

Abelard, and the re-discovery of a lost Aristotle to Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. The re-statement—let us say boldly the re-construction—of Christian doctrine is the great intellectual task upon which the Church of our day is just entering, and with which it must go on boldly if Christianity is to retain its hold on the intellect as well as the sentiment and the social activities of our time. And, depend upon it, the Church that has lost its hold of the first will not long retain its control of the last. In that great task the reverent study of the past is an essential element. As an age awakens to new spiritual needs, it often finds that its wants have been to a great extent anticipated, though undoubtedly the old truth can only be rescued from oblivion by becoming something different from what it was before. No two ages can ever see exactly alike. In this re-construction of Christian Theology, I am convinced that we have something to learn from the scholastic Theologians, and most of all perhaps from the first, the greatest, the most modern of them all. Partly for this reason—as an illustration of what we may learn from him—I have ventured to speak of Abelard's doctrine of the Atonement, but still more because I believe it to be as noble and as perspicuous a statement as can even yet be found of the faith which is still the life of Christendom.

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THE CHRONOLOGY OF EZRA IV. 6-23.

II.

WE now turn to that other passage in the interesting Book of Ezra, which has been a source of perplexity to commentators, and has led to some untenable hypotheses. We will first describe the position; then state the hypotheses by which it has been attempted to get over the difficulties, and show them to be impossible. And lastly,

give what we believe to be the true explanation, which is perfectly simple and in accordance with the whole structure of the book.

Ezr. iii. 2 to the end of chapter vi. is a consecutive history of the doings of the Jewish captives after their return from Babylon in the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, whose Babylonian name was Sheshbazzar, the adopted grandson of Jeconiah king of Judah, and of Jeshua, the High Priest, the son of Jozadak, who was taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. It runs from the 1st of Cyrus B.C. 536 to the 6th of Darius B.C. 515. But in the middle of this history—viz., in chap. iv. 16-23—is an account of what happened in the reign of Ahasuerus, and then of what happened in the reign of Artaxerxes, in opposition to the work which the Jews had on hand, followed by the words (iv. 24) "Then ceased the work of the House of God which is at Jerusalem; so it ceased unto the second year of Darius king of Persia." If the whole chapter is taken as a consecutive history, which at first sight it has the appearance of being, it follows that the reign of "Ahasuerus" and of "Artaxerxes" came between the reign of Cyrus and that of Darius here named. But we know that Cyrus was succeeded by Cambyses, Cambyses by the usurper Smerdis, Smerdis by Darius Hystaspis, Darius by Xerxes, and Xerxes by Artaxerxes Longimanus. The problem is how to reconcile the Book of Ezra with authentic history.

One hypothesis advocated by some learned men, following in the main Josephus,¹ is that Ahasuerus, in Ezr. iv. 6, means Cambyses, and that Artaxerxes in the next verse means the usurper Smerdis, who succeeded him and reigned for a few months. But as there is no single example in

¹ Josephus (*Antiq.* xi. 2) applies to Cambyses all that is said in Ezra iv. 8-23 of Artaxerxes, but takes no notice of the difference in the name. He takes no notice either of Ahasuerus in Ezra iv. 6; in this, as in other respects, following closely not the canonical Ezra, but the Apocryphal 1 Esdras ii. 16 ff.

profane or sacred history of either Cambyses being called Ahasuerus, or the pseudo-Smerdis being called Artaxerxes, nor of either of these names being borne by any king except the kings commonly known by them, nor any historical support whatever for the idea that these names were hereditary appendages to the names of the reigning sovereigns of Persia, like the Pharaohs of Egypt, or the Cæsars of Rome, the hypothesis has about as much probability in it as one which should explain Queen Victoria to mean Queen Caroline, or King George to mean King James, and may be dismissed without further examination. Only it may just be added, as some recent commentaries (see *Speaker's Commentary*) still accept the solution, that it is a sheer impossibility that the intercourse backwards and forwards from Persia to Judæa, and from Judæa to Persia, should have taken place, and the search in the Babylonian records have been made and reported to the king, in the brief space of seven months, during which Smerdis sat on the throne. Most assuredly, therefore, Artaxerxes in Ezr. iv. 7-23 does not mean Smerdis.

The other hypothesis, which has been extensively supported, is that the Darius of Ezr. iv., v., vi. is not Darius Hystaspis, but Darius II., surnamed Nothus, who began to reign B.C. 424. This hypothesis has the advantage of preserving the sequence Xerxes, Artaxerxes, Darius; but there its merits end, being absolutely impossible. This will be seen by the hastiest glance at the history. In the first year of Cyrus King of Persia, B.C. 536, the Jews, under the leadership of Zerubbabel (here called Sheshbazzar) and Jeshua, came from Babylon to Jerusalem to build the House of the Lord which is in Jerusalem (Ezr. i. 5, 8, 11), and they actually built the altar, and offered on it the daily burnt offerings, and kept the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezr. iii. 2-6).¹ In the following year, B.C. 535, they laid the

¹ Observe that here and at ch. iv. 3 Zerubbabel is called by his own Jewish name.

foundation to the new Temple¹ with great ceremony and rejoicings (Ezr. iii. 8-13), and by so doing excited the enmity of their Samaritan and other Heathen neighbours, who set to work to obstruct the builders, and by hired counsellors succeeded in frustrating the progress of the building, so that it ceased till the second year of King Darius. But in the second of Darius, under the stirring exhortation of Haggai and Zechariah the Prophets, Zerubbabel and Jeshua resumed the work, and actually completed the building in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the King (Ezr. iv. 24; v. 1, 2; vi. 15). If Darius the King means, as is contended, Darius Nothus, the sixth year of his reign was B.C. 418. And we are helped over the stile of the difficulty of Ezr. iv. by being told that Zerubbabel and Jeshua, who were actively engaged in building the Temple in the 2nd of Cyrus, were no less actively employed 117 years afterwards!

The absurdity of such a solution is no less apparent if we approach it from another side. Zerubbabel was the heir of Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, in the third generation. As it is expressed in our Lord's genealogy, Matt. i. 12: "Jechonias begat Salathiel, and Salathiel begat Zorobabel." How is it possible that one who may be reckoned as Jehoiachin's grandson could have been alive and active in the reign of Darius Nothus? Jehoiachin was fifty-five years old (2 Kings xxiv. 8, xxv. 27) in the year B.C. 562. In B.C. 418, one hundred and sixty-nine years from the time when he was thirty years old, you would expect the fifth or sixth generation to be flourishing, not the third. Again, Jeshua

¹ Some needless difficulty has been felt in regard to Hagg. ii. 18, as if it stated that the foundation of the Lord's House was laid in the 24th day of the 9th month of the 2nd year of King Darius. What the verse really says is this: "Consider now from this day and upward, viz., from the 24th day of the 9th month to the day when the foundation of the Lord's House was laid, consider it." The *terminus a quo* was the 24th day of the 9th month, when Haggai's prophecy was uttered. The *terminus ad quem* (going backwards in point of time) was the day when the foundation of the Lord's House was laid in the 2nd Cyrus.

the High Priest was the son of Jozadak. But Jozadak was carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar B.C. 568 (2 Kings xxv. 21; 1 Chron. vi. 15). How could his son be acting as High Priest in the year B.C. 418, one hundred and fifty years afterwards?

Or take another test. In Ezr. iii. 12 we read that many of the Priests and Levites, who were ancient men who had seen the first house, when the foundation of Zerubbabel's temple were laid before their eyes, wept. That would only be fifty-three years after the burning of the Temple by Nebuzar-adan (2 Kings xxv. 9), where men between sixty and seventy years of age might well remember having seen the Temple in their youth. There would, of course, be fewer alive in the second year of Darius Hystaspis, when Haggai put the question, "Who is left among you that saw this House in her first glory?" (Hagg. ii. 3). But a few old men of eighty years old and upwards might well remember what they had seen sixty-eight years before. I myself remember quite distinctly seeing the Emperor Alexander of Russia, and the two Princes of Prussia—afterwards King of Prussia, and the first German Emperor—at a breakfast at Lord Liverpool's villa at Combe Wood when they were in England in the year 1814, now seventy-nine years ago. But to have put such a question in the second year of Darius Nothus, B.C. 422, when nobody could have been left who was not over 170 years old, would have been obviously absurd.

One more chronological argument, and I have done. We read in Zech. iv. 9 "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this House, his hands also shall finish it." And in Ezr. iii. 8-13, v. 2, vi. 7, 14, 15 we read the fulfilment of this prophetic declaration. Is it likely that this prophecy should have been either made or fulfilled if 117 years were to elapse between laying the foundation and finishing the building? (From second Cyrus B.C. 535 to the sixth Darius Nothus B.C. 418.)

But there are other arguments independent of chronology, which are conclusively against understanding Ezr. iv. 6-23 of the times preceding the building of the Temple; and thus removing the only pretext for taking Darius to mean Darius Nothus. Up to the time embraced by Ezr. i.-vi. (except the eighteen verses in question) there has been no mention whatever of the walls of Jerusalem, but only of the Temple. The arguments therefore of Rehum and his companions in Ezra iv. 7-22 are wholly irrelevant to the matter in hand, and can only refer to the later times when the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was being agitated. They are therefore obviously out of their place here. Josephus seems to have felt this, and therefore following 1 Esdr. ii. 18, 20 introduces twice in the letter of Rathumus (Rehum, Ezr. iv. 3) to Artaxerxes an express mention of the Temple, when there is no such mention in the Book of Ezra. This shows that the difficulty of the passage was felt as early as the writing of the first Esdr., probably in the first or second century before Christ, but gives no help towards explaining the difficulty. If we follow the authentic history as given in the Hebrew text of Ezr. iv. the paragraph *vv.* 6-23, is manifestly out of its place from the mention of the walls of Jerusalem, as well as from the mention of Xerxes and Artaxerxes.

Yet another proof that these verses do not relate to the hindrance of the building of the Temple, from the second of Cyrus to the second of Darius Nothus, is found in the history of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah in the reign of Artaxerxes. Can anything be more certain than that in the reign of Artaxerxes the Temple was standing, and the Temple services regularly conducted? (Ezr. vii. 15, 16, 19, 20, 23, 27; viii. 17, 25, 29, 33, 36; ix. 9; x. 1; Neh. vi. 10, 11; x. 32-34, 36-39; xi. 22; xiii. 7, 9, 11, 14). Besides these positive testimonies to the existence of the Temple in the time of Artaxerxes, we have the equally strong nega-

tive evidence of the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Not one single word in either of them of regret at the unfinished state of the House of God, not a single word of effort to obtain the King's leave to finish it. Nehemiah is full of zeal and activity in building the city walls, but makes not the slightest mention of the House of God lying level with the ground. In the face of this evidence is it possible to believe that in the friendly reign of Artaxerxes, and in the lifetime of Ezra and Nehemiah, who were one or both in high favour from the seventh to the thirty-second year of his reign, the Temple was lying just as it was left in the reign of Cyrus, before Haggai the Prophet lifted up his stirring voice, and Zerubbabel and Jeshua with all the remnant of the people were stirred up to work in the House of the Lord of Hosts their God (Hagg. i. 3, 12, 14).

The two hypotheses by which it has been attempted to explain *Ezr. iv. 6-23* being now shown to be absolutely impossible, we proceed to give what we have no doubt is in the main the true explanation.

We saw in considering *Ezr. ii.* distinct proof that it did not form part of the original history of the times of Zerubbabel, but was inserted much later by a subsequent compiler. Exactly the same thing has happened here. The original history, as either written or sanctioned by Haggai the Prophet, ran thus: "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. Then ceased the work of the House of God which is at Jerusalem, and it ceased unto the second year of Darius, king of Persia. Then the prophets, Haggai the Prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews, etc. Then rose up Zerubbabel . . . and Jeshua . . . and began to build the House of God," etc. (*Ezr. iv. 4, 5, 24; v. 1*), and so on

to the end of chapter vi. where this portion of the history ends, and is followed by a long gap of sixty-two years, in which nothing is recorded. The history is taken up again in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus B.C. 457. That this history of the times of Zerubbabel, and the building of the Temple, existed in the time of Haggai, there can be little doubt. And that there could be nothing in it about Artaxerxes is of course absolutely certain. But much later, when the history of Nehemiah's times had to be incorporated in the national annals, the then compiler thought to illustrate the opposition of the adversaries of the Jews in the days of Zerubbabel, by similar instances which had since occurred in the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes, and so inserted the history of those hostile efforts which is contained in *Ezr. iv. 6-23*. But this was done with so little skill as to mislead the author of *1 Esdr.*, and many subsequent readers down to our own times, into the belief that the action described in *Ezr. iv. 23* caused the ceasing of the work spoken of in *v. 24*, whereas really the work had ceased some sixty years before; and moreover the work that ceased was the "work of the House of God," whilst the work which Rehum and Shimshai and their companions "made to cease by force and power" was the totally different one of building the city walls (*Ezr. iv. 12, 13, 21*), which Zerubbabel and Jeshua had never thought of doing. It is impossible not to suspect strongly that the insertion of *Ezr. iv. 6-23* in its present place was the work of the same compiler who inserted the second chapter in the previously existing history. The presumable motive—to illustrate the narrative by fresh documents—the unskillfulness with which the insertion was made, and the time when it was inserted, necessarily not before the time of Nehemiah—are all so exactly similar as to suggest the agency of the same hand. The insertion of the name of Artaxerxes in *Ezr. vi. 14* is of the same kind.

But there is an apparent objection to the foregoing statement that must not be overlooked; I mean the fact that the narrative which ended in Hebrew at Ezr. iv. 5 is taken up in Aramean at iv. 24; whereas you would have expected that after the Aramean insertion of 5-23 the original narrative would have gone on in Hebrew again. But the objection is more apparent than real. It may be assumed with some confidence that under the direction of Haggai there was a complete Hebrew narrative of the times of Zerubbabel down to the finishing of the temple, and the dedication thereof, and the celebration of the Passover; and the archaic expression "the King of Assyria," in Ezr. vi. 22, is a very strong indication that you have in the closing verses of Ezr. vii. a portion of that narrative. But the narrative from Ezr. iv. 24 to Ezr. vi. 18, where the Aramean ends, is so consecutive, and fits on so naturally to Ezr. vi. 19-22, which is in Hebrew, that the probability seems very great that the Aramean is merely the Aramean version of the Hebrew original. The cause of its substitution for the Hebrew I conjecture to be purely accidental. The Aramean was first introduced by transcribing an Aramean document, the letter of Rehum and Shimshai to Artaxerxes, and our attention is specially called to the fact that the letter was "written and interpreted"¹ in Aramean or Syrian (Ezr. iv. 7). Exactly in the same way the letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra is given in the original Aramean (Ezr. vii. 12-26), but then the narrative goes on in Hebrew at v. 27. This would naturally have been the case here, and the insertion of the Aramean document is no explanation of the transition from Hebrew to Aramean in the

¹ Gesenius (*Thes. sub voce* מִתְּרַגְּמָן) understands the word to mean "translated," i.e. from Hebrew into Aramean which was the language of communication with the court. It is curious that the same thing has happened in Dan. ii. 4. The introduction of the Aramean speech of the Chaldeans is the occasion of a change in the language which continues to the end of chap. vii. when the Hebrew is resumed and continues to the end of the book.

main body of the history. But it is very likely that the scribe who had written in Aramean Rehum's letter, and the King's answer, may have gone on by mistake to transcribe from the Aramean version instead of from the Hebrew. It seems to the highest degree improbable that there should have been no Hebrew history of the time covered by Ezr. iv., v., vi. The above explanation therefore is not affected by the transition to Aramean.

But whatever was the cause of the continuance of the narrative at Ezr. iv. 24 to vi. 19 in Aramean, which can only be a matter of conjecture, the conclusion we have arrived at that Ezr. iv. 6-23 is no part of the history which ends at chap. vi. 22, but refers to later times, is sure and certain. One or two detached points remain to be considered.

1. The identity of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel has in the previous pages been assumed. But the proofs of it are not far to seek. In Ezr. i. 8, Sheshbazzar is called "the prince of Judah," *הַנְּשִׂיא לְיְהוּדָה*. Now this title can belong to nobody but Zerubbabel, who was the hereditary chief of the tribe of Judah, the lineal descendant of King David, and the heir of his throne. It was not conferred upon him by Cyrus, it was his own rank by birth. In Num. vii. 10 we read of "the princes" *הַנְּשִׂאִים*, and then in the following verses to the end of the chapter we have the name and offerings of "the Prince" of each separate tribe. Zerubbabel was *פֶּקֶד* or "Governor" (Ezr. v. 14, vi. 7) by the appointment of Cyrus, Ezr. v. 14; he was "Prince of Judah" by hereditary succession. This alone is quite sufficient to establish his identity with Zerubbabel. Everything else agrees with this. Ezr. i. 11, *Sheshbazzar* brings up the vessels of gold and silver with the captives who came from Babylon to Jerusalem; Ezr. ii. 1, 2, the captives come up from Babylon to Jerusalem "with *Zerubbabel*"; Ezr. v. 15, *Sheshbazzar* "lays the foundation of the House

of God." Ezr. iii. 8, 10, 11; Zech. iv. 9, *Zerubbabel* "laid the foundation of this House." Ezr. v. 14, vi. 7, *Sheshbazzar* is "Governor," at the very time when we know from the history and from Haggai i. 1, ii. 2, that *Zerubbabel* was the governor. So that the identification is complete whatever may be said to the contrary.

As regards the double name, one his Jewish and the other his Babylonian name, it is in exact accordance with what we know was the practice of the kings of Babylon. When a foreigner was taken into the royal service he received a Babylonian name. Thus *Daniel* received the name of *Belteshazzar*; *Hananiah*, that of *Shadrach*; *Mishael*, that of *Meshach*; *Azariah*, that of *Abed-nego* (*Dan.* i. 6, 7, ii. 26). It is also noteworthy that those thus taken into the king's personal service were "of the king's seed, and of the princes"¹ (*Dan.* i. 3), and in like manner *Zerubbabel* was of the royal family. So that the precedents are complete.

2. The composite nature of the book is deserving of especial notice. The first six chapters (with the exception of chap. ii. and iv. 6-23) is a continuous history of the returned captives from the first year of *Cyrus* to the sixth year of *Darius Hystaspis*. But it does not follow that the whole was by the same hand. In my article on "Ezra, Book of," in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, I gave what still appear to me strong reasons for believing that *Ezra* i. is mainly the work of *Daniel*, and among them the calling *Zerubbabel* by his Babylonian name. As the transition chapter between the history of the captives at *Babylon*, and the history of the captives returned to *Jerusalem*, it would naturally fall to his lot to write it as the responsible prophet. For the same reason the following chapters

¹ The word אֲשֵׁרָא is not that here used, but הַפְּרָתִימִים, a Persian word rendered in Greek ἐνδοξοί, εὐγενεῖς, rendered in the A. V. "nobles" *Esth.* i. 3 most noble" *Esth.* vi. 9.

(iii.-vi.) were, we can hardly doubt, either written or at least superintended by Haggai the Prophet. Some special reasons for believing this are given in the article in the *Dictionary of the Bible* above referred to. But at chap. vii. and following chapters Ezra himself comes on the stage not only as actor but also as author. Ezr. vii. 8, 9, seems to show that the early part of the chapter, though speaking of Ezra in the third person, was written by him, and he speaks in the first person throughout chap. viii. and ix. Chap. x. may with probability be assigned to him also.

But then it must be remembered that the contemporary annals of these several writers underwent a revision by a subsequent compiler or editor—possibly more than one—before they were incorporated in the sacred volume as a continuation of the Books of Chronicles in the shape in which we have it. This is proved by the additions already noticed of chap. ii., iii. 1, iv. 6-23, and the insertion of the name of Artaxerxes at vi. 14. But there may have been besides these additions many omissions and abbreviations, just as when the writer of the Books of Kings, *e.g.*, again and again, after recording certain events in the reigns of such and such kings, adds, Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, Rehoboam, Ahab, etc., are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles, etc? So that we have not in Ezra, any more than in any other part of the Historical Scriptures, the complete work of any prophet or annalist relating to any period, but only such extracts from them as sufficed to give to the Church such a record as to the Providence of God seemed fit.

It is to forgetfulness of the peculiar character of the Old Testament annals that we owe so many mistakes on the part of commentators. The very inquiries into the authorship of this or that book are conducted in a way that cannot lead to a satisfactory result. Anachronisms, the use of particular words, and similar arguments which would be of the

utmost weight if applied to a printed book, are worthless when applied to the books of Scripture, which are made up, as we have seen the Book of Ezra is, of contemporaneous documents worked up by later hands into the form in which we now have them, with such additions as they thought conduced to the completeness of the whole.

To this cause may be ascribed those anachronisms in names and such like in the older Books of Scripture, which have led some critics to the monstrous conclusion, against an enormous mass of evidence, that the books of Moses are mainly of post-exilic origin. The simple fact is that the successive editors occasionally modernized names of places, or added scraps of genealogies, or other matter which seemed to make the documents they were editing more intelligible. A good example of the modernizing process may be found in 1 Esdr. as compared with the book of Ezra. In Ezra (iv. 10, 11, 17; v. 3, 6; vi. 6, 13; vii. 23) the province of which Judæa formed part is always spoken of as being עֵבֶר נְהַרָה, "beyond the river," and the governor is described as פַּחַת עֵבֶר נְהַרָה, "governor beyond the river," *i.e.* the country to the west of the Euphrates.¹ But in the parallel passages in 1 Esdr. the country is spoken of as "Coele-Syria and Phœnice," the name it acquired in or after the time of Alexander the Great (1 Esdr. ii. 17, 24, 27; iv. 48; vii. 1).

To sum up Immediately we recognise the true composition of the Book of Ezra, the difficulties of chronology, of personal names, of erroneous numbers, of incongruous history, vanish away. The book tells a consistent and most edifying and instructive story. The minor difficulties which remain are in harmony with the cessation of the prophetic office, which conduced so remarkably to the integrity of the earlier books of Scripture, and the discovery resulting from

¹ The Hebrew and Aramean phrase is indifferently translated "on this side" or "beyond."

the less skilful compilation of these later books sheds an important light upon many difficulties in those earlier books which it might otherwise have been more difficult to elucidate.

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THE DIFFICULT WORDS OF CHRIST.

III. THINGS NEW AND OLD.¹

THE words of our Lord contain many counsels to Christian teachers; but this one is in certain respects peculiar. In other sayings He expatiates on the spirit in which work for Him ought to be done; but here he enters in an unusual way into practical detail. In others He speaks in the character of the supreme Lord, who sends forth the labourers into His vineyard; but here He appears rather as Himself a worker for the kingdom, who has had to find out the path and gives His fellow-labourers the benefit of His experience.

The name which he employs for Christian teachers is noteworthy: He calls them scribes—"every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven."

This is a singular name for Him to use. The "scribes," in the New Testament and especially in Christ's own history, occupy a sinister position, and theirs is an evil name. The Christian generations look back to them with disfavour, and Christian writers never weary of satirising their pedantic learning and orthodox absurdities. Jesus Himself delivered against them the most scorching philippics, branding them with everlasting contempt. It might naturally, then, have been expected that scribes

¹ "Therefore every scribe that is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."—*Matt.* xiii. 52.