

DIFFERENCES IN THE KJV VS CUV

By Lim Seng Hoo

Many bilingual, English-Mandarin Christians, were taken aback by a recent article published on 2 September 2007, entitled, “**NO VPP, NO KJV! NO CUV!**” Its’ author is a Bible-Presbyterian pastor cum lecturer of the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) in Singapore, where the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) view is aggressively promoted. In a bid not to alienate Chinese brethren, these VPP proponents try to make out the Chinese Union Bible (CUV) as “the best, most faithful, most reliable, and most accurate Bible for the Chinese speaking people,” just as the King James Version (KJV) is for the English speaking, in a way that misrepresents the CUV and the KJV as having nearly identical underlying textual basis.

The truth however is that the CUV, like most other translations in other languages, was not based on the same Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek texts used by the 1611 KJV translators. This 1919 publication, which is today’s most widely used Chinese Bible, was translated in 1890 by a panel of missionaries from the Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, Congregationalist churches and from the China Inland Mission, using the 1885 English Revised Version as its source text supplemented by the original manuscripts for crosschecking.

To illustrate the above, some KJV - CUV differences are here shown: -

Verses/Portions of Verses found in the KJV that are not in the CUV

Mk 9:44 and 46, Col 1:2, 14, 2:2, 11, 1Thess 1:1, 2Thess 2:4

1 Tim 2:7, 3:3, 4:12, 5:4, 16, 6:5 and 7, 2 Tim 1:11

1 Pet 1:22, 4:1 and 14, 1John 4:3, 5:7

Rev 1:8, 11, 5:14, 11:1, 17, 15:2, 16:5, 14 and 21:24

KJV Verses not found in the CUV text but harmonised in the Margins

(Given in brackets in smaller print preceded with “some old Mss contains ~”)

Matt 17:21, 18:11 and 23:14, Mark 7:16, 11:26 and 15:28

Luke 17:36 and 23:17, John 5:4

Acts 8:37, 15:34, 24:7 and 28:29

Other KJV Vs CUV Differences

Eph 6:24 “Amen” ending in KJV is absent in the CUV and in the Greek TR texts.

2Sam 8:4 in the KJV reads 700 horsemen. CUV reads 1,700 horsemen, which accords with the underlying Hebrew Masoretic Text.

Ps 12:7 - the CUV states that God shall preserve His people (not the words), from this generation forever, while the KJV is unclear (but gives “him” in the margins).

Rev 22:19 – “book of life” in the KJV was reversed engineered from the Latin and has no Greek warrant. CUV renders this “tree of life”.

Jude 1:25, where the KJV truncates away, “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (CUV translation – “to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord”)

Act 4:25, where the KJV truncates away “by the Holy Spirit” (CUV translation – “It was thou who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant...”)

The above should not shake the faith of our Chinese brethren in the CUV, which is in various respects actually more accurate than even the KJV, such as in its rendition of Rev 22:19 above. The CUV was also the Bible of men like Wang Ming Tao and John Sung, without whom the Bible Presbyterian churches in Singapore would not have come into being.

TRUTH UNENDING AND UNCHANGEABLE

The crucial problem about VPP is its starting premise, first made around 1930, that the KJV is perfect. From there, VPP proponents today make the unproven claim that the original language Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek texts used by the KJV translators in 1611 were jot and tittle perfect, and the identification of the “perfect VPP texts” take its reference to the KJV. This would mean that if there is a difference in the Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek readings and the KJV, certain VPP proponents would correct the original language readings with the KJV.

VPP thus puts the cart before the horse, crimping in the process, the work of methodical textual collation. VPP adherents are told they must reject the testimony of all of the thousands of extant manuscripts that God has preserved for us, on any point in which the KJV deviate from these. They are also to ignore the fact that Erasmus, whose work formed the basis of the Textus Receptus, had in his time only 5 or 6 Greek manuscripts to work with, which were incomplete, missing for example the last 6 verses of the Book of Revelation, which obliged Erasmus to reverse translate these from the Latin Bible back into the Greek!

The sad part is that in elevating one translation above all others, VPP proponents had also gone out at length to level unnecessary and unjustified attacks against brethren who do not accept their views, notwithstanding that these are godly and conservative brethren, who fear the Lord and His Word. It is almost as if they made the KJV an idol to the extent that they are willing to hate their brethren who have done no harm to the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ. The irony of this also is that in reality, the textual agreement among conservative Bible translations are exceedingly great and no major doctrine is impugned by the remaining areas of diversities. The KJV Preface to the Reader on their “reason for setting diversity of senses in the margin, where there is great probability for each”, itself states,

“It hath pleased God in his Divine Providence here and there to scatter words and sentences of that difficulty and doubtfulness, not in doctrinal points that concern salvation, (for in such it hath been vouched that the Scriptures are plain) but in matters of less moment, that fearfulness would better beseem us than confidence, and if we will resolve, to resolve upon modesty with *S. Augustine: It is better to make doubt of those things which are secret, than to strive about those things that are uncertain.*”

Where does all of the above take us? Simply this - if VPP is indeed a Biblical doctrine, it would not keep changing! This however has been precisely the case for VPP, with the above cited article representing yet one more new change, contradicting earlier VPP propositions.

The Chameleon VPP Text

Dr Jeffrey Khoo, Academic Dean of FEBC wrote “Kept Pure in All Ages”, FEBC Press, 2001, following the position of Dr Donald A Waite, who first introduced the VPP idea to Singapore in 1992, which maintained **Beza 1598** as the perfect Greek NT text: -

“Since there were no printing or photocopying machines in those early days, the production of copies of the NT manuscripts was done painstakingly by hand, word for word. This tedious process would invariably result in some copying errors experienced even today by typists on electronic typewriters or computers.” (p 31) “By the providential hand of God, all such typographical and transmission errors, both accidental and intentional, have been corrected by 1598 in Theodore Beza’s fifth edition of the Textus Receptus. The printing machine invented during the 15th century has removed the need to hand copy the Scriptures, thereby preventing any scribal errors from recurring in the transmission process.” (p 32)

All of the above was well and good... except that the Greek text used at FEBC was not Beza 1598 but Scrivener’s 1881/1884 text published by the Trinitarian Bible Society. When informed by Rev Charles Seet that the two texts differed in over 190 places, Dr Khoo quietly changed his position in “A Plea for a Perfect Bible”, The Burning Bush, January 2003, p 9: -

“In like manner, the Lord allowed copyist errors and corruptions to enter into the transmission process through the pen of fallible scribes. I believe that in the fulness of time - in the most opportune time of the Reformation ... – God restored from out of a pure stream of preserved Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, the purest Hebrew and Greek Text of all—the Text that underlies our KJV—that accurately reflects the original Scriptures.”

“If there exists a perfect TR, then which of the many editions of the TR is perfect? The present edition of the Textus Receptus underlying the English Authorized Version of 1611 follows the text of Beza’s 1598 edition as the primary authority, and corresponds with ‘The New Testament in the Original Greek according to the text followed in the Authorized Version,’ edited by F H A Scrivener.”

This author wrote to Dr Khoo on 12 February 2003, pointing out that Scrivener served on the RV Committee with Westcott and Hort, and his 1881 work was a product of the Commission, which included revising the AV via “the removal of ‘PLAIN AND CLEAR ERRORS’ whether in the Greek Text originally adopted by the Translators, or in the Translation made from the same.” Only necessary changes were to be made – to introduce as few alterations as possible into the Text of the AV”, and “they should indicate such alteration in the margin.”

Dr Khoo responded thus on 14 February 2003: -

“I do not consider Scrivener’s 1881 Greek edition of the TR to be the perfectly restored text or the exact replica of the Autographa. What I did say was, “the purity of God’s words has been faithfully maintained in the Traditional / Byzantine / Majority / Received Text and fully represented in the Textus Receptus that underlies the KJV.” In other words, it is not strictly Scrivener’s TR (although extremely close) but the TR underlying the KJV that is the perfectly restored text or as Hills calls it “The Reformation Text.”

Which paved the way for my simple rejoinder on 14 March 2003: -

“But wonderful – all that is now required to decisively come to a judgement is to produce a copy of this “The Reformation Text” for all to see and examine! This will be the talk of the Millennium! But ought not this VPP text by now to be very well known, broadly published and widely used and scrutinised by the public, resulting in its infallibility being clearly upheld? Why did Burgon not know of this? Hills and Burgon did argue that God would not allow such a text to be hidden in some monastery or in a bottle, but would ensure its wide accessible public use in the churches! (And... is the CUV also based on this “The Reformation Text”?) And poor Scrivener did not know of it either and spend great efforts and years in reconstructing the Greek TR underlying the KJV from Beza and other sources.”

At which Dr Khoo, fatally for the VPP proposition, conceded on 21 March 2003,

I do not believe there is a "single purified" TR (there is no such volume at present). I have never advocated a "miraculous" (i.e. double inspiration) but a special "providential" preservation of Scripture. I have never held to a perfectionist view of the KJV. I have always affirmed that the KJV is the best, most faithful, most reliable, most accurate, most beautiful Bible in the English language.

THE TRUE ESTABLISHED DOCTRINE

The established Doctrine of the Bible consists of the Verbal Plenary Inspiration of every word of the Original Autographa, and the Providential Preservation (not VPP) of the same throughout the ages under Almighty God’s singular care. This is clearly evident today in: -

1. The strong similarities and agreement among the different conservative Bible versions wherein over 99.5% of verses are not in doubt and no major doctrine is affected.
2. The many thousands of ancient manuscripts, early Bible translations and numerous New Testament quotations in the writings of the early Church Fathers, which have survived, providentially preserved till this present day, provide for us the highest certainty possible of the veracity and record of the Original Autographa.
3. The powerful witness of the Bible itself, to all humble and discerning readers, who will find when reading God’s Word reverently, a powerful conviction of sin and a purifying conviction of truth (Ps 119:89-112, 2Tim 3:16, Heb 4:12, 2Pet 1:19-21).

In concluding, if VPP was true and the KJV Translators in 1611 perfectly identified every jot and tittle of the inspired Word so as to perfectly preserve the same, the whole Church of God would have known of this! Thereafter, all faithful Bible Translations, including the CUV, would have been translated based on this “VPP” text, which however is clearly not the case!