



# MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS & SECULAR MEDIA

VOLUME 29 - NUMBER 3

## THE BIBLE VERSIONS DEBATE PART 2A MATERIALS OF VALUE

By Dusty Peterson



### Editor's Note:

*I am truly delighted to be able to publish the following article. It is extremely sound and well written, and it covers a topic which directly affects every single Christian. Beyond this, it has been crafted so that it can safely be given to anyone, regardless of their stance. The text of the article is largely restricted to the points that every believer ought to know, whereas the footnotes take matters to a deeper level for those who would like to learn more. Some of the latter material is fairly involved, so unless the reader is already conversant with this topic, I recommend they ignore the footnotes on their first trip through. This issue features the first installment of Part 2, which will conclude with Part 2B.*

*Dusty is well placed to write this article, as we shall see in Part 3. Such is his mastery of the issues that he has been able to present them more lucidly than any other writer I have read. Nonetheless, one or two areas discussed are unavoidably profound, so those readers who are new to this subject are asked to give the document their full attention. If they still find any paragraph difficult to follow, they are advised simply to move on to the next. If they then return to the difficult section at the end, they should find it considerably easier to grasp.*

*Dusty bent over backwards to make this work suitable for as broad a spectrum of individuals as possible, but a necessary side effect is that some wording will not be what some readers would prefer. Don't be put off by that. Rather, please put up with it, remembering that we ought to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). *ajd**

**A**mong other things, the British Coronation ceremony famously describes the Bible as “the most valuable thing this world affords,” and I encourage the reader to keep this in mind as they explore the following.

In Part 1, which really should be read before progressing to this next Part, we looked at the two ways of translating Scripture into English, dynamic equivalence and word-for-word translation. But the issue of how best to *translate* a document obviously assumes there is no argument about what the original document *said*. Unfortunately people are far from agreed on the original text of the Bible, and this is why I have penned the article you are now reading. This topic is immeasurably more interesting than it sounds, and I will very shortly be addressing the

question of whether or not the differences being argued over can be considered trivial.

Please note that I have tried to word the material in a way that people on *all* sides of the debate can cope with. (Naturally this includes those folks I consider to be in error.) However, this inevitably means that all readers will need to be patient with me at times. The topic under discussion arouses a great deal of emotion in many people, but the Bible calls us to be self-controlled and I urge readers to bear this in mind.

To keep *everyone* with me as I work through the relevant issues is a big challenge. I have sought to be fair as I describe and evaluate the positions of each side, but if I have inadvertently written any-

thing that offends, I beg readers not to walk away but instead to hear me out and withhold judgment until the conclusion of the article. I would ask them to act like a jury in a court of law - i.e., to make their decision only when the evidence on both sides has been presented. If I have not given ample support for my position by the end, please don't hesitate to contact me with the details.

I sincerely thank readers in advance for their understanding over this matter.

### Background

None of the original manuscripts, or “autographs,” of the 66 books comprising the Bible are known to exist today, else this whole question would be rather

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# Bible Versions Debate Part 2

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simpler. (For convenience, students of this subject usually just write “MS” in place of the word “manuscript.” Similarly, the plural is shortened to “MSS.”)

In the next article I shall briefly need to mention the “Old Testament,” but it’s on the Greek portion of the Bible, the “New Testament,” where the arguments are overwhelmingly focused. There are a large number of Greek copies of the New Testament still in existence from before the days of printing, all of which are obviously descended in one way or another from the original documents. The problem is that these copies disagree with each other, sometimes in thousands of places. These manuscripts are commonly said to fall into three or four, or even more, different groups or “families.” A common term for a family of MSS is “text-type,” and the name given to the process of identifying which readings are correct is usually called “textual criticism.”

The popular view today is that almost all manuscripts were simply copied relatively faithfully from earlier ones, and that every so often an extensive revision (recension) of the text was undertaken for one reason or another, thus starting a new family. Hence the diagram in the adjacent column (Figure One).

As an aside, certain scholars are far from convinced that there *are* multiple “families” in this sense. They believe there are simply those manuscripts which were created by *sincere, God-fearing* people, and those created by different parts of the

false Church. (Scripturally, there do exist true brothers and false brothers, true teachers and false teachers, true and false prophets, true and false apostles, the true Christ and false Christs.)

There are a few additional reasons why certain scholars conclude that Bible manuscripts merely fall into one or other of the “true” or “false” camps. A central point made by such folks is that one set of surviving manuscripts shows very close similarity between most of its members, which is taken as a sign of fidelity, whereas the rest differ among themselves much more – which is taken as a tell-tale lack of reverence for God’s Word. Additionally, some MSS (plus certain early Christian writings) actually appear to span two or more families simultaneously.<sup>1</sup> Even the strongest supporters of the idea of families are not always sure how many families they have discovered.

Whatever your view I ask you to bear with me as I endeavor to operate on the principle that manuscripts do indeed fall into several families. (Most of the scholars who deny the existence of such families are prepared to work on the basis that these families exist because they feel that the set of manuscripts they support still

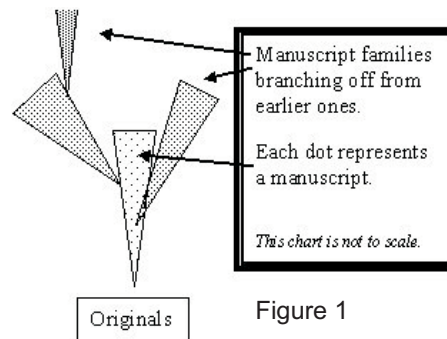


Figure 1

comes out on top, whichever way the issue is approached.)

Between these two groups of scholars there exists sharp disagreement over which of the various families is closest to God’s Word, and which others represent a significant departure from it. The arguments center on just *two* of the families – and this debate is reflected in the vast majority of Bibles we use today. Some people use Bible versions based on one family and some use versions based on the other. I can almost guarantee that every English-speaking Christian of more than a few months standing today has come across Bibles founded on each.

In order to avoid uncommon words wherever possible in this article, I’ve chosen to call these two families “A” and “B.” Among other names, family A is frequently called the “Syrian” or “Byzantine” or “Antiochian” family. Family B is often called the “Minority” or “Alexandrian” family.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, scholars use the very names “A” and “B” to refer to high-profile manuscripts connected with families A and B respectively.

I don’t want to leave families A and B as mere abstract concepts for the reader, but equally I don’t want to say anything about them that might tempt us to pre-judge matters. I have therefore chosen to characterize this pair of manuscript families in just two ways. The reader is asked not to read anything into these attributes yet. We will put more flesh on the bones as we go.

I will describe the two families like this: (i) Manuscripts within family A contain more words than those in family B. (They don’t contain more *books*, but sim-

(Continued on page 13)

- 1 See Edward Miller, *A Guide to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, (1886, 1919), pp. 50-1; see also 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, pp. 19-21).*
- 2 Additionally the text-types of families A and B are helpfully often called “Alpha” and “Beta” respectively. Some scholars contend that there is a separate family, termed “Neutral,” which is related to family B, but this is not so common a view as it once was. For simplicity I have combined the Neutral and Minority families into one (B), not least because many experts today do not distinguish between the two. For this short overview of textual criticism, I have employed another simplification – viz., I sometimes relate comments made specifically about *manuscript B* simply to *family B*, and likewise I sometimes relate comments about the *Textus Receptus* (a Greek text derived from family A manuscripts) to the whole of family A. However, neither simplification alters the final outcome.

# Bible Versions Debate Part 2

(Continued from page 3)

ply more words in their books.) (ii) Family A manuscripts tend to be very similar to each other, whereas those in family B vary more.

It is often said that the differences between these two families are unimportant. Here are some initial observations about that claim. I will start by quoting two of the most pre-eminent scholars in favor of each family – i.e., Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828-1892) and John William Burgon (1813-1888). Hort was a leading member of the revision committee which produced the “Revised Version” of the Bible in the late 19th century. Hort said that if the Christian Church were to replace one of these two manuscript families with the other, it would be so significant as to produce a whole “**new period in Church history.**”<sup>3</sup> Likewise, but from a supporter of the *other* family, Burgon said the result would be a “**seriously mutilated**” text.<sup>4</sup>

What some folks don’t realize is that the differences between these two families affect nearly six *thousand* separate parts of the New Testament,<sup>5</sup> impacting nearly *ten thousand* words. That’s a lot of words being added, deleted or changed. And given the staggering intricacy and multi-layered nature of God’s Word – as we discussed in the previous article – that’s bound to represent a real problem. What’s more, several thousand differences between Bible versions are inevitably going to promote confusion and doubt. If you think, as I do, that confusion and doubt are enemies of God and His Kingdom, this issue is not trivial.

Furthermore, we are on holy ground here (Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15). We are supposed to *love* God’s Word and treat it with awe (Psa. 119:161-168). We should guard its purity as we would our life – if not more carefully. In view of the fact that men and women have indeed *died* for the sake of the Bible over the centuries, it seems to me that the least we can do in return is seek to protect its accuracy.

Deferring to respected scholars in each of the two camps, why would Hort call one of these two MS families “**vile**”<sup>6</sup> if the differences in it were insignificant? That’s an extremely strong word to use if the differences are indeed negligible. Similarly, why would Burgon call Hort’s MS family “**grossly depraved**”?<sup>7</sup> It seems clear from these heavy-duty quotes that it would be wise for us to look into this.

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

So, the pre-eminent figure on one side of the debate described the other side’s chosen manuscripts as “vile,” and the pre-eminent figure on the other side called the first’s set “grossly depraved.” There are many sincere followers of each party, so how have we reached this state of affairs? If we take a glimpse at the history of the debate, and if we consider the principles applied by each party, we’ll see how this situation arose – and, crucially, where the truth of the matter lies.

Here are a couple of foundational points for those who are new to this subject. Before the invention of the printing press in the mid 1400s, literary works had to be copied by hand (the word “manuscript” means a document written manually). Each time a manuscript was copied, errors of varying magnitude were introduced by the human scribe. The problem

is that it is not always immediately apparent which variation on a particular passage is faithful to the original and which is an error. The solution is to collect and sort through the evidence, interpreting it by using the appropriate rules.

Let’s now take a stroll down the two roads leading to those supremely contradictory conclusions we’ve just seen. One can readily trace the split back to the aforementioned revision committee which was set up in 1871 by the Church of England to revise the King James Version of the Bible (or KJV for short).<sup>8</sup> Rather than just reconsider the *translation* of the KJV, the most influential members of the committee also decided to reconsider the very source material – e.g., the Greek manuscripts – behind the KJV. I want to commence our investigation into this huge split by listing the four different types of evidence the committee had available to it. When trying to decide which family carries more weight, the relevant documents obviously include the surviving Greek MSS. But also pertinent are any surviving MSS where the Greek has been translated into other languages. (Again, to avoid unusual terminology wherever possible, I’m going to call such items “translations” although that’s not the word used by students of this subject.<sup>9</sup> The correct terms for all these things can be found in the footnotes. Virtually the only unusual terms I use in the whole of the rest of this article are about to come up.)

Another type of evidence relevant to this inquiry is the writings of early Christians wherever they quote parts of the New Testament – since those citations naturally indicate which MS family was used by those early Christians. I’m going

3 Arthur F. Hort, *The Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort, Vol. II*, (Macmillan, 1896), pp. 138-9. (All emphases in quotes in this article are my own unless otherwise stated.)

4 John W. Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, (Dean Burgon Society Press, 2nd printing, 2000), p. 109.

5 Estimates usually vary between 5,300 and 5,900 changes. Waite counted 5,604 (D.A. Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, [The Bible For Today Press, 2004], p. 40).

6 See A.F. Hort, *Life and Letters, Vol. I*, p. 211, as quoted in Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, p. 13.

7 *Revision Revised, op. cit.*, p. 109.

8 A preliminary, 16-man committee first sat in 1870, but the *full* group was started the following year.

9 The strict term for those translations of Holy Writ that are made from the Bible’s *original* languages is “versions.”

to use the term “quotations” to refer to this type of material.<sup>10</sup>

The fourth and final relevant pieces of evidence are called “lectionaries.” These are simply portions of the New Testament which were read on special days in the Eastern Church. You can think of this practice as somewhat akin to the way fellowships today often read 1 Corinthians 11 aloud before taking Holy Communion.

In the 1870s, the KJV revision committee knew of only one hundred lectionaries. Since then over *two thousand* more have been discovered. However, to demonstrate how this enormous conflict between MS families first opened up, I’m principally going to be working on the information available to both sides *at the time the committee sat*.

So in order to get to the bottom of this whole issue of which manuscripts are trustworthy, we need to consider: (1) The surviving Greek MSS; (2) The early translations of those MSS; (3) Quotations by early Christian writers from those MSS, and (4) Lectionaries created from those MSS. (Strictly speaking, the documents in *each* of these four categories are “manuscripts,” but to avoid confusion this word applies here only to actual copies of the Greek New Testament.)

For the sake of clarity I shall present certain things in pictorial form. The chart opposite is a mere *numerical* representation of the items supporting each of the two key families. It’s not perfectly to scale<sup>11</sup> but it gives us a feel for the situation the Revisers faced.<sup>12</sup>

### Step 1: Greek versus Variety

I have broken down this massive disagreement between the two parties into a number of steps, and I describe these in terms of the main figure on each side of the debate, i.e., Hort and Burgon (more properly, *Dr. Hort* and *Dean Burgon*<sup>13</sup>). The first two steps are the most involved, but I guarantee readers will be rewarded if they persevere with them.

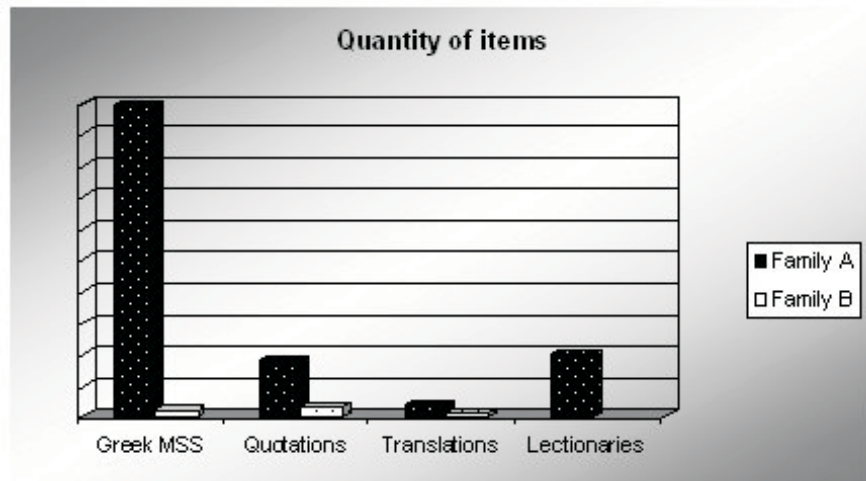
#### Hort’s Side:

Let’s start with Hort’s first step. (It is widely known that Hort worked very closely with a man called Dr. B.F. Westcott, but Hort was the main force behind the textual theory they both espoused.)

As we see from the bar chart, family A is supported by a general consensus of ancient manuscripts, translations and quotations – and Hort accepted this.<sup>14</sup> However, he felt it was important to treat the Bible essentially like any other book. He argued that we should approach the Bible according to “the accepted princi-

ples of textual criticism” – i.e., the principles which are used to determine the original readings of all *other* ancient documents, whether inspired or not.<sup>15</sup> One upshot is that Hort viewed any evidence other than the *Greek MSS themselves* as very much secondary.<sup>16</sup> I’ll explain why.

Imagine if the Bible were a cookbook. You wouldn’t usually expect a cookbook to be significantly corrupted during simple copying, whereas there is a much greater likelihood of alteration when it’s being *quoted or translated*. It was therefore the surviving Bible manuscripts in the *original* language on which Hort and his followers initially concentrated. We can sensibly think of this as Hort temporarily putting the translations and quotations to one side, with a view to returning to them after fully considering the Greek MSS. Interestingly, Hort went even further with regard to lectionaries, believing them to be “without [any] ... value” in determining which MS family was purest.<sup>17</sup>



10 The full name is “patristic quotations.” Popular alternate terms include “Church Fathers” or just “Fathers.”

11 In the 1870s there were nearly a thousand Greek MSS supporting family A and only five representing family B, but reproducing that on this chart would so dwarf the smaller quantities as to make them invisible.

12 Burgon knew of 1000 MSS, 20 versions, 100 lectionaries, and many patristic quotations.

13 Burgon was a university professor but was best known as the Church of England’s “Dean of Chichester.”

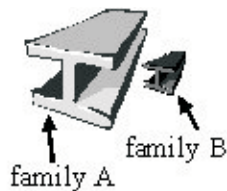
14 Burgon, *Revision Revised*, *op. cit.*, Article III, p. 269.

15 To confirm this, Hort said “we **dare not** introduce considerations which could not reasonably be applied to **other** ancient texts” [Quoted in Jack Moorman, *Forever Settled*, (e-book), chapter 12].

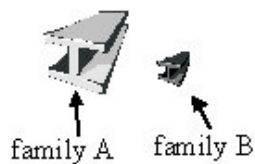
16 According to Hort, patristic quotations are no more important than “...so many **secondary** Greek uncial MSS., [“*uncial*” in this context means an early manuscript] **inferior** in most cases to the better sort of secondary uncial MSS. now existing” [Quoted in *Revision Revised*, p. 298].

17 B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* 2 Vols., (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1881), II, “Appendix,” p. 42, as quoted in Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

As we go through these steps I will try to illustrate pictorially the relative value that Hort and Burgon placed on families A and B. To do this I'm going to employ two drawings of girders and I shall enlarge or reduce each girder in line with the weight these men came to attach to each family. (Girders speak of both weight *and* strength, and they're also a useful metaphor for building a solid fellowship on the back of a solid representation of God's Word.) So, if we were to give all four types of evidence similar weight, and if we simply look at the known *quantity* of each item in the 1870s, we'd probably get our two girders looking something like this (again, I don't mean to suggest this is exactly to scale):



Now, if we plug into the above diagram Hort's rejection of lectionaries and his temporary sidelining of translations and quotations, both sides shrink and we get something like this:



If we were to put these two girders onto a set of scales, the balance would, for the time being at least, still lie on the side of family A. Let's now see what Burgon thought.

### Burgon's Side:

Burgon felt very differently from Hort.<sup>18</sup> Burgon held that, since the Bible is God's Word, it is not like any other book and so it cannot be treated as such. We'll come back to this distinction shortly, but let's see some of the ways it influenced Burgon's thinking...

#### a – Lectionaries had some worth

First, Burgon didn't see lectionaries as completely worthless but as having at least a small amount of value. He didn't see why they could not have been created from a pure MS source.<sup>19</sup> And since their contents will have been read aloud in the hearing of congregations more frequently than almost any other portion of the Bible, Burgon felt it unlikely that someone would be able to get away with corrupting them very easily.<sup>20</sup>

#### b – Other items were important

Burgon considered translations and quotations to have greater importance than Hort assigned them. We will see why in a moment. Obviously both types of material do imply something about the Greek text of the Bible that their creators had in front of them.

#### c – Heretics corrupt the Word

Burgon claimed that one reason the Bible can't be treated like every other book is that there are people in this world who are utterly opposed to God and His Word and who want to neuter His people. (In 2 Corinthians 2:17 the Bible does warn of heretics who deliberately "corrupt the Word of God."<sup>21</sup>)

#### d – Protecting Scripture from heretics

Burgon found himself in opposition to Hort regarding heretics, for, as we shall see, Hort evidently operated on

the principle that no one would *malevolently* alter God-ordained writings. However, given the existence of heretics, Burgon actually *expected* this type of corruption and assumed that the early Christians would have taken steps to minimize its impact upon succeeding manuscripts.

Burgon believed that one way in which the early Christians could have safeguarded cherished manuscripts was by arranging for their contents to be quoted in other documents. This would have made it more difficult for heretics to corrupt the material because they would have had to change not just the Greek MSS but also the writings which *quoted* those MSS – plus they would have had to get rid of as many sound copies of each as possible. Likewise, Burgon felt that *translating* valued manuscripts would have provided "the most effectual security against fraud," as he phrased it, because heretics would have had to counterfeit sound *translations* as well as sound Greek MSS. (Again, these people would also have had to track down and then quietly corrupt – or else remove from the picture – as many *copies* of each translation as possible.)

Incidentally, many people from both sides of the fence are happy to accept that the very early Christians didn't necessarily *know* that a given document would become part of the biblical canon. On this basis, they obviously wouldn't have been aware just how vital was the protection of such items. However, people like Burgon were convinced that many early Christians would, as a minimum, have been able to discern which documents were *God-given*

18 The complete set of Burgon's principles for MS evaluation are listed in Burgon, *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established*, arranged, completed and edited by Edward Miller, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), pp. 28-29.  
 19 Burgon, *The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels*, arranged, completed and edited by Edward Miller, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), pp. 67-68. Judging by the Peshitta (an early translation), "the eastern Christians were very careful and conservative in their copying of Scripture" [Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, p. 65].  
 20 Presumably, hearers would also have been well placed to spot differences between old and new copies of a lectionary. In his researches, Burgon found that family A was – as our bar chart shows – "identical with **every** ... [known] lectionary of the Greek church" (Burgon, quoted in Philip Mauro, *Which Version? Authorized or Revised?*, [1924], e-book, chapter X).  
 21 For other scriptural examples of men perverting the words of God, see Jeremiah 23:29-36; 29:23.

and they would have taken great caution in preserving them.<sup>22</sup>

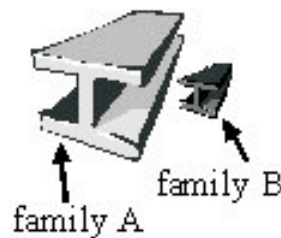
Beyond this, Burgon and his followers were confident that, at the very least, the early Christians would have revered any writings by the apostles like Peter who had actually walked with Jesus – and that those early Christians would thus have quoted and translated the writings of such disciples with both care and fidelity.<sup>23</sup> (These writings constitute a large proportion of the New Testament. We will return to this question later.) Needless to say, Burgon was convinced that the true believers in Jesus would certainly have handled the New Testament books with great respect and care as soon as those documents *had* been identified as canonical.

Burgon suggested a further benefit that accrues from keeping in view the quotations by early Christians. He noted that the origins of, and hence the identity of *copyists* behind, the very early MSS were invariably “a matter of conjecture [i.e., speculation],”<sup>24</sup> whereas a relatively large amount is known about the *writers* among the early Christians, and so we can attach a more definite amount of credibility to the latter. If an early writer is known to have been godly, Burgon felt that the use of a given MS family by that writer implies some value in that family – in the same way that he felt translations created by apparently sincere fellowships around the world in the past gives some credibility to the MSS these fellowships decided to use.

### e – Conclusion

To recap, Burgon felt it unspiritual to approach the Bible like any other book. As such, he attached substantial weight to writings (e.g., quotations) based on the NT books as well as to the underlying Greek MSS themselves. Burgon didn’t attach as *much* weight to translations, and so on, as to MSS. Instead he was interested to see if a given reading appeared in a good *variety* of places<sup>25</sup> – i.e., if a reading was found, say, in a majority of translations *and* a good number of quotations – and he was therefore concerned to ensure that all the evidence was fully considered from the very start.<sup>26</sup>

If one follows Burgon’s principle, family A gains a lot of weight here because it predominates in terms of translations, and quotations, as well as lectionaries, as we saw on the above bar chart.



### Step 2: Genealogy versus Consent

This step contains easily the most intricate sections of the entire article, so readers who are new to this subject must not be troubled if they find it more demanding than earlier points.

*Note: I urge readers to remember, as they consider this section, that we are dealing with the very Word of God and that the upcoming*

*points are therefore not just academic. As I say, some people are tempted to see this whole topic as unimportant, but what is man that he can pronounce a difference of nearly ten thousand words in the New Testament as unimportant? Is that how God tells us we should view matters? I think we’ve already seen, especially in Part 1 of this writing, that it is not. Returning to one of the analogies I used there, if a beloved spouse-to-be had written us a carefully crafted love-letter, would we not want to receive it in the purest form possible? Would we not care if it had been altered by other hands?*

### Hort’s Side:

Hort wasn’t impressed by the *number* of manuscripts in a family as much as by the value or weight he believed the family possessed. Indeed, he felt that the quantity of MSS in a family was the *least* important factor in identifying the value of that family.<sup>27</sup>

For Hort, the first stage in determining the weight carried by a given set of MSS was to ask whether or not those MSS were closely related to each other. In other words, the next step on Hort’s side was to consider a manuscript’s family tree (as per Figure One on page three). Hort felt that any group of MSS created from the *same parent* manuscript should be given the weight of only a single MS. He said we can think of this situation as if one witness to a crime were to tell lots of other people what he saw, who, in turn, each told lots of other people and so on. Clearly all those people count as only one witness – since they all derived their information from just one actual witness to the crime.

22 All the apostles were Hebrews, as were most of the very early Christians. This is relevant because, by the time of Christ, the Jewish people had already seen the canon of Scripture grow over the centuries – and they would therefore have been relatively open to the extension of Holy Writ. Indeed, following the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah and the unparalleled significance in history of those events, most believing Jews would surely have *expected* the canon to grow.

23 A follower of Burgon has said, “Those who undertake a work of such importance as the translation of [revered material] into a foreign language would, of course, make sure, as the very first step, that they had the best obtainable Greek Text” (Mauro, *Which Version?*, *op. cit.*, chapter V).

24 Burgon, *The Traditional Text*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

25 The usual term for MS support of a particular reading is “attestation.”

26 Burgon, *Revision Revised*, *op. cit.*, Article III, pp. 339-341.

27 Hort’s view is quoted in Burgon, *Ibid.*, p. 255. Hort called it “presumption” to suppose that a majority of MSS is “more likely” to represent the truth. Further, he said that this presumption is “too minute to weigh against [even] the **smallest** tangible evidence of other kinds” (*Ibid.*) – i.e., quantity was the least important factor of all in his view (Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72).

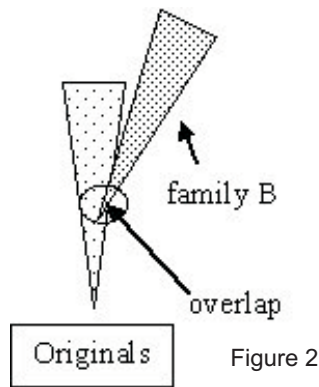
Hort posited that when one MS is derived from another, “the weight of authority from both becomes **only** the weight of authority possessed by the **earlier** of the two. **Again**, two or more documents are observed to be **so similar** to one another that they **must** have been transcribed either directly, or through one or more intervening ancestors, from a **common original**. Accordingly, their united authority, **how many they are**, does not exceed the authority of their **single original**”<sup>28</sup>

This is an important principle. Let’s say a Bible “sweatshop” operated for a while in ancient times, and that it rapidly produced a vast number of copies, followed by copies of those copies etc, *all from a single MS*. Such an activity would generate a huge quantity of copies, but it would be incredibly foolish to attach the same amount of weight to each of those copies as to a lone surviving MS unrelated to any other. This is because, if the starting manuscript used by that sweatshop production line came from a corrupt family, its enormous number of offspring would heavily bias the picture in favor of that corrupt family.

So, if a group of MSS stem from the same single copy, whether they be children, grandchildren, great grandchildren or whatever of that single copy, in Hort’s view they must collectively be considered as representing only a single witness – and therefore should carry only the *weight* of a single witness. In view of the fact that the members of family A must all stem back to the MS copy which gave birth to that particular family, Hort said that the entire family, no matter how large it ulti-

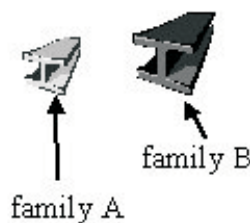
mately became, should carry only the weight of that initial MS.

However, Hort also felt that one of the surviving members of family B was, strictly, a member of a *different family altogether*. (You can think of this third family as overlapping slightly with family B, as per Figure Two, below.)<sup>29</sup>



Because of this, Hort effectively said that family B should actually be given the weight of *two* independent witnesses rather than just one. Partly because his favorite manuscripts differ markedly from each other, Hort claimed they should be considered as two “independent” witnesses, whereas the strong similarity of the members of family A means they only counted as *one* witness in his eyes.<sup>30</sup>

In all these things, Hort was seeking consistently to tackle the Bible as you would any other book – and he openly championed this approach.<sup>31</sup>



### Burgon’s Side:

Up to a point, Burgon agreed with Hort here in the sense that it is impossible to create a good MS if all you have is a bad parent MS. Burgon didn’t “follow ‘numbers’ blindly” either,<sup>32</sup> and he believed that if a known MS could be *shown* to have been created from another known MS then the pair should indeed carry far less weight than two unrelated ones. Likewise, if two MSS could be shown to be *brothers* (i.e., created from the same parent manuscript) then that pair should again count only as approximately one witness.

### a) No parents or siblings

The trouble is that virtually no MSS in Burgon’s day were known to be related – either as brothers or as parent and child. Burgon was aware of a handful (literally) of MSS which were *brothers or cousins*, but none which were in any direct line of genealogy.<sup>33</sup> Burgon was “unacquainted with one single instance of a known MS copied from another known MS.” This led him to say “[A]ll talk about ‘Genealogical evidence’ where...no Genealogical evidence exists, is absurd.”<sup>34</sup> As such, Burgon considered it unreasonable of Hort to deduce that family A carried so little weight when it was such a large family.

(Interestingly, even with all the thousands of MSS discovered since Burgon’s day, and with the availability of computers to help compare them, there are still only an infinitesimal number of MSS that can be shown to be brothers or to be descended from known MSS. One of my reviewers writes, “[The scholar] Kirsopp Lake collated many MSS of Mark 11 from at least 4 different locations and found no

28 Quoted in Miller, *Textual Criticism*, op. cit., p. 40.

29 This is the one point where simplifying a couple of matters comes back to bite me just a little. Hort said that *manuscript B* was not strictly part of *family B*, which is why he felt that their combined evidence deserved to be counted as two witnesses rather than one.

30 Burgon, *Revision Revised*, op. cit., Article III, p. 318.

31 Hort said “**ALL** trustworthy restoration of corrupted texts [i.e., biblical and non-biblical texts] is founded upon the study of their history, that is of the **relations of descent** [i.e., their family tree].” Again, he treated the Bible like any other book in this matter.

32 Pickering, *Contribution*, op. cit., p. 15.

33 Miller, *Textual Criticism*, op. cit., p. 47.

34 *Revision Revised*, op. cit., pp. 255-6.

evidence of direct copying of MSS. Rather the MS. were orphan children without brothers.”)<sup>35</sup>

Let me expand on these things:

The remarkable scarcity of brothers among family A manuscripts from any period in history indicates that only a tiny handful of copies were usually made from a given MS – else more of these brother copies would still be around today. (It certainly suggests that mass production was never used to propagate family A.) Furthermore, Burgon considered that the almost total lack of any identifiable *parent-child* relationships between MSS also undermined Hort’s conclusions. The scarcity of *parent-child* relationships between MSS suggested to Burgon that each MS was produced by comparing *multiple* parents. Burgon argued that Hort’s theory did not cater for situations where a MS was created from *more* than one parent. He stated that Hort’s theory was useless “when there is mixture.”<sup>36</sup> What’s more, Burgon felt that, in order for a sincere copyist to ensure he produced the most accurate possible manuscript, it should be expected that he would have sought to begin with more than one “parent” so that he could compare readings and thus promulgate the minimum number of errors. Sure enough, a lot of MSS show a mixture – i.e., that they were generated from more than one parent.

The following section gives the backdrop to Burgon’s view here.

#### **b) Consent (i.e., quantity alongside breadth of localities)**

As we have seen, Hort believed that families should be “weighed, not counted.” However, Burgon said that

“‘number’ is the most ordinary ingredient of weight”,<sup>37</sup> and that, while quantity must certainly never be allowed to become the “be all and end all,” neither should it be ignored – *especially if the MSS under consideration don’t appear to have been created by the same people.*

Except where a “sweatshop” situation was evident, Burgon felt that a person’s very *preparedness* to copy a given MS carried some weight in itself. Put another way, if a fellowship had determined a particular MS to be worthy of the laborious and costly procedure of being copied *by hand*, Burgon saw this fact alone as implying some value (however limited) in the MS. And if early congregations from diverse geographic locations around the world had chosen to copy MSS from the same family, Burgon ascribed that family even more weight – because these folks could scarcely be conspiring together to distort the picture.

Burgon explained himself thus: “Speaking generally, the ... [matching] testimony of ... witnesses, coming to us from **widely sundered** regions is weightier by far than the same number of witnesses proceeding from **one and the same** locality, between whom there probably exists some sort of sympathy, and possibly some degree of **collusion.**”<sup>38</sup> Not surprisingly, Burgon also declared this to be one occasion when it was crucial to keep ancient *translations* of the Bible in view, since researchers like himself would then be better able to determine how geographically widespread a given MS family had become.

Burgon observed that family A does not just have a larger foundation than family B *numerically*, but also *geographically*.<sup>39</sup> (According to the known evidence

then and now, family B was not widely copied – unless, somehow, it was systematically obliterated from almost all the places it reached.<sup>40</sup>)

#### **c) Conclusion**

Both sides agreed that the quality of the witness is more important than the quantity – but Burgon also believed that, provided the MSS are not closely related, “Quantity has a certain quality of its own” as others have phrased it. Here is the result in the form of our girder illustration:



By the way, if you disagree with anything I have written thus far then I would ask you to continue to be patient. You may be pleasantly surprised by later material, but regardless of this I would beg you to permit yourself, if only for today, to allow for the possibility that your current position on this topic is mistaken to some extent. I’m certain you will then be better placed to view my comments objectively and see if there is any merit in them after all.

#### **Step 3: Age versus Continuity**

##### **Hort’s Side:**

If all modifications to the text of the Bible during copying are accidental (or at least well-intentioned) then the oldest available copies are almost certain to be the best.<sup>41</sup> If we consider a cookbook, or a book on gardening, it is patently appropriate to work on the basis that the older the copy, the closer its content will be to the original. Since Hort was sure that we should treat the Bible like any other

35 James Sightler, *Personal email on file*, 2nd June 2006.

36 Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, p. 16. (The amount of error in a MS created by a sincere believer from multiple parent MSS will have been much smaller than Hort’s theory assumes. As we shall discover, this has a major impact on Step 3.)

37 Burgon, *The Traditional Text, op. cit.*, p. 43.

38 *Ibid*, p. 52. By contrast, there is some evidence of sympathy between Hort’s two favorite MSS. As a minimum, these MSS were produced in the same place.

39 As cited by Jeff Johnson, *Spiritual Deception in the Highest, Part Two*, (e-book), Chapter 18.

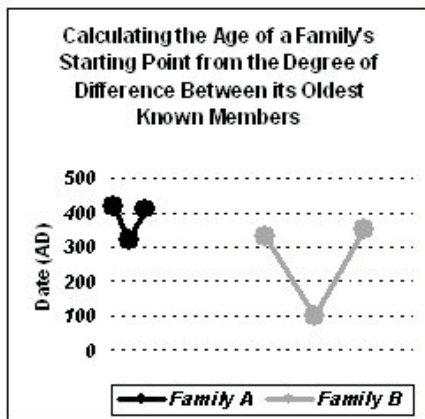
40 Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, p. 81.

41 This is especially true if each copy is only created from a *single* parent MS.



book, he did indeed operate on the principle that “The older the MS the better.”

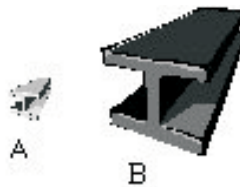
In the chart below, the oldest surviving MSS in family A are so similar to each other that, according to Hort, their common ancestor can't have been much older than they were – otherwise more disparities would have arisen through the natural process of errors being introduced over time.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, the two most ancient MSS associated with family B have a great many differences between them. On this basis, *their* common ancestor must be much older than they are – to allow sufficient time for such a large number of disparities to have emerged.<sup>43</sup>



Indeed, working on Hort's principle, the date of family B's oldest ancestor must actually be very close to the original

MSS themselves – and therefore must be very pure, if we accept his principle that the older the MS the better. This is arguably the central idea on which Hort relied. In many ways, the *age* of a MS was the “Holy Grail” for Hort and his followers – i.e., it outranks any other quality or fault with a MS.

The result of all this was to invest the parent MS of family B, and therefore the earliest surviving children of that ancestor, with “paramount importance.”<sup>44</sup> Thus our girder picture for Hort now shows overwhelming strength for family B:



#### Burgon's Side:

Burgon had a number of problems with Hort's position. Firstly, Burgon identified what he considered to be two serious problems with the idea that working backwards in such a way was even practical in this situation.<sup>45</sup>

He felt that MS copies could have been made with *varying* rapidity.<sup>46</sup> (Hort's principle does depend to an extent on MSS being created at a consistent pace, but Burgon and his supporters believed that circumstances such as large-scale persecution of Christians can make

a big impact on the rate of copying. Burgon's closest colleague felt that Hort disregarded the truth that “generations [of MSS] might be propagated as **fast as the pens of scribes would admit**; and that after the wholesale destruction of copies in the persecution of [Emperor] Diocletian ... it is almost certain that transcription must have proceeded at a **rapid** rate [i.e., by churches desperate to obtain replacement copies of God's Word]. Genealogy therefore is misleading, for it supplies no warrant for **any** conclusion as to **time**.”<sup>47</sup> And MSS created by faithfully comparing *multiple* parent MSS will be far more accurate than Hort's theory predicts, meaning that family A could have started far earlier than he claimed.)

Secondly Burgon felt that *deliberate* corruption sometimes occurs – which would have a colossal effect on the implied age of a family.<sup>48</sup> Allow me to expand on that. “Using the analogy of a stream, it is argued [by folks like Hort] that the closer one gets to the spring or source the purer the water will be.”<sup>49</sup> People on both sides of the fence accepted that this is normally true, but Burgon's side went on to ask, “what if a **sewer** pipe empties into the stream [just] a few yards below the spring?”<sup>50</sup> In other words, Burgon felt that a MS can have suffered deliberate corruption from *extremely* early times. He therefore insisted that age alone tells us surprisingly little about a manu-

42 I do not claim that this chart is perfectly to scale but only that it is representative.

43 As we will see later, the two family B MSS in question are quite divergent from each other. Because of the numerous differences between them they must, Hort said, have been “derived from a common original **much** older than themselves, ‘the date of which **cannot** be later than the early part of the second century, and may **well** be yet earlier” (Quoted in Miller, *Textual Criticism, op. cit.*, p. 40). From this analysis of the two oldest MSS connected with family B (i.e. the manuscripts commonly called B and Aleph, or “Vaticanus” and “Sinaiticus,” respectively), Hort said their testimony “may be treated as equivalent to that of a [single] MS older than ... [each of them] by **at least two centuries**, [and] **probably** by a generation or two **more**” (Quoted in *Revision Revised, op. cit.*, Article III, p. 303). Hort reiterated this in an even bolder way when he declared that their “respective ancestries ... **MUST** have diverged from a common parent **extremely** near [the very originals]” [*Ibid*].

44 Miller, *Textual Criticism, op. cit.*, p. 40.

45 The proper term for working backwards like this is “extrapolation.”

46 Therefore the common ancestor of family B could be much younger than Hort supposed.

47 Miller, *Textual Criticism, op. cit.*, p. 48.

48 Suppose you have a pair of MSS with lots of differences between them, but suppose too that these differences are due to deliberate corruption rather than accidental error. The two MSS could actually have been created from the very same parent but would *appear* to have been derived from a far more ancient ancestor if Hort's theory is used.

49 Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, p. 93.

50 *Ibid*. The author continues, “**Then** the process is **reversed** – as the polluted water is exposed to the purifying action of the sun and ground, the farther it runs the **purier** it becomes (unless it passes more pipes)”.

script's accuracy (unless of course we are dealing with the very originals).<sup>51</sup>

Most of us would accept that there are some *today* who deliberately corrupt the Scriptures. Yet readers may well ask, "How do we know that people were perverting the Scriptures so very long ago?" Burgon pointed out that various early Christian writers are actually known to have *complained* about people perverting God's Word.<sup>52</sup> The apostle Paul himself warned of heretics and false apostles, and he observed that there were people in his day who were already trying to pass off counterfeit letters as being from him (2 Thess. 2:2). Burgon thus felt that false brothers can have corrupted MSS at *any* stage in history – and indeed that they would have wanted to corrupt the books of the NT as soon as physically possible.

To summarize, to people like Burgon "Mere antiquity is no guarantee of authority" because heretics have always existed and have always been prepared to alter the Scriptures, just as they do now. (Discoveries since Hort's day have also called into question his belief that corruptions *take time to occur*. Here are three such: (i) Even Burgon's opponents admit that "the overwhelming majority of [divergent] readings were created **before** the year 200"<sup>53</sup>; (ii) Two incredibly early MSS called the "Chester Beatty" and the "Bodmer" overlap for 70 verses, yet they differ in these 70 verses "some 73 times **apart** from mistakes"<sup>54</sup>; and (iii) Colwell

did a study of "singular" readings [i.e., readings found in only **one** known MS] and found that P66 was a *very* poor copy – "yet it is the **earliest**!"<sup>55</sup>)

Finally, Burgon felt that age (i.e., survival) is *not* a good sign. He believed there are several reasons why survival of a very ancient MS is actually a cause for *suspicion* rather than reverence.

### **i – A sound MS would surely be used and would thus eventually fall apart**

One of Burgon's points is this: MSS wear out with use. This means that MSS which have survived for an extremely long time cannot have been used very much during that time. Burgon argued that, in contrast, *sound* MSS would invariably get used *a good deal* by true believers wanting to know God's Word. To Burgon, the obvious inference was that MSS which survive from early times are probably not sound, else Christians would have "thumbed them to pieces" over the years. Burgon felt that very old MSS will usually have survived because generations of believers could see that they were corrupt,<sup>56</sup> that these MSS were almost guaranteed to be such bad copies that "people refused to use them."<sup>57</sup> This is not *absolutely* guaranteed, but it seems a thoroughly reasonable explanation. Given the enormous effort and cost of producing MSS before the days of printing, true Christians are unlikely to have wasted time and money on creating Bibles they didn't use much.

Burgon was worried by the manner in which Hort had founded his theory on the very earliest MSS he could find, including one which had been allowed to "lie in disuse" for 1400 years. The MS in question is called Aleph, and it is still in excellent physical condition today. Why was it allowed to lie in disuse for 1400 years?

A reasonable inference would be that the MS was cast aside and ultimately consigned to the waste paper basket [where it was found in 1859], because it was known to be permeated with errors of various sorts. This inference is raised to the level of practical certainty by the fact that, time and again, the work of correcting the entire manuscript was undertaken by successive owners.<sup>58</sup>

This was one of Hort's two *favorite* MSS. In fact, *both* of Hort's favored MSS are in great condition for their age, strongly suggesting they are deliberately corrupted Bibles which were either protected by heretics or discarded by true believers. "Burgon regarded the good state of preservation of these MSS in spite of their exceptional age as a proof not of their goodness but of their badness. If they had been good manuscripts, they should have been read to pieces long ago. Thus the fact that B and Aleph are so old is a point **against** them, not something in their favor. It shows that the early

51 MS D is very old, yet Hort himself speaks of "the **prodigious** amount of error which D contains" (Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, II, "Introduction," p. 149, as quoted in Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, p. 93).

52 These ancient writers include **Irenaeus, Tertullian** (B.M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* [OUP, 1964], p. 201, in Pickering, *Contribution*, pp. 9-10) and **Gaius** (Burgon, *Revision Revised*, *op. cit.*, p. 323).

53 E.C. Colwell, "The Origin of Texttypes of New Testament Manuscripts," *Early Christian Origins*, ed. Allen Wikgren (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), p. 138, as quoted in Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

54 G.D. Kilpatrick, "The Transmission of the New Testament and its Reliability," *The Bible Translator*, IX (July, 1958), pp. 128-129, as quoted in Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

55 Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

56 A fan of Burgon has explained, "[W]hereas it is true that there are few [sound] manuscripts of the N.T. of great age, this is because faithful texts wore out with use, constantly requiring fresh copies to be made. **Faulty** texts, on the other hand, were discarded, and thus some have survived" (Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 21). "These few ancient MSS are old copies but they are bad copies and the Greek Church as a whole in the 4th Century rejected their unreliable testimony and permitted them to sink into undignified oblivion" [Brown, quoted in *Ibid*].

57 Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

58 Mauro, *Which Version?*, *op. cit.*, Chapter V.

Christians rejected them and did not read them”<sup>59</sup>

## ii – A sound MS would be destroyed after copying

It turns out that MSS do not need to be “thumbed to pieces” in order to need replacing. If a single *page* starts to come loose and can’t reliably be re-attached, or if the ink has begun to fade on even just a single verse, the text is in danger of becoming unsafe for use. In this situation, Burgon believed that the only sensible thing for a church to do would be to destroy the MS so it couldn’t be copied wrongly in its potentially misleading state. Burgon pointed out that even one of Hort’s own followers “favored the idea that the scribes ‘usually destroyed ... [the older, deteriorating MS<sup>60</sup>] when [they] had copied the sacred books.’”<sup>61</sup>

Incidentally, this would explain why virtually no parents of known MSS have been found. The parents get copied and then destroyed. (Even today, if a single *character* becomes faint in a Torah scroll in a Jewish synagogue, the scroll is taken out of commission until that letter has been repaired. And if the offending character cannot safely be restored, the entire scroll is destroyed.<sup>62</sup>)

## iii – A sound MS would be prone to persecution

It is a lesser point, but Burgon posited that God’s enemies tend to focus their efforts on sound assemblies rather than unsound ones. Based on this principle, a shortage of old *sound* MSS would make sense. The severe persecution of Christians by both of the Roman emperors Diocletian and Galerius would have led to the destruction of many such copies. Unsound regions of the Christian world will presumably have suffered less, so their unsound Bibles will have had a better chance of surviving.

### Burgon liked to see *continuity*

Burgon preferred to see a given reading appearing not just in antiquity but in *all* ages. This is because he believed it to be hard for an assembly to function well without an accurate representation of God’s Word.<sup>63</sup> After all, God does say His people are destroyed for “lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6a), and He makes similar statements elsewhere (e.g., 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 3 John 1:3-4).

Burgon felt that a sincere assembly must copy God’s Word *faithfully* in order to be able to operate properly. He thus felt that we should expect to see continu-

ity in terms of the evidence supporting a sound MS family. On the other hand, an *insincere* assembly is likely to be considerably less interested in reading (and hence copying) their unsound Bible texts – so Burgon expected to see gaps in the evidence supporting *unsound* families.<sup>64</sup>

Remember that Burgon took into account *all* types of evidence, including quotations (which are less likely than MSS to be destroyed after copying). Had Hort also referenced quotations instead of sidelining them, he would have found that family A “predominated in the writings of the Church Fathers in *every* age from the very *first*,” whereas substantial time gaps appear in terms of family B.<sup>65</sup> For Burgon, A became even weightier:



## Step 4: Brevity versus Context

### Hort’s Side:

Hort’s next step was to look at the *content* of MSS. He observed the differences in readings between MSS and believed –

59 Edward F. Hills, “The Magnificent Burgon,” a chapter in David Otis Fuller, Ed., *Which Bible?*, (Grand Rapids International Publications, 1990), pp. 93-94.

60 The proper term here is “exemplar.”

61 Kirsopp Lake, *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 21, 1928, pp. 347-349, referred to in Hills, *The Magnificent Burgon, Which Bible?*, p. 94. Another point worth making is this: Hort admitted that the interval of years between MS A and his two favorite MSS is “probably small” [Quoted in *Revision Revised, op. cit.*, Article III, p. 345], yet he gave the latter MSS practically *all* the weight.

62 One of his followers says, “It would appear that Burgon’s explanation for the survival of the earliest MSS is more than reasonable [i.e., they survived because they are seriously corrupt]... Judging by the copies we have, great age in a transcript should arouse our **suspicion** rather than reverence” (Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, p. 101).

63 One analogy would be a firm whose job it is to print a nation’s currency and whose work is paid for by being allowed to print some money for its own use – e.g., to pay the staff and maintain the equipment. If this firm doesn’t produce accurate copies it won’t be able to continue in this line of work.

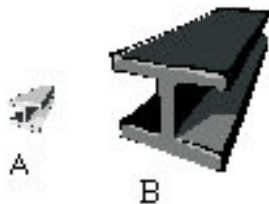
64 Burgon accepted that the age of a document carries an *amount* of weight but, because of the points we have discussed here, he felt that other attributes carry far *more* weight [*Revision Revised, op. cit.*, Article III, pp. 339-342]. For instance, he said, “[MS] B would be worth more than any **single** minuscule [i.e., a *much later* MS] but not more than five or ten [unrelated] minuscules” (Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, pp. 68-69). The situation where Burgon felt that the age of a piece of evidence carried some weight is explained in this quote from him: “When ... a reading is observed to leave traces of its existence and of its use **all** down the ages, it comes with an authority.... And on the contrary, when a **chasm** ... of years yawns in the vast mass of evidence ... or when a tradition is found to have died out ... suspicion ... must inevitably ensue” (Burgon, *The Traditional Text*, p. 59).

65 If translations and quotations had been borne in mind rather than sidelined, *they* constitute the oldest surviving evidence – and they promote family A more than family B. In light of this, one follower of Burgon has asked, “Is it not strange ... that those who justify their course by appealing to, and by professing to follow blindly, that principle [i.e. that the **oldest** is best], should cast it aside and accept the reading of **fourth** century [MSS], where these are in conflict with **second** century [translations] and quotations?” (Mauro, *Which Version?, op. cit.*, Chapter V).

as his followers have put it – that “Scribes tended to add material [in an effort] to explain the text, rather than abridge [i.e. shorten the material]”<sup>66</sup> and therefore that “the shorter the reading, the more preferable.”<sup>67</sup> Hort’s words were these:

In the New Testament, as in almost all prose writings which have been much copied, corruptions by ... [addition] are many times more numerous than corruptions by omission”.<sup>68</sup>

Once more we see that Hort was certain we should treat the Bible like any other book when it comes to determining its original content. And because family B’s readings are frequently shorter than those of family A, Hort attached yet more weight to family B – resulting in this picture:



#### Burgon’s Side:

Burgon felt that Hort’s view again fell down in a variety of ways.<sup>69</sup>

#### a) No true Christian would be likely to add to a MS

Would a true believer add to God’s Word? Some may argue that the early Christians didn’t *know* that some or all of the books that would ultimately prove to

be part of the New Testament were actually God’s Word. But people like Burgon claimed that sincere Christians would not have added to a document even if they thought it only a *possibility* that the document was canonical.

We have already noted that the early Christians would undoubtedly have cherished books written by those who actually walked with Jesus during His incarnation. We now need to consider Paul and Luke, for their writings make up the great bulk of the remainder of the New Testament text.

Let’s start with Paul. He, too, was taught directly by Christ, albeit after the Ascension (Galatians 1:12;16-18, etc.), so the early Christians certainly would have respected his words. Surely any Christian who met Paul after his conversion would have had further reason to revere his writings, given his awe-inspiringly godly life, as well as his amazing gifts from God. Also, Peter places Paul’s epistles on the same level as “the other Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15-16). Also, Paul himself made extremely authoritative statements such as can be found in 1 Corinthians 11:1 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6. Paul even declared that anyone who preaches a different gospel from the one *he* had preached to the Galatians should be *accursed* (Galatians 1:8). All of this would have discouraged Paul’s readers from adding to his words.

In view of the fact that Paul warned his brethren about those who were trying

to corrupt his words and pass off false epistles as being from him, Burgon felt genuine believers would have endeavored to keep material like Paul’s pure, even in the event that they didn’t yet discern that material to be Holy Scripture – *i.e., if only to protect it from the efforts of the perverters.*

Let us now consider Luke. It seems from the book of Acts, not to mention what Paul says of him in 2 Tim. 4:10-11, that Luke was Paul’s most faithful partner in the ministry. For this reason alone any godly believer would respect Luke’s writings and not have the audacity to add to them. But let us also recall that, “In 1 Tim. 5:18 Paul puts the Gospel of Luke on the same level as Deuteronomy, calling them both ‘Scripture.’” Note that 1 Timothy is generally thought to have been written *within* just *five years* of Luke’s Gospel. Thus the very early Christians would have had good reason not to meddle with Luke’s writings.<sup>70</sup> We will return to this whole matter shortly.

#### b) Among unintentional errors, addition is *less* likely than omission

Burgon obviously accepted that *unintentional* errors sometimes occur, but let’s compare the likelihood of accidental *addition* of words when copying something, with accidental *loss* of words. Accidental addition might be more common than omission when *writing* an original piece, but not generally when *copying* a document. Although both are possible, it is more probable that copyists would *lose* words than add

66 Calvin Smith, *An Introduction to Textual Criticism*, (Midlands Bible College, Audio Tapes, Lecture Series 101/8-10).

67 *Ibid.* The technical (Latin) term is *lectior brevior potior* (“the shorter reading is the stronger”).

68 The correct term for this is “transcriptional probability” (determining what the *copyist* [rather than the author] most probably did). Hort’s two rules here were: (a) we should prefer the *shorter* reading (because he felt it was more probable that the copyist would *add* rather than delete material), and (b) we should prefer the *harder* reading (because he felt it was more probable that the copyist would simplify the text than make it harder). These rules, along with what the *author* was most likely to have done, are called “internal evidence” – as opposed to “external evidence” (the age, provenance and affiliation of each MS) [The wording of this footnote was based on that of another source].

69 Is it *true* that, in “almost all prose writings,” additions are “many times more numerous” than omissions? A.C. Clark, Corpus Professor of Latin at Oxford, has cast enormous doubt on Hort’s theory for Greek and Latin classics and has actually shown that “the error to which scribes were most prone was **not** interpolation [i.e., deliberate insertions] but accidental **omission**” (B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* [Macmillan and Co.], 1930, p. 131, cf. pp. 122-124, as quoted in Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, pp. 52-52; see also Moorman, *op. cit.*, chapter 31). It seems as if, at least where there was respect for a document, people in antiquity didn’t make a habit of adding their own words after all.

70 *Ibid.* (Italics in original.)

them for the following reason: Their brains would tell them, “Hold it; I read this bit a second ago and I’ve just written down exactly the same words as I’m now writing. Something’s wrong.”<sup>71</sup> There would be little reason for such a sharp caution if a copyist had *skipped* one or more words; the brain is less likely to pick that up because the repetition factor isn’t there.

Skipping words is a common problem, particularly “when two words/phrases/ lines conclude with the **same sequence of letters**. The scribe, having finished copying the first, [accidentally] skips to the second, omitting all intervening words.” This is a very easy, and hence likely, mistake – especially when the document is written in a language with which the copyist is not hugely conversant.<sup>72</sup> So regarding unintentional errors at least, the rule of “taking the shorter reading” actually tends to promote the *wrong* reading.

#### **c) Omission is what enemies of God would mostly employ**

We’ve looked at the likely behavior of *true* believers in Jesus, but what about that of *false* brothers? What about heretics in the past who would have loved to subtly corrupt and undermine the Word of God? Given the choice between corrupting Scripture via addition or deletion, the *addition* of words is substantially harder to conceal, and therefore harder to get away with, than the *deletion* of words. This

is because our brains automatically seek to “fill in the gap” if there is a modest gap in a familiar set of words, but our brains alert us much more readily if something has been *added* to a familiar reading.

As an example, consider the phrase, “The quick brown fox jumped the lazy dog.” This is such a famous sentence that, if it were spoken out loud, most hearers would spot the omission of the word “over” in it. However, our brain is even more alert to the *additive* change that produces “The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy *white* dog” than to the subtractive change which gives “The quick brown fox jumped the lazy dog” – even though the latter modification involves twice as many syllables. The omission is harder to consciously spot – and hence object to – than the addition, because it doesn’t grate on one’s mind so acutely.

Some of us may think that the odd word or clause lost here or there in Holy Writ is not significant. But as a bare minimum, deletion allows a surprising amount of ambiguity to enter in – which can be all that a false teacher needs in order to do his damnable work.<sup>73</sup> Sure enough, we find deliberate omissions in some MSS.<sup>74</sup> (Even Hort acknowledged that one of his two favorite MSS omits a lot of words – yet he still considered this MS to be an upright source and therefore the product of a sincere copyist.<sup>75</sup> Other scholars,

however, have found that the scribes behind *both* of Hort’s most treasured MSS omitted many words and were “**habitual offenders** in this respect.”<sup>76</sup>)

(If anyone still doubts that there are people who would want to quietly damage God’s Word, let me ask, can Satan *really* be trusted not to try to corrupt the Bible? The answer is plainly no – and we must therefore factor this in.)

#### **d) Burgon looked at the context**

Burgon felt there was a more refined technique than Hort’s “shortest is best” rule. Burgon believed that we could learn a useful amount about the likely reliability of a particular reading by carefully checking the quality of the copying in the *vicinity* of the passage. If the scribe had shown carelessness, or a tendency to delete (or even add) words in passages immediately before or after the section at issue, it is surely fair to suspect that the same attitude or agenda would have existed when he was copying the *disputed* reading.<sup>77</sup>

The carelessness ... that leads a copyist to misrepresent **one** word is sure to lead him into error about another. The ill-ordered [efforts] ... which prompted **one** bad correction most probably did not rest there. And the errors committed by a witness just before or just after the testimony which is being sifted was given **cannot but be**

71 For helpful further discussion of these points, see Pickering, quoted in Jay P. Green Sr., ed., *Unholy Hands on the Bible*, (Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1992), p. 573.

72 My wording here is based on that of another source. (The technical term for the type of omission we are discussing in this section is *homoioleuton* meaning “same endings.”)

73 Indeed, with the “quick brown fox” example I have just used, the version suffering the omission has now been made seriously ambiguous because there are at least three possible meanings in today’s parlance when something is said to “jump” something else.

74 This has been proved by analyzing the very early MSS P45, P66 and P75 [see Pickering, *Contribution*, op. cit., pp. 53-54]. For example, the MS called P45 proves that, “with some scribes omissions were **deliberate** and **extensive**” [*Ibid*, p. 54]. As one scholar who leans towards Hort’s general position admits, “the scribe of P45 wielded a sharp axe. ... He omits adverbs, adjectives, nouns, participles, verbs, personal pronouns – without **any** ... habit of **addition**. He frequently omits phrases and clauses ... But he does **not drop syllables or letters** [in other words his omissions were apparently not accidental!]” (E.C. Colwell, ‘Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text’, *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. P. Hyatt, [New York: Abingdon Press, 1965], p. 383, as quoted in Pickering, *Contribution*, op. cit., p. 98).

75 Aleph omits a lot even by manuscript B’s standards (unless of course Aleph is very pure, in which case B is the product of a great deal of interpolation – an idea Hort would undoubtedly have opposed with some vigor!).

76 Miller, *Textual Criticism*, op. cit., p. 53.

77 This question is covered more completely in Pickering, *Contribution*, op. cit., pp. 82-84, and in Burgon, *The Traditional Text*, op. cit., pp. 61-65.

held to be closely germane [i.e., relevant] to the inquiry.<sup>78</sup>

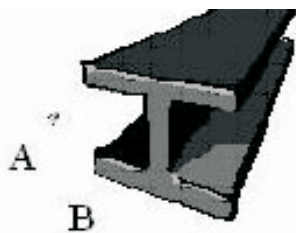
All told, Burgon found that family A once again comes out much better than family B in this area:



### Step 5: Difficulty vs Respectability

#### Hort's Side:

Whenever a reading differs between MSS, Hort said we should give preference to the "harder" – i.e., the less logical or less expected – wording. To quote a modern Bible teacher who essentially follows Hort, "Scribes tended to smooth out ... difficult readings to make ... [them] understandable... [T]herefore, the more simple [sic] reading ... is more likely to be the corrected one, than the more difficult [reading]..."<sup>79</sup> Thus Hort's disciples believe that, "Where different MSS conflict on a particular word, the more **unusual** one is more likely [to be] the original ... because scribes would often replace odd words with more familiar ones than vice versa."<sup>80</sup> Because Hort knew that family B typically had the stranger readings, he felt it was worthy of much more weight than family A in this regard:



#### Burgon's Side:

At first glance Hort's idea seems very sensible, but Burgon felt it had serious flaws.

Burgon asked where the *evidence* was that scribes indeed tended to change unexpected readings so that they became more understandable. As we have already seen in the footnotes of Step 4 that copyists of classic texts (at least those in Latin or Greek) didn't habitually add words to make the material clearer, it seems unlikely that they regularly made *any* type of alteration for this sake, otherwise why not *add* words as well as change them?

Hort's followers claim that "Harmonization was a common scribal practice."<sup>81</sup> For instance, Hort believed that parallel passages in the NT were often altered to say the same thing – hence the related idea that "Different readings are to be preferred." Put another way, if you have two possible versions of Luke's Gospel, and the first one is less harmonious with the rest of the Gospels than the other, then the first version is to be preferred. However, *God* needed to arrange for many such passages to say the same thing in order to satisfy His own rule that "a matter is established by two or three witnesses" (2 Cor. 13:1; Matt. 18:16).

#### a) No true Christian would alter the Bible

We come again to this question of how the early Christians would have treated the various documents that were to become the recognized New Testament canon. Hort claimed that, "Textual purity ... attracted hardly any interest" in the very early assemblies.<sup>82</sup> Scholars like Hort take this view because they assume that the New Testament writings were

not recognized as Scripture when they first appeared. Such people follow this up with a second assumption, *viz.*, that early believers would have been relaxed about adding to, or otherwise modifying, the text of those writings. In Step 4 we noted several problems with both assumptions. Here are some more:

To begin with, *why* should the early Christians have failed to acknowledge these writings as Holy Scripture? Even if, for some odd reason, God chose not to give early believers any *direct* clue that a given document was canonical, most of the early so-called "Church Fathers" (even *very* early ones) seem to have had a good awareness of what was and wasn't inspired and authoritative.<sup>83</sup> Also, surely the twelve apostles themselves, being full of the Holy Spirit and with their unique and powerful ministries, would have been in a position to tell their brethren which documents were and weren't to be treated as canonical. Indeed, Paul actually wrote that any man who considers himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, should acknowledge that the things Paul wrote to the Corinthian church "are the **commandments of the Lord**" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

The next problem is that even if the early Christians recognized the NT writings as merely inspired rather than actually canonical, they would still have treated such items with care – because no sincere Christian would deliberately "harmonize" or "simplify" *God*-given texts.<sup>84</sup> They would venerate the Lord too much for that.<sup>85</sup>

When Bibles were so difficult and expensive to create, true Christians would not try to "harmonize" texts. There would have been only two types of deliberate modification to the text: (1) *Repairs* would

78 Burgon, *The Traditional Text*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

79 Calvin Smith, *op. cit.*, The technical (Latin) terms used here are *Lector difficilior potior* ("the more difficult reading is the stronger"), and *proclivi lectioni praestat ardua* ("the harder reading is to be preferred").

80 *Brainy Encyclopedia*.

81 C. Smith, *op. cit.*.

82 Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, II, "Introduction," p. 9, cf. p. 7, as quoted in Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

83 For specific examples, see Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

84 The technical term for such alterations is "emendation."

85 Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-56.

be made – and then only in the light of clear evidence from other MSS, etc., and (2) Deliberately perverted copies would be made by false Christians. Sadly, Hort lost sight of these facts and invented a tendency for Christians to harmonize. When the issue of molested readings comes up, folks like Hort ask, “How do you explain the presence of such a [strange] reading if it isn’t authentic?” The answer, of course, is that it was introduced by a *heretic*.

If, as I pointed out in a footnote for Step 4, *pagans* in antiquity didn’t tend to deliberately alter documents they respected, how much more would a true Christian (especially one who had embarked on an important job like copying a piece of teaching from an *apostle*) have wanted to do only what God *led* him to? It should go without saying that the Holy Spirit would never lead believers to alter Scripture, but would give them a *check* in their spirits if any such intention arose.

It has also been claimed that the early Christians would not have been too concerned about textual purity even if they did recognize a given document as canonical. Let us consider this.

Imagine *we* had to copy one or more of the NT books by hand. Would we not do so with immense care, especially in view of the points I raised in Part 1 of this series of articles? Interestingly, folks like Hort accepted that the *Old Testament* was copied with extreme care and accuracy with no tendency to add explanatory notes into the text, but these same people apparently find it hard to accept that God’s sincere followers –

and certainly those of Jewish descent – would seek to do the same for the *New Testament*.<sup>86</sup> (Even if a few early Christians *were* prepared to take liberties with the text, these documents were passed from assembly to assembly, so it is likely that any lack of respect for God’s Word would have been identified and confronted.)

Not only is Hort’s rule extremely subjective, it’s likely to point to the *wrong* reading.

#### **(b) This rule is a dream for Satan and his Bible corruptors**

Preferring “harder” readings opens the door to error for a second reason. It promotes readings *even where the Greek language wouldn’t allow them*, because grammar can go out the window. (If the corrupted reading makes the passage ungrammatical it becomes less likely, and therefore gets chosen by Hort’s rule.) This allows for key Bible passages to have been deliberately perverted in the most subtle way imaginable – i.e., whichever way would least grate on believers’ ears and would therefore not get spotted too easily.<sup>87</sup>

For example, imagine if the phrase, “The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog,” was a doctrinally pivotal statement. A heretic who wants to undermine such a statement would not want the alteration readily noticed. A simple way to do this is to make the altered wording *sound* similar to the original, even if the corrupted version is no longer logical. If he changes the phrase

to something like “The quick brown **box** jumped over the lazy dog” he would achieve this – and Hort’s rule would prefer this reading to the true one! (Ironically, some of the very people who promote the use of the “dynamic equivalence” method of translation on the basis that the Bible is *easy* to understand in its original languages, simultaneously promote family B on the basis that it is *hard* to understand in places.)

#### **(c) Burgon preferred respectability**

Unlike Hort, Burgon didn’t attach weight to a MS based on the strangeness of its readings.<sup>88</sup>

As we have seen, Hort believed that the character of a MS depends chiefly on its age rather than on things like the sincerity of the person who created it. Burgon, on the other hand, was more interested in the *character of the MS as a whole* – which he principally determined via the credibility of the copyist, regardless of its age. If, for instance, the copyist had included some non-canonical books in his MS, or had included a number of readings found in no other known MS, or had left out some chunks found in all other MSS, then he was probably a very unreliable person, and therefore his whole MS should be viewed with distrust. It turns out that both of the MSS most admired by Hort exhibit the above warning signs. As such, they (and their family) fell even lower in Burgon’s estimation.

Hort’s two favorite MSS “differ from **one another** in three THOUSAND places

86 For more about the ingrained reverence of the Jewish people toward Scripture, see Pickering, *Contribution*, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114.

87 If one wished to corrupt a MS with subtlety, one would *love* the rule that “the harder reading is to be preferred,” because it allows far more scope for corruption. One could make changes with minimal alteration to the *sound* of the passage so that the change goes unnoticed by most brains because they are not jangled by obvious differences. Since the resultant passage doesn’t need to be logical or even grammatical, this rule maximizes the number of *ways*, and minimizes the number of *changes*, necessary to undermine a given passage. For helpful further material on this issue, see Green, *op. cit.*, p. 573. (Producing a similar sound in a passage would be the most important concern for a heretic trying to corrupt God’s Word among fellowships which owned very few copies of the Bible and which therefore often read Scripture aloud among the members. For congregations with enough copies of Scripture for believers to be able to read them at home, a heretic might focus more on the *visual appearance* of the passage.)

88 Burgon, *The Traditional Text*, *op. cit.*, p. 67. Because of its deeply subjective nature, Burgon felt that “Internal Evidence” (i.e., how the text of a given MS actually reads) has the least weight of all. He felt that *external* evidence (i.e., the attributes of the physical document) carries far more weight.

in the Gospels alone – NOT including differences in spelling.”<sup>89</sup> Just from this solitary, breathtaking statistic we can see that, rather than being worthy of Hort’s great praise and reverence, at least one of these MSS is grievously corrupted.

I have included only one illustration of their failings here, but more are given in the footnotes.<sup>90</sup>

“What would be thought in a Court of Law of ... witnesses ... who should be observed to bear [such] contradictory testimony...?”<sup>91</sup> “[T]he ‘best manuscripts’ ... have been ‘weighed’ and found wanting”<sup>92</sup>

### Where Do These Steps Lead?

Burgon confirmed that his method “is the direct contradiction of that adopted by [Hort] ... Moreover, it conducts us throughout to directly opposite results.”<sup>93</sup>

If we accept the above principles to which Burgon held, we must also accept that family A is where the Word of God



resides and, what’s more, that family B represents *deliberate counterfeiting by people opposed to the truth.*

In future parts of this work I intend to explain how Hort came to promote his strange teachings, but the five steps we have covered also oblige us to ask how on earth the bulk of the *revision committee* ended up submitting to Hort’s position. (Regrettably, he managed to convince a majority, although not all, of the men on the committee that the Bible should be treated like any other book, so his arguments prevailed there.) Various factors lay behind this sad turn of events and I plan to list several of these next time. For now I will focus on the reasons why the committee was not well placed to challenge Hort’s arguments.

For one thing, Burgon was not included on the committee. Another major problem was that, as we noted at the start, the committee was asked to revise only the *English*, not the Greek. It was not convened with a view to reconsidering the *value* of the MSS underlying the KJV, so its members were selected for reasons other than their experience in this area. The role of a translator is very different from that of a textual critic, thus committee members were “unacquainted

with the ... science of Textual Criticism.”<sup>94</sup> (In contrast, Hort had enjoyed many years to prepare his theory and find ways to convince others of it.)

A related problem was that Hort appears to have been prone to making statements in such a bold and categorical way that members of the committee assumed he had plenty of evidence to back them up. The truth was that he invariably lacked much evidence at all *and often had none whatsoever.* When highly intelligent people like Hort confidently make unequivocal claims about a matter, it can be extremely intimidating to hearers who are not expert in the relevant disciplines. Hort presented his mere theories as *unarguable facts*, and the “Emperor’s New Clothes” syndrome did the rest.

Another hurdle was that the committee, “met together **secretly** ... All was done in **secret**.” “All reports indicate that an **iron** rule of **silence** was imposed upon these revisers during all that time.”<sup>95</sup> This meant that members could not approach people outside the committee for advice or help because they were sworn to secrecy. It also meant that any waverers on the committee did not come under pressure from outside to stand up for the truth. “The public was

89 Theodore P. Letis, *The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate*, (Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, no date), p. 43, as quoted in Johnson, *op. cit.*, Chapter 20. See also Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, p. 75. Burgon said “It is in fact easier to find two consecutive verses in which these two MSS [Aleph and B] **differ** the one from the other, than two consecutive verses in which they entirely **agree**” (*Revision Revised, op. cit.*, p. 12).

90 Here are some further problems with **MS Aleph**: (i) It adds two extra books to the end of Revelation; (ii) “On nearly every page of the MS there are corrections and revisions, done by **ten** different people” (Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 61). It doesn’t *sound* a terribly reliable MS. Maybe this is why these ten revisers eventually gave up trying to straighten it out and finally put it in a bin. (Its modern discoverer, Constantine von Tischendorf, noted at least twelve *thousand* changes in it. Presumably people went to such great efforts to put it right because it was written on vellum – an extremely valuable medium); (iii) Aleph has approximately 1,500 readings that do not appear in *any* other manuscript (Burgon, *Revision Revised*, Article III, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-319). “From these facts, therefore, we deduce [that] ... the impurity of ... [Aleph], in every part of it, was fully recognized by those best acquainted with it, and ... it was finally cast aside as worthless for any practical purpose” (Mauro, *Which Version?*, *op. cit.*, Chapter IV). Here are some problems with **MS B**: (i) It has nearly **600** readings that occur in *no* other manuscript – which means that all of these readings are almost *unchallengeably* wrong and hence that the copyist was either working from a very bad MS or was *deliberately creating* a very bad MS; (ii) Experts in linguistics have noted that “B is reminiscent of classical and **plato**nian Greek, NOT the Koine (common) Greek of the New Testament” – so it doesn’t look as if the copyist was a reliable person; (iii) Even Tischendorf admitted that blemishes occur *throughout* B. One collator found 2,556 omissions. (For more on Aleph’s and B’s lack of respectability see Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, pp. 100-101, and Burgon, *Revision Revised, op. cit.*, pp. 319-320.)

91 Burgon, *Revision Revised, op. cit.*, p. 31.

92 Pickering, *Contribution, op. cit.*, p. 78.

93 *Revision Revised, op. cit.*, pp. 338-339.

94 *Revision Revised, op. cit.*, Preface, p. xii. For additional background on this matter, plus further evidence that the committee did not even know the basic *procedures*, let alone the basic principles for the job it ultimately took on, see chapter 6 of Mauro, *Which Version?* *op. cit.*

95 Benjamin G. Wilkinson, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*, (June 1930), e-book, chapter 5.



kept in suspense ... Only after elaborate plans had been laid to throw the Revised Version **all at once** upon the market ... did the world [have a chance to learn something of what had gone on].”<sup>96</sup>

All these circumstances afforded scholars like Burgon no chance (nor any obvious *reason*) to oppose Hort’s efforts during the committee’s deliberations.

Finally, it is *rationalistic* to approach the Bible like any other book. Unfortunately the hierarchy of the Church of England in the late 19th century was not exactly uncontaminated with rationalism.

The task assigned to the committee represented a huge responsibility. It is therefore not surprising to find that the prestige attached to their role was so great that many folks on the outside blindly trusted the committee’s findings.

My next installment lists further illegitimate reasons why Hort’s ideas were taken up in certain quarters and are still around today. I also supply further reasons why it is inappropriate to treat the Bible like any other book.

The second half of Part 2 is entitled, “Magnitude of Problem,” and it exposes a number of severe and unexpected dangers with leaning towards family B. It gives several reasons why it is foolish to argue that “we can ignore this issue because every doctrine is still supported in family B,” and it also supplies numerous reasons why relegating the correct readings to footnotes is unbiblical and leaves many of the above dangers intact.

### **ISN’T THIS MATTER DIVISIVE?**

Another common argument is that we should forget the whole matter on the grounds that it is divisive. I would urge readers to wait until they have read Part 2B before making up their minds on this question, because the points I make there demonstrate that the situation is a lot

more serious than it may appear thus far. However, there are other observations one could make about the “divisive” argument.

(a) People who employ this line of reasoning need to identify where *they* draw the line. They also need to justify why they draw the line where they do. *How much* blatant corruption to the very Word of God is acceptable? We must always put God’s Word first. If we do not, then we are *truly* being divisive, for we are separating from God’s commands (Psa.19:7-13; 119:1-11; 138:2).<sup>97</sup>

(b) I say the following with all humility, not least because I am certain I could never have written this document without the Lord. The key arguments in this article seem *inescapable*. As long as people are presented with a clear summary of the arguments and supporting data, it would seem that only *false* brothers and those incapable of grasping the truth would reject the main conclusions in this document. It goes without saying that we should not be encouraging unity with *false* brothers.

(c) Likening God’s Word to a well, who among us would stand by and watch our friends drink from a well we knew to have been *deliberately* polluted by people who *hated* us (or at least hated what we stood for) – especially if an unadulterated well was readily available? More, would we be happy for people to adamantly insist to our very *family* that it was safe to drink from the poisoned well?

One final observation. Some folks have actually given their *lives* in defence of family A and its Bibles against family B and its progeny.<sup>98</sup> Why would false brethren go so far as to *murder* people in order to foist family B onto the Body of Christ if the differences in it can be safely ignored? I recommend we be very careful

before suggesting those brave souls died for no reason.❖

**Closing note from AI:** Such is the foundational *and spiritual* nature of the subject under discussion that I anticipate this material will provoke a heated reaction from the enemy and his minions.

If the reader comes across criticism of this article, I encourage them to check whether the critic faces up to the *specific data and arguments presented here*. After all, this is what really matters. If the critic has indeed been prepared to focus on the actual content of the piece, I recommend readers to ask themselves whether the critic has offered adequate evidence to justify his claims. If this test is also passed, I urge you to consider whether the problems flagged by the critic are genuinely severe enough to demolish Dusty’s overall conclusions or whether they merely bruise a couple of his many powerful arguments. (Like everyone else, Dusty is fallible. Very seldom will a document of this size and complexity be totally error-free. It is also perfectly possible that a few mistakes crept in when I was editing the article. This all means there are bound to be some straws for people to clutch at if they are not prepared to accept the overwhelming evidence supplied above. The Lord often gives men enough rope to hang themselves if they refuse to submit to the truth.) *ajd*

Dusty welcomes your comments and questions regarding his writing. You may contact him by mail:

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Separation isn’t always wrong. God’s Word makes abundantly plain that not all division is ungodly. For instance, if some sheep are determined to go into apostasy then we would be stupid, not to mention unscriptural, to remain in unity with them. (See Part 4 of a book I co-authored called *Alpha – the Unofficial Guide: Church* for copious evidence of all of this from holy writ. The book is offered through Sword Publishers.)

<sup>98</sup> Waldensians, for instance, have been put to death for refusing to give up their version based on family A and submit to a family B version *in the selfsame language*.