

The King James Version Debate

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Defense of the Byzantine Text Type¹

Some major arguments put forth by defenders of the Byzantine Text type are:

1. The textual-critical theories of B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort are both bad theology and bad textual criticism.
 - Westcott/Hort said the Byzantine text was a conflate text from the mid-fourth century A.D. The Alexandrian texts were earlier and therefore preferred.
 - Westcott/Hort defined a “neutral” text outside of the Alexandrian type which consisted of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. This was their preferred text in determining which variant to use. Both Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are now considered to be part of the Alexandrian Text type.
2. The Byzantine text stands closer to the original than any other text type.
3. The other text types were rejected by the early church.
4. The other text types omitted material as a result of the desire to promote some heretical teachings.
5. Modern versions dependent on the Alexandrian Text type deny the inspiration of Scripture as they are omitting parts of God’s word.
6. The Alexandrian texts survived because no one was using them whereas the Byzantine texts were wore out through their constant use.

Fourteen Thesis²

1. *There is no unambiguous evidence that the Byzantine text-type was known before the middle of the fourth century, i.e. the mature Byzantine text-type appears nowhere before the fourth century.*

In answer to the assertion that the Byzantine texts wore out through use:

- a. Although this theory may explain why the autographs disappeared, it cannot explain why their are *no* extant copies of manuscripts of the Byzantine text-type prior to the fourth century A.D.
- b. The ante-Nicene fathers unambiguously cited every text type *except* the Byzantine.
- c. If the Byzantine texts were being wore out, who was wearing them out? Certainly not the ante-Nicene fathers.

¹ D.A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate, A Plea for Realism*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), pp. 39-42.

² *Ibid*, pp. 43-78.

2. *The argument that defends the Byzantine tradition by appealing to the fact that most extant manuscripts of the Greek New Testament attest to this Byzantine text-type, is logically fallacious and historically naive.*
 - a. The number of manuscripts that support a reading is not nearly as important as the number of text-types.
 - b. Although most early non-Byzantine manuscripts have been found in Egypt, it is naive to postulate that the textual tradition they represent is restricted only to that area.
 - c. The hot, dry climate of Egypt is more conducive to the preservation of manuscripts for a longer period of time than Asia Minor.
 - d. The Byzantine textual tradition is preserved in the only area in the world where the Greek language was still used extensively, the eastern part of the Roman empire.
3. *The Byzantine text-type is demonstrably a secondary text.*

Harmonizations are much more common in the Byzantine text type than in other text types.
4. *The Alexandrian text-type has better credentials than any other text-type now available.*
 - a. The Alexandrian text-type is quoted by the Ante-Nicene fathers.
 - b. The Alexandrian text-type all appear in papyri dating from the second and third centuries, e.g. p⁷⁵.
5. *The argument to the effect that what the majority of believers in the history of the church have believed is true, is ambiguous at best and theologically dangerous at worst; and as applied to textual criticism, the argument proves nothing very helpful anyway.*
6. *The argument that defends the Byzantine text by appealing to the providence of God is logically and theologically fallacious.*
 - a. God has also providentially preserved the other text-types.
 - b. Most Christians in the world are depending on translations based on other than the Byzantine text-type. What about them?
7. *The argument that appeals to fourth-century writing practices to deny the possibility that the Byzantine text is a conflation, is fallacious.*
8. *Textual arguments that depend on adopting the TR and comparing other text-types with it are guilty, methodologically speaking, of begging the issue; and in any case they present less than the whole truth.*

The idea here is that many assume the TR to be the choice text before they prove it.
9. *The charge that the non-Byzantine text-types are theologically aberrant is fallacious.*
10. *The KJV was not accepted without a struggle, and some outstanding believers soon wanted to replace it.*
11. *The Byzantine text-type must not be thought to be the precise equivalent of the TR.*

12. *The argument that ties the adoption of the TR to verbal inspiration is logically and theologically fallacious.*

- a. No two manuscripts in the Byzantine tradition agree perfectly.
- b. The TR itself has some major problems to overcome:
 - 1). Revelation has several verses translated from the Latin back into Greek. These verses have NO Greek mss evidence for their readings.
 - 2). Acts 9:5-6 have NO Greek mss evidence for their existence.
 - 3). 1 John 5:7 has four mss supporting the text, and all of these are very late originating in the sixteenth century.

13. *Arguments that attempt to draw textual conclusions from a prejudicial selection of not immediately relevant data, or from a slanted use of terms, or by a slurring appeal to guilt by association, or by repeated appeal to false evidence, are not only misleading, but ought to be categorically rejected by Christians who, above all others, profess both to love truth and to love their brothers in Christ.*

14. *Adoption of the TR should not be made a criterion of orthodoxy.*