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ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves"; where the comma must be intended to guard the reader against making "to account" depend upon "sufficient." St. Paul, according to this amended translation, says, "not that of myself I am sufficient (for my ministry), that anything I do should be reckoned as from myself." It will be found, I think, that everywhere in the New Testament λογίζεσθαι preserves its sense of "reckoning" or "taking account."

J. LLEWELYN DAVIES.

ZECHARIAH.

OUR subject is the prophecy of Zechariah. We know, from the title prefixed to the book, the exact period when the prophet lived and worked. It was in the second year of Darius, son of Hystaspes as he is usually called, to distinguish him from Darius the Persian, who lived a century later that "the word of the Lord" came to him. Judæa was then under the dominion of this Darius. The community of Jews at Jerusalem had only just returned from their exile in Babylon, and they were engaged in rebuilding their old homes, and bringing their old lands and farms into cultivation again. At that period, about 520 B.C., two prophets appeared. Haggai, probably the older man, was one of them; Zechariah was the other. We do not know very much about those two men. They are both mentioned, and with honour, in the Book of Ezra, as true prophets. All that is told of Zechariah in the book which bears his name is that he was "the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo." In the Book of Ezra there is "Zechariah the son of Iddo," and Berechiah is entirely passed over. But there cannot be a shadow of a doubt that both passages refer to the same man. The likelihood is that Berechiah died early, and possibly never became

the head of the house. And so, in the Book of Ezra, the prophet is spoken of as the son of his grandfather Iddo. We also know that he belonged to a priestly family, and that goes some way to account for the extraordinary interest he took in the Temple and in the priesthood. Beyond these simple facts we do not know anything about the man.

From the writings of Zechariah we gather with a great deal of probability that he himself was born in Babylon; that he lived in that foreign land; that he became acquainted with its imagery, its temples and pictures, and the statuary of its varied worship; that he was familiar with its laws and its institutions, and with the whole organization and administration of the Persian power. Moreover, it is extremely probable that at least the imagery in which he clothes his faith about the unseen world is imagery largely suggested and moulded by certain of the doctrines of the Persian religion. That applies to some of the visions we have to study, particularly to the parts in which Satan is introduced.

I come now to the Book of Zechariah. As we find the book in our Bibles—and, of course, also in our Hebrew Bibles—it appears as one book, and purports to have all been produced by the prophet whose name stands at the head of it, Zechariah son of Berechiah, son of Iddo. But, as a matter of fact, for more than a century now, the great majority of educated commentators, of Christian scholars, both the freethinking and the most orthodox, have been agreed that the whole of the book was not written by one man; that, in fact, we have in it the writings of two men; even, more probably, of three different men, and these living at very different times. No one reading the book through with any care can fail to perceive the reason there is for doubting the continuity of the work.

The first eight chapters stand by themselves, with a

clear-cut character both in the language and in the thought, and in all the little references and circumstances that accompany the prophecy. The moment you pass away from the eighth chapter, and as you go on to the end of the fourteenth, you feel yourself in another atmosphere, in another world. Even in our English Bible, as we all must have felt, the language is different. It is a different literary style we are touching and tasting in the second half. In that second half there is another great breach of continuity—a wide chasm that you have to jump over. The first three chapters in that half, *viz.* chaps. ix., x., and xi., make a group by themselves. Again, chaps. xii., xiii., and xiv. make a collection that stands by itself. Distinctions there are, much more minute. To appreciate them fully one would require to read the book in Hebrew. But still, a great many of them are quite evident as soon as they are pointed out. The consequence is, that a vast number of scholars hold that we have here the writings of two prophets. Others, again, say that you have the writings of three.

But it may be asked, how, first of all, did the idea spring into existence that our Book of Zechariah is a combination, a partnership? It was a very learned and devout Englishman, Joseph Meade, who remarked, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, a passage quoted out of our Book of Zechariah, which is said to have been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. That good man held a very rigid and orthodox theory of inspiration—a theory very common still. He was persuaded that Matthew, being inspired, could not make a mistake; that if Matthew quoted that passage as being from the prophecy of Jeremiah, then the chapter in which it stood belonged to Jeremiah, and not to Zechariah: therefore, said he, those Jewish rabbis who made up the canon of our Old Testament have blundered, and have put into the prophecies of Zechariah an utterance of Jeremiah.

Some other good men felt that he was right, and so there came to be a general impression that our Book of Zechariah is not all of one piece : that it is a collection of different prophecies.

Then German scholars, who are so thoroughgoing, commenced to study the book, to see whether there were not other indications that it was not from the pen of one author. They detected all the differences and striking contrasts I have indicated to you. And so, before very long, nearly every scholarly man came to admit that the Book of Zechariah is not the production of one prophet.

Without going minutely into the evidence, there are certain great groups of arguments brought forward. First of all, there is a remarkable contrast in style. There are certain peculiar characteristic expressions in the first half of the book that do not occur in the second. The first section of it contains certain idioms, words used in a peculiar fashion, that do not appear in the latter portion. There is something more than that. The form is very different. The first half of the book is mostly written in plain prose ; the second half is gorgeous oratory, glowing, impassioned, fiery, almost exaggerated in its impetus and imaginativeness. The literary imagery too is very different. The first half of the book is, practically and entirely, a chain of visions ; and all through them there runs an explanation by an interpreting angel. As soon as you get into the second half that angel disappears, and you have splendid descriptions of great things that are going to happen. Again, the first half of the book has various portions headed by a minute statement of the date when they were uttered, giving even the day of the month and the year. The second half has not that kind of heading, but has a characteristic superscription of its own ; *viz.*, "The burden of the word of the Lord." Now Malachi has a similar heading, and a great many of the best scholars think that

Malachi was not the personal name of any man, but that it is simply a very ingenious catch-title appended to an anonymous prophecy. That suggests the idea that there were three prophetic utterances without the authors' names, and that, when the canon of the prophets was being completed, they were put on at the end together. Old Hebrew manuscripts were not divided into chapters and verses, and were not separated by leaving half a page blank. Parchment was too valuable for that. And so it would be easy to run additions, from a different hand, on to a book or work that had an author assigned to it.

But there are more substantial reasons still. The first half of the book presents us with a most graphic picture of its stage or platform. It moves entirely in the period of the rebuilding of the Temple. It gives us the name of Joshua the high priest, of Zerubbabel, and the names of other people living there and then. Every part of it is directly aimed to get the people to do their duty in connexion with the building of the Temple. The moment we take a step out of the last verse of the eighth chapter into the ninth we are far away at sea, we do not know where we are; we have lost sight of all the landmarks, and get into a thick fog. There is no portion of the Bible that so hopelessly puzzles commentators as that second half of Zechariah. Therefore I shall keep to the first half; it will be quite enough. For, as I have said, when we get into the second half of the book, and try to find any indication of the period in Israel's history to which it applies, there is most extraordinary discord. The first section of it, if we assume that actual occurrences are alluded to, would unmistakably belong to the period when Hosea was prophet: it is full of apparent references to the Northern kingdom, centuries back from the time of Zechariah. The second portion, again, contains almost unmistakable references, if they allude to actual events, and if they are not imagery—

i.e. imaginative statements of the prophet's hopes at a later time—to the age of Jeremiah subsequent to the death of Josiah. But all such argumentation is very dubious; and here is a remarkable fact, that, just within the last ten or twelve years, there has been a sort of ebb of the tide. Previous to that time, nearly all scholarly commentators, with a rare exception here and there, said that the second half of the Book of Zechariah belonged to the early period of the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Now a number of our leading critics are convinced that, instead of being earlier than the first half, prior to the Exile, it was written, not by our Zechariah, but by a prophet who lived a good deal later than he did; and they produce an ingenious and a remarkable argument to prove that. What it is I cannot now explain; but before taking up the first part, I will tell you the present position of opinion about the whole book. First of all, there are a very few scholars who contend that our Book of Zechariah is a unity—was all written by that Zechariah who lived throughout the rebuilding of the Temple. I think that very possible. Though they are so few, still their opinion may prevail in the end. I will tell you why. Scholarly commentators too often lack imagination. They deal with a prophet as if he were a mathematician or an historian. I do not think that justice has yet been done to the amount of imagination—inspired, daring, literary imagination; poetry, allegory, parable, imagery of every description—used in revealing God's truth. The second position is, that the first half was by Zechariah; that the second half was earlier, and that the two portions of this were both prior to the Exile. The third position is, that the whole is post-exilic; that the first half of it was written by the first Zechariah during the rebuilding of the Temple, and the second was produced either in the fifth or third century before Christ, or possibly in the second century before Christ. They are not agreed

among themselves, these critics; but they are persuaded that that second half of the book relates to the fortunes and misfortunes of Israel after the time of Alexander, possibly even during the period of the Maccabees.

Henceforth we confine ourselves to the first half of the book, *viz.* the first eight chapters—a portion that is by everybody acknowledged to belong to the period immediately after the restoration; and first of all, I shall give a sketch of the history and try to make a picture of the position of Zechariah. Then I shall give a rapid analysis of the book; and, lastly, I shall endeavour to delineate the working of the man's soul and mind, and his faith and aspiration.

After remaining for nearly seventy years in captivity in Babylon, the Jews were suddenly brought face to face with the glorious hope of a restoration to their loved native land. The Persian king Cyrus overthrew the Babylonian empire; and, for some reason or another, he conceived great favour for the Jews. One of his earliest acts was to formulate a decree that gave them liberty to return to Judæa, to rebuild Jerusalem, and to restore their old Temple. Moreover, he granted them large sums of money out of the royal treasury and material from the arsenals. In the second half of Isaiah's prophecy, chapter after chapter glows with a great expectation of coming delivery for the Jews. It pictures how their return would be rendered easy to them. Foreign nations would bring their treasures; alien kings and monarchs would compete with one another to do God service; and the second Temple was to outshine in magnificence the splendid Temple of Solomon. The Jews had waited all those years, their hearts and souls filled with these magnificent hopes. As they saw Cyrus grow in power, as they felt the Babylonian imperial fabric tremble and begin to crumble away, and as at last they saw it overthrown, their hearts became exultant within them. Then came the climax of their expectations, when the Jews were

singled out for a wonderful deliverance and for unexampled privilege on the part of the heathen monarch Cyrus.

But we must not suppose that the whole of the Jews in Babylon were eager to get back. The mass of them had built themselves houses and cultivated gardens; they had acquired wealth in that rich metropolis, and the last thing they felt an inclination to do was to sell everything and go back to poverty-stricken Judæa. Only dreamers, *i.e.* men of faith, patriotism, religion, enthusiasts or fanatics, as some would call them; men intoxicated with the glorious expectation of a magnificent career in the world's history, were prepared to make the sacrifice essential to their going back and re-establishing God's kingdom in the Land of Promise. The consequence was that a mere handful of the captive Jews returned, and when they reached Jerusalem they found the whole city a mass of ruins. They found their old farms and vineyards, their family estates, utterly fallen out of cultivation, covered with thorns and briars. Travellers tell us that in that country, unless the land is constantly looked after, it rapidly degenerates into complete sterility. To clear the ground and bring the land again into cultivation is, in these circumstances, a heart-breaking labour.

Then the Jews who returned were so very few and so helpless. But, it may be said, Cyrus had promised them magnificent grants out of the royal treasury. Yes; but a number of officials, with open palms, thought Cyrus was foolish to waste his money in this way. Consequently there arose all sorts of intrigues, reports of probable insubordination, and plots, and conspiracies, from the greed of these treasurers and the rest of them. And so the poor Jews hardly got anything of that which Cyrus had promised them, and on which they had counted. But, like all men who do a great and noble action, they were animated by a splendid, glowing enthusiasm. Without enthusiasm

you can do nothing great and noble in this world. A prosaic, prudent, shrewd man, who says, "Stick to known facts," may look upon these enthusiasts as dreamers; but it is the dreamer that has done everything. What a dreamer Columbus was! and he discovered America. What a dreamer Martin Luther was! and what a dreamer was Newton! We have to allow something like a free hand and fair play to such people. Enthusiasm carried these Jews back to Jerusalem, and to illusions. They did not understand what a hard task they were taking up; they would never have done it if they had. Those Jews thought they were going to be helped in all sorts of ways, and were going to restore Jerusalem easily. In that they found themselves mistaken, and despondency laid hold of them. There does sometimes come a certain collapse of hope, vigour, and faith, when illusions vanish away, and all the difficulties of a task confront us, when weariness of body, sickness of heart, and uneasiness of mind beset us. The first thing these Jews thought they must do, when they returned, was to rebuild the Temple. Though they did make a start before long, it took so much labour and expenditure to build their own houses, and to cultivate their fields, that they had no money left to rebuild the Temple. And so, gradually, the great work was left alone, and this neglect continued probably for fifteen or sixteen years. It may be said, "No wonder! Who could blame them?" And yet they would have spoiled their whole career if they had settled down in apathy. And the reason is plain. There was this deadly danger: they were getting to care only for selfish and worldly ends. No community can ever come to anything unless animated by enthusiasm in some noble work, which makes men lift up their eyes from their own fields, and up to God's heaven, which causes their thoughts to soar away on into the future, in wonderful dreams for their children and children's children.

These Jews would no doubt have got rapidly mixed up with the pagan people that had crowded into the country round about, unless they had remembered that they belonged to God, and had recollected that God had directed them back; that they were, there, God's kingdom on earth that it was God's city they were building; that it was God's Temple they were to erect; and that it was the faith of God and the love of God they were to make to shine in the world. If they had not remembered all that, their whole soul would have died out of them, and they would have fallen to the level of the poor heathen world. At that critical point, God's Spirit stirred two men to detect the danger, to rouse the leaders, and to animate the people to take up, with enthusiasm, their proper position in the world. Those two men were Haggai and Zechariah.

What makes a man a prophet to his own age? It is not the adamant, unflinching, absolute faith, put mechanically into him. A man of that kind is not in touch with his own time. The man that can speak to the shaking hearts and the faltering souls of his own generation must be a man who knows his own heart and soul, who has been troubled by the same difficulties that are troubling other men; a man who has fought out his own battle with life's enigmas, has faced the darkness and reached God's light through it. That is the man who is in sympathetic touch with the doubting, failing, faltering men that are round about him. Therefore we must interpret a prophet in that fashion. We must never think of a prophet as mechanically inspired, as not feeling the doubts he grapples with, as not tempted by the sins he denounces, as not knowing, himself, the depression and despair he battles against. He is a man of like passions with other men, tempted as they are, but by God's Spirit made victorious, triumphant, over dangers, obstacles, and difficulties; and so, out of his own experience, armed by a faith won by himself in actual con-

fict, he can fight God's battle and become the leader of men.

Now if you take the prophecy of Zechariah, and try to feel for yourself just what the heart of his age needed to feel, you will find that each of these visions that flashed in upon his soul is simply the Divine triumph over a great doubt, or a great despair, or a painful, paralysing question.

There are seven pictures in the vision. First, horsemen, who are couriers, scouts sent out to gather information for the government. In a valley of Jerusalem the prophet sees these mysterious horsemen; he asks them for news, and they say all the world is quiet. The second is the picture of the four horns filed away by four smiths. This is the downfall of the world, or of the world-power hostile to God. The third is the surveyor. He is going to map out the walls of the Jerusalem that is to be rebuilt. It needs no wall. That passes on to a magnificent declaration that, in the glorious future, the nations will be gathered into obedience and loyalty to God. The fourth picture is the trial of the high priest; the fifth, the golden candlestick; the sixth, the flying roll, or national purification; the seventh, the woman in the ephah, an embodiment of wickedness and ungodliness: a splendid, artistic picture. These seven hold together, but the vision terminates in what really is a separate picture. What the prophet now sees is simply the break up that sends him to his work; that is, the vision of the chariots, the Divine chariots. Then follows the crowning of the head of the nation as *the Branch*. The civil head is Zerubbabel, and I think it is quite certain that, for some reason or other, Zerubbabel has been slipped out of the paragraph relating to the crowning. If you look at the wording very carefully, you will see that two men have been crowned. It does not stand to reason that two crowns would be put on one priest's head. It is almost certain that Zerubbabel also was crowned.

Let us try to see how the thoughts, the subtle, pictorial thoughts, embodied in these images are precisely the inspirations that Zechariah's age needed in order to stir them to do their duty for God, and for God's kingdom on earth. The people had got enmeshed in the entanglements of mere external, earthly existence. Moreover there was nothing in the outside show of things to make it easy for them to believe that God had some great thing for them to do in the world. In every shape and fashion, in every portion of the secular and religious organizations, things were sordid, poor, and disheartening. For instance, they remembered those glorious declarations of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, and of Ezekiel, the prophets of the Exile, how God would make the world shake to its very foundations, to break down all hostilities against His people and His kingdom, how God would pour the treasures of the pagan people into the arsenals and the building enterprises of restored Jerusalem. With all those recollections in their hearts and minds, they looked round, and they saw the world utterly unconcerned about them; everything lying in ignoble heaps; nowhere any commerce, any custom. Robbed by the Samaritans of their poor harvest, and harried in their expeditions for timber or stone required for building, it looked to them as if this world were empty of God. I believe Zechariah felt the agony of that doubting and that questioning; and he wrestled with it. He awoke within himself by prayer, by noble aspirations, all that inner core of spiritual nature where God resides in every man; and so at last there comes to him, with all the power and vividness of vision, a revelation, suddenly, in the darkness of his age. Out of that great dumb, silent, inert world, from every quarter of the compass, there appeared mysterious, supernatural, Divine emissaries. All at once, beneath the poor, external, physical surface of this world, beneath all its ambitions and greeds and mere earthly endeavours and

enterprises, the prophet felt the great controlling cords of God's interest in it. God cares for every part of the world ; God holds all the reins of government in His hands ; God keeps Himself informed of what is proceeding. It is not merely the poor community at Jerusalem, not merely Zechariah, that watches the hard, cold world. God at the centre, God come down there to Jerusalem, waits for news, eager as they were for the time to come when the whole world should be shaken as by earthquake, when all resistance to God's kingdom would be struck down, and when the city of God might be built once more on earth.

Here was a man who, by the power of his personality, by the grandeur of his character, by the strength and resistless conviction of his own soul, could pour out an impassioned story of a Divine vision like that, to people who did yet feel that God had spoken in the past, that God might still speak to them. Think of it, the inspiration, the enthusiasm there was in this sudden stripping off of the every-day surface of things, this making people feel that the world is pervaded by Divine interest, is held and moulded by the Divine will, and is being governed, all of it, for that very end and aim for which they have made sacrifices, for which they have suffered, and have been impoverished at Jerusalem, *viz.* the building up of God's kingdom on earth.

But then doubt arose. Looking at the tremendous bulk of those world-empires in their vast, gigantic strength ; with their mighty military organizations and their overwhelming wealth ; with their teeming cities and capitals ; with their great kings ; with their civilization ; with their art and their learning : men would say, how can a poverty-stricken Jew, living in his own solitary little home amid those wasted ruins of old Jerusalem, one of a handful of despised people that cannot build their own Temple, how dare such a man believe that the world's future resides

there, in that sordid, despicable, impoverished community, hiding in the ruins of their capital? The answer comes in that vision of the prophet, and it is this: "Do not look at mere physical bulk, at the imposing massiveness of material wealth or power, at the gigantic stature of immoral, godless civilizations, standing out like four great iron or brazen horns. Look rather at these invisible, awful, spectral forms that are slowly filing at these horns of the world's power and antagonism to God and to His kingdom." It meant the flashing into vision of the great law of God's government of this world; it meant that the world, in organization or in empire, rests upon a godless basis, that it exists for selfish, unjust, tyrannical ends, and is not advancing the world's real good. Those awful, subtle, moral energies of God's hatred—the hatred of that God who, through all the external organization of our world, is seeking righteousness, justice, holiness, ethical, spiritual being—are undermining and eating away the roots of the world-power, which suddenly totters and falls.

But, once again, a devout-hearted Jew looks round on those demolished walls, those vast, immeasurable ruins, those heaps of rubbish, where stately palaces formerly stood. He looks at the Temple, now with blackened, charred beams lying beneath overturned stones, all disfigured and overgrown with thistles. Despair comes into his heart, and he says, "Can it ever be built again?" Zechariah met that by an audacious grandeur of faith. "Built again? No; it shall not be built again. The new Jerusalem shall outstrip the old Jerusalem immeasurably. Walls? Why, no walls that man can build will hold that future city of God. Illimitable and immeasurable in its vastness, guarded by God, made to grow by God, dwelt in by God, towering above all structures, civilizations, and powers of this world, inhabited by God's Spirit, radiant with His holiness and the attraction of His just, righteous

judgment; it shall dominate the world, and all the nations shall be gathered to it."

Yes; but once again, there is a doubt that comes to the heart of faith entered on a new life, dreaming of doing God's will. "Can the past be undone? What of that awful guilt, that entail of retribution, which grows out of sin, error, ignorance, transgression? Does not a man's poisoned, diseased, wicked past, dog him to the end, and drag him down? Can a great sinner be restored to such an acceptance with God that he dare hope to be God's servant, that he may lift up his eyes to a stupendous, Divine task, and count himself heaven's minister to do it?"

In that vision of the religious head and representative of the community, the high priest, the man who goes into the holy of holies once a year to make atonement that the nation may be accepted by God, how finely the Divine answer to that doubt is pictured! How the doubt figures first in this picture! The high priest and the hearers' hearts sink within them. The high priest stands before God's throne of judgment. The accused defendant is clad in defiled, torn, sordid garments. Over against him appears the power of all malignity, the power of all evil, the devil, who charges him with his past. Ah! how the people listen for the verdict! and they hear it in the voice of God: "Be thou rebuked that doubted whether a man can get rid of his guilty past, that doubted whether a man can be taken to be God's servant because of the years wasted that lie behind him!" That doubt comes not from the voice of God; no, but from the devil: hell is in it, and God's hand stretches forward to strike it down. Be silent, doubt of hell and of the devil: be silent for ever!

That accused, attacked, slandered, charged defendant, in his filthy, sordid garments, is he not, by his very presence there, by his existence, by his escape from death, from destruction, a brand plucked from the burning, charred,

maimed, burned by the blunders of the past? Yes. But a brand plucked from the burning, that means a brand which has work in it, is capable of noble uses, is of value to its owner, to him who plucked it from the fire. O poor, restored Jewish community, doubting whether God means anything great for you; how came it that Cyrus delivered you? God plucked you out of the burning; but do you think that God would have done all that, if He had not a great future for you? They feel not man's power, but God's doing—God's grace begun in the worst of transgressors; and that is God's guarantee of heaven and of the whole of His kingdom.

Then we come to the second of those two series of visions, dealing with a different class of doubts from those in the first three visions. The next difficulty, a universal difficulty that we all experience, was this, to detect within frail, erring human personalities Divine powers and purposes. It is the tendency—so paralysing, and yet so difficult to withstand—to despise your present. We people the past with heroes. We dream of a future full of heroes. But how blind we are to the heroes of our own day and our own time! We drive them out. We think they are not worthy to be in the world. We persecute them. We crucify them, or we mock at them. It is only after they are dead and gone that we build their monuments. It is a universal blunder. It is a deadly error. We make it in our own homes; because of the homeliness of many a sweet virtue and true affection, and because of the faults and imperfections that attach to their embodiment, we often never know the government of God that is within it till it is gone from us. That was precisely the difficulty of the Jews. They looked at their high priest: his garments were not so splendid as those of Solomon's high priest; their high priest had no grand Temple, no splendid altar, no hecatombs of beasts. You see, it was not the high priest, nor the princes, that

stirred the people to build the Temple; but it was two outsiders, two prophets. Those Jews despised the day of small things—small priest and small king. What can come out of this?

Once again, with prophetic insight, Zechariah could look through the shows of things; just as we, with natural insight plant an acorn, and what our little child despises grows before our eyes to a spreading oak. Zechariah saw the national life, its existence, its purpose in the world, lit up by God to illumine the world, in the image of the seven-branched golden candlestick, the flames fed by a bowl of oil at the top in the centre. The bowl holds so little that the oil will soon be done. But, just like mysteries not seen in this visible world, there grow by its side two olive trees, rooted in the vegetative life that ever anew realizes the will and power of God, producing oil day after day and year after year; and from those two trees two channels feed that bowl of oil with a never-ending supply of divinely given sustenance. The prophet looks and looks, and he wonders, What is the meaning of it? The answer is that the candlestick represents the nation's future, the oil that shall make it burn the grace of God—the grace of God given to it as a religious community, the grace of God given to it in a wise, just, strong, secular government. This, surely, is a lesson to all times! Translated into the speech of to-day, one of its meanings is that the philanthropist must believe in his own reform, when the common people thwart him, and when the politicians that he drives to carry it out are seen by him plainly to be selfish men, and by no means over-noble.

The last two visions purpose not so much to meet a doubt as to avert a danger. How shall Israel reach this glorious future? In one way only: by becoming the willing, docile, perfect instrument of God. Of God, in what respect? As the subject of an elaborate theology and mysterious

explanations about His work and nature? No; but God, the just, holy, loving King of men. God's kingdom! In Hosea, Joel, Habakkuk, in every page of the Bible, God's kingdom consists not in meat and drink, not in ritual or ceremony, not in doctrine or dogma. God's kingdom and the light of God in man consist in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, loving our neighbour as ourselves, making our own life clean and helping to make our neighbour's life clean. Ah! the day will come when incarnate wickedness and ungodliness in its entirety shall be by God driven clean out of the land, and His kingdom shall be pure, holy, peaceable, the home of love, truth, justice, mercy, and righteousness, even as God Himself is in heaven.

Thereupon the prophet's eager heart springs to the perception that, though the work may take long, it has already begun. The last judgment will be a last judgment, but it is going on already; it is in process; God is governing the world. Surely the Jews will take heart, and will not be found with their Temple unbuilt, their faith in ruins, when suddenly God's work of judgment and righteousness in the world flashes forth, and the time has come to finish His kingdom!

It is easy to say that Zechariah is a great deal concerned about external things, and fanciful in throwing all his teaching into these visions, and that he expects the conversion of the world too largely to be done by force. Supposing all that were true, what was there at the centre of the man's faith? What was the animating principle and power of his whole life? What was it but the tremendous, daring belief that the most important of the world's population in that era was the handful of Jews at Jerusalem; the absolute conviction he held that that little community would do more in the future history of the world than all the mighty empires around them? A great philosopher has said that, in the

age when they lived, those fanatical Jews, with their monstrous dream of their destiny in the world's story, must have seemed like drunken madmen amidst sober men. Now look back on that faith of theirs, and over against it look at the arrogant, the haughty, proud, vainglorious Egyptian monarchs, the Babylonian monarchs, the Persian monarchs, the Greek conquerors, who spoke of subduing the world. They are dead and gone, and vanished from the world's real life; while the faith of those Jews, the morality of those Jews, the religion and life of those Jews, dominates the civilized world, and those men who seemed fools, madmen, and drunken men in their own age now stand out the sober, sane men, amid madmen and drunkards and fools.

How came that wretched, small, despised people (even taking them in the time of David) to dream such a dream, to hold fast to it, when by their own folly they had destroyed every apparent chance of their realizing it? How came they, when their national life was broken up, and they were scattered among the heathen, still to believe themselves to be the destined masters of the world's thought, civilization, faith, life? How came they to expect to accomplish their destiny by force, or by devotion to ritual, in ways that were useless and impotent? How came they to so blunder about the fashion of that kingdom that, when the real King did come, they did not know Him, but persecuted Him, cast Him out, rejected Him, and crucified Him? How came it that their strange dream, in spite of their doing all they could to destroy it, has yet come true? I know no other explanation but this: it was God's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes.

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