

The Acts of the Holy Spirit in Codex Bezae

An Examination of Variants in D⁰⁵
With Application to Pneumatology

Bob Welch

The Acts of the Holy Spirit in Codex Bezae

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Preface

The presentation of the Holy Spirit in Acts has been historically significant in the general understanding of how the Spirit works within and among Christian believers. The Biblical record in this regard has been fairly understandable from Greek manuscripts dating from the early 2nd to 5th centuries CE. Therefore, with a generally agreeable text of Acts, translations have been made to spread this knowledge. Of course, it is fairly well known that the different points of view arose over the centuries that have either reduced the Acts story as historical only, and yet not practical for today, and or to the other side whereby the gifts of healing, tongues, and miracles have been interpreted as still happening currently. This early Greek/Latin manuscript dates from the 4th century CE but it's exemplar (the copy it is based upon) shows readings of a very early and theologically consistent text of the 2nd century CE. The importance of this is seen in the definite readings that seem to have been not used after the Alexandrian texts and copying system began then as well. The Codex Bezae manuscript was located in the monastic library of St. Irenaeus in Lyon, France (as early as ninth century) and eventually found it's way to the University of Cambridge in the UK. Therefore, it is of an important early dating, and its readings show consistency. In other words, its readings do not seem to have been created as alterations of the AT manuscripts.

This work is a theological study of different readings in Codex Bezae from Acts that have an influence upon current pneumatological research. More specific actions of the disciples in regards to the Spirit, a methodology of interacting with the Spirit, and an important point of how God activated a validating process (as developed in the OT Jewish hermeneutic) to signal God's authority and proof of action. Several texts from Acts are examined with the intent to show how the Bezan text speaks of (1) the 'reception of the Holy Spirit' and its connection to conversion-initiation, (2) Luke's theological intention, (3) the significance of an inspired vocalization, e.g., glossolalia, as evidence of reception of

the Holy Spirit, and (4) the activity of the synergism of working with the Holy Spirit. It is the intention of this writer that more awareness be made of specific readings that can enlighten more discussion of the theology of the Spirit, and, practically, how this affects ecclesiastical doctrine as well as Christian mission.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Problem Stated

The study of the variant readings on New Testament manuscripts has normally been accomplished on a case-by-case methodology only for specific texts. This research is the evaluation of many specific variant readings present in Acts of an early Greek-Latin bilingual manuscript when compared to another.¹ This work reveals many significant differences that indicate, perhaps, theological motivations for either omission or addition. Ultimately, this study concludes a pneumatological distinction that has needed recognition, especially within the aspects of doctrinal beliefs and current research of the actions of the Holy Spirit.

Since Theodore Beza first presented the major uncial manuscript², a Greek-Latin diglot, in 1581 to Cambridge University, the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis³ has been extensively analyzed and compared with the Alexandrian text-type⁴. The last century has seen many attempts toward explaining the reason for the many variants and, subsequently, the debate has grown stronger for evidence of not only the manuscript's antiquity, but also of its importance as a 'primary' source.⁵

¹ This research is based upon earlier work: Bob Welch, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit in Codex Bezae: An Examination of Variants in D05 with Application to Pneumatology," M.Th. diss., University of Wales, Bangor, 2006.

² Codices: D^{ea}(05)—Greek column; it^{ea}(05)—Latin column; parchment with 415 folios.

³ This Greek-Latin Uncial manuscript was first obtained by Theodore Beza from the Monastery of Ireaneus of Lyons and presented to the University of Cambridge in 1581, according to the letter attached. A transcription was completed by F. H. Scrivener in 1864 and has been reprinted: F. H. Scrivener, *Bezae Codex Cantabrigiensis* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1996).

⁴ Codex Sinaiticus— \aleph ⁰¹ and Codex Vaticanus—B03 represent this family for this study.

⁵ Supporters of either priority of the Codex Beza or else parity with the Alexandrian text include A. C. Clark, C. B. Amphoux, M.-E. Boismard, A. Lamouille, W. A. Strange, J. Rius-Camps, J. Read-Heimerdinger. Those recognizing an early date for the exemplar used and yet rejecting the text as scribal or redactor interpolation and gloss include H. J. Ropes, B. Aland, D. C. Parker, to name a few.

The purpose for this discussion is to analyze the theological affect of the textual variants on our current understanding of Pneumatology. Specifically, an attempt will be made to ascertain the influence in Acts directly connected with the “Holy Spirit” on current debates concerning ‘reception of the Spirit’, intention, and normative experience. This research will attempt to suggest answers to the question: How do the variants in Codex Beza affect our understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit for (1) conversion-initiation versus Spirit reception, (2) the theological intention of Luke, and (3) the significance of glossolalia with Spirit reception, and ultimately (4) the importance of cooperation with the Spirit?

Theological emphases or ‘tendencies’ have been noted for many years⁶, e.g., an anti-Judaic tendency, greater emphasis on Peter the apostle, Christological titles, and a greater stress on the Holy Spirit. Studies that are more recent have discerned important nuances that do not seem to indicate normal scribal interpolation but rather point to either a knowledgeable redactor or the author himself. Codex Beza’s Greek, in D05, seems to be based on a different exemplar than the Latin side. Although confining the study to the Greek D05, the Latin variants will also be examined in critical areas when needed.

An important point of these “tendencies,” concerns the seeming position of the writer. Theophilus, although a common name, is importantly related as the third son of the High Priest Annas (37–41 CE) and indeed would be able to support the much more ‘Jewish’ perspective inherent in the Bezan text. Read-Heimerdinger/Rius-Camps particularly note the absence of any mention of a future day of judgment in the Bezan text. This is specifically important in consideration of judgment to a Jewish context and person as Theophilus. As Read-Heimerdinger/Rius-Camps state:

“The absence of the idea of judgment is further confirmed when Luke’s Gospel in D05 is compared with parallel pas-

⁶ See E. J. Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966; repr. Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2001). Epp clarifies the term ‘anti-Judaic’ as being a general opposition to Judaism as the religious complex system in that day. The apostles and Christians were in opposition to the ‘religious system’ out of which Christianity arose.

sages in Matthew where the day of judgment is explicitly referred to (cf. Mt. 10.15; 11.22, 24; 12.41, 42 with Lk. 10.14 D05; 11.31 D05)...this silencing of the theme of judgment is continued in Luke's second volume where on three occasions, a speech is cut short at the point when judgment begins to be mentioned with reference to the Gentile audience (e.g. Peter to Cornelius in Caesarea, Acts 10.42-44, etc.)...and this theme of judgment would be of special relevance to a Jewish person such as Theophilus, for whom the destruction of the Temple would have raised questions precisely on this issue, as to whether or not it was to be regarded as a punishment for the rejection of the Messiah. Luke's answer according to D05 is that judgment was not part of Jesus' teaching."⁷

Therefore, rather than an "anti-Judaic" perspective (implying a later Gentile writer and position), the Jewish perspective of the errors of those apostles, leaders, etc., in the gradual growth of a correct understanding of the history of Israel is in evidence within the Bezan text, rather than the AT (B03). This is why the apostles, including Paul, are shown in their struggle with the Spirit as they grasp the teaching of Jesus. In fact, the deliberate emphasis on Jesus giving orders "through the Holy Spirit" (διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου), is important theologically as this continues through Bezan Acts. R. Harris⁸ was the first to suggest Montanist⁹ influence upon

⁷ Josep Rius-Camps, and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *Luke's Demonstration to Theophilus: The Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles according to Codex Bezae* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), xxvi-xxvii.

⁸ Harris, J. Rendel, *Codex Bezae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), 148-153.

⁹ Montanus was a leader of a charismatic movement in the 2nd century, which promoted the gifts of the Spirit, particularly prophetic utterances. McDonnell proposes that the disappearance of charismatic gifts in later years may have been a reaction against Montanism and offers evidence that Cyril of Jerusalem, during the period of A.D. 348-380, changed from an open proclamation of the gifts to one of veiled references thirty years later. See K. McDonnell, and Montague, G. T., *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit—Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Minnesota: Liturgical, 1994), 231-232.

the text, although some disagreed.¹⁰ Evidence of direct Montanist scribal influence may not be proven but a more vivid description and involvement of the Holy Spirit is clearly depicted in D05. To be sure, many of these variants have been judged as 'secondary' by Biblical texts and, therefore, are even today not treated as acceptable as 'certain'. Yet a number of scholars firmly argue that Codex Beza's variants are closer to an 'original' text in comparison to Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. This will be briefly discussed in the background material. It is argued that Codex Beza presents many variants in Acts which may be described as 'more accurate' than either Codex Sinaiticus or Codex Vaticanus. Although it is not proposed that D05 in Acts is the 'original text', yet the sociological and theological emphases noted might indeed reflect the perception of the role of the Spirit at the time of the original exemplar. Particulars of the manuscript generally will serve to introduce the material. The main body of research concerns specific texts in Acts for analysis and interpretation with current pneumatological discussion. Many of these variants have been examined from time to time but their significance has not been actualized, effectively muting discussion or else allowing arguments from silence. The intention of this study is to shed more light on this important topic.

1.2. Method of Approach

A number of textual critical methods have been used in examination of Codex Bezae, yielding conflicting results. Generally, the majority of scholarly research has recognized an early date of the fourth to the sixth century for the manuscript itself and some have posited a date of the second century for its exemplar. This early date notwithstanding, the variants themselves have usually been judged as inferior and only to be used in a support basis for consideration of other manuscripts.¹¹ In the case of interpreting these variants for an understanding of theology, D.

¹⁰ James H. Ropes, *The Text of Acts, Vol III, The Beginnings of Christianity—The Acts of the Apostles*, Part I, ed. Jackson, F. J. F., Lake, K. (Oregon: Wipf, 2002; previous published Macmillan, 1926), ccxxxiv.

¹¹ Kurt Aland & Aland, Barbara, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd edition, trans. Rhodes, E. (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1981), 110.

Parker has noted that discerning “theological tendencies” in the variants of Codex Bezae is bound to be arbitrary and that “it is anachronistic to interpret them from a twentieth-century perspective”.¹² This line of thought is with respect to his basic conclusion after studying Codex Bezae for a number of years that “its many unique readings only very rarely deserve serious consideration.”¹³ However, he does perceive some value by saying,

Theologians, not least moral theologians, need to be aware of its (Codex Bezae) existence, if they are to do justice to the variety of thought alive in the early church.¹⁴

This remark at least allows for discussion on the theological level of the variants that may have reflected popular understanding. From the early 60’s and in the past several years, new research using linguistic methods has renewed a call for reconsideration of D05’s text as a more important text than thus far allowed. J. Read-Heimerdinger¹⁵ has examined the Bezan text of Acts extensively and has offered new linguistic insight that reveals methodological flaws in textual criticism of the text.¹⁶ Applying discourse analysis, she has observed that many differences between D05 and B03 are not merely scribal errors but are the results of the flexibility of communication. Her research confirms that Codex Bezae’s text transmits dates to before the fourth century as its readings are found among the oldest papyri, versions, and Patristic writings. In comparing D05 to B03, she has found that D05 is longer by only 6.6% and that the variation consists of not only additional words but also alternative word use,

¹² D. C. Parker, *Codex Bezae—An Early Christian Manuscript and its Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 190.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 286. A further development along this line is seen in his book: D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997).

¹⁵ J. Read-Heimerdinger, *The Bezan Text of Acts—A Contribution of Discourse Analysis to Textual Criticism*, JSNT (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

¹⁶ E. g. Boismard and Lamouille have arranged their study of the text of Acts into two hypothetical Lukan redactions, TO (Western) and TA (Alexandrian); M. E. Boismard, & Lamouille, A., *Les Actes Des Deux Apotres*, Vol. I, II, III (Paris: Librairie LeCoffe, 1990).

which suggests a complexity beyond the work of a copyist.¹⁷ It has been voiced that perhaps Luke has authored both of the exemplars for D05 and B03 or that both of these text-types represent a now lost original. It seems that each of these exhibit different theological emphases, or more clearly, the Alexandrian-text-type seems more narrative-historical and Bezae, theological didactic.

J. K. Elliott has offered an approach that joins the objective text-critical approach with the more subjective rational eclectic approach to achieve a “thoroughgoing eclecticism” for individual variant readings.¹⁸ He has argued that scribes attempted to correct periphrastic tenses, the author’s use of repetitions, and adjusted grammar. Therefore, instead of rejecting variants based solely on manuscript attestation, a more consistent approach is not bound by the number or alleged quality of particular manuscripts.

J. Epp echoes this position as he reasons that a narrative textual criticism approach, as espoused by Parker and Ehrman, may help to understand the reasoning of church ideology and subsequent influence on these variants.¹⁹ Yet, whether searching for the “original text” or else elevating all variants to the same level of importance, the objective is to come to the one message of truth that the author intended. Moreover, this exactly is the approach of this study. Early witnesses are noted in support of these variants in Acts. However, it is necessary to understand that even if not attested in many witnesses, the value of the variant at least may reside in the understanding of the community that used the text in the fourth century.

¹⁷ The variation is concentrated in introductions to new episodes and transitory sections and summaries. Speech narratives do not show much variation. Her data, 11-15, shows that specific chapters tend to incorporate greater variation of addition/omission and alternative word use.

¹⁸ J. Keith Elliott, ‘An Eclectic Textual Study of the Book of Acts’ in *The Book of Acts as Church History—Text, Textual Traditions and Ancient Interpretations—Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte—Text, Texttraditionen und antike Auslegungen*, Nicklas, T., Tilly, M. (eds.) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 11-12. His highlighting of certain “less than consistent” examples in Nestle-Aland showing that it too includes readings without enough substantiation argues for his approach.

¹⁹ E. J. Epp, ‘Anti-Judaic Tendencies in the D-Text of Acts: Forty Years of Conversation’ in *The Book of Acts as Church History—Text, Textual Traditions and Ancient Interpretations—Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte—Text, Texttraditionen und antike Auslegungen*, Nicklas, T., Tilly, M. (eds.) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 144.

This study will peer into several different texts and contexts: (1) Acts 1.2 – the work of the Holy Spirit in guidance; (2) Acts 1.5 – the role of seeking the Holy Spirit; (3) Acts 2.38-39 – the distinction of reception of the Spirit in connection to conversion-initiation; (4) Acts 8.4-25 – the Holy Spirit and evidence of obedience to authority; (5) Acts 8.26-40 – reception of the Spirit as a “completion” and “empowerment”; (6) Acts 10.44-46, 11.1-2, 17, 15.1-2, 4, 7-9 – Luke’s intention for reception of the Spirit; and (7) Acts 19.1-6 – the normative evidence of the Holy Spirit.

2. Background Material

2.1. Origins and History of Interpretation

In order to determine how important Codex Bezae is to our theological understanding, we must answer the questions of its origin and authorship. In this regard, the conclusions of K. Panten's study²⁰ in this area will help with the salient points. First, since 1582, numerous scholars have made collations of the Codex and have critically examined the text, both Greek and Latin. Jean Leclerc, 1686, was the first to postulate that the author of Acts had produced two editions, known as the bifurcation theory, and that Bezae was one of them. Other scholars wrestled with the Greek text seeing an influence by the Latin while still others disagreed and concluded no Latinization. Theories as to its production location have varied widely from Egypt, to Beirut, and even to England! For the most part, it has been a widely held belief that Codex Bezae had been in France from the ninth century until it was transferred to Beza in 1562. A date earlier than this is more difficult and involves critique of the text itself. After assimilating the historical data as well as textual critical research through to 1995, Panten makes the following specific conclusions²¹:

Ammonian Sections	8th Century—Greek side only
Annotators	8th Century—strongly in disagreement with Parker's dating of 550-650 A.D.
Correctors	Order G A B D C E H F—with particular attention to G who was a person of standing and authority. G corrected Matthew and Acts 1-4:12

²⁰ Kenneth E. Panten, *A History of Research on Codex Bezae, with Special Reference to the Acts of the Apostles: Evaluation and Future Directions* (PhD Dissertation, Murdoch University, 1995).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 357-360.

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