

ARTICLE II.

THE BUILDERS OF THE SECOND TEMPLE.

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WITH the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the transportation of the *élite* of the nation, the doom of Israel seemed to be sealed. Humanly speaking, the hopes of Isaiah and of Ezekiel were apparently only the fancies of enthusiastic dreamers. The restoration of Judah was as little to be expected as the restoration of the ten northern tribes. But, in spite of these overwhelming improbabilities, such a restoration actually did take place, Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt, and a new Israel rose on the ruins of the old, differing in many respects from the old, it is true, but still its legitimate historical successor.

The history of this period confirms the opinion which would be naturally formed, that such a restoration must take place gradually, and could not be effected at one stroke. A century was required for its accomplishment. With regard to the course of events during this century, the records are for the most part silent, but the salient points are treated with unusual fullness. These salient points are, the rebuilding of the temple, and the establishment of its services; the building of the walls of Jerusalem; and the foundation of the Jewish church on the basis of the law of Moses. The second and third of these events stand close together in point of time, and connect themselves with the names of Nehemiah, Ezra, and probably the prophet Malachi, while the first occurred three-quarters of a century earlier, and is connected with the names of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Haggai, and Zechariah.

It has always been supposed, on the basis of what seems to be the clear statements of the records, that the great majority of the new community were either returned exiles or the descendants of the returned exiles, though it is stated that they were reinforced by others of those who had never been carried into captivity.¹ But recently Professor Kusters,² the successor of the late Professor Kuenen at Leiden, in an elaborate monograph has attempted to prove that the generally received opinion is incorrect in holding that a large band of exiles returned from Babylon to Jerusalem in the reign of Cyrus, and that it was these returned exiles who began the work of restoration and reconstruction. Kusters maintains that there is no satisfactory evidence that any of the exiles returned from Babylon to Jerusalem in the reign of Cyrus; that the Jews still remaining in Palestine, inspired by their prophets, began the work of rebuilding the temple in the second year of Darius, and brought it to a successful issue in the sixth year of the same king; that not until after the rebuilding of the walls under Nehemiah did the exiles return in any considerable numbers to Judæa, as they did under the leadership of Ezra, and that this band of returned exiles had a share only in the final stage of the work, viz., the formation of the Jewish church. These revolutionary conclusions, Kusters maintains, are supported by an impartial estimate of the testimony of the documents themselves. The documents in question are the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Opinions will naturally differ as to the nature of Professor Kusters' arguments and the value of his conclusions. Professor Cheyne, for example, in his latest work,³ says that the conclusions of Kusters in the main points appear so inevi-

¹ Ezra vi. 21.

² "Het Herstel van Israel in het Perzische Tijdvak." Translated into German, "Die Wiederherstellung Israels in der persischen Periode."

³ Introduction to the Book of Isaiah, Prolegomena, p. 35.

table that he has constantly presupposed them in dealing with chapters lvi.—lxvi. of the book of Isaiah. But it is difficult to see how the candid reader can fail to notice that, with all his ingenuity in marshaling his arguments, Professor Kusters manifests a constant tendency to overestimate those arguments which favor his theory, while he makes use of every opportunity to throw discredit on the statements of the so-called Chronicler, the probable compiler of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Therefore, without undertaking a formal review of his work, and confining my attention to only one part of his thesis, it is my purpose in this article to consider whether his arguments compel us to give up the idea, that the return of a band of exiles from Babylon was the first step in the Jewish restoration.

THE HISTORY OF THIS PERIOD.

The historical records of this period are preserved for us in the first six chapters of the book of Ezra. According to this narrative, Cyrus in the first year of his reign in Babylon issued a decree permitting those of the Jews then resident in Babylon, who desired to do so, to return to Jerusalem to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. In addition to this, he turned over to the leader of the returning exiles the vessels of the temple which had been carried away to Babylon by the victorious Nebuchadnezzar. According to Ezra i. 8, this leader was Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. After their arrival in Jerusalem, the people, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, set up the altar of burnt-offering, observed the feast of tabernacles, and resumed the regular daily sacrifices. At the same time they began the preparations for the building of the temple, the foundations of which were laid, in the second month of the second year of the return, with great solemnity, amid the mingled rejoicings and lamentations of the people. But the work so auspiciously begun was not destined to proceed without interruption. The surrounding peo-

ples, headed doubtless by the Samaritans, came, asking to assist in the great work which the Jews had undertaken, and, when their offers of aid were rejected, adopted a policy of hostility and opposition. This opposition consisted of direct hindrances to the work of the Jews in Jerusalem itself, and also, what was probably more effectual, of opposition at the Persian court. Their efforts succeeded. Disheartened, the people desisted from their work, and for many years the building of the temple was discontinued. In the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspis (521-485), that is, in 520 B. C., under the impulse of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the people, led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, resumed the building of the temple. While they were occupied with their work they were visited by the representatives of the Persian government, and, upon being asked on what authority they were doing this work, they appealed to the permission of Cyrus, and declared that, in obedience to the commands of Cyrus, his legate Sheshbazzar had years before laid the foundations of the temple, and that they were simply carrying to completion this earlier work. The Persian authorities contented themselves with taking the names of the leaders, and then appealed to Darius for his decision. Darius reaffirmed the decree of Cyrus, and also made an additional decree in favor of the work of the Jews. Thus under royal favor the work of construction was pushed rapidly forward, so that, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius, that is four years from the resumption of the work, the building was completed on the third day of Adar, the twelfth month. The dedication of the house followed, the services of the temple were reestablished, and a month later, on the fourteenth day of the first month, the passover was observed by "the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land." With this event, which occurred in 515 B. C., the record of the first period of the restoration abruptly closes.

THE FOUNDING OF THE TEMPLE IN THE SECOND YEAR
OF THE RETURN.

Until the appearance of Professor Koster's book, with one important exception, the essential accuracy of this outline of events has been accepted by most scholars. This exception is with regard to the foundation of the temple in the second year of the return. So long ago as 1867, Schrader, in an article in the *Studien und Kritiken* for that year,¹ on the ground of Ezra v. 2, and principally on the ground of the testimony of Haggai and Zechariah, sought to prove that the statement of the Chronicler in regard to the early founding of the temple is unhistorical. Schrader's arguments have been accepted as conclusive by many modern writers,² who have yet held to the historical accuracy of the return under Cyrus. Koster, by the application of the same arguments, has proved that no return took place in the reign of Cyrus. And certainly, if Schrader's position is correct, the conclusions of Koster would almost seem to be its logical outcome, for it seems almost incredible that the Jews, armed with such authority as that described in Ezra i. 2-4, and indeed under such orders as are described in vi. 3-5, should have settled quietly in Jerusalem and its vicinity and for fifteen years have made no attempt to begin the work upon the temple. If they did not begin to build the temple, and the narrative is incorrect in this particular, then the presumption lies near at hand that no captives had returned charged with that work. It seems impossible to deny that there is much force in this contention of Koster.

But are we required to adopt Schrader's view? If there is any truth whatever in the statements in regard to Cyrus which are preserved in the record, then we are certainly justified in expecting that at no very distant date the chief task which

¹ Pp. 461 ff.

² Kuenen, *Hist. krit. Onderzoek*, § 34, Rem. 4. König, *Einleitung in das alte Testament*, pp. 281-283. Wellhausen, *Göttinger Nachrichten*, 1895, p. 175.

was laid upon the Jews by the decree of Cyrus would be undertaken. This expectation is satisfied by the statement that in the second year of the return the foundations of the temple were actually laid. Furthermore, this statement is substantiated, in its fundamental point, by the report of the Jewish elders to the Persian authorities, that Sheshbazzar, the legate of Cyrus, came and laid the foundations of the house. This statement, it is true, involves us in other difficulties; but, in regard to the main point, it confirms the opinion that the foundations of the house were actually laid early in the reign of Cyrus. The difficulties occasioned by this verse are not great. In the first place, here, as in Ezra i. 8, Sheshbazzar is named as the leader in the work of laying the foundation of the temple, while in iii. 8, and elsewhere, the leader of the post-exilic Jews is called Zerubbabel, who, according to 1 Chron. iii. 17-20, was a descendant of Jehoiachin, and so a member of the house of David. This difficulty is removed most easily by the assumption that Sheshbazzar is the Babylonian name, and Zerubbabel the Jewish name, of the same man,—a view which is not in the least improbable, and is suggested by the statements of our author, while at the same time it accounts for them. The other difficulty arises from the fact, that, while in Ezra iv. 1-5, and 24, it is said that the work on the temple ceased, in v. 16 the statement is made, "and since that time [viz. its founding by Sheshbazzar] even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not completed." If this is a misrepresentation, it is a misrepresentation on the part of the Persian authorities who are here giving the report to Darius. But it is not necessarily a misrepresentation, it may be only a loose way of stating the justification of the work on the part of the leaders of the Jews. The work in which they were engaged was no new enterprise, but was simply a continuation of the work begun under Cyrus and in accordance with his express commands.¹

¹ See Van Hoonacker, *Zorobabel et le Second Temple*, p. 98.

The statement in Ezra v. 2, "then [in the second year of Darius] rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem," does perhaps give the impression of an actual beginning of the work, and not merely of its renewal. But at the same time no one would dream of questioning the historical accuracy of the statement that the foundations of the temple had been laid some fifteen years earlier, on the ground of this passage alone. "Began to build" does not of necessity mean anything more than began anew to build. Much the same can be said with regard to most of the passages in Haggai and Zechariah which are urged in favor of Schrader's hypothesis.¹ These passages might, it is true, be quoted in support of this theory in case it had been proved on independent grounds, but by themselves they are all perfectly consistent with such a founding of the temple as that described in Ezra iii. 8-13. Zech. viii. 9 occasions more difficulty, but still is not a satisfactory argument against the narrative in Ezra. The prophet, speaking on the fourth day of the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius, says: "Let your hands be strong, you who are hearing in these days these words from the mouth of the prophets, who lived in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built." Fairly interpreted, all that this passage says is, that the prophets who were speaking to the people in 518 B. C. were also present at the founding of the temple. But because we do not hear that Haggai and Zechariah were present at the alleged laying of the foundation in the second year of Cyrus, are we justified in regarding this argument as decisive proof that the foundation of the temple was not laid until the second year of Darius? From the testimony of Zechariah, therefore, it would be impossible either to assert or deny an earlier founding of the temple.

¹ Hag. i. 2, 4, 9, 14; Zech. i. 16; iv. 9; vi. 12.

There remains only one passage that is quoted in favor of Schrader's theory, and that is Haggai ii. 18. The verse in question reads, "Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it." According to the majority of modern authorities, the phrase "from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid," simply indicates that the day that the foundation of the house was laid was the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. If this interpretation is correct, then we must either give up the historical accuracy of Ezra iii. 8-13, or else conclude, with Driver, that Haggai simply ignores this earlier founding of the temple. But it is at least a question, whether this interpretation is the correct one. In the first place, the description given by Haggai¹ of the work of the people on the temple since the time of his first exhortation in the sixth month of the second year of Darius, and especially his declaration in the seventh month that, in spite of the seeming insignificance of the new house, its glory should exceed that of the former house, are hardly compatible with the view that the foundation was not laid until the ninth month. Furthermore, it is certain that in the majority of cases the preposition here used to introduce the words, "from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid" (מִיּוֹם) is used to indicate something which is not present either in time or place. Hence it is quite probable that, in spite of the awkwardness of the expression, we have in this verse not merely the end of the period which the people are asked to consider, but also its beginning,—namely, the day of the founding of the temple, a day in the past which was well known to the people. This period was a period of disaster, and this disaster came in punishment for the negligence of the people, because, after the foundation of the temple had been laid, they had not pushed the work on to completion. Verse 18, then, simply

¹ Hag. i. 14; ii. 1-9.

describes in more exact terms the same period that is described in verse 15. In verse 15 the end of the period is the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, its beginning is some point in the past when the building was not going on, as it was at the time when the prophet was speaking; verse 18 fixes this point in the past as the day when the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid.¹ Kusters, it is true, urges that, even if this interpretation is adopted, the date of the foundation of the temple cannot be placed back of the sixth month of the second year of Darius; but this is pure assumption, and, in the presence of the direct statement of Ezra iii. 8-13, is without any weight. This much at least is certain; Haggai does not assert that the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month was the date of the foundation of the temple. And furthermore, instead of contradicting, he most probably actually refers to this earlier founding.

We conclude, therefore, that, unless better proof can be brought forward than is at hand, there seems to be no need to doubt the essential accuracy of Ezra iii. 8-13. Unfortunately there exists at present no corroborative evidence from the Persian records, which give very little information in regard to the latter years of the reign of Cyrus. But it is not impossible that coming years will furnish the needed corroboration.

THE TEMPLE BUILT BY RETURNED EXILES.

We are now prepared to consider the question raised by Professor Kusters, as to who the builders of the temple actually were. In Ezra i. 5 we read, "Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all those whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem." This statement is confirmed by i. 11; ii. 8; iv. 1; vi. 16, 19, 21. All these passages assert that the initiative was taken,

¹ See Van Hoonacker, *ut supra*, pp. 77 ff.

and the leading part of the work was done, by the returned exiles, with whom were associated those of the people "who had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land." As might be expected, many—how many it is impossible to say—of the descendants of those who had not been carried away to Babylon joined in the great work of restoration, but it is distinctly stated that returned exiles formed the nucleus of the new community and the rallying-point for the new movement. In addition to this, the fact of such an early return is confirmed by the references in the book of Nehemiah to those "who went up at the first" or to those "who went up with Zerubbabel."¹

The Testimony of the Lists in Ezra ii.; Neh. vii. 7-73.

Apparently the strongest argument in favor of the early return of the exiles is to be found in the list in Ezra ii., which is usually supposed to be a list of those who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, in accordance with the decree of Cyrus contained in Ezra i. In spite of the somewhat numerous variations in the two lists, it probably is not seriously questioned by any scholar of the present day, that we have two copies of the same list in Ezra ii. and Nehemiah vii. 7-73. This identity has been satisfactorily proved by various scholars, among whom may be mentioned Bishop Hervey.² If this were really a list of exiles who returned with Zerubbabel, further argument would be unnecessary. But many competent scholars deny that this is such a list. Bishop Hervey has argued at considerable length that it contains a list, not of the captives who returned with Zerubbabel, but of the residents of the province of Judæa, in accordance with the results of the census taken by Nehemiah. Hervey's arguments are, it seems to me, conclu-

¹ Neh. vii. 5; xii. 1.

² See his art. "Nehemiah," *Smith's Dict. of the Bible* (Am. ed.), Vol. iii. p. 2094.

sive, and it might perhaps be sufficient to refer to his discussion, and accept his conclusions without further investigation. But, inasmuch as a correct conception of the first stage of the post-exilic history is impossible without an accurate idea of the significance of this list, it seems best to consider the question somewhat in detail. The first point that attracts attention is the title or superscription of the list. According to the heading, this is a list of the "children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away [i. e., "the Gola"], whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again unto Judah and Jerusalem, every one unto his own city." The interpretation adopted by Ryle¹ and many other commentators is, that the reference is here to "the Jews inhabiting Jerusalem and its vicinity as distinct from the Jews left in Babylon." The phrase "every one unto his own city," and particularly the statement in Nehemiah vii. 73 (Ezra ii. 70), "all Israel dwelt in their own cities," occasions difficulty on this theory. These words imply that, at the time of the formation of the list, the people had actually come into possession of settled abodes in the land of Judah. Furthermore, while not impossible, yet the interpretation first given is scarcely the natural interpretation of the superscription of the list. Had the author intended to convey that idea, he could have done it more simply by saying, "These are the children of the captivity who went up to the province," etc. The more natural interpretation is unquestionably as follows: these are the inhabitants of the province of Judæa in so far as these inhabitants consisted of returned exiles, in distinction from the other inhabitants of the province who had not been in banishment. In other words, the list does not claim to be a list of exiles who returned at any one time, but rather of the inhabitants of Judæa and Jerusalem who were returned exiles

¹ The Cambridge Bible. Ezra and Nehemiah, edited by H. E. Ryle, p. 38.

or descendants of returned exiles, and so competent to become members of the new community.¹ This interpretation not only avoids the difficulty occasioned by the statements quoted above, but also agrees admirably with the state of affairs presupposed by them, for it is undoubtedly true that these statements indicate that the settlement in the cities of Judah was an accomplished fact.

Again, the list and the purpose of the offerings as related in Nehemiah vii. 70 furnish a further argument in support of our theory. It is here stated that the chief of the fathers, the Tirshatha, and the rest of the people gave for "the work," or to "the treasury of the work," and among these gifts are included in Ezra ii. 69 one hundred priests' garments. The reference to the priests' garments raises the question as to whether these gifts could have been intended for the rebuilding of the temple, as is ordinarily supposed, and the use of the word "work" leads to the conclusion that the reference here is to gifts for the support of the temple service, to which this word (מְלָכָה) often refers, especially in the post-exilic literature.² The parallel passage in Ezra ii. 68 has a different reading, and says that the people gave "to set up the house of God in its place." But that this does not necessarily mean rebuilding has been conclusively shown by Hervey in the article already mentioned. Almost the same phrase is used in 2 Chron. ix. 8; xxiv. 13, where the reference is certainly not to rebuilding, but to restoration and renovation. The mention of these offerings is incompatible with the idea that the temple is in ruins. The existence of the temple is presupposed. The situation is one that reminds us of the ordinances which the people imposed upon themselves in the time of Nehemiah,³ in which they pledged themselves not to forsake the house of their God.

¹ See Smend, *Die Listen der Bücher Ezra und Nehemiah*, p. 17.

² See Neh. x. 34; xi. 12, 16, 22; xiii. 34; 1 Chron. vi. 34; ix. 13, 19, 33; xxii. 4, 24; xxvi. 30; xxviii. 13, 21; 2 Chron. xiii. 10.

³ x. 29-40.

The use of the title Tirshatha in Ezra ii. 63; Neh. vii. 65, 70, while not conclusive, is still not without weight. So far as we know, Nehemiah was the only governor of Judæa who bore this title, and, in close connection with this section, in the book of Nehemiah,¹ Nehemiah is expressly called the Tirshatha. Again, the incident referred to in Ezra ii. 59-63; Neh. vii. 61-65, is better suited to the time of Nehemiah than the time of Zerubbabel. It seems scarcely probable that immediately after the return, and before any work had been done, the people should set themselves about excluding certain of their number from their ranks. But at the time of Nehemiah in connection with the formation of the new community there was great need for such an act.

On this theory the occurrence of the names of Nehemiah and of Azariah,² who is perhaps the same as Ezra, in the list of the twelve leaders of the return, finds a satisfactory explanation. At the time of the formation of the list in the later period, Nehemiah and Ezra had proved their right to stand next to Zerubbabel and Jeshua among the leaders of the Jewish restoration.

Against this conclusion the only argument of any weight which can be urged is that Nehemiah seems to state that he gives the list as he found it. Hervey avoids the difficulty by urging that Nehemiah quotes merely the title of the older list which he found,³ while with vii. 7 he begins his own list. The difficulty is not so great when one realizes that we see here traces of the compiler's work, and further, it seems incredible that Nehemiah should have stated that he called the people together to make the census, and then simply have given the old list which he found. The position of the list in the book of Ezra is also urged as an argument against this view which we have adopted, but it cannot be regarded as of much weight. The composite character of Ezra i.-vi. must probably be accepted as a well-established fact, and it ought not to occa-

¹viii. 9. ²Seriah in Ezra ii. 2. ³vii. 6.

sion surprise that this list should be found out of its exact chronological position when one remembers that the section iv. 6-23 almost certainly refers to a much later period than that of Cyrus and Darius. It is not difficult to see how the compiler, whoever he may have been, in the absence of any authentic list of the exiles who returned under Zerubbabel, should have made use of this later list, which was doubtless to be found in connection with the memoirs of Nehemiah, and which he had the authority of Nehemiah for regarding as being based upon that earlier list. It is not denied that these are real difficulties, but, with our limited knowledge of the facts, they do not seem sufficient to outweigh the reasons which have already been brought forward in favor of the other view. If this view is correct, we are forced to acknowledge that we have no idea as to how many exiles returned in the time of Cyrus. But this very list in the mention of Zerubbabel and Jeshua furnishes another evidence in favor of a return of exiles under their leadership. Furthermore, the regulations adopted in regard to those who could not show their genealogy give an abundant proof that Nehemiah had in his possession a list of the true Israelites who had returned from Babylon so many years before. The evidence of this list is, then, different from what is often supposed to be. It distinctly states a return from Babylon under Zerubbabel, but it leaves us in ignorance as to its extent, and justifies the inference that the number of the returning exiles was not nearly so great as has been usually supposed.

The Evidence of Ezra v. 1-vi. 18.

As an argument against the historical accuracy of the return under Cyrus, Kusters appeals to the narrative in Ezra v. 1-vi. 18, or rather, as he expresses it, to the documents used by the Chronicler in these chapters, for he finds traces of two distinct narratives here, neither of which mentions a return from the captivity. But, apart from the fact that the

Jews here are mainly concerned with justifying their proceedings, and so refer merely to the permission of Cyrus to rebuild the temple, it would seem that there was a distinct intimation of a return of some sort in the statement that their fathers had been carried into captivity, and that the house had been destroyed, but that Cyrus had sent Sheshbazzar to rebuild it.¹ The reference is so clear here to the narrative in Ezra i. 5, 8, that it seems altogether too fastidious to insist on the literal conclusion that Sheshbazzar was the only one who came to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, and that merely in his official capacity as Persian governor.

The Evidence of Haggai and Zechariah.

But undoubtedly the strongest argument is the evidence of Haggai and Zechariah. Koster asserts that these prophets knew of no return of the exiles before the time of their activity. At first sight the argument seems plausible. Zechariah, it is true,² does mention the arrival of a few men from Babylon who had come presumably with gifts for the building of the temple, and he made their visit the occasion for the assertion that the "Branch" shall build the temple of the Lord, and closes his prophecy with the declaration that "they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord." The prophecy indicates, as does the exhortation to Zion to escape from Babylon,³ that the people of Jerusalem were hoping for further reinforcements from among the exiles in Babylon, but it is absolutely without weight as an argument against an earlier return. But it is urged, for these prophets the period of divine blessing is still in the future, while for the present they regard the land as resting under the ban of the displeasure of Jehovah. It is also worthy of note that Haggai and Zechariah speak of the people uniformly as "this

¹ v. 13-17. See Kuenen, *De Chronologie van het Perzische Tijdvak der Joodsche Geschiedenis*, p. 5.

² vi. 9-15. ³ ii. 7.

people" or "the remnant of the people," while the title Israel, which is the usual title in Ezra vii.-x.; Neh. viii.-x., does not occur. From this it is argued that at the time of these prophets Israel had not returned to Palestine. But is it not a most unwarranted application of the argument from silence to assert that their statements prove that no return of the exiles had taken place? The same argument would prove that the builders of the temple were not visited by the Persian authorities during the reign of Darius, a visit which was undoubtedly a source of great anxiety to the feeble community in Jerusalem, and which certainly took place during the activity of Haggai and Zechariah.

The arguments drawn from the silence of Haggai and Zechariah and their attitude toward the people of the land, whatever might be their force as against the supposed return of a band of exiles at least fifty thousand strong, and possibly three times as many,¹ are absolutely without force against our theory, which recognizes that the number of the exiles who returned under Zerubbabel was probably not very great. A fair exegesis which takes into consideration, not merely individual passages but also the tone of the whole prophecy, will certainly cause one to hesitate before asserting that Haggai and Zechariah knew nothing of a return of the exiles. On the contrary, it is not too much to claim that they presupposed it. Without a return of some sort their prophecies are practically inexplicable. Unfortunately we do not know very much of the condition of the people who were left in the land of Palestine, but everything that is known renders it highly improbable that they should have taken the initiative in the great work of restoration. During the exile the center of religious life, of present faith, and hope for the future was in Babylon, and not in Jerusalem. And so the confidence of

¹ If only the men are counted in the list in Ezra ii., then Smend is undoubtedly correct in estimating the whole number of persons at from 150,000 to 200,000. See Smend, *ut supra*, pp. 17, 21.

Haggai and Zechariah, and their assurances that the era of restoration has begun,¹ find their only satisfactory explanation in the historical background provided by the alleged return of the exiles. These prophets do not assert the Davidic descent of Zerubbabel, but their glowing descriptions² prove more positively than cold assertions that they regarded him as the heir of the promises made to David, and that upon him and Jeshua the hopes for the future Messianic kingdom depended. Their attitude towards these men is only to be explained on the ground of the genealogies, which assert that they were the descendants of the exiled king Jehoiachin³ and the priest Jehozadak respectively, and themselves born in exile, and hence the natural leaders of the returned exiles. Only by a narrow literalism is it possible to escape the force of these arguments. But why should one expect that the prophets should clearly describe the history of their own period? It was not their task to write a history of their own times in their prophecies. They presupposed this history, it is true, but they give us only here and there a sketch or suggestion, and when the historical narrative does not supply the details, the picture must remain only a sketch. Here the historical narrative does furnish many details, and in my opinion there is no discrepancy. On the contrary, while it is impossible to reconstruct the whole picture, on account of the meagerness of the details even in the historical narrative, it is not at all difficult to see that the different elements are all parts of the same picture.

But, last of all, the narrative of the return in Ezra coincides perfectly with what we learn from other sources of the history of this period. The meager records which have been discovered which treat of the life and activity of Cyrus⁴ prove,

¹ Hag. ii. 6-9; Zech. i. 14, 15; ii. 10-13; viii. 3-8, 20-23.

² Hag. ii. 23; Zech. iv. 6, 7, 9, 10. ³ 1 Chron. iii. 17-19; vi. 15.

⁴ Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, Vol. i. p. 605; Schrader, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, Vol. iii. 2, pp. 123, 127.

beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he reversed the policy of his Babylonian predecessors, and permitted many of the nations who had been transported by the Babylonians to return with their gods to their own lands, reestablish their native shrines, and set up once more their own worship. It would require the strongest arguments to prove that the devout Jews, with their hearts filled with the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, did not with Isaiah see in Cyrus the promised deliverer, and immediately avail themselves of the permission to return to their own land. That, with the exception of an occasional visitor, these Jews in Babylon, who were undoubtedly the select men of the nation, not only in culture, but also, in part at least, in consecration, should have waited until the feeble remnant in Palestine had rebuilt the temple and with the assistance of Nehemiah had restored the walls, before they returned in any numbers to their own land, seems so unnatural and so self-contradictory that only positive proof could suffice to establish it. And this proof, I do not hesitate to assert, Kusters has not brought forward.

To conclude: Ingenious as is the argument of Kusters, it can lead at most only to a redistribution of emphasis and to a partial reconstruction of the ordinary view of the Jewish restoration on the basis of the historical data. There seems to be no good reason for doubting that some of the exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, took immediate advantage of the decree of Cyrus and returned to Jerusalem. Their number, unfortunately, we do not know, and it is probable that it was not great. Only the most enthusiastic and the most earnest would care to face the hardships and undergo the sacrifices. At a later period, and probably under more favorable circumstances, Ezra could muster only about eighteen hundred adult males. But whatever the number, they returned to Jerusalem, where they were joined by all those of their brethren of like mind who had not been carried into captivity, and at once began the work of the restoration

of worship, and even before the temple was rebuilt, of the regular sacrifices. This was followed by immediate preparations for the building of the temple, which was formally begun amid solemn ceremonies a few months later. But the Samaritans, offended by their repulse, succeeded in stopping their work. This is in itself an additional evidence for the weakness of the returned exiles, whose strength and zeal were probably not sufficient to carry the whole community with them in the face of such odds. At all events, the work stopped and was not resumed until fifteen years later, when the prophets Haggai and Zechariah succeeded in stirring up the zeal of the people sufficiently to induce them to go on with the building of the temple. It is not at all improbable that in the meantime they may have been encouraged by the arrival of others of their fellow-exiles from Babylon. Zechariah plainly states that some came during the building of the temple, and it is fair to assume that others came whose names are not mentioned. The work of building was now continued without interruption until the temple was completed and dedicated. And with this event the first epoch in the history of the restoration was brought to a close.