

Preserving Our Godly Path

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls....” (Jeremiah 6:16)

OVERVIEW:

A. The Old Paths: The Doctrinal Position of Life B-P Church

- In our Church Constitution -
Verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages (i.e. Autographs)
- In our Doctrinal Positional Statement –
The texts underlying KJV are closest to the autographs.
- In the Westminster Confession of Faith -
OT and NT have been kept pure in all ages (providential preservation)

B. The New Paths: The Introduction of a New View

- As given in the *Burning Bush* (January 2003, Vol. 9 No.1).
- The Autographs of Scripture are exactly preserved in the texts underlying the KJV.
- The “Perfect Bible” of this new view refers to these exactly preserved texts.

C. Which Path Should We Take? We should take the Old Paths, because:

- There is nothing new in theology save that which is false.
- It is correct and upholds the KJV as the very Word of God.
- The term “closest” in our church position statement does not mean “perfect” but “nearest”.
- It has been held by a “multitude of counsellors” (Prov 11:14).
- The new view is only held by a small number of writers and institutions.
- Life B-P Church has been blessed for 52 years while we held it.
- The new view has caused disagreement, splits and strife.
- The new view is not supported by the proof texts that are cited for it.
- The new view restricts those who have perfect Bibles to those who live after 1611.
- It discriminates against all non-English Bibles of the Protestant Reformation.

D. Conclusion

- Let us take the Old Paths! -
Uphold the doctrinal position that has been stated in our Church Constitution all these years.
- Let us have a spirit of brotherly love in our church.

A. The Old Paths: The Doctrinal Position of Life B-P Church

1. For the past 52 years Life B-P Church has been faithfully holding forth the Word of Life (Philippians 2:16a). This is particularly so in the high view of the Holy Scriptures that our church has been promoting, as stated in our 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;” (Article 4.2.1, Constitution Of The Life Bible-Presbyterian Church).

2. Because of the emergence of many modern English Bibles today, our church takes a strong stand for the King James Version, as stated in the Doctrinal Positional Statement:

“We do believe that the Hebrew and Greek texts that were used for the King James Version of the English Bible (KJV) were providentially preserved by God and are therefore closest to the original autographs of the Bible.” (In the Golden Jubilee magazine, October 2000, 50 Years Building His Kingdom, p.64, emphasis added)

3. We believe that this is fully consistent with the system of doctrine commonly called “the Reformed Faith” as expressed in the Confession of Faith as set forth by the historic Westminster Assembly (see Article 4.1, *Constitution Of The Life Bible-Presbyterian Church*), and especially with article 8 of Chapter I of the Confession:

“The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.” (emphasis added. For a better understanding of what is meant here see Appendix B, p.8)

4. This view of Scripture which is also shared by various B-P Churches, has always been understood all these years to mean that the original writings of the Scriptures (called the Autographs) were given by inspiration of God and have been **providentially preserved** for us. Since our KJV Bible was translated from the texts that are **closest** to the original, and is the best English translation of these texts, we have no doubt that it is **the very Word of God, and is fully reliable**.

B. The New Paths: The Introduction of a New View

1. A new view of the Scriptures arose recently. This view is given in detail in the article “*A Plea for a Perfect Bible*” in the latest issue of the *Burning Bush* (January 2003, Vol. 9 No.1). The following are some points about the new view as expounded in this article (emphases added by underlining):

a. **The process of preservation of the Scriptures culminated in the Hebrew and Greek texts underlying the King James Version.**

“I believe the purity of God’s Word has been *faithfully maintained* throughout the whole transmission of the Traditional/Byzantine/Majority/Received Text, and is *fully represented* in the Apographa of the Hebrew Masoretic Text for the Old Testament and the Greek Textus Receptus for the New Testament underlying the KJV. So I agree with David W Cloud, in his paper quoting E F Hills, that “the KJV is accurate in all textual matters, *and if there is a difference between a KJV reading and any certain edition of the Received Text, we follow the KJV*” (i.e., the TR underlying the KJV).” (p.7)

b. **These texts surpassed all other editions of the traditional texts existing at that time.**

“If there exists a perfect TR, then which of the many editions of the TR is perfect? It must be affirmed that all the editions of the TR being from the pure stream of God’s preserved text are *pure*, no doubt about it. But which is the purest? It is the TR underlying the KJV.” (p.5)

c. **The ones who were responsible for these texts were the translators of the KJV.**

“Whose TR? Not completely Erasmus’s, Stephen’s, or Beza’s, it is a new edition of the TR which reflects the textual decisions of the KJV translators as they prayerfully studied and compared the preserved manuscripts.” (p.5)

d. God used the KJV translators to restore absolute 100% purity to the texts in the year 1611, which was during the time of the Reformation.

“I believe that in the fullness of time—in the most opportune time of the Reformation when the true church separated from the false, when the study of the original languages was emphasised, and the printing press invented (which meant that no longer would there be any need to handcopy the Scriptures thereby ensuring a uniform text)—God restored from out of a pure stream of preserved Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, the purest Hebrew and Greek Text of all—the Text that underlies our KJV—that accurately reflects the original Scriptures.” (p.9)

e. The result of this is that the Greek and Hebrew texts underlying the KJV are the exact words of the original writings, i.e. a virtual photocopy of the autographs.

“The word “closest should be interpreted to mean “purest.” Dr D A Waite, President of the Dean Burgon Society, likewise understands the statement to mean “that the words of the received Greek and MasoreticHebrew texts that underlie the King James Bible are the very words which God has preserved down through the centuries, being the exact words of the originals themselves.” (p.4)

“As regards the Traditional Hebrew and Greek Scripture underlying the KJV being a “virtual photocopy” of the originals, G I Williamson did write to this effect in his commentary on the Westminster Confession concerning preservation,...” (p.7)

f. Christians who use the KJV can therefore claim to have a perfect Bible.

“I believe in a perfect God who has given us a perfect Bible.” (p.12)

2. There is nothing wrong with using the term “perfect” to describe the Bible. It is generally accepted by all Bible-believing Christians to refer to the fact that the Scriptures are reliable, sufficient, infallible and authoritative. E.g. *“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”* (Psalm 19:7). This general acceptance creates a problem when the term “Perfect Bible” is used very often by advocates of this new view of Scripture:

- **Many have not understood what they mean when they refer to their view as a “Perfect Bible”**
- **The result is that many have mistakenly thought that there is nothing wrong with it.**

The following must be understood well:

a. What the “Perfect Bible” Debate is NOT About

i. **The debate concerning the “Perfect Bible” is NOT about the original writings (or the autographs) of the biblical writers (such as Moses, Peter or Paul).** These original writings, written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek are directly inspired of God (verbal and plenary). It is, therefore, inerrant, infallible (and obviously perfect). This is not the issue in this debate. This is accepted without any doubt whatsoever.

ii. **The debate concerning the “Perfect Bible” is NOT about modern versions derived from corrupt texts or manuscripts.** We have never promoted other versions and have held to the time-honoured KJV as the most faithful and reliable English Bible to be used exclusively for both public and private readings.

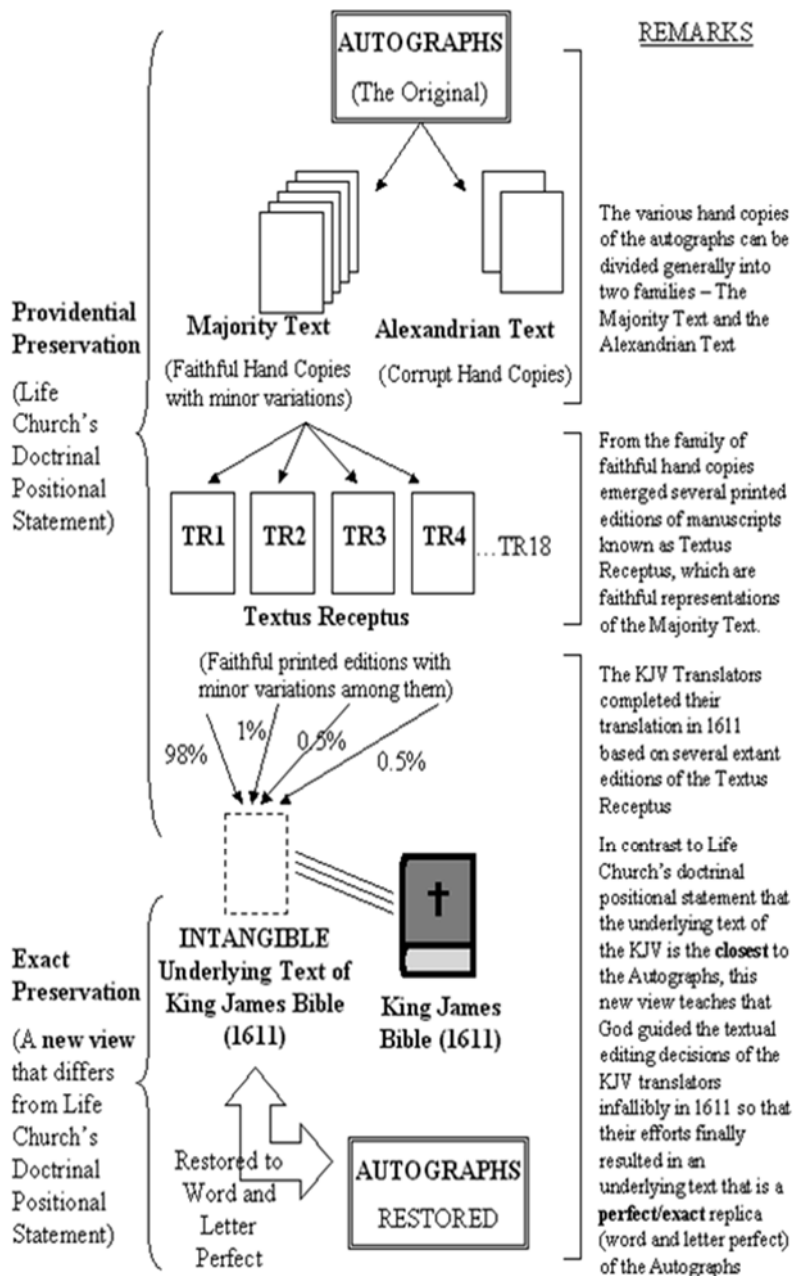
iii. **The debate concerning the “Perfect Bible” is NOT about God’s Preservation of His Word after the original autographs were lost.** We believe that God has fully preserved His Word in the body of manuscripts (or texts or

copies) after the original autographs were lost. We uphold the Byzantine/Majority Texts as the very Word of God.

Regrettably, all the above have been manipulated, misrepresented and distorted to **give the false impression** that those who do not agree with the advocates of the "Perfect Bible" are attacking the very Word of God (see Appendix D, p.12) and promoting unreliable versions such as the NIV.

b. What the "Perfect Bible" Debate IS Really About

The real issue in the "Perfect Bible" debate concerns ONLY the INTANGIBLE Hebrew and Greek Texts underlying the KJV. As can be seen from the quotations taken from the article "A Plea for a Perfect Bible" above, advocates of the "Perfect Bible" hold to the view that the **intangible** Greek and Hebrew texts (copies/manuscripts) underlying the KJV are **THE preserved and perfect texts**. By this it means that these copies are a 100% (exact) replica of the original autographs. The diagram below will help you to understand this:



When advocates of this view claim that their Bible is perfect, what they really mean is that they believe that the intangible texts (and these texts alone) used in the translation of the KJV are virtual photocopies of the autographs (not only closest).

The real issue is on the **intangible Greek and Hebrew texts underlying the KJV** (and not on the original writings, as some mistakenly believe). Are the texts underlying the KJV perfect and therefore the preserved Word of God? This is what the stand of "Perfect Bible" means when it is taught or preached. **It is really about the intangible Perfect Texts (and not the "Perfect Bible")**.

The following table may help you to see the issues clearly:

<p style="text-align: center;">The New Paths: The "Perfect Bible" View</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Old Paths: The Constitutional Position of Life Church</p>
<p>The Greek Textus Receptus and the Hebrew Ben Chayyim Masoretic Text are the perfectly purified text, and the virtual photocopies, i.e. an exact replica of the original writings.</p>	<p>The Greek Textus Receptus and the Hebrew Ben Chayyim Masoretic Text are the closest, i.e. very close to the original writings.</p>
<p>"Kept pure in all ages" is understood to be a dynamic process by which the purity of God's words has been faithfully maintained in the Byzantine/ Majority/ Received Text, but through divine providence, fully represented only in the intangible Textus Receptus that underlies the KJV, that emerged at the end of the process. Christians who lived before the end of the process did not have this intangible single fully purified text.</p> <p>Hence, God's promise of preservation is ultimately fulfilled in the existence of an intangible single fully purified text, which would eventually be found only at the end of the process.</p>	<p>"Kept pure in all ages" is understood to be a "stable maintenance process" i.e. God has willed that His promise of preservation should be fulfilled in the continued existence of the Byzantine/ Majority/Received family of texts.</p> <p>Since this family of Greek Text existed prior to 1611, Christians living before this period had always been possessing copies of this pure Word of God throughout the ages.</p>
<p>The end of the process is defined as the translation of the text into English by the KJV translators in 1611. They did not have a single purified text in their hands, but God guided their editing work. Their textual decisions from among the extant texts were providentially guided, hence producing in an English translation an intangible underlying text that perfectly reflects the readings of the autographs.</p> <p>In 1884 Scrivener edited the Textus Receptus (TR) to closely represent the underlying text of the KJV.</p>	<p>Since the purity of the text has been providentially maintained all the time only within the Byzantine/ Majority/ Received Text, best represented by the various editions of the TR, any one of these (all editions) may be taken to be pure and true.</p> <p>There is no need for us to play textual critic to decide which edition is the 'purest' of all, or seek to improve the intangible Greek and Hebrew texts which underlie the KJV.</p>
<p>Any alleged copyists' errors in the texts underlying the KJV are only apparent errors and not errors at all. The existence of true copyists' errors is absolutely denied.</p>	<p>Since preservation of the Scriptures is through providence, copyists' errors may exist in the underlying texts of the KJV but they are so few and insignificant that they do not affect the integrity of the Bible, nor do they distort the message of God to man.</p>

Foreign language Bibles that are based on other editions of the Textus Receptus can be deemed as the Word of God. But the KJV is still greater than all of them, because it is based on a Perfect Text.	Foreign language Bibles that are based on other editions of the Textus Receptus can be deemed not only as the Word of God, but also as being of equal standing with the KJV.
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C. Which Path Should We Take?

1. C.H. Spurgeon once said, *“No man can add anything to the religion of Jesus. All that is consistent with truth is already incorporated in it, and with that which is not true it can form no alliance. **There is nothing new in theology save that which is false.**”* (A sermon on Colossians 2:10, emphasis added)
2. The “old paths” position of the KJV that we have been holding all this time is correct:
 - a. The inerrancy and infallibility of the **original autographs**, which are directly inspired by God. There is not a single error or mistake and it is absolutely perfect.
 - b. The Hebrew and Greek Texts underlying the KJV of the English Bible were providentially preserved by God and therefore **closest** to the original autographs. We do not ascribe perfection to it (i.e. 100% exact replica of the autographs) or say that it is THE preserved text to the exclusion of other manuscripts within the family of Received Texts.
 - c. The KJV is a good, faithful and accurate translation and we have no doubt that we have the very Word of God, and it is fully reliable.
3. The word “closest” in our Doctrinal Positional Statement (see p.1) is an adjective meaning *nearest*. It is used to make relative comparison, i.e. among the body of manuscripts, there are those that are close, others that are closer, and the texts underlying the KJV are the closest (compared to the rest) to the original autographs. It is the closest and not the exact replica of the original. If *closest* means *perfect*, then why was not *perfect* used in the first place?
4. The “old paths” position that we have been holding all this time is the same position held by the Westminster divines[1], the Reformers[2], the KJV Translators, and even Dean John Burgon[3] who was the champion of the Textus Receptus in the 19th Century against Westcott and Hort. Proverbs 11:14 says, *“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the **multitude of counsellors** there is safety.”*
5. The new view became prominent only in the last 30 years in America and is held only by a small number of writers and institutions, e.g. Dr Donald A. Waite[4]. **It is NOT held by the majority of fundamental, Bible-believing institutions, churches and writers** (e.g. Trinitarian Bible Society[5], and G.I. Williamson, author of *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*[6]). The first to propound this view was a Seventh-day Adventist, Benjamin G Wilkinson (1872 – 1968) with his book *Our Authorised Bible Vindicated*(1930). Wilkinson was also the first person to misapply Psalm 12:6-7 as though it were a promise of the preservation of the KJV.[7] Notably, others such as James Jay Ray, David Otis Fuller and Peter S Ruckman have continued to use Wilkinson’s interpretation of this passage.
6. What is the basis of abandoning our time-honoured “old paths” position to embrace a new view that is held by only a few? We are not looking at man or numbers. **But has God not blessed Life Church in the past 52 years while we held to this position?**
7. Wherever this new view has gone, it has caused disagreement, strife and splits among like-minded Fundamentalist brethren. This is the testimony of some who have been to the U.S. If this new doctrine is from God, why are there divisions, distresses, unhappiness and repulsion?

8. It is not supported by the Bible verses that are cited as proof texts for the doctrine of exact preservation of the Scriptures (Psalm 12:6,7; Matthew 5:18; Matthew 24:35). **What can be understood from these verses is that the Word of God will be providentially preserved rather than exactly preserved** (See appendix A, p.8).

9. It **unbiblically restricts** the number of Christians who had Bibles that can be considered to be the verbally and plenary preserved Word of God. These include all manuscript copies of the Word of God that existed before the KJV translation was made in 1611.

10. It **discriminates** against all non-English Bibles of the Protestant Reformation. There is no biblical basis for such discrimination (See Appendices C & E, p.10,13).

D. Conclusion:

1. The Word of God in Jeremiah 6:16 speaks to us, *“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls...”*

2. We should continue to uphold solely and publicly as our Church position on the Scriptures, that which is already stated in our Life B-P Church Constitution and Doctrinal Positional Statement. And hence, those who hold a different personal conviction or view from the Church position should refrain from propagating their differing views to Church members whether publicly or privately.

3. Although we consider the “Perfect Bible” view to be untenable, for the sake of brotherly love and harmony, we do not want to discriminate against any persons who, on grounds of their own personal conviction, would choose to believe that the texts underlying the KJV are an exact replica of the original autographs. We believe “there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ. And in all these, we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.” (*Article 5.5, Constitution of the Life Bible-Presbyterian Church*).

4. The difference between the position of the Church and the new view is a very subtle one, and we do not want Satan to exploit this and disrupt the harmony and mission of the Church. To **forcibly impose** the new view on others (e.g. by name-calling or intimating that they lack saving faith), brings no glory to God, and will only discredit the Church of God. Let us therefore seek to observe the following in our church, with God’s help:

a. Ephesians 4:2,3 – *“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

b. Hebrews 13:1 – *“Let brotherly love continue.”*

Appendices

A. Passages cited as proof texts for the “Perfect Bible” view.

1. When these verses of Scriptures are interpreted correctly in their own proper context, it will be seen that they cannot be used to support the “Perfect Bible” view.

2. Psalm 12:6,7 – *“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.”*

The vast majority of Bible commentaries[8] do not interpret this as a passage on preservation of God’s Word. They take the words *“Thou shalt keep them”* and *“thou shalt preserve them”* as God’s firm assurance that He will keep and preserve His own people from harm (cf. v.5).

It is significant that this verse is not cited at all in paragraph 1.8 of the Westminster Confession (see p.1, A.3) as proof text for the phrase “Kept pure in all ages”. The only verse cited is the next one:

3. Matthew 5:18 – *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”*

In the context of the passage, Jesus meant that every detail of the Scriptures is vital and will not be abrogated, but fulfilled. Therefore, as He said in the next verse, no commandment of God, even the least commandment, is to be taken lightly – *“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.”*

At the time that Jesus said these words, the Old Testament scriptures had gone through a process of transmission by copying. Although the scribes were very meticulous in their copying, it would be very unlikely for the thousands of handcopied manuscripts of the OT scriptures existing at the time of Christ to be all alike word and letter-perfect copies of the autographs. This therefore implies that the scriptures will be providentially preserved in the same way that God had preserved it in the 15 preceding centuries.

4. Matthew 24:35 – *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”* (also in Mark 13:31 and Luke 21:33)

This verse must be interpreted in the context of the end-time prophecies that Jesus gave in vv.4-34. It indicates the certainty and reliability of all these prophecies. The words of Jesus will continue to be certain, valid and trustworthy even after the universe ceases to exist.

B. What is meant by the words “Kept Pure In All Ages” in the Westminster Confession?

1. The words of this article were written at the time when **the Reformers were fighting against the Roman Church's view that the Hebrew/Greek texts of Scripture were so corrupted that they could only rely on the Latin Vulgate**. This is seen in the Council of Trent's session 4 which states that “the Latin Vulgate should be held as authentic in the public reading, disputations, preaching, and expositions, so that no one should dare to reject it under any pretext.” This had led the Roman Church to argue against the purity of the sources, to be, as Turretin put it, “hostile to them, holding that there is no certainty in the Hebrew text, that we should not refer to the sources in controversies of faith, nor correct the Vulgate version by them.”

2. Hence, the words “kept pure in all ages” must be seen in that context. The Westminster divines put it in there in response to this Roman myth. If they had truly written it with the intention of proving perfect preservation of Scripture, **more** would have been written about it. The very fact that Matthew 5:18 was quoted was not because it is the supreme proof text, but because it showed that the Greek and Hebrew sources could be trusted since Jesus would fulfill them perfectly, and Jesus was referring to these sources. If the Roman myth was correct, then Jesus would have been wrong.

3. A. A. Hodge, who was professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, 1877-1886, wrote in his book, *The Confession of Faith - A Handbook of Christian Doctrine Expounding the Westminster Confession*:

“The section teaches,---

1. That the Old Testament having been originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek -- which were the common languages of the large body of the Church in their respective periods-- the Scriptures in those languages are the absolute rule of faith and the ultimate appeal in all controversies.

2. That the original sacred text has come down to us in a state of **essential purity**.

3. That the Scriptures should be translated into the vernacular languages of all people, and copies put into the hands of all capable of reading them.

The true text of the ancient Scriptures is ascertained by means of a careful collation and comparison of the following:-

1. Ancient manuscripts. The oldest existing Hebrew manuscripts date from the ninth or tenth century. The oldest Greek manuscripts date from the fourth to the sixth century. Many hundreds of these have been collated by eminent scholars in forming the texts of modern Hebrew and Greek Testaments. **The differences are found to be unimportant, and the essential integrity of our text is established....” (emphases added)**

4. Concerning the claim made by some that Article 1:8 teaches the complete inerrancy of the “Received Text” and of the Protestant translations based on it, Rowland S. Ward of Knox Presbyterian Church in Australia, wrote[9]:

Believing in the complete inerrancy of Scripture some conservatives have adopted what might be called the Vulgate error (from the Roman elevation of the Latin text). They hold that God's special providence in preserving the sources “pure in all ages” (1:8) is such as implies a “jot and tittle” view of preservation so that the “Received Text” represents the original without the slightest variation. Many hold in addition that, seeing 1:8 also says that translations enable the word of God to dwell plentifully in believers, the translation employed by the Westminster Divines (taken to be the KJV) must be precisely accurate, otherwise it could not be called “the word of God.”

Whatever the superficial attractiveness of the logic of this claim, **it is contrary to the plainest facts. It arises from a simplistic logic (not unlike that among some of the Anabaptists of the 17th century) coupled with a reactionary conservatism.** Matthew 5:18 (the jot and tittle passage) is not referring to the transmission of the text of Scripture but to the authority of God's claims upon us, The transmission of Scripture is not such that the sources have been preserved with exactness in any particular manuscript but, as Owen noted, in all the manuscripts. And we cannot say that providence has preserved only some manuscripts since providence extends to all events and thus to the preservation of all the manuscripts. Nor can we say that providence tells us which manuscripts are the best ones: only manuscript comparison and analysis can do that. In short, “pure” does not mean “without any transcriptional errors” but it means something like “without loss of doctrines and with the text preserved in the variety of manuscripts.” Thus, in affirming that “the original texts of the Old and New Testaments come down to us pure and uncorrupted” Francis Turretin (1623- 87) states:

“The question is not, Are the sources so pure that no fault has crept into the many sacred manuscripts...? For this is acknowledged on both sides and the various readings clearly prove it. Rather, the question is have the original texts (or the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts) been so corrupted by copyists through carelessness (or by the Jews and heretics through malice) that they can no longer be regarded as the judge of controversies and the rule to which all the versions may be applied? The papists affirm, we deny it ... for besides being in things of small importance and not pertaining to faith and practice ... they are not universal in all the manuscripts; or they are not such as cannot be easily corrected from a collation of the Scriptures and the various manuscripts.” [Institutes, II: 10: 3, 8 (pp. 106, 108-9 of 1992 edition)]

The “jot and tittle theory” cannot produce the allegedly perfectly preserved text which is the ultimate standard of appeal. Even the “Received Text” is not the best (NT) text that can be constructed from the Byzantine family of manuscripts but, as we all know, is largely the text constructed from a few manuscripts of that family and the ingenuity of Erasmus. In fact, many adherents of this theory canonise the King James Version, even affirm that God's elect always share their faith in its complete inerrancy (pity those who have only the “impure” stream of manuscripts) and appeal finally to it. Let William Ames express the truth of the matter in his clear and judicious way:

“The Scriptures are not so tied to these first languages that they cannot and ought not to be translated into other languages for common use in the church. But among interpreters, neither the seventy who turned them into Greek, nor Jerome, nor any other such held the office of a prophet; they were not free from errors in interpretation. Hence no versions are fully authentic except as they express the sources, by which they are also to be weighed. Neither is there any authority on earth whereby any version may be made absolutely authentic. **God's providence in preserving the sources is notable and glorious, for neither have they wholly perished nor have they been injured by the loss of any book or blemished by any serious defect- though**

today not one of the earlier versions remains intact. From these human versions all those things may be made known which are absolutely necessary, provided they agree with the sources in essentials. **Hence, all the versions accepted by the churches usually agree, although they may differ and be defective at several minor points.** We must not rest forever in any accepted version, but faithfully see to it that a pure and faultless interpretation is given to the church." [William Ames (1576-1633), *The Marrow of Theology*, l xxxiv, 27-33 (first edition, Latin 1623; English translations 1638; 1986).]

C. The Implications of Holding to The "Perfect Bible" View

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1. **Non-English Bibles of the Protestant Reformation Cannot Be "Perfect Bibles".**

a. It gives only KJV users the warrant to say, "My Bible is perfect" but disallows all users of all non-English Protestant Bibles (e.g. Luther's German Bible, the Polish Biblia Gdanska, the Spanish Reina-Valera Bible, and the French Martin's Bible) from making such a claim for their Bibles legitimately (See Chart in Appendix E, p.13). Would the non-English speaking Protestants who use these Bibles not protest against us for the right to make the same claim for their Bibles, and be inclined to regard us as bigoted English speaking brethren?

i. There is **no biblical basis** for such discrimination. The only basis that has been presented is this: That English was the chosen language in which God chose to restore His Word to the original purity of the autographs, because He foresaw that it would one day become the international language of the world. This is very subjective and speculative.

ii. The international language has already **changed** several times in history: Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Spanish, and English. Who knows what the next international language may be after English? And the English used today has some changes from the English of the 17th century. Also English is not the language spoken by most of the people in the world as per statistics:[10]

b. The 12 most widely spoken languages, with approximate numbers of native speakers, are as follows: Mandarin Chinese, 836 million; Hindi, 333 million; Spanish, 332 million; English, 322 million; Bengali, 189 million; Arabic, 186 million; Russian, 170 million; Portuguese, 170 million; Japanese, 125 million; German, 98 million; French, 72 million; Malay, 50 million. If second-language speakers are included in these figures, English is the **second** most widely spoken language, with 418 million speakers.

c. Also, why would God preserve His Words in one language? Were not the autographs themselves written in three languages, viz, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek? If we really want to do something worthwhile for the Lord regarding Bibles, then we should direct our attention to bringing a Chinese and Indonesian Bible that is not based on the Wescott & Hort text.

2. **No "Perfect Bible" Existed Prior To The Texts Underlying The KJV**

a. This view also implies there was no single perfect verbally and plenary preserved copy of the Word of God in existence **before** the time of the KJV translation, since it is very unlikely that any single manuscript had all the same readings as the intangible text underlying the KJV.

3. **The KJV Translators Were Rendered Infallible In Their Textual Choices, But Not Infallible In Their Translation Work.**

a. It is claimed that the KJV translators were providentially guided to make all the right textual decisions, so that all the correct readings were fully restored to the Word of God through them. But if all their textual decisions were providentially rendered infallible, why was their translation work not also providentially rendered infallible? It is a known fact that the 1611 KJV, well-received as it was as the best available English translation of the Scriptures at that time, still had its own translational flaws and errors.

b. Our current edition of the KJV differs from the 1611 edition in almost 24,000 places. Some are merely modernisation of spelling, punctuation, or other minor corrections; but many significant differences exist – including changes in grammar, word order, adding words, and deleting words. These changes do affect meaning.

c. E.g. in Genesis 39:16, the KJV translators erroneously translated “his” as “her” and in 1 Corinthians 15:6, they erroneously translated “after” as “and”. In 2 Samuel 16:12 they omitted the word “me”. All these errors of translation were corrected in subsequent revisions of the KJV and are no longer found in our Bibles today. If the Lord did not keep the KJV translators from making these mistakes in translation, on what basis can they say that He kept them from making errors in their textual choices of variant readings?

d. If we were to believe that the KJV translators were rendered infallible both in their textual choices and in their translation work, we should change our Bibles to the 1611 edition of the KJV, or at least to an edition that only modernises the spelling, punctuation and does not incorporate the changes in grammar, word order and additions or deletions of words.

4. We Would Have to Amend Our Church Constitution To Include the “Perfect Bible” View.

a. If we were to adopt the new view, it would be a serious departure from the doctrinal position stated in our Church constitution. It would mean that the Church has been in error for the past fifty-two years.

b. We would put our church in opposition to all the rest of the B-P Churches that do not take this view. We would also put ourselves against a great cloud of Bible-believing fundamentalists who have been stalwart colabourers with us for many years.

D. Is Not Holding the “Perfect Bible” View An Attack on The Word of God?

1. Those who do not hold this new “Perfect Bible” view have been unfairly compared with Neo-Evangelicals who attack the Word of God by teaching ‘Limited Inerrancy’ of the Scriptures. For example,

“Satan is up to his tricks again. He is now trying to cast doubt in the minds of God’s people that we do not have a perfect Bible. Satan is saying, “The Bible is only without mistakes or errors in the area of salvation, but in matters of science, history, or geography, it can make mistakes.” Neo-evangelicals who teach this view say that we must not say the Bible is the Word of God, but that the Bible merely contains the Word of God. The devil is whispering a doubt into our ears, “Yea, hath God said?” “Are you sure the Bible is perfect to the last jot and tittle?”[11]

2. It must be stated that ‘Limited Inerrancy’ attacks the autographs and the process of inspiration – not the manuscript copies that came in later (after the autographs were completed.)

3. Limited Inerrancy originated with the rise of ‘German Rationalism’ and unbelief, which caused many church leaders to elevate so-called Science above the Scripture, and to feel increasingly embarrassed by many of the “unscientific and historically inaccurate” statements in the Bible. For example, ‘Science’ says that man evolved from apes while the Bible says that he was created by God. In order to resolve this dilemma and remain respectable to the world, the erroneous doctrine of ‘Limited Inerrancy’ was invented, which was later embraced by Modernists, and by Neo-Evangelicals today.

4. This teaching of ‘Limited Inerrancy’ says that God accommodated to the weaknesses of man during the process of Inspiration. Hence, the Bible (in the autographs) is only infallible in the area of faith, but it may make mistakes in other areas such as science or geography. Clearly, Limited Inerrancy is a false teaching not in conformity with Life Church doctrinal position.

5. Hence, not holding to the new “Perfect Bible” view (eg. holding to our Church doctrinal position on the handcopied manuscripts) does not equate holding to Limited Inerrancy (pertaining to autographs); nor does it make a person like a Neo-Evangelical. Otherwise, the Reformers would also have to be considered as Neo-

Evangelicals, which is clearly a false allegation. In their understanding, there were copyists' errors that came into the text during the copying of manuscripts of the Bible, but they were too few and insignificant to affect the integrity and trustworthiness of the Bible.

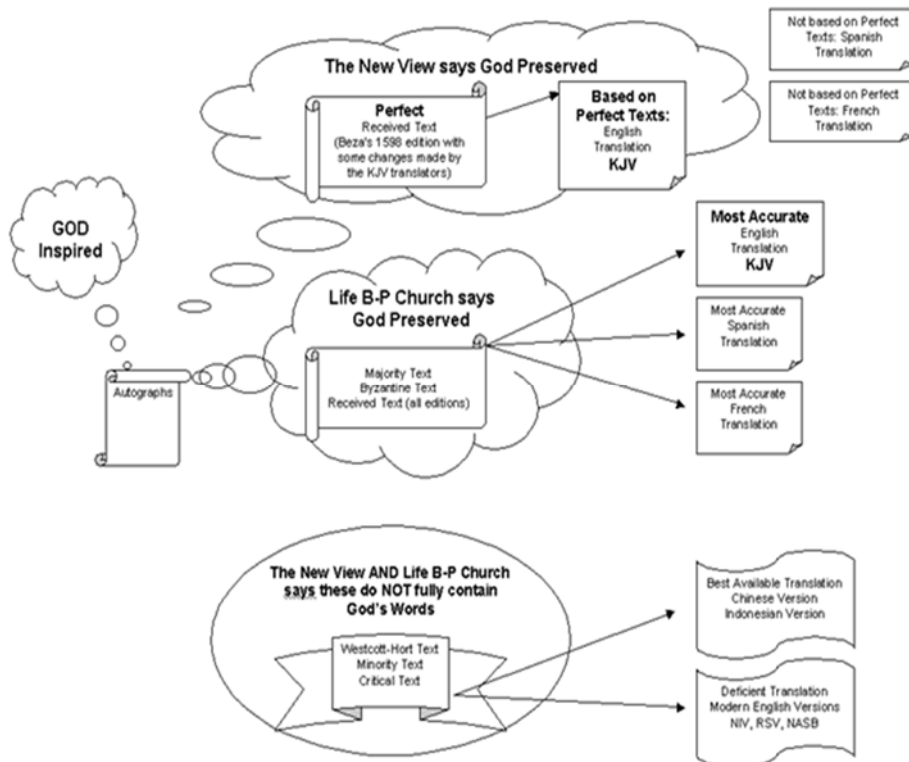
6. For example, while commenting on the discrepancy found between 2 Kings 8:26 and 2 Chronicles 22:2 regarding the age of king Ahaziah, Matthew Henry (a contemporary of the Westminster Divines) pointed out the following:

"Many good expositors are ready to allow that this, with some few more such difficulties, arise from the mistake of some transcriber, who put forty-two for twenty-two, and the copies by which the error should have been corrected might be lost. Many ancient translations read it here twenty-two. Few books are now printed without some errata, yet the authors do not therefore disown them, nor are the errors of the press imputed to the author, but the candid reader amends them by the sense, or by comparing them with some other part of the work, as we may easily do this."

7. The Reformers' faith in the Bible remained firm because they reasoned that the sovereign God who permitted these few insignificant copyists' errors to enter in MUST HAVE ensured that the integrity of the Bible remains intact and completely reliable for man's use.

8. Since the position of the Reformers has been accepted to be orthodox and correct even up to this day by the Reformed Community in general, those who hold the same position they held should not be considered to be less orthodox and biblical than them, much less be considered as attacking the Word of God.

E. Chart on Preservation



Respectfully submitted by:

- Rev Charles Seet
- Rev Colin Wong
- Pr Calvin Loh

- Pr Quek Keng Khwang
- Pr Mark Chen
- Elder Khoo Peng Kiat
- Elder (Dr) Lim Teck Chye
- Elder Sherman Ong
- Elder Sng Teck Leong
- Dn Victor Chan
- Dn Charlie Chan
- Dn (Dr) Chin Hoong Chor
- Dn Benny Chng
- Dn Benny Goh
- Dn Lee Hock Chin
- Dn Lee Heok Seng
- Dn Lim Ching Wah
- Dn Ng Beng Kiong
- Dn Pang Leong Siang
- Dn Seow Cheong Kiong
- Dn Tan Yew Chong

[1] Samuel Rutherford (St. Andrews), a Westminster Divine wrote, "To make one Copy a standard for all others, in which no mistake in the least can be found, he cannot, no Copy can plead this privilege since the first autographs were in being." (Quoted in B. B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Works*, p.241).

[2] Many of them often interacted with other manuscripts in their Bible commentaries, a fact which indicates that they did not see the underlying text of the KJV as the exact replica of the autographs. For example, see John Calvin's commentary on James 4:2.

[3] In his book *Revision Revised*, Dean Burgon wrote, "Once for all, we request it may be clearly understood that we do not, by any means, claim perfection for the Received Text. We entertain no extravagant notions on this subject. Again and again we shall have occasion to point out (e.g. at pg. 107) that the Textus Receptus needs correction" (p.21).

[4] In his book *Defending the King James Bible*, Dr Waite wrote, "The Received Text in the New Testament is ... the text that has survived in continuity from the beginning of the New Testament itself. It is the only accurate representation of the originals we have today! ... the WORDS of the Received Greek and Masoretic Hebrew texts that underlie the KING JAMES BIBLE are the very WORDS which God has PRESERVED down through the centuries, being the exact WORDS of the ORIGINALS themselves." (p.48)

[5] A J Brown, former editorial secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) wrote, "It is right to encourage an overall confidence in the Bible, and a faith in the perfection of the inspired originals, and to give due recognition to the workings of divine providence, but in common with orthodox Christian scholars in every age we should also make a realistic acknowledgement that the manuscript copies and the translations are to some extent subject to the fallibility of human creatures. It is potentially damaging for a minister to pretend to his congregation that there are no differences or difficulties among the manuscripts..." (From "*Faith and Textual Scholarship*", TBS Quarterly Record (Oct-Dec 1984)).

[6] Williamson wrote, "Remember, too, that in a day when there were no printing presses and only a few precious copies of the Bible, the people had to memorize much more than we do today. Thus it was that especially in the Greek-speaking Church, from the very beginning, the Greek New Testament had living witnesses who helped reduce the errors of copiers to an exceedingly small amount" (From *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964), p.17).

[7] "A Careful Investigation of Psalm 12:6-7", *The Biblical Evangelist*, vol. 17, no. 21, October 14, 1983.

[8] E.g. *The Psalms*, by A.F. Kirkpatrick (1951); *Commentary on the Psalms*, by George Horne (1997); *A Guide to the Psalms*, by W. Graham Scroggie; *Matthew Henry's Commentary* (1712); *Commentary on the Psalms*, by John Calvin.

[9] <http://www.spindleworks.com/library/wcf/ward.htm>

[10] <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/refpages/RefArticle.aspx?refid=761570647&pn=2> (emphases added)

[11] "A Perfect Bible Today" in *Bible Witness* Volume 2 Issue 4, p.5