

# NO BIBLICAL WARRANT FOR VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION

By Lim Seng Hoo

---

The new Verbal Plenary Preservation (“VPP”) Theory holds that the King James Version (“KJV”) is jot and tittle perfect in its original language Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek underlying texts as “textually recognised” and selected by the KJV Translators in 1611. All other versions / translations of the Bible are imperfect, corrupt or even Satanic. This teaching or theory is not in accordance with facts and truth and is devoid of Biblical support or warrant.

## ARTICLE REVIEW

Dr Thomas M. Strouse’s “The Biblical Defence for the Verbal, Plenary Preservation of God’s Word”, purports Biblical Warrant for VPP. We examine this article, given in blue (underline mine), identifying certain of its’ false premises and disjointed leaps: -

1. The article opens with the header *Problems with Modern Versions*

“Advocates of the modern translations movement (ASV, NASV, NIV, NEB, RSV, etc.) hold to the conceptual view of inspiration - they believe that God inspired His divine concepts and then preserved these concepts in the extant Manuscripts (MSS). Consequently, through the science of textual criticism, man can restore the approximate wording of the original text. Since the concepts are inspired and preserved, the exact words representing these concepts may not be available and may vary.”

False premise: Strouse starts with an untrue premise that brethren who use the translations cited do not hold to the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (“VPI”) of the Divine Autographs or Original Writings but believe only in a “conceptual view of inspiration” that only the “concepts” but not the very words in God’s Word were inspired and preserved.

2. The article’s second header is *The Doctrine of Providential Preservation*

“The Bible translation controversy is not about the science of textual criticism or extant MSS, but it is about the Lord Jesus Christ's promise to preserve His inspired words. The Bible teaches not only the verbal, plenary inspiration of the *autographa*, but also the verbal, preservation of the *autographa*. Bible believers accept passages such as II Tim. 3:16 and II Pet. 1:21 as clear declarations of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the *autographa*. Is there not Biblical warrant for Christians to expect the verbal plenary preservation of the inspired autographa? Indeed, Christians in every generation have had the expectation to have access to all the words of the autographa.”

False analogy: The header is used to disarm the reader, while the next two paragraphs quietly substitutes “providential” with “verbal, plenary”, carrying the reader into a false suggestion that the Doctrine of Providential Preservation is analogous with VPP!

3. The article then discusses Matt 4:4 and John 12:48 and comments, “These passages demand faith in the Lord’s providential preservation of His inspired *autographa*.”

A third header is then introduced *John 17:8* which starts “The clearest passage on Christ’s providential preservation of Scripture and man’s responsibility in receiving it is John 17:8.”

False analogy deepened: Strouse now shifts back from “verbal, plenary” to “providential”, which subliminally deepens the false analogy between the two quite different terms. Scriptural support texts for providential preservation begin to appear as VPP proof texts.

4. The article introduces its fourth header *My Sheep Hear My Voice*

“Christ not only teaches that He will preserve the words of the Father, but also that believers will hear His voice (Jn. 10:26). Where is the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ? **HIS VOICE IS HIS WORDS.** The Lord has given believers the means by which to verify the “received words.” Believers, indwelt with the Holy Spirit, “hear” and know which words are Christ’s “received words.” Furthermore, according to Jn. 10:5, believers “know not the voice of strangers.” Consequently, believers not only recognize a “received text,” but believers also reject the voice of strangers (“rejected text”). Applying the teaching of these verses to the version debate, one must conclude that the Lord has preserved His words in a “received text” and that believers will hear the voice of the Lord in this text. This is why Christians have maintained that the *textus receptus* is the voice of the Lord and that the variants in the modern versions are the voice of strangers.”

Disjointed leap into heresy: From nowhere and without scriptural basis, Strouse equates the Textus Receptus as the absolute and only preserved words of our Lord. He ignores the thousands of ancient Greek manuscripts providentially preserved to this day, the various renditions of the TR none of which exactly underlies the KJV 1611, and the several editions of the KJV itself. This leap is into heresy. Believers in every age and place who use not a Bible based on the KJV 1611 TR text, are not the Lord Jesus’ sheep but are lost! Perhaps Strouse was unaware that primary non-English Bible translations such as the Chinese United Version (“CUV”) and the Indonesian Alkitab are not based on the TR.

5. The article ends under a header *Conclusion*

“Christ promised to preserve every word of the original text for believers. Believers recognize the “received words” and verify them by “hearing” the Lord’s voice. This is subjective, but so are all other approaches. The subjectivism of the received text approach leads to certainty; the subjectivism of the critical text approach leads to uncertainty. The controversy around the version issue focuses on either faith in Christ’ preservation or faith in man’s textual criticism techniques. Where has the reader placed his faith?”

An insipid conclusion: Strouse’s conclusion is weak, tentative and untenable. He admits that VPP is “subjective” (and if so, he should not have made his divisive statements), and then illogically says that this leads to certainty?! His false analogy is in his final plea that the issue is one of “faith”: in Christ’s preservation or man’s textual criticism techniques.

True Biblical faith is objective and never subjective: the Object of our faith being only and solely the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! We are not called to believe upon the “subjectivism of a particular text” based on certain men’s unproven views. As for the various TR editions, these are the results of the textual criticism of Erasmus, Estienne and Beza, et al. Dean Burgon and Scrivener honoured each other as *facile princeps* in textual criticism (The Revision Revised, pages 231 and 246).

## FACTUAL AND BIBLICAL PROBLEMS

The problems of the VPP theory are serious and too numerous to name. We here list a few: -

1. VPP is a new theory first propounded in the 1980s; with the term itself first coined around 2002. Charles Spurgeon said, “There is nothing new in theology except that which is false!”
2. VPP is predicated upon “*Special providence or providentia extraordinaria*” (FEBC Statement), i.e. a special, extraordinary miracle took place in 1611 wherein the KJV Translators textually recognized every single jot and tittle of the Original Autographs from the few TR editions available to them. This 1611 miracle however went unnoticed (even by Burgon, Hills and Scrivener) until D A Waite in the 1990s! The FEBC statement says,

*“Knowing where the perfect Bible is, is a matter of textual recognition and **NOT** textual criticism. In the field of textual recognition, Burgon is good, Hills is better, Waite is best.”*

3. God’s Word itself contradicts VPP: -

**Jude 3**, “... ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Clearly God’s Holy Word was given once and for all in a fashion so complete as never to be done again. The miracle of inspiration should not be expected to be repeated upon the KJV Translators or any others in 1611 or at any other time.

**Rom 2:11** (and Deut 10:17, Acts 10:34), “*For there is no respect of persons with God.*” VPP requires Almighty God to be partial to the English speaking and those living from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century AD so that all others had only corrupt, incomplete Bibles and had to follow the voice of strangers. Thankfully, our Heavenly Father is no respecter of persons. In all nations and languages, everyone that fears and trusts Him, will find Him a shield and salvation (**Prov 30:5**). As Sovereign, God would not have allowed His missionaries in history to have brought His pure Word to the world in an incompetent, impotent manner, so as to necessitates re-translation of all non-English Bibles into the KJV text over again today!

**1 Cor 14:33**, “*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*” God’s Truth is not confusing and is not ever contradicted by evidential facts. Rather, discovered facts everywhere and every time would always confirm its truth, as **Rom 3:4** says, “... *yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*”

4. VPP proponents refer to the TR as though there was just one unique TR. There are approximately 30 TR editions in all (Appendix A).

This left at least Dr Jeffrey Khoo confused. He initially held Beza 1598 as the VPP Greek text (“Kept Pure in All Ages”, FEBC Press, 2001, page 32) but later changed to Scrivener (“A Plea for a Perfect Bible”, The Burning Bush, Jan 2003, page 9.)

On 14 Feb 2003 he wrote to me, “*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. ... 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."*

On 21 Mar 2003, he conceded to me that Hill's “The Reformation Text” did not exist, “*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.*”

In 2004, he told FEBC students that Scrivener 1884 differs from the KJV in one place – the “Amen” ending in Eph 6:24 of the KJV is absent in the Scrivener Greek text!

5. VPP proponents also refer to the KJV as though there was only one unique KJV. There are actually multiple editions and printings (see Appendix B). And the KJV that we use today – the Bible in our hands – is based on the 1769 edition and not the 1611 edition.

The American Bible Society, which publishes the KJV, has documented 24,000 revisions from 1611 to 1769, mostly spelling but also additions and deletions of phrases, changes of word meanings, grammatical forms, tenses, gender, numbers and capitalizations! Dr James D Price, in his 2006 book “King James Onlyism: A New Sect”, Appendix A, reproduces 600 of this list of changes that have some degree of significance; some represent modernization of vocabulary or grammar; some represent correction of discrepancies in earlier editions; some represent the introduction of new discrepancies not in earlier editions.

Even for our KJV 1769 edition, F. H. A. Scrivener had compiled a list of known and remaining errors, reproduced in part in Appendix C.

## **PROVIDENTIAL VERSUS VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION**

The VPP superstition or error is best dispelled by a clear understanding of the Doctrine of Providential Preservation as given in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap I Sect VIII: -

*"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 to them."*

Understood biblically and contextually, God's people recognized from the outset (authentic) the Divine Source, Inspiration and Authority of His revealed Word in both the OT and NT, which are the words of eternal life (John 6:68). In deep reverential awe (Providence of Almighty God superintending), the early scribes and copyists exercised greatest care in its reproduction for circulation, and later also in its translation. The early Church Fathers quoted extensively from God's Word so that it is said also that the entire NT can be re-compiled from their quotations.

The ancient documents that have survived to this day are variously dated from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD onwards, with many from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Century AD, discovered in disparate and sometimes surprising places ranging from Italy, past Egypt's Alexandria all the way to Asia Minor, with some recent finds in caves surrounding the Dead Sea in the Holy Land itself. They

number in the thousands: over five thousand Greek manuscripts, eight thousand ancient Latin manuscripts and some one thousand NT quotations in the early Church Fathers, besides ancient copies of the Septuagint, Syriac-Peshitto, Arabic, etc.

It must be realized that all these manuscripts are but the Bibles of believers of yesteryears, and represent but a fraction of the countless millions of Bibles that must have been reproduced down the ages. The most striking thing in these manuscripts is their close and astounding similarities rather than the differences and discrepancies which clearly and admittedly exist but in relatively few and small numbers. The fact of the discrepancies is actually re-assuring, lending complete authenticity to these ancient documents themselves, for how could it be otherwise when these documents were in their day copied painstakingly by hand? Whereas the discrepancies were by and large mostly the result of unintentional copyist mistakes, there are also clearly efforts at intentional corruptions or adulterations. However, as these were the Bibles read by believers, the corrupt copies were easily identified so that very few of these get subsequently copied and thus the majority of surviving manuscripts today are from a pure and reliable stream.

J Oliver Buswell, in his “A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion” (used at FEBC), was right to comment on variant readings in the extant manuscripts, “that considerably surprised him at first” that “This fact is not essentially different from the generally known fact that the common English translation of the Bible is not inerrant... We contend for the *inerrancy of the meaning* which the inspired writers intended to convey in their original manuscripts.”

There is a strong Biblical sense in which Buswell must be right: for God looks at the heart - in every age, language and nation, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Ps 34:18). The scribes and Pharisees, having the oracles of God, crucified our Saviour, while poor and unlearned sinners repented and believed unto eternal life! Moses broke the original tablets to show that it was not the letter engraved in stone but the spirit engraved in our hearts that counts (Rom 7:6, 2 Cor 3:6). Comparison of the Ten Commandments at Exodus 20:1-17 and forty years later in Deut 5:6-21, shows word disparities, without however any loss to its primary meanings. For Jeremiah’s roll burned by King Jehoiakim, God’s instructions were to write again all the former words that were in the first roll, and “there were added besides unto them many like words” (Jer 36:1-4, 27-32). Clearly it is the meanings or like words that God’s Spirit wants us to receive, in humility and by His aid.

### **CONCLUSION: NO BIBLICAL WARRANT FOR VPP**

It is clear in conclusion that there is neither real Biblical nor evidential or factual warrant to support the new, extraordinary and extreme “theory” of a Perfect KJV 1611 Bible aka VPP.

22 January 2007, Singapore

## APPENDIX A: VARIOUS “TEXTUS RECEPTUS” EDITIONS

One author compiled the following table of various editions of the TR since 1516 under the title “Fluid History of the TR” (edited by LSH).

1516	Erasmus' first edition	
1519	Erasmus' second edition	More than four hundred changes in the Greek text (chiefly corrections of misprints)
1522	Erasmus' third edition	More than one hundred changes from his second edition; addition of Trinitarian formula in 1 John 5:7
1527	Erasmus' fourth edition	More than one hundred alterations of the third edition, ninety of them in Revelation
1535	Erasmus' fifth edition	
1546	Stephanus' first edition	
1549	Stephanus' second edition	More than sixty changes from Stephanus' first edition
1550	Stephanus' third edition	Includes variant readings in the margins. Thought of as the Greek text underlining the KJV
1551	Stephanus' fourth edition	The first introduction of numbered verse divisions
1565 - 1598	Beza's nine editions	The ninth edition of Beza in 1598 is also thought of as the Greek text underlying the KJV.
1611	Beza's tenth edition	Prepared posthumously
1624	Elziver's first edition	
1633	Elziver's second edition	First called the Textus Receptus (twenty two years after the publication of the KJV)
1650	Elziver's third edition	Differs from the second edition in about 287 places
1881	Scrivener's post-engineered edition on behalf of the RV Committee	Scrivener compiled the Greek text underlying the KJV 1611 as part of his work on the 1881 Revised Version Committee, using Stephanus 1550, Beza 1598 and other sources; his final edition differing from Beza 1598 in over 190 places

In their article “The Received Text - A Brief Look at the Textus Receptus” G. W. and D. E. Anderson, writing for the Trinitarian Bible Society, further enumerates: -

### **What is the Textus Receptus?**

Today the term Textus Receptus is used generically to apply to all editions of the Greek New Testament which follow the early printed editions of Desiderius Erasmus. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469?-1536), a Roman Catholic humanist, translated the New Testament into Latin and prepared an edition of the Greek to be printed beside his Latin version to demonstrate the text from which his Latin came. Erasmus used six or seven Greek manuscripts (the oldest being from the 10th century), combining and comparing them in a process in which he chose the correct readings where there were variants. On several occasions he followed the Latin and included some of its readings in his text. This edition was published in 1516. There was great interest in this Greek text, and it is the Greek text for which the volume is remembered. This New Testament was the first published edition of a Textus Receptus family New Testament.

The term was first used, however, to refer to the edition of the Greek New Testament published by the Elzevirs in 1633. The preface to this edition, written by Daniel Heinsius, includes the Latin phrase "textum ... receptum". Because of this, the 1633 edition became known as the

"Textus Receptus" or the Received Text. This term has been expanded to include numerous editions of the Greek New Testament which come from the same Byzantine textual family representing the majority of the handwritten Greek manuscripts before the 16th century.

It needs to be remembered that the editions included in this family of Greek New Testaments were printed volumes. The Greek texts which preceded them were all hand-copied manuscripts which were in turn copied from copies for many hundreds of years. No two of the well over 5,000 manuscripts which are known today agree 100% with each other. In other words, the Textus Receptus was not printed from one manuscript alone.

### **How many editions of the Textus Receptus are there?**

There were approximately thirty distinct editions of the Textus Receptus made over the years. Each differs slightly from the others. There have been over 500 printings.

### **Why are various editions called 'Erasmus', 'Stephens', etc.?**

Numerous men during the past four centuries have produced editions of the Textus Receptus; these editions bear their names and the years in which they were published. These include:

- the work of Stunica as published in the Complutensian Polyglot (printed in 1514 but not circulated until 1522);
- the Erasmus editions of 1516, 1519, 1522, 1527 and 1535;
- the Colinaeus edition of 1534 which was made from the editions of Erasmus and the Complutensian Polyglot.
- the Stephens editions (produced by Robert Estienne, who is also called Stephanus or Stephens) of 1546, 1549, 1550 and 1551;
- the nine editions of Theodore Beza, an associate of John Calvin, produced between 1565 and 1604, with a tenth published posthumously in 1611;
- the Elzevir editions of 1624, 1633 (the edition known for coining the phrase "Textus Receptus") and 1641.

Stephanus is best remembered for his edition of 1550. It followed the Erasmus editions of 1527 and 1535 and was the first edition to include marginal variant readings, which were collated from fourteen manuscripts and the Greek New Testament of the Complutensian Polyglot. It became one of the best known editions of the Textus Receptus. Called the "Royal edition", it was very popular in England and is still published today in the United States in the form of an interlinear which is sometimes referred to as the "Berry" text. This is a misnomer because George Ricker Berry simply added the "Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament" and a chapter entitled "New Testament Synonyms" to the edition of the Stephens 1550 text.

One of the most important editions of the Textus Receptus is the Beza edition of 1598. This edition, in addition to the Stephens 1550 and 1551 editions, was used as the Greek basis of the Authorised Version of 1611. Beza collated and used numerous Greek manuscripts and printed editions in his work, and incorporated Jerome's Latin Vulgate and his own Latin and Greek text along with textual annotations.

### **Which edition of the Textus Receptus does the Trinitarian Bible Society print?**

In the latter part of the 19th century, F. H. A. Scrivener produced an edition of the Greek New Testament which reflects the Textus Receptus underlying the English Authorised Version. This edition, published posthumously in 1894, is currently published by the Society.

### **How does the Scrivener edition differ from the other editions of the Textus Receptus?**

F. H. A. Scrivener (1813-1891) attempted to reproduce as exactly as possible the Greek text which underlies the Authorised Version of 1611. However, the AV was not translated from any one printed edition of the Greek text. The AV translators relied heavily upon the work of William Tyndale and other editions of the English Bible. Thus there were places in which it is unclear what the Greek basis of the New Testament was. Scrivener in his reconstructed and edited text used as his starting point the Beza edition of 1598, identifying the places where the English text had different readings from the Greek. He examined eighteen editions of the Textus Receptus to find the correct Greek rendering, and made the changes to his Greek text. When he finished he had produced an edition of the Greek New Testament which more closely underlies the text of the AV than any one edition of the Textus Receptus.

### **How many differences are found between the Scrivener text and the Stephanus and Beza texts?**

There are approximately 190 differences between the Scrivener text and the Beza 1598. There are 283 differences between the Scrivener text and the Stephanus 1550. These differences are minor, and pale into insignificance when compared with the approximately 6,000 differences -- many of which are quite substantial -- between the Critical Text and the Textus Receptus.



## APPENDIX B: VARIOUS “KJV” EDITIONS

The same author compiled the following table of various editions of the KJV since 1611 under the title “Fluid History of the KJV”. Our current KJV is based on Blayney’s 1769 edition.

These are some of the thousands of changes in the KJV since 1611. The original translators' manuscript that was given to the printer is lost (like the autographa). We have only copies, all of which differ from each other. Also, all of them differ from the original because all of them have printers' errors.	
1611 original edition	More than eight thousand notes in the outer margins giving more literal translations, alternative textual readings, and explanatory notes; the translators put variant Greek readings in the margins of the NT
1613 edition	More than four hundred variations from the first edition
1616 edition	Changed "approved to death to "appointed to death" (1 Cor. 4:9)
1629 edition	Major revision of the KJV (printed at Cambridge)
1629 edition	First time the KJV excludes the Apocrypha (not generally omitted until the nineteenth century);
1631 edition	printed at London Called the "Wicked Bible"-the word not is omitted from the seventh commandment
1638	Further revisions
1717 printing	Called the "Vinegar Bible"; Jesus gives a parable of the vinegar in Luke 20
1745 printing	Called the "Murderer's Bible"; Mark 7:27 reads, "Let the little children first be killed instead of "filled"
1762	Thomas Paris Extensive revisions, published at Cambridge edition
1769	Blayney’s edition. Basis of most modern KJV Bibles; differs from the 1611 edition in at least seventy-five thousand details
1873	Cambridge Paragraph Bible Contained sixteen closely printed pages of differences from the original 1611 edition

## APPENDIX C: REMAINING MISTAKES IN KJV 1769

F. H. A. Scrivener, as a member of the RV Committee, also led in the collation of a list of mistakes remaining in the KJV 1769, on which our KJV today is based. A partial list follows: -

**Grammar:** Scrivener listed a number of examples of grammatical irregularities:

1. The following illustrate irregular verb forms:

- Ex. 9:31—“the flax and barley was smitten”
- 2 Sam. 17:29—“The people *is* hungry, and weary, and thirsty”
- 2 Chr. 1:12—“wisdom and knowledge is granted”
- Mark 9:3—“no fuller...can white them.”
- Luke 1:19—“Gabriel, that stand”
- John 11:57—“if any man knew where he were”
- Acts 1:15—“the number of names together were...”
- Acts 6:7—“a great company...were obedient”
- Acts 23:15—“or ever he come near”
- 1 John 5:15—“if we know that he hear us”
- Rev. 18:17—“so great riches is come”

2. The following illustrate antiquated singular forms that were usually corrected to plurals by the revisers, but evidently overlooked in these places:

Judg. 14:12, 13—“thirty change of garments”  
 1 Kings 10:17—“three pound of gold”  
 Ezra 2:69—“five thousand pound of silver”  
 Neh. 7:71—“two hundred pound of silver”  
 Neh. 7:72—“two thousand pound of silver”  
 Luke 9:28—“an eight days”

3. The following illustrate the irregular use of an adjective for an adverb:

2 Chr. 2:9—“wonderful great”  
 2 Pet. 2:6—“live ungodly”

4. The following illustrate the irregular use of double superlatives:

Mark 10:44—“chiefest” (see also 1 Sam. 2:29; 9:22; 21:7; 2 Chr. 32:33; Song 5:10; 2Cor. 11:5; 12:11)  
 Acts 26:5—“most straitest”

5. The following illustrates the irregular suppression of the sign of the genitive (of):

Rev. 18:12—“all manner vessels” (twice)

**Spelling:** The revisers usually corrected the archaic spelling of words. Scrivener listed numerous examples of words not corrected due to oversight:

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Archaic Spelling</u>	<u>Usually Corrected to</u>
Gen. 8:11	pluckt	plucked
Gen. 18:7	fetchtd	fetchd
Ex. 17:7	Tentation	Temptation
Ex. 33:22	clift	cleft
Judg. 6:31	whilst	while
2 Sam. 7:13, etc.	stablish	establish
2 Chr. 2:16	flotes	floats
Ezra 9:3, etc.	astonied	astonished
Job 41:18	neesings	sneezings
Psa. 68:13	lien	lain
Ezek. 21; 29	whiles	while
Ezek. 35:6	sith	since
Ezek. 40:31, etc.	utter	outer
Luke 9:62	plough	plow