

LESSON 8

IDENTIFICATION OF GOD'S PRESERVED WORDS (I)

-- Inspiration, Preservation, and Translations:

In Search of the Biblical Identity of the Bible-Presbyterian Church

(by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo)

I. THESIS

- (1) The Holy Scriptures are verbally and plenary *inspired* (VPI) by God in the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- (2) These VPI words in the original languages are verbally and plenary *preserved* (VPP) by God throughout the ages, and found in the Hebrew Masoretic Text of the Old Testament and the Greek Textus Receptus of the New Testament.
- (3) The King James or Authorised Version is a most faithful and reliable translation of these VPI and VPP Hebrew/Aramaic Old Testament and Greek New Testament words which are totally infallible and inerrant and hence supremely authoritative in all matters of faith and practice.

II. INSPIRATION

The Bible-Presbyterian (B-P) Constitution—Article 4.2.1—states,

We believe in the divine, verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life.

A. Definitions

Let us now define the important terms found in the above statement of faith.

The term, “divine, verbal and plenary inspiration” (VPI) means that the Holy Scriptures are a product of God’s very own breath (2 Tim 3:16, *theopneustos*, literally “Godspiration” or “Godspired,” and accurately rendered as “inspired of God” in the KJV) whereby God as Author supernaturally ensures that His inspired words as a whole (plenary) and in their parts to the last iota (verbal, cf Matt 4:4, 5:18) are not at all the words of sinful and fallible men but indeed the very words of the thrice holy and infallible God and thus entirely truthful and absolutely perfect, without any mistake or error (Ps 12:6, 19:7).

The divine VPI words are in the “original languages.” What are the “original languages”? They are the Hebrew and Aramaic words of the Old Testament Scripture, and the Greek words of the New Testament Scripture.

The words “inerrancy and infallibility” tell us that the Holy Scriptures by virtue of its very nature as God’s VPI words are without any mistake or error (inerrant), and incapable of error (infallible). The Bible is totally infallible and inerrant not only in matters of salvation, but also in matters of history, geography, and science.

The VPI Scripture being the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant, serves as the “Supreme and final authority” on all Christian beliefs and practices. In other words, what the Bible says rules and overrules all human theories and methods. God is always right,

and man is wrong every time he disagrees with God (Rom 3:4). Every doctrine and practice of the church must be supported by the Scriptures and the Scriptures *alone* (not Scripture *plus* ...).

As such, Article 4.2.1 of the B-P Constitution is a fine statement of faith, and accurate on the 100% or perfect inspiration of the Bible not only as a whole (plenary inspiration) but down to its words (verbal inspiration) in the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The plain and natural reading of the statement assumes the present perfection of the Scriptures, that believers possess a 100% inspired Bible *in their hands* that is totally infallible and inerrant without any mistake and their sole and supreme authority of faith and practice.

B. Autographs Only or Apographs Also?

But in the present Bibliological crisis in the Singapore B-P Church, VPI as spelled out in Article 4.2.1 is interpreted by 11 pastors from 7 B-P churches (Galilee, Grace, Life, Nazareth, Olivet, Shalom, and Zion) to be applicable to the original “autographs” (ie, the very first scripts written by God Himself, or His prophets, or His apostles) without including the apographs (manuscript copies). They wrote saying, “We ... *wholeheartedly believe and affirm that the inspired Word of God has absolutely no error in the Original Autographs. However we reject ... Verbal Plenary Preservation.*”¹

This “Autographs Only” view of infallibility and inerrancy is also held by the Board of Elders of Calvary B-P Church (Jurong) who in their paper on their “Non-VPP Stand” made their position very clear that “Only the original autographs of the OT and NT are the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word.”² Now it must be said that both evangelicals and fundamentalists affirm the VPI of the original autographs. There is therefore no issue here. This is also acknowledged in the Life B-P Church Sunday School paper of December 1, 2002 entitled, “Preserving Our Godly Path.” In that paper it is clearly stated, “The debate concerning the “Perfect Bible” is NOT about the original writings (or the autographs) of the biblical writers (such as Moses, Peter or Paul).” We VPP advocates do not dispute the VPI of the autographs. The truth is VPP cannot stand without VPI and vice versa. Those who wish to preserve “godly paths” ought to realise that there will be no godly paths to preserve if God did not preserve His perfect words. *Perfect Bible first before godly paths* is theologically correct.

So what is the issue all about if it is not about VPI? The issue is all about this: Is the Word of God infallible and inerrant in the autographs and the *autographs only*, or is the Word of God infallible and inerrant in the *apographs also*? Simply asked: Is the Word of God perfect only in the past but no longer perfect today? Is the Bible of today a lost and broken relic or is it a precise and exact representation of the Original that God gave in the beginning by virtue of His perfect preservation of every jot and tittle of His inspired words in the Original?

Anti-VPPists argue from Article 4.2.1 of the B-P Constitution that the infallible and inerrant Scriptures are *only in the autographs*. But where does it say so? Nowhere! It must be underscored that it stands precisely written in Article 4.2.1 that the inspired Scriptures the B-P Church believes to be infallible and inerrant are the Scriptures in the “*original languages*” and not simply and only the autographs. Why do the 11 pastors alter the sense of the Constitution by interpreting the word “languages” to mean “autographs” if not to exclude what they consider as “theory” but what we see as “doctrine” that the Bible is presently infallible and inerrant?

Now if what the anti-VPPists say is true that the perfect and authoritative Scriptures can refer only to the autographs, then *where are the autographs?* Do they not agree that the autographs have already perished and are no more? And if so where are the fully inspired, totally inerrant, and absolutely authoritative Scriptures that Bible believers can use confidently and declare, “Thus saith the Lord”? If we only believe that God has only inspired but did not preserve His words, we will not be able to say we have God’s totally infallible, inerrant and supremely authoritative Word today.

Now, if we do indeed have the inspired words of God today, then where are they? This brings us to the divine and special providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures.

III. PRESERVATION

Do we have the inspired words of God today in the *original languages* (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek)? If we do, then where are they? That is the key question which the “autographs alone” advocates cannot answer. They confess that the autographs are long gone and no more. As such, how can a non-existent authority serve as our final authority? An authority must be existent, tangible, available right now, at this time, or else it can be no authority at all. It goes without saying that an appeal to the non-existent autographs as the Church’s supreme and final authority is both illogical and untenable.

The veracity and validity of the Biblical Covenant is undermined when the 11 pastors affirm VPI but not VPP. They confidently affirm the total infallibility and inerrancy of the non-existent autographs (which they do not have and cannot produce), but cannot believe in a verbally and plenary preserved and hence presently existing infallible and inerrant Scripture in the original languages (which they pejoratively call a “theory” and a “new doctrine”). They wrote dismissively, “we reject the theory of Verbal Plenary Preservation ... that the Greek and Hebrew copies immediately underlying the King James Version are an exact replica of the Original Autographs.” Note that they have no biblical basis whatsoever for their non-VPP position. It is purely their opinion, or may I also say only a “theory”? But by the logic of faith, we VPP believers declare that we indeed have God’s infallible and inerrant Word in our hands today, and identify the inspired Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words behind the King James Bible to be precisely the words God has perfectly preserved.

A. Imperfect Hebrew and Greek Texts?

In a Life B-P Church “Statement of Clarification,” issued on Jan 19, 2003, the majority of the session (2 assistant pastors, 4 elders, and 12 deacons) and three preachers opposed their founding pastor—Rev Dr Timothy Tow—who affirmed the Bible to be “100% perfect without any mistake.” In their “Statement of Clarification” they wrote, “While agreeing wholeheartedly to the KJV Bible being the very Word of God and fully reliable, **the contributors of ‘Preserving Our Godly Path’ paper do not believe that the Hebrew and Greek texts that underlie the KJB are perfect**” (emphasis in the original). Question: How can they endorse the KJV as “the very (ie, complete, absolute, utter) Word of God and fully reliable” and yet “not believe that the Hebrew and Greek texts that underlie the KJB are perfect” (ie, complete, flawless, exact)? How can the KJV—a translation—be 100% without its source texts—the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures—being 100%? This is highly illogical and unnatural. As Jesus said, “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Luke 6:43).

Unlike non-VPP KJV users who say yes to the KJV but no to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words underlying the KJV, VPP advocates say yes to the KJV and yes also to the

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words behind the KJV. We believe the KJV to be the Word of God precisely because the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words underlying it are the very words God has inspired and preserved, and therefore 100% perfect, without any mistake. We say yes to the KJV, and a double yes to the original language Scriptures behind the KJV. Is this not biblically logical and consistent? Does it not instill faith and confidence in God and His Word for B-Ps who have always used and trusted the KJV as God's Word?³

B. Lost Words?

The 11 B-P pastors' rejection of VPP surely contradicts the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) to which every Reformed or Presbyterian Church (and certainly the B-P Church) subscribes. It is significant to note that the WCF speaks of the authenticity of the Scriptures in terms of the *original language* Scriptures, namely the "Old Testament in Hebrew" and the "New Testament in Greek" (note the absence of the "autographs" in the Confession). Chapter I and paragraph VIII of the WCF states,

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, *by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages*, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.

The affirmation "by His singular care and providence" clearly states that Biblical preservation is *God's work* and not man's. That is why this providence is a *special* one. That is why it has to be verbal and not just doctrinal preservation. If God is the One who single-handedly preserves His inspired words and keeps them pure, we can expect Him to do no less than a perfect job—*every word is kept intact and none is lost*. For biblical support, the Westminster theologians cited Matthew 5:18, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Does not the declaration that the Holy Scriptures are truly and presently "authentic" (ie, perfect, genuine, true) because they have been kept pure "by His singular care and providence" mean precisely "the divine, verbal and plenary preservation" of the Scriptures? How can God's preservation of His inspired words in the Holy Scriptures be less than infallible, entire, total, complete, and full? But anti-VPPists speak of only "essential" (ie, partial) preservation—the doctrines, truths, claims are preserved (ie, conceptual or thought preservation), not the words (ie, verbal preservation) for in their judgement some words of Scripture have been lost and are no more (eg, 1 Sam 13:1, 2 Chron 22:2). They then assure us that in their scholarly opinion, these lost words of Scripture are unnecessary for our faith and will not affect our salvation because they are "redundant" and "insignificant." Does this "lost Bible" or "lost words" view of preservation not contradict God's own promise of jot-and-tittle preservation in Matthew 5:18 as cited by the Westminster divines?

C. Jot-and-Tittle Preservation

This anti-VPP "lost words" view does indeed contradict the promissory words of Jesus. How do anti-VPPists respond? They respond by saying, "We must reexamine what Jesus said in Matthew 5:18. Perhaps 'jot and tittle' does not mean literally 'jot and tittle', but is an exaggeration." Is this what they mean by a "godly path" to God and His Word? In "preserving our godly path" should we not reexamine our ignorant selves and our fallible thoughts instead? Should we not apply the infallible principle of the glory of God in our

regard for our Lord and the interpretation of His Word (Isa 42:8, Jer 9:23-24, John 7:18)? Should we not take God's Word literally unless it is clearly figurative? Surely God says what He means and means what He says. "God says it, that settles it, and we believe it." This has always been the basic hermeneutical ethos of Biblical fundamentalists and inerrantists. Does not puny man know that the almighty God has magnified His Word above all His Name (Ps 138:2)?

It is crucial to know that the Reformers never thought of the perfection or infallibility of the Scriptures only in terms of the non-existent autographs but always in terms of the ever-existing apographs. According to Richard Muller,

The Protestant scholastics do not press the point made by their nineteenth-century followers that the infallibility of Scripture and the freedom of Scripture from error reside absolutely in the *autographa* and only in a derivative sense in the *apographa*; rather, the scholastics argue positively that the *apographa* preserve intact the true words of the prophets and the apostles and that the God-breathed (*theopneustos*) character of Scripture is manifest in the *apographa* as well as in the *autographa*.⁴

The Westminster divines in 1648 believed their Bible to be totally infallible and inerrant without any mistake. This is observed by William Orr who wrote,

Now this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was immediately inspired by God because it was *identical* with the first text that God has kept pure in all the ages. *The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the Textus Receptus of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith.*⁵

Which Hebrew OT text and Greek NT text did the Westminster divines use in their day? Was it not the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus that underlie the Reformation Bibles as best represented by the KJV? If the Westminster pastors and theologians did not think that the Bible they possessed in their day had any mistake, why is it so wrong and sinful for us today to also believe that the same Hebrew and Greek Scriptures the Westminster divines used are without any mistake?

IV. VPI WITHOUT VPP IS USELESS

The question however remains: Does Article 4.2.1 deny the biblical doctrine of the 100% preservation of the inspired words in the original languages? It is obvious that the B-P Constitution in keeping to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Biblical doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of Scriptures wrote the words "original languages" and not "Original Autographs" for the Scriptures in the "original languages" apply not only to the autographs but also the apographs without which we have no infallible and inerrant Scriptures today to serve as our final and supreme authority of faith and practice. Although it may be argued that it is inspiration and not preservation of the Scriptures that is mentioned in Article 4.2.1, preservation is surely implied and only logical for why would God want to inspire a perfect Bible in the beginning without wanting to preserve it? Will a person apply hair tonic to his head if he wants to be bald?

Myron Houghton of Faith Baptist Seminary, though not a Textus Receptus or KJV man, was nonetheless honest and truthful in this observation of his,

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” [2 Timothy 3:16]. Another way of saying this would be, “all Scripture is God-breathed,” or “all Scripture comes from the mouth of God.” This means God is directly responsible for causing the Bible writers to put down everything that He wanted written without error and without omission. But what of the Bible I hold in my hand? Is it God’s Word? Can it be trusted? The answer is yes! Both truths—the inspiration and inerrancy of the original manuscripts and the trustworthiness of the Bible in my hand—must be acknowledged. To affirm the inspiration and inerrancy of the original writings while casting doubt on the authority of the Bible that is available to us is just plain silly. Can you really imagine someone seriously saying, “I have good news and I have bad news: the good news is that God wanted to give us a message and therefore caused a book to be written; the bad news is that He didn’t possess the power to preserve it and therefore we don’t know what it said!” A view of inspiration without a corresponding view of preservation is of no value.⁶

Ian Paisley, renowned leader of the World Congress of Fundamentalists and an ardent defender of the KJV and its underlying texts, observed likewise,

The verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures demands the verbal Preservation of the Scriptures. Those who would deny the need for verbal Preservation cannot be accepted as being really committed to verbal Inspiration. If there is no preserved Word of God today then the work of Divine Revelation and Divine Inspiration has perished.⁷

V. PRESERVATION: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN INSPIRATION AND TRANSLATION

But it is sad that those who are expected to champion the verbal inspiration of Scripture are so quick to deny its verbal preservation. Such a denial of VPP is seen in a statement issued on October 29, 2005 by the Singapore Council of Christian Churches (SCCC) entitled “The Inspiration and Translations of the Holy Scriptures”:

Recently some brethren in Singapore have been advocating that apart from the verbal plenary inspiration (VPI) and consequent inerrancy and infallibility of The Scriptures in the original languages, the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus manuscripts immediately underlying the King James Version are also verbally and plenary preserved being an exact replica of the Original Autographs. This Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) theory for the KJV’s underlying texts thus claiming “100% perfection” for the KJV, is without Biblical foundation. This has not been, and is not the position of the ICCC or SCCC or other ICCC-affiliated organizations. The SCCC therefore calls upon its members and all other Bible-believing brethren not to subscribe to this new, Biblically unfounded and unproven theory.⁸

The question I would like to ask is: Why did they not entitle their statement, “The Inspiration, *Preservation*, and Translations of the Holy Scriptures”? Why is there no “Preservation”? Without preservation, what is the use of inspiration? Without preservation how can there be translations? The fallacy of the SCCC statement is precisely due to this “missing link” which is “Preservation.” Notwithstanding the missing link of “Preservation,” the SCCC statement in its published form saw a quick “evolution.” The November-December 2005 issue of the *Far Eastern Beacon* published an

“improved” version of its primitive forebear passed on October 29, 2005. Here is a comparison of the old and new statements of the SCCC against VPP:

Recently some brethren in Singapore and elsewhere have been advocating/promulgating that apart from the verbal plenary inspiration (VPI) and the consequent inerrancy and infallibility of ~~The~~the Holy Scriptures in the original languages, the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus manuscripts immediately underlying the King James Version are also verbally and plenary of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, “the words of the Received Greek and Masoretic Hebrew texts that underlie the King James Bible are the very words which God has preserved down through the centuries being ~~an~~the exact replicawords of the Original Autographsoriginals themselves”. This theory of claiming Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) theory for the KJV’s underlying texts thus claiming “100% perfection” for the KJV and their exact identification with the Holy Scriptures in the original languages, is without Biblical foundation. This has not been, and is not the position of the ICCC or SCCC or other ICCC-affiliated organizations. The SCCC therefore calls upon its members and all other Bible-believing brethren not to subscribe to this new, Biblically unfounded and unproven theory.

The revised version continues to deny VPP. Many today believe in inspiration and translation but not preservation. Such a belief begs the question: How could the inspired autographs serve as the basis for any translation if they have not been preserved by God? *Without preservation there is just a great chasm with no bridge to cross from inspiration to translation.* Despite our many attempts to define and clarify what VPP means, and why this doctrine is vital for the protection of the Christian Faith, the safeguarding of the beloved KJV (which the SCCC claims to uphold), and the basis for faithful translations of the Scriptures into other languages, the SCCC remains insistent on denying VPP, even pugnacious in pushing for its rejection.

VI. VPP IS HONOURABLE NOT HERETICAL

In Calvary Jurong’s “Non-VPP” paper, it is stated that the “ICCC (SCCC) calls on all Christians not to accept the VPP teaching.”⁹ When did the ICCC pass a resolution against VPP or endorse the SCCC statement against VPP? What the ICCC did do however under Carl McIntire’s presidency was to pass an excellent resolution not only in Amsterdam in 1997 but also in Jerusalem in 2000 affirming the superiority of the KJV over against the modern versions, and the Bible to be “Forever Infallible and Inerrant” with the following fine declaration of faith:

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.¹⁰

The ICCC clearly resolved to uphold the “forever infallible and inerrant” Scriptures which is nothing short of VPP, and identified the complete and preserved Scriptures to be the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus from which the KJV has been faithfully translated. This is precisely the stand taken by FEBC and all VPP advocates. It goes without saying that the SCCC has seriously undermined the credibility of the ICCC by such an act against VPP, and the inspired and preserved Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words underlying the KJV. It even “calls upon its members and all other Bible-believing

brethren not to subscribe to this new, Biblically unfounded and unproven theory.” Is it not strange for the SCCC to call on “Bible-believing” brethren to believe that the Bible they have in their hands today contains mistakes? What kind of “Bible-believing” faith is this? If the SCCC disagrees with but does not discriminate against VPP, that would not be unreasonable, but they intend to ban and silence VPP which is not only unfair but also unjust. Is this not an attempt at schism?

The SCCC (echoing the group of 11 pastors) claims that the “promulgation” of VPP is “schismatic.” Not so. *It is not the promulgation but the prohibition and persecution of VPP that is schismatic.* The anti-VPPists can go ahead to preach and write that the Bible is no longer infallible and inerrant since in their mind it contains some insignificant mistakes (whether God is pleased or grieved by this, and whether His people will accept it or be stumbled, should be left to the convicting work and judgement of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His saints); but why should they forbid and prevent VPP believers from declaring and defending the Bible they have in their hands today to be truly infallible and inerrant without any mistake?

If anti-VPPists feel that they cannot know whether the inspired words of God are perfectly preserved today, then they should be chagrined, but why cannot they rejoice with those who by faith are certain they have all of God’s inspired words and know exactly where all the inspired words are preserved—in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Scriptures underlying the KJV? Peter Masters of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle though not in total agreement with our position on VPP was at least honest enough to acknowledge that our position is an “honourable” one¹¹ unlike those anti-VPPists who maliciously label it “foolish,” “extreme,” “schismatic,” “heretical,” “cultic,” and even “Roman Catholic”!

VII. TRANSLATIONS

Not everyone today can read the Scriptures in the original languages. There is thus a need for the Scriptures to be translated into the common language of the people. The WCF shares this concern for the Bible to be translated,

But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope (I:VIII).

By the grace of God, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have been translated into many languages of the world. Insofar as the English translation is concerned, we are thankful to the Lord for the KJV, the best of all the good old versions of the Protestant Reformation. Today the KJV is being challenged by the many modern versions that seek to usurp its rightful place as the only English version that can rightly be called “the very Word of God.” D A Waite, President of the Dean Burgon Society, has given four reasons why the KJV is superior to all the other English translations available in the world today. In his ground-breaking book, *Defending the King James Bible: A Fourfold Superiority*, he argued that the KJV is superior in terms of its (1) Texts, (2) Translators, (3) Technique, and (4) Theology.¹² Even non-fundamentalists are hailing the goodness of this grand old version in terms of its translational accuracy and literary beauty.¹³ The KJV was not only a translation that transformed a nation; it was *the* translation that transformed the world *literarily* speaking.¹⁴

A. Perfectly Flawless Translation?

At this juncture, let me deal with Calvary Jurong's report on what the Rev Charles Seet wrote concerning my response to Gary Hudson's "Questions for the KJV-Only Cult." Calvary Jurong's report is skewed in such a way as to make me look like (1) I am defending a "perfectly flawless Bible translation" (underlining in the original), and (2) I believe that there was "no Word of God prior to 1611."¹⁵ The account totally left out my lengthy answer to Gary Hudson's question. Without giving the proper context, it thus misleads the reader. Allow me to produce in full my answer so that the reader may judge for himself whether Calvary Jurong has or has not represented me correctly in its "Non-VPP" paper.

(1) Must we possess a perfectly flawless Bible translation in order to call it "the word of God"? If so, how do we know "it" is perfect? If not, why do some limit "the word of God" to only one 17th Century English translation? Where was "the word of God" prior to 1611? [Note: This was Gary Hudson's question, and not Charles Seet's questioning of me as painted out in the Calvary Jurong report thereby making me look like a Ruckmanite.]

[Answer] We believe that "the King James Version (or Authorised Version) of the English Bible is a true, faithful, and accurate translation of these two providentially preserved Texts [Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text and Traditional Greek Text underlying the KJV], which in our time has no equal among all of the other English Translations. The translators did such a fine job in their translation task that we can without apology hold up the Authorised Version and say 'This is the Word of God!' while at the same time realising that, in some verses, we must go back to the underlying original language Texts for complete clarity, and also compare Scripture with Scripture." (*The Dean Burgon Society, "Articles of Faith," section II.A.*)

Every Bible translation can be legitimately called the Word of God if it is true and faithful to the original and traditional text. We refuse to consider heretical Bibles like the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses as "the Word of God." We also reject as unreliable all Bible versions (eg NIV, TEV, TLB, CEV ...) that are a result of the dynamic equivalence method of translation, and those (eg RSV, NASB, ESV ...) that cast doubt and/or omit verses based on corrupted readings of the Alexandrian or Westcott-Hort Text, and consider them unsafe for use.

Where was the Word of God prior to 1611? Well, the Word of God is found in the divinely inspired and providentially preserved Traditional and Preserved Text of OT and NT Scriptures used and recognised by the Church down through the ages, and in all the faithful and reliable translations that were based on those Texts, viz, Martin Luther's German Bible (1522), William Tyndale's Bible (1525), Myles Coverdale's Bible (1535), The Matthew's Bible (1537), The Great Bible (1539-41), and The Geneva Bible (1557-60).

It is significant to note that prior to the KJV, the English translations were largely individual efforts. The KJV on the other hand is a corporate work. In the words of the translators, the KJV was not produced "to make a bad one a good one; but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one." For this purpose and with such devotion the KJV translation committee was formed,

and they were careful to “assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them.”

The King James Bible is a product of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation. The providential hand of God was clearly at work at the time of the Reformation not only in the separation of the true church from the false church, but also in the invention of the printing press, the renewed interest in the study of the original languages, the publication of the Textus Receptus which finally culminated in the translation of the KJV. These products of the Protestant Reformation bear the divine imprimatur.

God holds His people in every age responsible for using the divinely inspired and preserved original texts and only the faithful and accurate translations of His Word. The KJV-only position (not Ruckmanism) does not limit the Word of God to only one 17th Century English Translation, but advocates that the KJV, being still the most accurate English translation based on the purest texts, should be the only Bible used by English-speaking Christians today. To use other Bibles when the best is clearly available would be to neglect our responsibility.¹⁶

Can the pastor and the elders of Calvary Jurong who object to my defence of the KJV kindly let me know which part of the above answer is not in line with the B-P stand on the KJV? Now the Rev Seet might possibly take issue with the word “purest” (meaning the best, without any mistake) to refer to the underlying texts of the KJV, for he believes that they are only “closest” (since he considers the underlying texts to contain “scribal errors” especially in places where there are absolutely none, eg, 2 Chron 22:2).¹⁷ It needs to be made known that I have no qualms with the word “closest” if it is taken to mean that (1) the Bible is entirely (100%) preserved and not just essentially (99.9%) preserved, (2) the Bible is verbally preserved and not just conceptually preserved, and (3) the Bible is indeed infallible and inerrant not just in the past but also today. But they speak adversely of those who take the Dean Burgon Oath,¹⁸ who believe that the Bible they have in their hands today have (1) no lost words and (2) no mistakes not only in its saving truths, but also in its numbers, names, dates, and places. Insofar as English versions are concerned, *the KJV is the closest to the purest Bible in the original languages that our all-powerful God has supernaturally preserved and His Spirit-indwelt Church has faithfully received throughout the ages.*

B. Perfect in the Original Languages

Since the Rev Seet has allowed his personal correspondence with me to go public,¹⁹ allow me then to share my email of June 27, 2002, written in reply to his concerns about why I switched from addressing a so-called “perfectly flawless translation” (Hudson’s caricature) to a perfectly flawless text in the original languages (ie, the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words underlying the KJV):²⁰

[Charles Seet] “**1) I think some may take issue with the wording of the first paragraph,²¹ as it implies that the texts underlying the KJV translation are not only closest to the original (as stated in our positional statement) but they are in fact virtual photocopies of the autographs, since the word ‘flawless’ means ‘without defect’. Actually the first paragraph misses the point of the question, which is about ‘perfectly flawless Bible translation’ (not text).**”

[My Reply] Yes, I am quite aware of this (viz, that the [ie, Hudson’s] question had to do with translation not text). I did not want to be drawn into Hudson’s

trap and fallacious reasoning. That is why I redefined the question and redrew the rules of engagement. I wanted to state our understanding of the text at the outset before going on to address the matter of translation which I did in my 2nd paragraph.

You are also correct to conclude that my statement meant that the texts underlying the KJV may be considered “virtual photocopies of the autographs.” The word “closest” as used in our position statement quoting the Dean Burgon Society should not be taken to mean that we only have a 99% pure text (1% error). I believe God has inspired and preserved His Word and words 100%. I can see how some may understand the word “closest” to mean “not perfect or exactly the same,” ie, we may have most of or essentially God’s words, but not all of God’s words in the texts underlying our KJV. I think we need to understand the context in which the statement was phrased. Westcott and Hort puffed up their cut-up Greek text as being “closest to the original” since they based it on the 4th century Alexandrian manuscripts, which manuscripts Dean Burgon has dismissed as “most corrupt.” Our use of the term “closest” seeks to *correct and counteract* Westcott and Hort’s view on the identity of the true text. The term “closest” also distinguishes between the autograph (past and “lost”) and the apograph (present and existing). We do not deny that the autograph and apograph *though distinct are the same*. The paper may be different, but the *contents* are the same.

Would the Rev Seet now kindly let me know in what way was my reply to him in defence of the KJV “heretical”? It was quite clear to him from the outset that I was not addressing a “perfectly flawless translation” but a “perfectly flawless text.” Knowing this, why is he giving people the impression that I am actually talking about a “perfectly flawless translation”? The **LIE** is spread that Jeffrey Khoo believes in “post-canonical inspiration”—that “the KJV was given by inspiration.” Why such deceit?

Another thing that baffles me is why the Rev Seet who claims to be strongly supportive of the KJV against the modern versions would launch such a campaign against VPP which is a precious biblical doctrine that actually protects and preserves the KJV? Why is all this done despite his assurance in 2004 that VPP should not be discriminated against? Why does he call me “extreme” if there should be no discrimination? Why is he and his supporters trying to silence VPP which safeguards the KJV which is the official Bible of the B-P Church since its founding? Why are anti-VPP/KJV men from BJU allowed to speak at his pulpit, but a ban is placed on certain B-P pastors who are VPP/KJV-defenders, even calling them “extreme” and “schismatic”? Why are enemies of the KJV promoted, but friends of the KJV cut down?

VIII. INSPIRATION, PRESERVATION, TRANSLATIONS: FOUR VIEWS

Is the B-P Church’s stand on the KJV a matter of “preference” or a matter of “principle or doctrine”? We believe our use of the KJV and our defence of its underlying original language texts (words) is a matter of principle or doctrine. As a matter of principle or doctrine, our KJV defence is not based on convenience but conviction. There are four views on the issue of inspiration, preservation, and translations. Of course, there are different shades of views in between, but which view is the biblically acceptable view?

VIEW QUESTION	Rationalistic ²² (Liberal)	Eclectic ²³ (Neo-Evangelical)	Deistic ²⁴ (Neo-Fundamental)	Fideistic ²⁵ (Reformed & Fundamental)
Inspiration 100%, VPI?	No	Yes & No	Yes	Yes
Preservation 100%, VPP?	No	No	No	Yes
Infallibility & Inerrancy?	Nowhere	Autographs only/partially	Autographs only	Autographs & Apographs
Bible Today?	Imperfect	Imperfect	Imperfect	Perfect
Biblical Basis?	No	No	No	Yes (eg, Matt 5:18)
What Preserved?	Nothing	Doctrines not words	Doctrines not words	Words & doctrines
Words Lost?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Discrepancies in Bible (eg, 2 Chron 22:2)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Westcott & Hort?	For	For	Neither for nor against	Against
English Version?	RSV/NRSV & modernistic versions only	NIV & modern versions mainly	NKJV & NASV mainly	Only KJV ²⁶

Which position ought we to take as B-Ps? Biblically and historically, we have taken the fideistic (faith) position which is the Reformed and Fundamentalist position on Biblical inspiration and preservation, and the KJV as the *best* translation of the English Bible: “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom 10:17). Only the faith position has any biblical basis resting on Psalm 12:6-7, Matthew 5:18, 24:35, John 10:35, 1 Peter 1:25, and many other passages.²⁷ The various anti- or non-VPP positions have no biblical support whatsoever.

Regardless of the absence of biblical support for their non-VPP stance which is based on non-Scriptural and subjectively interpreted “evidence,” certain ones have accused FEBC of changing the doctrinal stand of the B-P Church on the Bible and the KJV. If a person would take a step back and look at the whole controversy objectively, he will see that FEBC is actually strengthening and not changing the original KJV position of the B-P Church. The B-P Church has always used the KJV as the Word of God from the beginning. Our KJV position is strengthened by the doctrine of VPP which argues for the 100% purity of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures underlying the KJV over against the corrupt Westcott and Hort texts behind the modern English versions which are filled with errors.

Who better to speak for the B-P faith than the founder of the Singapore B-P movement and FEBC himself—the Rev Dr Timothy Tow—who believes without equivocation “the

special providential preservation of Scripture,” and “a 100% perfect Bible without any mistake”²⁸? Rev Dr Timothy Tow—the only theologian at the founding of the B-P movement—is supported by Dr S H Tow—founding leader of the B-P Church in Singapore and senior pastor of the Calvary churches—who believes likewise, and has identified for us where precisely this “100% perfect Bible without any mistake” is:

1. Question: Can we identify these texts?
2. Answer: Absolutely. Our great God did not leave Himself without witness, but preserved perfectly a body of MSS: the Masoretic Hebrew Old Testament Text and the Received Greek New Testament Text (Textus Receptus). From these perfectly preserved copies of God’s inspired, inerrant, infallible Scriptures, is derived our KJB.
3. What is “VPP”? “V” is “Verbal,” meaning “word for word” (Websters Dictionary). “P” is “Plenary,” meaning “complete or absolute” (Websters Dictionary). “P” is “Preservation” meaning “kept from corruption or error.”
4. “VPP of Scripture” refers to the supernatural and special providential care of God over the ages (Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter I, VIII; see also Ps 12:6,7; Matt 5:18, 24:35; 1 Pet 1:25), safeguarding the transmission of the MSS by scribes or copyists, so that the body of texts (Masoretic Hebrew OT and Received Greek NT) have been kept pure as the “good tree” giving us the “good fruit,” the KJB.
5. As the attacks on God’s Word increase in intensity, God’s faithful remnant people also increase and intensify in their loyalty to God’s Word without which the Gospel’s entire foundation would collapse.
6. The inspired and preserved Word of God for the Bible-Presbyterian Church is upheld by a “threefold cord” which cannot be broken, namely: (i) Constitution 4.2.1, (ii) the VPP of God’s Word, (iii) the KJB, the Reformation Bible.²⁹

Dr S H Tow went on to issue this pertinent warning:

Mark these words: The present attack on the VPP will lead ultimately to a denial and betrayal of the KJB. This is a prediction worth watching. God bless all readers with spiritual discernment.³⁰

Having discussed the Biblical identity of the B-P Church as regards Inspiration, Preservation, and Translations, our next part will concentrate on the identification of the preserved words of the Hebrew OT and Greek NT underlying the KJV, with special attention on specific words of Scripture that are currently under attack by certain anti-KJV and non-VPP authors who call themselves “fundamentalists.” Part II is entitled, “Canon, Texts, and Words: Lost and Found or Preserved and Identified?”

NOTES

¹ “A Statement on the Theory of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP),” Life Bible-Presbyterian Weekly, September 25, 2005.

² “Explanation of Our Non-VPP Stand,” presented on Sunday, November 6, 2005 to the congregation of Calvary Jurong B-P Church by Rev James Chan Lay Seng, Pastor of Calvary Jurong B-P Church.

³ At this juncture, it needs to be made known that prior to putting forth his name as a subscriber to the “Statement of Clarification” in which the subscribers agree that the KJV is the “very Word of God and fully reliable,” the Rev Charles Seet in August 2002 wrote an article—“How I Understand the Preservation of the Word of God”—to point out what he considers to be translational errors in certain parts of the English KJV.

⁴ *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, sv “autographa” (emphasis mine).

⁵ William F Orr, “The Authority of the Bible as Reflected in the Proposed Confession of 1967,” as quoted by Letis, *The Majority Text*, 174 (emphasis mine).

⁶ Myron J Houghton, “The Preservation of Scripture,” *Faith Pulpit* (August 1999): 1-2.

⁷ Ian R K Paisley, *My Plea for the Old Sword* (Belfast: Ambassador, 1997), 103.

⁸ “Inspiration and Translations of the Holy Scriptures,” a resolution passed by the Singapore Council of Christian Churches (SCCC), at its 49th AGM on October 29, 2005 held at Life B-P Church, Singapore.

⁹ “Explanation of Our Non-VPP Stand,” 13.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 2001), 125-6. The ICCC resolution was originally published in the *Far Eastern Beacon*.

¹¹ It is reported in the October 2, 2005 True Life B-P Church Weekly (ed Timothy Tow) that Dr Peter Masters “did not think our VPP position to be in any way ‘heretical,’ but indeed ‘an honourable one.’ He also gave unreserved support and endorsement of FEBC, ‘May I say that the ministry of FEBC under Dr Timothy Tow ... is a remarkable manifestation of the blessing of God in maintaining inerrancy, fundamentals, evangelism, sound hermeneutics and biblical separation. Your work is magnificent and encouraging in the highest degree.’ In another letter, Dr Masters reaffirmed his remarks on the VPP of Scripture that ‘it is a sincerely held view aimed at safeguarding the Word, and promoting integrity. Its advocates seek to proclaim and adhere to the Gospel and the historic doctrines of the faith. They seek to preserve an excellent translation of the Bible, and to oppose the corrupt W & H based translations ... the position is honourable. It is certainly not base, self-seeking, unfaithful, or heretical in the sense of denying any doctrine of the Christian faith.’”

¹² D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 2nd ed (Collingswood: Bible For Today, 1996).

¹³ For example, Leland Ryken wrote, “The KJV is the greatest English Bible translation ever produced. Its style combines simplicity and majesty as the original requires, though it inclines toward the exalted. Its rhythms are matchless.” *The Word of God in English* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 51.

¹⁴ See Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001).

¹⁵ “Explanation of Our Non-VPP Stand,” 2.

¹⁶ “KJV Q&A,” July 31, 2002 draft [words in square brackets not in original]. It is no secret that the Rev Charles Seet together with Rev Colin Wong declared that they could no longer take the Dean Burgon Oath in the FEBC faculty meeting of October 29, 2002. Rev Seet handed in his resignation letter to FEBC on November 15, 2002. In it he requested “not to be represented as a member of the FEBC faculty in any publication that is issued by the college from now on.” I respect his decision, and

take full responsibility for all that I have written in defence of the KJV and its underlying texts. Rev Seet has every freedom to disagree with me, but he and his friends have no right to misrepresent and malign me and those at FEBC who defend the KJV and more importantly the Biblical doctrine of VPP and the perfection of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words behind the KJV.

¹⁷ Charles Seet, “A Positional Paper on the Doctrine of Inspiration and Preservation of the Holy Scriptures,” <http://web.singnet.com.sg/~sbseet/position.htm>, accessed on February 3, 2006.

¹⁸ The Dean Burgon Oath states, “I swear in the name of the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—that the Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme. So help me God. Amen.”

¹⁹ “Explanation of Our Non-VPP Stand,” 2.

²⁰ See “Biblical Answers to Questions on the KJV and its Underlying Texts: A Response to Gary Hudson’s ‘Questions for the KJV-Only Cult,’” at www.febc.edu.sg under “Articles on the Defence of the Biblical Doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Bible.”

²¹ In an earlier draft of “KJV-Only Q&A” dated July 18, 2002, I answered Hudson’s question in the following way: “The question is rather mischievous. Let us rephrase it: Can a flawed Bible ever be deemed the ‘Word of God?’ Can a perfect God ever give His people a less than perfect Bible? The answer is obvious. The Bible is God’s Word, and if God is perfect, His Word must be no less perfect. God assures us that His Word is ‘very pure’ (Ps 119:40), ‘perfect’ (Ps 19:7), ‘true and righteous altogether’ (Ps 19:9). All, not some or most, of Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16).”

²² B F Westcott and F J A Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Harper and Brothers, , 1882); Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²³ D A Carson, *The King James Version Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); James R White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1995).

²⁴ James B Williams, ed, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999); James B Williams and Randolph Shaylor, eds, *God’s Word in Our Hands* (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald, 2003); Roy E Beacham and Kevin T Bauder, eds, *One Bible Only?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001).

²⁵ Paisley, *My Plea for the Old Sword*; D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible* (Collingswood: Bible For Today, 1996); Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *A Theology for Every Christian: Knowing God and His Word* (Singapore, FEBC Press, 1998).

²⁶ “A Doctrinal Positional Statement of Life B-P Church,” states, “We do employ the KJV alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.” *50 Years Building His Kingdom*, Life Bible-Presbyterian Church Golden Jubilee Magazine, 2000, 67.

²⁷ See George Skariah, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Perfect Preservation of the Holy Scriptures,” ThD dissertation, Far Eastern Bible College, 2005.

²⁸ Timothy Tow, “God’s Special Providential Care of the Text of Scripture,” *Bible Witness*, October-December 2002, 3-4.

²⁹ S H Tow, “Gospel Safeguard—VPP,” *Calvary Pandan B-P Church Weekly*, January 1, 2006. See also his book, *Beyond Versions: A Biblical Perspective of Modern English Bibles* (Singapore: King James Productions, 1998).

³⁰ *Ibid.*