

***The Received Text: A Field Guide.*** By Taylor DeSoto. Kept Pure Press, 2024. 172 pp. \$12.99.

This recent contribution to the topic of Bibliology seeks to provide a practical resource for those looking for a philosophical defense undergirding the continued use of the *Textus Receptus* by individuals, churches, and institutions, and it largely succeeds in its goal. Taylor DeSoto of Phoenix, Arizona, a church planter and author, has put together an overview of the issues concerning text and translation, and gives his reasoning in what led him to forsake the Critical Text for the Received Text.

He begins with an exhortation to avoid pejoratives, strawman arguments and reductionism - characteristics that unfortunately have followed this debate in recent decades. He rightly seeks to correct the tendency to “reduce a complex Byzantine Priority Eclectic Text position to “KJV Onlyism” (2). The question of “Which Bible should I use?” is a theological issue first, then a matter of textual scholarship & translation methodology, and finally a question of practical applications (4), and DeSoto elaborates on each of these in his opening chapter.

In chapter 2 DeSoto identifies the two major philosophies at odds in the discussion, showing that the Bible alone is the source for the Gospel and the truth claims of Christianity. He identifies View 1 as “The Word of God as Represented by the Surviving Manuscript Tradition,” which reduces preservation to the main ideas / thoughts of God’s revelation. Since the exact wording of the Bible has been lost to time, eclecticism and the science / art of Textual Criticism is necessary to restore the original wording. He cites the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and Daniel Wallace as examples of this view. View 2 is “The Word of God is Providentially Preserved in Time and Space,” and DeSoto appeals to the doctrine of preservation, historic confessions such as the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646, and Protestant authors such as Francis Turretin. He notes, “The view that the original words of Scripture were preserved in the copies is not novel is the historic protestant view (sic). So here, a significant problem arises if the foundation for our belief in Scripture is purely evidential” (32).

In chapter 3 DeSoto argues that these two differing foundations undergird all of the various views of the text and translation debate, whether it be a Majority Text position, Textual eclecticism (Critical Text) position, a Received Text position, or King James Onlyism. He concludes, “In my opinion, the most extreme position is that the Bible has fallen into such disrepair that it must be reconstructed (even though this cannot be done). If we examine this view against historic Christian orthodoxy, it is clear, at least theologically speaking, that this is an extreme perspective” (47).

Chapter 4 deals with the topics of translations and translation philosophy, and DeSoto is swift to rightly point out that this topic must not be conflated with the doctrines of preservation or the text of Scripture, though it certainly is a natural outworking of it. Beyond merely the pragmatic reasons that few (if any) today are fluent in the biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek), the Great Commission itself (and several other NT passages) anticipate the need for translations to be made into receptor languages. DeSoto correctly advocates for word for word (formal) translation against thought for thought (dynamic) translation, and warns his readers of

poor examples such as “Andrew Naselli, who advocates for the modern critical text, argues in his textbook, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament*, that the Message (MSG) should be preferred over and above the KJV. The MSG is so paraphrastic and silly in its translation that it should not be read under any circumstances” (50).

Chapter 5 touches on some of the practical matters churches face, such as confusion caused by multiple translations present in a single setting, and the questions caused by marginal notes in study Bibles. Chapter 6 gives a good overview of the two differing approaches to the text, Modern Textual Eclecticism (including the Coherence Based Genealogical Method) versus Faith Based Creation of Texts, citing various text critics and authors of both the past and present. DeSoto notes, “Herein we have revealed one of the most obvious differences between the traditional and modern approaches: Beza believed that the Bible came to him from the people of God preserved, while modern scholars believe the text originated in a crude form and then evolved in sophistication over the years” (78).

Chapter 7 (pages 81-103) is a strong argument for the Textus Receptus, reminding the reader, “Christianity is not a religion that deals in probabilities. It deals in absolute truth claims” (82). The Critical Text position is in fact a self-refuting philosophy that has yet to produce a restored initial text, much less an original text, and not even a text that is settled without need of ongoing tinkering. DeSoto declares, “The epistemological starting point for the defense of the Received Text is that God has preserved his text in time and space through the mechanism of Christians who read it, treasured it, and sought to be faithful stewards of it. We can simplify at least a portion of this history by acknowledging that by the 1600s, that preserved text was definitely the Received Text” (98). This is far more harmonious with the teaching of the NT than the Critical Text view, which has no place for the simple, pure, and irrefragable truth that the Lord’s words are preserved by the Lord’s churches in accordance with the Great Commission.

Chapter 8 provides a good answer to the “Which TR” question that is often employed as a red herring argument by insincere Critical Text proponents, while chapter 9 answers various forms of “KJV-Only” extremism. Chapter 10 analyzes and answers the postmodern view of the Bible which continually questions the words of the text. DeSoto cites Daniel Wallace’s famous quote, “we do not have now - in our critical Greek texts or in any translations - exactly what the authors of the New Testament wrote. Even if we did, we would not know it. There are many, many places in which the text of the New Testament is uncertain” (130). Chapter 11 addresses the charge of “TR Onlyism,” while chapter 12 gives a brief but robust defense of the KJV as being the Word of God in English. The book closes with an appeal: “The path forward is clear. Today’s Christian must reject the authority and impositions of the new academic magisterium and return to collect his inheritance: The Received Text” (133).

*The Received Text: A Field Guide* will be a help to church members of various stages of spiritual growth, and could as well be used as collateral reading in entry level courses on Bibliology. Certainly another value of this book is to challenge more Christians to join the growing ranks of the “Former Critical Text Proponents” and to embrace God’s Received Text.