

sian origin. According to Josephus, Joseph and Moses had Egyptian names. Sheshbazzar was evidently the same person as Zerubbabel, as appears from comparing the contents of chap. 3 with the statement of chap. 5, 16.

9. Chargers. The exact meaning of the word so rendered here is quite uncertain. The Septuagint version translates it by a word which means "wine coolers." The Hebrew word sounds somewhat like the Greek *Kartalos*, which means a basket with a pointed bottom. It is noticeable that the names of these vessels, so far as given, are quite different from those mentioned in 1 Kings 7, 45-50, and perhaps it was the writer's purpose to mention only a few of the more exceptional ones, for the sum of five thousand four hundred, which he gives in verse 11, is much in excess of the sum of the numbers given in verses 9 and 10. The corresponding passage in the apocryphal Book of Esdras affords no real help to solve the discrepancy. The probability is that here, as elsewhere in the record of numbers, the original text has suffered some corruption.

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. What motives—personal, religious, or political—may have influenced Cyrus in permitting the return of the exiled Jews?

Many motives, doubtless, were back of the royal decree which emancipated the exiles. Better to have a friendly nation contiguous to Egypt than a people politically and religiously in sympathy with the Babylonian power. Daniel the prophet, whom the enmity of the Persian satraps failed to destroy, in all probability profoundly influenced the king's mind by showing to him the prophecy of Isa. 44, 28; 45, 1-4, in which, some two hundred years before he was born, his name and deeds are mentioned. The theism of the Persians, as shown by the cuneiform inscriptions of Behistun, was not without its influence in strengthening the conviction which would arise from a reading of the astounding prophecy.—*R. J. Cooke, D.D., Grant*

Question 2. Was Cyrus conscious that he was acting under a divine impulse?

In a certain sense he was. Oriental like, he was superstitious and reverent. Through Daniel he learned he was in Jewish prophecy. As the result, his superstition and political sagacity moved him to obey this unknown God, inasmuch as the plan only meant more glory for him. When he fulfilled that strange prophecy he was not conscious that he was sowing the seed of a universal faith in the only soil in which it could grow. Had the conscious impulse which moved him been more than superstition or gain, his character would have corresponded. But moral virtue is nowhere ascribed to him. God used his sword, rather than

his character.—*James M. Thoburn, Jr., D.D.*

Question 3. Wherein were the Jews after the restoration different from their ancestors before the captivity?

They became free of idolatry, and their bent thereto was forever cured. They learned to be devout and prayerful without visible ordinances and sacrifices. Chiefly, they came to prize the sacred word, and the synagogue was established for its reading. Thus the captivity made the Jews non-idolatrous, spiritual, and scriptural. It also gave them broader views of mankind.
Hyde, D.D.

Question 4. How is the change in Jewish character after the return from captivity to be accounted for?

1. From Neh. 8, 8, it may be inferred that their vernacular language had become corrupted and mixed with the Babylonian and Chaldean languages, and this fact brought about a deterioration of mind and character. 2. The closeness of the intercourse between the captive Jews and their captors exerted, no doubt, a strong influence upon the former in gradually estranging them from their religion. 3. The Jews, being very impressionable, were greatly influenced by the elaborate institutions and religion of their powerful captors in their favor and against their own ancestral religion.—*Rev. M. J. Cramer, D.D., Associate Editor of German Theological Quarterly Review.*

Analytical and Biblical Outline.

Elements in Building God's House.

I. THE DIVINE PURPOSE.

The Lord stirred up. v. 1.

"Comfort ye my people." Isa. 40, 1, 2.

"I am with thee." Isa. 43, 5.

II. THE PROPHETIC WORD.

The mouth of Jeremiah. v. 1.

"When seventy years." Jer. 25, 12.

"I will visit you." Jer. 29, 10.

III. THE ROYAL COMMAND.

Thus saith Cyrus. v. 2, 3, 4.

"He is my Shepherd." Isa. 44, 28.

"Kings shall minister." Isa. 60, 10.

IV. THE EARNEST LEADERS.

Then rose up the chief. v. 5.

"I have planted." 1 Cor. 3, 6.

"Know them which labor." 1 Thess. 5, 12, 18.

V. THE WILLING PEOPLE.

All whose spirit God . . . raised. v. 5.

"With thy might." Eccles. 9, 10.

"Laborers . . . with God." 1 Cor. 3, 9.

VI. THE LIBERAL GIFTS.

All . . . willingly offered. v. 6-11.

"One another's burdens." Gal. 6, 2.

"A cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9, 7.