

"ZACHARIAH WHO PERISHED"

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On more than one occasion Christ stated that Pharisaism would be held responsible for all the blood of the prophets from Abel to Zachariah (Lk. 11:51, cf. Mt. 23:35). Even among evangelicals, it is now customary to identify the latter with Zechariah the martyred son of the high priest Jehoiada (II Chr. 24:20-22) and then, on the strength of this identification, to argue for the New Testament's acceptance of the rabbinic order of books in the Old Testament canon.¹ It would run from Abel, the first martyr of the first book of the Torah (Genesis), to Zechariah, the last martyr of the last book of the Kethuvim (II Chronicles), for chronologically there were other martyrs who perished later than this priest (cf. Jer. 26:23). Both of these conclusions, however, warrant reexamination.

Concerning the canon, liberalism's commitment to the theory of an eleven-book Kethuvim, terminating with Chronicles, and gaining recognition subsequently to an assumed close of the Nevi'im (Prophets) in 200 B.C., hardly required documentation;² with its need to maintain a composition for Daniel and Esther after 200 B.C., negative criticism simply cannot afford to be open-minded on the subject. Yet R. Laird Harris has repeatedly called attention³ to Josephus' restriction of the Kethuvim to the poetical books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon⁴ (cf. Christ's statement in Lk. 24:44). As H. B. Swete has remarked, "The rest of the Hagiographa seem to have been counted by him among the prophets,"⁵ a view supported by all other Jewish evidence,⁶ until the fourth Christian century.⁷ Long ago Moses Stuart also showed how "all the earlier Christian writers down to the middle of the fourth century testify in favor of . . . only these Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon as belonging to the Hagiographa."⁸ It remains to observe only that, in both Jewish (LXX) and Christian (patristic) groupings of the Old Testament books, just as in today's English Bible, the poetic Kethuvim are regularly inserted between the Former Prophets (historical books) and the Latter (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Twelve) and that, while "in the majority of patristic lists the Twelve minor prophets precede, Codex Aleph begins with the Four major prophets, and it is supported by other authorities."⁹

Concerning the Zachariah of Luke 11:51 then, arguments for his identification with Zechariah the son of Jehoiada are basically threefold. (1) Similarity of detail. Christ describes the former as one "who perished between the altar and the sanctuary," and II Chronicles 24:21 states of the latter that "they stoned him . . . in the court of the house of Yahweh." (2) The wider Biblical context. Christ warned that such innocent blood would be "required of this

generation" (Lk. 11:50), and the final prayer of the Chronicler's martyred priest was that "Yahweh look upon it and require it" (II Chr. 24:22). (3) Popular Jewish thought. Later Talmudic speculation did apply itself to the death of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada.¹⁰

Yet these same arguments, if pursued, may be found to point in another direction. (1) The killing of "Zechariah who perished" must be located in the inner or priests' court of the temple (I Ki. 6:36, II Chr. 4:9), while the people who stoned the son of Jehoiada may have been thronging the "great court" (I Ki. 7:12); cf. Meyer's admission that the New Testament "renders the narrative more precise."¹¹ (2) In the context of Luke, Zechariah is designated a prophet and, while our Lord may have been using the term loosely,¹² the wider Biblical context specifically identifies him as "Zechariah son of Barachiah" (Mt. 23:35),¹³ which seems to describe the minor prophet of that name (cf. Zech. 1:1), the next to the last of the Twelve.¹⁴ (3) Jewish tradition, in the Targum to Lamentations 2:20, identifies the minor prophet Zechariah with "the priest and the prophet slain in the miqdash (sanctuary) of Yahweh,"¹⁵ the term miqdash, it should be noted, being broad enough to include "temple and precincts."¹⁶ Perhaps Jerome and Chrysostom deserve greater attention in their equation of Zechariah the son of Barachiah with Zechariah the son of Berechiah. Furthermore, since the Targumic tradition says nothing of a martyrdom of Malachi, but even considers this final book of the Twelve a product of "Ezra the Scribe," Zechariah seems to have been the last traditional prophet-martyr of the Old Testament canon; and Christ's reference to "Zechariah who perished" may constitute evidence for the New Testament's acceptance of Josephus' division of books in the Old Testament canon, namely, Torah, Former Nebi'im (history), the poetic Kethuvim, and Latter Prophets.¹⁷

DOCUMENTATION

1. "Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51, which refer to . . . II Chronicles 24:20, 21, can only have meaning if the final order and arrangement of the Hebrew canon is referred to," Merrill F. Unger, Introductory Guide to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1951), p. 71, cf. John H. Raven, Old Testament Introduction (New York: Revell, c. 1910), pp. 19-20.
2. Cf. Albert C. Sundberg, The Old Testament of the Early Church (Harvard Theological Studies #10; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1964), and his presentation at the 1965 Society of Biblical Literature.
3. Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), pp. 141-145; or, "Was the Law and the Prophets Two-Thirds of the Old Testament Canon?" Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society, IX:4 (1966), 165-167; cf. his presentation at the 1966 Evangelical Theological Society.
4. Against Apion, I:8.
5. An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1914), p. 217; cf. The Jewish Encyclopaedia, III:146.
6. In the intertestamental literature, Ecclus. 44:3-5 and II Macc. 2:13-14 (II Esdr. 14:44-46 does indeed indicate 24 books rather than Josephus' 22, but it nowhere states the order), and Philo, De Vita Contemplative, 3 (if valid); cf. Wm. Henry Green, General Introduction to the Old Testament, the Canon (New York: Scribner's 1898), pp. 82-83.

7. An approximate dating for the Talmudic Baba Bathra, 14b, Harris, Inspiration and Canonicity, p. 141; "Was the Law. . . ?" p. 165. Even if authentically belonging to Judah Haqqadosh, it would still not antedate the second Christian century. Cf. Unger's explanation of the transfer of Ruth and Lamentations to the third division of the canon "after the second century. . . for liturgical reasons," op. cit., p. 55.
8. Critical History and Defence of the Old Testament Canon (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1849), p. 292; cf. the discussion in Swete, op. cit., pp. 210-222, or Sundberg's charts, op. cit., pp. 58-59.
9. Swete, op. cit., p. 227.
10. Gittin, 57b; Sanhedrin, 96b; and others, cf. ICC, Mt, p. 250.
11. Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894), II:113; cf. Th. Zahn's analysis of the Midrashic and Talmudic discussion over which court was the one involved, Das Evangelium des Lucan ausgelegt (Leipzig: 1913).
12. Cf. its application to Abel.
13. The reading of D, the Curetonian Syriac, and a few others in Lk as well; though, as the Nestle apparatus indicates, due to the influence of Mt. The presence of the patronymic in Mt has occasioned no little difficulty for those who maintain the equation with II Chron. Evangelicals tend to think of it as "a gloss which. . . afterwards crept into the text," John D. Davis, A Dictionary of the Bible (4th ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1927), p. 830; but it appears in all the best MSS except Aleph*; and the reading, fili Joadae, cited by Jerome from the Gospel of the Nazarenes (Evangelium secundum Hebraeos), appears to be apologetically motivated. Less Biblically inclined writers speak of "the inadvertance of the evangelist," The Expositor's Greek Testament, I:286, "confusion on the part of Matthew," HDB, IV:961a, or of "one of the great historical difficulties of the Gospel," Century, Mt, p. 281. We do well, however, to recall Wm. Henry Green's caution, "It is perhaps not absolutely certain that Zachariah, the son of Barachiah, of Matthew, is the same as Zachariah, the son of Jehoiada, in Chronicles," op. cit., p. 202.
14. So Gleason L. Archer, Jr., A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 410, who speaks of the son of Jehoiada as having "met his end in a like manner." This approach appears to be more tenable than the attempt to locate "Zachariah who perished" in some post-Old Testament figure, cf. the seven views listed in John P. Lange, Commentary on the Holy Scripture (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, N.D.), I:414-415, and Henry Alford's evaluations, The Greek Testament (London: Rivingtons, 1874), I:235.
15. Cf. ICC, Zech, pp. 83-84, and contra B. F. C. Atkinson in NBC, p. 799, and J. S. Wright in NBD, p. 1355.
16. BDB, p. 874a.
17. Cf. the argument of P. Katz, that the LXX preserves a Palestinian order of books before Jamnia, "The Old Testament Canon in Palestine and Alexandria," ZNTW, 47 (1956), 191-217.