and are aſſured that no perſon in the reign of Saul was ſo well acquainted with the ſplendid proſpects of David as the prophet Samuel.

The Greeks denominate the books of Samuel, which follow next in order, *The Books oſ Kingdoms;* and the Latins, *The Books of Kings L and II.* Anciently there were but two books of Kings; the firſt was the two books of Samuel, and the ſecond was what we now call the two books of Kings. According to the preſent diviſion, theſe two books are four, viz. the firſt and ſe­cond books of *Samuel,* and the firſt and ſecond books of *Kings.*

Concerning the author of the two books of Samuel there are different opinions. Some think that Samuel wrote only twenty or twenty-four chapters of the firſt book, and that the hiſtory was continued by Nathan and Gad. This opinion they ground on the following paſſage in *Chronicles@@*§*,* “Now the acts of David the king, firſt and laſt, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the s*eer,* and in the book of Nathan the *pro- fleet,* and Gad the *feer."* Others think they were compiled by Ezra from ancient records; but it is evi­dent that the books of Samuel were written before the books of Kings and Chronicles; for on compariſon it will be found, that in the laſt mentioned books many circumſtances are taken from the former. The firſt book carries down the hiſtory of the Iſraelites from the birth of Samuel to the fatal battle of Gilboa, compre­hending a period of about 80 years. The ſecond re­lates the hiſtory of David from his ſucceſſion to the throne of Iſrael till within a year or two of his death, containing 40 years. There are two beautiful paſſages in theſe books which every man of ſentiment and taſte muſt feel and admire, the lamentation or elegy on Saul and Jonathan, and the parable of Nathan. The im­partiality of the hiſtorian is fully atteſted by the can­dour and freedom with which the actions of Saul and David are related. There are ſome remarks interſperſed which were probably added by Ezra.

When the two books of Kings were written, or by whom they were compiled, is uncertain. Some have ſuppoſed that *David, Solomon,* and *Hezekiah,* wrote the hiſtory of their own times. Others have been of opi­nion that the prophets, viz. *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Gad,* and *Nathan,* each of them wrote the hiſtory of the reign in which he lived. But it is generally believed that *Ezra* wrote theſe two books, and publiſhed them in the form in which we have them at preſent. There can be no doubt but the prophets drew up the lives of the kings who reigned in their times; for the names and writings of thoſe prophets are frequently mentioned, and cited. Still, however, it is evident that the two books of Kings are but an abridgment of a larger work, the ſubſtance of which is contained in the books before us. In ſupport of the opinion that Ezra is the author of theſe books, it is ſaid, That in the time of the penman, the ten tribes were captives in Aſſyria, whither they had been carried as a puniſhment for their ſins: That in the ſecond of theſe books the author makes ſome reflections on the calamities of Iſrael and Judah, which demonſtrate that he lived after that event. But to this it is objected, That the author of theſe books expreſſes himſelf throughout as a contemporary, and as one would have done who had been an eye and ear witneſs of what he related. To this objection it is anſwered,

That Ezra compiled theſe books from the prophetic waitings which he had in his poſſeſſion; that he copied them exactly, narrating the facts in order as they hap­pened, and interſperſed in his hiſtory ſome reflections and remarks ariſing from the ſubjects which he hand­led.

The firſt book compriſes a period oſ 126 years, from the death of David to that of Jehoſhaphat. The ſecond book records the tranſactions of many kings of Judah and Iſrael for the ſpace of about 300 years, from the death of Jehoſhaphat to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the temple, A. M. 3416. A. C. 588.

The Hebrews ſtyle the two books of Chronicles *De­beri Imim@@§, i.e. Words of days,* journals or diaries, in alluſion to thoſe ancient journals which appear to have been kept among the Jews. The Greeks call them *Paralipomena@@⁋*, which ſignifies *things omitted;* as if theſe two books were a kind of ſupplement to inform us what had been omitted or too much abridged in the books of *Kings.* The two books of Chronicles contain indeed ſeveral particulars which are not to be met with in the other books of ſcripture: but it is not therefore to be ſuppoſed that they are the records of the kings of Judah and Iſrael, ſo often referred to in the books of Kings. Thoſe ancient regiſters were appa­rently much more copious than the books before us; and the compiler of the books of Chronicles often refers to them, and makes long extracts from them.

Some ſuppoſe that the author of theſe two books was the ſame with that of the two books of Kings. The Jews say that they were written by Ez*ra,* after the return from the captivity, aſſiſted by *Zechariah* and *Haggai,* who were then alive. But events are men­tioned in them of ſo late a date as to ſhow that he could not have written them in their preſent form; and there is another objection to his being their author, which is lit­tle leſs forcible: between the books of *Kings* and *Chroni­cles* there is a great number of variations both in dates and facts, which could not have happened if *Ezra* had been the author of them, or indeed if they had been the work oſ any one perſon.

The books of Chronicles are not to be conſidered merely as an abridgment of former hiſtories with ſome uſeful additions, but as books written with a particular view; which ſeems to have been to furniſh a genealogical regiſter of the twelve tribes, deduced from the earlieſt times, in order to point out thoſe diſtinctions which were neceſſary to diſcriminate the mixed multitude that returned from Babylon; to aſcertain the lineage of Judah; and to reeſtabliſh on their ancient footing the pretenſions and functions of each individual tribe.

The book of Ezra, and alſo that of Nehemiah, are attributed by the ancients to the former of theſe prophets; and they called them the lſt and 2d books of Eſdras; which title is ſtill kept up by the Latin church. It is indeed highly probable that the former of theſe books, which compriſes the hiſtory of the Jews from the time that Cyrus made the decree for their re­turn until the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longima­nus (which was about 100 years, or as others think 79 years), was all compoſed by Ezra, except the firſt fix chapters, which contain an account of the firſt return oſ the Jews upon the decree of Cyrus; whereas Ezra did not return till the time of Artaxerxes. It is of this ſecond return therefore that he writes the account; and

@@@[m]§ I Chron. xxix. 29.

@@@[m]§ דבד׳ס׳ס.

@@@[m]*⁋ παραλει. πομενα.*