

Series," the whole of this prophecy reflects the age of Persian dominion in Judah, inasmuch as we find the Jews for the first time in favourable relations with their rulers. The references to the heathen by the prophet and still more the absence of such references takes us back to a condition of things in Jewish history which was peculiar to the period of Persian dominion. This much is clear then—the book is post-exilic.

We can now take another step and place the date subsequent to the completion of the Temple in 516 B.C. This also is clear from internal evidence. The Temple is standing and sacrificial services are being carried on in it. Indeed a considerable number of years must have elapsed since the days in which Haggai and Zechariah uttered their words of encouragement and rebuke, inasmuch as the priests have become corrupt and the people wordly. Divorce has become common in order that marriages may be formed with heathen women. The payment of the Temple dues is neglected. All this points to a time considerably later than 516 B.C. It reflects a condition which is inconceivable in the years immediately following the restoration of the Temple.

After the year 516 B.C. the curtain falls upon Jewish history and is not lifted until the year 458 B.C., which marks the return of Ezra from Babylon with his band of 1,500 exiles. This was purely a religious movement, having for its aim the purification of the Temple worship and the lives of the people. Ezra brought with him what is known as "the priestly code," which was prepared in Babylon probably about the year 500 B.C., and which was intended to furnish the Jews in Jerusalem with an authoritative statement of their duties to the Temple, its services and priests. The various questions that arise in connection with this code, which in its contents and substance was not new, we think, but which was rather an exposition of ancient tradition and custom, a systematizing of principles and laws which dated back to early days, do not of course concern us. All that we need note here is the fact of its existence.

Ezra at once entered upon the work of reform. After the