

ARE THERE TWO LUKAN TEXTS OF ACTS?

THE most remarkable fact in recent criticism of the *Acts of the Apostles* is the increased importance attached to the "Western Text." The origin of that Text is discussed from various points of view, and with widely varying results; but undoubtedly the opinion which recognises the high value of that Text is growing in strength. The latest work of Prof. Blass in this line of research consists in an attempt to determine the Western Text in the form in which he believes that Paul wrote it. To this task he has applied all the learning and critical skill which have earned for him a leading place among the great scholars of the nineteenth century; and he has prefixed to the little book a preface in the crisp and epigrammatic style of Latin, which he handles so well.¹ Whereas he formerly rejected the name "Western" (which Hort preferred) as far too narrow a designation for a Text which was so widely spread, and one of whose chief representatives is a Syriac Version, he now acknowledges that he was mistaken (p. vi. f.); and he uses the even narrower title "Roman," understanding that this form of Text took its origin in Rome, when Luke was the companion of Paul's imprisonment there, and spread thence in all directions, being diffused in Syria through the influence of Tatian. Hort's title is thus justified; and we may continue to use it, confirmed by Blass's support.

Dr. Blass's theory—that Luke wrote two distinct Texts of *Acts*, first a longer (the "Roman" or Western), and thereafter a more concise form of the same book—is familiar to

¹ Acta Apostolorum, sive Lucae ad Theophilum liber alter. Secundum formam quae videtur Romanam edidit Fridericus Blass, 1896.

every one, and finds a growing number of adherents. The list of scholars who support it becomes steadily more imposing, alike from their numbers and their high standing in the world of scholarship. Yet I cannot but feel that in regard to their contention a distinction must be made. They have conclusively established, as I think, part of their theory; but in part of it they go too far, and will have to retract their position, inasmuch as they fail to rightly distinguish the bearing of certain facts. They sometimes argue quite correctly (as it seems to me) that the historical value attaching to the Western form of a certain sentence is so high that this form must be due to Luke himself; but they proceed incorrectly to infer that there must be two original and Lukan forms of the sentence in question. I miss in several such cases¹ the proof, or the probability, that the Eastern form of the sentence is equally original and good.

I have always, even before Dr. Blass had published anything on the subject, urged (1) that a high historical value belongs to many statements made in the Western Text; (2) that in a certain number of cases the Western variants either give exactly, or approximate to, the original words of Luke. But in most cases there seems to me to be good reason for regarding only one form of sentence as Lukan, and the other as a corruption. On p. viii. of his preface Dr. Blass claims that my arguments in favour of the historical truth of "Western" sentences are in reality so many proofs of his theory; but in several of these cases it seems to me that the Eastern Text is bad, and that the "Western" Text points the way to the true form, as written by Luke. This prefatory explanation is needed to make my position in the following pages clear.

¹ In a few cases, however, as will appear in the sequel, I believe that the case is probably made out, and that two forms of sentence may be with some probability assigned to Luke.

Through much of what Dr. Blass has written on this question we recognise the tone of the explorer, so intent on his own quest that he sees only the facts which tell in his own favour. Let me give one example of this.

On p. xi. f. he urges, as a strong confirmation of the existence of two original Lukan Texts, that in the speeches of *Acts* far fewer differences occur between the Eastern and Western Texts than in the narrative portions, whereas, if the Western Text were merely due to corruption, there ought to be as many variations from the Eastern Text in speeches as in narrative. So far his reasoning is obviously correct. The author, if he wrote two forms of his work, would be less likely to vary his expression in speeches, which he took on authority, than in narrative, where his expression was more free. Dr. Blass also points out that in the long speech of Peter ii. 14-40 all the variations that occur are quite unimportant; and in a note he quotes many other examples (several of which, however, do not show such very marked adherence to the rule which he has stated).

But every one must surely see that, if Luke felt himself bound to avoid variations in the case of speeches, much more would he feel himself bound to avoid them where he quotes a document *verbatim*. Now in xv. 23-29 he quotes a short document, embodying the Decree of the Apostolic Council. The document was of immense importance in his estimation, for he describes with unusual minuteness the stages of the action that led up to it. The value of such a Decree, laying down a universal rule of life intended to apply to all Gentile Christians, depends on scrupulous adherence to the exact words. But in this short Decree, Luke felt himself—according to Dr. Blass—free to give as equally authoritative and equally authentic two forms, varying from each other in four places; further, one of these variations is in respect of the rules laid down for the

guidance of Gentile Christians. We are asked to believe that in his first edition Luke gave a fuller form of the Decree; and that, when he revised his work, he cut out from *v.* 24 the words "telling you to be circumcised and to observe the Law," from *v.* 26 the words "to every trial," from *v.* 29 the words "and not to do unto another whatsoever things you do not wish to be done to yourselves," and from the end of the same verse "being borne onwards in the Holy Spirit." *Credat Iudæus Apella!*

It seems clear that both these forms cannot be of genuine Lukan origin: if the longer Western form is Lukan, the Eastern is mutilated by a later hand; if the Eastern form is Lukan, the Western has been interpolated by a later editor, who thrust into it scraps, the origin of which is readily traceable, while their presence adds little to the force and vigour of the Decree. Take, for example, the precept interpolated in *v.* 29. If such a precept had been written by the Apostles, why should Luke quote it rightly in one draft, and then cut it out? The real question is—did the original Decree contain the precept? Two lines of argument are open on this question.

(1) It might be plausibly argued, in a narrow logical view, that the interpolation spoils the Decree. The Apostles prescribe for the Gentiles certain rules of purity, which are advisable in order to facilitate intercourse between Jewish and Gentile Christians,¹ and which in all prob-

¹ I take this opportunity of correcting the erroneous interpretation of *πορνεια* given in my *St. Paul the Traveller*, pp. 169, 171. The obviously ceremonial character of the other rules, in contrast with the moral character of the prohibition of *πορνεια*, has led several scholars to hold that the word here denotes merely marriages within the forbidden degrees, which were allowed by Gentile law, but forbidden by Jewish law; and I wrongly adopted that view. It seems now clear to me that the Jews in this rule had been striking at a general and deep-rooted characteristic of pagan society, which at once cut off the pagans from intercourse with the Jews. In the opinion of even the best and most enlightened parts of pagan society habitual immorality (*πορνεια*) was permissible and natural and right (practically the same view that is advocated

ability had long been recognised by the Jews as obligatory on all Gentiles who desired to come into relations with a synagogue; but the brief rule of moral character which is added in the Western Text spoils the simple force of the Decree. Then a later editor, who missed the true bearing of the Decree, found that here there was a lack of recognition of the moral side of life; and he interpolated the wide-spread maxim, summing up a man's duty to his neighbours, which is old Jewish in its negative form, $\delta \muισε\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\varsigma \mu\eta\delta\epsilon\nu\acute{\iota} \pi\omicron\upsilon\eta\sigma\eta\varsigma$,¹ and is enunciated by Christ in its positive form (Matt. vii. 12; Luke vi. 31). This argument is thin, and lacks historical feeling.

(2) The added precept is a younger mixture of the Jewish negative form with Christ's positive form. But it is used in *Didache* i. 2, and therefore probably had an authoritative first century origin.² It stands on the level of the new *Logia*, representing a stage of thought later than Christ's, but earlier than the authoritative diffusion of the Gospels. Its fusion of Christ's words with the old Jewish rule is peculiarly suitable to the conciliatory attitude of James; but its variation from the Gospel form led to its being cut out from the Eastern Text at a later time. The Western Text seems to me Apostolic and Lukan.

Again, we observe sometimes that a view of life pervades a number of Western variants, different from that which characterizes the Eastern Text. As is shown in the following pages, Dr. Blass asks us to believe that in a series of

by some persons now): it became wrong only when complicated with extravagance or excess. Hence, before any pagan could be allowed to approach the synagogue, he must recognise and practise a stricter rule of life. The Apostles adopted this along with the other rules of purity, not implying thereby that Gentile Christians were to look on the avoidance of *πορνεία* as a merely ceremonial rule, but making it clear to all Jews that the necessary and fundamental rules of purity were observed by the Gentile Christians.

¹ Tobit iv. 16.

² See an interesting and suggestive paper by Mr. K. Lane in the *Classica Review*, April, 1897, p. 147.

cases Luke, after referring to Divine action as influencing conduct, changed his mind and cut out the reference (implying in some cases that a different reason actuated his personages). Again, we ask why, if Luke first wrote the Western Text, he should afterwards make the following changes, all showing a different tone as regards the position of women. In xvii. 4 he changed "the chief women" into "the wives of the chief men";¹ in xviii. 26 he placed Aquila before Priscilla instead of the usual order twice followed by Paul;² in xvii. 12 he changed the text so as to place the men of Berœa before the women. The Bezan Text even cuts out Damaris from xvii. 34, but here it stands alone among the Western witnesses, and its evidence in this case cannot be pressed. In xviii. 18 the Western Text gives Priscilla before Aquila; but on the view that during the second century dislike to the prominence of women led to some changes in the text, it is quite natural that the results should be sporadic and incomplete. Even Dr. Blass admits that this kind of change was taking place at a later period, for he sets down the Bezan variants in xvii. 34, xviii. 26, as examples of such change.

Let us now attempt to approach these two Texts, the Western and the Eastern, without prepossession; and let us apply to them the same principles which we apply, when (as is frequently the case) we are confronted with two distinct texts of some old Christian document. For example, we often meet with two or more forms of the *Acta* of some Saint or Martyr; and in many cases it is possible to attain

¹ It is surely not permissible to suppose that Luke adopted the new reading *γυναικῶν τε τῶν πρώτων οὐκ ὀλίγαι*, meaning "not a few of the wives of the chief men."

² Dr. Blass, in spite of the very large proportion of his Western witnesses who attest this variation, rejects it as a corruption, and makes the order the same in both Texts; but this seems contrary to his own principles for constituting the Western Text.

absolute certainty that one of the forms is earlier and another later. In the documents of that class we can distinguish several broad characteristics that mark off later forms from earlier forms. We regularly observe, as time goes on, a tendency in all those documents to pass through a certain series of changes :—

I. The sufferings and persecutions, to which the hero is exposed, are exaggerated and described in more detail ; and new sufferings are often inserted.

II. The miraculous element, especially the direct interference of Divine power in the action, is narrated in a fuller way, and is introduced in a greater number of places.

III. There is a marked tendency towards increased emphasis and exaggeration in general.

IV. The theological element is increased by the introduction of religious formulæ or ideas, and of references to ritual.

The Western Text, as all are agreed, was in existence during the second century. Even those who think it of later origin than the Eastern Text cannot allow a long period for the growth of changes. We cannot therefore on any hypothesis expect to find such serious changes made in the *Acts* as in the *Acta* of some martyr. But still we find in the Western variants examples of all the changes characteristic of later *Acta* as compared with earlier editions of the same *Acta*. The Bezan Text contains more examples for our purpose than does Blass's reconstituted Western Text ; and all those which he does not admit into the Text are regarded by him as corruptions. I shall give in the following list only examples which he admits as Lukan.

I. Exaggeration of Persecutions.

EASTERN TEXT.	WESTERN TEXT.
VIII. 1. διωγμὸς μέγας.	δ. μ. καὶ θλίψις.
XIII. 50. διωγμὸν.	θλίψιν μεγάλην καὶ δ.
XIV. 2. ἐπήγειραν.	ἐπήγαγον διωγμὸν κατὰ τῶν δικαίων.
XIV. 5. ὡς δὲ ἐγένετο ὁρμὴ τῶν ἔθνων τε καὶ Ἰουδαίων σὺν τοῖς ἄρχουσιν αὐτῶν ὑβρίσαι καὶ λιθοβολῆσαι, συνιδόντες κατέφυγον.	καὶ πάλιν ἐπήγειραν διωγμὸν ἐκ δευτέρου οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, σὺν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν καὶ λιθοβολήσαντες ἐξέβαλον αὐτοὺς ἐκ τῆς πόλεως, καὶ φυγόντες ἦλθον.
XIII. 28, 29 is much exaggerated in this direction.	

II. The Miraculous Element and Divine interposition.

EASTERN TEXT.	WESTERN TEXT.
XIX. 6. ἐλάλουν τε γλώσσαις καὶ ἐπροφήτεον.	ἐ. τε γ. ἐτέραις, καὶ ἐπεγίνωσκον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ὥστε καὶ ἐρμηνεύειν αὐτὰς ἑαυτοῖς· τινὲς δὲ κ. ε.
XIX. 14 is lengthened by specification of various details.	
XV. 32. προφήται ὄντες.	π. ο. πλήρεις πνεύματος ἁγίου.
XV. 7, 29, XVII. 15, XIX. 1, XX. 3: see next paragraph.	

Often, the Holy Spirit is introduced in the Western Text as conveying warnings or advice to Paul, where the Eastern Text either is silent about such intimation or even attributes the resulting action to Paul's own mind; *e.g.*, xv. 7, 29, xix. 1, xx. 3. Of these cases, xx. 3 is specially characteristic in the Eastern Text, "Paul determined to return"; in the Western Text, "The Spirit said to him to return." Such change of view implies change of hand.

III. Of emphasis and exaggeration the instances are very numerous, as Mr. Page has pointed out in his clever review (quoted below), *e.g.* :—

EASTERN TEXT.	WESTERN TEXT.
IX. 4. πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν.	π. ε. τ. γ. μετὰ μεγάλης ἐκστάσεως.
IX. 5. ὁ δὲ.	ὁ δὲ τρέμων τε καὶ θαμβῶν.
IX. 34. εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Πέτρος.	ἀνείσας δὲ εἰς αὐτὸν ὁ Π. ε. α. ¹
IX. 20. ἐκήρυσσεν.	ἐ. μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας.
X. 33. παραγενόμενος.	ἐν τάχει π.
XIV. 10. καὶ ἤλατο.	κ. εὐθέως παράχρημα ἦ.
XIV. 20. ἀναστὰς εἰσηλθεν.	ἐσπέρας μόγις ἀ. ε.
XVI. 39. ἐλθόντες παρεκάλεσαν.	παραγενόμενοι μετὰ φίλων πολλῶν ² . . . παρεκάλεσαν.
XXI. 31. The Western Text inserts ὄρα ὅν μὴ ποιῶνται ἐπανάστασιν.	
XIX. 8. ἐπαρρησιάζετο.	ἐν δυνάμει μεγάλῃ ε.

IV. The theological element is frequently added in the Western Text; a typical example is the addition appended to xxviii. 31, "that this is the Christ the Son of God, by whom all the world shall be judged." Other examples are found in xxviii. 19, xiv. 25, xiii. 15, 26, 28 f., 33, 45, 47; but they are so frequent that it is needless to pile up examples.

This selection of specimens, which might be largely increased did I not shrink from loading the pages of the EXPOSITOR, is enough to establish a presumption that the Western Text is of later type than the Eastern. The supporters of Dr. Blass's theory should turn their attention to this line of argument, and not confine themselves to

¹ On the use of ἀνείλξειν by Luke see *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 38 f.

² Emphasizes the humiliation of the apology by laying stress on the crowd of witnesses; in Eastern Text the apology is privately made.

showing that in a considerable number of cases the Western Text is valuable. I am in entire agreement with them on that point; but it does not establish the existence of two Lukan Texts. All that Dr. Blass has proved is that we have two Texts, neither of which gives us the pure Lukan original; and we must work back from them to the form that came from Luke's own hand.

I would even go further to meet Dr. Blass, and admit that in a few passages, perhaps, the two varying forms may have originated from Luke's own hand; but I would explain this, not as due to the intentional composition of two Texts by Luke, but as caused by the fact that the work was not brought to its final stage of perfection when Luke died.¹ Analogies from Lucretius (whose work was likewise never completed) will suggest themselves to every classical scholar; and I believe that at least one example of a duplicate (and perhaps more) could be quoted from the *Æneid*, which was left incomplete at Virgil's death.

On the other hand, Dr. Blass has, I think, triumphantly demonstrated the impossibility of the view that the Western Text has originated purely from corruption of the Eastern. Against such a theory as that, it is quite logical and sound reasoning to found an argument on the value of many Western variants. He has made it clear that the Western Text goes back to a Lukan original differing in many respects from the Eastern Text; and the only point of dissension between him and myself is that I think the Eastern Text goes back to the same Lukan original, whereas Dr. Blass holds that both the Texts are Lukan in their present form.

The Western Text, then, contains, as I think, two classes of variants: (1) passages in which it leads us back to the true Lukan form, corrupted in the Eastern Text; (2) pas-

¹ As is argued in *St. Paul the Traveller, passim*.

sages in which it is distinctly late and corrupt, while the Eastern Text gives a truer form. The non-Lukan variants may have originated either through an accidental process of corruption or through intentional alteration at the hand of an editor or "Reviser." In a number of cases, I think that intentional change must be supposed, as when an obscure or unusual phrase, or a technical term, is replaced by a plainer and simpler expression, *e.g.* κεφαλὴ τῆς Μακεδονίας for πρώτη τῆς μερίδος Μακεδονίας in xvi. 12 (where the interpreting change is complicated by an error in taking μερίδος as "province," instead of "division of a province"). The period when such explanatory changes found a place in the text was beyond any doubt the time when translations into Latin, Syriac, etc., began to be made; *i.e.* the middle of the second century.¹

Assuming the existence of a Reviser, we understand at once why, when he cut out a notable word in one place, he inserted it in some other place, where he thought it suitable. Thus in xiv. 2 he changes ἐπήγειραν to ἐπήγαγον; and in xiv. 5 he inserts ἐπήγειραν by a pure addition; and in xvi. 8 he changes παρήλθεν to διήλθεν, but in xvii. 15 he inserts παρήλθον by a pure addition to the text.²

The general impression that almost every one will derive from reading the Western Text, as reconstituted by Dr. Blass, is a feeling of profound thankfulness, in the interest of good literature, that Luke wrote another text of Acts, and did not content himself with this (supposed) first draft. While there are some cases in which the Western Text avoids a harsh construction, or a strange or obscure word, yet as a work of literature there cannot be any question that the Eastern Text is a far finer work. The interest,

¹ *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 25 f.

² But I admit that there is a possibility that Luke wrote the added sentence of xvii. 15: the decision depends on the unknown point whether Thessaly was in Macedonia, or in Achaia at the time. See *St. Paul the Trav.*, p. 234.

and even the value in many cases, of Dr. Blass's Western Text may be freely admitted; but Luke's claim to rank as a great or a charming writer can be rested with much more confidence on the Eastern Text. Many of the Western additions are weak and otiose, as Mr. Page has pointed out in an able and incisive (but rather one-sided) review.¹ A typical example of the sacrifice of effect is found in xii. 25, where the Western Text reads, "Paul, who is called by the additional name Saul." All the force, which is gained in the Eastern Text by introducing the transition from the Hebrew to the Greek name at a critical and turning point in the action (XIII. 9), is lost. The transition is introduced at an unimportant point; the author then returns to the Hebrew name; and then a second time makes the transition. A most marked and impressive literary effect, gained in the simplest way in the original and in the Eastern Text, is thus ruined in the Western Text; and it seems hardly open to doubt that *ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος Παῦλος* is a mere gloss on the phrase used in XIII. 9 (*ὁ καὶ Παῦλος*)² which has crept into the text at a wrong place.

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¹ The *Classical Review*, July, 1897, p. 217.

² The amount of erroneous commentary that has been written on this phrase shows how needful some explanatory gloss was.