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DANIEL:

HIS LIFE AND TIMES.

BY

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PREFACE.



THE following pages have been compiled from various notes which the writer made between 1875 and 1882, when he had the honour of lecturing on the Book of Daniel in behalf of Dr. Pusey, the late Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford. He has also made use of the sketches of eight lectures on the Book of Daniel given by him in St. Giles Church, Oxford, during the Advent season of 1879. He trusts that this may be allowed him as an excuse for his having been unable to give references to every book to which he is indebted for the large number of facts which he has mentioned.

Besides the better known works such as those of Lengerke, Keil, and Dr. Pusey, he has made use of Caspari's "Introduction to the Book of Daniel," Leipzig, 1869, and Tregelles' "Remarks upon the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel." For historical materials, Canon Rawlinson's well-known works have been employed, as well as Maspero's "Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient," 1886. Schrader, "Die Keilinschriften und das alte Testament," 1883; the writings of the late Mr. G. Smith and M. Lenormant, and various reviews and journals cited in the footnotes. The Hibbert Lectures of Mr. Sayce have been largely made use of, and the writer trusts that due acknowledgment has been made in the foot-notes for the many suggestions of which he has availed himself.

The writer desires to express his thanks to his friend and pupil, Mr. J. F. Stenning, of Wadham College, for having carefully verified his references. Perhaps this is the kindest act that one man can perform for another.

EAST STOWER, DORSETSHIRE.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS OF DANIEL.

Daniel as a youth at Jerusalem—His early religious and secular education—The effect of these on his career at Babylon—Hebrew politics in Daniel's youth—Assyria and Egypt the two great powers—Downfall of Assyria—Rise of the new empire of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar—Capture of Jerusalem—Daniel taken to Babylon—His journey.

THE narrative of the Book of Daniel in a few short and unpretending words introduces to our notice the reign of Jehoiakim as marking the era of Daniel the Prophet. He was at that time quite young ; but though the ambiguous word "children"¹ is applied to him and to the three others, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (with whom we are still familiar as "the three holy children"), yet extreme youth is not in any way implied by the word "child." It is a word frequently used in Hebrew, where we should consider it more correct to employ the word "young man." For instance, Joseph who, we know, was seventeen years of age,² is spoken of later as being a 'child.'³ So also the companions of Rehoboam are called "children,"⁴ though Rehoboam was at the time forty-one years of age.

The age of Daniel being only vaguely described, we may not be far from the truth, perhaps, if we suppose him to have been about seventeen years old at the time of his captivity. Assuming this to have been the case, and working backwards from the year B.C. 606, in which he first appears to us, we are brought to the year B.C. 623, as the possible date of his birth. In any case Daniel must have been born during the reign of Josiah, the

¹ Dan. i. 4. ² Gen. xxxvii. 2. ³ Ibid. xlii. 22. ⁴ 1 Kings xii. 8.

last good king of the House of Judah. But the year which has been suggested as Daniel's birth year is one of vast importance in Jewish history, being that in which Josiah effected his notable reformation in Church and State.

It is well known from the Holy Scriptures what immense pains were taken by Josiah, so as to secure for each Israelite a complete education in the principles of the Law of the Lord. He had every reason to do so, after having been a witness of the abominations which had arisen in his time from the general neglect of religious instruction which had prevailed. It is hard to realize the fact, but it is undoubtedly the case, that during the whole reign of good Hezekiah, even while Isaiah was attempting to lead the people of Jerusalem to a closer walk with Jehovah, the temple which Solomon had erected to Chemosh, the Moabite goddess, was standing on the Mount of Olives,¹ opposite Jerusalem. We may remark, in passing, how singular it is that, at so early a time, the type of Antichrist should have been raised in the sight of Mount Zion. But it remained for Josiah, in his zeal for God, to destroy this shrine. Under the guidance of the priest, and probably not without the counsel of his friend, the prophet Jeremiah, he removed this, and all other traces of idolatry from the kingdom of Judah, and restored all the feasts which were required by the law of Moses.

Daniel as a child must have heard of all these events, and of the horrors which had accompanied idolatrous worship. He had been educated upon the principles of the Bible, though his Bible was small compared with that which we possess. However, with such a solid foundation of true practical religion laid in him, we shall not be surprised when we see what was his conduct in Babylon, when he was brought into contact with idolatry as a living power; when, in the very centre of heathenism, we find him bravely refusing to comply with a royal edict, though his refusal would cost him his life.² Similarly we shall not find anything unnatural in the manly refusal of the three holy children to fall down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. To those who had been brought up in the rigid monotheistic principles

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 13, "Mount of Corruption" is a name of contempt for "Mount of Olives."

² Dan. vi. 7, 21, 22.

of the law of Jehovah, death would be preferable to idol service.

And we may notice another influence of early religious training upon the character of Daniel. When long advanced in years, witnessing the approach of the deliverance from the exile, and wondering, perhaps, whether he should be permitted to return to his own city once more, we find him seeking for comfort by reading the prophecies of Jeremiah, whom he must have seen when a lad, and known as the statesman-prophet of Judah, and friend of the great king of Babylon.

We would gladly learn what secular education was common among the Jews at this period of their history; but, unfortunately, little can be discovered about the matter. We know that "Schools of Prophets" had formerly existed throughout Palestine. We are also informed that in Hezekiah's time a college of learned men had been very active in collecting what remains of ancient Hebrew literature could then be recovered. One subject, evidently, was taught, namely, geography, for without a knowledge of this a large amount of the Sacred Scriptures would have been unintelligible. We may be sure, however, that whatever subjects of study may have been prescribed, the Hebrews took immense pains with the education of those who were destined to rise in life. They were aware that the main purpose of education was to form habits of attention, and that when these had once been secured, the pupil would be capable of mastering any subject that Divine Providence should put before him.

Upon such principles must Daniel and his three companions in exile have been educated. We shall shortly see that they had not been so very long in Babylon, before those habits of attention and application, which had been formed by their education at Jerusalem, enabled them not only to master the wisdom and learning of the Chaldeans, but actually to surpass these Gentile scholars in their own science.

But we must return to Daniel's youth, and take a brief survey of Hebrew politics at that period, so as to be the better able to form a distinct view of his times. Let us remember that the two great world-powers at this time were Egypt and Assyria. Palestine lay on the highroad between these two countries. The kingdom of Israel had disappeared nearly a century before the date which we have assumed for Daniel's birth. Further

northwards we find that Syria, mighty kingdom though it had been in former times, was now a dependency of Assyria. Such also were other tribes in the neighbourhood of Judah, the Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, and others of less note. Whatever power they may have had in former times belonged to them no more. Consequently, party quarrels between Judah and the neighbouring tribes were quite impossible except with the permission (or rather encouragement) of one of the two great powers.

It was to the Assyrian rule that Daniel, as a youth, was first subject. To the Assyrians, he must have heard, the good king Josiah had paid tribute; and one event, which occurred when he was a lad of thirteen or fourteen years of age, must have been vividly impressed upon his memory for the rest of his life. One day Daniel heard the sounds of mourning and woe; public lamentations, and grievous cries of distress throughout the streets of Jerusalem. These were occasioned by the death of Josiah.¹ Nechoh, king of Egypt, for some reason of which we are not informed, made war against the king of Assyria. Josiah, loyal to his master, went out to fight in his defence. It was in vain that Nechoh urged Josiah to retreat; the king of Judah stood firm to his oath of allegiance, and fell pierced with the Egyptian arrows. Strange indeed that Judah should have lost her best king by his act of supporting an empire which the prophets had denounced for the cruelties which it had so frequently practised upon the people of God. But, whatever may be the opinion of the world at the present time, in those days an oath of allegiance was regarded as something binding in the sight of God and man,² and Josiah died faithful to his word which he had given to the king of Assyria.

The Assyrian Empire, however, was doomed to be overthrown, and the great catastrophe was not far distant. Warnings had been given to Nineveh, the capital town of Assyria, that such, most assuredly, would be the case. For just as Daniel was sent to Babylon to prepare that city for her overthrow, so had Jonah been sent to Nineveh, years before in God's mercy, to

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 29, 30.

² Compare the remarkable language respecting the sanctity of an oath of allegiance employed 2 Chron. xxxvi. 11-13, "Zedekiah did that which was evil . . . and humbled not himself; . . . he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God."

preach the doctrine of repentance. His warnings, we know, availed to procure the temporary penitence of the people, but they produced no permanent effects upon their general character, so as to avert the final downfall.

And yet any Assyrian who at that time happened to be well versed in politics might have seen danger in the horizon of his country. On the one side was Babylon, an inveterate enemy, which had never been at any time wholly subordinate to Assyria, but required to be coerced into obedience, and had many times not only attempted to assert her own independence, but actually succeeded in so doing. In the days of Merodach Baladan,¹ the Assyrian yoke was for a time entirely cast off, and nothing but the iron will of the reigning emperors, Sargon and Sennacherib, availed to crush that great Babylonian patriot. On the northern frontier there had been an incursion of a vast horde of Scythians. Very little is known about the history of these tribes, beyond the fact that, in the sixth and seventh centuries before the Christian era, they devastated a large portion of Western Asia and Northern Europe. The news of the danger which was threatened by their approach must have been carried to the head-quarters of the Assyrian monarch, but we do not know whether any steps were taken to check their advance.

A further danger was impending. A new empire was gradually rising in the North, though it sinks into insignificance when compared with the Assyrian or Babylonian Empires. This was the Median power, and between the Median king Cyaxares and Nabopolassar of Babylon friendly relations had been established. But, notwithstanding all these apparent dangers, the signs of the times were neglected by Assyria. No attempts were made to keep off the impending ruin. No doubt, as is often the case both with nations and individuals, the Assyrians were more keen-sighted when looking on the past and the future, than they were with regard to the present.

Daniel, as a youth, was a passive spectator of all these political convulsions. From his own home, and possibly under the guidance of some great man like Jeremiah, he traced the

¹ Isa. xxxix. 1. For a full account of this great man see Lenormant, "Les prém. civilisations," vol. ii. pp. 203-309. He was the bitter enemy of Sargon, and was finally subdued by Sennacherib, who placed his own son on the throne of Babylon. See "Records of the Past," vol. vii. p. 63.

gradual decay of Assyria. He learned that the huge and unwieldy extent of that empire was a continued source of internal weakness to it; that large outlying provinces, and the difficulties of communication were a constant danger to its stability. For instance, if a proper hold had been maintained over the dependencies, how could the Medes have obtained even that semblance of a kingdom which they had acquired under Cyaxares? Or, if a strenuous government had existed, how could the Scythians have succeeded in forming themselves into so strong a power, that with their united action they proved themselves an object of terror both to Assyria and to Media?¹

Another fact must have arrested the attention of Daniel. Knowing as he did that Assyria and Egypt were the two great powers in the world at that time, he must have inferred that any weakness in the one would be a source of vantage to the other. So he found the Egyptians gradually working their way in the West, while the Babylonians and Medes were advancing on the East and on the North. Apparently, at the very time when the Egyptian king took Ashdod, the strongest Assyrian fortress in the West, Nabopolassar declared the independence of Babylon and prepared to take the initiative against his neighbouring rival. Cyaxares, whose little kingdom was rapidly recovering from the Scythian inroads, was ready to join, and looked forward to pick up anything that he could in the general scramble for the remains of Assyria.

At length the end came, and the time for striking a decisive blow had arrived. Nabopolassar made a friendship with Cyaxares, whose daughter he procured in marriage for his son Nebuchadnezzar. The king of Armenia,² a country little known in ancient history, joined Cyaxares in attacking Assyria on the North, Nabopolassar with his son appeared in the very heart of the empire, while the Egyptians appeared suddenly in the West. It was, let us remember, in attempting to stop this advance of the Egyptians that Josiah lost his life. A battle was fought at Carchemish,³ a fortress of great importance, which commanded

¹ On the Scythians see Maspero, "Hist. Ancienne," chap. xii.; Rawlinson's "Herodotus," vol. iii. pp. 137, &c.

² For an account of Armenia see Maspero, "Hist. Ancienne," chap. x.

³ A good map will illustrate the strategical importance of this town. It is situated on the Euphrates about two hundred miles above the junction of the Chaboras with that river.

the passage of the Euphrates. In this, the Egyptians were victorious, and by this one blow all the Syrian possessions of Assyria, Palestine included, became provinces under Egyptian authority. Thus the nationality of Daniel was changed; he became an Egyptian subject, and saw Jehoahaz, the rightful king, deposed, and Eliakim humiliated by the substitution of the name Jehoiakim for that which he had originally received, while the land was heavily taxed so as to pay the tribute which Nechoh demanded.¹

It is unknown whether the Egyptian army penetrated beyond the Euphrates; in fact, the whole story of the fall of Nineveh is as yet only partially known. We cannot tell, for instance, whether it was the result of an agreement between the powers that Egypt took the field against Assyria on this occasion. We do not even know by what means the city of Nineveh was taken. Some have stated that a sudden rise of the Tigris effected a wide breach in the broad walls which surrounded the city, and that the victors made an unopposed entrance. Others have said that a protracted siege occurred, which resulted in the king burning his palace over his head. One thing only is certain, which is, that Nineveh fell, and never recovered her former splendour, and that the remains of the vast empire east of the Euphrates were shared between Babylonia and Media, while Nechoh was permitted for the time to retain the Syrian portion of the Assyrian Empire.²

Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, was advanced in years at the time of the fall of Nineveh, but his spirit was as ambitious as it had been in his younger days. In his son Nebuchadnezzar he had one whom he rightly regarded as a worthy successor to himself. Accordingly no sooner was Nineveh in his power than he determined to acquire by conquest all that had formerly belonged to Assyria. Naturally his first thoughts were about the western provinces of Syria, which were at this time occupied by Nechoh. From such works³ on geography and history as

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 31-35.

² Mr. Budge ("Babylonian Life and History," p. 67) is of the opinion that the river Tigris rose and carried away the greater part of the wall, and that then the Assyrian king gathered together his wives and property into his palace and set it on fire. Then the enemies went into the city, and destroyed everything that they could find.

³ A specimen of such a work may be found in the "Records of the Past," vol. xi. p. 145, &c. The Fragment there translated gives the

he possessed, he was well aware of the importance of a port upon the coast of the Mediterranean. To an empire geographically situated as was the Babylonian, having already means of access to the Persian Gulf, the possession of a harbour on the Syrian coast was absolutely essential. Accordingly, a pretext for war was readily found, and an expedition against Syria, which at this time was an Egyptian province, started under the command of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Egyptians were speedily informed of this invasion of their territory, and started off to meet the enemy. It was in the third year of Jehoiakim, according to the story narrated by Daniel,¹ that the war was commenced by the march of Nebuchadnezzar upon Syria. He was met by the Egyptians at Carchemish, where a furious battle ensued in which the latter were utterly routed. A wonderful account of this engagement is recorded in the Book of Jeremiah.² He regards the battle as a decisive point in the history of Egypt. It was—

"A day of the Lord God of hosts,
A day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries :
And the sword shall devour
And it shall be made satiate, and made drunk with their blood :
For the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice
In the north country by the river Euphrates."

The prophet compares the battle not only to a sacrifice, but to an incurable wound :

"Go up into Gilead and take balm,
O virgin, the daughter of Egypt ;
In vain shalt thou use many medicines ;
For thou shalt not be cured."

And as Jeremiah had said, so the result proved. Egypt never recovered what she had lost. From that time "the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt."³

It is impossible to do more than conjecture what occurred principal geographical products of the different districts, as well as the mythical names of certain rivers.

¹ Dan. i. 1.

² Jer. xlvi. 3-12.

³ 2 Kings xxiv. 7.

after the second battle of Carchemish. It is probable, from the prophecy of Jeremiah, that the Egyptians took to headlong flight, and that the Babylonian army followed in pursuit so as to reap the fruits of the victory. Possibly the king of Judah, being a vassal of Egypt, thought it his duty to go out and oppose the passage of the Babylonians through Palestine. All that we know for certain is that in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which is the year of the battle of Carchemish to which we refer, Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar's army. How long the siege lasted we cannot say. It is recorded¹ that Jehoiakim was bound in fetters to be carried to Babylon. The sentence, however, was not carried out; for it appears² that this king became tributary to Babylon, and continued his miserable reign three years longer. But Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and others of "the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes,"³ were conveyed to Babylon. In the same caravan with them were taken a part of the Temple vessels, which were placed in the shrine of one of the Babylonian gods.

Nothing is recorded respecting the route which was followed by the conquerors as they led their captives from Jerusalem to Babylon. We know that on a later occasion the road through Riblah was taken by the Babylonian army; hence the valley of the Euphrates was easily reached, down which they marched till they arrived at Babylon. But on that occasion, we must remember, on account of a campaign in Syria, the head-quarters of the Babylonian army were at Riblah. On the present occasion it is probable that only a small number of troops had remained to invest Jerusalem. The rest had either gone in pursuit of the Egyptians, or were guarding the passages of the Euphrates at Carchemish. It is probable, therefore, that another line of march was adopted by them so as to curtail the distance. This would have been to strike into the desert, to pass through Tadmor (or Palmyra), and in this way to reach the Euphrates valley. It is most likely that Nebuchadnezzar took this route, as he was much hurried in his movements on account of the death of his father, which had occurred since the battle of Carchemish.

But as for Daniel, who formed one of the caravan, we have

¹ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6.

² 2 Kings xxiv. 1.

³ Dan. i. 2.

to think of the effects produced upon him at his youthful time of life by the fatigues of so long a journey. We know from the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah how much they suffered from the length of the travel which in their case occupied three months and a half; yet they were journeying home, and we all know that the homeward is less fatiguing than the outward journey. But Daniel was taken away from his home, his friends, and everything that he most dearly loved, to a country, the language of which he could not understand, and to scenes which, to one of his education, were of a most revolting description. Yet the God whom he had served was with him, and Daniel knew whom he had believed. With deep sorrow of heart, but without a shadow of doubt in God's providence, he passed beneath the gates of Babylon, and entered into exile.

CHAPTER II.

DANIEL IN BABYLON.

Daniel's daily life in Babylon—The old city—The river Euphrates and its lessons—The great tower of Babel—The temples and a Babylonian wedding—The market—The police—The great Bank of the Egibi family—The law courts—A scene—A settlement of accounts—Rebuilding of the city by Nebuchadnezzar—Restoration of the temple of Merodach—The ornamental lake—The hanging gardens—The bridge over the Euphrates—Forced labour.

IN the manner described in the foregoing chapter Daniel made his first appearance in Babylon. He was at once placed under the strict supervision of competent directors both as to his mental and bodily discipline. This was necessary inasmuch as the cultivation of mind and body were esteemed of equal importance in the times of which we are speaking; the well-trained slave being highly valuable to the monarch in tabulating his reports,¹ and furnishing him with various details affecting the welfare of the empire; and on the other hand, the personal appearance of the slaves and other attendants being a weighty matter in a court where so much depended upon the dazzling splendour in which the Eastern nations delighted. For these reasons the chief of the courtiers, Ashpenaz by name, was ordered to bring "certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes, children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had

¹ This appears very clearly from a perusal of the Assyrian letters edited by Mr. S. A. Smith in the "Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archæology," vol. i. pp. 61, 66-67, 69-70, 158-159, 160-161, 165, 170-171, 313-314. We may surely assume that some organization similar to the Assyrian was in use at Babylon.

ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans."¹

We have seen that the foundations of Daniel's learning had been already laid while he lived at Jerusalem. Like his race in the present time, he possessed a marvellous power of application, and even at an early time of life was regarded as a fit person to be initiated into the mysteries of Babylonian learning, and to be taught the language of the country.

But before we proceed to speak of the educational course which Daniel pursued at Babylon, it will be well for us to attempt to picture to ourselves the man himself and his daily surroundings in that city; for we can never truly appreciate the real character of the men of the Bible unless we endeavour to place them before our mind's eye as living men, actuated by motives similarly to ourselves, and taking their own part in the bustle and strife of the busy world.

Let us assume that there was a seminary in Babylon where the young men of promise were educated in the learning and wisdom of the Chaldeans; let us suppose also that from time to time these students were permitted to walk through the city so as to gain an insight into Babylonian life and manners, and to be brought into contact with the people in their daily life; and, to fix our thoughts, let us follow Daniel in one of his walks through the city.

Here he is, in one of the oldest cities in the world, a city that can boast of a higher antiquity than even Damascus. He walks through the streets of the capital of a kingdom which claims a succession of kings for over four hundred thousand years before the Deluge, and nearly forty thousand years since that event. Through the midst of the city flows the river Euphrates, which an old Assyrian fragment declares to be "the life of the world,"² and such, perhaps, was the very name by which the river was called by the guide who escorted Daniel through the town. What a host of ideas must have been suggested to Daniel by the sight of this river! While living in Palestine he had been accustomed to look upon rivers as the emblems of the nations through whose territories they passed. He regarded "the waters of the river strong and many"³ as the figures of the hostile armies of the East; and the sight of this mighty rushing stream

¹ Dan. i. 3, 4.

² "Records of the Past," vol. xi. p. 149.

³ Isa. viii. 7, 8.

swollen by the melting of the snows on the Armenian mountains suggested to him the various invasions to which his own country had been subjected. It called to his mind the Assyrian ravages from Tiglath Pileser down to Esarhaddon, and those attacks made a few years ago by the Babylonians themselves. And as he gazed from some tower upon the surrounding country, and saw it inundated by the various canals which had been cut for purposes of irrigation, he must have thought of Palestine overspread with troops, covering it like a torrent that gathers up its waters even to the neck of the traveller. And then, as he contemplated the scene, the ancient prophecy occurred to him : " He shall pass through Judah, he shall overflow, and go over, he shall reach even unto the neck ; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." ¹ And must not that word " Immanuel " have suggested to him another comforting prophecy? Must he not have taken courage from the thought that all the raging of the nations symbolized by the surging flood was to no purpose against God's people, " for God is with us " ?

But to return, we must remember that when Daniel first arrived in Babylon the city retained much of its old form. It was not till many years afterwards, when the outlying provinces of Nebuchadnezzar were quieted, that the old city was restored, and the new public buildings were erected. However, the old city must have been a magnificent place, even before the great alterations were made ; and as Daniel walked along one of the broad quays abutting upon the river he would have been pointed out the tower of Babel, the ruins of which were then of a far greater size than they are at present.² Upon seeing this he would at once remember the destiny of the vast city. He would think upon Isaiah's prophecy, " Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never

¹ Isa. viii. 8.

² That this tower was in ruins at the time of Daniel's first appearance at Babylon is evident from the fact that Nebuchadnezzar states in his inscription that he repaired it. The temple of Merodach is the place which he mentions as needing much repair, and this is identical with the mound of Babel. See Rawlinson's " Ancient Monarchies," vol. iii. p. 77 ; Mr. Rodwell, in the " Records of the Past," vol. v. p. 116 ; Mr. C. J. Ball, in the " Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archæology," vol. x. pp. 94, 95.

be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." ¹ Daniel may well have asked himself whether it were possible that this vast centre of life should ever be reduced to a ruin. But his faith gave him the true answer. If Babel, now a ruin, had once been so magnificent, why should not Babylon hereafter become a desert? In her periods of greatest prosperity Babylon had always been a standing witness to the truth of God's prophecies respecting her future overthrow.

Daniel now turns from the quays to go up one of those streets, or rather squares, which distinguished Babylon from other Oriental cities. The houses are different from what may be seen elsewhere. They are lofty, extending to three or even four storeys, and are alive with business.

At every corner of the streets stands a temple dedicated to one or more of the many gods of Babylon. The walls are made of plaster, in which here and there a row of bricks are imbedded. The portico stands before us, and a grand flight of steps leads up to the temple door. The lintel, bolt, and lock are overlaid with gold, and the cedar roofs are overlaid with silver in some parts, and in others with fine burnished gold. The external decorations are of the most magnificent description; massive bulls of bronze, and huge serpents guard the entrance.²

As Daniel passes by he sees the provisions being delivered for the daily use of the gods—that is, of the priests: "A fine bullock, a fatling, a bullock full grown, food of fish, fowl flesh, vegetables, tokens of abundance, mead, spiced wine, date wine, heady liquor of the hills, pure wine, honey, milk, curd, the first of the oil"—all these provisions are being carried into the temple.³ And how is it that the temples are able to provide such rich stores? It is because they are endowed. In fact, those offerings of fine flour, sheep, and wine mentioned in the apocryphal book of Bel and the Dragon⁴ had been presented before the gods since the year B.C. 2600,⁵ and tithes in behalf of the temples had been collected from various cities for many generations.⁶

But a religious ceremony is to be performed in the temple, no

¹ Isa. xiii. 19, 20.

² Mr. Ball, in the "Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archæology," vol. x. pp. 216, &c.

³ Ibid., p. 223.

⁴ Ver. 3.

⁵ Mr. Pinches, in the "Babylonian and Oriental Record," vol. i. p. 9.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 76-78.

less than a marriage service. The marriage settlement has been already drawn up by the proper legal officers. It has been duly witnessed. Those witnesses who could write have subscribed their names. Those who have not acquired the art of writing have impressed their mark by their nails in the well-kneaded clay. By this precious tablet (for such we must call the document) the bride has acquired as her dowry from her father as much as ten minæ of silver, and four slaves, not to mention the furniture which she will require for her house.¹

Perhaps the young lady has been even better endowed. She has received a cornfield, well planted and well tilled; situated, moreover, not so very far from the river, so that she can avail herself of all the machines which were employed for the purposes of irrigation during the dry seasons. This field she has received in lieu of certain personal property with which she is willing to part, to wit, thirty minæ of white silver, five of refined silver, two minæ of gold, a ring, and two slaves.² Happy Babylonians, to find so great a security in land! And yet you had to pay tithes. Perhaps you had a poor rate, and a school rate as well; yet you were better off than the British farmer of the present times.

The marriage ceremony is now being performed in the gate of the temple before the image of the god. Here the bride and bridegroom are placed, and the priest, standing before them, delivers a very solemn address, in which he urges them to make restitution in respect of every wrong which they may have done to any person while they lived in the happy state of bachelor and spinster. Then sacrifices are offered. Libations are poured out. Once again the man and his bride stand side by side, and then, after some further ceremonial, they are solemnly exorcised from all evil spirits that can possibly touch them.³

This ceremony being finished, Daniel has the opportunity of seeing the various emblems of the many deities which the Babylonians were accustomed to worship. As he notices these his thoughts recur to that simple faith in which he himself has been brought up, which admitted one temple only for the worship of the One true God, and allowed no symbol or repre-

¹ "Babylonian and Oriental Record," vol. i. p. 138. ² *Ibid.*, vol. ii. pp. 1-8.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 146. The document, from which the account in the text has been taken, is very fragmentary. It seems to suggest that the marriage was civil, and the service in the temple was some solemn ecclesiastical function for the confirmation or benediction of the nuptials.

sentation of Him to be made. He thought of this, and blessed the Lord who had called Abraham from beyond Babylon, years ago, to leave his false gods, and to become the father of the faithful.

But while we linger with Daniel on the temple steps, we have forgotten that it is market day in Babylon. What vast crowds of people are pressing in from the country to do their business ! What a strange sight for the Israelite to see the prominent part in active life taken by the women of the neighbourhood ! They are not closely shut up from the gaze of men as was the case in many parts of the East, but work like men, and at the very same tasks as the men. Perhaps, even, the women are more masculine in appearance than the men, for both have long flowing hair, both are somewhat slender in their frame, but there is an air of audacity in the features of the weaker sex which is not noticed in the stronger. The latter have every trace of brutality and ferocity stamped upon their countenance, but the former add cunning and intelligence to the other marks which they possess in common with the men. But these are not the grand ladies of Babylon, they are only country people. The others are, as Isaiah observes, "tender and delicate," unused to any hard domestic tasks. But even these are more masculine in their demeanour than the young dandies, who are conspicuous with their richly-coloured turbans, and whom the whole repository of a Jezebel could not supply with sufficient paint and cosmetics to brighten up those cheeks so sunken by the effects of a luxurious and licentious life.

The men and women flock in from the country with their loads of produce prepared for the daily supply of Babylon. But among them some women walk alone ; these have no heavy burdens to bear, only a clay jar or two, which they guard with immense precaution. The bearers are married ladies of Babylonia, who, having a certain amount of capital of their own, are trading upon their own account.¹ Those earthenware jars contain their precious documents, all stamped upon clay tablets, all duly executed before the judges in the presence of witnesses. Another jar contains her money, and in it she will bring back this evening the leases and mortgage deeds of a neighbour's property, upon which she is going to advance her manehs. No tender-hearted woman is she ; nothing will satisfy her short of

¹ See "W. St. C. B." in the *St. James's Gazette*, No. 2275.

the highest rate of interest; no humble three, four, or five per cent., but forty, fifty, or even sixty will she obtain.²

Daniel sees the large loads of grain, both wheat and barley, brought in for the needs of the city. He recognizes the oil merchants at once. He sees the large baskets of beans and lentiles prepared for the inhabitants. Fruit is there too, the date, the olive, and the mulberry; while in another place the air is redolent with the perfumes of the various spices in which the Babylonians delighted. He sees the camels, horses, and mules casting off their precious cargoes, and the carter's dog² barks as merrily around his master's dray as he does in modern London.

Then what a rush of people there is in the streets! Each man is intent on his own business, as if the welfare of the whole world depended upon it! What a crush, too, there is before that spacious mansion! Daniel wonders, and hears that this is the great bank of Babylon, where the firm of the Egibi (probably Jacob and Co.) are only too glad to "do business" with anybody. Here they have traded, fathers and sons, for nearly two centuries, collecting taxes or tithes, lending money at an exorbitant rate of interest, giving mortgages on fields, in fact, doing anything they are asked, provided that they are sure of getting a good return for their money.³

Such an enormous amount of traffic being carried through the streets of Babylon, it is quite natural to suppose that officers must have existed whose duty it was to control it; or, in other words, we must take for granted that some police system existed in this great city. It is highly probable that such was the case. (1) We know that immense pains were taken to secure the ends of justice. We know that a table of legal precedents was drawn

² "The usual interest upon money in ancient times in Babylonia was a shekel [monthly] upon every maneh, about $16\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. yearly" (Mr. Pinches, in Bezold's "Zeitschrift für Assyriologie," vol. i. p. 202).

² The dog was, to all appearances, not popular among the early Babylonians. At a later time he gained high favour. See Mr. Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, pp. 287-289.

³ See *St. James's Gazette*, No. 2265, "W. St. C. B.," as before. Eight tablets from this family's deeds are published in the "Records of the Past," vol. xi. p. 97. One of these reads like a modern entry: "One shekel of silver which for wine was given, one shekel of silver which to the messenger Tamnaziku was given, a loan of silver which to the messenger of the Ratenu was given."

up for the use of the judges, and it is highly probable that if there was a higher organization of judicial functions, a lower organization must have existed as well. (2) We must not forget that as early as the time of the Hebrew monarchy we find traces of the existence of a police organization at Jerusalem. We have good reason to infer that in a highly civilized society such as Babylon possessed, the police were thoroughly organized at a later period. But (3) one little tablet which has been recently discovered appears to place this point beyond all question. We gather from it that the horrors of modern civilization were not unknown in ancient Babylon. An awful tragedy is described in the following simple but expressive language :

“Dammu to the child of her husband
Hath given drink. She hath killed him.”¹

Not a note or a scratch denotes the name of the informer ; but here we find an anonymous letter giving information to the police of Babylon that a terrible case of child murder had occurred which required immediate investigation.

Another turn brings Daniel face to face with one of the many gates that, even in his time, defended the town of Babylon from any sudden surprise. These gates are large and roomy places, furnished with seats, and within them the processes of law are carried on. As we enter these gates, we find a father bargaining with his future son-in-law respecting the terms on which he is to receive his wife. In another place we notice a widow pleading before the judges for the restoration of her small fortune, to which her three sons have laid claim. This matter has been hardly settled, when up rushes an energetic young fellow who has some grievance for which he desires redress. As has been remarked with reference to many Babylonian tablets, “these ancient documents show that at a very remote period, as early as the days when Abram was leaving his Chaldean home, the laws were administered by judges who sat in the city gate, and there in the sight of the people dealt out justice apparently of a very common-sense kind.”²

¹ Mr. Pinches, in the “*Babylonian and Oriental Record*,” vol. i. pp. 119, 120.

² “*W. St. C. B.*,” in the *St. James's Gazette*, No. 2265 ; see also Nos. 2275, 2285.

Let us follow Daniel into the gate, and see what business is being transacted. Here stands a lady of Babylon, a tradesman, and a youth ; the magistrates are seated, and evidently something of importance is about to happen. The youth is the slave of the lady, and it is her intention to increase his value by binding him as apprentice to the tradesman, who is a weaver. The clay tablets have been prepared, and the document states that the slave is to receive from his mistress his daily food and all other necessaries of life, and that the weaver, Bel-Edir by name, shall teach him the art of weaving. The terms of the contract are remarkably severe. If Bel-Edir fails to teach the slave he is to be fined. If either party to the contract contests it in any way he will be mulcted to the amount of forty shekels. It does not appear to whom the fine should be paid, but the exchequer of Babylon, doubtless, was always thankful to receive any sums which would aid it to meet the enormous daily drain that was entailed upon its resources by the vast public expenditure.¹

Another case is soon called on. Two men have an account current between them, and are anxious to arrive at a settlement. A owes B one mina and fifty shekels. B owes A ten shekels. A agrees to pay B one mina and a third in wheat, according to the market price in the month Tammuz, and to pay the balance in silver by instalments of ten shekels each, without paying interest. The witnesses stand by and sign the important agreement.²

We must now suppose several years to have elapsed, and Daniel no longer a youth, but a man of mature years, to be passing through the city. A new town has grown up amidst the old, and has attained a magnitude and a splendour unrivalled in the world. The walls are of an enormous size ; their circuit is no less than forty miles, the height between seventy and eighty feet, the width about thirty.³ The prophet Jeremiah refers to the height of the walls when he says, "Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the Lord."⁴ The estimate of Herodotus,⁵ that the height was

¹ Mr. Pinches, in the "Babylonian and Oriental Record," vol. i. pp. 81-85. ² Dr. V. Revillout, in the same journal, vol. i. pp. 117-119.

³ The various conflicting statements respecting the huge wall of Babylon are discussed in Rawlinson's "Ancient Monarchies," vol. ii. pp. 518, 519.

⁴ Jer. li. 53.

⁵ Herodotus, i. 178.

three hundred feet is an obvious exaggeration, and, standing as the city did in the midst of a broad plain, it would be very easy for the eye to be deceived. But the work in any case was one of gigantic proportions, and was due to the skill of Nebuchadnezzar and his engineers.

Then the great restoration of the temple of Belus was also witnessed by Daniel. The work is described by the great king himself in the following words, "I reared the summit of the house with blocks of noble lapis lazuli; to the construction of Bit-Saggatu my heart uplifted me; in abundance I wrought the best of my pine trees which I brought from Lebanon, together with Babil wood for the portico of the temple of Mero-dach. I made good the shrine of his Lordship with pine and tall cedar woods. I covered the portico of the temple of Mero-dach with brilliant gold. I embellished the lower thresholds and the cedar awnings with gold and precious stones."¹ This, apparently, was the shrine on the summit of the lofty tower or Ziggurat, which is stated to have measured two hundred yards each way at the base, and, being built up in eight stages, to have attained the incredible height of two hundred yards.

Another great work constructed at the same time was a large reservoir on the left bank of the river. It is described by the king as follows: "Great waters like the might of the sea I brought near in abundance, and the passing by was like the passing by of the great billows of the Western ocean. Passages through them there were none, but I heaped up heaps of earth, and caused to be constructed embankments of brickwork."²

But this was apparently only an ornamental piece of work, for not far off was the most extensive work of all, namely, the hanging gardens. It is impossible to get an accurate account of these, but from the various stories that have been told about them, we may infer that the king, with a view of gratifying the longings of one of his wives for something which would resemble the scenery of Media, her own country, constructed in miniature a mountainous region on the plain of Babylon. Masses of earth were collected so as to throw up a mound which formed at the base a square, with each side over four hundred feet long. It was then raised to a great height, and laid out in terraces.

¹ See Mr. Rodwell, in the "Records of the Past," vol. v. p. 119; Mr. Ball, in the "Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology," vol. x. p. 100.

² See the "Records of the Past," vol. v. p. 128.

Sufficient soil was placed there to enable the largest of trees to grow, all difficulties with regard to the water supply being obviated by machinery which enabled the appointed officers to draw from the Euphrates whatever quantity was required for the purposes of watering and the like.

The earth required for this mound was probably obtained from the excavation of the large reservoir just mentioned, from the forming of a much larger reservoir, and finally from a canal which was constructed for the purpose of joining the Euphrates to the Tigris.

Among other engineering works which must not be omitted is the bridge over the Euphrates, which is stated to have been built of stone. An ancient writer ¹ expresses his wonder at the possibility of the foundations having been laid in a river so rapid as the Euphrates, and carrying along in its bed so large an amount of sand. And it is indeed wonderful, if true, that engineers in those days should have possessed so much practical skill; but in a country where so much pains had been taken with education, and where for so many years a remarkably high degree of culture had existed, the skill and the genius of the engineer or architect is not so marvellous as the energy of that one king, Nebuchadnezzar, who caused all these great works to be carried into effect.

Daniel saw the works executed, and had it been his calling to write a history of Babylon, or a chronicle of the Jewish captivity, he could have told us how it was carried out. But the king himself tells us in his inscription how it was that he managed to compress so much work into a lifetime. It was by employing forced labour. His words are as follows, "I stirred up the disobedient, and I collected the poor and gave full directions for the work, and in numbers I supported them."² Though it appears to be not improbable that the labourers were paid, yet their service was compulsory. And among those numbers who had been brought away from their own homes, it must be remembered that, in the only case of which we know anything at all, it was chiefly the very best of the inhabitants who were deported.³ But, probably, the same rule was applied to all other conquered nations. This explains the reason why

¹ Curtius V. i. 29.

² See the "Records of the Past," vol. v. p. 116.

³ Jer. xxxix. 10.

not only so large a number of labourers, but also why so vast a body of skilled workmen were always easily obtained. The money that was paid in wages was of small consequence to a king who had conquered a large portion of the known world. But hardships were inflicted upon the unfortunate slaves, from which Israel suffered now, as it did of old in the Egyptian bondage. On account of this comes the reproof of the prophet : "Thou didst show no mercy, upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke."¹ Hence it appears that, whether by the "ancient" is meant the Jewish nation, or persons advanced in years, the taskmaster in Babylon had transgressed those limits of inflicting punishment which had been entrusted to him by Almighty God.²

Let us bear in mind again that Daniel was a silent witness of these sufferings, that he saw the disgrace of Israel culminate ; and we can well imagine that, as he walked along the quays and broad terraces of the city on his way to his business, he paused by the waterside, where some of his fellow captives had met together for worship, and there addressed to them a few words of comfort from that rich store of Divine truth which he had been taught.

¹ Isa. xlvi. 6.

² The words of Isa. x. 5-12, make a similar charge against the king of Assyria.

CHAPTER III.

ISRAEL IN CAPTIVITY.

Condition of Jerusalem after the Exile—Death of Jehoiakim—Jehoiachin and, subsequently, Zedekiah taken to Babylon—Probable number of exiles—Their form of government—Their occupations—Their religious observances—The false prophets—How the exiles received the true prophetic teaching—Specimen of a sermon preached to an exile congregation—Prophetic teaching on the return from the Exile—Influence of the appearance of Cyrus upon (1) the world ; (2) the minds of the exiles.

THE excavations which have been made at Jerusalem during the last few years have exhibited the most remarkable structural phenomena. They have shown us not only that the modern city is built upon ruins, but that these ruins vary in depth from sixty to over a hundred feet. The stratum of ruins with which students of the life and times of Daniel are most concerned dates from B.C. 580, when the houses which had escaped the destructive work of the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar were left tenantless of the best of their inhabitants.

A quarter of a century had at that time elapsed since Daniel and his companions had been taken to Babylon, and afterwards no more Israelites were removed from Jerusalem into Babylonian exile. However, since the deportation of Daniel, matters at Jerusalem had been going from bad to worse. It was in vain that Jeremiah had preached by repentance, and threatened the certainty of coming Judgment. It was in vain that, at the peril of his life, he announced his warning message within the sacred precincts of the Temple, and inside the portals of the palace. Jehoiakim persisted in his evil course. Only three years after he had been reinstated by Nebuchad-

nezzar, it appears that he attempted to form an alliance with Egypt. To what extent his negotiations had been carried is quite uncertain, but we have no doubt that he had entered into some deep conspiracy against the Babylonian authorities. Nebuchadnezzar, to whom it was a matter of indifference who was king in Jerusalem, provided that his own sovereignty was unquestioned, besieged the city and took it, thereby inflicting a serious wound on Egypt. In some skirmish, the details of which are not recorded, Jehoiakim was slain. We read, indeed, in the Book of Kings that "he slept with his fathers";¹ but that sleep of death, which to his brave ancestor Josiah, was a sleep of peace,² proved far different to the cowardly Jehoiakim. "He was buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem; . . . his dead body was cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost."³

He was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, who had only been king for a short time, when the Babylonians, for some unknown reason, seized him and carried him off to Babylon; and with him were taken "his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers, and all the mighty men of valour, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths."⁴ Thus there was an accession to the numbers of the colony which had set out seven years previously. Ten years more elapsed, and then another party joined them. The number is fixed by Jeremiah⁵ at eight hundred and thirty-two, but as this is a very small number it is probable that the prophet intended to designate some of the higher classes, who had escaped notice at the time of the former captivity. Amongst them was Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's unfortunate successor, who had been blinded of his eyes at Riblah, was then carried to Babylon without seeing it,⁶ as had been foretold,⁷ and there died miserably in prison. And last of all, five years later, though under what circumstances a remarkable silence is observed, the work of desolation was completed by the deportation of seven hundred and forty-five persons more.⁸

It is impossible to estimate the exact number of those who were carried away. The Scripture narrative accounts only for a few more than eleven or twelve thousand; but this reckoning probably

¹ 2 Kings xxiv. 6. ² Ibid. xxii. 20. ³ Jer. xxii. 19; xxxvi. 30.

⁴ 2 Kings xxiv. 15, &c. ⁵ Jer. lii. 29. ⁶ Ibid. xxxix. 7.

⁷ Ezek. xii. 13.

⁸ Jer. lii. 30.

refers to the number of households. To obtain the approximate number of individuals we must multiply by five at least. Comparing the number so obtained with that of those who are reported to have returned, it appears that there is nothing unreasonable in this hypothesis. It must always be remembered, however, that it was the superior classes who were taken into exile; the poor and the unskilled labourers were left in Judæa and in Jerusalem.

Considering the amount of information which the prophet Jeremiah gives us with respect to those Israelites who had been content to remain in Palestine, or had migrated into Egypt, we should have expected to have heard considerable details about those who were taken to Babylon. But it is not so. Except from a few scattered notices in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we know nothing whatever respecting the exiles in the East.

From these sources we will now endeavour to obtain a consistent account of Israel during the Babylonian Captivity; we shall then be able to realize to ourselves more distinctly the position of Daniel.

Jeremiah, in a remarkable letter which he addressed to the captives in Babylon¹ some five years after the first detachment of them had settled there, exhorts the elders as follows: "Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat the fruit of them, take ye wives . . . that ye may be increased there, and not diminished, and seek the peace of the city, . . . and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." From this passage it is perfectly plain that the exiles had fixed residences allotted to them, that they were permitted to cultivate the soil, that some prescribed form of worship existed; in fact, it is highly probable that there was in Babylon an organized community of exiles governed by its own officers, who were subject in their turn to the Babylonian government.

The language of Ezekiel² confirms this. It was amongst "them of the captivity at Tel-Abib that dwelt by the river Chebar," where God first showed this prophet what is called "the rule of prophecy." Here, as we can easily see, there was a regular colony of Israelites; elders are spoken of in connection with them,³ who formed a distinct body apart from the rest of the people, as appears both from Jeremiah's letter, and from

¹ Jer. xxix. 5-7.

² Ezek. iii. 15.

³ Ezek. viii. 1; xiv. 1; xx. 1.

many passages of Ezekiel. It may indeed be questioned whether there were various ranks of them or not, but circumstances seem to justify us in assuming that one of these was regarded as the chief.

That this was the case we infer as follows : (1) We notice that as soon as the edict of Cyrus was issued, permitting the Jews to return, Zerubbabel at once came forward as the acknowledged chief and leader of the people, and assumed the management of affairs. It is not likely that he could have appeared publicly in so exalted a position, unless he had possessed certain supreme powers previously. (2) We notice that the names of the Davidic family were most carefully preserved during the course of the Captivity through the lines of Pedaiah, Zerubbabel, and Hananiah. This not only shows us that some officials must have existed whose duty it was to preserve the genealogies of the exiles, but that the chief was selected from the family of the house of David. But (3) what occurred some centuries later amongst dispersed Jewish communities is not without weight in lending some further probability in favour of this hypothesis. At Alexandria, for instance, was the Alabarch, or Arabarch ; at other places were persons dignified by the titles of "Chiefs of the Captivity." The organization is so simple and so practicable, that we cannot suppose it to have been non-existent in some form or other at Babylon in the times of Daniel.

But while many of the exiles, and probably the greater part of them, lived in this way, there were others who were young men of great promise like Daniel, or were known by report to Nebuchadnezzar as men of ability in science, art, or letters. These were taken to the city of Babylon itself. Here those who were of mature years were employed in carving, painting, or otherwise dedicating their skill to the glory of the king's palaces and public buildings. The younger persons were taken to the palace, or to an adjacent building, where they were instructed in every branch of science, art, and literature, which professors in ancient Babylon had it in their power to teach.

We have already observed² that the great mounds which stand to this day on the site of ancient Babylon bear testimony to the sorrows undergone by those who were not skilled workmen. We may say that each Babylonian brick in the British Museum represents a groan from one of this numerous class,

We hear them complain about their sufferings, saying in the Psalms that they were "devoured," and "broken in pieces." We hear their cries in the sorrowful words which they use of their oppressors, "They swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled at us;" "The plowers plowed upon my back and made long furrows." Or observe the still more touching appeal for sympathy, which is found in the Psalm where the writer is complaining of the way in which the Hebrew captive musicians were treated by the æsthetic and music-loving Babylonians. "Sing us one of the songs of Zion," was one of the daily taunts to which some were subjected. Mere curiosity attracted the Babylonians to demand specimens of Jewish music, just as in the present day crowds will go to listen to Japanese or Indian performances for the sake of the novelty of the exhibition.

The religion of Israel, as might have been expected, was not so rigorously observed at Babylon as it had been at Jerusalem. We can trace amongst the Jews of Babylon precisely what we observe among persons of the present times who are voluntary exiles in foreign countries. In other words, English people, when travelling or residing in foreign countries, frequently forget for the time their own religion, and conform to the worship of the country in which they are sojourning. Most of them do not care whether it is a Protestant or a Catholic faith which they profess. Similarly, we find that in the times of the Exile, as soon as the company, which had carried Jeremiah into Egypt, began to grow into a regular colony, the worship of the Queen of heaven was established.¹ Such, no doubt, was the case in Babylon. We can find allusions to the facts in the writings of Ezekiel, and there is no room for doubting that what Jeremiah had foreseen actually occurred.

This prophet had warned the Israelites in the plainest words, "Learn not the way of the heathen,"² alluding, of course, to the Babylonish captivity which was then close at hand. But from Ezekiel we learn the facts more distinctly. He speaks of the worship of Moloch as being practised among the elders who came to inquire of him.³ In course of time idols and idol temples were erected, and even human sacrifices were offered.⁴ True, indeed, some communities continued to maintain the

¹ Jer. xlv. 17, 18.

² Ibid. x. 2.

³ Ezek. xx. 30, 31.

⁴ Ibid. xxiii. 37-39.

outward semblance of the worship of the true God, but side by side with them there dwelt others whose desire was "to be the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone."¹

And though the exiles had prophets like Ezekiel, and in after-times Haggai and Zechariah, men whose sole object of life it was to restore Divine worship to its spiritual purity, yet they imitated the example of the inhabitants of Jerusalem by having their false prophets as well. Strange to say, that same great antagonistic power of false prophecy, which Jeremiah had to encounter within the city of Jerusalem, was endured and opposed by Ezekiel in Babylon. It appears that not so very long after the captivity of Jehoiachin an opinion was commonly current, both at Jerusalem and at Babylon, that the Captivity was nearly at an end, and that Jehoiachin would be shortly restored. This opinion was supported by a false prophet at Jerusalem, named Hananiah,² and by two otherwise unknown Jewish false prophets in Babylon named Ahab and Zedekiah.³ They appear to have been not only misleaders of the people, but also men of immoral lives. Their prophecy that the Captivity was nearly closed was justly construed by Nebuchadnezzar into an act of attempting to incite the Israelites to rebellion, and they expiated their crime by undergoing the horrible punishment of burning.

We must not suppose, however, that falsehood and evil practices were universal among the exiles. Jeremiah speaks of some who were men of blameless life,⁴ who were carried into the "land of the Chaldeans for their good," that is, that they might escape the misery and distress which would fall to the lot of those who remained in Jerusalem till the closing scene in Zedekiah's reign. Among these was the king Jehoiachin himself, of whom Jeremiah, in his famous chapter of judgment,⁵ speaks in terms of regret, without uttering a single reproachful word against him. Amongst others who went to join Daniel in exile was a large class of persons whom the prophet Ezekiel describes in his prophecies as "the righteous."

But to return to the prophets of the Lord, who were the chief religious instructors of the exiles, let us see how their labours were received by those to whom they ministered. We find that

¹ Ezek. xx. 32.

² Jer. xxviii. 2, 3.

³ Ibid. xxix. 20-23.

⁴ Ibid. xxiv. 5-7.

⁵ Ibid. xxii. 20-30.

they were treated very much in the same way as their fellow labourers had been at Jerusalem. Nor is it hard to explain this. Just exactly as man has no connatural knowledge of God implanted in him, so is he gifted with no natural religious instincts. True religion can come only by revelation; and those only who have been prepared by a religious education, and by religious influences are capable of receiving religious impressions. In this way we can explain why the majority of men and women now living pay so little regard to any religion whatever. The little education worthy of the name of education that they have received, and the influences which have guided them, have been of an entirely irreligious, if not anti-religious, character, and for this reason they are not only indifferent to religion, but actually come to hate it. Such has been universally the way with the world from the Fall of Adam to the present moment, and upon this general principle we can explain the indifference with which, as we shall see, the exiles received the religious teaching of the prophets.

The best, or rather the only, instance that we can take of a prophetic teacher during the Captivity is Ezekiel, for Daniel's teaching cannot be properly called "prophetic." We find that this prophet of the Exile, though listened to by some, was an object of mockery to others.¹ "Ah Lord, doth he not speak parables," was a scoffing remark made at a message of Ezekiel's, which was plain enough to be understood by those who were willing to do so. Or again, people went out of curiosity to hear Ezekiel address them, just as many at the present time will go to hear a popular preacher or a religious address, with no further purpose than to criticize. Thus, we hear that some said, with regard to Ezekiel, "Come, I pray you, hear what is the word that cometh from the Lord."² This passage, indeed, proves beyond a doubt that there were many among the exiles who were quite as callous to the earnest exhortations of the prophets as they had been at Jerusalem.

Taking Ezekiel as a type of the prophets of the Captivity, we must say that his preaching is plain and practical. A fitter specimen of his discourses, to illustrate what we are speaking of, could not be taken than that which appears in his twentieth chapter. In this he traces the history of Israel from the Exodus down to his own time, showing that the life of the

¹ Ezek. xx. 49.

² *Ibid.* xxxiii. 30.

people had been one continued act of rebellion against God from first to last. They had received their warnings, but the lessons of the wilderness and of the Law were lost upon them. They have served idols ; therefore all the offerings are polluted, and once again they are brought into "the wilderness of the people; and here again the Lord will plead with them, as He did with their fathers, so as to purge out the rebels and the transgressors from among them."¹ And the grand address comes to a close with the solemn announcement that purifying fires must fall upon Jerusalem,² because she has become the very centre of all that is opposed to God, instead of what God had intended her to be.

The striking feature in the discourse, of which a very short summary has been just given, is the point of view from which the prophet, himself an exile, regards the Captivity. It is not as a punishment for sins that he looks upon it, so much as a purification from sin. It is a process through which the people of Israel must pass, if they would become more like their God. In fact, the prophet Ezekiel, in this respect, has a point in common with both Jeremiah³ and Daniel,⁴ teaching that a process of refining is the result of oppression and persecution. In the passage cited from Jeremiah, the metaphor is taken from the melting vessel which has been heated to the utmost, and into which the very best fusing metal has been poured, but all to no purpose, "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." With Daniel the lesson taught by tribulation is precisely the same. It is "to try them, and to purge and to make them white even to the end." By such language did these three great prophets anticipate the teaching of the New Testament. "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God."⁵ Even so in those days, Israel, when regenerated by the Captivity, would become fitted to dwell in that Canaan of which Ezekiel speaks,⁶ at the conclusion of his book.

We have already seen that Jeremiah foretold that there should be a return from the captivity after the end of seventy years. It will be interesting to observe the way in which Ezekiel enlarges upon this point.

Here he pursues the same remarkable line of thought which

¹ Ezek. xx. 35-38.

² Ibid. xx. 45-48.

³ Jer. vi. 27-30.

⁴ Dan. xi. 35.

⁵ Acts xiv. 22.

⁶ Ezek. xlvi. 1-7.

he took up with regard to the Captivity itself. The condition of Israel in Babylon is analogous to what it had been nearly one thousand years earlier in Sinai and Paran; it is the land through which those must pass who would reach Canaan; and when they enter the land of promise it must, on this occasion as on the first, be divided out upon certain fixed and definite principles. No second Joshua is hinted at who should divide their inheritance to them (a second David is to do this), but the position of each one of the twelve tribes is assigned to it. And then, again, as in the days of the Exodus, minute details were given with respect to the form of the tabernacle, so now does Ezekiel, like a second Moses, lay down the plans for the Israelites to follow when they return and build their Temple. Even the rules for sacrifices, for the dresses of the priests, and similar matters are laid down with a minuteness which makes the latter part of Ezekiel read more like a section of the Levitical law than as a prophetic book.

But the legislation contained in Ezekiel is very different from the Levitical.² The priests themselves are no longer to be taken from the tribe of Levi. A more specific determination of their qualifications is now given. The prophet is so fully convinced of the firmness and stability of the promises of God made to David,² that he limits the ministers of the Temple to the descendants of Zadok, saying, "The priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, and they shall come near Me to minister unto Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer unto Me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God."³

In this striking language Ezekiel recalled to the minds of the people the infallible character of God's promises to David, in spite of the apparent failure which they had received when Jerusalem was destroyed.

We see, then, that Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, the three great prophets of the Exile, each have their own peculiar way of exhibiting (so to say) the certainty of the return from the Captivity. Jeremiah bought a field, though he knew that it was so soon to fall into the hands of the Babylonians, and then

² In a short book dealing with Daniel it cannot be expected that reasons should be given for showing that Ezekiel was not unacquainted with the Levitical legislation, the so-called Priestly Code, contained in the Pentateuch.

² Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.

³ Ibid. xlv. 15.

to show how firmly he believed in the return from the Captivity, "subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed the money in the balances."¹ Ezekiel indicates his belief in the certainty of deliverance by legislating for the revived community. With Daniel, the certainty of the future is expressed in a more peculiar manner. He assumes that his people actually are dwelling in Palestine, and then points out some of the perils to which they would be exposed after their return,² warning them also that a period of seventy weeks further probation was determined upon them in Palestine.³

There is another feature which is found in the writings of these three great prophets, though their language and method of dealing with the subject is different. The feature to which we refer consists of the prophecies respecting nations who were not Israelites.

Jeremiah's prophecies of this class are chiefly directed against Babylon and Egypt.⁴ These were the powers of the world which, in his time, were most frequently brought into collision with Israel, and Jeremiah foretells in the plainest language the overthrow of Egypt by Babylon, and the ultimate and complete destruction of the latter.

Ezekiel simply dwells upon Egypt,⁵ and says very little about Babylon, declaring little more than that Nebuchadnezzar shall be successful in his invasion of that country, as a reward for his labours at Tyre.⁶ He prophesies that Babylon shall be strengthened by the Lord, so as to subdue Egypt, and declares that the sword of the king of Babylon shall destroy all the multitudes of Egypt. But while, like Jeremiah, Ezekiel prophesies respecting heathen nations of secondary importance, he differs from Jeremiah by uttering no prophecy respecting the final overthrow of Babylon.

But Daniel does not speak so explicitly upon this subject as his two contemporaneous writers. In his vision he is shown that in the course of history four principal empires would stand prominently forward ; that one of them, if not two, would be

¹ Jer. xxxii. 10. ² Dan. vii., viii., and xi. ³ Ibid. ix. 24-27.

⁴ The chief Babylonian prophecies of Jeremiah are contained in chapters 1. and li. Those against Egypt in xliii. 8-13 and xlvi. Like Ezekiel he prophesies respecting foreign nations of secondary importance.

⁵ See Ezek. xxix.-xxxii.

⁶ Ibid. xxix. 18, 19.

the cause of great tribulation to Israel ; and it is only quite indirectly that we are able to discover what those different empires are. Egypt, if it is mentioned at all by Daniel, is not the Egypt of the sixth century before the Christian era, but the Egypt of the Roman period of history.

We cannot help speculating upon the interest with which the prophets of the Exile must have witnessed one great event which occurred not so very long after Ezekiel uttered his prophecy against Egypt, which was the sudden appearance of Cyrus. Isaiah had mentioned the name of the deliverer.¹ He mentioned, as one of the proofs of the supernatural character of his prophecy, that the very name of the man has been declared by God before the birth of the man who bore that name.² What hopes must have been raised among people and prophets when the news of the progress of Cyrus was told in Babylon ! Daniel of course was living. Did he stir up the faith of any of the wavering Israelites by directing them to watch his movements ?—how he is now in Asia threatening Cræsus and terrifying Greece and Egypt ;—now further off again amongst the Bactrians and Scythians ;—and now, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold, like an eagle on the swoop, directing his armies against Babylon ? The only language that Daniel uses about him is that in which he records his vision, where he says, “ I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood a ram . . . which had two horns : and the two horns were high ; but one was higher than the other, and the highest came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward ; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand ; but he did according to his will and became great.”³ These are the only direct references made to Cyrus by Daniel, but is it likely that, with Cyrus in the immediate vicinity, he should have abstained from pointing out that not only were the seventy years of exile nearly ended, but that God’s appointed “ Servant ” had come as well ?

Twenty years, however, had to pass away before those hopes could be realized, which had been raised by the first appearance of Cyrus. By that time the conqueror was over sixty years of age, but he was hailed by the Jews as their coming deliverer. Josephus⁴ goes so far as to say that Cyrus was prompted to act

¹ Isa. xlv. 1.

² Ibid. xlv. 24-28.

³ Dan. viii. 3, 4.

⁴ Josephus, “ Antiquities,” xi. 1, § 2.

as he did by reading the prophecies of Isaiah. However, we cannot pronounce with certainty upon that point ; all that we can affirm is that Cyrus came as an instrument of God's providence, and that he acted as such, but from what motives on his own part, we will not say at present.

The return from the Captivity will form the subject of another chapter, but it was advisable to carry on the description of Israel in captivity down to the time of Cyrus so that it might be more easy to picture to ourselves Daniel living as an individual belonging to a large foreign population dispersed throughout Babylonia. Unless we bear in mind that Daniel was one of the conquered race, and that the race itself had some considerable political importance in Babylonia, one great lesson of the Book of Daniel will be lost to us.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EDUCATION OF DANIEL.

The learning of the Chaldeans—Chiefly theology—How the system was daily brought before Daniel—An objection answered—Three principal external difficulties in speaking of the religion of Babylon—Internal difficulties—The names of the principal gods—Dogma in Babylon—Origin of evil—Revivication of the dead—Religious books of Babylon—Forms of exorcism—Charms and omens—Scientific treatises—Babylonian education—Physicians and their prescriptions—Summary.

WE have already considered Daniel's outer life in Babylon, as well as the daily surroundings of his companions in exile within the city ; it remains for us to direct our attention to his inner life, to his education, and to the various religious influences which were brought to bear upon him in his new home. The Bible tells us in simple language that he was placed under the care of the chief of the king's servants, that he might be taught the "learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans."¹

The learning of the Chaldeans ! What a huge subject is implied by this ! The complicated system of Babylonian theology, the whole science of divination, astronomy, and, what was most closely connected with it, astrology—all these and more were the subjects of Daniel's study. And let us not imagine that the greater part of these subjects were entirely science falsely so called. Far from it. A high civilization like that of Babylon, which already possessed the elements of the telescope, and a knowledge of the calculation of eclipses, even though it taught some of the principles of science very erroneously, yet was far from possessing nothing but what was contemptible.

¹ Dan. i. 4.

It must have been the theology of Babylon which most severely tried the religious feelings of Daniel ; for what a contrast it must have been for a man who had been educated in a simple childlike faith in One God and Father of all, to be brought into contact with Babylonian polytheism. Daniel found himself living face to face with what he had heard denounced by the prophets who had preceded him, as the Pantheon of Babylon. Here he was in the land spoken of by Jeremiah "as a land of graven images."¹ He had read in the writings of Isaiah that in Babylon idols were made wholesale,² in factories, so to say ; and now he could see the whole of this taking place before his very eyes. He had been told by the prophet Jeremiah that the whole nation, amidst whom he was now living, was "mad upon idols,³" and now he saw some of his own people yielding, when tempted to worship these false gods and serving them with that zeal which the same prophet had sarcastically characterized as "serving them day and night."⁴ He was aware from the communication of his friend and companion in exile, the prophet Ezekiel, that magic and enchantment were practised upon a huge scale throughout the country,⁵ and now he was forced to learn these very things of which he could not hear without horror. Confident as he was, that the day would come when Bel should bow and Nebo stoop,⁶ and all the graven images of Babylon be dashed in fragments to the ground, yet he was forced to learn the mysterious legends in which these gods played so important a part. Here was the awful reality of idolatry surrounding him on all sides, Babylon and all her gods, Babylon the centre of idolatry, Babylon the acknowledged emblem in his day of all that was opposed to the truth of the God of Israel.

And the reality of all this was emphatically forced upon him daily, if not hourly, in one particular way. His very name could not even be mentioned without the heathen character of his surroundings being recalled to him. To the Hebrew there was something very precious in his name. It always brought to his mind some of God's mercies vouchsafed to himself or to his people. It was, in fact, a text, rather than what we should call a name in our sense of the word. For instance, Daniel's own name signified "God is Judge," and whenever he

¹ Jer. l. 38.² Isa. xl. 19, 20 ; xli. 7 ; xliv. 9.³ Jer. l. 38.⁴ Ibid. xvi. 13.⁵ Ezek. xxi. 21 ; Isa. xlvii. 12, 13.⁶ Isa. xlvii. 1.

had been addressed by it, he was led to think of those many ways in which God had "judged" or "vindicated" the cause of His people. But now this name had been changed to "Belteshazzar," a word quite as much of a text in the Babylonian language as "Daniel" was in Hebrew. "Protect his life," or, possibly, "Beltis protect the prince," was the meaning of it. He could not hear it pronounced without being reminded of the name of Bel, the great god of Babylon. His three friends also felt the pain of having their names changed. Azariah, meaning "he whom Jehovah helps," was changed to Abednego, "the servant of Nebo;" while Hananiah and Mishael received names which, though their meaning has not as yet been ascertained,¹ were undoubtedly of a similarly idolatrous character.

But Daniel was obliged, as an exile, to bear the name imposed upon him by his masters, and to study the religion of Babylon as it was set before him by his teachers. How indeed could he avoid learning it when theology was so much mixed up with all the science and learning of the Chaldeans? He could not have become skilled in the latter without an intimate knowledge of the former.

Some persons have objected that Daniel ought to have had sufficient faith to enable him to refuse to study the religious system of Babylon. But, after all, was it worse for him to study a Gentile religion than for Moses to do so, who became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians"?² Or was Daniel's faith weaker than that of many Christians who in these days are led by their studies to make researches upon ancient systems of heathen theology and philosophy in which they do not believe? No English schoolboy believes in the gods of Homer and Virgil, though he reads about them. Just so, Daniel studied the Babylonian systems, not that he might believe them, but that he might understand them; and it was quite as possible then as it is now for a person to study a theory

¹ The names Shadrach and Meshach are connected with a sacred Babylonian name, probably Aku the moon-god, but inasmuch as Abednego is a cryptogram (the *g* being written instead of a *δ*), Shadrach and Meshach may be such also. By a well-known Jewish cryptogram called Atbash, the syllable *Bel* reads *shach*. It is possible that Mishael (who is like God) may imply the name of the chief god of Babylon. It is hard to explain "Shadrach" upon this principle.

² Acts vii. 22.

or a science while he believes the whole thing to be false from beginning to end.

It is necessary for us at this point to give some account of religion in Babylon, as otherwise the position of Daniel would be very obscure. But it is not easy to give a short sketch of so weighty a matter, inasmuch as it is beset on all sides with difficulties and obscurities. It may be worth while to state what some of these difficulties are.

(1.) First, it is far from easy to understand even a modern system of religion or philosophy with which we are unfamiliar. Let us take Buddhism as an example. Though this is professed by at least five hundred millions of human beings, yet the system is imperfectly understood. Take any particular doctrine of it, such as the Nirvana. How hard it is to enter into the esoteric sense of it is best exemplified by the very different interpretations of it with which we meet in books written upon the subject.

(2.) But, secondly, if the difficulty is great when we deal with a living religion, the sacred books of which are written in a language that can be learned in such a way as to make the student certain what the words themselves mean, how much greater difficulties must be experienced in attempting to describe the Babylonian religion, where the language is only imperfectly known as yet, and many words and phrases possess a meaning which has not at present been accurately ascertained! Marvellous though the progress is which has been made in discovering the lost languages wherein the sacred books of Babylon were written, yet the science of Cuneiform decipherment is still in its infancy; and though daily making prodigious strides, it has yet ample room for progressing almost indefinitely.

(3.) And, lastly, if we were actually in possession of the whole of the religious literature of Babylon, we might be able to be more certain of the accuracy of the results which we obtain; for if that were the case, we should be able to compare one text with another, and verify the readings as well as the translations. But as it is, much if not most, of what we have at present is very fragmentary. A fragment frequently breaks off just in the most important place, and precious though each word is which helps us to grasp the meaning of those aspirations of devout men who lived at least two thousand years, if

not twice as long, before the Christian era, yet we are unable to feel certain of the ground over which we are travelling. As it has been observed, in many cases the language in which some of the religious hymns were written was absolutely unknown to the priests who recited them.¹

Such are the principal external difficulties which we have to encounter in attempting to give an account of the Babylonian religion. But there are others besides. Not to mention that the priests, in this as well as other religious systems, always endeavoured to make everything as mysterious and unintelligible as they could, there are further internal difficulties which arise.

(1.) While the Babylonians were polytheists in almost every sense of the word, yet each divinity of the Pantheon did not receive equal honours in all places. Most deities received only local worship, and nothing was further from the mind of the Babylonian than the belief in One Supreme God, to the exclusion of all other lords, a doctrine we look upon as forming the very essence of all religion. Thus, for instance, Bel was principally worshipped at Babylon, but Nebo was the tutelary god of Borsippa, though that town was not so very far distant. True it is that Nebo and others had their temples at Babylon, but they did not rank with Bel Merodach at Babylon any more than the last-named would stand in the same class with Nebo at Borsippa.

(2.) A further difficulty arises from the custom that individuals had of placing themselves under the protection of one particular god, and attaching themselves to him alone. Thus Nebuchadnezzar was most especially devoted to the god Merodach, though, judging by his name, he was originally dedicated to Nebo. His successor Nabonidus, however, though a resident in Babylon, adopted the god Sin, or the moon, as his tutelary divinity; and though as king of Babylon he must have been bound to recognize Bel Merodach as his god, yet he did not scruple to address the moon as "Chief of the gods of heaven

¹ See Mr. Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 67, to which, as well as to the writings of the late M. Lenormant and Mr. G. Smith, the writer is indebted for much which is contained in the following pages. He trusts that this brief acknowledgment will be taken as an excuse for his unwillingness to encumber the footnotes of this little volume with endless references for the various facts which he mentions.

and earth, King of the stars upon stars which dwell in heaven."¹ But even here it must be noticed that by the "heaven" he means no more than the visible sky, and is regarding the moon, from the popular point of view prevalent in his day, as having been made before the sun, and therefore superior to all planets.

(3.) Again, we find that local gods in some cases were relics of forgotten and antiquated deities. It appears as if antiquarian research had been directed to the discovery of any god who might have been overlooked, and that he was occasionally locally adopted. The difficulty caused by this is very great, as it is hard to tell at times whether we are reading of an old god who had been long and continuously worshipped, or of one who had been recently adopted from the relics of a former age. In such cases it is only the antiquity of the text of the hymn which can serve as any guide whatever towards a correct conclusion.

Making allowance for the local and individual worship of particular gods, we may roughly say that the Babylonian religion, though polytheistic, was not originally pantheistic. The visible world, that is to say, was not the outward manifestation of a hidden god who was within it. The universe did not come into being as an emanation from any god. The world was not one with the gods, nor were the gods one with the world. They were above the world, as the protectors, guardians, and creators of it. It may be urged that the Babylonians worshipped the stars as gods, but this they did, not because they believed the stars to be identical with gods, but because there was a certain amount of awe and mystery in the movements of the planets which reminded them of what they imagined to be wonderful and hidden in the gods.

First and foremost among the gods came one who was the fountain-head or root of all godhead whatever. His name was Ilu, a word corresponding to the Hebrew word El, and strictly meaning "god." The extent to which he was worshipped, if indeed at all, is most uncertain. Apparently, on account of his immensity and great antiquity, his ear was regarded as being far beyond the reach of the prayer of man. It is questionable whether he ever acquired anything like divine personality, and still more so whether any image or symbol was used to represent him.

¹ "Records of the Past," vol. v. p. 146.

From Ilu there emanated a triad of gods known by the names of Anu, Nuah or Ea, and Bel, representing time, intelligence, and creation. "The origin of the triad was purely accidental ; there was nothing in the religious conceptions of the Babylonians which led to its formation."¹ It was merely from his position at the city of Erech that Anu was entitled to the first place in the triad. These three being masculine, it was considered necessary to place in close rank with them three female deities, though not forming a second triad, namely, Anat, Davkina, and Beltis. Here a remarkable difference is to be noticed between the second and the other two members of the triad. While Anat and Beltis are strict feminines of Anu and Bel, Davkina took a different position. She was, so to say, the female principle of which Ea was the male. While the latter represented intelligence, or the god of the water, the former signified the fruitful or productive principle in nature, or the god of the earth.

The first, however, of the great triad, the god Anu had acquired in course of time a very different character from the other two. From the position which he originally occupied at Erech, he came to hold another. No longer representing the abstract notion of time, no longer being the mere god of the visible heavens, he became spiritualized into the god of the invisible heavens, where the gods dwelt. And gradually it came to be believed that "as he had become a supreme god, the lord and father of the universe, it was only a step further to make him the universe, and to resolve into him the other deities of the Babylonian Pantheon."² Thus Anu is a god in whom we may discern traces of a later pantheistic development.

From the first triad originated a second, consisting of Sin, Samas and Istar, with three female deities corresponding to each male god. The three male deities represented the Moon, the Sun, and the Evening Star. But though we read much of these deities separately, they were not looked upon as forming a triad so high as the first, and we also trace a relation between the different members of the second triad which is not to be observed in the other. Sin comes before us as the father of Samas and Istar. It is a curious peculiarity that the moon should be regarded as the eldest of the stars, but yet such was the case. In the Babylonian legend of the Creation we read ;

¹ Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 193.

² *Ibid.* p. 191.

“The god Uru (the moon) he caused to rise out, the night he overshadowed, to fix it also for the light of the night until the shining of the day, that the month might not be broken, and in its amount be regular. At the beginning of the month, at the rising of night his horns are breaking through to shine on the heaven. On the seventh day to a circle he begins to swell, and stretches towards the dawn further.”¹ And then the poet proceeds to describe the creation of the sun, though the tablet is unfortunately too much mutilated to enable anything to be definitely ascertained except that the moon was regarded as the principal body of the two. Daniel’s earliest lessons in religion had taught him a far better theory about “the greater light” and “the lesser light.”

Next in order of succession came the five planets Adar, Merodach, Nergal, Istar, Nebo, corresponding to those known to us as Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury respectively. Each of these had a mate of the opposite sex, as, for instance, Istar corresponded to Tammuz. The god thus in his complete state corresponded to, or was a secondary manifestation of, one of the gods of the first triad, so that Merodach and Bel, Ishtar and Belis were very closely related.

It appears, then, that the gods of the highest rank were twelve in number, and there can be no doubt that they were in some way connected with the twelve months of the year, and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. But the above is a very incomplete sketch of the Babylonian theology. Not only was each month dedicated to a god, but each day of the month had its appointed service set apart to the honour of a certain god. The Babylonian had his calendar of saints days like the modern Englishman, and a very minute ritual for each day. Then besides these days there were sabbaths observed also. They were kept every seventh day, though the original institution of them is not recorded in Babylonian literature. It was customary also to proclaim special fasts or festivals for certain special occasions, so that the Babylonian who really desired to be religious according to his lights had plenty of opportunities for so being. It is needless to add that, besides the principal gods whom we have already noticed, there were in unlimited number various minor gods, some of whom had become obsolete, some whose names only had survived, some identical with gods then wor-

¹ G. Smith, “Chaldean Account of Genesis,” p. 70.

shipped but called by other names, some perhaps not even considered as gods, but rather as genie empowered to protect or even to injure men.

The Babylonian mind exercised itself with various speculations upon theological doctrines. Thus we are not surprised to find that the old question of the origin of evil was disputed upon even in very early times. The world has gaped over this wearisome inquiry for the last two thousand years, and possibly there were some in those remote days who looked upon it as a question to which no answer could ever be found. It appears however that the Babylonian attempted to solve the difficulty in the following way. He regarded his gods ¹ as the creators of good and evil alike—judging from what he saw in nature, namely, a good side and an evil side to every question; he inferred that these qualities of good and evil must have come from the gods, who themselves possessed them. In the course of time the evil principle disappeared from the higher gods, who were regarded as the benefactors of man, as those who heard his prayers and the like, while the minor gods or demons had their power of malevolence increased. “But the old conception which derived both good and evil from the same source, did not wholly pass away. Evil never came to be regarded as the antagonist of good, it was rather the necessary complement and minister of good.” ² Further than this they could not attempt to go, and who has ever gone any further? Who at least has ever succeeded in doing more than to shift the difficulty one step further back?

One remarkable instance can be given of the practical way in which the Babylonians treated evil. Pestilence was regarded as a demon that made war with mankind. The pestilence was not merely personified, but actually regarded as a divine being. Even a form was ascribed to this awful personage. It is represented as having four wings, the body of a man, the claw-like feet of a gryphon, while its head was a half-decayed, parched skull. An ancient epic poem once existed in which was celebrated the Apotheosis of Dibbara, the demon of Pestilence, of which the following is a free translation by the author cited in the footnote :

■ Dibbara couches in the great gate on the body of the noble and slave
There he has fixed his seat

¹ Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 205.

² Ibid., p. 206.

The Men of Babylon, even they themselves are shut in
 Their curse thou art
 Thou throwest down, dust thou makest
 O Warrior Dibbara
 Thou departest not when thou goest to another place,
 Gnawing as a dog thou makest, and the palace thou enterest :
 They shall see thee, and throw away their arms.
 The high priest of Babylon, the enticer to evil hardens his heart.
 Go to the city whither I shall send thee,
 Reverence no man—fear not a soul.
 The host of the king is gathered and entereth the city
 Drawing the bow, and piercing with the sword,
 The host of the bound ones he cuts down
 Their weapons thou breakest,
 Their corpses into the streets like the downpour of rain thou hast cast,
 Their storehouses thou openest, and sweepest [the food] into the river.”¹

Another question upon which the Babylonians appear to have made up their minds was the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. They regard the soul after death as being clothed in a “dress of feathers.”² An engraved seal represents a disembodied soul brought by the ministers of punishment before the god Ea to receive the punishment which its sins have merited. Ea is represented with two streams of water flowing from his loins, and one of the attendants is evidently correcting the soul with a staff.

But their views respecting the future state of the dead are plain from what we read in one of the hymns where the god Merodach is addressed as “The merciful one among the gods who loves to raise the dead to life.”³ Similarly, to Samas was attributed the same power. “O Sun-god, thou that clothest the dead with life.”⁴ And so again we find a hymn in which prayer is offered that the king might come to a hoar old age, and that “for the men who pronounce these prayers may the land of the silver sky, oil unceasing and the wine of blessedness be their food, and a good noontide be their light.”⁵ Such simple unpretending words may have been the source of consolation to many a religious Babylonian as he lay upon his death-bed, and may we not hope that those who offered their prayers in earnest were heard by the Lover of man ?

¹ See B. W., in “Babylonian and Oriental Record,” vol. i. pp. 12, 13.

² See Mr. T. Tyler, *ibid.*, 55-57. ³ Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 99.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

Another subject of Daniel's study must have been the religious books of the Babylonians. Of course amongst these there were large collections of hymns and litanies to the gods.¹ Another large work consisted of the story of Ishtar and Tammuz,² which appears in its Western form as the legend of Venus and Adonis. Besides this amongst many others may be mentioned the Chaldean account of the creation of the world,³ which exhibits a remarkable correspondence with the first chapter of Genesis. Closely connected with this is a legend respecting the tower of Babel and the Deluge, in which, as in the former, we may trace a very close agreement with the story preserved in the Book of Genesis.

In this system Daniel was educated. We need not think that at any time of his life he joined in any religious act of worship which would have been contrary to his religious belief as "a servant of the living God." His own firmness of character in the days of Darius the Mede shows us what his conduct must have been in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and we may feel certain that had he been called upon to worship the golden image, he would have shared the horrible death that was designed for his three friends rather than comply with the orders of the king. Yet he was compelled to make this and much more the object of his study.

But we must not forget that, closely connected with the religion of Babylon, were the exorcisms, enchantments, and the like, which were required for various purposes. An acquaintance with these was of course necessary to give any individual the title of a learned man. We are in possession of a large number of these formularies, and a specimen or two may be given with advantage. The first is a prayer for an invalid. "On the sick man, by means of sacrifices, may perfect health shine like bronze; may the Sun-god give this man life; may Merodach, the oldest son of the deep, give him strength, prosperity, and health; may the king of heaven preserve, may the king of earth preserve." But in many cases, instead of a

¹ Specimens of these may be seen in the fourth, fifth, and sixth appendices to Mr. Sayce's Hibbert Lectures, and in the "Records of the Past," vols. iii., v., ix. ² Ezek. viii. 14.

³ See Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, pp. 376, &c.; Lenormant, "Origines de l'histoire," vol. i.; Schrader, "Keilinschriften und das alte Testament," pp. 1-5.

prayer being offered, as the sickness was supposed to come from an evil spirit, recourse was had to exorcisms. Thus we find an exorcism in the following form: "May the goddess . . . wife of the god . . . turn his face in another direction, that the evil spirit may come out from him and be thrust aside, and that good spirits and good powers may dwell in his body."¹ Then, further, a certain amount of good was supposed to come from tying magic knots around the hands or about the head of a sick person. For instance: "Take a woman's kerchief, bind it round thy right hand, loose it from the left hand, knot it with seven knots. Do so twice. Sprinkle it with bright wine. Bind it round the head of the sick man. Bind it round his hands and feet like manacles and fetters. Sit down on his bed. Sprinkle holy water over him. He shall hear the voice of Ea, Davkina shall protect him, and Marduk, eldest son of heaven, shall find him a happy habitation."² Hence a phrase arose among the Babylonians, used to denote a person who was capable of doing very difficult things, "a dissolver of knots."³

To these may be added various charms that were employed for various purposes, and above all omens drawn from various objects in the natural world. The value of the latter may be best understood from the two following specimens: "If a white dog enters into a temple, the foundation of that temple is not stable."⁴ "When a child is born with six toes on each foot, the children go not to school."⁵

Such rubbish, great as it is, receives credit, though in different garbs, in some of the more secluded parts of our own country till this day. But let us remember, that what we condemn as a gross superstition in England was part of the wisdom of Babylon; and no doubt so long as the popular mind felt itself in want of such superstitious aids, there were many who were competent and willing to supply the demand. In fact, what strikes us most in the Babylonian tablets is the absence of anything which we should call worth knowing. With history they have little to do. No historical tablet respecting the wars of Nebuchadnezzar has been as yet discovered. Those which we have relate chiefly to his public buildings and to his gods. These, of course, as well as the prayers to the gods, and certain

¹ "Records of the Past," vol. iii. p. 139.

² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³ Dan. v. 12, marginal note in the Authorized Version.

⁴ "Records of the Past," vol. v. p. 169.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

astronomical and scientific tablets, are full of the greatest interest.

Of the fullest importance would be "The Observations of Bel,"¹ a work of large dimensions, dealing with various astronomical phenomena, such as eclipses, comets, the phases of Venus, and the like. Such again are the various deeds of sale² with which we meet, the moral and political precepts of Babylon,³ the legal precedents and decisions which were to rule in future cases, and a large number of letters and reports,⁴ from which it is evident that in many cases the omens hinted at above were disregarded, and the people set to work in a businesslike, sensible way, when the foundations of a building were suspected of being insecure, instead of watching the movements of a white dog.

The extreme difficulty of the languages required in Babylon for religious and State purposes has already been noticed. It is needless to delay the reader by mentioning the difficulties of the Cuneiform character, in which each sign may signify various sounds, and therefore mean various things, till the "determinative prefix" is noted, which shows what meaning is intended by the writer. Let us ask if Daniel was, at the very outset of his education, expected to master the difficulties of these languages and characters? Probably not at first; for it appears that the Babylonians were very careful teachers, and not only did they have books for the use of Semitic students who were attempting to learn Accadian, but a graduated series of books was made use of in schools for teaching young people. A list of books has been discovered, which contains the lessons which were appointed for children to study. They consist of poems and hymns,⁵ such as "Merodach the lord of glory," "On a day of soothsaying"; or of fables, such as "The story of the fox," "The story of the ox and the horse," "The story of the twins," and others. Thus it appears that even in those days persons attempted to make the act of learning as interest-

¹ Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 29; "Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology," vol. iii. pp. 1, &c.

² Specimens may be found in the "Records of the Past," vol. vii.

³ Ibid., vol. iii. p. 23.

⁴ See "Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archæology," vol. ix. pp. 240, &c.

⁵ Mr. Sayce's article in the "Zeitschrift für Keilschriftforschung," vol. i. pp. 187-194.

ing as they could, and it is amusing to see that the "fox" figures in these ancient fables just as he does in those of later times.

Another great science taught in Babylon was that of medicine. While there were some who practised upon the sick by exorcisms and charms, there were others who had made medicine a science, and have left behind them, in a series of tablets, the results of their experience. In these we find various prescriptions and recipes intended to cure certain disorders. It is true that marks of superstitious customs may be traced here and there, but this only proves that the Babylonian physicians, like some modern medical men, were accustomed to humour their patients. The following is a cure for lowness of spirits.¹ The unhappy sufferer is ordered to be placed opposite to his image; his mouth is to be plastered with an unguent made of calves' milk, barley, and another substance. By the "image" most likely is meant a waxen effigy of the man himself. This in some cases was treated as well as the man, but unless it was done with a view of humouring the patient we cannot account for the treatment. Again the Babylonian physician was quite capable of making a diagnosis of a disease. Thus for a disease of the heart, after a large number of drugs have been mentioned which are to be mixed and well stirred, it is ordered that on the fourth day the physician "should observe the sick man's countenance; if it shows a white appearance his heart is cured; if it shows a dark appearance his heart is still devoured by the fire; if it shows a yellow appearance, during the day it achieves the man's recovery; if it shows a black appearance he will grow worse and will not live."²

These few extracts, insignificant though they may appear, are yet of great value in aiding us to realize more distinctly the course of studies which Daniel was obliged to pursue in the College of the wise men of Babylon. We have to think of him surrounded by idolatry and superstition, studying under idolatrous and superstitious masters, and in the end surpassing them in their own branches of study yet never for one moment suffering his faith in the God of his fathers to waver. And let us not think that it was his own mere natural ability, or that marvellous power of industry and perseverance which marks the Hebrew race that enabled him to succeed; his natural powers were aided by the manifold grace of God, and through this he was able to do all things.

¹ Mr. Sayce in Bezold's "Zeitschrift," vol. ii. pp. 1-14.

² Ibid.

CHAPTER V.

DANIEL'S FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE.

Daniel's residence in Babylon—His physical training and diet—Two doubts about Daniel—Reply—Daniel's wisdom put to the test—Nebuchadnezzar's dream—The bewilderment of the wise men—A massacre imminent—Daniel's intervention—His prayer and thanksgiving—He stands before the king for the first time—Causes of the king's disquietude—The dream and its interpretation—Daniel's reward—Three lessons taught by the dream.

WE must now return to the town of Babylon. Let us remember that, roughly speaking, the river Euphrates flows nearly due North and South, and that in its present course it passes through the remains of that ancient city. It is, of course, hard to identify the precise situation of the old buildings, because rivers constantly change their courses, and it is perfectly possible that much of what now lies on the right bank of the river may have been originally situated on the left.

It is to some shapeless mounds on the right bank that we must now direct our attention. One of these, now called the Kasr, was at the time of Daniel the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. Close to it was a still larger building. Not far from this, on the East, the "waters of the river strong and many,"¹ hurried on amidst the quays and embankments. It was in the very neighbourhood of this larger palace—it may have been inside its walls—that Daniel and his three friends were assigned their habitations.

The enormous size of the *débris* of this building shows us clearly that it must have been designed to provide for a large number of visitors. We know also that Nebuchadnezzar had a

¹ Isa. viii. 7

huge retinue, to swell the pomp of his state. Some of these persons were kings, such as the unhappy Jehoiachin, who was allowed to languish in prison for thirty-seven years before "his head was lifted up," and "his prison garments changed," and "a continual diet given him by the king of Babylon."¹ Others were there, no doubt, who had been for some time treated as prisoners, but had been released. Such may have been the king of Tyre, whose capital had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar after a prolonged siege of thirteen years in duration.

In this same establishment most probably Daniel himself was placed ; for it is evident that the wise men did not live so very far from the royal residence. The needs of the empire were of such a nature that their advice might be required at a moment's notice, as, in fact, was the case upon two occasions mentioned in the Book of Daniel. Everything that we read respecting the wise men renders it probable that they lived, what may be called, a collegiate life. Hence it appears likely that Daniel's "house,"² as it is entitled, must be looked for in the neighbourhood indicated by these ruins.

We have already noticed the pains which the Babylonians took in educating young people. Accordingly there is nothing to surprise us in the fact that Daniel and his three friends were placed under the closest supervision, not only for intellectual, but also for bodily training. The two persons most closely connected officially with their education were Ashpenaz and Melzar. Of neither of these is anything whatever known. The latter name, however, is most probably the name of an officer rather than of a man. As the margin of the Authorized Version indicates,³ we are to understand "a steward," but the precise meaning of the word and the etymology of it have not been accurately ascertained.

The food which was placed before the young Israelites was evidently the food of the country, and this, so far as we can tell from the writings of early travellers in Eastern parts, consisted of various fruits, of which the date formed the chief, meats and vegetables, the natural produce of Babylonia, while many other luxuries were imported. The wine of the country was made out of the palm, but we know that a more delicate liquor

¹ Jer. lii. 31-34.

² Dan. ii. 17.

³ Ibid., i. 11.

was brought down the Euphrates in small circular boats, and been sold to the wealthier inhabitants of the city.¹

The extreme luxury of the richer portion of the population of Babylon is well known, and as an example of it may be mentioned the story which tells us that the long halt of Alexander's troops in this city considerably² interfered with the military discipline of his army. Nor must it be omitted that the moral corruption of Babylon was very great. Daniel and his friends, having all this in view, determined to live in the most simple way that they could, requesting that they might be fed on pulse and water only. The steward had considerable doubts as to what effect might be produced upon them by so sudden a change from a luxurious to a simple diet, but was induced to give them a trial of ten days. The experiment proved successful, and for the rest of the period of their remaining under the tutorage of Ashpenaz they lived without the customary wine and meat. The consequences were such as Daniel had anticipated. The personal appearance of the four friends was improved, and so far were their intellectual powers from suffering loss, that they acquired "knowledge in all learning and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."³ Their faith had endeared them to their God, and He had blessed their studies so far, that when the king sent for them to prove their powers he found them "in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in the realm."⁴

Two questions arise here which require a short notice. It has been asked whether the wisdom that Daniel acquired was miraculous or not. Of course there can be no doubt about the answer. Wisdom comes not from within, but from without, and is therefore the gift of God. God's blessings, that He bestows upon what we call man's natural powers, are equally miraculous with those which He grants to inert matter, causing it to bring forth food and the like for the children of men. We speak of these things as natural; it is far better to call each gift that comes from God miraculous. A further question has been reasonably asked. Was it consistent in Daniel to receive instruction in Babylonian wisdom if his prejudices were so strong that he could not eat the Babylonian food? It is to be

¹ Herodotus, i. 194. ² Curtius V. i. 39. ³ Dan. i. 17. ⁴ Ibid. i. 19, 20.

observed, in answering this question, that though Daniel expressed a slight fear about being defiled by the Babylonian food, it was a simplicity of life only that he desired, and the effect of this upon him was such as always results from habits of temperance in eating and drinking, a healthy and fresh complexion. He had no fears about the defiling powers of the meat any more than he had with regard to the evil effect of the Chaldean philosophy and theology. His mind was fully saturated with the precepts of the law of the true God, his faith was firmly established in His religion, and therefore no harm could befall him either from eating the food or learning the wisdom of the country. To those whose faith has been firmly built up no harm can possibly occur from the study of such subjects as were placed before Daniel, no more harm than the spark of fire can cause to the crystal fountain. Daniel learnt these things,¹ not out of any vain or morbid curiosity, but that he might be able to understand what was the meaning of the men into contact with whom he was daily brought.

At length the time arrived when Daniel's wisdom should be put to the test. It was the second year of the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, that is to say, according to the Babylonian computation of the reigns of kings, three anniversaries of the king's accession had passed.² We must assume that at this time Daniel had been for about three years engaged in the study of the Chaldean wisdom. At last an opportunity occurred when the services of this holy man were required by his heavenly Master. During those two or three years that he had passed in the Babylonian seminary he would have been ready to come forward at any time, had he been required to do so, to perform the duty that might have been expected of him. But at this epoch, described in the Bible as "the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, he was for the first time prominently brought into public life."

¹ "Discunt non ut sequantur sed ut judicent atque convincant," Jerome on Dan. ii. 8.

² The late Mr. G. Smith observes ("Assyrian Discoveries," p. 386) "It is a curious fact that the kings of Assyria and Babylonia did not in general begin to count the years of their reign until the commencement of the new year following their accession. During the remainder of the year in which they ascended the throne documents were dated, 'In the year of the accession of so and so,' and the first year of the reign commenced with the next new year's day, the first day of the month Nisan."

The circumstances are narrated in a very simple manner by the sacred writer. The king had a dream. He at once recognized that it was no common dream. How he was aware that such was the fact we cannot say, but, like Pharaoh in former times, he was convinced that his dream was not the ordinary dream of night. It pleases Almighty God to reveal His will by the Holy Spirit as He wills, and to whom He wills. He who had spoken to the heathen Pharaoh of the trouble which should befall his land, and allowed the heathen prophet Balaam to announce the coming of the Messiah in the same merciful way allowed the king of the antitheistic country to have a glimpse into the future of the kingdom of God.

The king sent for his experts. Probably he had some reason for distrusting their skill, or at least for not being satisfied with the correctness of their interpretations in general. Accordingly when they desired him to inform them what the dream was, he replied that he had forgotten it, and it was their duty to tell him what it had been, in order that he might be certain that their interpretation of it was correct.

There have been persons who have found an inconsistency in the king's conduct ; but, on the contrary, is it not a very natural remark for him to have made? Let us remember that, like all great conquerors, he was a man gifted with a large amount of common sense. He was still young, and perhaps disinclined to believe that the wise men had any powers of interpretation which he did not possess himself. In other words, he says, "One thing is not more supernatural than other. To what the gods are said to do degrees of difficulty do not apply. If by supernatural means you pretend to tell me what my dreams mean, surely you will by the aid of the same powers be enabled to tell me what the dream was. If ye show the dream and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour ; therefore show me the dream and the interpretation of it."

It was in vain that they protested that no precedent existed for such a request as this. They pleaded, but to no purpose, that higher deities than those with whom they professed to hold communion must be consulted before they could satisfy the king. He cared for no precedents, and had reason already to doubt the omniscience of his gods. His mind was fully made up. He was convinced that the wise men were only planning

how to defer the whole matter till he should forget it, or that they might obtain some hints from him which might suggest the dream to them, and enable them to satisfy his demands. It only remained that the threat should be carried out. "If ye will not make the dream known, there is one decree for you. . . Ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill."¹

The order went out "to destroy all the wise men of Babylon." Of course Daniel and his three friends being students in the college were included in the number of the intended victims. It is true that they were not present at the time when the others had been summoned before the king. Possibly they were not anxious to anticipate the ruling of that Providence which they knew watched over them, thrusting themselves forward as candidates for the rich gifts which had been promised to the interpreters of the dream. Perhaps they had not even been permitted to appear on account of the jealousy with which they were viewed by their seniors. Not until Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, made his appearance to execute the sentence of death upon all the wise men was the cause of the "hasty" decree made known to them.² Then at once Daniel without any difficulty obtained access to the king, and asked that time might be given to him so that he might show the king the interpretation of his dream.

The ready way in which Nebuchadnezzar acceded to Daniel's request shows us that he was really anxious to test the truth of the religious system under which he had been brought up. He was, in his way, a religious man, but required that certain points should be cleared up before he fully believed what he had received. We shall in the sequel observe how the same spirit of inquiry leads him on from step to step till at last we have every reason to believe that he became a worshipper of the One true God.

Daniel, having obtained his request from the king, went at once to his residence. Here he found Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego assembled, and anxious for his return. A common danger threatened them, and therefore they united in common prayer that the God of heaven would reveal this secret, and that "Daniel and his fellows might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." What a striking thought

¹ Dan. ii. 5.

² Ibid. ii. 15.

it is that on that fateful evening out of the many myriads in Babylon who worshipped the creature rather than the Creator, four were found who should make their supplication to the God of heaven. Yes; these four men had remained true to that faith which their forefather Abraham had brought from that same country. They remembered the striking words of the "Father of the faithful," when in his old age he said, "The Lord God of heaven which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land, He shall send His angel before thee."¹ Though the words had been spoken only to Abraham's steward in respect of one particular matter only, yet these holy children knew from history that the Angel of God's presence had always gone before His people, and they had no shadow of doubt that He was with them at that moment of trial and difficulty.

Nor was the prayer offered in vain. Then, as in after-days, it was found that "If two shall agree on earth as touching anything that they ask, it shall be done for them."² At so early a time, even before the duty of prayer had been revealed, we find that common prayer had not failed to bring a blessing. And we also notice that with the answer to the prayer, namely, the revelation of the secret to Daniel in a night vision, there came a hymn of thankfulness from those who had prayed. In this beautiful psalm we must notice the care with which Daniel adopts phrases which entirely exclude anything like the doctrine of secondary causes. God is the Fountain of all wisdom and might. He alone causes empires to pass away as easily as He does the "times" of day and night, or "seasons" of winter and summer. He alone knoweth the errors of the "darkness" of human ignorance, as well as the faint "light" that issues from the highest attainments of the human understanding, and therefore "he answered and said :

" Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever ;
 For wisdom and might are His :
 And He changeth the times and the seasons :
 He removeth kings and setteth up kings :
 He giveth wisdom unto the wise
 And knowledge to them that know understanding :

¹ Gen. xxiv. 7.

² Matt. xviii. 19.

He revealeth the deep and secret things :
 He knoweth what is in the darkness,
 And the light dwelleth with Him.
 I thank Thee and praise Thee, O thou God of my fathers,
 Who hast given me wisdom and might,
 And hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee :
 For thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter." x

Arioch was the first person whom Daniel sought. The whole interview appears to have taken place in great haste, as the urgency of the king's commands was well known; "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon," were Daniel's first words, interceding for those whom he knew to be envious of his own position. "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon, and I will show unto the king the interpretation."² The captain of the king's guard did as he was requested, and in his words to the king we can see that he had been brought to acknowledge the power of the God of Israel. He had been touched at the manner in which Daniel had prayed for his enemies, and in introducing him to the king took pains to mention that Daniel was no Babylonian priest or wise man, but simply a Jewish captive who has been enabled to fulfil a command which to all the wisest had appeared impossible.

As we observed above, the king knew that there had been something supernatural in his dream, and betrayed his anxiety to recall it. But, again, the matter escaped him. He was astonished to see one so young as Daniel come before him, who was known to him only by reputation, and by the very brief interview which occurred on the preceding day. "Art *thou* able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen and the interpretation thereof?"³ Daniel, true as at all times to his heavenly Master, replied that human intellect was unable to solve the king's difficulty, but "there is a God in heaven that revealeth and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."⁴

We may well inquire what it was that made the king to be so remarkably anxious about this dream. Perhaps the best clue that we can discover is obtained by remembering the time when the vision occurred. It was Nebuchadnezzar's second year—or what we should call by our reckoning his third year. He was beginning to feel himself established in his

x Dan. ii. 19-23.

2 Ibid. ii. 24.

3 Ibid. ii. 26.

4 Ibid. ii. 28.

dominion. The boundary line between Egypt and Babylonia had been settled very much to his own advantage. On the North he was at peace with the Medes. In fact, it was through their assistance that he had been raised to the throne. But there was one power which was the source of trouble to him, viz., Persia. This kingdom was already causing its influence to be felt in the East, and Nebuchadnezzar may have feared that the seasons of peace for which he had hoped, in order that the internal resources of his dominions might be developed, were liable to be disturbed. Again, through the many mercenaries who served in his army may not tales have reached him relating to some brave tribes in the West, the Greeks,² whose gallant deeds had already been the themes of foreign poets? Might it be possible that his empire should suffer from these? His posterity, again, must have been a source of painful anxiety to him. Would his descendants be capable of retaining what his own energy had acquired? Or, on the other hand, would his magnificent empire be dissolved with the same lightning-like rapidity with which it had come into existence?

Those early years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign must have been moments of grave anxiety to him; and, as is frequently the case with us, so was it with him. Anxiety gave the starting-point to the dream. Though the vision itself was supernatural, yet there was a natural element underlying it; just as in all the miracles recorded in Scripture, except that of Creation itself, God is pleased to employ natural means in carrying out His will. The anxiety of the king was in this instance the natural means which led to the dream through which God revealed to him what should happen in the latter times.

The vision, as described by Daniel, was as follows :

As the king was asleep he saw a single image of colossal size standing before him. It was at the same time both magnificent and awful to behold. It was not made of one substance, nor did the various members of it all consist of the same material. The head was of finest gold; the breast and arms of silver; the belly and thighs of brass; the legs of iron; the feet part of iron and part of clay.

² Among the mercenaries was the brother of Alcæus, the Greek lyric poet. A fragment of a poem written to welcome the soldier on his return from a Babylonian campaign is found in "Bergk. Poetæ Lyrici," p. 713 fragm. 33.

The very first thing that must have struck the king as the form of the image was brought before him, must have been the instability of it. Here was gold, the heaviest substance, forming the head, while clay, the lightest, formed the base or feet of the image. And he must have been struck also by the decrease in the value of the materials of the image, reckoning from the head downwards. At the top was the most precious of metals, gold; at the bottom the most common, that which might have been found in the richest abundance anywhere in the large plains of Babylonia.

He kept on gazing, till at last, a large stone, cut out whence he knew not—though from some mountain—but cut out without any signs of human agency, suddenly fell upon the feet of the image and broke them in pieces. At once the whole collapsed, clay, iron, brass, silver, gold, all fell to the ground like a heap of chaff, the wind carried the fragments away, and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the earth.

Such was the dream which had bewildered the king. Daniel then gave the interpretation, which certainly is one which human ingenuity itself could not have hit upon. But before we notice Daniel's interpretation of the dream, let us observe in anticipation, that the history of the whole world is here for the first time presented to us as the history of one colossal man, who has embodied in himself the lives of all who have been born into the world since the time of Creation till "the latter times," who has thought out all the philosophies which human intellect has evolved, and reigned over the whole world as all the various conquerers have and shall from the beginning to the end. Here we notice for the first time in the Bible a hint that man is a little universe in himself; that man is the lord and master of that very limited portion of matter which he identifies with himself, just as God is of the whole universe. Here we learn that every man contains in the very shape of his body, a history and a prophecy of the fate of the whole universe, from the commencement of the Babylonian captivity to the most remote period of the future.

But to return to Daniel's interpretation of the vision. The head of the image represented Nebuchadnezzar—"Thou art this head of pure gold."¹ Babylon the "golden city"² of

¹ Dan. ii. 38.

² Isa. xiv. 4.

which Isaiah spoke, the city that was crowded with the treasures of so many foreign conquests, was one of the objects denoted by the dream.

The breast and the arms denoted another kingdom, but as far inferior to the Babylonian as silver is to gold. The name of this is not given by Daniel, but we recognize in it the Medo-Persian Empire, which was announced to be the successor to the Babylonian by the hand which a few years later traced the mysterious writing upon the wall. This kingdom is stated to be "inferior" to the Babylonian, and such it was, not perhaps in extent, but at least in solidity and in organization.

The third kingdom, symbolized by the brazen substance which composed the lower part of the trunk of the image, is to be one which shall bear rule in all the earth. This is the Greek Empire which, in an incredibly brief space of time, annihilated the Persian Empire, and under Alexander the Great ruled over the whole world then known. And by the Greek Empire we must understand that of Alexander and his successors, the two thighs pointing out especially to two contemporaneous dynasties of the Greek Empire, the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ, which should hereafter play so important a part in the history of Israel.

Daniel's explanation of the fourth kingdom is most lengthy, because the constitution of that kingdom is far more complicated than that of the others. Like the second and the third kingdoms it was divided mainly into two distinct parts symbolized by the legs of the image. Unlike them it was subdivided both in matter and in form. The matter of it consisted of two heterogeneous elements, iron and clay. The form of it contained the subdivisions of legs, feet, and toes. This represents the Roman Empire in its many phases of existence; Eastern and Western, as represented by the two legs; now strong, now weak, as shown by iron and clay; while the mysterious number ten, indicated by the toes, most probably points out some phase in the development of the fourth empire which has not yet been witnessed.

The "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" represents an indestructible kingdom which God will set up in the days of the kings of the fourth empire. This is none other than the kingdom of God Himself, which has indeed been founded, but for the complete establishment of which Christians have

prayed for centuries in the words which their Divine Master has taught them. The stone has already been hewn out of the mountain, and is rolling towards the image, but as yet it has not fallen upon the toes of it and caused its overthrow.

Upon hearing this interpretation of his dream Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and did obeisance to Daniel, and offered sweet odours to him. He recognized in the young man a servant of One whom he acknowledged to be "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings,"¹ but further than that his religious convictions did not carry him. We can trace his superstitions in the reverence that he showed Daniel, actually imagining that God dwelt within the prophet, and adoring him as present beneath the human form which he saw. As a reward he not only gave Daniel many great gifts, but also made him "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief ruler over all the wise men of Babylon,"² and as a still further mark of his favour, promoted, "at Daniel's request, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon, permitting the prophet to sit in the gate of the king."

But persons are not uniformly agreed as to what these four kingdoms really were, and in early ages it was not unusual for some writers to consider that the second kingdom was that of the Medes, the third the Persian Empire, while they regard the fourth kingdom as the Empire of Alexander, and of his successors, the Ptolemies and Seleucidæ. In a later chapter we shall examine various opinions which have been held upon this important subject, but it will be sufficient for the present to say that the view last mentioned was maintained as early as the fourth century of the Christian era by Ephraim, the great Syrian doctor. The same view had been held by the heathen philosopher, Porphyry, a hundred years previously, whose object it was to prove that Daniel lived in the times of the Seleucidæ, and who endeavoured to show that the horizon of the prophet extended no further than the times in which he lived.

Let us briefly observe, in conclusion, the importance of this revelation to Israel in Captivity.

(1) The Israelites were thoroughly aware, from Daniel's interpretation of the king's vision, that Nebuchadnezzar, though the head of gold, was to be succeeded in his empire by another which

¹ Dan. ii. 47.

² Ibid. ii. 48, 49.

should be inferior to his. Hence, as they groaned beneath the tasks imposed upon them by the overseers of the great works which were in course of execution, they would know that a day was approaching when the Babylonian Empire, in spite of its apparent strength, would come to an end, and all oppression from this source would cease.

(2) Similar thoughts of consolation must have occurred to them when they were residing in Susa, under the Medo-Persian rule, or in Palestine, under the Antiochian or the Roman dominion. They knew that human persecution and oppression could last only for a while, and that in God's own time, so soon as the rolling stone should fall, all earthly oppression should cease.

(3) And this is the comfort of Israel in dispersion till this day. The time is rapidly approaching when the stone will destroy all the powers of the world, and the kingdom of the God of Israel will be established so as to be indestructible. And this stone is not, as Porphyry thought, and as some Jews taught in his day, the people of Israel fulfilling their destiny by wielding an universal dominion, and by crushing all Gentile powers ; nothing of the sort ; the stone is the Messiah Whom the prophets have foretold by word and figure, in Whom Israel is besought to believe, through Whom salvation is offered to Israel and to all that believe in His name

CHAPTER VI.

THE MARTYRS OF BABYLON.

The early part of Nebuchadnezzar's reign—Few foreign troubles except those brought about by Egypt—Peace in Northern and Eastern Asia—Temples built at Babylon—Attention paid to the gods—The colossal image of Dura—The signification of it—A reformation in Babylonian religion—The day of the festival—The pageant—The three holy children and their brave conduct—The furnace heated—The ordinary use of it—Two marvels occur—The apocryphal addition to Dan. iii.—The meaning conveyed to Nebuchadnezzar's mind by the phrase "Son of God"—How Christians understand it.

WE now come to speak of the miraculous history of the deliverance of the three holy children from the peril of the burning fiery furnace, a story which has thrilled through us from our earliest childhood, and ever gains in interest.

It is impossible to assign any precise date to the event, as there is absolutely no indication given of the time which had passed since Daniel interpreted the king's dream about the Colossus. The following facts, however, will be sufficient to show that the interval that had elapsed was considerable.

Let us remember that Nebuchadnezzar found no difficulty in adjusting domestic affairs upon his succession to the throne of Babylon. There was no rival to make him uneasy ; nor, so far as we know, were there any other members of the royal family who had any claim to the throne. He had already distinguished himself during his father's lifetime, and we need not doubt that the sagacity of the Babylonians led them to see that Nebuchadnezzar and no other was the very man who, at the present juncture, was the fittest to be at the head of affairs.

But though all was quiet at home, troubles befell him abroad.

The greatest adversary that he had was Egypt. That ancient jealousy which had so long existed between the Eastern and Western centres of civilization constantly burst out into fresh flames, and in the various sieges of Jerusalem at this period we trace the effects of successive attempts on the part of Egypt to oppose the growth of the Babylonian Empire. No doubt Jehoiachin's rebellion can be accounted for in this way. We know for certain, that not long afterwards Pharaoh Hophra, or Apries, shortly after his accession to the throne, took the field against Nebuchadnezzar.² The latter, however, immediately raised the siege of Jerusalem, and caused his adversary to beat a speedy retreat. Unfortunately we have very few records of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and it is impossible for us to account for all the troubles which he had to encounter in the West. To the protracted siege of Tyre we have already directed our attention. Possibly at the same time the Babylonians invaded Arabia, stories of the fabulous wealth of which district had attracted the Assyrians in earlier times.² Not till some years later, the thirty-seventh of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, did a further invasion of Egypt occur, according to one account of which Pharaoh Hophra was dethroned and put to death, and Egypt overthrown;³ while another story, derived from Egyptian sources, states that Nebuchadnezzar sustained a very serious defeat.⁴ Modern discoveries, however, have put it beyond all doubt that the first-mentioned story is correct, and that the disturbance was caused by the rebellion of Amas's,⁵ whom the Babylonians had appointed governor, and whom they found it necessary to coerce into obedience.

Such were the only troubles in the West which, so far as we are aware, disturbed the peace of Nebuchadnezzar. In the North and East of his dominions he experienced no serious anxiety whatever. His alliance with the Medes continued firm, and it was not till three years after his death that Persia revolted against Babylon. We have every reason to believe from these facts, that from his sixteenth to his thirty-first year this great king, to use his own words, was "at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace."⁶

² Jer. xxxvii. 5-10.

³ Josephus, "Ant." X. ix. 7.

² Maspero, p. 553.

⁴ Maspero, p. 555.

⁵ "Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology," vol. vii. pp.

It was at this peaceful period of his long reign, perhaps about the thirty-fifth year of it, when he was comparatively free from all distraction that he set to work completing many of his temples and public buildings. His own words obviously give us to understand this: "When Marduk, the great Lord, had created me a king, he commanded me to complete his holy buildings."¹ And so again in a longer inscription he speaks of his empire having become consolidated: "Empire over multitudes," he says, in his prayer to Merodach, "hast thou assigned me;"² and then, in the prayer of dedication with which the inscription closes, he says, "For thy glory, exalted Merodach, a house have I made. May its greatness advance! May its fulness increase! In its midst abundance may it acquire! May its memorials be augmented! May it receive within itself the abundant tribute of the kings of the nations and of all peoples. From the West to the East by the rising sun may I have no foemen! May they not be multiplied within in the midst thereof for ever."³

These passages bear out what is implied by the few historical facts that are known, namely, that as soon as the king had leisure to divert his attention from foreign affairs, he paid due regard to his gods and to their temples. Connected closely with some great religious solemnity is the story of the golden image, which we now proceed to consider.

The image we must suppose to have been constructed in the same way that idols usually were. First, the carpenter made a model in wood, then the goldsmith proceeded to overlay it with thin plates of gold. The base was cut from palm-wood, or from the choicer cedar-wood. The latter having been erected in the place appointed for it, the image was borne in procession upon men's shoulders, and placed upon the pedestal. Lastly, silver chains were then attached to the idol to keep it unshaken in its elevated position. Such was the ordinary method of manufacturing and erecting idols, as described by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.⁴

With regard to this particular image, the height of it, including the pedestal, was no less than sixty cubits. The breadth of the pedestal was six cubits. The image at the top was no more than a head or a bust, such as was suggested to

¹ "Records of the Past," vol. vii. p. 75. ² *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 115.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴ Isa. xl. 19, xli. 7; Jer. x. 9.

the king by the words of Daniel, "Thou art this head of gold."¹ Placed on so elevated a pedestal in the midst of the plains of Dura, the golden head would reflect to the inhabitants of Babylon the rays of the rising sun, at the hour when morning prayer was offered.

On the day appointed by the order of the king a large concourse of people were assembled to assist at the dedication of the image. The plain was filled with the State officers of the province of Babylon. Representatives from outlying districts also were there.² The army was present.³ The heralds of the king were there, and a band of music, which to modern Europeans would have been offensive from its noisy harshness, played such strains as the Babylonians loved, upon trumpets, flutes, harps, and bagpipes.³ Various instruments of percussion, such as psalteries, drums, and cymbals increased the din, clashing in as often as the refrain of the hymn returned. Command was given that at the sounding of the music all who were present should fall down and worship the image.

Now it strikes us at the first glance as a very remarkable fact that so vast a concourse should have been gathered together from all parts of the empire merely for the purpose of dedicating an image to a god. It is also remarkable that so much constraint should have been found necessary, that the army was obliged to be present to enforce obedience to the king's decree. It is equally interesting to observe that it was expected that some would refuse to worship the new idol, for the threat was issued with the original edict, "Whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."⁴ These facts are sufficient to convince us that the occasion was a very unusual one, and what it was we are able to ascertain with some probability of truth through the discoveries of an English scholar.⁵

Let us remember that the worship of this god was known by the authorities to be unpopular. We have also mentioned above that the Babylonian gods were local deities; and it is stated that "the endeavours of Nabonidus" in after-times "to under-

¹ Dan. iii. 4.

² Ibid. 20.

³ See the Hymn to Nebo translated in Mr. Sayce's Hibbert Lectures, p. 491. The "Selah" or "Forte" would come in at the end of lines 3, 4, 9, of this hymn.

⁴ Dan. iii. 6.

⁵ Mr. Sayce, Hibbert Lectures (*passim*).

mine its local character and to create an universal religion for a centralized Babylonia was deeply resented by both priests and people. The policy of Nabonidus, therefore, which aimed at making Merodach not *primus inter pares*, but absolute lord of captive or vassal deities, shocked the prejudices of the Babylonian people, and eventually proved fatal to its author."¹

It appears that this is precisely what Nebuchadnezzar was attempting to do. Merodach was the local deity of Babylon, and as a younger god had gradually assumed the position once upon a time occupied by the elder god Bel or Belus. By way of a compromise he received the double name Bel-Merodach, and by introducing him into such prominence it seems as if Nebuchadnezzar desired to constitute him the supreme being. Not that he would exclude Beltis. Of course the lady must stand by her lord. Nor indeed could Nebo be excluded, for not only was he the king's patron god, but also the protector of learning. Of course also his female counterpart would naturally be worshipped along with him. Other gods, of course, in whose honour the king erected temples such as the Moon, the Sun, Gula, and the like, would have their place in the Pantheon, but compared with Bel-Merodach in Nebuchadnezzar's mind they would be as nothing. Though Ninip was called by him "the breaker of the sword of his foes,"² yet it was by the help of Bel-Merodach alone that he had overcome the gods of his neighbours. No doubt he considered that Daniel, the worshipper of Jehovah, had not been unfavoured by Bel-Merodach since his residence in Babylon. He acknowledged Jehovah to be a god of gods, but not the only God. So again he tolerated the worship of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but only in so far that he forbade anything "amiss"³ to be said against Him, while he would not acknowledge Him to be equal to Bel-Merodach. His desire was to establish his own god as the supreme god over the whole world, which as we have seen was not by any means a popular step for him to take. Hence the grand display at the consecration of this golden image of Bel-Merodach. Hence can be explained the precautions taken of having the army present, and the severe penalty with which the recusants were threatened.

It must have been a grand sight in Babylon on that great

¹ Sayce's Hibbert Lectures, p. 89.

² "Records of the Past," vol. v. p. 123.

³ Dan. iii. 29.

day. As the sun rose, the early rays flashed from the golden image, and the burnished copper roofs of the temples within the city blazed like fire. Magnates from Syria, from Arabia, from Armenia, and from the remote East were there. The fantastic dresses, the varied armour of the troops, all tended to enhance the beauty of the scene. The king comes in all his pomp attended by the princes of the conquered provinces. The high priest or Nisakku,¹ whose duty it was to pour out libations in honour of the gods, is in close attendance upon the king. The subordinate priests come in long procession ;—the Sangu, the chief assistant, the Pâsisu or “anointer,” the Kali or the “illustrious,” each in his appointed place. A vast concourse of the merchants and artists of Babylon are present. The libation is poured out to the new god, the image is anointed, the Sangu is appointed who shall attend specially to the requirements of it, there is a loud burst of clashing sounds from the band, and all the vast multitude from the king to the artist fall as one man, and bow before “the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.”²

The great pageant having come to an end the Chaldeans lost no time in laying information against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, for having failed to comply with the king's order. These men, who we must suppose were of high authority in the State, had not forgotten the three foreigners whom the king had set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, and in laying the matter before Nebuchadnezzar, took pains to remind him of the fact. Nothing but jealousy prompted them to do this, for at any time since the three holy children had come to sojourn in Babylon, the charge of impiety might have been brought against them. And at any time would they have laid down their lives rather than worship any one of the king's graven images. But jealousy sought on this occasion to gratify its revenge, by seeing these devout men exposed to the awful torture of the fiery furnace.

It appears as if the king was hardly capable of believing that there could be any truth in the report that was brought him with respect to his favourites. “Is it of design,” he asked, “O

¹ See Sayce's Hibbert Lectures, pp. 60-62.

² That this was the posture adopted in prayer appears from the following rubric, “At dawn and in the night the worshipper shall bow down before the Throne-bearer, and shall speak as follows” (Sayce, *ibid.*, p. 79).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that ye do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" Though full of rage and fury, Nebuchadnezzar was willing to give the men an opportunity of retracting their decision, and once again they were placed between the alternatives of committing what their consciences knew to be a heinous sin, or of suffering a most cruel death. But as the Son of God was a Saviour of men before He became man Himself, so also did He support the faith of those whom He had chosen to be His witnesses, before He had Himself given an example of infinite patience and infinite fortitude. Through His help the three children made their heroic reply: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king; but if not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."¹ Words expressive of the most childlike faith in God their heavenly Father! They say that if He pleases, He can deliver them; but if He will not, they are determined not to forsake Him. "Though he slay them yet will they trust in Him."

The furnace was in the neighbourhood of the spot where the service for the dedication of the image had been held, and it was soon prepared for the State punishment of those whom the king could not regard as other than infidels. The fiery chamber itself, so far as we can gather from Daniel's narrative was constructed with two large openings, one in the vaulted roof, and one at the side. Fuel abounded in the locality, and as vast amounts of naphtha were found in wells around Babylon, there could have been no difficulty found in obtaining a very intense heat at the expense of a small amount of labour. As the punishment of burning was reserved for State offences (for such is the inference which may be drawn from the other solitary instance recorded in Scripture²), the execution of the sentence was carried out publicly; and accordingly, that the criminals might be the better seen by the assembled masses, approach to the upper opening of the chamber must have been made by means of a large balcony raised above it.

¹ Dan. iii. 16-18.

² Jer. xxix. 22. The offence of Ahab and Zedekiah was no less than high treason.

It appears from the narrative before us that the furnace was quite prepared for the terrible purpose for which it was to be employed. But, at the same time, we may infer from the king's order, "that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated," that for some reason or other the furnace was in constant requisition. Recent discoveries enable us to explain this remarkable circumstance.

It was conjectured some years ago¹ that the custom of disposing of their dead by means of cremation was practised by the ancient Babylonians. This conjecture has now been proved correct, and it appears that the Accadians, when they invaded Mesopotamia, introduced at the same time the custom of burning the remains of the dead. Their theory was "that fire was the great purifier of moral, as well as of physical evil." Just as fire was "the polisher of gold and silver," as the hymn says, so also had it power "to turn the breast of the wicked."²

We are thus enabled to see what was the intention of Nebuchadnezzar when he consigned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to the burning fiery furnace. He was unable to believe that any persons could refuse to worship the god whom he believed to be the supreme being, unless he was prompted to do so by some evil spirit dwelling within him. Consequently, he cast the three pious Israelites into the flames, which he trusted would destroy those evil spirits which had prompted them to refuse to worship his image.

On this occasion two unlooked-for prodigies occurred. No sooner did the executioners attempt to retreat after having cast the three holy children into the furnace than the flames overtook them and slew them. In his zeal for the honour of his god Nebuchadnezzar had used the sacred number "seven," ordering the fire to be made seven times more ardent than it was wont to be heated, but he saw his most mighty men killed by the heat. And then a second wonder struck his astonished sight. He had seen the three men bound in their long linen dresses, their shorter woollen tunics, and their turbans. He had seen the three fall into the midst of the fire bound, but as he gazed into the furnace through the lower opening, he saw four men

¹ Mr. G. Smith, in the "Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archaeology," vol. iii. pp. 171, 567.

² Mr. G. Bertin, in the "Babylonian and Oriental Record," vol. i. pp. 17-21.

loose walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth, he said, "is like the Son of God."

Here let us pause a moment to reflect upon the prayer and beautiful hymn, which in some ancient translations of the Bible is inserted at this part of the chapter. It is found in the Latin, Greek, and Syriac Versions, that is to say, in the most ancient and most important ones, though it is not found in the Chaldee, in which language this part of the Book of Daniel is written. The apocryphal character of the addition is undoubted, but yet at a very early period of the history of the Church Christians made use of it as a Hymn of Praise,¹ and even Jerome, who speaks with authority upon the subject of the Canonical Books of the Old Testament, remarks that "he must say a few words upon it, in order that he may not seem to omit all mention of it."²

According to this apocryphal story, Azariah commenced with blessing God for His mercies, praying that they may not fail himself and His friends in their present hour of trouble, but that deliverance may be vouchsafed, so that men may know that Jehovah "is the only God, and glorious all over the world." The servants of the king are represented as heaping combustible materials upon the burning fuel, "till the flames streamed forth above the furnace forty-nine³ cubits." Upon this "the angel of the Lord came down into the oven together with Azarias and his fellows, and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven, and made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind, so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt nor troubled them. Then the three, as out of one mouth, praised, glorified and blessed God," in the words with which we are all familiar, concluding with a doxology founded upon the words of the great thanksgiving hymn in the psalter.⁴

There is no doubt as to the antiquity of this addition to the Book of Daniel, but probably on account of the feelings of hatred which the three holy children express with regard to their enemies, it was not universally received by the Church.

¹ Athanasius, "De Virginibus," § 20.

² Jerome on verse 23: "Hucusque Hebræi legunt; media quæ sequuntur usque ad finem Cantici trium puerorum in Hebraico non habentur; de quibus ne omnino præterisse videamur pauca dicenda sunt."

³ The Jews appear to have been fond of magnifying the number seven. Thus in the Targum on Isa. xxx. 26, we read that "the light of the sun shall be 343 (*i. e.*, $7 \times 7 \times 7$) the light of the moon." ⁴ Psa. cxxxvi. 1

Most probably, like the Book of Tobit,¹ or the apocryphal additions to the² Book of Esther, it had a Hebrew original. However it bears all the marks of what is commonly called a Midrash, that is, a legendary lesson, founded upon the history which the writer is considering.

But to return to the marvel which was witnessed by the king. "He saw four men, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Well may the king have asked himself, "Who is this Son of God that I might believe on Him?"³—He evidently pondered amidst his wonder, showing us that the mercy of God was leading even him, the anti-Christian monarch of pre-Christian times, in the direction of the truth. And he arrived at one conclusion, which though far below the truth, was far in advance of any religious statement hitherto made by him, that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was a true god, though only one out of many; and the "Son of God," though probably he recognized no Divine Person in him, he believed to be a supernatural being.

But we must not pass over the phrase the "Son of God" without considering more fully (1) what the king meant by the title, and (2) what we learn from this manifestation of the Divine power.

(1) The clay tablets give us many illustrations of the way in which the Babylonians employed the words "father" and "son" when enunciating theological propositions. Thus we find it stated of the god Anu that he "possesses the life of Assur father of the great gods."⁴ So again, "Almighty king is Anu the first born of the gods."⁵ Merodach is described as speaking to his father "Ea," and "Ea answered his son Merodach."⁶ Then another statement is made "Seven are the gods the sons of Bel, who is the voice of the firmament; they heap up the seat."⁷ In all these passages the words "father" and "son" appear to be employed to signify an elder god when spoken of in relation to a younger corresponding deity.

Another striking phrase occurs in an Incantation "O altar, son of heaven, may the son of Ea, Merodach the son of Eridu purify my hand."⁸ In what sense the altar is called the son of

¹ Neubauer, "The Book of Tobit," Oxford, 1878.

² "Jelinek Bet-ha-Midrash," part v. Vienna, 1873. ³ John ix. 36.

⁴ Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 128. ⁵ Ibid., p. 483. ⁶ Ibid., p. 494.

⁷ Ibid., p. 495. ⁸ Ibid., p. 511.

heaven, or why it is invoked, it is not easy to say, but Merodach is called the "son of Eridu," because he was worshipped in that city. Further, we find the prayer, "May the king, the son of his god, give ear to thee for judgment;"¹ and the incantation, "Every curse which has seized upon the king, the son of his god." Here the word "son" probably means no more than one who is devoted to his god, and we are reminded of the way in which the words Elohim (gods) and B'nē Elohim (sons of God) are used in Hebrew, the one referring to judges, or nobles, the other to angels.

It does not seem that the words used by Nebuchadnezzar can have been employed by him in any of the above senses. It may be conjectured, however, that he identified the Form which he saw, not with any god at all, but rather with a spirit of earth, with one of those "deities who never obtained a prominent place in the official hierarchy of the gods."² As we have already noticed, in the Book of Daniel we find mention made of "the gods whose dwellings is not with flesh."³ One of the gods whose dwelling *was* with flesh may possibly have been identified by the king with what he saw. But it is perfectly plain, that he acknowledged the whole of the miraculous agency, which brought about the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to be due to the God of Israel.

(2) Reading the Old Testament, however, as we Christians read it, through the light that is shed upon it by the Gospels, and believing as we do in the eternity of the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that this Person who appeared was none other than the Saviour Himself. He allowed His Presence to be witnessed by the heathen king. He who had been heard by Adam as a "Voice," had been seen by Abraham as a "Man," by Israel as a "Rock" or a "Cloud," He who in the last times revealed Himself as the Son of God—a distinct Person from the Father, because as the Word He was with Him; and yet one in substance with the Father, because He was the same God that the Father was,—He who had promised by Isaiah, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the fire kindle upon thee"⁴—He had fulfilled His promise. The Psalmist had declared, "The wrath of man shall praise Thee

¹ Sayce's Hibbert Lectures, pp. 487, 509.

² *Ibid.*, p. 217.

³ Dan. ii. 11.

⁴ Isa. xliii. 2.

and the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain,"¹ and that prediction, so frequently verified in former times, was now again realized by His three faithful servants.

Here we take leave of them. They appear not again in the sacred pages. All we know is that "The king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon,"² and in their exalted station no doubt they continued prospering, as honest and faithful men always do, especially if they have as their friend one who is little less than a universal monarch to 'make them prosper.'³

¹ Psa. lxxvi. 10.

² Dan. iii. 30.

³ Ibid., marginal translation.

CHAPTER VII.

A DREAM OF SAD IMPORT.

Absence of notes of time in Daniel—The king's second dream occurred during a period of peace—Neglect of previous warnings—The State document—Biblical expressions employed in it—How this is to be accounted for—The dream—Four points of special interest contained in it—Effect produced upon Daniel by hearing the dream—His counsel to the king—Consequence of neglecting the Divine warning—Influence of the king's character felt during his madness—His recovery—Traditions respecting him in ancient authors—One strange misrepresentation—The true lesson learned from him.

ONE of the many great difficulties which the student of the Book of Daniel must be prepared to encounter, is the partial absence of sufficient chronological data to enable him to approximate to the time when many of the events occurred which are recorded in it. For instance, in the first part of his book Daniel has given us very few notes of time at all, while in the six last chapters of it, he has left very minute dates of the times, when he saw the different visions, which he describes. In the six first chapters, with the exception of the epoch of the Captivity, and of Nebuchadnezzar's first vision, no dates are noticed at all. As we observed in the last chapter, it is almost impossible to assign, with certainty, any date to the setting up of the Colossus. It is equally difficult to say when the dream of mournful import occurred which forms the subject of the fourth chapter.

It is worth while mentioning, however, that in the Chaldee text (for such is the language in which chapter ii. vii. of Daniel are written), the third and fourth chapters are more closely connected than they are in the English translation, the three first

verses of the latter being joined to the former. But we cannot infer from this that the two events occurred at about the same time, because the sacred writers do not for the most part pay any great regard to the chronological order of events, but arrange them with a view to sequence of subject matter. Nor should it be passed over, that the Septuagint, which is always ready either to make or to explain difficulties, assigns the event to the eighteenth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. No such date, however, is possible, as at that time the king was engaged in the siege of Jerusalem. The Septuagint has the honour of standing alone among the Greek versions with this guess at the date, and a great authority states "that the seventy considerably differ from the Hebrew verity."^x

Accordingly, the only clue to the date of this event that we can obtain is what the king tells us himself about his condition at the time when he had the vision. He says that he was at perfect rest. "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace."² His wars were over. He was the master of a large portion of the known world, and, as at the period indicated in the last chapter, he had little work on hand, except to devote his mind to architecture and the fine arts. We must look for a period of peace in his busy reign, and when the discovery of some historical tablets shall have enabled us to find out this, we shall find it possible to assign some probable date to the dream.

In order that we may understand the narrative more distinctly, let us remember that twice already in the Book of Daniel we have read of the reproofs which the king had received from the God of Israel. On two occasions, indeed, his own gods had been brought into conflict with Jehovah, and on each they had been vanquished. Accordingly, Nebuchadnezzar, having a fairly opened and unprejudiced mind, had already confessed that the God of Daniel was a "God of gods," and a "King of kings," and that no god could deliver as He who was the object of the worship of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Thus he had indeed partially acknowledged the value of these two lessons which he had learned; but there was another lesson which was being taught him every day of his life which he had neglected. This was taught him by the presence of Israel in Babylon,

^x Jerome on Dan. ix. 6, "multum ab Hebraica veritate discordant."

² Dan. iv. 4.

which was a standing witness to the truth and omniscience of Jehovah. There can be no doubt that Nebuchadnezzar must have been fully aware of this fact, for we know that he was intimately acquainted with the Prophet Jeremiah, so much so, that he had ordered his general, Nebuzaradan, upon the capture of Jerusalem, to take him, and look well to him and do him no harm.¹ From that prophet he must have heard the predictions concerning himself and the captivity of Judah. Accordingly, he had seen the verification of these prophecies about himself; the Israelites in captivity were a convincing proof to him of the truth of Jehovah's word; but yet he allowed the Divine warnings to pass by unheeded.

It may perhaps be thought strange that a man should have forgotten three such striking lessons as these, but we must remember the education that he had received, and the excitement and turmoil in which he lived. We may remember also our own personal history, and consider whether we are not in a great measure guilty of neglecting Divine warnings, a guilt which is greater in ourselves than it was in the case of the king of Babylon, because the light that has been given to us is far greater than that which shone upon his path.

According to the record given us by Daniel, the narrative begins with a State document. There is a royal proclamation which publishes to all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, the signs and wonders which the high God had wrought towards the king. And before mentioning what these wonders are, the proclamation states in the most remarkable language the king's admiration at the greatness of God. "How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion from generation to generation."²

The language strikes us at once as Scriptural, rather than such as befits a State document. The expressions "signs" and "wonders," of course suggests many parallel expressions in the Bible, and the rest of the heading brings to our mind several other passages, in which the everlasting character of Jehovah's kingdom is spoken of.³ But towards the end of the document the language still more closely resembles the writings of the Old Testament. It is impossible to read the final Doxology,

¹ Jer. xxxix. 12.

² Dan. iv. 3.

³ Psa. x. 16.

("And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing ; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him 'What doest thou?')¹ without thinking of the words of Isaiah. "All nations before Him are as nothing ; and they are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity,"² "that bringeth out their hosts by number . . . not one faileth,"³ and the words of Job, "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder Him ? who will say unto Him, What doest thou ?"⁴

Some persons have found it a considerable stumbling block to read such words in such a context ; but there is no real difficulty whatever in the matter. The words, though remarkably Biblical in character, are actually no citations at all. They are simply thoughts which occur in the Babylonian hymns, as well as in Scripture. If we find in these hymns such words as "Heaven and earth are thine."⁵ "Wickedness and evil thou destroyest, justice and righteousness thou bringest to pass,"⁶ we need not be surprised at the parallels to Scriptural language which we meet with here. It is needless, therefore, for us to speculate whether Daniel drew up the proclamation and inserted in it the Scriptural language. It is enough to remember that the Babylonian and the Jewish religion were alike Semitic, and that the words are quite as much in accordance with the religious ideas of Babylon as they are with those of the Bible.

He proceeds to state that none of his own wise men were able to make known to him the interpretation of the dream. They had indeed been summoned, but either failed or feared the consequences of predicting evil to the king. Daniel, most probably, had been absent from Babylon, his duties having called him into the provinces ; but on his return he was called before the king, who told him the dream.

He had seen in his night vision a huge tree planted in the midst of the earth, which grew larger and larger as he gazed at it, till at length it had attained such a size that it could be seen from all parts of the earth. Its fruit also was large and plentiful, so as to suffice for the food of all flesh. Suddenly a heavenly being descended, and cried, like a herald, "Hew ye down the tree, and cut off his branches . . . yet leave the stump in the earth,

¹ Dan. iv. 35.

² Isa. xl. 17.

³ Ibid, xl. 26.

⁴ Job ix. 12.

⁵ Sayce's "Hibbert Lectures," p. 501.

⁶ Ibid., p. 516.

but with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field ; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth ; let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him and let seven times pass over him . . . to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." ¹

Several features in this dream demand our attention, before we proceed to notice the interpretation given to it by the prophet.

(1.) First we should notice the emblem of the tree. This imagery was perfectly familiar to the Semitic mind. The green leaf was considered as the outward sign of the prosperity of a righteous man,² while the withering leaf, "which seeth when heat cometh,"³ represented just the reverse. In this way a tree, was regarded as an emblem of human life,⁴ and in course of time, among some nations, trees became objects of worship.⁵ Such had been the case in Israel during the period of the Monarchy ; while with the Assyrians, the tree ⁶ was an emblem of the god Assur ; and portraits of sacred trees have been found on sarcophagi belonging to a date considerably later than that of Daniel.

At the time of the Exile it appears that the tree was regarded as a representation of the Assyrian Empire. Ezekiel in his prophecy of the overthrow of Egypt especially selects the cedar as a type of Assyria in her strongest days. "The Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature ; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all nations."⁷

¹ Dan. iv. 10-17. ² Psa. i. 3. ³ Jer. xvii. 8 ; Isa. lxiv. 6. ⁴ Isa. lxx. 22.

⁵ See Isaiah lvii. 5. ⁶ Rawlinson's "Ancient Monarchies," vol. iii. p. 7.

⁷ Ezek. xxxi. 3-6.

It is impossible to read this passage without being struck with the parallels to it which we find in Daniel. "I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all. The beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it."¹ We need not doubt, after comparing this passage with the Book of Daniel, that the comparison of nations to trees was one with which the Babylonians were not unfamiliar.

(2.) Secondly, we must observe that the king saw the tree in the act of growing. Now let us remember that as a general rule, the background of every ordinary dream that we have is for the most part some detail taken from our daily life, which has pre-occupied our minds during the day, and recurs at night, occasionally dressed up in some very fantastic garb. This is, apparently, what was the case with Nebuchadnezzar. In his waking moments he had been thinking about the *growth* of his empire. This thought naturally suggested to him, while sleeping, the *growth* of the tree. His own world-wide empire painted to his vision the tree of enormous size, and the countless crowds who were dependent upon the tree for their support. Possibly, like ourselves at times, he was aware of the cause of his dream; but it was the meaning of it, not the cause, which troubled him.

(3.) Again, another very important feature in the dream is the "heavenly watcher." It is far from easy to discover what this means. Literally translated the words signify "a watcher a holy one." The Septuagint explain them to mean an angel, an opinion which Jerome approves of, reminding us of the very apposite verse in the Psalter, "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."² This is probably the correct meaning. However, the Greek version by Theodoret puts the Chaldee word into Greek letters, leaving the meaning of the word "Eir" as doubtful as it was before.

The question is, what did the king think that he saw?

Now the Babylonians believed³ very distinctly in the existence of Divine Providence. They held that nothing took

¹ Dan. iv. 10-12.

² Psal. cxxi.

³ Diodorus II. 30.

place upon earth without the consent of the gods. These, however, required to be informed of what took place upon earth, and accordingly they had their messenger named Papsukal,¹ just as in Greek Mythology the sun acquainted the gods with what occurred.² Accordingly we have no reason to doubt that some Babylonian deity or genie formed what we may call the natural background to this phenomenon in the king's dream. But in reality this dream came from no Babylonian god; it was, as Daniel shows, "the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king."³

(4.) Lastly, we may reasonably inquire what meaning is to be attached to the words "seven times"? The use of the number seven, as a sacred number, has been already mentioned, the whole difficulty turns upon the employment of the word "times." Are we to explain it to mean a year of three hundred and sixty days. According to Josephus⁴ we are to understand that the poor king suffered seven years from this awful visitation. But at a very early time we find that a more lenient interpretation was given to the sentence. The "times" were understood to mean the two principal seasons of the year, summer and winter, so that seven "times" were explained to mean only three years and a half. Such was the opinion of Theodoret, whose commentary is remarkable for sound sense. The expression, however, is best left indefinite, (as it is in the version generally printed in Greek Bibles, and rendered "seasons.") What these were, none can tell, but that they were in some way connected with one or more of the heavenly bodies is plain from the words "seven times *pass over* him." Whether years, months, or even days are intended, it is impossible to say, but the punishment of the unhappy king was infinitely terrible, whatever the length of its duration may have been.

The effect upon Daniel, produced by the narrative of the dream, was simply stupifying. He saw in a glance, that the prophecy, for such it really must be considered, was unfavourable to the king. A friendship had grown up, as it does occasionally, between sovereign and subject. The one had been raised to his high position by the kindness of the other, and had always proved himself faithful to his trust. Thus

¹ "Records of the Past," vol. i., p. 147; Sayce's "Hibbert Lectures," p. 224.

² Homer "Odys," viii. 270; "Ibid." iii. 277.

³ Dan. iv. 24.

⁴ "Ant.," X. x. 6.

gratitude was the ground of the friendship between the two men, and it was genuine sympathy with his master for his coming misery which prompted Daniel to be "astonied for one hour," and to say "My Lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies."¹ Forthwith he gave to the king the explanation that lies on the surface of it, and promised him a continued course of prosperity so soon as he shall have learned that "the heavens do rule," and this, not in that sense in which the unfortunate monarch had been educated by his wise men to understand it, but in the higher sense that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will."

Daniel's interpretation of the dream concludes with a serious and plainspoken call to repentance. "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility."² As has been well observed by a recent writer, "Oppression and injustice were probably almost inseparable from heathen despotism. Anyhow, Daniel's advice implies that Nebuchadnezzar had fallen into them. His advice, then, is to those same two acts which the Saviour of the world accepted in Zacchæus, reparation and deeds of love. "Redeem thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the afflicted." If the gospel has any other terms of forgiveness than the breaking off of sin by its contrary, righteousness; if there is any other valid token of repentance than newness of life, or if mercy shall cease to have that prerogative with God, that the merciful shall obtain mercy, then we may think that this advice belonged to a decayed Judaism. But if the copying of those two great attributes of God is essential to the Christian, and in the Great Day mercy shall rejoice over judgment, then we shall admire the great prophet who fearlessly admonished of his sins the conqueror of the world, in the centre of his self-created magnificence, and exhorted him to a greater work than the conquest of the world, the conquest of himself, and to a greater glory than his stupendous works, to imitate that most glorious prerogative of the King of kings, the mercifulness of our God."³

¹ Dan. iv. 19.

² Ibid. ver. 27.

³ Dr. Pusey's "Daniel the Prophet," p. 559.

The promise, however, was, like other Divine promises, only conditional. We have noticed how Divine truth was gradually finding an entrance into the king's heart, but as yet his conversion had been only partial. He had already forgotten the lesson which had been taught him by the deliverance of the three martyrs from his fiery furnace, namely that there was "One" who was stronger than himself. Even this kindly warning of Daniel was lost upon him. As it is stated, a terrible catastrophe occurred. "All this came upon the King Nebuchadnezzar."¹ Hardly had a year passed, before he was walking upon the terraced roof of his palace in the kingdom of Babylon, surveying the grand buildings which he had erected, thinking about a world lying prostrate at his feet, and admiring the magnificence of his state. One sentence only was uttered by him, in language similar to what he employs in his inscriptions, ascribing *all* his success to himself. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" In a moment the sentence was carried into effect. In a moment of arrogance he lost for a time that kingdom which deeds of mercy and forgiveness might have secured to him. The voice came from heaven, "The kingdom is departed from thee." The reason of the poor king failed him; he became subject to one of the most terrible forms of insanity, and was separated from his fellow men.

Perhaps the real influence of Nebuchadnezzar, and the true greatness of his character, cannot be seen more clearly than they are from the conduct of the Babylonians towards him upon this melancholy occasion. As a rule, in the East, everything depended upon the personal activity of the king, and his constant presence to direct every movement whether in the direction of war, fine art, politics, theology, or civil engineering. But in this case the king was in a helpless condition, confined to one of his palatial parks, and there shut off from all intercourse with the outer world. Here he was treated, most probably, not as unfortunate persons are at the present time by the kindness of skilled physicians, who have made a study of human infirmity, but by his own magicians, who bound their sacred texts around him, and recited over him some of those incantations to which we have already referred.² Yet the

¹ Dan. iv. 28.

² See Chapter IV.

whole of the State machinery went on just as if the mainspring itself were sound. No attempts were made to nominate a successor or even a regent. The prestige of the great conqueror, aided, doubtless, by the wisdom of Daniel, was in itself sufficient to maintain the empire.

The nature of the form of insanity which seized Nebuchadnezzar need not be dwelt upon. It is sufficient to say that it has been known in ancient and modern times alike. The subject is discussed fully, and instances of it are given in various books dealing exclusively with the subject matter of the Book of Daniel.²

At length the seven times had passed over the king, and once again he lifted up his eyes in gratitude to the God who had mercifully restored him to his senses, and made a proclamation to all his dominions of the wonders that had been done to him. How many years he survived his recovery cannot be said, inasmuch as we are not aware of the date of his sickness. We know, however, that he reigned forty-three years in all, and if our surmise was correct, that the golden image was set up by him in the thirtieth year of his life, he may have reigned ten years in peace and happiness. It may be mentioned in connection with this subject that there are² tablets in the British Museum which refer to the thirty-sixth and fortieth year of his reign. It is needless, however, to transcribe these, as they refer only to the affairs of private individuals, and contain no matter of interest beyond the evidence which they give us of the great care with which bonds or promissory notes were drawn up in ancient Babylon.

Of the end of the great king we know nothing. Various fragments of ancient historians have been preserved by Josephus and other writers, which hint at some mysterious silence with regard to the history of his later days. A notice is given by Berosus that he suffered from a lingering sickness before his death.³ Megasthenes also, having mentioned that he invaded Libya and Iberia, states that he went up to the top of his palace, and was there overpowered by some god, and said

² See Dr. Pusey's "Daniel," pp. 425-434; Bishop Wordsworth's "Commentary" on Dan. iv. 21; Mr. Fuller in the "Speaker's Commentary," vol. vi. p. 293.

² Bezold's "Zeitschrift für Keitschriftforschung," vol. i. pp. 87-95.

³ In Müller, "Fragm. Hist. Græc."

“I, Nebuchadnezzar, foretell to you, O Babylonians, the calamity which will befall you, which both Bel, my forefather, and the queen Beltis, are unable to persuade the fates to avert. A Persian mule will come, who will find your gods his allies, and will bring slavery upon you. . . . He then, after uttering his oracle, disappeared.”¹

We cannot draw any solid inferences from these passages. All that we know is that Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of the heathen heroes of the Bible, disappears from our view at this point, never to appear again in the pages of Sacred History. If we marvel at the greatness of his conquests and public buildings, we wonder all the more at his final conviction, which he expressed to all his subjects, “I praise, extol, and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.” It is not for us to say what will be his lot in the last judgment, whether he will stand at the right hand or at the left of the Judge. But of this we may be certain, that mercy was showed to him in this life, that his heart was accessible to the truth, and we hope that the same God, who enables those who have received His Holy Spirit to do all things by Jesus Christ, led him to acknowledge the one true God, and further, that He will show him mercy in that day.

The history recorded by Daniel, however, simple as it appears to us by the light that has been thrown upon it by ancient documents and monuments, was regarded as incredible by many persons who lived in early Christian times. The most singular misreading of it was that which supposed the whole chapter to be an allegory referring to Satan. The cause of this marvellous misinterpretation seems to have been the fact that according to Daniel's account Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole world, while history did not record his having made any conquests over Europe and Eastern Asia. Hence, those who desired to maintain the literal truth of the Bible, imagined that the king mentioned by Daniel had no real existence whatever, but was a figure of Satan. Jerome mentions this error with some fulness in his commentary on the fourth chapter of Daniel, and from him we learn that the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar, after seven times had passed over him, was erroneously supposed to mean that Satan after a certain time

¹ In Müller, “Fragm. Hist. Græc.”

should be restored to his former dignity. And the increase of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion after his recovery taught in a parable that Satan, after his restoration, would be far greater than he was before his fall. To these Jerome replies, "How could the angels who had never fallen receive as their chieftain one who had returned unto God by repentance?"

But it is needless to do more than notice so great perversions of God's truth. What we do learn clearly is, that the grace of God is given to all freely, and if it was given to a heathen king in such abundance, how much more abundantly will it be given to those who know Him, and serve Him in spirit and in truth.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FALL OF BABYLON.

The successors of Nebuchadnezzar—Evil Merodach—Neriglissar—Labosoarchod—Nabonidus—Belshazzar—Who he was, and what office he held—His feast—Description of it—Not held in Babylon, but at Accad—The writing on the wall—Failure of the wise men to read it—Daniel's interpretation of it—The writing fulfilled—Chronological table.

IT may be truly said that when Nebuchadnezzar died, the sun of Babylon set. No successor of his upon the imperial throne attained any note. He was immediately followed by Evil Merodach, of whom very little is known. According to the brief notices of him given in the Book of Kings,¹ and in the parallel passage of Jeremiah,² it appears that his first act was to set the captive Jehoiachin at liberty, and assign him the position which captives of his station in life were accustomed to hold at the conqueror's court. If, indeed, we may trust Josephus,³ Jehoiachin was not only released from prison, but was actually esteemed by Evil Merodach among his most intimate friends, and received large presents from him in recompense for the harsh treatment which he had undergone.

It is highly probable that it was Daniel who influenced Evil Merodach to perform this act of kindness towards the royal prisoner. It is perfectly fair to assume that this was the case; for there is no reason for supposing that Daniel lost his high rank in the State when his first patron died.

Josephus informs us that the reign of Evil Merodach lasted eighteen years; but it is hard to reconcile this with the received

¹ 2 Kings xxv. 27-30.

² Jer. lii. 31-34.

³ "Ant." X. xi. 3

chronology. Accordingly, we are compelled to fall back upon the account given by Berosus,¹ which is to the effect that after a wicked reign of two years, the monarch was murdered in a conspiracy. The conspirator is known to us from the Scriptures² as Nergel Sharezer. On a former occasion, when the Babylonian army took Jerusalem, this man had acted as Rab-Mag, a title which implies "chief of the priests," or "mighty prince." Subsequently he married the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, becoming the brother-in-law of the king against whom he had conspired.

The reign of Nergal Sharezer, or Neriglissar, is passed over by Daniel in the same silence as that of his predecessor. It consisted of four years only, namely, from B.C. 560 to B.C. 556, and, as far as we know, was of a very unwarlike character. He appears to have been considerably occupied in restoring two of the temples of Merodach in Babylon, and in adding to their ornamentation.³ He also rebuilt a palace, and made some alterations in the courses of various canals for the purposes of irrigation, and executed certain other works "which the former king had planned, and arranged."⁴ Nothing at present is known of his life or death, beyond what is contained in the above short notice.

His successor was a person of similar obscurity, known as Laborosoarchod, or more correctly, Labashi-marduk. He is stated to have been a child upon his accession, and to have reigned only for a few months. The only authority for his existence is Berosus, from whom Josephus cites as follows—"by reason of the very ill temper and ill practices he exhibited to the world, a plot was laid against him by his friends, and he was tormented to death. After his death the conspirators got together, and by common consent put the crown upon the head of Nabonnedus, a man of Babylon, and one who belonged to that insurrection."⁵

In the course of the reign of this king, who is better known to us as Nabonidus, or Nabonahid, the history of Daniel is again brought before us. During the three reigns which had occurred in the short period of the six years that had elapsed since the

¹ In Müller, "Fragm. Hist. Græc."

² Jer. xxxix. 3.

³ "Records of the Past," vol. v. pp. 137-142.

⁴ Ibid. vol. v. pp. 139-142.

⁵ Josephus *adv. Apion*, i. 20.

death of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon appears to have continued in a flourishing condition, undisturbed by any foreign wars. The commerce of the city, no doubt, had been considerably developed, but the frequent recurrence of conspiracies which is mentioned leads us to infer that there must have been considerable discontent at home. Possibly this was due to the peaceful policy pursued by Nebuchadnezzar's indolent successors, which stirred up the military spirit of the leaders of the army, and made them thirst for the repetition of the scenes of conquest with which they had been familiar in their earlier years. It does not appear, however, that Nabonidus ever engaged in any foreign wars. He imitated his predecessors, as we read in his inscription, by building temples, embellishing and restoring the works of those who had reigned before him.

Such were the internal circumstances which led to the fall of Babylon. External circumstances combined to accelerate the downfall of the doomed city.

At the time of the accession of Nabonidus the power of Persia had considerably increased. A formidable insurrection had already broken out in the East of Babylonia, which finally resulted in the supremacy of Persia as dominant power of the world. What Nabonidus had first to settle was, what steps he should take to interrupt the progress of the victorious Persians. There is no doubt that about the time of his reign Cyrus was meditating a descent upon Lydia, of which Cræsus was at that time king. If the story told by Herodotus¹ is reliable, a defensive alliance was made between the Lydians on the one hand, and the Egyptians and Babylonians on the other. It appears, however, that before the allies were able to come to the assistance of Lydia, Sardis, the capital, had fallen, and Cræsus was a prisoner in the hands of Cyrus.

Nabonidus appears to have been speedily informed of the perilous position in which Babylon was placed by the rapid strides that the new Persian Empire was making under Cyrus, and we find that he commenced at once to strengthen the fortifications of his capital. Situated as it was in a vast plain, it had no natural strongholds; but, on the other hand, the many channels of the Euphrates and the Tigris were serious obstacles to an enemy approaching from the north-east. According to Berosus,² certain walls enclosing the river were made of baked

¹ Herodotus i. 77.

² In Müller, as above.

bricks and asphalt. Herodotus¹ states that the Queen Nitocris made certain vast additions to the existing fortifications, which no doubt were constructed for the purpose of preventing the approach of the dreaded Persians. But we must remember that the existence of Nitocris, as a historical personage, rests upon the testimony of Herodotus only. She is mentioned neither in the Canon nor by Berosus. However, she has been identified with the queen who is spoken of by Daniel as taking part in a striking scene which will shortly demand our attention.²

Another personage now comes before us, the last prince of Babylon, namely Belshazzar, but considerable difficulty stands in our way when we endeavour to state who he was. Taking the account given in the Book of Daniel as our first authority, we observe that the queen speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as his father,³ and Daniel repeats the same statement.⁴ If we are to take these words as literally true, it can only follow that Belshazzar and Nabonidus are the same person, and that the former is called the son of Nebuchadnezzar, because he married that king's daughter.

This view has actually been maintained by Josephus,⁵ and by some modern writers⁶ also, but it must be remembered that, (1) the Jews were very lax in their way of expressing relationship, and as they had no word in their language which would signify "grandfather," or "great grandfather," such relationship might readily be implied by the one word "father." Also (2) it is worth while to notice that Nabonidus actually had a son named Belshazzar. In the inscription of Nabonidus, to which we recently referred,⁷ after describing the various temples and public works which he had executed, that king prays the moon to preserve the life of "Bel-sar-usur," my eldest son, the offspring of my body; fix thou firmly in his heart the awe of thy great divinity, that he may never fall into sin, and that his glory may endure."

Further (3) as evidence that Belshazzar had a certain amount of independence during his father's lifetime, it may be mentioned that two tablets exist referring to the reign of Nabonidus, in one of which it is stated that in the seventh year of that king,

¹ i. 185-7. ² Dan. v. 10. ³ Ibid. v. 11. ⁴ Ibid. 18, 22.

⁵ "Ant." X. xi. 2.

⁶ See "Transactions of Society of Biblical Archæology," vol. vii. pp. 149, 150.

⁷ Above, p. 88.

Belshazzar sent certain offerings to the temple E Barra ; in the other, Belshazzar is said to have given to his major-domo certain sums as tithes of the gods Bel, Nebo, Nergal, and the lady of Erech.¹ If Belshazzar had an establishment separate from his father's, it is not improbable that he may have had some share in conducting the government of the country.

Perhaps (4), though the point is very small, we may infer from the proclamation² which was made respecting Daniel on the last night of Belshazzar's life, that this prince ranked next his father in imperial dignity, and that the interpreter of the dream took precedence of all other State officers except Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

These considerations make it needless for us to identify Belshazzar with Nabonidus.

But (5) an insuperable difficulty has to be encountered by those who attempt to identify the two men. In an inscription of Cyrus, to which we shall refer more fully in the sequel, we read that Nabonidus was king of Babylon at the time of the capture of the city, and the king's son,³ who can be none other than the Belshazzar for whom he prayed, is spoken of in the same inscription as being with the great men and his soldiers in the town of Accad. Now we read in the Book of Daniel that Belshazzar reigned three years ; the inscription, on the other hand, says that the king (Nabonidus) was in Teva, or Tema, a city of Babylonia, whence he removed to E-tur-Kalama, the last place where he is spoken of as having been resident ; hence he fled, and having been overtaken by the Persians, was carried in chains to Babylon. The inference from these passages is, not that Nabonidus was identical with Belshazzar, but that the two men reigned jointly for three years at least, and that their deaths occurred within a very short distance of time from the fall of Babylon. It is true that the inscription speaks only of the "king's son," but that might have been a title which was given to a co-regent, just as in England George the Fourth was called Prince Regent during the lifetime of his father, and performed the acts of a king.

"The king's son was in Accad." So says the inscription, and it is very remarkable that Daniel, who declares that Belshazzar was slain on the night of the banquet, does not give us a single

¹ Mr. Boscawen, in "Babylonian and Oriental Record," vol. ii, pp. 14—18. ² Dan. v. 29. ³ "Transactions" as before, vol. vii., p. 165

hint as to the place where the feast was held. It has been always customary to assume that the events described by Daniel occurred in Babylon ; but not a word to that effect is stated by Daniel himself. If it is urged that the vessels of Jehovah were brought before the king, and that they had been carried to Babylon, it may be asked very reasonably, why should it be supposed that they had remained in the same place for more than half a century? Surely it is most natural to suppose that they had been taken away to adorn other shrines and palaces.

Or, if again we are reminded that Isaiah prophesied that Babylon should fall during a banquet,¹ we must remember that this city underwent several sieges, and even if Isaiah's words apply to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, they are as silent as Daniel is with regard to the place where the feast was held. On the contrary, Isaiah describes a feast in some distant place being suddenly disturbed by the news that Babylon was about to fall, or, in prophetic language, "had fallen." May we not reasonably suppose then, that the feast which Daniel describes was held in Accad ; that the revolution made by the men of Accad was caused by the news of the extreme peril of Babylon being brought to it by the posts? There seems to be nothing to prevent such a view being taken ; to say the least, it is a very curious coincidence that the king's son, whom we know to have been named Belshazzar, should have disappeared from the inscription, after the revolution at Accad, just at the same time when Belshazzar the king disappears from the pages of Daniel, unless the two men are one and the same.

But let Belshazzar be identified with whom we will, it cannot be denied that the account of his last banquet is one of the most graphic descriptions that is found in the whole Scriptures. He was evidently a young prince of debased habits, and not over attentive to the affairs of the State. Circumstances, however, made it necessary for him to hold a levy, at which a thousand of his lords attended. A banquet followed. The king sat by himself at a separate table, apart from the magnates and princes who did him homage. He "tasted" the wine before the assembled multitudes, and while at the height of his enjoyment ordered the sacred vessels of Jehovah to be brought forth from the temple of his god into the banqueting-hall.

What could have induced Belshazzar to think of Jehovah at

¹ Isa. xxi. 1-10.

this particular moment? Could it be possible that he had heard that one of Jehovah's prophets had announced that Cyrus should "loose the loins of kings, and open before him the two-leaved gates?"¹ Or did a sudden presentiment take hold of him that some great catastrophe was at hand, and as he heard of Cyrus' rapid advance did another of these oracles of Jehovah flash across his memory, "Cyrus is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure?"² Or had he received any tradition with regard to Nebuchadnezzar's prophecy about the Persian mule?³

If there is one point which the Book of Daniel brings out more strongly than another, it is the mercy which God shows to those who have not been brought up in the knowledge of Himself. We observe here that even at the last moment of grace, when intoxicated by pride and drink, the name of Jehovah came across Belshazzar's mind; but, alas! it was only to evoke his defiance. The sacred vessels of Jehovah's temple were in his possession. Jehovah's people were his slaves—Jehovah's own city was one of his own outworks. "Surely," he must have argued, "Jehovah is powerless against the god of Accad, or the god of Babylon." So he defied Jehovah openly, and drank in the sacred vessels, both he and the princes, and his wives and concubines. And that nothing in the way of profanation might be omitted, "They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."⁴ Yet at this moment God was giving Belshazzar one last token of His almighty power and love.

Suddenly the king's countenance changed, the bright looks vanished, the joints of his loins were loosed, and in his abject terror "his knees smote one against another." No one knew the cause of this sudden change. Did a sudden panic seize the guests? Apparently so. Henceforth only the king and the wise men, the queen,⁵ and Daniel appear before us. With a cry of terror the guests rapidly disappeared from the awful scene. The presentiment of the approaching destruction had fallen upon them, though they had not seen what the king had seen, namely, fingers of an unseen hand tracing on the

¹ Isa. xlv. i. ² Ibid. xlv. 28. ³ See above, p. 84. ⁴ Dan. v. 3, 4.

⁵ According to the inscription of Cyrus cited above the mother of Nabonidus had died some two years before. This lady must have been the mother of Belshazzar.

plaster, over against the sacred candlestick, words which none could read.

It was the work of a minute for some fugitive to fetch the wise men upon the scene. They, like the queen, had their apartments not so very far from the banquet-house, and the noise and shouting of the hurrying guests had placed them on the alert. With a mighty cry the king summoned as his counsellors the astrologers, the Chaldeans and the soothsayers, forgetting in his terror to summon the fourth order,¹ consisting of the magicians and Daniel their chief. On the entrance of these men, he promised high position in the State, and rich decorations, to any one who could read the writing upon the wall, which was now visible, though the mysterious fingers had disappeared.

Some of the lords had by this time returned, but they were as powerless as the wise men to explain the writing. We need not search far for the reason of their inability to do so. It was not that the character was one that they did not know, not that the language was one with which they were unfamiliar, not that the characters were written in a different order from what was usual. The whole defied their efforts, because it was supernatural. It was of a totally different kind from anything with which they, the servants of Merodach, were familiar. It was the wisdom of the world suddenly and unexpectedly in the height of its pride confuted with a simple thing that came from God.

The inability of the wise men to decipher the writing was the cause of signal discomfiture to the king and his lords. "Then was King Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished."² We have already seen to how large an extent the Babylonians believed in omens and portents. Surely this must have been the very worst portent on record that a writing should appear, and that the wisest and most highly favoured by the gods should be unable to decipher it.

At length the queen, the mother of Belshazzar, heard the confused noise within the banquet-house, some of those present suggesting one scheme, some attempting to cheer the king's drooping courage, some hastening away in terror as to the consequences which might befall them, some in their confusion

¹ Compare Dan. v. 7 with ii. 2.

² Dan. v. 9.

recalling those who had departed. "By reason of the words of the king and of his lords, she came into the banquet-house,"¹ and reminded the king of his ancestor's friend Daniel. In him had been a wisdom higher than that of the other wise men—even the spirit of the holy gods. He was the chief of all the four classes of the wise men, but he had not as yet been summoned: "Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

If it was through fright that the king forgot to send for the magicians and for Daniel, it was equally from his terror that he failed to recognize Daniel when he appeared. He addressed him, "Art thou that Daniel which art of the children of the captivity of Judah whom the king, my father, brought out of Jewry?"² Nothing seems more striking than that one who had held so high a position at court during Belshazzar's short reign should have been personally unknown to him. Perhaps he had neglected the prophet, and now his fear was increased by meeting a man who had uttered words of such fearful import to his grandfather, words, moreover, which had proved so awfully true.

Belshazzar appears to have recognized Daniel after a few minutes' reflection, and made the same offer to him which had been made previously in public to all the wise men, "If thou canst read the writing and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."³ With considerable indignation, Daniel replied that gifts and rewards were immaterial to him. His words do not indicate that he felt the same respect for this king that he did for his predecessor, and after briefly setting before him the moral lessons which were conveyed by the history of Nebuchadnezzar, proceeded to say plainly to Belshazzar, "And thou, his son Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, . . . and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified?"⁴

Let us notice here a remarkable truth which the Holy Spirit teaches us by Daniel's plain-dealing reproof. Divine warnings may be traced in his own personal history by each individual. Belshazzar well knew all the lessons which he might have learnt from the troubles which overtook his forefather, but he

¹ Dan. ver. 10. ² Ibid. ver. 13. ³ Ibid. ver. 16. ⁴ Ibid. vers. 22, 23.

paid no more attention to them than men and women now living pay to similar lessons. And as it is with the individual, so is it with a nation, which is only an assemblage of individuals bound together by a common interest. The sins of the individuals form the sins of the nation; and just as in the life of the individual every pain that he feels, every disappointment that he meets, is a lesson sent from heaven, so is it with the nation. The calamities which overtake it, be they great or small, are a lesson to it, that whatever strength and prosperity it has received are given as blessings from above, and are in no way procured by the sagacity of individual leaders.

Daniel saw the writing, and promptly read to the king the enigmatic but momentous words, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," "Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided." Perhaps the very words themselves, when first read by the prophet, were partially intelligible to the king, for the Chaldee words were not unlike the Aramaic spoken in Babylon. However, that no misunderstanding might ensue, Daniel explained the words. That Almighty One, whom Belshazzar had defied, had Himself numbered the days of his kingdom. While the king had been living recklessly and godlessly, Jehovah had been weighing him in the balances of the heavenly sanctuary, and there he was found to be lighter than vanity itself. All was now finished with Belshazzar's empire, for his kingdom was already divided among the Medes and Persians.

The prophet received the earthly reward which had been promised him, and was elevated to the position of third ruler in the kingdom, that is, most probably, as has been suggested,¹ he was allowed to rank next in order after Belshazzar himself. But the day of grace had passed away from the king for ever, and Daniel's prayers were of no avail to avert the terrible punishment of the man who had neglected his opportunities. Nebuchadnezzar had accepted the grace which Belshazzar had rejected, but now the limit of Divine forbearance had been passed by the latter. The Divine sentence had gone forth, and could not be revoked, "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain,"² and the kingdom passed away for ever from the proud family of Nebuchadnezzar.

¹ See above, p. 90.

² Dan. v. 30

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES, ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL.

B. C.

- 605 Captivity of Daniel.
- 604 First year of Nebuchadnezzar.
- 598 Submission of Jehoiakim.
- 597 Captivity of Jehoiakim. Reign of Zedekiah commences.
- 593 Rebellion of Zedekiah.
- 590 War of Cyaxares with Alyathes.
- 589 Nebuchadnezzar comes to Riblah.
- 587 Fall of Jerusalem. Capture of Zedekiah.
- 586 Siege of Tyre resumed.
- 582 Captivity of Jews, mentioned Jer. lii. 20. Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year.
- 577 Probable date of the capture of Tyre.
- 562 Evil Merodach.
- 561 Release of Jehoiakim, aged 55.
- 560 Murder of Evil Merodach. Neriglissar or Nergal Sharezer.
- 559 Accession of Cyrus to the Median Empire.
- 556 Laborosoarchod. Nabonidus.
- 541 Probable date of Dan. vii. Belshazzar's 1st year. (?)
- 539 Date of Dan. viii. (?) Fall of Babylon, Dan. v. Darius the Mede.
Date of Dan. ix.
- 538 First year of Cyrus, according to the Scripture reckoning. Return of
the Jews under Zerubbabel.
- 537 Foundation Stone of the Temple laid.
- 536 Samaritan Opposition. Date of Dan. x. 12.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONQUEROR OF BABYLON.

The Revolution at Accad—Political causes—Religious causes—Light thrown upon the history by the Inscriptions—Babylon, as the prophets had foretold, destroyed by its own idols—Death of Nabonidus—Accession of Cyrus—Darius the Mede identified with Gobryas—Various hypotheses respecting Darius—Conduct of Cyrus on his accession—Cyrus an Opportunist—Cyrus and Israel—Daniel's position with regard to Cyrus and the return from the Exile—Daniel's difficulties about the end of the Exile—It continues till this day.

ON the night of that banquet, the Prophet Daniel must have heard strange sounds in the streets of Accad ; it was the roar of angry voices, the clash of weapons, the shrieks and groans of wounded and dying men that reached his ears. The king and his principal supporters had been massacred, and all was confusion and uproar. The revolution had broken out, and it was all the more terrible because it was religious, as well as political.

The political character of the revolution is evident. We observed that considerable dissatisfaction had been felt at the indolent character of the successors of Nebuchadnezzar. This had on more than one previous occasion led to a revolution. The same thing happened now, when Cyrus was at the very walls of Babylon itself, and both the king and his son showed such feeble signs of resistance. The revolutionary party declared itself in favour of Cyrus, and looked upon Nabonidus and Belshazzar just as the vine dresser regards the worthless branches which he prunes from the vine.¹

In a former chapter² we have hinted at the religious question which aided to raise the revolution. Nabonidus had been guilty

¹ Isa. xiv. 19.

² Chapter vi.

of what appeared sacrilege to the more religiously-minded of the Chaldeans. He had removed the local gods from their respective sanctuaries, and transferred them to Babylon, endeavouring thereby to establish a religion in which all the gods should equally share the worship of their devotees. This was a most unpopular move. "The removal of the gods implied something more than the removal of the images, and the visible loss of local self government or autonomy. Each image was the centre of a particular cult, carried on in a particular temple, in a particular way, and entrusted to the charge of a special body of priests. . . . Most of the cities which were thus deprived of their ancestral deities were as old as Babylon, many of them claimed to be older; while it was notorious that Babylon did not become a capital until comparatively late in Babylonian history. . . . The policy of Nabonidus, therefore, which aimed at making Merodach, not *primus inter pares*, but absolute lord of captive or vassal deities, shocked the prejudices of the Babylonian people, and eventually proved fatal to the author."¹

It may be noticed how clearly this is brought out in the inscription to which we referred in the last chapter. As year after year returns the writer of the inscription repeats in monotonous terms the following phrases, "The king to Babylon did not go, Nebo to Babylon did not go, Bel did not come forth." The state of irritation of the religious feelings of the people is clearly reflected in the inscription, and this irritation inflamed the fury of the revolutionary party.

The first victim to fall was Belshazzar himself, but his death by no means stayed the torrent of ill-will which had burst out. This was fostered by the total feeling of estrangement from Nabonidus and his family that possessed the Babylonians, and led them to look to the new conqueror as one who should restore the gods to their original shrines; and disposed them to be friendly towards him. Thus politics and religion combined to the overthrow of the Babylonian empire.

It is remarkable to observe that, through the providence of God, the idolatry of Babylon was the cause of the destruction of the city. And this was the very fact which had been foretold by the prophets years before. Isaiah, in prophesying the overthrow of Babylon,² mentions the idols especially as con-

¹ Sayce's Lectures, pp. 88, 89.

² Isa. xxi. 9; xlvi. 1.

nected with it. So again Jeremiah says, "Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces,"¹ and again, "I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up : and the nations shall not flow to him any more : yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall."² It was not merely the helplessness of the idols to deliver Babylon which had been foretold, but also the fact that they really led to the overthrow of the city, which strikes us in reading the prophecy by the light of the history.

There is another remarkable manner in which this history throws light upon earlier prophecy. The passage is well known in which Isaiah describes the terror of the Babylonians at the approach of Cyrus, depicting the enthusiasm of the religious party amongst them in the sarcastic words, "So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, it is ready for the soldering ; and he fastened it with nails that it should not be moved."³ This is precisely what we notice to have occurred in the time of Nabonidus. For some years came the monotonous repetition of the phrase, "Nebo to Babylon did not go, Bel did not go forth," till at last we find that in the seventeenth year of Nabonidus, the year in which he died, "Bel went forth,"⁴ and other gods with him which had been long neglected.

But it was too late for Nabonidus to turn to his gods. Cyrus in person directed his troops against Babylon. A portion of the army had already passed through Accad. Gobryas, a general in the army, led other sections of it from the south. Meanwhile, the indolent Nabonidus, who had apparently halted for a while at the town of Sipar, was captured in his attempt to escape. Some four months later, Cyrus appeared in Babylon, and within six weeks afterwards public mourning was observed for Nabonidus.

With the death of Nabonidus, rather than with that of Belshazzar, we must connect the total ruin of Babylon. The question naturally arises, What was the government which succeeded that of Nabonidus? One answer only can be given, namely, that Cyrus himself became the supreme ruler over all that had been recently possessed by the king of Babylon. But

¹ Jer. l. 2.

² Ibid. li. 44.

³ Isa. xli. 5-7.

⁴ "Proceedings of Society of Biblical Archæology," vol. ix. pp. 163,

a difficult historical notice occurs in Daniel, stating that "Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old."¹ The main difficulty consists in discovering some known historical personage with whom we may identify this Darius under whose reign Daniel played so important a part.

It is generally allowed at present, by those who are most competent to judge,² that the word Darius is the name of an officer, meaning a governor, rather than a proper name. If this is the case we may with good reason identify him with Gobryas, whom, as the inscription states, "Cyrus appointed his governor in Babylon."³ The text of Daniel implies that Darius the Mede was not king by his own right, for it is carefully stated that, "Darius *received* the kingdom,"⁴ and again, that "Darius was made king."⁵ He must have received the kingdom from some one who had a right to bestow it; he must have been made king by some one who had a right to constitute a king. Now Gobryas was made a "Darius," or governor, by Cyrus, according to the inscription; why, then, should not the Darius of Daniel be the Gobryas of the inscription?

A difficulty might be raised on account of the express mention that Darius the Mede is especially spoken of as the "Son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes."⁵ But this is a very superficial difficulty. The only other Ahasuerus of whom we read in the Scriptures, it is true, is to be identified with the well-known Xerxes of classical notoriety, who certainly was not a Mede. But does it follow as a matter of course that the Ahasuerus who is mentioned in the Bible should be the only man called by that name who ever existed? Certainly not. The Ahasuerus of Daniel is a man at present unknown to history, just like many others whose memories pass away with themselves.

We must with all deference notice opinions respecting this Darius which were entertained by writers of antiquity who had traditions remaining in their time which are now lost to us. For instance, Josephus⁶ maintains that Darius was a kinsman of Cyrus, and a son of Astyages. The Septuagint translators

¹ Dan. v. 31.

² Dr. Kautzsch in Herzog and Plitt's "Cyclopædia," vol. iii. p. 500.

³ "Proceedings of Society of Biblical Archaeology," vol. ix. pp. 166, 20.

⁴ Dan. v. 31.

⁵ Ibid. ix. 1.

⁶ "Ant." X. xi. 4.

make a very bold guess that Artaxerxes and Darius are the same person, which is not only a proof of the arbitrary character of their paraphrase of Daniel, but also shows us at what an early period the difficulty was felt. Others identified him with Cyaxares the Second, if indeed such a man ever existed. Lastly, there appears to have been a tradition that the well-known Daric coin received its name, not from Darius the son of Hystaspes, but from some earlier king.¹ The fact is, we need never be ashamed to say "we do not know," when we really have so very slight means of knowing anything certain about a matter as we have in this case.

Let Darius be identified with whom he may, it cannot be denied that Cyrus the Persian was the monarch who succeeded Nabonidus on the throne of Babylon, and that the unknown Darius was his deputy. It appears that one of his first acts was to restore to their local shrines all those gods whom Nabonidus had removed. In fact, Cyrus, from his inscriptions, appears before us rather as a zealous restorer of Babylonian polytheism than as a devout monotheist, who restored the Israelites to Palestine, because their religion, like his, professed faith in only *one* God. The words of Cyrus as recorded in his inscription are full of interest, "The gods who dwelt among them (*i.e.*, certain tribes) I restored to their places, and assigned them permanent habitations. All their people I assembled, and I increased their property, and the gods of Sumir and Accad, whom Nabonidus had introduced at the festivals of the Lord of the gods at Kal-anna, by the command of Merodach the great lord, I assigned them an honourable seat in their sanctuaries, as was enjoyed by all other gods in their own cities. And daily I prayed to Bel and Nebo that they would lengthen my days, and increase my good fortune, and would repeat to Merodach my lord that, 'Thy worshipper Cyrus the king, and his son Cambyses . . .'"² Here the inscription unfortunately breaks off, but these words are sufficient to show that whatever the position may have been of the man who "received the

¹ Scholiast on "Aristoph. Eccles." 602, referred to by Dr. Kautzsch and many others before him. Mr. Budge ("Babylonian Life and History," p. 88) rightly observes, "We must wait, and perhaps when Babylon is excavated we shall find tablets which will offer a solution of the mystery. The Babylonian contract tablets make no mention of this Darius the Median."

² On the Cyrus cylinder see the "Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, New Series, vol. xii. pp. 70-97.

kingdom," or "who was made king," Cyrus regarded himself as the king of Babylon.

Another remarkable circumstance is brought before us by the few lines just cited. It appears that the policy of Cyrus was that of an opportunist both in religious and civil matters. To undo the work of Nabonidus, by restoring the gods to their ancient homes, was, of course, the very best means that he had of appeasing the outraged susceptibilities of the aggravated Babylonians. But the inhabitants of Babylon, we must remember, were only a small part of the vast empire which Cyrus had acquired. There was a large resident population in Babylonia whose political requirements he was constrained to consult. These were the various foreign settlers who, from time to time, had been imported into Babylonia from their own homes, some of them having been colonists for nearly three hundred years. Among them were the Israelites, and the Bible lets us know that their interests were not neglected. A decree was published, similar to many others published at the same time respecting other colonists, that not only might the Israelites return,¹ but also that there were certain prescribed limits within which the new temple at Jerusalem might be built.²

It may be well wondered why the new emperor should have paid this minute attention to such little details as the size of the temple which the Israelites were allowed to build. Here we can see the hand of the veteran statesman Daniel. Known as he had been by the name of Belteshazzar during the whole course of the Babylonian empire, the chief of the wise men, the friendly counsellor of the founder of that magnificent empire, the man who had been heard (by Persian spies perhaps) to speak so plainly to Belshazzar at the last dreadful night in Accad, the last of the ancient royal family of Israel, he, though nearly fourscore and ten years of age, did not scruple to speak to Cyrus in behalf of his own people. Not to speak of the well-known character of Daniel which would command the attention of the emperor, cannot we fancy that we see the old man stand forth before his new master, and endeavour to impress upon him that it was "Jehovah the God of heaven who had given unto him all the kingdoms of the earth,"³ and not those deities whom in his triumphal worship he professed to worship daily?

¹ Ezra i. 2-4.

² Ibid. vi. 3-5.

³ Ibid. i. 2.

In a future chapter we shall notice how the decree of Cyrus was carried out under the guidance of Zerubbabel, prince of the House of Judah, aided by Haggai and Zechariah, who were almost the last of the prophets. But we must here remember how the influence of Daniel, which had already impressed Cyrus, must have inspired these noble Israelites whose mission it was to restore Judah to Jerusalem. Like other great men, they were called to accomplish a hopeless task. First it was their duty to prevail upon the Israelites to leave Babylonia. Then, Palestine having been reached, a hard task would lie before them, as they well knew, in attempting to introduce once more at Jerusalem a power of which so many bitter memories still remained among the tribes situated on the south and south-east.

But the great problem that Daniel had to solve was this: Should he return with the rest of the exiles, or should he remain where he was? We have already been reminded of the great age of the seer. He was well aware of his decreasing powers, and of the very fatiguing character of the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.¹ Was he strong enough to undertake this? He was a true patriot, but he was well aware that the scope of true patriotism may be found abroad as well as at home. He knew full well that his own residence in Babylon, where he stood at the right hand of the governor whom Cyrus had placed there, would make matters smooth for his people in countless ways, and afford them a protection, almost unlimited, which could not have been otherwise acquired by them.

A further difficulty was felt by Daniel. His patriotism was not one sided. Like many noble-hearted Hebrews in modern times, next to his own land he loved his adopted land. He felt and knew that God had in His mercy called him to those duties in Babylon which he had discharged for seventy years, and for this very reason he loved those occupations with which heathen men had entrusted him. Having been the third in rank under Nabonidus, he continued as third under Cyrus. He had, therefore, undoubted proof that God's providence had called him to the post which he held. Daniel followed the dictates of his own conscience, and these justified him in remaining where he was, and refusing to join the exiles on their return. By his conduct he teaches us, that as long as we are serving God and

¹ Ezra viii. 32.

man in that place to which Providence has called us, neither the failings of increasing age which we feel, nor the opposition which we experience at the hands of those who ought to have been our helpers and associates in our good work, ought to deter us from it. But there are very few to whom this lofty consciousness is given; only those who, like Daniel, have kept a good conscience before God at all times, and have lived simple, honest, and straightforward lives. Such persons, when called upon to give their advice upon circumstances of great difficulty, have given their counsel in unambiguous language which none can mistake. When called upon to reprove some national sin, they have done so without any attempts at equivocation, or palliation of the crime. It is to such as have lived like Daniel, with strict and firm principles before them, and to such only, that conscience is the surest guide to practical life.

We may consequently infer that Daniel's grief, like that of his fellow prophets, Haggai and Zechariah,¹ was caused by the fact that so little interest in the great event of the return from the Captivity was felt by the Jews residing in Babylon. Their conduct implied a disbelief both in the written and spoken words of Jehovah. This was the true cause of Daniel's sorrow, that they preferred the comforts of their homes in Babylon to the fatigues of a journey across the desert, and to the very doubtful prospects that they had of maintaining a happy residence in Jerusalem. Overwhelmed with grief on account of these thoughts, Daniel prayed to his Heavenly Father, and received, as we shall see, a rich recompense for his prayers in behalf of his people.

It is hard to realize a man's feelings without knowing all his surroundings, so that it may be well for us to examine Daniel's grief from a different point of view. Looking back at the past, with our Bibles open, and with the pages of ancient and modern history constantly before us, can we say that the actual captivity of Israel ended when the seventy years of the Babylonish Captivity came to an end? If by the return is meant a return of the same numbers from the Captivity as those who entered into exile, it may be true. But within seventy years a population increases itself immensely, so that at least twice as many remained in Babylon in proportion to those who returned. It follows, then, that of all who had permission to return, very few

¹ Hag. i. 2; Zech. i. 12.

availed themselves of it. Many more went back several years later under Ezra, but, then again, a far larger proportion remained behind. If at the present time, we will not say permission, but a State order, were given that every Israelite in England should leave the country and return to Palestine if he pleased, how many would be found to obey the order? The fact is that the dispersion of the Jews in the time of Daniel was much the same as it is now. The return of the Jews to Jerusalem was only a change from one form of dispersion to another. Their life in Palestine before the Exile was as little like their life after it, as was their life in Persia in the times of Esther and Mordecai. After the return from the Captivity, Israel had no separate political existence either as a State or as an independent Power. Everything depended upon Persia. Zerubbabel, though an excellent Jewish Prince, was really a Persian Governor. In later times Ezra and Nehemiah were only officers under the Persians, though they were men in authority over the Jews. We may follow the history of Israel still further down to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the Israelites fought for their autonomy and gained it. Yet their power lasted only a few years, and then it yielded to the iron grasp of Rome.

It was the knowledge that Daniel had of the miserable character of the return under Zerubbabel which caused him such grief and apparent doubt. And, in closing this chapter, let it be distinctly understood that the Captivity of Israel still continues, even to this day,¹ but that the return of those few under the edict of Cyrus is an earnest of a fuller return which shall happen hereafter, when a greater than Cyrus shall summon them. If we can realize this, it will not be so difficult to understand much of what is otherwise enigmatical in the last period of Daniel's life under Cyrus the Persian.

¹ Thus in the "Mussaph Prayer" for the three festivals, used by the modern German Jews, part of the prayer reads as follows, "But by reason of our sins we have been exiled from our land, and removed far from our native soil, so that we are no longer able to go up, and appear, and prostrate ourselves before Thee, or fulfil our duty in the house of Thy selection.

CHAPTER X.

DANIEL'S TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH.

Daniel under Darius the Mede—He resides in Babylon—Character of his private house—His further advancement—Envious feelings show themselves against Daniel—The crafty nature of the attack upon him—King-worship originally an Eastern custom, whence it passed into Greece and Rome—Punishment by exposure to beasts—Daniel's prayer, and the manner of it—He is detected—The king in a dilemma—Sentence executed—The king's conduct—Daniel's delivery—Fate of the accusers—A fictitious miracle.

THE accession of Darius the Mede to the post of Governor of Babylon in no way interfered with the high position in state occupied by Daniel. Darius had heard of the proclamation which Belshazzar had made the day before he died ; perhaps he had even seen a copy of the document. No doubt he inquired into the reason of it, and was told the story of the wonderful slave, who had been brought many years before from a far distant land, and had risen to so high a position that he became the confidential adviser of the great founder of the empire ; how skilful he had been in the interpretation of dreams and cryptograms, and what wonderful things the God of his people had done for three of his companions in captivity when He brought them forth uninjured from the flames of the burning fiery furnace. Darius would not desire to lose the services of so distinguished a man, accordingly he confirmed the appointment already made by Belshazzar. The whole kingdom having been divided into a hundred and twenty provinces, three presidents were placed over these, who should receive the accounts of the princes of the provinces and prevent the king's estate from suffering damage. Thus the same providence of Almighty God which had called

ings to cease from their conquests preserved Daniel alive, that even at his advanced time of life, he might carry out His work upon earth.

It was, no doubt, in Babylon, where the head-quarters of Darius were fixed, that Daniel did the king's business. Josephus, however, had a tradition that after the capture of Babylon, Darius took Daniel with him into Media, and "honoured him very greatly, and kept him with him, for he was one of the three president whom he had set over his three hundred and sixty provinces, for into so many did Darius part them."¹ But there is no need for us to suppose that anything of the sort occurred. Of course Daniel in the discharge of his duties had travelled over a large portion of the Babylonian Empire, for we find that he had been at Shushan,² the palace, or Susa in Persia, and that the Tigris was not unknown to him,³ but not a word in the sixth chapter of his book implies that Darius moved the seat of his government away from Babylon.

In Babylonia Daniel was best known, and in Babylon we must suppose that he continued to reside. Here he had a house, closely resembling those dwellings which travellers describe to us—a large capacious building, with many rooms in it, set apart for the various officers of state who were under his superintendence, and one large airy room at the top, immediately underneath the flat roof, in which were windows of a considerable size, fitted with shutters that could be opened or closed at will. It was in a house of this common Oriental type, that Daniel "did the king's business,"⁴ and overlooked his share of the satraps' accounts, taking pains that the king should have no damage.

His miraculous skill in managing matters of business soon made him appear "distinguished" in comparison with the remaining two presidents, "and the king thought to set him over the whole realm,"⁵ that is, to associate Daniel with himself in the government of the kingdom. The reason of this advancement of the prophet has been much questioned. Some, indeed, have supposed that Darius promoted him out of mere indolence, that he might have more leisure to give himself up to the pleasures of

¹ "Ant." X. xi. 4.

² Dan. viii. 2. It may be observed that Daniel would not have recognized Shushan in his vision unless he had been there at some earlier time of his life.

³ Ibid. x. 4.

⁴ Ibid. viii. 27.

⁵ Ibid. vi. 3.

life. But it is needless to impute to Darius charges for which there is no foundation. What is more natural than that a man of sixty-two years of age, being called upon to act as governor of a territory with which he was unfamiliar, should desire to associate with himself a man whose experience was immense, and whose honour was unimpeachable, and whose straight-forward character, and consistent statesmanlike policy had never been questioned.

The same envious feelings which existed against Daniel in the college of the wise men some seventy years previously, soon manifested themselves a second time. It cannot, however, have been mere jealousy which prompted them to act as they did ; for while ambitious men are in general much distressed by the prosperity of the young, they seldom feel much annoyance at the promotion of their elders. Their jealousy against Daniel was founded upon the fact that he was not a native of Babylonia ; and this seems to be clear from the words in which they bring their accusation against him. They lay especial stress upon the nationality of Daniel, "That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king."¹ So strong were the prejudices of the Babylonians against foreigners, that even seventy years of residence had not naturalized Daniel, nor given him the rights of a free citizen. In spite of the many benefits which he had conferred upon the state, he was still remembered as a Jew, he was taunted and scoffed at as being "one of the captivity," a slave. Similarly, in later times, Mordecai was viewed with envy because he was a Jew, and perhaps even in modern times, instances have not been unknown where political jealousies have arisen from the fact that a great statesman was of Jewish extraction.

The attack made upon the prophet was of a most determined and crafty description. It appears that at first an attempt was made to discover some maladministration on Daniel's part. They "sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault ; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."² We have already seen to what an enormous extent what we call "business" was carried on in Babylon ; the discovery of the satraps then shows us what marvellous talents Daniel must have possessed to undertake so vast a responsi-

¹ Dan. vi. 13.

² Ibid. vi. 4.

bility, and to be competent to undergo the scrutiny of so jealous an investigation.

But a further remark of theirs shows us, that "talent" was not the only cause of his success. They could not find any occasion against him except "concerning the law of his God."¹ Happy indeed is the man who lives in such a way that no fault can be found with him, except that he does what his God commands!² Such was Daniel's case, his obedience and prayers obtained for him the help of God, which enabled his natural "talents" to accomplish these wonders.

Accordingly, with all craftiness, a deputation of satraps approached the king and begged him to pass a decree that, during the space of thirty days, no one should ask any petition of any god or man, save of the king alone. Josephus has succeeded in making the decree even more stringent. According to him nothing but an absolute absence of all requests would be tolerated: "The princes and governors had thought proper to allow the multitude a relaxation for thirty days, that no one might offer a petition, or prayer, either to the king or to the gods, but that he, who shall transgress this decree, shall be cast into the den of lions, and there perish."³

The question which naturally arises is, how could the king have been persuaded to pass such a decree?

His motive seems to have been purely political. In ancient times, as we know, it was far from an uncommon occurrence that divine honours should be paid to an emperor. Thus in Egypt, we are told,⁴ the inhabitants appeared both to worship and honour their kings as if they were gods. Perhaps the reason of this was, that it was hard to imagine that a king could derive his power without divine forethought, or be willing to do good to his subjects unless he partook of the nature of the gods. The apotheosis of the emperor by the Romans is well known to us by the exaggerative language which the Latin poets employed respecting the emperors, and by the records of the many Christians who endured martyrdom rather than offer sacrifice to the emperor.

The custom, apparently, was Oriental, and, if we may trust the historian of Alexander the Great,⁵ it was from the East that the practice was borrowed. And the same historian observes

¹ Ibid. vi. 5. ² Jerome's remark. ³ "Ant." X xi. 5. ⁴ Diodorus i. 90. ⁵ Q. Curtius VI. vi. 2.

that the Persians are not only pious in worshipping "their kings among the gods, but wise in so doing, for this majesty is a protection to the empire." ¹ Accordingly we are not surprised to read elsewhere ² that the Persians "looked upon their kings as the representatives of Ormuzd, and as such paid him divine honour ;" or that the king should be called "the progeny of the gods" or even "god." And when once the apotheosis had been allowed, it would only be a very short step further to address prayer to the deified man.

There seems to be a special reason why such should have been the case with regard to Darius. Being a Mede, it was necessary that on ascending a throne which owed allegiance to Persia, he should in every way give public proof of his willingness to conform to all Persian religious customs. Accordingly, when the deputation arrived, there was nothing to make him suspicious or to startle him in the measure which they proposed that he should enact. And perhaps the people of Babylon were as little disturbed by the decree as was the king himself, for it is highly probable that the deification of the king was not unknown among the Babylonians. The Assyrians certainly had a custom not far removed from the apotheosis of the reigning sovereign.

A heavy penalty was ordered to be inflicted upon those who should venture to disobey the royal edict, no less than that of being cast into the den of lions. It appears that in the neighbourhood of Babylon, just as is the case with many modern European towns, there was a place where wild beasts were kept. Formerly kings of Assyria had kept them for hunting purposes, and in the British Museum there is a representation of a man letting forth a lion out of a large cage in which he had been confined. Many other reliefs exist which indicate the fondness which these kings had for hunting the lion. Now Darius, being a Median, was naturally a huntsman. He had some large arched chamber in which his lions were kept, whence they were selected when any day for hunting was determined upon. It is impossible to say how they were secured, but a door formed out of a single stone ³ appears to have kept them under perfect restraint, while there was some aperture, probably covered with a strong grating of iron, through which they were visible to those who were outside.⁴

¹ Q. Curtius VIII. v. 11. ² Pusey on Daniel, pp. 442, 443. ³ Dan. vi. 17.

⁴ At Fez, where State prisoners and Jews were often thrown to the lions,

How far punishment by exposure to the wild beasts was common in the East it is not easy to say, but without doubt it prevailed among the Assyrians. We know from the writings of St. Paul that at Ephesus he had to fight with beasts, being the first of that long rank of Christians, over whom the fatal cry had been raised, "To the lions, to the lions." Perhaps, on the occasion which we are considering, the malice of the satraps inspired them with the sudden thought of inventing a new and horrible punishment. Perhaps, on the contrary, it may have been a recognized mode of executing persons guilty of grave State offences.¹

Daniel had been absent in the discharge of his duty at the time when the decree was signed, and of course many other satraps were serving in distant provinces, so that the decree was known at first only to the few virulent enemies that Daniel had in Babylon. In course of time, however, the decree came before him as a matter of business, and what was his conduct? "He went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime."² In other words, he simply went on his daily path of life, just as if no such order had been given. His business with the king had been finished, so he went home and prayed as he was accustomed to do.

We have already noticed what was, most probably, the character of Daniel's house. The upper chamber, to which we referred, was that to which he resorted for purpose of prayer. But we need not think that it was by way of bravado, or on purpose to court danger, that he allowed the lattices of his casement to be open. On the contrary, had he closed them, the watchfulness of his enemies would at once have led them to suspect that he was engaged in some practice which he desired to keep secret from them.

Nor need Daniel be blamed because he prayed towards Jerusalem "the den was a large quadrangular hole in the ground divided by a partition into two chambers. This wall has a door which can be opened and shut from above. The keepers of the lions throw food into the one division, and so entice the lions thither, then they shut the doors from above and clean the other division. The whole is under the open sky, and is encircled with a wall over which people can look down into it" (Höst, cited by Dr. Pusey, p. 416).

¹ Smith "Assurbanipal," pp. 166, 260-262, 281.

² Dan. vi. 10.

lem. He did not believe that Jehovah was dwelling at Jerusalem any more than at any other place. He did so in memory of Solomon's prayer,¹ who earnestly besought the Lord to hear the exiles of Israel when in the land of their enemies they should pray unto Him, towards the land which He had chosen, and the temple which Solomon had built for His name. Perhaps at that very instant service was being offered up at Jerusalem by some of the advanced guard of the returning exiles, and Daniel consoled himself by joining with them in prayer, and even at that great distance worshipping, like the royal sufferer, "towards God's holy temple."²

All these acts of Daniel have induced many to cavil at him, as though he did what was unworthy of a man of his character, or what no truly pious Israelite would have thought of doing. It has even been suggested that to offer prayer three times in the day was a Persian superstition, introduced at a time far later than that of Daniel. But, not to mention that it is natural for a religious mind to hold communion with God at morning and evening, and also at noon as a sort of halting-place between the two other times, it may be remembered that a psalmist (and the psalm bears all the marks of having been composed by David) says, "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray unto thee and cry aloud."³ The custom of praying three times a day was far older than Daniel's time, and from his time it was handed over to the synagogue, whence in very early ages it passed into the Christian Church.⁴

We must further remark that the very posture of prayer adopted by Daniel is significant; he prayed kneeling. The position which the Jews adopted when they prayed was not uniform. Occasionally they fell prostrate on their faces before the Lord, at other times they fell upon their knees, while it appears that they were accustomed to "stand up and bless the Lord,"⁵ though the later Jews appear to have stood up when they prayed.⁶ Daniel prayed kneeling so as to show his humility, and his example was followed by the early Christians⁷ for the same reason.

It was not long before Daniel was discovered to be engaged

¹ 1 Kings viii. 44-48.

² Psa. v. 7.

³ Ibid. lv. 17.

⁴ See Jerome on Dan. vi. 10; "Ep." 108, 19; "Constit. Apost." viii 34. vii. 24.

Neh. ix. 5.

⁶ Mishnah, Taanith, iii. 8.

⁷ Tertull. "De Orat." § 14.

in his devotions. It seems as if persons had been actually set to spy out his movements ; for while he was one day praying and making his supplications as usual, the men burst in upon him, and without delay brought the information to the king. It was a cruel snare that they had laid both for the king and for Daniel. For which of the two alternatives was the king to choose, should he break a law, to do which was contrary to the customs of the Medes and Persians? or should he take away the life of an innocent man? Apparently he was strongly in favour of abrogating the meaningless law, for we read that he "laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him,"¹ advancing all the arguments that he could to deliver his guileless friend. He was overpowered by the rulers, and sentence having been pronounced, Daniel was cast into the den of lions.

Now we must not think that the conduct of Darius on this occasion exhibits to us a pattern of human weakness ; he did what often falls to the painful duty of many rulers when advised by their ministers, namely, to see that the law of the State is carried out. He was far different from Herod who beheaded the Baptist merely for the sake of keeping his own rash oath. There was a consistency about the conduct of Darius which deserves respect. A law, so long as it exists, be it just or unjust, must be carried out for the sake of preserving due order, that is, liberty, among the subjects of the State ; but whenever an open injustice is discovered in a particular law, it is not the duty of either rulers or citizens to violate the law, but rather to procure the abrogation of it as speedily as possible. Such a course, however, was not open to Darius, as it was utterly opposed to the fundamental character of the constitution of the Medes and Persians to alter the law. Accordingly nothing remained for the king but to see that this hastily made decree was rigidly enforced.

Daniel heard with calmness the sentence that was pronounced upon him, and as he was being led forth to execution the king expressed a vague hope, "Thy God whom thou servest, He will deliver thee."² The unhappy monarch may have remembered at that moment the story of the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and comforted himself with the expect-

¹ Dan. vi. 14.

² Ibid. vi. 16.

tation that some equally miraculous deliverance would be granted to Daniel.

Meanwhile the prophet had been taken to the place of torture. We can well imagine the insults which were offered to him by the different State officers who had longed for his fall, and we can well believe that Daniel answered with meekness and patience. At last the den was reached, the great stone was taken away from the mouth of it, Daniel was cast among the lions, the stone was replaced, and sealed both by the king and by the satraps; then the king and his officers retired, leaving the lions to do their deadly work with God's aged saint.

This twofold sealing of the stone door requires some explanation. Most probably, during the long discussion that took place during the afternoon between the king and his ministers some sort of compromise was agreed upon. If all parties present sealed the stone, it would be impossible for the satraps to open the den and murder the prophet in case the lions should fail to despatch him, without the king's knowledge that such had been done; nor, on the other hand, could the king on his part effect a rescue without the broken seals of the satraps indicating the fact.

The king returned to his palace heavy hearted. He tried to console himself by thinking that he had done his duty, and that he had endeavoured to save Daniel, but yet he was miserable. He passed a sleepless night, thinking of his faithful servant who had been torn in pieces, then again brightening up with the hope that some miracle might have saved him. It was in vain that his servants tempted him with the choicest viands that Babylon could supply, "He passed the night fasting." In vain had the music loving Babylonians rehearsed their concert for that evening, "Instruments of music were not brought before him." Nothing, in fact, was set before him that by reason of its attendant pleasures could entice his thoughts away from Daniel.

Meanwhile Daniel was amidst the lions, praying and giving thanks as earnestly and as instantly as if he had been in the upper chamber of his own house. No apocryphal writers have ever ventured to suggest any prayer which he used. One obvious passage² occurs to every reader which would have

² Psa. xxxiv. 10, "The lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." The "lions" are translated "wealthy" by the LXX.

been considered appropriate for the occasion, but the peculiarity of the Greek version prevented the early Greek apocryphal writers who were unacquainted with Hebrew, from applying it to Daniel's case ; and as the early Latin Psalter was translated from the Greek we are not surprised that among the many legends that have gathered together around Daniel, a prayer should not have been ascribed to him.

The king's sleepless night having ended, he arose very early in the morning and went with haste to the den of lions, and called out, " O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions ? " ¹ Then the welcome answer came to him from within, " O king, live for ever." And it was no common form of salutation ² that Daniel addressed to the king. A change had come over him during that night. He had watched the calm demeanour of Daniel from the first, and this led him to believe that Daniel's God was the living God, whom truly to know is life eternal. It is in this sense that Daniel greets him.

It was the work of a minute to rescue him from the lion's den, and then to see that justice was measured out to the men who had dealt so cruelly with Daniel. During the long discussion on the previous day, another compact had been made between Darius and the satraps besides that to which we have already referred, that in case Daniel should come out unhurt the accusers should forfeit their lives. Whether Daniel interceded for them, we are not told ; but without delay all the accusers (not the hundred and twenty satraps and the two presidents as some have foolishly imagined) and their wives and children were sent to experience the same fate that they had designed for Daniel. They were cast into the den and " the lions had mastery over them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." ³

At this point Josephus introduces a singular feature into the story. He observes that the satraps on hearing sentence pronounced against themselves remarked to the king that the lions had been recently fed and for this reason failed to devour Daniel. The king, with grim readiness, at once ordered the lions to be well fed, and then cast the satraps into the den, that

¹ Dan. vi. 20.

² " Honorat honorantem se et ei vitam æternam imprecatur " (Jerome).

³ Dan. vi. 24.

he might see whether the lions when full would touch them or not. "And it appeared plain to Darius after the princes had been cast to the wild beasts, that it was God who preserved Daniel, for the lions spared none of them, but tore them in pieces as if they had been very hungry and wanted food." ¹

This account is interesting chiefly from the manner in which it illustrates the tendency of a later age to magnify the miracles that occurred in the time of a past generation. The two miracles that occurred were Daniel's calmness which converted the king, and Daniel's deliverance which resulted in the name of the true God being proclaimed during the Persian Empire. But it seems as if Josephus invented a further miracle merely for the sake of telling a humorous story. God does not work miracles lavishly. For those recorded in Scripture we can trace a reason, for the Apocryphal miracles none at all. It is not for us to invent new miracles, but to adore with all reverence and love that wonderful hand "which delivereth and rescueth, and worketh signs and wonders in heaven and earth, which hath delivered Daniel from the hand of the lions." ²

¹ "Ant." X. xi. 6.

² Dan. vi. 27.

CHAPTER XI.

DANIEL THE SEER.

Two styles in the Book of Daniel—Explanation of this—Peculiar character of the visions in the second part—Singular characteristics of the revelations—In both visions and revelations we observe certain notes of time—How these were understood—How certain notes of time continue unexplained—The vision of the four beasts shortly described—The New Testament a key to parts of Daniel's vision.

A VERY slight acquaintance with the Book of Daniel exhibits to the reader one very singular fact. While the first six chapters are chiefly historical, the last six are entirely prophetic. The first six chapters give us certain information respecting the person of Daniel, his friends, and the Babylonian monarchs under whom they served. Certain visions are recorded in them, but these are treated as so many incidents in the history. In the last six chapters we notice just the reverse. There is an entire absence of the historical element; the whole of the subject matter consists of three visions, and one long prophetic communication.

A little consideration is sufficient to show that this change in the style of the book is evidently the result of design on the part of the author, and not of any haphazard arrangement adopted by the editor of the Book of Daniel. For it is perfectly clear that in the first six chapters a chronological order of narrating events is adopted. The book begins with an account of the captivity of Daniel, it then speaks of events which occurred in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and Darius successively. It is now universally acknowledged that the six last chapters are to be ascribed to the same hand which wrote the six first. But it is evident that the

visions recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters, and perhaps also the ninth, chronologically precede the events described in the sixth chapter. Is it probable, we ask, that the author would have dislocated these chapters from their chronological position, unless he had a reason for so doing?

We will endeavour to see what his purpose was, and we shall most easily discover this by taking a brief bird's-eye view of the last six chapters, or, as we shall henceforth term them, the second part of the Book of Daniel.

Daniel who, by the time of Darius, had spent at least three-fourths of his life at Babylon, and had proved himself faithful to four consecutive Babylonian kings without in any way compromising his religious convictions, was rewarded for his life of faith and holiness by receiving certain revelations, in each of which some fact in the future history of his people was made known to him. At the first glance two of the visions appear to be very general. Various monstrous forms were seen by him, which a casual reader might fancy were suggested to him by the ornaments which he could have seen in the palaces and temples of Babylon. But there was one remarkable peculiarity about the visions. Each form seemed to melt away as he gazed at it, and another took the place of the one which had disappeared. These forms were very different from each other, and the manner in which they presented themselves to the seer was not the same. In some cases they were at rest, in other cases in motion, in other cases there was a modification even of the same form while the seer looked at it. He seemed to be, as it were, gazing down a long gallery, the view down which was intercepted by a series of curtains hung across it. On each curtain a picture was painted, and as curtain after curtain was lifted, a fresh picture behind it was unveiled, which represented some fact in the history of his people, at one time their persecution, at another their triumph over their enemies, and as the last curtain was lifted he saw, depicted at the end of the gallery, the destruction of the enemies of God's people.

Such is the general character of the visions recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters, and the interpretation in each case, according to Daniel's narrative, is given by an angel, who also gives various indications of the period during which certain events were to continue, in the first instance consisting of the interval of a "time and times and the dividing of a

time,"¹ and in the second of "two thousand three hundred days."²

But the revelation concerning the future was delivered to him not in visions only. He received certain other communications respecting the future without any such medium, and these are recorded in the four last chapters of his book. The language, which was the vehicle of the revelation, may, perhaps, be considered as enigmatic as were the forms which he had seen in the visions; but what should be especially noticed is the totally different mode of communication that is employed. An angel informed him that certain things must happen; and not only that, but that a definite time had been laid down by God's providence within which all would be fulfilled.³ Nor was this all; just as on a long road, the milestones indicate not only how far the traveller has gone, but also how far he is from his journey's end, so in the pathway of future history, indicated by this revelation, there are certain landmarks laid down—periods indicated by seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, one week, half a week, by which those who read Daniel's words might know when the promise might be expected to be realized.

In anticipation of a future chapter, it might be here mentioned that a portion of this revelation has been fulfilled to the very letter. Pious Israelites, of a later date, who had studied the writings of Daniel, were expecting the fulfilment of the angel's words just at the time when the fulfilment came. For instance, we read in the New Testament that Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel,"⁴ just at the very moment when it pleased God to "comfort His people."⁵ Simeon had obviously read aright the prophecy in Daniel respecting the Seventy Weeks. So had Anna, who was looking for the "redemption in Israel,"⁶ and gave thanks to the Lord when she saw the Redeemer presented to her in the person of the holy Child Jesus. Others wondered whether Jesus was "He that should come, or whether they looked for another."⁷ Others asked, "If Thou be the Christ tell us plainly."⁸ Others "mused in their hearts of John whether he were the Christ."⁹ All had pondered over the revelation that had been made to Daniel, and had calculated that the time was not far distant when the object of

¹ Dan. vii. 25.

⁴ Luke ii. 25.

⁷ Matt. xi. 3.

² Ibid. viii. 14.

⁵ Isa. xl. 1.

⁸ John x. 24.

³ Ibid. ix. 21.

⁶ Luke ii. 38.

⁹ Luke iii. 15.

their hopes should be vouchsafed to them ; and they were not disappointed of their hope.

In the three last chapters of the book a further revelation is recorded which was made to Daniel ; but this differs very much from the one mentioned in the ninth chapter in this particular respect ; it speaks not only of the remote, but of the immediate future of his people. He was informed that after the end of the Persian Empire, now in course of consolidation, a critical time in the history of Israel was to occur. Two kingdoms, spoken of as the Northern and Southern kingdoms respectively, were to play a principal part in this drama of the future. One individual was especially selected as the typical enemy of Israel, and the blasphemer of the God of gods ; and he, in his appointed time, is to come to an end, and then the elect of Israel shall be delivered. Here again, as in the case of the first two visions, notes of time are given. Two periods are mentioned, one consisting of twelve hundred and ninety, the other of thirteen hundred and thirty-five days, which were of vast importance to Israel, and then the Person, who had informed him of this,¹ told him that he should rest in his grave, and not see the fulfilment, but stand up in his lot at the end of the days.

It is remarkable that whereas the period of seventy weeks was distinctly understood by the Israelites to be approaching to an end, just at the time of the coming of the Saviour, no similar expectation was founded upon the periods mentioned in the last chapter of Daniel. We have some reference in the New Testament to the Book of Daniel, to the "abomination of desolation,"² to the "coming of the Son of Man in the clouds."³ We find also certain enigmatic numbers in the New Testament which are based, apparently, upon the mystical numbers in the Book of Daniel, such as "time and times and half a time,"⁴ "forty-two months,"⁵ and "twelve hundred and sixty days,"⁶ but to the numbers mentioned in the last chapter of Daniel there is no reference whatever, so far as we can tell.

True it is, persons in modern times have attempted to unravel the mystery of the numbers mentioned by Daniel, just as they have attempted to identify certain features in his

¹ Dan. xii. 13.

² Matt. xxiv. 15 ; comp. Dan. ix. 26, 27.

³ Matt. xxiv. 30 ; comp. Dan. vii. 13.

⁴ Rev. xii. 14.

⁵ Ibid. xi. 2.

⁶ Ibid. xi. 3.

visions with certain historical characters ; but they have failed to establish the truth of their explanations. The year and even the day of the month, when the great end of all things shall occur, has been fixed by man over and over again, but the end has not come at the time settled by human calculation. Hence we learn not only to avoid hasty conclusions about our so-called verifications of prophecy, but to remember that the truth of the Word of God is not affected by the false interpretations that man can put upon it. Those who, like Daniel, are content to wait in loving and trustful hope, will be taught in God's own time when the periods mentioned by the Holy Prophets are approaching towards a termination.

We are now in a position to see clearly what was the object of Daniel in combining together, in one portion of his book, all these revelations which were made to him, whether by vision or by word of mouth. He desires to make perfectly plain whatsoever God has revealed to him respecting the future of the elect, whether of Israel or of the Gentiles. Against Israel an enemy is to arise during the continuance of each of the four empires. When the time of trouble arrives, those who are called upon to suffer will know that their sufferings have been preordained by God. And as the revelation which contains the announcement of future woe abounds with the most tender expressions of love, God's suffering people are assured that, when they come to suffer, One who is Eternal Love has called them to a state of suffering, and that those sufferings will not be prolonged one day, week, month, year, or "time" beyond what His love will enable them to bear. Thus, the first part of the book is the justification of the second. It establishes Daniel's claims to be a man sent from God. It is a solemn assurance that the revelations contained in the second part are really and truly delivered to Daniel by God Himself.

Bearing this in mind we will now examine the vision which Daniel had in the first year of Belshazzar.²

It was night time, and Daniel saw in his vision the sea lashed into fury by the four winds of heaven, or, in other words, the vast sea of humanity stirred up by the various influences which were brought to bear upon it from the different quarters of the globe. "Thus when the Assyrians held the

² Dan. vii. 1-28.

rudder-strings of the world, they drew all people to become their subjects. When the sovereignty passed into Persian hands, immediately the tide of conquered nations flowed in that direction. And when the Macedonians received the sceptre, all nations left those to whom they had been formerly subject and brought tribute to these. But as soon as the Romans obtained the mastery, all moved towards the west, making no account of the Macedonians, inasmuch as they were reckoned among conquered people."¹ The figure of the "sea" to represent nations is not uncommon in the Scriptures, and the aptness of it is self-evident.

Out of this sea Daniel saw four beasts arise, they were of monstrous form, and none of them resembled the other. The first was like a lion, but it had the wings of an eagle. As he watched it the wings were plucked off; it was raised from the earth and, instead of resting on the four feet, stood up like a man, and a human heart was given it. That this first beast represented a king, that is, a kingdom, we know from the words of the angel, "These great beasts which are four are four kings which shall arise from the earth."² It requires very little thought to see that by the first beast is signified the Babylonian Empire, or, in other words, that the empire was represented by the first king. No better emblems for the bravery of Nebuchadnezzar, or for the strength and rapidity of his movements can be imagined, than those which are combined in the lion and the eagle. Yet the eagle lost its wings. The mighty empire of Babylon was shorn of its wings, it was lifted off the earth, and became like a man, subject to those over whom it had formerly ruled, and bereft of all the majestic appearance of lion and eagle.

The prophet continued to look, and another beast arose from the seething ocean. This was like a bear, of which one side attracted greater notice than the other. The bear had in its mouth the ribs of three captured beasts, which it was gnawing with its teeth, and a voice said to it, "Arise, devour much flesh."³ Such was the form under which the empire of the Medes and Persians was presented to Daniel. The bear, not so active as the lion, represents an empire not so distinguished as that which had preceded it, either for its bravery, or for the rapidity

¹ See Theodoret on Daniel, vol. ii. p. 1190.

² Dan. vii. 17.

³ Ibid. ver. 5.

of its movements. The twofold character of the empire, that is, partly Mede and partly Persian, is represented by the two sides of the bear, one of which was raised higher than the other; and this difference in the height of the two sides implied that the Median Empire was of very small importance, when compared with the Persian, lasting as a distinct empire only for a short while, and then absorbed by the Persians. The three ribs no doubt referred to three conquered nations, but whether we are to press them to signify the Babylonians, Lydians, and Egyptians, as some have thought,² or the three parts of the world then known, namely, the countries lying to the east of the Hellespont, Egypt, and Ethopia, and the territories inhabited by the Scythians, as has been also maintained,² is a fruitless point for investigation. The command to "arise and devour much flesh," directs the Persian Empire to make still further conquests, as, in fact, it did under Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius Hystaspis.

A third beast appeared in the form of a panther, which had four wings and four heads, and "had dominion given to it." Here again we trace another empire, the Greek, which began and ended under Alexander the Great. The agility of this great conqueror's movements is represented partly by the panther and partly by the wings, while the number "four," which is to be noticed as a special characteristic of this beast, points partly to the four directions of the world in which Alexander made his conquests, and partly to the four "heads" or generals among whom his empire was divided upon his decease, Seleucus obtaining the Syrian, Ptolemy the Egyptian, Cassander the Macedonian, and Lysimachus the Thracian parts of his dominions. It must be carefully remembered that this is the first of the four beasts that had not come into existence at the time when Daniel wrote. Athens at this time was under the despotism of Pisistratus; and Greece can hardly be said to have existed as an empire; for the principal Greeks of the time were colonists in dispersion, not united by any national tie. Nor should it be forgotten that the description of the third beast is much less full than that of the others. However, a further revelation concerning the Greek Empire was given to Daniel in another vision which he saw in the third year of Belshazzar.

² Hippolytus in his Commentary.

² Theodoret.

But again the prophet's attention was arrested by a fourth beast, and of such a terrible appearance was it that words seem to have failed him as he attempted to describe it. The teeth were of iron, the claws of brass ; it devoured and brake in pieces much, and what it did not succeed in destroying in this manner it stamped out by its feet. It had ten horns, and from amongst these Daniel saw a smaller one arise, which destroyed three out of those that remained, and, which was more remarkable, this horn had eyes, and mouth like a man's, the mouth speaking great things. Such is the manner in which the Roman Empire was represented ; and not merely the Roman Empire which has passed away, but those fragments of it which have been welded together and have been built up out of its ruins into the various independent kingdoms and states which now occupy the world, that is to say, all those whose laws, institutions, languages, and civilization depend upon what was devised by the statesmen of that wonderful empire. No comment is necessary to illustrate the warlike, impetuous, and " stamping " character of Rome, because these are not the principal features in the vision. What especially demands our attention is the ten horns, or kings, which appear simultaneously at a certain stage in the development of the history of the fourth empire, and another king who is to arise from the other ten, to destroy three out of the ten, and then become notorious for his blasphemies against God, for his persecution of the saints, for attempts to overthrow existing institutions, whether Divine or human, and for establishing a general spirit of anarchy and disbelief.

Nor does the vision close here. The period is specified during which this awful state of things is to continue. It is to last for " a time, times, and the dividing of a time." There will, in short, be three distinctly marked periods in the reign of this iniquitous king, represented by the little horn, of which that which comes in the middle is the longest, and the third is the shortest. But the end of the beast has not ceased when the little horn comes into being. It is not till the " Ancient of Days," that is, the Eternal One Himself, sits in judgment upon the blaspheming monster that the beast is slain, and the body destroyed in the burning flame.

Then comes the end. One like the Son of man, that is to say, a Person in human form, appears, one totally unlike any of

the monstrous shapes which had hitherto appeared in the vision. He is brought before the Ancient of days. His enemies have been finally destroyed, and He comes to receive a kingdom which is to be eternal and indestructible.

The Christian, who reads this latter portion of Daniel's vision by the light of the New Testament, has no doubt as to what it refers. He knows that though, in the language employed by Daniel, the phrase "Son of man" means no more than "a man," yet there was One who was pleased to assume that title Himself, and speak of Himself as "the Son of man." None of those whom He most dearly loved while on earth ever ventured to address Him by it, and He uses it only when speaking of His humiliation and of His subsequent glorification. And when upon one occasion¹ He cited this very passage in Daniel as applying to Himself, "the High Priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy." The testimony of the High Priest is important, showing, as it does, what interpretation the early Jews put upon this passage in Daniel's prophecy.

But though there is no difficulty in explaining what is meant by the "Son of man" in this passage, since Jesus Christ has told us what the meaning is, we cannot in any way explain what is meant by the ten kings and the little horn. Attempts have been made by some moderns to establish the ancient interpretations given by Ephraim,² the great Syrian doctor, and to maintain that the fourth beast represents the Greek Empire. It is to be noticed that the task that lies before these interpreters is to point out ten kings under that empire, all of whom reigned simultaneously, so as to correspond with the beast, which possessed ten horns at the same time. Ephraim says that the horns are ten kings, but he does not hint at their names, and ten successive kings will not satisfy the conditions of the prophecy. Ephraim again, and several modern writers agree with him, identifies the little horn with Antiochus Epiphanes, and looks upon the Maccabee princes as the saints who received judgment from the Ancient of days; but as was observed by Jerome,³ who lived a little later than Ephraim, Judas Maccabeus who overthrew the schemes of Antiochus cannot be said to have come with the clouds of heaven, still less to have been presented before the Ancient of days, and to

¹ Matt. xxvi. 64.

² "Commentary on Daniel."

³ "Commentary on Daniel," vii. 14.

have received from Him a kingdom so gorgeously described as that of which Daniel says, "There was given unto Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

When we find the whole of what has been developed from the Roman Empire, Eastern and Western, ruled over by ten kings living simultaneously, then we may venture to speculate upon the little horn. Till that time we must be content with what has been revealed to us, and remember that the language of Daniel leads us to look for one in whom Satan will become incarnate, so to say; one whose blasphemies and wickedness will so far surpasses those of Antiochus and of all other monsters of iniquity, that only one name can be applied to him, and that has been assigned to him by the Scriptures, "The man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."¹

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

CHAPTER XII.

DANIEL AND THE FOUR EMPIRES.

Further consideration of the four empires—The traditional interpretation—History of it—Porphyry's view—The modern interpretation traceable to Ephraim the Syrian—A plain statement of it—Simplicity of it—Difficulties in it—The two little horns represent two different personages—No Median Empire, as distinct from the Persian, existed in the time of Cyrus—The Greek Empire does not correspond with the fourth empire in either vision.

IN the preceding chapter we did no more than give a brief outline of Daniel's first vision which referred to the four principal empires of the world in which the destinies of Israel were enwrapped. We briefly noticed that there was not an exact agreement, among those who had studied the question, as to what those empires were, and we observed that this divergency of opinion existed at a very early time. We have now to point out that the vision of Daniel is, if we may so say, an expansion of the vision of Nebuchadnezzar of which we spoke in Chapter V., and that while the king's dream was of a very general character, the vision of Daniel enters into more minute particulars.

We maintain that, taking the vision and the dream together, the golden head of the Colossus, or the lion with the eagle's wings, represent the Babylonian Empire. The silver breast and arms of the image, or the bear with the three ribs, stands for the Medo-Persian kingdom. The body of the Colossus, into which the arms were united at the shoulders, represents the Persian kingdom alone, to which nothing so strikingly analogous is found in Daniel's vision, The brazen belly and

thighs, or the panther, represents the Macedonian Empire under Alexander the Great and his successors, the thighs implying the kingdoms of the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ, which were the most important developments of that kingdom so far as the fortunes of the holy people were concerned. While lastly, the two legs of the Colossus, partly clay and partly iron, which correspond to the fourth beast in Daniel's vision, are symbols of the Roman Empire, which after a certain course of self-development shall be succeeded by the kingdom of the Messiah, symbolized in the king's dream by the rolling stone, but described more fully in Daniel's vision as "the kingdom of the saints of the Most High."¹

This is generally called the "traditional interpretation" of the four kingdoms, and there are certain very sound reasons for believing it correct, which will be stated hereafter. It is called the traditional view, because though perhaps not the most ancient, it has yet been most generally received. If we would search for the oldest known authority for it, we can find it in the Epistle of Barnabas,² a production of the early part of the second century of the Christian era, where the writer, speaking of the ten kingdoms that Daniel had foretold, declares that they are then existing, that the fourth beast is reigning, and then warns his sons and daughters "that the last offence has come nigh." This writer, however, does not in any way expatiate upon the three kingdoms which preceded that under which he lived himself. After Barnabas we come to Hippolytus,³ who lived about a century later, and continues this explanation, saying, "Who are these except the Romans whose empire is iron?" The earliest lengthy exposition of the dream and of the vision occurs in the learned works of Jerome, who writes with the greatest minuteness, with the view of refuting the opinions of the heathen Porphyry, who had flourished about a century before his time. From the time of Jerome, the "traditional view" was followed by others, such as Theodoret, and it has been maintained till this day by many who have given the greater part of their lives to the study of this and similar questions.⁴

The next view of the four kingdoms which it is fit to

¹ Dan. vii. 27.

² Chap. iv. secs. 4, 5.

³ Hipp., Fragm. i.

⁴ Among many others may be mentioned Hengstenberg, Caspari, Hofmann, Zündel, Aublerlen, Kliefoth, Dr. Pusey, and Keil.

mention is that of Porphyry, in fact, it comes next in order of antiquity. According to him the first and second empires are the Babylonian and the Medo-Persian. Then, says Jerome,¹ he places the last two beasts where Jerome himself placed the third beast, making the panther to represent Alexander, and the beast which was unlike the other three beasts, to stand for the four successors of Alexander. He then enumerated up to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes those ten kings whom he concluded to have been most infamous for their persecution of the Jews, taking them not from one empire alone, but from different empires, ultimately identifying "the mouth speaking great things" with Antiochus Epiphanes, after whose time the vision had no meaning whatever. This view has also obtained supporters within the present century.²

A third view, which has the prestige of antiquity to recommend it, has already been briefly noticed. Ephraim is the earliest writer of note who gives his authority to it, and according to it the empires are the Babylonian, the Median, the Persian, and the Macedonian. This early father is careful to point out, as some of those who maintain his view have not, that whatever fulfilment the prophecy received in the times of the Maccabees was only a type of a further fulfilment to be expected in the last days. This opinion has found supporters in modern times,³ and it may be noticed that it agrees with the notion of Porphyry, in making the horizon of the prophecy lie in the Greek period of the history of the world.

What, then, were the reasons which have led people to place the termination of the prophetic period of Daniel's visions in the times of the Greek Empire?—And let us remember that this is the opinion of some persons who uphold the authenticity of the Book of Daniel, and are far from denying that God is unable to announce the future through human agency.

The argument may be briefly stated as follows :

With the seventh chapter there begins a second part of the Book of Daniel, and from the first verse of the eighth chapter Daniel speaks of himself as the author of the work. The seventh chapter of the book gives an account of the four beasts

¹ "Comment. on Daniel," vii. 7.

² Bertholdt 1808, Zöckler 1870.

³ Eichorn, Lengerke, Ewald with some modifications, Bleek, Kranichfeld, Dr. Westcott. It has been strongly advocated by Delitzsch (in Herzog and Plitt, vol. iii, p. 473).

and *the* little horn ; the eighth chapter speaks of the Medo-Persian Empire, the Macedonian Empire, and *a* little horn ; from the tenth till the last chapter we read of the persecutions which God's people shall suffer in the last days of the Greek or Macedonian Empire ; is it likely, we are asked, that the little horns mentioned in the seventh and eighth chapters of Daniel should be intended to represent different persons ? It may be further stated that no thoughtful person has denied that Antiochus Epiphanes is the individual designated by the little horn spoken of by Daniel in his eighth chapter, why should not the little horn mentioned in the seventh chapter refer to the same individual ? If the "horns" mentioned in the two chapters are identical, then it follows that the kingdoms, from which each horn arises, are the same. Therefore, as a necessary consequence, the fourth empire must have been that out of which Antiochus Epiphanes arose, or, in other words, the Greek or the Macedonian Empire. It is pointed out that in both chapters the same things are attributed to each of the little horns. Each is a persecutor of God's people, and a blasphemer of God Himself. Further, it is alleged that the period of persecution¹ which in the seventh chapter is to last for "a time and times, and the dividing of a time," and which in the ninth chapter² is to continue for half a week, that is, $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2}$ days, recurs again in the last chapter of the book.³ Is it likely that when the same measures of time are employed, the reference should be to different events ?

And again it must be noticed that, so far as we can judge from a careful examination of the two visions, there is no interval between the epochs of the persecutions mentioned in them, and that which is hinted at in the last two chapters.⁴ Nothing is said respecting a long interval which is to occur between the great persecution under Antiochus, and that which shall come in the last times. On the contrary, in the very passage where it is admitted that Antiochus is predicted, the angel introduces the matter to Daniel's notice by saying, "Behold I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of indignation, for at the time appointed the end shall be."⁵ This is a strong argument in favour of the persecution recorded in the seventh chapter being that under Antiochus. It is urged

¹ Dan. vii. 25.

² Ibid. ix. 27.

³ Ibid. xii. 7.

⁴ Ibid. xi. 31 ; xii. 1.

⁵ Ibid. viii. 19.

that there is only one other alternative open to those who maintain the traditional interpretation, which is to assume that Daniel has two ends in view, a further and a later, a typical and an antitypical end; but against this it is said that the hypothesis of a double end might have been plausible if the visions which place the Roman Empire as the fourth were later than those which deal with the times of the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ. But we observe just the reverse to be the case. The visions recorded in the second and the seventh chapters are of an earlier date than those mentioned in the last five chapters of the book.

Let us assume for the present that this interpretation is correct, and that both the little horns represent Antiochus Epiphanes; it remains for us to see what we can make of the four empires. The third, of course, must be the Persian,¹ and as the first is undoubtedly the Babylonian, the second can only be the Median Empire. It is stated that a Medo-Persian Empire is unknown to Daniel, that the passage just cited² in no way justifies the assumption that such an empire ever existed. The reason alleged is that Daniel is always very careful to draw a distinction between the Medes and the Persians.³ He is also consistent in speaking of Darius as a Mede,⁴ and of Cyrus as a Persian.⁵ He says that Daniel "prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian,"⁶ not that he prospered in the reigns of Darius and Cyrus, as if they were both sovereigns belonging to the same empire. And though he does mention the kings of Media and Persia,⁷ yet it does not follow that he believed that the Median and Persian Empire were one and the same, because the key to the vision is to be found in the two horns, and not in the single ram. If it is replied that the reign of Darius the Mede was very brief and of very little significance, and that he is the only Mede who came into contact with Israel, the maintainers of the modern view retort, that the importance of the reign of Darius is manifest, inasmuch as (1) in the first year of it Israel was set free, (2) in the first year of Darius the Mede the angel of the Lord is specially stated to have "stood, to confirm and to strengthen him."⁸

It remains for us to see in what sense the details of the

¹ Dan. viii. 20. ² Ibid. viii. 20. ³ Ibid. v. 28, 31; vi. 8, 12, 15.

⁴ Ibid. v. 31; ix. 1; xi. 1. ⁵ Ibid. vi. 28; x. 1. ⁶ Ibid. vi. 28.

⁷ Ibid. viii. 20.

⁸ Ibid. xi. 1.

second and seventh chapters are explained according to this view.

It is urged that there is no empire which corresponds better with the lower limbs of the Colossus than the Græco-Macedonian Empire ; that the material composing the feet, being partly iron and partly clay, corresponds with the division of the great empire of Alexander, out of which issued ultimately the kingdoms to which Daniel refers in the eleventh chapter, the iron representing the Egyptian, the clay the Syrian dominion. The mixture of the iron and clay points to such attempts, as Daniel mentions,¹ which were made to unify what, for very many reasons, were regarded as heterogeneous elements. In fact, the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, and the exposition of it by Daniel is actually said to be one of the very best keys to a right understanding of the eleventh chapter. Again, it is observed that there is nothing forced in making the silver breasts and arms apply to the Median, while the copper belly and thighs refer to the Persian Empire.² "After thee," says Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, "shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee." It is questioned how far the Persian Empire can be said to have been inferior to the Babylonian? If we reply that it assuredly was such in its beginnings, the maintainers of the modern view retort upon us that we have no right to assume that Daniel is speaking here of the Persian Empire as it was in its beginnings, and not as it was in its prime. Hence it is asserted that the second kingdom was the Median ; the third, the Persian, which according to Daniel's own interpretation of the vision, "bare rule over all the earth."³ The Persian becomes, it is observed, an empire like the Babylonian, the insignificant Median Empire having intervened merely as a stepping-stone from one great empire to another. With this is compared with some force the vision recorded in the sixth chapter of the prophet Zechariah.⁴ The red horses represented the Babylonian Empire, which had ceased to exist ; the black horses marching forth into the north country are the Medes ; after them came white horses representing the Persians ; while last of all came grisly and bay horses indicating the Greek Empire in its ultimate stage of development into the Egyptian and Syrian kingdoms. It must be observed, however, in

¹ Dan. xi. 6, 17.

² Ibid. ii. 39.

³ Ibid. ii. 39.

⁴ Delitzsch, article in Herzog.

passing, that this view of Zechariah's vision is not universally acknowledged.

Similarly in the seventh chapter, the first beast is acknowledged to mean Nebuchadnezzar and his empire. The king is represented as acknowledging the true Godhead of Jehovah, by being "made to stand upon his feet, and receiving the gift of a human heart."² The second beast, the bear, does not contain anything in itself which leads us to look for a long succession of kings belonging to the same empire. He represents Darius the Mede, and the three ribs are the three satrapies into which the Median Empire was divided by Darius² (though Ephraim explained them to mean the Medes, the Persians, and the Babylonians). The command to "Arise and devour much flesh"³ means that the empire of Darius had a great future *potentially* in store for it, which he is unable to realize. The panther is Cyrus, the four wings are the Persians, Medes, Babylonians, and Egyptians. The four heads are the four Persian kings Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius Hystaspis, and the last king.⁴ It remains, therefore, that the fourth beast must "mean the Græco-Macedonian Empire." This was the first empire that was of an entirely different character from the Asiatic Empires which had preceded it. The little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes, and the other ten horns are ten kings,⁵ the first three of whom are overthrown by the little horn, as Daniel describes at greater length in the eleventh chapter.⁶ Three of them only were contemporaneous with the little horn, but the whole ten, with their dates, are: (1) Seleucus Nicator, 312-280; (2) Antiochus Soter, 279-261; (3) Antiochus Theos, 260-246; (4) Seleucus Callinicus, 245-226; (5) Seleucus Ceraunus, 225-223; (6) Antiochus the Great, 222-187; (7) Seleucus Philopator, 186-176; (8) Heliodorus, who after the murder of Seleucus actually became king, 176; (9) Demetrius, who was sent to Rome as a hostage instead of Antiochus Epiphanes, 175; (10) Ptolemy Philometor, whom Cleopatra, sister of Seleucus Philopator, and Antiochus Epiphanes endeavoured to place upon the throne of Syria.⁷ The last three were deposed by Antiochus, the overthrow of Demetrius⁸ and Ptolemy Philometor⁹ being especially referred to by Daniel.

² Dan. vii. 4.

² Ibid. vi. 2.

³ Ibid. vii. 5.

⁴ Ibid. xi. 2.

⁵ Ibid. xi. 21.

⁶ Ibid. xi. 22-28.

⁷ Delitzsch.

⁸ Dan. xi. 21.

⁹ Ibid. xi. 22-28.

It is maintained that all these events which are explicitly mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Daniel, are implicitly taught in the two visions of the Colossus and of the four beasts.

Such, then, is the explanation of these two visions according to that school of interpreters which arranges the empires after the model of Ephraim Syrus, the Babylonian, the Median, the Persian, the Græco-Macedonian. At first sight there is something very plausible in the scheme, as it appears to make the whole plan of the book much more distinct, and to introduce a symmetry which is wanting to the traditional interpretation. But we must remember that while the truth is always simple, it does not follow that everything that is simple is true. A little consideration will show us some of the difficulties which stand in the way of the interpretation.

The first difficulty arises respecting the little horns in the seventh and eighth chapters respectively. Though it is very tempting to identify the two, is there after all any reason for doing so? At the very outset we notice a marked difference in the characteristics of the two. In the seventh chapter the little horn grows up amidst ten other horns and destroys three of them; in the eighth chapter it grows out of one of the four horns which the goat has on his head, and does not destroy any of them. On the contrary, "the king of a fierce countenance"¹ rises while the four horns are still remaining, though they are "in the latter time of their kingdom." This is certainly a very important point of divergence. Let us also observe that the ten horns of the fourth beast correspond to the ten toes of the Colossus, and then we shall see that it is questionable whether both the second and seventh chapters do not speak of some fourth kingdom which is not that out of which the little horn grows, that is so prominent a feature in the eighth chapter.

A still further examination will convince us that Antiochus Epiphanes does not correspond to the Antichrist either of the seventh or the eleventh chapters. Antiochus is described as "becoming great toward the south, and toward the east and toward the pleasant land,"² as "waxing great even to the host of heaven, and casting down some of the host, and stamping upon them," as "magnifying himself even to the princes of the host, taking away the daily sacrifice and casting down the place of the sanctuary." But the Antichrist of the seventh chapter

¹ Dan. viii. 23.

² Ibid. viii. 9-12, 23-25.

has "a mouth speaking great things against the Most High, wearing out the saints of the Most High, and thinking to change times and laws."¹ In no point do the two Antichrists agree except in blaspheming God, and making war against His people. They differ in many ways. Especially peculiar is the description of the little horn of the third kingdom, who extends his power towards Egypt, Babylon, and the Holy Land,² crushes many of the people of God, and takes away the daily worship, and destroying the temple. But the Antichrist of the seventh chapter does far more than this; he is a far more awful monster of iniquity. He destroys three kingdoms to establish his own, he places himself in the position of God, and while maintaining this position tries to change all the established customs and manners of men.

These outlines in the characters of the two are sufficiently different to show that different persons are intended by the two horns. We need not then be surprised to find that the measures of time in the two visions are different. Antiochus Epiphanes will carry on his destructive work for two thousand three hundred days,³ but the great Antichrist of the seventh chapter,⁴ has the saints in his power for a "time and times, and the dividing of a time." By no possible calculation can these two measures of time be made identical with each other. The measure of time given us in the seventh chapter occurs again in the twelfth,⁵ but there again it cannot be identified with the numbers mentioned later on in the same chapter.⁶

So again the "last end of indignation"⁷ does not mean the end of all things; it might with equal reason be applied to the end of the Babylonian captivity. The phrase must rather be taken to refer to the end of the revelation of the Divine wrath. Such was precisely the character of the persecution under Antiochus, when, for the last time in Jewish history, the innocent suffered for the sins of the apostates. We cannot, in fact, bear too carefully in mind, that this was the last persecution in which the law of Moses was put to the test. The whole of the circumstances of the persecution were concerned with nothing but the adhesion of the Jews to the principles of their religion. Politics

¹ Dan. vii. 8, 20, 25.

² Ibid. viii. 9.

³ Ibid. viii. 14.

⁴ Ibid. vii. 25.

⁵ Ibid. xii. 7.

⁶ Ibid. xii. 11, 12. The numbers are 1290 and 1335 days respectively

⁷ Ibid. viii. 19.

were only involved in a very secondary manner. In later persecutions politics were far more common as the provoking causes. But at the time of Antiochus the plain question was, would the Jews, or would they not, allow their religious institutions to be hellenized? This consideration again aids us to see that Antiochus Epiphanes does not correspond with the Antichrist of the seventh chapter.

Nor, again, is it quite clear that Daniel divides the Medo-Persian Empire into two, a Median and a Persian Empire. How are we to account, as we have already observed, for the fact that Darius the Mede "received" ¹ the kingdom, unless some greater sovereign than himself existed who had the power to give it to him? Or how again could he have been "made king," unless some one else had authority to confer the royal title upon him? Nor is there the slightest reason for supposing that the national distinction between the Medes and Persians was sufficiently great to make it necessary that at the time of Cyrus they formed two distinct empires. They both came from the same stock. They both spoke languages closely akin to each other. ² And, above all, after the conquest of Media, the Persians continued to rank the Medes next themselves, adopting their dress, their laws, and their religion.

Quite as little does the empire of Alexander correspond with what the two visions tell us of the fourth empire. We cannot find any elements of iron in the Greek Empire. Its characteristic certainly was not "breaking in pieces and bruising" other empires. It rather attempted to hellenize them, and to procure union amongst the widely separated kingdoms which it had subdued, not by recklessly destroying them, but by treating them courteously, adopting their national dresses and customs, polishing the whole with that in which it most gloried—Hellenic culture.

These simple considerations show us that great as some of the difficulties are which attend the traditional interpretation, there are some that are equally formidable, if not more so to be encountered by those who maintain the modern interpretation. In a future chapter we shall be forced to recur to this very difficult subject; till then we must postpone all further remarks.

¹ Dan. xi. 1. ² This of course does not apply to the early Medes.

CHAPTER XIII.

DANIEL'S APOCALYPSE.

Daniel at the close of the Captivity—A further vision—Supplementary character of it—Change in the language of the book—Was Daniel actually at Susa?—The little horn—Explanation of the vision—Antiochus Epiphanes—His crusade against the Law—The measure of time—Importance of this vision to the Israelites—The Psalms of Solomon arose in the time of Antiochus—The Messianic hopes contained in them.

THE vision which we considered in the last chapter was vouchsafed to Daniel in the first year of Belshazzar. We now come to speak of one which he saw in the third year of the same king, at a time when the generals of Cyrus were rapidly concentrating their forces upon Babylon.

Daniel's thoughts at this time must have been fixed upon the long-looked-for return to Jerusalem. He had been nearly seventy years in captivity himself, and he well knew that the hard slavery of Israel was nearly completed. But he had his difficulties about the matter. Should he be able to return himself, or would it be his lot to remain behind in Babylon?

Again was Daniel favoured with a revelation from heaven, which spoke to him about the future of his people, but this vision in particular, concerning the ram and the he-goat, important though it was, told him nothing whatever about the time and the season of the end of the Captivity and of his own destiny. It told him, as we shall see, that the empire which was about to be established in the place of the Babylonian would come to an end, and that another empire would arise out of it, which would be of vast import to his people.

But before proceeding, let us take a rapid *résumé* of what

Daniel had learned about the future from the visions which he had already seen. He had learned (1) from the revelation made to Nebuchadnezzar some sixty years previously that the history of the world was to be marked out by four great empires, and that these must pass away before the kingdom of God should be established upon the earth. (2) We saw in the last chapter that it was revealed to him that four kingdoms were intimately connected with the destinies of his people. One of these, namely, the Babylonian, was then rapidly passing away. A second, the Medo-Persian, was upon the point of arising. With this the fortunes of Israel were very closely bound up. From Persia were to come the first beginnings of deliverance. Under Persian rule Israel would suffer persecution, and a large portion of the people well-nigh suffer extermination. But a third and a fourth kingdom were to be established in the remote future, and then very critical times in the history of his nation would arise. The leopard with four wings and four heads was to receive dominion, and Daniel's thoughts must have naturally led him to inquire how Israel should be affected by this kingdom.

His desire for further knowledge was rewarded by a supplementary revelation being vouchsafed to him in which the future was made plainer to him. He was informed that a great conflict would arise, symbolized by the contest between the ram and the he-goat—that the ram signified the king of the Medo-Persian Empire, and that the rough goat with the single horn, which afterwards became four horns, represented the Grecian Empire, which as yet had no existence as an independent empire, but yet was destined to overthrow the Persian sway and to be the occasion of the severest trial to Israel.

The vision in itself is supplementary to the one immediately preceding ; and it is well for us to pause a moment here, and note a fact which is common to the Book of Daniel and to other books of the Bible. It is the essence of all revelation, except of the primary revelation itself, to be supplementary to some previous revelation. Revelation does not consist of a series of isolated or disconnected truths, but admits of the supplementing and developing character of which we have just spoken. As an example we may take the first words of comfort given to Adam and Eve after the Fall. This was the promise which occupied the thoughts of the saints who lived in the

patriarchal world, and God, in His mercy, was pleased to add supplemental revelations from time to time. For instance, the promise of a deliverer of humanity was narrowed down first to one born of Abraham, then to a descendant of Isaac, and then to the family of Judah alone out of the twelve sons of Jacob. Then it was revealed that the great Liberator was to be a prophet, and for such a Person the Jews were anxiously waiting at the very time when Daniel's vision received its fulfilment. Then, as a further development, it was declared that this Person was to be a King of the house of David ; and that there might be no doubt about Him when He appeared it was stated still further that His mother should be a virgin, His birthplace Bethlehem, and that His entrance upon His work should be proclaimed by a great prophet who would recall the character of Elijah to all persons' minds.

In such a way did each successive revelation given by God through His holy prophets point out more distinctly the great Deliverer, each in its turn being supplemental to those which had preceded it. And it is this feature which we may notice in the writings of Daniel, and in the eighth chapter especially.

Very little, indeed, respecting the third kingdom is said in the second and fourth chapters, but in the supplementary vision recorded in the eighth chapter we recognize at once the third beast of the seventh chapter, by the quadruple character of the horns ; and from this revelation of Antichrist, for such we may call it, we learn that a remarkable person under the third empire shall distinguish himself as the persecutor of Israel and the opponent of Jehovah. In the same manner it is highly probable that the two last chapters of Daniel contain a supplementary revelation respecting the fourth kingdom, which will enable those who shall live under it to learn the signs of the times from Daniel's writings.

We may notice, in passing, another remarkable fact connected with this revelation. The language employed by Daniel is suddenly changed. Though living under the Chaldean Empire he no longer writes in the Chaldee language as he has done from the second chapter onwards, but returns to Hebrew. For this we can account only by the fact that what Daniel writes in this chapter is in no way connected with the Babylonian Empire, but concerns only the Hebrew people in their relation to some other Gentile power.

There is something remarkable in the background of the vision. It is stated by the prophet that he was in "Shushan the palace."¹ Are we to infer from these words that Daniel at his advanced time of life actually journeyed from Babylon to Susa, the capital of Persia, and resided upon the banks of the river Eulæus? This has been maintained by some. Josephus, for instance, who afterwards makes Daniel journey with Darius into Media, declares that on the occasion of this vision he was actually in the plains of Susa. But there is no need of supposing that any more is meant than that the locality of Susa, which no doubt was well known to Daniel in his official capacity, was the place which he saw in his vision.

The same character of a dissolving view, which we noticed in another vision, strikes us here. The changes in the objects took place while the prophet was gazing at them. The ram who was pushing from the East towards the other three points of the compass was suddenly overthrown by the he-goat, who moved with so great rapidity that his feet could hardly be seen touch the earth. The rapid overthrow of the ram, the growth of the goat, and the breaking of the horn were each of them in rapid succession to the other. The fragment of the single horn developed insensibly into the four horns, and from one of these in its turn in the same way came the little horn that was the principal subject of the vision.

We may also remark that as the vision progresses, no room for doubt was left upon Daniel's mind that the horn signified an individual. Personal acts were attributed to it. "It cast down some of the host, and of the stars to the ground and stamped upon them."² Though the little horn is not described as having a mouth, like the horn which sprung up amidst the ten in the preceding vision, and spake very great things, yet it has the power to take away the daily sacrifice, and to "cast down truth to the ground."³ In this vision also there is no account given of the body of the beast being "destroyed, and given to the burning flame;" all that we read is that the horn shall prevail "unto 2,300 days,"⁴ that then the king of fierce countenance represented by the little horn shall "be broken without hand," that is, by no human agency, but by the immediate power of God, and that "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

¹ Dan. viii. 2. ² Ibid. viii. 10. ³ Ibid. viii. 11, 12. ⁴ Ibid. v. 14.

In attempting to explain the details of this vision more fully it is to be observed that (1) a king is mentioned ; (2) certain definite acts are mentioned which he is to perform ; (3) a certain definite time is laid down, during which he is to afflict Israel in some very terrible way.

(1) As to the king. Now that the prophecy has been realized we have no difficulty in identifying him. By the goat is meant the Grecian Empire ; by the single great horn Alexander the Great is designated, the rapidity of whose conquests would have been simply incredible were it not that history has left us so many undoubted records of them. His sudden and unexpected death at Babylon in the year B.C. 323 is symbolized by the breaking of the great horn. The four horns which took the place of the broken horn were the four kings into whose hands the four principal parts of Alexander's empire ultimately descended some twenty years after his decease. These were Thrace, Syria, Macedonia, and Egypt, being subject to Symmachus, Seleucus, Cassander, and Ptolemy respectively. From one of these four arose the little horn who is identified with Antiochus V., commonly known as Epiphanes, who succeeded to the kingdom of Syria B.C. 175 upon the death of his brother Seleucus. He distinguished himself by his invasions of Egypt on the South, his marauding expeditions into Persia in the East, and his abominable doings in the "pleasant land" of Palestine.

(2) Of this man we have many records, which all agree in exhibiting him to us as one of the most extraordinary characters that the world has ever produced. If, indeed, his actions as king were such as to procure for himself the name of Epimanes, or "Madman," rather than "Epiphanes," or "Illustrious," his impieties alone make us hope that his madness may, to a certain extent, palliate them. It is beyond our province to refer to stories which are recorded of his conduct in company with his friends, or at the public baths ; it will be sufficient to mention the principal modes in which, according to Daniel, he declared himself to be an opponent of the God of Israel.

His principle was to hellenize all the Jewish institutions, and to secure an uniformity of heathenism throughout Syria. Thus, being bribed, he conferred the high priesthood on Jason, whose much beloved brother, Onias III., he expelled from that high office, banished him, and forced him to live at Antioch. This Jason was simply a tool in the hand of Antiochus, and endeavoured

to introduce Greek customs among the Israelites so far as it was possible. At Jerusalem he built a gymnasium in which the Jewish youths were trained in all the ordinary exercises of the Greeks. A contemporaneous writer mentions, "That the priests had no courage to serve any more at the altar, but despising the temple, and neglecting the sacrifices, hastened to be partakers of the unlawful allowance in the place of exercise, after the game of Discus called them forth; not setting by the honours of their fathers, but liking the glory of the Grecians best of all."¹

As another instance of the pressure that was put upon the Jews, to force them to conform to heathen customs, it may be noticed that many of the Israelites were prevailed upon to take an official part in the quinquennial games held at Tyre in honour of Heracles. Many more Israelites were won over by other means to the side of Antiochus, and by their influence others in Jerusalem were persuaded to give up their faith, and become apostates. Soon the Temple itself was defiled, and a reign of terror commenced in the holy city. The sacred rite of circumcision was interdicted, the eating of unclean food was forced upon the people, the alternative of death being the only one offered to them. Finally, a statue of Jupiter was erected in the Temple at Jerusalem; a small altar was placed upon the top of the one which Zerubbabel had erected in the Temple after the return from the Captivity, and upon this the heathen sacrifices were offered.

Nor did the tyrant confine himself to overt acts such as these. In his zeal to obliterate all traces of the true religion, he ordered all copies of the Law of Moses to be surrendered to his officers. These were desecrated by pictures of heathen gods painted on them. Of course the next step was to forbid the reading of the Law, but the small number of the faithful continued to meet together, and read passages from the prophetic books which inculcated a lesson similar to the lesson in the Law which was ordered to be read. This was called the Haftarah, and a list of these passages is to be found at the end of most modern Hebrew Bibles.

Language seems hardly able to express the monstrous acts of Antiochus. "It waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself

¹ 2 Macc. iv. 9-15.

even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.”²

It is not easy to discover at what date in his reign Antiochus commenced this crusade against the Law of Moses. We know, however, that in the year B.C. 164, he was succeeded by his son. The famous family of the Maccabees had accomplished a certain amount of reformation in religious matters ; and in the year B.C. 165, the Temple was purified, and the Feast of the Dedication instituted which was continued up to the times of the Saviour. How many Israelites perished in the persecution is unknown, but the troubles had their effect in bringing out the faithfulness of the believers ; in short, from this time onwards we meet with persons, who from their respect for holy things were called by the party names of “ Saints ” or “ Righteous.”

Such were some of the acts of Antiochus which appear to be pointed out in this vision. What has been stated about them is sufficient to show the critical nature of the Antiochian persecution in the history of the Israelites. The whole nation, almost to a man, had lapsed into idolatry, and “ the faithful had minished from among the children of men.” But a great difficulty remains for us to examine, which is (3) the distinct note of time which we find indicated to us ; the period being stated during which the sanctuary and the host, that is, the people of God, were to be trodden down under foot. Daniel heard the voice of a “ saint ” say to him that it should be unto “ two thousand three hundred days, and then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

But it is not easy to explain exactly what is meant by the remarkable Hebrew expression here translated “ days.” Literally the compound word, for such it is, means “ evening morning,” as appears from the margin of the Authorized Version of the Old Testament. It is highly probable that this phrase is used, because there was a special reference to the morning and evening sacrifices which were about to be abolished—just exactly as in the first chapter of the Bible there is a certain point of view from which the evening and the morning may be regarded as one complete day, so is it here. All sacrifice whether morning or evening is to cease during two thousand three hundred days ; but whence the commencement of them should be dated it is not so easy to say.

The following considerations may aid us. The purification

² Dan. viii. 10, 11.

of Temple by Judas Maccbæus occurred on the 25th of December B.C. 165. The Temple, during the space of three years and a half, had been without sacrifices, and heathen sacrifices had been offered in lieu of them ; but this great Hebrew hero purged everything relating to the sacred buildings, and restored the services to what they had been before. If we work back two thousand three hundred days from this, or six years and nearly five months, reckoning the months as consisting of thirty days, we are brought to the later part of July in the year B.C. 171. This was the time when Menelaus obtained the priesthood from Antiochus after the banishment of Jason.¹ Onias, the lawful high-priest, reproved Menelaus for having plundered the Temple, and withdrew himself into sanctuary at Daphne, near Antioch. Menelaus and Andronicus, a man in authority, as deputy for the king, enticed Onias from his security, and barbarously murdered him. This may well be regarded as the commencement of the reign of terror at Jerusalem, and though Antiochus is stated to have lamented the murder of Onias, yet we must bear in mind the previous and subsequent character of the king, before we venture to pronounce upon the sincerity of his sorrow. No day or month can be assigned to this tragedy, but the year of it is undoubted, and perhaps it is not far from the truth to assume that the period spoken of by the prophet began towards the end of July B.C. 171.

It may be mentioned that many persons have understood the 2,300 days to have consisted of 1150 evenings and 1150 mornings, so that no more than 1150 days are indicated by Daniel. It is needless to say that such a rendering is impossible according to the ordinary usage of the Hebrew language. It is also to be noticed that in no way can the two thousand three hundred days be identified with the "time times and dividing of a time" mentioned in the preceding vision, or with the mystical numbers which occur in the chapter concluding the book.

We are now, perhaps, in a position to appreciate the importance of this portion of the Book of Daniel. If we place ourselves in the position of the Israelites who lived during the Antiochian persecution, we shall see with what interest they must have read this prophecy. Not only, as we saw in a preceding chapter, did they know that God had ordained their sufferings beforehand, but that this particular persecution was

¹ 2 Macc. iv. 27-36.

sent upon them in punishment for their sins.¹ And accordingly we find that in the prayers offered by the devout Israelites in these times of trouble, confessions of sins, for the most part, formed the chief prelude to every prayer. They knew that God was merciful, and though they were suffering justly for their national sins, yet the period of the Divine judgment would not last seven years, but only two thousand three hundred days. And further, what support must they have found in this book to their firmness when under persecution. They had the example of Daniel who had been faithful to his God through a long life spent in the service of heathen kings. They had the miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, before them. Surely the God who had worked His wonders of old for His people's sake in Babylon, would not forget them now that they were suffering in Jerusalem.

The influence of the Book of Daniel must indeed have been weighty, and it is interesting to compare it with some of the literature that arose at the time of the persecution. We shall see how vast a difference there is between the inspired Word of God and the devout aspirations of man. In the Psalms of Solomon, for such is the name of a small collection of hymns which probably arose at this time,² we find the devotional outpourings of some Israelite who lived to witness these terrible predictions. In these hymns the author describes a time of great moral corruption, the Temple defiled, war and the horrors of war. The children of Jerusalem had defiled the holy things of the Lord, so that God was justified in His judgments. From time to time a prayer is raised that God will remember His holy covenant, and occasionally a hope flashes forth that days of deliverance are not far distant, because days of deliverance have been promised.³ Accordingly Jerusalem is called upon to put on her glorious garments and her sacred robes, because God has spoken everlasting good to Israel.⁴ God will come to visit the earth by His judgment,⁵ to repay sinners the endless recompense of their deeds, and to establish His own everlasting kingdom.⁶ And as the Psalmist ventures to express a Messianic hope he writes as follows:—

¹ Verses 12, 23.

² Dr. Dillmann, however, in Herzog and Plitt's "Cyclopædia," vol. xii. p. 347, places the Psalms of Solomon considerably later in B. C. 63.

³ Psalm of Solomon, vii. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.* xi. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.* xv. 14.

⁶ *Ibid.* xvii. 4.

“ Behold, Lord, and raise up to them their king,
 The Son of David, at the time which Thou knowest, O God,
 That He may reign over Israel Thy servant :
 And gird Him with strength to crush unjust rulers.
 By wisdom and justice purify Jerusalem
 From Gentiles who walk in destruction.

He shall judge the people and the Gentiles
 In the wisdom of His righteousness. Selah.
 And He shall have the peoples of the Gentiles to serve Him
 Beneath His yoke.

And He shall purify Jerusalem by sanctification
 As she was from the first.

That the Gentiles may see the glory of the Lord
 With which God hath glorified her.
 And he shall be over them
 A just king taught by God,
 And there is no injustice in the midst of them in His days,
 Because all are holy, and their king is Christ Lord.

And He is pure from sin that He may rule over a great people,
 To reprove rulers, and to take away sinners by strength of word.

Feeding the flock of the Lord in faith and righteousness.”¹

This extract, brief as it is, exhibits a very bright hope of a Messiah, and indicates the aspirations of the devout portion of the nation during the times of trouble of which Daniel spoke in this vision. But this expectation was not to be realized at that time. And when He came whom Israel had longed to see, the prophet whose presence was desired in the Maccabee times, then, as the Evangelist touchingly writes, “ He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”²

¹ Psalm of Solomon, xvii. 23-45.

² John i. xi.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL.

The first year of the return—Cheering prophecies—Daniel's difficulty—His prayer—Founded on Scripture phrases, the model of all prayer—The revelation of the seventy weeks—What it taught him—Difficulties felt in the interpretation—The LXX—Africanus—Apollinarius—Judas—The starting point of the prophecy—The last week of it—Other modes of explaining it—The Messianic teaching of the prophecy.

SCARCELY twelve months had elapsed since the fall of Babylon, before Daniel received from heaven a revelation of a more striking character, if possible, than any that he had as yet been permitted to see. As we cannot be too attentive in our endeavours to realize the exact condition of the prophet at the time when he received it, we must very shortly call to memory the fact that Daniel had been at this time nearly seventy years a resident in Babylon. In the duration of his life, he had already far surpassed the four-score years which were regarded as the limit of human age. He was well aware that the end of the Captivity had nearly arrived. He had "books" with him,¹ which, of course, consisted of as much of the Bible as had been written at his time, and in these he sought for comfort. In his Bible, small as it was compared with ours, there must have been two prophecies which above others raised his hopes in behalf of his people; one of these was the prophecy of Isaiah respecting Cyrus,² the other that of Jeremiah respecting the seventy years during which the Israelites were destined to dwell by the side of the waters of Babylon.³

With Isaiah it is impossible that Daniel should have been

¹ Dan. ix. 2.

² Isa. xliv. 28; xlv. 1.

³ Jer. xxv. 11, 12; xxix. 10.

personally acquainted, as he must have died some ninety years at least before the fourth year of King Jehoiakim. Notwithstanding this, the wonderful prophecy respecting Cyrus, the deliverer of Israel, must have been the principal source of comfort which had sustained the prophet during his seventy years of captivity. He had wondered, no doubt, who Cyrus might be. Was the name actually that of a person who should live? or was he to suppose that it was no more than a symbolic name like the "Branch" or "Shiloh;" and that the prophecy indicated no more than that the great deliverer would be like the "Sun" (for such is the meaning which has been attributed to the word Koresh or Cyrus¹) which warms the earth after a long winter's night, and makes the flowers look upwards with gladness? No, it could not be so; for the name of Cyrus belonged to a known conqueror, and his deputy Darius the Mede was now in command of Babylon. Was this the Cyrus spoken of in prophecy, Daniel may have asked himself, or was he to look for another Cyrus?

So again with regard to Jeremiah's prophecies there was a difficulty. There were two passages in which there was a reference to the seventy years. In one "book" Daniel read, "The whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."² And the other "book" contained the heart-stirring words: "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good work towards you in causing you to return to this place."³ But which of these two prophecies spoke of the date of the termination of the Exile? Was Daniel to date the seventy years from the "terminus" indicated in the first or in the second of these prophecies? from the fourth year of Jehoiakim, or from the exile of Jehoiachin?

Besides these two termini mentioned by Jeremiah, there is a third which may also have occurred to Daniel. Was the destruction of the Temple an epoch in the history of Israel of similar importance to the deportations of the population of

¹ The name Cyrus has also been connected with "kur," or "a mountain."

² Jer. xxv. 11-13. This last verse and the passage cited in the next note speak of parts of the 25th and 29th chapters as each being called "a book" by the Prophet Jeremiah.

³ Ibid. xxix. 10.

Jerusalem? If so might that not be another point whence the seventy years could be reckoned?

It is singular, indeed, that seventy years after each of these three epochs, events occurred which immensely affected the welfare of the exiles. For the fourth year of Jehoiakim having been B.C. 606, seventy years later brings us to B.C. 536.¹ Now as Cyrus took Babylon in the year B.C. 538, we may look upon seventy years as a "round number," to express the date of what really happened only in a year or two less. Then again from the deportation of Jehoiachin in B.C. 598 to the period of prosperity indicated by Ezra to have occurred B.C. 528,² was exactly seventy years; and from the overthrow of the Temple in B.C. 588 to the publication of the edict of Darius in B.C. 518 was seventy years.³ It is highly possible that some such anxious thoughts were at this time passing through Daniel's heart, and that he was doubting which of these three possible "termini" he ought to adopt.

Let us remember that there was no want of faith in Daniel which prompted this difficulty to him. He was simply doubting whether he was correct in his own surmises; that at last the time for deliverance had arrived. With this in his mind, and knowing fully well that the sin of Israel had brought upon that nation all the miseries of the Captivity, and speaking in their name, he "set his face unto the Lord God,"⁴ looking as in past times towards Jerusalem, the centre of his hopes, and confessed to Almighty God his own sins, and those of his people.

No fitter form of confession, no more eloquent prayer than Daniel's can be found, as it is founded entirely upon language which is based upon the books of Scripture then existing. His mind was stored with precious treasures drawn from the sacred pages of the Bible, that vast treasure-house of holy and soothing thoughts. During his life these had become a part of his own spiritual thoughts, and were the natural outpouring of his soul when engaged in supplication. Even so our own famous Bishop Andrewes was accustomed to draw from the Scriptures those prayers with which he was wont to comfort the sick and the dying while he laboured as a humble curate, combining most happily with each other such passages as touched most

¹ Ezra iii. 12.

² Ibid. v. 6.

³ Ibid. vi. 1.

⁴ Dan. ix. 3.

closely upon every particular case with which it was his duty to deal.¹

The whole of Daniel's prayer deserves careful study. And we should especially notice the form in which sin presents itself to him. Though he acknowledges it to consist of offences committed by thought, word, and deed, yet he regards it, in each act, as a rebellion against a Divine Person.² Warnings given by a merciful Father have been repeatedly neglected, and His righteousness appears all the more prominently, now that His sinful people are suffering the just consequences of their sins.³ Yet the same Lord is the God to Whom mercy and forgiveness belong, and this condescending pity exists in Him in spite of Israel's grievous rebellion. And so Daniel finishes by praying to the Heavenly Father that He will turn away His anger from Jerusalem which has become desolate on account of the sins of her people: "O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for Thine own sake, O my God; for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thine own name."⁴

Daniel's prayer was heard at once, even before he had completed what his spirit moved him to say. This was the very hour at which the evening sacrifice would have been offered in the Temple of Jerusalem, and while he was yet speaking, "the man Gabriel having hastened to do the will of God touched him, and told him that his prayer had been heard from the first, and that he was worthy to receive a great proof of God's love towards him."⁵

Then follows the revelation of the great Seventy Weeks which is as follows: "Know therefore and discern that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one the prince shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks it shall be built again with street and moat even in troublous times. And after the three score and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off and shall have nothing and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary and his end shall be with a flood and even unto the end shall be war desolations are determined. And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and upon the wing of abominations

¹ Bishop Andrewes, "Devotions for the Sick."

² Dan. ix. 5.

³ Ibid. ix. 6.

⁴ Ibid. ix. 16-19.

⁵ Ibid. ix. 21.

shall come one that maketh desolate and even unto the consummation and that determined shall *wrath* be poured out upon the desolator.”¹

Such was the revelation, and we need not be surprised if, considering its astonishing character, we find in it some remarkable words and expressions. In an unique prophecy we have every reason to expect that the language in which it is couched should also be of a singular character.

The word “weeks” offers us the first difficulty. Literally it means any period counted by sevens, and for the sake of vagueness it may be translated “Heptads.”²

Now the Jews were in the habit of reckoning “Heptads” in three different ways. They had first, as we have, the “heptad” of days which constitutes a week, and is approximately the fourth part of a lunar month. Secondly, they knew of a “heptad” of years, which formed a cycle of seven years, known as a sabbatical year. Lastly, they knew of a “heptad” of sabbatical years, that is, a cycle of forty-nine years, which was terminated by the jubilee year. Now we have to consider which of these “heptads” we are to select in attempting to explain this prophecy.

If we make trial of the first style of “heptad,” and attempt to explain Daniel’s weeks as weeks consisting of seven solar days, we should expect to find that the whole prophecy received complete fulfilment in about one year and four months after it was uttered. But there is nothing whatever recorded in sacred history which points to any anointed prince (or Messiah) having been cut off between the first and the third year of Cyrus, nor is there anything to prove that Jerusalem was rebuilt during that time. Any such interpretation must fall to the ground when we remember that, in all probability, Daniel himself outlived the period of seventy weeks, and, if the prophecy had been fulfilled, he would have called the reader’s attention to the fact of its fulfilment, as he does elsewhere;³ if it had not been fulfilled, he would have cancelled it.

¹ Dan. ix. 25. The translation is here taken from the Revised Version; with regard to punctuation, all except full stops have been designedly omitted on account of a well-known uncertainty regarding the Hebrew accentuation in ver. 25.

² The word “Heptad” is evidently employed by Aristotle, “Politics,” vii. 16, to mean those periods of seven years by which human life is measured.

³ Dan. iv. 33.

If we adopt the third style of "heptad" employed by the Jews, and attempt to explain the seventy weeks to mean a period of seventy jubilees, we shall arrive at an absurdity. The fulfilment of the prophecy would even now lie in the remote future, without any possibility of being fulfilled for about eleven hundred years.

Consequently we are obliged to adopt the second style of "heptad," which is occasionally called "the year-day" hypothesis,¹ and understand that by each "heptad" is meant a period of seven ordinary years. And before entering into further details respecting the seventy weeks let us see how this revelation was an answer to Daniel's prayer. (1) He learned that whereas he was longing to know about the termination of the seventy years of captivity, there was still a period of seven times seventy years which was of vital importance to his people. During this time not only should Jerusalem be rebuilt, but abundance of pardon and everlasting righteousness should be placed within the reach of all men by the "anointing of a most Holy One." (2) It was explained to Daniel that all these events were to take place within an interval of time accurately foreknown by God. In no way would the free agency of man be interfered with by the prophecy. A further probation was allowed to Israel, and upon his conduct during the last week depended the issues of the future. (3) At the end of sixty-nine weeks one should come for whom all Israel longed, an Anointed Prince, of whom all other so-called anointed ones and princes were types, and figures, and nothing more.²

It is not surprising that great difficulties have always been experienced in attempting to explain the seventy weeks. The earliest traces of such difficulties are to be found in the Septuagint Version of Daniel, in which the seven weeks, the sixty-two and the seventy are confused to such an extent that it is impossible to ascertain what meaning the translators intended to convey. The version of Theodotion is far more correct, but we can see that he felt his task very difficult. Jerome, who is a great authority upon the subject, mentions various interpretations of the seventy weeks which were current in his time. One

¹ Tregelles on Daniel, p. 115.

² That the seven weeks and the sixty-two are to be taken together is indicated by the united testimony of the principal ancient versions, and by common sense.

of these was due to Africanus, a Christian of the third century, who counted the seventy weeks of years from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, and maintained that from this epoch till the coming of Christ there were four hundred and ninety years, measured by Jewish months of twenty-nine days and a quarter each. Others held that the seventy weeks were intended to signify some period in the remote future. Such was the opinion of Apollinarius, and of a certain Judas, the latter maintaining that the seventy weeks came to an end at the beginning of the third century A.D.¹

This is sufficient to show how keenly alive to its difficulties were the early expositors of the seventy weeks. The vastly discordant interpretations which are given in our own times by various writers, show that the difficulties have not as yet received a satisfactory solution.

The points of divergence in modern writers upon the subject are chiefly the following: (1) All are not agreed whether the first year of Cyrus, the seventh of Artaxerxes or the twentieth of the same king, should be taken as the starting-point of the seventy weeks. (2) There is some difficulty felt as to whether the seven weeks have the same starting-point as the sixty-two, or whether the two series of weeks denote successive periods. (3) It has been suggested that the sixty-two weeks may be divided, and the seven weeks interpolated between the two parts.

Omitting the last suggestion, which is obviously a very unwarrantable assumption, and returning to the first, we can see at once that great attention must be paid to the features of the starting-point of the prophecy which are indicated by Daniel himself. The first condition required is "a commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." Now, we must remark, that the decree of Cyrus cannot possibly be thought of here, for that was only the granting of permission to the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple.² Another decree bearing very closely upon the matter was issued by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign, B.C. 458.³ Though this decree refers principally to the rebuilding and decorating of the Temple, yet we notice incidentally that obviously permission has been granted to restore the city; for we may well ask what would have been the advantage of giving Ezra powers to appoint judges and

¹ Jerome de Vir. Ill., lii.

² Ezra i. 1-4.

³ Ibid. vii. 8-28.

magistrates, if the Israelites had not been permitted to dwell in houses? We have again a very definite decree issued by Artaxerxes in his twentieth year. On this occasion (B.C. 445) the decree not only permitted Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but actually went so far as to make provision for the materials of the citadel and walls being supplied from the royal forests.¹

It is plain that this is an extension of the permission which had been given by Artaxerxes in his seventh year, accordingly we prefer to take the decree mentioned by Ezra rather than the "letters" given to Nehemiah as the starting-point of the seventy weeks.

Reckoning accordingly seven weeks of years from the seventh year of Artaxerxes, we are brought to the year B.C. 409. This is the fifteenth year of Darius Nothus, and what occurred at the time cannot be precisely ascertained. But if we are right in supposing that Daniel means that during these seven weeks "the streets of Jerusalem should be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times," we may assume that the "troublous times" came to a temporary end at the time of which we are speaking, and a careful study of the Book of Nehemiah will show what were some of the troubles which the restorers of Jerusalem experienced during the first seven weeks.

Taking the year B.C. 408 as the terminus from which we are to recommence our calculations, sixty-two weeks or four hundred and thirty-four years bring us down to A.D. 26, which, on the ordinary supposition that the Birth of Christ occurred four years previous to the commencement of the Christian era, was the date of the beginning of the Saviour's ministry. This, as carried on by Himself and His apostles, lasted, as far as Israel was concerned, seven years; in the midst of which the Anointed One was "cut off," that is to say, rejected by His people, and rooted out of the land of the living, so that "He had nothing"; nothing, not even His people belonged to Him now. But the patient waiting of God endured the perversity of Israel for three years and a half longer, and it was not till the year A.D. 33, that the whole period of seventy weeks was accomplished, and then both vision and prophecy were fully confirmed by the events which occurred. But what the final act of sin was which marked the close of the last week of grace is not known to man. Some have

¹ Neh. ii. 7-9.

attempted to show that the martyrdom of Stephen the Deacon was the crowning sin which filled the cup of wrath against Israel to the last drop. At any rate, we know that "at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem,"¹ and the gospel began to be preached in Samaria, from which we may infer that henceforth the apostles considered that their mission to the Jews, as a nation, had ceased.

Before we notice very briefly some of the principal facts about the kingdom of the Messias, which Daniel here reveals to us, we must examine a view of the seventy weeks which has found advocates in ancient as well as in modern times.

According to this hypothesis the seventy weeks commence at the time in which the commandment of God was given by His servant Jeremiah, that the Captivity should last seventy years. Now this, we know, took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, B.C. 606. Forty-nine years later than this we are brought to the year B.C. 557, when the anointed one, a Prince, was to make his appearance. This is Cyrus, whose fame about this time begins to be spread about. Returning to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and counting sixty-two weeks or four hundred and thirty-four years from it as a terminus, we arrive at the year B.C. 172, which is the second year of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the precise time when Jason began to introduce the heathen rites at Jerusalem. The anointed one then "cut off" was Onias III., who, as we have seen, was murdered at Antioch. This took place B.C. 171. By the "wing of abominations" and "one that maketh desolate," are indicated Antiochus and the idolatrous altar erected by him in the Temple; and, lastly, by "the consummation" and "wrath poured out upon the desolator," are signified the tumults and disturbances which "harassed Judæa from B.C. 169, and especially after B.C. 167."² The last week would terminate in B.C. 166, when the persecution against the Jews was raging most violently, the triumphs of Judas Maccabæus over Nicanor, Timotheus, and Lysias, taking place during the two following years.

Now it must be remembered that the advocates of this view, for the most part, maintain that the Book of Daniel was written by one who had been an eye-witness of the Antiochian persecution; and, if such was the case, it is very surprising that any events which are known to have occurred between B.C. 174 and

¹ Acts viii. 1. ² Kuenen's "Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," p. 267.

B.C. 167 can be said "to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." It also appears rather strange to be forced to suppose that the troublous times, during which the streets and wall of Jerusalem were being rebuilt, extended over a period of four hundred and thirty-four years. And lastly, the terrible doom pronounced upon Jerusalem, which sounds like a prophecy of continued desolation, certainly was not realized at the time of Antiochus. Perhaps also it is worth while observing that it is not quite clear that we are justified in assuming both the seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks to have the same terminus. Daniel appears to be speaking of seventy weeks and not sixty-three.

But the great difficulty which all experience who endeavour to explain the events foretold as about to occur during the second half of the seventieth week, or at the close of the seventieth week is due to the great obscurity of the language. Many a reader of the Book of Daniel, either in the Authorized or in the Revised Version, cannot refrain from asking himself whether it is upon the "desolate" or upon the "desolator" that wrath shall be poured out. Of course, according to the opinion of those who refer the fulfilment of the prophecy to Maccabæan times, the "desolator" is none other than Antiochus Epiphanes. It is noticed that, after the ravages committed by him at Jerusalem, he went into Persia, and there attempted to plunder the temple of Elymais, and perhaps succeeded in his attempts; that the inhabitants of the district rose against him in battle and forced him to retreat. While on his journey to Babylon, news reached him that his army in Palestine had been defeated, and that the conqueror Judas had entered into Jerusalem. Here, in the East, he fell sick, and died; and in this way "wrath" was poured out upon the desolator.

But apart from other considerations,¹ which forbid us to refer the prophecy to Antiochus, we must notice that the death of this persecutor gave no relief to the Jews, inasmuch as they were brought into contact with his generals, Nicanor, Timotheus, and

¹ Such, for instance, as that Antiochus made no covenant with the Israelites, did not destroy the city and temple, and did not die in war. According to 1 Macc. vii. 43-50, "The land of Judah" first had rest for a little while after the death of Nicanor, B.C. 161, three years after the death of Antiochus.

Lysias, against whom Judas Maccabæus directed his energetic efforts for three years. In no sense therefore can the "consummation and that determined," be limited to the decease of Antiochus.

On the contrary, the meaning undoubtedly is, that after Messiah has been cut off, both city and temple shall be destroyed as a consequence of that act. Such we know to have been the case. Daniel foretells that the *people* of the prince, and not the prince himself, shall be the instruments of the destruction of the Temple; and of this we have a remarkable confirmation in the history of Josephus,¹ who concludes his account with the words, "And thus the holy house was burnt down without Cæsar's approbation." Daniel again foretells that the fulness of wrath shall be poured upon the "desolate." Could a better word be chosen to apply to the condition of Jerusalem during the last eighteen hundred years?

But he foretells that before this end shall arrive, in the midst of the last week, Messiah shall make a firm covenant with many, and make the sacrifices of the Law cease. This leads us on to think of the principal Messianic facts which Daniel's prophecy brings before us.

First and foremost stands the promise of reconciliation and righteousness. The Messiah shall "make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness." It is not "sins," such as may have caused the Jewish captivity, but "sin" in the abstract, which shall be remitted, so as to render possible reconciliation between God and man. For this and for "righteousness" the Jewish Church had longed, and in their offerings at the Temple the faithful were able to see the types of a greater reconciliation than could be effected by the blood of bulls and of goats. Here, then, they found a limitation of the time when this great reconciliation might be expected, along with which would follow that righteousness for which David had prayed, and which, as Isaiah had promised, should come through the knowledge of God's righteous Servant.

The Messiah shall, says Daniel, "confirm the covenant with many for one week." Need we doubt what this covenant is? It is the covenant of Grace, the promise of the Holy Spirit foretold by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others.² During seven years, through the Messiah, would be promulgated the new law of the

¹ "Jewish War," vi. 4. ² Jer. xxxi. 31; Ezek. xxxiv. 25; xxxvii. 26.

Spirit as the fulfilment of the Mosaic Code. As a sign of the certainty of this, the Messiah will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease for the half of the week. This He did when by His one sacrifice of Himself He made all other sacrifices meaningless, and the rent veil of the Temple proved that the old things had now come to an end, and that the time had arrived when they should "say no more, The Ark of the covenant of the Lord ; neither shall it come to mind ; neither shall they remember it ; neither shall they miss it ; neither shall it be made any more." ²

² Jer. iii. 16.

CHAPTER XV.

DANIEL AND THE RETURN FROM EXILE.

The end at hand—Importance of the return—Account of it in Scripture—
In Apocrypha—Edict of Cyrus—His inscriptions—Poverty of Israel as
a colony in Palestine—Smallness of their number—Priests—Form of
government—Zerubbabel's duties—No monarchy—Importance of the
Temple—Difficulties in reconstruction of it.

“AND Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus”
(Dan. ii. 21). “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius
and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian,” (Dan. vi. 28).

But how did he continue? How did he prosper? Scripture
is silent. Yet we may infer from his past conduct that he
“continued” to be the same faithful servant of God and of the
king, that he had always been, and that he “prospered” in the
time of Cyrus in the same way in which God always causes the
righteous to prosper.

He “prospered” certainly in one remarkable way, namely,
that he was allowed to see the fulfilment of the prophecy which,
as we saw in the last chapter, had exercised his mind, the
prophecy of Jeremiah respecting the seventy weeks. It was in
the year B.C. 536, when, according to our reckoning, Daniel was
eighty-seven years of age, that the order of Cyrus was given,
and it was in that year, to the best of our belief, that the return
from the Captivity occurred.

In its historical importance the return from the Exile was
parallel to the Exodus from Egypt, just as the sojourning in
Egypt was to the Captivity in Babylon. Such was the way in
which the prophets regarded it, especially Isaiah in the Book
Consolation with which he concluded his great work. Yet it is

remarkable that the account that we have of this great event is very fragmentary. A few scattered notices in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah give us numerical details as to those who returned, the sacred vessels, the form of provisional government which was established, and an inquiry which was made into the genealogies of the families which returned. But of the journey to Jerusalem, and of what befel the travellers by the way, not a single hint is given us unless we regard *Psa. cvii.* to be a hymn of gratitude composed for the occasion. It must be remarked however, that much of the language in that psalm applies with equal force to the Exodus, so that we are unable to pronounce with any certainty upon the exactness of the reference.

A tradition remains in an apocryphal book,¹ which speaks of the first setting forth of the exiles, and mentions that they started "with musical instruments, tabrets and flutes." It gives us a long list of the names of the families who returned, and so far coincides with the list given in duplicate by Ezra and Nehemiah. There is, however, one difficulty which stands in the way of our receiving the whole of the narrative as true, which is that by some strange mistake the writer has substituted in his account Darius for Cyrus. This of course need not affect the truth of every particular detail recorded in the story.

Let us now remember the edict of Cyrus. It was uttered in the following remarkable words, "Thus saith Cyrus the king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem."² In such language was couched the permission for the Jews to return, and if we had no other decree of Cyrus beyond this, we should have supposed, as was believed at one time, that Cyrus being a Persian was a rigid monotheist, and showed this favour to the Jews because their religion coincided to a certain extent with his own. But nothing

¹ 1 Esdras v. 1-8.

² Ezra i. 2-4.

of the sort was really the case. An inscription of Cyrus remains which shows that political and not religious motives, urged him to set the Jews free. It was a part of his general policy to allow perfect freedom to all religions, and it was with the same indifference that he allowed the Jews to build their temple, that he rebuilt the temples of the Babylonian gods. Cyrus was perhaps the first emperor who invented the policy of tolerating all creeds, himself having none at all.

The inscription, which is referred to, was discovered in 1879, and the most important passage, as far as concerns our present purpose, is the following:—Speaking of the various races who dwelt between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf, he states: “The gods who dwelt among them to their places I restored, and I assigned them a permanent habitation. All their people I assembled and I increased their property; and the gods of Sumir and Akkad whom Nabonidus had introduced at the festivals of the Lord of the gods at Kal-anna by the command of Merodach the great Lord, I assigned them an honourable seat in the sanctuaries, as was enjoyed by all the other gods in their own cities. And daily I prayed to Bel and Nebo that they would lengthen my days, and increase my good fortune, and would repeat to Merodach my lord that ‘Thy worshipper, Cyrus the king and his son Cambyses.’”¹

At this point the cylinder becomes illegible, but enough appears in the portion of the fragment just transcribed to show that Cyrus was no rigid monotheist—that his policy was to allow perfect freedom to all religions, and to abolish the custom of deportation, that is, of transporting a large majority of the population of a conquered district into another that is more remote. Yet, strange to say, in this manner did the words of Isaiah receive their first fulfilment, “Kings shall be thy nursing fathers.”²

There can be no doubt that the poverty of the Israelites who returned was extreme. Their brethren in Palestine, who either had not quitted the Holy Land, or else had returned at various intervals during the Captivity fared little better. The gift therefore from the royal treasury must have been highly acceptable.

Upon their return into Palestine, they must have had some

¹ “Cyrus the Great,” by Canon Rawlinson *Contemporary Review* for January, 1880, p. 91. See also Mr. Budge, “Babylonian Life and History,” pp. 73–84.

² Isa. xlix. 23.

definite dwelling-places assigned to them, besides the city of Jerusalem itself. A duplicate list is given us in the Books of Ezra¹ and Nehemiah,² from which we discover that at least eighteen cities were inhabited. There is no difficulty in recognizing most of these cities, which are situated in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, the southernmost being Bethlehem. Let us remember that this small district was all that remained of the once powerful kingdom of Judah, and this is now for the first time in Biblical language called by the name of "a province."³

It must indeed have been heartrending to Daniel to hear of the melancholy condition of his own former home, and still more painful for him to notice the comparatively small number of those who returned, and the little anxiety to return that was displayed by them. The few who returned were, for the most part, of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, besides the number of persons who were required to form the Temple staff. To these must be added some individuals of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh,⁴ who for some unknown reason had attached themselves to the other two tribes. It was the presence of many families of mixed descent which made it so necessary to hold an inquiry into the genealogies, so that the political rights of all might be ascertained. The total number of those who returned amounted to 42,360,⁵ being of course a very small fraction of the number of those who might have availed themselves of the decree of Cyrus.

The priests who returned were in number 4289,⁶ and they consisted entirely of persons belonging to the house of Jeshua. Besides these, four heads of the priestly houses are mentioned,⁷ namely Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur and Harim, which, with the exception of Pashur,⁸ were heads of the courses instituted by David. In reading this census we are struck when we observe the smallness of the number of the Levites who returned, compared with that of the priests. According to one account it was 733, according to another, 752. No importance whatever can be attached to this slight discrepancy in the figures, as it is quite impossible to determine upon what principles the Hebrews determined the numbers which composed different

¹ Ezra ii. 21-34.

² Nehem. vii. 26-37.

³ Ezra ii. 1.

⁴ 1 Chron. ix. 3. ⁵ Ezra ii. 64. ⁶ Ibid. ii. 36-39; Nehem. vii. 39-42.

⁷ Ibid. vii. 39-42.

⁸ 1 Chron. xxiv. 7, 8, 14.

families. The fact of the relative smallness of the number of the Levites when compared with that of the priests, perhaps, can be best accounted for by supposing that while the priests had been exceedingly careful about preserving their genealogical records, the Levites had been less exact in keeping their pedigrees. It may also be the case, that the Levites having no professional occupation in Babylon, gradually mixed up with other tribes, and possibly even intermarried with the heathen.

But small as the revived community was, it could not have existed without some fixed form of government, and it may be that the experienced mind of Daniel suggested many of the outlines of the new constitution to Zerubbabel, to whom Cyrus entrusted all the responsibility of government. Zerubbabel was the representative of the nation, and was especially responsible for the lay element. Jeshua was the high priest whose duty it was to organize all that was necessary for the due performance of the Temple services, and the proper celebration of the religious rites which the Law commanded. However, so simple a rule as this was insufficient even for the small colony that returned. Accordingly Zerubbabel and Jeshua selected ten others to assist them in making all necessary arrangements.¹ This supreme Council was known by the name of "Chiefs of the Fathers,"² the number twelve having been designedly fixed upon so as to indicate that the new community then being established at Jerusalem was the lawful successor to that which had been impersonated in the twelve tribes.

It will be interesting to gather from a few notices in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, what were the functions of the "Chiefs of the Fathers," that we may see more clearly what was the form of this new constitution. We read that at a certain time a deputation was sent by certain persons, who are called "adversaries of Judah,"³ with a request that they might be permitted to assist in building the Temple. The persons whom they recognized as the representatives of the government were Ezra, Jeshua, and the "Chief of the Fathers" of Israel. These, on the other hand, readily accepted the responsibility of representing the nation, and at the same time acknowledged themselves to be the subjects of Persia. Another instance of the same thing may be given. A certain man

¹ Ezra ii. 2 ; Nehem. vii. 7. ² Ibid. viii. 1 ; iv. 2. ³ Ezra iv. 3.

named Rehum,² was chancellor, that is Persian governor of Palestine at this time. The malcontents to whom, we have just referred, laid their complaints before him. We notice that he had no hesitation in looking upon the decree of the "Chief of the Fathers" as equivalent to the voice of the people. Some years later this form of government appears to have continued, for we find that Darius in his decree² respecting the rebuilding of the Temple refers to the "governor," who can be no other than Zerubbabel, and to the "elders of the Jews," who cannot but be identical with the "Chief of the Fathers." The phrase is happily chosen, it expresses exactly what was meant, namely, that just as Zerubbabel was an impersonation of the lay element in Israel, so the "Chief of the Fathers" were impersonations of the twelve tribes.

There were other minor officers appointed who had no judicial functions, but yet are distinguished as heads of the people. Some were superintendents of works,³ some were guardians of morals,⁴ but in no way could they be considered as representatives or delegates of the people. Others were appointed whose duty it was apparently, to pay especial attention to the village communities which were then rapidly developing in Palestine. These are sufficient instances to indicate that a provisional government at least existed at Jerusalem, and that this possessed ample means for developing its further powers.

The precise duties of Zerubbabel cannot be ascertained. The titles given to him in the Books of Ezra and Haggai, Tirshatha⁵ and Pasha⁶ mean no more than "governor" and throw no light upon his duties. One case only occurs in which he is mentioned as taking a principal official part, and this is in the dispute which arose with regard to the legal rights of those priests who were unable to establish their own genealogy. On this occasion Zerubbabel the layman settled the dispute, and not Jeshua the priest, even though the question was one of ecclesiastical, rather than civil law. The reason is not hard to discover. The priests were very likely to prove bad judges when their own interests were concerned. The sentence of Zerubbabel was very just, "They should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest knowing Urim and

² Ezra iv. 9.² Ibid. vi. 7.³ Nehem. iii. 5.⁴ Ibid. x. 29.⁵ Ezra ii. 63.⁶ Hagg. i. 1.

Thummim.”¹ This sensible settlement of an intricate question shows how competent Zerubbabel was for the duties which devolved upon him.

There is one very remarkable fact which we must not fail to notice before we quit this part of our subject, which is that after the return from the Captivity no attempt was made to re-establish the monarchy. This cannot have been due to the absence of properly qualified individuals, for Zerubbabel himself was a lineal descendant of David; and even in the event of his family failing, there was a certain Hattush “of the sons of David.”² But in no case does there appear to have been the slightest intention of setting either of these upon the throne. It may be that the Jews regarded their king in past years, as the authors of all their miseries, and that they were unwilling to revive an institution which had led to such fatal consequences. This is all the more remarkable when we bear in mind that Jeremiah and Ezekiel made frequent references to the promises made to the family of David. But no such teaching occurs in the writings of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and Malachi, who lived after the Exile. The Israelites were taught by these to look for “the desire of nations,”³ to expect a king who would come “as a lowly one,”⁴ to expect a great prophet like Elijah to arise before the coming of the Messiah,⁵ and not to hope for the mighty king who should restore the kingdom unto Israel. For them the monarchy was a thing of the past, as much of the past as were the patriarchs and the judges, and they had no wish to see it restored.

The Temple, however, was regarded from a very different point of view. Though their past history was most intimately bound up with the Temple, as it was with the monarchy, yet the one was essential to the nation, the other was not. It would be next to impossible for a Hebrew to conceive the existence of the nation without some central place of worship, which should not only represent, as in a type, the unity of the nation, but also serve as a common place of meeting for the whole people. “The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all.”⁶ This was the idea that was suggested by the Temple. It was a

¹ Nehem. vii. 65.

² Ezra. viii. 2. But it may be questioned whether the writer did not mean that Daniel was of the sons of David, and Hattush of the sons of Shechaniah.

³ Hagg. ii. 7.

⁴ Zech. ix. 9.

⁵ Mal. iv. 5.

⁶ Prov. xxii. 2.

place where all could assemble, and all distinction of rank descent, wealth, was merged in the one great fact that they met there before the Eternal One. From the Exodus onwards, the tabernacle and the Temple had suggested this thought. How then could this small community survive without a temple? And some of the foresighted amongst them must have perceived the importance of having, amidst the general heap of ruins, some one place which might serve as an impregnable fortress, and a secure asylum from the raids of the hostile tribes who surrounded them.

Accordingly, in the general survey of Jerusalem which was made by the "Chief of the Fathers"¹ when they came to the site of the Temple, they made contributions towards the rebuilding of it which amounted to a very large sum, considering the extreme poverty of the times. It amounted to no less than one thousand drams of gold, and five times as many pounds of silver. Probably some others besides the "Chief of the Fathers" were the causes of so large an offering being made.

But considerable difficulties had to be encountered. It was no slight labour to clear away the charred heap of *débris* which occupied the place where Solomon's huge blocks of stone had once stood. If we bear in mind the huge number of men employed by Solomon in constructing the Temple buildings, how vast a gang of workmen would be required to clear away the remains. Ezra gives us some idea of the vastness of this task when he tells us that seven months were occupied in obtaining no more than a level surface, and upon this they were unable to erect more than merely a temporary altar.² This, however, was sufficient for their present purpose, and once more the daily sacrifices were offered from the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

It was not without considerable danger that they succeeded even in doing this, so liable were they to interruption from the hostile tribes who surrounded them.³ However, they persevered, and before long not only was the Feast of Tabernacles observed "as the duty of every day required," but also the feasts of the new moons were observed, "and all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated." To some such occasion as this is due the original groundwork of Psa. cxviii., though a part of it must belong to the completion of the Temple, of which, at the

¹ Ezra ii. 68.

² Ibid. iii. 1.

³ Ibid. iii. 3.

time to which we refer, not even the foundation stone had yet been laid.

The workmen were soon engaged, their pay was given them, according to the custom of the times, in corn, wine, and oil. All the arrangements were made upon the plans adopted by Solomon. The Tyrians and Sidonians were employed in bringing cedar wood from Lebanon to Joppa, and so zealously was the work carried on that in the second month of the second year after the return from Babylon, all preparations had been made for the laying of the foundation stone. All the Levites, who were above the age of twenty years, were summoned to take part in the work, and three of them, Jeshua, Kadmiel, and Henadad, were appointed to superintend the whole of the operations.

At this time Daniel was nearly ninety years of age. Possibly one of the reasons why he "prospered" during the reign of Cyrus was his hearing that works were progressing so rapidly and prosperously at Jerusalem. But he himself was too old to return. Perhaps he was all the more resigned to remain where he was, inasmuch as he knew that the exiles in Babylon would need such support as a man in his high position could give. Need we doubt that one who had interceded so earnestly for his people and had so fervently prayed the God of Israel "to cause His face to shine upon the desolate sanctuary,"¹ now fell upon his knees and offered thanksgivings to God, who had allowed him to witness so great and unexpected a mercy, and prayed from the bottom of his heart that the work thus begun under God's blessing might be continued, and speedily finished. We can imagine him uttering his *Nunc Dimittis* like Simeon, now that he had seen the Lord's salvation.

At length all was ready. Zerubbabel laid the foundation stone amidst the shouts of the people and the blasts of trumpets, while the sons of Asaph sang by courses some of those striking psalms which always appear so admirably fitted for such an occasion.² As the Prophet Haggai pointed out, the beginnings, were very small, "Is it not in your eyes in comparison as nothing?"³ and Zechariah called it "the day of small things."⁴

¹ Dan. ix. 17.

² These are Psa. cvi., cvii., cxviii. That such psalms as these were then used is probable, partly from the contents of them, and partly from the language employed by Ezra iii. 11. ³ Hagg. ii. 3. ⁴ Zech. iv. 10.

Yet Zechariah encouraged the people by promising them that all obstacles would disappear before Zerubbabel, and that the top stone would be laid amid the shouts, "Grace to it, grace to it," as surely as now the foundation stone was being laid.

It was, however, with very mixed feelings that this ceremony was regarded by the spectators. There were some among those who had returned who remembered the first Temple and its fading glory. Some of these might have been of the same age as Daniel, some, of course, may have been younger, for we must remember that it was not much more than fifty years since the Temple had been burned. But all viewed the proceedings with mixed feelings as they considered the miserable circumstances under which the foundation stone of the second Temple was laid. Some burst into a loud wail. The younger members of the community uttered joyous shouts. So confused was the din that it was impossible to distinguish between the cries of triumph and the voices of weeping. Yet in after-times Haggai and Zechariah, and, no doubt, Zerubbabel as well, exhorted the people to continue the works, promising that not only the Temple, but the city also should be rebuilt.²

The works of the Temple were carried on zealously in spite of the greatest opposition, but it is beyond the bounds of probability that Daniel lived to see them completed. It was not till twenty years after the laying of the foundation stone that the Temple was finished and dedicated. But while Daniel was denied, like Moses, to enter into the Holy Land himself, he received brighter visions from the heavenly Jerusalem than such as could have been witnessed by him had he been present in the flesh with Zerubbabel and his fellow-workers. Of these we shall speak in the following chapters.

² Zech. viii, 1-10.

CHAPTER XVI.

DANIEL'S LAST VISION.

The prophet remains in Babylon—His feelings of solitude—He is informed of what takes place at Jerusalem—His fast at the time of the Passover—Reason of it—He goes to the Tigris—The vision and the supernatural character of it—His companions—Whom did he see?—The Word of God in human shape—Effect produced upon him by the vision—What we infer from his gradual recovery—Cause of his terror—Answer to his prayer why delayed—The prince of the kingdom of Persia—Doctrine of guardian angels watching over human empires—Nothing unreasonable in this—The threefold asseveration.

WE were compelled to journey to Jerusalem with the returning exiles, so that we might be able to realize with greater ease the hopes and feelings of Daniel. He had now outlived nearly all the friends and companions of his youth, and lived amidst a generation which respected and honoured him as children would a venerable father. And now he was to be separated from those children.

Yet it was with feelings of thankfulness that he saw the Israelites gathering together in the streets of Babylon, and finally beheld the last of the caravan leave the western gate of the city. We can well imagine him returning homewards, and, on his way, ascending one of the many towers which crowned the city, so that he might follow the path of those whom he loved, as far as his failing eyes would permit him. He traced them along the right bank of the Euphrates, journeying towards the North, occasionally lost to his view amidst the palm groves and willow plantations. Gradually they became less distinct. At last he saw them turn off in a westerly direction towards the Holy City. The line of camels and horses and travellers grew

thinner and thinner, and at last disappeared finally amidst the sands of the desert.

Then Daniel went down to his house, and, doubtless, as he did aforetime, his windows being opened toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees and prayed, and gave thanks to God." ¹ And what more suitable form of supplication could he have found than that which was known by the name of "the Prayer of Moses, the man of God." ²

" Lord, Thou hast been our refuge
From one generation to another.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever the earth and the world were made,
Thou art God from everlasting and world without end.

* * * * *

Show Thy servants Thy work
And their children Thy glory.
Prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us,
O prosper Thou our handy-work."

How striking was the parallel between the two saints ! Each absent from the promised land ! each destined never to enter it ! each having lived far beyond the three score and ten years allotted to human life ! each left alone in the vast solitude of a busy world !

Yes ; Daniel remained in Babylon alone. For we cannot with any reason suppose that he, any more than Moses, formed new friendships in his old age. The time of life when friends are readily formed had passed away for ever. However, his occupations relieved him from a sense of solitude. The cares of a vast kingdom rested upon him, and though his lengthy experience prevented him from feeling overburdened by his official duties, yet they were sufficient to occupy his time fully. But there was a higher sense in which he was not alone. His mind was filled with that overflowing feeling of companionship which the soul of a devout servant of God experiences in his Master's constant presence.

Day by day the reports came to Daniel from various parts of the empire. He was informed of all that took place throughout its world-wide extent ; and among other despatches he read the melancholy intelligence that a large amount of disorganization

¹ Dan. vi. 10.

² Psa. xc.

existed at Jerusalem. It appeared that considerable opposition had been offered to the Israelites by the surrounding tribes,¹ who viewed them with great jealousy, while they were endeavouring to revive the ruins of Jerusalem. These hereditary enemies felt that, if the strong fortress on Mount Zion was once again restored, they would have a powerful adversary safely encamped in the midst of them. And besides this, they offered more active opposition to the returned colony, by hiring counsellors against them to "frustrate their purpose."² Such was the case during the time of Cyrus, to which we are referring. But, in later times, the opposition became far more serious, and it was not till the reign of Darius that the original edict of Cyrus was discovered, to which that king gave immediate effect.³

Daniel must have been sadly tempted to be disappointed of his hopes. The return from the Exile had not resulted as he had anticipated. By the revelation of the seventy weeks he had indeed been prepared to expect that the Messiah would not appear till many years later; but yet all the prophecies of the return were so closely linked together with future Messianic glories, that it must have been a bitter disappointment for him to see the hopeless helplessness that reigned at Jerusalem. The Captivity was over, yet there was no king, no one, not even Zerubbabel himself, no prophet, not even Zechariah and Haggai, who was capable of reducing things to order. Would God forsake His faithful servant at such a moment of trial as this?

We shall see what took place and how Daniel was comforted in his perplexity.

It was the first month of the year,⁴ the very time when the Israelites at Jerusalem were celebrating, what was most probably, the first passover after their return. We can well believe that Daniel, who had always been remarkable in his observance of the hours of prayer, would not fail to keep the feasts of the Law so far as his residence in a foreign country would permit him. This passover, of course, was one which he could not fail to observe, as it commemorated a deliverance, a type of which only was commemorated by the passover instituted in Egypt. Yet, knowing the depressed condition of his people, he was unable to observe the festival with joy. On the contrary, he says that he was "mourning three full weeks, that he ate no

¹ Ezra iv. 1.² Ibid. iv. 5.³ Ibid. vi. 1.⁴ Dan. x. 4.

pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into his mouth, neither did he anoint himself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Grateful though he was to God for His past mercies, yet he hoped by prayer to be able to bring down some further blessings upon his people at Jerusalem.

Three days after the end of the fast, he was no longer at Babylon, but on the banks of the Tigris. The distance of the locality where he resided was, perhaps, not more than sixty or seventy miles, and the canal, which joined the Euphrates to the Tigris, would have made the journey comparatively easy. On the banks of this river it is possible that Daniel had some country residence to which he was wont to retire in his old age when seeking for a temporary rest from his official life. Here he may have fitted up for himself a dwelling-place, like those which had been occupied by the holy prophets of old, furnished simply with "a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick;"¹ and here, perhaps, were some disciples residing with him, who are described as accompanying him on the banks of the Tigris, whom Jewish tradition has identified with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

A more suitable place to receive such a revelation cannot be imagined. Rivers, as we have already noticed, were regarded as the emblems of the nations through whose territories they flowed. Hence, what the Euphrates was to Babylon, that was the Tigris to Persia. Just as the battles of Carchemish on the Euphrates had been decisive to Babylon, so were the victories of Cyrus on the Tigris, and afterwards that of Alexander at Arbela, near which the same river flows, decisive to Persia.

It has been questioned whether Daniel was present at the Tigris actually or in vision only. The inquiry is not without importance; and it may be said that the circumstances of the case give us every reason for believing that he was not there merely in the spirit, as he was at Shushan some six years previously. Not only do the words of Daniel distinctly express that he "was by the side of the great river which is Hiddekel," and then "lifted up his eyes and saw the vision;" but the fact that he had companions with him implies his local presence there.

It is interesting to compare this vision with the earlier one which Daniel records in his eighth chapter. The future history

¹ 2 Kings iv. 10.

of Persia and Greece was there revealed to him under the similitude of the ram and the he-goat. The overthrow of the ram and the breaking off of one of the horns of the goat were a symbol of the decay of Persia and the death of Alexander. Here he is told in plain words, apart from symbols, that the kingdom of Persia is near its end, and that only four kings of any note shall rule that empire. So again only one king of Greece is mentioned, but plain words,¹ and not symbols, are employed to indicate that "his kingdom shall be broken." In the former vision all was enigma, all was seen as in a picture, or in a dissolving view; here a Divine Power reveals to him the future in distinct language, leaving no doubt about the general meaning of the vision.

The companions of Daniel "saw not the vision." Of course it is impossible for us to explain how it was that they did not see it; and we must remember that where the supernatural is recorded, we cannot be reasonably expected to explain every detail. The explanations of natural phenomena, as we call them, consist in referring those phenomena to some higher law, which itself has been discovered by induction or experience. So also the phenomena of the supernatural can only be explained by the same process. We must examine each detail with reverent care, and then take our results, remembering that the supernatural, like the natural, is ever present to us, and that the phenomena of both must be examined with equal accuracy before we can pronounce any opinion. It may be true that the supernatural is only that side of the natural of which we are unable to give any account. Or it may be true that there is no line of demarkation which separates the natural from the supernatural, but that the one merges insensibly into the other. It may be true that it is only in our present condition that we make distinctions between what is natural and what is supernatural. Yet in all cases it is for us to examine the phenomena and to endeavour to approach the truth by a careful examination of every particular instance of the supernatural which has been recorded, or which we know ourselves.

With regard to this special instance with which we are dealing, it must be noticed that Daniel's friends "saw not the vision." It seems then, at first sight, to be one law of the supernatural that what may be seen or heard clearly by one person may pro-

¹ Dan. xi. 14.

duce no such effect upon another. This is precisely what we find in other records of supernatural revelations recorded in the Holy Scriptures. For instance, a voice from heaven said to Jesus of Nazareth respecting the Name of the Almighty, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."¹ All who were present heard a sound, some heard what they thought was thunder, some heard what they believed to be the voice of an angel. It was only a few who were able to recognize the words which were actually spoken from heaven. And again in the history of the conversion of St. Paul, though the men who journeyed with him "heard the voice, but saw no man,"² heard a sound which they could not understand, yet the apostle himself heard the very words which had been spoken. We observe that the same law of the supernatural holds true in the case of Daniel. He heard what was hidden from others. We observe the same in our own times. The Divine words of the gospel speak clearly to some ears, assuring them of pardon and everlasting peace. To others the self-same words seem as idle tales.

But what was it that Daniel really saw?

A man was standing solitary (for such is the meaning of the Hebrew "one man") by the banks of the river Tigris. He was dressed in linen, and his loins were girded about with the finest gold. The dress recalls to us partly the dress of the high priest, and partly that of the man who appeared to Ezekiel in his vision.³ Similar to it was the dress which the Saviour Himself was seen to wear by St. John in his vision, "One like unto the son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle."⁴ The body gleamed like beryls, while the face flashed like the lightning, the eyes were as fire, and the arms and feet like burnished copper. What he said at the first we are not told, but "the voice of his words was like the voice of a multitude."

We cannot fail to recognize who this Person was. He was none other than the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. He had appeared at earlier times to Adam, to Abraham, to Moses, and to others, and now He allowed Himself to be seen by Daniel. He appeared in human form—before He became man. Even Jewish tradition⁵ had admitted that it was the Word, the first-begotten Son, who undertook the care of

¹ John xii. 28. ² Acts ix. 7. ³ Ezek. ix. 2, &c. ⁴ Rev. i. 13.

⁵ Philo, "De Agr.," sec. 12; "De Somn." I. secs. 33, 34.

God's sacred flock in the wilderness, and that He it was who spake to Adam and others. We have no hesitation, in accordance with this, in following what has been the teaching of the Church of Christ¹ from the very first, and admitting that it was the Word who manifested Himself to Daniel.

The effect of this vision upon Daniel was simply stupendous. In a former vision, when the angel Gabriel appeared to him, "he was in a deep sleep on his face towards the ground,"² but the revelation of this higher Person "took away all his strength from him, his comeliness was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength. . . . He was in a deep sleep upon his face, and his face toward the ground."³ Nor need we be astonished at the effect thus produced upon him. The awe with which Daniel was panic stricken is that which must be felt by the holiest of the sons of men, who is brought face to face with his Creator. The more conscious the man is of his own sinful nature, the more overpowered is he by the contemplation of that dazzling purity which belongs to God alone. And, on the other hand, the more that a great saint like Daniel or Paul or John learns of the holiness of God, the more conscious is he of his own sinfulness. So St. John at Patmos, "when he saw Him, fell at His feet as dead;"⁴ so Ezekiel, on seeing the rainbow, which was "the appearance of the glory of the Lord, fell upon his face."⁵

It is interesting to observe that though of course it was possible for this heavenly Person to have restored Daniel to his consciousness immediately, yet He was not pleased to do so. It would teach us, it may be, that just as in this world the growth of the knowledge of God is very gradual, so it shall be in the world beyond the grave. The attainment of holiness is a gradual process in this life. Absolute holiness is never attained. But at the last day, when, clothed with that righteousness which comes through the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us, we shall enter into the joy of our Lord, we shall begin afresh, learning more and more about God, with always something fresh to learn. A simple illustration will convey our meaning more simply. Any person who has not advanced so very far in mathematical studies is aware that there are certain curved lines which are traced in accordance with a fixed law,

¹ See Bull, "Def. Fid. Nic.," book i.

³ Ibid. x. 8.

⁴ Rev. i. 17.

² Dan. viii. 18.

⁵ Ezek. i. 28.

and constantly tend to touch one or more other lines, but do not touch them within any finite distance. The interval between the curve and the line is always diminishing, but in no finite time will it disappear. Even so we notice in Daniel's conduct, that when first he heard the words of Him who spake with him, "he was in a deep sleep on his face, and his face toward the ground."¹ When the "hand" touched him, he was "set upon his knees, and upon the palms of his hands." Not till the command was given, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright"—not till then was he able to stand, and then "he stood trembling."

But let us remember that Daniel's spiritual condition was not unprepared at the time when he received the heavenly vision. It is plain that fasting and prayers had been engaged in by him on account of himself as well as his people. The Voice especially said, "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words."² During those three weeks, like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, he had **been longing** to be delivered from the "body of that death" which was ever present with him,—even with a man who had spent his whole life in the blameless service of God. **And** now he is assured that from the very first time that he had commenced to offer up his prayer God had heard him. Is it not remarkable that so great a saint should have been denied any answer to his prayers for so long a time as three weeks? Yet such are God's ways with those whom He loves. This long apparent delay in giving any reply to Daniel's prayer, only increased his joy when he received the answer. God's delays in sending mercies increase their value when received. The holy angels whom God had given charge over Daniel, and who then, as now, behold the face of the heavenly Father, had been watching over him, and each single aspiration of his soul had been observed from heaven.

Seldom is it revealed to man what delays the answer to his most earnest petitions. Probably if the reason were given to him he would fail to comprehend it. Such seems to be the lesson which is taught us by the instance of Daniel upon the present occasion. It is impossible to explain with any satisfaction to ourselves or to others the reason which this Person gives for not having come to Daniel earlier. "The prince of the

¹ Dan. x. 9-11.

² Ibid. ver. 12.

DANIEL'S LAST VISION.

kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days, but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia.”¹ Who this “Prince of the kingdom of Persia” may have been we shall endeavour to say presently, but what we have to notice first is what he is stated to have done. It appears that in some way or other during the space of twenty-one days he had been withstanding God’s plans for the restoration of His people at Jerusalem. As we know from the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, there were many obstacles raised to the Jews upon their return, and no doubt only a very few of the difficulties that they were forced to encounter have been recorded in those books. To some such troubles Daniel is here referred, but as to the measure of time, whether we are to understand the twenty-one days literally, or whether we are rather to suppose it to signify a period of three years, or three weeks of years, none can say.

We have still to inquire “Who was this person spoken of as the Prince of the kingdom of Persia?”

The first indication of any aid in solving this question is found in the words, “Lo, Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me.” Not to mention that it is obvious from this that the Person who spoke to Daniel was greater than Michael, and therefore far above other angels, it appears that the “Prince of the kingdom of Persia” was a person who was alike opposed to Michael and to Him who was addressing the prophet. In fact, we are here permitted to see that God, who is pleased to exercise His providence over individuals by the ministry of angels, does the same with regard to nations. And further, as there are holy angels who do His will with respect to nations, there are others who oppose it.

It appears that this was acknowledged as a truth even in pre-Christian times. In the Book of Deuteronomy where we read, “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel,”² the Septuagint Version translates the last clause, “He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the angels of

¹ Dan. x. vers. 12, 13.

² Chap. xxxii. 8. On this passage see more fully Eisenmenger, “Entd. Judensthum,” part i. p. 806 &c.; comp. Eccus. xvii. 17, 18; 1 Cor. ii. 6, 8; Isa. xxiv. 21.

God." It is remarkable that the Septuagint is not merely the only Greek Version which gives this reading, but that it is the only version worth mention in which the reading occurs. We may therefore conjecture that we have a paraphrase of the text before us, rather than any indication of a various reading in the Hebrew text, and the paraphrase was made in accordance with the doctrine which was held at the time when the version was made.

From the use of the Septuagint which prevailed in early Christian times we need not be surprised that the majority of the Church fathers interpreted the passage in Deuteronomy so as to agree with what is here written in Daniel. It was a matter of dispute among them, however, whether the guardian angel of the kingdom of Persia was an evil or a good angel; whether, in fact, the purpose of God had been revealed to the angels or not. Into such endless discussions it is needless for us to enter. Jerome, who is very cautious in expressing his opinion, states that the Angel of Persia endeavoured to prevent the release of the whole of the captivity, enumerating the sins of the Jews, insisting that they were justly detained captive, and ought not to be released.

Of course it is impossible for any person to discover anything respecting this doctrine except from what is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. But it appears just to infer that if Almighty God is willing to appoint angels to watch over individuals, He may do so for nations. And if by His permission evil angels assault individuals, why should it appear incredible that He should not permit them to attack nations? If Satan was permitted on more than one occasion to assail the Son of God Himself, is it naturally impossible for him to attempt to deceive whole nations, and to lead them through national sins into their perdition?

As we have already noticed, a reason can be traced which will account for every miracle that is recorded in this book. Daniel's interpretation of the two dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, and the deliverance of the three holy children were miracles, the object of which was to bring the king of Babylon to acknowledge Jehovah to be the true God—miracles wrought in mercy to the king and to Israel as well. Similarly the deliverance of Daniel from the den of lions was effected by a miracle, that the Persians might know the power of Jehovah, and that Israel

might know that their God was their protector as truly under the Persian as He had been under the former empire. So in this miraculous revelation that is given to Daniel, the cause of it is actually stated—"I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days."² This revelation is made in behalf of Israel, that they may know in the remote future, when these things come to pass, that they come with the permission of Jehovah, and in the fulfilment of these prophecies they will recognize the omniscience of Him who spake them by the mouth of His holy prophet.

And one further fact we should notice before we pass on to consider the revelation more fully. The Divine Person who speaks with Daniel lays great stress upon the importance of this vision. It is rarely that we find in the Bible that the person by whom a revelation is given solemnly asserts the truth of it, but here three times within the three last chapters One who cannot lie makes a threefold asseveration of the truth which He declares—

"I will show thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth."²

"And now I will show thee the truth."³

"The man clothed in linen . . . held up his right hand . . . and swarc by Him that liveth for ever, that . . . all these things shall be finished."⁴

² Dan. x. 14.

³ Ibid. x. 21.

³ Ibid. xi. 2.

⁴ Ibid. xii. 7.

CHAPTER XVII.

LAST REVELATION OF DANIEL.

The character of this revelation—The angelic ministration—The coming struggle—Persia—Greece—The successors of Alexander down to Antiochus Epiphanes—The persecution—Is this interpretation correct?—Various opinions—Last words to Daniel.

THE great revelation which we now proceed to examine is a development of the one contained in the eighth chapter, just as that vision develops truths which had been revealed in earlier visions. It is believed by many persons to refer to the time which should intervene between Cyrus and Antiochus Epiphanes, while others understand it to relate what shall happen in the remote future. A certain character appears who has some features which have been noticed in Antiochus Epiphanes; other features, however, are depicted in him which lead us to believe that the reference is to some greater monster of iniquity. It is hard to read the chapter through without being struck with what appears to be a distinct reference to the kingdoms of the Ptolemies and Seleucidæ into which the empire of Alexander was developed; but then, on the other hand, some very important details are passed over, details which seriously affected the fortunes of Israel; and this omission leads us to believe that our attempt to make the whole of the revelation refer to the trying times of Antiochus is futile.

Of the introduction to the revelation we have already spoken; it remains for us to examine the revelation itself, and in so doing we shall first mention the principal events to which according to one school of interpretation it has been supposed that Daniel refers.

The prophet, after having been strengthened by the Divine Person who spoke with him, expressed himself able to bear the weight of the revelation which was about to be communicated to him, "Let my lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me."¹ He is first informed that the Person would shortly depart to fight with the evil power which was endeavouring to influence Cyrus against the true interests of Israel.² He also mentions that Michael, the Prince of Israel, that is the guardian angel of Israel, has come to His aid—Michael, whose name means "Who is like God?"—Michael, who is to be identified with the Captain of the Host of the Lord. During the reign of Darius the Mede, the Word of God had been standing by the chief of angels to strengthen him. These two had been the supporters of Daniel during the reign of that king. They had raised him to his high position in the State, they had delivered him from the lion's den, but, above all, they had, at the Exodus, many years before, procured the release of Israel from Captivity.

At this point commences the principal part of the revelation. It begins with a declaration of the fact that there will be in the future a great struggle between the kingdoms of Persia and Greece. Persia, it must be remembered, was at this time still in her infancy, and Greece was merely a collection of small independent states. The prophet is informed that there shall stand up after Cyrus three kings in Persia, "the fourth of whom shall be far richer than they all, and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia."³ Of course there can be no doubt that the last king mentioned is Xerxes, who certainly was the richest king of Persia, and is to be identified with the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. He, therefore, may well claim notice in a prophecy which professes to speak of the interests of Israel. Any doubts as to the identification of this king with Xerxes disappear when we remember that Daniel says that his riches are the cause of his expedition against Greece. If, at any time in the history of the world, troops were bought up with money, at no time was it more the case than in the time of Xerxes. It must be remarked that Daniel only enumerates four kings, but in doing so he does not imply that four kings only should be concerned with the Persian Monarchy. In accordance with the principle which we may

¹ Dan. x. 19. ² Comp. Zech. iii. 1, 2; Eph. vi. 12; Rev. xii. 7

³ Dan. xi. 2.

notice is observed by other writers in the Holy Scriptures, he passes over those who were least noteworthy in the annals of his own people's history, and speaks only of those whose acts mostly affected the Church of God. By these three, most probably, are meant Cambyses, Darius Hystaspis, and Xerxes.

Apparently the prophecy takes Xerxes as the salient point in history; and it cannot be denied that, practically speaking, the reigns of the later Persian kings were not so important in the development of the history of the world (to say nothing of God's people) as those of Darius and Xerxes. Hence we are at once introduced to the rising of the kingdom of Greece, not a word being said about those kings of Persia who had no special influence either upon Greece, Persia, or Israel. We are accordingly called to notice the rising of Alexander the Great, the overthrow of the Persian Empire, the autocratic character of Alexander,¹ and the extent of his dominions. But it shall happen, says Daniel, that during the lifetime of this mighty king,² when he is at the height of his power, he shall have a sudden fall, his kingdom shall be divided into four parts but no descendant of his shall have any share of his dominions.³ Strangers are to receive this huge inheritance, and they shall be looked upon as kings, though not of such dignity as Alexander. In illustration of this it may be mentioned that history states that both of Alexander's sons were slain in a conspiracy made against them by one of the four generals who received a share of the Greek Empire.⁴ Thus it happened that his kingdom was divided but "not to his posterity."

The four generals of Alexander among whom his empire was divided, so far as especially concerned the fortunes of Israel, were Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. The last two respectively reigned over Syria and Egypt, and from this period of the revelation onwards the kings of these two countries are severally called the King of the North and the King of the South.

The first two kings to whom Daniel is supposed to refer are Ptolemy Lagus and Seleucus Nicator. Ptolemy, as it appears, was a powerful king, and succeeded in increasing the territory which he obtained at the death of Alexander. The Northern king Seleucus, on the other hand, was "strong above him and

¹ Dan. ver. 3, comp. viii. 5-8. ² Ibid. xi. 4. ³ Ibid. viii. 8.

⁴ Justin, XV. ii. 3, 5.

had dominion."¹ He indeed may be looked upon as the only one of the four generals who was a worthy successor to Alexander.²

Nothing further appears to be stated with regard to these two kings.³ We appear to pass over from them to their successors, Antiochus Theos and Ptolemy Philadelphus. It appears that after a considerable time had been spent by these two kings in war, an attempt was made by them to come to terms. Philadelphus, with this in view, gave his daughter in marriage to Antiochus, and a large dowry was given with her to secure peace between the two kingdoms. But the help of Berenice, the king's daughter, availed little; both her suite and the princess herself were "given up," that is, betrayed; Berenice herself was murdered; all the complicated plots failed, and hostilities between the two kingdoms commenced afresh.

Berenice had a brother, Ptolemy Euergetes, who on succeeding his father determined to avenge his sister's death.⁴ Accordingly he marched against Seleucus Callinicus, who had succeeded Antiochus Theos; put to death Laodice, who had instigated the murder of Berenice; took part of the northern provinces belonging to Seleucus; and returned to Egypt carrying with him the gods and the treasures which he had captured in his expedition. For some time war ceased between the two kingdoms. Euergetes "continued more years than the king of the North;" he survived him, according to the ordinary chronology, some four years.

At length circumstances combined to effect a renewal of hostilities.⁵ The sons of Seleucus Callinicus, namely, Seleucus Ceraunus, and Antiochus the Great, collected a large army. One of the sons only is mentioned by Daniel, which is Antiochus, for Ceraunus was killed shortly after setting out upon the campaign. Antiochus took his army with him, and went to attack the Asiatic provinces of Ptolemy Philopator, the son of Euergetes. He was successful in his military expedition, and then returned to Syria. Shortly afterwards he got together a large army, and marched against Philopator

¹ Dan. xi. 5.

² Appian, "De reb. Syriacis," § 61. It must be remembered that Appian did not write till the middle of the second century A.D. The value of his testimony is very doubtful. See especially § 66 of the work above cited.

³ Dan. xi. 6.

⁴ Ibid. xi. 7-9.

⁵ Ibid. xi. 10-12.

himself. Philopator, "moved by choler," met him on the frontier at Raphia, where some four hundred years previously Sargon had overcome Egypt,¹ and inflicted a serious defeat upon her king. Yet no permanent fruits remained even to so great a victory as this. Philopator "was not strengthened by it." He returned to his home and spent the rest of his life in the greatest luxury and excess, by which indeed he shortened his days.

Some fourteen years later² "the king of the North," Antiochus the Great, returned with a larger army than that which he had brought upon the former occasion. Philopator had been succeeded by Ptolemy Epiphanes, who was a mere child of four years of age. His tender years enabled many enterprising persons to enrich themselves at the expense of the country. One of those thus enriched was Antiochus himself. Another, out of the "many who stood up against the king of the South," was Philip III., king of Macedonia. The provinces subject to Egypt and a part of Egypt itself rose in revolt against the regents of Egypt, and some of Daniel's own countrymen deserved the name of "robbers" for joining in the insurrection and supporting the cause of Antiochus against Ptolemy Epiphanes. Unconsciously these seditious Jews accomplished a part of this revelation, "establishing the vision," but in the end they fell. Josephus gives the following account of this matter—"When Antiochus had beaten Ptolemy he seized upon Judæa; and when Philopator was dead, his son sent out a great army under Scopas, the general of his forces against Cœle-Syria, who took many of their cities, and in particular of our nation; which, when he fell upon them, went over to him. Yet was it not long afterward when Antiochus overcame Scopas . . . and afterward the Jews of their own accord went over to him, and received him into Jerusalem, and readily assisted him when he besieged the garrison which was in the citadel of Jerusalem."³ In this striking way, if credit may be given to Josephus, the Jews brought upon themselves the very troubles which they were forced to undergo in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

The next move is that the Syrian king, Antiochus, went out to attack the fortress of Sidon.⁴ This was held by Scopas, who

¹ "Records of the Past," vol. vii. p. 26; see also Schrader, p. 396.

² Dan. xi. 13-14. ³ Josephus, "Ant." XII. iii. 3. ⁴ Dan. xi. 15-19.

had retreated thither after his defeat by Antiochus. Ptolemy sent troops to relieve Sidon, but it was to no purpose. Scopas was forced to surrender; Antiochus took the Asiatic portions of the Egyptian territory, and disposed of them as he pleased; he then entered the Holy Land (the glorious land as it is described in this revelation), with a view of gaining all the possessions of his southern rival. Hence, again, he set his face to march against Egypt. He had not only a large army, but also "upright ones" with him—that is, he had various plausible schemes and diplomatic arrangements by which he trusted that he should succeed if force failed. One of these plans was to betroth his daughter Cleopatra, who was only a child, to the young king, expecting in this way to allure the young king to his destruction. Rightly is such conduct on the part of Antiochus stigmatized as "corrupting his daughter." However, this plan proved a singular failure, as his daughter, Cleopatra, not only refused to comply with his request, but actually at a later time took the opposite side to him. Still Antiochus lost none of the ambition with which he had commenced his reign. He "turned his face to the isles," making a descent upon the Mediterranean coast, upon Asia Minor, and some of the Greek islands. He met with some success, taking some cities and islands, but the Romans, whose power was daily increasing, considered that "a reproach was offered" to them by his conduct; and they inflicted upon him a series of defeats, finally crushing him in a battle near Magnesia. The result of this defeat was that his son, Antiochus, was sent to Rome as a hostage for the future good behaviour of his father, who was forced to retreat within the fortresses of his own land, Antioch, and other places, and while going through the provinces, attempting to raise money, was slain in the act of plundering a temple at Elymais.

Antiochus the Great was succeeded by his son Seleucus Philopator.¹ A heavy tribute was due from him to the Romans amounting to no less than a thousand talents annually. With the object of paying this charge he was compelled to raise a large amount of money by taxation, and if we may trust the writer of the Second Book of Maccabees, he actually sent the tax collector, Heliodorus, to plunder wherever he could.² For about twelve years Seleucus carried on his government in this

¹ Dan. xi. 20.

² 2 Macc. iii. 2-7.

miserable fashion, but at last he fell "neither in anger nor in battle." His death was not occasioned by revenge or by war, but by the treachery of the same Heliodorus whom he had employed as his tax collector.

At this point the most prominent person in the chapter, Antiochus Epiphanes, is brought before us.¹ He was the younger brother of the late king, and had resided for some years at Rome as a hostage,² and knowing that he was not legally entitled to the kingdom, obtained it by flattery and by stealth. Having once become master of the situation, he determined to act in the most tyrannical manner, his power becoming greater day by day. His troops rushed on as a torrent that none could stem, overwhelming all that were brought into contact with him, even "the prince of the covenant," that is, the priests and rulers of Jerusalem. He succeeded in making a league with one high priest, but broke it, and gave the high priesthood to another. Notwithstanding, all that he accomplished at Jerusalem was done by the aid of a very small number of men. By means of his "peaceable" or stealthy policy, he succeeded in overcoming hostile troops which were brought against him, and annihilating them. In this way he defeated the army of Ptolemy Philometor, son of Ptolemy Epiphanes; and then coming into the richest of his provinces, scattering among his followers large quantities of spoil and plunder, would form plans for reducing the fortresses of other neighbours. Such is his conduct to be "even for a time," that is as long as God will allow him to succeed with this policy of craft.

At last, following in the steps of his predecessors, he resolved upon conducting a war against Egypt.³ The king of this country was Ptolemy Philometor, son of Cleopatra, nephew to Antiochus Epiphanes, who overcame him at Pelusium.⁴ It appears that the Egyptians had amassed a large number of troops, but that the devices that were planned against them were of so crafty a nature that they were forced to yield. By some act of treachery it may have been that the battle was lost, and the strong cities of Egypt and a considerable amount of spoil came into the hands of the Syrians.

A singular change in the course of events occurred at this

¹ Dan. ix. 21-24.

² See 1 Macc. i. 10.

³ Dan. xi. 25-28.

⁴ See 1 Macc. i. 16-19.

junction. The two kings profess mutual friendship for each other, and hold apparently the most friendly relations, but all the while each was seeking for some secret opportunity of destroying the other. Neither of them, however, obtained his object, for the time appointed by God had not yet arrived. The Syro-Egyptian troubles could not be brought to a finish before "the end at the time appointed." Elated by his conquest, Antiochus returned to his home loaded with spoil; his heart was stirred up against Jerusalem on his return,¹ and it was upon this occasion that he commenced his persecutions of the Jews; the holy vessels were taken away, a large number of persons were massacred, a large number sold as captives, and the Temple itself was defiled. Having accomplished this much of his impious purpose he returned to Antioch.

Two years afterwards, "at the time appointed,"² he renewed his attack upon Egypt, but this time with a very different issue from the last. After he had almost completely attained his object, in spite of the machinations of Ptolemy, ships came from Chittim, that is, from the West, bringing a Roman envoy named Popilius, who met Antiochus near Alexandria, and requested him to give up his expedition against Egypt without delay. The story is well known in Roman history. Antiochus pleaded for time to consider what course he would adopt; but the Roman promptly drew a circle around him, and forbade him to withdraw from that small space until he had given a satisfactory answer. Antiochus had no other alternative open to him but to obey the imperious summons of Rome. Greatly discouraged he withdrew, and vented his wrath once more upon the people of the covenant, gaining the assistance of many apostate Jews in his attempts to persecute those who continued faithful.³ He sent out troops to act in his behalf at Jerusalem to desecrate the Temple even to a greater extent than it had been desecrated two years previously, to abolish the daily sacrifice, and finally, after having completely divested the place of its sacred character, to set up the abomination of desolation,⁴ that is, the abominable thing which effected the desolation within the Temple itself. This was a statue of Jupiter, which of course not only made the Temple a profane place, but actually

¹ See 1 Mac. i. 20-28.

² Dan. xi. 29-35.

³ 1 Macc. i. 11-15; ii. 18; Dan. xi. 39.

⁴ See Dan. viii. 11, 13; 1 Macc. i. 34, 37, 39, 54, 59.

rendered it desolate, so far as the Divine presence of Jehovah was concerned, who would not brook any other god in comparison with Himself. Those of the Jews who were evilly disposed to the covenant became wholly apostate ;¹ they yielded to the flatteries and cunning persuasions of Antiochus, but the pious found their faith strengthened through the example of the faithful martyrs who gladly endured the loss of their lives,² and their goods, by the fire and sword which the persecutors, under the orders of Antiochus, sent among them.³ Though many fell in the persecution, and perished, yet the faithful remained firm to the covenant ; they received help from God, though it appeared as if they were only "holpen with a little help."⁴ But while this was the lot that fell to some of the faithful, there were many around them who by their hypocritical conduct attempted to ensnare them.⁵ Yet of these faithful ones, who are as leaven amidst the mass of the people, and preserve them from complete apostasy, many fell victims either to death or imprisonment or slavery, right up to the very end of the time which God had ordained, "because it is yet for a time appointed."⁶ But it is the faithful who are purged and purified by this tribulation, while the half-hearted, and they alone, become apostates.

Now begins the last act in this ghastly tragedy.⁷ In all his doings Antiochus acted according to his own hot-headed, self-willed, though crafty, policy ; lifting himself up against everything that was called God,⁸ he uttered blasphemies of the most amazing nature against the God of gods,⁹ and apparently prospered in all his undertakings till the anger of God against His rebellious people was completely exhausted, "for that which is determined shall be done." God's decrees are irrevocable, and must be accomplished. But this is not an account of the ends to which Antiochus was prepared to go ; he exhibited greater pride than anything that has as yet been described. He

¹ See 1 Macc. ii. 18, &c.

² See Ibid. ii. 1, &c. ; v. 27, &c. ; 2 Macc. vi. 18-31.

³ See Dan. viii. 11, 13 ; 1 Macc. i. 60-63 ; ii. 31-38 ; iii. 41, v. 13 ; 2 Macc. vi. 11, 19, 30, &c. ; vii. 1, &c.

⁴ See 1 Macc. iii. 11, &c. ; iv. 14, &c. ; v. 56-62.

⁵ Comp. 2 Macc. xii. 40 ; xiii. 21.

⁶ See Dan. viii. 11, 13 ; 1 Macc. vi. 46 ; ix. 18 ; 2 Macc. vi. 18, &c.

⁷ Dan. xi. 35-39.

⁸ 1 Macc. i. 41, &c.

⁹ See Dan. viii. 11, 25 ; 1 Macc. i. 24.

magnified himself above everything, paying no regard to the gods whom his fathers worshipped, nor even to the promptings of natural affection. What he desired was to raise himself up far beyond anything that men esteemed high or worthy of reverence. His god—so far as he can be said to have any god at all—is the “God of Forces,” that is, war personified—he does not worship even Mars or Jupiter Capitolinus. The “taking of fortresses”¹ is his god—because that is the means by which he obtains all his objects. He worships power, but secular power only. Those indeed who can recognize these objects of his love **and** ambition, he rewards with honour and promotion,² he “will divide the land for gain,” or, in other words, he divides land³ among them, as well as money⁴ by way of bribing them, and forcing them to aid him in all his schemes.

The time of the end was now nigh at hand, that is, the end of the life of this impious man.⁵ The king of the South, Ptolemy Philometor, made up his mind once more to engage in a conflict with Antiochus. The latter took the initiative, and invaded Egypt with a large force, both by land and by sea. He overran all his provinces with the gigantic forces which he brought with him, and amongst them he entered once more into Palestine. The only nations that escaped from this general overflow were nations who were hostile to Israel, namely, Edom, Moab, and Ammon.⁶ But as yet the greed of Antiochus is unsatisfied; he would gladly be master of the Libyans and Ethiopians, and possess the treasures of Egypt; but while pursuing his career of plunder, rumours reached him which spake of troubles in the eastern and in the northern parts of his empires. It appears from history that the Phenicians, Parthians, and Armenians, were in a state of insurrection. He rushed off in his wrath to chastise the offending provinces. During his retreat from Egypt towards Phœnicia he pitched his tent once more between the mountains upon which Jerusalem stood and the Mediterranean sea. Here for the last time he stood upon the soil of that Holy Land which he has polluted, “yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.” His end is nigh from which none can deliver him.⁷

¹ See 1 Macc. i. 24, and xi. 38.

² Comp. Ibid. ii. 18.

³ Ibid. iii. 36.

⁴ Ibid. ii. 18; iii. 30, &c.

⁵ Dan. xi. 40.

⁶ See 1 Macc. v. 1, 3, 6.

⁷ 1 Macc. vi. 1, &c.; 2 Macc. ix. 1, &c.

At this time, when the godless king of the North is carrying on these wars of extermination throughout his dominions, and persecuting God's people, Michael, the Prince of Angels, the guardian and protector of Israel, will arise, and will fight in behalf of his people. They will need his help, for such persecution as will then exist never has been, never can be. Then will all those who have outlived this persecution be partakers in the great deliverance, and awake, as it were, to a new life. And of those who perished during the persecution, the faithful shall rise hereafter to everlasting life, while the lot of the apostates when they arise shall be everlasting contempt and shame. And those who, when the trial was at the hottest, strengthened others by their faithful example,¹ shall shine the brightest in the everlasting world.²

Here we must pause for a while to reflect upon this marvellous revelation. And the first question that we are prompted to ask of ourselves is, whether the whole of it is to be applied to the Ptolemies and Seleucidæ? If so, what is the meaning of the prophecy? Is it intended to unfold to the Israelites what their fortunes would be under the third empire? If not, to what purpose was the revelation made?

With regard to the first question, it has been frequently maintained that the whole, as far as the twenty-first verse, applies to the Syrian and Egyptian kingdoms, but that afterwards the prophecy is to be explained of what has as yet been unfulfilled. Jerome remarks upon this, that according to the ordinary explanation in his time Antichrist was introduced at this verse as the object of the prophecy. It appeared to some that this view was opposed by one striking fact, which was the omission of so many and so great personages between Seleucus and Antichrist. To this the reply was that such similar peculiarities may be observed in this very chapter. Four kings of Persia only are mentioned between Cyrus and Alexander the Great; and this is to be noted as not uncommon in Holy Scripture; all events are not narrated, but only those which appear to be of greater importance. Hence Jerome says, "inasmuch as many things which we are going to read and explain may be suitably applied to Antiochus, the interpreters regard him as a type of Antichrist, and maintain that what was

¹ Comp. xii. 3.

² Comp. I Cor. xv. 41.

partially fulfilled in Antiochus will be completely realized in Antichrist."¹

But even supposing that this interpretation is correct, to what purpose is the revelation which speaks of events which occurred from the time of the first of the Seleucidæ and Ptolemies down to Seleucus Philopator and Ptolemy Epiphanes? It may be noted that in this portion the people of Israel are only mentioned once, and also that there is only one reference to the Holy Land itself. How can this be explained, if the whole of these verses to the end of the twentieth were fulfilled at the time when they are stated to have been?

It should be added that if the revelation was really intended to warn Israel of what was to happen, we might reasonably have expected that so many events of such vital importance to the people of God should not have been passed over. For instance, Jerusalem was besieged by Ptolemy Lagus. He took the city by craft, coming on the Sabbath day, when the Jews were unwilling to offer any resistance.² A large number of captives were carried into Egypt on this occasion, yet there is no reference to it in Daniel. No account, again, is given of the means by which Ptolemy obtained possession of Judæa, Phœnicia, and Cœle-Syria, which certainly were matters of importance. Similarly, after the battle of Raphia, Ptolemy visited Jerusalem, and attempted to enter the holy place; and at this time the Jews suffered immensely. The very next year Ptolemy made an attempt to massacre all the Jews in Egypt. The persecution, moreover, was upon a religious question as to whether the Jews would receive the mark of the sacred ivy leaf or not. We might also have expected that some notice would have been taken of the application to Rome from the Alexandrians, that help might be sent to defend Ptolemy Epiphanes against the machinations of Antiochus the Great, for in the very next year (B.C. 201) a Roman protectorate under Lepidus was established in Egypt. Again, if so many details are recorded with regard to Antiochus the Great, how are we to account for the omission of all allusions to his more serious defeats? It seems as if too many important matters affecting the Jews are passed over in the prophecy to justify us in main-

¹ Jerome on Dan. xi. p. 712.

² See Josephus, "Ant." XII. 1, sec. 1.; comp. 1 Macc. ii. 41.

taining that it applies to the period to which it is often supposed to refer.

This becomes evident from another simple consideration. It appears, upon a careful examination, that only a few measures of time are mentioned in the revelation, and those are very vague, such as "in the end of years," "after certain years," "in those times," "after this," "then," "within few days." Therefore we have no reason for supposing that the fulfilment of the prophecy will occupy a long duration of time. The succession of one individual after another is only hinted at twice. "One shall stand up in his estate." "Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes." Consequently up to the appearance of the "vile person" there is no reason for our thinking that more than one king of the North and two of the South are mentioned. The sons of the Northern king are mentioned once, but it is not stated that they reigned either with him or after him. Nothing prevents us, then, from looking upon the whole of the first part of the revelation as foretelling a long series of wars and political intrigues which shall occur in the last times between two powers which will be recognized in those days when the fulfilment comes. That after the death of the last Northern king but one, another person of considerable insignificance will take the place of the Northern king, unworthy of the name of king, and deserving only to be called a raiser of taxes. After a short while he will disappear by treachery, apparently, and the full revelation of Antichrist will be verified.

The conclusion of the revelation is followed by a few words from the Person who has been speaking throughout, in which the whole of the Book of Daniel is concluded. He is ordered to close up in a sealed book the words which he had just heard,² because many years will elapse before the fulfilment of them. During that time many will have occasion to read His words and to study their meaning with intense diligence, "and knowledge shall be increased."

Upon this Daniel saw two angels standing on each side of the river. One of them asked the Man who had been speaking with the prophet when the end should come. The Man was standing upon the waters of the Tigris, which represented the powers of the world; He by His position asserted His

² Comp. Dan. xii. 4.

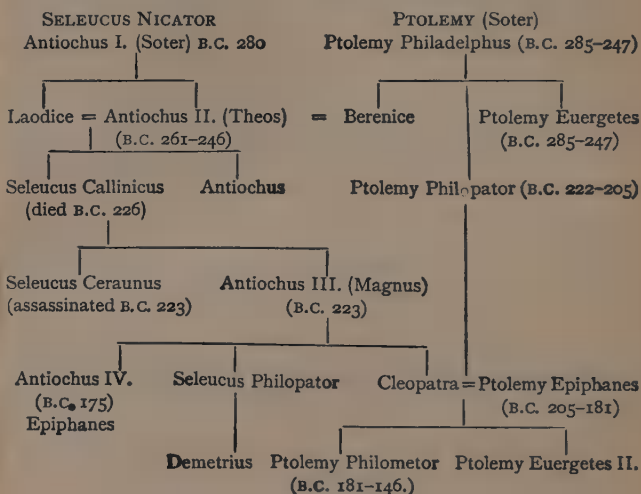
sovereignty over all the empires. He lifted up His hands, and declared with a solemn oath that all should be finished when the space of a "time, times and a half" should have been accomplished, and when the power of the holy people shall have been scattered, or, in other words, when the faithful shall not only have "minished from among the children of men," but have almost entirely disappeared, and nothing but apparent ungodliness shall be triumphant. Of this oath the angels are witnesses who are standing on either side of the river, and the object of it is to assure those who, in the last times, shall suffer persecution, that the end of their sufferings is not far off, and that future glory is in store for the faithful.

Daniel heard the words, but he could not understand their meaning, accordingly he inquired again when the end should come, or how it should come. He was told to go and wait, because the full understanding of the vision was closed till the end of time, and reserved for those who should then be alive. But many will be purified through the sufferings that shall befall them before the end comes ;¹ while, on the other hand, the wicked will be led on into further deeds of wickedness.² Of the wicked, none will understand the vision, but the others shall understand. With an intention of securing this object an enigmatical declaration of the time of the end is given to Daniel. From the time of the removal of the daily sacrifice, and the setting up of the abomination of desolation to the end of the persecution shall be twelve hundred and ninety days, or just one month beyond the space of three and a half ordinary Babylonian years. Happy is he to be who, while he patiently waits for deliverance, attains to the thirteen hundred and thirty-fifth day, that is, one month and a half after the end of the persecution. Then will he completely realize how great the deliverance has been. But as for Daniel, he must rest and wait for the end. He will see no portion of the fulfilment during his earthly life, but at the end, when the promised awakening of the dead shall take place, then he will stand up to receive the glorious reward that will be allotted to him.

¹ Comp. Dan. xi. 33, 35.

² Comp. xi. 31 ; Rev. xxii., 11.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE, ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE LAST
THREE CHAPTERS OF THE PROPHET DANIEL.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WRITER OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

Anonymous character of the Book of Daniel—Instances of anonymous authors being identified—Attempt made in the case of Daniel—Both parts of the Book of Daniel written by the same man—He professes to have lived from B.C. 606–530—This is borne out by internal evidence—The author is well acquainted with Babylon—Less so with Persia—Greece—The Successors of Alexander—He could not have lived when prophecy was extinct, because he did all that prophet ever did—He did not live in the time of Ezra—Still less in the Maccabean times—The book was well known in the first century of the Christian era—Also in the second century B.C.—There is a break in Hebrew literature for many years—But Ezekiel knew a contemporary of his own, named Daniel, who fulfilled all the conditions required by the author of this book.

THE Book of Daniel, strictly speaking, is anonymous. Unlike the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, it possesses no title-page, for such we may call the very first verse by which the writings of these two prophets are distinguished from the books which precede them. It begins abruptly by stating a certain historical fact that occurred in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and then proceeds to give a brief account of the early history of Daniel. Then it branches off into an account of various dreams, visions, and revelations, among which occurs one short narrative respecting three fellow captives of Daniel's, and another respecting Daniel himself. The question that we have to answer is, how are we to discover the author of this anonymous work?

To some it may seem to be a hopeless undertaking to endeavour to discover the identity of an anonymous author,

but it is not so. We may take two remarkable instances of successful identifications made in modern times. Some years ago a sonnet was discovered which was alleged to have been written by Milton. External arguments in favour of the Miltonian work, such as the handwriting, were carefully examined. As many specimens of Milton's handwriting existed, there was no difficulty experienced in conducting this part of the inquiry. Internal arguments also were sifted, such as the use of the words in the sonnet in question, the thoughts themselves, and the mode in which they were expressed, and the like. That the sonnet was non-authentic was the universally acknowledged verdict. A more remarkable solution of this difficult problem was arrived at by Lord Macaulay, in respect to the authorship of the anonymous letters of Junius. The principles which this great scholar employed were as follows: (1) the test of the handwriting of the autograph of Junius, which proved to be "the peculiar handwriting of Philip Francis slightly disguised." It was then discovered (2) that Junius "was acquainted with the technical forms of the Secretary of State's office; (3) that he was intimately acquainted with the business of the War Office; (4) that during the year 1770 he had attended the debates in the House of Lords, taking notes of the speeches; (5) that he bitterly represented the appointment of Mr. Chamier to the place of deputy secretary at war; and (6) that he was bound by some strong tie to the first Lord Holland." All these five last marks were found in Philip Francis, not "more than two of them can be found in any person whatever. If this argument does not settle the question, there is an end of all reasoning upon circumstantial evidence."²

If, indeed, external evidence of the same nature existed with regard to Daniel as to Junius, we should gladly avail ourselves of it, but unfortunately no specimen of Daniel's handwriting exists, so that the external evidence which we have to employ is of a different nature. We have, however, a considerable amount of internal or circumstantial evidence, from which we are able to arrive at a fairly certain conclusion, that the author of the book was named Daniel, and to lay down certain limits of the period within which the author lived.

² See article on Warren Hastings, reprinted in the "Critical and Historical Essays."

In the first place, we must notice one remarkable feature in this book. Throughout the six first chapters Daniel is spoken of in the third person, or, in other words, Daniel is described by somebody as acting in the way in which he does. On the contrary, throughout the six last chapters he is spoken of in the first person, and appears to be describing himself receiving certain visions and revelations from heaven. A hasty conclusion might hence be drawn (in fact, it has been actually concluded), that in the Book of Daniel we have traces of two authors, a biographer and an autobiographer. But a closer examination shows that any such conclusion is preposterous.

If we examine the six last chapters with perfect freedom and fairness, omitting all question as to the date of the book and the character of it, we shall be forced to admit that a certain man named Daniel claims to have seen certain visions, and to have received certain revelations; a vision of four beasts representing four kingdoms; a supplementary vision of a ram and a goat, which Daniel is informed represent the Medo-Persian and the Grecian Empires; a revelation respecting seventy weeks, within which period certain events were to befall the people of Israel; and finally a lengthy revelation with regard to what was to occur after the close of the empire of Alexander, whether in the immediate or in the remote future it does not matter for our present inquiry. The reader is introduced to each of the portions where these visions and revelations are narrated by such phrases as "I saw in my vision by night, and behold," "I saw in a vision; and it came to pass," "I, Daniel, understood by books," "I, Daniel, alone saw the vision." The third person is only twice employed with regard to Daniel in the second part of the book,¹ and in neither of those passages is there anything to interfere with the personal character of the narrative to which we refer.

But though there exists that remarkable difference between the two parts of the book, yet there is a remarkable correspondence between them. The first series of chapters forms a complete whole, and as such is a prelude to the second series, which, in fact, without it would be unintelligible. It may be said with truth that two distinct languages are employed in the book, but not only do these languages appear

¹ Dan. vii. 1; x. 1.

in each part, but it is precisely the same style of language which occurs, the same phrases, the same forms, the same words, whether Hebrew or Chaldee, occur in each series, many of them being peculiar to the so-called Book of Daniel. It is most improbable, we may assert, that a work which is written upon so distinct a plan, which has moreover such complete uniformity of style about it, should be the work of more than one writer. It is highly improbable that if the author of the last part of the book was Daniel, another author should have written the first part.¹

Let it be granted that there was only one author of the book, and this is now generally agreed upon, it remains for us to find approximately the date at which it was written. As a rule we may establish the date of an author by examining the statements which he makes as to his own immediate surroundings, and the events which occur in his lifetime. Daniel claims to have "continued" from before the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the first year of Cyrus, and to have received a revelation in the third year of Cyrus. He says that Nebuchadnezzar "promoted him to be ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief of the governors over the wise men that were in Babylon." He says that he was employed in matters affecting the kingdom in the third year of Belshazzar, and whatever may have been the length of that king's reign, Daniel states that on the last day of his life he appointed him the third ruler in the kingdom. During the obscure reign of Darius the Mede, Daniel represents himself still as one of the chief rulers in the kingdom, and he adds that he prospered, or, in other words, that he was eminent in the days of Cyrus the Persian.

Such, in short, is the account of Daniel's life, which may be gathered from the slender notices which he has casually dropped with regard to himself. Though he lived at least under two empires, and was eminent in both of them, he lived longer, according to his own story, under the Babylonian than under the Persian Empire.

As we have only internal evidence to assist us in attempting

¹ M. Lenormant observes: "Plus on avance dans la connaissance des textes cunéiformes, plus on reconnaît la nécessité de réviser la condamnation portée beaucoup trop prématurément par l'école exégétique allemande contre le livre de Daniel" ("La Magie," p. 14).

to ascertain the date of the book, the next question that arises is whether there is sufficient reason to believe that the author of the book is trustworthy in the details which he has narrated about himself.

We should naturally expect that a man who had spent the greater part of his life under one Empire, would prove himself most intimately acquainted with the facts of that empire. This is precisely what we find to be the case with Daniel. He shows that he is aware of many minute details of Babylonian life. He is aware, for instance, of the three classes of wise men mentioned besides the astrologers, that is, the khartumim, the khakamim, and the ashaphim, whom modern discoveries prove to have existed at Babylon, though the ancient historians passed over them in silence. He is also acquainted with phrases like "dissolving of knots," he knows certain theological ideas of the Babylonians, such as the sacred character of the number seven, the "gods whose dwelling is not with flesh." He describes the Babylonian dress correctly in the case of the three holy children. And, finally, the religious character which he gives to Nebuchadnezzar agrees completely with what that king's inscription would lead us to expect of him. These, and many minute particulars, recorded as they are without ostentation, or apparent intention, evidently point to an author living in Babylon.

The author betrays no special knowledge of Persia; in fact, having not lived beyond the third year of Cyrus he cannot have been expected to know much; he knew it only as one of the empires of the world then extant. He was aware of the existence of such a place as Greece, and on one occasion when describing the instruments which were used in a State concert, given during the Babylonian Empire, he employed two or three names for musical instruments which have a Greek sound about them, but though he seems to be aware that Persia should be overthrown by Greece, he makes certain omissions in the numbers of the kings of Persia, which would not have been made by any writer living under the Greek Empire, nor does he show the slightest acquaintance with the influence of Greece upon Roman history.

His knowledge of Greece is still less: for whereas he betrayed a certain acquaintance with various incidents of the Persian court of which he claims to have been an official, he mentions nothing respecting the Greek Empire except that it should

only last during the reign of the first king. Had he lived at the time of this king, or even after him, why should he have described him wrongly when he might have easily done so aright? Why does he compare him to a goat with one horn, when Alexander was represented by a two-horned animal? At any rate, he is entirely ignorant of the various stages by which it became possible for the Greek Empire to become what Alexander made it.

Of the historical events which occurred after the death of Alexander, he knows very little. He is granted to know that the empire should ultimately be divided into four parts; and, as we saw in the last chapter, he is aware that two of these would have a very significant influence upon the destiny of Israel, but there is such an absence of minute accuracy in the delineation that much of what he says might be applied with equal distinctness to many modern political plots, and diplomatic complications. It has been pointed out that he refers distinctly to the marriage of Ptolemy and Berenice, to the wars between Antiochus and Ptolemy, and to the persecution of the Jews in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes; but it must be remembered that he omits many equally important facts, and if Antiochus Epiphanes really is the terrible personage depicted at the end of his eleventh chapter, it is singular that his death should be described in language so completely at variance with the facts of the case. According to this writer's account, Antiochus came to his end in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, whereas if other historians are deserving of any credit he perished in Armenia, or at the least in that neighbourhood.

The very slight evidence that there is points to an early, rather than to a late authorship. The only period of history with which the author shows anything like acquaintance, is that of the Babylonian Empire. At whatever time we suppose him to have lived, we find ourselves encountered with difficulties, but the easiest way to escape from them is to suppose him to have written at the time when he states that he lived.

It may be worth while paying attention to one or two other little facts respecting this author. He never claims to have received the title of a prophet, and not once in the Old Testament is spoken of as a prophet. However, he claims to have received certain revelations from God, and certainly foretold and preached, or, in other words, prophesied as truly as any

other prophet ever did. We might reasonably assert that he must have lived at a time when the gift of prophecy had not as yet become extinct. Now after the Captivity in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, we find that a great difficulty arose as to what was to be done in the case of certain priests who were unable to prove their genealogies, and the question was deferred till there "arose a priest with Urim and Thummim."¹ A prophet could have readily solved the difficulty for them, had one been living; but the fact that they waited for a priest to guide them shows that they had no prophet. A similar incident occurred later. It appears that at the time of the cleansing of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus, a difficulty arose as to what should be done with the stones of the altar, which had been profaned. We are told that "they pulled it down, and laid up the stones in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them."² So also in later times we still find that complaint was made that no prophet was present to guide the people.³ If such a man as the writer of this Book of Daniel had been then living, can we think it likely that he should have been unable to give them the information that they desired? These considerations show us that if the ordinary tradition of the Jews is correct, that the gift of prophecy ceased with the return from the Exile, that it is then highly probable on this ground alone that the Book of Daniel was written before that time.

We can still avail ourselves of another slight argument which ought to have some weight in settling this question. It is actually the only direct piece of external evidence that we have as to the date of the book. We are able to trace it from hand to hand for some years, then we find a break in the tradition, and finally we come to persons who lived at the same time with Daniel and speak of him as a man well known.

We have very distinct references to the Book of Daniel in the New Testament. Our Saviour's words, "They shall see the Son of man coming upon a cloud"⁴ refer most clearly to Daniel's words, and are in themselves sufficient to establish the authority of the book whatever the date of it may be. The abomination of desolation to which Daniel alludes both in his eighth and eleventh chapter is spoken of by the Saviour, as

¹ Ezra ii. 63; Nehem. vii. 65.

³ Ibid. ix. 27; xiv. 41.

² 1 Macc. iv. 45, 46.

⁴ Luke xxi. 27.

something still future. "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place."¹ So that, whatever else we may think about the interpretation of those two difficult chapters of Daniel, there were persons living less than two centuries after the time of Antiochus, and among them was the Son of God Himself, who believed that the words of Daniel were then awaiting fulfilment. Similarly the doctrine of the resurrection is expressed in the New Testament almost in Daniel's own words, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."² The condition of the righteous after the resurrection is described as follows in the gospel: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."³ These are but the echoes of the words spoken by the Son of God to Daniel: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."⁴ These passages are sufficient to show that the Book of Daniel was esteemed highly by the Christians of the first century.

To the Jewish historian Josephus we owe a very important testimony respecting the Book of Daniel, confirming the opinions entertained by Christians. This writer cites from the Book of Daniel at considerable length, and adds that Daniel himself was favoured as one of the greatest of prophets. The writings of Daniel, he says, were read up to that time, and from them it might be inferred that the prophet himself conversed with God. He continues to state that Daniel was unlike other prophets in one respect, he not only foretold the events which were to happen, but actually defined the very time when the events were to occur.⁵

Nearly two centuries previous to Josephus, not so very long after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, we find reference made to the Book of Daniel as a work already existing. Not only is the name of Daniel mentioned in company with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego among the list of worthies who were saved on account of their faith, but also the stories respecting them are alluded to as well known.⁶ If in the same historical

¹ Matt. xxiv. 15; Mark xiii. 14.

² John v. 28, 29; comp. Dan. xii. 2.

³ Matt. xiii. 43. ⁴ Dan. xii. 3.

"Ant." xx. xi. 7. ⁶ 1 Macc. ii. 60.

work we find references to the "abomination of desolation,"¹ and to "the great affliction in Israel, the like whereof was not seen since the time that a prophet was not seen among them,"² it must be with a reference to thoughts in the Book of Daniel, that the historian wrote. It is far from probable that if the Book of Daniel had been of very recent origin it could have acquired any great notoriety in those days. Literary forgeries are perhaps easy matters in the present times, but in those days the sacred books were guarded with a jealousy which prevented any gross imposture—especially of so very recent a date—from being included among them. At least we may be allowed to say, that the mere facts that (1) the history of Daniel was known in those days, and (2) that no other sources for that history have been ascertained to exist except the Book of Daniel, afford the strongest evidences which we have to prove that the book itself is far older than the times in which it is for the first time found to be cited.

Between the time of the writing of the first Book of Maccabees and the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, a most unfortunate gap occurs in Jewish literature. Except from a few notices in Josephus we can hardly be said to know anything about the history of Israel at all during those eventful years. Need we be surprised if no mention is made of Daniel during a period of nearly three centuries, if no contemporaneous literature exists in which it is possible for him to be mentioned?

But if we go back a little more than a century before the time of Ezra we shall find that at the beginning of the sixth century B.C., at about the time when Jerusalem was taken for the last time by Nebuchadnezzar, a man named Daniel was well known. Ezekiel speaks of Daniel as famed for his wisdom.³ The fame of his wisdom had then actually reached as far as Tyre. What Daniel could this have been except the man spoken of in the Book of Daniel, the author of the book himself. The same Ezekiel⁴ speaks of three holy men, each of whom delivered some persons from death, these are Noah, Daniel, and Job. If the Noah and Job who are known to us from the Old Testament are the persons whose fame was well known to Ezekiel, is it improbable that the Daniel whom he mentions should be different from that Daniel who was his own companion in Exile, and by his entreaties delivered all the wise men of Babylon from a cruel massacre?

¹ 1 Macc., i. 54.

² Ibid. ix. 27.

³ Ezek. xxviii. 3.

⁴ Ibid. xiv. 14.









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