

THE ROLE OF THE POPULACE IN THE PASSION NARRATIVE OF LUKE IN CODEX BEZAE

GEORGE E. RICE
Andrews University

In three previous studies I have shown that the unique, variant readings in the Western text of Luke, and in particular in Codex Bezae (D), are theologically motivated.¹ In these studies it was shown how Jesus is exalted as a Davidic king by an alteration in the heavenly voice heard at his baptism (Luke 3:22) together with the substitution of Matthew's genealogy, containing the line of kings, for that of Luke (3:23-31). It has also been shown that the Western text of Luke contains an anti-Judaic bias.

In the present study, a series of variants dealing with the populace of Jerusalem, and found in the passion narrative of Luke in D, will be examined. These variants show the populace playing a more active role in the events of the passion than does the normal text of Luke.

1. *Arrest and Trial*

In the two previous studies that dealt with anti-Judaic biases, the variants appear in connection with various religious leaders, either increasing their hostility toward Jesus or generally casting them in an unfavorable light. The common people of Jerusalem are not portrayed as being particularly hostile toward Jesus. But when the variant readings that appear in the passion narrative are examined, the populace of Jerusalem takes on a belligerent role. Prior to this they are merely passively unresponsive to Jesus' ministry.

¹"Luke 3:22-38 in Codex Bezae: The Messianic King," *AUSS* 17 (1979): 203-208; "The Anti-Judaic Bias of the Western Text in the Gospel of Luke," *AUSS* 18 (1980): 51-57; "Some Further Examples of Anti-Judaic Bias in the Western Text of the Gospel of Luke," *AUSS* 18 (1980): 149-156.

The first variant that we will consider suggests that the common people were involved in the arrest of Jesus.

Luke 22:47

Codex B²

ετι αυτου λαλουντος ιδου
οχλος και ο λεγομενος
ιουδας εις των δωδεκα
προηρχετο αυτους

“ While he was yet speak-
ing behold a crowd and
the one called Judas
one of the twelve was going
before them.”

Codex D

ετι δε αυτου λαλουντος ιδου
οχλος πολυς και ο καλουμενος
ιουδας ισκαριωθ εις των ιβ
προηγεν αυτους

“And while he was yet speak-
ing behold a great crowd and
the one called Judas Iscariot
one of the twelve was leading
the way before them.”

+ πολυς post οχλος, D 544 sy^{sc} Tatian

+ ισκαριωθ post ιουδας, D 1

προηρχετο] προηγεν, D 1 22 69

In D the size of “the crowd” actively participating in the arrest is increased beyond the normal text by a harmonization with Matt 26:47. Because Luke identifies “the crowd” that makes up the arresting party as being composed of the chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders (Luke 22:52), it is not impossible to assume that the increase in number, expressed in the first variant as a “great crowd,” would be mainly composed of the people from Jerusalem, especially in view of the active role they play in the passion as reported by D.

After the arrest, Jesus was taken to the home of the high priest (vs. 54). Although people who were not members of the Sanhedrin served as a backdrop for Peter’s denial, the “great crowd” that participated in the arrest was not present, as D indicates in the next variant.

²Codex B is used for purposes of comparison because it is a real text that exists, rather than a critical edition which gives a text that never existed in manuscript form.

Luke 23:1

Codex B

και ανασταν
 θος αυτων ηγαγον αυτον επι τον
 πειλατον

“And when the whole multitude
 of them arose they led him
 to Pilate.”

Codex D

και ανασταντες
 ηγαγον αυτον αυτον
 επι πειλατον

“And when they
 had arisen they
 led him to Pilate.”

ανασταν] ανασταντες, D Θ 131 239 299 sy^{scp} cop^{sa}
 om. απαν το πληθος αυτων D

The active support and interest of the populace of Jerusalem in the arrest and the trial of Jesus before Pilate is presented by D as greater than what we find in the normal text. Thus we have a “great crowd” (vs. 47) involved in the arrest, instead of a “crowd” in the normal text. Pilate calls together “all the people” for his verdict (23:13), instead of the “people” in the normal text (see below). Therefore, the omission of “the whole multitude of them” in the variant above now becomes significant, for it seems that D wished to indicate that only the religious leaders interrogated Jesus and arrived at the decision that he must die, but the populace are more directly involved in other aspects of the passion narrative.

Once Pilate had examined Jesus and had arrived at a tentative verdict, D then brings the populace back into the drama.

Luke 23:13

Codex B

πειλατος δε συνκαλεσαμενος
 τους αρχιερεις και τους αρχον-
 τας και τον λαον

“And when Pilate himself had
 called together the chief
 priests and the rulers and
 the people.”

Codex D

ο δε πειλατος συνκαλεσας
 τους αρχιερεις και τους αρ-
 χοντας και παντα τον λαον

“And when Pilate had
 called together the chief
 priests and the rulers and
 all the people.”

συνκαλεσαμενος] συνκαλεσας D
 + παντα ante τον λαον D c sy^c

As D makes the inhabitants of Jerusalem active participants in the arrest of Jesus, so, being assembled by Pilate, they become active participants in the uncompromising demand for Jesus' crucifixion (22:18-25).

2. Crucifixion

D further incriminates the people of Jerusalem at the site of the crucifixion. In the account of Matthew and Mark, Jesus is ridiculed by both the people and the rulers. The people say in essence, "You who can destroy the temple and in three days raise it up again, save yourself and come down from the cross" (Matt 27:40; Mark 15:29, 30); and the priests say, "He saved others, he cannot save himself; if he is the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross and we will believe him" (Matt 27:42; Mark 15:31,32).

Luke, however, pictures the people as silently watching the one who was crucified while the rulers alone scoffed at him. D takes the words spoken by the rulers and puts them into the mouths of the crowd.

Luke 23:35

Codex B

και ειστηκει ο λαος θεωρων
εξεμυκτηριζον δε και οι αρχον-
τες λεγοντες αλλους εσωσεν
σωσατω εαυτον ει υιος εστιν ο
χς του θυ ο εκλεκτος

"And the people stood by watch-
ing but the rulers scoffed
saying Others he saved let him
save himself if he is the Christ
the elect Son of God."

Codex D

και ειστηκει ο λαος ορων
εμυκτηριζον δε αυτον
και ελεγαν αυτω αλλους εσω-
σας σεαυτον σωσον ει υιος ει
του θυ ει χρς ει ο εκλεκτος

"And the people stood by
watching and they
scoffed at him and said Others
you saved save yourself if you
are the Son of God if you are
the Christ if you are the Elect
one."

θεωρων] ορων, D

εξεμυκτηριζον δε και οι αρχοντες λεγοντες] εμυκτηριζον δε αυτον
και ελεγαν αυτω, D

αλλους εσωσεν σωσατω εαυτον ει υιος εστιν ο χς του θυ] αλλους
εσωσας σεαυτον σωσον ει υιος ει του θυ ει χρς ει, D

Although the scoffing of the priests in the normal text is directed at Jesus, it is not a bold challenge hurled into his face. Through D's alterations, the people continue their active role in Jesus' humiliation, and their scoffing becomes a challenge of bold defiance directed at Jesus personally, "Others you saved, save yourself if you are the Son of God."

D underscores this bold defiance of the people with further alterations: (1) by altering the remarks of the soldiers and the unrepentant thief, and (2) by altering the conversation between the repentant thief and Jesus (cf. the change in the repentant thief's appraisal of Jesus, from "he has done nothing amiss" to "he has done no evil," in *AUSS* 18 [1980]: 52).

Luke 23:36,37,39

Codex B

36. ενεπαιξαν δε αυτω και οι στρατιωται προσερχομενοι οξος προσφεροντες αυτω

37. και λεγοντες ει συ ει ο βασιλευς των ιουδαιων σωσον σεαυτον

39. εις δε των κρεμασθεντων κακουργων εβλασφημει αυτον ουχι συ ει ο $\chi\varsigma$ σωσον σεαυτον και ημας

"36. And the soldiers also mocked him coming and offering vinegar to him
"37. And saying if you are the king of the Jews save yourself.

"39. And one of the criminals who was hanging blasphemed him: Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us."

Codex D

36. ενεπεζον δε αυτω και οι στρατιωται προσερχομενοι οξος τε προσεφερον

37. λεγοντες χαιρε ο βασιλευς των ιουδαιων περιτεθεντες αυτω και ακανθινον στεφανον

39. εις δε των κακουργων εβλασφημει αυτον

"36. And the soldiers also mocked him coming and offering vinegar
"37. Saying Hail king of the Jews placing on him a thorny crown.

"39. And one of those who was hanging blasphemed him."

v. 36 om. αυτω, D

v. 37 om. και, D lat

The mockery of the people (vs. 35) stemmed from Jesus' claim to have the power to save and to be the "Son of God." Their challenge, "Save yourself if you are the Son of God," indicates their unbelief and their rejection of this claim. They shared in the responsibility of his crucifixion, and this crucifixion in turn testified to the accuracy of their appraisal of him. They challenged him to disprove their appraisal and their reasons for rejecting him.

The soldiers' mockery (vss. 36-37), on the other hand, stemmed from a different point of view. By changing their words, D indicates that the soldiers' treatment of Jesus has its roots in different motives than those of the people. The soldiers were not rejecting Jesus' claim to have the power to save, they only mocked his claim to be a ruler in Caesar's stead.

The apparent reason for D's omission of the blasphemy of the unrepentant thief is to make the rejection by the people complete by way of contrast. In the normal text, the blasphemy of the thief centers in Jesus' claim to be the Savior—"Are you the Christ? Save yourself and us" (vs. 39)—; therefore, the words of the blasphemy are omitted by D, and he simply states that the thief blasphemed. Of all those who blaspheme and mock Jesus in D's text, the people alone touch the very heart of Jesus' proclaimed mission as the divine Savior. They alone are pictured as rejecting this mission.

A suggestion made by G. D. Kilpatrick many years ago would fit very nicely here and lend further support to D's emphasis on the defiance of the people.³ He takes the word *δικαιος*, spoken by the centurion regarding Jesus (23:47), to be "innocent" and not "righteous." Thus the centurion supports Herod, Pilate, the soldiers, and the repentant thief in declaring Jesus' innocence in opposition to the opinion of the people.

3. *Conclusion*

As a general rule, one would look to the attitudes of the rulers in order to appraise the attitudes of a city or nation. D, however, uses the populace of Jerusalem to portray the attitude of rejection

³G. D. Kilpatrick, "A Theme of the Lucan Passion Story and Luke xxiii.47," *JTS* 43 (1942): 34-36. Kilpatrick's suggestion of "innocent" as a translation for *δικαιος* was followed by the translators of the RSV.

in the passion story. Prior to the passion narrative, the people of Jerusalem are passively unresponsive to Jesus. By his alterations, they become actively hostile by: (1) participating in the arrest, (2) participating in the uncompromising demand for Jesus' crucifixion, and (3) mocking and defiantly challenging Jesus to save himself. This belligerent attitude is emphasized further by alterations in the words of the soldiers and by omitting the blasphemous words of the unrepentant thief. Thus, the populace of Jerusalem is portrayed by D as actively rejecting Jesus' proclaimed mission as the divine Savior.