

## JUSTIN MARTYR: AN EARLY “WESTERN” WITNESS TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS?

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The claim that Justin used a “Western” text of the synoptic gospels appears to be something of an urban legend in New Testament textual criticism, a claim that is often repeated in introductory texts though without specific documentation regarding its source.<sup>1</sup> For example, Justin’s name features consistently in lists of second-century writers who *depended* on “Western” texts. Thus, Vaganay and Amphoux single out Justin’s quotations “because of the number of ‘Western’ readings they contain,” noting that Justin “*use[s]* a text ... of the same type as Codex Bezae.”<sup>2</sup> Metzger and Ehrman link Justin to the “Western” text three times in their introduction, asserting, for example, that “the Western type of text can be traced to a very early date, for it was *used* by Marcion, Justin, Heracleon, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and other patristic sources of the second century.”<sup>3</sup> Similar claims are made at least as far back as Souter, Lake, and B. Weiss.<sup>4</sup> But the

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the designation “Western” text by convention.

<sup>2</sup> “The quotations [of the apologists] are more substantial, especially those of Justin, and have attracted the attention of several scholars because of the number of ‘Western’ readings they contain.” L. Vaganay and C.- B. Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (trans. Jenny Read-Heimerdinger; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 47. “Justin and Irenaeus also use a text of the Gospels and Acts of the same type as Codex Bezae.” *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>3</sup> B. M. Metzger and B. D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 277. Cf. pp. 178 and 308: “Because the Western type of text was used by such second- and early third-century authors as Marcion, Justin (and probably Tatian), Heracleon, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, most scholars date to the emergence of the Western text to the mid-second century or shortly thereafter.” *Ibid.*, 308. The first list is distinctly more cautious and drops Heracleon for Hippolytus and Cyprian: “Marcion, Tatian, Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Cyprian all made use to a greater or lesser

claim is not limited to text-critical introductions. In his *Ancient Christian Gospels*, Helmut Koester likewise observes that “special affinities of Justin’s quotations with the Western text are well known and are a very strong argument for the existence of this text type in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century,” defining “special affinities” elsewhere as the basis of Justin’s quotations.<sup>5</sup> Now, words like *uses* and *basis* imply that Justin’s synoptic gospel traditions ultimately *depend* on a source whose readings, at least, might be defined somehow in terms of “Western” witnesses, such as D and the Old Latins. But given the allusive nature of Justin’s citations, the ambiguity concerning his sources, and the inherent difficulty of demonstrating dependency in the first place, we are entitled to wonder as to how much of Justin’s evidence can withstand the scrutiny required to substantiate this claim.<sup>6</sup>

In this paper, I have decided to focus on three citations in which Justin seems to preserve a “Western” reading, occurring at Luke 10:16, Mark 10:18, and Matthew 25:41. My research on Justin’s citations suggests that these readings are the most likely to reflect “Western” influence of Justin’s unambiguous citations. From an initial pool of about 300 synoptic-gospel citations gathered from the critical editions by Marcovich, Munier, and Bobichon, I found that only about

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extent of a Western form of text.” Ibid., 178. The same claim can be found in older introductions, such as Lake, who writes that “[m]any ... Western readings are traceable in the text *used* by Justin Martyr and by Marcion, etc.” Lake, *The Text of the New Testament* (1902), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Souter (1913); Lake (1908); B. Weiss, 1888, 2:422n6.

<sup>5</sup> H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Trinity, 1990) 365n1.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. *The New Testament in the Greek Fathers* series.

ten can be mapped to a specific gospel tradition in a passage that contains a “Western” reading.<sup>7</sup> While, in seven or so, Justin follows the mainstream reading against the “Western,” in at least three cases he does for the most part appear to cite the “Western” reading with slight differences. I will suggest, however, that, when these differences are considered, the “Western” reading reflects a more developed text form by internal criteria than that of Justin and, hence, that the “Western” reading is more likely to be relatively recent compared to that of Justin. Moreover, the Old Latin readings in the same passages independently suggest a similar sequence in these readings. This idea is not new. Commenting on the early Christian writers whose citations resemble Justin’s saying in *Apology* 16.10 and 63.5, A.J. Bellinzoni observes that, “because Justin is the earliest of these witnesses, it is impossible to conclude whether this variant existed before Justin or whether he himself is its author.”<sup>8</sup> Koester wonders whether “Justin [is] a witness for the early existence of the Western Text ... [o]r ... the Western Text ... [is] testimony for the influence of Justin’s Gospel harmony.”<sup>9</sup> Given that Justin’s literary influence extends to possible direct influence on Irenaeus and Tertullian and extended citations by Eusebius as well as

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<sup>7</sup> Marcovich (1994; 1997); Bobichon (2003); Munier (2006). Cf. Minns and Parvis (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 21. Only the citation from the *Apostolic Constitutions* (8.46.1) agrees with Justin and D.

<sup>9</sup> H. Koester, “The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century” in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission* (ed. W.L. Petersen; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) 33.

limited citations by John of Damascus, I would suggest that Justin’s agreement with a “Western” reading does not imply that we can assume the direction of dependence in either direction.<sup>10</sup>

*APOLOGY 16.10; 63.5 (MATTHEW 7:24 + LUKE 10:16)*

The first citation I will examine bears a formal resemblance to Luke 10:16. It occurs in a similar form in *First Apology* 16.10 and 63.5. With two instances of ακουω replacing two of αθετεω, the citation becomes “whoever hears me, hears the one who sent me,” a saying that occurs in the gospels only in the present reading. Bousset calls this “a very old reading of the western text,” cautiously suggesting that Justin may depend here on the “Western” text.<sup>11</sup> Marcovich and Munier are more confident in their recent critical editions, explicitly noting a parallel between Justin’s text and codex D. Of course, this seems to imply that Justin is at these points *following the text of D*.

However, as Andrew Gregory points out in *The Reception of Luke and Acts*, it is far from certain that Justin is citing a Lukan tradition here.<sup>12</sup> No doubt the assumption that he is stems from Luke’s use of an ακουω-based saying in the immediately preceding context. I would suggest that the idea of hearing in Justin’s citation more likely reflects his own redacted form of

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<sup>10</sup> Skarsaune, 435-453. Justin is mentioned at several points in Eusebius’ history, which mentions eight writings. Book 4, ch. 8, 12, 16-18. Justin is mentioned by Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.11; 5.26. See S. Parvis, “Justin Martyr and the Apologetic Tradition.” See Marcovich, *Apologies*, 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Bousset: “einer sehr alten Lesart des western text,” and notes “dürfte die Vermutung nicht abzuweisen sein, dass J. den Herrenspruch in dieser Fassung in seiner Quelle las.” Bousset, *Die Evangeliencitate Justins*, 87. Ⓣ was not available to Bousset.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Gregory, *Reception*, 243.

the saying in *Apology* 16.10.<sup>13</sup> Here the saying is a redaction of Matthew 7:24, which in its canonical form reads “whoever hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise person.” But in Justin’s form, the ending is redacted to “whoever hears me and does what I say, *hears the one who sent me,*” echoing the memorable form of the sayings at Matthew 10:40 and Luke 10:16, but in an entirely new context. In *Apology* 63.5, Justin uses the same redacted saying, but this time introduces it with the solemn attribution, “our Lord himself said,” creating what appears to be a new saying of the Lord. However, for later traditions that encountered Justin’s supposed “saying” and could not find it in their copies, Luke 10:16 would naturally suggest itself as a potential place to preserve this apparent *agraphon*, whether in a marginal note or perhaps in the text itself.

It is remarkable, then, that the readings preserved in D, Θ, and f<sup>13</sup> appear to be conflated forms of the mainstream text with a saying like Justin’s. If we allow that Justin’s form and the “Western” form may be related, then, on internal grounds, it would seem that the more-developed readings in D, Θ, and f<sup>13</sup> would reflect traditions later than Justin. If this is so, the form in D would have replaced the verb ἀθετεῶ with ἀκουῶ in a manner that succeeds in preserving the saying about hearing, though at the expense of a perhaps less-quotable saying about rejecting. The second form, in Θ and f<sup>13</sup>, would have appended Justin’s saying to the mainstream form, thereby, preserving both traditions intact. In either case, the priority of Justin’s text form is assumed whether or not there is direct dependence. If we turn to the Old Latin evidence, there are two main forms: first, the reading of the African-based witness *Palatinus* (e), which renders the Greek mainstream reading and betrays no acquaintance with the “Western” form and, second, the conflated form in the European tradition. If we take *Palatinus* (e) to reflect

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<sup>13</sup> See Koester and Bellinzoni.

the state of the Latin text at the time of Cyprian, as is usually thought, there is no evidence, then, that the “Western” reading in Luke 10:16 was known in the Old Latin tradition until after the mid-third century. While, admittedly, this does not provide us with positive evidence for reconstruction neither does it negate the possibility that Justin’s form precedes that of D as suggested by internal criteria.<sup>14</sup>

*APOLOGY* 16.7 (MARK 10:17-18; LUKE 18:18-19)<sup>15</sup>

My second citation occurs in a Matthean form in the *Dialogue* and a Markan or Lukan form in the *Apology*. The latter form is unusual because Justin’s “Western” citation appears as a Latin reading in Luke and as a Greek reading in Mark.<sup>16</sup> Due to Justin’s usual preference for Matthean and Lukan material, it appears more likely that he follows Luke.<sup>17</sup> The variant reading involves a single word in Jesus’ response to the rich young man, where, in Mark, the mainstream text has [ουδεις αγαθος ει μη] εις ο θεος or “one is good, God,” but Justin has [ουδεις αγαθος ει μη] μονος ο θεος or “only God is good.” On the other hand, D has the apparently conflated form [ουδεις αγαθος ει μη] μονος εις θεος or “only one is good, God.”<sup>18</sup> Of course, if D’s reading is

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<sup>14</sup> Fischer (1972); Haelewyck (2013).

<sup>15</sup> Justin cites the same passage in an adapted form in the *Dialogue* 101.2 which will not be discussed here, since does not attest the “Western” reading.

<sup>16</sup> While the narrative introduction to the citation parallels Matthew 19:16, starting with the young man’s address διδασκαλε αγαθε, the wording parallels Mark and Luke. See Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 18. See W. Bousset, *Die Evangeliencitate Justins des Märtyrers in ihrem Wert für die Evangelienkritik* (Göttingen, 1891), 105.

<sup>17</sup> See Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 140, on Justin’s preference for Matthew and Luke. Cf. Koester (2007) 46-50.

<sup>18</sup> The loss of article is typical of D’s Latin scribe and is not genetically significant. See Parker (1992).

truly a conflated form, it would, then, reflect the mixture of the two earlier traditions rather than influencing either one. Turning to the Old Latin evidence in Mark, we again find that the African tradition supports the mainstream reading *unus*, this time represented by Bobbiensis (**k**), which, according to Fischer and Haelewyck is not earlier than 230 C.E.<sup>19</sup> While D's reading has yet to appear in the early European witness Vercellensis (**a**), it is finally attested in Veronensis (**b**), Corbiensis (**ff**<sup>2</sup>), and Bezae (D/**d**), witnesses that, according to *Vetus Latina*, belong to a latter fourth-century text form, which Fischer calls the "progressive" Italian text from 350-380 C.E.<sup>20</sup> While clearly no definite conclusions are possible from this limited evidence, it does call into question any *a priori* assumptions concerning the necessary priority of the "Western" reading when it agrees with Justin.

While the manuscript tradition provides no evidence of a conflated reading in the second century, it turns out that Justin's Valentinian contemporary, Ptolemy, also references a Jesus saying with the conflated terms, writing in direct appeal to the spoken authority of Jesus, that "our Savior has declared that his Father ... is the one and only good God."<sup>21</sup> One might wonder, then, whether Ptolemy got his reading from a "Western" text. To assess this possibility, I examined the synoptic citations in Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*, which contains thirteen clear parallels to Matthew and one each to Mark and Luke, among which there are six variants with

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<sup>19</sup> Fischer (1972); Haelewyck (2013).

<sup>20</sup> In support of the mid-fourth century date, Haelewyck shows that in Mark this text form is not attested before Hilary. See Haelewyck (2003). I.e. "den fortschrittlichen italienischen Text um etwa 350-380." Fischer, "Das Neue Testament in lateinischer Sprache," 36.

<sup>21</sup> *Pan.* 33.7.4-5; trans. Williams (1987), 203.

“Western” readings.<sup>22</sup> In each case, though, Ptolemy agrees with the mainstream reading against the “Western.” While clearly this is a small basis, at the same time, it offers no encouragement for the view that Ptolemy depends on D-type readings. A simpler hypothesis, I would suggest, is that Ptolemy chooses the word *μονος* to argue that the demiurge is merely just, but not good, unlike the one only good God. Since Ptolemy provides doubtful contemporary evidence of the “Western” reading, there is no reason to throw out the possibility that Justin’s reading reflects an earlier form.

Finally, I should note that neither the mainstream nor “Western” forms explains *why* Justin chooses to call God *μονος* but not *εις*. Of course, with Justin, we must allow for the possibility that he adapted the citation to meet the needs of his argument.<sup>23</sup> While this may seem like an all-too-convenient plea, examination of Justin’s passage reveals that the word *μονος* carries some rhetorical weight, with three other occurrences in the immediate context, starting with the Matthean-influenced formulation of the Shema using *μονος*.<sup>24</sup> In the context, Justin’s defense of Christian teaching hinges not on God’s *oneness*, but on his *unique* worthiness of human worship and good deeds. While an anti-Valentinian factor is certainly plausible, I would suggest that Justin’s ultimate inspiration for the word *μονος* is not the “Western” text, but Matthew 4:10. If this is so, Justin has once again seemingly redacted a new “saying” of Jesus

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<sup>22</sup> Köhler (1987) 349. For Mark 7:11, see *Pan.* 33.9.5.

<sup>23</sup> See Verheyden, “Assessing Gospel Quotations in Justin Martyr,” in *Festschrift J. Delobel* (2002) on the redaction aspects.

<sup>24</sup> Of course, neither the LXX nor the MT has a placeholder for *μονος* at Deuteronomy 6:3. The inspiration apparently comes from Matthew 4:10. See Davies and Allison, 1:373, who point to 1 Kgdms 7:3 LXX: *ἐτοιμάσατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν πρὸς κύριον καὶ δουλεύσατε αὐτῷ μόνω*.

into existence, which may well have influenced later traditions, whether through marginal notes or an impulse to preserve *non-canonical* Jesus sayings.<sup>25</sup>

#### DIALOGUE 76.5 (MATTHEW 25:41)

My third text is from the *Dialogue*, where Justin cites Matthew 25:41, though with some key differences with respect to both the mainstream *and* the “Western” text forms. The “Western” reading is essentially the active form of ητοιμασεν with ο πατηρ as subject, a reading is supported in a wide variety forms by an equally impressive array of early Christian writers, including Pseudo-Clement, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.<sup>26</sup> While there is no synoptic parallel, two elements of Justin’s citation parallel other Matthean texts: first, the characteristic Matthean expression “to the outer darkness” at Matthew 8:12; 22:13; and 25:30; and, second, the combination of “Father” (or “king”) with “prepare” at Matthew 20:23; 22:4; and 25:34. On the other hand, two ideas link this citation to Matthew 25:41: first, the expression of going to a destination of eternal ruin, whether “outer darkness” for Justin and the Clementines or “eternal fire” for all other Greek witnesses including D and, second, the expression “for the devil and his angels,” for which Justin alone reads “Satan,” possibly by redaction. While patterned on material from Matthew 25:41, it seems Justin’s text is a composite of several Matthean statements concerning the final judgment.

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<sup>25</sup> B. Aland on conservatism of D in Acts (1986) 32. The case of the “Western” non-interpolations is for another day, though it seems germane that each “Western” non-interpolation avoids a contradictory account, e.g. the Eucharistic words, Peter’s race to the tomb, the lance in Jesus’ side – each one conflicts with an account in another gospel.

<sup>26</sup> Birdsall (1989) 13.

The first thing to note is that the reading has ancient support that is not “Western.” According to Anderson, it has the manuscript support of five f<sup>1</sup> members and Origen in addition to D and the unmixed Old Latins.<sup>27</sup> As such, it cannot be shown that Justin depends on the “Western” as opposed to a common underlying tradition.<sup>28</sup> More important, I think, is Justin’s lack of the possessive pronoun, which again seems to reflect a more primitive form, a form that appears also in the Clementines and once in Irenaeus. While it is possible that Justin dropped the pronoun, the normal tendency of correction would seem to favor the more specific, clarifying form found in the reading of D and family 1.<sup>29</sup> What is consistent with previous observations is that the reading supported by D seems to attest a more evolved *form* of the variant.

### CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have looked at three citations in which Justin’s text form generally agrees with the “Western” reading, but internal criteria suggest that Justin’s form is more primitive. I am suggesting that Justin does *not* attest “Western” text forms at these points and, moreover, that the reverse possibility should be kept open. To conclude, I would like to suggest three factors that may contribute to the view that Justin’s text depends here on the “Western” reading:

First, I would suggest that what constitutes a “Western” reading depends somewhat on the perspective taken of textual history. If “Western” readings are regarded as a pervasive

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<sup>27</sup> Anderson (2004) 123.

<sup>28</sup> Zuntz (1954; 1972).

<sup>29</sup> I.e. Griesbach’s canon #3 : “‘The harsher [or rougher] reading is preferable to that which flows pleasantly and smoothly.’ ‘Harsher’ refers to readings that are elliptical, Hebraizing, ungrammatical, contrary to normal Greek usage, or offensive to the ears.” From Epp (2005) 141.

corrupting influence on the Greek tradition as in Hort's model, then readings will be identified as "Western" that include a fair amount of non-"Western" support. On the other hand, if "Western" readings are regarded as a distinctive stream as in Zuntz' model, then readings will only be considered "Western" that are limited to typical "Western" witnesses (setting aside for now the question of what that means), while readings that are shared with other Greek witnesses rather reflect a common "reservoir."<sup>30</sup> Studies that assume the former model would be expected to identify more readings as "Western".

Second, I would suggest that the present limited state of our knowledge of the factors behind "Western" readings requires some tentativeness concerning which witnesses are *assumed* to attest prior readings at points of variation. One assumption that I would like to question is that the common "Western" element in D and the Old Latins necessarily attests a second-century text. A number of studies on "Western" gospel readings in the earliest writers suggest that the tradition may not have come into existence at the time of Justin, including E.C. Blackman's investigation of Marcion's citations in the Old Latin gospels, B. Aland's comparison of Irenaeus' citations with D in Acts, C. Cosaert's analysis of the gospels in Clement, and J.C. Fenton's unpublished dissertation on Hippolytus.<sup>31</sup> I've argued the same seems true for Ptolemy and, at least partially (as far as I've argued here), for Justin. (An exception seems to be Ehrman's study of Heracleon.) Aland's study of the "Western" Acts text warrants special consideration due the historical model she develops to explain the evidence, a model that situates second-century "free" texts like those of Justin and Irenaeus significantly earlier than the layer D shares with the

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<sup>30</sup> G. Zuntz (1954; 1972). This is on Paul and Acts.

<sup>31</sup> Blackman (1948); B. Aland (1986); Cosaert (2008); J.C. Fenton, "The New Testament Text of Hippolytus of Rome," 2 parts. B.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1952.

Old Latin, separated perhaps by over a century. Of course, under Aland's reconstruction, direct dependence could only be of "Western" forms on Justin.

Third, two areas that cannot be taken for granted in relation to the problem of the "Western" text are the Old Latin version and harmonizing traditions. Not only does the Old Latin have the advantage of so-called "translation color," but there are more witnesses to compare and a better understanding of their development. Likewise, given Justin's apparent use of harmonies and the phenomenon of "Western" harmonization, these traditions cannot be overlooked either. Ultimately, despite some shared characteristics and possibly some shared readings, there seems to be a fundamental lack of cohesiveness between Justin and the "Western" witnesses. While the three readings I examined are just a sliver of the tradition, it seems they have a great deal to offer in terms of the necessary cautions they raise and the insights they potentially offer concerning openness to new sets of assumptions.