to follow His example. Our Lord Jesus carried His yoke in this world. The Lord when on earth preached the gospel of God, and took care of the sick. Each time He was tired, He went to meet God the Father. It was the way He overcame His weariness. He would go to a quiet place, to the mountain, and to the seaside. There He would commune with God the Father. By doing so, He received fresh power to do God's work. To learn of Jesus is to make His method mine. Jesus took the yoke which the Father in heaven gave to Him. It was a heavy burden. He had to be crucified on the cross for mankind. He was a friend of sinners. In spite of every mockery of the people, He went to Golgotha carrying His yoke. He died for you and me. He was willing to carry His yoke. Even at that time He did not lose his peace of mind. As a matter of fact, He wanted to share His peace with His disciples. In John 14:27 Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I



## *DO YOU HAVE TRUE REST?*

give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Dear friends, let us look up to the Lord. By so doing, heavenly peace will fill our hearts and minds. We will receive God’s strength only if we connect ourselves to the Lord who carried His yoke willingly and shed all His precious blood for each one of us. He is the Source of new strength. He gives us true rest. While He was in this world, He did not want to be apart from God the Father even for a moment. That was the key to our Lord’s peace and rest. Isa 40:31 says, “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” To him who has believed in the Lord Jesus, the word of promise applies, “I will give you rest.” Our Lord gives us rest of mind and satisfies all the conditions for our rest.

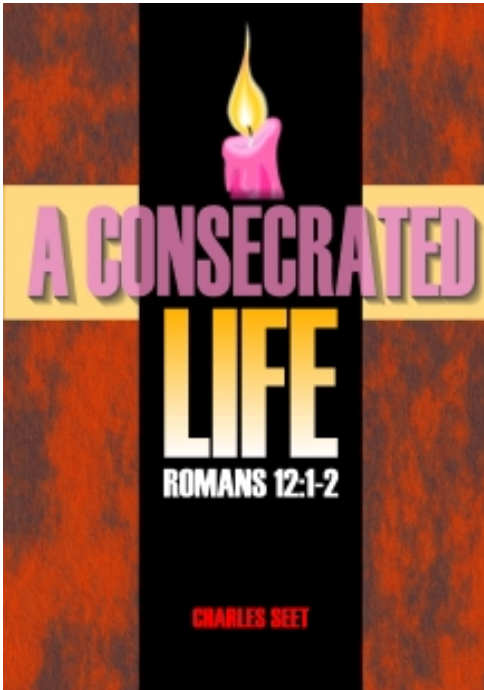
Nevertheless, why do we sometimes lose this rest of mind? It is because we have taken off the yoke of the Lord. We stopped learning from Him. Dear friends, a new semester has just started. We have so many subjects to study this semester. It is another difficult semester. Is this really stressful to us? Does this bother us? Rev Tow often reminds us of the words of John Calvin, “The study of God and the study of man are true wisdom.” And he often says they are the two highest strata of learning, beyond *mosquitology*. I believe that is really true. Personally, I studied American and English literature in the university. I enjoyed very much the dramas of Shakespeare and the poems of William Wordsworth. But since I studied theology here, I have experienced true joy and contentment in my heart. Of course, as you know, I often have so much trouble in study because I must do it in English as a foreign language. But each time I have a problem, I remember my Lord Jesus. I look forward to my future ministry, and to serving His people. I go to the Lord for help. The Lord is really my faithful Lord. Whenever I ask for help, He does not turn me away. He helps and leads me and gives me encouragement and peace. I have experienced great blessing that is beyond comparison with that of worldly learning. The word of Rev Tow is true. Our study is beyond comparison with *mosquitology*. It is even beyond Shakespeare. As the wife of a pastor, I hope I can help my husband and his ministry more effectively in the future. But above all, the best blessing is in studying theology. It is the joy of knowing God more and more. I believe it was possible only because I had the rest which Jesus gave me.

I really thank God. I have been enjoying my studies. I have the peace of heart and mind. We should keep one thing in mind in our study of theology. We should understand the purpose of our study. In order to have peace and joy in our hearts even in the storms of life, we should bear the yoke of Jesus and learn of Him. Only then, can we be blessed. I hope that you will take His yoke and learn of Him.

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*A sermon preached by Shim Eun-Ju (MRE candidate) in the homiletics class of August 5, 1998.*

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***A Consecrated Life*** (ISBN 981-04-0606-1, 108 pages, \$6.00) by Rev Charles Seet is a series of nine messages based on Rom 12:1-2 preached at a Bible Camp at Hope B-P Church, Adelaide, in 1997. It is written with the prayer that God will use it to call some into full-time Christian service.

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# **CHRISTIANS IN THE CAMBODIAN HOLOCAUST**

Jimmy Rim

On April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh city. The troops in black uniforms and Hogi Myung sandals come marching into the city, taking over all former government officers, offices and property. The streets were lined with people cheering and welcoming the Communist troops. The war had been going on for so long with its shelling, burning, killing, rocketing, etc, that it seemed ironic to care who took over the country. Anything, even Communism, would be easier to bear than all the terror of war, which had plagued the Cambodians for so long.

The jeep, with the loud-speaker attached to the roof, went all about the city, announcing the victory and liberation from war. “Everyone come out,” it said, “there is nothing to fear. We have come and brought liberty with us, do not be afraid. Even you government officials have nothing to fear, the only thing that we request of you is that you come to our office for registration, we will not hurt you. Everyone come out and welcome your new government in.”

The generals and government officials believed that no harm would come to them and registered as they had been bidden. The Khmer Rouge knew that they would be afraid, so they used this tactic to keep them from escaping before they could reach them. At night, the new government forces arrested them secretly and put them in jail one by one.

About 150 foreigners failed to evacuate from Phnom Penh when the Khmer Rouge took over. Some of them were businessmen and news reporters. One by one, they began coming into the French embassy for protection. Most embassies had already evacuated except the French. Most of those foreigners were French, so the embassy provided them with food and shelter in the embassy territory.

The reporters went about taking pictures for the first three days of the new government set up. After that, the only way to get any pictures was to sneak out and hide to take them.

The Khmer Rouge started killing people off by hundreds. No guns were used, only axes and jungle knives. When they first came in, it seemed that things would be well; but now the truth came out, as people were mercilessly murdered and their bodies used as advertisement to the rest. Most former government men and higher generals' heads were cut off and placed all around outside the market place for everyone to see.

Commercial businesses were owned by the Chinese who had settled in Cambodia. The Indians who settled there owned most of the textile shops. When the Khmer Rouge came into the country, the Chinese closed down their businesses. Communist troops pounded on the doors to gain admittance. Upon entry, everything was confiscated and the owners shot to death. If the owner refused to open the shutters, they were shot open, then the owner was shot to death and everything was confiscated.

The darkness provided an excellent cover for escape from Phnom Penh to Vietnam, which is closer from that city than to other countries.

Three thousand people were killed and their bodies thrown into the Mekong River in 1970. There were many Vietnamese residents in Cambodia at the time. When they saw this brutality, many fled back to their native homeland. One month later, Vietnam too fell to the Communists.

The reason for the deaths of the 3,000 was revenge on them for a crime that they had committed earlier. Before Cambodia's fall, the Viet Cong harassed the Vietnamese and ran into Cambodia to get away from them. The Vietnamese government requested permission from the Cambodian government to come into their jungle after the Viet Cong. Cambodia granted the request to come in, but the Vietnamese troops not only killed the enemy, they raided farmers' houses, stole the goods, killed the farmer, and raped and killed many young girls. Now Cambodia was getting revenge on the Vietnamese for this awful wrong.

Historically, Cambodia and Vietnam have been constant enemies. Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia had good relations, but Cambodia and Vietnam could never get along together.

Takumoa was a large city on the Mekong River. For many years, it had been the centre of Christianity and Christian learning in Cambodia. It

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was considered by all as the Jerusalem of Cambodia. It had a Bible school and three pastors. The Christians in that city were very strong, spiritual people. Many Christian families lived here together. Since it was on the Mekong River, whenever there was a baptismal service to be held, it would be here. Most Christian activities were scheduled to be here in this city and most of the Christian teachers came from Takumoa, as well as many people who had come to my orphanage for overnight prayer meetings. This had been its history for nearly seventy years.

Some teachers, who used to visit my orphanage, taught the children and supported me, came to visit after the fall, to see how much help we needed. Half of the children, along with some of the helpers, were gone. The people asked the children to come back to Takumoa with them to stay. Now only a few remained at the Angels Christian Orphanage.

The Christians in Takumoa did not want to leave their place. Daily they concentrated in prayer groups that sometimes lasted over night, pleading that the Lord's will be done, and that if He would see fit to provide for and protect them from the Khmer Rouge and for the coming persecution. They were willing to submit to the Lord's will though, whatever it would be.

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it (*Luke 9:23-24*).

The Khmer Rouge came into the city asking for the pastors whom, upon being located, were imprisoned. The pastor's family was the next to mysteriously disappear. After that, Christian families all over began to disappear. Buddhists were also persecuted along with all other religions but not unto death, as the Christians.

At the appearance of the Communist troops at the gate, dressed in black with AK-47 rifles, all the Christians began to pray. No one knew whose name would be called to be taken out for imprisonment and persecution. The name was called, slowly the awe-stricken family moved toward the gate, to be escorted out of sight by the troops, never to return. The people slowly, quietly sang hymns while they watched their life-long brothers and sisters leave,

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*  
*Faith of our fathers living still, in spite of dungeon, fire and sword.*

*Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy whenever we hear that glorious Word.  
Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee till death.*

This was the way it went until the entire city was empty of Christians. Just as the cruel Nero persecuted and killed the Christians, so did the Premier Pol Pot, the modern day Cambodian Nero.

From the beginning of the persecution until the very last of the Christians, singing never stopped. Now the audible voice was gone, but the spiritual voice will never stop; the Spirit of God was still there. Just as the waves of the sea never cease to roll, so also the Spirit of God will never cease to work in that place.

There were two churches in Cambodia, one in Battambang and the other in Phnom Penh. The church in Battambang held services in the morning. After that service was over, the Cambodian Christians used the building for their service. The church in Phnom Penh was different though, in that it always kept to itself.

In the Chinese custom, the lady will never marry a foreign man; it is shameful, they say. A few men had married foreign women, but such cases were the rare exception. The church was paralleled to this custom. All other Christians joined together in activities for good fellowship, but the Chinese remained isolated from the rest of the body of Christ.

There was one large church in Tulkok, another city in Cambodia. The pastor came to visit me a few times. He was a very spiritual man with a good education, well able to lead the flock of God. This was one church in a city rather than a whole city of Christians, as in Takumoa. When Cambodia fell, the people fled. No one knew what happened to the pastor. The best guess that anyone could come up with was the rumour that he was arrested and killed like the others. Many smaller churches were closed down in the suburbs of Phnom Penh and the other cities. The Christians ran and hid.

Three Christian men were arrested for their faith and were taken to the riverbank of the Mekong River. All three stood in a line facing the Communist soldier who asked the first man: "Do you believe in God or a god?" "Yes" the man answered. "Which god do you believe in?" "The living God; the Lord of heaven and earth who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords." "How do you know He is living? Can you give me any proof? Can you show Him to me?" "I know that He is living because He is living inside of me. He in here right now, with us. I love Him and want

## CHRISTIANS IN THE CAMBODIAN HOLOCAUST

you to meet Him too. Even if I die, as everyone will some day, I will still love Him.” “Shut up!” Then with a flash of the knife the man’s neck was cut, sending him tumbling to the ground; the days of his life being over. His one reaction was “Oh, Lord,” as he died. Blood spurted out of his neck onto the second and third men. This blood was seen by God and precious in His sight, especially since it was shed for Him by one of His faithful stewards. Those men were definitely in heaven with the Lord!

The soldier then turned to the second man, and looking into his pale, terrified face, said, “What about you? Do you believe the same as he does? If I kill you too, will you still believe?” “Yes,” the second man answered. “If I were to kill you too, will you still believe?” “Yes; if I were to deny that I knew the Lord, that would only be a lie. I cannot reject Him.” So again the knife flashed in the sunlight, sinking into the left side of the second man’s neck. With the expression, “Oh, Lord,” and the blood spurting forcefully from the man’s neck, he too collapsed to the ground.

Then the soldier turned his attention to the third person, saying, “You have seen what happened to your fellow men, do you want the same or will you deny your Lord and live?” With knees shaking, lips stammering, and face white with horror, the brave third man answered, “I cannot deny my Lord. I think I should answer the same as they did, and go to heaven where I will see them and my Lord.” In the same manner as the former two, his days were also ended. *“Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it”* (Luke 9:24).

Another method used was the mass-method. Many Christians hid in the upper rooms of the houses. There were no basements, because the ground was always too wet, so that basement would be filled up with water. The Communists constantly made searches of the houses for these people. After collecting a mass of them, the questioning started. “Who do you work for?” (Some did work for outside agencies). “Where do you work? How long have you been associated with this group? What have you told them?” On and on it went. After all the information were out, that they could possibly get, these people were sent to work in the rice paddies digging.

All day long, they laboured in the hot sun without a break, drink, or food. In the evening as the sun was going down, the order to stop was given. The people were then forced into the gigantic hole, and the one

way out was guarded. The Communist theme song was sung by the ruthless soldiers as they took the shovels and slowly threw dirt in on their victims. In the hole some prayed, others sang hymns, others shouted for God's deliverance. Slowly the dirt covered the heads and smothered the last breaths out of the martyrs.

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*The above account is told by Jimmy Rim—missionary to Cambodia—in his book—With Christ in the Killing Fields (FEBC Press, 1998).*

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## College News

The July 1998 intake saw a total of 18 **new students**: From Australia: **James Sun Yazhang**; Indonesia: **Ellyzabeth, Irwan Suryadi Tanuwidjaya, Linda Liejardi**; Kenya: **Paul Losute Kendagor, Stephen Kavita Masila, Francis Onyango Nyamiwa**; Myanmar: **Dim Khan Man, Louis Zung Hlei Thang**; Singapore: **Mark Chen Chih Chuan, Ng Boon Choo, Ong Chair Siang, Sim Peng Sin, Tan Kian Sing, Jane Tow Lee Young, Wong Wei Ping**; Vietnam: **Nguyen Thi Thu, Tran Thi Thien Thanh**. There are 5 new **external CertRK** students: **Xie Ping** (Fisherman of Christ Fellowship), **Poh Ee Huat** (Calvary Tengah BPC), **Arthur Wong** (Life BPC), **Patricia Lee** (Life BPC), **Chan Ho Wan** (Hong Kong).

The FEBC **Evening “Basic Theology for Everyone” classes** continue to be a boon to members of the church who wish to deepen their knowledge of the Bible. The courses offered during the July-November 1998 semester were: **Isaiah** by Rev Dr Timothy Tow, **OT Poetical Books** by Rev Charles Seet, **Evangelism** by Rev Dr Goh Seng Fong, and **Charismatism** by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo. The Certificate of Religious Knowledge (CertRK) is awarded to those who earn 20 credits (10 courses).

Last semester's **FEBC Gospel Rally** was held on September 19, 1998, at Life Bible-Presbyterian Church. Rev Jack Sin, pastor of Maranatha Bible-Presbyterian Church was the Lord's messenger on the topic: “What if Christ Had Not Come?”

The **9<sup>th</sup> FEBC-Life BPC Holy Land Pilgrimage** will be from March 9-23, 1999. The biblical lands will be covered quite extensively this time visiting Egypt and the Sinai peninsula, and the lands on both sides of the Jordan—Ammon and Palestine. Pilgrims will have the wonderful opportunity of worshipping with the



Palestinian Christians of Baraka Bible-Presbyterian Church in Bethlehem. Students earn 2 credits when they submit a written project.

The **Rev Dr Morris MacDonald** of the Presbyterian Missionary Union, and Bible-Presbyterian Church (USA) will be in Singapore in May-June 1999 to conduct a week-long **Daily Vacation Bible College** course on the History of Missions, and to speak at the Bible camp of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, May 31-June 4.

**Dr S H Tow**, former president of the FEBC Board is the contributing editor of **The Defined King James Bible** published by The Bible for Today Press, USA, 1998. Get your copy from the FEBC Bookroom (Tel: 2549188) or Tabernacle Books (Tel: 5601111). Below is an introduction to *The Defined KJB* by Dr Tow:



It is with profound thankfulness to God Almighty and our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, the WORD OF GOD, that we come together to launch *The Defined King James Bible*. Not that the KJB is not available in the shops, but this Bible is different. In what way?

First. Difficult, archaic words and obsolete words are defined with modern English equivalent on each page in the footnotes. This removes at once a commonly raised objection to the use of the KJB.

Second. In forty pages of companion NOTES, the case for the continued usage of the Queen of English Bible Translations is simply and powerfully set forth, as well as the subtle corruption of every Modern English Version is clearly exposed.

Third. This Defined KJB is published by defenders and lovers of God's Word purely as an encouragement to God's faithful remnant and not for filthy lucre (which motivates the giant Bible publishers). It signals to all the world, that God has raised up a banner of Truth in the USA and Far East, for such a time as this.

For "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa 59:19). The Defined KJB is a standard raised for God.

May all of God's faithful remnant people rally to the Good Book, and together let us join hands around the globe as we "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). All glory be unto the Holy Triune God. Amen.

## **Class Notes**

**Lau Choon Poh** (BTh '83), and **Monica Tong Bee Keow** (BTh '84) were conferred the Master of Biblical Studies and Master of Church Music respectively by Singapore Bible College, on May 8, 1998.

**Lee Kim Shong** (DipTh '90), and **Lim Jit Thye** (BTh '96) were ordained as Ministers of the Gospel on October 25, 1998, in the presence of the English and Chinese congregations of Calvary Jaya Bible-Presbyterian Fellowship, Malaysia.

**Anne Wong** (BTh '94) married Tim Low Shair Him on October 31, 1998 at Maranatha Bible-Presbyterian Church. Their address: 8 Steen Place, Mangere Bridge, Auckland, New Zealand. E-mail: tshlow@xtra.co.nz.

**Yusniar Lumbantoruan** (DipTh '96) in a letter (July 29, 1998) to the editor wrote, "Thank you for *The Burning Bush* received recently. All the contents are precious knowledge to me. I was especially attracted to the message on Biblical Marriage which is badly needed by many people today. It gives me a better idea to answer those who have marriage problems. I am also very proud of FEBC to see the picture of my fellow students on their graduation day. It is my prayer that God may use you all mightily in His service." Her address: Jln Cibubur 8F, No 12A, Kel Cibubur Rt 009/09, Jakarta-Timur 13720, Indonesia.

Our 3 Korean graduates—Revs **Jonathan Lee** (BTh '94), **Moses Hahn** (MDiv '97), and **David Koo** (BRE '97) have established 6 Bible-Presbyterian churches in Cambodia, namely, Life Stone-Bridge, and Hope for All B-P Churches (Jonathan Lee); Botsemon, Onyaheng, and Smaittaing B-P Churches (Moses Hahn); and Jesus Christ B-P Church (David Koo). Jonathan Lee is also the director of the Agape Mission for Cambodia (AMFC), P O Box 38, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, Tel/Fax: (855-23) 368567.

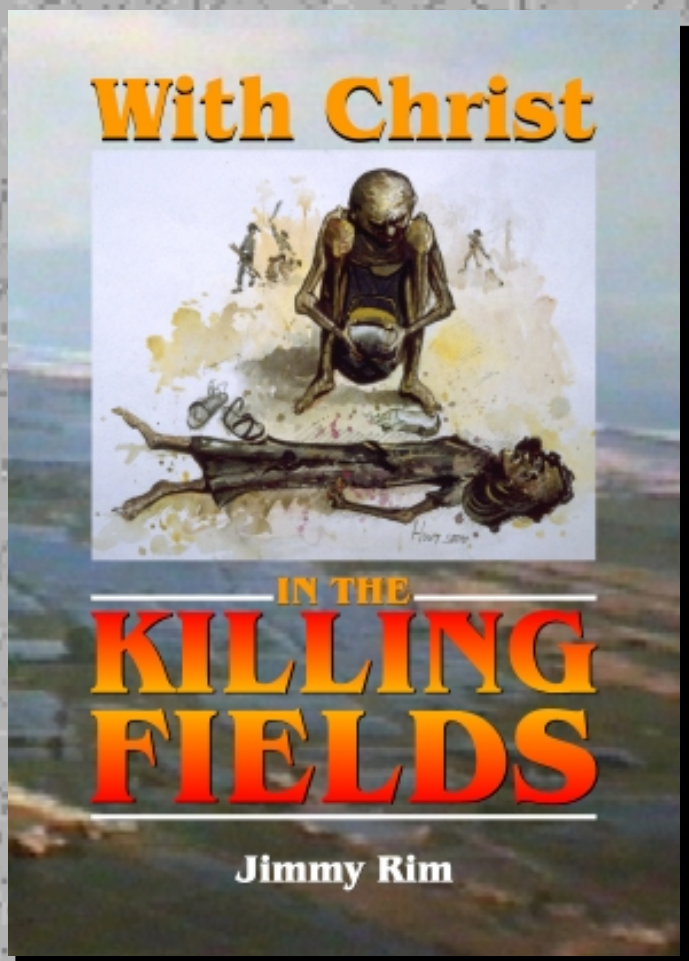
**Lau Yeong Shoon** (MDiv '97) is now serving at Maranatha Bible-Presbyterian Church as a staff-worker.

**Ho Heng Sau** (BTh '98), and **Hannah Yeo** (BTh '98) have been serving in the Saipan mission field since their graduation.

**Loi Huey Ching** (MRE '98) is now serving at Life Bible-Presbyterian Church in the area of publications—printed and electronic.

**Asa Timarong** (BRE candidate) married Rebecca Woon on July 18, 1998, at Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore. Asa hails from Palau, and Rebecca is Malaysian. They met each other while serving on board the Korean gospel ship—Hannah.

# With Christ in the Killing Fields



ISBN 981-04-0359-3 152 pages \$6.00

This autobiography relates how God saved a Korean officer in the war-torn country of Cambodia and then uses him to reach out to the many orphans and victims of war in that country. His ministry has inspired other missionaries to labour in Cambodia, including three graduates from FEBC.

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