BRIEF NOTES

THE ANTI-JUDAIC BIAS OF THE WESTERN TEXT IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

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In AUSS 17 (1979): 203-208, I presented a brief discussion on how the Western text in Luke uses variant readings to develop a theological bias. The variants noted in that study magnified the role of Jesus as the Messianic King by changing the words in the heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism and by borrowing the kingly line from Matthew's genealogy.

Further biases can be clearly seen in other variant readings throughout Luke. One that appears repeatedly is strongly anti-Judaic.

Eldon J. Epp comments as follows on the anti-Judaic bias in the Western text of Acts and in Codex Bezae (D) in particular. "These textual variants, like so many others in D, are small—there is, after all, a basic conservatism in all New Testament texts. These small variants, nevertheless, combine to reveal the calculated anti-Judaic sentiment from which they first sprang."¹ What is true in Acts is true in Luke.²

In the present brief note I shall call attention to instances of three ways in which this anti-Judaic bias is reflected by the Western text.

1. The Use of πονηρός

After examining D's addition of the word πονηρός ("evil") at Acts 3:17, Epp says that D's use of this word not only sharpens the

contrast between the Jews and Christians, but confirms the disparity between what the Jews did in crucifying Jesus and what God did through Jesus’ suffering and exaltation.\(^3\)

The verse reads as follows:

**Acts 3:17**

Codex B

καὶ νῦν αδελφοὶ
οἶδα
οτὶ
κατὰ ἁγνοιαν
ἐπράξατε
ωσπερ καὶ οἱ αρχοντες υμῶν.

“And now brethren
I know
that
you acted
out of ignorance
even as your rulers also.”

+ ανδρες, D it\(^{hpw}\)
oida oti epistamēthα oti υμεις μεν, D. it\(^{hpw}\)
+ πονηραν, D it\(^{hpw}\) syhm

First, the addition of μεν in the D-text contrasts the action of the Jews in v. 17 with the δε and God’s action in v. 18. Second, the addition of πονηρον leaves no doubt as to how this action of the Jews is viewed. They are looked upon as being not without guilt because of their ignorance.\(^4\)


**Luke 23:41**

Codex B

καὶ ημεῖς μὲν δικαίως
αξία γὰρ ων ἐπράξαμεν
ἀπολαμβανομεν ουτος
δε ουδεν ατοπον ἐπράξεν

“And we justly
for we did things
worthy of what we
are receiving but
this man did nothing
amiss.”

atopon] πονηρον, D lat.

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\(^3\)Epp, p. 43-44.
\(^4\)Epp, p. 44.
In Acts, the Western text points out that what the Jews did to Jesus was evil. In Luke, on the other hand, Jesus is presented as having done nothing evil. As Epp observes, “The contrast is vivid and effective.”

A second use of πονηρός in Luke strengthens the anti-Judaic sentiment developed by the Western text.

Luke 5:21,22

Codex B

21. καὶ ἡράκλειον διαλογίζεσθαι οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ φαρισαῖοι

λέγοντες τις εὐτυχ οὗτος οἱ λαλεῖ βλασφήμιας τις δύναται αμαρτίας ἀφεῖναι εἰ μὴ μονος ὁ Θεός

22. εἶπεν οὖν δὲ ὁ Παρισσιακός τοὺς διαλογίζομενος αὐτῶν αὐτοῖς εἰπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς τί διαλογίζεσθε εν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν

21. “And the Scribes and Pharisees began to reason saying who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who is able to forgive sin except God alone?

22. And Jesus knowing their reasoning answered and said to them why do you reason in your hearts?”

Codex D

21. καὶ ἡράκλειον διαλογίζεσθαι οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ φαρισαῖοι εἰς ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν

λέγοντες τις εὐτυχ οὗτος λαλεῖ βλασφήμιας τις δύναται αμαρτίας ἀφεῖναι εἰ μὴ εἰς Θεός

22. εἶπεν οὖν δὲ ὁ Παρισσιακός τοὺς διαλογίζομενος αὐτῶν λέγει αὐτοῖς τί διαλογίζεσθαι εν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν πονηρός

21. “And the Scribes and Pharisees began to reason in their hearts saying why does this man speak blasphemies? Who is able to forgive sin except one, God?

22. And Jesus knowing their reasoning said also to them why do you reason evil in your hearts?”

v. 21

+ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν post φαρισαίοι, D it τις εὐτυχ οὗτος os] τι οὗτος, D μονος] εἰς, C D

v. 22.

ἀποκρίθης εἰπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς] λέγει αὐτοῖς, D + πονηρός post υμῶν, D

With the addition of πονηρός here, D harmonizes Luke’s text with Matt 9:4. The harmonization again presents a striking contrast

Ibid.
between Jesus, who did no evil, and the religious leaders, who thought evil and did evil.

The Western text again harmonizes Luke with Matthew by using a cognate of πονηρός at Luke 20:23 and intensifies the encounter between Jesus and the Jews while bringing into sharper focus the anti-Judaic bias.

**Luke 20:23**

**Codex B**

κατανοήσας δε αὐτῶν
τὴν παρουσίαν εἶπεν
πρὸς αὐτοὺς

“And when he perceived their craftiness he said to them.”

**Codex D**

ἐπιγνον δε αὐτῶν
τὴν πονηρίαν εἶπεν
πρὸς αὐτοὺς
τι μὲ πειραζῇ ὑμᾶς

“And when he knew thoroughly their malice he said to them why do you tempt me?”


2. *The Ministry of John the Baptist*

The ministry of John the Baptist provides another context for the anti-Judaic sentiment of the Western text. This sentiment surfaces in three identical variants in D. Before these variants can be appreciated, it is necessary to review briefly the attitude of the Jewish leaders toward John’s ministry as it is presented by Luke.

In Luke’s account, we are told that crowds of people came out to be baptized by him. As the crowds assembled John addressed them, “Generation of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” (Luke 3:7). The words of censure that John addressed to the crowds in Luke are addressed to the religious leaders in Matthew, “And when he beheld many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism he said to them, generation of vipers who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” (3:7).
From Luke's account one is left to conclude that the religious leaders did not seek repentance and baptism at John's hand. This conclusion is verified at Luke 7:29, "And the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him [John]."

Understanding that Luke presents the Jewish leaders as rejecting God's will for them by refusing John's ministry, the variants in D's text strengthens this rejection and thus emphasizes the anti-Judaic sentiment at Luke 3:10, 12, 14. In the normal tradition of Luke, oi oχλοι ("multitude"), τελώναι ("publicans"), and στρατευόμενοι ("soldiers") are presented as coming to John, under the conviction of his preaching, and asking him, τι ποιησωμεν ("What shall we do?").

To each group John gives appropriate counsel. In D's text, the question asked by each of the three groups is expanded to read, τι ποιησωμεν ὅνα σωθωμεν ("What shall we do that we might be saved?"). The rejection of God's will for the religious leaders now becomes a matter not only of rejecting John's ministry but of rejecting God's offer of salvation. Thus the religious leaders stand in sharp contrast to the general populace, even to the despised publicans, who sought salvation through John's ministry, and thus were obedient to God's will.

3. The Man With the Withered Hand

There are several intriguing changes in the next series of variants. Space forbids looking at them all here, even though some show an anti-Judaic bias. We will have to be content with examining three variants and leaving the rest for a future study.

Luke 6:9-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codex B</th>
<th>Codex D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. εἶπεν δὲ ἦς πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἴπερωτον ὑμᾶς εἰ ἐξεστὶ τῷ σαββατῷ ἀγαθοποιήσας ἡ κακοποιήσας ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἡ ἀπολέσαι</td>
<td>9. εἶπεν δὲ ἦς πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἴπερωτος ὑμᾶς εἰ ἐξεστὶν τῷ σαββατῷ ἀγαθοποιήσας ἡ κακοποιήσας ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἡ ἀπολέσαι οἱ δὲ εἰσώπων</td>
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9. "And Jesus said to them
I will ask you if it is
lawful to do good on the
Sabbath or to do evil, to
save life or destroy?

10. And when he had
looked around upon
them all
he said to him
Stretch out your hand
and he did so
and his hand was
restored.

11. And they were filled
with anger and
discussed with one
another what they
might do with Jesus.”

5. "And then he had
looked around upon
them all in wrath
he said to the man
Stretch out your hand
and he stretched it out
and his hand was
restored as the other.

[5] And he said to them
the Son of man is Lord
also of the Sabbath.

11. And they were filled
with anger and
discussed with one
another how they
might destroy him.”
By adding οἱ δὲ εἰσώπτων ("and they were silent") to v. 9 and ἐν ὀργῇ ("in wrath") to v. 10, D harmonizes Luke with Mark and intensifies the confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders. D climaxes this intensified confrontation by a third harmonization with both Mark and Matthew; i.e., the leaders took counsel as to how they might destroy Jesus. By the first two harmonizations considered here, D increases the tension between Jesus and the leaders where Luke had softened the confrontation when compared with Mark. By the final harmonization with Matthew and Mark, D advances in point of time the plotings of the religious leaders to kill Jesus from 19:47 to 6:11 in Luke's tradition.

1. Conclusion

Through carefully placed variant readings, the Western text shows a decided anti-Judaic bias in Luke. This bias is seen more clearly in D than in other Western manuscripts, because D has a number of singular readings that are anti-Judaic in nature. In this study, the anti-Judaic biases are seen in: (1) the use of πονηρός ("evil")’ (2) adding ἵνα σωθῶμεν ("that we might be saved") to the question τί ποιήσωμεν ("what shall we do") asked of John by the crowds, the publicans, and the soldiers, but not by the leaders; and (3) three harmonizations that intensify a sabbath confrontation between Jesus and the leaders and in Luke's tradition throws forward by thirteen chapters the plotings of the leaders to kill Jesus.