THE POSITION OF ADVERBS IN LUKE

BY

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Both Blass-Debrunner (par. 474 (2)) and Moulton-Turner (p. 227) state categorically that in NT Greek an adverb usually follows the adjective or verb which it determines. Neither of these authorities, however, produces any statistical evidence to support this claim. Indeed, the only statistics cited by Turner show that, if this is the established practice of NT writers, it runs contrary to that of secular Greek authors who use the adverb predominantly in pre-position. This suggests that we should beware of accepting such a blanket judgement. Both Blass-Debrunner and Turner in fact cite exceptions to their rule, particularly Matthew’s alleged habit of placing adverbs after imperatives. Mayser (II.2, pp. 180-184), whose statistics are misleadingly interpreted by Turner, refrains from making any rule for the usage of the Ptolemaic papyri, but indicates that it is possible to recognise certain trends of usage when the author, for example, seeks to emphasise an adverb. Mayser’s evidence together with evidence based on the usage of classical authors suggests that the position of the adverb in the sentence differs from one work to another in secular Greek depending on the style of the author, the type of work and the time of writing. The same may be true of NT Greek. Certainly each author’s usage needs to be investigated separately before any accurate assessment can be given or any rule formulated. This note is therefore an attempt to assess one NT author’s use of adverbs on the evidence of the first part of his two volume work.

I.

Not all words described as ‘adverbs’ in lexicons are used as proper adverbs since a word which has the form of an ‘adverb’ may sometimes perform the function of another part of speech. For this reason only instances where the adverb performs its true function as an adverb are included in this investigation. This means excluding instances where, though the word may be an adverb in form, it is used as a noun,¹

¹ e.g. Matt 23:26 τὸ ἑρῶς.
an adjective,² a preposition³ or a conjunction.⁴ Certain adverbs, such as relative, interrogative and negative adverbs, have their position determined by considerations other than the fact that they are adverbs, so none of these have been included. Adverbial forms of numerals have also been excluded since it is difficult to classify them.

The remaining adverbs have been categorised in two different ways. First, they have been classified into three groups depending on whether they are adverbs of time, manner or place. Secondly, they have been categorised according to the position of the adverb relative to the word it modifies. Occasionally it is difficult to decide which word is, in fact, modified by the adverb. Such instances have been deferred to the end when the results of our investigation may be applied in attempting to reach a final decision. In taking account of textual variation instances where the adverb has a different position vis-à-vis the word it modifies have been categorised separately and a discussion of instances where the readings vary between pre- and post-position of the adverb will be appended to our observations. Instances of textual variation where none of the variant readings involves a different categorisation have been noted, but ignored for the purpose of compiling statistics.⁵

The actual adverbs considered may now be listed:

Time: αὐριον, ἐγγύς, ἐξαίφνης, ἔτη, ευθὸς/εὐθέως, ἡδη, νῦν, πάλαι, πάλιν, πάντοτε, παραχρήμα, πυκνά, σήμερον, τότε, ύστερον (15 in all).
Manner: ἀκριβῶς, ἀληθῶς, ἀμη, ἀσώτως, ἀφόβως, δεινῶς, δικαιώς, ὀυκοκλώς, ἐκτενέστερον, ἐπιμελώς, εὗ, εὐτόνως, ἰας, καθεξῆς (time?), κακῶς, καλῶς, λαμπρῶς, λίαν, μακρά (time?), μᾶλλον, μόνες/μόλις, μόνον, ὑλόν (also place), ὄμοιος, ὄντως, ὀρθῶς, ὀφέλως, παμπληθεῖ, πάντως, πυκνῶς, πολύ, σπουδαῖος, σφόδρα, ταχύ/ταχέως (time?), φρονίμως, ὀσαύτως (36 in all).
Place: ἀνάτερον, αὐτοῦ, δεύρο, ἐκεῖ, ἐκείθεν, ἐμπροσθεν, ἐνθάδε, ἐνθε, ἐντεθε, ἔξω, ἔπανω, ἔσωθεν, κάτω, μακράν, μακράθεν, ὑλόν (also manner), ὑποθε, ὑπόσω, πανταχοῦ, πάντοθεν, πόρρω, πόρρῳθεν, πορρώτερον, ὀδε (24 in all).

ἀνωθεν (Luke 1:3) has not been classified because its exact meaning is not certain.

² e.g. Acts 20:26 ἐν τῇ σήμερον ἡμέρᾳ.
³ e.g. Luke 10:19 ἐπάνω ἄκεφον.
⁴ e.g. words like τότε, especially in Matt. See Moulton-Turner, 341.
⁵ These variants involve such matters as orthography, add./om., lexical variation and so on.