

*The Book of Zechariah and the Passion Narrative*¹

F.F. Bruce

**Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in
the University of Manchester**

[p.336]

I

It is widely recognized that the narrative of the last few days of the life of Jesus was the earliest part of the Gospel story to take shape as a connected whole. There were many reasons why this should be so. For one thing, the events of those days must have been indelibly impressed on the memory of those men and women who spent them in Jesus' company. When they came together for fellowship and worship they would recall the days that led up to the crucifixion, and the days that followed it; and others who had not been present at the time would be eager to hear the details. This was especially true of those occasions when Christians took the bread and wine of thanksgiving as their Master's memorial: "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup", said Paul, "you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. xi. 26)—words which appear to mean not simply that participation in the Lord's Supper was in itself an acted proclamation of His death, but that every such participation was regularly accompanied by a repetition of the passion narrative. In this way even recent converts to the new faith must soon have become tolerably word-perfect in their ability to tell the story.

Nor was it only at Christian meetings for worship that the story was repeated; it was told time and again as an essential part of the apostles' preaching. Paul reminds his Galatian converts how before their very eyes "Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified" (Gal. iii. 1)—so vividly, we may gather, did he describe the crucifixion as he preached the gospel to them. In like vein he reminds the Corinthian Christians how, when first he visited their city with the gospel, he "decided to know nothing"

[p.337]

among them "except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). And when, later in the same epistle, he reminds them of the terms in which he preached the Gospel to them, he says that he delivered to them "as of first importance" what he himself had received—to begin with, "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3).

At a later stage, this emphasis reappears in the prominent place given to the passion narrative in the written Gospels, to a point where these Gospels have been described—exaggeratedly, it is true—as "passion narratives with extended introductions".²

One point that was emphasized among others in this repeated telling of the story of the death of Christ was that it took place (as Paul puts it) "according to the scriptures". This was evidently part of the tradition as Paul received it, and not something added by himself, for it is present in all strata of the passion narrative. Peter's speech in the temple court after the

¹ A lecture delivered in the Library series of public lectures.

² M. Kähler, quoted by G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (1960), p. 17.

healing of the lame man is generally held to present a very primitive Christology,³ but it is quite definite on this point: "what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled" (Acts iii. 18). Jesus Himself, according to our earliest written Gospel, submitted to arrest in Gethsemane with the words: "let the scriptures be fulfilled" (Mark xiv. 49).

Much has been written on the precise scriptures which Jesus and the apostles may have had in mind as fulfilled in His passion. The portrayal of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah lii. 13-liii. 12 and the Righteous Sufferer's cries for help in the Psalms (e.g. Ps. xxii, lxix) come readily to mind in this connection. But the purpose of this paper is to examine another group of Old Testament prophecies which have left their mark in the passion narrative of all four Gospels—those contained in the last six chapters of the Book of Zechariah.

II

In the Massoretic text and the Septuagint version alike the night-versions of Zechariah, prophet of the return from exile (Zech. i-viii), are followed by three short prophetic corpora, each

[p.338]

of which is introduced by the phrase "the oracle of the word of Yahweh" (Heb. *maśśa' d'bar YHWH*, Gk. *λῆμμα λόγου κυρίου*). The third of these has come down to us as an independent document in the volume of the Twelve Prophets, with the title "Malachi"—a title evidently derived from the mention of "my messenger" (Heb. *mal'ākī*) in Malachi iii. 1. It has been drawn upon in the Gospel narrative—expressly in relation to John the Baptist (cf. the quotation of Mal. iii. 1a in Mark i. 2 and of Mal. iv. 5 f. in Mark ix. 12) and implicitly, perhaps, in relation to the cleansing of the temple (cf. Mal. iii. 1b). But the two "oracles" which precede the book of Malachi are more closely linked with each other, and it is with them that we are to concern ourselves more particularly.

There are few Old Testament passages to which it is so difficult to assign a historical "life-setting" as it is to these two oracles. The first one (Zech. ix-xi), which begins with the proclamation of the word of Yahweh against various neighbours of Israel, has been thought to reflect the invasion of Alexander the Great in 332 B.C., or even the struggle under Antiochus Epiphanes, but the former is quite uncertain, and the latter quite improbable. The second oracle (Zech. xii-xiv), which is announced as "the word of Yahweh concerning Israel" is, if possible, even more difficult to place. Of one paragraph in these chapters (xii. 10-14) Professor Eissfeldt says that "we cannot get away from an *ignoramus*, and this *ignoramus* will in all probability continue as an *ignorabimus*".⁴ We may feel that this admission could be extended to most of the contents of these three chapters, if not indeed the whole of Zechariah ix-xiv; although it is always permissible to hope that some fresh discovery will illuminate our darkness. At present it does not look as if the discoveries at Qumran will provide this particular illumination.

³ Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, "The Most Primitive Christology of All?" *JTS*, n.s. 7 (1956), 177 ff.

⁴ O. Eissfeldt, *Einl. i. d. A. T.*² (1956), p. 541.

III

However, it is not the historical background of these chapters that we are to look at, but the use that is made of them in the New Testament. First of all, let us list the *pro forma* quotations.

[p.339]

Most famous of all, probably, is the quotation of Zechariah ix. 9 in connection with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. All four of the Evangelists describe how He rode into the city on a colt; but the first and fourth quote Zechariah ix. 9 in the course of their description. Matthew says that He entered Jerusalem in this way "to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

'Tell the daughter of Zion,
Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble and mounted on an ass,
and on a colt, the foal of an ass''

(Matt. xxi. 4 f.).

As is well known, Matthew separates the two parallel phrases at the end of the passage so as to see a reference to two animals instead of one, and the two animals appear in his actual narrative, as though to insist on the most literal fulfilment of the prophecy. His quotation of the passage is abbreviated, but not so abbreviated as John's. John says that "Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it; as it is written,

'Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold thy king is coming,
sitting on an ass's colt!''

(John xii. 14 f.).

These two quotations of Zechariah ix. 9 are independent of each other, and each deviates both from the traditional Hebrew text and from the Septuagint. While the Old Testament passage is not quoted in the accounts of the entry into Jerusalem given by the other two Evangelists, it seems very probable that Jesus' decision to ride into Jerusalem on a colt (Mark xi. 1-7; Luke xix. 29-35) was understood as a fulfilment of Zechariah ix. 9 even in the absence of an explicit quotation.⁵

[p.340]

⁵ In Matthew and John the πῶλος is expressly an ass's colt. W. Bauer (*JBL*, 72 [1953], 220 ff.) argues that when another animal is appropriately named in the context, μῦλος is the young of that animal, but that otherwise it means "horse", not "colt"; he concludes that "horse" is meant in Mark xi. 2 ff. and Luke xix. 30 ff. But see O. Michel in *NTS* 6 (1959-60), 81 f. In any case, if the Evangelists, following the intention of Jesus, had Zech. ix. 9 in mind, they would understand πῶλος as a young ass even if they did not expressly use ὄνος (or ὑποζύγιον, the LXX word) in the context. H. W. Kuhn (*ZNW* 50 [1959], 82 ff.) sees in Mark's account an allusion to the "foal", in parallelism with "ass's colt", of Gen. xlix. 11; cf. *Bereshith Rabba*, *ad loc.* (98.9)—in which precise context the thirty silver shekels of Zech. xi. 12 f. are interpreted alternatively (a) of the minimum of thirty righteous men who will always be left in the world, (b) of the thirty precepts which the Gentiles will agree to keep when Messiah Comes.

If we follow the sequence of the passion narrative, the next quotation comes in Mark xiv. 27 (cf. Matt. xxvi. 31). After the Last Supper Jesus and the disciples leave the upper room for the Mount of Olives; "and Jesus said to them, 'You are all going to be disillusioned; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered"'". This quotation from Zechariah xiii. 7 is perhaps the most important of all; it will serve as a starting-point for our enquiry. But two further direct quotations must be mentioned first.

Of all the Evangelists, Matthew is the only one to specify the sum of money which Judas was promised by the chief priests for his undertaking to betray Jesus to them. Mark (xiv. 11; cf. Luke xxii. 5) simply says that they "promised to give him money"; Matthew says that "they weighed out for him thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. xxvi. 15). This is practically a quotation from Zechariah xi. 12b, where the prophet tells us that when he asked to be paid for the services he had rendered as "shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter", his employers "weighed out" as his wages "thirty shekels of silver." The Evangelist's dependence on the Zechariah narrative becomes still plainer when he tells of Judas' repentance and suicide, an account paralleled in none of the other Gospels. The chief priests, he says, took the thirty pieces of silver which Judas had thrown down before them in the temple, and said: "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." So they bought the potter's field with them, and that field, having been bought with blood money, came to be known as the Field of Blood.⁶ The Evangelist continues:

Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field; as the Lord directed me" (Matt. xxvii. 9 f.).

The quotation is readily recognizable as coming from Zechariah xi. 13, where the prophet tells what he did with the thirty

[p.341]

shekels which his employers paid him for looking after their sheep.

Then Yahweh said to me, "Cast it to the moulder"⁷—the lordly price at which I was valued by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and cast them to the moulder in the house of Yahweh.

But why does Matthew ascribe the prophecy to Jeremiah? Probably because it had already been closely associated, if not conflated, in an early set of *testimonia* with two passages from Jeremiah—Jeremiah xviii. 2 f., where Jeremiah visits the potter's house, and Jeremiah xxxii. 6-15, where he buys the family field at Anathoth.⁸

⁶ Cf. the account given of the name Akeldama in Acts i. 18 f.

⁷ That is, to the man who melted the silver in the standard mould of the temple (cf. LXX *χωνευτήριον*, "foundry"). Heb. *yōṣēr*, of course, usually means "potter"; but a potter would be difficult to account for in the temple. The Syriac version reads *ʾōṣār*, "treasury", and this is preferred by R.S.V. Cf. the reference to the "treasury" in Matt. xxvii. 6.

⁸ I am indebted to Mr. R. H. Gundry for the suggestion that the Jeremiah passage referred to is xix. 1-13, where the prophet, at the "Potsherd Gate", breaks a "potter's earthen flask" in token that Jerusalem will be destroyed like "a potter's vessel", and announces that the Valley of Ben-hinnom will in future be known as "the Valley of Slaughter".

The last of the direct quotations comes in John's passion narrative. He describes how, just before sundown on Good Friday, the soldiers broke the legs of the two men who were crucified on either side of Jesus, before removing their bodies from the crosses—

but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear... these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, "Not a bone of him shall be broken". And again another scripture says, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced" (John xix. 33-37).

Of these two quotations, the former comes from Exodus xii. 46, and marks Jesus out as the true Passover Lamb. The latter comes from Zechariah xii. 10, where, after the defeat of the nations who take part in the end-time siege of Jerusalem, Yahweh says:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him⁹ whom

[p.342]

they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born.

There is another reference to this passage in the Johannine literature of the New Testament, where the seer of Patmos announces Christ's coming with the clouds, when "every eye will see him, every one who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him" (Rev. i. 7).¹⁰

These direct quotations, distributed among three of the Evangelists, might in themselves go far to support Professor Dodd's inclusion of Zechariah ix-xiv among the "primary sources of testimonies" used by the primitive Church.¹¹

IV

"You are all going to be disillusioned, because it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered'." So said Jesus to His disciples as He led them to Gethsemane. "But," He added, "after I am raised up, I will lead you forth to Galilee" (Mark xiv. 28). These last words are echoed in Mark's resurrection narrative: the young man who appears to the frightened women outside the empty tomb says to them: "go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is leading you forth to Galilee; you will see him there, as he told you" (Mark xvi. 7).

The Zechariah passage which Jesus quotes belongs to an isolated oracle (Zech. xiii. 7):

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,
against the man who stands next to me,

⁹ MT 'ālai, "on me". John xix. 37 (ὄψονται εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν) presupposes a Hebrew text with 'ālāw, "on him". John xix. 37 and Rev. i. 7 give a more literal rendering of Heb. *dāgārū* (ἐξεκέντησαν, "they pierced") than does LXX (κατωρχήσαντο, "they danced" or "mocked").

¹⁰ Cf. also Matt. xxiv. 30, "and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn" (a non-Markan clause).

¹¹ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (1952), p. 107; cf. pp. 64-7.

says Yahweh of hosts.

Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered;
I will turn my hand against the little ones...

Whether there was originally a reference here to the earlier shep. herd passage in Zechariah xi is uncertain, but it is a possibility to be seriously considered. In that chapter not only does the prophet play a shepherd's part for a season to the flock of Israel, but a "worthless shepherd" is also introduced, against whom

[p.343]

doom is pronounced for his deserting of the flock: "May the sword smite his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded!" (Zech. xi. 17). That this worthless shepherd should be described as Yahweh's *geber 'āmîṭ*, His associate, is improbable; although this appears to be the interpretation put upon the passage in MS. B of the *Zadokite Work* (xix. 5-9):

But all the despisers of the commandments and ordinances [shall be visited with extinction] when God visits the earth to cause the recompense of the wicked to return upon them, when the word comes to pass which is written by the prophet Zechariah: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me, says God; strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones." And those who "gave heed" to him are "the poor of the flock".

In this interpretation the "shepherd" seems to be one of the wicked rulers of Israel who misled and exploited the common people, while "the poor of the flock" are probably to be identified with the faithful community. Professor Rabin,¹² however, thinks that the smitten shepherd may be the Teacher of Righteousness; he mentions the Gospel texts which identify this shepherd with Jesus, Ibn Ezra's referring of the passage to the events following the death of Messiah ben Joseph, the precursor-Messiah, and the Karaite Moses Dar'i's referring of it to the Messiah. But in the context of the *Zadokite Work* it looks rather as if the smitten shepherd is interpreted as being a wicked ruler, although in the original context of Zechariah xiii a ruler acknowledged and approved by God would seem to be much more in place.

There is, at any rate, no doubt about the application of the passage in Mark xiv. 27; the smitten shepherd is Jesus. Moreover, according to Mark, it is Jesus Himself who makes the identification. I have no doubt at all that Mark is right in ascribing this interpretation of the prophecy to Jesus; it is all of a piece with Jesus' presentation of Himself as the Shepherd of Israel—a presentation which can be traced in most of the Gospel strata.

We may recall an earlier occasion in Mark's Gospel, where Jesus had compassion on a great throng of Israelites, "because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark vi. 34). Professor T. W. Manson has pointed out that, whereas we tend to think

[p.344]

¹² C. Rabin, *The Zadokite Documents*² (1956), p. 31.

of this expression as though it meant "a congregation without a minister", we should think of it here rather in terms of its Old Testament usage, where it means "an army without a general, a nation without a national leader".¹³ The anointed king is repeatedly described as a shepherd in the Old Testament, and when Jeremiah and Ezekiel look forward to a future prince of the house of David who will rule Israel in wisdom and justice, they depict him as a faithful shepherd, by contrast with the unworthy shepherds who betrayed their trust (cf. Jer. xxiii. 1-6; Ezek. xxxiv. 23 f., xxxvii. 24).¹⁴ It is such Old Testament passages as these that underlie the self-portrayal of Jesus as the good shepherd in John x. 1-16, but their influence can be traced in the Synoptic tradition too, and along with them we must reckon a number of passages in Zechariah ix-xiv.

The occasion when Jesus pitied the crowds who were leaderless and bewildered like sheep without a shepherd was just before the feeding of the five thousand. It is noteworthy that, in John's narrative of the feeding, the crowds tried to compel Jesus to be their king (John vi. 15). If He could supply their needs in the wilderness, could He not also lead them against their enemies? But Jesus did not let them have their way with Him. He was only too ready to be shepherd to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel",¹⁵ but on His own terms, not on theirs. And when they realized that He was not going to be the kind of leader that they wanted Him to be, many of them refused to have Him as a leader at all, and gave up following Him (John vi. 66). The undesigned coincidences between the Johannine and Synoptic accounts of the feeding and its aftermath are too impressive to be dismissed as accidental, and we are perfectly justified in making judicious use of details in the one account to illuminate details in the other.

The flock of Israel as a whole will not have Him as their shepherd, but there are some who persist in following Him, and with them He now makes a new beginning. By comparison with the nation, they are but a "little flock"; but in them lies the

[p.345]

hope of the future. "Fear not, little flock", Jesus could say to them, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32). And it was the members of this little flock, who continued with Him in His trials (cf. Luke xxii. 28), that He had in mind when He announced the fulfilment of Zechariah xiii. 7 on the night of His betrayal. He Himself was the shepherd who was about to be smitten; they were the sheep who were to be scattered. But beyond, the smiting and the scattering there was yet hope. "After I am raised up, I will lead you forth to Galilee" (Mark xiv. 28.) The shepherd would come back to his scattered sheep, he would rally them again and continue to lead them as he had done in the past.

When we see the quotation of Zechariah xiii. 7 not as something isolated, but as part of Jesus' presentation of Himself as the good shepherd, we begin to see other things. In particular, we begin to see the germ of the use of Zechariah ix-xiv in the Gospels, and especially in the passion narrative. For the figure of the shepherd recurs throughout these six chapters.

¹³ T. W. Manson, *The Servant-Messiah* (1953), p. 70.

¹⁴ Cf. Ps. Sol. xvii. 45, where the coming Messiah is pictured as "shepherding the flock of the Lord faithfully and righteously".

¹⁵ A Matthaean expression; cf. Matt. x. 6, xv. 24.

In Zechariah ix. 16 those whom Yahweh delivers in the day of His intervention are "the flock of his people". In Zechariah x. 3 His anger burns hot against the shepherds who have thus far ruled His people, "for Yahweh of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah". In Zechariah xi the prophet himself is commanded by Yahweh to serve as "shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter", because the existing shepherds exploit them and traffic in them. He obeys, and tends the sheep with his two staffs, named Grace and Union. By virtue of the authority divinely committed to him, he promptly deposes or destroys the unfaithful shepherds, three in number. But even so the sheep do not appreciate his services, and he becomes impatient with them. At last he refuses to be their shepherd any longer, breaks one of his staffs, and asks for his wages. He is paid thirty silver shekels, and he recognizes the insult implicit in this miserly sum—it was the price which, in the ancient covenant-law, a slave-owner received as compensation for a slave gored to death by someone else's ox (Exod. xxi. 32). But the prophet has been acting throughout as the agent and representative of Yahweh, the true Shepherd of Israel, and the insult is directed as much at Yahweh

[p.346]

as at His servant. So, at Yahweh's command, this "lordly price" is appropriately disposed of, thrown into the temple foundry to be melted down, and the prophet breaks his other staff, betokening a dissolution of the national unity of all Israel. The flock which has rejected a faithful shepherd receives once again a harsh and oppressive shepherd to take charge of it.

In much, though not all, of this passage (so hard to attach to a firm historical setting) Jesus saw His own rôle as the messianic shepherd foreshadowed. In the course of the passage there are two references to a group called in A.V. and R.V. "the poor of the flock" (Heb. *"niyyé haššō'n*). R.S.V. calls them "the traffickers in the sheep", which is also the only meaning that can be extracted from the Septuagint.¹⁶ But we have seen how the Zadokite Work quotes Zechariah xi. 11, where "the poor of the flock" are those who "gave heed" to the prophet, with evident reference to the faithful remnant, the Zadokite community; and we may wonder whether the "little flock" of Luke xii. 32 does not echo "the poor of the flock" in Zechariah xi. 11 and (even more certainly) "the little ones" of Zechariah xiii. 7. Whether there was an original connection between chapters xi and xiii of Zechariah or not, Jesus at any rate draws on both places in His self-portrayal as the repudiated and smitten shepherd.

If we are right thus far, then the entry into Jerusalem takes on a fresh significance. As we have seen, it is the two later Evangelists, Matthew and John, who expressly quote Zechariah ix. 9 in this context, but there is an implicit reference to the prophecy in the Markan account of the entry (which is followed quite closely by Luke). In the original context there is no doubt that the king who comes to Zion is the long expected prince of the house of David. In Zechariah ix. 10 he is described in language borrowed from Psalm lxxii. 7 f. and similar passages in the earlier prophets:

he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.¹⁷

¹⁶ εἰς τὴν Χαναανίτιν (xi. 7), οἱ Χαναανῆες (xi. 11); cf. xiv. 21, where Χαναανῆς represents Heb. *kēna'ānī* ("trader").

¹⁷ Cf. Ps. Sol. xvii. 36-39.

[p.347]

We know how the rabbis of a later date debated this oracle how could the Messiah come "meek and sitting on an ass" if he was also to come "with the clouds of heaven"? Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, who propounded the riddle, supplied his own solution: "If they are worthy, he will come with the clouds of heaven; if they are not worthy, meek and sitting on an ass."¹⁸ But what was in the mind of Jesus as He carried out His plan to ride into Jerusalem thus? He certainly wished it to be known that He was presenting Himself to the city in that day of its visitation, not as a warrior-Messiah but as a peaceful prince—more precisely, as Israel's shepherd-king. The attendant crowds who acclaimed "the coming kingdom of our father David" (Mark xi. 10) grasped part of His intention, but they may well have missed the more important part. We should take quite seriously the remark which is appended in John xii. 16 to the quotation of Zechariah ix. 9: "His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him."

Hard upon the proclamation of the peaceful king comes Yahweh's announcement of liberation to the captives "because of the blood of my covenant with you" (Zech. ix. 11). The resemblance between this and "my covenant blood" in our Lord's words of institution (Mark xiv. 24) can scarcely be fortuitous, although the scripture principally in His mind then appears to have been Exodus xxiv. 8.

In the light of this usage of Zechariah ix-xiv, other sayings and incidents in the Gospel narrative take on a fresh significance. The entry into Jerusalem was followed, a day or two later, by the incident of the unfruitful fig tree. In the context of this incident Mark places one of Jesus' sayings about faith: "Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him" (Mark xi. 23). It was pointed out several years ago by the late Professor William Manson of Edinburgh¹⁹ that this is probably not such a

[p.348]

floating logion as some form critics have maintained. For, if Mark's setting is right, "this mountain" could only have been the Mount of Olives, which, according to Zechariah xiv. 4, was to be cleft asunder on the Day of the Lord, when Yahweh came down to fight against Jerusalem's enemies. The natural inference is that not Mark but "*Jesus had the Old Testament passage in mind, and the tradition followed by Mark was here true to history*". The logion is then a picturesque way of saying, "If only you have sufficient faith in God, the promised Day of the Lord will come swiftly".

The same passage of Zechariah, describing the siege and capture of Jerusalem, has influenced some of the language in the eschatological discourse, especially in its Lukan form, where the surrounding of Jerusalem with armies replaces the Markan allusion to the abomination of desolation.²⁰ And the flowing of living waters from Jerusalem, mentioned later in the same

¹⁸ TB *Sanh.* 98a. The implied identification of the "one like a son of man" of Dan. vii. 13 with the Messiah is remarkable but not unparalleled in rabbinical literature.

¹⁹ W. Manson, *Jesus the Messiah* (1943), pp. 29 f.

²⁰ Cf. C. H. Dodd, "The Fall of Jerusalem and the 'Abomination of Desolation'", *JRS*, 37 (1947), 47 ff.; also C. C. Torrey, *Documents of the Primitive Church* (1941), pp. 20 ff.

chapter of Zechariah, may underlie the words of Jesus in John vii. 38: "as the scripture has said, 'from the midst thereof shall flow rivers of living water'."

There is in this interpretation of Zechariah ix-xiv something quite different from the atomistic procedure which characterizes the Qumran commentaries on the Old Testament. One dominating principle—here, the portrayal of the shepherd-king—is discerned throughout the whole section of prophecy, and becomes determinative for the application of any part of it. Professor T. W. Manson gave a lecture in this Library over eight years ago on "The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus"²¹ in which he concluded that "our Lord's treatment of the Old Testament is based on two things: a profound understanding of the essential teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures and a sure judgement of his own contemporary situation. There is nothing trivial or artificial about his use of the Old Testament: throughout we feel that we are in touch with realities, the realities of the divine revelation and the realities of the historical situation." I feel that a study of our

[p.349]

Lord's use, in word and action, of Zechariah ix-xiv confirms this conclusion.

V

With their Master's use of these chapters as a precedent, the Evangelists, as we might expect, had little difficulty in finding further correspondences between them and His ministry. Matthew's use of the thirty pieces of silver we have already considered. "There is", says Professor Dodd, "no reason to suppose that this belongs to the primitive corpus of *testimonia*, but we may well believe that Matthew was led to it because the whole passage of Zechariah was already recognized as a source of testimonies."²² Moreover, the belief that Judas' defection was a subject of Old Testament prediction is deeply embedded in the Gospel tradition. In Jesus' announcement of the betrayal in Mark xiv. 18-21, the words "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" may contain a hint that "that man" is also going as it is written of *him*. However that may be, the belief comes to full expression in Acts i. 16 ff., where Peter assures his fellow-disciples that "the scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas"; and goes on to quote two *testimonia* from the Psalter (Ps. lxxix. 25, cix. 8) to show what he had in mind. We remember too that in John's passion narrative Jesus applies to Judas the language of Psalms xli. 9, "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me" (John xiii. 18),²³ and later says in His prayer for His disciples: "none of them is lost"²⁴ but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John xvii. 12). This being so, it is not surprising that Matthew should find a further *testimonium* in Zechariah xi, where the services of Yahweh's shepherd are estimated at a mere thirty shekels.

It is worth observing, too, that Matthew evidently knows the variant "treasury" (Heb. 'ôṣār) for "moulder" or "potter"

²¹ BULLETIN OF THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY, 34 (1951-2), 312 ff.

²² *According to the Scriptures* (1952), pp. 64 f.

²³ There may be similar significance in the parallel words in Mark xiv. 18, "one who is eating with me".

²⁴ Professor A. Guilding connects this with Zech. x. 10 LXX, "not even one of them shall be left behind" (*The Fourth Gospel in Jewish Worship* (1960), p. 165).

[p.350]

(Heb. *yôṣēr*) in Zechariah xi. 13. In his account it is almost as if the chief priests said: "How shall we fulfil this scripture? Shall we give it to the *'ôṣār* or to the *yôṣēr*? We cannot give it to the *'ôṣār* because it is blood-money; let us give it to the *yôṣēr*." So they bought the potter's field with it. They did not get the field, at any rate, out of the *testimonium*, and Matthew, as we have seen, conflates this *testimonium* with another from Jeremiah, where a field is purchased. This, taken along with the story in Acts i. 18 f., rather suggests that a field was bought with the reward of Judas' iniquity. I will not go farther, as Dr. Del Medico invites one to do,²⁵ and identify Akeldama with the Qumran cemetery, purchased for a song to bury strangers in after the sediment of potter's clay had been worked out; this calls for qualities of imaginative insight which I do not command.

To the Fourth Evangelist, too, the association of Zechariah ix-xiv with the passion narrative was no new idea; it was something that he had "received", in common with his fellow-Evangelists. His quotation of Zechariah ix. 9 in connection with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is, as we have seen, independent of Matthew's quotation of the same *testimonium*. His quotation of Zechariah xii. 10, "they shall look upon him whom they pierced", is not found in any other Gospel; there was, of course, no occasion for another Evangelist to quote it, as John alone mentions the piercing of Jesus' side with the spear (as he is also the only Evangelist to make express reference to the nails by which Jesus' hands were pierced when he was crucified).²⁶ It may be argued that it was this *testimonium* and the companion one from the directions for preparing the paschal lamb that suggested the story of the piercing to the Evangelist; he might almost be thought to have anticipated this argument by the solemnity with which he impresses on his readers that these details were marked by an eyewitness whose reliability is beyond question. As in other details of the passion story, it is the event that has suggested the *testimonium*, and not the other way about.

[p.351]

But in his brief reference to Zechariah xii. 10 he has suggested something more than he may have completely realized. The prophet compares the mourning over the pierced one to "the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo" (xii. 11). Now the annually repeated lamentation for a fertility deity, never finished and always fruitless, has been swallowed up by the compassionate tears of penitent supplicants for a victim pierced once for all, never to be struck again. Whatever be the original reference of the piercing and the mourning, in the passion narrative it has been given an implicit reference to the smitten shepherd of Zechariah xiii. 7.²⁷

The cleansing of the temple in the Fourth Gospel is not closely bound up with the passion narrative as it is in the Synoptic Gospels; John, perhaps for programmatic reasons, places it at the beginning of the ministry, not at the end. But when he reports Jesus as saying, "you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (John ii. 16),²⁸ he may well be echoing the

²⁵ H. E. Del Medico, *The Riddle of the Scrolls* (1958), pp. 93 f.

²⁶ There may well be an allusion to the wounds left by the nails in Luke xxiv. 39: "See my hands and my feet."

²⁷ In TB *Sukhah* 52a the pierced one who is mourned in Zech. xii. 10 is the Messiah ben Joseph, fallen in battle.

²⁸ In the same context (verse 17) John quotes from Ps. lxix, another fertile source of passion *testimonia*. The rebuke of Jesus in Mark xi. 17 points the contrast between "a house of prayer for all nations" (Isa. lvi. 7) and "a den of robbers" (Jer. vii. 11).

closing words of Zechariah xiv: "there shall no longer be a trader in the house of Yahweh of hosts on that day." The rendering "trader" (R.S.V.) for "Canaanite" is at least as old as the Targum.²⁹ One might not have so readily seen an allusion to Zechariah xiv. 21*b* in this part of John's narrative were it not that we have such conclusive evidence elsewhere of his drawing upon Zechariah ix-xiv as a source of *testimonia*.

Even so, one may well hesitate to go so far as to find an echo of Zechariah ix-xiv in his statement that the high priest's slave whom Peter wounded at Jesus' arrest was called Malchus (John xviii. 10). It has been suggested in one of the most important studies of the Fourth Gospel to appear in recent years that John called the slave Malchus to show that the narrative of the arrest fulfilled Zechariah xi. 6, "I will cause men to fall each into the hand of his neighbour,³⁰ and each into the hand of his king

[p.352]

(*malkô*)".³¹ But there is a basic appropriateness about John's other allusions to Zechariah ix-xiv which is lacking here; no one fell into Malchus' hand, and why, of all the people present, should the high priest's slave be chosen to fulfil the prophecy about a "king"? It is more likely that the Evangelist tells us that the slave's name was Malchus because he happened to know that Malchus, in fact, was his name.

If Jesus was the first to speak of His passion in terms of Zechariah ix-xiv, the Evangelists follow His example not only in finding other foreshadowings of His passion there, but in finding them in a manner that does not do violence to the original sense and context. These chapters present a pattern of revelation and response which the Evangelists recognize as recurring in the story of Jesus.

It is, I think, worthy of mention, as illustrating their sobriety and restraint, that none of them makes use of the utterance of Zechariah xiii. 6, where the man who tries to hide the fact that he is a prophet explains away the ecstatic wounds "between his hands" by saying that he received them in the house of his friends. No New Testament writer, and (to the best of my knowledge) no Christian writer of the earliest centuries A.D., tries to see in this utterance a prophecy of the nail wounds in our Lord's hands, "in the grossest misapprehension of its meaning".³² E. B. Pusey's attempt to take it closely with the immediately following words about the smitten shepherd carries its refutation on its face.³³

There are obvious differences between the Evangelists' use of these six chapters of Zechariah and the use of scripture found in the Qumran *pesharim*. But in one important respect they have something in common; in neither community are incidents invented to fit the scriptures—on the contrary, the scriptures are interpreted in the light of the events. The *presentation* of the incidents is another matter. Parts of the passion narrative of the

²⁹ Targ. *taggarâ*; cf. TB *Pesahim* 50a.

³⁰ MT *rē'ēhu*. R.S.V. renders "his shepherd", as though reading Heb. *rô'ēhû*.

³¹ A. Guilding, op. cit. pp. 165 f.; cf. p. 232: "St. John took this, and many other such details, from the synagogue lections... since the lections were inspired scripture they had for him an authority which far outweighed that of any human testimony, however well attested."

³² T. V. Moore, *The Book of Zechariah* (1856, reprinted 1958), pp. 208 f.

³³ E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets* (1860), pp. 583 f.

[p.353]

Gospels—especially the First and Fourth—are recorded in such a way as to present a commentary or midrash on Zechariah ix-xiv and other prophetic scriptures, but that was because the Evangelists saw such a clear correspondence between the prophetic *testimonia* and the events to which the apostles and their colleagues testified as having taken place *sub Pontio Pilato*.

© 1961 *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*. Reproduced by permission (<http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/specialcollections/information/publications/bulletin/>).

Prepared for the web in April 2008 by Robert I. Bradshaw.

<http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/>

The Book of Zechariah and the Passion Narrative. 1. [p.336].¹ At a later stage, this emphasis reappears in the prominent place given to the passion narrative in the written Gospels, to a point where these Gospels have been described² as "exaggeratedly, it is true" as "passion narratives with extended introductions".² One point that was emphasized among others in this repeated telling of the story of the death of Christ was that it took place (as Paul puts it) "according to the scriptures". This was evidently part of the tradition as Paul received it, and not something added by himself, for it is present in all strata of the passion narrative. Peter's speech i