

AN OPEN LETTER

13 July 2005

Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo, Academic Dean
Far Eastern Bible College
9A Gilstead Road
Singapore 309063

Dear Dr Khoo,

10 JUL 05 MORNING SERMON AT CALVARY PANDAN JN 7:24 “JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGEMENT” – NO BASIS FOR PERFECT KJB

I refer your sermon last Sunday morning, which was diverted to promote your pet but unfounded “doctrine” of KJV Perfectionism in its underlying Hebrew and Greek apographs (copies). Your two points on the assigned Scripture text are that 1) “judge not according to appearance” means not by dress, good looks and good singing voice, etc, and 2) “but judge righteous judgement” means to hold to “Verbal Plenary Preservation” (“VPP”) of the KJV underlying texts.

I respectfully submit that you missed the true exegesis and failed to edify the congregation. Your points are without warrant.

Reading in context, the Jews sought to kill our Lord Jesus. This was not because of His physical looks but because they had judged Him superficially as having broken Moses law, by healing on the Sabbath and by saying that God was His Father (Jn 5:16, 18, 7:1, 19). He tells them (in the Greek present imperative), “Stop judging superficially”, and His conjunctive (in the aorist imperative), “but judge righteous judgement”, directs urgent attention to the specific example of His case. The Jews had evaluated superficially and unrighteously. None of them kept the law (Jn 7:19), whereas Christ did not break the law. Healing on the Sabbath is as legitimate as circumcision on the Sabbath (Jn 7:23), and Jesus is in truth the Son of God! They discarded Jesus as not being the Christ because He was from Galilee and not from Bethlehem (Jn 7:42) and carelessly concluded that He was thus worthy of death for blasphemy.

Having missed, you then leapfrogged tangentially away into various verses to support “VPP”. Again these scripture applications were exegetically incorrect. Let me cite just two problems: -

1. The same verses that you cited are also found in all the other Bible versions such as the Chinese United Version (CUV), the Indonesian Akitab, The Thai Bible, NASV, NIV, NKJV, etc. Anyone reading these in those versions, if interpreting as you do, would conclude that it is their version that is “VPP”, rather than the KJV.
2. When more fully examined, none of the verses quoted support the “VPP” proposition

For example: Matt 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.”* And Matt 24:35: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”*

When the earth passes away, would not all that it contains including all material apographs also pass away? In these verses therefore, our Lord was not referring to apographs, but rather as the context clearly shows, to the absolute and inviolable claims of God and of the Son upon us, for Jesus spake “as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mt 7:28).

Another example Ps 119:140 “Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.”

Was the psalmist’s love of God’s Word due to the purity of the apographs? And this Psalm, being written before the completion of Scripture canon, if VPP pureness (completeness, perfect to every jot and tittle) is meant, should have been the last book of the Bible.

Is not the purity here rather the *purifying effect of God’s Word*, as illustrated through the entire Psalm as well as say in Ps 19:7-9, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.” And in Heb 4:12, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

As for scribal errors in the specific KJV underlying Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Textus Receptus texts, this, whether intentional or unintentional, is inevitable due to the passage through human hands. Inspiration occurred only once, and once for all, at the original giving of God’s Word, when the Divine Autographs were God-breathed; when “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:21). For the KJV to have a completely identical apograph text to the Divine Autographs (Originals), in jot and tittle terms, would necessitate a second inspiration either in the copying process, the textual editing process or the translation process. It also necessitates that written script forms for Hebrew and Greek not change an iota throughout the passage of decades of centuries.

This does not mean that God’s Word is not preserved for us! They are in the providential sense! Is 59:21 indicates this, “my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.” Dean Burgon expresses it thus, “But I would especially remind my readers of Bentley’s golden precept, that ‘The real text of the sacred writers does not now, since the originals have been so long lost, lie in any MS, or edition, but is dispersed in them all.’ This truth, which was evident to the powerful intellect of that great scholar, lies at the root of all sound Textual Criticism.”¹

In other words, God’s Word is providentially preserved in the many copies of uncials, codices and fragments surviving to this day, supplemented by early translations into other languages such as the Septuagint, the Syriac-Peshitto, the Arabic, the Latin and other Bible versions, and supported by the writings of the Early Church Fathers that have survived. By painstaking comparison of these, (textual criticism is not a dirty word or a needless science; Dean Burgon and F H A Scrivener being eminent in the field), we can arrive extremely close to the Originals.

As for clear evidence of textual problems in the KJV underlying texts, I here cite two (we both know of more, yet only one is needed to disprove the “Perfect KJV-VPP” case): -

¹ Page 26 of “The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels, Volume I”, 1896, by Dean John William Burgon, edited by Edward Miller, M.A posthumously after the Dean’s death. Re-published by Dean Burgon Society.

2Sam 8:4 (700 horsemen) and 1Chron 18:4 (7,000 horsemen) in KJV

In your “A Plea for a Perfect Bible” (The Burning Bush January 2003), you put this down as an “apparent discrepancy”, that perhaps one counted them one-by-one and the other by groups. The obvious difficulty is that there are no groups! All the other numerals are in concurrence – *one thousand chariots, twenty thousand footmen* and horses David reserved for *one hundred chariots* and his slaying of *twenty two thousand men* (Syrians). If 2Sam 8:4 counted horsemen in groups, why did it not also do the same for the chariots, footmen and slain men? Do you lord it over the intelligence and faith of your hearers? But your approach creates large difficulties in reading and understanding God’s Word – one would never know when a number is a number or a group of numbers, opening the way for “spiritualising” non-literal, liberal interpretation of God’s Word.

But God’s Word states, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” (2Cor 13:1, Deut 19:15) If the above verses therefore are at odds, they cannot be established; therefore one of them has to be correct and the other probably a scribal error!

Since it is normal that an army would have more footmen than horsemen, and more horsemen than chariots, seven thousand horsemen in 1Chron 18:4 would seem the more correct. When we research evidential sources older than the 10th Century AD Masoretic texts, Praise the Lord, we find this true! The Septuagint, with older extant textual copies dating back to the 2nd and 3rd Century AD, has 2Sam 8:4 exactly as 1Chron 18:4, “one thousand chariots, seven thousand horsemen, twenty thousand foot soldiers! And the Hebrew Dead Sea scrolls also, recently discovered and dating back to the time of Christ, confirm this reading!

But this is not all. The KJV translators recognised the 2Sam 8:4 error of the Masoretic, which actually reads “one thousand seven hundred horsemen”! The word “*chariots*” is not in the Masoretic (thus italicised in the KJV to indicate not in the original)! The CUV and the NASV are thus more faithful to the Masoretic than the KJV on this point. Confronted with the scribal error revealed by the parallel account of 1Chron 18, the KJV translators, without any warrant or basis, chose to deviate from the Masoretic and broke up the one thousand seven hundred into one thousand, to which they added the word “*chariots*” and left the balance seven hundred as horsemen, to reduce the discrepancy. I reiterate: they have absolutely no warrant; no underlying Hebrew text support whatsoever! Clearly in this instance, the KJV translators recognized the scribal error and chose to discard the original reading of 2Sam 8:4 of the Masoretic text!!

Matt 10:8 (“to raise the dead” not part of the Autographs)

Dean Burgon himself gave us this, “When our LORD first sent forth His Twelve Apostles, it was certainly no part of His ministerial commission to them to ‘*raise the dead*’ (Matthew 10:8). This is easily demonstrable. Eusebius, Basil, Chrysostom, Jerome, Juvenus, omit the words. P.E. Pusey found them in no Syriac copy. But the conclusive evidence is supplied by the Manuscripts; not more than 1 out of 20 of which contains this clause.”²

I was at first surprised at reading this, and asked myself, “Could this be?”, but on reflection over a long time, realised that Burgon was right. The parallel accounts are Lk 9:1-6 (the sending of the twelve) and Lk 10:1-9 (the sending of the seventy), who were to go before our Lord into every city and place whither our Lord himself would come. The passages in Luke omit the

² Page 107 & 108 and their footnotes, “The Revision Revised – A Refutation of Westcott and Hort’s False Greek Text and Theory,” 1881, by Dean John William Burgon. Re-published, Dean Burgon Society

phrase “to raise the dead”. Certainly, this power was solely our Lord’s prerogative, testifying to His deity, as in the raising of the widow’s son at Nain (Lk 9:11-16) and the raising of Lazarus (Lk 11:45, 12:10-11). This power was not extended to the apostles until after our Lord’s ascension and the descent of the Holy Paraclete at Pentecost. In all four gospels accounts, no apostle raised any dead. Even as late as Mt 17:16-19, they had trouble casting out some types of demons after the Mount of Transfiguration incident, let alone “raise any who were dead”.

Dear brother, with the above I rest my case. I appeal to you and your friends, “Stop judging superficially, but judge righteous judgement!” Stop alleging that we say that the Bible contains errors! We affirm wholeheartedly with Dean Burgon, “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, – (where are we to stop?) – every letter of it – is the direct utterance of the Most High! – Πάσα γραφή θεόπνευστος. “Well spake the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of” the many blessed Men who wrote it. – 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 who sitteth upon the Throne; – absolute, – faultless, – unerring, – supreme!”

The King James Version however is not so. If, as you yourself say, there are mistakes in the English of the KJV due to translation errors, how can it be that the translators can make mistakes in their own current mother tongue, but be absolutely flawless in the textual identification of the apographs in rare ancient foreign tongues? Nevertheless, we hold the KJV as reliable, trustworthy, venerable and beloved, and with this common agreement, we should be content.

Your cause has been divisive, and self promoting rather than seeking the honour and glory that comes from God alone (Jn 5:44). Brethren are falsely attacked, and the unity of our churches affected. You miss out the truest test of Biblical separation as given by our Lord in Jn 13:34-35. Only if we love the brethren to the same extent as our Lord loved us and laid down His life for us, shall all know that we are His disciples.

Finally, I bring again to your attention my research article, “An Evidential Review of the VPP Theory” sent to you on 24 September 2003. Please do not mentally ignore the facts and the truth clearly set forth, which would be intellectually dishonest. If you are not convinced of this, and would like to debate this publicly, we need only to work out the time and place, provided we agree to let the debate results be conclusive to resolve this once and for all.

I await to hear from you. In the meantime, this open letter may be freely circulated to any and all concerned in any of our churches.

Sincerely, in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Lim Seng Hoo
Member of Calvary Pandan Bible Presbyterian Church