

A Founding Leader of the B-P Movement in Singapore Replies to a Query on the Church Constitution

Was the teaching of Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Scriptures a relatively new teaching that was introduced to the Bible-Presbyterian movement in Singapore only in 1992, or was it already part of the Constitution of the B-P Church, and hence, part of the church's doctrinal statement from the inception of the movement?

The following will help us to answer this. In an email dated 24 April 2007, the following two questions were sent to Rev (Dr) Quek Kiok Chiang who was one of the founding leaders of the Bible-Presbyterian movement in Singapore (underlining added):

1. When Life BP Church was formed in 1950, how did the church constitution come about? Who were then responsible to draft and revise it? Was this version of the constitution subsequently adopted by all BP Churches as their church constitution (prior to the dissolving of the BP Synod in 1988), including Calvary Pandan BP Church?
2. Regarding Clause 4.2.1 of the constitution *"We believe in the divine, verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life."* What are the main contradictions between this clause and the VPP (Verbal Plenary Preservation) theory which has been promoted in recent years? Some pointed out that this VPP teaching has all along been encapsulated within clause 4.2.1, is such a statement reasonable?

Rev (Dr) Quek Kiok Chiang's reply on 25 April 2007 was as follows: (reproduced here with his permission)

Reference your email to me yesterday.

2 When Life B-P Church was founded in 1950, the church constitution was introduced by the founding Pastor Rev Timothy Tow in consultation with me as the Co-founder and founding Elder. This church constitution was adapted from the constitution of a mission church in North India being assisted by the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM), a leading mission board affiliated with the ICCC. The adapted Constitution, with Chinese translation made by me, was duly adopted by the founding members.

3 This adapted constitution was adopted by all B-P Churches as their church constitutions prior to the dissolving of the B-P Synod in 1988, including Calvary Pandan B-P Church. I understand that for separate registration in 1986 under the Societies Act as individual, self-governing churches, there have been some adaptations or changes in each case.

4 On clause 4.2.1, of the constitution "We believe in the divine, verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original language, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life".

4.1 First of all, let me point out that until the Synod dissolution in 1988, all member B-P Churches kept to this statement concerning the Word of God. No ICCC-affiliated member churches or Christian associations throughout the world have ever changed or revised the text of the statement: Unanimity is required of this cardinal statement concerning the Word of God.

4.2 On the question of “main contradictions” between this so far unchanged doctrinal statement and the so-called VPP (Verbal Plenary Preservation) theory, I see the wisdom of abiding by the existing doctrinal statement concerning our faith in the Word of God. I do not see the wisdom of singling out a translated version of the Scriptures, in this case the King James Version despite its being a good translation, and equating its authority with “the Scriptures in the original languages”. This is overstating the excellence of a translated version of the Scriptures. None of the Bible-believing churches or Christian institutions, including all in the ICCC family, have so far subscribed to this new Biblically unfounded and unproven theory. The Oct 2005 statement of Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, and the Oct 2005 Statement of the Singapore Council of Christian Churches (SCCC) repudiating this VPP theory, refer.

4.3 Thus, while I do not see “main contradictions” between the clause 4.2.1 in the existing Constitution of our B-P Churches and the VPP theory, I see the wisdom of leaving the clause stand as it is, without adapting it to include a new theory Biblically unfounded and unproven. As to the claim that this VPP teaching has all along been encapsulated within clause 4.2.1, I am of the opinion that the claimant is subjective and arbitrary and can hardly justify his claim according to the Word of God.

Sincerely yours

Rev Dr Quek Kiok Chiang