

The Return of the Jews under Cyrus.

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THE period of Jewish history, which commences with the return from captivity, has of late been the object of considerable study by biblical scholars. In the March number of *THE EXPOSITORY TIMES*, Professor Kennedy indicated the principal works which have appeared on it in recent years. He had chiefly in mind the volume of Ed. Meyer, on *Die Entstehung des Judenthums*. It merited the notice which it received, not only on account of its intrinsic value—a characteristic of all that the eminent author writes, but also as an indication of a return to ideas long since abandoned by a number of learned men as to the value of the work of the Chronicler. Meyer's work has been severely criticised by Wellhausen.¹ For our part, however, we are convinced that the conclusions reached by the Professor of Halle, and indicated by Professor Kennedy, rest upon a solid basis.

As to the historical value of the first chapters of Ezra, Meyer would have done well to go further than he did. We think he was wrong in sacrificing chap. iii., which contains the narrative of the founding of the temple under Cyrus. The first opponents of the historical character of chap. iii., notably Schrader, attached great importance to the testimony of v. 1, 15–16, of the same book. Now they give it up, since it tells against themselves, and appeal only to Haggai and Zechariah. As to the latter, Schrader cited i. 16, iv. 9, vi. 12, viii. 9, as absolutely incompatible with Ezra iii. Kusters abandoned the first three passages, relying solely on viii. 9. And finally, Wellhausen,² who declares that our interpretation of Zech. viii. 9 is unintelligible to him,—though it merely states that Zechariah manifestly employed in this passage the expression *on the day when* in an indefinite sense, meaning *at the time when*,—returns to chap. iv., which does not contain the faintest trace of an allusion to the date of the foundation of the temple. When the prophet said: 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house: and his hands

shall also finish it,' he did make a distinction between the work of the foundation as past, and that of completion as future. Now, if any inference from this text be allowable, it is not that the foundation was not distinct from the ulterior work.

We will return to Zechariah again. As for Hag. ii. 15–19, those who consider 'the four-and-twentieth day of the ninth month' of the second year of Darius, as identical with 'the day on which the temple was founded,' contradict other clear passages of the same book,³ and, though appealing one to another, have recourse to the most divergent interpretations of the prophet's terms. At one time they claim that the expression *הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְכִמְעָלָהּ* points to the future, not to the past—an interpretation in no way supported by 1 Sam. xvi. 13, xxx. 25,⁴ and which is contrary to the context in question (15b–17), to the very construction of the phrase (15b: *כִּן* depending on *כִּי*), and to parallel places (i. 5 ff.). At another time, admitting that Haggai invites his hearers to consider the past, ver. 18, they will not admit that 'the day on which the temple was founded'—which is introduced by the compound particle *לְכִן*—is a *terminus a quo* fixed in the past for the review of the trials which they had endured;⁵ or, admitting that the

³ II. 3 ff.

⁴ Cp. our *Nouvelles études sur la restauration juive* (Paris, Leroux, 1896), p. 106 ff.

⁵ Ver. 18: 'Consider now, from this day and upward, from the four-and-twentieth day of the ninth month, till from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid.' . . . (See *Nouvelles études*, pp. 112–122.) The construction of ver. 18 is, in fact, parallel with that of ver. 15. Here, also, we have a *distant terminus a quo* fixed in the past: ' . . . from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid on a stone in the temple of the Lord . . . ' that is to say, from the beginning of the period during which there was not a stone laid on a stone. When the prophet insists (vers. 15, 19) on the data of *this day, the 24th of the ninth month*, it is not at all as if the first stone had been laid now,—at the end of the ninth month the rainy season had begun! (Ezra x. 24),—but because it was henceforth that the benediction of the Lord, already promised when the works were taken up again in the sixth month (ver. 4), would manifest its effects. *Now* the sowing was just finished, and the fruit trees were not yet in flower (ver. 19): from this day Jehovah will bless!

¹ *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (1897, No. 2). See also *THE EXPOSITORY TIMES* (April, pp. 320 ff.).

² *Loc. cit.*

day of the foundation of the temple is indeed the *terminus a quo*, that is, the point at which the review must begin, they place it, not at all in the reign of Cyrus, but in the sixth month of the second year of Darius. In fact, both interpretations have been used by a single author in one work. We hope our intention will not be misunderstood. We do not ascribe the facts mentioned to any prejudice. But when such differences are found in determining the sense of a text, we have a right to ask if they do not arise from a faulty point of view. We repeat, Meyer's conclusions would have lost none of their force had they been extended to chap. iii. of Ezra.

Before Professor Kennedy's article appeared, the question of the return of the Jews was referred to in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES (February 1897, p. 200b.) à propos of an article by Dr. Brown, of New York, on 'Old Testament Problems.' Dr. Brown was inclined to doubt the historic reality of the return under Cyrus, because 'the silence of the prophets is opposed to it.' We have examined the testimony of the contemporary prophets in this regard in our *Nouvelles études* (pp. 66-91). Here let us pause a moment.

Is it true that in Haggai and Zechariah there is no allusion to the return of Zerubbabel; that they contradict, in fact, the narrative of the first chapters of Ezra? It has been held that the two prophets regarded the people whom they addressed as established in the country from time immemorial, as never having left the mother-country for the land of exile. This opinion is based on the fact that the two prophets constantly call the people הָעָם הַזֶּה, הָעָם הַזֶּה, שְׂאֵרֵי הָעָם, עַם הָאָרֶץ; that they never call the people Israel, but Judah. But nothing is proved by this. After returning from the Exile, the people could easily have been called שְׂאֵרֵי הָעָם, עַם הָאָרֶץ, Judah, etc., and, as a matter of fact, it is frequently so called by the prophets and others of the sacred writers, when the restoration is regarded as accomplished, or about to be accomplished (Neh. vii. 72; Ezra ix. 13-15; Jer. xxiii. 3, xxxi. 7; Isa. xlvi. 3; Mic. ii. 12, iv. 7; Zech. ii. 16, etc.). Furthermore, it is inexact to say that Zechariah never calls the people Israel (viii. 13; see also Neh. ii. 10, xiii. 18; Ezra viii. 29, ix. 1; etc.). Likewise, the fact that, in the second year of Darius, the people, contemporary with Haggai, owned and cultivated fields, vines, etc., proves in

no way that they had not returned from exile under Cyrus.

But those considerations aside, did our prophets fail to mention the fact of the Return? There being only thirty-two verses in *Haggai*, but little can be said of him, except that i. 4, 9, seems to allude clearly to a preoccupation on the part of the people, in the establishing of their own homes. The reproaches of the prophet are best understood by supposing the people to have been in the country for some time. *Zechariah* is of more interest. We believe we indicated, in the work already referred to, the true point of view necessary to understand the first six chapters of this prophet. Viewed in the light of our observations, the problem is completely solved. Zechariah asserts, formally, that the people had returned from Babylon, that the fall of the oppressor's empire had been the signal of deliverance for the captive Jews.

We must carefully distinguish the two sections, i.-vi. and vii.-viii., which have totally different characters. In the second, vii.-viii., Zechariah places himself *en scène*, as answering a practical question of the delegates of the people, as to the days of fasting, which had been instituted to commemorate the destruction of the Jewish state (vii. 1-3). In the first, i.-vi., the prophet recounts a double series of nocturnal visions (i. 7 ff., ii. 1, 5, iii. 1 ff., iv. 1 ff., 11 ff., v. 1 ff., vi. 1 ff.).

Now, in chaps. vii.-viii., when Zechariah speaks from the standpoint of the actual situation, he declares that to-day the time of trial has terminated; therefore the days of fasting of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months should be transformed into days of joy (viii. 19). He begins his answer to the delegates of the people (in the fourth year of Darius) by saying that the reply is to be found in the words of the former prophets (vii. 5-7). Before these days, it is true, the fathers had been punished—they had been scattered among the nations because they had not heeded the warnings of the prophets (vii. 8-14). Yet, while menacing, the prophets had announced pardon and mercy from Jehovah. Zechariah reproduces the promises (viii. 1-8), as he had recalled the unheeded lessons shortly before (vii. 8 ff.). He congratulates the people because they hear the former promises repeated by the prophets of *to-day* (in opposition to the epoch of the fathers *before these days*), when the promises are

fulfilled, as is shown in the rebuilding of the temple (viii. 9 ff.). The favour of Jehovah has been regained; henceforth the people will not be treated as they had been before these days, at the time of the Captivity (viii. 10 f.); they will no longer be cursed among the nations, but will be rather an object of benediction (viii. 13). Formerly Jehovah punished the fathers who incurred His wrath, but *in these days* He has resolved to heap benefits upon His people (viii. 14, 15). This is why the days of fasting, instituted to commemorate the disasters at the beginning of the Captivity, must now be changed to days of joy (viii. 19). It is evident, to say it again *en passant*, that, in this context, the day of the founding of the temple (ver. 9) signifies the actual epoch, the time of restoration, as contrasted with the epoch of the fathers and the Captivity. Hence there is no indication in ver. 9 of the date of the foundation as being the very day on which Zechariah pronounces his discourse. Besides, the latter is dated from the fourth year of Darius! But so true is it that the prophet considers the time of trial over, that what he announces for the future is not a return of the captives, but the conversion of the pagan nations to the God of the Jews (viii. 20-23).

It seems, at first sight, that in chaps. i.-vi. the prophet means otherwise,—that he here announces as future what in chaps. vii. and viii. he relates as past. But such is not the case. In both sections Zechariah regards the deliverance of the people as accomplished. In chaps. i.-vi. he represents it in a very vivid manner, as seen in his nocturnal visions. But, according to the character of a description of that kind, the preparation and the accomplishment of events are arranged in a purely artificial perspective. It must not be forgotten that we are dealing here with an apocalyptic composition. There is proof on every page that this is the correct view of Zech. i.-vi. Thus, for example, the prophet announces that men will come from a far-off country and labour on the temple, vi. 15, at a time when they were building;—vers. 12, 13, in the same chapter, he predicts that he who is called the Branch (*Zerubbabel*, chap. iii. 8) will build the temple, at a time when he was actually engaged in doing it. The prophet treats the chastisement of Babylon as impending; but it is the fall of the Babylon which has despoiled the people of Jehovah (ii. 11, 12), it is the destruction of the

four horns which dispersed Judah and Jerusalem which Zechariah announces (ii. 1 ff.). Now the Babylon which despoiled and scattered the people is the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Empire, and not the Babylon occupied by the Persians. The appeal addressed to Zion in connexion with the menace directed against Babylon (ii. 10 ff.) is found expressed in similar terms in Isa. xlvi. 20, lii. 11; Jer. li. 1 ff., where it sounds like an echo of the triumph of Cyrus. It is on the occasion of the destruction of the Babylonian Empire, by Cyrus that the Jewish people are pressed to flee from the condemned city. Again, Jer. xxv. 12, the end of the seventy years (Zech. i. 12), is the very term fixed for the fall of the *Babylonian Empire* (538).

Zechariah regards the deliverance of the Jewish people as a corollary of the ruin of Babylon, and he presents that event as about to be accomplished (i. 15, ii. 1-4, 5-9, 10-17). The thought of the destruction of the enemy's power, which meant the liberation of the captive people, fills the soul of the prophet with joy and enthusiasm (ii. 14-17). Now, this is unintelligible, except on the hypothesis that he has in view the destruction of the Babylonian Empire by Cyrus. He could not expect to see the empire of Darius crumble, and another chastisement of the city of Babylon by Darius could have contributed in no way to the deliverance of the Jews.

We said above that chapters i.-vi. contain a double series of visions. The first terminates with the glorification of Zerubbabel and Joshua (iii.-iv.). In the second, Zechariah returns to the contemplation of the past. The visions, wherein he describes the flying roll, which signifies the Divine curse hurled against the whole country (of Judah) (v. 1-4), then the vessel containing the sin of the country, which two women carry to the plain of Shinar to leave it there for ever (5-11), are intended to recall to the people that the crimes of Judah were the cause of captivity. The people had been purified of their defilements by the Exile; they were banished to the plain of Shinar to leave the weight of their iniquity there.

The chastisement which the oppressors of the people had undergone is represented in a new vision (vi. 1-8). The chariots which had been sent 'towards the north country,' that is, against Babylon, 'have quieted my spirit in the north country.'

The second series of visions is completed, like the

first, by the apotheosis of Joshua and Zerubbabel. Chap. vi. 9-15 is absolutely parallel to iii. 1-10. The scene described in vi. 9-15 cannot be regarded as an historical fact. The circumstances preclude such an interpretation. Zechariah could not, on the day when he had to place himself among the persons *en scène*, make crowns of gold and silver for Joshua, and put them in the temple which was not yet built. We have here purely a symbolism analogous to many of the same kind in prophetic literature. The *Golah* mentioned in ver. 10 is not the captive people established in Babylon; it is the people settled in the country and returned from captivity; it is not *the gold and the silver* brought from Babylon that the prophet should receive, but simply *gold and silver*.

We hope that the considerations here summarily presented, which we have treated more in detail elsewhere, will suffice to show why we find in Zechariah unmistakable proof of the return of the captives under Cyrus.

One word more. Someone has said, in speaking of our opinion as to *the date of the foundation of the temple*, that we escape the difficulty found in Zech. iv. by supposing that the prophet speaks of the past. That is not exact. Our interpretation of the visions of Zechariah has nothing to do with our argument concerning the date of the foundation of the temple. On the contrary, we have stated that Zech. iv. 9, which is part of the glorification of Zerubbabel closing the first series of visions, is a passage in which the prophet describes the actual situation in *historical*, not in apocalyptic terms. The way the matter stands is this. We have held, and we hold still, that Zech. iv. contains no argument whatever against the founding of the temple under Cyrus. It rather confirms the narrative of Ezra iii.; the distinction made by the prophet between the founding and the later work being better understood by supposing an interval between the two terms.

Requests and Replies.

What did Kepler really hold as to the Magi's star? I find no less than three different theories ascribed to him by writers of repute.—J. H. B.

WITH the help of Sir Robert Ball I have been able to trace the reference (or one reference) in Kepler to the Magi's star, and can give the following account:—It is in his treatise, *De stella nova Serpentarii*, chaps. xxvi.—xxvii. (Kepler, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Frisch, Frankfurt, vol. ii. pp. 705-718). He is giving the history of a new star which shone in Serpentarius in the years 1604 and 1605. It rose when there was a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, and the question is raised, Was this conjunction (and the appearance of the star) fortuitous? In considering this question he states four opinions: (1) of the astrologers; (2) and (3) of the physicists (mutually contradictory); and (4) of the theologians. The theologians start from the principle that the whole universe is under the guidance of Divine Providence, and believe that miracles are sometimes wrought in sky and on earth, exceptions to the course of nature, by the Divine goodness calling men to repentance. God does not shrink from making use of the popular conceptions of men

as the means of making His monitions plainer to the multitude—*e.g.* the national customs of the Egyptians made Pharaoh a believer in interpretation of dreams, so God sent him appropriate dreams to convey to him His monitions; so in the case of Nebuchadnezzar; similarly Abraham (to whom the first beginnings of astronomy are traceable) He taught by stars how numerous his posterity would be. 'The Chaldæan Magi practised astrology, and were in the habit of conjecturing future wants from the *concursum siderum* and the rise of comets, *them* God, intending to lead them to the Lord Christ, warned by kindling a star.' Everything goes to establish a close parallelism between that star and the new one under consideration. At a time when a noticeable conjunction of planets attracts the attention of men to a particular quarter of the heavens, the manifestation of the new star is made, so that its significance cannot be ignored.

This seems to be all that is said directly about the Magi's star; but he goes on to pass in review all the opinions already mentioned; and the conclusion to which he comes as regards the new star under consideration would seem to be applicable also to the