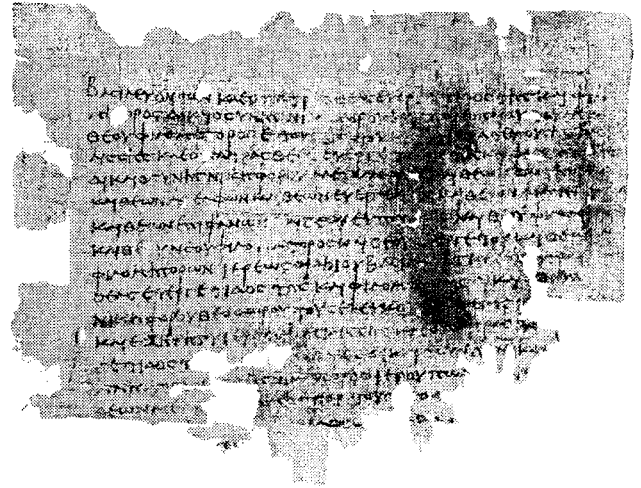

The Bible Versions Debate

Part 2B: MAGNITUDE OF PROBLEM

By Dusty Peterson



INTRODUCTION

By Albert James Dager

Following is the excellent concluding section of Part 2 in this important series. The article is very clearly and graciously argued, and is illustrated with superb examples. It is shorter than the previous piece, and readers should also find it demands much less effort of thought. (In Part 2a, the section entitled “Step 2” unavoidably required a good deal of concentration, although the rest of the document was comparatively straightforward.)

Readers should have read Part 1 before proceeding, but please note that the same is not nearly so true of Part 2a unless you have looked into the topic of Bible versions before now. Here is a very quick summary of the latter article:

The “New Testament” portion of Bibles today is based on one or the other of two “families” of Greek manuscripts. For simplicity Dusty called these families “A” and “B.” Members of family B can differ from family A by as much as 10,000 words, but they differ in all sorts of other respects also. Consider these four features of the text of family B that are not true of A:

- It was not copied in great quantity;
- It was not copied widely around the world;
- It was quoted in almost no lectionaries;
- It went out of use for many centuries.

All four facts indicate it was not blessed by God. Now consider two other features of family B that are not true of A:

- Its members frequently vary substantially in content between *each other*, suggesting a lack of reverence for God’s Word by their creators.
- Significant numbers of people have been *martyred* for refusing to replace their Bibles based on family A with those using family B.

Both points suggest B is the product of false brothers.

This suggestion is bolstered by the truth that no true disciple of Jesus would ever change Scripture. That such change was effected in family B is evidenced by two facts: (i) family B invariably gives the shorter readings where the text differs between families (deletion is harder to spot than addition and would thus be the much more popular route for people wanting to quietly corrupt the Bible) and (ii) family B has the “harder” readings (exactly what would be expected from people seeking to corrupt the Bible as subtly as possible).

Family B becomes the preferred text over family A only if we view the Bible like *any other* book. God would never bless such a faithless approach to His Word, for without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:3,6). Instead, He is likely to give faithless people over to their foolish ideas. For example, approaching the Bible like any other book means placing overwhelming weight on the oldest surviving manuscripts. When talking about *whole* manuscripts (rather than just fragments), family B is the “winner” here because two of its members comprise the oldest ones known. These two manuscripts (or “MSS”) have survived from the first half of the 4th century. But applying the “oldest is best” rule ignores the truth that their very survival means these copies couldn’t have been used much. This strongly implies that they are unsound.

Sure enough, the manuscripts in question each contain non-canonical “New Testament”-era books plus many typographical errors and other mistakes, all of which suggest they were not written by people who venerated God’s Word. Both of them also exhibit hundreds of readings not found in any other manuscripts, including each other!

The only sensible conclusion from all this is that family A is where the true text resides, and family B is the product of individuals opposed to God’s truth. In the following article we will learn not only the real significance of the differences between these families, but we will also discover extra reasons to reject family B.

I thoroughly commend this work. *ajd*

The rubber has officially hit the road. It's time we came to the nitty-gritty where I repay the investment in time and effort the reader made with Part 2a. Let's finally look at the *specific* differences in content between the two Greek families underlying Bibles today, and the practical differences they make to the Body of Christ.

In the previous piece we learned that some English translations of the Bible are largely based on family "B" while others are rooted in family "A". We also learned certain very troubling facts about family B. Nevertheless, people often argue that the differences between these families can safely be ignored, particularly when it comes to the published Greek texts behind actual Bible versions available today. Here are seven common justifications folks offer for this position, along with some observations about them.

"The Differences Are Trivial"

In spite of the pure and interwoven nature of God's Word as we noted in Part 1, it is sometimes claimed that the readings in dispute are trivial in nature. However, if that is so then why did both John Burgon and Fenton Hort make use of such strong language in their denunciations of the respective Greek texts? Why did Hort go to such great lengths to overturn the traditional Greek? And why did his close colleague, B.F. Westcott, say "[I] am most anxious to provide something to replace [it]"?¹ Readers may respond that it is important to refine Scripture, but it must follow from this that it is important these refinements be *correct*.

In this article we shall see that a number of the differences in dispute cannot possibly be considered trivial. But what about the many differences that do, indeed, seem inconsequential at first glance? Hort himself said of them, "I do not think the significance of their existence is generally understood ... It is quite impossible to judge of the value of what **appears** to be trifling alterations merely by reading them one after another. Taken **together** [however], they have **often** important bearings...."²

"Doctrine Is Unaffected"

Most people who are familiar with the points raised in the last installment of this article would accept that the textual differences cannot all be genuinely trivial. Nevertheless, some of these folks still insist that the differences "do not affect a single doctrine."

The first comment to make is this: Such a notion was certainly not the view of scholars around the time of the 1871 KJV revision committee. Allow me to give quotes from recognized authorities on both sides of the fence. One member of the revision committee was a man named G. Vance Smith. He was a supporter of family B, and his response to the claim that the differences being argued over are of "little importance from a doctrinal point of view" was that "**any** such statement [is] ... **contrary to the facts**."³ Meanwhile Edward Miller, who supported family A, declared that "many of ... [the differences] are of **great** importance."⁴



JOHN WILLIAM BURGON

Next, let us recall that we are talking about nearly *ten thousand* words being added, deleted or changed. That's sure to affect doctrine to one degree or another. Bear in mind also that we are not addressing the whole Bible here. These ten thousand or so changed words refer only to the "New Testament," that portion of Scripture which, among other things, acts as the spiritual *key* to God's Word, and whose accuracy is therefore especially vital. Lastly, a number of biblical passages which we will mention in this article have been changed in ways which unarguably affect Christian teachings.

(Incidentally, if any reader believes "doctrine" to be a *bad* thing, please remember that this word largely just means "teaching," and that the Bible makes it crystal clear that the beliefs and teachings of God's People have real consequences. 1 Timothy 4:6,13,16 and Romans 6:17-18 should be enough on their own to convince us of this. And if we also consider Titus 2:7 and 1 Timothy 5:17 there should be no room left for any doubt. But if all these passages do not persuade the reader, they are urged to see this footnote.⁵)

- 1 Arthur Westcott, *The Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott, Vol. I* (Macmillan, 1903), p. 229. (All emphases in quotes in this article are my own unless otherwise stated.)
- 2 Arthur F. Hort, *The Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort, Vol. II* (Macmillan, 1896), p. 102.
- 3 George Vance Smith, *Texts and Margins of the Revised New Testament Affecting Theological Doctrine Briefly Reviewed* (London, 1881), p. 45.
- 4 Edward Miller, *A Guide to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Dean Burgon Society, Orig. 1886), p. 1.
- 5 For reasoned proof that sound doctrine is vital to the Body of Christ, see Part 4 of a book I have co-authored entitled *Alpha – the Unofficial Guide: Church*. This volume is stocked by Sword Publishers. Additional outlet details for the rest of the world are available from the "Rubies" section of the website for which I write (i.e., www.bayith.org).

"No Cardinal Doctrines Are Affected"

There are folks who acknowledge that *some* doctrines of the Bible are affected but who still insist we can safely disregard the multitude of differences in the Greek on the basis that no "cardinal" (i.e., chief or principal) doctrines are impacted. This is a surprising position to hold. Apart from the fact that major doctrines *are* affected—as we shall see later—and that the Bible doesn't call *any* doctrine unimportant, how can fallen men have the audacity to claim that we don't need to be concerned about real damage to teachings the Lord has given us in His Word, just because those teachings don't happen to be "cardinal" ones? Certainly this attitude presents a low view of Scripture.

God made us. He knows how we function and what we need. He knows exactly what truths the Bible ought to comprise. How can men dare to question this? How can a person state that any teaching God chose for Holy Writ is expendable? Is this not tantamount to thinking we can do a better job than our Creator? I really wish such folks would ask themselves, "What on earth am I playing at, showing such disrespect for the statements and whole teachings the Lord wanted in His sacred Word?"

"Every Doctrine Is Still Supportable"

Some people who realize that "cardinal" doctrines are indeed impacted still continue to tolerate differences in the Greek because every doctrine is still supportable in family B. In other words, even if a proportion of the "New Testament" statements on a given doctrine have been weakened (or even nullified altogether) in family B, nevertheless we are told that this is acceptable on the basis that there always remains at least one passage that makes the same point.

No-one making this claim seems to notice the obvious problems associated with it. For a start, losing some references to a particular matter surely means we are less likely to reach the correct conclusion on that matter. (Such loss certainly makes it more difficult to be "Berean"—i.e., to check teachings we have received, as per Acts 17:11.) Next, it becomes tougher to justify our stance on a given doctrine in conversation with folks who do not agree with us, especially if other errors have been introduced to the Bible text so as to impugn the doctrine in question. Put simply, Scripture's God-ordained balance is lost.

Even a firm supporter of family B admits, "The Bible may have to say [something] **several** different times, and perhaps in different ways, for us to understand unambiguously and precisely what truth is being taught."⁶ But let's put all these problems to one side. As we shall see later, those souls who rely on the

principle that "every doctrine is still supportable" are missing the point for a variety of *further* reasons. The reality is that our enemy is subtle. He would very seldom be so obvious as to remove every single passage on a given truth, else no Christian would ever have been fooled into using such a text. As we shall discover, our adversary has taken a somewhat craftier approach to undermining biblical teaching.

"There Is Only 1% Variation"

Certain people try to argue that only 1% of the New Testament is affected and that this means the differences can be disregarded. The true proportion is actually about eight times this amount,⁷ but for the sake of argument let us assume that 1% is indeed the correct figure. We need to remember a couple of things. Firstly, when did God ever say "As long as you deliberately corrupt only a small percentage of My words it's not a problem?" And secondly, if you place a knife through the middle of someone's heart you will destroy much less than 1% of the person. In fact you will destroy less than 1% of their heart alone. But you'll kill them just as surely as if you'd run them over with a steamroller.

"The Differences Don't Stop People Being Saved"

People regularly turn to the argument that the differences in the Greek don't reduce the number of Christian conversions, although quite how it is possible to gauge this never seems to be explained. The differences do seem to have hampered the following piece of evangelism: "I shall always remember the look of glee on the [cultist's] face when, as I was in the course of [demonstrating something about Jesus] from a Bible verse ... my friend who was with me interrupted and said that that was not what it said in his Bible."⁸ Promoting a Greek text reliant on family B doesn't appear to have done much for the Church of England either, which is today just a shadow of what it was prior to Westcott and Hort's efforts.

But regardless, there are other serious flaws with this line of reasoning. To begin with, God is indeed merciful and can assuredly save people in less than ideal circumstances (e.g., while they are attached to apostate groups), but this doesn't mean He wants them to *remain* in those circumstances. God does not call us to make converts, but rather disciples, and the article you are reading will make it evident that family B categorically hinders this process (which actually threatens the evangelistic effectiveness in the lives of these converts anyway).

Even if the reader is adamant that conversions are not reduced, either directly or indirectly, by family B, this cannot be made the *conclusive* test of that family because otherwise we would have to believe "the end justifies the means" which is the very opposite of what the Bible teaches (Romans 3:8; 12:21; 3

6 D.A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate*, (Baker Book House, 1979), p. 65.

7 "The discrepancy ... is around 8% (involving 8% of the words). In a Greek text with 600 pages, that represents 48 solid pages worth" (Pickering, quoted in Jay P. Green Sr., ed., *Unholy Hands on the Bible*, [Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1992], p. 555).

8 John Cooper, *Vanguard* magazine, Issue 4, Jul 1997, p. 20. (Italics in original)

John 1:11; 1 Peter 3:10-11; 1 Samuel 15:22b, etc.). Although we can know a *person* by their fruit (i.e. do they show the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their character as per Gal. 5:22-23?), we must not make fruit the conclusive test of an *action*. As I have noted elsewhere, if conversions had been made the conclusive test of Noah's ministry during his 120 years of preaching (i.e. zero souls saved!), none of his family would ever have gone into the Ark. King Saul lost not only his throne but his very life for believing that the end justifies the means (see 1 Sam. 13:5-13; 15:1-28; and 28:7-19). God's ways, once again, are not man's ways, and we must come to terms with this fact if we are to share God's perspective on the Bible versions debate.

"The Alternative Is Unthinkable"

If all else fails, some people claim that anyone who opposes family B must automatically hold to some illogical position at the other extreme. But even a few basic checks would quickly prove this assertion to be wrong. As is the case for most, if not all, other aspects of Christianity, the fact is that a wide spectrum of positions exists among those folks who reject family B.

The Bible calls us to be devoted to the truth and, for every matter, to find the balanced position that explains all the relevant data. Taking the balanced position never means turning a blind eye to deliberate corruption.

(Some readers may be curious as to why I haven't yet distanced myself from those people who have taken an unbalanced position at the *other* end of the spectrum. It needs to be recognized that these articles are not only designed to warn supporters of family B but to bring the truth to *everyone* whose standpoint doesn't fit the facts, regardless of where they are on the spectrum. Just as I have striven to avoid challenging folks on the side of family B until it was necessary, I am dealing with those who hold to other viewpoints in like manner.)

Section Conclusion

If the Bible were like any other book, it might be possible to argue that the differences between versions can be ignored. The truth of the matter is that the Bible isn't like any other book and we must not treat it as if it is. The next article demonstrates this point from a variety of different angles, but for now let us at least acknowledge that both God and Satan have a unique interest in the text of the Bible—a fact which makes the Bible itself unique. For this reason alone it cannot sensibly be approached like any other.

THE ASSAULTS ON RELIABILITY

The section following this one will prove that doctrine is indeed affected by the different Greek readings, but this isn't actually the primary problem with the corrupt Greek text. In his very first appearance in Scripture, Satan's initial attack was not on the *doctrine* of a particular statement but on the reliability of the state-

ment itself—i.e., whether or not God had truly said it. Only after Satan had instilled such doubt did he assail the doctrine in question. Similarly, our enemy's primary aim with regard to Bible corruption is to stop people from *trusting* their Bibles. This makes his assaults on doctrine incomparably easier to achieve, for the following reasons:

- If people do not trust their Bible properly, they will not respect it much. They will certainly not respect it enough to read it prayerfully and reverently, yet both are important if God is to truly bless their reading and to write His Word on their hearts (Psalms 119:27, 125).
- If people do not trust their Bible properly, they won't read it in faith. But this is another prerequisite for God to open our spiritual eyes to His Word so that we can divide it aright (Psalms 119:66).
- If people do not trust their Bible properly, they will waver regarding those passages within it that fight hardest against their fleshly side, yet we must earnestly seek to obey God's Word if we are to be given more light by the Lord (Psalms 119:100).
- If people do not trust their Bible properly, they won't delight in it and hence won't meditate much on it and won't memorize much of it—things which will again limit our ability to understand God's Word (Psalms 119:99).
- If people do not trust their Bible properly, they are less motivated to seriously pursue an understanding of it (and even if they do, they are likely to get their understanding from those individuals who share their lack of trust for the Word).

As the Bible references above indicate, Psalm 119 is very instructive regarding these things, thus it comes as little surprise to find this psalm missing from the "Old Testament" portion of Hort's favorite manuscript (usually called "B"). It is not just *reading* the Bible that matters, but *heeding* the Bible. All the problems cited above obstruct right understanding of the Bible. This in turn makes Satan's task of promoting false doctrine (e.g., via false teachers) infinitely easier. It's the same ultimate goal, but achieved in a much craftier way. Satan and his followers do not mind us studying the Bible so long as we don't obey what it says.

Some may complain that such strong commitment to the Bible is Pharisaical. But according to our Savior, the problem with the Pharisees was not that they were too committed to their Bibles, but that they instead held to the traditions of men (Mark 7:5-13). In terms of Scripture, the Pharisees adhered only to certain lesser issues and exploited these to nullify the weightier matters in God's Word (Matthew 23:23).⁹ In a similar way, Satan is

9 The first chapter of a book I have co-authored, called, *Alpha—the Unofficial Guide: World*, goes into this in much more depth and also shows how Christ Himself urged us to know and obey the Scriptures. This book is available from Sword Publishers.

quite content for people to read the Bible if they don't fully believe what they are reading. That way, they can pick and choose which bits to accept. Unfortunately, this will frequently mean they accept those bits with which their fallen nature is most comfortable. These parts are then used as an excuse to ignore the rest of the Bible—the very problem with the Pharisees. This arrangement has the benefit for Satan of making people appear to be sound Christians because they read their Bible.

Let's now see how false brothers create this distrust of Holy Scripture.

Important Note

In order to illustrate this problem, I need to identify some specific passages corrupted in family B. Since the members of that "family" vary so much between them,¹⁰ I can't always refer to a particular verse being wrong across the entire group. I shall therefore move from comments about *family B* to instead focus on *manuscript B*. It is entirely reasonable to do so, since Manuscript B was Hort's overwhelming first choice. According to him, even when "[Manuscript] B stands quite alone, its readings must **NEVER** be lightly rejected."¹¹

From now on in this series of articles, all references merely to "B" pertain to the single manuscript of that name. Students of this subject often refer to that document as "**Codex B**", and I shall sometimes do likewise. (The word "codex" usually just denotes that the manuscript exists in book form rather than as a scroll.)

Contradicts Truth

To weaken faith in God's Word, Hort's favorite manuscript casts doubt on the verbal inspiration of the Bible in a range of ways. We will need to look at several of these, but the particular issue I cover in this section is the way in which manuscript B places definite contradictions into the text. Manuscript B not only contradicts family A, but it also contradicts itself. It even contradicts reality.

A powerful way to damage faith in Holy Writ (and seriously impair our ability to convince others of its trustworthiness) is by introducing numerous logical impossibilities into the text. Codex B does exactly this. As others have noted, it incorporates "plain errors of fact and contradictions such that any claim that the New Testament is divinely inspired becomes relative ... **If the authority of the New Testament is undermined, all its teachings are likewise affected.**"¹² Burgon was aware of this danger and was therefore alert to any "readings which are grammatically, logically, geographically, or scientifically impossible."¹³ Quite a number of examples could be given,¹⁴ but for space I have limited myself to eight here—four of which I have placed in a footnote—which should prove adequate to make the point.¹⁵



FENTON J.A. HORT

(Obviously, *grammatical* impossibilities are usually, although not always, removed during translation, so I have not cited any of these in this article, but they nevertheless help to demonstrate further the unreliability of B as a source. For specific examples, see this footnote.¹⁶)

- B states, in Luke 4:44, that Jesus was in Judea when, according to verses 14 and 31 (as well as the parallel passage in Mark 1:35-39), He was not in Judea at all but in *Galilee*.
- B pretends, in 1 Corinthians 5:1, that no Gentile (i.e., pagan) man ever fornicates with his father's wife, yet this type of fornication patently does sometimes occur within the Gentile world.

10 As we discovered in Part 2a, family B is not really a family. Rather, it is a compilation of products from different sections of the false church.

11 Quoted in Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

12 Pickering, as quoted in Green, *op. cit.*, p. 556. Pickering was specifically addressing here a Greek text called "UBS³" but the Westcott and Hort revision "was taken as the basis" for the UBS Greek—and this revision, as we have already seen, was founded on manuscript B.

13 Wilbur Norman Pickering, *Contribution of John William Burgon to New Testament Textual Criticism*, (A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Department of New Testament Literature and Exegesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, May 1968), p. 84.

14 Pickering, quoted in Green, *op. cit.*, p. 569.

15 Other logically impossible readings in Codex B include: **John 18:24** (Annas couldn't send Jesus to Caiaphas *then*, since it is clear from Matthew 26:57-58 that Peter did his denying at Caiaphas' house, and from Luke 22:61 that Jesus was *already there*); **John 6:11** (according to Matthew 14:19, Mark 6:41, and Luke 9:16 the *disciples* did the distributing, not Jesus Himself); **Matthew 11:19** (wisdom is justified by her *children*, as Luke 7:35 declares, but replacing "children" with "deeds" or "works" results in a nonsensical statement); and **Mark 1:2** (the words in the second half of that verse are from Malachi (i.e., 3:1) not from Isaiah).

16 For details of further impossible readings in B, including a number of grammatically impossible ones, see Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 557-567, or Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-29, 57-59.

- B claims, in Matthew 14:30,¹⁷ that it is possible to see wind itself (rather than merely the *strength* of a wind). A person can obviously see particles carried by the wind, but wind itself is just a force, not an object, and forces cannot be seen.
- B insists, in Matthew 10:10, that the Lord Jesus told His disciples not to take any staffs at all with them (rather than merely telling them not to take *multiple* staffs), but this would fly directly in the face of the parallel passage in Mark 6:8 which says they were to take *nothing but* a staff!

Pickering rightly observes, “the effect of [all] these [contradictions] ... is cumulative. It may be possible to circumvent [some] ... of them, but with each attempted circumvention the strain on our credulity increases many-fold.”¹⁸ This all serves to promote doubt in the authority of Scripture which results in the problems described earlier. (As readers may recall, the previous article noted that some people ask, “How do you explain the presence of such a strange reading if it isn’t authentic?” The answer is that such readings are from false brothers, since they make it much harder to have faith in the inspiration of the Bible and they thus play into our enemy’s hands.)

As an aside, please don’t imagine that textual critics necessarily avoid these problems with Codex B. That document is still central to modern followers of Hort’s basic principles, and every single one of the verse corruptions listed in this article has found its way into more than one Bible version sold today.

Contradicts Family A With Opposite Readings

Readings in Codex B not only disagree with family A on a huge number of occasions, but the differences in a given passage are even mutually exclusive at times. We will see some instances in a moment. This, too, is a situation which damages faith in the Bible, as well as causing confusion generally. Imagine a young Christian buying two different Bible versions in order to compare readings so as to get a deeper grasp of the Scriptures, only to discover that these readings irreconcilably disagree with each other. Will this not cause real doubt about the degree of inspiration of the Bible?

To illustrate the point, here are four examples of blatant contradiction. Again, four more are provided in the footnotes.¹⁹

- In Colossians 2:18, family A refers to things a man has “not seen,” whereas Codex B says, “he has seen” them.

- In Romans 4:19, the traditional text says that Abraham did not consider his body when it came to the promise of siring a child, whereas B says he did, indeed, face the state of his body.
- In Colossians 4:15, family A mentions “his house” whereas Codex B claims the passage should refer to “her house.”
- In Luke 14:5 the traditional text uses the phrase, “an ass or an ox” but the word “ass” is eccentrically replaced in B with the word “son.”

(Incidentally, if the reader is wondering whether it might not be family A that is in error, it should be noted that it is often plain that Codex B is the text in the wrong—either because the reading it gives upsets the grammar (e.g., the tense or gender), or because it is the only known manuscript in the world to give the reading in question.

Contradicts Family A With Major Deletions

Additionally, there are the colossal number of occasions when sections of text are simply omitted in Family B. These omissions sometimes involve the loss of entire verses. Hort’s rule that “the shorter reading is to be preferred” means that, if the whole verse is missing, it inevitably qualifies as the shortest reading and therefore gets preferred. Imagine a group of believers trying to have a Bible study where each attendee has to read one verse in turn from any of the dozens of passages in the “New Testament” where a whole verse has disappeared. Let’s say your group is reading the twelve verses between Mark 9:38 and the end of the chapter. You get to verse 44 only to find that the person supposed to be reading that verse doesn’t have it in their Bible. You manage to recover from this, only to find the same thing happening just two verses later. Consider the doubt about the purity of God’s Word which results from this sort of situation.

Although certain English translations which exhibit omissions (plus other contradictions) don’t have *whole* verses missing, that’s not the point. The point is that Codex B is so patently unsound that Bible translators shouldn’t rely on it at all, any more than they should the Gnostic “gospels.” Indeed, if the translators of such Bibles think the verses omitted by B ought to be present then that itself should cause these people a good deal of doubt about B as a healthy source. On the other hand, if these translators don’t believe the verses are original then they should have the courage of their convictions and remove them from the text altogether. Either way they are showing themselves to be un-

17 This reading was the product of a “corrector” of B, but was still taken as the true reading by Westcott and Hort.

18 Quoted in Green, *op. cit.*, p. 562. (See also page 559 of that document.)

19 Other discrepancies between family A and Codex B that are very hard to reconcile include: **Acts 13:42** (was it the Jews, or actually Barnabus and Paul, who were leaving?); **1 John 5:18** (who is being kept, and who does the keeping?); **Matthew 5:22** (the qualifier “without a cause” makes a vast difference); and **Romans 10:9** (confessing the Lord Jesus obviously involves rather more than just saying the words “Jesus is Lord” as 2 Corinthians 11:4 shows).

wise. (Note that these translators are often inconsistent in that they don't remove whole verses, but they seem happy to remove large parts of verses. This is an illogical approach though, since the Bible was not originally separated into verses. Verse numbering began only as late as 1551 when Stephanus used it. Furthermore, some deletions within verses are longer than whole verses which are retained! For instance, Luke 23:17 is only ten words long but is kept in because it is a whole "verse," whereas 1 Peter 4:14 suffers a deletion of fourteen words in a row. According to this arbitrary rule, the latter passage would have been retained in the Bible had Stephanus made a slightly different choice here and given these fourteen words their own verse.)

Just a few of the verses missing wholesale from B are: Matthew 17:21; 23:14; Mark 15:28; Luke 17:36; 23:17; John 5:4; Acts 24:7; 28:29; and Romans 16:24. I'm not insisting such verses have any *direct* doctrinal impact (although other deleted verses certainly do, including Matthew 18:11; Mark 11:26; Acts 8:37; and both of the Mark 9 verses cited earlier). What I am saying is that it is very disconcerting for a Christian to find an entire verse missing from their supposedly infallible Bible and that this inevitably impoverishes their faith in God's Word. Even if a translation incorporates the verses left out of the underlying Greek, such versions often include footnotes worded in such a way as to cast serious doubt on the passage and to make people ask, "If this verse was part of English Bibles for hundreds of years but actually shouldn't have been included, what guarantee is there that my more recent version doesn't have some extraneous material in it?" The full significance of this will be revealed shortly.

Alongside the disappearance of whole "verses," there are numerous occasions when substantial *parts* of a verse are omitted. For instance, see Matthew 20:16 (seven words); Mark 6:11 (fifteen words); Luke 8:43 (six words); and Acts 18:21 (eleven words). Deletions can be conspicuous for reasons other than just length though. See for example Galatians 5:21 (loss of the word "murders"!); and 1 Peter 1:22 (two deletions in one verse, i.e., loss of "through the Spirit," and loss of "pure" from the phrase, "pure heart"). Once again, I'm not requiring the reader to suppose that all such deletions have a direct effect on doctrine (although, again, some patently do, such as those from Matthew 5:44; Mark 9:45; Acts 15:24; and Romans 14:6). I simply ask the reader to recognize that it could weaken a Christian's faith in his Bible if he compared translations based on these two different Greek texts and found such big discrepancies.

If a person has been brought up for years with a sound Bible, then he may be able to mentally "fill in the gaps." But what about someone who hasn't had the benefit of such a background? Even if a man decides his own version is reliable, he is bound to conclude that some brothers (to whom he may one day need to entrust his life) are using corrupt Bibles. Won't he question the wisdom of a fellowship that happily accepts multiple versions which exhibit such large numbers of contradictory readings? At the very least, won't he be confused? If he supposes God is happy for His people to use such diverse Bibles, won't this again detract

from faith in the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture that we discussed in Part 1?

Could It "B"?

In case any readers are still entertaining the thought that it might be family A in the wrong and that Codex B has the correct readings after all, please remember the multifarious reasons offered in Part 2a for discounting this possibility. Please also consider the following:

(a) One can be confident that B is at fault, because its shorter readings frequently make the Greek grammatically or logically inconsistent. For instance, the "stirring" of the water in John 5:7 no longer makes much sense given the deletion of verse 4.

(b) If Codex B is sound then most other Greek manuscripts contain a very considerable number of additions. But, in practice, additions to the text would be rare in these MS families. While it is true that a mere *heretic* might add to the text, an actual *false brother* would normally be far too subtle to do that because addition is much more conspicuous than deletion. A true Christian would only ever add to the original text accidentally. (What's more, these accidents would invariably only ever happen as a result of re-reading a similar-looking piece of text in the immediate vicinity of the passage being copied (this is called "dittography"). Certainly there are other ways in which text can accidentally be inserted into a MS, but they all imply a reckless copying procedure—and hence the product, at some point or another, of people who didn't venerate God's Word and whose work is therefore unreliable.)²⁰

(c) Although too large for most modern translators to be prepared to remove, nevertheless Hort's two favorite manuscripts are alone in omitting the twelve verses comprising Mark 16:9-20, yet Burgon was able to fill an entire book with evidence that this passage was part of the original text and should thus be present. His arguments have never been answered.²¹ (These same two manuscripts, "Aleph" and "B," also omit a second batch of twelve consecutive verses. This deletion occurs between John 7:53 and 8:11 and causes a breakdown in the logic of the Greek.²²) Note also that B is sometimes not even joined by Aleph in losing the sections of text I listed earlier.²³

(d) There are many other problems with B. These include omissions (such as occur in its version of the books of Samuel) and deliberate corruptions (such as those in its appalling rendition of the book of Job). To top it all off, "bad spelling ... is constant in [B]."²⁴ Together these things strongly suggest this codex to be the product of people who did not cherish Holy Writ and whose work is therefore not to be trusted.

(e) While employing a number of arguments, Part 2a could be said to have shown just *one* way of approaching the question of which Greek family is sound. If any reader doesn't accept the conclusions given in that article, please be aware that there are at least three *other* ways by which one can approach this issue – *and they all lead to the same result already seen*. I plan to look at these in future articles. (Supporters of family A who feel I have omitted vital aspects of this issue should find them dealt with there.)

Section Conclusion

Satan's primary goal, then, is to weaken our faith in Holy Writ. Some readers may think the above material would not do much damage. They need to bear in mind a few things though. Firstly, there are yet other entire facets of Codex B which undermine faith in God's Word but which we haven't even touched on. (I plan to cover two such in Part 3.) Beyond this, the world today—through our schools and media among other outlets—regularly offers us fake “reasons” to doubt the reliability of the Bible. Satan's offensive against the inspiration of Scripture goes well beyond corrupting the text itself. He is forever looking for ways to cause us to question the contents of the Bible—e.g., the miracles recorded there. What I am saying is that, alongside these other lines of attack, the changes I have thus far listed in this article can easily act as the straw that breaks the camel's back and lead Christians to deny the verbal and plenary inspiration of their Bibles with all the attendant damage this does to their spiritual walk in Christ.

To top it all off, B makes various alterations to Scripture which directly assist the work of Bible corruptors and also directly help to conceal the necessity of pursuing right doctrine. The most blatant instance is the complete removal of Psalm 119 and its 176 verses extolling God's Word. Of course this psalm is not removed from English translations—because no one would buy a copy which excluded it. But again, that is not the issue here. At this stage I am simply pointing out that B is such a de-based document as to be totally untrustworthy as a guide to any readings. Besides, there are other such instances in B which do appear in English Bibles sold today:

- The fact that some scribes are thoroughly opposed to God's Word is obscured by their disappearance from both Matthew 26:3 and Luke 11:44.
- Even if we learn that someone we know has sinned against God by corrupting His Word, alterations to Matthew 6:15 & 18:35 (both of which originally

referred to *trespasses against us* but can now be read as including heresy, etc.) mean we are obliged to treat this news much less seriously than we should.

- Likewise, the alterations to 1 John 3:14b (loss of “brother”); Matthew 5:22 (loss of “without a cause”); and 1 John 4:19 (loss of reference to God) all allow the work of false brothers and their foolish supporters to continue more easily.
- We need wisdom, but *God's* wisdom rather than man's. The removal of the word “man's” from the phrase “man's wisdom” in 1 Corinthians 2:4 helps false teachers to claim that the wisdom God has supplied for us in His Word is not as important as it really is. Similarly, we need to “obey the **truth**,” but B has deleted this fact from Galatians 3:1.

Perhaps the most egregious change is made in Luke 4:4. It ought to read, “man shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word of God,**” except the emboldened section has gone from B!

Before we have even started to get into the doctrinal aspect of the corruptions, surely it is already obvious that it is simply wrong to claim we can safely ignore the differences between the Greek texts used by translators.

The next section will at last begin our review of the doctrinal impact caused by the differences in the Greek.

(In case the reader is wondering why I have waited so long to come to the doctrinal side of matters, my reasoning has been two-fold: Firstly there were other issues that also needed covering and I didn't want to run the unnecessary risk of losing readers who hold to the doctrinal errors promoted in Codex B before I had to. Secondly, until I had adequately exposed the depth of B's problems, all talk of doctrine could have been misconstrued as a circular argument—i.e., that I was simply supporting those MSS which support my personal doctrinal outlook. There is an added bonus to the approach I have used. Namely, once B has

- 20 It is often claimed, for instance, that marginal notes could easily find themselves inserted into the main text by later copyists. However, any decent copyist who was in any doubt about a reading would simply check another source. Similarly, it is obviously true that scribes get tired and that tiredness can lead to mistakes, but any copyist who truly cared about Holy Scripture would compensate for their fatigue by being twice as careful—just as any sensible driver who is tired will drive with extra diligence. It is also evident that harmonization of texts was hardly a “common activity,” since there exist a very large number of passages in the “New Testament” which make obvious candidates for annotation in one way or another for the sake of easier understanding but which apparently passed by all these supposed multitudes of interpolators and harmonizers.
- 21 For more details see Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 564-565.
- 22 For a fuller analysis of this, see Pickering, quoted in Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 566-567.
- 23 If any reader thinks *Aleph* to be a sound text, they need to explain away the points made in Part 2a. They also need to recall that *Aleph* was Hort's second favorite text. “The text of Westcott and Hort is practically the text of **Aleph and B**” [Herman C. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies—a Study and an Indictment*, as quoted in David Otis Fuller, *Which Bible?* (Grand Rapids International Publications, 1990), p. 136]. Hort himself said, “**no** readings of *Aleph/B* can safely be rejected absolutely” [B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*, (1882), p. 225]. Finally, defenders of *Aleph* need to bear in mind that most of the corrupted verses mentioned in this article are also to be found in that MS—and that *Aleph* has further instances not found in B.
- 24 Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 59; see also p. 56.

been proved to be the Greek with the deliberate corruption, the most crucial aspects of the Gospel are swiftly confirmed to everyone, since they are the parts which the enemy of our souls had to attack the most in Scripture.)

THE ASSAULTS ON DOCTRINE

Once false brothers have engendered doubts about the infallibility of the Bible itself, it takes only a relatively modest—and therefore inconspicuous—amount of corruption to raise doubts about the central doctrines of the Christian faith and to allow false teachers to neuter the gospel. Let's see the different methods the enemy uses to achieve this.

2 Or 3 Witnesses

People often argue that, if a particular point is made somewhere in Scripture, it doesn't really matter if any additional occurrences of that same point have been lost. They claim we should tolerate the many problems with Bibles relying on family B because "you can always locate an alternative passage to support any given truth." In some people's eyes, as long as a teaching is given *somewhere* in the Bible then any additional mentions of the same teaching are apparently unimportant, if not completely redundant.

The first observation to make is that we are talking about the very Word of God, not just a letter to the *Times*. No part of God's Word is superfluous. A given statement in the Bible may need to be repeated for a variety of reasons. We noted several of these in the section entitled "Every Doctrine is Still Supportable." A further reason is that God has apparently ordained the principle that each doctrine can be established *only* if it has a minimum of *two* scriptural witnesses. Let's see some evidence for this. There is a rule in the Bible that, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). During His time on earth, the Lord Jesus stated, "the testimony of two men is true" (John 8:17b). He also said "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16b). Joseph explained that God gave Pharaoh his dream in two different forms "because the thing is established by God" (Genesis 41:32). For more evidence of this principle, see Acts 10:13-16; Revelation 11:3; or Matthew 26:42-45.

What this means is that we cannot definitively teach a given doctrine if our Bible doesn't contain at least two witnesses to it (i.e., two passages clearly making the point in question). I should clarify this. I am not talking about every last statement in the Bible. Not every fact is repeated in Holy Writ. But for every doctrinal point made in the Bible, there will always be at least one other passage having the *same spiritual significance*. (For two examples of that very truth in action, see Luke 13:1-5 and Acts 5:36-37.) D.A. Carson is one advocate of Codex B who endorses this principle. He writes, "[E]stablished doctrines are **never** based on just one verse....[D]octrine is not based on just **one** verse"²⁵ Therefore, if witnesses are removed from the Bible text such that

only one remains, the doctrine will indeed still be supportable, but it won't be *establishable*, and its significance becomes debatable rather than something we know we must obey. (Why would God create such a rule? For a start it obviously makes life harder for false brothers and "false witnesses" (Deuteronomy 19:15-16) who would like to quietly insert lies into, or remove truths from, God's Word. However, I suggest it was also an elegant way of alerting those early assemblies which didn't possess the full canon of Scripture, or whose copy had accidentally lost a page, to their lack. I plan to mention a third advantage in a later article.)

The principle that we need at least two scriptures witnessing to a given matter in order to establish that matter is one of the main reasons why no Christian can afford to use Bibles based on family B, else he will regularly find the necessary second witness missing. For pages and pages of examples, see the book, *A Concordance of the Destruction of the Two and Three Witnesses in the Bible* by Les Garrett. (Not every entry in Garrett is present in Codex B, but many are, and every entry can certainly be found in modern English versions in use today.) Here is a cross-section of examples to start us off and to illustrate the sort of things I am talking about:

- Did Jesus "call ... sinners to **repentance**"? The emboldened section is clearly important but has been removed from both Matthew 9:13 and Mark 2:17 in Codex B, so there is only one direct witness left.
- The phrase "gospel of **peace**" occurs only twice in the whole Bible, but just once in B (it is omitted from Romans 10:15).
- Christ suffered, but did He actually suffer "for *us*"? This question has implications, but one of the only two passages specifically saying He suffered for us has lost this crucial qualifier in Codex B (see 1 Peter 4:1).
- Did Jesus really ask the rhetorical question about every father, "if his son ask [for] bread will he give him a stone?" This passage appears twice in the Bible, but B removes it from one of those places (Luke 11:11) leaving only a solitary witness.
- Some people might reasonably suppose that the content of the Lord's prayer is of more than a little significance. The wording is given only twice in the Bible (Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4). Just take a look at the differences in Luke's version as given in Codex B. No longer does it mention God's will being done, and no longer does it include the request to "deliver us from evil." In fact, more than twenty words have been cut.

Someone who has been brought up under sound teaching, or raised with a sound Bible, may be able to compensate for some or all of these gaps, but what about those souls who do not have such a background?

(Please Note: Corruption of the second witness can be a problem even when the passage in question has no obvious impact doctrinally. If the passage occurs in one of the four Gospel accounts, and if it has an irrefutable parallel in another of the Gospels, the extra differences introduced by Codex B have the inevitable effect of causing further doubt in the reader's mind as to the reliability of Holy Writ. For example, the word "wife" has gone missing in both Matthew 19:29 and Mark 10:29 but has been allowed to remain in the parallel statement in Luke 18:29.)

Earlier I likened Satan's attack on the Bible to a knife through the heart. Sure enough, the enemy's main target, in terms of doctrinal corruption, is the heart of the Gospel. It goes without saying that the heart of the Gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ. The above list included two instances of our Savior's nature and ministry being injured. Here is a selection of further occasions, to show how wide-ranging the attacks are. (Again, more examples are available in the aforementioned book by Les Garrett.)

- Was Christ Mary's "firstborn" son? Regrettably, B removes this teaching from one of the two places it should occur (i.e. Matthew 1:25), but this question has major ramifications for the nature of our Lord, as Peter Johnston has eloquently explained.²⁶ The issue is directly related to the doctrine that Jesus Christ has "come in the flesh"—a doctrine that serves as the pivotal test of a false brother according to 1 John 4:2-3. Presumably this is the very reason Codex B drops this clause from verse 3! (You can easily "confess Jesus" without confessing that He has come in the flesh.)
- As a child, did Jesus grow "strong in spirit"? This too has serious implications for His nature, yet Codex B has taken it out of Luke 2:40, leaving only one clear witness to this truth.
- Was the Lord Jesus sent to "heal the brokenhearted"? This statement occurs only twice in the Bible, but it has been excised from one of those places (Luke 4:18) thanks to B, even though it appears in the middle of an "Old Testament" passage the Lord is quoting.
- Was Christ Jesus really "numbered with the transgressors"? Only two verses in the whole of Scripture make this specific statement, and Codex B has taken one of them away (Mark 15:28).

This "2 or 3 witnesses" issue may not impress every reader, but it is clearly a problem—especially when we consider that it takes only a small amount of alteration to pervert the Gospel.

One can ruin the Gospel just by adding a solitary extra teaching to it, which is why Paul and Barnabus needed to have such an enormous dispute with some men who tried to do that (Acts 15:1-2). Just a single change to the Gospel can turn it into "another [i.e., false] gospel" (Galatians 16; 2 Corinthians 11:4). This is undoubtedly one reason why God made it so plain that we are not to add or delete *any* words when it comes to Holy Scripture (a fact we discussed at some length in Part 1).

Remaining Witness Now Questionable

Hort's theories lead to the conclusion that even the Greek text he himself published is significantly flawed (i.e., mankind is still very much in the process of restoring the original Greek as we find more evidence). Those Bibles translated by people who follow Hort equip false teachers to argue that the lone remaining witness for a given teaching in those Bibles is only present due to the original text still being in the process of reconstruction. By this means, such people can expunge some doctrines completely!

The problem doesn't stop there. Consider this matter alongside the doubts that people justifiably develop about the accuracy of the Bible as a result of all the physical, geographical or logical impossibilities in translations based on B. Then consider the additional doubts about the accuracy of the Bible that are induced by Hort's claim that textual accuracy attracted hardly any interest among early believers, and that the insertion of explanatory notes was common. Suddenly it can be argued that the lone surviving witness to a given teaching was an uninspired addition to the true text, and that the very fact it is a lone witness—when every matter must be established by at least two or three witnesses—means it is almost certainly not part of the true Bible.

Similarly, if a particular article of the faith has been removed from, say, fifty percent of the passages in which it should appear, then there is still a problem even if two or more witnesses remain. This is because, if a person is shown these differences between Bible versions but is taught that Codex B represents the better Greek, they will assume that someone inserted these "extra" entries as part of the creation of family A. This could easily lead such folks to wonder why someone was so keen to add this point into the Bible. Might they not then speculate that the occurrences which are still present in B were also additions, and thus conclude that the article of faith does not belong in the Bible at all? If, as B's fans assert, some Bibles have a whole extra twelve verses added in a row, it is easy to argue that the occasional single verse, or partial verse, has also been added to the Bible from time to time.²⁷

26 Quoted in Green, *op. cit.*, p. 330. (Please note, however, that I would not endorse everything in Green's writings.)

27 It is all very well for B's supporters to say that the number of passages in dispute between Greek texts is relatively small (although 5,600 doesn't seem terribly small to me), but unless a believer happens to know precisely *which* passages are in dispute then they are bound occasionally to wonder if a given passage is one of them, even if it isn't.

The issue of fasting is quite a striking example. The assaults on this important aspect of Christian practice are copious. For instance, did Christ teach that “prayer and fasting” was required by the disciples in order for them to be able to cast out the more powerful devils? In Codex B this point has been removed from both of the only two times it is made (i.e., Mark 9:29 and Matthew 17:21). Was Cornelius fasting when God told him to send for Peter? The reference to this has been deleted from Acts 10:30. According to 1 Corinthians 7:5, should married couples set aside times to devote themselves to prayer and *fasting*? Not if one reads Codex B. If a believer is presented with many differences on a single topic, will this not lead to confusion at best?

Ambiguities

Having brought into question key aspects of the faith, it would appear the enemy’s next task is to see if he can surreptitiously change any verses so that they become ambiguous in such a way that they can be exploited to outrightly *deny* key aspects of the faith. Just one verse per doctrine can be enough, because if people don’t know their Bible (as a result of the enemy’s prior attacks on its reliability) then that’s all a false or heretical teacher needs. Such teachers can then promote the wrong interpretation of these ambiguous passages—not least by claiming that the “changes” taking these verses in the direction of family A were themselves corruptions perpetrated by individuals who produced a “vile” Greek (as Hort described it) and whose work is therefore deeply suspect.

Here are just four of the many Bible passages now made dangerously ambiguous in B. (I have added an extra four in the footnotes, but it would not have been difficult to supply a large number more.²⁸)

- Hebrews 1:3 declares that Jesus “purged our sins,” but Codex B removes the word “our” here—thus enabling heretics to teach that Jesus had His own sins to purge. Similarly, Matthew 27:24 no longer has Pontius Pilate describing Jesus as “this just person.”²⁹
- John 6:47 quotes the Lord Jesus saying we have everlasting life if we believe on Him. The removal of this condition helps false teachers convince people that every person of “faith” has everlasting life no matter who (or what!) they have faith in.
- Luke 12:31 tells us we should “seek the kingdom of God,” but B omits “of God,” thereby allowing people to apply this verse to an earthly kingdom that will be established before Christ’s return. (Matthew 6:33 suffers a very similar fate.)

- Matthew 6 verses 4, 6 and 18 teach that if we act in secret when we pray, or when we fast, or give to the poor, God shall reward us “openly.” By removing the word “openly” on all three occasions, Codex B equips false brothers to claim they have done these good deeds but that their reward is invisible to anyone else because it was given secretly.

In my experience, Christians often have to sit through sermons for which the chosen text is just a solitary verse. If that verse has been emasculated or otherwise corrupted so that it is hard to interpret rightly, the entire sermon may end up being one long deception. Also, what happens if a sound teacher gives a talk which relies on one or more verses that have been corrupted in the Bible versions used by many of the folks present at a meeting? Won’t he look foolish? Indeed, might not his scope for bringing valuable teachings in the future be eroded by such a thing? Why should he have to waste time checking lots of corrupt versions? (I am just grateful to God that this scenario hasn’t happened to me yet, as far as I am aware.)

Interconnections

Even if a corruption to a reading appears very minor, it is most likely that the verse is knitted to other parts of Scripture and that we will cause an unraveling of this if we are not careful. As noted in Part 1, the Bible is multi-layered. Some spiritual truths are supported by an interrelationship between two or more passages that may not necessarily appear closely connected at first glance. Passages can be linked in a variety of ways, and if Satan can break some of the more important links for a given teaching then he has once again weakened the force of that teaching. By their very nature, low-key links can often seem arguable, and I don’t want to be controversial if I don’t have to be, so I shall illustrate my point here with an indisputable connection, *viz.*, the way Codex B removes the passage commencing “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet” in Matthew 27:35 which God placed into the Bible to help connect the crucifixion with Psalm 22 (cf v18).

Combination

Christians need to be prepared to put their very lives on the line for the sake of the truth. For this reason they need to have an unshakeable faith built on firm foundations. Just as a house depends on the solidity of its constituent parts, and depends on these parts being held together securely, so the constituent teachings of our faith need to be solid and properly connected. Our enemy doesn’t try to remove whole beams from the house, for that would be evident to all. Instead he enfeebles them and damages their joints.

28 Other verses made unhealthily ambiguous by Codex B include: **Matthew 26:28** (was our Lord instituting the new Covenant here? This ambiguity is perpetuated in Mark 14:24); **1 Peter 2:21** (didn’t Christ suffer for Peter too?); **1 John 4:19** (should we love men as much as we love God?); and **Romans 15:19** (which “Spirit” is in view? Cf 2 Corinthians 11:4).

29 The alteration to 1 Peter 4:1 we looked at earlier is an even more disquieting instance.

As Hort admitted, per our citation in the opening section of this article, it is in the *combination* of changes where the impact lies. When we consider the combination of different types of attack, we can finally recognize the true gravity of the situation. Some of the constituent parts of the house have had their “two or three witnesses” reduced to one; others have had a substantial proportion of their infrastructure eroded, even if this still leaves two surviving witnesses. Other parts have been badly weakened by being made ambiguous. And in other cases the interconnections, or joints, holding everything together have been severed.

Hort’s colleague Westcott confirmed as much when he said, “The value of the revision is most clearly seen when the student considers together a **considerable group** of passages, which bear upon some article of faith. The **accumulation** of small details then produces the **full effect**.”³⁰ Crucial teachings suffer multiple wounds which inevitably harm them materially.

Again, Satan’s focus is on the core of the Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ. Like termites which have eaten away at the fabric of a house, Satan has scuttled unnoticed into God’s Word and chewed away at the truth about our glorious Redeemer. Key aspects of His nature and incarnation are undermined, including His virgin birth, His resurrection, and His lordship. Just consider His ascension. This has been weakened, for instance, by the removal of the last twelve verses of Mark (which include the statement that our Lord was “received up into heaven”) and by distorting John 3:13 (which no longer says He is currently “in heaven”). (We will expose even more of Satan’s attacks on the Lord Jesus in a later article.) Instead of the true Rock on which to build our house, the enemy gives us sand.

The Final Nail

What I have said thus far should be worrying enough for any true believer. But there is yet another issue to factor in. As I explain in my short series of articles entitled *Beware False Balances*, God seems to test our love for the truth by sometimes putting a verse in Scripture which, if not interpreted in the light of the rest of the Bible, appears on the surface to point *away* from the truth. Indeed, I have yet to find a doctrine which *cannot* superficially be questioned (or even denied) by at least one verse. (I realize this will be a radical teaching to some, so I beg readers who doubt it to remember that God promises to send a strong delusion upon those who do not believe the truth “that they should **believe a lie**” [2 Thessalonians 2:11-12]. I also encourage such readers to check out the relevant articles in the “Rubies” section of the bayith.org website.) If most doctrines do indeed have a verse in God’s pure Word which, on the surface, negates that doctrine, the true implications of the enemy’s corruption of Holy Scripture becomes even more chilling. Even with a sound Greek text,

God appears to have arranged things (in line with passages like Numbers 12:7-8; Matthew 13:13-15; and 1 Corinthians 1:19-20) such that we won’t grasp His Word aright if we do not approach it in faith and meekness. In view of this, imagine how hard it must be to understand His Word properly when an unsound Greek text is in use.

Section Conclusion

Let me reiterate that these sections could have included numerous further examples. But even in the event that a believer does not pick up any wrong doctrine from their aberrant Bible, these corruptions give the impression that God is confused or that the Bible is not verbally inspired.

I should also make clear that there exists a whole set of verses which have been altered to the point that they can be used to *directly* contradict the Gospel, but which I have so far not mentioned at all. These verses either add extra requirements to the pure Gospel or question the most pivotal aspect of it. This matter is revisited in Part 3. It would not make sense to identify them before that point in case I lose readers who hold to these very errors. Many sincere people around the world believe these particular falsehoods. (They do so precisely because they have been taught via Bibles reliant on manuscripts like Codex B.)

The Bible text God gave us was in perfect balance, but the thousands of changes in B have demonstrably produced a false balance. God calls false balances an “**abomination**” (Proverbs 11:1), so what must He think of Codex B? The reader may protest that actual translations avoid the problems I have highlighted. In reality, two popular English translations available today suffer *all* the scores of specific corruptions I have identified here.

Let me close this section by posing one final question. Who among us will be prepared to stand before Almighty God on the last day and say, “Even though You faithfully supplied us with a trustworthy family of Greek MSS, I couldn’t be bothered to take seriously the thousands of corruptions people made to it and I encouraged others to ignore them too”?

DON’T FOOTNOTES COVER THE ISSUE?

Some people consider what I’ve written in this article to be a non-issue because they think Bibles based on the wrong Greek still offer the correct readings in the footnotes or margins, and that this makes everything fine. The first point to offer in response is that some Bible versions do not give such footnotes, but let us assume they all do. The next problem is that translations rarely include all six thousand or so differences, but let’s again assume they all do.³¹

30 Quoted in Jasper James Ray, *God Wrote Only One Bible*, (Eye Opener Publishers), p. 26, as quoted in Jeff Johnson, *Spiritual Deception in the Highest*, (e-book), chapter 21.

31 For instance, many B-centered Bibles seem inconsistent in that they don’t admit that they supply only half the family A rendering of Ephesians 5:30 (i.e., they omit the words “of his flesh, and of his bones”).

Many people do not read the footnotes, but once again let us assume they all do. How many of us check (or remember) every relevant footnote every time we read a passage? Not many, I suspect, but let us assume we all do this too. The sad facts are these:

(a) Most of us are likely to trust the translators of our chosen Bible version to pick the right reading for the main text, and we will often thus reject the footnote variant.

(b) Even if we are not so trusting, the wording of these footnotes is typically extremely misleading in terms of guidance on which reading is the correct one. Frequently the translators either (i) **Give delusive data** (i.e., obscuring the true support for a given variant reading),³² or else they (ii) **Predetermine the issue** (i.e., saying things such as, “later mss *insert*,” thus prejudging the matter).³³

(c) We cannot simply decide to accept all the footnote variants, because not all of them come from family A.

(d) Even if we somehow always manage to pick the correct reading, many of the God-ordained interconnections between passages are obscured when we have to mentally replace sections of the text with the proper wording from the footnotes.

Let’s be generous and say that one person in every million could overcome all the above problems. Even if you or I are that one-in-a-million, we are still legitimizing our Bible version for the 999,999 in every million who can’t. We are giving credibility to a Bible based on corrupted MSS, yet Holy Writ calls us to do all we reasonably can to avoid causing a brother to stumble (e.g., see 1 Corinthians 8:11).

Of course there is an even more fundamental problem with such footnotes. Specifically, they cause a lot of questions about the reliability—and hence the verbal inspiration—of Scripture. Page after page, they promote doubt about the true readings. (They even suggest that the translators themselves are unsure as to what is the correct reading.³⁴ After all, why would these people offer another reading if they were certain it was wrong?) In other words, these footnotes actually serve Satan’s primary aim for the Bible! And besides, where do we draw the line down this slippery slope of compromise? The warning in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 is very relevant here.

But again, this is all immaterial in a way. The question is, what does God think? Where does He ever teach that it is acceptable to relegate truths about Him and His Kingdom to mere footnotes while intentional corruptions are left in the main text of His Word?

(Please Note: It should be borne in mind that this article concentrates on the underlying Greek text. In other words, this arti-

cle does not include the additional problems introduced by the use of the “dynamic equivalence” method of translation discussed in Part 1. Nor does the document you are reading include those problems caused by any unsound motives on the part of translators—a possibility we will need to investigate in Part 3. Neither of these extra sources of error is removed by supplying footnotes of alternate Greek readings.)

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

At this point, some readers will be asking themselves how Hort’s approach ever won any converts at all, far less how it came to be accepted by the majority of the 1871 KJV revision committee. In the previous article we saw five reasons why this committee was poorly placed to challenge Hort’s arguments and we also noted a reason why sections of the public respected the committee’s decision. We now need to look a little more widely at this aspect of matters. I shall start by considering some of the more forgivable reasons why Hort himself, along with his very close friend Brooke Foss Westcott, got things so wrong. I shall then suggest additional reasons why the majority of the revision committee were duped and why other souls followed them.

Westcott And Hort

There were a number of factors which led Westcott and Hort to take the wrong path. We shall look at a subset here and return to this question in Part 3, God willing.

One difficulty was that these men spent a lot of time in the company of what are termed “higher critics”—people who approach the Bible just like any other book. This undoubtedly encouraged Westcott and Hort to do the same. A further difficulty seems to have been that these two men spent several decades working on their theory without seeking the balancing effect of alternate opinions. The elder of the pair (Westcott) even admitted, “He who has long pondered over a train of reasoning becomes **unable** to detect its weak points.”³⁵ They were also busy men with a range of interests, who consequently appear to have failed to find the necessary time to check whether their theories actually agreed with the facts.

Another problem was the particular window of history in which they were working. On the one hand, Codex Aleph had been discovered twelve years before the committee began its deliberations, and Codex B had also recently become properly available to scholars for the first time in decades. (The exceptional age of Aleph and B was probably as intoxicating to Westcott and

32 For example, at least one Bible says, regarding the deletion of the thirteen words at the end of Matthew 6:13, that only “**some** ... manuscripts” include the missing words, whereas the truth is that more than **98%** of manuscripts include them. Given space, many other cases could be cited, including similarly breathtaking ones.

33 To be fair, translators are themselves often supplied with misleading information by textual critics, although it might be reasonable to expect translators to check their facts before annotating the very Word of God.

34 For important relevant comments by Burgon on these things, see *The Revision Revised*, (Dean Burgon Society Press, 2nd printing, 2000), pp. 235-238.

35 John W. Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, p. 362.

Hort as it proved to be to many other people, even though—as I noted in our previous installment—the survival of a complete manuscript from extreme antiquity is, for three separate reasons, a cause for *suspicion* rather than reverence.) On the other hand, evidence which would have stopped their theory in its tracks wasn't available at that time.³⁶ I will revisit this evidence in Part 3.

As I say, there are additional reasons why Westcott and Hort ended up promoting a counterfeit Greek, but these will have to wait until the next Part. The important point to note at this stage is that Hort's theory can plainly be seen to be false without even considering the issues I raise there.

The Committee

Let us now return to the Revision Committee and uncover more explanations for why most of its members were taken in by Hort's ideas.

The most obvious point is that Hort was not alone in his efforts. Westcott, who had been an extremely close personal friend of Hort for many years, was on the committee and thus doubled the pressure exerted on the other members. Furthermore, Westcott threatened to resign from the committee if a third individual who shared their textual outlook (G. Vance Smith, who was mentioned towards the start of this article) was not allowed to participate, even though other factors would certainly have barred him. Beyond this, several other members of the committee were friends of Westcott and/or Hort or were already on their textual wavelength.³⁷ It is also a fact that Westcott and Hort spent time influencing members before the committee began.

During the ten years the committee sat, members tended to submit to Westcott and Hort, partly because these two men were very intelligent. The regrettable conclusion seems to have been that if both men were sure of their ground and were so intelligent then they must be right. Both men also had strong personalities and this seems to have helped their cause. Similarly, the fact that Westcott was very well connected in British society (even being friends with the Prime Minister³⁸) doesn't appear to have hurt his objective. The next point to bear in mind is that Westcott and Hort were both absolutely committed to their cause, and worked resolutely and zealously to propagate their theory. "The Revisers of 1881 followed the guidance of ... Westcott and Hort who were **constantly** at their elbows."³⁹ Hence it has been said that "The committee of the Revised Version was dominated and practically controlled by Westcott and Hort."⁴⁰

There is a final observation to make here. It was naturally a major consideration, when originally creating the manuscripts comprising "family" B, for the false brothers responsible not to alarm Christians by the corruptions. If the changes were blatant, and certainly if the *purpose* of those changes was blatant, then no believer would accept such a document and the whole project would be pointless. The changes to the text had to seem as innocent and unrelated as possible. It is only when these alterations are grouped together in the ways we have seen in this article that the true nature of the corruption becomes discernible. As Hort privately admitted, "few would think of [the real impact of the changes] at first." What I am saying is that the committee accepted Hort's theories because it understandably failed to grasp their appalling ramifications. "[I]t seems clear that, not until after the Committee had disbanded, and their work had come under the scrutiny of able scholars ... were they themselves aware [of the true situation] ... Only after it was too late were the facts realized, even by the Revisers themselves."⁴¹

Of course this begs the question: why didn't the members disavow their work once they finally came to appreciate the truth? A few of them were indeed prepared to distance themselves from the work, but it takes a brave man to admit to the entire English-speaking world that he has been a complete fool for ten whole years. The decision becomes even harder when one realizes that participation in such a high-profile committee meant the members were virtually guaranteed a glittering future career—unless they renounced their participation. I fear a number of them couldn't cope with the latter course since it would have destroyed their reputations in the eyes of many of their peers and would have ruined their hopes of success on the world's terms. (Note also that after these men had spent ten years acting unbiblically, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Lord withheld conviction from some of them in line with His clear warnings at the end of Revelation about those who corrupt His Word.)

Finally, please be aware that Part 3 is expected to offer yet more reasons why Westcott and Hort were able to get the majority of the committee on their side.

Beyond The Committee

Apart from their reasonable, albeit misplaced, respect for a committee that had been entrusted with such a prestigious task, why did parts of the outside world follow the committee's lead? There were a number of forgivable, but nevertheless illegitimate, reasons for this.

- 36 For example, neither man lived to see the evidence that "Koine-Greek was the actual language of the New Testament. The Papyri discoveries were made **after** the time of Westcott and Hort" [Luther W. Martin, as quoted in Green, *op. cit.*, p. 349].
- 37 Lightfoot was a particularly close friend of the pair. Moulton and Milligan were both from the **same** Coleridge-inspired group of higher critics. For even more examples, see James Sichtler, *A Testimony Founded For Ever*, (Sichtler Publications, 2001), chapter 4.
- 38 Sichtler, *Testimony*, chapter 10.
- 39 Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 25, as quoted in Johnson *op. cit.*, Chapter 21.
- 40 Fuller, *Which Bible?*, p. 106.
- 41 Philip Mauro, *Which Version? Authorized or Revised?*, (e-book, 1924), chapter VI. Italics in original.

(1) The public didn't realize the committee had gone beyond its remit. They therefore assumed not only that the committee members were qualified for the job they had performed, but that the work undertaken had been sanctioned by the hierarchy of the Church of England itself.⁴² Readers today may not attach a lot of weight to this point, but it should be remembered that the English-speaking people, especially the British, were very deferential in those days and implicitly trusted those in positions of authority.

(2) The actions of the Committee hampered Burgon and other scholars in their efforts to expose the truth. In particular, Burgon et al were never told that the Revised Version (RV or ERV) was based on a Greek text generated using radically different principles from those which produced the KJV. (Westcott and Hort had published a Greek text, but had done so *privately*. It was only "**confidentially and under pledges of the strictest secrecy**, placed in the hands of ... the revising body."⁴³) This had the following effect: "Burgon had undertaken the examination of the R.V. upon the supposition that that work was what its name implies, and what its authors had been charged to produce, namely, a 'Revision of the Authorized Version.' But, as he puts it, 'we ... found out that an **entirely different** problem awaited us. We made the distressing discovery that the underlying Greek Text had been completely refashioned throughout.' *This is the more serious because no one, upon reading the preface to the R.V. would find any hint at such a thing.*"⁴⁴ Beyond this, "[I]n the margin [of the RV] ... **no** record is **preserved** of the underlying textual changes."⁴⁵ All of these things afforded committee members valuable extra time to persuade those souls in the (not always terribly godly) world of academia to accept Hort's theory and his Greek text without the voices of Burgon and colleagues being raised in opposition.

(3) Even when Burgon was "up to speed" on the true situation, Hort and others were very active in their criticism of him. They chiefly dismissed him for his decision to approach the matter from a spiritual standpoint. Burgon worked on the basis that the Bible is God's Word. Hort and his followers confused some of the public by insisting that Burgon should instead spend his time disproving Hort's theories, even though (a) an English Bible created using different textual principles (i.e., the KJV) had already been widely accepted, so it was Hort who should have been doing any "disproving" before foisting his own ideas on the world, and (b) some of Hort's theories *cannot* be disproved—if the Bible is indeed just like any other book—so Burgon had no choice but to approach the matter from a spiritual point of view. (I will need to return to this topic in Part 3.)

(4) If the reader is wondering why the God-fearing public at large didn't take more notice of Burgon, there are several things to bear in mind. Firstly, Burgon was principally writing to other *scholars* (in the hope they would have the wisdom and godliness to repent), and he therefore used a lot of specialist terms and a good deal of advanced English phraseology which did very little to help the man on the street follow his arguments. Another problem was one I noted regarding Hort himself, *viz.*, the more ancient something is, the greater the excitement it naturally occasions and the greater the reverence it enjoys. A third factor was that Burgon was already almost seventy by the time the Committee ended its work, and he died within just seven years.

In closing, it is worth pointing out that the public largely *rejected* the English Revised Version once they had had a proper chance to read it and consider it. "The **highest** sales for the Revised Version, after the first year's [understandably] very large sales, came in 1892; ERV 54,419 copies and KJV 722,326. By 1902 the figures were 13,574 copies for the ERV and 774,785 for the KJV."⁴⁶ Some readers may argue that a lot of Christians today do not reject versions based on Codex B. However, this is swiftly explained when we remember that, unlike believers in the nineteenth century, most of these folks have never read a formal equivalence translation based on family A so they have very little with which to compare their version.

Sadly, not all scholars proved to be as wise as the public. In the next installment of this article I plan to look at this problem, and why it still exists today. Suffice it to say that Hort's ideas led his followers to accept a fundamentally different world view from the true. This "paradigm shift" to which Hort's followers continue to cling, means they interpret all new discoveries in the field of textual criticism from this immovable standpoint. Even when material is unearthed which proves Hort's central theory to be untenable, it is always subordinated to the fixed world view to which these people have pinned their reputations. You can liken this situation to misreading a map and taking a wrong road which leads into a dense forest. Instead of humbling themselves and retracing their steps so they can start over, these souls wander around grabbing hold of anything that can be made to fit their preconceived position. (Needless to say, this unhealthy approach means they usually find themselves in different parts of the forest to each other.)

CONCLUSION

I hope the reader has found this material of use. I trust I have at least demonstrated that many of the differences in B cannot possibly be accidental but must be deliberate corruptions by people heavily opposed to biblical Christianity.

42 Mauro, *ibid.*, chapter 6.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.* Italics in original.

45 *Ibid.*

46 Data from Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (Oxford University Press, 1966), Vol. 1, p. 55, as cited in Sichtler, *Testimony*, chapter 10.

However, this article in isolation does not expose the full magnitude of the problem. This material had to focus on the Greek rather than on English translations of the Greek, so it was obliged to remain silent on the additional problems caused by unsaved or apostate translators. Also, due to space limitations, it had to remain silent on other ways Codex B undermines faith in the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture. Finally, for the sake of readers caught up in cults, I have been obliged to stay virtually silent on the most crucial corruptions in B, since their exposure will directly challenge some teachings cherished by such folks and will therefore need a fuller treatment than could be supplied here. Part 3 will endeavor to make good all of the above limitations.

In case the reader is contemplating sharing this article with someone else, I strongly recommend forwarding a copy of Part 1 first, as it lays vital groundwork. (Part 2a, on the other hand, is vital only for those who already possess some knowledge of the whole debate.) No errors have yet been reported to me regarding Part 1 or Part 2a. Please see the end of Part 3 for an update on this.

How Does Your Bible Fare?

Codex B is clearly not a sound resource for translators! Indeed, it is a plain counterfeit. God would never require us to rely on such an ungodly document, thus it is not a manuscript on which *any* weight should be placed. Translators who have done so inevitably produce corrupt Bibles. Thankfully it is easy to check one's personal version.

To determine whether your current translation has been influenced by B, the simplest way to check is to read the Preface of your Bible and see if the creators of your version made use of either the "UBS" or "Nestle-Aland" Greeks. If they did, you have a problem—because every edition of both is very heavily slanted towards the side of Westcott and Hort and their beloved manuscript. But don't take my word for it. Scholars on both sides report, "The ... Nestle-Aland and U.B.S. ... really vary little from the W-H text";⁴⁷ "Nestle is essentially Hortian";⁴⁸ and "[Hort's Greek] was taken as the basis for the present [UBS] edition."⁴⁹

Similarly, if the translators of your version claim to have been "eclectic" in their choice of Greek it means they wish to appear independent while, in truth, "still essentially [remaining] within the framework of Hort's theory."⁵⁰ "[T]he recent [UBS] Greek New Testament ... which was produced by the so-called eclectic method, has moved even closer to Westcott and Hort...";⁵¹ "[E]clectic texts are based ... [mainly] on B and Aleph..."⁵²

If your Bible does not give any such indications as to the Greek used in its creation, one alternative way to check this is to look up the specific verses I've cited within this article. If your version suffers any of the flaws listed then you need to be concerned—remembering that I have cited only a small proportion of the corrupted verses. If it suffers more than a handful of them then you can be sure that Codex B has infected it. (Note that it is also a bad sign if the correct text is placed in italics or parentheses.) Even if your Bible passes this test, it does not completely *guarantee* that it has a sound Greek base, but if it fails then it is most definitely unsound.

I have decided not to identify which specific Bible versions do and do not rely on B. Partly this is because new versions are coming out all the time and I don't want my material to age unnecessarily, but mainly it is because I want to encourage readers to investigate the Bible version debate for themselves rather than blindly trust me—or indeed blindly trust anyone but God. It is vital that Christians learn to be less gullible, else they will be fooled by our extremely clever and wily foe. We must not underestimate Satan's cunning, or his seething hatred for God's Word. If he was able to trick Adam and Eve, we ought to be very vigilant (1 Peter 5:8; Jeremiah 17:9).

What If Your Bible Is Unsound?

As mentioned earlier, there are further reasons to reject Bibles which rely on B. God-willing we shall come to these in the next two articles along with added reasons why this matter is so serious. However, if you are already convinced that you ought to reconsider your current Bible version, the following note offers some guidance.

Among other things, Part 3 will show that the logical conclusion of approaching textual criticism from a godly, rather than a worldly, standpoint is to use a Bible translation made from (a) the *Textus Receptus* (or TR) for the Greek part of Scripture,⁵³ and (b) the "Masoretic" Hebrew for the remainder of the Bible.⁵⁴ The text of the TR was the product of having exactly the sort of faithful outlook Burgon espoused. (It was refined by various God-fearing scholars over a period of about a hundred years from a wide variety of family A materials.) I shall have more to say in the final Part (Part 4) on the excellence of the TR and on the badly misinformed comments made about it by those who have fallen for the deceptive claims of the very type of false brothers who penned B in the first place. ❖

**You may address your comments or questions to Dusty:
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47 Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, (Thomas Nelson, 1980), p. 38.

48 Pickering, *Contribution*, p. 90.

49 Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (German Bible Society, 1975), p. xviii.

50 Pickering, *Contribution*, p. 105.

51 Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney, *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, (Zondervan, 1974), p. 19.

52 Pickering, *Identity*, p. 145. "The modern 'eclectic' Nestle-Aland text ... differs in less than 400 places from the Westcott-Hort text." [James Sightler, *Westcott's New Bibles*, (Sightler Publications, 2001), Introduction].

53 Latin for "received text." References in this article to "family A" are usually simplified references to that text.

54 It is Hortian to prefer the Septuagint text to the Masoretic. I plan to explain why in the next article.