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# The Bible Versions Debate

## INTERMISSION: MOUNTAIN OF PRECONCEPTIONS

By Dusty Peterson



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We have now published the first half of Dusty's excellent series of articles (Parts 1, 2A & 2B) on the Bible Versions Debate. The following piece acts as a crucial interlude before we commence with the second half. As Dusty explains below, various factors make it extremely difficult for some people to even *contemplate* changing their view on the subject of Bible versions. This article deals graciously and compellingly with numerous such factors. It also communicates very ably the need for patience and prayer when faced with souls who struggle with them. (All emphases in quotations in this article are Dusty's unless otherwise stated.) — *ajd*

I've just been through a remarkable experience. I was asked at the start of the year to participate in an Internet "bulletin board" (a written discussion, open to everyone) on the subject of the three Bible Versions Debate articles that have so far appeared in *Media Spotlight*. I had other plans, but I sensed it was right to agree to the request, not knowing what a rollercoaster ride I was letting myself in for.

A young man (young enough to be my son, it transpires), spent the next month or so dominating the conversation. He liked Part 1 in my series, but when it came to Part 2a (entitled *Materials of Value*) he kept raising issues which were at a distinct tangent, and sometimes completely irrelevant altogether, to the content of the article. I was taken aback by his inability to face up to the document itself. It was as if this young man had somehow become almost physically *incapable* of judging the material on its merits.

I endeavor to teach in a way that is digestible for as wide a range of individuals as is possible without having to compromise on the truth. I had worked hard to see that each of my three articles began from first principles, in the hope that this would make the material accessible to all but the most stiff-necked. However, my Internet discussion made it clear that

some folks today have so many preconceptions about the topic of Bible versions that a number of such souls are literally *unable* to put these things to one side and approach material on this topic with a truly open mind. This means that, if such people try to read Part 2a in my series, they may find it very difficult to objectively determine the soundness or otherwise of the arguments made there.

In an effort to plug this gap, this "Intermission" seeks to demonstrate that these preconceptions are not a reasonable basis for dismissing my article out of hand. Hopefully the observations I supply will assist any readers who are trying to bring this sort of material to brethren who hold to such preconceptions. It is also designed to bring comfort to all those who have had a rough time convincing their friends about the matter. (For reasons which will become obvious, this article will probably be appreciated only by folks who are happy with Parts 1 and 2 in the series.)

### BACKGROUND

Let me "set the scene." Here are four central principles with which I hope every sincere reader can agree:

1) The Holy Scriptures were inspired by God and were given to the Body of Christ for a very good reason. We can deduce from this that the Scriptures are unique and spiritual. Further, their accuracy is patently important if the spiritual welfare of believers in Jesus is reliant upon them.

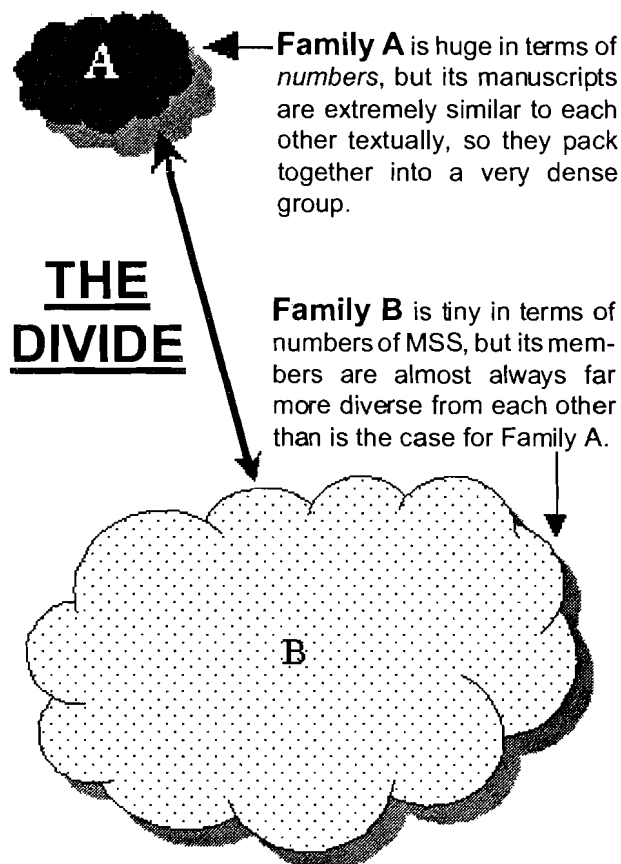
2) It is sensible, especially in view of the number of translations around today, for Christians to make some rudimentary checks to ensure that their personal Bible translation is trustworthy. It surely follows that it is wise to start such checks by gaining a basic overview of the *source material* on which the translation in question was founded, so as to make reasonably certain that the underlying text is reliable. (Translators are not infallible, and—as we noted elsewhere—the knowledge and talents required to *translate* Scripture are substantially different from those required to be a textual critic of it.)

3) Even a very limited investigation into this topic will reveal that, although there exist a number of different views among scholars today, easily the most conspicuous feature on the landscape is a fundamental divide in attitude regarding the New Testament—a divide which I define below. (Every living Bible scholar I know of sits on one side or the other of this divide, regardless of whether or not they call themselves “eclectic.”<sup>1</sup>) While it is true that there are a variety of positions on each side of the divide, nevertheless the large divide *between* these two sides can be characterized as having the following three elements:

- One of the camps (I’ll call it “camp A”) adamantly reveres the “Byzantine” family of evidence (my articles have termed this “family A”), whereas the other camp is adamantly *disdainful* of that family;
- Camp A is deeply unimpressed with the “Alexandrian” family of evidence (or “family B”), whereas the other camp (I’ll call it “camp B”) resolutely holds members of this family in *high regard*;
- Camp A sees family A as being absolutely key to determining the original text of the Bible, whereas camp B believes that family A is, at best, almost *irrelevant* and that family B is the main resource for reconstructing the original text.

(There are additional facets to this divide between the camps, but we shall come to these later. Suffice it to say that

this divide in attitude is so fundamental that it is very rare for a textual critic to swap sides.) Below is an illustration.



(4) Although the great bulk of textual differences separating families A and B are very small in size, nonetheless there are thousands of them. I believe this to be true even of the two closest MSS across the divide.<sup>2</sup> All told, these thousands of different readings between the families affect *many* thousands of separate words.

It surely follows that only one camp can be right in their attitude towards these two families. Given the extreme importance of Holy Writ, it would be worth finding out which camp is right. An analysis of the background to this divide in attitude is bound to help us work out which of these camps has the correct stance. (Part 2a in my series of articles was intended to be just such an investigation.)

1 This is why two general types of Bible versions are produced today. (The word “types” here is an attempt to reflect the fact that there is some variation of text *within* each of these two streams of Bibles. Some members of camp B understandably draw attention to the variation within family A, but there is far more variation *between* the two families than is found *within* family A.)

2 The only possible exception I know of is Codex A—when it is compared with the closest MS to it. But even Codex A still differs in many *hundreds* of places from any other known manuscript. Besides, its constitution is so obviously rigged that no one, on either side of the divide, sees it as reliable. Other manuscripts have a mixed text, but either they lean heavily to one family or the other (e.g., Codex W) or they are too fragmentary to draw firm conclusions about them (e.g., p33).

## IS ANALYSIS UNNECESSARY?

Here's where we hit problems. Some members of camp B argue that, for various reasons, their side of the divide is so evidently in the right that no such analysis is required. I know of three reasons in this category (the young man I mentioned above produced all three at one time or another during our discussion), and I have attempted to deal with each of them in this section.

### "The Majority Of Scholars Are In Camp B"

An observation commonly used to pre-empt an analysis of the divide is that camp B comprises the bulk of the scholars today. This, it is often claimed, is devastating to the case for camp A.

There are a number of serious difficulties with this line of reasoning:

- One problem with the principle that the majority of scholars must be right is that folks applying this principle at different points in history would have ended up in *different camps*. For example, during the 17th and 18th centuries the majority of scholars sided with camp A.
- Another problem derives from the fact that the Bible is a spiritual book given by the *Holy Spirit*. According to 1 Corinthians 2:14, the things of the Spirit of God are "spiritually discerned" (see also Eph. 2:1-3; and 2 Cor. 4:4a). Thus, when attempting to discern which source materials are godly, only the opinion of *saved* scholars carries any weight (because all other scholars are spiritually dead to God as per Gen. 2:17; Matt. 8:21-22; Eph. 5:14, etc.). Even though it is irrefutable that camp B contains the large majority of scholars today, if any of these scholars are not true Christians then their opinion of which materials are godly is *irrelevant* to the question of where the majority view lies (as would naturally also be the case for any unsaved scholars in camp A).<sup>3</sup>

If the reader doesn't accept this point, I recommend perusing 1 Corinthians 1:17-29. Here are some quotes from that passage: God has "made **foolish** the wisdom of this world." God "will **destroy** the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to **nothing** the understanding of the prudent." God does **not** call "many wise men after the **flesh**." Instead He has "chosen the **foolish** things of the world to **confound** the wise," just as He did in Matthew 11:25 and Acts 4:13-14.

- Even among true Christians, the Bible says that knowledge tends to puff us up (1 Cor. 8:1), and we know that pride is an enemy of godly wisdom (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:4; Prov. 8:13-14). In other words, even scholars who are true Christians must work hard to avoid pride obscuring their view of the issues.
- Similarly, *ungodliness* (e.g., dishonesty or a lack of proper reverence for God) is damaging to one's discernment over spiritual matters (Job 28:28; Psa. 111:10; Prov. 1:7). If we are determined to follow the majority of scholars, we cannot simply talk about a physical number on each side of the fence without taking into account the *nature* of these scholars.
- If they have a mighty intellect, even humble and moral Christians can be "too clever for their own good," as my grandmother used to phrase it. They can be tempted to rely on their prodigious mental powers rather than on the power that comes from godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). Even when a genius is in the *wrong* he can often still win arguments against lesser brains. He achieves this either by being unnecessarily complicated and thereby intimidating the other side and embarrassing them into submission, or simply by being able to exploit his remarkable memory and knowledge to reel off lots of points and express them in the best possible light. Time and again I find that great intellect in a person causes him to develop major spiritual blindspots. And very often I get the distinct impression such souls are trying to impress their *peers* rather than God. It is *spiritual* knowledge and wisdom that is most needed when dealing with spiritual matters.

(A number of scholars within camp B have fallen for the error I exposed in Part 1 of my series—i.e., they support the creation of "dynamic equivalence" Bibles. This means that these scholars can't be particularly wise if they have made such a basic mistake.)

- Another problem which can get in the way of textual scholars making a sound judgment is if those scholars, during their schooling, were not given a balanced picture of the arguments. The views of *both* camps need to have been presented to them. (Of course, this is particularly crucial if their teachers believed in the wrong camp!) From what I can see, this even-handed approach seldom takes place. It was the same thing sixty years ago when Alfred Martin, then vice president of Moody Bible Institute, warned that students were hearing "one side only."<sup>4</sup> It is

3 If, as elements within camp B argue, it is not important for a textual critic to be saved, readers may want to bear in mind that the majority of unsaved scholars today would deny numerous historical facts recorded in the Bible. Does this not suggest we should listen only to *saved* people when it comes to deciding the text underlying the Bible?

difficult for a young scholar to determine for himself which side is right if one of the sides is kept from him. If he selects the wrong camp at this formative stage it becomes very tough to recognize, and then respond biblically to, his error in later years.

- Another impediment to reaching the correct conclusion is to deny the inspiration of Holy Writ. God is not going to bless a faithless attitude (Heb. 11:6). Put simply, scholars must genuinely believe the Bible to be fully inspired if they are going to be of use to Him. To be frank, there is a low view of Scripture among many of the scholars in camp B. We do not find this nearly so much in camp A.
- Finally, where does the Bible (in any of the source materials in either of the two main families of text) teach that the majority of scholars must be right? Does the Bible not rather say we should *beware* of the scribes? It is surely worth observing that God's People made the mistake of blindly siding with the majority of scholars in *Christ's* day—and ended up seriously disfiguring the Word on that occasion (i.e., the Word made flesh).

(Please Note: In the closing sections of both Parts 2a and 2b I looked, from a historical perspective, at how scholars can “get it wrong.” I plan to continue this study in Part 3.)

### **“There Are Sinners In Camp A”**

Another common argument for rejecting any analysis of the divide is that camp A includes some very unChristlike people and that this camp must therefore be the wrong one.

Two responses to this reasoning occur:

Firstly, it is indeed the case that there are some very unChristlike people in camp A. But, as camp B also has its share of very unChristlike people,<sup>5</sup> this seems an odd argument for camp B to proffer.

Secondly, any reasonably complete manuscript (regardless of whether it contains the New Testament or the Old Testament), exposes Satan as an incredibly subtle and utterly implacable enemy of God and His People. It follows that Satan seeks to undermine the true Body of Christ and that he sometimes makes use of very devious means to do so. A few of the ways in which he attempts to undermine us are as follows:

(a) He tries to prevent believers having access to God's true Word (e.g., by burning their sound Bibles);

(b) For those folks who escape step (a), he discourages them from *faithfully studying* God's Word (i.e., by sowing confusion and doubt about its reliability);

(c) For those who escape step (b), he brings division by inventing a variety of dogmatically-held but illogical positions and by raising up false brothers *from within the camp* to promote those illogical positions.

It follows from the above that, even within the correct camp, there will be people who are unChristlike and who unswervingly and mercilessly preach false conclusions. These people serve the enemy because: they give the correct camp a bad name; they obscure the proper (i.e., true and balanced) position within the correct camp; they cause unnecessary division within the camp; and they cause confusion about God's Word within the camp. In other words, the fact that a camp has some unChristlike people within it does not mean it is necessarily on the wrong side of the aforementioned divide in attitude.

### **“The Instigators Were From Camp A”**

A third way to dispense with an analysis is to argue that it was the “KJV Only” people among the populace of camp A who created the divide in the first place—and therefore that camp B must be the right one.

Here are two responses to that argument:

Firstly, the divide in attitude predates not only the “KJV Only” movement but the KJV itself. In fact the divide can be shown to have existed more than a thousand years before the KJV was *dreamt* of.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, each camp blames the other for originating the rift. Since the divide in attitude can be seen way back in antiquity, we cannot be sure when it began and so we cannot safely discern *from history alone* which camp created it. Once again, we are dealing with the Bible—a spiritual book. We must therefore approach the question of who caused the rift by “comparing spiritual things with **spiritual**” (1 Cor. 2:13b; see also Psa. 42:7a). We do this by looking at the issue from a spiritual perspective rather than a purely historical one. Put another way, one must first *perform an analysis* of the divide before one can definitively say which side *created* it.

4 Alfred Martin, *Critical Examination of the Westcott-Hort Textual Theory*, 1951 dissertation presented to the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary's Graduate School, as cited in *Friday Church News Notes*, May 19, 2006, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).

5 I demonstrate this in Part 3 in my series, but I also provide evidence for it a little later in the current document.

6 It appears the divide was present in Britain as far back as Augustine's day [A. McClure, *Translators Revived*, (R.E. Publications, 1858), p. 3]. Westcott and Hort themselves apparently accepted that the divide dates back at least to the start of the fifth century [B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, vol. 2, *Introduction & Appendix* (Macmillan, 1881), pp. 141-142].

## IS ANALYSIS UNHELPFUL?

We have now seen that elements within camp B sometimes claim that investigating the divide in attitude between the two camps would be redundant. If these arguments fail, others may be utilized to head off such an investigation on the basis that it would be *unhelpful*. I can think of eight arguments in this category.

### “The Differences Are Minor”

We are regularly told that, in practical terms, the textual differences separating the two camps are doctrinally trivial, and that any analysis of the divide would therefore be a waste of everyone’s time.

It turns out that some scholars in camp B do *not* believe the differences to be doctrinally trivial.<sup>7</sup> But for the sake of argument, let us accept for now that the differences are indeed doctrinally negligible. There are still some problems with the above rationale:

- We’ve already seen, in the “Background” section above, that the Bible is from God and that its accuracy is very important. We’ve also seen that *thousands* of textual differences separate the two camps. Since only one of the two camps can be right, the other camp is in error and—in view of the need for accuracy—the camp in error needs to have this made known to them. Thus, even if the textual differences don’t affect doctrine noticeably, it is still wise to find out which camp is on the right side of the divide—and wise for the other camp to be open to correction and to accept the truth. (We ought to have the same reverence for Scripture that the Psalmist expressed throughout Psalm 119. We ought to love it [v97]. Indeed, if we have a biblical fear of God, ought we not to *tremble* at the thought of thousands of corruptions to the Bible He gave us [Isa. 66:2; Ez. 10:3])?
- Even if all the thousands of textual differences at issue are accidental or well-intentioned, they will nevertheless cause damage to the pure and intricate text of God’s Word (as I hope I established in Part 1 of my series). Also, many of them are of a type which promotes doubt about the inspiration, and hence reliability, of God’s Word (see Part 2b).
- In the 21st century Western World, where a Bible can be obtained for a pittance, and where owning one is no longer punishable by death, it is very easy to become blasé about

its text. If, as has been the case in past centuries, people had to find a very great deal of money (or had to write the entire text out by hand) in order to obtain a copy of the Bible, I am convinced folks would be a lot more interested in ensuring they were obtaining an accurate version. (In fact I suspect it wouldn’t even *cross their minds* to ignore the thousands of differences.) Which attitude do we suppose God wants?

Irrespective of whether or not the textual differences *within* one’s chosen camp are trivial, it is clearly advisable to ensure that we are at least on the right side of the divide *between* the camps.

### Are The Differences Trivial?

Most of the textual differences may look trivial but, as I noted in Part 2b, it requires only a *minuscule* number of non-trivial ones for doctrinal problems to arise:

- To do damage to a person’s walk, or a fellowship’s effectiveness, all a false teacher needs is for his audience not to know their Bible well, and for there to be a tiny handful of corrupt verses which go to the heart of the Gospel and which oppose some aspect of it. This situation does real harm because these verses, with their unambiguous opposition to the Gospel, *cannot be explained away by the audience*. Indeed, if every such verse were shown to a person, a false teacher could potentially *demolish* the Gospel in that person’s eyes.
- If a person’s long-standing and firmly-held position on *any* doctrine can be called into serious doubt by a corrupted passage, this can weaken that person’s faith in their *other* beliefs. It certainly makes it easier for false teachers to lead that person down the wrong road.
- Depending on which camp is supporting the correct family, the importance of the textual differences varies considerably. If camp A is in the right *and* if the basic doctrines held by people like Dean Burgon are essentially correct, then the differences between the text-types can be shown to be far from trivial.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, if camp B is in the right and if the basic doctrines held by people like *Dr. Hort* are essentially correct then the differences between the text-types are again important. (Hort’s basic doctrines varied markedly from Burgon’s, as I intend to document in Part 3.) Plainly it would be prudent to “err on the side of

7 In Parts 2a and 2b we observed Drs. Westcott, Hort and Smith all admitting as much. Other members of camp B who have acknowledged that the differences are not doctrinally trivial include Dr. Metzger who has written that some of the differences are of “**considerable consequence**” [Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament*, 2nd. ed., (UBS, 1994), pp. 9-10]. Part 3 in my series offers additional such quotes.

caution” in this matter and work on the basis that the textual differences may well have significance.

As I documented earlier, there are influential scholars in camp B who do *not* think the textual differences are minor—and certainly not minor when *taken together*.<sup>9</sup> (The very way in which camp B scholars regularly protest that “no **cardinal** doctrines are affected” is effectively an admission that *some* doctrines God saw fit to give us in the Scriptures *are* affected. Who has the authority to say these others are dispensable? Are they not given to help the Body of Christ to mature and to help its members in their lifelong process of discipleship and sanctification?) It would clearly be wise to perform the analysis of the aforementioned divide so that we can determine which camp is correct and hence uncover the true gravity of the differences.

### **“Analysis Promotes Doubt”**

Ironically (in view of the preceding entry), it is sometimes said that analyzing the divide is unhelpful for the very reason that doing so can itself lead to doubt about the reliability of one’s preferred translation of the Bible (i.e., because such an analysis draws attention to a divide that most “laymen” don’t even know exists).

This idea assumes that the textual differences between the camps are spiritually negligible. But even if that were the case, there are still problems with this argument:

- As I noted in the previous section, doubts about the reliability of God’s Word are *already* caused by the thousands of textual differences between Bibles, and by the very size and nature of some of these differences. Thus, plenty of folks *already* have a significant distrust of their Bible version thanks to the textual differences between the camps. A sound and clear analysis of the divide in attitude between

scholars would ultimately deal with this and hence would *increase* one’s faith in Holy Writ rather than diminish it.

- We’ve already seen that “it is sensible for Christians to make some rudimentary checks to ensure that their personal Bible translation is trustworthy.” For those so-called “laymen” who perform such checks, a degree of doubt about God’s Word is unavoidably caused in their minds by having the scholars in each camp insisting (*unshakeably*) that their side is right and that their preferred Greek family is the best. Scholars in both camps are forever impugning the accuracy or reliability of the family exalted by the opposite camp.<sup>10</sup> A solid analysis of which camp is right would actually expunge said doubt.<sup>11</sup>

### **“Analysis Is Divisive”**

Another common argument used by elements within camp B to deny the value of analyzing the divide is that the textual differences between the two camps are not as important as *unity*.

Such a line of reasoning seems to assume a number of things. Let us look at the different facets of this.

### **On Dividing**

As I explained in Part 2b, we must avoid the unbiblical idea that the end justifies the means. Just because some Christians separate over issues is no justification for keeping them ignorant about those issues. Each of us is responsible before God for our actions, and God is big enough to cope. (He has promised He will build His “Church”<sup>12</sup> and we must not tell Him how to do it.) At least when communicating with other believers about the fundamental things of God, we should speak the truth in love, not hide the truth in fear.

8 We saw this in Part 2b. For example, every time an instance of a teaching is omitted from the Bible, it makes it: **(a)** Less likely we’ll determine the correct teaching in the first place, **(b)** Less likely we’ll *remember* the teaching, because we’ll hit it less often in our Bible studies, and **(c)** Less likely we’ll *recall the location* of one of the instances of the teaching when in conversation with other folks.

9 Admittedly these scholars seem to play down the extent of their antagonism towards family A in public. Hypothetically speaking, is it *impossible* that certain scholars within camp B have to be seen to tolerate the camp A Greek in order to discourage people from asking searching questions about the cause of the divide? The apparent desire of some scholars to discredit family A while dissuading ordinary mortals from properly investigating the subject results very frequently in amusing doublespeak. Dr. A.T. Robertson, for instance, says that family A is “substantially correct”, but he later turns around and claims that we “**must** bear in mind that some of the passages in dispute are of **great** importance” [A.T. Robertson, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, (Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), pp. 21, 22].

10 It does seem unreasonable for elements within camp B to promote doubt about the family A text while simultaneously telling us that an investigation into the matter is unhelpful because it will cause doubt!

11 In later articles we shall, God-willing, see that a proper analysis of the divide removes doubt about the trustworthiness of Scripture in other ways too.

12 Editor’s Note: Regular readers of *Media Spotlight* will know that I prefer to use *ekklesia*, the Greek word mistranslated “church” in English versions of the Bible.

Also, as we noted at the start of Part 2a, we are on holy ground here. Unless God has shown us that it is *impossible* to determine which camp is on the correct side of the divide (and why would that be?), we should seek to do so.

Bible translations rooted in different texts promote different doctrinal emphases—which in turn promote division. An analysis of the conflict between scholars would actually *reduce* division.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, whenever scholars in camp B criticize the family supported by camp A it encourages a degree of division. This too would be alleviated if an analysis of the divide were undertaken.

“Division” can take many forms, and the Bible makes plain that not all division is wrong. (I looked briefly at this matter at the end of Part 2a. It gets discussed much more extensively in a book I have co-authored. See this footnote for details.<sup>14</sup>) I would suggest that the most divisive situation occurs when believers are presented with copious amounts of verifiable evidence that their position is in error and they refuse to listen. They are dividing from the truth and therefore from the God of truth (Deu. 32:4; Psa. 31:5-6; Isa. 65:16).

#### More serious

Of course, the whole argument about divisiveness only makes sense if the textual differences between the camps are harmless. But even if the differences are merely accidental or well-intentioned it does not follow that they are harmless. Beyond this, and as we have already established, Satan is unimaginably subtle and an utterly implacable enemy of God and His People. It surely follows that:

(a) Satan is extraordinarily keen to corrupt God’s Word in whatever way he can in order to reduce its power as much as possible, but

(b) He is limited as to the quantity and nature of these corruptions because his *overriding* need is obviously to ensure that the purposes of his alterations are not easy to discern, else the whole endeavor will have been pointless. In other words, what may appear at first glance to be a bunch of unrelated and minor differences could actually represent deliberate corruption by the enemy. Part 2b in my series went into all this and showed that some of the textual differences between the camps are indeed important, especially when combined.

(c) Given that Satan is desperately crafty, he naturally seeks to counterfeit God and His ways. Just as there is a true Body of Christ and a false “church,” there is surely at least the *possibility* that one of the two streams of Bible text is a subtle counterfeit. It goes without saying that, if brothers are using Bible versions rooted in what is effectively a counterfeit Greek text, they ought to be informed of this.

The Bible is the foundation for all that we believe. In view of the immense importance God attaches to the purity of His Word, such that even *well-intentioned* changes bring curses on those who make them (as I showed in Part 1), it seems evident that we should make this a priority. If God commands us to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 1:3) then it cannot be wrong to contend for the words through which that faith is given to us. Should we really turn a blind eye to corrupt texts? What is more fundamental than ensuring the brethren use trustworthy versions of God’s Word?

#### “God Would Not Allow Deceptive Texts”

Some followers of Camp B insist that the textual differences cannot be serious because the Lord simply wouldn’t allow such a state of affairs. God would supposedly prevent any of His children from using a significantly corrupted Bible. On this basis, any analysis of the divide in attitude is said to be a waste of time and a distraction.

There are several problems with this argument:

1) It implies that *any* new translation, no matter how extreme a paraphrase it is or how theologically biased it is, must be acceptable to God if it is accepted by any Christians. This is not a biblical stance. David’s son Absalom was accepted by, and indeed was very popular among, God’s People—but he was seriously in the wrong (see 2 Sam. 15-17).

2) It also implies that God pre-empts notable deception before it can affect His People. This is not biblical either. God did not stop Satan from deceiving Solomon, or many of God’s *other* children in Scripture for that matter. Nor did He stop Satan from deceiving a third of all the angels as per Rev. 12:4.<sup>15</sup> It is imperative that we have an accurate idea of God. He is infinitely holy and commands us to be holy too. When

13 In view of the regularity with which members of camp B use the argument that analysis would be divisive, it is necessary to note that division exists *among* the supporters of camp B. After all, some of these folks are happy with certain camp B translations but are opposed to other translations emanating from that *same camp* (and not just the paraphrases either). Indeed there is division even among camp B supporters who use the “*same*” translation as each other. Many fans of a certain popular version are up in arms about the new editions coming out now. (It is a little surreal to watch these folks get so upset about the relatively small differences involved there, given that these same individuals are so relaxed about the far greater number – and more serious type – of differences existing between camps A and B. I have come across people in this very category who blow a fuse if anyone shows even a hint of divisiveness over the much wider divide involved *between* the two camps.)

14 The book is called *Alpha – the Unofficial Guide: Church* and is stocked by Sword Publishers.

the men of Bethshemesh looked into the Ark of God, the Lord punished them with a “great slaughter” (1 Sam. 6:19), but some preachers today depict God as someone very different.

3) If we are to *find* the truth, God says we need to seek it as diligently as we would seek hidden treasure (Prov. 2:3-5). It is up to us to seek truth. God has already given us plenty of warnings on this. Here are some cases in point: He has already warned us about people who corrupt His words (e.g., Jer. 23:36); He has already warned us that our enemy is: **wily** (Eph. 6:11), **crafty** (Dan. 8:25), and **subtle** (2 Cor. 11:3, etc.); and He has already warned us that we need to be vigilant (1 Pet. 5:8).

4) Consider a believer who uses a Bible produced by the wrong camp. In the situation where this believer is sincerely walking with God and is simply in unavoidable ignorance of the textual differences, God would certainly undertake to protect that believer from the corruptions. But where does the Bible ever say that this situation justifies hiding the truth on such a matter? (Anyway, how can we ever *know* if a person is truly in *unavoidable* ignorance—assuming such a state is even possible when the God of the Bible can patently do all things.)

I need to make a final observation here. If one of the two streams of Greek text does indeed represent a counterfeit of God’s Word by the false “church,” then we might reasonably expect the corruptions to be largely confined to reducing faith in the inspiration of Holy Writ, and undermining (directly *or indirectly*) the heart of the Gospel. It follows that if a believer already enjoys a solid faith in the inspiration of Scripture and has a sound grasp of the true Gospel, this corrupt text would do him less damage than it would to someone who doesn’t share these characteristics.<sup>16</sup>

### **“The Common Man Cannot Understand”**

Some members of camp B claim that the principles of textual criticism are beyond the mental powers of the “layman” and that an analysis of the divide is therefore a waste of time and could even be dangerous.

As usual, there are severe problems with this argument:

1) In my experience it is invariably those in camp B who make the claim. Yet if it is indeed too hard for the common

man then one would have thought that most, if not all, scholars on *both* sides would say this.

2) Why would God make it too hard for the common man to understand the issues? Would the God of the Bible really leave these vital matters about His eternal Word solely in the hands of some elite class? The Bible never says so. Indeed, God calls every believer to test “all things” (1 Thess. 5:21), so it must surely be possible for them to do this—particularly when it comes to such a crucial issue as the true text of Holy Scripture. Even among the requirements God has laid down for *elders* there is no mention of the need for great intellect.

3) Obviously a person needs to have special gifting in order to *translate* God’s Word or to do elementary research into manuscript evidence, etc., but the fact is that none of the actual *concepts* involved in textual criticism is difficult.<sup>17</sup> After all, it isn’t rocket science. It merely deals with the method of transmission through history of the Bible’s text.

I must reiterate that the Bible is a spiritual book and that it must therefore be approached *spiritually*. (Along with various other aspects of the article you are reading, I go into this point further in Part 3 of my articles.) If God can make fishermen into apostles, He can plainly enable a Christian’s sanctified mind to understand the principles underlying textual criticism (Psa. 119:98-100). (It is interesting to observe that camp B scholars who argue that only other scholars can understand the issues aright rarely seem to add any caveat to the effect that, since the Bible is a spiritual book, only *saved* scholars can interpret the evidence aright. Besides, scholars often disagree on the meaning of the evidence. So which scholars are correct?)

Incidentally, a person can determine which camp is in the right without having to approach the question from the point of view of textual criticism at all. I intend to demonstrate this in Part 3. Thus, even if the “ability” argument were correct for textual criticism, it would not apply to every analysis of the divide between the camps.

### **“Analysis Leads To Obsession”**

It is regularly pointed out that some people who investigate the divide get so caught up in the topic that their focus

15 There is a variant on the “God wouldn’t allow His children to be deceived” argument which I confront at some length in Part 3.

16 This wouldn’t mean the corrupt text was safe for a mature Christian to use. Apart from anything else, their use of the text would legitimize it in the eyes of more vulnerable younger believers around them.

17 The complexity only comes with the sheer amount of information required to refute some of the confused and faithless arguments thrown up by unbelieving scholars! Some of these people write in an unnecessarily opaque and convoluted way as if to *purposefully* make the material impenetrable to the common man. What do they have to hide? Where is the “simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3)? Is it not a tiny bit suspicious when people in camp B criticize camp A’s text (calling it things like “disfigured,” “debased”, and “full of inaccuracies”) and then tell us we shouldn’t look into the issue for ourselves?



stops being a desire to become more Christlike and instead turns into an obsession to merely promote their view on the question of Bible versions. It is further noted that this, in turn, often leads such people to become arrogant, aggressive, and judgmental (i.e., the *opposite* of becoming more like our Lord, who was “full of grace” John 1:14).

It is absolutely true that we should concentrate on becoming ever more Christlike and that the study of the divide in attitude between scholars can lead some people to lose sight of this critical element of our faith, but there are numerous problems with the idea that this means we should ignore the divide.

If we take the argument to its logical conclusion, we end up with a very peculiar situation. For example, since some people develop an obsession about keeping fit or eating healthily, does this mean it is wrong for us to encourage exercise or a sensible diet? Any truth can become an obsession with people, but that’s no excuse for concealing it.<sup>18</sup> What’s needed is *balance*.

A godly analysis of any spiritual matter will point us *towards* Christ, so the problem is not with the topic but with the *person*. Any person who gets obsessive about this subject would almost certainly get obsessive about other things too. Local fellowships which do their job properly will perform or locate a godly analysis of the divide written in a way that discourages an obsessive response. They will also disciple their members so that they react to the analysis in a mature way. (Besides, is not the very fact that some people get obsessive about this issue an indicator that there may indeed be significance to the whole issue after all?)

Identifying the correct camp means we identify the sound family of manuscripts. This brings us closer to God’s Word. For any sensible Christian this will take them *closer* to Christ rather than further away.

Yes, there are some who have made the issue of Bible versions more important than their own personal walk with the Lord. While diligently seeking to *defend* God’s Word, they have forgotten to be diligent about *studying and applying* God’s Word in their own lives. Their prayer lives are inadequate (are they even *having* daily quiet times?) and they have become very uncharitable (apparently losing sight of the fact that 1 Corinthians 13:2-3 says this means they *cannot possibly* be serving God no matter how laudable their intentions). However, it is also necessary to acknowledge that defending the accuracy of God’s Word and serving Christ are hardly incompatible activities.

The Word of God is the written parallel of Christ Jesus Himself—the Word made flesh. As His betrothed, we should protect its accuracy as zealously as a wife would protect her husband’s reputation.<sup>19</sup> Put another way, what may seem like an obsession is sometimes just a God-given burden to help brothers recognize a fundamental truth. Indeed, just as ministry in music, ministry to children, and serving tables can be a part of one’s God-given, Christ-centered, ministry, so can studying and teaching the things of God, including issues surrounding His Word.

Finally, I hope readers can see from the way I express myself in these articles that a person does not stray from Christ or become uncharitable just because he looks into this matter.

### **“Analysis Hinders Evangelism”**

Analysis of the divide is sometimes circumvented on the basis that it gets in the way of the Body of Christ’s evangelistic role. Specifically, the time and effort expended on analysis could be spent witnessing to unbelievers instead.

Once again, this argument doesn’t appear to have been fully thought through:

- For a start it is difficult to see a non-Christian being terribly impressed by such indifference to the purity of our holy book. Surely it is a rather bad witness for us not to even know which family is the correct one on which to base our Scriptures.
- A corrupt Bible text could potentially include readings that (directly or indirectly) impair our *ability* to evangelize. Unless we investigate the divide, it is very hard to know the situation. For instance, we have already seen that the textual differences between the two families are of a quantity and nature that reduce faith in God’s Word. This is certainly not going to assist our evangelism. As I noted towards the start of Part 2b, the Lord calls us to make *disciples* rather than converts, and the textual differences could very easily damage our capacity to do that.
- It is perfectly true that time expended on analyzing the divide (or indeed on alerting those brothers who have attached themselves to the wrong camp) could be spent on evangelism, but this could be said of all sorts of other tasks too. Time spent on studying one’s Bible, time spent on prayer, time spent on serving and encouraging the brethren, and a hundred other things that the Body of Christ is biblically supposed to be doing could all be sacrificed if we were to apply this idea consistently. And

18 *Papering over* the divide can lead people to become pretty obsessive too - i.e., obsessive in their desire to oppose anyone who wants to peel back this flimsy wallpaper and understand why the scholars are split. I would suggest it is more than a little obsessive for someone to have invented all these spurious reasons for ignoring the gaping hole between the scholars!

19 If, as camp A asserts, the corruptions between the families often revolve directly around the person of the Lord Jesus Christ then we are hardly serving Him if we ignore those corruptions.

how would we have access to translations in the first place unless people had seen that it was right to spend time making God's Word accessible to all His People?

- Folks who say, "We should be getting on with saving souls" lose sight of the truth that only God can save souls. Such is the profound nature of this operation that only God knows when, and how, to reach a given soul. If we try to evangelize in our own strength we will merely produce wood, hay and stubble (1 Cor. 3:10-14; Psa. 127:1a). For more on this pivotal topic, see this footnote.<sup>20</sup> As I've pointed out before, God's ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8-9; Prov. 14:12, 16:25).<sup>21</sup>

### **"We Must Not Strive Over Words"**

In trying to avert analysis of the divide, some members of camp B quote 1 Timothy 6:4 and/or 2 Timothy 2:14, both of which warn against striving over "words."

Not surprisingly, there are numerous problems with applying these passages to the Bible text:

- The context of neither passage is the text of Scripture. Indeed, both passages urge us to have tremendous *care* for the "words of our Lord Jesus Christ" and the "word of truth" respectively.
- It would be unwise to clutch at two ambiguous verses and make the whole of the rest of God's Word subservient to them - especially when Scripture includes plenty of verses teaching the opposite of such an interpretation. Otherwise, when God warned us in Holy Writ about people corrupting His Word, He must have been wrong to do so!
- I devoted the whole of Part 1 in my series of articles to establishing that we should have reverence for the Scriptures and should attach great importance to keeping them as pure as possible. If "The words of the LORD are pure words" (Psa. 12:6a), should we really not be bothered when thousands of those words have been corrupted in one or other of the two families? Far from ignoring this situation, we should take it very seriously.
- By reckoning that we should never strive over words, we should never make any fuss about *any* Bible version,

including extreme paraphrases and those openly-twisted translations produced by cults.

- A Christian belief on a matter can depend on a single word (e.g., see Luke 20:42-44), or even a single letter (Gal. 3:16). Our beliefs are crucial and are meant to rely on the words in the Bible, so it cannot possibly be right to be indifferent about corruption (deliberate or otherwise) to the words underlying the Bible.
- It is sobering to consider that members of camp B seem more than happy to strive about words when it suits them! They enthusiastically criticize the wording of family A's text.<sup>22</sup>
- In answering this "words" argument, all that is required is to quote Revelation 22:18-19, for this passage surely blows the whole notion clean out of the water.

### **Conclusion**

For people who love the truth, there is no need to fear a godly analysis of the divide in attitude between the two camps. There is no need to come up with reasons to avoid such an analysis, because—as long as it is performed in a Christian way—an analysis will only confirm the truth of the situation. Authentic Christians have nothing to lose by undertaking or reading such an analysis.<sup>23</sup>

### **ANALYSIS UNSOUND?**

If a sincere analysis of the divide in attitude between camps A and B actually gets completed and becomes public, certain members of camp B seem prepared to do whatever it takes, no matter how improper, to dissuade people from reading it.

I'm not for a moment suggesting that every such analysis is beyond reproach! Some, written with urgency, are incompletely developed or are not brilliantly researched. Various unwise decisions can be made as a result of sheer desperation to get the truth out as swiftly as possible. Occasionally an ambiguous passage in a source document has been misinterpreted. Out of great zeal to provide as much supporting evidence as possible, other errors have occurred. But none of these problems automatically means the *central* arguments are invalid.

20 See Appendix B of *Alpha - the Unofficial Guide: Overview*. This book is available from Sword Publishers.

21 Also, God's priorities are not always the same as ours (Prov. 4:7; 2 Pet. 1:5-7; 3 John 1:3-4; Prov. 1:1-9, 20-33; 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 13:3 etc). See the article entitled, *Godless Godliness?* in the 'Rubies' section of the bayith.org Web site for more.

22 Consider Bruce Metzger's statement that "the Byzantine [i.e., family A] form of the Greek text, [which was] reproduced in all early printed editions, was disfigured, as was mentioned above, by the accumulation over the centuries of myriads of scribal alterations." (Metzger, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.)

23 If camp B is in the right then this will be demonstrated by the analysis, so it seems very telling that some people who identify themselves with camp B appear unhappy for analyses to be performed or circulated. Few, if any, people attached to Camp A have such qualms as far as I am aware.

Let me use the analogy of buying a car in the 1950s. Such a car may have had a large number of flaws and design faults but its basic mechanics were sound and it could get its owner where he wanted to go. The car's critic is entirely justified in exposing the flaws with the vehicle, but he ought also to acknowledge that the vehicle is still able to "do its job." When it comes to *spiritual* matters, such acknowledgement is obviously vital.<sup>24</sup> What I am saying is that, despite their failings, the underlying "mechanics" of many analyses are still solid, but critics are obscuring this fact and are employing some very inappropriate methods against them—methods by which folks are being led to reject such analyses *wholesale*. I have come across examples of each of the following methods being used for this ungodly purpose, and I plan to cite some in forthcoming articles.

- Many critics exploit the *minutest* shortcomings, regardless of how insignificant they are to the central debate, apparently in order to discredit the entire analysis. These people will even make an issue out of the omission of the publisher's address from source references. They exaggerate and extrapolate wildly. Get an historical date wrong and you're incompetent; get a name wrong and you're a terrible researcher. It's as if these people are oblivious to the fact that no man is infallible and that no one can be expert in *every* relevant field.<sup>25</sup> (Some critics read a piece of work solely to look for ammunition they can use to bring the work into disrepute rather than reading it with an open mind. Unless one knows for certain that the author of the work in question is a false teacher, this is a spiritually perilous activity. We should be wary of critiques that have little or nothing good to say about the analysis they are discussing.)
- Some critics focus on a tiny proportion of the analysis (i.e., they concentrate on the weakest comments within it while ignoring the vast bulk of the data and arguments given alongside). In analyses of the divide between the camps, many of the individual observations or pieces of data involved may be very small and debatable *in isolation*. Put another way, there are bound to be some very weak observations included when publishing an extensive analysis of the divide. As with a jury in a court of law, the question is *what* happens when all the data is viewed in *concert*. Plainly, if an undeniable pattern can be

demonstrated via many data points then there is a real case to answer and it is extremely dishonest to sweep the pattern under the carpet by only mentioning the least impressive elements.

- Some critics try to claim that the analyst attaches much more weight to a particular point than is genuinely the case. The author of the analysis may simply be making a throwaway remark merely intended as a light-hearted aside to help make the prose more interesting. (Arguably, such asides are *necessary* in order to keep people interested—especially when the author is needing to write a lengthy document or is writing for people who these days seem to be reading fewer and fewer books.) When removed from its context, a playful remark can be dressed up as if it was meant as a deadly serious one. In this deceitful way, the author can be made to look enormously foolish.
- Some critics generate smokescreens to confuse the issues. They will raise irrelevant points; they will offer tortuous (and ultimately illogical) lines of reasoning; and they will employ unnecessary technical terms without explaining them. They will do anything necessary to dazzle the reader and thus leave him doubting the original analysis.
- Some critics set up "straw men." (In other words they misrepresent their opponent's position so that they can then appear to demolish that position.)
- Many critics avoid using a spiritual perspective. Here's a common instance: The author of the original analysis offers huge quantities of evidence to defend his stance on a matter, but the critic *hides* the true amount of evidence supplied, and negates the analyst's conclusion by offering a tiny amount of evidence pointing *away* from that conclusion. This gives the impression to the reader that the respective quantities of evidence are comparable, which leaves him supposing that the analyst's conclusion, and indeed his entire approach, is baseless. The critic has obscured the fact that the towering bulk of the evidence does indeed support the analyst's argument.<sup>26</sup>

#### Important Notes:

(i) Many of the above tricks are impossible to detect unless one has actually read the analysis being critiqued. This means we must be supremely careful before circulating critiques of those

24 As one victim of just such behavior patiently expressed it to me, his critics "didn't engage the **thesis**." Such critics are truly in danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

25 Some mistakes are likely to occur purely as a result of the amount of disinformation being put about. And legitimate simplifications or generalizations (which can be vital in the early stages of any analysis designed for the common man in order to keep the material from getting too involved too quickly) are frequently seized upon as some enormous error or attempt to deceive.

analyses we have not personally studied. If we are careless in this sort of activity, we will not only look foolish (Prov. 18:13) but we will have to answer to the Lord.

(ii) If a critic claims that a particular analysis is “filled” or “awash” or “packed” or “replete” with weak or flawed elements then we must not propagate such a claim until we have checked it against the analysis in question. In my experience, such claims never come *remotely* close to being demonstrated in critiques. (And anyway, what is meant by these terms in this context? They never seem to get defined, which means the critic is never obliged to prove his case. Potentially the critic could try to use such loaded terms even when the analysis has an average of only one mistake every 20 pages!) Suspicion over such claims should always ensue whenever the critic fails to tell readers where they can go to find adequate examples to support the claim. After all, if the critic has actually gone to all the trouble of physically checking enough of the points in the analysis such that he can safely pronounce it “filled” with errors, why not provide the details rather than expect readers to take the assertion on trust? The critic has supposedly found the errors, so there seems no reason not to make them available, if only in an appendix or on an associated Web page.

(iii) We need to give analysts a “right of reply”—as would be the case in a court of law (and is the rule in scholarly circles too). If an accusation is made against an analyst, we must be sure not to condemn him before hearing his evidence (John 7:51). We must first read his analysis and his defense against his accusers. No matter how indefensible a thing might *seem*, we must not be hasty in judgment. How many times have people throughout history jumped to firm, but very erroneous, conclusions based on the perspective of just one side?

#### **FOUR MORE TRICKS**

Here are some further ways in which elements within camp B undermine analyses of the divide:

(1) An especially chilling method is to devise myths and unjustified half-truths that can then be wheeled out to (falsely) “disprove” points made in the analysis and so bring the entire work into disrepute. It turns out that an immense number of such misleading “facts” have been invented on topics related to textual criticism (and to the issue of Bible versions generally). Unwary souls who have been exposed to

many of these myths understandably conclude that there can’t be this amount of smoke without any fire.

Myths proved to be the stumbling block for the young man I referred to at the start of this article. He completely dismissed Part 2a on the mistaken understanding (a) that Hort’s work had not influenced modern textual critics significantly, and (b) that the *Textus Receptus* was not representative of the family A text-type. At the end of Part 2b I gave a number of quotes disproving point (a), but the young man was so utterly convinced of his position that he merely read that article looking for reasons to ignore me rather than looking for things he could learn about the issue as a whole. In Part 3, we will see much more evidence of Hort’s substantial impact on modern criticism. As to point (b), there is indeed a small amount of variation between the TR and the family A text, but to say that the TR is not representative is to play with words. As Burgon pointed out on page 272 of *Revision Revised*, the family A text is “virtually identical with the *Textus Receptus*.”<sup>27</sup> (In upcoming articles I plan to debunk numerous other myths.)

Perhaps the most unsettling thing about the Internet discussion was that, every time I exposed a myth for which this young man had fallen, he would simply start parroting the next one—instead of saying to himself, “Given that people who should have known better led me to believe a myth over an important matter, is it not likely that they led me to believe other myths too? Might it not be wise for me to check the rest of my ‘knowledge’ before confidently declaring it to all the world?”

(2) Another ungodly way to trash an analysis is to trash its author in any way possible—irrespective of the soundness of the analysis itself. For example, the author will usually be tarred with the same brush as the most illogical wing of the camp to which he belongs (or lumped in with the least Christ-like people in that camp).<sup>28</sup>

(3) In order to do everything in their power to dissuade people from reading the analysis, some members of camp B resort to claiming that the analysis must *inevitably* be wrong because the author lacks some qualification—ignoring the fact that the issue at hand is the *truthfulness or otherwise of the analysis itself*.<sup>29</sup> (In Part 3 I shall have more to say on the different qualifications needed for different activities within the realm of textual criticism.)

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26 The question is, where does the *balanced* position lie on a given subject? Let’s say 95% of the evidence on an issue points inexorably in one direction and that the remaining 5% appears on the surface to point in another. The balanced article will obviously focus overwhelmingly on the 95% and make very little reference to the misleading 5%. In contrast, the author of an *unbalanced* article will attach huge significance to the 5% and make only passing reference to the 95% (while having the audacity to criticize those authors who rightly play down the 5%). The 95% is all that’s needed to know and show the truth, so an article would actually still be balanced on the subject at hand even if it made *zero* mention of the misleading, ambiguous, 5%.

(4) Finally, critics will sometimes employ methods designed to frighten readers into submission. Here are a few examples:

- Critics frequently make bold assertions without offering any evidence for these assertions (yet they are assiduous in noting any missing source references in the analysis itself!).
- While complaining about the divisiveness of the issue, they seem unduly ready to question the salvation of folks in parts of the other camp.<sup>30</sup>
- They roundly denounce the use of material written by someone outside of today's Christian orthodoxy—while at the same time seeing nothing wrong with relying on the work and opinion of blatant apostates and non-Christians in their own camp.

Alongside the lack of logic *and* lack of honesty *and* lack of a spiritual perspective, these critics often show a distinct lack of charity too.<sup>31</sup> In view of this, it is astonishing that many of these same critics are swift to denounce any perceived lack of love on the part of camp A. The truth is that the latter have good reason to be angered by all the ungodly techniques used against them that I've listed above, let alone by the fact that they sincerely believe a dangerously corrupt version of God's Word is being supported in the process.<sup>32</sup>

## TRUTH-LOVER?

At this point it is necessary to mention a vital fact of life. As observed in previous articles in this series, God seems to test our love for the truth by allowing a small fraction of the evidence associated with any given truth to appear (superficially) to point away from the direction indicated by the rest of the evidence. Thus, if a person does not genuinely love the truth but would rather find a way to *wriggle out* of the truth on a matter, he will always be able to do so. This is the case not only of the Bible, but appears to be a *fundamental* spiritual principle (i.e., a feature of *any* truth). If people are determined to reject the truth about *any* given issue, God appears to ensure that they will always be able to find enough "rope" with which to hang themselves.<sup>33</sup> In a court of law, the jury is asked only to be sure beyond *reasonable* doubt, because experience has shown that a small proportion of the evidence will always point away from the correct verdict and allow some doubt to creep in.

Why am I raising this point? Because this principle has very relevant impact. It means that any document, no matter how sound the author makes it, will inevitably have a small percentage of aspects to it that people can use to reject it. Indeed, the more compelling the document, the more compelling its problems/errors must be (without jeopardizing the *overall thesis* of the document of course). And the greater the

- 27 Even Doug Kutilek, one of camp B's staunchest members, admits that, "in general the 'Textus Receptus' editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, **and** the Elzevirs, ... **agree with the Byzantine text**" (Doug Kutilek, 'Wilkinson's Incredible Errors', *Baptist Biblical Heritage*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Fall 1990, as republished at [kjonly.org](http://kjonly.org)). Robertson, also of camp B, phrases it thus: "the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus" (Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.) It should also be noted that I use the phrase "family A" to cover *all* types of evidence for the Byzantine text, not just Greek MSS.
- 28 If the author is deemed to be anywhere on the spectrum of positions within the area of camp A labelled "KJV-Only," some folks attached to camp B will even go so far as to say that any analysis performed by such a person can be completely rejected *out of hand*. (Apparently these folks imagine that anyone who today stands for the KJV cannot possibly write anything of use on the subject of textual criticism, which seems a little bigoted.)
- 29 Besides, if the analyst is genuinely unqualified (i.e., inadequately equipped) to discuss the *actual topics about which he wrote*, it would surely be straightforward for a scholar to find plenty of blunders that specifically illustrated this lack. If such tell-tale blunders are present, why is this fact so seldom demonstrated? I have even come across critiques in which an analyst is accused of not being qualified to write what he did but where no solid evidence is offered in support of the claim.
- 30 I realise there are some folks in *both* camps who are quick to do this, but I also know of people who have been threatened with disfellowship by members of camp B *merely for encouraging the other party to read an analysis of the divide*.
- 31 It is good to ask ourselves if the spirit manifested in the critique is the same Spirit that Christ displayed. This is a useful indicator to the nature of the material.
- 32 We should remember too that the biblical definition of love is substantially different from the modern Western idea. For more on this point, see the 'Church' volume of *Alpha – the Unofficial Guide*. God is angered by the disfiguring of His Word, so it is biblical for His people to reflect that and likewise be indignant about it. And if both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus called people "vipers," it is not necessarily unloving to be similarly direct, although grace and self-control will still be to the fore.
- 33 Just to be completely transparent on this point: If someone wants to ignore what God is saying on a spiritual matter, the Lord will make sure they can find some reasons to "justify" doing so.

amount of evidence provided in an analysis, the greater the number of errors that will accompany this evidence.<sup>34</sup>

All this has an intriguing ramification, for it enables critics to say that an analysis has not unarguably “proved” its case, even when the evidence provided in the analysis is overwhelming. When critics take this approach, I respond that God has not unarguably proved His existence either. He requires us to have *faith*, so unarguable proof would make faith redundant and is therefore unbiblical.

This whole principle holds true for the *author* as well as for the analysis they write. In other words, irrespective of how sound a person’s ministry is, there will always be a non-negligible quantity of evidence that, on the face of it, suggests the ministry is not of God. We must therefore be diligent and cautious when seeking to determine the true situation (Jas. 1:19; Isa. 11:3b-4a; Prov. 18:17). We must submit to the *bulk* of the evidence. This obviously requires us to be *conversant* with the bulk of the evidence rather than just some brief critique of it!

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To Everyone

I humbly suggest that the observations in this article make it advisable that we read any pertinent analysis of the divide whenever we discover any of the unChristian methods described above being used to discredit that analysis. I say this because it is very likely that the person utilizing these methods is trying to hide something important from us.

Please also be aware that, *in extremis*, members of camp B sometimes publish their own analyses for use by the “layman” (seemingly forgetting the argument from their own camp that the subject is too complex for such souls). However, these analyses only ever seem to be written in order to enable ill-informed believers to reject *sound* analyses. Needless to say, camp B analyses suffer from the very same sort of myths and half-truths used to discredit those from camp A.<sup>35</sup> (They often also appear to be written by people who lack some or all of

the qualifications that members of camp B themselves demand!) I recommend being extremely alert and prayerful when reading such analyses.

Lastly, please jump to the underlined section below that most applies to you.

### To Those Who Identify With Camp A

Those who are attached to camp A need to have patience with the “laymen” who support camp B, because the factors discussed in this article conspire to make it very difficult for such folks to cope with even a gentle analysis of the divide.

It is relatively easy to be patient towards young believers and non-scholars who align themselves with camp B out of pure lack of awareness of the issue, but what about those souls in camp B who should know better? Not all of them are insincere. Dr. S. Franklin Logsdon was a case in point. Like him, some of the translators and commentators attached to camp B have ended up in that camp simply through *bona fide* unfamiliarity with the other side of the argument. As Logsdon explained, these folks just “haven’t gone into it.”<sup>36</sup>

### A Subtle Approach

I realize the following section will be controversial to certain parts of the Body of Christ, but I am convinced it is sound. Please don’t hesitate to contact me with relevant Scriptures if you disagree.

My first proposition is that we should have great love for the brethren and should therefore be prepared to do everything we biblically can to get the truth about the divide in attitude across to the souls aligned with camp B. My next proposition is this: If the text of camp B is unhealthy, then we ought to bear in mind that Satan will work hard to keep those who have fallen for that text from grasping the truth about the divide. He will do all he can to close their eyes and ears to the real situation.

The result of the above pair of propositions is that we may well need to step gently in order to persuade some of

34 Readers may be wondering what mistakes are present in Part 2a. All I have spotted so far is that there are a handful of minor clarifications I could have added. I plan to document these in the next article. While they would have been of use, none would have altered any of my main arguments in any way.

35 For one thing, camp B analyses often spend very little time on the divide in attitude between the two camps and instead concentrate on the wide variety of arguments put forward by different wings of the “KJV-Only” section of camp A. This focus is very revealing, for if a sound analysis of the divide showed that camp B was in the right then there would be no *need* to look at any of these other arguments because they’d all be redundant. I’m not sure how such an approach can be taken as anything other than a tacit acknowledgement that camp A is on the correct side of the divide—or at least that the case for camp B is very limited and feeble.

36 S. Franklin Logsdon, *The New American Standard Version*, undated audio cassette, transcribed in *O Timothy* magazine, Vol. 9, Iss. 1 (1992).

camp B's adherents. We may even need to take a subtle, rather than head-on, approach.

At this point the reader may complain that we should just speak the unvarnished truth and let the other side take it or leave it. After all, if we don't sugarcoat the Gospel why should we worry about our approach when seeking to help believers? The reason is this: Bringing the Gospel to an unbeliever is a fundamentally different activity from bringing a teaching to a believer. For a start, we are dealing with souls in two completely separate spiritual kingdoms. For another thing, a believer has already accepted an upending of the worldview he held as an unbeliever and it can be asking a lot of a young or immature believer to perform another major shift in his understanding. Thirdly, believers today are regularly told they cannot possibly be deceived. Understandably, they are therefore often very reticent to change their view on the Bible versions debate if it means acknowledging they have been fooled.

Let me say at this point that the "head-on" approach definitely has its place. When being corrected, certain folks actually prefer this direct method (especially if they respect the person bringing the correction). But for some folks who have been steeped in error and who don't know any different, a subtle approach may be necessary. (I personally believe this to be the message of Jude 1:21-23.) It is true that the subtle approach involves more effort on our part, but no authentic Christian would short-change his brother for the sake of a little extra effort. (After all, if I am driving my car somewhere and I discover that a tree has fallen across the road, I don't ram my car into it in a vain attempt to knock it out of the way. I simply reverse up and find a different route.)

Here is a summary of what I am suggesting. If we are dealing with a person (a) whom we don't know well, (b) who sincerely believes all sorts of untruths on the topic at issue, (c) who has held these errors for years and has perhaps even passed them on to others, (d) who has always been surrounded with people who believe the same as he, (e) who, in terms of camp A, has only ever come across the least Christlike elements within it, and (f) who has become spiritually short-sighted, or even blind, through deep exposure to lies, is it really reasonable to expect him to cope with a head-on assault that obliges him to immediately pre-judge the whole issue and requires him to suspend all the errors he has unwittingly taken onboard?

In most cases, we should see our task as simply bringing a teaching to the uninformed. I think we need to follow the

example of the apostle Paul. He evidently taught believe about the Kingdom of God *from first principles*. He didn't launch in with the logical conclusion of a matter until he had taught the basic points leading up to it (Heb 5:11-6:1-2).

If the reader is still unhappy with the idea that a subtle approach can be of God, I entreat him to think back over his own life and honestly ask himself if he has never benefited from someone bringing correction to him in such way. (If the reader would like additional advice on recommended techniques for bringing correction to a brother, please see the transcript of a talk I have given called *Full of Grace and Truth*, freely available from the 'Rubies' section of the bayith.org Web site.)

### Suggested Route

If the reader is seeking to convert a friend to his point of view, I recommend the following approach.

Firstly, pray for wisdom and God's timing. If and when you feel led to, give your friend Part 1 in this series of articles. After he has read it, by all means ask his views on that document, but avoid getting into a discussion about any Bible version topic beyond that article. Give him Part 2a in the series, but insist that if he locates any serious problem with it, he should stop reading it immediately and contact you. If he flags one of the problems I have covered in the article you are reading then supply him with the material in the relevant segment of this article (along with a copy of the section entitled, "Background").<sup>37</sup> Once the flagged problem has been overcome for your friend encourage him to continue with Part 2a (and repeat the above procedure if necessary). When Part 2a is completed, pass him the next Part, applying the same principle as for Part 2a. I recommend giving him a *complete* copy of this "Intermission" article only after he has read Part 4. (I'm afraid fiddling with other people's souls can be a delicate business.)

### To Those Who Identify With Camp B

Those who are attached to camp B need to ensure they are open to instruction (See Proverbs 1, and much of the rest of the book for that matter). They also need to watch out for the ungodly techniques I have exposed here. Please don't be like the young man I mentioned at the start of this article. What happened to him you ask? Regrettably he chose just about the ultimate method of avoiding the need to face up to the divide. He ran away. ❖

You may address your comments or questions to Dusty:  
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37 If he flags a problem I *haven't* covered in this article (or in any of the other articles in the series), by all means contact me with the details.