



The Burning Bush

ISSN 0219-5984

January 2025

Volume 31 Number 1

PREACHERS AND HEARERS 1

Jeffrey Khoo

MODERN VERSIONS CONTROVERSY: HOW TO
CHOOSE A TRANSLATION? 7

Lingkang Ko

*A REVIEW OF KEPT PURE IN ALL AGES: RECAPTURING
THE AUTHORISED VERSION AND THE DOCTRINE
OF PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION* 34

FANNY CROSBY: HER LIFE AND SONGS 36

Joycelyn Chng

I REMEMBER MRS IVY TOW 50

Karen Lee

COLLEGE NEWS 62



THE BURNING BUSH

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Publisher : Far Eastern Bible College
Website : www.febc.edu.sg
Permit : MCI (P) 017/03/2024

The Burning Bush (ISSN 0219-5984) is published bi-annually in January and July, and contains theological papers, sermons, testimonies, book reviews, College news, and alumni reports. Articles are indexed in the *Christian Periodical Index*. The journal is distributed gratis to the FEBC family and Bible-Presbyterian churches, and is available online at www.febc.edu.sg. Local/Foreign subscription rates in Singapore dollars: one year—\$8/\$16; two years—\$15/\$30; back issues—\$4/\$8 per copy. Make cheques payable to “Far Eastern Bible College.”

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PREACHERS AND HEARERS

Jeffrey Khoo

To be able to profit from a sermon, it is good to understand the biblical elements of preaching and of hearing a sermon.

What Sermons Must Be

Firstly, a sermon must be expository and faithful to the text for therein lies the power—not from the preaching per se but from the word preached, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom 10:17). We are *“to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Cor 1:17–18). Paul himself confessed, *“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God”* (1 Cor 2:3–5).

Secondly, sermons with illustrations and testimonies are helpful to make the truth relatable and relevant. In Bible College, we learned the four forms of effective speech: (1) Statement, (2) Restatement, (3) Illustration, and (4) Testimony. From where do we get the illustrations/testimonies? Illustration handbooks/encyclopedias can be a source, but the best source is still the Scriptures which are full of them, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Rom 15:4), *“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”* (1 Cor 10:11). Again, God’s Word is paramount in terms of illustrations and testimonies and we should use the infallible and inerrant illustrations and testimonies that come from Scripture as much as we can.

Thirdly, practical application is important to challenge the people to examine themselves and take stock of their lives and do what is good

and right in light of the truth that has been expounded, as James 1:22 famously states, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* Doctrine first, then practice. Neither should be absent in a sermon.

Most importantly, it is the Holy Spirit who is the one who applies infallibly and effectively a sermon when it is truthfully and faithfully preached to change lives (John 16:7-13), provided the hearers will hear the Spirit and His Word with the right mind and heart (Matt 11:15).

All the mechanics of effective speech notwithstanding, there is a spiritual element that cannot be ignored. That was why our founding pastor and my homiletics teacher—the Rev Dr Timothy Tow—rightly observed, *“Homiletics (Preaching) is a mystery.”* At first I did not understand what he was trying to say, but now after all these years as a preacher, I see the significance of that profound statement. Preaching is certainly not the same as delivering a speech. A Toastmaster’s course will not cut it. The Holy Spirit’s role is key.

Danger of This Modern Age

Now, let me address a danger that we have today and that is the plethora of false and deceitful preachers and teachers out there. This should not come as a surprise for the Lord had forewarned, *“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. ... And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many”* (Matt 24:4-5,11).

Besides the danger of false preaching and teaching, there is also the danger of false hearing. The way people today hear and see things is more often than not impaired by social media with thumbs up/down emojis. The things said from a Bible-based pulpit are not things people want to know or like to hear today. What is truth is now dictated by popular opinion or sentiment, not God’s Word. People are no longer interested in doctrine or teaching. They want to know the how but not the what and the why. To them, if it works, it must be good and right. Pragmatism rules the day and the way, not truth or sound doctrine.

With pragmatism ruling the day, Bible colleges and seminaries in order to attract students and income are offering easier “practical” courses with “politically correct” philosophies. Are you

preaching or preachy? Is your preaching heavy with doctrine? It will not win you votes.

Market-Driven Pastors and Churches

Pastors today are under pressure to be “relevant”. But what does that mean? Well, you are “relevant” only if you can deliver what your hearers want to hear—the consumer (ie hearer) is king, not the Lord, not His Word. The market dictates the message. In a market-driven church, “the congregation is king”. We want to see the numbers! We want to see the money! Truth and righteousness are not determined by VPI/VPP but by KPI. Be warned, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you”* (2 Pet 2:1-3).

More and more pastors are giving in to market-driven consumerism. In order not to be sidelined, they say they have no choice but to “pivot”. Dance to the tune of the popular voice. To keep my job, I must stay niche. I must move away from the stuffy traditional expository and doctrinal preaching to the hip and cool “motivational” style of dressing and addressing. Get rid of the coat and tie, don the leather jacket and jeans. You need to look cool! You need to charm! Communicate through how you look—your wardrobe, your hairstyle etc. Make the worldly look pious. The vibe is you don’t have to give up the world to be accepted by God. This strategy is a sure win—you will see the numbers and the money. But not the Lord, *“For ... he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not”* (Isa 53:2-3).

Yes, the market-driven pastors and orators are very inspirational and highly esteemed. They have the gift of the gab. To sound Christian and churchly, they quote Scripture, but Scripture is there only to serve as a pretext to promote their personality and philosophy. Their egocentric mantras are popular because they know just how to say

things you want to hear and get you to buy what they are selling. Their speeches are peppered with popular clichés and full of jokes and anecdotes. Their life examples and experiences are all meant to achieve a goal, and that is to manipulate you to like them and be shaped into their likeness (successful, popular, rich and powerful). In the end, both speakers and hearers are captivated by a self-deluding narcissism: I must like myself and esteem myself highly to be successful. I must be right because I am liked (look at all the “likes” I have in my “-tube” and my “-book”). This is nothing short of pride and idolatry. The sinfully gullible will gulp in all that self-serving mantra hook, line and sinker. Everyone’s ego gets pumped up each time and on a high. These speakers and hearers deserve each other (2 Tim 4:3). As the Bible says, *“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived”* (2 Tim 3:13).

Beware of “Woke”

Caveat Auditor (Hearer Beware). Be aware that the “woke” spirit, so pervasive in today’s sinful and selfish society, has found its way into our homes, schools, and churches. Social media has a huge role to play in all this. It is influencing big time the mind of people young and old, programming them to be only receptive to their egos. It is again the age-old sin of pride. It is all about I, Me, Myself. This wicked spirit is intolerant and fierce and will bully and abuse to get its way.

Churchgoers who have been influenced by such a spirit will only hear what they want to hear. They have been groomed by social media, and they will use the same media to destroy those who say no to them. These “woke” people will seek to destroy you if you so much as disagree with them and do not do what they say, even claiming that it pleases God and that it is good and even godly; *“yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service”* (John 16:2).

Hearing and Yet Not Hearing

Hearers today are not hearing God’s Word the way God wants them to hear. The spirit of the age today is self-indulgent. If your sermon is not to my liking, not palatable to my taste, not tuned to the way I see my world and my life, you are finished! If I am offended in any way, I will see to it that you get cancelled. You must disappear. You have no right to exist, period. Our Lord had forewarned, *“Then shall*

PREACHERS AND HEARERS

they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" (Matt 24:9-10).

Such will even quote Scripture to justify their evil, *"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing"* (Matt 5:25-26). The "woke" attitude is this: I don't care whether it is the truth or a lie. I don't even care whether you live or die. The "woke" crowd will do anything to stake their place and save their face. They will turn the truth into a lie and take the lie as truth. They don't care for truth and they don't care for you. What they care is this: What you say or do offends ME. You have offended ME. And that is all that matters. And because you do not follow ME, I will spare no effort and use whatever means I have at my disposal to get you cancelled and silenced. They stoop to slander and libel to defame and kill. Such is the "woke" spirit and it is wicked and evil to the core.

The Bible already predicted this, *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"* (2 Tim 3:1-5). This is all a prelude to worst things to come, *"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God"* (2 Thess 2:3-4). People today are being primed to accept the Antichrist.

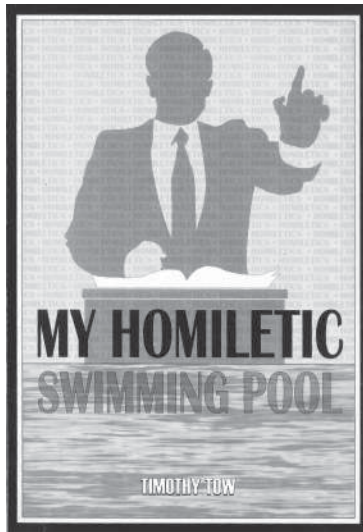
Pray for Your Pastors and for Yourselves

Please pray for your pastors, that they will remain faithful to the sacred privilege of preaching and teaching God's Word in all its fullness and truthfulness with charity and humility (Gal 1:10, Eph 4:11-15, 1

Thess 2:4). Pray also for yourselves that there will be a faithful and humble hearing of God's Word.

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:2-4).

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Timothy Tow, *My Homiletic Swimming Pool* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1988).

Download: https://www.febc.edu.sg/assets/pdfs/febc_press/My%20Homiletic%20Swimming%20Pool.pdf

MODERN VERSIONS CONTROVERSY: HOW TO CHOOSE A TRANSLATION?

Lingkang Ko

Introduction

The topic of modern versions of the English Bible has been the subject of no small controversy, especially in the past 50 years or so. In certain sections of Christendom, the debate has been particularly vitriolic, with allegations hurled at each other, and churches and denominations split over disagreements over which versions should or should not be acceptable and used in both public worship and for private reading.¹

The issue is a complicated one, involving a myriad of issues and viewpoints. Writing in 2001, Bauder estimates that “hundreds of volumes have been published on the subject (of the King James Version debate) over the last thirty years.”² In the years that have ensued, many further volumes have added to this debate, and it does not seem that the conflicting parties have come anywhere nearer to any sort of consensus or resolution.

Broadly speaking, there are two sides to the argument (though not everyone in these two camps would necessarily see a need to debate or be in a controversy over it). On one side of the debate, are those who would (again for a myriad of reasons) desire to continue to use the King James Version (KJV). Some would do so because they believe it is God’s inspired word in the English language, over and above the Bible in the original languages. Others would argue for its exclusive use because of its textual basis and translational excellence. There are also some who retain its use simply because of preference for its style, or because they have been using and memorising it for a long time and are reluctant to change.³ On the other side, there would be those who are open to any version of the Bible, or favour one or more modern versions, as long as it meets their criteria, whether it be ease of reading, textual basis, translational technique, or other factors. There are varying degrees of militancy within these groups, and the extents to which they would argue for their position.⁴ Suffice to

say, there are many on both sides who have written much to fuel this controversy, often accusing the other of seditious behavior, misleading people from the truth, and not being faithful to the Word of God.⁵

The purpose of this paper is to examine the issues central to the modern version controversy, namely that of the history, texts and translation techniques of the English versions to demonstrate that there is an objective and logical reason behind a position that calls for the exclusive use of the King James Version.

History of the English Versions

Before one can assess the plethora of versions available in the modern era, it is needful to first give a brief survey of the history of the English versions of the Bible, as an explanation of how the present situation came about. It is a story of God's providential dealings with the English-speaking world, of how in His perfect timing, He would lead men to translate the Bible into the language that would become the *lingua franca* of the world. It is also a story that tells of the heritage and legacy that all modern versions of the Bible rest upon, for each new translation builds upon the efforts of the previous ones, from Wycliffe's early attempts to every new translation that is published today. Sadly, it is also an account of the roots of conflicts that would give rise to the present controversy concerning modern versions. Understanding the history of how English versions developed would also give one a better understanding of why such a controversy even exists at all.

Early English Versions

Prior to the 14th century, there was no translation of the Bible that was widely available to the English-speaking world. Historical records show some attempts were made to translate portions of the Bible into Old English from as early as the 8th and 9th century, such as parts of the Psalter by Aldhelm (d 709), the translation of the Gospel of John and other portions of Scripture by Bede (675-735/736), and the Scripture portions translated by Alfred the Great (849-901).⁶ However these were not widely distributed, and were only parts of the Bible, and never consolidated into a single whole.

It was only in the latter half of the 14th century, through the efforts of John Wycliffe (1329-1384) that England would have a complete Bible translated into English. Wycliffe was a brilliant Oxford scholar and

churchman. Through his study of Scripture, he began to be troubled by the excesses and corruptions of the church and papacy, noting especially how their teachings and practices were in conflict with Scripture. Because of his preaching against the church and his emphasis on the authority of Scripture over any earthly powers, Wycliffe was admonished by the church and lost his position in the university.⁷ He is best remembered for his translation of the New Testament (NT) which was published together with the Old Testament (OT) translated by an associate, Nicholas of Hereford, both translating from the Latin Vulgate. The resultant translation was known as the Wycliffe Bible (c 1388). Further work was done by John Purvey, a follower of Wycliffe, to smoothen the translation. This revision became known as the 'Lollard Bible'—the edition that became the predominant English Bible throughout the 15th century, until the time of Tyndale. Because the printing press was not yet invented, every copy had to be painstakingly made by hand. Yet despite that, Wycliffe's Bible was carried throughout Europe and enabled many to be able to read the Bible in a language they understood.⁸

More than a hundred years later, William Tyndale (1494–1536) had the noble, godly ambition to “cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of scripture than he (the Pope) did.”⁹ Like Wycliffe, he knew the importance of the Bible and wanted everyone in England to be able to read it in a language that they knew. Thus, he devoted the rest of his life to translate the Bible into English directly from the original Greek and Hebrew, which by then, with the invention of the printing press, was available to him. Prior to his martyrdom in 1536, he had managed to translate the NT, and the Pentateuch and other portions of the OT. Tyndale's skill and mastery in translation and the English language was excellent, and widely regarded to be superior to Wycliffe. His translation was accurate, clear and of great stylistic beauty.¹⁰ His translation was published and smuggled throughout England. He himself was arrested, imprisoned and eventually put to death for this act, for at that time it was still illegal to translate the Bible. At his execution, as he was tied to the stake to be burned, he cried out with a loud voice: “Lord! open the King of England's eyes”¹¹—a prayer that would soon be answered in a most spectacular way.

Over the next seventy years, many rapid changes were taking place in England. The Church of England had split from the Roman Catholic

Church, and the rule against translations of the Bible was abolished in England. There was a further interest and study made into the original languages of Hebrew and Greek. Greek texts were being edited and published by men such as Erasmus, Stephanus and Beza, producing various editions of a group of texts that would later anachronistically be termed as the *Textus Receptus* (TR) or Received Text.¹²

Various other English Bibles also began to appear, such as the Coverdale Bible (1535), the Matthews Bible (1537) the Great Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1560). Most of them were based on the work of Tyndale. There was no centralised backing for any of those works, and some of them had problems with accuracy, or were being championed by various factions within the young protestant church. For example, there was the Geneva Bible which had very strongly Calvinistic commentary notes which the Church of England opposed, whilst the Great Bible, which was a huge Bible printed to be placed in the churches and chained there, was a compilation of various works and not consistent. There was a growing desire for an authoritative translation that would be received by all English-speaking Christians.

King James Version¹³

In 1604, the new King of England, King James I agreed to a meeting with various ministers of the different groups of protestants in England at that time, to try to seek out a common ground between them. Though the meeting itself did not do much in terms of uniting the Christians in England, one fruit of it was the decision to translate an officially authorised version of the English Bible. Puritan John Reynolds was the man who set forward the proposal for this new translation, which was readily received by King James. As it was a work backed by the king, no effort was spared in ensuring that it would be done to the best of their abilities. Over the next six months, a general plan was drawn up as to how the translation was to be done, and who would be involved in the work.

A list of 54 scholars were drawn up and tasked to carry out the translation work. Due to some deaths and withdrawals, 47 were finally involved in the actual translation process. These were men of great learning and understanding, top-rated scholars of England and Europe in their day. They were also pious men of deep faith, with great respect for the Bible as the infallible Word of God.¹⁴

These 47 men were divided into six companies, and the various portions of the Bible were distributed amongst them to translate. The whole process of the translation was extremely thorough and meticulous, with every effort made to ensure that the work produced would be as perfect as it could possibly be. A list of directives was drawn up to guide these translators in the execution of this project. Every single word that was translated would be subject to repeated scrutiny and evaluation by the rest of the committee.¹⁵ The texts that the translators had available to them were as follows:

They had the Complutensian Polyglot of 1517 ... and they had the Antwerp Polyglot, 1569-72. These gave Hebrew and Greek texts with versions in other tongues added. Of course they had the Latin Vulgate, though that was suspect because it was popish. With some fragments of early scrolls, they had countless comments by the early church fathers and ancient scholars. Often they referred to St. Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.) ... Another reference authority was the Geneva scholar, Theodore Beza (1519-1605).¹⁶

After its initial publication in 1611, revisions were made by two of the original translators, John Bois and Samuel Ward in 1629 and 1638 to correct various printing errors, or to make some minor grammatical or punctuation changes. In 1762 and 1769, two further revisions were made mainly to standardise and modernise the spelling, punctuation, use of italics, and marginal annotations. The final revision was done in Oxford in 1769, and is the edition used by most printers of the KJV today.¹⁷

Despite some initial resistance against the adoption of this version, it soon became the only available printed version of the English Bible. In 1644, the last issue of the Geneva Bible was printed, and by the end of the seventeenth century, the KJV would be the translation used by almost all Christians in the English-speaking world.

Modern Versions

In the years following the publication of the KJV, it was widely accepted by theologians that the Bible in their hands was indeed the authoritative word of God, and the texts underlying it ought not to be questioned. As Kurt Aland, himself an advocate of modern textual criticism notes:

Every theologian of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and not just the exegetical scholars) worked from an edition of the Greek text of the New Testament which was regarded as the "revealed text." This idea of verbal

inspiration (i.e., of the literal and inerrant inspiration of the text), which the orthodoxy of both Protestant traditions maintained so vigorously, was applied to the *Textus Receptus*.¹⁸

Few people saw any need for any revision of the Bible in their hands and believed that God's "singular care and providence"¹⁹ was what had guided the editors of the texts in the original languages such that what they had in their hands were the inspired and preserved words of God.

However, with the passage of time, and the growing influence of rationalism and naturalistic approaches to the text of Scripture, various scholars²⁰ began to delve into the work of assembling the variant readings²¹ from Greek manuscripts, versions and the writings of the church fathers. Whilst they continued to print the text of the TR as their main text, they began to include textual apparatus in their margins and footnotes which would suggest variant readings for the reader's considerations. At that time, the church as a whole was strongly resistant to any change to the Greek texts which they regarded as the true reading of the Word of God. Thus any "occasional brave soul who ventured to print a different form of Greek text was either condemned or ignored."²²

By the 19th century, the field of textual criticism was advancing, with more and more scholars seeking to put aside the TR and publish critical editions of the NT. Men like Johann Griesbach (1745–1812), Karl Lachmann (1793–1851), Constantin von Tischendorf (1815–74), Samuel Tregelles (1813–75) and culminating with the Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892), were actively promoting a form of textual criticism that questioned the readings of the TR and ascribed greater value to a few supposedly older and more accurate manuscripts.²³

Their efforts culminated in a call for an update of the KJV. In 1870, Samuel Wilberforce, bishop of Winchester, put forth the proposal to revise the KJV, which was accepted by the House of Convocation of Canterbury. The committee of translators were commissioned to not just to update the language and correct any translational errors and inconsistencies, but also to make changes based on "alterations due to the adoption of a Greek text different from that used for the Authorised Version."²⁴ A chief influence in introducing textual critical methods to alter the text based on the new Greek text that they published, were members of the NT committee, Westcott and Hort.²⁵ As a result, the

Revised Version (RV), published in 1885, “was the first major translation to make use of modern textual critical principles, frequently noting alternative readings in the margins.”²⁶

In terms of translation technique, the RV generally followed the literal word-for-word style of the KJV, though it was accused of being too literal and therefore unreadable.²⁷ For the OT, they followed the readings of the same Masoretic Text (MT) that was the basis for the KJV, though they did deviate in a few instances and relied on the Septuagint (LXX) reading instead.²⁸ In the NT, “there were about 5,788 changes in the underlying Greek text, about one-fourth of which altered the reading of the text.”²⁹ It was met with a mixed response, and did not really achieve any large measure of popularity amongst the British populace.

The RV was soon followed by the American Standard Version (1901). This was the work of the American committee that also worked on the RV but continued to modify the RV after it was published to include changes in wordings that would be more suitable to an American audience. This version was met with much better reception than the RV, and the Presbyterian Church soon adopted it to replace the KJV. However not every church was so ready to make such changes, and many continued to use the KJV.³⁰

The next major version to be published would be the Revised Standard Version (RSV) in 1957, which was an effort on the part of the National Council of Churches (NCC) to further modernise the language of the ASV, mostly doing away with the archaic terms, except in passages which addressed God. However, it also included further instances of emendations, editing the text of the OT with readings from the LXX and recent findings from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It was also strongly criticised for translating Isaiah 7:14 with “young maiden” instead of “virgin” and changing “only begotten Son” in John 3:16 to “only Son”.³¹ Nonetheless with each new translation released into the public, more and more people were becoming more accepting of the idea of different versions of the Bible, notwithstanding the different textual basis, translational techniques and nuances of theology that would be affected.

From the 1970s onwards, there would be a rapid increase in the number of new translations that would be released. Each of them had their own unique translational philosophies, with different target audiences. For example, the New American Standard Version (NASV)

released in 1971 was a very literal translation that received a measure of support amongst the more academic audiences, while the Living Bible (TLB) in 1971 and Good News Bible (GNB) in 1976 utilised dynamic, thought-for-thought translations that sought to provide a Bible that was readily accessible to readers of lower English proficiency.³²

With this increase in versions available, also came an increase in debate concerning the merits and problems with adopting each new translation that was published, giving rise to the modern version controversy. The debates would mainly centre on two main issues. (1) The textual basis of the translation, whether it would be from the MT and TR that was the text underlying the KJV, or depart from the MT in the OT and apply textual criticism, and translate the NT based on the new critical Greek Text promoted by Westcott and Hort. (2) The translational technique adopted, whether it would seek for a more literal, word-for-word translation, or a more dynamic, thought-for-thought or even paraphrase methodology in its translation.

The Textual Basis

The first and most important aspect of evaluating a version of the Bible is the texts which it is based upon. Not all texts are the same, and not every version has the same textual basis or philosophy regarding it. At the heart of the version controversy, is the debate concerning the texts of the Bible. Every reader of the Bible would want to be certain that what he has is a faithful translation of the very words of God. The textual debate centres on the issues surrounding these words of God. To rightly assess a version, it is necessary to know what texts the version is based upon, and what textual critical methods have been applied to decide on what readings to use from the texts.

But before coming to the texts of Scripture, it is first important to put forth some presuppositions and biblical perspectives with regard to the doctrine of Scripture that one needs to have in order to have the right perspectives with regard to the texts.

Verbal Plenary Inspiration

The doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture is clearly attested in passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. Inspiration can be succinctly defined as “a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which

their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.”³³ It teaches that every single word of Scripture was directly breathed out by God to man, such that He superintended every exact word without error. It is the direct revelation of God to man through the working of the Spirit, whereby God was able to use human writers to pen the very words of God. Because of that, the qualities of infallibility and inerrancy can be applied to the whole of Scripture, where each and every word of Scripture can be said to be without error, and written exactly as God had intended.

The doctrine of inspiration is generally accepted by conservative evangelical and reformed believers. It is significant, for it is the foundation upon which the doctrine of preservation is built.

Verbal Plenary Preservation

The doctrine of the verbal plenary preservation of Scripture very necessarily and logically flows from the doctrine of inspiration. It is of little use if one argues that God has perfectly inspired His word, but then to deny that He had perfectly preserved them. Since God had so deliberately and carefully inspired His Word through His special revelation, such that every single word which He intended for man to know was written by the authors of Scripture, it stands to reason that He would also providentially see to it that none of the words be lost or added to.

More importantly, this doctrine is clearly attested in passages like Matthew 5:18 and Psalm 12:6–7. The doctrine of preservation teaches that it is the very words, and not just the message of Scripture that has been preserved, down to the ‘jot and tittle’, as Jesus had declared in Matthew 5:18. Though in the context of that verse, Jesus was not directly making a case for such perfect preservation of Scripture, yet His choice of words imply that He understood the law that was available to the people in His time was as exact as it was when it was first penned by Moses, and assured that not one jot or tittle shall ever fall from it. In like manner, Psalm 12:6–7 speaks of the assurance that the godly man can have from God’s word amidst the wicked who walk on every side. The comfort from God then is the fact that His promise to protect him (v.5) is like all of God’s words, pure and sure (v. 6), and will never fail. They are words that will be kept and preserved by God in every generation.³⁴

Such a conviction was affirmed through the Reformation and Post Reformation period, as evidenced by the Westminster Divines in the seventeenth century, who stated in the confession that they penned:

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.³⁵

A more specific and narrow definition was given in the Helvetic Consensus Formula—a document drawn up by the Swiss Reformed Church in the 17th century in response to problematic teachings coming out of the Academy of Saumur. Although the bulk of the formula was responding to the Amyraldian controversy, the first three canons also deal with inspiration and preservation, answering particularly to Louis Cappel who argued that only the consonants, and not the vowels of the Hebrew text are inspired.³⁶

Canon 1: God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have his word, which is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believes” (Rom 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the Prophets and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care from the time it was written up to the present, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore the Church justly ascribes to it his singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world (2 Pet 1:19), a “sure word of prophecy” and “Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim 3:15), from which though heaven and earth pass away, “the smallest letter or the least stroke of a pen will not disappear by any means” (Matt 5:18).

Canon II: But, in particular, The Hebrew original of the OT which we have received and to this day do retain as handed down by the Hebrew Church, “who had been given the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2), is, not only in its consonants, but in its vowels either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points not only in its matter, but in its words, inspired by God. It thus forms, together with the Original of the New Testament the sole and complete rule of our faith and practice; and to its standard, as to a Lydian stone, all extant versions, eastern or western, ought to be applied, and wherever they differ, be conformed.

Canon III: Therefore, we are not able to approve of the opinion of those who believe that the text which the Hebrew Original exhibits was determined by man’s will alone, and do not hesitate at all to remodel a Hebrew reading

which they consider unsuitable, and amend it from the versions of the LXX and other Greek versions, the Samaritan Pentateuch, by the Chaldaic Targums, or even from other sources. They go even to the point of following the corrections that their own rational powers dictate from the various readings of the Hebrew Original itself which, they maintain, has been corrupted in various ways; and finally, they affirm that besides the Hebrew edition of the present time, there are in the versions of the ancient interpreters which differ from our Hebrew text, other Hebrew Originals. Since these versions are also indicative of ancient Hebrew Originals differing from each other, they thus bring the foundation of our faith and its sacred authority into perilous danger.³⁷

In this declaration, the formula rightly declares that preservation of Scripture is to be found in the Bible of the original languages, and ought not to be corrected by any translation, whether it is through the LXX, or any other early versions. They also affirm that it is not just the consonants, but also the vowel points or the vocalisation of it that identifies the words that are inspired and preserved by God. It also sounds a warning against those who would attempt to correct or change the words of the original Hebrew through the process of textual criticism, and that by so doing, it would “bring the foundation of our faith and its sacred authority into perilous danger.”

However, not everyone would agree that belief in the preservation of Scripture is a necessary presupposition that one must adopt when considering the text of the Bible.³⁸ Others such as William Combs would argue that preservation should be the necessary corollary of inspiration, but only in a general way, and that part of the process of preservation must necessarily include applying methods of textual criticism. However, this can never result in a complete recovery of all of God’s Words, but leave one with a text with variations that he deems is “sufficient for God’s purposes”.³⁹

These views ought to be rejected in light of God’s clear promises to preserve His Word with perfect purity for every generation. It is inconsistent for one to affirm belief in the scriptural teachings of preservation but deny that God would direct the process of preservation in a manner that results in having all the words of Scripture available to every generation. This would, in the words of Hills, result in “maximum uncertainty”,⁴⁰ for there would be confusion as to where one may locate the preserved words of God. The right understanding of the doctrine of

preservation would lead one to be able to know, by the logic of faith, where the words of God can be found and be accessible in every generation. Therefore, the presupposition of inspiration and preservation are necessary to make the right choice of Bible translation to use.

Text of the Old Testament

In the debates surrounding the modern versions controversy, disagreement usually centres around the identification of the texts used to translate the NT. Generally, all versions of the English Bible, whether modern versions or those of the Reformation period, would utilise the MT of the OT. However, although the general textual basis is the same, the approach to it would differ. In various instances, many of the modern versions would depart from the reading of the Masoretic Text and introduce emendations based on other early versions such as the LXX, Syriac, Latin Vulgate and others. Such an approach is clearly described in the prefaces to some of these modern versions:

NIV: The translators also consulted the more important early versions—the Septuagint; Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion; the Vulgate; the Syriac Peshitta; the Targums; and for the Psalms the Juxta Hebraica of Jerome. Readings from these versions were occasionally followed where the Masoretic Text seemed doubtful and where accepted principles of textual criticism showed that one or more of these textual witnesses appeared to provide the correct reading.⁴¹

ESV: In exceptional, difficult cases, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and other sources were consulted to shed possible light on the text, or if necessary, to support a divergence from the Masoretic text.⁴²

In so doing, they have utilised translations of the Hebrew text to correct the Hebrew text itself. On the other hand, the KJV translators followed the reading of the MT that they had with them, namely that of the second Rabbinic Bible of Jacob ben Chayim, published by Daniel Bomberg in 1524–5.⁴³

Text of the New Testament

Much of the debate on the textual issue centers around the text of the NT. Very broadly speaking, versions that were translated prior to the KJV and the KJV itself would be based on the TR. All modern versions (apart from the NKJV being the only modern version to be based on the TR) would be based on the critical text of the NT and

apply textual critical principles. This was the view popularised by Westcott and Hort in the text that they published, where they also outlined their principles of textual criticism.⁴⁴ Subsequent editions of the critical text, the United Bible Societies and Nestle-Aland texts would be essentially the same text, with most of the changes made to the critical apparatus and not the text itself.⁴⁵

With such a distinct divergence between the KJV and the modern versions, a careful analysis ought to be made in ascertaining which textual basis ought to be preferred.⁴⁶ An evaluation of the critical text will first be made, followed by an argument for preferring the TR as the location of the preserved text of the NT.

The Critical Text

Adherents of the critical text would often argue that through the process of textual criticism, they are able to scientifically recover the original words of Scripture. They see it to be a legitimate and needful endeavour because there is a need

to recover the original text of the New Testament from the available evidence. Two factors make New Testament textual criticism a necessary field of study. The first is that none of the original manuscripts of the New Testament has survived ... The second reason is because there are numerous mistakes in the extant copies of the New Testament.⁴⁷

While both above-mentioned points are true, it does not logically necessitate textual criticism for it fails to consider God's divine role in preserving His Word. What they also imply is that up to this point, the words have not yet been recovered or continue to be uncertain. Therefore, the task falls upon everyone that comes to the text, that he must first decide on the right reading before he can proceed with exegesis. Yet despite the much research and study over the past centuries, it seems that the critical text advocates are no nearer to the original than when they had first begun. As Eldon Epp observes:

As a parallel development beginning already in the nineteenth century, many—perhaps most—textual critics used the term *original text* more cautiously, for they realized increasingly that any certainty about the text the New Testament authors wrote was more and more elusive, especially as new manuscript discoveries brought into view more and more variant readings and as increasing complexity accompanied the application of the critical canons that were supposed to facilitate the identification of the

original readings. Hence, textual critics, at least since Samuel Tregelles in 1854, began to speak of their goal as the restoration or reconstruction of the New Testament text “as nearly as can be done on existing evidence.”⁴⁸

Likewise, leading textual critic Bart Ehrman in evaluating recent work into publishing a definitive edition of the critical text, rather frankly notes on the seemingly futile efforts of the past century to achieve the objective of recovering the original:

In my opinion, we need to reconceptualize the task of New Testament textual criticism. If the primary purpose of this discipline is to get back to the original text, we may as well admit either defeat or victory, depending on how one chooses to look at it, because we’re not going to *get* much closer to the original text than we already are. Barring some fantastic manuscript discoveries (like the autographs) or some earth-shattering alterations in text-critical method, the basic physiognomy of our texts is never going to change ... There are masses of data now available for reconstructing the text of James—several times more witnesses than available, for example, over a century ago to Westcott and Hort. How much has this mass of evidence affected the textual complexion of the book of James? Almost none at all. The two changes of the NA²⁷ text in this new attempt are completely minor. And I should point out, in both cases the text now reads exactly as it did in Westcott and Hort’s edition of 1881.⁴⁹

Therefore, by their own admission, the critical text has not recovered all the original words of Scripture, and neither can that task be achieved in the foreseeable future. The same questions over the variant readings that were adduced by the textual critics of the past centuries have not yet been answered, and the church seems to be left with an incomplete Bible.

However, for the critical text advocates, the solution does not lie in returning to the TR. Instead, they find the traditional Received Text as being woefully inadequate and maintain that it has to be only through the readings and variants of the critical text that one can have a greater certainty as to what the Word of God says.

In dismissing the TR, Metzger notes that: “its textual basis is essentially a handful of late and haphazardly collected minuscule manuscripts, and in a dozen passages its rendering is supported by no known Greek witness.”⁵⁰ The reason behind this bias against the TR and the majority text tradition is the theory first set forth by Westcott and Hort, known as the Syrian Recension.⁵¹ In this theory, it is assumed that the Byzantine Text is but a modified eclectic combination of earlier

texts such as the Western, Alexandrian and Neutral. They claim that it is but a result of “a revision made by an editor or editors in the fourth century who wished to produce a smooth, easy and complete text.” They see the Byzantine majority as no more than a “conflated text...farthest removed from the originals,”⁵² and it is therefore not to be regarded as a credible witness.

Although most scholars today have distanced themselves from this theory, they continue to reject the Byzantine text with an almost contemptuous aversion. As Metzger explains, “nearly all critics today see the Byzantine text as a later development in the history of transmission. Recent studies of the Byzantine text have shown that ... its final form represents a slowly developing tradition, not one that sprang up immediately at one time and place.”⁵³ While rejecting a singular act of recension, they still view it as a later, edited text that cannot be trusted.

In response to such a view, Harry Sturz gives much evidential proof as to why the rejection of the Byzantine text is unjustified. His research has been valuable in debunking the idea that the Byzantine text is but a later and secondary witness to the primary text. Instead, he ably proves that the Byzantine readings are not late conflated readings,⁵⁴ but have abundant papyri witnesses that date as early as the second century.⁵⁵

Therefore, there is no good reason as to why the critical text should be accepted or utilised as the textual basis for the NT.

Textus Receptus

In his article *Seven Biblical Axioms in Ascertaining the Authentic and Authoritative Texts of the Holy Scriptures*, Khoo provides a useful, biblically based metric through which one can biblically discern which text ought to form the basis of an acceptable Bible translation. These seven points demonstrate why the MT and TR ought to be the textual basis of a good Bible translation. The axioms are summarised as follows:⁵⁶

First, the Epangelical Axiom based on God’s promise to preserve His word for every generation, based on the promises given in passages such as Psalm 12:6-7 and Matthew 5:18. The text must therefore be one that can be said to have been preserved by God through every generation, with no word or letter lost at all.

Second, the linguistic axiom. This states that the inspired words of Scripture can only be found in the manuscripts and texts of the original languages, namely Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Because the breathed-out words of God (2 Tim 3:16) were penned in these languages, it logically follows that the process of preservation would occur in the original languages and not have some readings found only in a translation, whether ancient or modern.

Third, the temporal axiom. This argues that the authentic Scriptures would be those which have always been available and easily accessible to God's people, based on Jesus' promise that His words shall not pass away (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33). It would not be found in readings that have been hid from God's people for hundreds of years.

Fourth, the ecclesiastical axiom. This point teaches that it is the faithful within the church of God that would have the Word of God revealed to them (Rom 1:17) and would receive it by faith (Heb 11:6). The faithful would be guided by the Spirit of truth that guides them into all truth (John 16:13), and as sheep, always receptive to the voice and call of Christ (John 10:27). Therefore, the right texts and readings should be those which have been used by the true church and received by the faithful throughout the ages.

Fifth, the evangelistic axiom. Based on Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission issued by Christ implies that 'all things' that Christ has commanded would go out to all nations. It logically then follows that the authentic Scriptures would be found in the majority of manuscripts, for the Scriptures would have been sent out and propagated, accessible to the world, and not in the minority and often conflicting witness of a few ancient manuscripts.

Sixth, the doxological axiom. The attitude of every believer must be one that seeks to glorify God and humble himself (John 3:30). God's Word must also be magnified (Ps 138:2). In light of these principles, the textual critical approach to Scriptures ought to be rejected, for it adopts a rationalistic approach to Scripture that places man as the judge of God's Word and does not allow the providence of God to work in the preservation of Scripture. Faith in God and a regard for His working in history must be the guiding principle, and not naturalistic interpretation of evidence.

Finally, the historical axiom. This axiom acknowledges the sovereign directing hand of God in superintending every event of history, such that He would infallibly preserve His words. Two scriptural precedencies of God's providential care over the text of Scripture are cited. In the account of the receiving of the decalogue in Exodus, God gave His word to Moses again after he broke the first tables that God had given to him. And then in the account of Jeremiah 36, God again caused Jeremiah to re-record all the words that were in the scroll that Jehoiakim cut and burned up. Through this it is evidenced that God will extend His providential care over His word and ensure that it is always available to His people.

In considering these seven axioms, it becomes apparent that only the MT in the OT and the TR in the NT can fulfil all the abovementioned criteria. They have been the texts that had been used by the church throughout the ages, up until the relatively recent introduction of modern textual criticism. The textual witness for the TR is in the vast majority of extant manuscripts which have historically been used by the Reformers of the 16th century, the Puritans of the 17th centuries, in the Great Awakenings of the 18th and 19th centuries, and continue to be used by faithful believers throughout the world today. The witness can also be traced back to the writings of the church fathers and have always been extant throughout the church age. There is therefore no good reason to reject the textual basis of both the Old and New Testaments of the KJV, and based on this point, the KJV should be the translation of choice.

The Translation

A second issue that one must consider in assessing a version is the translation technique that it adopts. This is the process through which the message of the texts can be transmitted to the reader through a language which he understands—in this case, English. It is understandably not a simple task at all, given differences in the grammar, syntax and vocabularies between languages. The translator must be a master of both the original and target languages and possess the ability to translate in a way that as much of the message with all its nuances can be conveyed into the target language without any loss or distortion of meaning.

However, there is more than just language proficiency that is required. A brief perusal of the various Bible versions available in the

market will quickly show that not all translational techniques are the same, for a single verse can be translated in various ways, resulting in different phrasings and sometimes different nuances of meaning as well. Much of the difference lies in the translational philosophy or technique that is utilised in producing the version. While translation can be an inexact science, with some measure of subjectivity in its execution, nevertheless there can and should be objective guidelines and methodologies that are set to govern one's translation.

Generally, there are two contrasting schools of thought upon which all translations can be measured against. They are two ends of a spectrum, with the method commonly known as Formal Equivalence on one end, and Dynamic Equivalence on the other.⁵⁷

Formal Equivalence

Formal equivalence, or 'essentially literal translation',⁵⁸ is the phrase used to describe the translational methodology that seeks to translate a passage as literally as possible, attempting to reflect the surface structure of the original language without sacrificing readability and coherence. It is defined as such:

An essentially literal translation translates the meaning of every word in the original language, understood correctly in its context, into its nearest English equivalent, and attempts to express the result with ordinary English word order and style, as far as is possible without distorting the meaning of the original. Sometimes such a translation is also called a "word-for-word" translation.... The main point is that essentially literal translations attempt to represent *the meaning of every word* in the original in some way or other in the resultant translation.⁵⁹

With this method, the translator seeks to preserve the words of the original as much as the technicalities between the languages allow for it. In so doing, it allows for God's Words to be transmitted to the reader, and not be first interpreted by the translator. The reader then is the one who performs the exegesis for himself and is able to explore the full range of meanings that are inherent in the text.

The scriptural basis for adopting such an approach to translation can be found in passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16, Psalm 12:6, Matthew 4:4, Revelation 22:18-19 and others. The key thought in each of these passages is the importance of not just the thoughts but the very words of Scripture. The very minute details of the choices of words that God

used, down to the personal pronouns, the difference between singular and plural can be seen in passages such as Matthew 22:41-45 and Galatians 3:16, where theological concepts were debated based on a single word of Scripture.⁶⁰

Since every single word is important to God, the translator must be careful to ensure that the force of each word is meaningfully transmitted to the reader. Having said that, it does not mean that the translator's role is simply to find an equivalent English word for every word that appears in the original, for that would result in an unreadable product in English, more like an interlinear than a translation. There would be instances where idioms and metaphors in the original would make no sense if literally translated and would therefore require a freer translation. Other times, there may not be a single word in the target language that can accurately transmit the meaning of the original and may require two or more words. Nonetheless the abiding principle is that the meaning of each word in the original ought to be translated with as much accuracy and clarity as possible.

This was the philosophy of translation of the earlier translators of the Bible, such as that of the KJV and the works of Tyndale and others before it.⁶¹ It was also the philosophy behind the earlier modern versions such as the RV, ASV, RSV, NASV and NKJV, though applied to varying degrees. Some more recent translations, such as the English Standard Version (ESV) and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) have also adopted such a translation technique.⁶²

Dynamic Equivalence

A more recent development in translation philosophy is the idea of dynamic equivalence, that seeks to translate Scripture in a more thought-for-thought manner, such that the meaning of Scripture is emphasised over the words. Eugene Nida, who coined this term and popularised such a technique, describes the purposes of translation as such:

- (1) Contextual consistency should have priority over purely verbal consistency,
- (2) dynamic equivalence has priority over formal correspondence, (3) orality has priority over scribal forms, and (4) expressions that are used by and are acceptable to the intended audience have priority over expressions that may be traditionally more prestigious.⁶³

He rejects what he terms the "older focus in translating", which emphasised the form of the message, reproducing the rhythm, word

play, chiasmus, parallelism of Scripture, and asserts that there ought to be a new focus. This new method places a greater emphasis on the “response of the receptor”. The translator ought then to determine what the receptor’s response to the translated message ought to be, comparing it to how the original audience would have reacted to the message when it was first given in its original setting.⁶⁴

With such a philosophy, the translator necessarily must also be an interpreter, for he must understand the full context of the message in the original, anticipate what response it would have evoked, and then attempt to recreate such a scenario in the target language. Often, whole sentences and verses would have to be rephrased and retold in modern contemporary language. Cultural idioms, metaphors, figures of speech and euphemistic terms would all have to be dropped and converted to modern terms that the reader can readily understand.

Such an approach gives rise to multiple problems. For one, fidelity to the words in the original is lost for the translator is free to rephrase the words as he wishes, for it is the meaning of the passage, rather than the words that are important. Ranges of meaning in a given text, whereby there may have been some deliberate ambiguity in the passage itself, are lost, for the translator is the one who chooses a meaning and forces it upon the reader. Emphasis that may have been in the original, through means of repetition or choice of particular word orders, can sometimes be lost as well. Details may then be added, for in the rephrasing and choice of the translator’s words, ideas are added to the text that were not in the original. As a result, the reader is now placed a step further from the original, for what he is reading is not just a translation, but an interpretation that would invariably be influenced by the theological leanings of the translators.

In summary, the technique of dynamic equivalence should not be accepted as a valid means of translating Scripture. It may be a useful reference in helping one to understand the meaning of Scripture or in helping to interpret some more difficult passages of Scripture. Yet in many cases it falls short of giving an accurate rendition of what the words of God intend to convey in the original. In some cases, the translation provided could even be a wrong interpretation of what the original actually means. Therefore, in the choice of a translation, preference

should always be given to one that adopts a formal equivalence method of translating Scripture.

Conclusion

Based on the above-mentioned criteria, it has been shown that the only acceptable English version is the King James Version and must be the one used in reading and worship.

The King James Version is based on the inspired and preserved texts of Scripture, namely the MT of the OT and the TR of the NT. There were no emendations made to the texts of the original, or any modern textual critical methods applied in the process of identifying the words of Scripture.

In terms of its translation, it was translated using the formal equivalence method, whereby words of the original were translated as faithfully and close to the original as possible, with any additional words added to smoothen the reading given in italics.

Controversies will continue so long as people have different opinions on these various points, and on many other points not discussed in the scope of this paper. Given the widely diverse range of commitment to fidelity of Scripture and concern for truth amongst Christians today, it is unlikely to be an issue that can be resolved in the foreseeable future, especially given the complexities and different viewpoints of these issues. No matter what objective and Biblical proofs given, many will simply make a choice based on personal preference or convenience.

Nonetheless it has been shown that Christians would certainly do well to retain the use of the KJV, and there is no good reason to reject it from the pulpit or the private closet. Among the available versions, it alone fulfils all the requirements of a faithful English translation, and ought to be recognised as such.

Notes

¹ One such example is the fallout between various Bible-Presbyterian Churches and the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) in Singapore over the dispute of whether to use the King James Version, and also the question of the preservation of the texts underlying the King James Version. This dispute eventually led to a lawsuit between Life Bible-Presbyterian Church and FEBC. For a chronology of events see Jeffrey Khoo, ed, "The Battle for the Bible Between Far Eastern Bible College and Life Bible-Presbyterian Church: Chronology of Events," *The Burning Bush* 18, no. 2 (July 2012): 86–108.

² Roy E Beacham and Kevin T Bauder, eds, *One Bible Only? Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001), 13.

³ James R White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), 1–5.

⁴ These are generalisations painted in very broad strokes. The debate would be loudest and most vigorous from those at either end of the spectrum who would hold to their positions more dogmatically and see theological implications in rejecting the positions that they hold to. Many in the middle-ground do not see the choice of Bible version as a big issue and would simply have personal preference as a main criterion. The purpose of this paper is to examine the opinions of those involved in the debate, and not to exhaustively study every single position.

⁵ For example, while claiming to write a book “because of a desire for peace in the church of Jesus Christ”, yet on the same page White directs the blame on those who would defend and seek to use the KJV: “Responsibility must be laid at the door of the KJV Only camp for the destruction of many Christian churches. Church splits have taken place as the direct result of the influence of KJV Only materials on elders, deacons, and other influential members.” White, *The King James Only Controversy*, v.

⁶ Paul D Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 273–281.

⁷ Wegner, *Journey from Texts to Translations*, 281.

⁸ C P Hallihan, *The Authorised Version: A Wonderful and Unfinished History* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 2010), 21–24.

⁹ John Foxe, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, ed William Byron Forbush (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.), accessed February 12, 2017, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/foxe/martyrs/files/martyrs.html>.

¹⁰ For an assessment of Tyndale’s translation and its impact on the AV, see Jonathan D Moore, “The Authorised Version: The Influence of William Tyndale’s Translations” (Oxford, UK: Trinitarian Bible Society, 2011), 1–19, accessed February 12, 2017, <http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.tbsbibles.org/resource/collection/255F0F61-81C1-4992-BC04-CA72788DF0BB/238-1.pdf>.

¹¹ Foxe, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*.

¹² The *Textus Receptus* describes a group of published editions of the Greek New Testament. It was a phrase coined in 1633 due to the term used by the Elzevir brothers in the preface of their second edition of the Greek New Testament, which stated that it was “the text now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted.” Subsequently, this term became a catchword to refer to the form of the Greek texts found in the editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, Elzevir, and the later work of Scrivener, all of which form the basis for the King James Version and of all the principal Protestant translations in the languages of Europe prior to 1881. Summarised from Bruce M Metzger and Bart D Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 152.

¹³ The following is summarised from Hallihan, *The Authorised Version*, 39–51.

¹⁴ For a detailed look at the profile of the translators of the KJV, see Gustavus S Paine, *The Men Behind The King James Version* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977).

¹⁵ Rules 8–12 to guide the translation process: 8. Every particular Man of each Company, to take the same Chapter or Chapters, and having translated or amended them severally by himself, where he thinketh good, all to meet together, confer what they have done, and agree for their Parts what shall stand. 9. As any one Company hath dispatched any one Book in this Manner they shall send it to the rest, to be considered of seriously and judiciously, for His Majesty is very careful in this Point. 10. If any Company, upon the Review of the Book so sent, doubt or differ upon any Place, to send them Word thereof; note the Place, and withal send the Reasons, to which if they consent not, the Difference to be compounded at the general Meeting, which is to be of the chief Persons of each Company, at the end of the Work. 11. When any Place of special Obscurity is doubted of, Letters to be directed by Authority, to send to any Learned Man in the Land, for his Judgement of such a Place. 12. Letters to be sent from every Bishop to the rest of his Clergy, admonishing them of this Translation in hand; and to move and charge as many skilful in the Tongues; and having taken pains in that kind, to send his particular Observations to the Company, either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford. Paine, *The Men Behind The King James Version*, 70–71.

¹⁶ Paine, *The Men Behind The King James Version*, 77.

¹⁷ Hallihan, *The Authorised Version*, 54–56.

¹⁸ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, rev ed (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1995), 6–7.

¹⁹ Westminster Confession of Faith 1.8.

²⁰ Early textual critics would be men such as Brian Walton (1600–61), John Fell ((1625–86), John Mill (1645–1707) and Edward Wells (1667–1727). Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 155.

²¹ Note that these variant readings were not unknown to Erasmus and the rest of the early editors of the TR, as Hills explains: “Almost all the important variant readings known to scholars today were already known to Erasmus more than 460 years ago and discussed in the notes which he placed after the text in his editions of the Greek New Testament.” Edward F Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 4th ed (Iowa: The Christian Research Press, 1984), 199–200. Thus it is clear that he consciously rejected the variant minority readings, but instead by the logic of faith, took a Byzantine priority in his editing of the TR. This is the same logic of faith that were followed by the succeeding editors of the TR.

²² Some examples of the Church’s response against the early rise of textual criticism can be found in Metzger’s biographical account of various early textual critics of the 17th and 18th centuries. Brian Walton’s (1600–61) Polyglot Bible, which was published in 1655–7 in six folio volumes, was attacked by Puritan John Owen, for it contained a systematic collection of variant readings and critical apparatus. Likewise for John Mill (1645–1707) who studied New Testament textual criticism for 30 years and published an “epoch-making edition of the Greek text”, which included a collection of variant readings from numerous sources, and also a prolegomena “in which he dealt with the canon of the New Testament and the transmission of the text,” he came under fire from Daniel Whitby who was alarmed by the great number of variant readings that Mill had collected. Whitby argued that the authority of the Holy Scriptures was in peril and that the assembling of critical evidence was tantamount to tampering with the text. Summarised from Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 153–155.

²³ See Hills, *King James Version Defended*, 63–67 and Metzger, Text of the New Testament, 165–174 for a summary of the work and influence of these men on modern textual criticism.

²⁴ Wegner, *Journey from Texts to Translations*, 316.

²⁵ Burgon demonstrates how the revision committee, under the influence of Westcott and Hort, had reneged from their original intent “to introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the Authorised Version, consistently with faithfulness”, where only “plain and clear errors” were to be corrected. As a result, multiple changes were made based on their strong adherence to the readings of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Dean John William Burgon, *Revision Revised*, 127–130, 154–164, 400–403.

²⁶ Wegner, *Journey from Texts to Translations*, 317.

²⁷ For example, Burgon gives a scathing review: “How it happened that, with so many splendid Scholars sitting round their table, they should have produced a Translation which, for the most part, reads like a first-rate school-boy’s crib,—tasteless, unlovely, harsh, unidiomatic;—servile without being really faithful,—pedantic without being really learned;—an unreadable Translation, in short; the result of a vast amount of labour indeed, but of wondrous little skill:—how all this has come about, it were utterly useless at this time of day to enquire.” Burgon, *Revision Revised* (Collingswood: The Old Paths Publications, 2008), 238.

²⁸ Wegner, *Journey from Texts to Translations*, 318.

²⁹ Ibid, 317.

³⁰ Ibid, 318–319.

³¹ Ibid, 323.

³² The scope of this paper is not to examine and assess each individual translation available, but to establish broad principles on how to evaluate them. For articles that examine and critique each modern version, see the articles on the Trinitarian Bible Society’s website, at <http://www.tsbibles.org/page/articles>.

³³ Benjamin B Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed Samuel G Craig (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1948), 131.

³⁴ A common objection to this verse being used to prove the doctrine of preservation is that the “them” in verse 7 is a mistranslation of a masculine pronominal suffix, and should not refer to the words of God, but the godly who are oppressed. However, there are grammatical instances where a masculine suffix can refer to feminine substantives (Gen 31:9, 32:15; Exod 1:21). From the context of the verse, the verb “keep” should refer to the closer antecedent noun of the words of God, and not the godly man in verse 1. See Suan Yew Quek, “Did God Promise To Preserve His Words?: Interpreting Psalm 12:6–7,” *The Burning Bush* 10, no. 2 (July 2004): 96–98.

³⁵ WCF 1.8

³⁶ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power: The Age of Religious Conflict* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2016), 4:123–4, 151.

³⁷ Martin I Klauber, trans, “The Formula Consensus Helvetica (1675),” *Trinity Journal* 11 (1990): 103–123.

³⁸ See for example Wallace, who argues that “the doctrine of the preservation of scripture has neither historical roots, nor any direct biblical basis”, and therefore

should not be “elevating such to the level of doctrine” Daniel B Wallace, “Inspiration, Preservation and New Testament Criticism,” *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (1992): 21–51.

³⁹ See Combs, who refutes Wallace’s rejection of the doctrine of preservation, but also rejects the notion of jot and tittle perfection, and therefore he says that it is not possible “to provide a perfectly pure text with no variations. It was sufficient for God’s purpose to preserve his Word in copies of the autographs whose exact wording contains some variation. This level of purity is sufficient for God’s purposes” William Combs, “The Preservation of Scripture,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (Fall 2000): 3–44.

⁴⁰ “But what if we ignore the providential preservation of the Scriptures and deal with the text of the Holy Bible in the same way in which we deal with the texts of other ancient books? If we do this, we are following the logic of unbelief, which leads to maximum uncertainty. When we handle the text of the holy Bible in this way, we are behaving as unbelievers behave ... In short, unless we follow the logic of faith, we can be certain of nothing concerning the Bible and its text.” Hills, *King James Version Defended*, 225.

⁴¹ The Committee on Bible Translation, “Preface to the New International Version,” NIV, 1983, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/niv-preface.html>.

⁴² The Translational Oversight Committee, “Preface to the English Standard Version,” ESV, 2001, accessed December 6, 2017, <https://www.esv.org/preface/>.

⁴³ Debra E Anderson, “A Brief History of the Hebrew Bible,” Trinitarian Bible Society, accessed December 5, 2017, <http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.tbsbibles.org/resource/collection/9D62A49E-9FF0-410B-B3CB-23A3C5EAE1CF/A-Brief-History-of-the-Hebrew-Bible.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, eds, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1897).

⁴⁵ As Eldon Epp observes, ‘it may surprise many to learn that, over a period of eighty years, these Nestle and NA texts (through the twenty-fifth edition) “remained the same (apart from a few minor changes adopted by Erwin Nestle—no more than a dozen at most)”, and therefore also maintained their same closeness to Westcott and Hort. Yet ... NA²⁶ and now NA²⁷ (with the UBS equivalent texts) still remained closer to Westcott and Hort than to other editions, in spite of the striking fact that in the deliberations over UBS² (1968) the editorial committee (or more precisely its majority) decided to abandon the theories of Westcott-Hort and the ‘Western non-interpolations’. Moreover, we are informed by the preface of UBS³ (1975) that “more than five hundred changes” were made against the second edition, and still the closeness to Westcott and Hort remained. Eldon Jay Epp, “Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism: Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty First Century,” in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed David Alan Black (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 49.

⁴⁶ Aside from the Critical Text (CT) and *Textus Receptus* (TR) position, there is also the Majority Text position, as put forth in Zane C Hodges and Arthur L Farstad, eds, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, 2nd ed (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985). However as there is no major English version that is based on that text, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss that position.

⁴⁷ David Alan Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 12.

⁴⁸ Eldon Jay Epp, "Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism," 71.

⁴⁹ Bart D Ehrman, "Novum Testamentum Graecum Editio Critica Maior: An Evaluation," *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 3 (1998), <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/v03/Ehrman1998.html>.

⁵⁰ Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 152.

⁵¹ See Burgon, *Revision Revised*, 266-294 for a sound and comprehensive description and refutation of this theory. Also, Jakob Van Bruggen, *The Ancient Text of the New Testament* (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1976), 14-36.

⁵² Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 177.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 279-280.

⁵⁴ Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type & New Testament Textual Criticism* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 53-95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 137-223.

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Khoo, "Seven Biblical Axioms in Ascertaining the Authentic and Authoritative Texts of the Holy Scriptures," *The Burning Bush* 17, no. 2 (July 2011): 74-95.

⁵⁷ Wayne Grudem et al, *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005).

⁵⁸ Phrase used by Ryken, Grudem and other translators of the ESV. They acknowledge the term formal equivalence and generally agree that it refers to what they are describing, but they see "essentially literal" as a more accurate term to describe such a translation. See Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002); Grudem et al, *Translating Truth*.

⁵⁹ Emphasis original. For a chart that lists the major Bible translations showing how they fall along a spectrum from the most literal to that which inclines towards more dynamic equivalence and paraphrastic tendencies, see Grudem et al, *Translating Truth*, 22.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 25-29.

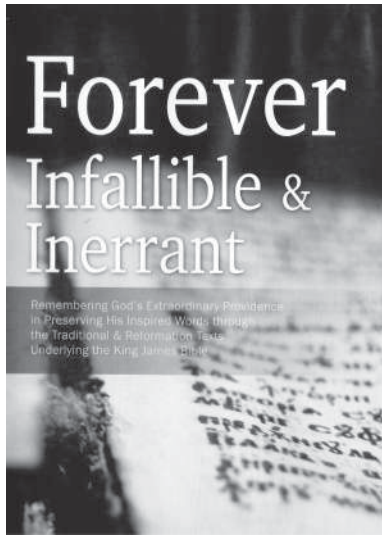
⁶¹ The way in which the King James Bible translates the Greek and Hebrew originals suggests that the translators tried to (1) ensure that every word in the original had an English equivalent, (2) highlight all words added to the original for the sake of intelligibility, and (3) follow the word order of the original where possible. Ryken, *The Word of God in English*.

⁶² For example, the preface to the ESV reads as such: 'The ESV is an "essentially literal" translation that seeks as far as possible to reproduce the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. As such, its emphasis is on "word-for-word" correspondence, at the same time taking full account of differences in grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. Thus it seeks to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and exact force of the original.' The Translational Oversight Committee, "Preface to the English Standard Version."

⁶³ Eugene A Nida and Charles R Taber, *The Theory And Practice Of Translation* (Boston: Brill, 2003), vii.

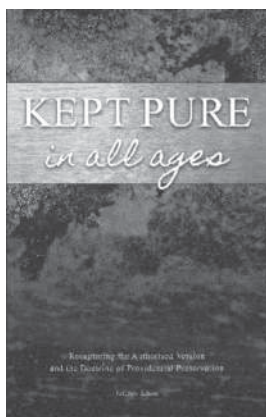
⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

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Jeffrey Khoo, ed, *Forever Infallible and Inerrant: Remembering God's Extraordinary Providence in Preserving His Inspired Words through the Traditional and Reformation Texts Underlying the King James Bible* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 2011). Download: <https://www.febc.edu.sg/assets/pdfs/vpp/foreverinfallibleinerrant.pdf>.

A REVIEW OF *KEPT PURE IN ALL AGES: RECAPTURING THE AUTHORISED VERSION AND THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION*



Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages: Recapturing the Authorised Version and the Doctrine of Providential Preservation*. 2nd edition. Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College/The Old Paths Publications, 2021. 172pp. Amazon.sg \$38.00. Paperback. An AI review.

Kept Pure in All Ages by Jeffrey Khoo is a meticulous examination of the doctrine of the preservation of the Bible, tracing its historical roots and theological underpinnings. Khoo, a respected theologian and pastor, delves into a subject that is crucial for understanding the foundation of Christian faith—the belief that the Scriptures have been divinely preserved through the ages, free from corruption.

The book is structured in a clear and logical manner, beginning with an introduction to the doctrine of biblical preservation and its importance. Khoo then systematically explores historical instances of how this doctrine has been upheld, referencing key figures and pivotal moments in church history that have contributed to the belief in the Bible's divine preservation.

Khoo's scholarship is evident throughout the book. He provides a thorough analysis of both Old and New Testament texts, supporting his arguments with extensive citations from early church fathers, reformers, and modern theologians. His defence of the inspired original language text of the King James Version (KJV) as the preserved text is particularly noteworthy. Khoo argues that the KJV, which is based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek Textus Receptus, aligns closely

with the original manuscripts that have been divinely preserved, making a compelling case for its continued use and reverence.

One of the strengths of *Kept Pure in All Ages* is Khoo's ability to engage with opposing viewpoints respectfully and thoughtfully. He addresses criticisms and alternative theories regarding biblical preservation, providing counterarguments that are both theologically sound and historically informed. This balanced approach makes the book a valuable resource for scholars, students, and anyone interested in the integrity of the biblical text.

However, the book's academic tone and depth of detail might be challenging for some readers, particularly those new to theological studies. The extensive footnotes and references, while essential for academic rigour, can sometimes interrupt the flow of the narrative. Additionally, Khoo's strong stance on the superiority of the KJV might not resonate with readers who prefer modern translations of the Bible.

In conclusion, *Kept Pure in All Ages* is a significant contribution to the field of biblical studies. Jeffrey Khoo's thorough research and articulate presentation provide a robust defence of the doctrine of biblical preservation. This book is highly recommended for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of how the Scriptures have been maintained throughout history, affirming the belief that the Bible, as God's Word, has indeed been "kept pure in all ages."

FANNY CROSBY: HER LIFE AND SONGS

Joycelyn Chng



“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:1-3).

Who was Fanny Crosby and why is her story worth telling? Officially named Frances Jane Crosby, she was a prolific hymnwriter of more than 8,000 hymn and gospel song texts and can be said to be a household name amongst Christians. It is not uncommon to find a large number of her hymns published in any one hymnal. In fact, it has been noted that many of her hymns have played an important part in evangelical worship through the years. Her reputation as “the remarkable leading poet of the gospel hymn movement” would be justified by virtue of her immense contribution to Christian hymnody. Nevertheless, there was something more to Fanny Crosby that has

endeared her to Christians and caused her life story to be recounted in various forms time and time again for the edification of the saints.

Her Blindness

Fanny Crosby was born in New York on March 24, 1820, to John and Mercy Crosby. At the tender age of six weeks, she developed a bout of sickness which led to inflammation of her eyes. She was subsequently blinded following improper medical treatment by a local physician. When she was six months old, her father died.

Despite suffering these setbacks early on in her life, Fanny Crosby did not become bitter. She was brought up by her mother and particularly her maternal grandmother who taught her the Word of God and guided her in memorising long Bible passages.

Years later, Fanny Crosby would say of her blindness, "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life. Although it might have been a mistake on the doctor's part, it was God's intention that I should live in physical darkness all my life so as to be better prepared to sing His praise and to lead others from spiritual darkness into eternal light. With sight I would have been too distracted to have written thousands of hymns." Arguably, Fanny Crosby's persistent faith in God despite her physical blindness is the reason her life story has such profound impact on all who are acquainted with it.

Her Talent

Fanny Crosby displayed a special poetic talent early in life. At the age of eight, she wrote her first recorded poem, which revealed her joy despite her blindness:

*O what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world,
Contented I will be;
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot and I won't.*

She published her first volume of secular poems at the age of twenty-four and became a popular secular poet, while also teaching at the New York School for the Blind. It was only when she was in her

early forties, that she began to write gospel hymn lyrics through the encouragement of William Bradbury, a well-known church musician. Fanny Crosby testified that she then became the “happiest creature in all the land.” Indeed, there can be no better way to use one’s God-given talent than in the service of the Giver Himself (cf. 1 Pet 4:10). Fanny Crosby also wrote hymns using over 200 pen names. It is said that she wrote three new hymns a week at one stage in her life, a testament to the poetic talent God had blessed her with.

Her Hymns

Some of Fanny Crosby’s universally known hymns include *All the Way My Saviour Leads Me*, *Blessed Assurance*, *Rescue the Perishing*, *Saved by Grace*, *To God Be the Glory* and *My Saviour First of All*. One oft-told story pertains to the writing of the hymn, *My Saviour First of All*. A well-meaning Scotch minister had remarked to her, “I think it is a great pity that the Master, when He showered so many gifts upon you, did not give you sight.” She responded without skipping a beat, “Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition to my Creator, it would have been that I should be born blind?” “Why?” asked the surprised clergyman. “Because, when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Saviour.”

Other hymns such as *Rescue the Perishing*, based on Luke 14:23, and *Saved by Grace*, were used frequently by Ira Sankey in his evangelistic campaigns with D. L. Moody. Sankey testified of how God had greatly used these hymns to convict many to repent of their sins.

Her Faith

Fanny Crosby was a prayerful woman of faith. She was known to have never written a hymn text without first seeking the Lord in prayer on bended knees, asking Him to guide her in the writing. One of her most beloved hymns, *All the Way My Saviour Leads Me*, was the product of an experience she had of God answering her prayer. She needed five dollars desperately one day, and with no means to obtain this amount, she did the one thing she knew and prayed to God for help. Very shortly after, a stranger came by and gave her exactly five dollars. She wrote the poem immediately and Dr Robert Lowry set it to music.

Though well-versed in the Bible from a young age, Fanny Crosby came to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ personally only at the age of thirty-one. God used the cholera outbreak in New York City to awaken her spiritually and cause her to repent of her sins, trusting in Jesus personally to save her. It would be some thirteen years later that she gave herself fully to the writing of gospel hymn texts. Although she had a relatively late start in the service of God through hymn-writing, she redoubled her efforts and also served fervently as a city missions worker. The Lord bestowed upon her many years of faithful and fruitful ministry, calling her home at a ripe old age of ninety-five.

It is recorded that each time Fanny Crosby wrote a hymn, she prayed that it would bring people to Christ. She always looked forward to hearing reports of how her hymns had been used by God to lead souls to the Saviour, and it was her prayer that God would continually allow her to be used in this manner as long as she lived. God most certainly answered her prayer above and beyond what she had asked for (cf. Eph 3:20), as till this day He is still using her hymns to convict sinners and comfort and edify the saints. It is apt to conclude on this note, in Fanny Crosby's own words taken from the hymn, *To God Be the Glory*:

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.*

CANTATA

**Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy and Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church
Mrs Jemima Khoo and True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church**

At the True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church camp in June 2024, a cantata entitled "Fanny Crosby - Her Life and Songs" was presented. This presentation was four years in the making. It all started in early 2020, when the late Mrs Jemima Khoo (nee Tow) planned a cantata on Fanny Crosby to be presented at the church camp that was to be held in Penang in June that year. It was an adaptation of a presentation that Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church had done 15 years earlier, with permission from the Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy. Roles were assigned and the choirs were readied, but we never got round to rehearsing as the

COVID-19 pandemic curtailed all plans. The church camp was eventually cancelled, and the cantata shelved.



When it was announced that the 2024 church camp would be held in Penang, the Lord placed a burden in sister Judith d’Silva’s heart to complete the work that was begun by the late sister Jemima and present the cantata in loving memory of her. With Pastor Jeffrey Khoo’s blessing, sister Judith and brother Han Ming Kuang assembled a team and started preparing for the cantata. At the church camp, weeks of rehearsals culminated in the presentation of the Fanny Crosby story interweaved with the singing of her hymns by the choirs and the congregation. By God’s grace and to His glory, many campers were much ministered to through the presentation.

The cantata was presented once again at the 21st anniversary thanksgiving of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church on the Lord’s Day, 6 October 2024.

Choir: *Saviour, More than Life to Me*

Narrator:

Such was the testimony of Frances Jane Crosby, or Fanny Crosby as she is more commonly known.

Born on the 24th of March 1820 in New York, Fanny was a blind poet, lyricist, composer and speaker. Although she wanted most to be remembered as a home missions worker to the poor, she is in fact best

remembered as one of the most prolific hymn writers in church history, writing more than 8,000 hymns and gospel songs, with more than 100 million copies printed. By 1900, Fanny Crosby was a household name and she was known as the “Queen of Gospel Song Writers”.

Hundreds of her hymns were published in hymnbooks under one of almost 200 pseudonyms because some publishers were hesitant to have so many hymns by one person in their hymnals. The crusade musician Ira Sankey, who worked together with revivalist D L Moody, once remarked that the success of their evangelical campaigns was due, more than any other human factor, to the use of Fanny Crosby’s hymns.

Fanny’s unparalleled powers of memorisation and love of the poetic would become the tools of her trade and the means to change the lives of so many people.

Choir: Redeemed

Narrator:

Fanny’s writings were not limited to Christian themes. She also wrote more than 1,000 secular poems and collaborated in writing popular secular and patriotic songs and at least five cantatas on biblical and patriotic themes.

Fanny was the only child of John and Mercy Crosby. When Fanny was only six weeks old, she was blinded by improper medical treatment. Years later, when telling her life story, Fanny explained:

Fanny:

It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life. Although it might have been a mistake on the doctor’s part, it was God’s intention that I should live in physical darkness all my life so as to be better prepared to sing His praise and to lead others from spiritual darkness into eternal light. With sight I would have been too distracted to have written thousands of hymns.

Narrator:

However, Fanny had such an excellent spirit even during her childhood that her first recorded poem read:

Fanny (Child):

*O what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,*

*I am resolved that in this world,
Contented I will be;
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot and I won't.*

Narrator:

Fanny's father died when she was an infant so Fanny's grandmother cared for and nurtured her as her mother had to go out to work. She spent long hours reading the Bible to the child and helped her memorise Scripture. As a child, she memorised five chapters each week, so that by the time she was 15, she could recite the Four Gospels, the Pentateuch, the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon and many of the Psalms. The times that Fanny spent with grandma made such an impression upon Fanny that years later she wrote:

Fanny:

The great fortune that I had during my young days was that I was taught the Bible. I could recite many parts of the Bible without a mistake. I also knew a great number of poems.

Choir: *Tell Me the Story of Jesus*

Narrator:

When she was 15, Fanny enrolled in the New York Institution for the Blind. It was an answer to prayer as she longed to receive an education, like that available to other children. She remained there for eight years as a student, another two years as a graduate student and then as a teacher of grammar, history, and rhetoric, until her marriage in 1858. Here she learned to play the piano, organ, harp, and guitar and became a good soprano singer. Here, as well, her writing skills developed.

While at school, her poetic gift started to attract attention from students and teachers. One day, Mr Jones, the superintendent of the school, called Fanny into his office. She was in for a great surprise. Fanny remembers the meeting this way:

Mr Jones:

Fanny, your gift at poetry has brought you much fame here in the school and a great deal of flattery too. Do not trust a flatterer, Fanny. Remember that all the abilities or talents that you have come from God.

Fanny:

Yes, Mr Jones was right in telling me that I should believe that it is the great God above that deserves all credit for my accomplishments, for all great gifts come from Him. May God's name be exalted always.

Choir: *To God be the Glory*

Narrator:

Fanny did not see her need to accept Christ as her personal Saviour until the age of 31. During this time, there was a cholera outbreak in New York City and for seven long months, between 500 and 800 people were dying of the disease every week. In this atmosphere of death and gloom, Fanny became increasingly introspective over her soul's welfare. She began to realise that something was lacking in her spiritual life. She knew that she was wrapped up in social, political and educational reform, and did not have a true love for God in her heart. It was when she was attending a revival meeting at the Old John's Street Methodist Church in New York City that she went forward to get an assurance of her salvation.

Fanny:

I had heard the messages often and could recite verbatim from many parts of the Bible and yet I did not know the author of the Bible in a real and personal way. In the church, when they began to sing the grand old hymn, "*Alas and Did My Saviour Bleed*", and when they reached the third line of the fifth stanza, "Here Lord, I give myself away. 'Tis all that I can do", my very soul was flooded with celestial light. I repented of my sins and trusted in Jesus who died for me with my whole heart. I was gloriously saved!

Choir: *Near the Cross*

Narrator:

While serving as a teacher at the New York Institution for the Blind, Fanny Crosby met Alexander Van Alstyne, who was also a blind musician. The two were married in 1858 when Fanny was 38 years old.

A year later, tragedy struck when their infant daughter died suddenly. This event was something that Fanny Crosby would never discuss with anyone throughout her life.

Although Fanny had believed in the Lord and was saved, it took some time for her ministry in hymn writing to materialise.

Fanny:

I started writing hymns at age 24 but it was not until I was 44 that I discovered my true vocation as a hymn writer. In 1864, I was introduced to Mr William Bradbury, a famous writer of hymn music.

Narrator:

Her first hymn was a Sunday school hymn written for William Bradbury entitled “We Are Going, We Are Going, to a Home Beyond the Skies”. From that point on in 1864 to her passing in 1915, Fanny continued to write many more poems and hymns and was able to support herself with her writings for the publishing company, Biglow & Maine Co, where she wrote nearly 4,000 hymns. She often composed six or seven hymns a day—all composed entirely in her mind. She was normally able to work on as many as 12 hymns at a one time before dictating them to a scribe. She describes the role of prayer in her hymn writing:

Fanny:

It may seem a little old-fashioned, always to begin one’s work with prayer, but I never undertake a hymn without first asking the good Lord to be my inspiration.

Narrator:

Also, she set a goal of winning a million people to the Lord through her hymns, and so whenever she wrote a hymn, she prayed that it would bring people to Christ. She believed that, since the hymns were consecrated to winning souls, God could choose to work miracles through them. She kept careful records of those reported to have been saved through her hymns.

The first hymn she wrote was eventually performed at Bradbury’s funeral in 1868.

Choir: *We are Going*

Fanny:

As I stood by the casket, I could not refrain from crying out. And then, I heard a clear beautiful voice from somewhere in the congregation telling me to persevere in my work. After Mr William Bradbury's death, I continued writing many hymns. This time, it was for Mr William Howard Doane, a composer and friend of mine. One day, he came to me hurriedly and exclaimed!

Mr Doane:

Miss Fanny, I have exactly 40 minutes before my train leaves. I am attending a state-wide Sunday school convention in Cincinnati, Ohio and I need a new hymn for the boys and girls. Here is the melody. (*Keyboard plays the first line of 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus'*). Can you write the words for it?

Fanny:

Your music says, "Safe in the Arms of Jesus". What could be more appropriate for boys and girls at a Sunday school convention? There has been a Bible verse ringing in my mind—"Underneath are the everlasting arms". Then followed a space of twenty minutes, during which I was unconscious of all else except the work I was doing. At the end of that time, I recited the words to "Safe in the Arms of Jesus". Mr Doane copied them, and had time to catch his train.

Choir: *Safe in the Arms of Jesus*

Narrator:

Fanny Crosby's hymns were always popular and she was invited to speak at many places where mission work was carried out. On one occasion in 1868, she was speaking at a state prison.

Fanny:

After I had spoken and some of the hymns were sung, I heard one of the prisoners cry out in a pleading voice, "Good Lord, do not pass me by". Following Howard Doane's suggestions, I wrote a hymn that evening incorporating the line, "Pass me not, O gentle Saviour".

Choir: *Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour*

Fanny:

It was in the year 1869 and I was addressing a large number of working men on a hot summer evening when a thought kept forcing

itself on my mind that some mother's boy must be rescued that night or he might be eternally lost. So I made a pressing plea that if there was a boy present who had turned his back on the things of God and his parents, he should come to me at the end of the service. A young man of 18 came forward and said:

Young Man:

Did you mean me, Miss Crosby? I promised my mother to meet her in heaven. But, as I am now living, that will be impossible.

Fanny:

We prayed for him and he finally arose with a new light in his eyes and exclaimed triumphantly:

Young Man:

Now, I can meet my mother in heaven for I have found God!

Narrator:

A few days before, Mr Doane had sent Fanny the theme for a new song, "Rescue the Perishing," based on Luke 14:23. While she sat in the New York mission that evening, the line came to her "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying". She could think of nothing else that night. When she arrived home, she went to work on the hymn at once and before she slept, it was ready for the melody. Mr Doane wrote the beautiful and touching music of this hymn.

"Rescue the Perishing" became the "theme song of the home missions movement" and was "perhaps the most popular city mission song."

Choir: *Rescue the Perishing*

Narrator:

In 1875, Fanny Crosby wrote the hymn "All the Way my Saviour Leads Me" which is one of her best-known hymns, and this was her first hymn to be set to music by Dr Robert Lowry.

A frequently told story about his hymn relates that it came to Fanny as a result of prayer. One day, she was desperately in need of five dollars and did not know where she could obtain this amount. As was her custom, she began to pray about the matter. Within a few minutes, a stranger appeared at her door with just the right amount.

Fanny:

I have no way of accounting for this except to believe that God, in answer to my prayer, put it into the heart of this good man to bring the money. My first thought was, it is so wonderful the way the Lord leads me. I immediately wrote the poem and Dr Lowry set it to music.

Choir: *All the Way My Saviour Leads Me*

Narrator:

In 1880, Fanny Crosby made a fresh commitment to the Lord to serve the poor and to devote the rest of her life to home missions work, especially in the worst slums of Manhattan, New York City. During the next three decades, Aunt Fanny worked at various city rescue missions. She spoke at YMCAs, churches and prisons and thought of herself more as a city missions worker than as a celebrated gospel hymn writer.

In the summer of 1886, Fanny Crosby was a guest of Ira Sankey in Northfield, Massachusetts. One day he composed a tune and asked her to write a poem to the tune, but the spirit of poetry did not seem to be upon her.

Fanny:

No, I cannot do it at present.

Narrator:

The following day they went for a drive and expected her to go along but to their astonishment, she asked to be excused, saying that she had something she wished to do. After leaving the house, a number of students came in and had a pleasant chat with Fanny Crosby. When they had gone, she sat down at the piano and played Ira Sankey's tune over and the words of the hymn came to her. Upon return, she hastened to meet Sankey and recited the verses to him.

Fanny Crosby spent eight summers at Northfield and she told Ira Sankey that some of her happiest days were those at Northfield, and referring to his hymn, she said she knew that she had been permitted to do a little good there. She also said she knew that many a poor soul had been comforted by this simple hymn.

Choir: *O Child of God*

Narrator:

In 1891, Fanny attended a prayer service at which her distant relative Dr Howard Crosby spoke. He preached on the topic, "Grace". He said that

no Christian should fear death, for if each of us was faithful to the grace given us by Christ, the same grace that teaches us how to live would also teach us how to die. His remarks were afterward published in a newspaper, and they were read to Fanny by Mr Biglow. Not many hours after she heard them, she began to write the hymn. She kept the poem to herself for three years until she took part in a Bible conference conducted by D L Moody, the well-known evangelist. At the end of the message, song leader Ira Sankey turned to Fanny and said, "Now, we want a word from you."

Fanny:

There has been a song that I have written which has never been published. I call it, "My Soul's Poem". At times, when I am troubled, I repeat it to myself for it brings comfort to my heart.

Choir: *Saved by Grace*

Narrator:

Mrs Joseph Knapp was the daughter of the noted Methodist evangelist Dr Walter Palmer. She attained widespread reputation as a writer of music and verse, specialising in writing for children. She married Joseph Knapp, a prominent Sunday school worker and successful businessman, who became quite wealthy and organised the famous Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

She composed a melody, and played it over to Fanny two or three times on the piano. She asked Fanny what it said, and she replied, "Blessed Assurance". Within a few minutes Fanny Crosby had written the complete poem, just as it stands today.

Choir: *Blessed Assurance*

Narrator:

The final hymn story for this evening is "My Saviour First of All". Once, a well-intentioned Scotch minister remarked to her, "I think it is a great pity that the Master, when He showered so many gifts upon you, did not give you sight."

Her rebuke came quickly, "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition to my Creator, it would have been that I should be born blind?"

“Why?” asked the surprised clergyman, “Because, when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Saviour.”

On the 12th of February 1915, just short of her 95th birthday, Fanny went home to be with the Lord, to the land of which she loved to sing about. A small stone at the head of her grave simply lettered, “Aunty Fanny—She hath done what she could.”

Choir: *My Saviour First of All*

Narrator:

Fanny Crosby left money in her will for “the sheltering of senior males who had no other place to live, with these men to pay a nominal fee to the home for their living expenses.” The Fanny Crosby Memorial Home for the Aged operated until 1996 when it was given to the Bridgeport Rescue Mission.

On 1st of May 1955, a large memorial stone was dedicated by Fanny’s friends to whom her life was an inspiration. It contained the first stanza of “Blessed Assurance”.

We pray that you have been blessed listening to the story of Fanny Crosby and may each of us be faithful to the Lord and live for Him. Let us close this session with the singing of the first stanza of “Blessed Assurance”.

Choir: *Blessed Assurance*

Joycelyn Chng holds a BEng from the National University of Singapore and an MDiv from Far Eastern Bible College, and is a tutor in Christian Education at Far Eastern Bible College and serves in the children’s ministry and choir of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church. The Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy holds a BSc from the University of Kerala, and a BTh, MDiv, ThM, ThD from Far Eastern Bible College, and is Dean of Students and lecturer in Bible and Theology at Far Eastern Bible College, and the pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church. Jemima Tow held a BTh from Far Eastern Bible College, MA from Grace Theological Seminary, MRE from Trinity Theological Seminary, and was a lecturer in Christian Education at Far Eastern Bible College and superintendent of the Children’s Sunday School at True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church.

I REMEMBER MRS IVY TOW

Karen Lee



As a Spiritual Mother to Her Students

Mrs Ivy Tow was a teacher of Greek and a matron of Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC). I remember her most as a spiritual mother to her students. She taught us many spiritual lessons in word and in deed, and would not hesitate to correct or rebuke when necessary. She continued to carry out this role even after students graduated from the College. I remember how she would readily take up the opportunity to visit them when possible (even if it means traveling with the aid of a walking stick/umbrella) and would ask about the work of the ministry. She would encourage them in the work of the Lord and would also continue to offer her advice when necessary. It seemed to me that once her student, we are always her student, and she continued to love and care for us like she did before.

As a Woman Who Gave of Her Best in the Lord's Service

Mrs Tow gave of her best in the Lord's service. As my teacher in Elementary Greek, I remember how she marked my worksheets or test papers so meticulously. As our matron, I remember the daily

afternoons where I would see her cooking lunch for us in the kitchen, each meal planned with much thought and prepared with much effort. She would make sure she involved herself in things she was able to do, whether it was sitting in meetings with student cooks, going marketing with students, planning for thanksgiving services and dinners, preparing for the FEBC Mersing retreats, or making sure the needs of the College were met, even when she could simply leave it to others to do. She gave of her best in her service to the Lord and expected the same of her students as well.

As One Who Saw Beyond the Externals

Although Mrs Tow expected students to do well in what God had given them to do, whether in their studies or in their duties, she was not one who was content with just the externals. I remember how I damaged *all* the whiteboards in the classroom where Mrs Tow taught us Elementary Greek by cleaning it until words written on the board with the whiteboard marker could not be erased with the duster (or something like that). I remember vividly the fear in my heart when I called Mrs Tow in the night to confess my wrongdoing, all prepared for a big scolding. To my surprise, Mrs Tow did not scold me at all (even though I rightly deserved it). On the contrary, she spoke most kindly and gently to me and told me that she always noticed the whiteboards were very clean when she went in for her Greek class. She even comforted me and said that the whiteboards were old already and it was time for a change.

Although a “perfectionist” in the work of the Lord, it seemed to me that externals were not all that mattered to her. What was important was that we give of our best, and we do it with a heart sincere out of love for God and His people, and with the fear of God in our heart. Mrs Tow, whom I knew and remembered, was not one who would be impressed by one’s good grades or paper qualifications. Rather, she desired that we serve the Lord with a good heart, faithfully, sacrificially and unconditionally.

As One Who Made the Most of the Life God Has Given to Her

Mrs Tow knew there would come a time when she would no longer be able to do things she used to do, hence she would do so while she was still able to. Whatever her hands found to do for the Lord, she would do

so with her might. She would wake up as early as the students and would not be idle but would occupy her time in the service of the Lord.

I remember her telling me that while she still had strength and was able to walk, she would want to travel, especially to Israel, where her Saviour once walked, even though she had been there many times. With her walking stick/umbrella, she would join Bible camps, visit others, and go where the Lord would lead her. During her time at the elder care, she did not hesitate also to speak to her good friend, Aunt Mary (a Roman Catholic) if she knew where she would be going after her time on earth is spent. As long as she still had breath, Mrs Tow continued to live for the Lord and serve Him with every opportunity He gave her. She would make her life count for Him.

As a Loving Wife, Mother and Grandmother

Since the homegoing of her husband, Rev Dr Timothy Tow, Mrs Tow continued to remember him fondly, and each time she spoke of him it was with much respect and love. Mrs Tow also loved her daughter and son deeply and would speak fondly of them to me (although not in detail), each time she thought of them. She would talk fondly about her grandson, Joshua, showing me photos of him when he was much younger, and thank God for blessing her with two good granddaughters, May Ann and May Lynn, who took good care of her. She thought often of May Ann and May Lynn even though she would see them every day and would ask me if May Lynn was still around in College when I dropped by for a visit in the evening, and when the night fell, if I saw May Ann coming home.

As a Woman Who Loved the Lord and His Word

Mrs Tow loved the Lord and His Word. She enjoyed listening to messages and teachings from God's Word while she was in the kitchen, and I remember her telling me to turn the volume up so that she could hear the speaker. Her fear of God was such that she did not want to do anything that would cause God to judge her, and for others to do the same.

Mrs Tow would bless those who are serving the Lord and serving the Lord faithfully with the right heart. When she heard that one is doing this and that for the Lord, she would be very ready to say, "God bless you...". She also said to me, "Good la, Eileen is trained, can help

him (Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo) in the ministry”, and that Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo is a “good man”.

Thank and praise God for the life and ministry of Mrs Ivy Tow, and for all that she had taught us by example. Surely goodness and mercy had followed her all the days of her life, and she will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever (Ps 23:6).

Testimonies from Other Students/Graduates

“Thank God for opportunities to fellowship with her over feeding the fishes at the Sea of Galilee and taking walks outside and around the college. Mrs Tow would ask me about my grandma and my cousin, as well as give me good Christian counsel. Thank God for her care and concern for the college and the students.” *Sophia Chew, Singapore*

“I (David) remember how she would periodically remind us that when we are faithful in our service to the Lord, He will not forsake us, and He will always make a way for us. She would often tell us that the Lord will honour those who will honour Him. This has been a helpful reminder and encouragement in the ministry. Gracia thinks fondly of all the times she had with Mrs Tow, sitting by the pond with her, and hearing all the stories of God’s work and her life of service with Rev Timothy Tow. The sharings of Mrs Tow has greatly encouraged her in the service for the Lord.” *David and Gracia Chew, Singapore*

“There was one particular incident that etched deeply in my mind. In the third week of school, I had some church friends who attended the day classes. Mrs Tow invited them to stay for lunch. After serving them their food, I obliviously scooted away towards the girls’ dormitory. Very soon, I heard Mrs Tow calling my name from afar. I scurried back. She then pointed at me, and sternly said something to the effect of, ‘These are not your friends. These are FEBC guests. If you don’t learn, you’re going to get it.’ God was using Mrs Tow to teach me to be hospitable to others, as well as some CS (common sense).” *Hadassah Chew, Singapore*

“She was very thoughtful of students’ needs. She cooked nice meals and never let the students go hungry, especially during exam times. She would give rebukes to the students; some of her rebukes were sharp often bringing students to tears. However, I know she tried

her best to help the students and mould our characters. She has faithfully served the Lord until the end." *Elisabet, Singapore*

"Like the rest of the FEBC alumni, I do have fond memories of Mrs Tow, not only that she was our college matron; she was also a mentor and a mother to everyone." *Rev Reggor B Galarpe, Cebu, Philippines*

"Mrs Tow is always remembered for her service to FEBC students as a mother. For FEBCians, let us take seriously the lessons Mrs Tow impacted on us to live out practically." *Rev Degu Genffe Guyola, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

"One of my fondest memories of Mrs Tow is how she would always call me by my name. Whenever she would call me to come to her, my heart would jump because I didn't know what to expect. Though sometimes quite strict yet there was a lot of love and care in it. She always wanted the best for her students." *Jonathan Ryan Hendricks, Bangalore, India*

"The first Greek teacher of my life was Mrs Tow. I learned the Greek language from her 27 years ago and still keep the Greek textbook that I studied. I appreciate her passion and dedication." *Rev Dr Ezra (Sae Kwang) Jang, Singapore*

"She was my lecturer in Greek and as matron she ensured we have the best food and accommodation. She was like my mother in all the nearly six years I was in FEBC. We will miss her but she has left a legacy worthy of imitation." *Rev Dr Michael Koeh, Bomet, Kenya*

"We remember fondly her famous olive fried rice, usually served on Friday lunch. Besides her motherliness, Mrs Tow is also the enforcer of law and order, keeping peace among the students in FEBC. She often reminded me to be friendly to greet people. Su Shiang cherishes her memory of Mrs Tow teaching her elementary Greek and walking to the McDonald's in Novena on some Saturday mornings as Mrs Tow loved the McDonald's breakfast." *Kong Sing Soon and Su Shiang, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia*

"We remember the life and service of Mrs Ivy Tow, our beloved Matron lovingly. Her life was a testimony of love and perseverance in labour for the Lord. For many like us who have walked through the portals of FEBC, she provided us with nourishment in the form of good and tasty meals, and also very wise spiritual counsel for our life and

ministry. I will always remember her words, 'Never be afraid to do what is right for the Lord.'" *Rev Lim Seh Beng, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia*

"Mrs Tow was a remarkable person who touched the lives of many with her kindness, wisdom, and unwavering spirit. Her memory will forever be cherished by all who knew her." *Rev S V Nathan, Singapore*

"Let me share one memory that really touched my heart. There was one Friday dinner when I didn't hear the dinner bell at all because I fell into a deep sleep though it was supposed to be just a nap. The night before, I wasn't able to sleep at all due to the Greek assignment and quiz. I also had all the classes on that Friday, followed by the many duties in the afternoon. When my fellow dormmate came to wake me up at 6.05 pm, I knew I was dead meat. I hurriedly went down preparing my heart to receive scolding. When I presented myself in front of her, she saw my swollen, just-woke-up face. I wasn't even able to say anything yet but she gently said 'You were sleeping is it? Okay sometimes we need to rest ah. Go take your dinner.' I could only say 'Sorry, Mrs Tow. Thank you, Mrs Tow.' At that moment, I felt so loved by her that I wanted to cry because I was expecting to get scolded. Behind Mrs Tow's proper and strict demeanour, there was always that tender, loving heart that cared for all of us, and I feel very honoured to be one of them." *Theya Lagapa, Philippines*

"I have many good and precious memories of Mrs Tow but some of my favourite ones are the times she would walk through the library, and she would give a firm pat on the shoulder while I did my assignments. No words were said but so much love and encouragement were felt. There was also a time where after I finished a difficult exam, Mrs Tow called me from the kitchen to give me a cup of milo so that I would have energy to study for the rest of the exams. Those times assured me that she loved and cared for all of us. I look back to those times with a grateful heart to the Lord that I got to experience FEBC training and care under her." *Thessa Lagapa, Philippines*

"We will miss her greatly for her dedicated service to the Lord. We enjoyed her hospitality when we visited Singapore two years ago." *Rev Dr Jonathan Cheriot Langat, Bomet, Kenya*

"She knew her calling well and dedicated her life to fulfil that calling, no matter how tough the going may be. That kind of dedication was only

possible because she knew her calling was from God and how real God was in her life. For that, I'm very thankful and desire to always be present in whatever call God has for me." *Rachel Leong, Batam, Indonesia*

"As the matron, Mrs Tow took care of our boarding and meal, duties, and occasionally our sicknesses. I was barely 20 when entered FEBC, full of mischief. A lot of discipline from her, yet she always forgave at the end. When I was leaving after completing my studies, she called me to the parsonage, and presented me with a single bed blanket. I was grateful and used it for many years. I am grateful to enjoy her care and training all those years." *Rev Kiantoro Lie, Batam, Indonesia*

"I thank God that He gave Mrs Ivy Tow to us as a matron of FEBC, not only for her good work but also for the glory of God in her life. She worked enthusiastically in her ministry as a strong pillar of FEBC. In her service, she showed her concern for and care for others." *Janet Lim, Singapore*

"During the years of my studies at FEBC, I came to know her as a loving and caring mother-like Matron. She encouraged me so much by saying, 'Lazum ah! You are good at what you put your mind into. You try hard to get things you wanted.' She said this when I passed her Greek class exams, and I still vividly remember her today. She also paired me with my classmates to cook meals. That's when I learned to cook! I was amazed by her trust in me." *Rev Dr Lazum, Lone Wah, California, USA*

"Mrs Ivy Tow, you were an outstanding mother. You taught me how to be a responsible and diligent leader. Mrs Tow, your love and straightforward leadership and diligence will be cherished in me throughout my life." *Violet Malongo, Kenya*

"Mrs Tow was like a mother to her students. She would never fail to strongly and firmly rebuke and scold me. On hindsight, I know it was for my good. Indeed, those scoldings moulded me into who I am and was very good to prepare me for the ministry. She knew how hard the ministry would be. Thus, she helped me to persevere and be a good Christian." *Maritus, Batam, Indonesia*

"I spent many hours with Mrs Tow during my studies in FEBC. I accompanied her to go for walks after dinner every day. I know much about the Newton and Novena areas because of walking with her. While walking together, she always asked about my study and

I REMEMBER MRS IVY TOW

encouraged me to persevere and do my best for the Lord. She told me that she was praying for me every day. Moreover, she bought me a Bible which is the best gift I ever received from her.” *Mega, Batam, Indonesia*

“Many students were scared of Mrs Ivy Tow and tried to avoid her as she usually scolded those students who failed to follow the College rules, failed to fulfil their duties properly, or misbehaved in FEBC. However, I must thank God for her faithful ministry and for her discipline in keeping the College in order.” *Rev Dr Nguyen Gia Hien, Brisbane, Australia*

“Mrs Tow has been an integral part of my life as an FEBC student, and I am most thankful to God for each and every single opportunity which I’ve had to fellowship with her, learn from her and most importantly gain Godly wisdom from her. I will never forget the CS—the common sense that I have learned from her.” *Timothy Nguyen, Brisbane, Australia*

“Mrs Tow was the one who cooked me my very first meal in FEBC. The first day I came to Singapore, I kept crying because I was scared of many things since it was my first time abroad. When I arrived at FEBC, Sis Janet brought me to see Mrs Tow. Mrs Tow was so kind to ask me to come to her house for dinner. When I came, she kept telling me, ‘Don’t cry. It will be okay. You just need to study hard, and God will bless you.’ Then she brought me to her kitchen, and we fried eggs together. I could see her care when she told me: ‘Don’t burn your hands. Let me do it.’



At that moment, she reminded me of my grandmother very much. To be honest, her training was tough, and I did cry many times too. But at the end of the day, I am thankful for everything she had done. Thank God for using her to help us to be strong and lean on the Lord even more.” *Nguyen Ngoc Thien Khim, Vietnam*

“At such a difficult time, let us remember her entire life which was spent in God’s service and praise God for all the good works she had been doing for the sake of Christ. A life which is lived for God’s glory is a life well-spent, a life that has eternal spiritual fruits, a life which

will be rewarded by Jesus Christ.” *Rev Ephrem Chiracho Ouchula, Alem Gena, Ethiopia*

“Thank God for Mrs Ivy Tow’s fruitful life on earth especially serving Rev Timothy Tow, her children, the many students of FEBC, the members of Life BPC and True Life BPC.” *Rev Pang Kok Hiong, Guek Mui and family, Saipan*

“Mrs Tow was the teacher and the mother to all of us. We have learned many things from her during the days of FEBC. Now we are practising her teachings in our ministry, especially for the Bible College Movement.” *Rev Dr Park SeungKyu, Arusha, Tanzania*

“Mrs Tow has a profound impact on our lives. She was not just our Greek teacher but a dear college mom, always there to guide and support us. Her deep consideration, care, and training for FEBC students have taught me many things.” *Dr Chae-Won RA (Mrs Park SeungKyu), Arusha, Tanzania*

“I experienced Mrs Tow’s love, care, and wisdom. She has been a blessing and comfort to many. Her life was the life of service.” *Angela Park JongHwi, Arusha, Tanzania*

“She has been a blessing for many people especially the students as a faithful matron, and spiritual guide for all of us.” *Joyce Park JongEun, Arusha, Tanzania*

“An item that Mrs Tow gave to us was a little wooden carved donkey she bought from Israel. She said that it must remind us to be like a donkey to do anything for God, always bearing the load of the ministry, labouring hard, and working tirelessly for our Lord. And that there must be nothing too menial for a minister to do for the Lord in His vineyard. This item continues to sit in my home for over a decade, serving as a good reminder.” *Rev Joseph Poon, Perth, Australia*



“She made me a zero to hero, and in front of God, a hero to zero. She loved me so much and helped me a lot like a mother.” *Byju Samuel, India*

I REMEMBER MRS IVY TOW

“I was much blessed by her encouragement to study well. I am also thankful for the rebukes and corrections she gave like a grandmother with much love.” *Rev Sujith Samuel, Vizag, India*

“Mrs Ivy Tow not only taught us how to be good and faithful students of the Word by trusting the Lord (Prov 3:5,6), but also to be ‘clever boy and girl!’ Her admonition and correction were for our own good and to be who we are today.” *John Saray and An Sitha, Sihanoukville, Cambodia*

“Mrs Tow taught me to plant plants and bougainvillea flowers in the garden surrounding the Sea of Galilee, which she always loved so much. The most difficult duty in FEBC was cooking. Meeting Mrs Tow’s expectations was challenging. I always remember her best and special food for us—meat with hyssop from Israel, cooked for hours which fed us well during exam time.” *Stefanie, Kuching, Malaysia*

“Mrs Tow, who had such a burden and vision to teach students in Bible College not only sound doctrine but as Matron to teach good lessons in every aspect of life.” *Rajan Shrestha, Kathmandu, Nepal*

“In her own way, she instilled in us that the smallest details matter. The slightest stroke in a letter, the precise cuts of watermelon, the precious cents saved during marketing. As we underwent intense scrutiny, accompanied by her ‘tough love’, she taught us to be responsible and accountable, both to God and man in all things great and small. If we could not be faithful in that which is least, how could we be faithful in much.” *James Tan, Nairobi, Kenya*

“If there can be only one thing to remember of Mrs Tow, it would be her tireless love towards us, her students in FEBC. In her love, she had encouraged us, rebuked us, corrected us, comforted us, and helped each and everyone of us to do better for the Lord’s glory. Somehow, Mrs Tow understood us and knew what each of us needed to be trained up for the Lord’s service. I thank God that I have memories of Mrs Tow telling me, ‘Shermaine, you must do this ...’ Mrs Tow is my beloved teacher, and always will be.” *Shermaine (Mrs James Tan), Nairobi, Kenya*

“Mrs Tow taught us how to be humble and helpful in the ministry. She had also shown us the example of a God-fearing servant who obeys and lives by His Word. She had taught us the lesson of trusting in God

and waiting upon His timing to provide according to His will.”
Warunee, Weerapong (Billy) and Alongkorn, Chiangrai, Thailand

“Thank you, Mrs Tow, for being a true servant of Christ and a cherished mother figure to us all. Your impact on our lives is immeasurable, and your memory will continue to be a source of strength and encouragement. We are grateful for everything you had done and for the profound ways you had shaped our faith and character.” *David and Susan Weng, Adelaide, Australia*

“I never felt like running away from Mrs Tow and she became my spiritual grandmother. We would often talk in the garden after dinner in FEBC. It was a time when she shared her nuggets of wisdom through warnings and her rich life experiences. She always reminded me to pray and seek God’s help. She would quote Rev Tow’s saying, ‘Self-help with God’s help is the best help.’ She held onto this principle even at the hospital. When I asked for her last words to FEBC, she said ‘Don’t need, they are all big already. They just need to obey and follow God’s Word ... and pray.’” *Crayson Wong, Singapore*

“I thank God for the opportunities she gave to us for service (cooking, marketing, gardening, offloading the things brought to FEBC). She would assign different students to dine at lunch or dinner with Rev Tow. What would be very ‘Special Occasions’ for me would be having both Rev Tow and Dr Khoo and whether we ate quietly together or made small talks.” *Rev Dr Nelson Were, Christine Kendagor, and our children (Charmaine, Nathan and Charissa), Kisumu, Kenya*

I remember when I was in FEBC, she always took care of us very well. She trained us strictly. So I was scared of her, but she always showed mercy in her strictness. I learned many things from her.
Tadahito Yamazaki, Hokkaido, Japan

“For many decades, God had used Mrs Tow to help the late Rev Tow in God’s ministry of the church, missions, and FEBC. We thank God for her faithful service to the LORD.” *Rev Peter Yoksan, Pontianak, Indonesia*

“I always remember how Mrs Tow called me ‘fat boy’, but I know that she loved me. She was like a mom to me in college. When she taught me Greek, she said, ‘Remember your syntax.’ When she taught me to cook, she said, ‘Remember, you cook for my students, do it properly.’ When she invited me for breakfast many Saturdays at her place, she said,

I REMEMBER MRS IVY TOW

‘Remember, you are here to study, not to make money.’ When she scolded me for making mistakes in my duties, she said, ‘Remember to use your CS—common sense.’ Her teachings are a precious part of my FEBC life that I cannot forget.” *Zakharia, Pontianak, Indonesia*

The following alumni sent their condolences: Joseph Amos, John Chemalan, Anne Chiam, Shadrack Kimutai, Lorna Were, Li Yahui, Lim Ren Muh, Peter Mutua, Francis Onyango, Sun Sreileakena, Lal Lianuk.

Mrs Ivy Tow, the first Matron of Far Eastern Bible College, went home to be with the Lord on 17 May 2024 at the age of 86 and was buried at the Chua Chu Kang Lawn Cemetery. Karen Lee earned her BA from National University of Singapore and MRE from Far Eastern Bible College. She serves in the literature department at Truth Bible-Presbyterian Church.



**True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church and Far Eastern Bible College Choirs
at the Vigil Service of Mrs Ivy Tow.**

COLLEGE NEWS

Day of Prayer

FEBC reopened with a Day of Prayer on Monday, 15 July 2024. It was a needful and profitable time of consecration for the FEBC family as board, faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends gathered for a time of worship and service to seek God's blessing as we begin a new academic term. The Rev Dennis Kwok of Truth Bible-Presbyterian Church was the Lord's messenger and he spoke from 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 on how we must be faithful stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truths as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

In Memory of Mrs Ivy Tow



In Loving Memory of Mrs. Ivy Tow (1938-2024)

On 15 July 2024, a special evening service was held in the FEBC Hall in memory of FEBC's first Matron—Mrs Ivy Tow—who was called home to the Lord on 17 May 2024 at a ripe old age of 86. Her son Jonathan, in gratitude to the College, hosted a buffet dinner for the Board, faculty, staff and students. There was a nostalgic presentation of video/photo slides of Mrs Tow's life and ministry with her husband and FEBC's founding Principal—the Rev Dr Timothy Tow—who was called home earlier in 2009. Assistant Matron Mrs Eileen Khoo who had served with Mrs Tow for eight years after she graduated from FEBC

gave a testimony of her experiences with Mrs Tow and what she had learned from her. Mrs Khoo having been trained by Mrs Tow will now have to assume that role of matron with God's help.

Enrolment and Students

Total enrolment in the July to November 2024 semester was 610: 36 fulltime residential students and 574 part-time/online students from 15 countries: Australia, Cambodia, China, Congo, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Korea, Tanzania, Thailand, UK.

We warmly welcome nine new students from five countries: (1) Indonesia: Timoti Kurniawan; (2) Korea: Ko Hyunmyung, Lee Hageom; (3) Myanmar: Hrang Lian Hre, Pau Sian Tuang, Thang Sian Muan; (4) Philippines: Crissan Dave Lariba, Tiffany Batao Gayon; (5) Thailand: Chatchanok Sumangkaset.

Teachers and Courses

The lecturers/tutors (and courses) for the July to November 2024 semester were: Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo (Epistle of James, Covenant Theology), Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew (Old Testament History III, Homiletics, Hebrew Reading I), Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy (Theology of Prayer), Rev Dr Koa Keng Woo (Bible Geography III, Cults I), Rev Stephen Khoo (Church Administration), Rev Tan Kian Sing (Epistles of John), Rev Clement Chew (Elementary Hebrew I, Acts of the Apostles II), Rev Dr Jose Lagapa (Church History I), Rev Samuel Joseph (Greek Exegesis I), Rev Zhu Jianwei (New Testament Introduction [Chinese]), Miss Carol Lee (Thinking and Study Skills, Women in the Bible I), Pr Cornelius Koshy (Elementary Greek I), Pr Joshua Yong (Contemporary Theology I, Greek Reading I), Miss Joycelyn Chng (Introduction to Christian Education), Mrs Patricia Joseph (Elementary English I), Mrs Ng May Shyen (Intermediate English I), Mr Aw Beng Teck (Advanced English I), Mrs Cheng May Lynn (Beginner Pianoforte).

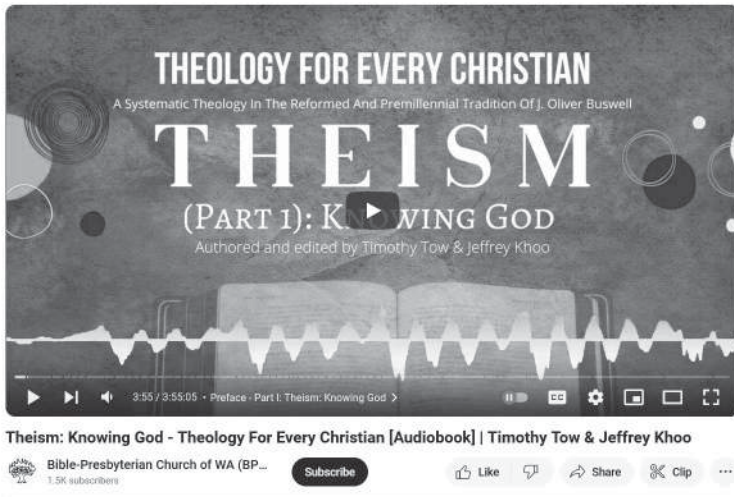
Basic Theology for Everyone

Fourteen Basic Theology for Everyone (BTFE) courses were offered to the public on campus and online this semester: (1) Systematic Theology III: Soteriology, (2) Epistles of John, (3) Epistle of James, (4) Cults I, (5) Introduction to Christian Education, (6)

Theology of Prayer, (7) Contemporary Theology I, (8) Church History I, (9) Thinking and Study Skills, (10) Acts of the Apostles II, (11) Women in the Bible I, (12) Old Testament History III, (13) New Testament Introduction (Chinese), (14) Covenant Theology.

Audio Books

Thank God that not only can good theology be read but also heard. The Rev Joseph Poon of Bible-Presbyterian Church of Western Australia (BPCWA) with his team of church members have converted several of FEBC's publications into audio books. One of them is *Theology for Every Christian* (all four parts).



Rev Poon said, "With so many sound materials we have readily available from FEBC, we felt that we have no excuse for not getting them onto platforms that can help get the Truth to as many as possible." Praise the Lord!

College Outing and Retreat

The students organised an outing during the mid-semester break on 3 September 2024. They had a blessed time of fun and games at Gardens by the Bay.

The College had an end of year retreat at the Resort Lautan Biru, Mersing, 11-13 November 2024. It was a blessed time of Bible study and fellowship among faculty and students.



**Far Eastern Bible College, 2nd Annual Retreat
Resort Lautan Biru, Mersing, 11-13 November 2024**



Far Eastern Bible College, Mid-Semester Outing, Gardens by the Bay, 3 September 2024