



为何我们不接纳

WHY WE DO NOT ACCEPT

VPP 的教义

**THE DOCTRINE OF VERBAL
PLENARY PRESERVATION (VPP)**

华语崇拜长执会

班丹加略堂笃信圣经长老会

**By The Chinese Session,
Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church**

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WHY WE DO NOT ACCEPT THE DOCTRINE OF VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION (VPP)

(i) Introduction

- This booklet aims to:
 - Clarify the church's traditional position as adopted by the Chinese Session
 - Explain why we do not accept VPP as our Church doctrine
- The Chinese Congregation of Calvary Pandan BPC, just as the English congregation and several other BP Churches have been adversely affected by the VPP teaching.
- Since 2005, the Chinese Session has been studying the VPP teaching and its evolution over time. We are very concerned for the members of the church, having understood the dangers of VPP teaching.
- The Chinese Session had written to the Board of Elders (BOE) at least 3 times since 2005 to explain our objection to VPP³, but we have received no formal reply.
- VPP proponents continue to propagate VPP, and recently claimed that VPP is a doctrine of this church⁴, and requested the Chinese Session to accept this erroneous teaching.
- However, VPP represents a major departure from our traditional position on the preservation of the bible, which is enshrined in the Constitution Article 4.2.1. This has also caused the splits in several other BP churches.

³ 18 Nov 05, 17 Apr 06, 27 Apr 06

⁴ See for example Rev Quek S.Y. 'No VPP, No KJV! No CUV!', in Calvary Pandan BPC Bulletin, 2 Sep 2007

- All members (English and Mandarin) need to understand the implications of VPP, and make a deliberate decision. If VPP is to be this church's doctrine, members should be given the option to endorse or reject it through appropriate Constitutional amendments conducted in a proper congregational meeting. Other VPP churches and institutions, such as FEBC, Truth and True Life BPC, have amended their Constitutions accordingly to reflect their VPP beliefs.

- If you are a Christian who believes in the inerrancy and infallibility of God's Word, then you should take a keen interest to understand how the VPP teaching measures against our traditional position on the preservation of Scriptures, as it would have a bearing on the foundation of your faith, which is the Bible.

(ii) Terminology -Key Terms Defined and Explained

Abbreviations or Terms	Definition
Autographs	The original writings by the prophets and apostles which each have the distinctive qualities of being inerrant and infallible, as they were written under the direct inspiration of God.
Bible	The inerrant and infallible Word of God as contained in the complete set of autographs.
CUV	Chinese Union Version Bible, or 和合本
Constitution 4.1	Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church Constitution, Article 4.1, which states <i>‘The doctrine of the Church shall be in accordance with that system commonly called "the Reformed Faith" as expressed in the Confession of Faith as set forth by the historic Westminster Assembly together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms’</i>
Constitution 4.2.1	Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church Constitution, Article 4.2.1, which states <i>‘We believe in the divine, verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life’</i>
Doctrine	Doctrines represent authoritative articles that define the fundamental beliefs of the church, for which there can be no compromise. Key doctrines of our church are documented in Article 4 of its Constitution. In the church’s history, groups that promoted doctrines that contradict or go beyond these key articles of faith had often lead to heresy and were viewed by the mainstream as ‘heresies’. Doctrines differ from ‘teachings’ in that the latter refer to positions taken on secondary issues that have no bearing on fundamental beliefs, and for which differences do not amount to a test of fellowship.

Abbreviations or Terms	Definition
Manuscripts, and texts	Hand-written copies (and copies of copies) of the autographs. Texts include manuscripts and edited texts in original languages.
Mistakes, or Errors	Subsequent copies of the autographs or 'manuscripts', are written and copied by uninspired men and even the most careful and godly of them cannot claim to have produced manuscripts that have exactly the same authority as the autographs. These differences (additions or omissions which lead to variant readings across manuscripts) however do not amount to mistakes/errors as long as the expressed meanings do not differ from the Word of God as contained in the autographs. Within the context of the Bible being inspired by God, there can be no errors or mistakes in it, hence only the autographs possess 'inerrancy and infallibility'.
MT	Masoretic Text - a family of edited texts of the Old Testament
TR	Textus Receptus - a family of edited texts of the New Testament
VPI	Verbal Plenary Inspiration
VPP	Verbal Plenary Preservation
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith

1. Our Traditional Position - How did the Bible come about

- It is only possible to appreciate the implications of the VPP doctrine after first appreciating our traditional position on the inspiration and preservation of God's Word.
- Inspiration of God's Word
 - ◇ Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) (Constitution 4.2.1, II Tim 3:16⁸); God inspired His Word in the Autographs. What does this mean?
 - ◇ The Autographs were written mainly in the Hebrew language⁹ (in the Old Testament or OT) and the Greek language (in the New Testament or NT).
 - ◇ Each of these autographs were written at different times (ranging from pre-1400 BC to first century AD), and by different people (from Moses to Apostle John). These authors were however all distinct from ordinary human authors in that they wrote under God's inspiration, i.e. 'God-breathed'. These autographs were therefore inerrant and infallible.
- Preservation of God's Word
 - ◇ God not only inspired His Word, but also kept it pure by his singular care and providence throughout all ages (Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 1.8¹⁰, Constitution 4.1). What does this mean?

⁸ *'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness'*

⁹ Small parts of the OT (e.g. in the Book of Daniel) were written in the Aramaic language.

¹⁰ *'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. But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.'*

- ◇ In absence of printing and modern writing materials, written autographs would perish quickly. Copies of these autographs were made by scribes and copyists, and these were in turn copied and disseminated. These copies are known as manuscripts.
- ◇ For OT books, following the writing of autographs by Moses and the prophets, by the time the Jews returned from captivity, they upheld the Law of Moses as the 'Word of God' (Ezra 7:6, Neh 8:5). In the NT era, Jesus and his contemporaries frequently cited from works of the prophets which reflected their acceptance of and acquaintance with them as the Word of God.
- ◇ As Greek became the common language (lingua franca) in the ancient world with the rise of the Greek and Roman empires, the OT was also translated into Greek, known as the Septuagint (LXX) between around 300BC and 100 BC. Though it was a Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, it was often cited by Jesus and the Apostles. The KJV translators themselves recognized the status of the LXX as God's Word no less.¹²
- ◇ The copying and distribution of OT manuscripts in Hebrew was undertaken mainly by a group of Jewish scribes (Masorettes) between 7th and 10th century AD, leading to them being named as Masoretic Texts (MT).

¹² The KJV translators, in their preface to the KJV 1611, stated that the Apostles did not condemn the Septuagint (LXX), but used it, as it was worthy of 'the appellation and name of the Word of God'.

- ◇ For NT books, following the early writings of autographs, a number of these epistles have gained the same authority as OT scriptures in the apostolic era.¹⁶ Writings from the church fathers in the 2nd and 3rd century AD show that the early church gradually accepted some writings as having the authority of scriptures over this period. By 4th century AD, church historian Eusebius made clear distinctions between epistles that could be recognised as inspired Word of God from those that ought to be rejected. These were finally confirmed as the NT Canon at the Council of Carthage in 397AD. An important point to note:

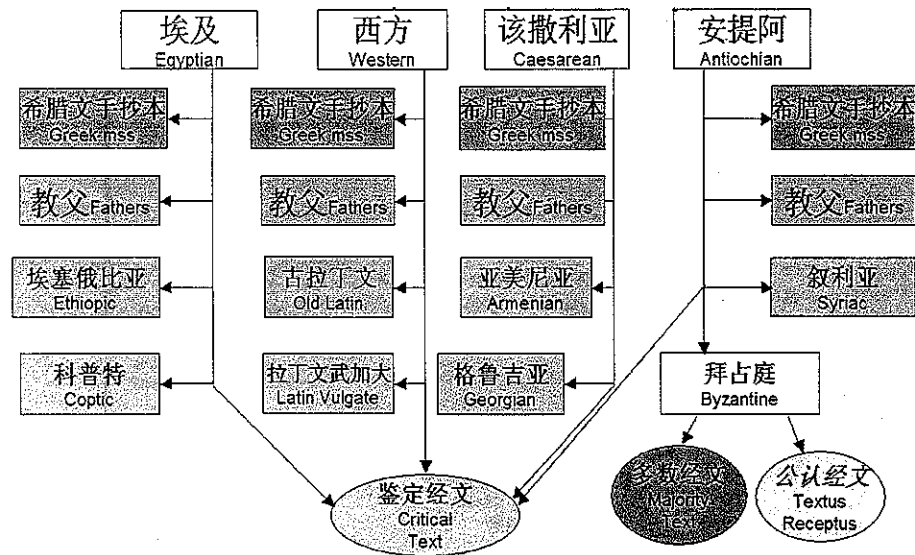
* *'The authority and status of all the epistles in the NT did not originate only when they were formally accepted into the Canon. On the contrary, it was after the Church had discovered the unique authority of these books and epistles, and had recognized God's inspiration of them, that they accepted them into the Canon.'*¹⁷

- ◇ From 4th century AD onwards, copying of Greek manuscripts became more extensive. The first known manuscripts were done on sheep skin or leather (termed 'Codex'). Earlier manuscripts were written in 'Uncials' (or capital letters) up till 9th century AD and subsequently it was common to have them written in 'Minuscules' (or small letters) up till the 15th century AD.¹⁸
- ◇ In any case, scholars broadly agree that these manuscripts can be grouped into four 'text families' tied to the geographic areas where copying was widely done (Figure below).

¹⁶ E.g. Peter recognized Paul's teachings as equal in authority as OT scriptures in II Pet 3:15-16.

¹⁷ translated from: Chen Runtang, 'The New Testament Background', Campus Evangelical Fellowship (1986), p.347

¹⁸ Chen Runtang, The New Testament Background (1986)(Campus Evangelical Fellowship), p.348



图表：四大组别的新约手抄本

- ◇ 所有组别的手抄本之间会有差异，甚至在同组里也会有。这是预料中的事，因为那些文士及抄录员都不是被神默示的。虽然各手抄本之间会有差异（无论是遗漏，增加或使用不同的词汇/写法），但严谨的查考及手抄本之间的互相印证足以让学者确认神话语的真正意思。¹⁹
- ◇ 尽管如此，抄本之间的差异都是微小的²⁰，并不足以构成任何教义上重大的影响。因此，我们可以对神话语的可靠和无误性持有绝对的把握。²¹

¹⁹ G. I. Williamson, The Westminster Confession of Faith: Study Guide (2nd edition), pp19-23

²⁰ A.T. Robertson 的研究显示任何有关经文的差异只是占“整个经文的一千份之一”看 ‘An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament’ (Broadman:1925), p.22.

²¹ J. Oliver Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion (1962年初版, 1994年第二版, Christian Life Publishers Pte Ltd), p. 207 of Volume I: “我曾经很惊讶在我们许多最良好的原文的文本中居然有许多差

Figure: Four Text Families of NT Manuscripts

- ◇ There are differences in readings across manuscripts in different text families, and even within the same text families. This is to be expected since the scribes and copyists were not inspired. While each manuscript would differ from another (by way of omissions, additions or use of different words/phrasing), careful study and comparison of these manuscripts would enable scholars to ascertain the true meaning of God’s Word.²²
- ◇ In any case, the textual differences are minute²³ and has no impact whatsoever on any key doctrine, and as a result we can have full assurance of the infallibility and inerrancy of God’s Word²⁴.

异，并且原本的文件已经遗失了。我后来却看见，这个观察其实与我们所知道的事实相符，就是我们通用的英语翻译本其实不是无误的…我们所坚持为无误的到底是什么呢？当我思想这件事时，我的结论是我们所维护的是原本被神所默示的作者们在原稿所要传达的意思…各文本之间的差异的重要性其实是被人夸大了。实际上，我们最良好的希腊文的文本与原来的文件是相同的。从来没有神学上的争执是因为文本之间的差异而起的。”

²² G. I. Williamson, The Westminster Confession of Faith: Study Guide (2nd edition), pp19-23

²³ A.T. Robertson’s research indicated that any real concern regarding textual variants amounted to ‘a thousandth part of the entire text’. See ‘An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament’ (Broadman:1925), p.22.

²⁴ J. Oliver Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion (first published in 1962, reprinted by Christian Life Publishers Pte Ltd, 1994), p. 207 of Volume I: “It was a considerable surprise to me to find that there are many variant readings in our best texts of the original languages, and that all of the original documents are lost. I soon came to see, however, that this fact is not essentially different from the generally known fact that the common English translation of the Bible is not inerrant. …What is it after all which we claim to be inerrant? As the subject shapes itself in my mind, we contend for the inerrancy of the meaning which the inspired writers intended to convey in their original manuscripts… The importance of variant readings is greatly over emphasized. For all practical purposes our best Greek texts are identical with the original manuscripts. No historical theological conflict has ever arisen over a variant reading.”

- Translation of God's Word
 - ◇ God not only ensured the preservation of His Word but also ensured that it was faithfully translated into common languages of every nation (WCF 1.8)
 - ◇ God raised different people in different times to provide faithful translations of the Bible into different languages e.g. English (KJV), Chinese (CUV), Tamil, Korean, Japanese, etc. Translators of the bible, like scribes and copyists of manuscripts, were not inspired. As such, just as there are differences across manuscripts, there would also be differences across translations since translators would necessarily exercise their judgments in both textual issues (i.e. deciding which readings from different manuscripts should be adopted) and translational issues (i.e. how best to translate the selected readings).
 - ◇ While these translations cannot claim to have the same authority as the autographs, key doctrines are preserved in faithful translations, even though none of these translations or their underlying texts can claim to have equal authority as the autographs. In addition, many faithful translations also include marginal notes to provide possible alternative readings (where the translators do not have definitive readings), cross references and additional explanations, e.g. in KJV (1611) and CUV.

2. What is VPP?

- VPP - 'Verbal Plenary Preservation'²⁸
 - ◇ Verbal - all words
 - ◇ Plenary - entire, complete
 - ◇ Preservation - kept pure, free from mistake

- This seems to teach that God has preserved the bible. But in fact, VPP teaches that the Bible is perfectly preserved down to its 'jot and tittle', in the Masoretic Text (MT) and Textus Receptus (TR) that underlie the King James Version (KJV).²⁹

This seems like a simple doctrine, but why do we only get hear about it recently?

- VPP is new, not only in name but also in substance.

- It first originated in the USA in the late 1990s but found support in Singapore in the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) in around 2002.

- Supporters of VPP hold on to the belief that only the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible is a faithful translation of the Bible, as it uses the MT and TR as the underlying texts. They claim that God promised to preserve the Scriptures word-for-word ('jot and tittle'), which is fulfilled only by MT and TR. However, the reader should note that the VPP teaching has actually evolved. For example, the critical question of which is the perfect Greek NT Text has changed over time.³⁰

远东神学院声称史瑞诺(Scrivener's TR)的公认经文才是唯独蒙逐字保守的希腊文本 (See J. Khoo, 'In Defence of the Far Eastern Bible College, the Reformed Faith and the Reformation Text', in *The Burning Bush*, Jul 2006, p79, http://www.febc.edu.sg/Defence_FEBC.htm)

²⁸ Document distributed by Dr Tow at BOE's meeting with the Chinese Session, 16 Nov 2007

²⁹ Rev Tow, Timothy and Khoo, Jeffrey, 'Theology for Every Christian'. Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2007. pp. 77, 104, 115.

³⁰ Dr Jeffrey Khoo initially proposed that Beza's 5th edition of the TR (1598) was the perfect VPP text in 2001 ('Kept Pure in All Ages', FEBC Press:2001, p32). Then by 2003, it was indicated that the TR underlying the KJV included

- The VPP teaching has also over time propagated important doctrinal distortions, for example:
 - ◇ They have previously stated that certain texts in the original languages are 'closest' to the autographs, but now claim that they are identical to the autographs.
 - ◇ Redefining our traditional understanding of God's 'providential preservation' of his Word to mean 'miraculous preservation'. The implication is that while we have traditionally recognized God's Word to have essential purity (meanings have all been preserved), VPP teaching now advocates absolute purity of certain texts (all words have been preserved). By miraculous preservation, VPP proponents assert that God has used the KJV translators to restore the autographic texts in 1611.³¹
- It is important to note that the vast majority of fundamentalist Christians (including those in Life BPC and Calvary Jurong BPC) uphold the KJV as the Word of God but do not subscribe to VPP. These Christians uphold the inerrancy and infallibility of God's Word, but they do not accept the VPP claim that the MT and TR texts preserve the Word of God 'jot and tittle', at the total exclusion of other manuscripts.

³¹ See Khoo, J. 'KJV-Q&A' (2003)

3. Why is VPP an important issue?

- All church members need to understand how VPP is going to have a negative impact on their faith.
 - ◇ As mentioned earlier, VPP basically teaches that the Bible is perfectly preserved down to its *jot* and *tittle*, and specifically in the Masoretic (MT) and Received Texts (TR) that underlie the King James Version (KJV).
 - ◇ By claiming that these texts are essentially the same as the autographs, this means other bible translations that do not use exclusively the MT and TR are corrupt, and by implication they are not God's Word.
 - ◇ If so, then the basis of your faith (the bible) is questionable if you do not use the KJV or other translations that use MT and TR as the underlying texts.
- But as we shall now show the reader, the allegation above is definitely not true, and the VPP teaching departs from our traditional position

4. Does VPP differ from our traditional position?

- VPP is NOT the same as WCF 1.8
 - ◇ VPP proponents have explained the new VPP terminology was necessary because “new assaults on the foundational and indispensable doctrine of the infallible preservation of the inerrantly inspired words of Holy Scripture require **updated statements and more definitive terms** to affirm Christianity's fundamental beliefs concerning the forever infallible and inerrant Scripture, hence ... ‘Verbal Plenary Preservation’...”³³
 - ◇ But as explained in the earlier sections, the VPP teaching is not just a change in terms, but also differs from our traditional position in substance. The diagram in Figure explains the differences.(Refer to page 30)

³³ Khoo, J and Tow T., ‘Theology for Every Christian’ p.114.Emphasis added

5. What is wrong with VPP?

- **First, there is no sound biblical basis for VPP.** The bible tells us that God preserves His Word, but not where it is preserved and how it is preserved.³⁶ However, the VPP teaching attempts to specify where and how. By doing so, it requires Christians to put their faith in certain texts as being inerrant and infallible like the autographs and reject all other texts, even though no one has ever seen the autographs.
- Many bible verses have been used to support VPP, but none clearly shows where and how preservation occurs. For example,
 - ◇ Ps 12:6-7:

⁶The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. ⁷ Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

Note that the word 'them' in Verse 7 (*masculine* in Hebrew) cannot refer to His Words in Verse 6 (*feminine*). Instead it refers to 'the poor' (*masculine*) in the preceding Verse 5:

⁵ For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

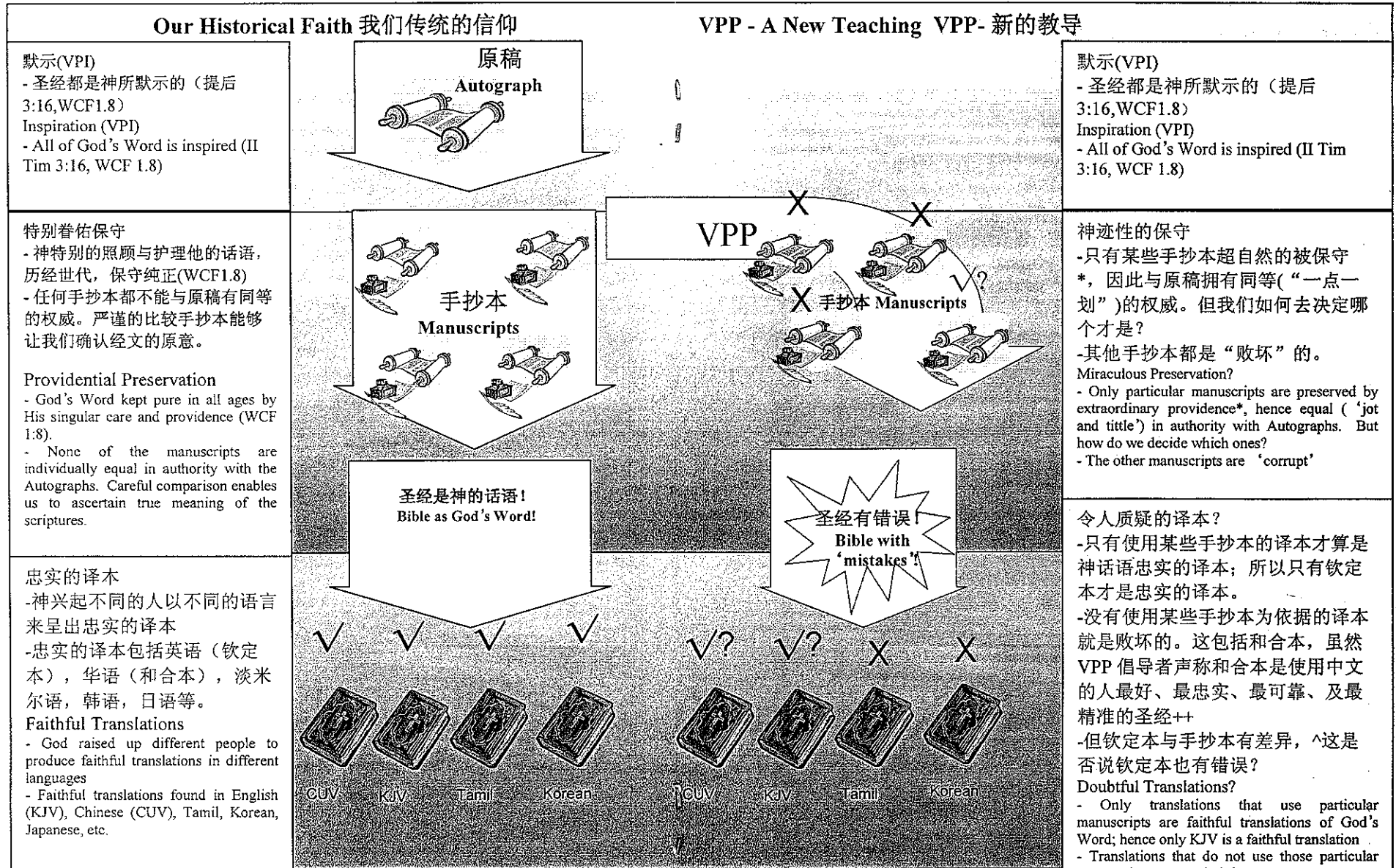
It is important to note that the KJV translators themselves had clarified the word in the margin thus: "*him: that is, every one of them.*"³⁷ It is inconceivable that they would use the word 'him' to refer to the Bible. This psalm speaking of the preservation of God's people has been made to teach the preservation of the Bible.

³⁶ This is summarized in Dr W. Combs' paper, 'The Preservation of Scripture', Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal, Fall 2000, pp.14-26

³⁷ The Holy Bible, Conteyning the Old Testament and the New, 1611.

Figure : A Comparison of our Historical Faith Versus the VPP Teaching

图表：我们传统信仰与 VPP 教导的对比



*: VPP 倡导者声称圣经只被保守在希伯来文的马所拉经文[MT](Ben Chayyim, 1524)及希腊文的公认经文[TR](Stephanus 1550, Beza 1598, Scrivener 1894)

++: 参阅 Khoo, J, "KJV-Q&A" (2003)

^: F.H.A. Scrivener 指出钦定本翻译员有 19 次使用 Complutensian Polyglott (1522)或武加大译本多过使用 Stephanus 和 Beza。在 Scrivener 的统计里, 钦定本圣经 (KJV) 的翻译员在 113 处使用 Beza 的公认经文 (TR) 多过使用 Stephanus 的公认经文 (TR); 59 处使用 Stephanus 多过使用 Beza; 在 80 处使用 the Complutensian, Erasmus, 和武加大译本多过使用 Stephanus 和 Beza。

(F.H.A. Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611), its subsequent Reprints and modern Representatives*. Cambridge: University Press, 1884

*: VPP proponents claim that the preserved texts are Hebrew Masoretic Text [MT] (Ben Chayyim, 1524) and Greek Textus Receptus [TR] (Stephanus 1550, Beza 1598, Scrivener 1894)

++: See Khoo, J, "KJV-Q&A" (2003)

^: F.H.A. Scrivener reported KJV translators followed the Complutensian Polyglott (1522) or Latin Vulgate against both Stephanus and Beza 19 times. In Scrivener's collation, the KJV translators followed Beza's TR against Stephanus' TR in 113 places; Stephanus against Beza in 59 places; the Complutensian, Erasmus, and the Vulgate against both Stephanus and Beza in 80 places (F.H.A. Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611), its subsequent Reprints and modern Representatives*. Cambridge: University Press, 1884

◇ Matt 5:17-18, 24:35:

¹⁷ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

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.

³⁵ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

These verses indeed show the authority of God's words, but these are only implicit references to the preservation of the Bible, and do not explain 'how' and 'where' preservation occurred.

- ◇ In any case, since the Autographs are no longer with us, no one can dogmatically or honestly claim literal 'jot and tittle' preservation of God's Word in any manuscript, or even in a few manuscripts.
- ◇ To further illustrate the error of VPP's claim of literal 'jot and tittle' preservation of God's Word, please compare Jesus's reply to Satan in Matt 4:4 and Luke 4:4, and how they both differ from Deut 8:3. Do we conclude that either Matthew or Luke had made a mistake, or that they both corrupted God's Word since they both differed from the verse in OT? We do not, because in line with our historical position, we believe that all three are the inerrant Words of God and there are no contradictions since their underlying meanings are the same.

Matt 4:4 'But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

Luke 4:4 'And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'

Deut 8:3 'And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.'

- **VPP deviates from our traditional position grounded in the historical faith**
 - ◇ As explained earlier, VPP goes beyond the doctrine of inspiration and our church constitution.
 - ◇ By arguing that God has exercised a 'miraculous preservation' of His Word to restore the autographic texts⁴⁰, VPP has essentially deemed certain texts to be the autographic texts, including readings not from Greek⁴¹. Who has the authority to declare that certain texts are same as the inspired autographs? This is similar to post-canonical inspiration, a dangerous doctrine.

⁴⁰ E.g. in the booklet 'KJV-Q&A' (2003), Dr J. Khoo remarked that 'The Majority Text and the Textus Receptus are essentially the same. In a few places, the Textus Receptus is preferred over the Majority Text because the Protestant Reformation was used by God to recognise and establish it, thereby restoring to God's people all of His inspired words.' (p.29)

⁴¹ E.g. from the Latin Vulgate. On Erasmus use of the Latin Vulgate in producing the first TR, please refer to Combs, W. 'Erasmus and the Textus Receptus', Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal, Spring 1996, p.47. (http://www.dbts.edu/journals/1996_1/ERASMUS.PDF)

- ◇ Doctrines of the church were defined, tested and proven over long periods of time before they were accepted by forerunners of our faith such as the church fathers and finally established as key articles of our faith. The establishment of the Canon followed a similar process over several centuries. The VPP teaching does not qualify to be a doctrine since it has not established itself firmly, remains controversial and is still evolving.

- **Logical Flaws and Inconsistencies.** This can be seen from several aspects:
 - ◇ VPP teaching asserts that, through a miraculous preservation, the Hebrew and Greek texts of God's inspired words have been restored⁴⁴ i.e. these texts are identical with the autographs. Does that mean the Word of God had been 'lost' before 1611? The traditional position however asserts that God has been and will continue to preserve His Word.

 - ◇ VPP proponents condemn the texts used by Westcott and Hort as corrupt, and also acknowledge that the Chinese Union Version (CUV) Bible was based on these texts. Yet they claim that the CUV is 'the best, most faithful, more reliable, and most accurate Bible for the Chinese-speaking people'⁴⁵. But are the VPP proponents being consistent when they condemn the NIV and its underlying texts, and yet ascribe such an honourable status to CUV, considering that CUV (like NIV) differs from KJV in so-called key verses such as the Johannine comma (I John 5:7)?

⁴⁴ In his booklet 'KJV-Q&A' (2003), Dr J. Khoo remarked that 'The Majority Text and the Textus Receptus are essentially the same. In a few places, the Textus Receptus is preferred over the Majority Text because the Protestant Reformation was used by God to recognise and establish it, thereby restoring to God's people all of His inspired words.' (p.29)

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp 40-41. See also footnote 29.

- ◇ VPP proponents argue that without VPP, there is no gospel to preach⁵¹. Taking into account the VPP position that God restored his inspired Words during the Reformation, would that mean the early church fathers and subsequent saints before the Reformation had no clear basis to preach the gospel if they did not have the underlying texts of the KJV?

6. What is dangerous about VPP?

- **It causes you to question the Bible, the foundation of your faith.** The VPP teaching asserts that only certain Hebrew and Greek texts⁵² are the miraculously preserved and perfect copies ('jot and tittle') of the Autographs.⁵³
- So long as your bible translation (e.g. CUV) is not derived solely from these texts, your bible translation would be deemed to be corrupt, i.e. it contains errors⁵⁴
 - ◇ The teaching of 'Jot-and-tittle preservation'⁵⁵ means manuscripts and edited texts that differ from those texts are inaccurate or erroneous.

⁵¹ E.g. Rev Quek S.Y's remark that 'Without the doctrine of VPP there is no gospel to preach...', in 'All that matters is to preach the Gospel?' Calvary Pandan BPC Bulletin, 7 Oct 2007.

<http://calvarypandan.org/edlrpages/20071007.htm>

⁵² Masoretic Text (Ben Chayyim, 1524) and Textus Receptus (Stephanus, 1550, Beza, 1598, Scrivener, 1894)

⁵³ For example, Dr Jeffrey Khoo states that 'the inspired words of the Hebrew OT are all the words of the Hebrew Masoretic Text (Ben Chayyim)'. See Khoo, J. 'Lost Words in the Bible?', in The Burning Bush (Jan 2007), p.49

⁵⁴ This is notwithstanding VPP proponents' claim that the CUV is a good translation. For example, FEBC website states that 'The Chinese Union Version (CUV) is the "Word of God" for the Chinese people today since it is the best, most faithful, most reliable, and most accurate version among the Chinese versions presently available. Great care ought to be taken not to undermine our Chinese brethren's confidence in the CUV'. See

<http://www.febc.edu.sg/Verbal%20Plenary%20Preservation.htm>

However it is a well-known fact that the key underlying text used in the translation of CUV is the 'Westcott and Hort' text which also underlies the translation of newer English versions such as the NIV, and for which VPP proponents have deemed to be corrupt.

- ◇ But there is no basis for believing that these texts that have been claimed as VPP texts are inerrant and infallible, as proven by the production of many revised editions of the TR since the first edition by Erasmus⁵⁸.
- Equating the authority of these texts with the authority of the Autographs is also problematic since it means that all other Bible translations that differ from these texts are not God's Word. This will generate doubts among Christians on the reliability of the bible translations that they use, and consequently key doctrines that they hold, for example salvation in this life and hope in the eternity. This also affects KJV users since the KJV differs from its underlying texts in many instances.⁵⁹ In short, the VPP teaching gives cause for bible-believing Christians to doubt the reliability of their bible translations.
- **It is also a divisive teaching.**
 - ◇ This teaching also causes Christians who uphold the VPP teaching to reject other Christians who do not share their belief, and view them as not believing in the preservation of the bible and attacking the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. In fact, they only do not believe that certain manuscripts are equal in authority with the autographs. This is the root cause of many divisions in several BP churches in recent years.

⁵⁸ For detailed descriptions of Erasmus' TR and subsequent revisions, please refer to Combs, W. 'Erasmus and the Textus Receptus', Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal, Spring 1996, pp35-53.

(http://www.dbts.edu/journals/1996_1/ERASMUS.PDF)

⁵⁹ F.H.A. Scrivener (i.e. author of Scrivener TR) indicated that KJV translators followed the Complutensian Polyglott (1522) or Latin Vulgate against both Stephanus TR and Beza TR 19 times. In Scrivener's collation, the KJV translators followed Beza's TR against Stephanus' TR in 113 places; Stephanus TR against Beza TR in 59 places; the Complutensian, Erasmus, and the Vulgate against both Stephanus TR and Beza TR in 80 places (F.H.A. Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611), its subsequent Reprints and modern Representatives*. Cambridge: University Press, 1884

- ◇ Developments in several BP churches in the last 5 years show that wherever VPP was taught, that church had suffered disharmony and pain, eventually resulting in church schism and the marring of Christian testimony. Such divisions have however been dismissed by some as the inevitable outcome of preaching the truth.⁶¹ Instead, we are reminded from God's Word 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith'. (I Tim 6:20-21).

7. How should Bible-believing Christians respond?

- Hold on to the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3), as recorded in the Bible and in our church constitution. Reject VPP.
- Continue to pray for peace and harmony in this church. Pray that the Lord reveal the truth to more Christians.
- Do not debate that which is hidden from us, such as where and how the Bible was preserved. Focus on His Words that are clearly revealed for us to study and obey: *'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.'* (Deut 29:29)

WCF 1:7: All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

MAY GOD BLESS THE DISCERNING READERS WHO WOULD UPHOLD THE TRUTH!

⁶¹ Rev Quek, S. Y. 'All That Matters Is to Preach the Gospel?' Calvary Pandan BPC Bulletin, 7 Oct 07.

8. Other Frequently Asked Questions on VPP

Q1. What is wrong if VPP proponents assert that MT/TR are the only texts that are equal in authority with the Autographs? They are upholding the authority of KJV.

Answer:

- KJV has always been upheld as the Word of God in this church, long before VPP was raised as an issue.
- The VPP teaching errs in claiming ‘miraculous preservation’ of God’s Word which elevates certain manuscripts (MT [Ben Chayyim 1524]/TR [Stephanus, Beza, Scrivener]) onto the same level as the autographic texts, thereby ascribing absolute authority to these texts. This teaching has no sound biblical basis, and is very different from our traditional position of providential preservation.
- By asserting that only these texts are equal in authority with the Autographs, VPP undermines all other faithful Bible translations, including even KJV and CUV, because
 - Erasmus (author of the first edition of TR) himself admitted using Latin Vulgate in the first version of TR, the underlying text for KJV’s New Testament⁶⁴
 - KJV translators themselves did not limit themselves to the MT/TR⁶⁵, but also to other faithfully translations and that, by logic, would have extended to the CUV and other faithfully translations.

⁶⁴ Combs, W., ‘Erasmus and the Textus Receptus’, Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal, Spring 1996, pp.46-48

⁶⁵ The KJV translators, in their preface to the KJV 1611, stated that the Apostles did not condemn the Septuagint (LXX), but used it, as it was worthy of ‘the appellation and name of the Word of God’. They also freely consulted different translations in ‘*Hebrew, Syrian, Greek or Latin, ..Spanish, French, Italian or Dutch...*’, and set in marginal notes words which were uncertain in meaning.

- In short, asserting that the MT/TR are the only authoritative texts equal with the Autographs does not only discredit many faithfully translations, but is factually and historically untrue.
 - It can only mean that many faithful translations like KJV and CUV actually have 'mistakes' just because they do not always agree with MT/TR readings.

Q2. What about the argument by VPP proponents that 'a good tree bears good fruits' - I have heard that KJV translators were godly people, whereas scholars associated with other versions (e.g. Westcott and Hort) are liberal, pro-homosexuality, pro-Catholicism etc.⁶⁸

Answer:

- Remember these facts:
 - The TR was first produced by Erasmus, a Catholic priest who never left Roman Catholicism in his life and had refused to be identified with the Protestants' cause.
 - The KJV translators also endorsed the Apocrypha as part of their Bible.
 - F.H.A. Scrivener, who produced the Scrivener's TR used by VPP proponents, was also involved in the translation of the New Testament of the English Revised Version, whose committee included F.J.A Westcott and B.F. Hort.⁶⁹ So would VPP proponents reject Scrivener and his TR?

⁶⁸ See for example Rev Quek S.Y.'s accusations in 'What is wrong with the Westcott and Hort Texts?', in Calvary Pandan Bulletin, 30 Sep 2007, and compare with the clarifications in the Westcott and Hort Resource Centre, <http://www.westcotthort.com/quotes.html>

⁶⁹ <http://parkviewcoc.org/Bible%20Class%20Material/special%20studies/The%20English%20Revised%20Version-American%20Standard%20Vers.pdf>

- Therefore we should be very careful about being too hasty in our judgement
 - 'the ridicule approach cuts both ways in the translation debate...' ⁷²

- We will also need to be careful about our sources of criticism, e.g. slanderous allegations of dubious scholarship and the character of Westcott and Hort by people such as Gail Riplinger have been proven to be factually untrue in many instances. ⁷³

- Therefore, even for readers who may not be convinced that the theological leanings of scholars such as Westcott and Hort are always aligned to fundamentalist teachings, we should not jump to conclusions concerning their texts. Consider Balaam (Num 24-25):
 - God may choose to use unclean instruments to proclaim his Word, if He so pleases!
 - God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Is 55:8-9)

⁷² This was a comment by Mike Randall, who was himself a strong KJV defender. See 'The Baptist Preacher', Sep/Oct 1999, pp.4-7

⁷³ See White, J. 'The Kings James Only Controversy', pp 97-102, for numerous examples where Riplinger misrepresented Westcott and Hort. Riplinger was almost among the first to allege that Westcott was a homosexual, and this allegation has been shown to be full of blunders by James Richard May. <http://westcotthort.com/jmay/homosexual.html>

Q3. VPP proponents have said that those who do not agree with VPP do not believe in the preservation of the bible; 'VPI without VPP is useless'⁷⁸ and 'without the doctrine of VPP there is no gospel to preach'⁷⁹...

Answer:

- Our church has historically stood fast on the inspiration and preservation of scriptures as spelt out in WCF 1.8 and our Church Constitution 4.1. Non-VPP Christians hold on to these two key doctrines too. The gospel had been preached since the Lord Jesus' resurrection; the preservation of the Bible has never been an issue which hindered the preaching of the Gospel, till VPP came about.
- The issue is not over whether God preserved his Word, but 'where' and 'how' as has been historically believed and testified in this church.
- The basic question is: what is our historical position on Bible preservation all along, before the VPP teaching was conceived.
- Answer: God has preserved His Word providentially which can be found in extant manuscripts. None of the manuscripts are individually equal in authority with the Autographs. Careful comparison of the manuscripts enables us to ascertain the true meaning of scriptures.
 - "Those that say God hath so preserved the Scripture, as that there are no various readings and doubtful texts" are "those that give too much (in bulk, but too little in virtue) to the scripture" and thus have 'erred in over-doing' (Richard Baxter, 'a Christian Directory', p725)⁸⁰
 - Comparison across manuscripts has been and will remain an important avenue of understanding the meaning of the Scriptures⁸¹

⁷⁸ E.g. Khoo, J., 'Inspiration, Preservation and Translation', The Burning Bush (Jan 2007), p11

⁷⁹ Rev Quek S.Y. 'All that matters is to preach the gospel?', Calvary Pandan Bulletin, 7 Oct 2007

⁸⁰ The seed for this Directory was sown by Bishop James Ussher in 1654 when he first approached the author, a reformed pastor, to write a pastoral volume that could be useful for the Christian's spiritual growth. Bishop Ussher was on the Westminster Assembly that gave us the Confession of Faith.

⁸¹ Williamson, G. I., The Westminster Confession of Faith: Study Guide (2nd edition), pp19-23.

Q4. I was told that VPP is consistent with our church constitution, and no amendments to the Constitution are needed.

Answer:

- Our Church Constitution, which represents our historical faith, clearly reflects our belief in God's inspiration of His Word in the autograph (Constitution 4.2.1) and His preservation of His Word through all ages, in accordance with Westminster Confession of Faith (Constitution 4.1).
- VPP, which believes that God has only preserved his Word in particular manuscripts, and therefore proclaims only certain translations of the Bible as God's Word, goes beyond the Constitution. Indeed, our church Constitution does not state that the KJV or the CUV is the exclusive Word of God for the congregation.
- VPP proponents in several other churches have acknowledged that the existing Constitution does not adequately reflect VPP. Thus, you find that the FEBC, True Life and Truth BPC have all amended their Constitutions, and in doing so, they have gone beyond Constitution 4.2.1.
- In Calvary Pandan BPC, many members would recall that VPP proponents had made an abortive effort to amend the Constitution 4.2.1 in 2005. That proposal was subsequently dropped after the Chinese Session objected to it. This goes to show that the VPP proponents in Calvary Pandan BPC have been fully aware of the fact that VPP was never reflected in our existing Constitution, notwithstanding their present assertion of the contrary.
- Perhaps it should also be noted that there is a great difference between whether VPP could be read into the Constitution and whether it had been originally reflected there at all. The former raises ethical questions while the honest acknowledgement of the latter i.e. that VPP had never been reflected in the Constitution could pave the way to restoring peace in the church and for returning to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints".

Q5. Isn't this an issue within the English congregation? Why did the Mandarin congregation get into this debate?

Answer:

- The Chinese session has co-laboured in peace with English session for more than 20 years. We cherish it and would certainly want to maintain the harmony, if it is not at the expense of the truth.
- However, VPP has affected the Mandarin congregation too, since many of our members are effectively bilingual, and use both KJV and CUV.
 - We have no issue with the need to uphold the KJV. But VPP's endorsement of the MT/TR in absolute terms (miraculous preservation) has actually cast doubts on the authority of CUV as God's inerrant and infallible Word.
 - We also want rest for our flock.
- VPP was initially restricted to the level of personal conviction, and discussed within the BOE. Dr Tow had also stated clearly in 2005 and 2006 that 'VPP should not be a stumbling block', and that with or without VPP, we can co-labour together⁸⁴. As such, we held our reservations but attempted to maintain a harmonious approach.
- We have written to BOE three times since 2005 to explain our objection to VPP, but had received no formal reply.
- But then we were suddenly informed in Aug 07 that the church has now adopted VPP as its doctrine and it has since been promoted as such⁸⁵. This had left the Mandarin session with no option but to come forward to defend our position that we have kept with all honesty and conscience in line with our traditional position in this church.

⁸⁴ See Dr Tow S.H., Calvary Pandan BPC Bulletin, 25 Sep 2005, and Dr Tow S.H., 'Appeal to Charity', 29 Apr 06

⁸⁵ e.g. see Rev Quek S.Y., 'No VPP, No KJV! No CUV!', Calvary Pandan BPC Bulletin, 2 Sep 2007, which claims VPP to be a doctrine.

Q6. Where can I obtain more information?

Answer:

- On the historical teaching on inspiration and preservation:
 - Westminster Confession of Faith (see for example the Presbyterian Church of America website:
http://www.pcanet.org/general/cof_chapi-v.htm)
 - G. I. Williamson, The Westminster of Confession: Study Guide (2nd edition), esp. pp19-23
 - J. Oliver Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion (first published in 1962, reprinted by Christian Life Publishers Pte Ltd, 1994), Volume 1, p. 207

- On how the TR was produced, including Erasmus use of the Latin Vulgate in producing the TR:
 - W. Combs, 'Erasmus and the Textus Receptus', Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal, Spring 1996,
http://www.dbts.edu/journals/1996_1/ERASMUS.PDF

- On how the KJV translators themselves view the 1611 KJV, please read their preface:
 - A.V. Bible Tracts and Books (copyright 1999-2002), 'The Original Preface to the King James (Authorised) Version', in <http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/pref1611.htm>. You will find that they readily referred to other translations, and upheld the authority of the Septuagint as the Word of God, among other positions that would not be accepted by VPP proponents.

- For a thorough examination of preservation
 - W. Combs, 'The Preservation of Scripture', Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal, Fall 2000, in <http://www.dbts.edu/journals/2000/Combs.pdf>

- On key references explaining the problems of VPP:
 - J. R. White, *The King James Only Controversy*
 - J. Price, *King James Onlyism - A New Sect*
 - See also the testimony of a Christian who left KJV-onlyism, Fred Butler, 'Confessions of a King James Only Advocate', <http://www.fredsibletalk.com/fb019.html>

- On whether Westcott and Hort were engaged in homosexuality and were sympathetic towards Roman Catholicism, see
 - James Richard May (copyright 2005), <http://westcotthort.com/jmay/homosexual.html>
 - The Westcott and Hort Resource Centre, http://www.westcotthort.com/quotes_mary.html

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The reference to these authors or their writings does not necessarily signify our full endorsement of them. These are articles that would, in our opinion, generally present a prudent and biblical assessment of their respective subjects. All readers should emulate the Bereans in Acts 17 to put every teaching under the searchlight of God's Word. God bless.