

My dear readers,

A Concise Treatise on the Conflict within the Bible-Presbyterian Church

(Text of a paper read at a seminar on 1 May 2009)

In October 1950 the Bible-Presbyterian (B-P) Church took its origin in the form of “Life Church English Service, an offshoot of the Teochew ‘Mother Church.’”

In November 1988, when the B-P Church had grown to some thirty individual B-P Churches, differences within the body led to a dissolution of the Synod. Since then each B-P Church functioned on its own.

In 2002 Life BPC – “Mother Church” became the scene of vigorous difference of belief over the doctrine of “VPP” – “Verbal Plenary Preservation” propounded by founding pastor Rev Timothy Tow. This, and other contentious issues within the Session, led to Rev Tow’s resignation in 2003 and his founding of “True Life B-P Church.”

A continuing difference between Life Church and Far Eastern Bible College led to the Session of Life B-P Church demanding that the College (FEBC) vacate the premises of 9A Gilstead Road, legally owned by Life B-P Church. (Arising from this, a lawsuit is currently brewing between Life B-P Church and the College).

What had begun in 1950 as a peaceful Gospel endeavour has become a bitter conflict between the present Life Church Session and their erstwhile Founding Father, who had in matter of fact admitted them into positions of leadership, tenderly nurtured and mentored them through years even as a gentle parent.

Today’s Seminar was scheduled some time in March 2009, to be held on 1 May, Labour Day. Meantime, Rev Tow was called Home to rest by the Lord on April 20, some ten days ago. It is my burden, as his younger brother to discharge my assigned duty, in a God-honouring and unbiased manner, for whatever I say, or do not say, will go down permanently recorded in the annals of the Bible-Presbyterian Church.

As I put pen to paper, I recognize the enormity of the task laid on me, as I am the only founding member of the Bible-Presbyterian Church Movement, who had grown up in Life Church for twenty years, and am in a position to relate and realistically evaluate and assess the course of events of the past nearly sixty years. So help me God.

Two questions arise. 1) What happened in 1988 that caused the B-P Synod to dissolve? 2) What happened in 2003 that caused the Founding Pastor of Life Church to leave the Church which he had founded, nurtured and led for 52 years?

These two happenings will now be taken up, each in its turn.

The Dissolution of the B-P Synod 1988 – Causes and Outcome

Let me tell it “as it happened, without adding or taking away” as the Spirit enables.

With growth of numbers, the B-P leadership went into the process of “decentralization” and “diversification.” (While we were one – just Life Church – everyone followed one Pastor). Now arose an increasing chorus of voices from new and younger leaders. In those years (1950 – 1980) the B-P Church was said to be the fastest growing Church in Singapore. Increasing numbers meant also increasing differences in beliefs and practice, and departure from the original.

Causes of Dissolution

a) **Questioning the trustworthiness and authenticity of the Bible Record.** Out of Zion B-P Church came Bible Study notes “FOCUS” (1974) which cast doubt on the Genesis Record.

- on the OT record, compared with other ancient accounts, the Genesis Record was “**most likely the true one.**”
- casting serious doubt on the Genesis record of the years of the Patriarchs, FOCUS said, “*there must be some other explanation for “years” in Genesis, e.g. if years = months, then Noah’s 950 years were in fact 950 months.*” **Question:** Which was true: **BIBLE** or **FOCUS**?

- “... we have no way of determining the facts of the case ... was the Flood over the whole world or only on part of it?” **Question:** Why doubt what God’s Word said again and again (some ten times or more) that the Flood was “*over all the earth*”?

This sort of open challenge to the authenticity of the Bible Record conveyed one clear message: modernism and unbelief had surely crept into the B-P leadership.

b) **Fellowshipping and collaborating with New Evangelicals.** Our B-P Church was clearly founded on the stand of separation from all “non fundamental” Christian groups, e.g. New Evangelicals, Liberals, Ecumenists, Modernists, etc. Certain of the younger leaders were openly co-labouring and fellowshipping with New Evangelical and Ecumenical persons and groups – contrary to our stand.

c) **Demand for Modern English Bibles.** Not satisfied with our KJV (AV) Bible, there arose a growing demand for Modern English Versions (MEV) e.g. NIV, NKJV, etc, ignoring the fact that these MEVs are corrupt and ecumenically inclined.

d) **Sympathy toward Charismatic practices.** This was the “*last straw which broke the camel’s back.*” In 1987, at our Annual Pastors’ Conference up in Cameron Highlands, certain of the younger leaders maintained a resolute stand on the issue, insisting that “meaningful ecstatic utterances” had not ceased. *(To be continued)*

Lovingly in the Lord

Dr SH Tow, Sr Pastor