

A clear case of Majority error in Acts 9:20

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My translation is: “Immediately he started proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.” Instead of “Jesus”, the AV and NKJV have ‘Christ’, following the TR. Here is the manuscript evidence, taken from the apparatus of my Greek Text: $\iota\eta\sigma\upsilon\upsilon\nu$ f^{35} P^{45} A,B,C [20%] OC,NU || $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu$ [80%] HF,RP,TR,CP . Codex D is missing here, and the ancient Syriac and Latin versions both have ‘Jesus’. Family 35 preserves the older reading. In this case the modern versions that follow the eclectic text have it right; those that follow the TR have it wrong, even though the TR has a heavy majority attestation. Consider:

To teach that the Messiah was the Son of God would probably not be all that revolutionary, and would not cause a violent reaction—but Saul was showing that Jesus was God’s Son. Notice the end of verse 22, “this is the Christ”—what is the antecedent of “this”? To say that the Christ is the Christ would be stupid, which neither of the authors is. And why did the Jews become so angry that they plotted to kill Saul (verse 23)? To teach that the Christ was the Christ would produce no more than an irritated boredom at Saul’s stupidity, and for wasting their time. But he was declaring **Jesus** to be the Christ. Right on, Saul! Whoever created the majority variant in verse 20 evidently did not look ahead to verse 22.

On the other hand, could it be possible that the change was made deliberately? Beginning with the Jewish leaders who told Pilate to crucify Jesus, there have always been those who did not want to believe that Jesus is God’s Son. Not only that, there have always been those who would go to considerable lengths to try to keep others from believing that Jesus is God’s Son—to this day.

I have written elsewhere that an average Alexandrian copyist would make at least fifteen mistakes per page of printed Greek text. An average Byzantine bulk copyist would make at least three mistakes per such a page, while an average Family 35 copyist would make one mistake every two such pages. Taken by itself, the statement that Christ is God’s son is theologically correct and would not jar a copyist; and an average Byzantine bulk copyist would not look ahead to verse 22, and by the end of verse 22 he would have forgotten verse 20. Even though ‘Christ’ garners an impressive [80%], that variant is clearly an error.