

MARK THEM WHICH CAUSE DIVISIONS

by the Pastor and Elders of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore
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*Though with a scornful wonder men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping, their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.*

THE WORDS of this hymn, composed by Samuel Stone in the 19th century, reflects a painful phenomenon that has troubled the Church of Jesus Christ from the time of its inception – Heresies and the divisions engendered by them. The apostles had to deal with them in the first century (Acts 15:24; Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10).

In the second century, church fathers like Irenaeus had to write against a pseudo-Christian cult called Gnosticism. In the 3rd century the Church had to deal with Sabellianism. In the 4th Century it was Arianism, and in the 5th century it was Nestorianism...and so on, right up to the present day.

The word ‘heresy’ is derived from the Greek verb *haireomai* which means ‘choose.’ Hence, a heresy can be defined as a chosen course of thought or action which is held dogmatically but varies from the true exposition of the Christian faith as prescribed by the Word of God. A heresy is seldom a complete lie. It often arises from a slight distortion of the truth that wrests it from its original context (cf. 2 Peter 3:16), or that puts undue emphasis on a particular facet of it. There are at least three characteristics of a heresy:

1. It Is New

Charles Spurgeon once said,
“No man can add anything to the

religion of Jesus. All that is consistent with truth is already incorporated in it, and with that which is not true it can form no alliance. There is nothing new in theology save that which is false.”

Within the last 77 years a new teaching on the preservation of the Bible has arisen. It was started by a Seventh Day Adventist named Benjamin G Wilkinson (1872 – 1968) through a book entitled, *Our Authorised Bible Vindicated* (1930). This new teaching has been propagated since then. It emerged in our midst more than 5 years ago with the name Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP).

In his testimony, *From the RSV to the KJV*, Dr Jeffrey Khoo wrote, *“Through Hills’s book I discovered the sorely neglected doctrine of biblical preservation. It was a doctrine affirmed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. As a Bible-Presbyterian, I was flabbergasted that I did not know this doctrine. I*

was never taught it. I knew well the doctrine of biblical inspiration, but had never heard of biblical preservation. This doctrine is clearly taught in Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 24:35. I felt like the parabolic man who had found the pearl of great price. What a precious doctrine!”

The teaching can be summarised as follows:

“There is nothing new in theology save that which is false.”

- C.H. Spurgeon -

The process of preservation of the Scriptures culminated in the Hebrew and Greek texts underlying the King James Version. These texts surpassed all other editions of the traditional texts existing at that time. The ones responsible for these texts were the

translators of the KJV. God used these translators to restore absolute 100 % purity to the texts in the year 1611. The result of this is that only the Greek and Hebrew texts immediately underlying the KJV are the exact words of the original writings, i.e. the very words used when God first gave His word by inspiration to the Bible writers.

As you can see, the intention of those who promote this teaching is quite noble – to give those who use the KJV absolute confidence that they have a Bible translation which is based on the texts which are not only *closest* to the original, but which is word and letter perfect, *exactly the same as* the original.

Wouldn't it be good news to all KJV users that we alone have the unrivalled privilege to have such a Bible in our hands? This would surely provide us with the most solid grounds to continue using it and to discourage the use of any other version of the Bible.

But as noble as the intention may be for this new teaching, we must realize that it is untenable. (Romans 10:2 – *“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”*) Although it claims to be based on passages of Scripture which speak on the preservation of the Scriptures (e.g. 1 Peter 1:23-25), it is really a subjective opinion that has no biblical authority.

Nowhere in the entire Bible is there a verse which says that God will restore the 100 % purity of the Greek and Hebrew texts of His

Word to make them exactly like the original autographs. Nowhere in the Bible can you find even a single verse that says or implies that God will do this restoration work through the translators of the KJV in the year 1611. This is all purely human conjecture.

If it is truly based on the Bible, then any Christian in any period of church history and in any part of the world who studies nothing else but the Bible carefully, guided by the Holy Spirit should be able to arrive at this teaching independently. But this is obviously not the case. It is a new doctrine, limited to some users of the KJV.

Therefore its basis is something other than the Bible. And if we were to make it binding for every Christian to believe, then we are no longer based solely on the divine authority of the Bible.

Let us heed what God says in Jeremiah 6:16 – *“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”*

For the past 57 years, Life Church has been upholding the use

of the KJV because we believe that it is the best English translation of the Scriptures, made by godly translators from the best Greek and Hebrew texts. As the Westminster Confession of Faith states in chapter 8, article 1, these have been “*by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages.*” We affirm that because God has providentially preserved His Word in the body of manuscripts, there is maximum certainty that what we have today is the very Word of God and fully reliable.

2. It Is Infectious

H e r e s y spreads quickly, just like gangrene. The apostle Paul had to write to Timothy, “*But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker...*” (2 Timothy 2:16-17)

The word ‘canker’ in this verse is translated from the Greek word *gangraina*, from which we get the word gangrene. Gangrene is an infection that has a strong tendency

to spread quickly because the bacteria produce powerful toxins that destroy adjacent healthy tissues, making them highly susceptible to further invasion. The treatment involves heavy doses of antibiotics and, if necessary, the timely amputation of the affected tissue. Without such radical measures the infection will spread like wildfire until the whole body is consumed.

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Paul clearly used this metaphor to warn Timothy in no uncertain terms of the extreme danger of dealing lightly and slowly with heresy. Its toxic effects will spread quickly to every church and household it infiltrates. Swift and drastic action is

necessary to stem its venomous tide.

The gangrene-like characteristic of the VPP heresy has been amply demonstrated both locally and abroad. Since the infection began to develop in Singapore more than 5 years ago, it has ravaged churches at an amazing rate. It has

affected no fewer than 6 churches todate, and will continue to spread with even greater fervour if nothing is done to stop it. The bad news is that Bible-believing churches that use the KJV appear to be most vulnerable to this infection. The situation has come to a stage where such churches will certainly succumb to its terrible onslaught if they have no prepared defenses against it!

And even with prepared defenses, vigilance is still necessary, because heresy mutates into more virulent forms over time. When the VPP heresy first began in 2002, the Greek Text that was held to be the underlying text of the New Testament of the KJV and a replica of the original autographs was Beza's 5th edition of the *Textus Receptus*, published in 1598. But when evidence was shown that this text differed from the KJV in 190 places, the perfect text was changed to Scrivener's edition of the *Textus Receptus*, published in 1881 and 1884. But when this was later found to differ slightly from the KJV, the perfect text was changed to Edward F. Hill's 'The Reformation Text'.

Let us not be fooled. Certain statements may have been changed over time to make the heresy more plausible and appealing, but that

does not make its payload less destructive!

3. It Is Destructive

Heresy leaves a sea of horror in its wake. It creates much tension and disrupts good Christian fellowship. By so doing, it stumbles young Christians and ruins the Church's testimony before the world. It also takes up much precious time and energy to deal with it.

It is probably Satan's most ingenious tool for sapping all the vitality and life out of a vibrant church. Many churches are mere shells of what they once were because of heresy's infiltration.

In Matthew 7:16, Jesus said, "*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*" What fruits has VPP brought forth since its inception? It has certainly brought forth more ungodliness (2 Timothy 2:16). Consider the following fruits:

Division

Life B-P Church and True Life B-P Church (2003); Calvary Jurong B-P Church and Truth B-P Church (2005); Calvary Jaya B-P Church and Evangel B-P Church

(2006). The precious unity that we formerly enjoyed within B-P circles (Psalm 133:1) has been destroyed.

Deception

By using selective quotations, it erroneously claimed as its proponents some well-known authorities such as the Westminster divines, Dean Burgon*, G.I. Williamson, Edward F. Hills, John Owen, the Trinitarian Bible Society and the International Council of Christian Churches.

(* E.g. On page 21 of *Revision Revised* Burgon wrote, “Once for all, we request it may be clearly understood that we do not, by any means, claim perfection for the Received Text. We entertain no extravagant notions on this subject. Again and again we shall have occasion to point out (e.g. at page 107) that the *textus receptus* needs correction.”)

Distortion

In the Calvary Pandan B-P Church’s *Elder’s Page* dated 6 January 2008, Rev (Dr) Quek Suan Yew

wrote: “They have stated that FEBC would be allowed to use the sanctuary **IF she would sign an undertaking that she will teach**

that the Bible has mistakes and that God has not preserved all His words perfectly for us today.”

“The most effective way to reduce or remove an infection is to stop it at its source.”

What was actually stated in the letter that Life Church sent to FEBC on 5th October 2007 was: “Please be informed that in view

of our non-VPP position which is consistent with the Life B-P Church constitution, users of the church sanctuary are required to give a written undertaking that they would respect the position of Life B-P Church. If Far Eastern Bible College (“the college”) wishes to continue using the church sanctuary for its night lectures **please give us written unconditional undertaking that the college would not promote the VPP doctrine in the night classes, failing which we regret to inform you that this will no longer be available to the college from January 2008.”**

What Should We Do about Heresy?

Romans 16:17 says, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*”

Those who propagate heresy must be closely observed and avoided, not to be unkind to them, but for the sake of protecting the flock of God from being influenced and infiltrated by their teaching.

The most effective way to reduce or remove an infection is to stop it at its source. According to Titus 1:11 the mouths of heretics must be stopped. To allow them continued freedom to promote the heresy within our Church Sanctuary

is to make us bear part of the blame for the grievous damage it is causing to the body of Christ. However, if they are willing to cease their propagation of VPP permanently and return to the truth, we will most gladly extend the use of the premises to them.

We remain fully committed to Christ-centred preaching of the Gospel, to the saving of souls, and to build up God’s kingdom according to the truth of God’s Word. Let us pray for those who have been led astray by heresy – that they will return to a biblical emphasis on the pre-eminence of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:2 – “*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*”

For Life B-P Church’s stand on the Preservation of Scriptures, please refer to the articles on “Our Stand on the Preservation of Scriptures” posted on our Church website: www.lifebpc.com.

Alternatively, if you do not have access to the Internet, you may contact the Church office (admin@lifebpc.com or 6254-5433) for a copy.