

Inspired Textual Criticism?

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Is the Biblical doctrine of the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures “inspired perfect textual criticism?” VPP advocates say “No!” But VPP detractors persist in painting a different and distorted picture of their opponents. The skewed depiction of VPP by its detractors is yet another straw man that has been conveniently and desperately erected to knock down the 100% inspiration and the 100% preservation of the infallible and inerrant words of God. ¹

Let it be stated again that VPP believers do not believe in “double inspiration,” “post-canonical inspiration,” or “inspired perfect textual criticism.” As a matter of fact, these are terms alien to the VPP doctrine, and none of our VPP writings use such terms to explain or describe the doctrine.

VPP is Not “Double Inspiration” or “Post-Canonical Inspiration”

VPP concerns *preservation*, not inspiration. VPP is distinguished from VPI (Verbal Plenary Inspiration). VPI is the one-time act of God in the past when He breathed out (*theopneustos*) the original language words in the autographs of the Holy Scriptures. VPP, on the other hand, is the continuous act of God in preserving the very same original language words in the apographs (or copies) of the Holy Scriptures we have in our hands today. In the VPP doctrine, we are dealing with inspired *words* of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Scriptures, and *not* inspired men or methods, versions or translations.

Much as VPP believers hold the KJV in very high esteem, they do not believe in an “inspired KJV.” As such, they do not embrace a “doubly inspired” or “separately inspired” KJV. As a matter of fact, the Dean Burgon Society which believes in VPP and defends the KJV frowns upon any reference to the KJV as “inspired” or “given by inspiration.” The Dean Burgon Society clearly states its official position on the Bible’s “Inspiration” thus,

Whereas, in all of the official documents of the Dean Burgon Society, the terms “God breathed,” or “inspired” are never used when referring to the King James Bible, but, on the contrary, there is a clear avoidance of calling the King James Bible “inspired,” and

Whereas, in all of the official documents of the Dean Burgon Society, the terms “breathed out,” “inspired,” or “inspiration” are reserved exclusively for the Words of the original Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek manuscripts or for the exact copies of those Words that God has been [sic] preserved for us today, and

Whereas, in all of the official documents of the Dean Burgon Society, the terms used for the King James Bible (or Authorized Version) are as follows: (1) a “true, faithful, and accurate translation,” (2) a translation that “has no equal among all of the other English translations,” (3) “the Word of God,” (4) “an accurate translation of the true, inerrant, infallible Word of God,” (5) the “true Word of God” in a faithful language translation, (6) “the God-honored, most accurate, and best translation,” (7) a translation that occupies an “honored position,” (8) a translation that has our “confidence,” and (9) we “continue to recommend its continued use in Bible believing church pulpits, Pastors’ studies, home, Bible School classes, and formal classes in Bible Institutes, colleges and theological seminaries,” therefore

Be It Resolved, that all members of the Dean Burgon Society and members of the Executive Committee and Advisory Council particularly follow the teachings and references found in our official documents when referring either to the original language texts of Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek or to the King James Bible, especially regarding the technical distinctions that are made therein with regard to “inspire,” “inspiration,” and other terms.²

The allegation that VPP means an “inspired KJV” is blatantly false. Why cannot Anti-VPPists deal with the fact that VPP means *a presently infallible and inerrant Scripture in the original languages—the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus*—on which the KJV is based? Is it because they cannot deal with the truth? Or is it because they have not the faith to believe that God has indeed preserved His words infallibly to the jot and tittle (Matt 5:18)?

Ironically, it is not VPP but Non-VPP or Anti-VPP proponents who are calling the KJV “inspired.” For instance, Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, which is against VPP and calls it “schismatic,” even “heresy,” says this about the KJV, “We must declare the KJV Bible to be nothing less than God’s powerful inspired Word.”³ Such a strong statement for the KJV could be misconstrued as Ruckmanism, and it would be better if Life Bible-Presbyterian Church sticks to the strict definition of Biblical “inspiration” (*theopneustos*) in Article 4.2.1 of her Constitution as meaning the Holy Scriptures in the “*original languages*” (2 Tim 3:16).

Now, if Life Bible-Presbyterian Church believes the KJV to be “nothing less than God’s powerful inspired Word,” why then is the Far Eastern Bible College and all VPP holders at fault for believing *the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words immediately underlying the KJV* to be nothing less than God’s powerful inspired words, infallible and inerrant? Those who condemn VPP believers for believing in a Perfect Bible in the *Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament behind the KJV* ought to do some self-examination: “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye” (Luke 6:42-42). Let us reason together: How can the KJV be “nothing less than God’s powerful inspired Word” if its *underlying Hebrew and Greek Texts* are imperfect and contain mistakes? How can the KJV be good when its underlying texts or words are no good or not so good? “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Luke 6:43).

VPP is not “Inspired Perfect Textual Criticism”

The phrase, “inspired perfect textual criticism,” is self-contradictory. Does a “Canine Feathered Cat” exist? Only in Aesop, one would think. It goes without saying that an “inspired perfect textual criticism” is a new and strange mythical creature of pure fiction.

As explained above, the word “inspired” is always used of the original language words of Scripture, not any man or method. All Scripture (*pasa graphe*) is God-breathed or inspired by God (*theopneustos*) as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16. Inspired Scripture or words is correct, but there are no inspired men, methods, translations, or textual criticism.

Furthermore, textual criticism is far from being a perfectly objective science. The textual critical game is played with man-made rules. I wonder which textual critic on earth would be so foolhardy to claim infallibility for himself or his rules? A E Housman has judged correctly, “A textual critic engaged upon his business is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planets: he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas.”⁴

It must be put on record that believers of the 100% inspiration and the 100% preservation of the Holy Scriptures are not “estranged sons” of Benjamin Wilkinson (an SDA), as caricatured by Doug Kutilek, just because they share with Wilkinson the same belief here about the Scriptures. Such Kutilek logic and equation, if embraced, would make all monotheists like Jews and Christians “estranged sons” of Muslims! I eat rice, the Malays eat rice, am I therefore a Malay? What bad logic!

Alan McGregor of the Bible League (UK), hardly an SDA, agrees with Wilkinson's belief and defence of the Special Providential Preservation of the Scriptures (*Providentia Extraordinaria* or VPP) and the complete trustworthiness and faithfulness of the KJV despite Wilkinson's SDAism.⁵ It defies logic to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Enemies of the KJV and the VPP of Scriptures who castigate anyone and everyone who is Pro-KJV or Pro-VPP as holders of "double inspiration" or "inspired textual criticism" are theologically ignorant, blind, immature or hardened.

It is also alleged that VPP has "wrecked [sic] havoc and caused discord among brethren." What a malicious allegation! The Bible teaches separation (as commanded by the Lord in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 and 2 Thess 3:6-15). Is the Biblical doctrine of separation therefore schismatic? Only neo-evangelicals and ecumenists would think so. Why are so-called "fundamentalists" or "separatists" singing the same tune?

Has separation caused havoc in the church? If there is havoc, it is caused by Anti-VPPists who persecute Biblical separatists for their defence of the good old Reformation Bible and Text against the modern corrupted texts and cut-up versions of Westcott and Hort. Separation is sometimes inevitable, and always painful, but to malign as schismatic those who had separated from the old church with nothing to start a new church from scratch so that they can believe in the truth and practise their faith in peace is unjust to say the least. The Rev Dr Timothy Tow—founding father of the Bible-Presbyterian movement in Singapore and Malaysia, and founding pastor of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church—left peaceably the old church in 2003 to found a new church, True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, so that he might preach and teach without any hindrance the 100% perfection of Scripture without any mistake. He wreaked no havoc in Life Bible-Presbyterian Church which he had faithfully pastored for over 50 years. He simply refused to bow to the pressure put on him not to assert that the Bible today is 100% perfect. He simply wanted to remain true to the Dean Burgon Oath he had taken together with the faculty and directors of the Far Eastern Bible College, and to proclaim boldly and unequivocally that the Bible is 100% perfect without any mistake to the last syllable and letter, 100% inspired and 100% preserved in the original languages. As a Biblical fundamentalist and disciple of Dr Carl McIntire, he simply wanted to warn against the errors of Westcott and Hort, and the corruption that is found in the Alexandrian Text and in the modern perversions of the Bible.⁶ The Rev Dr Timothy Tow is ultimately a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he believes without equivocation the Lord's infallible words of promise, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33), and he believes the Lord fulfilled His promise in all the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words underlying the good old Authorised Version or the King James Bible of the Great Protestant Reformation.

For many who believe in the Biblical doctrine of the VPP of Scripture, it has given them great hope and joy. Among brethren who submit themselves to the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures, there is only great comfort and assurance to know that God's Word is presently infallible and inerrant to the last word, and to know with maximum certainty the precise location of God's infallible and inerrant words so that they might know how to live by God's every word (Matt 4:4).

Are non-TR, non-KJV believers or users "lacking in saving faith?" VPP believers are not so presumptuous as to deem whoever is non-TR or non-KJV unsaved. Dr Homer A Kent Jr, my highly esteemed NT professor at Grace Theological Seminary, under whose fine tutelage I excelled in my NT studies, is a godly, gracious, and gentle man. However, I cannot agree with his view that the TR and KJV are inferior, and the VPP of Scripture is non-biblical. Neither can I commend him for his role in the NIV. Notwithstanding my disagreement with him, I have never asserted that he is not saved or has lost his salvation. God forbid! Whether a person is saved or not is for each individual to ascertain for himself based on the Holy Scriptures—God's Perfect Yardstick on earth (Ps 12:6-7, 19:7). Let every man examine himself whether he be in the faith (2 Cor 13:5). Let every man be judged by Christ and His Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-4). God alone is the perfect Judge (1 Cor 4:3-5, Heb 12:23). Only God can see the heart (1 Sam 16:7, Ps 139:23-24, John 7:24). Furthermore, once a person is saved, he cannot be unsaved (Rom 8:28-39, Eph 1:13-14). "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jon 2:9).

Nevertheless, I submit that a denial of VPP would logically lead one to a denial of VPI for if God did not preserve His words infallibly, how can we be sure that He had inspired His words inerrantly? What is the use of VPI without VPP? Anti-VPPists could learn a thing or two from today's preeminent textual-critical guru—Bart Ehrman—who is throughly consistent

and brutally honest, and a “happy agnostic” to boot!⁷ Make no mistake about it—Dr Ehrman lives and breathes textual criticism! Having attained textual-critical nirvana, it is no wonder that he is so gnostically high in agnostic bliss. Where is God? “God is nowhere.” “Now here” or “no where?” God is no where and so is the Bible. How’s that for “inspired textual criticism?”

¹ For a Biblical defence of the doctrine of the special providential preservation or verbal plenary preservation of the Holy Scriptures, and the present infallibility and inerrancy of God’s Word in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus underlying the KJV, go to <http://www.febc.edu.sg>, <http://www.truthbpc.com>, <http://www.deanburgonsociety.org>, <http://www.biblefortoday.org>, <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org>.

² See D A Waite, “Bible Inspiration and the KJB” (www.deanburgonsociety.org/PDF/Bible_Inspiration.pdf, accessed August 13, 2006). See also D A Waite’s reply to Thomas Cassidy’s slander against Bible-Presbyterian pastors in Singapore, namely, S H Tow, Timothy Tow, Jeffrey Khoo, and Quek Suan Yew, concerning the KJV issue, and Cassidy’s disagreement with the DBS when it voted not to use the term “inspired” with reference to the KJV in 2001 (http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/DBS_Society/waite_reply.htm, accessed August 13, 2006).

³ “A Doctrinal Positional Statement of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church,” <http://www.lifebpc.com/ourchurch/docpos.htm>, accessed August 13, 2006.

⁴ Christopher Kelty, Alfred Housman, and Scott McGill, “The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism by A.E. Housman,” *Connexions*, April 23, 2004, <http://cnx.org/content/m11803/1.2/>.

⁵ Alan J Macgregor, *Three Modern Versions: A Critical Assessment of the NIV, ESV and NKJV* (Wiltshire: The Bible League, 2004), 12-13.

⁶ Under the leadership of Dr Carl McIntire, the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) in Amsterdam (1998) and Jerusalem (2000) affirmed the Holy Scriptures to be “forever inerrant and infallible,” that “the O.T. has been preserved in the Masoretic text and the N.T. in the Textus Receptus, combined they gave us the complete Word of God. The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts.” (“ICCC 16th World Congress Statements,” *Far Eastern Beacon* [Christmas 2000]: 13). In 1998, the ICCC passed a statement on “Bible Versions:” “BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the International Council of Christian Churches, assembled in the historic English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, observing its 50th Anniversary, August 11-15, 1998, urge all Bible-believing churches worldwide to use only the Authorised or 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.” (“ICCC 50th Anniversary Conference Statements,” *Far Eastern Beacon* [November 1998]: 1).

⁷ Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).