2 CORINTHIANS 1:2: AYIOTHTI OR APLHOTHTI?

BY

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In this verse Paul is vindicating his own conduct. According to several important witnesses he says that he has behaved ἐν ἁγιότητι καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, “with holiness and godly sincerity”. An alternative reading, however, presents him as having conducted himself ἐν ἁπλότητι καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, “with simplicity and godly sincerity”. The evidence is as follows:

ἁγιότητι P46 κ* ABCKΨ 0121a 0243 33 81 630 1739 1881 1962 2127 2492 1241 it r1 copśa,bo arm Clement Origen Euthalius John-Damascus

ἁπλότητι κο DG 104 181 326 330 436 451 614 629 1241 1877 1984 1985 2495 Byz Lect itar,d, dem vid, e,f,g,x,z vg syrp,h goth Ambrosiaster Chrysostom Theodoret

The first reading appears to have superior attestation, but the second has attracted some support. It is preferred, though with some hesitation, by the editors of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament. Professor G. D. Kilpatrick has also argued in its favour, in an article published in 1944.¹ In exploring the problem, we shall first look at the evidence in favour of ἁγιότητι, and then consider the validity of the arguments which can be adduced in support of ἁπλότητι.

The chief argument for ἁγιότητι is obviously the strong support it receives from early and reliable witnesses, but a few further points may be added. H. Windisch² notes that the word ἁγιότης is extremely infrequent in biblical Greek, and that it is not used by the Apostolic Fathers or by the Apologists. He suggests that this very fact may have caused it to be altered. We may add that it would be very easy to explain the substitution of the term ἁπλότης, were a scribe to be puzzled by ἁγιότης. It is highly suitable to the context, as we shall see.


² Hans Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1924) 54.
Furthermore, it was a popular term in the literature of both Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity. In a monograph on ἀπλότης and its cognates\(^3\) Joseph Amstutz has demonstrated the frequent use and varied meaning of this wordgroup in Philo, Josephus, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Hermas, and other post-apostolic and patristic writings. In Justin and Irenaeus it is used of simplicity and straightforwardness in speech and behaviour,\(^4\) a sense which would admirably suit the context in 2 Cor 1:12. The word ἀπλότης was therefore well-known in religious circles. In any case it is found several times, without variants, in 2 Corinthians itself (8:2; 9:11, 13; 11:3) and in other NT epistles (Rom 12:8; Col 3:22; Eph 6:5). If the variant in 2 Cor 1:12 has arisen through deliberate scribal alteration, the infrequency of ἄγιότης and the familiarity of ἀπλότης would strongly suggest the alteration of the former to the latter, and, consequently, the originality of ἄγιότης. Conversely, one could not maintain the incorrectness of ἄγιότης on the grounds that it was totally unfamiliar to the NT writers. It is found in Heb 12:10, in an allusion to participation in the divine holiness: εἰς τὸ μεταλαβεῖν τῆς ἄγιότητος αὐτοῦ. This would not be dissimilar to the phrase in 2 Cor 1:12, ἐν ἄγιότητι καὶ ἐλκυνεία τοῦ θεοῦ, if we may understand τοῦ θεοῦ to refer to both preceding nouns.

The evidence for ἄγιότητι is substantial. Is there equally strong evidence in favor of ἀπλότητι?

Professor Kilpatrick bases his preference on Pauline usage. "ἄγιότης occurs in the New Testament elsewhere only at Heb. xii 10, but ἀπλότης is used seven times in the Pauline Epistles. These facts suggest that ἀπλότης should be read here. ἄγιότης may well be a palaeographical corruption and, if that is so, P\(^4\) ≠ ABCK, 69, Clem., Orig., are wrong".\(^5\) Allo\(^6\) agrees on the question of usage. He also claims that the context supports ἀπλότητι, since Paul is about to defend himself against a charge of duplicity, and takes up Kilpatrick’s further point that a change from ἀπλότητι to ἄγιότητι could be explained as a transcriptional error. The original ΑΠΛΟΤΗΤΙ would be altered by the accidental omission of Α to ΑΠΟΤΗΤΙ, which would then be

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\(^4\) Ibid. 155, n. 239.

\(^5\) "Western Text" 62.