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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
EZRA

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF EZRA

AT the conclusion of 2 Kings, and also of the preceding book, 2 Chronicles, we have seen the state of misery and desolation to which the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were reduced through their unparalleled ingratitude to God, and their innumerable backslidings and rebellions. These at last issued in their captivity; the inhabitants of the former country being carried away by the Assyrians, and those of the latter by the Chaldeans. The former never recovered their ancient territories, and were so disposed of by their enemies that they either became amalgamated with the heathen nations, so as to be utterly undistinguishable, or they were transported to some foreign and reclusive place of settlement, that the place of their existence, though repeatedly guessed at, has for more than *two thousand years* been totally unknown.

In mercy to the less polluted inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah, though delivered up into the hands of their enemies, God had promised by his prophet, that at the expiration of *seventy years* they should be enlarged, and restored to their own country. This prediction was most literally fulfilled; and the books of *Ezra*, *Esther*, and *Nehemiah*, inform us *how* the Divine goodness accomplished this most gracious design, and the *movers* and *agents* he employed on the occasion. The writer of the following book was undoubtedly the chief agent under God; and his history, as found in the most authentic writings of the Jews, is too nearly connected with this book, and too important in every point of view, to be passed by. No man has written on this subject with such perspicuity as Dean *Prideaux*; and from his invaluable work, *The Connected History of the Old and New Testaments*, I shall freely borrow whatever may be best calculated to throw light upon the ensuing history.

“In the beginning of the year 458 before the Christian era, Ezra obtained of King Artaxerxes and his seven counsellors a very ample commission for his return to Jerusalem, with all of his nation that were willing to accompany him thither; giving him full authority there to restore and settle the state, and reform the Church of the Jews, and to regulate and govern both according to their own laws. This extraordinary favour, not being likely to have been obtained but by some more than ordinary means, appears to have been granted by King Artaxerxes to the solicitations of Esther, who,

though not at that time advanced to the dignity of his queen, was yet the best beloved of his concubines.

“Ezra was of the descendants of *Seraiah*, the high priest who was slain by Nebuchadnezzar when he burnt the temple and city of *Jerusalem*.

“As Ezra was a very holy, so also was he a very learned man, and especially skilled excellently in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; and therefore he is said to have been a very ready scribe in the law of God, for which he was so eminent that Artaxerxes takes particular notice of it in his commission. He began his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, called *Nisan*, which might fall about the middle of our March; and having halted at the river of Ahava till the rest of his company was come up to him, he there, in a solemn fast, recommended himself and all that were with him to the Divine protection; and then, on the *twelfth* day, set forward for Jerusalem, they all having spent *four* months in their journey from Babylon thither. On his arrival he delivered up to the temple the offerings which had been made to it by the king and his nobles, and the rest of the people of Israel that stayed behind; which amounted to *a hundred talents* of gold, with *twenty* basons of gold of the value of *a thousand* darics, and *six hundred* and *fifty* talents of silver, with vessels of silver of the weight of *a hundred* talents more: and then, having communicated his commission to the king’s lieutenants and governors throughout all Syria and Palestine, he betook himself to the executing of the contents of it, whereby he was fully empowered to settle both the Church and the state of the Jews, according to the law of Moses; and to appoint magistrates and judges to punish all such as should be refractory; and that, not only by imprisonment and confiscation of goods, but also with banishment and death, according as their crimes should be found to deserve. And all this power *Ezra* was invested with, and continued faithfully to execute, for the space of *thirteen* years, till *Nehemiah* arrived with a new commission from the Persian court for the same work. *Ezra*, having found in the *second* year of his government (*Ezra* ix. and x.) that many of the people had taken strange wives, contrary to the law, and that several of the priests and Levites, as well as the chief men of Judah and Benjamin, had transgressed herein, after he had in fasting and prayer deprecated God’s wrath for it, caused proclamation to be made for all the people of Israel that had returned from the captivity to gather themselves together at Jerusalem, under the penalty of excommunication, and forfeiture of all their goods. And when they were met, he made them sensible of their sins, and engaged

them in promise and covenant before God, to depart from it by putting away their strange wives, and all such as were born of them, that the seed of Israel might not be polluted with such an undue commixture; and thereon commissioners were appointed to inquire into this matter, and cause every man to do according to the law.

“And they sat down the *first* day of the *tenth* month to examine into this matter, and made an end by the *first* day of the *first* month; so that in *three* months’ time, that is, in the *tenth*, *eleveth*, and *twelfth* months of the Jewish years a thorough reformation was made of this transgression: which *three* months answer to *January*, *February*, and *March* of our year.

“About this time (^{<J702b>}**Esther 2:21**) Bigthan and Jeush, two eunuchs of the palace, entered into a conspiracy against the life of King Artaxerxes. Most likely they were of those who had attended Queen Vashti; and being now out of their offices by the degrading of their mistress, and the advancing of another in her place, took such a disgust at this as to resolve to revenge themselves on the king for it; of which Mordecai, having got the knowledge, made discovery to Queen Esther, and she in Mordecai’s name to the king; whereon inquiry being made into the matter, and the whole treason laid open and discovered, the two traitors were both crucified for it, and the history of the whole matter was entered on the public registers and annals of the kingdom.

“Ezra continued in the government of Judea till the end of the year 446; and by virtue of the commission he had from the king, and the powers granted him thereby, he reformed the whole state of the Jewish Church, according to the law of Moses, in which he was excellently learned, and settled it upon that bottom upon which it afterwards stood till the time of our Saviour. The two chief things which he had to do, were to restore the observance of the Jewish law according to the ancient approved usages which had been in practice before the captivity, under the directions of the prophets; and to collect together and set forth a correct edition of the Holy Scriptures; in the performance of both which, the Jews inform us he had the assistance of what they call the Great Synagogue, which they tell us was a convention consisting of *one hundred and twenty* men, who lived all at the same time under the presidency of Ezra, and assisted him in both of these two works; and among these they name Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

“But the whole conduct of the work, and the glory of accomplishing it, is by the Jews chiefly attributed to him under whose presidency they tell us it was done; and therefore they look upon him as another Moses: for the law, they say, was given by Moses; but it was reviewed and restored by Ezra, after it had in a manner been extinguished and lost in the Babylonish captivity. And therefore they reckon him as the second founder of it: and it is a common opinion among them that he was Malachi the prophet; that he was called Ezra as his proper name, and Malachi, which signifies an angel or messenger, from his office, because he was sent as the angel and messenger of God to restore again the Jewish religion, and establish it in the same manner as it was before the captivity on the foundation of the law and the prophets. And indeed, by virtue of that ample commission which he had from King Artaxerxes, he had an opportunity of doing more herein than any other of his nation; and he executed all the powers thereof to the utmost he was able, for the resettling both of the ecclesiastical and political state of the Jews in the best posture they were then capable of: and from hence his name is in so high esteem and veneration among the Jews, that it is a common saying among their writers, ‘that if the law had not been given by Moses, Ezra was worthy, by whom it should have been given.’ As to the ancient and approved usages of the Jewish Church which had been in practice before the captivity, they had by Joshua and Zerubbabel, with the chief elders, then contemporaries, and by others that after succeeded them, been gathering together from their first return to Jerusalem, as they could be recovered from the memories of the ancients of their nation who had either seen them practised themselves before the captivity, or who had been informed concerning them by their parents or others who had lived before them.

“All these, and whatsoever else was pretended to be of the same nature, Ezra brought under review, and, after due examination, allowed such of them as were to be allowed, and settled them by his approbation and authority: they gave birth to what the Jews now call their oral law; for they own a twofold law—the *first*, the written law, which is recorded in the Holy Scriptures; and the *second*, the oral law, which they have only by the tradition of their elders. And both these, they say, were given them by Moses from Mount Sinai, of which the former only was committed to writing, and the other delivered down to them from generation to generation by the tradition of the elders; and therefore holding them both to be of the same authority, as having both of them the same Divine

original, they think themselves to be bound as much by the latter as the former, or rather much more; for the written law is, they say, in many places, obscure, scanty, and defective, and could be no perfect rule to them without the oral law, which, containing according to them a full, complete, and perfect interpretation of all that is included in the other, supplies all the defects and solves all the difficulties of it; and therefore they observe the written law no otherwise than according as it is explained and expounded by their oral law. And hence it is a common saying among them, ‘that the covenant was made with them, not upon the written law, but upon the oral law;’ and therefore they do in a manner lay aside the former to make room for the latter, and resolve their whole RELIGION into their traditions, in the same manner as the Romanists do theirs, having no farther regard to the written word of God than as it agrees with their traditionary explications of it, but always preferring them thereto, though in many particulars they are quite contradictory to it, which is a corruption that had grown to a great height among them even in our Saviour’s time; for he charges them with it, and tells them *that they make the word of God of none effect through their traditions*; ⁴⁰⁷¹³**Mark 7:13.** But they have done it much more since, professing a greater regard to the latter than the former; and hence it is that we find it so often said in their writings, ‘that the words of the scribes are lovely above the words of the law; that the words of the law are weighty and light, but the words of the scribes are all weighty; that the words of the elders are weightier than the words of the prophets;’ where, by the words of the scribes and the words of the elders, they mean their traditions, delivered to them by their scribes and elders. And in other places, ‘that the written text is only as water; but the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*, in which are contained the traditions, are as wine and hippocras.’ And again, ‘that the written law is only as salt, but the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* as pepper and sweet spices.’ And in many other sayings, very common among them, do they express the very high veneration which they bear towards the oral or traditionary law, and the little regard which they have to the written word of God in comparison of it, making nothing of the latter but as expounded by the former; as if the written word were no more than the dead letter, and the traditionary law alone the soul that gives it the whole life and essence.

“And this being what they hold of their traditions, which they call their oral law, the account which they give of its original is as follows: they tell us that ‘at the same time when God gave unto Moses the law in Mount Sinai,

he gave unto him also the interpretation of it, commanding him to put the former into writing, but to deliver the other only by word of mouth, to be preserved in the memories of men, and to be transmitted down by them from generation to generation by tradition only; and from hence the former is called the written, and the other the oral, law.' And to this day all the determinations and dictates of the latter are termed by the Jews 'Constitutions of Moses from Mount Sinai,' because they do as firmly believe that he received them all from God in his *forty days*' converse with him in that mount, as that he then received the written text itself. That on his return from this converse he brought both of these laws with him, and delivered them unto the people of Israel in this manner: As soon as he was returned to his tent, he called Aaron thither unto him, and first delivered unto him the text, which was to be the written law, and after that the interpretation of it, which was the oral law, in the same order as he received both from God in the mount. Then Aaron arising and seating himself at the right hand of Moses, Eleazar and Ithamar his sons went next in, and both these being taught laws at the feet of the prophet in the same manner as Aaron had been, they also arose and seated themselves, the one on the left hand of Moses, the other on the right hand of Aaron; and then the *seventy* elders who constituted the Sanhedrin, or great senate of the nation, went in, and being taught by Moses both these laws in the same manner, they also seated themselves in the tent; and then entered all such of the people as were desirous of knowing the law of God, and were taught in the same manner. After this, Moses withdrawing, Aaron repeated the whole of the law as he had heard it from him, and also withdrew; and then Eleazar and Ithamar repeated the same, and on their withdrawing, the seventy elders made the same repetition to the people then present; so that each of them having heard both these laws repeated to them four times, they all had it thereby fixed in their memories; and that then they dispersed themselves among the whole congregation, and communicated to all the people of Israel what had been thus delivered to them by the prophet of God. That they did put the text into writing, but the interpretation of it they delivered down only by word of mouth to the succeeding generations; that the written text contained the *six hundred and thirteen precepts* into which they divide the law and the unwritten interpretations, all the manners, ways, and circumstances, that were to be observed in the keeping of them; that after this, towards the end of the *fortieth* year from their coming up out of the land of Egypt, in the beginning of the *eleventh* month, (which fell about the beginning of our June,) Moses, calling all the

people of Israel together, acquainted them of the approaching time of his death, and therefore ordered that if any of them had forgot aught of what he had delivered to them, they should repair to him, and he would repeat to them what had slipped their memories, and farther explain to them every difficulty and doubt which might arise in their minds concerning what he had taught them of the law of their God; and that hereon they applying to him, all the remaining term of his life, that is, from the said beginning of the *eleventh* month till the *sixth* day of the *twelfth* month, was employed in instructing them in the text, which they call the written law, and in the interpretation of it, which they call the oral law; and that on the said *sixth* day having delivered unto them *thirteen* copies of the written law, all copied out with his own hand, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy, one to each of the twelve tribes, to be kept by them throughout their generations, and the *thirteenth* to the *Levites*, to be laid up by them in the tabernacle before the Lord, and having moreover repeated the oral law to Joshua his successor, he went on the *seventh* day into Mount *Nebo*, and there died; that after his death Joshua delivered the same oral law to the elders who after succeeded him, and they delivered it to the prophets, and the prophets transmitted it down to each other till it came to *Jeremiah*, who delivered it to *Baruch*, and *Baruch* to *Ezra*, by whom it was delivered to the men of the great synagogue, the last of whom was *Simon the Just*; that by him it was delivered to Antigonus of Socho, and by him to Jose the son of Jochanan, and by him to Jose the son of Jooser, and by him to Nathan the Arbelite and Joshua the son of Berachiah, and by them to Judah the son of Jabhai, and, Simeon the son of Shatah, and by them to Shemaiah and Abitulion, and by them to Hillel and by Hillel to Simeon his son, who is supposed to have been the same who took our Saviour into his arms when he was brought to the temple to be there presented to the Lord at the time of his mother's purification; and by Simeon it was delivered to Gamaliel his son, the same at whose feet Paul was brought up, and by him to Simeon his son, by him to Gamaliel his son, and by him to Simeon his son, and by him to Rabbah Judah Hakkadosh his son, who wrote it into the book called the Mishnah. But all this is mere fiction spun out of the fertile invention of the Talmudists, without the least foundation either in Scripture or in any authentic history for it. But since all this has made a part of the Jewish creed, they do as firmly believe their traditions thus to have come from God in the manner I have related, as they do the written word itself; and have now, as it were, wholly resolved their religion into these traditions. There is no understanding what their

religion at present is without it, and it is for this reason I have here inserted it.

“But the truth is this: After the death of *Simon the Just* there arose a sort of men whom they call *The Jarmain*, or the Mishnical doctors, who made it their business to study and descant upon those traditions which had been received and allowed by Ezra and the men of the great synagogue, and to draw inferences and consequences from them, all of which they ingrafted into the body of these ancient traditions, as if they had been as authentic as the others; which example being followed by those who after succeeded them in this profession, they continually added their own imaginations to what they had received from those who went before them, whereby the traditions, becoming as a snow-ball, the farther they rolled down from one generation to another the more they gathered, and the greater the bulk of them grew. And thus it went on till the middle of the second century after Christ, then *Antoninus Pius* governed the Roman empire, by which time they found it necessary to put an these traditions into writing; for they were then grown to so great a number, and enlarged to so huge a heap, as to exceed the possibility of being any longer preserved in the memory of men. And besides, in the second destruction which their country had undergone from the Romans a little before, in the reign of Adrian the preceding emperor, most of their learned men having been cut off, and the chiefest of their schools broken up and dissolved, and vast numbers of their people dissipated, and driven out of their land, the usual method of preserving their traditions had then in a great measure failed; and therefore, there being danger that under these disadvantages they might be all forgotten and lost, for the preservation of them it was resolved that they should be all collected together, and put into a book; and *Rabbi Judah*, the son of Simeon, who from the reputed sanctity of his life was called *Hakkadosh*, that is, The Holy, and was then rector of the school which they had at Tiberis in Galilee, and president of the Sanhedrin that there sat, undertook the work, and compiled it in *six* books, each consisting of several tracts, which altogether made up the number of *sixty-three*; in which, under their proper heads, he methodically digested all that had hitherto been delivered to them, of their law and their religion, by the tradition of their ancestors. And this is the book called *The Mishnah*, which book was forthwith received by the Jews with great veneration throughout all their dispersions, and has ever since been held in high estimation among them; for their opinion of it is, that all the particulars therein contained were dictated by

God himself to Moses from Mount Sinai, as well as the written word itself, and consequently must be of the same Divine authority with it, and ought to be as sacredly observed. And therefore, as soon as it was published, it became the subject of the studies of all their learned men; and the chiefest of them, both in Judea and Babylonia, employed themselves to make comments on it; and these, with the *Mishnah*, make up both their *Talmuds*; that is, the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonish Talmud. These comments they call the *Gemara*, i.e., The Complement, because by them the *Mishnah* is fully explained, and the whole traditionary doctrines of their law and their religion completed. For the *Mishnah* is the text, and the *Gemara* the *comment*; and both together is what they call the *Talmud*. That made by the Jews of Judea is called the Jerusalem Talmud, that by the Jews of Babylonia is called the Babylonish Talmud. The former was completed about the year of our Lord 300, and is published in *one* large folio; the latter was published about *two hundred* years after, in the *beginning of the sixth century*, and has had several editions since the invention of printing. The last, published at Amsterdam, is in *twelve* folios; and in these two Talmuds, the law and the prophets being in a manner quite justled out of them, is contained the whole of the Jewish religion that is now professed among them; but the Babylonish Talmud is that which they chiefly follow; for the other, that is, the Jerusalem Talmud, being obscure, and hard to be understood, is not now much regarded by them. But this and the *Mishnah*, being the most ancient books which they have, except the *Chaldee Paraphrases of Onkelos and Jonathan*, and both written in the language and style of the Jews of Judea; our countryman, Dr. Lightfoot, has made very good use of them in explaining several places of the New Testament by parallel phrases and sayings out of them. For the one being composed about the *one hundred and fiftieth* year of our Lord, and the other about the *three hundredth*, the idioms, proverbial sayings, and phraseologies, used in our Saviour's time, might very well be preserved in them. But the other Talmud being written in the language and style of Babylonia, and not compiled till about the *five hundredth* year of our Lord, or, as some will have it, much later, this cannot so well serve for this purpose. However, it is now the Alcoran of the Jews, into which they have resolved all their faith, and all their religion, although framed almost with the same imposture as that of Mohammed, out of the doctrines falsely pretended to be brought from heaven. And in this book all that now pretend to any learning among them place their studies; and no one can be a master in their schools, or a teacher in their synagogues, who is not well instructed

and versed herein; that is, not only in the text, which is the Mishnah, but also in the comment thereon, which is the Gemara; and this comment they so highly esteem beyond the other, that the name of Gemara is wholly engrossed by it; the Gemara of the Babylonish Talmud being that only which they now usually understand by that word; for this with the Mishnah, to which it is added, they think truly completes and makes up the whole of their religion, as fully and perfectly containing all the doctrines, rules, and rites thereof; and therefore it is, in their opinion, the most deserving of that name, which signifies what *completes*, *fills up*, or *perfects*; for this is the meaning of the word in the Hebrew language.

“They who professed this sort of learning, that is, taught and propagated this traditionary doctrine among them, have been distinguished by several different titles and appellations, according to the different ages in which they lived. From the time of the men of the great synagogue to the publishing of the Mishnah, they were called *Jarmain*; and they are the *Mishnical* doctors, out of whose doctrines and traditions the *Mishnah* was composed. And from the time of the publishing of the Mishnah to the publishing of the Babylonish Talmud, they were called *Amoraim*; and they are the *Gemarical* doctors, out of whose doctrines and traditions the *Gemara* was composed. And for about a *hundred* years after the publishing of the Talmud, they were called *Seburaim*, and after that *Georim*. And these were the several classes in which their learned men have been ranked, according to the several ages in which they lived. But for these later times, the general name of *Rabbi* is that only whereby their learned men are called, there being no other title whereby they have been distinguished for nearly *seven hundred* years past.

“For about the year 1040 all their schools in Mesopotamia, where only they enjoyed these high titles, being destroyed, and all their learned men thence expelled and driven out by the Mohammedan princes, who governed in those parts; they have since that, with the greatest number of their people, flocked into the western parts, especially into Spain, France, and England; and from that time all these pompous titles which they affected in the East being dropped, they have retained none other for their learned men from that time but that of *Rabbi*; excepting only that those of them who minister in their synagogues are called *Chacams*, i.e., wise men.

“But the great work of Ezra was, his collecting together and setting forth a correct edition of the Holy Scriptures, which he laboured much in, and

went a great way in the perfecting of it. Of this both Christians and Jews gave him the honour; and many of the ancient fathers attribute more to him in this particular than the Jews themselves; for they hold that all the Scriptures were lost and destroyed in the Babylonish captivity, and that Ezra restored them all again by Divine revelation. Thus says *Irenæus* and thus say *Tertullian*, Clemens Alexandrinus, Basil, and others. But they had no other foundation for it than that fabulous relation which we have of it in the fourteenth chapter of the second Apocryphal book of Esdras, a book too absurd for the Romanists themselves to receive into their canon.

“Indeed, in the time of Josiah, through the impiety of the *two* preceding reigns of Manasseh and Amon, the book of the law was so destroyed and lost. The copy of it which *Hilkiah* is said to have found, and the grief which *Josiah* expressed at the hearing of it read, do plainly show that neither of them had ever seen it before.

“And if the king and the high priest, who were both men of eminent piety, were without this part of the Holy Scripture, it can scarcely be thought that any one else then had it. But so religious a prince as King Josiah could not leave this long unremedied. By his orders copies were written out from this original; and search being made for all the other parts of Holy Scripture, both in the colleges of the sons of the prophets, and all other places where they could be found, care was taken for transcripts to be made out of these also; and thenceforth copies of the whole became multiplied among the people; all those who were desirous of knowing the laws of their God, either writing them out themselves, or procuring others to do it for them; so that within a few years after the holy city and temple were destroyed, and the authentic copy of the law, which was laid up before the Lord, was burnt and consumed with them, yet by this time many copies, both of the law and the prophets, and all the other sacred writings, were got into private hands, who carried them with them into captivity.

“That Daniel had a copy of the Holy Scriptures with him in Babylon is certain, for he quotes the law, and also makes mention of the prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah, which he could not do had he never seen them. And in the sixth chapter of Ezra it is said, that on the finishing of the temple, in the *sixth* year of Darius, the priests and the Levites were settled in their respective functions, according as it is written in the law of Moses. But how could they do this according to the written law, if they had not copies

of the law then among them? And this was nearly *sixty* years before Ezra came to Jerusalem.

“And farther, in Nehemiah, ^{<180>}**Nehemiah 8:1**, the people called for the law of Moses, to have it read to them, which the Lord had commanded Israel, which plainly shows that the book was then well known to have been extant, and not to need such a miraculous expedient as that of the Divine revelation for its restoration; all that Ezra did in this manner was to get together as many copies of the sacred writings as he could, and out of them all to set forth a correct edition; in the performance of which he took care of the following particulars: *First*, He corrected all the errors that had crept into these copies, through the negligence or mistakes of transcribers; for, by comparing them one with the other, he found out the true reading, and set all at rights. Whether the *keri cethib*, or various readings, that are in our present Hebrew Bibles were of these corrections, I dare not say. The generality of the Jewish writers tell us that they were; and others among them hold them as much more ancient, referring them, with absurdity enough, as far back as the times of the first writers of the books in which they are found, as if they themselves had designedly made these various readings for the sake of some mysteries comprised under them. It is most probable that they had their original from the mistakes of the transcribers after the time of Ezra, and the observations and corrections of the *Masorites* made thereon. If any of them were of those ancient various readings which had been observed by Ezra himself in the comparing of those copies he collated on this occasion, and were by him annexed in the margin as corrections of those errors which he found in the text, it is certain those could not be of that number which are now in those sacred books that were written by himself, or taken into the canon after his time; for there are *keri cethib* in them as well as in the other books of the Hebrew Scriptures. *Secondly*, He collected together all the books of which the Holy Scriptures did then consist, and disposed them in their proper order; and settled the canon of Scripture for his time. These books he divided into three parts: 1. The Law. 2. The Prophets. 3. The *Cethubim*, or *Hagiographa*; i.e., the Holy Writings: which division our Saviour himself takes notice of, ^{<244>}**Luke 24:44**, where he says: ‘These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things might be fulfilled which are written in the law, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.’ For there, by the Psalms, he means the whole third part called the *Hagiographa*; for, that part beginning with the Psalms, the

whole was for that reason then commonly called by that name; as usually with the Jews, the particular books are named from the words with which they begin. Thus with them Genesis is called *Bereshith*, Exodus *Shemoth*, Leviticus *Vaijakra*, &c., because they begin with these Hebrew words.

“And Josephus makes mention of this same division; for he says, in his first book against Apion, ‘We have only two and twenty books which are to be believed as of Divine authority, of which five are the books of Moses. From the death of Moses to the reign of Artaxerxes, the son of Xerxes, king of Persia, the prophets, who were the successors of Moses, have written in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and documents of life for the use of men:’ in which division, according to him, the law contains *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, *Deuteronomy*. The writings of the prophets, *Joshua*, *Judges*, with *Ruth*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, with his *Lamentations*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, the twelve minor prophets, *Job*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Esther*; and the *Hagiographa*, i.e., the *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Song of Solomon*, which altogether make *two and twenty* books. This division was made for the sake of reducing the books to the number of their alphabet, in which were *twenty-two* letters. But at present they reckon these books to be *twenty-four*, and dispose of them in this order: *First*, the Law, which contains *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. *Secondly*, the Writings of the Prophets, which they divide into the former prophets and the latter prophets: the books of the former prophets are, *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings*; the books of the latter prophets, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*; the twelve minor prophets; the *Hagiographa*, which are the *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Job*, the *Song of Solomon*, which they call the *Song of Songs*, *Ruth*, the *Lamentations*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Esther*, *Daniel*, *Ezra*, and the *Chronicles*. Under the name of *Ezra* they comprehend the book of *Nehemiah*; for the *Hebrews*, and also the *Greeks*, anciently reckoned *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* but as one book. But this order has not been always observed among the Jews; neither is it so now in all places, for there has been great variety as to this, and that not only among the Jews, but also among the Christians, as well as the Greeks and Latins: but no variation herein is of any moment, for in what order soever the books are placed, they are still the word of God; and no change as to this can make any change as to that Divine authority which is stamped upon them. But all these books were not received into the canon in *Ezra’s* time, for *Malachi* it is supposed lived after him; and in *Nehemiah* mention is

made of Jaddua as high priest, and of *Darius Codomannus* as king of Persia; who were at least *a hundred years* after his time. And in ~~<1300>~~ **1 Chronicles 3:1-24** of the first book of Chronicles the genealogy of the sons of Zerubbabel is carried down for so many generations as must necessarily make it reach to the time of Alexander the Great; and therefore the book could not be put into the canon till after his time.

“It is most likely that the two books of *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Esther*, as well as *Malachi*, were afterwards added in the time of *Simon the Just*, and that it was not till then that the Jewish canon of the Holy Scriptures was fully completed: and indeed these last books seem very much to want the exactness and skill of *Ezra* in their publication, they falling far short of the correctness which is in the other parts of the Jewish Scriptures. The five books of the law are divided into *fifty-four* sections. This division many of the Jews hold to be one of the constitutions of Moses from *Mount Sinai*; but others, with more likelihood of truth, attribute it to *Ezra*. It was made for the use of their synagogues, and the better instructing of the people there in the law of God; for every Sabbath day one of these sections was read in their synagogues; and this, we are assured in the *Acts of the Apostles*, was done among them *of old time*, which may well be interpreted from the time of *Ezra*. They ended the last section with the last words of *Deuteronomy* on the Sabbath of the feast of tabernacles, and then recommenced with the first section from the beginning of *Genesis* the next Sabbath after; and so went on round in this circle every year. The number of the sections was *fifty-four*; because in their intercalated years (a month being added) there were *fifty-four* Sabbaths. [See complete tables of] [these in all their variations at the end of this comment on the] [book of Deuteronomy.]

“On other years they reduced them to the number of the Sabbaths which were in those years by joining two short ones several times into one; for they held themselves obliged to have the whole law thus read over to them in their synagogues every year. Until the time of the persecution of *Antiochus Epiphanes* they read only the law; but, being then forbid to read it any more, in the room of the *fifty-four* sections of the law, they substituted *fifty-four* sections out of the prophets, the reading of which they ever after continued. So that when the reading of the law was again restored by the Maccabees, the section which was read every Sabbath out of the law served for their first lesson, and the section out of the prophets for the second lesson; and so it was practiced in the time of the apostles.

And therefore, when *Paul* entered into the synagogue at *Antioch*, in *Pisidia*, it is said that ‘he stood up to preach after the reading of the law and the prophets;’ that is, after the reading of the first lesson out of the law, and the second lesson out of the prophets. And in that very sermon which he then preached, he tells them, ‘That the prophets were read at *Jerusalem* every Sabbath day,’ *that is*, in those lessons which were taken out of the prophets.

“These sections were divided into verses, which the Jews call *pesukim*; they were marked out in the Hebrew Bibles by two great points at the end of them, called from hence *soph-pasuk*, i.e., *the end of the verse*. If *Ezra* himself was not the author of this division, (as most say,) it was not long after him that it was introduced, for certainly it is very ancient. It is most likely that it was introduced for the sake of the *Targumist* or *Chaldee* interpreters; for after the Hebrew language had ceased to be the mother tongue of the Jews, and the Chaldee grew up into use among them instead of it, (as was the case after their return from the Babylonish captivity,) their usage was that, in the public reading of the law to the people, it was read to them, first in the original Hebrew, and after that rendered by an interpreter into the Chaldee language, that so all might fully understand the same; and this was done period by period; and therefore, that these periods might be the better distinguished, and the reader more certainly know how much to read at every interval, and the interpreter know how much to interpret at every interval, there was a necessity that some marks should be invented for their direction herein. The rule given in the ancient books is, that in the law the reader was to read one verse, and then the interpreter was to render the same into Chaldee; but that in the prophets the reader was to read three verses together, and then the interpreter was to render the same three verses into Chaldee, in the same manner; which manifestly proves that the division of the Scriptures into verses must be as ancient as the way of interpreting them into the Chaldee language in their synagogues, which was from the very time that the synagogues were erected, and the Scriptures publicly read in them, after the Babylonish captivity. This was at first done only in the law; for till the time of the Maccabees, the law only was read in their synagogues: but afterwards, in imitation of this, the same was also done in the prophets, and in the *Hagiographa* especially. After that the prophets also began to be publicly read among them, as well as the law; and from hence the division of the

Holy Scriptures into verses, it is most likely, was first made; but without any numerical figures annexed to them.

“The manner whereby they are now distinguished in their common Hebrew Bibles is by the two great points called *soph-pasuk* above mentioned; but whether this is the ancient way is by some made a question. The objection against it is this: If the distinction of verses was introduced for the sake of the Chaldee interpreters in their synagogues, and must therefore be held as ancient as that way of interpreting the Scriptures in them, it must then have place in their sacred synagogical books; for none others were used, either by their readers or their interpreters, in their public assemblies. But it has been anciently held as a rule among them, that any points or accents written into these sacred books pollute and profane them; and therefore, no copy of either the law or the prophets now used in their synagogues has any points or accents written in it. To this I answer, Whatever be the practice of the modern Jews, this is no rule to let us know what was the ancient practice among them, since in many particulars they have varied from the ancient usages, as they now do from each other, according to the different parts of the world in which they dwell. For mention is made of them in the *Mishnah*; and that the reason for this division was for the direction of the readers, and the Chaldee interpreters, is also there implied; and therefore, supposing a division for this use, it must necessarily follow, that there must have been some marks to set it out; otherwise it would not have answered the end intended.

“It is most likely that anciently the writing of those books was in long lines, from one side of the parchment to the other, and that the verses in them were distinguished in the same manner as the *stichi* afterwards were in the Greek Bibles; for the manner of their writing those *stichi* was, to allow a line to every *stichus*, and then to end the writing where they ended the *stichus*, leaving the rest of the line void, in the same manner as a line is left at a break: but this was losing too much of the parchment, and making the book too bulky; for the avoiding of both these inconveniences, the way afterwards was, to put a point at the end of every *stichus*, and so continue the writing without leaving any part of the line void as before. And in the same manner I conceive the *pesukim*, or verses of the Hebrew Bibles, were anciently written. At first they allowed a line to every verse, and a line drawn from one end of the parchment to the other, of the length as above mentioned, was sufficient to contain any verse that is now in the Hebrew Bible; but many verses falling short of this length, they found the same

inconveniences that the Greeks after did in the first way of writing their *stichi*; and therefore came to the same remedy, that is, they did put the *two* points above mentioned (which they call *soph-pasuk*) at the place where the former verse ended, and continued the writing of the next verse in the same line, without leaving any void space at all in the line. And so their manner has continued ever since, excepting only that between their sections, as well the smaller as the larger, there is some void space left, to make the distinction between them; and I am the more inclined to think this to be the truth of the matter; that is, that anciently the verses of the Hebrew Bible were so many lines, because among the ancients of other nations, about the same time, the lines in the writings of prose authors, as well as the poets, were termed verses; and hence it is that we are told that *Zoroaster's* works contain *two millions* of verses, and *Aristotle's*, *four hundred and forty-five thousand two hundred and seventy*; though neither of them wrote any thing but in prose; and so also we find the writings of *Tully*, of *Origen*, of *Lactantius*, and others, who were all prose writers, reckoned by the number of verses, which could be no other than so many lines. And why then might not the Bible verses anciently have been of the same nature also? I mean when written in long lines as aforesaid. But the long lines often occasioning, that in reading to the end of one verse, they lost the beginning of the next, and so often did read wrong, either by skipping a line, or beginning the same again; for the avoiding of this they came to the way of writing in columns and in short lines, as above mentioned. But all this I mean of their sacred synagogical books. In their common Bibles they are not tied up to such rules, but write and print them so as they may serve for their instruction and convenience in common use.

“But the division of the Holy Scriptures into chapters, as we now have them, is of a much later date. The Psalms, indeed, were always divided as at present; for St. Paul, in his sermon at Antioch, in Pisidia, quotes the second Psalm: but as to the rest of the Holy Scriptures, the division of them into such chapters as we find at present is a matter of which the ancients knew nothing. Some attribute it to *Stephen Langton*, who was *archbishop* of *Canterbury* in the reigns of King *John* and King *Henry III.* his son. But the true author of this invention was *Hugo de Sancto Claro*, who being from a *Dominican* monk advanced to the dignity of a cardinal, and the first of that order that was so, is commonly called *Hugo Cardinalis*.

“The third thing that Ezra did about the Holy Scriptures in his edition of them was:-he added in several places, throughout the books of this edition, what appeared necessary for the illustrating, correcting, or completing of them, wherein he was assisted by the same Spirit by which they were at first written. Of this sort we may reckon the last chapter of Deuteronomy, which, giving an account of the death and burial of Moses, and of the succession of Joshua after him, could not be written by Moses himself, who undoubtedly was the penman of all the rest of that book. It seems most probable that it was added by Ezra at this time: and such also we may reckon the several interpolations which occur in many places of the Holy Scriptures. For that there are such interpolations is undeniable, there being many passages through the whole sacred writers which create difficulties which can never be solved without the allowing of them: as for instance, ^{<01276>}**Genesis 12:6**, it is remarked on *Abraham*’s coming into the land of *Canaan*, that the ‘Canaanites were then in the land;’ which is not likely to have been said till after the time of *Moses*, when the *Canaanites*, being extirpated by *Joshua*, were then no longer in the land: and ^{<01224>}**Genesis 22:14**, we read, ‘As it is said to this day, In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen.’ But Mount *Moriah*, which is the mount there spoken of, was not called the Mount of the Lord till the temple was built on it many hundred years after; and this being here spoken of as a proverbial saying that obtained among the Israelites in after ages, the whole style of the text manifestly points at a time after *Moses*, when they were in the possession of the land in which this mountain stood; and, therefore, both these particulars prove the words cited to have been an interpolation. ^{<01318>}**Genesis 36:3**, it is written, ‘And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the land of Israel,’ which could not have been said till after there had been a king in *Israel*; and therefore they cannot be *Moses*’s words, but must have been interpolated afterwards. ^{<01655>}**Exodus 16:35**, the words of the text are, ‘And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, till they came to a land inhabited. They did eat manna till they came into the borders of the land of Canaan.’ But *Moses* was dead before the manna ceased; and, therefore, these cannot be his words, but must have been inserted afterwards. ^{<01212>}**Deuteronomy 2:12**, it is said, ‘The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime, but the children of Esau succeeded them when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead, as Israel did unto the land of his possession which the Lord gave unto them.’ Which could not have been written by *Moses*, *Israel* having not till after his death entered into the land of his possession,

which the Lord gave unto them. ^{<RB1>}**Deuteronomy 3:11**, it is said, ‘Only Og, king of Bashan, remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron. Is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon?’ The whole style and strain of which text, especially that of the last clause of it, plainly speaks it to have been written a long while after that king was slain; and therefore it could not have been written by *Moses*, who died within five months after. In the same chapter, ^{<RB1>}**Deuteronomy 3:14**, it is said, ‘Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob unto the coasts of Geshuri and Maachathi; and called them after his own name, Bashan-havoth-jair, unto this day.’ Where the phrase *unto this day* speaks a much greater distance of time after the fact related than those few months in which *Moses* survived after the conquest; and therefore what is there written must have been inserted by some other hand than that of *Moses*, and long after his death. And in the book of *Proverbs*, which was certainly King *Solomon’s*, in the beginning of the *twenty-fifth* chapter, it is written, ‘These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.’ Which must certainly have been added many ages after *Solomon*; for Hezekiah was the *twelfth* generation in descent from him.

“Many more instances of such interpolated passages might be given; for throughout the whole Scriptures they have been frequently cast in by way of parentheses; where they have appeared necessary for the explaining, connecting, or illustrating the text, or supplying what was wanting in it: but those already mentioned are sufficient to prove the thing. Of which interpolations undoubtedly Ezra was the author, in all the books which passed his examination; and *Simon the Just* in all the rest which were added afterwards; for they all seem to refer to those latter times.

“But these additions do not at all detract from the Divine authority of the whole, because they were all inserted by the direction of the same Holy Spirit which dictated all the rest. This, as to Ezra, is without dispute, he being himself one of the Divine persons of the Holy Scriptures: for he was most certainly the writer of that book in the Old Testament which bears his name; and he is, upon good grounds, supposed to be the author of two more, that is, of the two books of *Chronicles*, as perchance he was also of the book of *Esther*. And if the books written by him be of Divine authority, why may not every thing else be so which he has added to any of the rest, since there is reason for us to suppose that he was as much directed by the Holy Spirit of God in the one as in the other? The great importance of the

work proves the thing, for as it was necessary for the Church of God that this work should be done; so also it was necessary for the work that the person called thereto should be thus assisted in the completing of it.

“*Fourthly*, He changed the names of several places that were grown obsolete, putting instead of them the new names by which they were at that time called, that the people might the better understand what was written. Thus, ~~Ⲁⲓⲏⲏ~~ **Genesis 14:14**, *Abraham* is said to have pursued the kings who carried *Lot* away captive as far as *Dan*, whereas the name of that place was *Laish* till the *Danites*, long after the death of *Moses*, possessed themselves of it, and called it, *Dan after the name of their father*; and, therefore, it could not be called *Dan* in the original copy of *Moses*, but that name must have been put in afterwards instead of that of *Laish* on this review. And so in several places in *Genesis*, and also in *Numbers*, we find mention made of *Hebron*, whereas the name of that city was *Kiriath-arba*, till *Caleb*, having the possession of it after the division of the land, called it *Hebron* after the name of *Hebron*, one of his sons: and, therefore, that name could not be had in the text, till placed there long after the time of *Moses* by way of exchange for that of *Kiriath-arba*, which it is not to be doubted was done at the time of this review.

“And many other like examples of this may be given; whereby it appears that the study of those who governed the Church of God at those times was to render the Scriptures as plain and intelligible to the people as they could; and not to hide and conceal any of it from them.

“*Fifthly*, He wrote out the whole in the *Chaldee* character: for that having now grown wholly into use among the people after the *Babylonish* captivity, he changed the old *Hebrew* character for it, which hath since that time been retained only by the *Samaritans*, among whom it is preserved even to this day. This was the old *Phœnician* character, from which the *Greeks* borrowed theirs; and the old *Ionian* alphabet bears some resemblance to it, as *Scaliger* shows in his notes upon *Eusebius’s Chronicon*. In this *Moses* and the other prophets recorded the sacred oracles of God; and in this the finger of God himself wrote the ten commandments in the two tables of stone. *Eusebius*, in his *Chronicon*, tells us so, and *St. Jerome* doth the same; and so do also both the *Talmuds*; and the generality of learned men, as well among the Jews as Christians, hold this opinion.

“Whether *Ezra* on this review did add the vowel points which are now in the *Hebrew* Bibles, is a hard question to be decided: it went without contradiction in the affirmative till *Elias Levita*, a *German Jew*, wrote against it about the beginning of the Reformation, *Buxtorf*, the father, endeavoured to refute his argument; but *Capellus*, a Protestant divine of the *French* Church, and professor of Hebrew in their university at *Saumur*, hath, in a very elaborate discourse, made a thorough reply to all that can be said on this head, and very strenuously asserted the contrary. *Buxtorf*, the son, in vindication of his father’s opinion, has written an answer to it, but not with that satisfaction to the learned world as to hinder the generality of them from going into the other opinion.

“There is in the church of *St. Dominic*, in *Bononia*, a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures, kept with a great deal of care, which they pretend to be the original copy written by *Ezra* himself, and therefore it is there valued at so high a rate that great sums of money have been borrowed by the *Bononians* upon the pawn of it, and again repaid for its redemption. It is written in a very fair character upon a sort of leather, and made up in a roll, according to the ancient manner; but it having the vowel points annexed, and the writing being fresh and fair, without any decay, both these particulars prove the novelty of that copy.

“But though *Ezra*’s government over all *Judah* and *Jerusalem* expired in this year, 446; yet his labour to serve the Church of God did not end here; for he still went on as a preacher of righteousness, and a skilful scribe in the law of God, to perfect the reformation which he had begun, both in preparing for the people correct editions of the Scriptures, and also in bringing all things in Church and state to be conformed to Scripture rules. And this he continued to do so long as he lived, and in this he was thoroughly assisted and supported by the next governor, who, coming to *Jerusalem* with the sane intention, and the same zeal for promoting the honour of God, and the welfare of his people in *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, as *Ezra* did, struck in heartily with *Ezra* in the work, so that *Ezra* went on still to do the same things by the authority of the new governor, which he before did by his own; and, by their thus joining together in the same holy undertaking, and their mutually assisting each other, it exceedingly prospered in their hands, till at length, notwithstanding all opposition, both from within and without, it was brought to full perfection *forty-nine* years after it had been begun by *Ezra*. Whether *Ezra* lived so long is uncertain;

but what he had not time to do was completed by the piety and zeal of his successor.”

See the Introduction to the book of Nehemiah; and see Prideaux’s Connection, vol. i., edit. 1725.

For all other matters relative to the text, see the notes as they occur.

THE BOOK OF EZRA

Chronological Notes relative to this Book

- Year from the Creation, according to Archbishop Usher, whose system of chronology is most generally received, 3468.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 532.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 536.
- Year of the Julian Period, 4178.
- Year since the flood of Noah, according to the English Bible, 1812.
- Year of the Cali Yuga, or Indian era of the Deluge, 2566.
- Year from the vocation of Abram, 1386.
- Year from the destruction of Troy, 649. This we collect from three passages in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, (who flourished in the Augustan ages) which state that an interval of *four hundred and thirty-two years* elapsed from the destruction of Troy to the building of Rome.
- Year from the foundation of Solomon's temple, 475.
- Year since the division of Solomon's monarchy into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, 439.
- Year of the era of Iphitus, who re-established the Olympic games, *three hundred and thirty-eight years* after their institution by Hercules, or about *eight hundred and eighty-four years* before the commencement of the Christian era, 349.
- Year since the conquest of Corœbus at Elis, usually styled the first Olympiad, (being the *twenty-eighth* Olympiad after their re-establishment by Iphitus,) 241.
- First year of the sixty-first Olympiad.
- Year of the Varronian or generally received era of the building of Rome, 218. This is upon the supposition that Rome was built in the last year of the sixth Olympiad.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Cato and the Fasti Consulares, 217. Dionysius of Halicarnassus follows this account; for he says that the metropolis of the Roman work was built in the first

year of the sixth Olympiad, which was the first year of Charops, the first decennial archon of the Athenians.

- Year from the building of Rome, according to Polybius, 216.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Fabius Pictor, who lived about *two hundred and twenty-five* years before the Christian era, 212.
- Year of the Nabonassarean era, 212.
- Year since the destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, 186.
- Year from the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, 53.
- Year of Servius Tullius, the sixth king of the Romans, and father-in-law of Tarquin the Proud, 43.
- Year of Ariston, king of Lacedæmon, and of the family of the Proclidæ, or Eurypontidæ, 29.
- Year of Anaxandrides, king of Lacedæmon, and of the family of the Eurysthenidæ, or Agidæ, 28. N. B. The kings of the Lacedæmonians of the families of the Proclidæ and the Eurysthenidæ sat on the throne together for several hundred years.
- Year of Amyntas, the ninth king of the Macedonians, 12.
- Year of the reign of Cyrus, computing from the year in which he dethroned his grandfather Astyages, the last king of Media, 24. But this was only his *first year*, if with the Holy Scriptures, as well as Xenophon in the eighth book of his Institutes, we compute the years of his reign from the time in which he was put in possession of the whole Eastern empire. See ^{<151010>} **Ezra 1:1**.
- Year of the Babylonish captivity, 70. The years of this captivity are generally reckoned from 606 B.C., when Jehoiakim king of Judah was put in chains to be carried to Babylon; and are supposed to be terminated by the edict of Cyrus to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. But others are of opinion that the *seventy years' captivity* are to be computed from the total destruction of the Jewish monarchy; and that they reach down to the second year of Darius king of Persia, at which time Zerubbabel and Joshua were encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to proceed with the rebuilding of the temple.

CHAPTER 1

The proclamation of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple, 1-4. The people provide for their return, 5, 6. Cyrus restores to Sheshbazzar the vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar out of the temple of Solomon, 7-11.

In the introduction to this book the reader will find the history of Ezra detailed at considerable length. It is only necessary to say here that he is generally allowed among the Jews to have been of the sacerdotal family, and therefore he is called **ο ιερευς**, *the priest* by the *Septuagint*. Among the rabbins he passes for a most extraordinary critic, Divinely authorized to collect and arrange the different portions of the sacred writings, and digest them into a system. How far all they say on this subject is true, we cannot tell; he was, beyond all controversy, a very eminent man; and in all that he did, acted under the immediate direction and inspiration of the Almighty.

This history contains the transactions of about *eighty-two* years; from the *first* year of Cyrus in Babylon, according to Archbishop Usher, A.M. 3468, to the *nineteenth* year of *Ardsheer Diraz Dest*, or *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, who sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem, about A.M. 3550. For all other particulars, see the *introduction*.

NOTES ON CHAP. 1

Verse 1. Now in the first year] This is word for word with the *two* last verses of the preceding book; which stand *here* in their proper place and connection, but there are entirely destitute of chronological connection and reference.

Cyrus] This prince, so eminent in antiquity, is said to have been the son of *Cambyses* king of Persia, and *Mandane*, daughter of *Astyages* king of the Medes; and was born about *six hundred* years before Christ. Josephus accounts for his partiality to the Jews from this circumstance; that he was shown the places in Isaiah the prophet where he is mentioned by name, and his exploits and conquests foretold: see ^{<23428>}**Isaiah 44:28; 45:1**, &c. Finding himself thus distinguished by the God of the Jews, he was anxious to give him proofs of his gratitude in return; and so made the decree in favour of the Jews, restored their sacred vessels, gave them liberty to return to their own land, and encouraged them to rebuild the temple of Jehovah, &c.

It is very probable that when Cyrus took Babylon he found *Daniel* there, who had been long famed as one of the wisest ministers of state in all the East; and it is most likely that it was this person who pointed out to him the prophecy of Isaiah, and gave him those farther intimations relative to the Divine will which were revealed to himself. Of his death there are contradictory accounts. *Herodotus* says, that having turned his arms against the Massagetes, and killed the son of *Tomyris* their queen, the mother, impatient to avenge the death of her son, sent him a defiance; promised to glut him with blood; and, having attacked him, pretended to be worsted and to fly; and thus she drew him and his army into an ambuscade, where he was routed and slain, and a considerable part of his army destroyed. The enraged queen having found his body, cut off his head, and threw it into a vessel full of human blood, with this most bitter sarcasm:—

Εὐ μὲν, ἐμεῦ ζωσῆς τε καὶ νικωσῆς ἐς μάχην, ἀπώλεσας
παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν, ἐλὼν δολῶ σε δ' ἐγὼ, καταπερ ἠπειλήσα,
αἱματος κορῆσω. -HEROD. Clio, c. 214.

“Although living and victorious, thou hast destroyed me in slaying my son, whom thou hast overcome by deceit; but, as I have threatened, I will now slake thy thirst with blood.”

Cyrus, thy thirst was blood, now drink thy fill.

By-Jeremiah] This prophet, ^{<24512>}**Jeremiah 25:12; 29:11**, had foretold that the Babylonish captivity should last only *seventy* years: these were now ended; Cyrus had given the Jews permission and encouragement to return to Judea, and rebuild the temple of the Lord; and thus the prediction of Jeremiah was fulfilled.

Verse 2. The Lord God of heaven] It is not unworthy of remark, that in all the books written *prior* to the captivity, Jehovah is called *The Lord of Hosts*; but in all the books written *after* the captivity, as 2 Chronicles, Ezra Nehemiah, and Daniel, he is styled *The God of Heaven*. The words however have the same meaning.

All the kingdoms of the earth. At this time the empire of the Medo-Persians was very extensive: according to ancient writers, Cyrus, at this time, reigned over the Medes, Persians, Hyrcanians, Armenians, Syrians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Lydians Phœnicians, Babylonians, Bactrians, Indians, Saci, Cilicians, Paphlagonians, Moriandrians, and many others. His empire extended on the

EAST, to the Red Sea; on the NORTH, to the Euxine Sea; on the WEST, to the island of Cyprus and Egypt; and on the SOUTH, to Ethiopia.

Verse 4. Whosoever remaineth in any place] Every one was at liberty to go, but none was obliged to go. Thus their attachment to God was tried; he whose heart was right with God went; he who was comfortably settled in Babylon, might go if he chose. Those who did not go, were commanded to assist their brethren who went.

Verse 6. Vessels of silver] *Articles* of silver, gold, &c.

Verse 7. The king brought forth the vessels] See on ^{<15010>}**Ezra 1:9-11.**

Verse 8. Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.] This was probably the Chaldean name of him who was originally called Zerubbabel: the former signifies *joy in affliction*; the latter, *a stranger in Babylon*. The latter may be designed to refer to his *captive state*; the former, to the *prospect of release*. Some think this was quite a different person, a Persian or Chaldean, sent by Cyrus to superintend whatever officers or men Cyrus might have sent to assist the Jews on their return; and to procure them help in the Chaldean provinces, through which they might be obliged to travel.

Verse 11. All the vessels-were five thousand and four hundred.] This place is without doubt corrupted; here it is said the sum of all the vessels, of every quality and kind, was *five thousand four hundred*; but the enumeration of the articles, as given in ^{<15010>}**Ezra 1:9, 10**, gives the sum of *two thousand four hundred and ninety-nine* only. But we can correct this account from **1Esdras 2:13, 14**.

I shall set both accounts down, that they may be compared together.

EZRA, ^{<15010>}**Ezra 1:9-11.**

Golden chargers 30
 Silver chargers 1000
 Knives 29
 Golden basons 30
 Silver ditto, second sort 410
 Other vessels 1000

Said to be 5400 — only 2499

Difference of the first account from *itself* 2901

1 ESDRAS, **1Esdras 2:13, 14.**

Golden cups 1000
 Silver cups 1000
 Silver censers 29
 Golden vials 30
 Silver vials 2410
 Other vessels 1000
 —Total — 5469

Difference of the *second* account from the *first* 69

According, therefore, to the sum total in *Ezra*, the sum total in *Esdras* is only 69 different. See the next chapter.

It may be said that the vessels did actually amount to 5400, and that the chief of them only were intended to be specified; and these happen to amount to 2499; but that it was not the design of Ezra to insert the whole; and that the *ninth* verse should be considered as stating, *And of the chief of them*, that is, the gold and silver articles, *this is the number*. But the expression in ^{<5010>}**Ezra 1:10**, *other vessels*, sets this conjecture aside: the place is most manifestly corrupted.

EZRA

CHAPTER 2

An account of those who returned from Babylon, 1-35. The children of the priests who returned, 36-39. Of the Levites, 40. Of the singers, 41. Of the porters, 42. Of the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, 43-58. Others who could not find out their registers, 59-62. The number of the whole congregation, 63, 64. Of their servants, maids, and singers, 65. Their horses and mules, 66. Their camels and asses, 67. The offerings of the chief men when they came to Jerusalem, 68, 69. The priests, Levites, singers, porters, and Nethinim, betake themselves to their respective cities, 70.

NOTES ON CHAP. 2

Verse 1. These are the children of the province] That is, of *Judea*; once a *kingdom*, and a flourishing *nation*; now a *province*, subdued, tributary, and ruined! Behold the goodness and severity of God! Some think *Babylon* is meant by the *province*; and that *the children of the province* means those Jews who were born in *Babylon*. But the first is most likely to be the meaning, for thus we find *Judea* styled, ^{<1500>}**Ezra 5:8**. Besides, the *province* is contradistinguished from *Babylon* even in this first verse, *The children of the province-that had been carried away unto Babylon*.

Verse 2. Which came with Zerubbabel] There are many difficulties in this table of names; but as we have no less than *three* copies of it, *that* contained here from ^{<1500>}**Ezra 2:1-67**, a *second* in ^{<1606>}**Nehemiah 7:6-69**, and a *third* in **1Esdras 5:7-43**, on a careful examination they will be found to correct each other. The *versions* also, and the *Variae Lectiones* of *Kennicott* and *Deuteronomy Rossi*, do much toward harmonizing the names.

Though the sum total at the end of each of these enumerations is equal, namely 42,360, yet the particulars reckoned up make in *Ezra* only 29,818, and in *Nehemiah* 31,089. We find that *Nehemiah* mentions 1765 persons which are not in *Ezra*, and *Ezra* has 494 not mentioned by *Nehemiah*. Mr. *Alting* thinks that this circumstance, which appears to render all hope of reconciling them impossible, is precisely the very point by which they can be reconciled; for if we add *Ezra's surplus* to the *sum* in *Nehemiah*, and the *surplus* of *Nehemiah* to the *number* in *Ezra*, the numbers will be equal.

Thus:-The number in Ezra 29,818
 Surplus in Nehemiah 1,765

Sum total 31,583

The number in Nehemiah 31,089
 The surplus in Ezra 494

Sum total 31,583

If we subtract this sum 31,583 from 42,360, we shall have a deficiency of 10,777 from the numbers as summed up in the text; and these are not named here, either because their registers were not found, or they were not of Judah and Benjamin, the tribes particularly concerned, but of the other Israelitish tribes; see ^{<1326>}**Ezra 2:36**.

Verse 3. The children of Parosh] Where the word *children* is found in this table, prefixed to the name of a *man*, it signifies the *descendants* of that person, as from ^{<1328>}**Ezra 2:3-21**. Where it is found prefixed to a *place, town, &c.*, it signifies the inhabitants of that place, as from ^{<1321>}**Ezra 2:21-35**.

Verse 21. The children of Beth-lehem] The inhabitants: see before.

Verse 33. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono] These were cities in the tribe of Benjamin; see on ^{<13812>}**1 Chronicles 8:12**.

Verse 36. The priests] The preceding list takes in the census of Judah and Benjamin.

Verse 55. The children of Solomon's servants] The *Nethinim*, and others appointed to do the meaner services of the holy house.

Verse 63. The Tirshatha] This is generally supposed to be Nehemiah, or the person who was the commandant; see ^{<1689>}**Nehemiah 8:9; 10:1**, for the word appears to be the name of an *office*. The *Vulgate* and *Septuagint* write it *Atershatha*, the *Syriac* and *Arabic* render it *the princes of Judah*. Some suppose the word to be *Persian*, but nothing like it of the same import occurs in that language at present. If, as *Castel* supposed, it signifies *austerity*, or that *fear* which is unpressed by the authority of a governor, it may come from [Persian] *ters*, FEAR, or [Persian] *tersh*, ACID, the former from [Persian] *tarsidan*, to FEAR or DREAD.

Should not eat of the most holy things] There was a high priest then, but no *Urim* and *Thummim*, these having been lost in the captivity.

Verse 66. Their horses-seven hundred, &c.] They went into captivity, stripped of every thing; they now return from it, abounding in the most substantial riches, viz., horses 736, or, according to Esdras, 7036; mules, 245; camels, 435; asses, 6720; besides gold, and silver, and rich stuffs. See below.

Verse 69. Threescore and one thousand drams of gold] μynwmkrd *darkemonim*, drakmons or darics; a Persian coin, always of gold, and worth about 1*l.* 5*s.*, not less than £76,250 sterling in gold.

Five thousand pounds of silver] μynm *manim*, manehs or minas. As a *weight*, the *maneh* was 100 shekels; as a coin, 60 shekels in value, or about 9*l.*; 5000 of these manehs therefore will amount to £45,000, making in the whole a sum of about £120,000; and in this are not included the 100 *garments for priests*.

Thus we find that God, in the midst of judgment, remembered mercy, and gave them favour in the land of their captivity.

Verse 70. Dwelt in their cities] They all went to those cities which belonged originally to their respective families.

EZRA

CHAPTER 3

The altar of burnt-offerings is set up, 1-3. They keep the feast of tabernacles, 4-6. They make provision for rebuilding the temple; and lay its foundation in the second month of the second year, 7, 8. Ceremonies observed in laying the foundation, 9-11. Some weep aloud, and others shout for joy, 12-18.

NOTES ON CHAP. 3

Verse 1. When the seventh month was come] The month *Tisri*, which answers to the latter part of our *September*, and beginning of *October*. It seems that the Israelites had left Babylon about the *spring* of the year; that on their arrival at Jerusalem they constructed themselves huts and sheds to lodge in among the ruins, in which they must have spent some months. After this they rebuilt the altar of burnt-offerings, and kept the feast of tabernacles, which happened about this time, and continued to offer sacrifices regularly, as if the temple were standing.

Verse 2. Jeshua the son of Jozadak] He was grandson of Seraiah the high priest, who was put to death by Nebuchadnezzar, ^{<12518>}**2 Kings 25:18, 21**. This Jeshua or Joshua was the first high priest after the captivity.

Verse 3. They set the altar upon his bases] Rebuilt it on the *same spot* on which it had formerly stood. As it was necessary to keep up the Divine worship during the time they should be employed in re-edifying the temple, they first reared this altar of burnt-offerings; and all this they did, “*though fear was upon them,*” because of the unfriendly disposition of their surrounding neighbours.

Verse 4. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written] This began on the *fifteenth* day of the seventh month; but they had begun the regular offerings from the *first day* of this month, ^{<151816>}**Ezra 3:6**. And these were religiously continued all the time they were building the temple.

Verse 7. They gave money also] They copied the conduct of Solomon while he was building his temple; see ^{<18511>}**1 Kings 5:11**. He employed the Tyrians, gave them meat and drink, &c.; and this permission they now had from Cyrus.

Verse 8. In the second year] The previous time had been employed in clearing the ground, felling timber, hewing stones, and transporting them to the place, and making other necessary preparations for the commencement of the building.

Verse 10. After the ordinance of David] With *psalms* which he composed, acting in the *manner* which he directed.

Verse 12. Wept with a loud voice] They saw that the glory had departed from Israel; in their circumstances it was impossible to build such a house as the first temple was; and had this been even possible, still it would have been greatly inferior, because it wanted the ark of the covenant, the heavenly fire, the mercy-seat, the heavenly manna, Aaron's rod that budded, the Divine shechinah, the spirit of prophecy, and most probably the Urim and Thummim.

Many shouted for joy] Finding they were now restored to their own land, and to the worship of their God in his own peculiar city: these, in general, had not seen the original temple; and therefore could not feel affected in that way which the elderly people did.

The sight must have been very affecting: a whole people, one part crying aloud with *sorrow*; the other shouting aloud for *joy*; and on the same occasion too, in which both sides felt an equal interest! The prophet *Haggai* comforted them on this occasion by assuring them that the glory of this latter house should exceed that of the former, because the Lord (Jesus Christ) was to come to this temple, and fill it with his glory. See *Haggai*, <3700>**Haggai 2:1-9.**

CHAPTER 4

The Samaritans endeavour to prevent the rebuilding of the temple, 1-5. They send letters to Artaxerxes, against the Jews, 6-9. A copy of the letter, 10-16. He commands the Jews to cease from building the temple, which they do; nor was any thing farther done in the work till the second year of Darius, 17-24.

NOTES ON CHAP. 4

Verse 1. Now when the adversaries] These were the Samaritans, and the different nations with which the kings of Assyria had peopled Israel, when they had carried the original inhabitants away into captivity, see ^{<15040>} **Ezra 4:9, 10.**

Verse 2. Let us build with you] We acknowledge the same God, are solicitous for his glory, and will gladly assist you in this work. But that they came with no friendly intention, the context proves.

Verse 3. Ye have nothing to do with us] We cannot acknowledge you as worshippers of the true God, and cannot participate with you in anything that relates to his worship.

Verse 4. Weakened the hands] Discouraged and opposed them by every possible means.

Verse 5. Hired counsellors] They found means to corrupt some of the principal officers of the Persian court, so that the orders of Cyrus were not executed; or at least so slowly as to make them nearly ineffectual.

Until the reign of Darius] This was probably *Darius* the son of *Hystaspes*.

Verse 6. In the reign of Ahasuerus] This is the person who is called *Cambyses* by the Greeks. He reigned seven years and five months; and during the whole of that time the building of the temple was interrupted.

Verse 7. In the days of Artaxerxes] After the death of *Cambyses*, one of the *Magi* named *Oropæstus* by *Trogus Pompeius*, *Smerdis* by *Herodotus*, *Mardus* by *Æschylus*, and *Sphendatates* by *Ctesias*, usurped the empire, feigning himself to be *Smerdis*, the brother of *Cambyses*, who had been put

to death. This is the person named Artaxerxes in the text: or, following the Hebrew, *Artachshasta*. It is generally believed, that from the time of Cyrus the great, *Xerxes* and Artaxerxes were names assumed by the Persian sovereigns, whatever their names had been before.

Written in the Syrian tongue] That is, the Syrian or Chaldean *character* was used; not the *Hebrew*.

Interpreted, in the Syrian tongue.] That is, the *language*, as well as the *character*, was the *Syriac* or *Chaldaic*.

Verse 8. Rehum the chancellor] With this verse the *Chaldee* part of the chapter begins; and the same language continues to the end of ^{<15618>}**Ezra 6:18**. These men wrote to Darius in their own language; and the king in the same dialect returns an answer, chap. v. This circumstance adds authenticity to what is written: so scrupulous was the inspired penman, that he not only gave the words which each spoke and wrote, but he gave them also in the very language in which they were conceived and in the *character* peculiar to that language.

Verse 10. The great and noble Asnapper] Whether this was *Shalmaneser*, or *Esar-haddon*, or some *other person*, learned men and chronologists are not agreed. The Syriac terms him *Asphid*; but of this person we know no more than we do of *Asnapper*. He might have been the military officer who was appointed to escort this people to Judea.

Verse 11. And at such a time.] The word **tn[kw** *ucheeneth* has greatly perplexed all commentators and critics. The versions give us no light; and the Vulgate translates it *et dicunt salutem*, “and they wish prosperity.” Some translate it *and so forth*; and our translators supposed that it referred to the *date*, which however is not specified, and might have been as easily entered as the words *and at such a time*.

In our first translation of the Bible, that by *Coverdale*, in 1535, the passage stands thus: “And other on this syde the water, and in Canaan.”

In that by *Becke*, 1549, it is thus: “And other on this syde the water, and in Ceneeth:” and in the margin he enters “or *peace*,” “or *health*.”

In *Cardmarden’s* Bible, printed at Rouen, 1566, it stands thus: “And other that are nowe on thys syde the water.”

In that printed by *Barker*, 1615, we find the text thus: “AND OTHER *that are beyond the river, and Cheeneth;*” on which is the following marginal note: “To wit, Euphrates: and he meaneth in respect of Babel, that they dwelt beyond it.” And the note on *Cheeneth* is, “Which were a certain people that envied the Jews.” All this is merely *guessing*, in the midst of obscurity; most of these having considered the original word **tn[k** *Ceeneth* as the name of a people; and in this they follow the Syriac, which uses the word *Acaneth*.

Calmet thinks we should read **t [bw** *ubaeth*, “and at this time; “ as if they had said, “We wish thee to enjoy the *same* health and prosperity at all *future* times, which thou dost at *present*.” This is not remote from the meaning of the *Chaldee* original.

Verse 13. Toll, tribute, and custom] The first term is supposed to imply the *capitation tax*; the second, an *excise on commodities and merchandise*; the third, a sort of *land tax*. Others suppose the first means a *property tax*; the second, a *poll tax*; and the third, what was paid on *imports and exports*. In a word, if you permit these people to rebuild and fortify their city, they will soon set you at naught, and pay you no kind of tribute.

Verse 14. Now because we have maintenance from the king’s palace] More literally: *Now because at all times we are salted with the salt of the palace*; i.e., We live on the king’s bounty, and must be faithful to our benefactor. Salt was used as the emblem of an incorruptible covenant; and those who ate bread and salt together were considered as having entered into a very solemn covenant. These hypocrites intimated that they felt their conscience bound by the league between them and the king; and therefore could not conscientiously see any thing going on that was likely to turn to the king’s damage. They were probably also persons in the *pay* of the Persian king.

Verse 15. The book of the records of thy fathers] That is, the records of the *Chaldeans*, to whom the Persians succeeded.

Verse 17. Peace, and at such a time] The word **t [kw** *ucheeth* is like that which we have already considered on ^{<15410>}**Ezra 4:10**, and probably has the same meaning.

Verse 19. Hath made insurrection against kings] Mow true is the proverb, “It is an easy thing to find a staff to beat a dog!” The struggles of

the Israelites to preserve or regain their independency, which they had from God, are termed insurrection, rebellion, and sedition: because at last they fell under the power of their oppressors. Had they been successful in these struggles, such offensive words had never been used. In 1688 the people of England struggled to throw off an oppressive government, that was changing the times and the seasons, and overthrowing the religion of the country, and setting up in its place the spurious off-spring of popery and arbitrary government. They were successful; and it is called the Revolution: had they failed it would have been called rebellion; and the parties principally concerned would have been put to death.

Verse 20. Beyond the river] That is, the Euphrates. Both David and Solomon carried their conquests beyond this river. See ^{<108B>}**2 Samuel 8:3**, &c., and ^{<102B>}**1 Kings 4:21**, where it is said, *Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river (Euphrates) unto the land of the Philistines; and unto the borders of Egypt.*

Verse 21. Until another commandment shall be given from me.] The rebuilding was only provisionally suspended. The decree was, Let it cease for the present; nor let it proceed at any time without an order express from me.

Verse 23. Made them to cease by force and power.] Commanded them on pain of the king's displeasure not to proceed, obliging all to remit their labours, and probably bringing an armed force to prevent them from going forward.

Verse 24. So it ceased unto the second year of-Darius] They had begun in the first year of Cyrus, B.C. 536, to go up to Jerusalem, and they were obliged to desist from the building B.C. 522; and thus they continued till the second year of Darius, B.C. 519. See the chronology in the margin and the following chapter.

EZRA

CHAPTER 5

Haggai and Zechariah the prophets encourage Zerubbabel and Jeshua to proceed with the building of the temple, 1, 2. Tatnai, the governor of the provinces on this side the Euphrates, and his companions, inquire by what authority they do this, 3-5. They write to Darius; a copy of the letter, 6-16. They request to know how they are to proceed, 17.

NOTES ON CHAP. 5

Verse 1. Haggai-and Zechariah] These are the same whose writings we have among the twelve minor prophets.

The son of Iddo] That is, the *grandson* of Iddo; for Zechariah was *the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo*. See his prophecy, **Zecariah 1:1**.

Verse 2. Then rose up Zerubbabel] Here we find *three classes* of men joining in the sacred work: *Zerubbabel* the *civil* governor; *Jeshua* the *high priest* or *ecclesiastical* governor; and *Haggai* and *Zechariah* the *prophets*. How glorious it is when we see the *civil government* joining with the *sacerdotal* and *prophetic* for the establishment and extension of true religion!

Verse 3. Tatnai, governor] He was governor of the provinces which belonged to the Persian empire on their side of the Euphrates, comprehending *Syria, Arabia Deserta, Phœnicia, and Samaria*. He seems to have been a mild and judicious man; and to have acted with great prudence and caution, and without any kind of *prejudice*. The manner in which he represented this to the king is a full proof of this disposition.

Verse 4. What are the names] It is most evident that this is the *answer* of the *Jews* to the inquiry of Tatnai, ^{<STRB>}**Ezra 5:3**, and the verse should be read thus: *Then said we unto them after this manner: THESE are the names of the men who make this building.*

Verse 5. The eye of their God was upon the elders] The *watchful care* of God was upon the elders. They were assured of his *favour*; and they found his especial *providence* working in their behalf.

Verse 8. With great stones] They are making a very *strong* and a very *costly* building.

Verse 11. We are the servants of the God of heaven] How simple, plain, and ingenuous is this confession! They were the servants of the God of heaven. How came they then into bondage! Why, they *provoked the God of heaven-repeatedly sinned* against him, and then he gave them into the hands of their enemies.

Verse 16. Sheshbazzar] Probably the military officer that conducted the people from Babylon, and had the oversight of the work; but some think that Ezra is meant.

Verse 17. The-treasure house] *ayzng ginzaiya*. This is a Persian word, [Persian] *gunji*, a *treasury*.

There is a great deal of good sense and candour in this letter. Nothing of passion or prejudice appears in it. They laid before the king a fair statement without any attempt to prejudice his mind, and gave him those directions which were most likely to lead him to the truth, and to form a correct judgment on a business which, however it issued, must be of considerable importance to the state. God was in all this business; he was now giving an additional proof of his continued regard for a disobedient people, whom, though he had punished in his *justice*, he had spared in his *mercy*.

EZRA

CHAPTER 6

Darius orders search to be made for the edict of Cyrus, 1. It is found at Achmetha, 2. A transcript of this edict, 3-5. Darius confirms it, 6-12. Tatnai encourages the Jews to proceed; and they finish the temple in the sixth year of Darius, 13-15. They dedicate the temple, 16-18; keep the Passover, 19-21, and the feast of unleavened bread, 22.

NOTES ON CHAP. 6

Verse 1. In the house of the rolls] *ayrps tyb beith siphraiya*, the house of the books, the king's library. This is the first time we hear of a library.

Verse 2. At Achmetha] Ecbatana in India, whither it is probable all the records of Cyrus had been carried. This was a sort of summer residence for the kings of Persia.

Verse 3. The height thereof threescore cubits] This was much larger than the temple of Solomon. This was *sixty cubits high*, and *sixty cubits broad*; whereas Solomon's was only *twenty cubits broad*, and *thirty cubits high*.

Verse 4. Three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber] We have noticed this kind of building before, three courses of stones, and then a course of strong balk; and this continued to the square of the building.

And let the expenses be given] Cyrus had ordered *wood* to be cut at Libanus, and conveyed to Joppa at his expense; but it does not appear that he furnished the other expenses of the building, for we have already seen that the Jews contributed for the defraying of all others. But it appears that he provided at his own expense the *sacrifices* and *offerings* for the temple. See ^{<1500>} **Ezra 6:9.**

Verse 6. Be ye far from thence] Do not interrupt the Jews in their building; but, on the contrary further them all in your power.

Verse 10. And pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.] Even heathens believed that offerings made in their behalf to the God of the Jews

would be available. And this principle has had considerable influence in certain states where there was even a form of religion established by the law, to induce them to tolerate other forms, that the state might have the benefit of their prayers.

Verse 11. Let timber be pulled down] Whether this refers to the punishment of hanging and gibbeting of whipping at a post, or of empaling, is not quite clear. In China they tie culprits to posts; and the executioner cuts them open while alive, takes out their bowels, &c. Empaling thrusting a sharp stake through the body till it comes out at the side of the neck, or hanging, seems to be intended here.

Let his house be made a dunghill] Let it be reduced to ruins, and never more used, except for the most sordid and unclean purposes.

Verse 14. According to the commandment of the God of Israel] He first gave the order, and stirred up the hearts of the following Persian kings to second that order.

Of Cyrus] This sovereign gave his orders for the rebuilding of the temple about A.M. 3468.

And Darius] Darius Hystaspes confirmed the above orders, A. M. 3485.

And Artaxerxes] Artaxerxes Longimanus sent Ezra to Judea with new privileges, A.M. 3547. With the permission of the same king, Nehemiah came to Judea in 3550. The writer recapitulates the different sovereigns who favoured the Jews after the Babylonish captivity. See *Calmet*.

Verse 15. This house was finished] The sixth year of Darius mentioned here was about A.M. 3489, twenty years after the foundation had been laid by Zerubbabel, under the reign of Cyrus.

Verse 17. Twelve he-goats] This was a sin-offering for every tribe.

Verse 18. And they set the priests] With this verse the Chaldee or Aramitic part of this chapter ends.

Verse 20. The Levites were purified together] They were all ready at one time to observe the proper rites and ceremonies, and had no need of having a second passover, which was appointed by the law for those who had been accidentally defiled, or were at a distance from the tabernacle. See ^{<143118>}2 Chronicles 30:3.

Verse 21. And all such as had separated themselves] These were the *proselytes* who had embraced the Jewish religion by having mingled with the Jews in their captivity. This proves that there the poor captives had so acted according to the principles of their religion, that the heathens saw it, and walked in the light of the Lord with them. A good example is very persuasive; and particularly so when founded on pure principles.

Verse 22. Turned the heart of the king of Assyria] I am of Calmet's mind, that *king of Assyria* is here put for *king of Persia*. Cyrus and his successors possessed all the rights and estates of the ancient kings of Assyria, and therefore the same monarch may be styled king of Assyria as well as king of Persia.

DARIUS had a very high character, as a wise, just, and merciful prince. To strengthen his title to the crown, he married two of the daughters of *Cyrus*, and, no doubt, to show his affection to this family, he the more cheerfully confirmed the edict which Cyrus had made in favour of the Jews.

EZRA

CHAPTER 7

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra goes up to Jerusalem; and with him certain of the priests, Levites, porters, and Nethinim: his character, 1-10. The letter and decree of Artaxerxes in behalf of the Jews, 11-26. Ezra's thanksgiving to God for these mercies, 27, 28.

NOTES ON CHAP. 7

Verse 1. In the reign of Artaxerxes] This was Artaxerxes Longimanus, the seventh of whose reign chronologers place A.M. 3547, *sixty-eight* years after Cyrus had sent back Zerubbabel.-*Calmet*. See the *introduction*.

Son of Seraiah] Either this could not have been Seraiah the *high priest*, who had been put to death by Nebuchadnezzar *one hundred and twenty-one years* before this time, or the term *son* here must signify only his *descendants*, or *one of his descendants*. Were it otherwise, Ezra must now be at least *one hundred and twenty-two years* of age, supposing him to have been born in the year of his father's death; if, indeed Seraiah the high priest was his father; but this is evidently impossible. In this place there are only *sixteen* generations reckoned between Ezra and Aaron, but in ~~<1308>~~ **1 Chronicles 6:3, 4**, &c., there are not less than *twenty-two*. We must therefore supply the deficient generations from the above place, between Amariah son of Meraioth, ~~<1307>~~ **1 Chronicles 6:7**, and Azariah the son of Johanan, ~~<13060>~~ **1 Chronicles 6:10**. There are other discrepancies relative to genealogies in these *historical* books which it would be useless to investigate. On these differences much has been already said in different parts of this comment.

Verse 6. A ready scribe] *ryj m rpws sopher machir* does not merely signify a *speedy writer* or an *excellent penman*, but one who was eminently skilful in expounding the *law*. In this sense the word *γραμματευσ*, *scribe*, is repeatedly used in the New Testament, and we find that both in the Old and New Testament it had the same signification. The *Syriac* gives the sense of the word by translating [Persian] *sophro chocimo*, a *wise scribe*, or *expounder*.

Verse 8. He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month] From the following verse we learn that Ezra and his company set off from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and thus we find they were upwards of *four months* on their journey. They could not travel fast, as they were a great company, composed in part of the *aged* and *infirm*, besides multitudes of *women* and *children*. They appear also to have taken a circuitous route. See on ^{<15824>}**Ezra 8:24-32,**

Verse 10. Ezra had prepared his heart] Here is a fine character of a minister of God: *He prepares*, ^{ˆykh} *hechin*, he fixes, purposes, and determines, ^{wbbi} *lebabo*, *with his heart*-with all his powers and affections, to *seek the law of God*, and *to do it* himself, that he may be properly qualified to *teach its statutes and judgments* to Israel.

Verse 12. Artaxerxes, king of kings] This letter, from the beginning of this verse to the end of ^{<15712>}**Ezra 7:12-26**, is in the *Aramitic* or *Chaldee* language.

This title of the king would, in Persian, run thus: [Persian] *Ardsheer shahinshah*, or [Persian] *padshah*, “Ardsheer, king of kings;” “*great* or *supreme king*, or *emperor*.”

Verse 13. Their own free-will] None shall be *forced* either to *go* or to *stay*. He who loves his God will avail himself of this favourable opportunity.

Verse 14. His seven counsellors] It is very likely that the privy counsel of the king consisted of *seven* persons simply. The *names* of these seven counsellors or chamberlains may be found in the book of Esther, ^{<17010>}**Esther 1:10.**

Verse 16. And all the silver and gold] The king and his counsellors had already made a present to the house of the God of Israel; and Ezra is now empowered to receive any contribution which any of the inhabitants of the province of Babylon may think proper to give.

Verse 18. After the will of your God] He gave them the fullest liberty to order every thing according to their own institutions, binding them to no form or mode of worship.

Verse 22. A hundred talents of silver] The talent of silver was 450£.

A hundred measures of wheat] A hundred *cors*; each *cor* was a little more than *seventy-five gallons, one quart, and a pint*, wine measure.

A hundred baths of wine] Each *bath* was *seven gallons and five pints*.

Verse 23. Why should there be wrath] As he believed he was appointed by the Almighty to do this work, he therefore wished to do it heartily, knowing that if he did not, God would be displeased, and that the kingdom would be cut off from *him* or his *posterity*.

Verse 24. It shall not be lawful to impose toll] As these persons had no private revenues, it would have been unreasonable to have laid them under *taxation*.

Verse 26. Whether it be unto death] These include almost *every* species of punishment which should be inflicted on culprits in any civilized state. With this verse the *Chaldee* part of this chapter ends.

Verse 28. And I was strengthened] In what the king decreed he saw the hand of God; he therefore gave him the praise, and took courage. There is a most amiable spirit of piety in these reflections. Ezra simply states the case; shows what the king had determined, and tells what he said; and then points out the grand agent in the whole business-it was the Lord God of his fathers. Thus God had put it into the king's heart to beautify the house of Jehovah; and, as that house was built for the salvation of the souls of men, he gives God praise for putting it into the king's heart to repair it: he who loves God and man will rejoice in the establishment of the Divine worship, because this is the readiest way to promote the best interests of man.

EZRA

CHAPTER 8

The genealogy of the chief persons who went with Ezra from Babylon, 1-14. He gathers them together at Ahava; and finding among them no Levites, he sends confidential persons to the river of Ahava, who return with many Levites and Nethinim, 15-20. He proclaims a fast at Ahava for Divine protection on their journey, 21-23. He delivers to the care of the priests &c., the silver, gold, and sacred vessels, that they might carry them to Jerusalem, and deliver them to the high priest, 24-30. They depart from Ahava, and come to Jerusalem, 31, 32. The vessels are weighed and the weight registered, 33, 34. They offer burnt-offerings to God, 35; deliver the king's commissions to his lieutenants, by whom they are furthered in their work, 36.

NOTES ON CHAP. 8

Verse 2. Gershom] One of the descendants of Phinehas, son of Eliazar.

Verse 3. Of the sons of Shechaniah] There were three of this name; the second is mentioned ^{<15186>}**Ezra 8:6**, and the third ^{<15102>}**Ezra 10:2**. They were all different persons, as may be seen from their fathers' houses.

Verse 15. The river that runneth to Ahava] Ahava was a *river* itself, which is supposed to be the same that is called *Diava* or *Adiava*, in the province of *Adiabene*; and perhaps the place whence the people of *Ava* came who were brought by the king of Assyria to Palestine, ^{<12174>}**2 Kings 17:24**.

None of the sons of Levi.] None that were *simply Levites*. He found *priests*, and they were *sons of Levi*; but no *Levites* that were not *priests*.

Verse 17. At the place Casiphia] The most judicious commentators are agreed that by *Casiphia*, the *Caspian mountains*, between Media and Hyrcania, are intended; where, probably, the *Nethinim* were employed in working silver mines: *āsk keseph*, from which the word comes, signifies *silver*.

Verse 22. I was ashamed to require-a band] He had represented God, the object of his worship, as supremely powerful, and as having the strongest affection for his true followers: he could not, therefore, consistently with his declarations, ask a band of soldiers from the king to

protect them on the way, when they were going expressly to rebuild the temple of Jehovah, and restore his worship. He therefore found it necessary to seek the Lord by *fasting* and *prayer*, that they might have from *Him* those succours without which they might become a prey to their enemies; and then the religion which they professed would be considered by the heathen as false and vain. Thus we see that this good man had more anxiety for the glory of God than for his own personal safety.

Verse 26. Silver vessels a hundred talents] That is, The *weight* of all the silver vessels amounted to one hundred talents; not that there were one hundred vessels of silver, *each a talent in weight*.

Reckoning in round sums, 650 *talents* of silver at £450 the talent, amount to £292,500 sterling. *Silver vessels*, 100 talents, amount to £45,000; *gold*, 100 talents, at £7,000 per talent, amount to £700,000 independently of the 20 *basons of gold*, amounting to 1000 *drachms*. Now the *golden drachm* or *daric* was worth about 1£. 2s., therefore these basons were worth £1100; the whole amounting to £1,038,600 sterling. But these different weights and coins are variously computed; some making the silver talent only £353 11s. 10 ½d., and the talent of gold £5057 15s. 1 ½d., calculations which I have elsewhere introduced.

Two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold] What these were we cannot tell. The Syriac translates [Persian] *nechoso corinthio toba*, to be vessels of the *best Corinthian brass*; so called from the brass found after the burning of Corinth by *Lucius Mummius*, which was brass, copper, gold, and silver, all melted together, as is generally supposed. But it was probably some *factitious* metal made there, that took the polish and assumed the brightness of gold, and because of its *hardness* was more durable. There is still a certain factitious metal of this kind, made among the Asiatics. I have seen this metal often made; it is as bright and fine as gold, takes a most exquisite polish, and will scarcely tarnish. I have kept this exposed to every variation of the air, even among old iron, brass, copper, &c., for twenty years together, without being scarcely at all *oxidized*. It requires much art in the making, but the constituent materials are of small value. Vessels of this metal, because of their lustre and durability for ornamental and domestic uses, are in many respects more valuable than gold itself. The only difficulty is to get at first the *true colour*, which depends on the *degree of heat*, and the time employed in *fusion*; but there are, however,

proper rules to ascertain them. This metal is widely different from the *or molu* of France and England, is less expensive, and much more valuable.

Verse 35. Twelve bullocks for all Israel] Though of *tribes* there were only *Judah* and *Benjamin*, yet they offered a bullock for *every tribe*, as if present. There can be little doubt that there were individuals there from all the twelve tribes, possibly some families of each; but no complete tribe but those mentioned above.

Verse 36. The king's lieutenants] *ynprdvj a achashdarpney*: this is generally understood to mean *lieutenant* or *deputy*, and is probably of *Persian* origin, though here greatly *corrupted*. The *Vulgate* renders it *regis satrapis*, to the *satraps* of the king, which is the *Persian* [*Persian*] *satrab*. A *viceroys* in *Persian* is [*Persian*] *soubah-dar*; *viceroys*, [*Persian*] *soubahdaran*. [*Persian*] *darafreen* signifies a person in whom one has *confidence*; and [*Persian*] *achi* is an epithet of a *vizir*. These two words conjoined will make nearly that of the text. But I do not give any of these etymologies with confidence. Other words might be proposed as candidates, but where there is so little certainty, conjecture is useless. Were it necessary a dissertation might be written on the *Persian words*, and *Persian forms of speech*, in *this* and the *two following books*; but probably after my toil few of my readers would thank me for my pains.

EZRA

CHAPTER 9

The princes inform Ezra that many of the people now settled in the had married heathen wives; and several of the rulers were principal offenders in this thing, 1, 2. He is greatly afflicted, 3, 4. His prayer to God on thus account, 5-15.

NOTES ON CHAP. 9

Verse 1. The people of Israel] These were they who had returned at first with Zerubbabel, and were settled in the land of Judea and whom Ezra found on his arrival to be little better than the Canaanitish nations from whom God had commanded them ever to keep separate.

Verse 2. Hath been chief in this trespass.] They who are the *first* men have been the most *capital* offenders; so VIRGIL, *Æn.* ix. 783:—

*Unus homo, vestris, o cives, undique septus
Aggeribus, tantas strages impune per urbem
Ediderit? Juvenum primos tot miserit orco?*

*“Shall one, and he enclosed within your walls,
One rash imprisoned warrior, vanquish all?
Calm you look on, and see the furious foe
Plunge crowds of heroes to the shades below!”*
PITT.

The *first* of the *Trojan youth* were the *chief*, the most *illustrious*; so we say the *first* men of the kingdom for the *nobles*, &c.

Verse 3. I rent my garment and my mantle] The *outer* and *inner* garment, in sign of great grief. This significant act is frequently mentioned in the sacred writings, and was common among all ancient nations.

Plucked off the hair] *Shaving* the head and beard were signs of excessive grief; much more so the *plucking off the hair*, which must produce exquisite pain. All this testified his abhorrence, not merely of the act of having taken strange wives, but their having also joined them in their *idolatrous* abominations.

Verse 4. Those that had been carried away] Those that had returned long before with Zerubbabel; see ^{<1500>}**Ezra 9:1.**

Until the evening sacrifice.] The *morning* sacrifice was the first of all the offerings of the day, the *evening* sacrifice the *last*. As the latter was offered *between the two evenings*, i.e., between *sunset* and the *end of twilight*, so the former was offered between *break of day* and *sunrise*. Ezra sat *astonied*-confounded in his mind, distressed in his soul, and scarcely knowing what to do. He probably had withdrawn himself into some sequestered place, or into some secret part of the temple, spending the time in meditation and reflection.

Verse 5. Fell upon my knees] In token of the deepest *humility*. *Spread out my hands*, as if to *lay hold* on the mercy of God. We have already had occasion to explain these significant acts.

Verse 6. I am ashamed and blush] God had been so often provoked, and had so often pardoned them, and they had continued to transgress, that he was ashamed to go back again to the throne of grace to ask for mercy in their behalf. This is the genuine feeling of every reawakened *backslider*.

Verse 8. And now for a little space] This interval in which they were returning from servitude to their own land.

Grace hath been showed] God has disposed the hearts of the Persian kings to publish edicts in our *favour*.

To leave us a remnant to escape] The ten tribes are gone irrecoverably into captivity; a great part even of Judah and Benjamin had continued beyond the Euphrates: so that Ezra might well say, there was but a *remnant* which had *escaped*.

A nail in his holy place] Even so much ground as to fix our *tent-poles* in.

May lighten our eyes] To give us a thorough knowledge of ourselves and of our highest interest, and to enable us to re-establish his worship, is the reason why God has brought us back to this place.

A little reviving] We were *perishing*, and our hopes were almost *dead*; and, because of our sins, we were *sentenced to death*: but God in his great mercy has given us a *new trial*; and he begins with little, to see if we will make a wise and faithful use of it.

Verse 10. What shall we say after this?] Even in the midst of these beginnings of respite and mercy we have begun to provoke thee anew!

Verse 11. Have filled it from one end to another] The abominations have been like a sweeping mighty torrent, that has increased till it filled the whole land, and carried every thing before it.

Verse 13. Hast punished us less than our iniquities] Great, numerous, and oppressive as our calamities have been, yet merely as temporal punishments, they have been much less than our provocations have deserved.

Verse 15. Thou art righteous] Thou art *merciful*; this is one of the many meanings of the word **qdx** *tsedek*; and to this meaning St. Paul refers, when he says, *God declares his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,* ^{<6025>} **Romans 3:25**. See the note there.

We remain yet escaped] Because of this *righteousness* or *mercy*.

In our trespasses] We have no righteousness; we are *clothed* and *covered* with our trespasses.

We cannot stand before thee because of this.] The parallel place, as noted in the margin, is ^{<9005>} **Psalms 130:3**: *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Every man must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: but who shall stand there with joy? No man against whom the Lord marks iniquities. There is a reference here to the temple service: the priests and Levites stood and ministered before the Lord, but they were not permitted to do so unless pure from all legal pollution; so no man shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ who is not washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Reader, how dost thou expect to stand there?

EZRA

CHAPTER 10

The people are greatly afflicted by Ezra's prayer, 1. Shechaniah proposes that all who have taken strange wives should put them away, and the children they had by them; and make a covenant to serve God, 2-4. Ezra is encouraged; and make a proclamation to collect the people, to find who had transgressed, 5-8. They come together on the twentieth day of the ninth month, 9. Ezra exhorts them to put away their strange wives, 10. The people agree to it, and require time, 11-14. This being granted, the business is completed by the first of the first month, 15-17. Some of the priests had taken strange wives; their names, and the names of all who were in the same trespass, 18-44.

NOTES ON CHAP. 10

Verse 1. The people wept very sore.] They were deeply affected at the thought of God's displeasure, which they justly feared was about to light upon them, because of their transgressions.

Verse 2. Shechaniah the son of Jehiel] He speaks here in the name of the people, not acknowledging *himself* culpable, for he is not in the following list. It is in the same form of speech with that in James, ~~<508>~~ **James 3:9.** *With the tongue curse we men.* He seems to have been a *chief man* among the people; and Ezra, at present, stood in need of his influence and support.

Yet now there is hope in Israel] **hwqm** *mikveh*, *expectation*, of pardon; for the people were convinced of the evil, and were *deeply penitent*: hence it is said, ~~<1500>~~ **Ezra 10:1**, that *they wept sore*.

Verse 3. Let us make a covenant] **tyrb trkn** *nichrath berith*, *let us cut or divide the covenant sacrifice*. See Clarke's notes on "~~<0150>~~ **Genesis 15:10**".

Verse 4. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee] By the decree of Artaxerxes, he was authorized to do everything that the law of God required: see ~~<15723>~~ **Ezra 7:23-28**. And all officers were commanded to be aiding and assisting; hence Shechaniah says, *We are with you*.

Verse 5. And they swear.] The thing was evidently contrary to the law of God; and now he bound them by an *oath* to rectify the abuse.

Verse 6. Johanan the son of Eliashib] Eliashib was high priest, and was succeeded in that office by his son Joiada, ^{<161210>}**Nehemiah 12:10**. Probably *Johanan* here is the same as *Jonathan* in Nehemiah, who was the son of *Joiada*, and grandson of *Eliashib*. Some suppose that *Johanan* and *Joiada* were two names for the same person.

Verse 8. All his substance should be forfeited] *To the use of the temple*. So the *Septuagint* understood the place: **Αναθεματισθησεται πασα η υπαρξις αυτου**, “All his substance shall be devoted to a holy use.”

Himself separated] *Excommunicated* from the Church of God, and *exiled* from Israel.

Verse 9. Ninth month] Answering to a part of our *December*.

Trembling because of the great rain.] **Απο του χειμωνος**, *Because of the winter, Septuagint*; it was now *December*, the coldest and most rainy part of the year in Palestine.

Verse 11. Make confession] Acknowledge your sins before God, with deep compunction of heart, and the fullest resolution to forsake them.

Verse 12. As thou hast said, so must we do.] They all resolved to do what Ezra then commanded, they did put away their wives, even those by whom they had children; ^{<151044>}**Ezra 10:44**: this was a great hardship on the *women* and *children*. Though by the Jewish laws such marriages were *null* and *void*, yet as the *women* they had taken did not know these laws, their case was deplorable. However, we may take it for granted that each of them received a portion according to the circumstances of their husbands, and that they and their children were not turned away desolate, but had such a provision as their necessities required. *Humanity* must have dictated this, and no law of God is contrary to humanity. After all, there is some room to doubt whether they did put them *finally* away, for several years after Nehemiah found Jews that had married wives of *Ashdod*, *Ammon*, and *Moab*; ^{<161323>}**Nehemiah 13:23**. And if these were not the same women, we find that the same offense was continued.

Verse 17. The first day of the first month] So they were *three whole months* in examining into this affair, and making those *separations* which the law required.

Verse 19. They gave their hands] They bound themselves in the most solemn manner to do as the rest of the delinquents had done; and they made all acknowledgment of their iniquity to God by offering each a *ram* for a trespass-offering.

Verse 25. Moreover of Israel] That is, as Calmet observes, *simple Israelites*, to distinguish them from the *priests, Levites, and singers*, mentioned in ^{<15108>}**Ezra 10:18, 23, 24.**

Verse 44. Some of them had wives by whom they had children.] This observation was probably intended to show that only a *few* of them had children; but it shows also how rigorously the law was put in execution.

According to a passage in *Justin Martyr's* dialogue with *Trypho*, a Jew, Ezra offered a paschal lamb on this occasion, and addressed the people thus: "And Ezra said to the people, This passover is our Saviour and our Refuge; and if ye will be persuaded of it, and let it enter into your hearts, that we are to humble ourselves to him in a sign, and afterwards shall believe in him, this place shall not be destroyed for ever, saith the Lord of Hosts: but if ye will not believe in him, nor hearken to his preaching, ye shall be a laughing-stock to the Gentiles."-*Dial. cum Tryphone*, sec. 72.

This passage, *Justin* says, the Jews, through their enmity to Christ, blotted out of the book of Ezra. He charges them with cancelling several other places through the same spirit of enmity and opposition.

In the *Hebrew text* this and the following book make but one, though sometimes Nehemiah is distinguished as the *second book of Esdras*. In the Masoretic enumeration of sections, &c., both books are conjoined. This may be seen at the end of *Nehemiah*. I can add nothing of importance to the character of Ezra, which has already been given so much in detail in the *introduction* to this book.

Corrected, March, 1828.-A. CLARKE.