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ENHANCE



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THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM[1]

The Book of Ezra opens with a decree of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return and to build the Temple. A number return in 536 B.C. but, after making a start on the Temple, they become discouraged under opposition, and more or less relinquish the work until 520 B.C. Then, inspired by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they take up the building once more, and complete it by 516 B.C. There is now a gap in the history, until in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Ezra arrives at Jerusalem from Babylon, leading back a fresh party of exiles, including priests and Levites. After an account of how Ezra dealt with mixed marriages at Jerusalem, the Book of Ezra closes.

The Book of Nehemiah opens with a scene at Shushan, or Susa, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, when Nehemiah receives news of the desolate state of Jerusalem. In much trepidation he applies for permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and its walls. Permission is granted, and in a matter of weeks the city wall is finished, in spite of opposition from Sanballat and others. Ezra is then summoned to read the Law to the assembled people, and the Book records a covenant that all the people made. Some more pieces of history occur at the end of the Book, and these are said to have taken place some time after the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (Ne. xiii. 6).

At first sight this history appears to be straightforward enough. The problem arises when we try to link together the lives of Ezra and Nehemiah. Since the two Books in our Bible were originally one in the Jewish Bible, it is clear that, if the record is read consecutively, Ezra is presented as coming to Jerusalem thirteen years before Nehemiah, and, according to Nehemiah viii, he was still there when Nehemiah was governor.

There were three kings with the name of Artaxerxes, but external evidence indicates which of the three was Nehemiah's

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patron. For the Elephantine papyri show that in 408 B.C. Sanballat was an old man, whose work as governor of Samaria was to all intents and purposes in the hands of his two sons (Sachau, *Pap.* i. 29). This means that the Artaxerxes in whose reign Nehemiah lived must have been Artaxerxes I (464-424 B.C.), since Sanballat was then obviously in the prime of life. It would be impossible to identify the reigning king with Artaxerxes II or III. Therefore, in making Ezra overlap Nehemiah, the Chronicler intended to place Ezra also in the same reign. Thus Ezra came to Jerusalem in 458 B.C., i.e. the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (Ezr. vii. 7) and Nehemiah in 445 B.C., i.e. the twentieth year of the same reign (Ne. ii. 1).

Ezra and Nehemiah were both prominent men in their own sphere, and both apparently kept personal records, some of which are incorporated in our present Books. It is, then, rather extraordinary that the records show so little trace of any real contact between the two men. Naturally we should not expect any mention of Nehemiah in the period covered by the Book of Ezra, but, after Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem and was engaged on the building of the wall, one would have expected that Ezra's name would have occurred somewhere, if only as one of the builders who are named in chapter iii. Not until chapter viii does Ezra appear, when he is summoned to read the Law to the people. But this chapter presents difficulties of its own. In I Esdras[2] it occurs immediately after Ezra has dealt with the mixed marriages, i.e. at the end of the Book of Ezra; and Nehemiah's name does not appear in it at all. It is commonly supposed, in fact, that this chapter has been misplaced in our Hebrew Bible, and should belong to the period before the coming of Nehemiah. This would mean that Nehemiah's name has been wrongly inserted in verse 9, and also in x. 1, if this incident of the sealing of the covenant belongs to the same occasion. This latter verse cannot be checked against I Esdras, since that book closes with the verse that corresponds in the Hebrew to Nehemiah viii. 12.

The only other reference to Ezra in the narrative of Nehemiah is in xii. 36, where, in a record of the dedication of the wall that is ostensibly from the memoirs of Nehemiah, it is said of a part of the procession, 'Ezra the scribe was before them.' This

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single reference, meagre though it is, would be sufficient to establish the fact that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, if it were not for the suspicion that here the Chronicler has himself composed the account or added this clause. The most that we can say of this reference for the moment is that it confirms the fact still further that the author or compiler of the Book believed that Ezra was the contemporary of Nehemiah, and that therefore he, like Nehemiah, came to Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes I.

In view, however, of the scanty evidence from the documents that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, modern scholars have queried whether the Chronicler may not have been mistaken. In particular there are three notable passages which, they say, would be more

understandable if Ezra came some time after Nehemiah.

The first is Ezra ix. 9 where Ezra says in his prayer, 'Our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.' Ezra refers to 'a wall', and yet the wall was built by Nehemiah.

Secondly, in Ezra x. 1 we read of 'a very great congregation' that assembled in Jerusalem. Yet in the time of Nehemiah, Nehemiah himself records that there were only a few people living in the city (Ne. vii. 4). A sudden drop in the population between the time of Ezra and that of Nehemiah is unlikely. If, on the other hand, Ezra lived after Nehemiah had induced the people to settle in Jerusalem, then Ezra's great congregation is perfectly understandable.

The third significant passage concerns the name of the high priests under whom Ezra and Nehemiah lived. In Nehemiah's day the high priest was Eliashib (Ne. iii. 1). In Ezra's records the high priest is not named, but in Ezra x. 6 it is said that Ezra 'went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib', apparently in the Temple buildings. Nehemiah xii. 22, 23, in a list of high priests, indicates that the high priest Eliashib had a son, or grandson, named Johanan. This is confirmed by the Elephantine papyri, which refer to Johanan as high priest in 408 B.C. So once again we have a reference which is understandable if Ezra came to Jerusalem after the time of Nehemiah.

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THE MODERN RECONSTRUCTION

In view of these difficulties, two alternatives to the Bible order have been proposed. The first is the radical suggestion that the person of Ezra is a fictitious creation of the author. He is invented as a priestly counterblast to the secular Nehemiah, so that a layman might not have all the glory for the reconstruction of the Jewish State. C. C. Torrey at the beginning of the century was the first to suggest that Ezra had no real existence. His view has not been widely followed, though it has been accepted by Hölischer in *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia* (1923), and by Loisy in *La Religion D'Israel* (3rd edition, 1933). But most scholars would probably agree with the verdict of Lods in his book *The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism* (translated by S. H. Hooke, 1937) that Ezra's autobiography is too concrete and definite and probable to be fiction. There are elements in the record that the Chronicler would not have included if he had been inventing. Thus Ezra viii shows the reluctance of the Levites to return to Jerusalem, and the list of those who had contracted heathen marriages in Ezra contains the names of Levites, whereas the general characteristic of the Chronicler is to magnify the Levites. Moreover one might add that, if a priestly Ezra had been invented to counterbalance the secular Nehemiah, he would have been given far greater prominence in the Book of Nehemiah itself. Otherwise the whole point of his invention would be lost.

The only external argument for Torrey's theory is that Ezra is not mentioned by Ben-Sira (c. 180 B.C.) in Ecclesiasticus xlix. 11-13, when he speaks of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Nehemiah, as the chief men of the post-exile period. But this omission might be because Ben-Sira is speaking only of the rebuilding of the Temple and the city, or, as Lods suggests, it might be due to a certain lack of sympathy between a writer of Sadducean tendencies and one of Ezra's strict views.

As an alternative to Torrey's radical rejection of Ezra, a less drastic treatment of the Bible story has found wide favour in recent years. To the best of my knowledge, the earliest complete presentation of it in English is in the *International Critical Commentary* on Ezra-Nehemiah by L. W. Batten (1913), though the actual originator of the idea appears to have been Van Hoonacker before the opening of the present century. This interpretation solves the problem by the neat suggestion that the king, in whose

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reign Ezra came to Jerusalem, was not Artaxerxes I but Artaxerxes II. The date given in Ezra vii. 7, 'the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king,' should therefore be reckoned as 398 B.C. and not 458 B.C. This brings Ezra to Jerusalem at a suitable interval after Nehemiah, and makes him the contemporary of Johanan, the high priest, whom the Elephantine papyri show to have been holding the office in 408 B.C.

This solution is so brilliant and so simple that it has been accepted almost without question in recent books on the Old Testament history. One may indeed say that what began as a theory has now come to be accepted as an historical fact. Yet it would seem that this theory has been accepted all too easily. The three or four arguments in its favour have fitted together so neatly as to discourage any further investigation; and, since the pieces of the jigsaw join up, there has not been a sufficiently close examination to see whether the picture on the pieces is really consistent. In actual fact the modern reconstruction has serious weaknesses, which appear only when we begin to look closely into it.

THE WEAKNESS OF THE MODERN VIEW

In what follows I want to try to show: (1) The improbability of the modern reconstruction on general and on particular grounds. (2) The likelihood that far too much has been read into the passages that are thought to support the priority of Nehemiah over Ezra. (3) The probability, therefore, that the traditional order is correct after all, and that we must accordingly look for an explanation of the failure of Nehemiah's records to make more mention of Ezra. This is the order in which the argument can best be built up, and, although I have used only the words 'probability' and 'likelihood', I feel myself that the case is very much stronger than that.

In order to estimate the likelihood on general grounds of the modern reconstruction, it is necessary to reach some conclusion about the authorship and date of the Books. For obviously

the nearer one brings the writer to the events that he describes, the less likely he is to have made a radical error in the relative positions of two famous men. For instance, in how many years from now would it be possible for a German writer to make Hitler either precede the Kaiser or be jointly in power with him?

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Even assuming that almost all the written records of the two wars had perished, the memories of the Germans would be adequate to preserve the true continuity for at least 150 years. But only some twenty-five years separated the two wars. Suppose the figure was increased to about fifty years. It would then be even longer before a German historian could confuse the order of the two men. For then the memories that Germans had of the Kaiser would be more than a generation behind those that they had of Hitler. There would be people alive whose fathers and grandfathers had told them of how they had seen Hitler, though they had never seen the Kaiser at all. I doubt whether 200 years would be adequate before a historian could falsify the relative order of the two leaders without his mistake being detected. Even then he would be setting himself against a tradition that existed in the minds of his contemporaries, and one would expect to find some strong motive to account for his extraordinary attitude to the past.

A consideration of this kind is a salutary preparation for considering the general likelihood of the modern reconstruction. We are concerned with the lives of two men who attained very great fame amongst their countrymen. We are dealing, moreover, with a comparatively small community, where tradition would be more stable, since men's memories would continually be refreshed and checked by their contacts with one another. In these circumstances we have to consider the likelihood of a reversal of the tradition in so far as it concerned the chronological order of these two men.

The date of the Books now becomes a matter of importance. Up till now we have spoken of the Chronicler as the author. That is to say, the author is the man who wrote our two Books of Chronicles. This view is almost universally accepted. It has, however, been challenged by the late Dr. Adam C. Welch in his book *Post-Exilic Judaism* (Chaps. XI and XII). Without wishing to be unfair to Dr. Welch, it seems clear, both from this book and from his Schweich Lectures on *The Work of the Chronicler*, that his real reason for challenging the Chronicler's authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah is that he is concerned to establish on other grounds an early date for Chronicles. He does in fact date the original Book of Chronicles before the time of Ezra, but holds that the work was considerably annotated by a writer of the school of Ezra. This means that Dr. Welch is bound to separate

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Chronicles from Ezra-Nehemiah. His grounds for doing so are not strong. In the main his reasons are summarized on page 219 of *Post-Exilic Judaism*; 'The author of Ezra reveals no interest in the three matters which peculiarly engaged the attention of the Chronicler - the Davidic kingdom, the ark and the status of the Levites.' But it is difficult to see how the Chronicler, if it was the Chronicler, could have dealt with the Davidic kingdom and the ark in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah, since both had ceased to exist. With regard to the Levites, it should be noted that Dr. Welch has determined the attitude of the Chronicler towards the priests and Levites by ascribing to another hand those passages in Chronicles which suggest that the Levites were subordinate to the priests. Those who wish to know his reasons will find them in the two books already mentioned. But if Chronicles is taken as a whole, there is no real difference in the attitude towards the priests and the Levites in Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. If the compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah is candid enough to record that the Levites as a whole were reluctant to come back with Ezra, he assigns a prominent enough place to those who did return at this date and earlier.

It does not seem necessary, then, to spend longer in justifying the commonly held view that the Chronicler wrote Ezra-Nehemiah in addition to the Books known as Chronicles. The date at which he wrote is of considerable importance, as has already been indicated. Batten in the *I.C.C.* on Ezra-Nehemiah, on the basis of E. L. Curtis's introduction to the *I.C.C.* on Chronicles, sums up. 'Certainly our books go down to the Greek age, and it is quite impossible to place the work earlier than 300 B.C. We can with a good deal of confidence name the third century B.C. as the time of the Chronicler, but cannot be more exact' (pp. 2, 3).

A clue to the date may be found in the list of high priests in Nehemiah xii. 10-22. This list is carried down as far as Jaddua, the son of Jonathan (ii, 22). According to Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 8. 4) Jaddua was high priest at the time of Alexander the Great (c. 330 B.C.). This means that the Chronicler must have written after this date. On the other hand, both A. C. Welch (*Post-Exilic Judaism*, p. 242) and R. Dick Wilson (in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*) believe that this Jaddua is to be placed considerably earlier than Josephus's dating. Moreover, in an interesting article on 'The Date and Personality of the,

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Chronicler' in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. XL (1921), W. F. Albright points out that, since this Jaddua is mentioned immediately after Johanan, he is likely to have succeeded him soon after 400 B.C., and is therefore unlikely to be the Jaddua mentioned by Josephus. Albright believes that, when the Chronicler wrote, Jaddua was the heir to the high priesthood, and that the Book was actually compiled during the high priesthood of Johanan. The theory of an earlier Jaddua is reasonable, but it would be unfair to take advantage of it here. So we will accept Josephus's dating as correct, though we must bear in mind that the Jaddua of Nehemiah xii may have been earlier.

Now if Jaddua is used to fix the earliest possible date for the Chronicler, he can also be used to fix a possible latest date. Jaddua plays no part in the history that the Chronicler records. There is no point in introducing his name except as the last member in the line of high priests. He is included in order to bring the list in Nehemiah xii up to date. If there had been one or two more high priests before the Chronicler wrote, their names would naturally have been included too. The only reason for stopping short with Jaddua would be, either that he was high priest when the Chronicler wrote, or that he was the father of the man who was high priest at the time of writing,

or, as Albright suggests, that he was high priest etc. In any of these cases the date of writing would be about 300 B.C. Unless strong evidence were forthcoming on other grounds, it would be reasonable to adopt 300 B.C. as the approximate date, with a margin of up to about 30 years on either side of that date.

With this date in mind, we turn to consider the likelihood of a serious mistake in the relative order of the two leaders, Ezra and Nehemiah. Let us remind ourselves once again of the position. According to a number of scholars today, Nehemiah came to Jerusalem about 445 B.C. and Ezra in 398 B.C. after the death of Nehemiah. The Chronicler, however, writing about 300 B.C., not only makes them contemporaries of each other, but even reverses the order of their coming, so that he makes Ezra arrive in 458 B.C.

Such a surprising alteration of history could be due only to some powerful motive, or to a mistake through carelessness or ignorance. No motive has been suggested for the alteration; if the Chronicler was intending to point some moral, or underline some particular point of view by making the change, he has

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certainly not succeeded in making his purpose clear. But it is equally as difficult to ascribe the alteration to ignorance or carelessness. Whatever may be thought of the Chronicler's treatment of the earlier history, the period of Ezra and Nehemiah was relatively recent.

If Ezra really came to Jerusalem in 398 B.C., he presumably lived for, say, ten years more to attain the reputation that he held in subsequent days. A ministry of no more than a year or two would be insufficient to establish such a reputation for himself. One might reasonably give him a ministry longer than ten years, but ten years will do to make our point.

Ezra, then, would have died just within living memory of the Chronicler's contemporaries. In Jerusalem there would be two or three old people who had actually seen him, while there would be any number whose parents had told them again and again of how they had been present when Ezra read the Law. But there would be no one living who had seen Nehemiah. There would be quite a number whose grandparents had seen Nehemiah, but since these grandparents would also have seen Ezra, if he came after Nehemiah, their grandchildren, contemporaries of the Chronicler, would have heard repeatedly from their grandparents and their parents of the true order in which these two men came. Even if Ezra died within two or three years of his coming, or we placed the Chronicler considerably later, it is still difficult to see how he could have reversed what must have been a clear tradition.

In putting Ezra before Nehemiah he was producing a history that would immediately be apparent as appallingly inaccurate. And few historians care to run a risk like that, even if they are writing with an axe to grind. In fact the more they wish to write history with a purpose, the more careful they are not to lay themselves open to criticism on the score of inaccuracy.

From this point onwards I shall be making several references to the detailed and kindly criticisms that Dr. H. H. Rowley made of my original lecture in his own lecture entitled *The Chronological Order of Ezra and Nehemiah*, printed in his book, *The Servant of the Lord* (1952). Dr. Rowley here points out that Pfeiffer and Lods accept later dates for the Chronicler, but he does not suggest that he himself wants a date later than 300 B.C. He makes two points (pp. 139f.) in answer to what I have said. 1. 'The argument tacitly assumes that the books were "published" in a modern

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sense, and that they would immediately circulate amongst readers who could check their statements.' 2. In other cases the Chronicler had no hesitation in knowingly and wilfully modifying the facts, e.g. the price of the Temple site (i Ch. xxi. 25 cf. 2 Sa. xxiv. 24). And the statement that Asa and Jehoshaphat removed the high places (2 Ch. xiv. 3, 5; cf. i Ki. xv. 14. 2 Ch. xvii. 6; cf. 1 Ki. XX11. 43).

It is possible to grant that copies of the Chronicler's work would not have a wide circulation at first, but no author is content to keep his 'child' hidden from outside eyes altogether. The Chronicler was a man of sufficient importance to be allowed access to national records; he wrote with a purpose from a priestly point of view; and, in spite of what Dr. Rowley says on page 140, it would seem likely that in the first instance he intended his book to be read by 'a learned circle', since the priestly party would be men of learning. But, whether this is so or not, any middle-aged reader would know enough of his national history, handed down from parent to child, to say whether Ezra came to Jerusalem about 100 years earlier or whether he preceded that more remote national figure, Nehemiah, some 150 years before. We are not dealing with some insignificant event, but with two outstanding leaders of recent Jewish history.

The Chronicler's alteration of earlier isolated historical statements is on a different footing. It would be perfectly possible to harmonize the examples that Dr. Rowley quotes, and indeed conservative commentaries have done so. But no one could harmonize the wrong order of Ezra and Nehemiah, when this could be checked by anyone who had been born before 350 B.C., and by very many who had been born before 330-320 B.C., by way of the stories that their parents and grandparents had told them. If the Chronicler wrote about 300 B.C. he could not have made his error 'in ignorance', as Dr. Rowley suggests on page 139. But if he made it with intention, one would have thought that he would have made it clear just what his intention was; for it is impossible to suggest any reason from the book as it stands.

It is fair to say, then, that the idea that Ezra came to Jerusalem in 398 B.C. is faced with such a tremendous objection on general grounds at the very beginning, that one could adopt it only as a last resort. The question will ultimately resolve itself into a balance of probabilities. Are the difficulties in the way of accept-

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ing the Chronicler's date of 458 B.C. for Ezra really so great as to force us to adopt all the

difficulties of the 398 B.C. date?

But before turning to the difficulties of the 458 B.C. date, there are two more things to be said about a later date for Ezra. Before the suggestion was popularized that Ezra vii. 7 really referred to Artaxerxes II and not Artaxerxes I, as the Chronicler intended, Wellhausen proposed to emend the text 'seventh year' to 'twenty-seventh year'. This would bring Ezra to Jerusalem in 438 B.C. It would introduce a new problem of the lack of mention of Nehemiah in the memoirs of Ezra, since Ezra would have arrived during the governorship of Nehemiah, which extended till after Artaxerxes' thirty-second year, i.e. 433 B.C. (Ne. xiii. 6), though it might be held that Ezra's arrival coincided with Nehemiah's absence in Susa or Babylon. There is no MS. evidence for the emendation of the year, and, if the Chronicler really wrote 'twenty-seventh', it seems strange that he did not write a part of the story of Nehemiah first, after dating Nehemiah in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Neh. ii. 1).

But if we begin querying the Chronicler's chronology, there is no need to attempt any vindication of the date in Ezra vii. 7. If the seventh year of Artaxerxes I is abandoned, the true date may be any year in the reigns of Artaxerxes I, Darius II, or Artaxerxes II.

The nearer one brings Ezra to Nehemiah, the easier it would be for later generations to become confused over their relative orders, and thus the argument that I have used against the 398 B.C. date becomes less powerful. None the less, the argument is still cogent. If one great leader preceded another, their order in point of time would inevitably be a part of the tradition that was handed down about them in the small community in which they had lived. Whether one preceded the other by five or fifty years, A would traditionally come before B, and it would be many generations before a theory could be propounded that, in actual fact, B preceded A. It is clear that the only reason for suggesting at all that Ezra came after Nehemiah is that the Chronicler's order is felt to present insurmountable difficulties. If it can be shown, as I hope to show presently, that the difficulties are by no means insurmountable, it becomes unnecessary to adopt even the lesser chronological changes that have been proposed.

But there is still one more vital point before we can turn to an estimate of the Chronicler's order. I have assumed all along

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that the present order is due to the Chronicler, writing about 300 B.C. But it might be that the Chronicler himself originally made Ezra come to Jerusalem in the reign of Artaxerxes II, while a later editor was responsible for the change of order. Torrey, in his *Ezra Studies* (pp. 252f.), has in fact given a detailed analysis of how the main transposition came about 'near the end of the third century B.C.'. Torrey's book is almost impossible to obtain now, but his reasons and conclusions are summarized clearly and concisely by Dr. L. E. Browne, in his *Early Judaism* (chapter II). Dr. Browne has some further points of his own also. The original order of the chapters, as suggested by Torrey and Browne, is printed on page 32. The main alteration is to put the reading of the Law from Nehemiah viii between Ezra viii and ix, and the making of the Covenant from Nehemiah ix and x after Ezra x. Batten, in the *I.C.C.*, prefers to put the reading of the Law after Ezra x, which is where it stands in 1 Esdras, and he leaves Nehemiah x in its present position.

This change of order is interesting, and it is possible to make a plausible theory as to how the true order came to be misplaced. Torrey and Browne have demonstrated this. Personally I do not think that the change from the present Bible order is necessary, but, assuming that, when the work left the Chronicler's hand, it was in the order suggested by Torrey, Browne, or Batten, Ezra must still have preceded Nehemiah. All that has happened is that the reading of the Law has been closely associated with Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem and his marriage reforms. But the story of Nehemiah is still to come. A far more drastic rearrangement of the chapters would be necessary to get Nehemiah before Ezra. Now it is certainly possible that such a wholesale rearrangement may be necessary, but the more rearrangement that is needed, the less likely is it to be correct. Torrey and Browne have shown how their comparatively slight displacement could have come about, but no one, so far as I know, has attempted to give an explanation of how this far greater displacement could have happened. Dr. Rowley agrees that the theory of later dislocation is not very satisfactory (p. 139).

The evidence of 1 Esdras, and of Josephus, who follows 1 Esdras, might warrant our transferring the reading of the Law to a time soon after the arrival of Ezra. But since 1 Esdras has no record of Nehemiah before the arrival of Ezra, it is obvious that this book also must have placed the coming of Ezra before

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that of Nehemiah, though any chapters following the reading of the Law no longer exist, and indeed may never have been written.

To conclude, then, this section of the argument; it is unlikely that the Chronicler himself could have been radically mistaken over the relative order of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is impossible to rule out altogether the possibility of a later misplacement of the text, but the only misplacement which can be shown to be likely still gives us the order of Ezra followed by Nehemiah, and not Nehemiah by Ezra. This misplacement of the reading of the Law could easily occur, but a misplacement that involved the complete reversal of the order of the two men would have been such a clash with traditional history that one doubts whether it could have occurred before the middle of the second century, by which time both Torrey and Oesterley, in their books on the Apocrypha, believe that 1 Esdras was written. From that time onwards our Hebrew Ezra-Nehemiah and the Greek 1 Esdras are independent witness that our present order of Ezra before Nehemiah was the accepted one.

DID NEHEMIAH PRECEDE EZRA?

It is now time to turn back to the Books as they stand in our Bibles, and to see whether the

difficulties of accepting the present order are in fact so great as to compel us to adopt the really difficult theory of a radical mistake by the Chronicler himself, or a subsequent misplacement of the chapters.

It will be simplest to begin with the three key passages which are supposed to indicate that Ezra came after Nehemiah.

The first is Ezra ix. 9 with its reference to a city wall. If it refers to Nehemiah's wall, then obviously Ezra came after Nehemiah. But it is now fairly well agreed that Ezra iv. 7-23 refers to events in the reign of Artaxerxes I, and in fact is a letter of complaint about a wall that the Jews were building. The letter certainly carries the date of Artaxerxes, and the contents show that this can only be Artaxerxes I. By the time of Artaxerxes II, Nehemiah's wall was already in existence. Moreover the Book of Nehemiah opens with news of the destruction of the wall and gates of Jerusalem. The effect of the news on Nehemiah shows that this cannot refer to the original destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., one hundred and forty years previously. It must be some fresh destruction, and can only be what is implied in Ezra iv. 23, where the enemy 'went in haste

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to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease (building) by force and power.' [3] The case is set out by Dr. Rowley in his lecture 'Nehemiah's Mission and its Background' (1955).

Since this letter is dated in the reign of Artaxerxes I, and since Nehemiah i implies a recent destruction of the wall, there must have been some sort of a wall going up in the time of Ezra. Psychologically Ezra would be more likely to refer to a wall that was actually being built when he spoke, than he would be to refer to Nehemiah's wall, if he came to Jerusalem in 398 B.C., nearly fifty years after the wall had been built. By that time the wall would be taken for granted.

Since this letter and accompanying record belong to the reign of Artaxerxes I, it is strange to find it now in the part of the 'story that concerns the period 536-520 B.C. In I Esdras it occurs even earlier, that is after the events of Ezra i. The contents of the letter clearly refer to the building of city walls and not of the Temple (12, 13, 16), which is the subject of the beginning and ending of chapter iv. None the less the responsibility for the present position may lie with the Chronicler himself. Some words of Torrey in his *Ezra Studies* (p. 252) are worth quoting. Speaking of the desire of some people to rearrange ancient documents, he says, 'Many of the grave inconsistencies which trouble us did not disturb the author himself, simply because he understood, better than we do, what he meant to say.... Very many ancient writers did not bind themselves to observe logical sequence; did not care especially for symmetry; and would have been greatly astonished, or angered, or amused, if they could have heard attributed to them the views which they are now believed to have held.'

Torrey's warning is salutary. It is, I think, quite likely that the Chronicler himself inserted this passage out of its chronological order in the middle of another passage which spoke of earlier opposition to the building of the Temple. But since he left the date at the head, he did not intend there to be any confusion. Presently I will suggest a reason that may have influenced the Chronicler in not inserting the passage in its proper chronological position, but in the meantime we may notice that both this passage, and the section that follows, are in Aramaic, which makes the connection easier.

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There is a perfectly good alternative interpretation of Ezra's words, which some scholars have adopted, namely that Ezra is using the word 'wall' metaphorically. It is the word *gader*, 'which is not used of Nehemiah's wall, though it is used of city walls in Micah vii. 11. In favour of the metaphorical use here, the wall is said to be 'in Judah and in Jerusalem'. Against the metaphor is the fact that the two previous clauses are literal; 'to set up the house of our God, and to repair the ruins thereof.' I prefer the literal interpretation, though it is possible that the events of chapter ix happened several years after Ezra's arrival. The introductory phrase in verse i cannot be pressed, as Batten points out in the *I.C.C.* (p. 331).

The second key passage is Ezra x. 1, where 'a very great 'congregation' assembles, in contrast to Nehemiah vii. 4, where only a few people are living in the city. There is, however, all the difference in the world between the temporary collection of a crowd and their actual settlement in the city. Ezra's crowd was not necessarily living in permanent houses in Jerusalem. According to the Hebrew text the crowd came 'out of Israel'. 1 Esdras viii. 91 has 'from Jerusalem', but the Hebrew text may well be correct. If work on the walls was going on at this time, there would be people coming in daily, or for considerable periods, from the surrounding country, and the term 'Israel' would indicate that there were more than the inhabitants of Jerusalem who came before Ezra at this time. The remainder of the chapter suggests that there were as yet very few houses in the city. Verses 9 and 13 refer to many people and to much rain. The proximity of these two facts suggests that there was a complete lack of accommodation for the people who had assembled. In other words, there is no indication that the number of houses in Jerusalem in Ezra's day was greater than in the time of Nehemiah.

I do not think that Dr. Rowley (p. 143) is correct in making a contrast between the 'Israel' of verse i, and the 'Judah and Jerusalem' of verse 7. If the congregation of verse 1 was drawn solely from Jerusalem, it would be gratuitous to include the words 'out of Israel' at all. The words have significance only if they include dwellers round about Jerusalem; and the fact that many of these had been present on this first occasion would not preclude a proclamation throughout both Judah and Jerusalem (7) for the whole of the inhabitants to report in Jerusalem. If, however, the reading 'from Jerusalem' is correct, the total inhabi-

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tants at this time, though few in proportion to the city area, might still form a large assembly in the Temple precincts.

The third key passage concerns the high priest who was the contemporary of Ezra. Ezra x. 6 says that Ezra went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib. The Elephantine papyri

speaking of Johanan as high priest in 408 B.C. But neither Ezra x. 6 nor 1 Esdras ix. 1 says that Johanan was high priest in Ezra's day. The omission of his title is in fact unusual if he was high priest then. Nehemiah xii. 22, 23 gives Joiada's name in between Eliashib and Johanan, so it is likely that the Johanan of 408 B.C. was the grandson of the Eliashib of Nehemiah's day. The name Johanan is common, and it would not be strange if Eliashib had both a son and a grandson of that name, the son being brother of Joiada.

It is difficult to follow Dr. Rowley here on pages 145-6. After stating correctly that, according to this view, the Johanan of Ezra's day was the uncle of the Johanan who was high priest in 408 B.C., Rowley says that this is unlikely, since 'here there is also a common father's or grandfather's name'. His reference to Nehemiah xii. 23 must be taken in the light of xii. 22 and xiii. 28, where Joiada comes between Eliashib and Johanan.

It seems to me most probable that when Ezra came to Jerusalem, the high priest was Joiakim, as Josephus says in *Ant.* xi. 5. 5. (cf. *Ne.* xii. 10). This would account for the fact that Eliashib is not called high priest in Ezra x. 6. Since Joiakim was the son of Joshua, who was high priest in 536 B.C., he would have been seventy or more, and Johanan and Joiada need not have been children; they may well have had their own rooms in the Temple. Johanan could have been the eldest, and therefore high priest elect, though, if so, he must have died before his brother, Joiada, who then inherited. But this is not essential to the theory. All that is essential is to admit that the common name, Johanan, was borne by an uncle and a nephew.

In addition to these three key passages there is an argument that is built upon the recorded attitude of the two leaders to the matter of the foreign wives. Ezra insists on divorce (*Ezr.* x) while Nehemiah is content with making the people swear by God not to marry nor give their sons in marriage to foreigners (*Ne.* xiii. 23-28). It is felt that Nehemiah's milder treatment of the offence is likely to have preceded Ezra's drastic action.

We may notice first of all that Nehemiah's action came at

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least twenty-five years after Ezra's, according to the Bible order of events (*Ne.* xiii. 6). In spite of what Ezra had done, there had been plenty of time for the practice of intermarriage to crop up again. It was a perennial difficulty. But Nehemiah's words suggest that he also forced the offenders to put away their wives. Otherwise the terms of the oath in xiii. 25 are meaningless. 'I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves.' The terms of the oath are modelled on Deuteronomy vii. 3. But what would be the point of making them swear not to do something which they were continuing to do? The words make sense only if they were coupled with the putting away of the foreign wives. Thus Nehemiah was apparently taking the same action as Ezra had taken twenty-five years earlier.

As against these supposed indications that Nehemiah preceded Ezra, there are one or two slight pieces of incidental evidence that Ezra did come to Jerusalem in 458 B.C., and conversely that he did not come in 398 B.C.

There is the evidence of the names of those who were associated with Ezra, two, or perhaps three, of which occur again in the list of the builders of the wall in the time of Nehemiah. Thus in *Ezra* viii. 33 the money that Ezra has brought with him is handed over to Meremoth, the son of Uriah, the priest. In *Nehemiah* iii. 4, 21 Meremoth, the son of Uriah, is one of the builders of the wall. In *Ezra* x. 31 Malchijah, the son of Harim, is one of those who had married a foreign wife. In *Nehemiah* iii. 4. 11 he is one of the builders. In addition, in *Ezra* viii. 2 there is a Hattush who returns with Ezra, and in *Nehemiah* iii. 10 there is a Hattush who is one of the builders.

Dr. Rowley is certainly right in demonstrating that only Meremoth, the son of Uriah, is certainly the same man in both places (pp. 158, 159). He suggests, however, that when he undertook a double portion of the building he must have been younger than when he was the treasurer of national funds; thus this would favour the coming of Ezra after Nehemiah. This is not necessarily so. The leaders who are named in *Nehemiah* iii need not themselves have been active young men. We have seen that Eliashib (verse 1) was not young. What was needed was the ability to take charge of the work and to inspire others, and

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men who have risen to a responsible position, such as that of Temple Treasurer, would probably be excellent leaders. The reason why no more of Ezra's known contemporaries occur in the list of builders is that the list gives only the chief builders of each section of the wall, and it is more likely that these chief builders would be men who had been residents in Jerusalem for some time than that they would be selected from those who had arrived only quite recently.

A second piece of evidence is that when Ezra arrived there was apparently no governor of Jerusalem. He delivers the king's commission to 'the king's satraps, and to the governors beyond the river' (*Ezr.* viii. 36). It is also clear from the record of the abortive attempt to rebuild the walls in *Ezra* iv. 6-23 that there was no governor of Jerusalem at this time. Otherwise there would necessarily be some reference to him by the opponents. or by the king himself. This means that the account of Ezra's coming fits in well with the background of *Ezra* iv. 6-23, when Judah had no independent governor, but was under the general supervision of a governor of a wider area. Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 5-6) speaks of a single governor of Syria, Phoenicia, and Samaria.

But by 408 B.C. the Elephantine papyri show that Sanballat was the governor of Samaria, and Bigvai the governor of Jerusalem. The name 'Bigvai' occurs several times in *Ezra-Nehemiah* (*Ezr.* ii. 2, 14, viii. 14; *Ne.* vii. 7, 19, x. i6), but it is not suggested that any of these is the man who later became governor. But it is interesting to notice that the Greek versions render the name in various ways, mostly approximating to Bagoas or Bagoses. Bagoas is a Persian name, which occurs in *Judith* vii, xiii, xiv, and in *Herodotus* iii. 128 in the form Bagaaios. According to *Pliny H.N.* xiii., iv. 9 it means 'eunuch'. Now Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 7, 8) says that the governor in the time of Johanan was Bagoses, thus agreeing with the Elephantine papyri. Josephus implies that

Bagoses was a Persian, and the allusions in the letter sent to him from Elephantine suggest the same thing (Sachau. *Pap.* i). If, then, Bigvai, or Bagoses, was the governor of Judaea when Ezra came to Jerusalem, it is strange that there is no allusion to him at all in the story of Ezra. He would have been the first person to whom Ezra would have delivered the king's commission. The only possible mention of him is in 1 Esdras ix. 49, where the reading of the Law is placed soon after Ezra's arrival. This verse is roughly parallel to Nehe-

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miah viii. 9, with the omission of Nehemiah's name. The verse in 1 Esdras runs, 'Then spake Attharates unto Esdras the chief priest and reader, and to the Levites that taught the multitude, even to all, saying, "This day is holy unto the Lord..."'

Attharates is the Greek rendering, or misunderstanding, of the Persian title which appears in the Hebrew as Tirshatha, representing the governor of Jerusalem, and which is probably a Persian title of dignity, like the English 'his excellency'. If this is a reference to Bigvai, it is strange to find a Persian dictating to Ezra and the Levites on a religious matter of this kind. A possible solution would be to argue that, since 408 B.C., Bigvai had been succeeded by another governor of Jewish extraction. The only evidence for or against this is contained in Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 7). Josephus describes the quarrel between Bagoses and Johanan the high priest, which came to a head after Johanan had murdered his own brother in the Temple. For this Josephus says that Bagoses polluted the Temple, and punished the Jews for seven years, presumably by an annual fine. The Elephantine letter of 408 does not appear to know of any open quarrel between Johanan and Bigvai. The seven years' punishment cannot have begun before then. This would mean that Bigvai lived till at least 400 B.C. If he did die then, it is unlikely that Artaxerxes II would have appointed a Jewish governor in his place, and also have encouraged Ezra to go to Jerusalem. The situation that existed on Ezra's arrival is more consistent with the earlier period before Judah had a separate governor than after 400 B.C., when there was a separate governor, and he a Persian.

THE CONSISTENCY OF THE CHRONICLER'S ACCOUNT

The time has now come to state what, according to a fair reading of the Bible narrative, was the true course of events.

Ezra came to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. under a commission from Artaxerxes I. He was in no sense a governor, but was something in the nature of a civil servant. This view was worked out by a German writer, Schäder, and published in a pamphlet entitled *Esra der Schreiber* (1930). The pamphlet is almost unobtainable in this country, but Schäder's views on Ezra's office have been summarized, and largely accepted, by Dr. A. C. Welch in his *Post-Exilic Judaism* (pp. 255f.). According to this view the title applied to Ezra in vii. 12, 'the scribe of the law of the God of

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heaven', implies that Ezra was a court official, and head of the bureau that had charge of all Jewish business. The document of commission would be prepared under Ezra's supervision, and possibly written by his own hand. According to Schäder the style of Aramaic is the correct official Aramaic of the period.

With regard to the task that Ezra was commissioned to do, Schäder holds that he was sent to introduce the so-called Priestly Code. Welch, however, points out the unlikelihood of the Persian government's sanctioning an innovation of this sort, which might cause serious dissatisfaction amongst the Jews at Jerusalem. The interest of Persian kings in Jewish religious observances is proved by one of the Elephantine papyri, which gives instructions from Darius II in 410 B.C. as to how the Jews at Elephantine were to keep the feast of unleavened bread. It is unlikely that this is intended as an innovation.

Welch examines the terms of the commission in Ezra vii, and concludes from them that Ezra's task was to institute an enquiry into the condition of the community in regard to its religious affairs. Even verse 25 does not go beyond this. Ezra was empowered to appoint new magistrates where necessary, but their authority is carefully defined as applying only to the Jews themselves.

Soon after Ezra's arrival a scandal about mixed marriages is brought to his notice. It has usually been assumed that the residents at Jerusalem were the guilty ones, but Welch has argued (*Post-Exilic Judaism* pp. 247f.) that the offenders were members of Ezra's own party, and that the leaders of the Jerusalem community appealed to him to deal with them. The public inquiry disclosed 113 guilty persons, which Welch feels to be a small number after nearly 100 (or 150) years of residence in the land after the return. On the other hand it seems hard to believe that 113 members of Ezra's party had lapsed into mixed marriages almost immediately after their return. Perhaps one can grant that there were guilty members from both groups of Jews.

After this public inquiry and the divorce of the foreign wives, the Book of Ezra closes. But the next event chronologically is the passage in Ezra iv. 7-23. The walls of the city are going up. Protests are made by Persian officials and others to Artaxerxes, and the king orders them to make the Jews stop.

What part did Ezra play in all this? He may have taken no part at all. As Secretary of State for Jewish Affairs, he may have

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returned to Babylon soon after dealing with the marriage problem. There, perhaps, he wrote up the account of what he had done, and deposited it with the Jews in Babylon, together with a copy of the king's commission in Aramaic. This account and the commission were available for the Chronicler later.

I should be perfectly happy to accept this, and those who have followed me thus far will probably

feel that this explanation is adequate. After all, we should not have known that Nehemiah returned to Persia if it had not been for his casual remark in Nehemiah xiii. 6. If Ezra returned to Persia after dealing with the mixed marriages, we can suppose that he came back again after Nehemiah had completed the walls.

There is, however, another possibility. Here let me make it clear, in view of criticisms of my original lecture, that any hypothetical picture that I may build up is not part of the essential argument for the priority of Ezra. I should be content to rest that argument almost entirely upon the fact that the Chronicler in 300 B.C. could not have made a mistake over the order of the two great men; to suppose that he did raises problems of the utmost difficulty. If, then, Ezra preceded Nehemiah, we are entitled to speculate what he was doing during the period of the rebuilding of the walls recorded in Ezra iv. 7-23, if he was in Jerusalem then.

Although his commission did not extend to rebuilding, he was keen enough on the new wall to thank God for it in ix. 9. He need not have taken part in the building himself. But, when the enemies destroyed the new walls, Ezra's stock would fall immediately. He was the friend of Artaxerxes, who had been responsible for the destruction of the walls. He had persuaded his people to marriage reforms in the name of Yahweh, and now Yahweh had failed them. This is exactly the way in which Eastern peoples, and others nearer home, act towards their leaders when things go wrong. It would account for the reactions against Ezra's reforms, especially the ban on mixed marriages, which Nehemiah had to deal with again. It would explain why he was not given a leading part in the building of the walls a second time. And it might account for the Chronicler's removal of the section iv. 7-23 to its present position, so as not to detract obviously from Ezra's good work as reformer. This restatement of what I wrote in the original lecture will, I believe, turn the edge of Dr. Rowley's criticism on pages 141, 142, since

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there is not intended to be any personal reflection upon Ezra's conduct, which the Chronicler, or anyone else, needed to hush up.

Whilst Ezra has faded from the picture, Nehemiah takes up the task. He goes before Artaxerxes in fear and trembling because he has to persuade the king to reverse a decision that he has already made. After ordering the building to be stopped, the king has to be induced to allow Nehemiah to undertake the work himself. Quite obviously Nehemiah was a personal favourite of the king, and this won him the permission that probably none but he could have won. To clinch the matter, the king even made him governor of Jerusalem, a post that had lapsed since, probably, the days of Zerubbabel. Reading between the lines one can see that the root of Sanballat's opposition was jealousy. He had coveted the post himself, or else the post of governor of Samaria, with Judah included under him. His appointment later as governor of Samaria may have been a sop to his injured vanity.

Nehemiah strikes at once and begins to build the walls, and, once the work is finished, Jewish confidence returns.

They want to pledge themselves to the Law. So on a given day, at an assembly of all the people, 'they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses' (Ne. viii. i) and Ezra stood up in the sight of everyone and read the Law. Nehemiah joined him in speaking to the people (v. 9). And when the wall was dedicated with full ceremony, Ezra led one of the processions (xii. 36). The restoration of Ezra was complete.

Such a reconstruction seems to me to be psychologically likely. It makes the history run smoothly and consistently, and incidentally it keeps Nehemiah viii in the place where it now stands in our Hebrew Bibles. One can see how the chapter came to be moved back in 1 Esdras. An editor or scribe with a tidy mind wanted to finish the story of Ezra before he went on to Nehemiah. But it is better where it is in the Hebrew version, provided that one is not obsessed with the idea that Ezra came from Babylon ready armed with the Priestly Code, and burning to read it aloud at the first opportunity. Both L. E. Browne, in *Early Judaism*, and A. C. Welch, in *Post-Exilic Judaism*, have shown grave reasons for doubting whether the Law Book that was read aloud in chapter viii was the Priestly Code. The question of what it was would need a lecture in itself. Dr. Browne thinks that it was not a new book at all, but that it was Deuteronomy

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(*Early Judaism*, pp. 185f.). I think myself that it was extracts from the whole Pentateuch.

There is now no need to question the occasional references in the Book of Nehemiah to Ezra and Nehemiah as contemporaries, though, for the sake of completeness, we ought to notice them. The association of Nehemiah with Ezra in Nehemiah viii. 9 is entirely fitting. The omission of Nehemiah's name in the parallel passage in 1 Esdras ix. 49 is natural, since the compiler, having moved the chapter back, has not yet introduced the story of Nehemiah. He has, therefore, been content with putting the title 'Attharates', which is his rendering here of the Persian title 'Tirshatha'.

In Nehemiah x. 1, 'Nehemiah the Tirshatha' is named as the first of those who set his seal to the covenant that was made after Ezra had read the Law. This passage cannot be checked against 1 Esdras, since the book breaks off before this point. Since the best Greek reading here omits the title 'the Tirshatha', it is sometimes argued that there must have been originally a different Hebrew text here. But it is more likely that the awkward title 'Tirshatha' confused the translator, or a later scribe, as it clearly puzzled the man who rendered 1 Esdras into Greek. For whilst in 1 Esdras ix. 49 he renders it 'Attharates', in v. 40 he has the version 'Attharates'.

The final passage is Nehemiah xii. 36, where, in the professed memoirs of Nehemiah written in the first person, it is said that at the dedication of the wall Ezra the scribe was at the head of one of the processions. Dr. Rowley says, 'Here again we have no evidence that these words stood in the Chronicler's source' (p. 156). But what evidence could we have? Rowley continues, 'Just as Nehemiah plays no real part on the occasion reported in Nehemiah viii, so Ezra plays none here. We should have expected him to play a larger part than this on a religious occasion.' Yet this verse records that Ezra led one half of the procession; which is more than Nehemiah himself did,

so far as we can judge from verse 38. Obviously there must have been some solemn ceremony at the dedication of the walls, and this description, which purports to come from the personal memoirs of Nehemiah, is perfectly reasonable.

If, then, we believe on other grounds that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, the references that bring them together are adequate. In the reading of the Law Ezra is the reader and

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teacher, while Nehemiah, as governor, gives him support and takes the lead in setting his seal to the covenant. In the dedication of the walls Nehemiah plans the processions, and sets Ezra at the head of one of them, though the service and the singing were in the hands of the regular officiating priests.

The conclusion, then, of this lecture is that the Hebrew and Greek order of Ezra before Nehemiah does not raise so many problems as has sometimes been supposed. The reversal of the order is not only unnecessary, but introduces serious difficulties of such a nature that the theory can be accepted only with the greatest reluctance. And since the Chronicler's order can be shown to be consistent both with itself and with external history, it is only reasonable to take the view that Ezra came to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. and Nehemiah in 445 B.C.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are a number of foreign books and monographs from the end of the last century onwards. The Flemish scholar, Van Hoonacker, has written numerous books and articles since his *Néhémie et Esdras* in 1890, and amongst earlier writers may be specially mentioned W. H. Kosters, *Die Wiederherstellung Israels* (1895) and A. Bertholet, *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia in Kurzer Handkommentar des Alten Testaments* (1902). Another writer is Gustav Hölischer, whose commentary *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia* was published in 1910 with a further edition in 1922.

An important pamphlet by H. H. Schäder of Berlin, *Esra der Schreiber* (1930), is partially summarized by A. C. Welch in *Post-Exilic Judaism* (pp. 255f.). Schäder also deals with Ezra in his book *Iranische Beiträge* (1930), of which there is a copy in the Cambridge University Library. In his belief that the Aramaic of Ezra truly belongs to the period from which it professes to come, Schäder was anticipated by Eduard Meyer in his *Entstehung des Judentums* (1896).

Amongst the writers in English C. C. Torrey's two books are of great importance. *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah* was published in 1896, and *Ezra Studies*, a much fuller book, in 1910. These two books appear to be unobtainable in any secondhand bookshop in this country, but there are copies in the Cambridge University Library.

The fullest commentary in English is in the *International Critical Commentary* series, and is by L. W. Batten (1913).

Most of the histories of Judah have reproduced the view that Batten takes. This is more or less inevitable in a general history, where details of argument cannot be fully discussed. A history that touches some points that British writers omit is *The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism*, by A. Lods (translated from the French by S. H. Hooke. 1937).

Two writers who have done original thinking on the whole period are L. E. Browne in his *Early Judaism* (1920) and A. C. Welch in several books, but notably in his Baird Lecture for 1934, published under the title of *Post-Exilic Judaism*.

The Elephantine papyri have been referred to several times in this lecture. The edition that is usually quoted is by E. Sachau (1911), but an English translation is available in *Aramaic Papyri*

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Discovered at Assuan, by A. H. Sayce and A. E. Cowley (1906), and *Jewish Documents of the Time of Ezra* (1919), and *Aramaic Papyri of the 5th Century B.C.* (1923), by A. E. Cowley alone. The letters referred to in this lecture may be found at the end of Vol. IV of the *Clarendon Bible*.

Those who wish for a list of books written before 1913 will find it at the end of the introduction to the *International Critical Commentary* on Ezra-Nehemiah. A further list is given at the beginning of L. E. Browne's *Early Judaism*, and an outline of the main views up to 1920 is summarized by W. F. Albright in an article entitled 'The Date and Personality of the Chronicler' in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 40 (1921). This article is naturally difficult to obtain, but there is a copy in the British Museum Reading Room.

There is a very full list of references in H. H. Rowley's chapter in *The Servant of the Lord* (Lutterworth, 1952), and also in a further lecture, *Nehemiah's Mission and its Background*. This was published by the John Rylands Library, Manchester, in '955, and will presumably appear later in a larger book.

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SOME RELEVANT FACTS

THE KINGS OF PERSIA

538-
529. Cyrus.

529-
522. Cambyses.

522-521.	Gaumata (Pseudo-Smerdis), a usurper.
521-486.	Darius I (Hystaspis).
486-465.	Xerxes I (Ahasuerus).
464-424.	Artaxerxes I (Longimanus).
424-423.	Xerxes II.
423-404.	Darius II (Nothus).
404-359.	Artaxerxes II (Mnemon).
359-338.	Artaxerxes III (Ochus).
338-331.	Darius III (Codomannus).

Some authorities date Artaxerxes I, Xerxes II, and Darius II one year earlier than the date given above.

THE MAIN AUTHORITIES FOR THE PERIOD

1. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah in Hebrew, with some sections in Aramaic, i.e. 'Ezra' and 'Nehemiah' in our English Bibles. These books are a continuation of 1 and 2 Chronicles.
2. '1 Esdras' of our Apocrypha. This is printed as an appendix to the Vulgate, and is there called '3 Esdras'. In the Greek Bible it is called *Esdras a*. 1 Esdras is a fragment in Greek of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. It runs from 2 Chronicles xxxv. 1 to the end of Ezra, including Nehemiah viii. 1-12 at the end. It differs considerably from the present Hebrew text, but is believed by Torrey to be a translation of the Chronicler's history as it stood in the last century B.C.
3. The so-called Septuagint Greek version of the Hebrew 'Ezra' and 'Nehemiah'. This follows the Hebrew text closely, and is believed by Torrey to be Theodotion's translation of the 2nd century A.D. In the Greek Bible it is called *Esdras β*.
4. Josephus. His *Antiquities of the Jews* (end of 1st century A.D.) covers this period in Book XI. Josephus chiefly follows 1 Esdras, but has additional information of his own.
5. The Elephantine Papyri. Letters to and from a Jewish

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colony on the island of Yeb in Upper Egypt, near Assouan. They are written in Aramaic, and belong to the end of the 5th century B.C.

SUPPOSED ORIGINAL ORDER OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH

(as set out by L. E. Browne (Early Judaism, p. 28), closely following C. C. Torrey.)

Ezra i.

1 Esdras iv. 47-56.

1 Esdras iv. 62 - v. 6.

Ezra ii. 1 - iv. 5, 24.

Ezra v. 1 - viii. 36.

Nehemiah vii. 70 - viii. 18.

Ezra ix. 1 - x. 44.

Nehemiah ix. 1 - x. 39.

Ezra iv. 7-23.

Nehemiah i. 1 - vii. 69.

Nehemiah xi. i - xiii. 31.

References

[1] In order to grasp the nature of the problem, it is helpful to have a chronological table of the kings of Persia. Such a table is printed on page 31.

[2] See note on page 16.

[3] Verse 6 refers to a general complaint, which was evidently ignored, in the reign of Artaxerxes predecessor, Xerxes (Ahasuerus).

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10For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. 11Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. ▲ View Chapter. Share This Verse: Bible Verses like Ezra 7:8. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. - King James Version (1611) - View 1611 Bible Scan. He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. - New American Standard Version (1995). And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. - American Standard Version (1901). The Book of Ezra dates the beginning of Ezra's activity to the seventh year, and Nehemiah to the twentieth year, of Artaxerxes. If these dates refer to the same king, then Ezra would be prior to Nehemiah, as the present biblical tradition suggests. But there is reason to believe that Ezra should be dated to the reign of Artaxerxes II (404–359 bce) which would put him about 397 bce, well after Nehemiah. Another area of debate is how to understand the law book that Ezra brought to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile. Was it a particular part of the Pentateuch, such as the so-called

Priestly code, or was it a more complete form of the Torah, much as it is today? And just exactly what was the nature of Ezra's commission from the Persian court and the scope of his authority? Christian Standard Bible Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, during the seventh year of the king. Holman Christian Standard Bible Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, during the seventh year of the king. International Standard Version He arrived in Jerusalem during the fifth month of the seventh year of the king's reign. Ezra 7:7 So in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, he went up to Jerusalem with some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and temple servants. Ezra 7:9 He had begun the journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him. Treasury of Scripture.