

use of the Pauline ideas. For those ideas must have been often expressed, and they were not merely the product of the Epistles to the Corinthians and Romans, but were the source of those Epistles. That Paul was daily expressing his ideas in other modes than through his ten or thirteen preserved letters is a fact which is sometimes overlooked.

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### THE EXPANSION OF JERUSALEM.<sup>1</sup>

“ And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou ? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what should be the breadth thereof, and what should be the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me stood still, and another angel came forth to meet him ; and he [i.e., the angel that talked with me] said unto him, Run, speak to yonder young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, by reason of the multitude of men and cattle therein. For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and a glory will I be in the midst of her.” —*Zech.* ii. 1-5.

THE new Jerusalem was the problem of the hour : How was it to be built up ? When were the prophecies to be fulfilled ? A band of exiles had arrived from distant Babylon with great words ringing in their ears, great visions rising before their eyes. “ Behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.”<sup>2</sup> With words like these the Second Isaiah had kindled the hopes of the exiles. And then Ezekiel, after the destruction of the city and temple, had seen his vision as he lay by the waters of Babylon ; he saw the temple rebuilt, furnished and ordered in minutest detail, and the

<sup>1</sup> The annual sermon on Messianic Prophecy preached before the University of Oxford, January 26, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah liv. 11 ff.

holy city laid out around it; all was ready for Jehovah's return to His deserted shrine, and for the home-coming of His banished people. Presently the prophet saw the solemn entry of the Lord, the God of Israel, into the sanctuary by the eastern gate; "And behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord; and I fell upon my face."<sup>1</sup> It was this vision which the returning exiles brought home with them to Jerusalem. The interest and the pathos of the situation are to be found in the dreams which filled the hearts of the faithful; and indeed at all times in a nation's history such aspirations and common hopes possess more significance than the bare realities. But how and when were the prophecies to be fulfilled? that was the urgent question; and the prophet Zechariah came forward with an answer. He too had his visions like the rest, and this is what he saw: a young man with a measuring line in his hand about to measure the ground-plan of the new Jerusalem. By the prophet's side there stood an angel-interpreter, just as Virgil or Beatrice stood beside Dante in his visions; and when another angel appeared upon the scene, the interpreter bade him run and stop the young man with the measuring line, and for this reason: the Jerusalem of the future was not to be rebuilt on the same lines as the Jerusalem of the past; no measurements would be needed for the new city was to be built upon a larger scale to make room for the large increase of its citizens; it was to lie open like an unwallled town, capable of indefinite expansion; and as for defences, stone walls would not be needed, for Jehovah Himself would be a wall of fire round about, and His glorious presence would dwell within the city. Observe the fine mingling of the outward and the inward. The material fabric is not to be dissolved into a mere symbol or picture; there is to be a city, and it is to be inhabited by a multitude

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xliv. 1 ff.

of men and cattle; but the material fabric is to be spiritualized, the circumference a wall of fire, the centre Jehovah's presence in glory; matter and spirit, human and divine, welded into one corporate whole. As we follow the track of the prophet's thought, we catch already a glimpse of the shining climax to which it leads.

But we must turn to the vision. There is the young man with the measuring line. He represents the narrow and mechanical interpretation of prophecy which led to sad disappointments and grievous loss in the history of Judaism, and is by no means extinct among us now. For it is a tendency in human nature to imagine that we can apply our human measurements to God's plan and purpose. Those Jewish exiles imagined that the future was simply to reproduce the past; the Jerusalem they had in their minds was the strong fortress which could resist attack, the guardian of the nation's throne and altar, wherein Israel might dwell secure from the heathen world outside. On these lines, then, the city was to be measured out; the first business was to see what should be the breadth thereof and what should be the length thereof.

But it was exactly this short-sighted view of the destiny of Israel which the interpreting angel hastened to correct. God's purpose was wider than men imagined; it could no longer be contained within the boundaries which had sufficed for earlier needs; God's city must be built without walls. There must be ample room for expansion, space for more citizens, for a wider franchise, for a bolder confidence in the future. And lest any man should be afraid to welcome this larger view, Jehovah Himself promised the defence of His encircling guard and the illumination of His abiding presence. Here, in this vision of Zechariah, we have presented to us in vivid contrast the rival elements in the faith of Israel, the temper which was always

in favour of setting up stone walls and living within them, and the temper which refused to be confined, and looked beyond and trusted God. These elements run deep in human nature; they need not be rivals, if we can once learn how to be both loyal to the past and open-minded towards the future, and how to maintain the material fabric, the outward institutions, for spiritual ends. But what we see in the history and literature of Israel which followed the age of Zechariah is the struggle between these opposing elements; the reconciliation was to come later.

The great truth impressed upon Zechariah by his vision was not entirely new; earlier prophets had encouraged the larger outlook and hailed the prospect of the expansion of Jerusalem. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, they shall behold a far-stretching land." The great unknown prophet of the return from Babylon had pictured the children of the new Jerusalem saying, "The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell"; he had exhorted them, "Lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." But when it came to the point, disillusionment took the place of hope; the prophet's ardent dreams were not to be accomplished yet. In the century after Zechariah, we find Ezra organizing the Jewish community on the most exclusive principles, and Nehemiah setting to work at once to repair the walls of Jerusalem and collect the people within them for protection. So far from any thought of welcome for converted Gentiles, the main object of the religious leaders was to safeguard the community from heathen surroundings. Consolidation rather than expansion was the supreme necessity, if the Jewish faith and nation were to survive at all. In the centuries which followed, as the Persians succeeded to the Babylonians, and the Persians again gave place to the successors of Alexander, and Syria and Egypt fell under changing powers, sometimes friendly, some-

times hostile to the struggling little nation in Jerusalem—during this period the main religious tendencies were making for the preservation rather than the enlargement of the distinctive faith and practice of Judaism. It was the period when the faithful turned to the past for encouragement and idealized their ancient history, and studied the writings of the prophets, annotated and added to them, in a wistful effort to adjust their belief in God's particular providence to the non-fulfilment of His promise. At last, in the second century B.C., we come to the Book of Daniel, and what do we find? A life-and-death struggle going on between loyal Israelites and a wanton heathen persecutor of their religion. Death any day rather than eat the heathen meat, or profane the Sabbath, or sacrifice to idols, or neglect the hours of prayer! The spirit of martyrs and confessors is abroad! It is no narrow creed which such men champion. They have their wide outlook, their grasp of principles. They are convinced that no heathen powers can in the end prevail against God, that the truth is bound to triumph, and the kingdom of God be established. And they were bold enough to fix a date; in three-and-a-half years deliverance would come, and the reign of the holy people of God begin. So in former days the prophets had again and again expected, a great act of salvation was at hand, to be followed at once by the dawn of a glorious day. But no! it was not to be. The hour was not yet come.

The Book of Daniel is our one canonical specimen of a considerable body of literature which came into vogue at this period. We may see the beginnings of it in the visions of Zechariah, one of which we are trying to interpret. When the succession of prophets came to an end, their place was taken by the apocalyptic writers. The Jewish apocalypses reflect significantly the thoughts that were uppermost in the minds of the people. They were popular writings, widely

and eagerly read. They conjured up glowing pictures of the Messiah and the Messianic age; and in the main they encouraged a spiritual, supernatural conception of Israel's place in the divine plan. In some passages indeed the hope of Israel is fixed upon purely worldly or material objects; the Messiah is of the seed of David; He is to establish a temporal kingdom, and the enemies of Israel are to be destroyed with fire and sword; here exclusive, nationalistic conceptions predominate. On the other hand, we find not infrequent expression of the larger view: the Messiah is to come at the end of the world, and all the Gentiles will submit to Him; the enemies of God are to be destroyed, but with spiritual weapons; "it is no more a question of the supremacy of Israel alone, but all men who are faithful to God are to belong to the Messianic kingdom."<sup>1</sup> And when we turn from the Apocalypses to those books which belong to the Apocrypha, we notice similar conceptions of the destiny of Israel; on the one hand we have in 1 Maccabees xiv. the idealized description of the days of Simon the Maccabee, anticipating the peace and plenty, the justice, the zeal for the Law and the Temple, which are to characterize the times of the Messiah; here the ideal is largely temporal and restricted; but on the other hand we find in Tobit a fine passage which tells of the future return and the building up of the house of God on a more glorious scale, and the conversion of all the nations to fear the Lord God truly; "And all they that love the Lord God in truth and righteousness shall rejoice, shewing mercy to our brethren."<sup>2</sup>

Here, then, we follow the stream which sprang from the heights of prophecy; sometimes the stream flows within narrow banks; the narrower conceptions of the Messiah and His age had their home on the soil of Palestine among

<sup>1</sup> Oosterley and Box, *Religion and Worship of the Synagogue*, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Tobit xiv. 5-7.

the schools of the Pharisees ; but at times the stream widens out and will not be kept within its narrower bed ; and in these larger, universal hopes and aspirations we have the cherished dreams of the Jews of the Dispersion, who had their homes in the great world outside the hills of Judah.

Whether wide or narrow the current of prophetic ideals and hopes was still flowing ; the expectation which the prophets had aroused was still alive ; and hearts were waiting to enter into the promises up to the very moment when the fulness of the times was come.

But over against this prophetic temper, nurtured and trained by the larger faith of Israel, was that rival temper of which I spoke before, that temper which desired Jerusalem to be fortified with stone walls, which would keep the city of God strictly within the ancient bounds, and leave no room for expansion and growth. While one section of Judaism turned towards the coming age with a large-hearted and open gaze, another section fixed its attention upon the Law and all that it implied. Its spirit was scholastic, national, exclusive ; it was hostile to the larger faith ; and in order to safeguard the position of the Law attempts were made to check the popularity of the apocalyptic books. There was a time when religious effort was bound, as we have seen, to aim at consolidation rather than expansion ; but that time was passed. When Israel's great opportunity arrived the momentous issue presented itself ; which was to prevail, the larger or the narrower faith ? Was the new Jerusalem to be measured out on the lines of the past, or was it to be inhabited as a city without walls and welcome an unlimited access of new citizens, and make the great venture simply trusting in God's protection and abiding presence ?

The Gospel proclaimed by Jesus Christ made it clear

at once how He would decide the issue. Offspring of David's line, the outcome of Israel's eventful history, He made His appeal to the general heart of man, to man's universal need of a Saviour from the guilt of sin, to man's instinctive desire for righteousness and truth ; the universal laws of conduct, the common Fatherhood and Love of God—such was the content of the Gospel. And in proclaiming it, Jesus Christ proved Himself to be the true successor of the prophets, the fulfiller of their hopes and visions. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, not only the large ideals of the ancient faith, but its moral requirements, its insistence upon holiness both in heart and act. "Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets." He would advance His kingdom not by excluding anything, but by including all that was capable of being adopted into God's larger plan as it was now announced. And just as Zechariah had been told to see in the Jerusalem of the future a foundation in which the material fabric was interpenetrated and encompassed by the spiritual presence of God, so the kingdom of heaven was founded by Jesus Christ with an outward embodiment, a Church with its external ministry and organization, but living with the life of His Spirit, one corporate whole in which the human is welded with the divine, which exists to bring man into union with God. Here we see the fulfilment of the larger faith of Israel. The stream of prophecy flows without a break into the current of the Christian Church.

When we turn to Rabbinic Judaism, however much we may appreciate its constancy, its learning, its indomitable patience, yet we must admit that it represents an attenuated line of development.<sup>1</sup> It is not large enough to contain the richer faith from which it sprang. Nothing less than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Church of which He is

<sup>1</sup> Oesterley and Box, l.c. p. viii.



the Lord and Head, can satisfy or fulfil the vision of the new Jerusalem. But while we speak of the fulfilment of prophecy let us not forget the lesson which our glance across the ages has suggested. Men were always asking, When are the prophecies to be fulfilled? Again and again the fulfilment was postponed, and it never came in the way which the faithful expected. The non-fulfilment of prophecy is at least as instructive as the fulfilment. And with regard to the vision of Zechariah, which we have been considering, the full realization of it is still to come. The Synagogue, "with its long continuous cry after God for more than twenty-three centuries," may well awake a responsive echo in our hearts. "Sound the great horn for our freedom, and lift a banner to gather our exiles, and gather us into one body from the four corners of the earth"—so runs the tenth of the great Eighteen Prayers of Judaism. And the Jewish liturgy still cherishes the promise given to Zechariah, while the prayer goes up for Jerusalem, "With fire thou didst consume it, and with fire thou wilt again rebuild it, as it is written, For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and a glory will I be in the midst of her!"

We too may still look forwards to the building and expansion of Jerusalem. Let us beware of our short-sighted views of God's purposes; our human measurements are useless and misleading. The narrow limitations of an older day will not be sufficient for the present or the future. We must have room to expand and grow; we must be large and generous in our welcome to the truth as it unfolds before us. Even if the old defences are inadequate, we will have no fear; but rather address ourselves to our high tasks with a firm confidence in God's protection of God's own cause, in the wall of fire around, in the glory which abides within.

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