

**TRUTH B-P CHURCH**  
**Adult Sunday School**

**DOCTRINE OF THE VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION**  
**OF GOD’S WORD IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES**

**LESSON ONE: INTRODUCTION**

**I. THE BATTLE FOR THE PERFECT BIBLE**

The battle for the perfect Bible continues to be fought today. The doctrine of inspiration was undermined and fought in the last century. In this new century, a new battle emerged and it is the attack on the perfect preservation of the same Bible that is perfectly inspired.

A. The Bible In Original And Copies

1. The Bible is perfect because the Author is perfect. It pleased God to use more than 40 human writers to pen down His perfect Word over the span of 1,500 years. The very first copies in which these 40 human writers wrote on were called the Autographs, handwritten in three different languages, namely: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The same Autographs had been copied over and over again. And these copied manuscripts are rightly called the Apographs.
2. Where are the Autographs today? They are no more to be found because either they were already worn off or have been completely lost. However, we thank God that we still have the copies of the Autographs. Many of these copies are the copies of the copies. Are these copies in anyway inferior to the original copy? The answer is no. The reason is because God has preserved all the words – jot and tittle in the copies today. The form may have changed, but the words are still the same. Not one word is lost!
3. Without preservation, inspiration is meaningless. It does not make sense for God to inspire His Word if He did not intend to preserve them. God’s Word is written for His people. And His Word must therefore be preserved perfectly in order to pass down from generation to generation completely. This is logical faith.

B. The Beginning of Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) Issue in Singapore

1. Two Deadly “Poisons”: ‘From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man’ and “One Bible Only?”
  - a. In the late 2000, there were two books that have been promoted and circulated among some Christians in Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (BPC). These books were proven to be deadly “poison” when seeds of doubt on the perfect Bible have been planted in the mind of many Christians including some lecturers in Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC).
  - b. The first “poison” is this book ‘From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man’ published by Bob Jones University (BJU) in 1999. This book attacks the fundamental doctrine of Bible preservation by having an inclination to the critical texts originated from Westcott and Hort. In addition, BJU adopts a neutral position on the choice of English Bible versions.

This is the first “poison” that spreads to all who adore BJU as one Bible seminary and university that stood without apology through the dangerous time of great apostasy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, like many other Bible seminaries which had fallen, BJU succumbed to the god of humanistic scholarship and downgraded spiritual and biblical discernment. Thus, FEBC, being true to her call to be God’s watchman in these last of the last days, must sound the alarm bell of warning.

- c. The second “poison” is found in the book ‘One Bible Only?’ which was written by the Baptist fundamentalists who taught at Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Plymouth, Minnesota in the United States. This book speaks in one voice throughout saying that the Bible is preserved conceptually, and not verbally. In other words, it was believed that only the vital doctrines are preserved, and not the inspired words. Again, FEBC has to sound the warning against this unbiblical stand.
- d. Though it was better late than never, by then many in Life BPC and some B-P Churches were already ‘poisoned’ by the unfaithful stand that the Bible is not verbally and plenary preserved today. Thank God FEBC stood firm on God’s providential preservation of the perfect Bible and is still standing today without apology and compromise.

## 2. Life BPC & FEBC

- a. Rev (Dr) Jeffrey Khoo, then Academic Dean of FEBC, wrote two separate critiques against the two “poison” books which were highly endorsed by BJU and Central Baptist Seminary, in order to defend the King James Bible and the original language texts underlying it. His timely critiques serve as a strong warning to the readers of these books. The teaching of the doctrine of VPP has thus taken root and eventually became a controversial topic among B-P churches in Singapore.
- b. Among the teaching faculty members of FEBC, two disagreed on the doctrine of VPP. As a result, they resigned from the faculty but remained as assistant pastors of Life BPC. Due to their influence and good support from the Church Session, Life BPC steered a different direction from FEBC. Since then, anti-VPP statements were consistently made and taught that VPP is a new teaching and remains a personal conviction rather than a universal gospel truth.
- c. Thus, Life BPC and FEBC went on separate ways from the last quarter of 2003 onwards. In the same year, FEBC Principal Rev (Dr) Timothy Tow resigned from Life BPC as pastor and started a new church called ‘True Life BPC’ under the umbrella of FEBC.

## 3. Calvary BPC & Truth BPC

- a. ‘Truth will out’ was what Rev (Dr) Timothy Tow always reminded his students in FEBC. The issue of VPP did not remain with Life BPC-FEBC. For more than two years, Calvary BPC has been staying clear of this controversial issue for fear of splitting the church.
- b. However, in early 2005, the pastor decided to ‘educate’ the Board of Elders (BOE) on VPP in order to prepare them to go the way of the non-VPP direction. A 30-min session was organized and taught by a ‘scholarly’ church member from Calvary Pandan BPC. It was a biased, one-sided session, attacking the VPP position as heretical, divisive in its essence and intent. There was no room for any defense for the VPP position. The BOE led by the pastor unanimously stood for the non-VPP position.
- c. On 2 Oct 2005, an official church stand was declared and affirmed for the non-VPP position. Although there was a strong appeal made to the BOE against making such a hasty decision, it was turned down without any consideration. As a result, five deacons and two full-time staffworkers, unwilling to submit to the non-VPP stand, resigned from their offices and handed over their responsibilities by the end of the year.
- d. By the Lord’s leading, Truth BPC was born on 1 Jan 2006 at the premises of Calvary Pandan BPC. The group that left Calvary BPC to form Truth BPC vowed to take a firm stand on the doctrine of VPP. “For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth” (2 Corinthians 13:8).

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF VPP

### A. Inspiration and Preservation are Twin Brothers!

1. Non-VPPists or anti-VPPists do not believe the God who perfectly inspired His Word has also perfectly preserved His Word. They affirm Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) but deny Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP). They believe strongly that we do not have an infallible and inerrant Bible TODAY and thereby their denial of the doctrine of VPP. By denying VPP, they might as well deny VPI, for what is the use of an infallible and inerrant Bible in the past but not today?
2. Rev (Dr) Ian Paisley was absolutely correct to say, ‘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 committed to verbal Inspiration. If there is no preserved Word of God today then the work of Divine Revelation and Divine Inspiration has perished’ (*My Plea for the Old Sword*, 103).
3. Rev (Dr) Timothy Tow, founding pastor of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore and principal of the Far Eastern Bible College, likewise wrote, ‘We believe the preservation of Holy Scripture and its Divine inspiration stand in the same position as providence and creation. If Deism teaches a Creator who goes to sleep after creating the world is absurd, to hold to the doctrine of inspiration without preservation is equally illogical. ... Without preservation, all the inspiration, God-breathing into the Scriptures, would be lost. But we have a Bible so pure and powerful in every word and it is so because God has preserved it down through the ages’ (*A Theology for Every Christian: Knowing God and His Word*, 47).
4. Rev (Dr) Edward F. Hills wrote, ‘If the doctrine of *divine inspiration* of the Old and New Testament Scriptures is a true doctrine, the doctrine of the *providential preservation* of these Scriptures must also be a true doctrine. It must be that down through the centuries God has exercised a special, providential control over the copying of the Scriptures and the preservation and use of the original text have been available to God's people in every age. God must have done this, for if He gave the Scriptures to His Church by inspiration as the perfect and final revelation of His will, then it is obvious that He would not allow this revelation to disappear or undergo any alteration of its fundamental character’ (*The King James Version Defended*, 2).

### B. The Doctrine of Bible Preservation is not a New Teaching!

1. The doctrine of the 100% inspiration and 100% preservation of God’s Holy Word existed even before the Westminster Confession as much as the doctrine of the 100% deity and 100% humanity of Christ existed before the Athanasian Creed. The doctrine of 100% inspiration and 100% preservation of God’s words in the Holy Scriptures is not a new doctrine but a very old one. It certainly did not begin with D A Waite, nor E F Hills, nor J W Burgon, but with the Holy Scripture itself.
2. The doctrine of preservation is as old as the Bible. Why is the Bible our Supreme, Final, and All-sufficient Authority in faith and life? It is precisely because it is God’s Perfect Word, infallible and inerrant, even today!

### C. The Doctrine of VPP is Biblical!

1. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF) states very clearly that the inspired Scriptures in the original languages are by God’s ‘singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages’ (WCF I:8). The Westminster divines used Matthew 5:18 as a proof text for this affirmation of the verbal plenary preservation (VPP) of the Scriptures. This proves that the doctrine of the VPP of Scripture is not just creedal, but more importantly *Biblical*.

2. The VPP of Scripture is a position of faith that is based solely on the Word of God. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). It is a position that we must take if we are to weather and survive the onslaughts of postmodernism, pop-modernism, open-theism and neo-deism that seek to destroy the church today.

#### D. What Kind of Bible Preservation?

1. Many including non-VPPists say they believe in providential preservation. This is what they say, but what do they really mean? A non-VPPist will tell you he believes in preservation, however he does not mean entire preservation but essential preservation; it is conceptual preservation, not verbal preservation. In other words, he believes that only the vital doctrines are preserved and not the inspired words.
2. Does the Bible teach partial and conceptual preservation or plenary and verbal preservation? The Bible and the Protestant Church creeds affirm the latter. The Reformed Confessions in both Presbyterian and Baptist circles affirm not just the 100% inspiration of the Autographs, but also the 100% preservation of the Autographs in the faithful Apographs that have come down to us today.
3. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1.8) for instance 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.*’ Note that the Westminster Confession did not use the term ‘Autographs’ but spoke of the Scriptures in terms of the original *languages* (Hebrew OT and Greek NT). The Westminster Confession clearly affirms the 100% inspiration (“immediately inspired by God”) and 100% preservation (‘by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages’) of the Holy Scriptures in the original languages.

#### E. What and Where are the Preserved Texts Today?

1. They are the inspired OT Hebrew words and NT Greek words the prophets, the apostles, the church fathers, the reformers used which are today found in the long and continuously abiding and preserved words underlying the Reformation Bibles best represented by the time-tested and time-honoured KJV, and **NOT** in the corrupted Alexandrian manuscripts and critical Westcott-Hort texts underlying the liberal, ecumenical, and neo-evangelical modern English versions.
2. To be more precise, the infallible and inerrant words of Scripture are found in the faithfully preserved Traditional/Byzantine/Majority manuscripts, and fully represented in the Printed and Received Text (or Textus Receptus) that underlie the Reformation Bibles best represented by the KJV, and **NOT** in the corrupted and rejected texts of Westcott and Hort that underlie the many modern versions of the English Bible like the NIV, NASV, ESV, RSV, TEV, CEV, etc.

#### F. Are there Scribal/ Copyist Mistakes?

1. We do not deny that copying mistakes were made during the transcription process, but that does not negate the fact that God has superintended the transcription of His inspired words to ensure that none of His inspired words would be lost. If 10 scribes were copying the Scriptures, one or two might possibly make a mistake in copying a particular verse, but the rest would have copied it correctly, and the mistake made is easily identified and rectified by the rest. The special providential hand of God has ensured this.

2. God’s providential work is always supernatural. God knows all things and is all-powerful. Man makes mistakes, but not God. He who has inspired every jot and tittle of His Word has surely preserved every jot and tittle of His Word (Matthew 5:18).
3. There are no mistakes in the Bible. If there are any “discrepancies” in the Bible, the “discrepancies” are only seeming or apparent, **NOT** real or actual. Any inability to understand or explain such difficult passages in no way negates the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures, applying the faithful Pauline principle of biblical interpretation: “*let God be true, but every man a liar*” (Romans 3:4).

#### G. Is KJV Inspired?

1. Anti-VPPists are prone to put words into the mouths of VPP proponents by saying that they believe the KJV to be as inspired and as infallible and inerrant as the original language Scriptures. We make no such claim. 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*).
2. ‘No translation can claim to be 100% equivalent to the original language Scriptures, but if it is a true, faithful, accurate translation based on the preserved text, it is the Word of God. The Textus Receptus is like the platinum yardstick of the Smithsonian Institute, accurate to the last decimal point. The KJV on the other hand is like the wooden yardstick used in the homes and shops. Would anyone deny that the common yardstick though not the perfect yardstick of the Smithsonian Institute is any less a yardstick and fit to measure?’ (Dr Jeffrey Khoo, *The Emergence of Neo-Fundamentalism: One Bible Only? Or Yea Hath God Said?*, January Issue of Burning Bush Volume 10 Number 1).
3. Many English versions have been published, but none has yet overthrown the KJV. The KJV remains the best, most faithful, reliable, accurate, trustworthy, beautiful English Bible we have today. Can the venerable KJV ever be replaced? Should we ever think of revising it? Here is Dean Burgon’s reply: “Whatever may be urged in favour of Biblical Revision, it is at least undeniable that the undertaking involves a tremendous risk. Our Authorized Version is the one religious link which at present binds together ... millions of English-speaking men scattered over the earth’s surface. Is it reasonable that so unutterably precious, so sacred a bond should be endangered, for the sake of representing certain words more accurately,—here and there translating a tense with greater precision,—getting rid of a few archaisms? It may be confidently assumed that no ‘Revision’ of our Authorized Version, however judiciously executed, will ever occupy the place in public esteem which is actually enjoyed by the work of the Translators of 1611,—the noblest literary work in the Anglo-Saxon language. We shall in fact never have *another* ‘Authorized Version’” (*Revision Revised*, 113).

### III. SUMMARY

Our earnest contention for the inerrancy and infallibility of an extant Bible in the original languages is not an act of schism but of love for both God and man. We are intent on teaching “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27); we can do no less. The doctrine of VPP promotes God and glorifies Him, for it testifies of His character as One who is the same yesterday, today and forever. He means what He says, and says what He means. “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My WORDS shall not pass away*” (Matthew 24:35). Is this divine statement not clear enough?

Dr Jeffrey Khoo in his critique (published in FEBC Burning Bush Volume 10 Number 1) of the book *One Bible Only?* wrote ‘Hindus and Muslims all believe that their scriptures, the Bhagavad Gita and the Koran respectively, are perfect. Yet Christians who claim to believe in the one living and true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and Christ the only Mediator and Saviour of the world, are not so quick to believe they have an existing infallible and inerrant Scripture. What a shame!’ If we adopt a non-VPP position, then Christianity is no longer true, and Christians shall become the laughing stock of the religious world. Indeed, if the Christian Bible is not perfect, infallible and inerrant today and it is a thing of the past, “*then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; ... If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*” (1 Corinthians 15:14-15, 19).

The battle for the perfect Bible is far from over. 20 years may have passed since Truth BPC started in order to stand for the VPP position. The doctrine of VPP must continue to be taught to the next generation of Bible-believing Christians and be upheld as the fundamental truth because our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Living Word “the same yesterday, to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8) is the One who gave us His written Word that is perfectly inspired and perfectly preserved today. Let us not only believe it with all our heart, but also to live by it faithfully until the Lord Jesus Christ returns. May God help us. Amen.