CHAPTER 7


7.1 Introductory Remarks

Luke’s version is certainly the most dramatic and has attracted the most attention among scholars and believers in general. This version has become the Gethsemane scene par excellence, a fact due especially to the physical description of the agony found in verses 43–44. The recent interest in the Lukan version among scholars takes as its point of departure Jerome H. Neyrey’s groundbreaking study “The Absence of Jesus’ Emotions: The Lucan Redaction of Lk 22,39–46” (1980). The crucial matter is the textual conundrum involved with the question of the authenticity of verses 43–44, precisely the verses that have proven so decisive and productive in portraying Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane. In the present study, the authenticity question is not of primary interest, though I find the arguments against reading verses 43–44 as authentic more convincing. The longer version enjoys very early attestation that in any case makes it a key witness to the early discourse on Jesus at prayer in the garden. This discourse now emerges in the transmission of Luke’s text. My interpretation is therefore twofold, starting with the shorter version Luke 22:39–42, 45–46 moving to the longer version by including verses 43–44. While the shorter version is to be treated separately, the longer version is seen in continuity with the shorter.


2 Justin Martyr Dial. 103.7–9; Irenaeus, Haer. 4.35.3 (SC 100:871) and Hippolytus, Noet. 18.2. The texts of Justin and Hippolytus are treated below. In his refutation of Pelagians, Jerome refers to Luke 22:43 (Pelag. 2.16.19; CCSL 80:75), saying that this verse is found in some copies, Greek as well as Latin, thus indicating his familiarity with the question of their reliability. Hilary of Poitiers is likewise familiar with the issue, saying that the relevant verses in Luke are not found in Mark and Matthew (De Trinitate 10.40–41; CCSL 62A:493–95). Hilary uses this passage against heretics and hence would certainly have preferred that its authenticity were unquestioned. Nonetheless, he admits that there is doubt, since it is missing in many Greek and Latin manuscripts (De Trinitate 10.41:). Since this may be seen to undermine his point, his inclusion of it bears witness to a widespread awareness of the questionable status of these Lukan verses.
7.2 Textual Criticism: Window to a Gethsemane Discourse

Bart D. Ehrman and M.A. Plunkett’s article “The Angel and the Agony: The Textual Problem of Luke 22:43–44” (1983) furthered the debate on the authenticity of verses 43–44. The evidence for omitting verses 43–44 is substantial and has led the Nestle-Aland’s 28th edition to put these verses in double brackets, thus advising that “they are known not to be part of the original text.” Nonetheless, the external evidence is so divided that scholars continue to disagree on this point. The longer version finds support in, for example, Sinaiticus first hand, D, K, L, X, Δ (first hand), Θ, Π (first hand), Ψ, fi, many minuscules, several lectionaries, and many of the church fathers. The verses in question are omitted by P75, apparently P69, Sinaiticus post corr, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, N, T, W, the minuscules 579, 1071, numerous lectionaries and translations, and several church fathers. The division of the evidence is simply overwhelming.

7.2.1 Added?

Doctrinal reasons may have motivated both inclusion and exclusion of these verses; either option is plausible. The text may have been added to counter what many scholars hold to be the emotionless Jesus in this passage (see below). Bart D. Ehrman reiterates his position in an article in *A Journal of Textual Criticism* published 2000. He says that Jesus in Luke “never appears to become disturbed at all, in any way;” the only exception is Luke 22:43–44, verses that are therefore secondary. In this way the verses in question combat antidocetic tendencies. Jesus appears as utterly human, which refutes tendencies to remove Jesus from physical human needs and emotions, a tendency

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3 See also Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 187–94.
6 Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), 177 holds it unlikely that they were deleted.