

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

H A B A K K U K.

Exposition
BY REV. W. J. DEANE, M.A.,
RECTOR OF ASHEN.

Homiletics
BY REV. T. WHITELAW, D.D.

Homilies by Various Authors.
REV. S. D. HILLMAN, B.A. REV. D. THOMAS, D.D.

NEW EDITION.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
LONDON AND NEW YORK

1906

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

INTRODUCTION.

§ I. SUBJECT OF THE BOOK.

NAHUM had comforted Judah with the assurance that the power of Assyria should be overthrown, though for a time it was permitted to afflict the people of God. Habakkuk warns Judah of another great empire which was commissioned to chastise her backslidings (in spite of the partial reformation under Josiah), but which should itself suffer the vengeance which its iniquities merited. The predicted fate of Nineveh had lulled the Judæans into a false security, so that they forgot the dangers that threatened them, and, though they were no longer guilty of idolatry or selfish luxury, they relapsed into carelessness, forgetfulness of God, and various evil practices. Habakkuk is commissioned to show them that punishment was waiting for them at the hands of the Chaldeans, from whom as yet they had not realized their danger, though Isaiah (xxxix. 6, etc.) had forewarned Hezekiah that his treasures should be carried to Babylon and his sons be servants in the palace of the king. The Chaldeans were hitherto little known in Judæa, and prophecies referring to them made but slight impression on the hearers. It was not, indeed, till Nineveh had fallen that Babylon, long an appanage of Assyria, secured its independence, and entered on its short but brilliant career of conquest. Nabopolassar, who had treacherously joined the Medes and aided in the capture of Nineveh, obtained the hand of the Median king's daughter for his son Nebuchadnezzar, and received, as the reward of his treachery, not only Babylonia itself, but a large portion of the Assyrian territory, including the suzerainty over Syria and Palestine. Thus the way was prepared for the interference of the Chaldeans in Jewish affairs. The overthrow of Pharaoh-Necho, King of Egypt, at Carchemish by Nebuchadnezzar left the Babylonian monarch free to punish the revolt of Jehoiakim, and to continue the hostile measures which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Jews.

The prophecy of Habakkuk is an organic whole, divided into two parts, the first of which is a colloquy between God and the prophet, in which is announced the judgment coming upon Judah through the instrumentality of the Chaldeans; the second is a magnificent ode celebrating the punishment of God's enemies and the salvation of the pious. After announcing his office and mission, the prophet (ch. i.) expostulates with God on the iniquity and corruption which abounded in Judæa, and complains that it has not sooner been checked and the righteous released from suffering at the hands of the wicked. God answers that the day of retribution is at hand, for he commissions the Chaldeans, a fierce, rapacious, warlike nation, to punish the sinful people. Terrified at this account of the Chaldeans, the prophet beseeches the Lord not to punish unto death, and not to involve the good in the fate of the evil, and asks how God, in his holiness, can look calmly on the wickedness of those whom he uses as the instruments of his vengeance. The prophet (ch. ii.) waits for the answer to his expostulation; and God graciously replies, and bids him write the oracle plainly that all may read, because, though the fulfilment may be delayed, it is absolutely certain. The law of his kingdom is that the just shall live by faith; that righteousness has the promise of life and is life, but the proud and evil shall perish. This asserts the doom of the Chaldeans in general terms; and then their fall is announced in more particular form, under five special "woes," arranged strophically, and supposed to be uttered by the nations whom they had oppressed. They are thus denounced for insatiate ambition, covetousness, cruelty, drunkenness, and idolatry. So if the evils among the Jews are about to meet with chastisement, yet destruction awaits the oppressing Chaldeans, and God's justice is confirmed. The psalm that follows (ch. iii.) illustrates and, as it were, recapitulates the substance of the previous portion. Habakkuk professes himself greatly terrified at the judgment announced, and prays the Lord, while carrying out his threat, to remember mercy. Then he depicts the coming of the Lord to judge the world and to bring salvation to the righteous. He describes the theophany wherein God showed his majesty and power, and made the nations and inanimate nature to tremble. He delineates the judgment against the enemies of the Church, first symbolically, by the agitation of material things at the Lord's presence, and then properly, by its effect on the ungodly in this world. And through all runs a stream of consolation in that salvation is promised to the righteous amid the wreck of evil men. He ends the ode by describing the effects of this manifestation on the people of God, viz. fear at the coming chastisement, and hope and joy at the future salvation.

§ II. AUTHOR.

The writer of this book calls himself "Habakkuk the prophet;" and that is all that we are told of him for certain in Holy Scripture. The

name signifies "Embracing," and is taken personally to mean either "one who embraces" or "one who is embraced." The latter seems more probable. St. Jerome explains it also in the sense of one who wrestles with God, as Jacob, in prayer. But this sense is not generally allowed, and many commentators assume that the appellation is virtually equivalent to Theophilus, "Beloved of God." The name is written by the LXX. Ἀμβακούμ. Other forms also occur. In the apocryphal addition to Daniel, entitled 'Bel and the Dragon,' a prophet in Jewry, named Habakkuk, carries food to Daniel in the den of lions; and the title of this legend in the Septuagint itself (not in Theodotion) is, "Part of the prophecy of Habakkuk, the son of Jesus, of the tribe of Levi." But the whole account is plainly unhistorical, and its connection with the canonical writer cannot be maintained for a moment. In calling himself a "prophet" Habakkuk claims Divine inspiration and mission, and to have exercised his office in his appointed sphere. Whether he was called from some other occupation, as Amos, or whether he was trained in the schools of the prophets, is unknown. Some ground for supposing him to have been a Levite is given by the musical direction in ch. iii. 1, and the conclusion of the psalm, "For the chief musician on my stringed instruments," which would perhaps imply that he was qualified to take part in the temple services, and himself accompanied his hymn with instrumental music. But recent critics have thrown grave doubt on this inference (see Exposition). Legend has supplemented the silence of authentic history concerning the life of Habakkuk by certain details, some of which may have some elements of truth. Thus rabbinical tradition asserts that he was the son of the Shunammite woman whom Elisha restored to life. This, of course, is altogether unfounded. Christian writers, too, have not been backward in developing hints into facts. Pseudo-Epiphanius ('De Vit. Prophet.') and Pseudo-Dorotheus ('Chron. Pasch.,' p. 250) assert that Habakkuk was of the tribe of Simeon, and born in a place called Bethitouchar, perhaps Bath-Zacharias, famous in the history of Judas Maccabæus (1 Macc. vi. 32), that at the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar he fled to Ostracine, a town on the sea-coast of Egypt, some sixty miles east of Pelusium, and remained there till the Chaldeans departed, when he returned to his own country, and died two years before the end of the Captivity. His tomb is said to have been long shown at Keilah in the hill-country of Judah, and at Chukkuk in Naphtali.

§ III. DATE.

The time when Habakkuk prophesied can be gathered only from hints scattered in the book itself; and the limits thus obtained are a period before Babylon had obtained its independent position and so was able to menace its neighbours, and of course before the invasion of Judah, B.C. 605, twenty years later. Modern critics who do not believe in the possibility

of supernatural prediction, at once settle the question of the prophet's date by affirming that his assertion concerning the punishment of Jerusalem at the hands of the Chaldeans must have been uttered after the event, or else so short a time previous, that natural acuteness could foresee the result so certain to occur. But this does not dispose of his prediction touching the overthrow of Babylon, which human foresight could not have taught; and if we must allow the predictive element in one case, why must we refuse it in another? But neglecting the theories of these critics, as based on an erroneous principle, we find very great difficulty in coming to any satisfactory decision. Two theories are upheld by great names respectively. The first assigns our prophet to the time of Manasseh, immediately succeeding Nahum—a theory which is countenanced by the position of the book in the Hebrew and Greek canon. The general iniquity of which Habakkuk complains may certainly be predicated of that period in Jewish history. That the Chaldeans had not yet invaded the land, and that their appearance was not expected, we learn from ch. i. 5, "I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you." The words, "in your days," imply, says Pusey, that he is speaking to adults, many of whom would survive the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and who, if he prophesied about the close of the reign of Manasseh, would be about sixty years old at the time of the Chaldean attack. Some time later, when the Babylonian empire was well established, it would have been nothing incredible that destruction should menace Judæa from that quarter. It seems probable, too, that Zephaniah, who executed his office in the days of Josiah, adopted some of the words of Habakkuk (comp. ch. ii. 20 with Zeph. i. 7). Jeremiah likewise made use of his prophecy (Jer. iv. 13; Zeph. iii. 3; and ch. i. 8). Habakkuk, on the other hand, employs the language of Isa. xi. 9 in ch. ii. 14. These arguments would apply with equal force to the earlier part of Josiah's reign. Thus critics would place our prophet between B.C. 650 and 635, according to the usual reckoning, or about B.C. 626 in revised chronology. And this seems the most probable opinion. The other theory makes him a contemporary of Jehoiakim, between B.C. 609 and 598, grounding the opinion upon the idea that his account of the violence and oppression committed by the Chaldeans could only have been written by one familiar with their proceedings, and that it would have been injudicious prematurely to fill the minds of the people with fear of these foreign invaders. This is further supported by the tradition mentioned above, that he lived to see the Babylonian exile. The force of these arguments will not be allowed by any one who believes in the supernatural inspiration of the prophets of God.

§ IV. GENERAL CHARACTER.

There is something very striking in the style of Habakkuk. In grandeur and magnificence it is perhaps equalled by other of the prophets; language

as pure, power as concentrated, may be found elsewhere; but the extended colloquy between God and the prophet, and the exquisitely beautiful ode which forms the conclusion of the prophecy, are unique. The introduction of the majestic theophany is as bold in conception as it is sublime in diction. We know not whether most to admire the idea set forth, or the images under which it is developed. How terrible are the threatenings and announcements! how bitter the derision! how sweet and tender the promises of mercy and love! The past, the present, and the future are presented in vivid colours. Difficult, almost impossible, as it was for a prophet, confined to one circle of ideas, to be original, Habakkuk has given a new form to old conceptions, and brightened the notions of earlier seers with the splendour of imagery all his own, and with harmonious diction which is surpassed by no other sacred poet. The final ode may be set beside the two grand psalms, the eighteenth and the sixty-eighth, and will not suffer by the comparison.

§ V. LITERATURE.

Among the works specially devoted to the elucidation of the prophecy of Habakkuk we may note the following: The Jew Abarbanel, whose commentary was translated into Latin by Sprecher (1709); Agellius (1597); De Thou; Jansen d'Ypres, '*Analecta in Habac.*;' Dugué, '*Explication*' (1734). The above are Roman Catholic commentators. Among Protestants may be mentioned Capito (1526); Chyrtæus, '*Lectiones*' (1592); Marbury, '*A Commentarie*' (1650); Tarnovius, '*Comm.*' (1623); Kalinsky; Monrad (1759); Kofod (1792); Faber (1779); Wahl, '*Translation and Notes*' (1790); Wolff (1822); Delitzsch, '*Der Proph. Hab. ausgelegt*' (1843); Gumpach (1860); Reinke, '*Der Proph. Hab.*' (1870).

§ VI. ARRANGEMENT IN SECTIONS.

The book consists of two parts.

Part I. (Ch. i., ii.) Judgment upon the evil, in the form of a colloquy between the prophet and God.

§ 1. (Ch. i. 1.) The inscription of the book.

§ 2. (Ch. i. 2—4.) The prophet complains to God of the iniquity rife in the land, and its consequences.

§ 3. (Ch. i. 5—11.) God answers that he will send the Chaldeans to punish the ill-doers with a terrible vengeance; but these, his instruments, shall themselves offend by pride and impiety.

§ 4. (Ch. i. 12—17.) The prophet beseeches the Lord not to suffer his people to perish, seeing that he is in covenant with them, but to remember mercy even during the affliction at the hand of these rapacious oppressors.

§ 5. (Ch. ii. 1—3.) The prophet, waiting for his answer, is bidden write the oracle in plain characters, because its fulfilment is certain.

§ 6. (Ch. ii. 4.) The great principle is taught that the proud shall not continue, but the just shall live by faith.

§ 7. (Ch. ii. 5.) The character of the Chaldeans in some particulars is intimated; their destruction is announced under the form of five "woes."

§ 8. (Ch. ii. 6—8.) For rapacity.

§ 9. (Ch. ii. 9—11.) For avarice, violence, and cunning.

§ 10. (Ch. ii. 12—14.) For founding power on blood and devastation.

§ 11. (Ch. ii. 15—17.) For base treatment of subject nations.

§ 12. (Ch. ii. 18—20.) For idolatry.

Part II. (Ch. iii.) Psalm or prayer of Habakkuk.

- § 1. (Ch. iii. 1.) The title.
- § 2. (Ch. iii. 2.) The proœmium, in which the prophet expresses his fear at the coming judgment, and prays God in his wrath to remember mercy.
- § 3. (Ch. iii. 3—15.) He depicts in a majestic theophany the coming of God to judge the world, and its effect, symbolically on material nature, and properly on evil men.
- § 4. (Ch. iii. 16, 17.) It produces in the people of God, first, fear and trembling at the prospect of chastisement.
- § 5. (Ch. iii. 18, 19.) And next, hope of salvation and joy in God.

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—ch. ii. 20.—Part I. JUDGMENT UPON THE EVIL, IN THE FORM OF A COLLOQUY BETWEEN THE PROPHET AND GOD.

Ver. 1.—§ 1. *The inscription of the book.* The burden (see note on Nah. i. 1). The prophet (ch. iii. 1). This title, which is added in the inscriptions only to the names of Haggai and Zechariah, and cursorily to that of Jeremiah (xlv., xlvii., 1.), implies that he exercised the practical office of prophet, and was well known; and, as Pusey thinks, Habakkuk appended it here on account of the form in which his prophecy is cast, as being addressed almost entirely to God or the Chaldeans, not to his own people. Did *see*. In prophetic vision (see note on Amos i. 1).

Vers. 2—4.—§ 2. *The prophet complains to God of the iniquity of his own nation, and its consequences.*

Ver. 2.—Shall I cry; Septuagint, *κεκράξουαι*. The Hebrew is taken to imply that the prophet had long been complaining of the moral depravity of Judah, and calling for help against it. There is no reference here, as Ewald fancies, to acts of violence committed by the Chaldeans, who, in fact, are announced as coming to chastise the wickedness of the chosen people (ver. 6). And thou wilt not hear! The continuance of evil unchecked is an anomaly in the prophet's eye; and, putting himself in the position of the righteous among the people, he asks how long this is to last. Even cry out unto thee of violence; better, *I cry out unto thee, Violence*. A similar construction is found in Job xix. 7; Jer. xx. 8. "Violence" includes all manner of wrong done to one's neighbour. Septuagint, *βοήσονται πρὸς σὲ ἀδικούντες*, "I will cry unto thee being wronged," as if the wrong was done to the

prophet himself. So the Vulgate, *Vociferabor ad te vim patiens*. But Habakkuk doubtless speaks in the person of the righteous, grieved at the wickedness he sees around, and the more perplexed as the Law led him to look for temporal rewards and punishments, if in the case of individuals, much more in that of the chosen nation (Lev. xxvi., *passim*).

Ver. 3.—Why dost thou show me—Why dost thou let me see daily with my own eyes—iniquity abounding, the very evil which Balaam says (Numb. xxiii. 21) the Lord had not found in Israel? Cause me to behold grievance. This should be, *Dost thou look upon perverseness?* He asks how God can look on this evil and leave it unpunished. The LXX. and the Vulgate translate the word *amal* "trouble," or "labour;" Keil, "distress." In this case it means the trouble and distress which a man inflicts on others, as wrong-doing seems to be generally spoken of. Spoiling and violence are before me. "Spoiling" is robbery that causes desolation. "Violence" is conduct that wrongs one's neighbour. The two words are often joined; e.g. Jer. vi. 7; Amos iii. 10. Vulgate, *prædam et injustitiam*. These are continually coming before the prophet's eyes. There are that raise up strife and contention; better, *there is strife, and contention is raised*. This refers to the abuse of the Law by grasping, quarrelsome nobles. Septuagint, "Against me judgment hath gone, and the judge receiveth bribes." So the Syriac and Arabic. The Vulgate gives, *Factum est iudicium, et contradictio potentior*, where *iudicium* is used in a bad sense.

Ver. 4.—Therefore. Because God has not interfered to put an end to this iniquity, or because of the want of righteous judges, the following consequences ensue. The Law is slackened. The Law, *Torah*, the revealed code which governed the moral, domestic, and political life, "is chilled," is benumbed

(Gen. xlv. 26), is no longer of any force or efficacy, is become a dead letter. *Διασκέδασται*, "is dispersed" (Septuagint); *lacerata est* (Vulgate). Judgment doth never go forth; i.e. right is powerless, as if it had never been; justice never shows itself in such a case. Septuagint, *οὐ διεξάγεται εἰς τέλος*, "proceedeth not effectually;" so the Vulgate. The rendering, "goeth not forth unto victory," given by the Syriac, is not so suitable; "unto truth" is a mistake arising from referring the word to a wrong root. Doth compass about. In a hostile sense, with threats and treachery (Judg. xx. 43; Ps. xxii. 13). Septuagint, *καταδυναστεύει*, "prevails;" Vulgate, *prævalet adversus*. Therefore. Because the righteous are unable to act as they desire, being opposed by the wicked. Wrong judgment proceedeth; rather, judgment goeth forth perverted. Right, or what is so called, when it does come forth, is distorted, wrested, so as to be right no more.

Vers. 5—11.—§'3. *To this appeal God answers that he will send the Chaldeans to punish the evil-doers with a terrible vengeance; but these, his instruments, shall themselves offend by pride and impiety.*

Ver. 5.—Behold ye among the heathen; the nations. God, in answer, bids the prophet and his people look among the nations for those who shall punish the iniquities of which he complains. I will use a heathen nation, he says, as my instrument to chastise the sinners in Judæa; and you shall see that I have not disregarded the evil that is rife among you. Some commentators suppose that the impious are addressed; but Habakkuk spoke in the name and person of the righteous, and to them the answer must be directed. The LXX. gives, *Ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονῆται*, "Behold, ye despisers," which is justifiable. St. Paul quotes the Greek Version, Acts xiii. 41, in his sermon at Antioch in the Jewish synagogue, warning those who despised the gospel. This was sufficiently close to the Hebrew for his purpose. And regard, and wonder marvellously. They are to wonder because the work is as terrible as it is unexpected. The LXX. (quoted by St. Paul, *loc. cit.*) adds, *καὶ ἀφανισθῆτε*, "and perish," or rather, "be stupefied by astonishment," die of amazement. I will work; I work. The pronoun is not expressed, but must be supplied from ver. 6. It is God who sends the avengers. In your days. The prophet had asked (ver. 2), "How long?" The answer is that those now living should see the chastisement (see Introduction, § III.). Which ye will not believe. If ye heard of it as happening elsewhere, ye would not

give credit to it; the punishment itself and its executors are both unexpected (comp. Lam. iv. 12).

Ver. 6.—The executors of the Divine vengeance are now plainly announced. I raise up. God does it; he uses the power and passion of men to work out his designs (1 Kings xi. 14, 23; Amos vi. 14). The Chaldeans; *Kasidim*. By this appellation the prophets signify the soldiers or inhabitants of Babylon, which won its independence and commenced its wonderfully rapid career of conquest after the fall of Nineveh, between B.C. 626 and 608. At the time when Habakkuk wrote the Chaldeans had not appeared in Judæa, and no apprehension of danger from them was entertained. Bitter and hasty. The former epithet refers to their cruelty and ferocity (comp. Isa. xiv. 6; Jer. vi. 23; l. 42). They are called "hasty," as being vehement and impetuous in attack and rapid in movement. Which shall march through the breadth of the land; which marcheth through the breadths of the earth. The statement explains the general character of the Chaldeans, and points to the foreign conquests of Nebuchadnezzar. LXX., *τὸ πορευόμενον ἐπὶ τὰ πλάτη τῆς γῆς* (comp. Rev. xx. 9).

Ver. 7.—They. The Hebrew is singular throughout. The disposition of the people, as of one man, is depicted. Terrible; exciting terror, as Cant. vi. 4, 10. Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves; his judgment and his eminence are from himself. The LXX. translates the two nouns *κρίμα* and *ἀῆμα*: Vulgate, *judicium* and *onus*. The meaning is that the Chaldeans own no master, have no rule of right but their own will, attribute their glory and superiority to their own power and skill (comp. Dan. iv. 30). They are like Achilles in Horace, 'Ep. ad Pison,' 121, etc.—

"Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,

Jura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis."

Hitzig quotes Æschyl., 'Prom.,' 186, *ἵππῳ ἐάντ' ὃ δίκαιον ἔχων*, "Holding as justice what he deemeth so."

Ver. 8.—Their horses, etc. Jeremiah (iv. 13) compares their horses to eagles (comp. Job xxxix. 19, etc.). The punishment predicted in Deut. xxviii. 49, etc., is to come upon the Jews. We often read of the cavalry and chariots of the Chaldeans (Jer. iv. 29; vi. 23; Ezek. xxiii. 23, 24). Evening wolves. Wolves that prowl for food in the evening, and are then fiercest (Jer. v. 6; Zeph. iii. 3). Septuagint (with a different pointing), "wolves of Arabia." Their horsemen shall spread themselves. The verb is also rendered, "bear themselves

proudly," or "gallop." Septuagint, *ἐξιπνέουσαι*. The Anglican Version seems correct, implying that the cavalry, like Cossacks or Uhlans, swept the whole country for plunder. The verbs throughout vers. 8—11 should be rendered in the present tense. From far. From Babylonia (Isa. xxxix. 3). The preceding clause was of general import; the present one refers to the invasion of Judæa. As the eagle. This is a favourite comparison of Jeremiah, as quoted above (comp. also ch. xlviii. 40; xlix. 22; Lam. iv. 19).

Ver. 9.—**They shall come all for violence.** All, every one of the invaders, come for violence—to repay that violence of which Habakkuk complained (ver. 2). Septuagint, *συντέλεια εἰς ἀσεβείας ἦξει*, "An end shall come upon the impious;" Vulgate, *Omnes ad prædam venient*. Their faces shall sup up as the east wind. The word translated "shall sup up" occasions perplexity, being an *ὑπαξ λεγόμενον*. The Anglican rendering is virtually supported by other versions, e.g. Symmachus, Chaldee, and Syriac. The Vulgate, too, gives, *facies eorum ventus urens*, which Jerome explains, "As at the blast of a burning wind all green things dry up, so at the sight of these men all shall be wasted." This is the meaning of the Anglican Version, which, however, might be improved thus: *The aspect of their faces is as the east wind*. The Revisers have, *Their faces are set eagerly as the east wind*, which does not seem very intelligible. Other renderings are, "the endeavour," or "desire of their faces is directed to the east," or "forwards." (This rendering has the support of Orelli and others.) "The crowd of their faces," as equivalent to "the multitude of the army," which is not a Hebrew phrase found elsewhere. Septuagint, *ἀνθεστηκότας* (agreeing with *ἀσεβείας* in the first clause) *προσώποις αὐτῶν ἐξεναντίας*, "resisting with their adverse front." The effects of the east wind are often noted in Scripture; e.g. Gen. xli. 6, 23; Job xxvii. 21; Hos. xiii. 15. **They shall gather the captivity as the sand.** "He collects the captives as sand"—a hyperbolical expression to denote the numbers of captives and the quantity of booty taken. The mention of the east wind brings the thought of the terrible simoom, with its columns of sand.

Ver. 10.—**And they shall scoff, etc.; it, or he, scoffeth at kings.** The Chaldean nation makes light of the power and persons of kings. Compare Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of Jehoiakim (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6; 2 Kings xxiv. 1, 3; Jer. xxii. 19) and Jehoiachin (2 Kings xxiv. 12, 15). **They shall deride every strong hold.** The strongest fortress is no impediment to them. **They shall heap dust.** This refers to the raising

of a mound or embankment for the purpose of attacking a city (comp. 2 Sam. xx. 15; 2 Kings xix. 32; xxv. 1). In the Assyrian monuments one often sees representations of these mounds, or of inclined planes constructed to facilitate the approach of the battering-ram (see Bonomi, 'Nineveh and its Palaces,' pp. 181, 188, etc.; Layard, 'Nineveh,' etc., ii. 369).

Ver. 11.—**Then shall his mind change;** *τότε μεταβαλεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα* (Septuagint); *Tunc mutabitur spiritus* (Vulgate). From the ease and extent of his conquests the Chaldean gains fresh spirit. But it is best to translate differently, *Then he sweepeth on as a wind*. The Chaldean's inroad is compared to a tempestuous wind, which carries all before it. **And he shall pass over.** This is explained to mean, he exceeds all limits in his arrogance, or he passes onward through the land. The former interpretation regards what is coming, the latter keeps to the metaphor of the wind. **And offend.** He is guilty, or offends, as the next clause explains, by attributing his success to his own prowess and skill. Thus the prophet intimates that the avenger himself incurs God's displeasure, and will suffer for it. Septuagint, *καὶ ἐξιδάσεται*, which St. Cyril interprets to mean that the Lord will change his purpose of punishing the Jews, and will have mercy on them—a notion quite foreign to the purport of the sentence. Imputing this his power unto his god; more literally, *this his power is his god*; Revised Version, *even he whose might is his god*. He defies the Lord, and makes his might his god. (For such pride and self-glorification, comp. Isa. xiv. 13; xlvii. 7, etc.; Dan. iv. 30.) Thus Mezentius, the despiser of the gods, speaks in Virgil, 'Æn.,' x. 773—

"*Dextra mihi deus et telum, quod missile libro,
Nunc adsint!*"

Comp. Statius, 'Theb.,' iii. 615—

"*Virtus mihi numen, et ensis,
Quem teneo.*"

Vers. 12—17.—§ 4. *The prophet, in reply, beseeches the Lord not to suffer his people to perish, seeing that he has designed to be in covenant with them, but to remember mercy even during the affliction at the hand of their rapacious enemies.*

Ver. 12.—Habakkuk calls to mind God's immutability and his covenant with Israel. Art thou not from everlasting, etc.? An affirmative answer is expected. This is one ground of confidence in the corrective nature of the chastisement. God is Jehovah, the covenant God, who has been in personal

relation to Israel from time immemorial, and is himself eternal. **Mine Holy One.** He speaks in the person of the righteous people, and he refers to God's holiness as a second ground of hope, because, although God must punish sin, he will not let the sacred nation, the chosen guardian of the faith, perish utterly. And then he expresses this confidence: **We shall not die.** We shall be chastened, but not killed. The Masorites assert that the present reading is a correction of the scribes for "thou wilt not die," which the prophet wrote originally, and which was altered for reverence' sake. But this is a mere assumption, incapable of proof. Its adoption would be an omission of the very consolation to which the prophet's confidence leads. **Thou hast ordained them (him) for judgment.** Thou hast appointed the Chaldean to execute thy corrective punishment on Israel (comp. Jer. xli. 28). Others take the meaning to be—Thou hast predestined the Chaldean to be judged and punished. This is not so suitable in this place. **O mighty God; Hebrew, O Rock—**an appellation applied to God, as the sure and stable Resting-place and Support of his people (Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 37; Ps. xviii. 2; xxxi. 3; Isa. xvii. 10). **Thou hast established them (him) for correction.** Thou appointedst the Chaldean, or madest him strong, in order to correct thy people. He is, like the Assyrian, the rod of God's anger (Isa. x. 5). Septuagint, *Ἐλάσέ με τοῦ ἐλέγχειν παιδείαν αὐτοῦ*, "He formed me to prove his instruction." This, says St. Jerome, is spoken in the person of the prophet announcing his call and office.

Ver. 13.—Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil (comp. ch. i. 3). God cannot look with complacency on evil (Ps. v. 5, 6). **Iniquity;** Septuagint, *πόνους ὁδύνης*, "labours of pain." Injustice and the distress occasioned by it. God's holiness cannot endure the sight of wickedness, nor his mercy the sight of man's misery. And yet he permits these evil men to afflict the holy seed. This is the prophet's perplexity, which he lays before the Lord. **Them that deal treacherously.** The Chaldeans, so called for their faithless and rapacious conduct (Isa. xxi. 2; xxiv. 16). **More righteous.** The Israelites, wicked as they were, were more righteous than the Chaldeans (comp. Ezek. xvi. 51, etc.). Delitzsch and Keil think that the persons intended are the godly portion of Israel, who will suffer with the guilty.

Ver. 14.—The prophet appeals movingly to God by showing the indignity with which the people are treated. **As the fishes of the sea.** Dumb and helpless, swept off by the fisherman. **That have no ruler over them.** None to guide and protect them (comp. Prov. vi. 7; xxx. 27). So the Jews seem to be deprived of God's care, and left to be the prey of the spoiler, as if of little worth, and no longer having God for their King (comp. Isa. lxiii. 19, Revised Version). The "creeping things" are worms, or small fish (Ps. civ. 25).

Ver. 15.—They take up all men with the angle; he bringeth up all together with the hook (Amos iv. 2). **The net.** Any kind of net. Septuagint, *ἐμφίβληστρον*, "cast-net." The drag (*σαγήνη*). The large drag-net. At their own pleasure, unhindered, the Chaldeans make whole nations their prey, their fishing implements being their armies, with which they gather unto themselves countries, peoples, and booty.

Ver. 16.—Therefore they sacrifice unto their net. This is spoken metaphorically, implying that the Babylonians recognized not God's hand, but attributed their success to the means which they employed (comp. ver. 11; Isa. x. 13 etc.). There is no trace in the monuments of the Chaldeans paying divine honours to their weapons, as, according to Herodotus (iv. 62), the Scythians and other nations did (see Justin, 'Hist.' xliii. 3; and Pusey's note here). What a man trusts in becomes a god to him. **Their portion is fat; his portion is rich.** He gains great wealth. **Their meat plenteous; his meat dainty.** He is prosperous and luxurious.

Ver. 17.—Shall they therefore empty their net? Because they have had this career of rapine and conquest, shall God allow them to continue it? Shall they be permitted to be continually emptying their net in order to fill it again? The idea is that they carried off their booty and captives and secured them in their own territory, and then set out on new expeditions to acquire fresh plunder. The question is answered in the next chapter, where the judgment on the Chaldeans is pronounced. **And not spare continually to slay the nations?** And cease not to send forth his armies and to found his empire in the blood of conquered nations. The Septuagint and Vulgate have no interrogation, the assertion being made by way of expostulation.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*A prophet's burden.* I. THE PROPHET. 1. *His name.* Habakkuk—"Embracing," which might signify either "one who embraces" or "one who is

embraced." Accepting the former sense, Luther notes the suitability of the prophet's name to his office. "He embraces his people (in his prophecy), and takes them to his arms; i.e. he comforts them, and lifts them up as one embraces a poor weeping child or man, to quiet it with the assurance that, if God will, it shall be better soon;" though probably the name rather points to the character of the prophet's faith, which cleaved fast to the Lord amid the perplexity of things seen (Pusey). 2. *His person*. A Jewish prophet, belonging to the tribe of Levi, and officially qualified to take part in the liturgical service of the temple (ch. iii. 19). Beyond this nothing is known of his history, the Jewish legends concerning him (consult Introduction) being absolutely worthless. 3. *His date*. Uncertain. Before the arrival of the Chaldeans in Judah (ver. 6), and therefore before the third year of Jehoiakim (Dan. i. 1); but whether in the reign of Manasseh (Hävernick, Keil, Pusey), or in that of Josiah (Delitzsch), or in that of Jehoiakim (De Wette, Ewald, Umbreit, Hitzig, Bleek, Kleinert), is open to debate. That the Assyrians are not mentioned as a power seems to indicate that by this time Nineveh had fallen (B.C. 606), which speaks for the third of the above dates; that the predicted judgment (ver. 5) was to be so unlikely as barely to be credible favours a time while Babylon was yet subject to Assyria, and therefore a date in the reign of Manasseh. The moral and spiritual degeneracy of the age in which Habakkuk lived (vers. 1—4) harmonizes less with the reign of Josiah than with that of Manasseh or Jehoiakim. The latter is supported by the fact that the Chaldeans appear to be depicted as already on their march (ver. 6); the former by the circumstance that the judgment is represented as not immediately at hand, but only as certain to happen in the days of those to whom the prophet spoke (ver. 5).

II. THE BURDEN. 1. *Its contents*. As Nahum had predicted the destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian power, which had carried the ten tribes into captivity (2 Kings xvii. 6), so Habakkuk declares (1) the judgment about to come upon the degenerate nation of Judah through the instrumentality of the Chaldeans; and (2) the overthrow of the Chaldeans for their insatiableness, ambition, cruelty, treachery, and idolatry. 2. *Its form*. In the first two chapters the prophet sets forth his message in the form of a conversation between himself and Jehovah, the prophet addressing Jehovah in the language of complaint (vers. 1—4) and challenge (vers. 12—17), and Jehovah in return replying to his complaint (vers. 5—11) and to his challenge (ch. ii. 2—19). In the third chapter Habakkuk appends a prayer, which begins by supplicating mercy for the afflicted people of God (ch. iii. 1, 2), and quickly passes into a sublime description of Jehovah's coming in the glory of the Almighty (ch. iii. 3—11) for the destruction of his foes (ch. iii. 12—15) and the salvation of his people and his anointed (ch. iii. 13). "The whole of the prophecy has an ideal stamp. Not even Judah and Jerusalem are mentioned, and the Chaldeans who are mentioned by name are simply introduced as the existing possessors of the imperial power of the world, which was bent upon the destruction of the kingdom of God, or as the sinners who swallow up the righteous man" (Keil). 3. *Its style*. The lofty sublimity of this brief composition, as regards both thought and expression, has been universally recognized. "His language is classical throughout. . . . His view and mode of presentation bear the seal of independent force and finished beauty" (Delitzsch). "Habakkuk bears not merely the prophet's mantle, but also the poet's wreath adorns his honourable head. He is a Jeremiah and an Asaph in one" (Umbreit). "As regards force and fulness of conception and beauty of expression, he was certainly one of the most important among the prophets of the Old Testament" (Kleinert). 4. *Its origin*. No more in his case than in Nahum's was this political foresight, but inspiration. If this prophecy proceeded from the age of Manasseh, political foresight is simply out of the question as its explanation; if from the first years of Jehoiakim, it will be time enough to admit that political foresight could certainly predict a Babylonian invasion at a year's distance when it has been shown that modern statesmen can infallibly tell what shall be on the morrow. And, of course, if political foresight could not certainly predict the Babylonian invasion at one year's distance, still less could it announce a Babylonian overthrow at a distance of more than half a century. Political foresight, then, being an insufficient hypothesis, Divine inspiration should be frankly admitted. Like Nahum, Habakkuk "saw" the burden he delivered. In the New Testament the book is cited as inspired (Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Acts xiii. 40, 41; Heb. x. 38).

Learn : 1. That future events are known to God—Divine foreknowledge. 2. That God can reveal these to men, should he so please—the possibility of revelation. 3. That those whom God selects to be his messengers nevertheless retain their individual and characteristic modes of thought and expression—inspiration not mechanical or uniform.

Ver. 2.—*The lamentation of a good man.* I. OVER THE RELIGIOUS DEGENERACY OF HIS AGE. Not merely for himself, but as the representative of the godly remnant of Judah, Habakkuk expostulates with Jehovah concerning the wickedness of the times in which he lived. The picture he sets before Jehovah is one of deep national corruption, such as existed in the days of Jehoiaquim (Jer. xx. 8; xxii. 3, 13—17). A picture of wickedness. 1. *Great.* (1) Violence was abroad, as it had been in the days before the Flood (Gen. vi. 11), in the time of David (Ps. lv. 9), and even later in the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz (Micah ii. 2; vi. 12), practising spoliation, causing distress, and producing devastation, as it did in the long-past era of the patriarch of Uz (Job xxiv. 1—12), evoking strife and contention, perhaps partly through the natural resistance of good men defending their property, but just as likely through the spoliators quarrelling over their prey, leading to deceit and treachery in order to gain its unhallowed end, “the wicked compassing about the righteous,” and “plotting against the just” (Ps. xxxvii. 12). (2) Iniquity abounded, and that amongst a people whose ideal vocation was holiness (Numb. xxiii. 21); immoralities whose source was a perverse heart (Matt. xv. 19); such practices as were inconsistent with the professions and privileges of those who did them; iniquity, or that which was unequal, and therefore contrary to law and truth. (3) The Law of God was fallen into disrespect. The Torah, or Divine, revealed Law, “which was meant to be the soul, the heart of political, religious, and domestic life” (Delitzsch), was slackened; it was benumbed or chilled, paralyzed through the moral and spiritual apathy of the nation, which gave it no response and yielded to it no obedience. (4) Human justice was itself perverted. Just because men’s hearts had declined from the love of God, and had ceased to respect his Law, judgment seldom or never proceeded forth against evil-doers; or, if it did, it went forth perverted. When criminals were brought to trial, they could always secure a verdict in their favour. 2. *Public.* It was not merely a degeneracy, eating its way secretly into the vitals of the nation; the disease had already come to the surface. Vice and irreligion were not practised in private. Iniquity flaunted its robes openly in the eyes of passers-by. The prophet saw it, looked upon it, felt himself surrounded by it. Spoiling and violence were before him; and sinners of every description around him. 3. *Presumptuous.* It was wickedness perpetrated, not merely against God’s Law, but by God’s covenanted people, in the face of remonstrances from God’s prophets, and under the eye of God himself. The prophet states that Jehovah as well as he had beheld the wickedness complained of. 4. *Inveterate.* It was not a sudden outburst of moral and spiritual corruption, but a long-continued and deeply rooted manifestation of national degeneracy, which had often sent the prophet to his knees, and caused him to cry for Divine interposition.

II. OVER THE SEEMING INDIFFERENCE OF GOD. 1. *A frequent phenomenon.* During the long antediluvian period Jehovah, apparently without concern, allowed mankind to degenerate; though he saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth (Gen. vi. 5), it was not till one man only remained righteous before him that he interposed with the judgment of a flood. From the era of the Flood downwards he “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Acts xiv. 16). Job (xxiv. 12) observed this to be the method of the Divine procedure in his day, Asaph in his (Ps. l. 21), Habakkuk in his; and to-day nothing can be more apparent than that it is not a necessary part of Heaven’s plan that “sentence against an evil work” should be “executed speedily.” 2. *A perplexing mystery.* That God cannot be indifferent to sin, to the wickedness of nations or to the transgressions of individuals, is self-evident; otherwise he could not be God (Ps. xi. 7; cxi. 9; cxlv. 17; Isa. lvii. 15; 1 Pet. i. 15; Rev. iv. 8). But that, loving righteousness and hating iniquity, he should seem to make no effort to protect, vindicate, strengthen, and diffuse the one, or to punish, restrain, and overthrow the other,—this is what occasions trouble to religious souls reflecting on the course of providence (Job xxi. 7; Ps. lxxiii. 2). The solution of the problem can only be that, on the one hand, he deems it better that righteousness should be purified, tested, and established

by contact with evil, while, on the other hand, it seems preferable to his wisdom and love that wickedness should have free scope to reveal its true character, and ample opportunity either to change its mind or to justify its final overthrow (see homily on vers. 12—19).

III. OVER THE MANIFEST FRUITLESSNESS OF HIS PRAYERS. An experience: 1. *Strange*. Habakkuk had cried long and earnestly to Jehovah about the wickedness of his countrymen. If rivers of waters ran not down his eyes because they kept not Jehovah's Law, as the psalmist tells us was the case with him (Ps. cxix. 136), and Jeremiah (ix. 1) wished that it could have been with him, long processions of groanings ascended from his bosom to the throne of God on that very account. Doubtless, also, he expostulated with Jehovah about his seeming indifference, saying, "How long, O Lord, will this wickedness prevail? and how long wilt thou be silent?" Yet was there "no voice, nor any that answered him," any more than if he had been a worshipper of Baal (1 Kings xviii. 26); and this although Jehovah was pre-eminently the Hearer of prayer (Ps. lxxv. 2), and had invited his people to call upon him in the day of trouble (Ps. l. 15). 2. *Common*. It is not wicked men alone whose prayers are denied—men like Saul (1 Sam. xxviii. 6), and the inhabitants of Judah in the days of Isaiah (i. 15) and of Jeremiah (xi. 14), but good men like Job (xxx. 20) and David (Ps. xxii. 2) as well. As the Syro-Phœnician woman cried after Jesus, and was answered never a word (Matt. xv. 23), so many prayers ascend from the hearts of God's people to which, for a time at least, no response returns. 3. *Valuable*. Fitted to test the faith and sincerity of the petitioner, it is also admirably calculated to teach him the sovereignty of God in grace as well as in nature, to show him that, while God distinctly engages to answer prayer, he undertakes to do so only in his own time and way.

Learn: 1. That no good man can be utterly indifferent to the moral and spiritual character of the age in which he lives. 2. That good men should bear the highest interests of their country before God upon their hearts in prayer. 3. That good men should never lose faith in two things—that God is on the side of righteousness, even when iniquity appears to triumph; and that God hears their prayers, even when he delays to answer or appears to deny them.

Vers. 5—11.—*Judgment on the wing*. I. ITS CHARACTER DESCRIBED. (Ver. 5.) 1. *Its subjects*. The land and people of Judah (ver. 6). These, though Jehovah's covenant people, had declined from his worship, departed from his ways, dishonoured his Name. It was in the covenant that, under such circumstances, they should be chastised (2 Sam. vii. 14; Ps. lxxxix. 30); and Jehovah is never unmindful of his covenant engagements (Ps. cxi. 5), if men are of theirs (2 Tim. ii. 12, 13). 2. *Its Author*. Jehovah. "The Judge of all the earth" (Gen. xviii. 20), "his eyes behold and his eyelids try the children of men" (Ps. xi. 4), communities and nations no less than individuals (Ps. lxxvii. 4). As "justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne" (Ps. lxxxix. 14), so "all his ways are judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4), and "the works of his hands are verity and judgment" (Ps. cxi. 7). As the least significant occurrence (Matt. x. 29), so the most momentous, cannot happen without the Divine permission. The Supreme is behind all second causes. He regulates the rise and fall of nations and kings (Job xii. 23; Ps. lxxv. 7), the ebb and flow of ocean (Job xxxviii. 11), the movements of the heavenly bodies (Job xxxviii. 31—33), the growth and decay of flowers (Isa. xl. 7). When Nineveh is overthrown and Babylon raised up, Jehovah, unseen but all-powerful, is the prime Mover. When Judah or Israel is chastised, it is Jehovah's hand that holds the rod. 3. *Its certainty*. Being matter of clear and definite promise on the part of Jehovah: "I will work a work;" "Behold, I raise up the Chaldeans." So certain is Jehovah's future judgment of his enemies (Mal. iii. 5; Acts xvii. 31). This, like that, has no basis but Jehovah's announcement. That this will not fail may be inferred from the accomplishment of that. 4. *Its vicinity*. Close at hand. "Behold, I work a work in your days" obviously meant that within a generation at furthest the Divine stroke should descend on Judah, and that every person in the nation should regard it as near. In the same way are Christians directed to think of the judgment of the great day as at hand (Jas. v. 9; 1 Pet. iv. 7; Rev. xxii. 12), though of that day and of that hour knoweth no man (Mark xiv. 32) more than this, that it is certain (Job xxi. 30; Ps. l. 4; Dan. vii. 10;

Matt. xxv. 32; Heb. ix. 27). 5. *Its strangeness*. It should be both startling and incredible. (1) Startling. As to its Author, Jehovah; as to the quarter whence it should proceed, from among the heathen; as to the power by which it should be inflicted, the Chaldeans, when they might rather have expected the Assyrians (if Habakkuk prophesied under Manasseh) or the Egyptians (if he flourished in the first years of Jehoiakim); as to the suddenness with which it should spring forth, there being at the time when Habakkuk wrote no tokens of its coming discernible on the horizon. So will the judgment of the great day surprise the ungodly world and a sleeping Church (Matt. xxiv. 27—44; xxv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 2, 3; Rev. xvi. 15). (2) Incredible. So unlikely did a Chaldean invasion of Judæa seem, that Jehovah felt nothing but an actual experience of the same would ever convince his people of it. A simple fore-announcement of it would not suffice to carry conviction of its reality to their mind, although, of course, it should. That this was true, the reception accorded to Jeremiah's prediction of Nebuchadnezzar's appearance before Jerusalem showed (Jer. v. 12; xx. 7, 8; xxvi. 8—11). Up to the moment when the Chaldean armies arrived neither Jehoiakim nor his people would allow that a Chaldean conquest was so much as possible. Events, however, proved them to be in error. So the antediluvians knew not till the Flood came and took them all away (Matt. xxiv. 39). So shall the coming of the Son of man be (2 Pet. iii. 1—10).

II. *ITS INSTRUMENT INDICATED*. (Vers. 6—11.) This was the Chaldean or Babylonian power, at the time subject to Assyria, and not risen to the ascendancy it afterwards enjoyed under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. The prophet depicts it when raised up, not only into a nation, but against Judah by a sevenfold characteristic. 1. *Its natural disposition*. He calls it "a bitter and hasty nation," i.e. fierce and rough, heedless and rash, and represents it as marching through the breadth of the earth, impelled by covetousness, and making a way for itself by sheer brute force and violence—taking possession of dwelling-places not its own. 2. *Its formidable appearance*. "They are," or he, i.e. the nation, is, "terrible and dreadful," by its very name and much more by its aspect and actions inspiring terror in the breasts of beholders. 3. *Its presumptuous self-sufficiency*. "Their judgment and dignity proceed from themselves;" i.e. conscious of its own strength, it determines for itself its own rule of right, and ascribes to itself its elevation above the other nations of the earth. This putting of self instead of God in the place of honour and seat of authority is the essence of all sin. Wicked men walk after the counsels and in the imaginations of their own evil hearts (Jer. vii. 24), and are prone to arrogate to themselves what should be rendered to God, viz. the glory of their successful achievements (Deut. viii. 17; Judg. vii. 2). 4. *Its military strength*. (1) Its horses swifter than leopards, lighter of foot than panthers, which spring with the greatest rapidity on their prey, and fiercer than evening wolves, or wolves going forth at eventide after having fasted all day—an emblem of ferocity applied to the judges of Judah (Zeph. iii. 3). (2) Its horsemen or warriors coming from afar and spreading themselves abroad—"Neither distance of march shall weary nor diffusion weaken them" (Pusey)—darting upon its foes like an eagle hasting to devour, a bird to which Nebuchadnezzar is compared (Jer. xlviii. 40; Lam. iv. 19; Ezek. xvii. 3; Dan. vii. 4). (3) Both bent upon violence and having their faces set eagerly as the east wind, i.e. either set towards the front with determination, or like the east wind for devastation. Thus the characteristics of Babylonian warfare were—swiftness of movement, simultaneousness of action in the different parts of the army, unanimity of purpose, determination and ferocity, qualities the existence of which in them the monuments sufficiently attest. 5. *Its warlike achievements*. (1) The deportation of subjected populations. "They gather captives as the sand," i.e. "countless as the particles which the east wind raises, sweeping over the sand wastes, where it buries whole caravans in one death" (Pusey). (2) The defiance of all opposition. "Yea, he scoffeth at kings, and princes are a derision unto him." So Nebuchadnezzar did with Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (2 Kings xxiv. 15; xxv. 6, 7; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 5—21). (3) The capture of every stronghold. No fortress could withstand the Babylonian conqueror. Not even Tyre, "whose very name (Rock) betokened its strength" (Pusey). The most impregnable garrison seemed only to require that he should heap up a little dust against it, and it was taken. 6. *Its during impiety*. Rushing on like a swollen torrent, like his own Euphrates when it

overflows its banks, sweeping across the land like a tempestuous wind over the sandy desert, it overleaps all barriers and restraints both Divine and human, and stands convicted before God as a guilty transgressor. 7. *Its shameless blasphemy.* The culmination at once of its offence and of its guilt is that it deifies its own might, saying, "Lo, this my strength is my god!" Such was the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30) and of Belshazzar (Isa. xiv. 14); such will be that of the future antichrist (2 Thess. ii. 4).

Learn: 1. That if God's people sin they must look for chastisement (Deut. xi. 28; Ps. lxxxix. 32). 2. That if God's people are chastised for their offences, God's enemies cannot hope to escape punishment for theirs (1 Pet. iv. 17, 18). 3. That God can always lay his hand upon an instrument wherewith to inflict punishment upon his people (Isa. x. 5). 4. That wicked men and nations whom God employs in the execution of his judgments do not thereby escape responsibility for their own actions (Isa. x. 12). 5. That the deification of self is the last delusion of a foolish heart (Gen. iii. 5).

Vers. 12—17.—*The triumph of faith.* I. HABAKKUK'S GOD. (Vers. 12, 13.) 1. *Eternal.* From everlasting (Ps. xciii. 2), and therefore to everlasting (Ps. xc. 1); hence immutable (Mal. iii. 6), without variableness or shadow cast by turning (Jas. i. 17), in respect of his being (1 Tim. i. 17), character (Isa. lxiii. 16; Ps. cxi. 3), purpose (Job xxiii. 13), and promise (Heb. vi. 17). 2. *Holy.* In himself the absolutely and the only stainless One (Exod. xv. 11; Isa. vi. 3), and in all his self-manifestations (Job xxxiv. 10), in his ways and works (Ps. cxlv. 17) as well as words (Ps. xxxiii. 4), equally immaculate, and necessarily so, since an unholy Divinity could not be supreme, he is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," and "cannot look upon iniquity" with indifference, and far less with favour (Ps. v. 4; Jer. xlv. 4). 3. *Omniscient.* Inferred from the fact that he beheld all the evil that was done beneath the sun, both in Judah by his own people (ver. 3) and among the nations by the Chaldeans (ver. 13). Omniscience a necessary attribute of the Supreme, and one much emphasized in Scripture (Prov. xv. 3; Job xxviii. 24; 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Jer. xxxii. 19; Heb. iv. 13). 4. *Omnipotent.* This implied in his supremacy over the nations, raising up one power (the Chaldeans) and putting down another (Judah), giving the peoples into Nebuchadnezzar's net, and again hurling down Nebuchadnezzar's grandson from his seat of power. Also suggested by the designation "Rock," given him by Habakkuk, who meant thereby to teach the strength and steadfastness of Jehovah in comparison with the idols of the heathen, and his ability to shelter and defend those who trusted in him (Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37; Ps. xviii. 2; xxviii. 1; xxxi. 3, etc.). 5. *Gracious.* He was such a God as had entered into covenant with the prophet, who accordingly styled him "my God," "mine Holy One." "My" is faith's response to God's grace in offering himself to man as a God (Exod. xx. 2).

II. HABAKKUK'S PERPLEXITY. (Vers. 13—17.) 1. *A great mystery.* (1) Concerning Judah. Why God, being what he was, from everlasting, holy, etc., should suffer his people, who with all their faults were more righteous than their oppressors, to be trodden down, humiliated, and driven off into captivity by the Chaldeans! Why, when he saw them humiliated and destroyed, he held his peace! Strange inconsistency of the human heart, especially when touched by grace. A little before (ver. 3) the prophet had been concerned at God's silence about the wickedness of Judah; now, when God has spoken of raising up against that wickedness the Chaldean army, he is troubled that God should allow such cruelty to be perpetrated against the people of whom he had complained. (2) Concerning the Chaldeans. Why God, being what he was, unchangeably pure and just as well as resistlessly powerful, should permit the heathen warrior to work such havoc among the nations of the earth, to practise such deception towards and cruelty against them (ver. 13), to angle them up like fishes out of the sea or catch them in his net (ver. 15), to deprive them of their heads by carrying away their kings, and so to make them like the finny tribes that have no rulers over them (ver. 14); and not only so, but to exult in his conquests and depredations, as if these were exclusively the result of his own power and skill; to "sacrifice unto his net, and burn incense unto his drag" (ver. 16), thus making might his god (ver. 11), and practically deifying himself. 2. *An old problem.* Habakkuk's

perplexity was the same which from time immemorial has troubled thoughtful men, the dark enigma of providence—why good men should so frequently be crushed by misfortune, and wicked men so often crowned with prosperity. This mystery was a source of anxiety to Job (xii. 6; xxi. 7—13), David (Ps. xvi. 14, 15), Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 1—13), Jeremiah (xii. 1), the Preacher (Eccles. vii. 15; viii. 14), in the olden times; has caused much stumbling to good men since, and probably will do so while the world lasts. 3. *A valuable discipline.* Distressing as this mystery is, it is nevertheless not without its uses to such as are exercised thereby. It assists them to understand the sovereignty of God, that he giveth not account of any of his matters (Job xxxiii. 13); to realize their own limited and imperfect vision, which can only see in part, not in whole (Job xxxvii. 21; 1 Cor. xiii. 9), only the middle and neither the beginning nor the end of God's work in providence; to cultivate those virtues of patience, humility, trustfulness, which are essential elements in all true goodness (Ps. xxxvii. 3—5); and to seek their portion in God himself (Ps. xvi. 5) rather than in earthly things (Ps. xvii. 14), in the future world rather than in the present life (Col. iii. 2).

III. HABAKKUK'S CONSOLATION. (Vers. 12—17.) 1. *Concerning the righteous.* (1) Jehovah being what he was, it was impossible his people should be either cut or cast off. Habakkuk argued that Judah could not perish—"We shall not die"—because God lived and was holy. Jehovah sustained the argument by answering, in Mal. iii. 6, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed;" and Christ acknowledged its validity when he said to his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). This implies not exemption from physical suffering or death, as doubtless many Judeans perished in the Chaldean conquest, but protection from that future and eternal death which is the last penalty of unrepented and unforgiven sin. This the main consolation of a believer under suffering, that his covenant God hath said, "My mercy will I keep for him for evermore" (Ps. lxxxix. 28), and that Christ hath declared, "My sheep shall never perish" (John x. 28). (2) This being so, their sufferings must be designed only for their correction, not for their destruction, and accordingly should be regarded rather as fatherly chastisements than as penal inflictions. Habakkuk perceived that the Chaldean had been "ordained for judgment" and "raised up for correction," not commissioned for extermination. So the Christian discerns that "tribulation worketh patience," etc. (Rom. v. 3); that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17); that present chastisements are intended for our future profit, "that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. xii. 10), and that they might yield to us "the peaceable fruits of righteousness" (Heb. xii. 11); and in short, that suffering is the royal road to moral and spiritual perfection (Heb. ii. 10). 2. *Concerning the wicked.* Jehovah being what he is, the wicked cannot be allowed to go on always as they are. "Shall he," the Chaldean, "therefore empty his net" to fill it again? Is this process of angling and dragging for men and nations to go on for ever? Shall he "not spare to slay the nations continually"? the prophet asks; meaning by the question, "No, verily, this must come to an end." And those who have reflected deepest on the problem have perceived that, at the longest, the triumph of the wicked is but short (Job xx. 5; Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36; lxxiii. 18—20), and that their experience of prosperity, however long it may be, will only in the end aggravate their misery, unless before the end they repent of their wickedness, and turn to God in faith, humility, love, and righteousness. "The immortal gods," wrote Julius Cæsar, in his 'Gallic War' (i. 14), "are accustomed, the more heavily to pain by reverse of fortune those of whom for their wickedness they wish to be avenged, to grant to them in the mean while a larger share of prosperity and a longer period of impunity."

Learn: 1. That the good man's best comfort in affliction and stay in adversity is the character of God (Deut. xxxiii. 27; Isa. lii. 21; 2 Cor. i. 3). 2. That with God silence is not to be understood as equivalent to consent (Ps. i. 21). 3. That it is God's custom to make men reap as they have sown, to reward perverseness with perverseness, and iniquity with iniquity (Ps. xviii. 26; Matt. vii. 2; Gal. vi. 7). 4. That governments tend to the good order of society, and are to be respected and obeyed even when not perfect (Rom. xiii. 1, 2). 5. That the reign of wickedness will one day terminate (Ps. cxlv. 20; Matt. xxi. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 25).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The title.* This introduces us to the writer and his work. Note—

I. HIS NAME. *Habakkuk*; i.e. "One who embraces"—a name singularly appropriate in its significance to the man who "rested in the Lord, and waited patiently for him" through the dark days. Luther applied the name to the prophet's regard for his people, "embracing them, taking them to his arms, comforting them, and lifting them up as one embraces a weeping child, to quiet it with the assurance that, if God will, it shall be better soon." Jewish tradition has identified him with the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings iv. 18), and with the watchman sent by Isaiah to the watch-tower (xxi.) to look towards Babylon. But with these and other merely fanciful and utterly unreliable traditions the silence of Scripture very favourably contrasts. It makes him known to us through his teaching. It is the message rather than the messenger that is presented to us here; yet through the message we get to know the man so intimately that he becomes to us quite a familiar presence.

II. HIS OFFICE. "*Habakkuk the prophet.*" This title clearly indicates that he had been appointed to the prophetic office. Many men in Old Testament times uttered certain prophecies, as for instance Moses, David, Solomon, Daniel, but we do not find the title "the prophet" appended to their names, it being given simply to such as were specially chosen and set apart to this office. The closing words of the book (ch. iii. 19) have led some to regard him as belonging to one of the Levitical families, and as appointed to take part in the liturgical services of the temple; but of this we cannot speak with any degree of certainty, though probably it was so.

III. HIS PROPHECY. This is described as "the burden which Habakkuk the prophet *did see*." The phrase is peculiar, but the meaning is clear. He saw a vision of coming events, in which solemn Divine judgments would be executed both against his own people and their oppressors; and the scene of impending woe oppressed his spirit and lay as a heavy weight upon his soul. Still, dark as the outlook was, and oppressed in heart as he felt himself to be amidst the mysteries of life viewed in relation to the Divine government, he maintained throughout unswervingly his trust in God; and which so clearly pervaded his spirit and so repeatedly revealed itself in his expressions as amply to justify the representation that he is "eminently the prophet of reverential, awe-filled faith." Viewed from a literary standpoint, his prophecy may well excite our profoundest interest. Critical writers with one consent bear testimony to the beauty of his contributions to these sacred oracles. Ewald calls the book "*Habakkuk's Pindaric Ode.*" Delitzsch says of it, "His language is classical throughout, full of rare and select words and turns, which are to some extent exclusively his own, whilst his view and mode of presentation bear the seal of original force and finished beauty." Pusey observes, "Certainly the purity of his language and the sublimity of his imagery is, humanly speaking, magnificent; his measured cadence is impressive in its simplicity." But valuable as this composition is in this respect, its great charm consists in the spirit of holy trustfulness which it breathes. As we ponder over its contents we feel at every stage our lack of confidence in our God reproved, and are impelled to cry, "Lord, we believe: help thou our unbelief" (Mark ix. 24); "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 5).—S. D. H.

Vers. 2—4.—*The elegy.* In this brief and plaintive strain we have—

I. AN EARNEST HEART REFLECTING UPON THE PREVAILING INIQUITY. Whatever may have been the exact date of this prophecy, it is clear that the writer stood connected with the close of the kingdom of Judah, the eve of the Captivity, and that he presents to us, in a few graphic touches, a vivid description of the depravity then prevailing in the land. He bitterly laments over: 1. *The insecurity of property.* "Spoiling and violence are before me" (ver. 3). 2. *The strifes of parties and factions.* "And there are that raise up strife and contention" (ver. 3). 3. *Laziness in the administration of the Law.* "The Law is slackened, and judgment doth never go forth" (ver. 4). 4. *The good suffering unjustly at the hands of the evil.* "The wicked doth compass about the righteous" (ver. 4). 5. *The openness and audacity of wrong-doers*

in this evil course. He speaks of all this iniquity as being patent to the observer. Sometimes, "vice, provoked to shame, borrows the colour of a virtuous deed;" but in this instance there was no attempt at concealment or disguise, and no sense of shame. "Spoiling and violence are before me" (ver. 3).

II. AN EARNEST HEART YEARNING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND IMPATIENT OF DELAY. The life of piety is undoubtedly the happy life (Ps. i. 1). Still, it is not always sunshine, even with the good. There are times in their experience when the sky becomes overcast, and when they become depressed and sad at heart. Although possessing "the firstfruits of the Spirit," the pledge and the earnest of the enjoyment at length of a fulness of blessing, they often "groan within themselves" (Rom. viii. 23). And a very large ingredient in the cup of sorrow the good have to drink is that occasioned by beholding the blighting effects of sin. As they witness men unprincipled in their dealings, impure in their speech, dishonourable in their transactions, and as they note the pernicious influence and effects of such conduct, their hearts are rendered sad, and they are constrained to long ardently for the time when sin shall be completely vanquished, when it shall be banished from this fair universe of God, and when there shall come in all its perfection the reign of truth and righteousness, peace and love. This spirit runs through the prophet's mournful strain (vers. 2—4). We recognize it also in the words of David, "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked!" etc. (Ps. vii. 9), and of Jeremiah (xiv. 8, 9), and impelled by it many are crying to-day, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?"

III. AN EARNEST HEART DIRECTING ITS IMPASSIONED APPEAL TO GOD IN PRAYER. (Ver. 2.) The seer did not question the Divine rectitude, but his spirit was perturbed at the delay, and he yearned with a holy impatience for the vindication of the honour of his God. And under such conditions no course is so commendable as that of pouring our plaint into the ear of Infinite Love. Prayer at such seasons will be found helpful: 1. In tranquillizing the spirit, quieting and subduing agitation, and imparting a sense of restfulness and peace. 2. In linking our human weakness to God's almighty strength, and thus fitting us for renewed service to him. "Toil, pain, doubt, terror, difficulty,—all retreat before the recognition of a great life-purpose wrought out in entire dependence upon Heaven." 3. In causing light to shine through the dark cloud of mystery, helping us to understand the Divine plan (Ps. lxxiii. 16, etc.), and so preparing the way for our exchanging the mournful elegy for the rapturous melody of thankful and adoring praise.—S. D. H.

Vers. 5—11.—*The Divine working against evil and its doers.* We have expressed here God's response to the impassioned appeal addressed to him by his servant. There is much that is suggestive in these words as bearing upon the Divine working against those who practise sin and who persist in its commission. Note—

I. THAT GOD IS NOT INDIFFERENT WITH RESPECT TO PREVAILING UNGODLINESS. The seer had asked, "How long?" (ver. 2). He was impatient of delay. But whilst there is this lingering on the part of God, so that "judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily" (Eccles. viii. 11), this is owing to the Divine long-suffering and patience, and does not arise from indifference and unconcern being cherished by the Most High in reference to iniquity. Wrong-doing is ever before him, is closely observed by him. It is the source of displeasure to him who is perfect in purity, and the requital of it will assuredly be experienced by transgressors. Though it may tarry, it will surely come. "I will work a work," etc. (ver. 5).

II. THAT GOD, IN THE ORDER OF HIS PROVIDENCE, IN EXECUTING HIS JUDGMENTS, OVEERULES THE ACTIONS OF EVIL MEN, AND CAUSES THESE TO FULFIL HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. The verses contain a wonderfully graphic account of the Chaldeans who were to be the instruments of the Divine chastisement of Judah (compare with them Isa. xiv. 6, 16, 17), and whilst in reading them, so vivid is the portrayal, that we seem to see the Chaldean horsemen sweeping through the land like the simoom, causing death and desolation to follow in their track, we also have presented to us certain traits most clearly indicative of their gross wickedness. (1) Their proud ambition to possess the dwelling-places that were not theirs (ver. 6); (2) their fierceness and cruelty (ver. 7); (3) their self-sufficiency (ver. 7); (4) their scorn and contempt (ver. 10) and their

blasphemy (ver. 11);—all pass in review before us. And these were chosen to be the executors of the Divine judgments! "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans" (ver. 6). The meaning is that God, in his providence, would permit "that bitter and hasty nation" to be a scourge to his chosen people on account of their transgression. The Chaldeans, in seeking their own ends, should be made to fulfil the Divine behests. Man is wondrously free to act; and he often does act without any regard to truth and righteousness. The world, indeed, is full of evil-doers acting according to their own devices; but "he that sitteth in the heavens" is guiding and directing all to the accomplishment of his own high purposes and to the fulfilment of his holy and gracious will.

III. THAT GOD, IN OPERATING AGAINST EVIL AND ITS DOERS, SOMETIMES EMPLOYS UNEXPECTED AGENTS. "The Hebrew state was at this time in close alliance with the Chaldean state, an alliance so close and friendly that the Hebrew politicians had no fear of its rupture. Yet it was in this wholly unexpected form that the Divine judgment was to come upon them. The Chaldeans in whom they trusted, on whom they leaned, were to give the death-blow to the dynasty of David." All the material and moral forces of the universe are under the Divine control, and in ways and by means little anticipated his retributions often overtake his adversaries.

IV. THAT THIS DIVINE WORKING AGAINST EVIL AND ITS DOERS RECEIVES BUT TARDY RECOGNITION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT FROM MAN. (Ver. 5.) The retributions have to light upon them ere they will believe. "They cry, Peace and safety: till sudden destruction comes upon them" (1 Thess. v. 3). So has it been in the past, and so, upon the authority of Christ, will it be in the future (Matt. xxiv. 27–29). Still, amidst this unconcern and unbelief, the duty of the messenger of God is clear. He must "cry aloud." He must bid men "behold," "regard," and "wonder," and then, "whether they hear or forbear," "he has delivered his soul."—S. D. H.

Ver. 12.—*The inspiration of hope.* Hope is the expectation of future good. The cherishing of this spirit, even as it respects the affairs of everyday life, yields strength and courage, whilst the centering this in the glorious realities God has revealed imparts joy and gladness to the heart. To the man of piety hope is the helmet, serving as a protection and defence in the day of conflict, and the anchor rendering his spirit peaceful and secure amidst the storms of life.

I. CONSIDER THE PROPHET'S REASONING IN THIS VERSE IN ITS APPLICATION TO HIMSELF AND HIS NATION, AND NOTE HOW THE INSPIRATION OF HOPE FIRED HIS SOUL. 1. The seer directed his thoughts to the contemplation of the character of his God. Two aspects of this were vividly present to his mind. (1) *God's eternal duration.* "Art thou not from everlasting?" etc. (ver. 12). (2) *His infinite purity.* "Mine Holy One" (ver. 12). 2. Associated with these thoughts concerning God in the mind of the prophet we have the recognition of the relationship sustained by this Eternal and Holy One to himself and the nation whose interests lay near and pressed with such weight upon his heart. He and his people were the chosen of Heaven. God had entered into covenant relations with them. They had been the objects of his ever-gracious care and providential working. He had not dealt thus with any other people. They could call him *theirs*. "O Lord my God, mine Holy One" (ver. 12). 3. And by associating together these thoughts of God and of his relationship to his people he gathered, in the troublous times upon which he had fallen, the inspiration of hope. One great difficulty with him arose from the threatened extinction of his nation. He had mourned over the national guilt, and had sought earnestly in prayer the Divine interposition. The response, however, to his impassioned cry unto God was different from what he had expected. The revelation made to him of the approaching Chaldean invasion of his country seemed to carry with it the complete annihilation of the national anticipations, and the utter desolation and extinction of those who had been specially favoured of God. Surely, thought he, this cannot be. God is eternal; his purposes must be fulfilled. Then "we shall not die" (ver. 12). God is holy. Then evil cannot ultimately be victorious. It could only be for chastisement and correction that the threatened trials should come. "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction" (ver. 12). And by such reasoning hope became the balm of healing to his troubled heart, the

bow of promise cast across his stormiest cloud, the bright star kindled in his darkest sky.

II. OBSERVE THAT THE PROPHET'S REASONING ADMITS OF A MORE EXTENDED RANGE OF APPLICATION, AND HAS AN IMPORTANT BEARING UPON THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN. Jehovah is "from everlasting." He is "the eternal God;" hence, our immortal destiny: "We shall not die." Surely the Divine Father will not allow his children to fade away and be no more. Certainly, he whose tender love to his children the love of human parents so faintly images, will not dwell through the eternal ages and "leave himself childless when time shall end."

"Souls that of his own good life partake,
He loves as his own self; dear as his eye
They are to him; he'll never them forsake;
When they shall die, then God himself shall die:
They live, they live in blest eternity."

(Henry More.)

It may be said that this reasoning, however concise and seemingly conclusive, is after all based upon probability. We grant it, and whilst refusing to undervalue its worth, we thankfully turn even from these beautiful words of the noble prophet, "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die," and fix our thoughts upon the assurances, so authoritative and so certain, of the world's Redeemer. "Let not your heart be troubled," etc. (John xiv. 1—3); "I am the Resurrection," etc. (John xi. 25, 26); "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19).—S. D. H.

Ver. 12.—*The benefits of life's adversities.* "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction." This is a second inference drawn by the prophet. He not only inferred, from what he knew of the Divine character, that his people should not be *utterly destroyed* by the adversities which were about to overtake them—"We shall not die"—but also that these coming judgments should be made to *work for their good*. "O Lord, thou hast ordained," etc. (ver. 12). God's chastisements are not directed to the overthrow but to the salvation of those upon whom they are inflicted. He chastens men sore, but does not give them over unto death. The dark scenes through which the frail and erring children of men are led are designed to contribute to their weal. How? Well, they operate in various ways.

I. THEY TEACH US THAT WE ARE NOT TO EXPECT TO HAVE OUR OWN WILL, BUT THAT THERE IS ONE HIGHER THAN OURSELVES, TO WHOSE WILL WE MUST ALL BOW.

II. THEY LEAD US TO REFLECTION, AND ARE THE MEANS OF REVEALING TO US OUR PAST SHORTCOMINGS AND FAILINGS.

III. THEY RENDER US MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO RECEIVING THE TEACHINGS OF GOD'S OWN SPIRIT.

IV. THEY RAISE OUR THOUGHTS FROM EARTH TOWARDS GOD AND HEAVEN.

V. THEY BRING US BACK WHEN WE HAVE WANDERED FROM OUR GOD, AND ARE THE MEANS OF RESTORING TO US THE WARMTH AND FERVOUR OF TRUE PIETY. Whilst, therefore, suffering considered in itself is not good, yet instrumentally it is desirable, and, if we are rightly exercised by it, will help us to attain unto a holier and more heavenly life. So David (Ps. cxix. 71, 67). So Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—13). It is because we are so slow to learn the lessons our sorrows are intended to teach us that it is "through much tribulation" that we are to enter the kingdom prepared for the saints of God. We need these threshings of the inner spiritual man in order that the chaff may be separated from the wheat, and we become thus prepared for the heavenly garner. Let us accept all our griefs as precious tokens of the Divine Father's love, and make them our convoy to bear us up to him.—S. D. H.

Ver. 16.—*The pride of human sufficiency.* The reference is to the Chaldeans. They would, in due course, invade Judah, and should be successful in their invasion. The "sinful nation" should fall into their hands as fish into the net of the angler; and, intoxicated by their success, they should congratulate themselves upon their achievements and adore their military prowess and skill, and their weapons of war, as though

those had won the victory. "Therefore they sacrifice," etc. (ver. 16). They should be lifted up with the pride of human sufficiency. Observe—

I. SUCCESS IS EVER SECURED AS THE BESTOWMENT OR BY THE PERMISSION OF GOD. 1. *Temporal success is thus gained.* The age in which we live is an age of earnest toil, of restless activity. It is becoming more and more felt that a man cannot expect to make headway apart from continuous, energetic work. And this is a healthy "sign of the times." It reminds us that life is too valuable a gift to be frittered away. It contrasts, strikingly and pleasingly, with those periods in which ease, luxury, and sloth were deified and adored. There is dignity in labour. The danger lies in the non-recognition of God as the Bestower of the prosperity secured, and in ascribing the success achieved wholly to ourselves. The true spirit is that which prompts the acknowledgment, "All things come of thee" (1 Chron. xxix. 14). The Lord is "Giver of all." Success is sometimes achieved by bad men. By fraud, oppression, reckless speculation, and by taking mean advantage, "the portion" of such is "made fat" and "their meat plenteous;" and in such cases all this is through the all-wise although often inscrutable permission of the Most High. 2. *Spiritual success is also thus gained.* In holy service we are but the instruments employed by God. The power is his, and the honour should all be laid at his feet. Baxter, when complimented at the close of his career upon the usefulness of his writings, said, "I was but a pen in the hand of my God, and what honour is due to a pen?"

II. MEN, FORGETFUL OF THIS AND TRACING TO THEMSELVES THE SUCCESS ACHIEVED, BECOME ELATED WITH THE PRIDE OF HUMAN SUFFICIENCY. "Therefore they sacrifice unto their net," etc. (ver. 16). "They say in their heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. viii. 17). So Pharaoh said, "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself" (Ezek. xxix. 3). So Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built," etc. (Dan. iv. 30). Pusey refers in illustration of this to certain North American Indians, "who designate their bow and arrow as the only beneficent deities whom they know;" to the Romans sacrificing to their military standards; and to the French referred to in the *Times* during the Franco-German War as "almost worshipping the mitrailleuse as a goddess." And this is still our peril. Because our possibilities are so great, we think that we can win all blessings for ourselves. Everywhere we see the worship of our human powers and means—the workman worshipping the strength of his arm and the deftness of his fingers, the man of business worshipping his skill and acuteness, and the man of science, human knowledge. Nor is the Church of God free from this spirit: for there is far too much of trusting to forms and ceremonies, to worldly alliances, to machinery and organization, as though these were the great essentials, and far too little of "looking up unto the hills whence cometh her help."

III. ALL SUCH GLORIFYING IS VAIN. 1. *It reveals self-ignorance.* For no one who really understands himself could possibly cherish this spirit. 2. *It leads to oppression.* The man who has exalted notions of his own powers and doings is likely to be proud and overbearing in his conduct towards others. 3. *It is offensive to God.* "He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Jas. iv. 6). "In all our ways, therefore, let us acknowledge him," and as we prosper in our course ascribe the success gained to his favour and blessing. In the language of Keble, let us say—

"Should e'er thy wonder-working grace
Triumph by our weak arm,
Let not our sinful fancy trace
Aught human in the charm:

"To our own nets ne'er bow we down,
Lest on the eternal shore
The angels, while our draught they own,
Reject us evermore."

S. D. H.

Vers. 13—15, 17; ch. ii. 1—4.—*Dark problems and man's true attitude in relation to them.* I. THE MYSTERY CONNECTED WITH THE DIVINE OPERATIONS. (Vers. 13—15, 17.) The prophet in these words expressed the perplexity of his mind and the

consequent sadness of his heart. He had bitterly mourned over the prevailing guilt of his people, and had earnestly appealed to Heaven to vindicate the right. The Divine response, however, filled him with distress. That Divine chastisement should be inflicted upon his country he understood and approved, but that the Chaldeans, who were still greater transgressors, should be permitted to run over the land, and to lead his people into captivity, baffled and perplexed him. Yea, more; whilst the good in his land were but few, yet there were to be found such; and how could it be that these should suffer, and suffer at the hands of the heathen who were so gross and iniquitous? Surely, thought he, this scarcely accorded with the thought of the Divine purity, and of the rectitude of God's providential government. And hence he cried in his perplexity, "Thou art," etc. (vers. 13—15, 17). There is mystery in the Divine operations; dark problems confront us as we reflect upon the Divine working. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33); "Thy way is in the sea;" i.e. "far down in secret channels of the deep is his roadway;" "Thy footsteps are not known;" i.e. "none can follow thy tracks" (Ps. lxxvii. 19). One man enjoys the endowment of reason; another is left a helpless lunatic. One has all things and abounds; another is well-nigh destitute of the common necessities of life. One has "no changes;" another is being continually subjected to adverse influences. We see the mother dying just after she has given birth to her child; we behold the young and the beautiful passing "out of sunshiny life into silent death;" we behold the earnest toiler stricken down in the very prime of life, whilst useless and injurious lives are preserved and "burn to the socket." The sceptic asks us to reconcile all this with the thought of God's wise and loving rulership, and, failing this, to join him in his indifference and practical atheism; but to do so would be to go contrary to the deepest convictions of our hearts, and to the clearest testimony of our consciences. We will rather seek to cherish a faith which will pierce the mists, and enable us, despite such anomalies, to recognize the goodness and the love of God.

II. THE TRUE ATTITUDE IN RELATION TO THESE DARK PROBLEMS. 1. *The attitude of prayer.* The seer took all his fears and forebodings, his difficulties and discouragements, his doubts and perplexities, to God in prayer (vers. 13—15, 17). As we pray light often is cast upon the hidden path. 2. *The attitude of expectancy.* "I will stand upon my watch," etc. (ch. ii. 1). We are to "wait patiently for the Lord," and there is ever to enter into this waiting the element of watchfulness. We are to look for further light, even here, upon the works and ways of our God, and we shall assuredly miss this unless we cherish the spirit of holy expectation. "Many a proffered succour from heaven goes past us because we are not standing on our watch-tower to catch the far-off indications of its approach, and to fling open the gates of our hearts for its entrance" (MacLaren). 3. *The attitude of trust.* "The just shall live by his faith" (ch. ii. 4). It is not in the process, but in the issue, that the wisdom and rightness of the Divine operations will be fully manifested, and for the issue we must trustfully wait. Tennyson sings—

"Who can so forecast the years,
And find in loss a gain to match?
Or reach a hand through time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?"

In God's economy there is a gain to match every loss. Tears do bear interest; only we cannot "forecast the years," and see the gain; we cannot reach forth and seize in advance "the interest of tears." But however far off, it is there. We shall know more and more, even in the present life, as God's purposes concerning us develop, that all things are working together for our good (Rom. viii. 28), whilst at length standing upon the heights of eternity, and gazing back upon the past and seeing in the perfect light, the perfect wisdom, and the perfect love, we shall cry with adoring gratitude, "He hath done all things well!"—S. D. H.

Vers. 1—4.—*The cry of a good man under the perplexing procedure of God.* "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" etc. Of Habakkuk nothing is known for certainty. The fifth and sixth verses of the first

chapter tell us that he prophesied before that series of invasions by the Chaldeans which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people—probably between 640 and 610 years before Christ. He was therefore contemporary with Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The book treats of the wickedness of the Jews, the infliction of punishment upon the Chaldeans, and the destruction of the latter in their turn. It has also a splendid ode, composed by the prophet in anticipation of their deliverance from Babylonish captivity. His work is quoted by the apostles (Heb. x. 37, 38; Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Acts xiii. 41), hence it was regarded as having Divine authority. His style, in dignity and sublimity, is not surpassed by any of the Hebrew prophets. He is original. His utterances are bold and animated; his descriptions graphic and pointed. The lyric ode contained in the third chapter is esteemed by most biblical critics as one of the most splendid and magnificent in the whole compass of Hebrew poetry. The prophet sets forth the cause of the Chaldean invasion, and the great wickedness that abounded in the Jewish nation during his time. This was the burden of his discourse. "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see." What was the burden? The heavy judgments impending over his nation. He saw it like a mountain with his prophetic eye; nay, he felt it as a mountain on his heart. This doom hanging over the Jewish people was indeed an intolerable weight. The text contains the cry of a good man under the perplexing procedure of God—"O Lord, how long shall I cry!" There seem to be two elements in his perplexity.

I. GOD'S APPARENT DISREGARD TO HIS EARNEST PRAYER. "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!" Under the pressure of "the burden" that was resting on his heart, viz. the moral corruption and the coming doom of his country, it would seem that he had often cried unto the Almighty and implored his interposition; but no answer had come. How often have good men in every age felt that God disregarded their supplications! They cried and cried, but no answer came. The heavens seemed like brass; the oracles were hushed. It was thus with the Syro-Phœnician woman. Christ for a time not only treated her application with seeming indifference, but he even repulsed her. Why are not the prayers of good men immediately answered? In reply to this question three undoubted facts should be borne in mind. 1. *That impurity of soul is necessary to qualify for the appreciation of the mercies sought.* It is not until a man is made to feel the deep necessity of a thing that he values it when it comes. If we obtained from the Almighty what we required by one cry, or even by a series of mere formal applications, the boon would be of doubtful service; it would scarcely be appreciated, and would fail to fire the soul with the sentiments of devout gratitude and praise. It is not what God gives a man that does him good; it is the state of mind in which it is received that transmutes it either into a blessing or a curse. "How long shall I cry!" How long? Until the sense of need is so intensified as to qualify for the reception and due appreciation of the blessing. 2. *That the exercise of true prayer is in itself the best means of spiritual culture.* Conscious contact with God is essential to moral excellence. You must bring the sunbeam to the seed you have sown, if you would have the seed quickened and developed; and you must bring God into conscious contact with your powers, if you would have them vivified and brought forth into strength and perfection. True prayer does this; it is the soul realizing itself in the presence of him "who quickeneth all things." 3. *That prayers are answered where there is no bestowment of the blessing invoked.* We know not what to pray for; and were we to have what we seek, we might be ruined. Acquiescence in the Divine will is the highest answer to all true prayer. Christ prayed that the cup should pass from him. It did not pass from him; but, instead, there came to him the spirit of acquiescence in the Divine will: "Not my will, but thine be done." This is all we want. Acquiescence in the Divine will is the moral perfection, dignity, and blessedness of all creatures in the universe. With these facts let us not be anxious about the apparent disregard of God to our prayers.

II. GOD'S APPARENT DISREGARD TO THE MORAL CONDITION OF SOCIETY. "Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the Law is slackened, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." The rendering of Delitzsch is both faithful and forceful, "Why dost thou let me see mischief, and thou lookest upon

distress? Devastation and violence are before me; there arises strife, and contention lifts itself up. Therefore the Law is benumbed, and justice comes not forth for ever: for sinners encircle the righteous man: therefore justice goes forth perverted." The substance of this is the old complaint, "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" (Jer. xii. 1). Two facts should be set against this complaint. 1. *The good have the best of it, even in this life.* Goodness is its own reward. Take two men—one who enjoys the love and fellowship of God, but who is destitute of this world's good and lives in poverty; the other, in whose heart reign the elements of wickedness, but who has an abundance of the things of this life. Ask which of the two is the happier. The former, without doubt. Benevolence is the fountain of happiness, and selfishness the fountain of misery in both worlds. In this world give me poverty and piety rather than riches with wickedness. 2. *That the evil will have the worst of it in the next life.* There is no doubt about this. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches this. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever" (Ps. xcii. 7).

CONCLUSION. Pray on, brother. "Pray without ceasing." Thy prayers are not lost. Let not God's apparent disregard to the supplications of his people and the moral condition of society perplex thy judgment and disturb thy peace. Wait the great explaining day. "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter."—D. T.

Vers. 5—10.—*The doom of a nation of conventional religionists.* "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation; which shall march through the breadth of the land," etc. In these verses we have the doom of a nation of *conventional religionists*. The Jews were such a nation; they prided themselves in the orthodoxy of their faith, in the ceremonials of their worship, in the polity of their Church. "To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. ix. 4). But they had now become abhorrent to their Maker. He was weary of them, and he threatens them with a terrible doom; the doom was so terrible that "ye will not believe, though it be told you." The doom threatened was terrible in many respects.

I. IT WAS TO BE WROUGHT BY THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF A WICKED NATION. "I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs." "Nabopolassar had already destroyed the mighty empire of Assyria, and founded the Chaldeo-Babylonian rule. He had made himself so formidable that Necho found it necessary to march an army against him, in order to check his progress; and, though defeated at Megiddo, he had, in conjunction with his son Nebuchadnezzar, gained a complete victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish. These events were calculated to alarm the Jews, whose country lay between the dominions of the two contending powers; but, accustomed as they were to confide in Egypt and in the sacred localities of their own capital (Isa. xxxi. 1; Jer. vii. 4), and being in alliance with the Chaldeans, they were indisposed to listen to, and treated with the utmost incredulity, any predictions which described their overthrow by that people" (Henderson). Observe that God employs *wicked nations* as his instruments. "Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans." "I will work a work," he says; but how? By the Chaldeans. How does he raise up wicked nations to do his work? 1. *Not instigatingly.* He does not inspire them with wicked passions necessary to qualify them for the infernal work of violence, war, rapine, bloodshed. God could not do this. The diabolic passions are in them. 2. *Not coercively.* He does not force them to it; in no way does he interfere with them. They are the responsible party. They go forth on the bloody message with a consciousness of freedom. How, then, does he "raise" them up? He permits them. He could prevent them; but he allows them. He gives them life, capacity, and opportunities; but he does not inspire or coerce them. Now, would not the fact that the destruction of the Israelites would come upon them from a heathen nation, a nation which they despised, make it all the more terrible?

II. IT WAS TO BE WROUGHT WITH RESISTLESS VIOLENCE. 1. *The violence would be uncontrolled.* "Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves." They recognize no authority, and proudly spurn the dictates of others. "They recognize no judge save themselves, and they get for themselves their own dignity, without needing others' help. It will be vain for the Jews to complain of their tyrannical judgments, for whatever the Chaldeans decree they will do according to their own will: they will not brook any one attempting to interfere" (Fausset). 2. *The violence would be rapid and fierce.* "Their horses are swifter than the leopards." A naturalist says of the leopard that it runs most swiftly, straight on, and you would imagine it was flying through the air. "More fierce than the evening wolves." These ravenous beasts, having skulked all the day away from the light of heaven, get terribly hungry by the night, and come forth with a fierce voracity. Like the swift leopards and the ravenous wolves, we are here told, these Chaldeans would come forth. Yes, and swifter and more ravenous than the wolves, like the hungry eagle on its pinions that "hasteth to eat." What a terrible description of their doom! Alas! into what a monster sin has transformed man! he becomes leopard, wolf, eagle, etc.

III. IT WAS TO BE WROUGHT WITH IMMENSE HAVOC. "Their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap dust, and take it." As the east wind, they would sweep through the country, like the simoom, spreading devastation wherever it passed; and like that wind would bear away the Jews into captivity, thick as the sand. "They shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them." They would regard all the great magnates of Judæa with a haughty contempt, and treat them with derision. And so would they be in their bloody expedition. They would regard their very conquering power as their god, and worship their success.

CONCLUSION. All this was to come upon a nation of *conventional religionists*. All peoples whose religion is that of profession, letter, form, ceremony, are exposed to a doom as terrible as this.—D. T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The eternity, providence, and holiness of Jehovah.* "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction," etc. In this passage the prophet refers to the eternity, the providence, and the holiness of the Jehovah of the Jewish people.

I. HE REGARDS HIS ETERNITY AS AN ARGUMENT FOR THEIR PRESERVATION. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die." "However terrible and prostrating the Divine threatenings may sound, the prophet draws consolation and hope from the holiness of the faithful covenant God, that Israel will not perish, but that the judgment will be only a severe chastisement" (Delitzsch). "Art thou not from everlasting?" The interrogatory does not imply doubt on his part. The true God is essentially eternal; he "inhabiteh eternity." He is without beginning, without succession, without end. The loftiest thoughts of the loftiest intelligence are lost in the idea of his eternity. From his eternity the prophet argues that his people will not perish: "We shall not die." There is force in this argument. His people live in him. Their life is hid in God, and so long as he endures they may hope to continue. Christ said to his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also:" Man's immortality is not in himself, but in God. If he has purposed that we shall live for ever, he is eternal, and will never change his mind or die.

II. HE REGARDS HIS PROVIDENCE AS A SOURCE OF COMFORT. "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction." "Jehovah, for judgment thou hast appointed it, and, O Rock, thou hast founded it for chastisement" (Delitzsch). Whatever evil of any kind, from any quarter, comes upon the loyal servants of God, comes not by accident; it is under the direction of the All-wise and the All-beneficent. These Chaldeans could not move without him, nor could they strike one blow without his permission; they were but the rod in his hand. All the most furious fiends in the universe are under his direction. He says, concerning the mighty tide of wicked passions, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." Is not this a source of comfort under suffering and oppression? What-

ever mischief men design to inflict upon his people, he purposes to bring good out of it; and his counsel shall stand.

III. HE REGARDS HIS HOLINESS AS AN OCCASION FOR PERPLEXITY. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" Jehovah is the Holy One. His holiness is essential, underived, indestructible, reflected in all consciences. He is of "purer eyes than to behold evil." His eyes do behold iniquity. There is no sin that comes not within his glance. What the prophet means, I presume, is—Thou art of "purer eyes" than to behold iniquity with satisfaction. It is that "abominable thing" which God hates. Now, this holiness was the occasion of perplexity to the prophet. As if he had said, "Since thou art holy, why allow such abominations to take place? why permit wicked men to work such iniquities, and to inflict such suffering upon the righteous?" This has always been a source of perplexity to good men. That a holy God, who has the power to prevent such iniquities, should allow them to occur, abound, and continue, is one of the great mysteries of life.

CONCLUSION. Let us, in all our troubles, like the prophet, look to the Everlasting One, and hold firmly the conviction that, notwithstanding the abounding of evil in the world, He is the *Holy One*, and is of "purer eyes" than to approve of wickedness.

- "Courage, brother, do not stumble;
Though thy path be dark as night
There's a star to guide the humble;
Trust in God, and do the right.
- "Let the road be rough and dreary,
And its end far out of sight;
Foot it bravely, strong or weary:
Trust in God, and do the right.
- "Perish policy and cunning,
Perish all that fears the light;
Whether losing, whether winning,
Trust in God, and do the right.
- "Trust no party, sect, or faction;
Trust no leaders in the fight;
But in every word and action
Trust in God, and do the right.
- "Simple rule and safest guiding,
Inward peace and inward might,
Star upon our path abiding:
Trust in God, and do the right.
- "Some will hate thee, some will love thee,
Some will flatter, some will slight;
Cease from man, and look above thee:
Trust in God, and do the right."

(Norman McLeod.)

D. T.

Vers. 14—17.—*Rapacious selfishness in power.* "And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them. They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad," etc. In Nebuchadnezzar you have rapacious selfishness in power. He is here represented by implication as treating the Jewish people as a fisherman treats the fish in the sea. His aim is to catch them by "angle," "net," and "drag," and turn them to his own vile use. "These figures are not to be interpreted with such speciality as that the net and fishing-net answer to the sword and bow; but the hook, the net, and the fishing-net, as the things used for catching fish, refer to all the means which the Chaldeans employ in order to subdue and destroy the nations. Luther interprets it correctly. 'These hooks, nets, and fishing-nets,' he says, 'are nothing more than his great and powerful armies, by which he gained

dominion over all lands and people, and brought home to Babylon the goods, jewels, silver and gold, interest and rent of all the world" (Delitzsch). In these verses we have a specimen of *rapacious selfishness in power*. Selfishness is the root and essence of sin. All unregenerate men are therefore more or less selfish, and rapacity is an instinct of selfishness. Selfishness hungers for the things of others. Whilst this rapacious selfishness is general, mercifully it is not always *in power*, otherwise the world would be more of a pandemonium than it is. It is ever tyrannic and ruthless in the measure of its power. Here we find it in the power of an absolute monarchy, and it is terrible to contemplate. Four things are suggested.

I. IT PRACTICALLY IGNORES THE RIGHTS OF MAN AS MAN. "And makest man as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them." The Babylonian tyrant did not see in the population of Judæa *men* possessing natural endowments, sustaining moral relationships, invested with rights and responsibilities similar to his own fellow-men, but merely "fishes;" his object was to catch them and turn them to his own use. It is ever so with selfishness: it blinds man to the claims of his brother. What does the selfish landlord care for the *man* in the tenants and labourers on his estate? He only values them as they can subserve his interests. What does the selfish employer care for the *man* in those who work in his service and build up his fortune? He treats them rather as fishes to be used than as brethren to be respected. What does the selfish despot care for the moral humanity of the people over whom he sways his sceptre? He values them only as they can fight his battles, enrich his exchequer, and contribute to his pageantry and pomp. What were men to Alexander? What were men to Napoleon, etc.?

II. IT ASSIDUOUSLY WORKS TO TURN MEN TO ITS OWN USE. "They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and are glad." Thus they take up all of them, some with the hook one by one, others in shoals as in a net, others in a drag or enclosed net. Ah me! Human life is like a sea—deep, unresting, treacherous; and the teeming millions of men are but as fishes, the weaker devoured by the stronger.

" . . . the good old rule
Sufficeth them, the simple plan
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can."

(Wordsworth.)

The mighty ones use the hook to oppress individuals one by one, the net and the drag to carry multitudes away. To a rapacious selfishness in power the man is lost in the labourer, the clerk, the *employé*, the sailor, the soldier, the subject, etc. Men, what are they? To its eye they are goods, chattels, beasts of burden, "fishes"—nothing more. As the fisherman works by various expedients to catch the fish, the selfish man in power is ever active in devising the best expedients to turn human flesh to his own use.

III. IT ADORES SELF ON ACCOUNT OF ITS SUCCESS. "Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous." They glory even in their crimes, because these result in success. They admire their own dexterity and prowess. The selfish man says to himself, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. viii. 17). According to the measure of a man's selfishness is his propensity to self-worship. The more selfish a merchant, a scholar, a religionist, an author, a preacher, etc., is, the more prone to praise himself for his imaginary success. Because men are everywhere selfish, they are everywhere "sacrificing unto their net, and burning incense unto their drag." The selfish statesman says, "There is no measure like mine;" the selfish sectarian, "There is no Church like mine;" the selfish author, "There is no book like mine;" the selfish preacher, "There is no sermon like mine."

"To our own nets ne'er bow we down,
Lest on the eternal shore
The angels, while our draught they own,
Reject us evermore."

(Keble.)

IV. IT REMAINS INSATIABLE, NOTWITHSTANDING ITS PROSPERITY. "Shall they therefore empty their net?" etc. An old author thus paraphrases the language: "Shall they enrich themselves and fill their own vessels with that which they have by violence and oppression taken away from their neighbours? Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again to catch more? And wilt thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not spare continually to slay the nations? Must the number and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net?"

CONCLUSION. What an awful picture of the world we have here! All unregenerate men are selfish. Men are everywhere preying on men; and, alas! often those who most lament the universal selfishness are the most selfish. Like the ravenous birds which seem to bewail the sheep when dying, they are ready to pick out their eyes when their opportunity comes. "Where every man is for himself," says an old author, "the devil will have all." This selfishness is the heart of stone in humanity, which must be exchanged for a heart of flesh, or the man will be damned. What but the gospel can effect this change? Oh that those who call themselves Christians would cherish and exemplify that disinterestedness which alone gives title to the name! "I would so live," said Seneca, "as if I knew I had received my being only for the benefit of others."—D. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1—3.—§ 5. *The prophet, waiting for an answer to his expostulation, is bidden to write the oracle in plain characters, because its fulfilment is certain.*

Ver. 1.—Habakkuk speaks with himself, and, mindful of his office, waits for the communication which he confidently expects (Jer. xxxiii. 3). **I will stand upon my watch** (Isa. xxi. 6, 8). As a watchman goes to a high place to see all around and discern what is coming, so the prophet places himself apart from men, perhaps in some secluded height, in readiness to hear the voice of God and seize the meaning of the coming event. Prophets are called "watchmen" (comp. Ezek. iii. 17; xxxiii. 2, 6; Micah vii. 4). **The tower;** i.e. watch-tower, either literally or metaphorically, as in the first clause. Septuagint, *πέτραν*, "rock." **What he will say unto me; quid dicatur mihi** (Vulgate); *τί λαλήσει ἐν ἐμοί*, "what he will speak in me" (Septuagint). He watches for the inward revelation which God makes to his soul (but see note on Zech. ii. 9). **When I am reproved; ad arguentem me** (Vulgate); *ἐπὶ τὸν ἐλεγχόν μου* (Septuagint); rather, *to my complaint*, referring to his complaint concerning the impunity of sinners (ch. i. 13—17). He waits till he hears God's voice within him what answer he shall make to his own complaint, the expostulation which he had offered to God. There is no question here concerning the reproofs which others levelled against him, or concerning any rebuke conveyed to him by God—an impression given by the Anglican Version.

Ver. 2.—Jehovah answers the prophet's expostulation (ch. i. 12, etc.). **Write.** That it may remain permanently on record, and that, when it comes to pass, people may believe in the prophet's inspiration (John xiii. 19; comp. Isa. viii. 1; xxx. 8; Jer. xxx. 2; Rev. i. 11). **The vision** (see ch. i. 1; Obad. 1). The word includes the inward revelation as well as the open vision. **Upon tables; upon the tables** (Deut. xxvii. 8); i.e. certain tablets placed in public places, that all might see and read them (see Isaiah, *loc. cit.*); Septuagint, *ἐς πύλον*, "a boxwood tablet." The summary of what was to be written is given in ver. 4. This was to be "made plain," written large and legibly. Septuagint, *σαφές*. **That he may run that readeth it.** The common explanation of these words (unfortunately perpetuated by Keble's well-known hymn, "There is a book, who runs may read"), viz. that even the runner, one who hastens by hurriedly, may be able to read it, is not borne out by the Hebrew, which rather means that every one who reads it may run, i.e. read fluently and easily. So Jerome, "Scribere jubetur planius, ut possit lector currere, et nullo impedimento velocitas ejus et legendi cupido teneatur." Henderson, comparing Dan. xii. 4, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," interprets the clause to signify that whosoever reads the announcement might run and publish it to all within his reach. "To run," he adds, "is equivalent to 'to prophesy' in Jer. xxiii. 21," on the principle that those who were charged with a Divine message were to use all despatch in making it known. In the passage of Daniel, "to run to and fro," is explained to mean "to peruse."

Ver. 3.—*For.* The reason is given why the oracle is to be committed to writing. Is yet for an (*the*) appointed time. The vision will not be accomplished immediately, but in the period fixed by God (comp. Dan. viii. 17, 19; xi. 27, 35). Others explain, "pointeth to a yet future time." But at the end it shall speak. The verb is literally "breathes," or "pants;" hence the clause is better rendered, *and it panteth* (equivalent to *hasteth*) *towards the end*. The prophecy personified yearns for its fulfilment in "the end," not merely at the destruction of the literal Babylon, but in the time of the end—the last time, the Messianic age, when the world-power, typified by Babylon, should be overthrown (see Daniel, *loc. cit.*). And not lie; *it deceiveth not*; *οὐκ εἰς κενόν*, "not in vain" (Septuagint). It will certainly come to pass. Wait for it. For the vision and its accomplishment. Because it will surely come. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 37) quotes the Septuagint Version of this clause, applying it to the last coming of Messiah: "Ὅτι (plus δ, Hebrew) ἐρχόμενος ἔξει, καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονοῖται (ὅν χρονοῖται, Hebrew); so the Vulgate, *Veniens veniet, et non tardabit*. The original passage does not primarily refer to the coming of Messiah, but as the full and final accomplishment of the prophecy doubtless belongs to that age, it is not a departure from the fundamental idea to see in it a reference hereto. It will not tarry; *it will not be behindhand*; it will not fail to arrive (Judg. v. 28; 2 Sam. xx. 5).

Ver. 4.—§ 6. *The great principle is taught that the proud shall not continue, but the just shall live by faith.* The prophecy commences with a fundamental thought, applicable to all God's dealings with man. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; literally, *behold, puffed up, his soul is not upright in him*. This is a description of an evil character (especially of the Chaldean) in opposition to the character delineated in the following hemistich. One who is proud, presumptuous, thinks much of himself, despising others, and is not straightforward and upright before God, shall not live, shall not have a happy, safe life; he carries in himself the seeds of destruction. The result is not expressed in the first hemistich, but may be supplied from the next clause, and, as Knabenbauer suggests, may be inferred from the language in Heb. x. 38, 39, where, after quoting the Septuagint rendering of this passage, 'Εάν ὑποστρίληται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ, the writer adds, "But we are not of them that shrink back (ὑποστρίληται) unto perdition." Vulgate, *Ecce, qui incredulus est, non erit recta anima ejus in semetipso*, which seems to confine the

statement to the case of one who doubts God's word. But the just shall live by his faith. The "faith" here spoken of is a loving trust in God, confidence in his promises, resulting in due performance of his will. This hemistich is the antithesis to the former. The proud and perverse, those who wish to be independent of God, shall perish; but, on the other hand, the righteous shall live and be saved through his faith, on the condition that he puts his trust in God. The Hebrew accents forbid the union, "the just by faith," though, of course, no one can be just, righteous, without faith. The passage may be emphasized by rendering, "As to the just, through his faith he shall live." This famous sentence, which St. Paul has used as the basis of his great argument (Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; comp. Heb. x. 38), in its literal and contextual application implies that the righteous man will have perfect trust in God's promises, and will be rewarded by being safe in the day of tribulation, with reference to the coming trouble at the hands of the Chaldeans. When the proud, greedy kingdom shall have sunk in ruin, the faithful people shall live secure. But the application is not confined to this circumstance. The promise looks beyond the temporal future of the Chaldeans and Israelites, and unto a reward that is eternal. We see how naturally the principle here enunciated is applied by the apostle to teach the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. The LXX. gives, 'Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως μου ζήσεται, i.e. "by faith in me." The Speaker is God. St. Paul omits μου. Habakkuk gathers into one sentence the whole principle of the Law, and indeed all true religion.

Ver. 5.—§ 7. *The character of the Chaldeans in some particulars is intimated.* The general proposition in the former hemistich of ver. 4 is here applied to the Chaldeans, in striking contrast to the lot of the just in the latter clause. Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine. This should be, *And moreover, wine is treacherous*. A kind of proverbial saying (Prov. xx. 1). Vulgate, *Quomodo vinum potantem decipit*. There is no word expressive of comparison in the original, though it may be supplied to complete the sense. The intemperate habits of the Babylonians are well attested (see Dan. v. 3, 4; Quint. Curt., v. 1, "Babylonii maxime in vinum et quæ ebrietatem sequuntur effusi sunt;" comp. Her., i. 191; Xen., 'Cyrop,' vii. 5. 15). They used both the fermented sap of the palm tree as well as the juice of the grape, the latter chiefly imported from abroad. "The wealthy Babylonians were fond of drinking to excess; their banquets were magnificent,

but generally ended in drunkenness" (Rawlinson, 'Anc. Mon.' iii. 450, edit. 1865). Neither the Septuagint, nor the Syriac, nor the Coptic Version has any mention of wine in this passage. The Septuagint gives, *ὁ δὲ κατειόμενος καὶ καταφρονήτης*, "the arrogant and the scorner." He is a proud man, neither keepeth he at home; a haughty man, he resteth not. His pride is always impelling him to new raids and conquests. This is quite the character of the later Chaldeans, and is consistent with the latter part of the verse. The comparison, then, is this: As wine raises the spirits and excites men to great efforts which in the end deceive them, so pride rouses these men to go on their insatiate course of conquest, which shall one day prove their ruin. The verb translated "keepeth at home" has the secondary sense of "being decorous;" hence the Vulgate gives, *Sic erit vir superbus, et non decorabitur*; i.e. as wine first exhilarates and then makes a man contemptible, so pride, which begins by exalting a man, ends by bringing him to ignominy. Others take the verb in the sense of "continueth not," explaining that the destruction of Babylon is here intimated. But what follows makes against this interpretation. The LXX. gives, *Ἄνθρωπος ἄλαστον, οὐδὲν μὴ περάων*, which Jerome, combining with it his own version, paraphrases, "*Sic vir superbus non decorabitur, nec voluntatem suam perducet ad finem; et juxta Symmachum, οὐκ εὐπορήσει*, hoc est, in rerum omnium erit penuria." Who enlargeth his desire as hell; Hebrew, Sheol. Hell is called insatiable (Prov. xxvii. 20; xxx. 16; Isa. v. 14). Is as death, which seizes all creatures and spares none. People; peoples.

Vers. 6—8.—§ 8. *The destruction of the Babylonians is announced by the mouth of the vanquished nations, who utter five woes against their oppressor. The first woe: for their rapacity.*

Vers. 6.—All these. All the nations and peoples who have been subjugated and barbarously treated by the Babylonians (comp. Isa. xiv. 4). A parable. A sententious song (see note on Micah ii. 4). A taunting proverb. The Anglican Version combines the two Hebrew words, which stand unconnected, into one notion. So the Vulgate, *loquelam ænigmatum*. The latter of the two generally means "riddle," "enigma;" the other word (*melitzah*) is by some translated, "a derisive satirical song," or "an obacure, dark saying;" but, as Keil and Delitzsch have shown, is better understood of a bright, clear, brilliant speech. So the two terms signify "a speech containing enigmas," or a song which has

double or ambiguous meanings (comp. Prov. i. 6). Septuagint, *Πρόβλημα εἰς διήγησιν αὐτοῦ*. Woe (Nah. iii. 1). This is the first of the five "woes," which consist of three verses each, arranged in strophical form. Increaseth that which is not his. He continues to add to his conquests and possessions, which are not his, because they are acquired by injustice and violence. This is the first denunciation of the Chaldeans for their insatiable rapacity. How long? The question comes in interjectionally—How long is this state of things to continue unpunished (comp. Ps. vi. 3; xc. 13)? That ladeth himself with thick clay; Septuagint, *βαρύνων τὸν κλοιὸν αὐτοῦ στιβαρῶς*, "who loadeth his yoke heavily;" Vulgate, *aggravat contra se densum lutum*. The renderings of the Anglican and Latin Versions signify that the riches and spoils with which the conquerors load themselves are no more than burdens of clay, which are in themselves worthless, and only harass the bearers. The Greek Version seems to point to the weight of the yoke imposed by the Chaldeans on them; but Jerome explains it differently, "*Ad hoc tantum sævit ut devoret et iniquitatis et prædæ onere quasi gravissima torque se deprimat*." The difficulty lies in the *ἀπαξ λεγόμενον* *αὐτί*, which forms an enigma, or dark saying, because, taken as two words, it might pass current for "thick clay," or "a mass of dirt," while regarded as one word it means "a mass of pledges," "many pledges." That the latter is the signification primarily intended is the view of many modern commentators, who explain the clause thus: The quantity of treasure and booty amassed by the Chaldeans is regarded as a mass of pledges taken from the conquered nations a burden of debt to be discharged one day with heavy retribution. Pusey, "He does in truth increase against himself a strong pledge, whereby not others are debtors to him, but he is a debtor to Almighty God, who careth for the oppressed (Jer. xvii. 11)."

Vers. 7.—That shall bite thee. As thou hast cruelly treated others, so shall they, like fierce vipers (Jer. viii. 17), bite thee. Henderson, Delitzsch, Keil, and others see in the word a *double entendre* connected with the meaning of "lending on interest," so the "biting" would signify "exactng a debt with usury." Such a term for usury is not unknown to classical antiquity; thus (quoted by Henderson) Aristoph., 'Nub.' 12—

Δακνόμενος

ὑπὸ τῆς δαπάνης καὶ τῆς φάνης καὶ τῶν χρῶν.

"By the expenditure deep bitten,
And by the manger and the debts."

Lucan., 'Phars.,' i. 181, "Hinc usura vorax,

avidumque in tempore fœnus." The "biters" rising up suddenly are the Persians who destroyed the Babylonian power as quickly and as unexpectedly as it had arisen. *Vex*; literally, *shake violently*, like *διασείσθαι* (Luko iii. 14), or like the violent arrest of a creditor (Matt. xviii. 28); Septuagint, *οἱ ἐπιβουλοὶ σου*, "thy plotters;" Vulgate, *lacerantes te*. So of the mystic Babylon, her end comes suddenly (Rev. xviii. 10, 17).

Ver. 8.—The law of retaliation is asserted. **All the remnant of the people** (*peoples*) shall **spoil thee**. The remnant of the nations subjugated and plundered by the Chaldeans shall rise up against them. The downfall of Babylon was brought about chiefly by the combined forces of Media, Persia, and Elam (Isa. xxi. 2; Jer. l. 9, etc.); and it is certain that Nebuchadnezzar, at one period of his reign, conquered and annexed Elam; and there is every probability that he warred successfully against Media (see Jer. xxv. 9, 25; Judith i. 5, 13, etc.); and doubtless many of the neighbouring tribes, which had suffered under these oppressors, joined in the attack. **Because of men's blood**. Because of the cruelty and bloodshed of which the Babylonians were guilty. **For the violence of** (*done to*) **the land, of the city** (see ver. 17). The statement is general, but with special reference to the Chaldeans' treatment of Judæa and Jerusalem, as in Isa. xliii. 14; xlv. 4; Jer. li. 4, 11. Jerome takes "the violence of the land," etc., to mean the wickedness of the Jews themselves, which is to be punished. He is led astray by the Septuagint, which gives, *διὰ . . . ἀσεβείας γῆς*, "through . . . the iniquity of the land."

Vers. 9—11.—§ 9. *The second woe: for their avarice, violence, and cunning.*

Ver. 9.—**That coveteth an evil covetousness to his house**; better, *gaineth evil gains for his house*. The "house" is the royal family or dynasty, as in ver. 10; and the Chaldean is denounced for thinking to secure its stability and permanence by amassing godless gains. **That he may set his nest on high**. This is a figurative expression, denoting security as well as pride and self-confidence (comp. Numb. xxiv. 21; Job xxxix. 27, etc.; Jer. xlix. 16; Obad. 4), and denotes the various means which the Chaldeans employed to establish and secure their power (comp. Isa. xiv. 14). Some see in the words an allusion to the formidable fortifications raised by Nebuchadnezzar for the protection of Babylon, and the wonderful palace erected by him as a royal residence (see Rawlinson, 'Anc. Mon.,' iii. 340, etc., edit. 1865). It is certain that Nebuchadnezzar and other monarchs, after successful expeditious, turned their attention

to building and enriching towns, temples, and palaces (see Josephus, 'Cont. Ap.' i. 19. 7, etc.). **From the power of evil**; *from the hand of evil*; i.e. from all calamity.

Ver. 10.—The very means he took to secure his power shall prove his ruin. **Thou hast consulted shame to thy house**. By thy measures thou hast really determined upon, devised shame and disgrace for thy family; that is the result of all thy schemes. **By cutting off many people** (*peoples*). This is virtually correct. The verb in the present text is in the infinitive, and may depend upon the verb in the first clause. The versions read the past tense, *συνέτριπας, concidisti*. So the Chaldee and Syriac. This may be taken as the prophet's explanation of the shameful means employed. **Hast sinned against thy soul** (Prov. viii. 36; xx. 2). Thou hast endangered thy own life by provoking retribution. The Greek and Latin Versions have, "Thy soul hath sinned."

Ver. 11.—Even inanimate things shall raise their voice to denounce the Chaldeans' wickedness. **The stone shall cry out of the wall**. A proverbial expression to denote the horror with which their cruelty and oppression were regarded; it is particularly appropriate here, as these crimes had been perpetrated in connection with the buildings in which they prided themselves, and which were raised by the enforced labour of miserable captives and adorned with the fruits of fraud and pillage. Compare another application of the expression in Luke xix. 40. Jerome quotes Cicero, 'Orat. pro Marcello,' 10, "Parietes, medius fidius, ut mihi videntur, hujus curiæ tibi gratias agere gestiunt, quod brevi tempore futura sit illa auctoritas in his majorum suorum et suis sedibus" (comp. Eurip., 'Hippol.,' 418, *Τέμενά τ' οἴκων μή ποτε φθογγὴν ἀφῇ*; Ovid, 'Metam.,' ii. 696, "Tutus eas: lapis iste prius tua furta loquetur"). Wordsworth sees a literal fulfilment of these words in the appalling circumstance at Belshazzar's feast, when a hand wrote on the palace wall the doom of Babylon (Dan. v.). **And the beam out of the timber shall answer it**. "The tie-beam out of the timber work shall" take up the refrain, and "answer" the stone from the wall. The Hebrew word (*kaphis*) rendered "beam" is an *ἀπαξ λεγόμενον*. It is explained as above by St. Jerome, being referred to a verb meaning "to bind." Thus Symmachus and Theodoton translate it by *σύνδεσμος*. Henderson and others think it means "a half-brick," and Aquila renders it by *μάζα*, "something baked." But we have no evidence that the Babylonians in their sumptuous edifices interlaced timber and half-bricks (see Pusey, p. 419, note 23). The

but generally ended in drunkenness" (Rawlinson, 'Anc. Mon.' iii. 450, edit. 1865). Neither the Septuagint, nor the Syriac, nor the Coptic Version has any mention of wine in this passage. The Septuagint gives, *ὁ δὲ κατειδυμένος καὶ καταφρονήτης*, "the arrogant and the scorner." He is a proud man, neither keepeth he at home; a haughty man, he resteth not. His pride is always impelling him to new raids and conquests. This is quite the character of the later Chaldeans, and is consistent with the latter part of the verse. The comparison, then, is this: As wine raises the spirits and excites men to great efforts which in the end deceive them, so pride rouses these men to go on their insatiate course of conquest, which shall one day prove their ruin. The verb translated "keepeth at home" has the secondary sense of "being decorous;" hence the Vulgate gives, *Sic erit vir superbus, et non decorabitur*; i.e. as wine first exhilarates and then makes a man contemptible, so pride, which begins by exalting a man, ends by bringing him to ignominy. Others take the verb in the sense of "continueth not," explaining that the destruction of Babylon is here intimated. But what follows makes against this interpretation. The LXX. gives, Ἀνὴρ ἀλαζών, οὐδὲν μὴ περῶν, which Jerome, combining with it his own version, paraphrases, "Sic vir superbus non decorabitur, nec voluntatem suam perducet ad finem; et juxta Symmachum, οὐκ εὐπορήσει, hoc est, in rerum omnium erit penuria." Who enlargeth his desire as hell; Hebrew, Sheol. Hell is called insatiable (Prov. xxvii. 20; xxx. 16; Isa. v. 14). Is as death, which seizes all creatures and spares none. People; peoples.

Vers. 6—8.—§ 8. *The destruction of the Babylonians is announced by the mouth of the vanquished nations, who utter five woes against their oppressor. The first woe: for their rapacity.*

Ver. 6.—All these. All the nations and peoples who have been subjugated and barbarously treated by the Babylonians (comp. Isa. xiv. 4). A parable. A sententious song (see note on Micah ii. 4). A taunting proverb. The Anglican Version combines the two Hebrew words, which stand unconnected, into one notion. So the Vulgate, *loquellam ænigmatum*. The latter of the two generally means "riddle," "enigma;" the other word (*melitzah*) is by some translated, "a derisive satirical song;" or "an obscure, dark saying;" but, as Keil and Delitzsch have shown, is better understood of a bright, clear, brilliant speech. So the two terms signify "a speech containing enigmas," or a song which has

double or ambiguous meanings (comp. Prov. i. 6). Septuagint, Πρόβλημα εἰς διήγησιν αὐτοῦ. Woe (Nah. iii. 1). This is the first of the five "woes," which consist of three verses each, arranged in strophical form. Increaseth that which is not his. He continues to add to his conquests and possessions, which are not his, because they are acquired by injustice and violence. This is the first denunciation of the Chaldeans for their insatiable rapacity. How long? The question comes in interjectionally—How long is this state of things to continue unpunished (comp. Ps. vi. 3; xc. 13)? That ladeth himself with thick clay; Septuagint, βαρύνων τὸν κλοιὸν αὐτοῦ στιβαρῶς, "who loadeth his yoke heavily;" Vulgate, *aggravat contra se densum lutum*. The renderings of the Anglican and Latin Versions signify that the riches and spoils with which the conquerors load themselves are no more than burdens of clay, which are in themselves worthless, and only harass the bearers. The Greek Version seems to point to the weight of the yoke imposed by the Chaldeans on them; but Jerome explains it differently, "Ad hoc tantum sævit ut devoret et iniquitatis et prædæ onere quasi gravissima torque se deprimat." The difficulty lies in the ἀπαξ λεγόμενον *ablit*, which forms an enigma, or dark saying, because, taken as two words, it might pass current for "thick clay," or "a mass of dirt," while regarded as one word it means "a mass of pledges," "many pledges." That the latter is the signification primarily intended is the view of many modern commentators, who explain the clause thus: The quantity of treasure and booty amassed by the Chaldeans is regarded as a mass of pledges taken from the conquered nations a burden of debt to be discharged one day with heavy retribution. Pusey, "He does in truth increase against himself a strong pledge, whereby not others are debtors to him, but he is a debtor to Almighty God, who careth for the oppressed (Jer. xvii. 11)."

Ver. 7.—That shall bite thee. As thou hast cruelly treated others, so shall they, like fierce vipers (Jer. viii. 17), bite thee. Henderson, Delitzsch, Keil, and others see in the word a *double entendre* connected with the meaning of "lending on interest," so the "biting" would signify "exacting a debt with usury." Such a term for usury is not unknown to classical antiquity; thus (quoted by Henderson) Aristoph., 'Nub.,' 12—

Δακνόμενος

ὑπὸ τῆς δαπάνης καὶ τῆς φάτης καὶ τῶν χρῶν.

"By the expenditure deep bitten,
And by the manger and the debts."

Lucan., 'Phars.,' i. 181, "Hinc usura vorax,

avidumque in tempore fœnus." The "biters" rising up suddenly are the Persians who destroyed the Babylonian power as quickly and as unexpectedly as it had arisen. *Vex*; literally, *shake violently*, like διαείσθητε (Luke iii. 14), or like the violent arrest of a creditor (Matt. xviii. 28); Septuagint, of ἐπιβουλοὶ σου, "thy plotters;" Vulgate, *lacerantes te*. So of the mystic Babylon, her end comes suddenly (Rev. xviii. 10, 17).

Ver. 8.—The law of retaliation is asserted. **All the remnant of the people (peoples) shall spoil thee.** The remnant of the nations subjugated and plundered by the Chaldeans shall rise up against them. The downfall of Babylon was brought about chiefly by the combined forces of Media, Persia, and Elam (Isa. xxi. 2; Jer. l. 9, etc.); and it is certain that Nebuchadnezzar, at one period of his reign, conquered and annexed Elam; and there is every probability that he warred successfully against Media (see Jer. xxv. 9, 25; Judith i. 5, 13, etc.); and doubtless many of the neighbouring tribes, which had suffered under these oppressors, joined in the attack. **Because of men's blood.** Because of the cruelty and bloodshed of which the Babylonians were guilty. **For the violence of (done to) the land, of the city** (see ver. 17). The statement is general, but with special reference to the Chaldeans' treatment of Judæa and Jerusalem, as in Isa. xliii. 14; xlv. 4; Jer. li. 4, 11. Jerome takes "the violence of the land," etc., to mean the wickedness of the Jews themselves, which is to be punished. He is led astray by the Septuagint, which gives, διὰ . . . ἀσεβείας γῆς, "through . . . the iniquity of the land."

Vers. 9—11.—§ 9. *The second woe: for their avarice, violence, and cunning.*

Ver. 9.—That coveteth an evil covetousness to his house; better, *gaineth evil gains for his house*. The "house" is the royal family or dynasty, as in ver. 10; and the Chaldean is denounced for thinking to secure its stability and permanence by amassing godless gains. **That he may set his nest on high.** This is a figurative expression, denoting security as well as pride and self-confidence (comp. Numb. xxiv. 21; Job xxxix. 27, etc.; Jer. xlix. 16; Obad. 4), and denotes the various means which the Chaldeans employed to establish and secure their power (comp. Isa. xiv. 14). Some see in the words an allusion to the formidable fortifications raised by Nebuchadnezzar for the protection of Babylon, and the wondrous palace erected by him as a royal residence (see Rawlinson, 'Anc. Mon.,' iii. 340, etc., edit. 1865). It is certain that Nebuchadnezzar and other monarchs, after successful expeditions, turned their attention

to building and enriching towns, temples, and palaces (see Josephus, 'Cont. Ap.,' i. 19. 7, etc.). **From the power of evil; from the hand of evil; i.e. from all calamity.**

Ver. 10.—The very means he took to secure his power shall prove his ruin. **Thou hast consulted shame to thy house.** By thy measures thou hast really determined upon, devised shame and disgrace for thy family; that is the result of all thy schemes. **By cutting off many people (peoples).** This is virtually correct. The verb in the present text is in the infinitive, and may depend upon the verb in the first clause. The versions read the past tense, *συνετέραντας, concidisti*. So the Chaldee and Syriac. This may be taken as the prophet's explanation of the shameful means employed. **Hast sinned against thy soul** (Prov. viii. 36; xx. 2). Thou hast endangered thy own life by provoking retribution. The Greek and Latin Versions have, "Thy soul hath sinned."

Ver. 11.—Even inanimate things shall raise their voice to denounce the Chaldeans' wickedness. **The stone shall cry out of the wall.** A proverbial expression to denote the horror with which their cruelty and oppression were regarded; it is particularly appropriate here, as these crimes had been perpetrated in connection with the buildings in which they prided themselves, and which were raised by the enforced labour of miserable captives and adorned with the fruits of fraud and pillage. Compare another application of the expression in Luke xix. 40. Jerome quotes Cicero, 'Orat. pro Marcello,' 10, "Parietes, medius fidius, ut mihi videntur, hujus curiæ tibi gratias agere gestiunt, quod brevi tempore futura sit illa auctoritas in his majorum suorum et suis sedibus" (comp. Eurip., 'Hippol.,' 418, Τέρεμνά τ' οἰκῶν μή ποτε φθογγὴν ἀφῆ; Ovid, 'Metam.,' ii. 696, "Tutus eas: lapis iste prius tua furta loquetur"). Wordsworth sees a literal fulfilment of these words in the appalling circumstance at Belshazzar's feast, when a hand wrote on the palace wall the doom of Babylon (Dan. v.). **And the beam out of the timber shall answer it.** "The tie-beam out of the timber work shall" take up the refrain, and "answer" the stone from the wall. The Hebrew word (*kaphis*) rendered "beam" is an ἀπαξ λεγόμενον. It is explained as above by St. Jerome, being referred to a verb meaning "to bind." Thus Symmachus and Theodoton translate it by σύνδεσμος. Henderson and others think it means "a half-brick," and Aquila renders it by μᾶζα, "something baked." But we have no evidence that the Babylonians in their sumptuous edifices interlaced timber and half-bricks (see Pusey, p. 419, note 23). The

LXX. gives, *κάρβαρος ἐκ ξύλου*, a beetle, a worm, from the wood. Hence, referring to Christ on the cross, St. Ambrose ('Orat. de Obiit. Theod.,' 46) writes, "Adoravit illum qui pependit in ligno, illum inquam qui sicut soarabæus clamavit, ut persecutoribus suis peccata condonaret." St. Cyril argues that tie-beams were called *κάρβαροι* from their clinging to and supporting wall or roof. Some reason for this supposition is gained by the fact that the word *canterius*, or *cantherius*, is used in Latin in the sense of "rafter."

Vers. 12—14.—§ 10. *The third woe: for founding their power in blood and devastation.*

Ver. 12.—The Chaldeans are denounced for the use they make of the wealth acquired by violence. **That buildeth a town with blood** (Micah iii. 10, where see note). They used the riches gained by the murder of conquered nations in enlarging and beautifying their own city. **By iniquity.** To get means for these buildings, and to carry on their construction, they used injustice and tyranny of every kind. That mercy was not an attribute of Nebuchadnezzar we learn from Daniel's advice to him (iv. 27). The captives and deported inhabitants of conquered countries were used as slaves in these public works (see an illustration of this from Koyunjik, Rawlinson's 'Anc. Mon.,' i. 497). What was true of Assyria was no less true of Babylon. Professor Rawlinson (ii. 528, etc.) tells of the extreme misery and almost entire ruin of subject kingdoms. Not only are lands wasted, cattle and effects carried off, the people punished by the beheading or impalement of hundreds or thousands, but sometimes wholesale deportation of the inhabitants is practised, tens or hundreds of thousands being carried away captive. "The military successes of the Babylonians," he says (iii. 332), "were accompanied with needless violence, and with outrages not unusual in the East, which the historian must nevertheless regard as at once crimes and follies. The transplantation of conquered races may, perhaps, have been morally defensible, notwithstanding the sufferings which it involved. But the mutilations of prisoners, the weary imprisonments, the massacre of non-combatants, the refinement of cruelty shown in the execution of children before the eyes of their fathers,—these and similar atrocities, which are recorded of the Babylonians, are wholly without excuse, since they did not so much terrify as exasperate the conquered nations, and thus rather endangered than added strength or security to the empire. A savage and inhuman temper is betrayed by these harsh punishments, one that led its possessors to

sacrifice interest to vengeance, and the peace of a kingdom to a tiger-like thirst for blood . . . we cannot be surprised that, when final judgment was denounced against Babylon, it was declared to be sent in a great measure 'because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwelt therein.'"

Ver. 13.—Is it not of the Lord of hosts? Hath not God ordained that this, about to be mentioned, should be the issue of all this evil splendour? **That the people shall labour in the very fire;** rather, *that the peoples labour for the fire;* i.e. that the Chaldeans and such like nations expended all this toil on cities and fortresses only to supply food for fire, which, the prophet sees, will be their end (Isa. xl. 16). Jeremiah (li. 58) applies these and the following words to the destruction of Babylon. This is indeed to **weary themselves for very vanity.** Babylon, when it was finally taken, was given over to fire and sword (comp. Jer. l. 32; li. 30, etc.).

Ver. 14.—The prophet now gives the reason of the vanity of these human undertakings. **For the earth shall be filled, etc.** The words are from Isa. xi. 9, with some little alterations (comp. Numb. xiv. 21). This is one of the passages which attests "the community of testimony," as it is called, among the prophets. To take a few out of many cases that offer, Isa. ii. 2—4 compared with Micah iv. 1—4; Isa. xiii. 19—22 with Jer. l. 39, etc.; Isa. lii. 7 with Nah. i. 15; Jer. xlix. 7—22 with Obad. 1—4; Amos ix. 13 with Joel iii. 18 (Ladd, 'Doctrine of Scripture,' i. 145). All the earth is to be filled with, and to recognize, the glory of God as manifested in the overthrow of ungodliness; and therefore Babylon, and the world-power of which she is a type, must be subdued and perish. This announcement looks forward to the establishment of Messiah's kingdom, which "shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and shall stand for ever" (Dan. ii. 44). We must remember how intimately in the minds of Eastern heathens the prosperity of a nation was connected with its local deities. Nothing in their eyes could show more perfectly the impotence of a god than his failing to protect his worshippers from destruction (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 33, etc.). The glory of Jehovah and his sovereignty over the earth would be seen and acknowledged in the overthrow of Babylon, the powerful, victorious nation. **As the waters cover the sea.** As the waters fill the basin of the sea (Gen. i. 22; 1 Kings vii. 23, where the great vessel of ablution is called "the sea").

Vers. 15—17.—§ 11. *The fourth woe: for base and degrading treatment of subject nations.*

Ver. 15.—Not only do the Chaldeans oppress and pillage the peoples, but they expose them to the vilest derision and contumely. The prophet uses figures taken from the conduct produced by intemperance. **That giveth his neighbour drink.** The Chaldeans behaved to the conquered nations like one who gives his neighbour intoxicating drink to stupefy his faculties and expose him to shame (comp. ver. 5). The literal drunkenness of the Chaldeans is not the point here. **That putteth thy bottle to him.** If this translation is received, the clause is merely a strengthened repetition of the preceding with a sudden change of person. But it may be rendered, "pouring out, or mixing, thy fury," or, as Jerome, "mittens fel suum," "adding thy poison thereto." This last version seems most suitable, introducing a kind of climax, the "poison" being some drug added to increase the intoxicating power. Thus: he gives his neighbour drink, and this drugged, and in the end makes him drunken also. For the second clause the Septuagint gives, *ἀνατροπῇ βολερᾷ, subversione turbida*, and the versions collected by Jerome are only unanimous in differing from one another. **That thou mayest look on their nakedness.** There seems to be an allusion to the case of Noah (Gen. ix. 21, etc.); but the figure is meant to show the abject state to which the conquered nations were reduced, when, prostrated by fraud and treachery, they were mocked and spurned and covered with ignominy (comp. Nah. iii. 5, 11). So the mystic Babylon is said to have made the nations drink of her cup (Rev. xiv. 8; xvii. 2; xviii. 3).

Ver. 16.—Just retribution falls on Babylon. Thou art filled with shame for glory. Thou art satiated, indeed, but with shame, not with glory. Thou hast revelled in thy shameless conduct to the defenceless, but this redounds to thy dishonour, and will only add to the disgrace of thy fall. The Septuagint joins this clause with part of the following: "Drink thou also fulness of shame for glory." Drink thou also the cup of wrath and retribution. Let thy foreskin be uncovered. Be thou in turn treated with the same ignominy with which thou hast treated others, the figure in ver. 15 being here repeated (comp. Lam. iv. 21). It is otherwise translated, "Be thou," or "show thyself, uncircumcised." This, in a Jew's eyes, would be the very climax of degradation. The Vulgate has *conspire*, from a slightly different reading. The LXX., *Καθὼς σαλεύθητι, καὶ σεῖσθητι*, "Be tossed, O my heart, and shaken." The present text is much more appropriate, though the Syriac and Arabic follow the Greek here. **The cup of the Lord's right**

hand. Retributive vengeance is often thus figured (comp. Ps. lx. 3; lxxv. 8; Isa. li. 17, 22; Jer. xxv. 15, etc.). **Shall be turned unto thee.** God himself shall bring round the cup of suffering and vengeance to thee in thy turn, and thou shalt be made to drink it to the dregs, so that shameful spewing (*soul shame*) shall be on thy glory. The *ἀπαὶ λεγόμενον kikalon* is regarded as an intensive signifying "the utmost ignominy" (*ἀτριμία*, Septuagint), or as two words, or a compound word, meaning *vomitibus ignominia* (Vulgate). It was probably used by the prophet to suggest both ideas.

Ver. 17.—**For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee;** LXX., *ἀρέσια τοῦ Λιβάνου: iniquitas Libani* (Vulgate). It would be plainer if translated, "the violence against," or "practised on, Lebanon," as the sentence refers to the devastation inflicted by the Chaldeans on the forests of Lebanon (comp. Isa. xiv. 8; xxxvii. 24). Jerome confines the expression in the text to the demolition of the temple at Jerusalem in the construction of which much cedar was employed; others take Lebanon as a figure for Palestine generally, or for Jerusalem itself; but it is best understood literally. The same devastation which the Chaldeans made in Lebanon shall "cover," overwhelm, and destroy them. **And the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid.** The introduction of the relative is not required, and the passage may be better translated, *And the destruction of beasts made them* (others read "thee") *afraid*. Septuagint, "And the wretchedness of the beasts shall affright thee." Jerome, in his commentary, renders, "Et vastitas animalium opprimet te." The meaning is that the wholesale destruction of the wild animals of Lebanon, occasioned by the operations of the Chaldeans, shall be visited upon this people. They warred not only against men, but against the lower creatures too; and for this retributive punishment awaited them. **Because of men's blood, etc.** The reason rendered in ver. 8 is here repeated. Of the land, etc., means "toward" or "against" the land.

Vers. 18—20.—§ 12. *The fifth woe: for their idolatry.*

Ver. 18.—The final woe is introduced by an ironical question. The Chaldeans trusted in their gods, and attributed all their success to the divine protection; the prophet asks—What good is this trust? **What profiteth the graven image!** (comp. Isa. xlv. 9, 10; Jer. ii. 11). What is the good of all the skill and care that the artist has lavished on the idol? (For "graven" or "molten," see note on Nah. i. 14.) **And a (even the) teacher of lies.** The idol is so termed because it calls itself God and encourages its wor-

shippers in lying delusions, in entire contrast to Jehovah who is Truth. From some variation in reading the LXX. gives, *φαντασίαν ψευδῆ*, and Jerome, "imaginem falsam" (comp. Jer. x. 14). **Trusteth therein.** The prophet derides the folly which supposes that the idol has powers denied to the man who made it (Isa. xxix. 16). **Dumb idols;** literally, *dumb nothings*. So 1 Cor. xii. 2, *ἰδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα* (comp. 1 Cor. x. 19; Ps. cxv. 5, etc.). There is a paronomasia in the Hebrew, *elilim illelim*.

Ver. 19.—The prophet now denounces the folly of the maker and worshipper of idols. With this and the following verses compare the taunts in Isa. xlv. 9—20. **The wood.** From which he carves the image. **Awake!** Come to my help, as good men pray to the living God (comp. Ps. xxxv. 23; xlv. 23; Isa. li. 9). **Arise, it shall teach!** The Hebrew is better rendered, *Arise! it teach!* i.e. shall *this* teach?—an emphatic

question expressing astonishment. Vulgate, *Numquid ipse docere poterit?* The LXX. paraphrases, *καὶ αὐτὸ ἐστὶ φαντασία*, "and itself is a phantasy." It is laid over. "It" is again emphatic, as if pointed at with the finger. Hence the Vulgate, *Eccē iste cooperatus est;* and Henderson, "There it is, overlaid," etc. The wooden figure was encased in gold or silver plates (see Isa. xl. 19; Dan. iii. 1).

Ver. 20.—The prophet contrasts the majesty of Jehovah with these dumb and lifeless idols. **His holy temple.** Not the shrine at Jerusalem, but heaven itself (see Ps. xi. 4, and note on Micah i. 2). **Let all the earth keep silence before him.** Like subjects in the presence of their king, awaiting his judgment and the issue to which all these things tend (comp. ver. 14; Ps. lxxvi. 8, etc.; Zeph. i. 7; Zech. ii. 13). Septuagint, *Εὐλαβέσθω ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ*, κ.τ.λ., "Let all the earth fear before him."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The prophet upon his watch-tower.* I. **THE OUT-LOOKING PROPHET.** (Ver. 1.) Having spread out before Jehovah his complaint, Habakkuk, determined to stand upon his watch-tower or station himself upon his fortress, and to look forth to see what Jehovah would speak within him, and what reply in consequence he should give to his own complaint. The words indicate the frame of mind to be cherished and the course of conduct to be pursued by him who would hold communion with and obtain communications from God. There must be: 1. **Holy resolution.** No soul can come to speaking terms with God without personal effort. Certainly God may speak to men who make no efforts to obtain from him either a hearing or an answer, but in general those only find God who seek him with the whole heart (Ps. cxix. 2). Prophets frequently received revelations which they had not sought (Gen. xii. 7; Exod. iii. 2; xxiv. 1; Isa. vi. 1; Ezek. i. 1; Dan. vii. 1), but as often the Divine communications were imparted in answer to specific seeking (Gen. xv. 13; Exod. xxxiii. 18; Dan. ix. 2; Acts x. 9). In the same way may God discover himself, disclose his truth, and dispense his grace to individuals, as he did to Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix. 1—6), without their previous exertions to procure such distinguished favours; but in religion, as in other matters, it is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich (2 Pet. i. 10). 2. **Spiritual elevation.** He who would commune with God must, like Habakkuk, "stand upon his watch-tower, and station himself upon his fortress," not literally and bodily, but figuratively and spiritually. It is not necessary to suppose that Habakkuk went up to any steep and lofty place in order the better to withdraw himself from the noise and bustle of the world, and the more easily to fix his mind on heavenly things and direct his soul's eye Godward. Abraham certainly was on the summit of Moriah when Jehovah appeared to him; Moses was called up to the top of Sinai to meet with God (Exod. xxiv. 1; xxxiv. 2); Jehovah revealed himself to Elijah upon the mount of Horeb (1 Kings xix. 11); Balaam went to "an high place" to look out for a revelation from God (Numb. xxiii. 3); the disciples were on the crest of Hermon when Christ was transfigured before them (Matt. xvii. 1); and even Christ himself spent whole nights in prayer with God among the hills (John vi. 16). Local elevation and corporeal isolation may be usefully employed to aid the heart in abstracting itself from mundane things; yet this only is the elevation and isolation that brings the soul in contact with God (Matt. vi. 6). When David prayed he retired into the inner chamber of his heart (Ps. xix. 14; xlix. 3) and lifted up his soul to God (Ps. xxv. 1). 3. **Confident expectation.** Habakkuk believed that his prayers and complaints would not

pass unattended to by God. He never doubted that God would reply to his supplications and interrogations. So he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. xi. 6). It was David's habit, after directing his prayer to God, to look up expecting an answer (Ps. v. 3), and it ought to be the practice of Christians first to ask in faith (Jas. i. 6), and then to confidently hope for an answer (Matt. xxi. 22; Mark xi. 24; 1 John v. 14). 4. *Patient attention.* Though Habakkuk had no doubt as to the fact that God would speak to him, he possessed no assurance either as to the time when or as to the manner in which that speaking would take place. Hence he resolved to possess his soul in patience and keep an attentive outlook. So David waited on and watched for God with patient hope and close observation (Ps. lxxii. 5; cxxx. 5). So Paul exhorted Christians to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. iv. 2). Many fail to obtain responses from God, because they either are not sufficiently attentive to discern the tokens by which God speaks to his people, or lack the patience to wait till he chooses to break silence. 5. *Earnest introspection.* The want of this is another frequent cause of failure on the part of those who would but do not hear God speak. Habakkuk understood that if God answered him it would be by his Spirit speaking in him, and that accordingly he required not to watch for "signs" in the firmament, in the earth, or in the sea, but to listen to the secret whisperings that he heard within himself. So David exhorted others to commune with their own hearts upon their bed (as doubtless he himself did), if they would know the mind of God (Ps. iv. 4); and Asaph, following his example, observed the same godly practice (Ps. lxxvii. 6). While God has furnished lessons for all in the pages of nature and revelation, it is in the domain of the inner man, enlightened by his Word and taught by his Spirit, that his teaching for the individual is to be sought.

II. THE IN-SPEAKING GOD. (Ver. 2.) Habakkuk had not long to wait for the oracle he expected; and neither would modern petitioners belong without answers were they waiting more like Habakkuk's. Three things were announced to the prophet. 1. *That he should receive a vision.* Jehovah would not leave his dark problem unsolved, would afford him such a glimpse into the future of the Chaldean power as would effectually dispel all his doubts and fears, would unveil to him the different destinies of the righteous and the wicked in such a way as to enable him calmly to endure until the end; and exactly so has the Christian obtained in the Bible such light upon the mystery of Providence as helps him to look forward to the future for its full solution. The vision about to be granted to Habakkuk was (1) definite, *i.e.* for an appointed time, and so is the vision now granted to the Christian for a time as well known to God (though not to the Christian) as any moment in the past has been; (2) distant, *i.e.* to be fulfilled after a longer or shorter interval, and so has the day of the clearing up of the mystery of providence for the Christian been "after a long time;" but still (3) certain, *i.e.* it would surely come to pass, and so will all that God has revealed in Scripture concerning the different destinies of the righteous and the wicked come to pass. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not God's Word (Matt. xxiv. 35). 2. *That he should write the vision.* Whether a literal writing upon a tablet (Ewald, Pusey) was intended, as Isaiah (viii. 1; xxx. 8) and Jeremiah (xxx. 2) were directed to write down the communications received by them from God; or whether it was merely a figurative writing (Hengstenberg, Keil) that was meant, as in the case of Daniel (xii. 4); the intention manifestly was that Habakkuk should publish the vision he was about to receive—publish it in terms so clear and unambiguous that persons who only gave it a casual glance would have no difficulty in understanding it. This has been done, not with reference to Habakkuk's vision merely, but as regards the whole Bible, which is not only "all plain to him that understandeth" (Prov. viii. 9), but is able to "make wise the simple" (Ps. xix. 7), and guide in safety "the wayfaring man, though a fool" (Isa. xxxv. 8). The object contemplated by the writing (literal or figurative) of Habakkuk's vision was (1) the comfort of God's people in Judah during the period of waiting that should intervene between then and the day of their enemy's overthrow; and (2) the interpretation of the vision when the incidents occurred to which it referred. The same purposes are subserved by the Word of God, and especially by those prophetic parts which foretell the destruction of the enemies, and the salvation of the people, of God. 3. *That he should wait for the vision.* It might be delayed,

but it should come. Hence he should possess his soul in patience. So should Christians wait patiently for the coming of the Lord for their final redemption and for the overthrow of all the Church's foes (Jas. v. 8). The contents of the vision are narrated in the verses which follow.

LESSONS. 1. The dignity of man, as a being who can converse with God; the condescension of God in that he stoops to talk with man. 2. The duty and the profit of reflection and meditation; the sin and loss of those who never commune with their own hearts. 3. The simplicity of the Bible a testimony to its divinity; had it been man's book it would not have been so easy to understand. 4. The certainty that Scripture prediction will be fulfilled; the expectation of this should comfort the saints; the realization of this will vindicate God.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The unjust man and the just: a contrast.* I. THEIR CHARACTERS. 1. *The unjust man.* (1) Proud or "puffed up" in soul. The heart the seat and source of all sin (Jer. xvii. 9; Mark vii. 21); pride its origin and essence (Ps. x. 4; lii. 7; Prov. xvi. 5; Mal. iv. 1). Arrogant haughtiness and self-sufficiency characteristic of the carnal heart (Rom. i. 30; Eph. iv. 17). These qualities had marked the Assyrian (Isa. x. 12), and were to distinguish the Chaldean (ver. 5) conqueror. The Assyrians destroyed themselves in all who oppose or decline from the spirit of Christ (1 Cor. v. 2; Phil. ii. 3; 3 John 9). They will eventually culminate in antichrist (2 Thess. ii. 4). (2) Wicked or ungodly in life. His soul, being thus puffed up with pride, is not "upright" or "straight" within him; is not free from turning and trickery; does not in its thoughts, feelings, words, and actions adhere to the straight path of integrity, but loves "crooked ways" and devious roads, and thus turns aside unto iniquity (Ps. cxxv. 5). Again true of the Chaldean, whose iniquities—drunkenness, boasting, restless ambition, insatiable lust of conquest, relentless oppression—are specifically enumerated (ver. 5), it holds good also of the natural heart and carnal mind (Jer. xlii. 10; 2 Tim. iii. 2). (3) Rejected or "condemned" by God. This implied in the fact that he is not a just or "justified" man. 2. *The just man.* (1) Believing in soul. As pride or trust in self is the animating principle of the wicked, so is faith or trust in God that of the good. Faith the root of all moral and spiritual excellence in the soul. As the proud soul stands aloof from God, the humble heart cleaves to God, as "that which is straight, being applied to what is straight, touches and is touched by it everywhere." (2) Upright in life. As pride leads to disobedience, faith leads to obedience. Hence Paul speaks of "the obedience of faith" (Rom. i. 5), i.e. such obedience as is inspired by faith. The soul that trusts God, walks in his ways, avoids sin, and endeavours to order his conversation aright (Ps. i. 23; 1 Pet. ii. 5). Faith and holiness are in the gospel scheme inseparably connected (John xv. 8; Rom. xii. 13; Eph. ii. 10; Titus iii. 8). (3) Accepted by God. Paul in Romans (i. 17), and the writer to the Hebrews (x. 38), by quoting this statement from Habakkuk, teach that the "just" and the "justified" are one—that the just in the Scripture sense of that expression are those legally and spiritually righteous before God.

II. THEIR DESTINIES. 1. *That of the unjust—death.* Though not stated, this may be inferred. (1) The soul of which the inward essence is pride and self-sufficiency is destitute of spiritual life, is dead. "Swollen with pride, it shuts out faith, and with it the presence of God" (Pusey); and "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6). (2) The man who lives in sin is dead while he liveth (1 Tim. v. 6)—dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. ii. 1), and so long as he remains a stranger to the principle of faith which the breath of God's Spirit alone can awaken in the unrenowned, he must continue "dead," i.e. incapable of actions spiritually good. (3) The sinner not accepted before God is of necessity condemned by God; and to be under condemnation is to be "legally dead." 2. *That of the just—life.* Not necessarily life physical and temporal, because the "justified" die no less than their neighbours (Heb. ix. 27); but (1) life legal and judicial—"he that believeth shall never come into condemnation" (John iii. 18; v. 24; Rom. viii. 1); (2) life moral and spiritual, which Scripture connects with faith in God and in his Son Christ Jesus as a stream with its fountain, as a tree with its root, as an effect with its cause (Acts xv. 9; xxvi. 18; 2 Thess. i. 11; Gal. ii. 20); and (3) life indestructible and eternal, this being always a quality ascribed to the life which the justified man receives through his faith (John iii. 36;

v. 24; xi. 26; 1 John ii. 25; v. 11; 1 Tim. i. 16; vi. 12; Titus i. 2; iii. 7). All other life but that which Christ bestows is temporal and perishing.

Vers. 6—8.—*A parable of woes: 1. Woe to the rapacious! I. THEIR PERSONS IDENTIFIED.* 1. *The Chaldean nation*, in its kings and people, who were animated by a lust of conquest, which impelled them upon wars of aggression. 2. *The enemies of the Church of God and of Jesus Christ*, whether national or individual, in whom the same spirit dwells as resided in the Babylonian power. God's promises and threatenings in the Bible have almost always a wider sweep and a larger reference than simply to those to whom they were originally addressed.

II. *THEIR SIN SPECIFIED.* Spoliation, robbery, theft, plunder. A wickedness: 1. *Unjust*; as all theft is. In heaping up the spoils of plundered nations, the Chaldean was increasing what was not his; and the same is done by those who store up money or goods gotten by fraud or oppression. What men acquire by violence or guile is not theirs. How much of the wealth of modern nations and of private persons is of this character may not be told; to assert that none is may be charity, but is not truth. The practices complained of by James (v. 4—6) have not been unknown since his day. 2. *Insatiable*; as the lust of possession is prone to be. The plundered nations are depicted as asking—How long is this devastating power to go on despoiling peoples weaker than himself? Is his career of rapine never to be arrested? Will his thirst for what belongs to others never be quenched? So “he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase” (Eccles. v. 10). The passion for heaping up ill-gotten gains grows by what it feeds on. Those who determine to enrich themselves at the expense of others seldom know when to stop. Almost never do they cry, “Enough!” till retribution, overtaking them, strips them of all. 3. *Vain*; as all sin will ultimately prove to be. The foreign property taken by the Chaldean from other nations, the prophet characterizes as “pledges” exacted from them by an unmerciful creditor, perhaps intending thereby to suggest that the Chaldean would be “compelled to disgorge them in due time” (Keil). The idea, true of all man's earthly possessions (Job i. 21)—

“Whate'er we fondly call our own
Belongs to heaven's great Lord;
The blessings lent us for a day
Are soon to be restored.”

—is much more applicable to wealth acquired by fraud or oppression (Jer. xvii. 11). The day will come when, if not by the robbed themselves, by God the rightful Owner of the wealth (Hag. ii. 8) and the strong Champion of the oppressed (Ps. x. 18), it will be demanded back with interest (Job xx. 15).

III. *THEIR PUNISHMENT DESCRIBED.* 1. *Certain.* “Shall not all these take up a parable against him?” The overthrow of the Chaldean is so surely an event of the future that the very nations and peoples he has plundered, or the believing remnant amongst them, will yet raise a derisive song over his miserable and richly merited fall; and just as surely will the rapacious plunderer of others be destroyed, and his destruction be a source of satisfaction to beholders (Prov. i. 18, 19). 2. *Heavy.* The wealth he has stolen from others will be to him as a “burden of thick clay” that will first crush him to the earth, making the heart within him wretched and the spirit sordid and grovelling, and finally sink him into a hopeless and cheerless grave (Eccles. ii. 22, 23; vi. 2; Ps. xlix. 14). 3. *Sudden.* Retribution should fall upon the Chaldean in a moment—his biters should rise up suddenly, and his destroyers wake up as from a sleep to harass him (ver. 7); and in such fashion will the end be of “very one that is greedy of gain and taketh away the life of the owners thereof” (Prov. i. 19); he may “spend his days in wealth,” but “in a moment he shall go down to the grave” (Job xxi. 13); he may “heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay,” but he shall “lie down and not be gathered;” he shall “open his eyes, and behold! he is not” (Job xxvii. 16, 19). 4. *Retributive.* The Chaldean should be spoiled by the nations he had spoiled. So will violent and rapacious men reap what themselves have sowed. How often is it seen that money goes as it comes! Acquired by speculation or gambling, it is lost by the same means. He who robs others by violence or fraud not unfrequently is himself robbed by another stronger or craftier than he. “Whatsoever a man soweth,” etc. (Gal. vi. 7).

LESSONS. 1. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. xii. 17). 2. "Do violence to no man" (Luke iii. 14). 3. "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid" (Rom. xiii. 4).

Vers. 9—11.—*A parable of woes*: 2. *Woe to the covetous*! I. *THEIR AIM*. 1. *Personal comfort*. Suggested by the term "nest," which for the Chaldean meant Babylon with its palaces, and for the individual signifies his mansion or dwelling-place (Job xxix. 18). Josephus ('Ant.,' x. 11. 1) states that Nebuchadnezzar built for himself a palace "to describe the vast height and immense riches of which would be too much for him (Josephus) to attempt;" and Nebuchadnezzar himself tells us in his inscription that he constructed "a great temple, a house of admiration for men, a lofty pile, a palace of his royalty for the land of Babylon," "a large edifice for the residence of his royalty," and that within it were collected as an adornment "trophies, abundance, royal treasures" ('Records of the Past,' v. 130, etc.). Men who set their hearts on riches mostly do so under the impression that these will add to their comfort and increase their happiness—to them comfort and happiness being synonymous with large, beautiful, and well-plenished houses (Ps. xlix. 11). 2. *Social distinction*. Pointed at by the word "high," in which notions of elevation and visibility are involved. For one rich man that covets wealth to augment his bodily comfort or mental gratification, ten seek it for the lustre in others' eyes it is supposed to give. The upper classes in society are the wealthy; the under or lower classes are the poor. None notice the wise man who is poor (Eccles. ix. 16); the rich fool stands upon a pedestal and receives the homage of admiring crowds (Prov. xiv. 20). The same delusive standard is employed in estimating the greatness of nations. Wealth is commonly accepted by the world as the true criterion of rank. Rich nations take precedence of poor ones. In God's sight money is the smallest distinction that either country or person can wear. 3. *Permanent safety*. Stated by the clause, "that he may be delivered from the power [or, 'the hand'] of evil." The Babylonian sovereigns as individuals and as rulers held the delusion that the best defence against personal or national calamity was accumulated treasure (Prov. x. 15; xviii. 11). Nebuchadnezzar in particular used his "evil gain" for the fortification of his metropolis, building around it "the great walls" which his father Nabopolassar had begun but not completed, furnishing these with great gates of ikki and pine woods and coverings of copper, to keep off enemies from the front, and rearing up a tall tower like a mountain, so rendering it, as he supposed, "invincible" ('Records of the Past,' v. 126, etc.). In a like spirit men imagine that "money is a defence" (Eccles. vii. 12), and that he who has a large balance at his banker's need fear no evil. But "riches profit not in the day of wrath" (Prov. xi. 4); and just as certainly as Nebuchadnezzar's "eagle's nest" was not beyond the reach of the Persian falconer, so neither will the wicked man's silver and gold be able to deliver him when his end is come (Jer. li. 13; Ezek. vii. 19; Zeph. i. 18).

II. *THEIR SIN*. 1. *Against God*. This evident from the nature of the offence, which God's Law condemns (Exod. xx. 17), as well as from the evils to which it leads—oppression, pride, self-sufficiency, and self-destruction. 2. *Against others*. In carrying out its wicked schemes covetousness usually involves others in ruin. It impelled the Chaldean to cut off many peoples. It drives those whom it inspires to deeds of violence, robbery, oppression, and murder (Prov. i. 19; 1 Tim. vi. 10). 3. *Against themselves*. The covetous burden their own souls with guilt; and so, while professing to seek their own happiness and safety, are in reality accelerating their own misery and destruction.

III. *THEIR FATE*. 1. *Disappointment*. Whereas the covetous man expects to set his house on high, he usually ends by involving it in shame (Prov. xv. 27); instead of promoting its stability, as the result of all his scheming he commonly accomplishes its overthrow (Prov. xi. 28). 2. *Vengeance*. Likening the covetous nation or man to a house-builder, the prophet says that "the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it," as it were uniting their voices in a solemn cry to Heaven for vengeance on the avaricious despoiler. Almost literally fulfilled in the history of Belshazzar (Dan. vi. 24—28), the words are often verified in the experiences of communities and individuals who are destroyed by that very prosperity in which they have trusted (Prov. i. 32).

LESSON. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke xii. 15).

Vers. 12—14.—*A parable of woes : 3. Woe to the ambitious !* I. THE CRIMINALITY OF THEIR AMBITION. 1. *The object aimed at.* To build towns and establish cities. Not necessarily a sinful project, unless the motive or the means be bad. City-building may have originated in a spirit of defiance against Jehovah (Gen. iv. 17), though this is not certain ; but cities may be, as they often are, centres and sources of incalculable blessing to mankind. If they help to multiply the forces of evil, they also serve to intensify those of good. Cities promote the good order of society, stimulate intellectual life, increase the privileges, opportunities, and comforts of individuals, and so tend to accelerate the march of civilization, by quickening movements of reform and combining against public evils. Hence, though "God made the country," and "man made the town" (Cowper), it need not be assumed that city-founding is against the Divine will—it can hardly be, since he himself has prepared for us a city (Heb. xi. 16). Only as there are cities and cities, so are there diversities in the modes of their construction. 2. *The means resorted to.* Blood and iniquity. Murder, bloodshed, transportation, and tyranny of every kind the Babylonian sovereigns employed to enrich their capital and strengthen their empire ; and one is not sure whether in modern times cities are not sometimes built and kingdoms strengthened by similar methods, viz. by wars of aggression against foreign peoples, and by the enforcement of sinful treaties upon unwilling but weak governments. With regard to individuals, there is no room for doubt that often they build the houses of which a city consists in the way here indicated, if not by bloodshed exactly, at least by iniquity, paying for them by ill-gotten gains, and erecting them by means of under-paid labour.

II. THE VANITY OF THEIR AMBITION. 1. *The fact of it.* They, i.e. the peoples (nations or individuals), who build towns and cities as above described, "labour for the fire" and "weary themselves for vanity ;" i.e. exert themselves to erect buildings that the fire will one day consume, and weary themselves in producing structures that will one day be laid in ruins. What is here said about Babylon is true of all earthly things (2 Pet. iii. 10), and ought to moderate the strength of men's desires in running after them. 2. *The certainty of it.* It is already determined of the Lord of hosts. It is part of his counsel that permanence shall not attach to anything here below (1 John ii. 17), and least of all to the productions of iniquity. Individuals may be allowed to wait for their ultimate overthrow till the day of death or the end of the world, but cities and nations, having no future, are usually visited with doom in the present. The overthrow in time of nations and empires that are built up by bloodshed and iniquity may be safely counted on. Nineveh, Babylon, Rome, are examples. 3. *The reason of it.* "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God." That is to say, because this is the destiny of the world, the goal towards which all things terrestrial are moving, it is impossible that the ambitious projects of man should be allowed permanently to succeed. All superstructures, however solidly built, must be overthrown, all organizations, however compactly formed, must be broken up, that hinder the advancement of that happy era which Jehovah has promised. Hence the triumph of Babylon will come to an end, and with that the glory of Jehovah will shine forth with a brighter degree of effulgence. Men will see in that a display of Jehovah's character and power never witnessed before. The knowledge of his glory will take a wider sweep and extend over a larger area than before. The same principle demanded the overthrow of Rome, and demands the final destruction of all God's enemies, that the knowledge of his glory may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Learn : 1. The sin and folly of ambition. 2. The beauty and wisdom of humility.

Vers. 15—17.—*A parable of woes : 4. Woe to the insolent !* I. WANTON WICKEDNESS. 1. *Symbolically set forth.* The image employed is that of giving to one's neighbour drink from a bottle with which "vengeance," "fury," or "wrath," or, according to another interpretation, "poison," has been mixed, in order to intoxicate him, that one might have the devilish enjoyment of looking on his nakedness, as Ham did on that of Noah, or generally of glorying in his shame. To infer from this that the bare act of giving to a neighbour drink is sinful, is not warranted by Scripture (Prov. xxxi. 6 ; Eccles. ix. 7 ; 1 Tim. v. 23), and is going beyond the intention of the prophet, who introduces the "picture from life," not as an instance of one sort of wickedness in itself, but as a symbol of another sort of wickedness on the part of the

Chaldean. Still, the action selected by the prophet has in it several elements of wickedness which are worthy of consideration. If the mere giving of drink to another is not sinful (Prov. xxxi. 6), the doing so out of malice ("adding venom or wrath thereto") is, while the sin is aggravated by practising deception in connection therewith ("mixing poison therewith"—"drugging the wine," as the modern phrase is), and intensified further by the motive impelling thereto (to be able to gloat over the neighbour's degradation), and most of all condemned by being done against a neighbour to whom one owes not wrath but love, not casting down but lifting up, not exulting in his shame but rejoicing in his welfare. The words can hardly be construed into a condemnation of those who give and take wine or other drinks in moderation and to the glory of God; but they unquestionably pronounce him guilty in God's sight who deliberately and maliciously makes his fellow-man drunk in order to enrich or amuse himself at that fellow-man's expense. 2. *Historically acted out.* (1) By the Chaldean, who drew the nations of the earth into his power by means of poisoned flatteries. Enticed to place themselves beneath his tutelage, these nations ultimately fell into his power, and were by him oppressed, degraded, and insulted. (2) By modern nations, who to enrich themselves enforce upon weaker tribes treaties and traffic (whether of opium or of strong drink) which lead to their moral enfeeblement. (3) By private individuals, who for their own gain or pleasure hurl their neighbours with sublime indifference into gulfs of misery and shame.

II. APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT. 1. *Of Divine sending.* Jehovah's goblet, of which he had caused the nations to drink, should be handed round to the Chaldeans and other guilty nations and individuals, who should all be compelled to drink of it (Ps. lxxv. 8). 2. *Of terrible severity.* It should be as shameful as that which the Chaldeans had inflicted upon the nations. It should cause him also to be drunken, and should expose his forehead to others (cf. Isa. xlvii. 3). It should cover his glory with shame as when the attire of a drunken man is bespattered with his vomiting. Of sinners generally it is written that "shame shall be the promotion of fools" (Prov. iii. 35). 3. *Of retributive character.* The wickedness of the Chaldean should return upon his own pate. The violence he had done to Lebanon (the Holy Land or the fair regions of the earth generally) should rebound upon himself. The destruction of the beasts, i.e. practised upon wild animals which, by their incursions, cause men to assemble against them, should crush the Chaldean who had become as a ferocious beast (Pusey); or the destruction inflicted by the Chaldean on the wild beasts of Lebanon and other districts by cutting down the wood thereof for military purposes or for state buildings, should return upon them with avenging fury (Keil). The same law of retribution obtains in the punishment of sinners generally (Matt. vii. 2).

Learn: 1. The sin of drunkenness. 2. The greater sin of making others drunk. 3. The acme of sin, exulting in the moral overthrow of others. 4. The certainty that none of these acts of sin will go unpunished. 5. The fitness that this should be so.

Vers. 18, 19.—*A parable of woes: 5. Woe to the idolatrous!* I. IDOLATRY AN ABSURDITY. It must ever be so. The notion that any figure fashioned by man out of wood or stone, silver or gold, however carved or gilded, can either be or represent the Infinite and Eternal One, carries the stamp of unreason on the face of it (Ps. cxv. 4—8; Isa. xlv. 19; Jer. x. 5).

II. IDOLATRY A FRAUD. Set up as gods, and worshipped as such, graven and molten images are a hideous imposition upon man's credulity, being (1) lifeless,—“There is no breath at all in the midst of them;” (2) speechless,—the carved wood and graven stone are alike “dumb” (1 Cor. xii. 2), and only fools would say to them, “Arise, and teach!” (3) truthless,—in so far as they can be supposed to impart instruction being veritable “teachers of lies;” and (4) valueless,—of no use or profit to any one on earth and beneath the sun (Jer. x. 5).

III. IDOLATRY A RUINATION. It brings with it a woe upon all who are deluded by it. It entails upon them God's curse (Deut. xxvii. 15) and endless sorrow (Ps. xvi. 4) and everlasting death (Rev. xxi. 8).

LESSON. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John v. 21).

Ver. 20.—*The temple of Jehovah.* I. THE HOLY TEMPLE. 1. *Its material dimen-*

sions. The universe. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord" (Jer. xxiii. 24). "The Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands," but in that which his own hands have fashioned (Acts xvii. 24). He "filleteth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). 2. *Its inner shrine.* Heaven, the habitation of his holiness (Deut. xvi. 15; Isa. lxiii. 15), his dwelling-place (1 Kings viii. 43; 2 Chron. vi. 33), the throne of his glory (Ps. xi. 4; Isa. lxvi. 1), the place of his immediate presence (Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15), the abode of the redeemed (Ps. lxxiii. 24; Rev. iv. 4), his temple proper (Rev. vii. 15; xvi. 1). 3. *Its distinctive designation.* Holy, as being the temple of a holy God, which only the holy in spirit can enter, and in which holy services alone can be performed.

II. THE INDWELLING DEITY. 1. *His name.* Jehovah, the Self-existent and Immutable One. "I am that I am" (Exod. iii. 14). 2. *His attributes.* Omnipresence, since he is in his holy temple (Exod. xx. 24; Jer. xxiii. 24); omniscience, since all are before him (Ps. lxvi. 7; Prov. v. 21; xv. 3). 3. *His character.* Gracious, since he condescends to receive the homage of worshippers, and to hold communication and correspondence with them.

III. THE SILENT WORSHIPPERS. 1. *Their persons.* "All the earth;" i.e. all the inhabitants thereof. If all are not as yet (Ps. lxxiv. 20; 1 Cor. x. 20), all ought to be (Exod. xx. 3; xxxiv. 14; Matt. iv. 10), and all one day will be (Ps. xxii. 27; Isa. xi. 9; ch. ii. 14; Rev. xv. 4) worshippers of the one living and true God. 2. *Their attitude.* "Before him"—in his presence, beneath his eye, before his throne, at his footstool. God's worshippers should strive to realize the immediate presence of him whom they worship (Ps. li. 11; xcv. 2; c. 2). 3. *Their devotion.* "Silence;" expressive of reverence before his majesty (Ps. lxxxix. 7), of submission beneath his authority (Ps. xxxi. 2), of trust in his mercy (Ps. cxxx. 5), of expectant waiting for his utterances whether of commandment or promise (Ps. lxxxv. 8).

Learn: 1. That the highest glory of the universe is God's presence in it. 2. That man's truest hope springs from the vicinity of God. 3. That the finest worship may at times be inaudible. 4. That God oftenest speaks to those who are waiting to hear him.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 3.—*Waiting for the vision.* In this chapter we have set forth the doom of Babylon. The prophet had given to him glimpses of the future as affecting the adversaries of his people. The Divine voice within him gave assurance that the power of the oppressor should at length be broken. He saw the solution of the dark problem which had perplexed him so much concerning the victory to be gained over his people by the Chaldeans. The triumphing of the wicked should be short, and should be followed by their utter collapse. Yet there would be delay ere this should come to pass. The darkness which brooded over the nation should not be at once dispersed; indeed, it should even become more dense in the working out of the Divine purposes. Defeat must be experienced, the Captivity must be endured, and the faithful and true must suffer in consequence of sins not their own. Still, ultimately, "light should arise," and meanwhile, so long as the gloom continued, it behoved him and his people to trust and not be afraid, assured that in God's time the vision of peace and prosperity should dawn upon them. "Though it tarry, wait for it," etc. (ver. 3). The truth suggested is that even the best of men have to experience seasons of darkness—times when everything appears adverse to them, but that it shall not be ever thus with them, that brighter scenes are before them, and that hence their duty in the present is tranquilly and trustfully to wait the development of God's all-wise and gracious purposes. This teaching admits of various applications.

I. TEMPORAL CIRCUMSTANCES. These are not always easy and prosperous. Sources of perplexity may at any moment arise. There may come slackness of trade; new rivals may appear, causing sharp and severe competition; losses may have to be sustained; and in this way, from a variety of causes, "hard times" may have to be passed through. And under such circumstances we should trust and not be afraid, knowing that all our interests are in our loving Father's keeping. He has promised us

a sufficiency. "His mercies are not the swift, but they are the sure, mercies of David." We must not be less hopeful and trustful than the little red-breast chirping near our window-pane, even in the wintry weather. "Behold the fowls of the air," etc. (Matt. vi. 26). Then, "though the vision," etc.

II. LIFE'S SORROWS. These have fallen upon men at times with a crushing weight. All has appeared dark; not a ray of light has seemed to penetrate the gloom. Yet still they have found that, whilst the vision of hope has been deferred, it has been realized at last, filling their hearts with holy rapture. Jacob lived long enough to see that neither Joseph nor Benjamin had been really taken from him, and that those circumstances which he regarded as being against him were all designed to work out his lasting good. Elijah cast himself down in the wilderness and slept. And, lo! angel-guards attended him and ministered unto him, new supplies of strength were imparted, the sunshine of the Divine favour beamed upon him, and he who thought he ought to die under a lonely tree in the desert was ultimately altogether delivered from experiencing the pangs of the last conflict, and was borne in triumph to the realms of everlasting peace. The Shunammite had her lost child restored; the exiled returned at length with songs unto Zion. The Egyptians painted one of their goddesses as standing upon a rock in the sea, the waves roaring and dashing upon her, and with this motto, "Storms cannot move me." What that painted goddess was in symbol we should seek to be in reality, unmoved and unruffled by the tempests which arise in the sea of life, assured that there awaits us a peaceful and tranquil haven. Then, "though the vision," etc.

III. SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION. The Christian life is not all shadow. It has its sunny as well as its shady side. The good have their seasons of joy—seasons in which, believing, they can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Yet they have also their seasons of depression. There is "the midnight of the soul," when the vision of spiritual light and peace and joy tarries; and it is then their truest wisdom to trust and to wait, assured that in due time God will make them glad by lifting upon them "the light of his countenance." "Who is among you that feareth the Lord?" etc. (Isa. l. 10); "Though the vision," etc. (ver. 3).

IV. CHRISTIAN WORK. The great purpose of this is the deliverance of men from the thralldom of sin. The vision we desire to behold an accomplished reality is that of the dry bones clothed afresh, inspired with life, and standing upon their feet, an exceeding great army, valiant for God and righteousness. But the vision tarries! Spiritual death and desolation reign! What then? Shall we despair? Shall we express doubt as to whether the transformation of the realm of death into a realm of spiritual life shall ever be effected? No; though the vision tarry, we will wait for it, knowing that it will surely come; for "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." So Robert Moffat laboured for years without gaining any converts from heathenism, but at length a few were won, and he commemorated with these the death of Christ. "Our feelings," he wrote, "were such as pen cannot describe. We were as those that dreamed while we realized the promise on which our souls often hung (Ps. cxvi. 6). The hour had arrived on which the whole energies of our souls had been intensely fixed, when we should see a Church, however small, gathered from amongst a people who had so long boasted that neither Jesus nor we his servants should ever see Bechuanas worship and confess him as their King." And so shall the faith and patience of all workers for God be rewarded, since the issue is guaranteed and the harvest-home of a regenerated world shall be celebrated amidst rapturous joy.—S. D. H.

Ver. 4 (last clause).—*The life of faith.* There are two forms of life referred to in Scripture—the life of sense, and the life of faith. These differ in their bent (Rom. viii. 5), and also in the issues to which they tend (Rom. viii. 13). The sincerely righteous man, "the just," has tested both these. Time was when he lived the former, but, satisfied as to its unreality, he now looks not at the things which are seen, but at those which are unseen (2 Cor. iv. 18). His motto is Gal. ii. 20. "The just shall live by his faith." These words are quoted by St. Paul (Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11), and also by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 38). The New Testament writers were diligent students of the Old Testament, and we may learn from their example not to treat those more ancient writings as being of comparative unimportance. They,

however, use this expression of the Prophet Habakkuk in a somewhat different sense from that in which he employed it, and apply it to the exposition and enforcement of the important doctrine of "justification by faith." The thought possessing the mind of the seer was that the righteous man exercises an implicit confidence in God; and adopting this course is preserved and protected, and experiences tranquillity and happiness under every circumstance of life. In reflecting upon his words our attention may appropriately be directed to some of the circumstances in which "the just" may be placed, with a view to indicating how that, under these, their faith in God strengthens and sustains them, and enables them truly to live.

I. "The just shall live by their faith" in times of DECLENSION IN RELIGION. Such declension prevailed in the age to which this prophet belonged. The mournful words with which his prophecy commences indicate this (ch. i. 2—4). Many similar times of declension have risen among the nations, and when the falling away from the true and the right has been widespread. So also has it been with Christian communities. Watchfulness has been neglected, and prayer has been restrained; there has been a lack of the spirit of Christian unity and concord; there has been the fire upon the altar, but, alas! it has been in embers; the lamp has been burning, but it has given only a flickering light. "The just," under such circumstances, are grieved as they view the state of religion around them, but whilst sad at heart in view of such declension and of the way in which it dishonours God, they are also inspired with confidence and hope. Their trust is in him. They know that with him is "the residue of the Spirit." Whilst praying the prayer of this prophet, "O Lord, revive thy work" (ch. iii. 2), they can also, like him, express this confident assurance, "For the earth shall be filled," etc. (ch. ii. 14). And so it comes to pass that in the season of declension in religion, when many around have lost the fervour of their love and loyalty to God and to righteousness, "the just shall live by his faith."

II. "The just shall live by their faith" in times of NATIONAL CALAMITY. Chastisement follows transgressions to nations as well as to individuals. Judah had wandered from God, and, lo! he permitted them to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans; and it was the mission of Habakkuk to foretell the approaching Captivity. National calamities have been experienced by our own people. Sometimes it has come to us in the form of war. The appeal has been made to the arbitrament of the sword; and even although we have been victorious, the triumph has been secured at an enormous sacrifice of life, with all the bitter suffering to survivors thus involved. Or pestilence has prevailed. The destroying angel has swept over the land, sparing neither the old nor the young, and numbering thousands among his victims. And in the midst of these faith grasps the rich promises of God and rests unswervingly on him. Let the Chaldean warriors come on horses swifter than the leopards and more fierce than the evening wolves, let them in bitterness and haste traverse the breadth of the land, resolved to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs, let them scoff at kings and scorn princes and gather the captivity as the sand, still the hearts of the faithful shall be upborne, for in the time of national calamity, and when hearts uncentred from God are breaking, "the just shall live by his faith."

III. LEAVING THE EXACT CONNECTION OF THE TEXT, THE TRUTH CONTAINED IN IT RECEIVES ILLUSTRATION FROM THE VARIED CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE GOOD ARE PLACED HERE. Take the two extremes of prosperity and adversity. 1. Some enjoy great temporal prosperity. The temptations of such are (1) pride, (2) worldliness, (3) indolence, (4) selfishness, and yielding to which they lack those higher joys and nobler aspirations in which consists the true life. Walking by faith, the good man is preserved from yielding to the influence of these temptations. *Strong in faith*, he will see that all his prosperity is to be ascribed to him who giveth power to get wealth, and thus pride will be laid low. *Strong in faith*, he will realize that there are other treasures, incorruptible and unfading, and with mind and heart directed to the securing of these, he will think less of this world's pomp and vanity and show. *Strong in faith*, he will feel that he has a work to do for God, and that the additional influence prosperity has secured to him ought to be held as a sacred trust to be used to God's glory, and hence he will be preserved from seeking merely his own ease and enjoyment. And *strong in faith*, he will view himself as a steward of all that he has, and will therefore seek to be God's almoner to the needy around him. So shall he live by his

faith. 2. Others have to pass through adverse scenes; and the faith that strengthens in prosperity will also sustain amidst life's unfavourable influences. Resting in the Lord and in the glorious assurances of his Word, his servants can outride the severest storm, quietly acquiescing and bravely enduring. Ruskin remarks that there is good in everything in God's universe, that there is hardly a roadside pond or pool which has not as much landscape in it as above it, that it is at our own will that we see in that despised stream either the refuse of the street or the image of the sky, that whilst the unobservant man knows simply that the roadside pool is muddy, the great painter sees beneath and behind the brown surface what will take him a day's work to follow, but he follows it, cost what it will, and is amply recompensed, and that the great essential is an eye to apprehend and to appreciate the beautiful which lies about us everywhere in God's world. And this is what we want spiritually—the *eye of faith*, and then shall we see, even in the most opposite of the experiences which meet us in life, God's gracious operation, and the vision shall thrill us with holy joy. "The just shall live by his faith." This life of faith is a life characterized by true blessedness. There can be no real happiness whilst we are opposing our will to the will of God; but if our will is renewed by his grace, if we are trusting in the Saviour and following him along the way of obedience to the Divine authority and of resignation to the Divine purpose, then amidst all the changing scenes of our life our peace shall flow like a river, and we shall experience joy lasting as God's throne.—S. D. H.

Vers. 6—8.—*Covetousness*. In the remaining portion of this chapter the prophet dwells upon the sins prevailing amongst the Chaldeans, and indicates the misery these should entail. His utterances, taken together, form a satirical ode directed against the Chaldeans, who, though not named, are yet most clearly personified. In the general statement respecting them in ver. 5 allusion is made to their rapacity, and the first stanza in the song is specially directed to this greed, which was so characteristic of that nation. The words of the prophet suggest to us respecting the sin of covetousness, that—

I. IT IS UNSATISFYING IN ITS NATURE. It is compared (ver. 5) to Hades and death, that crave continually for more. "The covetous man is like Tantalus, up to the chin in water, yet thirsty." Necessarily it must be so, for "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth" (Luke xii. 15). Wealth can only yield satisfaction in proportion as it is acquired, not for its own sake, but to be consecrated to high and holy purposes. George Herbert sings—

"Be thrifty, but not covetous. Get, to live;
Then live and use it: else it is not true
That thou hast gotten."

II. IT LEADS TO INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION. The covetous man "increaseth that which is not his" (ver. 6). He disregards the rights of others. He uses all who come within his power with a view to his own aggrandizement. Self is the primary consideration with him, and influences all his movements. "He oppresseth the poor to increase his riches," and out of their grinding poverty and want he grows fat. He is ready to take any mean advantage so as to add to his own stores. He demands heavy security of the debtor, and exacts crushing interest, and "loadeth himself with thick clay" (ver. 6), i.e. "loadeth himself with the burden of pledges."

III. IT INCURS SURE RETRIBUTION. Whether this sin is committed by individuals or nations, it is alike "woe" unto such; for there shall assuredly follow Divine judgments. Habakkuk represents the Chaldeans as one who had gathered men and nations into his net (ch. i. 14—17), and as having "spoiled many nations" (ver. 8), and Jeremiah confirms these representations of their rapacity by describing them as "the hammer" (l. 23) and the destroyer (li. 25) of the whole earth; and they also declare that there should overtake them certain retribution for the wrongs they had thus done and the sorrows they had thus occasioned, and that the spoiler should be at length spoiled (vers. 7, 8). In the destruction of the Chaldean empire by the Medes and Persians we have the fulfilment of the threatenings, whilst, at the same time, we hear the voice of God speaking to us in the events of history and saying, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness!"—S. D. H.

Vers. 9—11.—*Corrupt ambition.* Ambition may be pure and lofty, and when this is the case it cannot be too highly commended. It is “the germ from which all growth of nobleness proceeds.” “It is to the human heart what spring is to the earth, making every root and bud and bough desire to be more.” Headway cannot be made in life apart from it, and destitute of this spirit a man must be outstripped in the race. Ambition, however, may take the opposite form, and it is to ambition corrupt and low in its nature that these verses refer. Observe indicated here concerning such unworthy ambition—

I. ITS AIM. The concern of the rulers of Babylon was to secure unlimited supremacy, to reach an eminence where, secure from peril and in the enjoyment of ease and luxury, they might, without restraint, exercise despotic control over the nations. “That he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil” (ver. 9). False ambition, whether in individuals or nations, is directed to the attainment of worldly distinction, authority, and power, and has its foundation in pride and self-esteem.

II. ITS UNSCRUPULOUSNESS. “They coveted an evil covetousness to their house” (ver. 9), totally disregarding the sacredness of property and the rights of man. Their acts were marked by oppression, plunder, and cruelty; they impoverished feebler nations and even “cut off many people” (ver. 10) in seeking the accomplishment of their selfish purposes. So is it ever that “such ambition breaks the ties of blood and forgets the obligations of manhood.”

III. ITS ISSUE. The prophet indicates that all this self-seeking and self-glorying must end in disgrace and dishonour. 1. The very monuments reared thus in the spirit of pride should bear adverse testimony. In the language of poetry he represents the materials which they had obtained by plunder and which they had brought from other lands into Chaldea, to be used in the construction of their stately edifices, as protesting against the way in which they had been obtained and the purposes to which they had been applied (ver. 11). 2. Shame and ruin should overtake the schemers and plotters themselves. “Thou hast sinned against thy soul” (ver. 10). Whatever their material gain, they had become spiritually impoverished by their course of action. They had degraded their higher nature and had incurred guilt and condemnation. 3. All connected with them should share in the disgrace and dishonour. “Thou hast consulted shame to thy house” (ver. 10); “God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him” (Exod. xx. 5); “He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house” (Prov. xv. 27). Men who have sought, by grasping and extortion, or by war and conquest, to establish and perpetuate a high reputation, have, through their unrighteous deeds, passed away in ignominy, leaving to their posterity a tarnished and dishonoured name. “The house of the wicked shall be overthrown; but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish” (Prov. xiv. 11).—S. D. H.

Vers. 12—14.—*The two kingdoms: a contrast.* Reference is made in these verses to two kingdoms—the kingdom of Babylon and the kingdom of God; and this association serves to indicate several points of contrast.

I. THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD IS MATERIAL; THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS SPIRITUAL. The glory of Chaldea centred in its magnificent city of Babylon, so grand in its situation, its edifices, its defences, and in the stores of treasure it contained, its greatness consisting thus in its material resources; but the glory of the kingdom of God is spiritual. It is “the glory of the Lord” that constitutes its excellence—all moral beauty and spiritual grace abounding therein.

II. THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD HAVE OFTEN BEEN FOUNDED AND ESTABLISHED BY MEANS OF WRONG-DOING; THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS FOUNDED AND ESTABLISHED IN PURE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE HOLINESS. The Chaldeans, by their superior might and powers, conquered other tribes, and with the spoils of war and the forced labour of the conquered they reared their cities. They “built a town with blood, and established a city by iniquity” (ver. 12); but “a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of God’s kingdom.”

III. HUMAN TOIL IS INVOLVED IN THE INTERESTS OF BOTH; yet notice, by way of contrast: 1. Toil in the interests of earthly kingdoms is often compulsory and is rendered

reluctantly—aliens who had fallen as captives into the power of the Chaldeans were made to labour and serve; but toil in the interests of God's kingdom is ever *voluntary* and is rendered *lovingly* and *without constraint*. 2. Toil in the interests of earthly kingdoms is often *toil for that which shall be destroyed, and which shall come to nought*. "The people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity" (ver. 13), *i.e.* they should labour in erecting edifices which should be consumed by fire, and thus their toil prove in vain; but *toil in the interests of God's kingdom shall prove abiding and eternal in its results*. 3. The workers of iniquity, no matter how earnest their toil, should be *covered eventually with dishonour and shame*—"Woe to him!" etc. (ver. 12)—but all true toilers for God and righteousness shall be *divinely approved and honoured*.

IV. THE PROSPERITY OF MATERIAL KINGDOMS IS UNCERTAIN; WHEREAS THE TRIUMPH OF GOD'S SPIRITUAL KINGDOM IS ASSURED. "The knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth."

V. EARTHLY KINGDOMS ARE LIMITED IN EXTENT; BUT THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM OF OUR GOD SHALL ATTAIN UNTO UNIVERSAL DOMINION. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."—S. D. H.

Vers. 15—17.—*God's retributive justice*. It is a Divine law that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7). God is just, and hence will cause retribution to be experienced by evil-doers. A striking illustration of the operation of this great law is presented in these verses. Consider—

I. THE COURSE THE CHALDEANS HAD ADOPTED TOWARD OTHERS. (Ver. 15.) The reference in this verse is not to the sin of drunkenness. That sin is a distressing and degrading one, and they are true lovers of their kind who seek to lessen its ravages, to deliver men from its thralldom. It has proved a blight to the children of men all down the ages. The Chaldeans were notorious for it; revellings, banquetings, excess of wine, marked them all through their history, and specially signalized the close of their career. The prophet, however, here simply used this vice as a symbol in order to set forth vividly the course the Babylonians had adopted towards others, and specially to indicate their deceitfulness. Drink drowns the reason, and places its victim at the mercy of any who are mean enough to take advantage of him. And the thought the prophet wished to convey here (ver. 15) seems to be that as a man, desiring to injure another, persuades him to take stimulant, and thus, whilst professing good intentions, effects his evil purpose, so had the Chaldeans intoxicated feebler powers by professions of friendship and regard, drawing them into alliance, and then turning upon them to their discomfiture and ruin. And he proceeds to indicate—

II. THE COURSE GOD WOULD ADOPT TOWARDS THEM. (Vers. 16, 17.) And in this he traced the Divine retribution of their iniquity. He saw prophetically that: 1. As they had taken advantage of others, so others should in due course take advantage of them (ver. 16) and bring them to shame. 2. As they would lay waste his country and take his people into captivity, so subsequently they should themselves be brought to nought, and their empire pass out of their hands (ver. 17; comp. Isa. xiv. 8, in which the fir trees and cedars are made to rejoice in the overthrow of Babylon). Our prophet had been perplexed at the thought of the Chaldeans as being the instruments of the Divine justice in reference to his own sinful people, but the mystery was clearing away, and in the final overthrow of Babylon he here foreshadowed, he traced another token that "the Lord is righteous in all his ways."—S. D. H.

Vers. 18—20.—*Worship, false and true*. The prophet, in recounting the sins of the Chaldeans, finally recalled to mind the idolatry prevailing amongst them. He thought of the temple of Bel, "casting its shadow far and wide over city and plain," and of the idolatrous worship of which it was the centre, and he broke forth in words expressive of the utmost scorn and contempt, and then closed his song by pointing to him who alone is worthy to receive the devout adoration and adoring praise of all the inhabitants of the earth. Notice—

I. HIS EXPOSURE OF THE WEAKNESS AND FOLLY OF IDOLATRY. (Vers. 18, 19.) 1. He appealed to *experience*. His own people unhappily had been betrayed into idolatry, and he asked them whether they had ever profited thereby (ver. 18). 2. He

appealed to *reason*. The maker of anything must of necessity be greater than that which he fashions with his own hands and as the result of his own skill; hence what greater absurdity could there be than for the maker of a dumb idol to be reposing his trust in the thing he has formed (ver. 18)? 3. He denounced the *idol priests*, who, by using dumb idols as their instrument, made these "teachers of lies" (ver. 18). 4. He declared the hopelessness resulting from reposing trust in these. "Woe unto him!" etc. (ver. 19). 5. He indulged in scornful satire (ver. 19). This verse may be fittingly compared with Elijah's irony of speech addressed on Carmel to the prophets of Baal (1 Kings xviii. 27). The verse is more effectively rendered in the Revised Version—

"Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake!
To the dumb stone, Arise!
Shall this teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver;
And there is no breath at all in the midst of it."

The weakness and folly of idolatry as practised in heathen lands is readily admitted by us; yet we are prone to forget that the idolatrous spirit may prevail even amongst those who are encompassed by influences eminently spiritual. Love of the æsthetical may lead us to become sensuous rather than spiritual in worship. Attachment to science may cause us to slight the supernatural and to deify nature. Desire for worldly success may result in our bowing down in the temple of Mammon; so that the counsel is still needed, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 21).

II. HIS PRESENTATION OF JEHOVAH AS BEING SUPREME AND AS ALONE ENTITLED TO THE REVERENT HOMAGE OF HUMAN HEARTS. "But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." 1. The contrast presented here is truly sublime. From impotent idols the seer raises his thoughts and directs attention to the living God. 2. The temple in Jerusalem was the recognized dwelling-place of God. The prophet saw looming in the distance the invasion of his country by the idolatrous Chaldeans, followed by the destruction of the temple and the desecration of all he held so sacred in association with it. Still he was assured that through all the coming changes Jehovah would remain the Supreme Ruler and Controller. Unconfined to temples made with hands, their overthrow could not affect his rule. "His throne is in the heavens;" he reigns there; and fills heaven and earth, dominating the universe, and guiding and overruling all to the accomplishment of his all-wise and loving purposes. "The Lord is in his holy temple." 3. Our true position as his servants is that of reverentially waiting before him, acquiescing in his will, trusting in his Word, assured that, despite the prevailing mysteries, the end shall reveal his wisdom and his love. He says to us, "Be still, and know that I am God." Then let no murmuring word be spoken, even when clouds and darkness seem to be round about him; the processes of his working are hidden from our weak view, but the issue is sure to vindicate the unerring wisdom and infinite graciousness of his rule. Happy the man who is led from doubt to faith, who, like this seer, beginning with the complaint, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!" etc. (ch. i. 2), is led through calm reflection and hallowed communion to cherish the conviction that "the Lord is in his holy temple, and that all the earth should keep silence before him."—S. D. H.

Vers. 1—3.—*Man's moral mission to the world*. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The prophet, after his supplicatory cry, receives a Divine command to write the oracle in plain characters, because it was certain, although it would not be immediately fulfilled. The first verse is a kind of monologue. The prophet holds conversation with himself; and he resolves to ascend his watch-tower, and look out for a Divine revelation. It is thought by many critics that the watch-tower is not to be regarded as something external, some lofty place commanding an extensive view and profound silence, but the recesses of his own mind, into which he would withdraw himself by devout contemplation. I shall

use the words of the text to illustrate man's *moral mission to the world*. Wherefore are we in this world? Both the theories and the practical conduct of men give different answers to this all-important problem. I shall take the answer from the text, and observe—

I. OUR MISSION HERE IS TO RECEIVE COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE ETERNAL MIND. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me." That man is constituted for and required to receive communications from the Infinite Mind, and that he cannot realize his destiny without this, appears evident from the following considerations. 1. *From his nature as a spiritual being.* (1) He has an *instinct* for it. He naturally calls out for the living God. As truly as the eye is made to receive light, the soul is made to receive thought from God. (2) He has a *capacity* for it. Unlike the lower creatures around us, we can receive the ideas of God. (3) He has a *necessity* for it. God's ideas are the quickening powers of the soul. 2. *From his condition as a fallen being.* Sin has shut out God from the soul, created a dense cloud between us and him. 3. *From the purpose of Christ's mediation.* Why did Christ come into the world? To bring the human soul and God together, that the Lord might "dwell amongst men." 4. *From the special manifestations of God for the purpose.* I say special, for nature, history, heart, and conscience are the natural orders of communication between the human and the Divine. But we have something more than these—the Bible; this is *special*. Here he speaks to man at sundry times and in divers manners, etc. 5. *From the general teaching of the Bible.* "Come now, and let us reason together," etc.; "Behold, I stand at the door," etc. But how shall we receive these communications? We must ascend the "tower" of quiet, earnest, devout thought, and there must "watch to see what he will say."

II. OUR MISSION HERE IS TO IMPART COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE ETERNAL MIND. "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." From this we may conclude that writing is both an ancient and a divinely sanctioned art. Thank God for books! That we have to *impart* as well as to receive is evident: 1. *From the tendency of Divine thoughts to express themselves.* It is of the nature of religious ideas that they struggle for utterance. What we have seen and heard we cannot but speak. 2. *From the universal adaptation of Divine thoughts.* Thoughts from God are not intended merely for certain individuals or classes, but for all the race in all generations. 3. *From the spiritual dependence of man upon man.* It is God's plan, that man shall be the spiritual teacher of man. 4. *From the general teaching of the Bible.* What the prophets and apostles received from God they communicated. "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood," etc. (Gal. i. 16).

III. OUR MISSION HERE IS TO PRACTICALLY REALIZE COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE ETERNAL MIND. "Though it tarry, wait for it," etc. The Divine thoughts which we receive we are to realize in our daily life, practically to work out. Here, then, is our moral mission. We are here, brothers, for these three purposes; not for one of them only, but for all. God is to be everything to us; he is to fill up the whole sphere of our being, our "all in all." We are to be his *auditors*, hearing his voice in everything; we are to be his *organ*, conveying to others what he has conveyed to us; we are to be his *representatives*, manifesting him in every act of our life. All we say and do, our looks and mien, are to be rays reflected from the Father of lights.

CONCLUSION. From this subject we may learn: 1. *The reasonableness of religion.* What is it? Simply to receive, propagate, and develop communications from the Infinite Mind. What can be more sublimely reasonable than this? 2. *The grandeur of a religious life.* What is it? The narrowness, the intolerance, the bigotry, the selfishness of many religionists lead sceptics to look upon religion with derision. But what is it? To be a disciple of the all-knowing God, a minister of the all-ruling God, a representative of the all-glorious God. Is there anything grander? 3. *The function of Christianity.* What is it? To induce, to qualify, and enable men to receive, communicate, and to live the great thoughts of God.—D. T.

Ver. 4.—*The portraiture of a good man.* "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." Whether the man whose soul is represented as "lifted up" refers to the unbelieving Jew or to the Babylonian, is

an unsettled question amongst biblical critics; and a question of but little practical moment. We take the words as a portraiture of a good man.

I. A GOOD MAN IS A HUMBLE MAN. This is implied. His soul is not "lifted up." Pride is not only no part of moral goodness, but is essentially inimical to it. It is said that St. Augustine, being asked, "What is the first article in the Christian religion?" replied, "Humility." "What is the second?" "Humility." "And the third?" "Humility." A proud Christian is a solecism. Jonathan Edwards describes a Christian as being such a "little flower as we see in the spring of the year, low and humble in the ground, opening its bosom for the beams of the sun, rejoicing in a calm rapture, suffusing around sweet fragrance, and standing peacefully and lowly in the midst of other flowers." Pride is an obstruction to all progress and knowledge and virtue, and is abhorrent to the Holy One. "He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

"Fling away ambition,
By that sin fell the angels; how can man, then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by 't?"
(Shakespeare.)

II. A GOOD MAN IS A JUST MAN. "The just shall live by his faith." To be good is nothing more than to be just. 1. Just to *self*. Doing the right thing to one's own faculties and affections as the offspring of God. 2. Just to *others*. Doing unto others what we would that they should do unto us. 3. Just to *God*. The kindest Being thanking the most, the best Being loving the most, the greatest Being reverencing the most. To be just to self, society, and God,—this is religion.

III. A GOOD MAN IS A CONFIDING MAN. He lives "by his faith." This passage is quoted by Paul in Rom. i. 17 and Gal. iii. 11; it is also quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 38). What is faith? Can you get a better definition than the writer of the Hebrews has given in the eleventh chapter and first verse?—"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This definition implies three things. 1. That the things to which faith is directed are invisible. "Things not seen." These things include things that are contingently unseeable and things that are essentially unseeable, such as thought, mind, God. 2. That some of the invisible things are objects of hope. "Things hoped for." The invisible has much that is very desirable to us—the society of holy souls, the presence of the blessed Christ, the manifestations of the infinite Father, etc. 3. That these invisible things faith makes real in the present life. "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The realization of the hopeable. Now, it is only by this faith that man can live a just life in this world; the man who lives by sight must be unjust. "To be just, he must see him who is invisible.—D. T.

Ver. 5.—*Moral wrong: some of its national phases*. "Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people." No doubt Habakkuk was reviled like the other prophets on account of his terrible predictions, as recorded in the preceding chapter (vers. 6 and 11). From this verse to the nineteenth the prophet unfolds new visions concerning the national crimes committed by Babylon, and the consequent national calamities approaching. This verse gives some of the national phases of moral wrong as they appeared in Babylon. Evil, like good, is one in essence, but it has many forms and phases. The branches that grow out of the root, whilst filled with the same sap, vary widely in shape and hue. In this verse we have three of its forms.

I. DRUNKENNESS. "He transgresseth by wine;" or, as some render it, "moreover, the wine is treacherous." This is one of the most loathsome, irrational, and pernicious forms which it can assume. Drunkenness puts the man or the woman absolutely into the hands of Satan, to do whatsoever he wills—lie, swear, rob, murder, and luxuriate in moral mud. "A drunken man is like a fool, a madman, a drowned man; one draught too much makes him a fool, the second mads, and the third drowns him" (Shakespeare). It is the curse of England. It fills our workhouses with paupers, our hospitals with patients, our jails with prisoners, our mad-houses with lunatics, our cemeteries with graves. Moral wrong took this form in ancient Babylon, and it takes

this form in England to-day to an appalling extent. Woe to our legislators, if they do not put it down by the strong arm of the law! Nothing else will do it.

II. HAUGHTINESS. "Is a proud man." Babylon became inspired with a haughty insolence. She regarded herself as the queen of the world, and looked down with supercilious contempt upon all the other nations of the earth, even upon the Hebrew people, the heavenly-chosen race. Nebuchadnezzar expresses the spirit of the kingdom as well as his own, when he says, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. iv. 30). It is suggested that the Chaldeans' love of wine had much to do in the developing of this haughty spirit. We read (Dan. v.) that Belshazzar at his feast drank wine with the thousands of his lords, his princes, his wives, his concubines. "Wine is a mocker;" it cheats a beggar into the belief that he is a lord. "Strong drink is raging;" it lashes the passions into furious insolence. It is fabled that Accius the poet, though he was a dwarf, would be pictured a giant in stature. Pride is an evil that leads to ruin. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

III. RAPACITY. Two things are suggested concerning the rapacious form it assumed in Babylon. 1. It was *restless*. "Neither keepeth at home." Not content with its own grandeur, wealth, and luxuries, it goes from home in search of others; goes out into other countries to rifle and to rob. 2. It is *insatiable*. "Who enlargeth his desire as hell [that is, 'as Sheol, the grave'], and is as death, and cannot be satisfied." "Hell and destruction," that is, the grave and death, says Solomon, "are never full." The grave cries for more and more, as its tenants multiply by millions. The earth seems to hunger and to gape for all the dust that enters into the frames of men. So it was with the Babylonian despot, though he gathered unto him all nations, and heaped unto him all peoples, his greed and ambition remained unsatiated and insatiable. "This," says an old writer, "is one of the crying sins of our land, insatiable pride. This makes dear rents and great fines; this takes away the whole clothing of many poor to add one lace more in the suits of the rich; this shortens the labourer's wages, and adds much to the burden of his labour. This greediness makes the market of spiritual and temporal offices and dignities, and puts well-deserving virtue out of countenance. This corrupts religion with opinions, justice with bribes, charity with cruelty; it turns peace into schism and contention, love into compliment, friendship into treason, and sets the mouth of hell yet more open, and gives it an appetite for more souls." Such are some of the forms that moral wrong took in Babylon, as indicated in these words. But these are not the only forms, as we shall see in proceeding through the chapter. Does not moral wrong assume these very forms here in England? Drunkenness, haughtiness, rapacity,—these fiends show their hideous shapes everywhere, and work their demon deeds in every circle of life.—D. T.

Vers. 6—8.—*National wrongs ending in national woes.* No. 1. "Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?" etc. In these verses, up to the nineteenth inclusive, the prophet denounces upon the Chaldeans and Babylonians five different woes. One for their pride and insatiableness (vers. 6—8); another for their covetousness, etc., which would become the cause of their corruption (vers. 9—11); another for the bloody and cruel means which they had employed for gratifying their thirst for acquiring possessions not their own (vers. 12—14); and fourth, for their wickedness, etc., which would be recompensed to them (vers. 15—17); and the fifth, for their trust in idols, which would redound to their shame (vers. 18, 19). We shall take each of the five sections separately under the title, *National wrongs ending in national woes.* Notice—

I. THE NATIONAL WRONGS. 1. *Dishonest accumulation.* "Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his!" Babylon grew wealthy. Its treasures were varied and all but inexhaustible. But whence came they? Came they by honest industry? Were they the home produce of diligent and righteous labour? No; from other lands. They were wrested from other countries by violence and fraud. Even the golden and

silver vessels used at the royal feast were taken out of the temple which was at Jerusalem. "No more," says an old writer, "of what we have is to be reckoned ours than what we came honestly by. Nor will it long be ours, for wealth gotten by vanity will soon diminish." Take away the ill-gotten wealth of the nations of Europe—wealth gotten by fraud and violence—and how greatly will they be pauperized! How much of our national wealth has come to us honestly? A question this worth the impartial investigation of every man, and which must be gone into sooner or later. 2. *Dominant materialism.* "And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay." Although some render this "ladeth himself with many pledges," our version, which gives the word "clay," will cover all. The burning and insatiable desire of Babylon was for *material* wealth; and the men or the nation who succeed in this, only lade themselves with "thick clay." It is a bad thing for moral spirits to be laden with "thick clay." See the individual man who so pampers his animal appetites until he becomes a Falstaff. His spirit is laden with "thick clay." See the nation whose inspiration is that of avaricious merchandise, and whose god is mammon; its spirit is laden with "thick clay." Ah me! what millions are to be found in all civilized countries who are buried in "thick clay"! Clay is everything to them. 3. *Extensive plunder.* "Thou hast spoiled many nations." The first monarchy we read of in Holy Scripture is that of the Assyrians, begun by Ninus, of whom Nineveh took name, and by Nimrod, whom histories call Belus, and after him succeeded Semiramis his wife. This monarchy grew, by continual wars and violences on their neighbours, to an exceeding height and strength; so that the exaltation of that monarchy was the ruin of many nations, and this monarchy lasted, as some write, *annos* 1300. 4. *Ruthless violence.* "Because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein." The terms 'men,' 'land,' 'earth,' 'city,' says Henderson, "are to be understood generally, not restricted to the Jews, their country and its metropolis." What oceans of the blood of all countries were shed by these ruthless tyrants of Babylon!

II. THE NATIONAL WOES. All these wrongs, as all other wrongs, run into woes. Crimes lead to calamities. What are the woes connected with these wrongs, as given in these verses? 1. *The contempt of the injured.* "Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!" The *woe* comes out in a derisive song, which continues to the end of the chapter. Dishonesty and low animalism must ever sink the people amongst whom they prevail into bitter contempt. Scarcely can there be anything more painful than the contempt of others when it is felt to be deserved. To be sneered at, laughed at, ridiculed, scorned,—is not this bitterly afflictive? Jeremiah predicted that one part of the punishment should be that he should be laughed to scorn. 2. *The avenging of the spoiled.* "Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee." Here is retaliation—plunder for plunder, blood for blood. Divine retribution often pays man back in his own coin. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

CONCLUSION. Ever under the righteous administration of Heaven *woes* tread closely on the heel of *wrongs*. More certainly than the waves of the ocean follow the moon must suffering follow sin. To every crime there is linked a curse, to every sin a suffering, to every wrong a woe. Be sure that "your sins will find you out."—D. T.

Vers. 9-11.—*National wrongs ending in national woes.* No. 2. "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." Notice—

I. THE NATIONAL WRONGS HERE INDICATED. 1. *Coveting the possessions of others.* "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house!" "An evil covetousness!" There is a good covetousness. We are commanded to "covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Cor. xii. 31). But to hunger for those things which are not our own, but the property of others, and that for our own gratification and aggrandizement, is the sin which is prohibited in the Decalogue, which is denounced in the Gospel as a cardinal

sin, and which is represented as excluding from the kingdom of heaven. The covetous man is a thief in spirit and in reality. 2. *Trusting in false securities.* So "that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil." The image is from an eagle (Job xxxix. 27). The royal citadel is meant. The Chaldeans built high towers like the Babel-founders, to be delivered from the power of evil. They sought protection, not in the Creator but in the creature, not in moral means but in material. Thus foolishly nations have always acted and are still acting; they trust to armies and to navies, not to righteousness, truth, and God. A moral character built on justice, purity, and universal benevolence is the only right and safe defence of nations. "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest against the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord" (Obad. 4). 3. *Sinning against the soul.* "And hast sinned against thy soul," or against thyself. Indeed, all wrong is a sin against one's self—a sin against the laws of reason, conscience, and happiness. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul." Such are some of the wrongs implied by these verses. Alas! they are not confined to Babylon or to any of the ancient kingdoms. They are too rife amongst all the modern kingdoms of the earth.

II. THE NATIONAL WOES HERE INDICATED. "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house!" etc. What is the woe connected with these evils? It is contained in these words, "The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." Their guilty conscience will endow the dead materials of their own dwellings with the tongue to denounce in thunder their deeds of rapacity and blood. Startling personification this! The very stones of thy palace and the beams out of the timber shall testify. "Note," says Matthew Henry, "those that do wrong to their neighbour do a much greater wrong to their own souls. But if the sinner pleads, 'Not guilty,' and thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with so much art and contrivance that they cannot be proved upon him, let him know that if there be no other witnesses against him, the *stone shall cry out of the wall* against him, and the *beam out of the timber* in the roof shall answer it, shall second it, shall witness it, that the money and materials wherewith he built the house were unjustly gotten (ver. 11). The stones and timber shall cry to Heaven for vengeance, as the *whole creation groans under the sin of man*, and waits to be delivered from *that bondage of corruption*." Observe: 1. That mind gives to all the objects that once impressed it a *mystic power of suggestion*. Who has not felt this? Who does not feel it every day? The tree, the house, the street, the lane, the stream, the meadow, the mountain, that once touched our consciousness, seldom fail to start thoughts in us whenever we are brought into contact with them again. It seems as if the mind gave part of itself to all the objects that once impressed it. When we revisit, after years of absence, the scenes of childhood, all the objects which impressed us in those early days seem to beat out and revive the thoughts and feelings of our young hearts. Hence, when we leave a place which in person we may never revisit, we are still tied to it by an indissoluble bond. Nay, we carry it with us and reproduce it in memory. 2. That mind gives to those objects that impressed us when *in the commission of any sin* a terrible power to start remorseful memories. This is a fact of which, alas! all are conscious. And hence those stones and timbers, stolen from other people, that went to build the palaces, temples, and mansions in Babylon, would not fail to speak in thunder to the guilty consciences of those who obtained them by violence or fraud. No intelligent personal witness is required to prove a sinner's guilt. All the scenes of his conscious life vocalize his guilt.—D. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*National wrongs ending in national woes.* No. 3. "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Notice—

I. THE NATIONAL WRONGS INDICATED IN THESE VERSES. The great wrong referred to in these verses is the accumulation of gain by wicked means. "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!" In itself there is nothing improper in building towns, establishing cities, and accumulating wealth.

Indeed, all these things are both legitimate and desirable. But it is stated that these Babylonians did it: 1. *By violence*. "With blood." Men's lives were sacrificed for the purpose. "By iniquity." Justice was outraged in the effort. 2. *By cruelty*. "Labour in the very fire." These wrongs we have already explained in the preceding sections. (But see a different explanation of "labour in the fire" in the Exposition.)

II. THE NATIONAL WOES INDICATED IN THESE WORDS. What is the woe? Disapprobation of God. 1. *These wrongs are contrary to his nature*. "Is it not of the Lord of hosts?" or, as Keil renders it, "Is it not beheld from Jehovah of hosts that the people weary themselves for fire, and nations exhaust themselves from vanity?" He does not desire it. Nay, it is hostile to his will, it is displeasing to his nature. The benevolent Creator is against all social injustice and cruelty. His will is that men should "do unto others as they would that men should do unto them." 2. *These wrongs are contrary to his purpose for the world*. His purpose is that the "earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." To this end the kingdom of the world which is hostile to him must be destroyed. "This promise," says Keil, "involves a threat directed against the Chaldean, whose usurped glory must be destroyed in order that the glory of the universe may fill the whole earth." What a glorious prospect! (1) *This world, in the future, is to enjoy the greatest blessing*. What is that? The knowledge of the glory of God. Knowledge in itself is a blessing. The soul without it is not good (Prov. xix. 2). It is not the mere knowledge of the works of God. This is of unspeakable value. Not merely the knowledge of some of the attributes of God. This is of greater value still. But the knowledge of the glory of God, which means the knowledge of God himself, "whom to know is life eternal." (2) *This world, in the future, is to enjoy the greatest blessing in the greatest abundance*. "As the waters cover the sea." He shall flood all souls with its celestial and transporting radiance.—D. T.

Vers. 15—17.—*National wrongs ending in national woes*. No. 4. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory," etc. "This," says Henderson, "is the commencement of the fourth stanza. Though the idea of the shameless conduct of drunkards here depicted may have been borrowed from the profligate manners of the Babylonian court, yet the language is not to be taken literally, as if the prophet were describing such manners, but, as the sequel shows, is applied allegorically to the state of stupefaction, prostration, and exposure to which the conquered nations were reduced by the Chaldeans (see Isa. li. 17—20; and comp. Ps. lxxv. 8; Jer. xxv. 15—28; xlix. 12; li. 7; Ezek. xxiii. 31, 32; Rev. xiv. 10; xvi. 19; xviii. 6). Notice—

I. THE NATIONAL WRONGS. What are the wrongs referred to in this passage? 1. *The promotion of drunkenness*. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink!" The Babylonians were not only drunkards, but the promoters of drunkenness. The very night on which this prophecy was fulfilled, Belshazzar drank wine with a thousand of his lords. More than once in these homilies we have had to characterize and denounce this sin. Who are the promoters of drunkenness? *Brewers, distillers, tavern-keepers*, and, I am sorry to add, *doctors*, all of whom, with a few exceptions, recommend intoxicating drinks. In doing so these men inflict a thousand times as much evil upon mankind as they can accomplish good. 2. *The promotion of drunkenness involves indecency*. "That thou mayest look on their nakedness." It is the tendency of drunkenness to destroy all sense of decency. A drunkard, whether male or female, loses all sense of shame.

II. THE NATIONAL WOES. "Woe unto him that giveth strong drink!" What will come to those people? 1. *Contempt*. "Thou art filled with shame for glory. . . . The cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee." As the Chaldeans had treated the nations they had conquered in a most disgusting manner, so they in their turn should be similarly treated. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." 2. *Violence*. "For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee." Stripped

of all figure, the meaning of this is that the sufferings which Babylon inflicted upon Palestine, represented here by Lebanon, would return to them. Here is retribution. Babylon had given the cup of drunkenness, and in return should have the cup of fury and contempt.—D. T.

Vers. 18, 19.—*National wrongs ending in national woes.* No. 5. "What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it." We have said that the prophet denounces upon the Chaldeans, in vers. 6—19 of this chapter, five different woes of a most terrible nature. We have noticed four of them. This is the fifth and the last; and it is denounced on account of their idolatry. We have seen no translation of the text more faithful to the original than this, the Authorized Version. The note of Henderson on the text deserves quotation. "These verses expose the folly of idolatry, to which the Babylonians were wholly addicted. It might be supposed, from all the other stanzas having been introduced by a denunciatory *ווי*, 'woe!' that a transposition has here taken place, and that the nineteenth verse ought to be read before the eighteenth; and Green has thus placed them in his translation. But there is a manifest propriety in anticipating the inutility of idols, in close connection with what the prophet had just announced respecting the downfall of Babylon, before delivering his denunciation against their worshippers themselves." Now, idolatry, as it prevails in heathen lands, idolatry proper as we may say, is universally denounced by the professors of Christianity everywhere. We need not employ one word to expose its absurdity and moral abominations. But its *spirit* is rampant in all Christendom, is *rife* in all "Christian Churches," as they are called; and it is the spirit, not the form, that is the guilty and damnable part of idolatry. We raise, therefore, three observations from these verses.

I. THAT MEN OFTEN GIVE TO THE WORKS OF THEIR OWN HANDS THE DEVOTIONS THAT BELONG TO GOD. These old Chaldean idolaters gave their devotions to the "graven image" and to the "molten image" that men had carved in wood and stone or moulded from molten metals. It was the works of their own hands they worshipped. They made gods of their own productions. This was all they did; and are not the men of England, as a rule, doing the same thing? They yield their devotions to the works of their own hands. It may be wealth, fame, fashion, pleasure, or power. It is all the same. Are men's sympathies in their strong current directed towards God or towards something else? Do they expend the larger portion of their time and the greater amount of their energies in the service of the Eternal, or in the service of themselves? This is the question; and the answer is too palpable to the eye of every spiritual thinker. Exeter Hall may "weep and howl" over the idolatry prevailing in India, China, and other heathen parts; but thoughtful Christ-like souls are showering in silence and solitude their tears on the terrible idolatry that reigns everywhere in their own country.

II. THAT MEN OFTEN LOOK TO THE WORKS OF THEIR OWN HANDS FOR A BLESSING WHICH GOD ALONE CAN BESTOW. These old idolaters said to the "wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise!" They invoked the dead forms they themselves had made, to help them, to give them relief, to render them happy. Now, it is true that men do not say formal prayers to wealth, or fashion, or fame, or power; yet to these they look with all their souls for happiness. A man's prayer is the deep aspiration of his soul, and this deep aspiration is being everywhere addressed to these dead deities; men are crying for happiness to objects which are as incapable of yielding it as the breathless gods of heathendom. "There is no breath at all in the midst of it." Men who are looking for happiness to any of these objects are like the devotees of Baal, who cried from morning to evening for help, and no help came.

III. THAT IN ALL THIS MEN ENTAIL ON THEMSELVES THE WOES OF OUTRAGED REASON AND JUSTICE. "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise!" 1. *It is the woe of outraged reason.* What help could they expect of the "molten image, and a teacher of lies"? What answer could they expect from the "dumb idols" that they themselves had made? What relief from any of the idols,

though overlaid with gold and silver? "There is no breath at all in the midst of it." How irrational all this! Equally unreasonable is it for men to search for happiness in any of the works of their hands, and in any being or in any object independent of God. 2. *It is the woe of insulted justice.* What has God said? "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" "Thou shalt worship no graven image;" "Thou shalt love me with all thy heart," etc. All this devotion, therefore, to the works of our own hands, or to any other creature, is an infraction of man's cardinal obligation. "Will a man rob God?" Go, then, to the men on 'Change, who are seeking happiness from wealth—to the men in scenes of fashionable and worldly amusements, who are seeking happiness from sensual indulgences and worldly applause—and thunder, "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise!"

"And still from him we turn away,
And fill our hearts with worthless things;
The fires of avarice melt the clay,
And forth the idol springs!
Ambition's flame and passion's heat
By wondrous alchemy transmute
Earth's dross, to raise some gilded brute
To fill Jehovah's seat."

(Clinch.)

D. T.

Ver. 20.—*Silence in the temple.* "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." "In striking contrast," says Dr. Henderson, "with the utter nihilism of idols, Jehovah is here introduced, at the close of all the prophecy, as the invisible Lord of all, occupying his celestial temple, whence he is ever ready to interpose his omnipotence for the deliverance and protection of his people and the destruction of their enemies (comp. Isa. xxvi. 21). Such a God it becomes all to adore in solemn and profound silence (Ps. lxxvi. 8, 9; Zeph. i. 7; Zech. ii. 13)." We take these words as suggesting three great subjects of thought.

I. THE UNIVERSE IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD. Men practically ignore this fact. To some the world is only as a great farm to produce food; to others, a great market in which commodities are to be exchanged in order to amass wealth; to others, a great chest containing precious ores which are to be reached by labour, unlocked and brought into the market; to others, a great ball-room in which to dance and play and revel in sensuous enjoyment. Only a few regard it as a temple. But few tread its soil with reverent steps, feeling that all is holy ground. What a temple it is! how vast in extent! how magnificent in architecture! how stirring are its national appeals!

II. THE TEMPLE IS FILLED WITH THE DIVINE PRESENCE. "The Lord is in his holy temple." He is in it, not merely as a king is in his kingdom or the worker in his works; but he is in it as the soul is in the body, the fountain of its life, the spring of its activities. Unlike the human architect, he did not build the house and leave it; unlike the author, he did not write his volume and leave his book to tell its own tale; unlike the artist, he did not leave his pictures or his sculpture to stand dead in the hall. He is in all, not as a mere influence, but as an absolute, almighty *Personality*. "Do not, I fill the heaven and earth? saith the Lord."

III. HIS PRESENCE IN THE GREAT TEMPLE DEMANDS SILENCE. "Keep silence before him." It would seem as if the Divine nature revolted from bluster and noise. How serenely he moves in nature! As spring by universal life rises out of death without any noise, and as the myriad orbs of heaven roll with more than lightning velocity in a sublime hush. How serenely he moves in Christ! He did not cause his voice to be heard in the streets. His presence, consciously realized, will generate in the soul feelings too deep, too tender for speech. Were the Eternal to be consciously felt by the race to-day, all the human sounds that fill the air and deaden the ears of men would be hushed into profound silence.

"Never with blast of trumpets
And the chariot-wheels of fame
Do the servants and sons of the Highest
His oracles proclaim;

But when grandest truths are uttered,
 And when holiest depths are stirred,
 When our God himself draws nearest,
 The still, small voice is heard.
 He has sealed his own with silence :
 His years that come and go,
 Bringing still their mighty measures
 Of glory and of woe—
 Have you heard one note of triumph
 Proclaim their course begun ?
 One voice or bell give tidings
 When their ministry was done ?”

D. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1—19.—Part II. PSALM OR PRAYER
 OF HABAKKUK.

Ver. 1.—§ 1. *The title.* A prayer. There is only one formal prayer in the ode, that in ver. 2; but the term is used of any devotional composition; and, indeed, the whole poem may be regarded as the development of the precatory sentences in the proemium (see the inscriptions in Ps. xvii.; lxxxvi.; xc.; cii.; cxlii.; and the last verse of Ps. lxxii., the subscription of Book II.). (For other hymns in the prophetic books, see Isa. xxxiv. and xxxv.; Ezek. xix.; Jonah ii.; Micah vi. 6, etc.; and as parallel to this ode, comp. Deut. xxxiii. 2, etc.; Judg. v. 4, etc.; Ps. lxxviii. 7, etc.; lxxvii. 18—20; cxiv.; Isa. lxiii. 11—14.) Of *Habakkuk* the prophet. The name and title of the author are prefixed to show that this is no mere private effusion, but an outpouring of prophecy under Divine inspiration. Upon *Shigionoth* (comp. title of Ps. vii.); Septuagint, *μετὰ ψῆδς*, “with song:” Vulgate, *pro ignorantia*. For this latter rendering Jerome had etymological ground, but did not sufficiently consider the use of *shiggayon* in Ps. vii., where it indicates the style of poetry, nor, as Keil shows, the fact that all the headings of Psalms introduced, as the present, with *al*, refer either to the melody, or accompaniment, or style in which they were to be sung. The Revised Version gives, “set to Shigionoth;” and the expression is best explained to mean, in an impassioned or triumphal strain, with rapid change of emotion, a dithyrambic song—a description which admirably suits this ode.

Ver. 2.—§ 2. *The proemium*, in which the prophet expresses his fear at the coming judgment, and prays God in his wrath to remember mercy. *Thy speech*; or, the report of thee; the declaration made by God in the preceding chapters concerning the punish-

ment of the Jews and the destruction of the Chaldeans. The LXX., regarding the ambiguity of the Hebrew, gives a double rendering, *εἰσακήκοα τὴν ἀκοήν σου*, and *κατενόησα τὰ ἔργα σου*, “I heard thy report,” and “I considered thy works.” Pusey considers that both meanings are intended, viz. both what God had lately declared, and all that might be heard of God, his greatness and his workings. Was afraid. The revelation of God’s interposition makes the prophet tremble. *Revive thy work*. God’s work is the twofold judgment spoken of above; and the prophet prays God to “quicken” and make it live, because, though it brings temporary distress upon his countrymen, it will also cause the destruction of their enemies, and re-establish the Jews and crown them with salvation, and make the glory of God known to all the earth. Dr. Briggs (*‘Messianic Prophecy,’* p. 234) translates, “Jahveh, I have heard the report of thee; I fear, Jahveh, thy work. In the midst of the years revive him (Israel).” He explains God’s “work” to be his acts in theophany—his judgment, especially as in ver. 16, the cause of fear to the psalmist. In the midst of the years. The “years” are the period between the announcement of the judgment and its final accomplishment (ch. ii. 3); the prophet prays that God would manifest his power, not merely at the extreme limit of this epoch, but earlier, sooner. This overthrow of the world-power forms, as it were, the central point of history, the beginning of a new age which shall culminate in the Messianic kingdom. *Make known*. Let all the earth know and acknowledge thy work. The LXX. have given two or more versions of this passage, one of which is remarkable. Thus they read, “In the midst of two animals (*δύο ζώων*) thou shalt be known; when the years draw nigh thou shalt be well known; when the time is come thou shalt be revealed.” The rendering, “two animals,” arises from a confusion of words:

but many of the Fathers, who were conversant with the Greek Scriptures, saw herein a reference to the incarnation of our blessed Lord, as lying in the stable at Bethlehem between the ox and the ass, which was the mystical explanation of Isa. i. 3, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." Others interpreted the two animals of the two thieves between whom Christ was crucified; or of angels and men; or Jews and Gentiles; or the two Testaments; or Moses and Elias. Others again accented the word *ἄσν* so as to understand "two lives," the present and the future, in the midst of which the Judge shall appear; or the life of Christ before his death and after his resurrection. There is a great truth underlying most of these interpretations, namely, that this magnificent hymn is concerned with the victories of Christ and his Church. **In wrath remember mercy.** When thine anger is displayed by sending the Chaldeans against us, remember thy mercy, and make a speedy end of our misery, and mitigate our enemies' cruelty (comp. ch. i. 13; and vers. 9, 13, 18, 19 of this chapter). The LXX. gives a double version, "In the troubling of my soul, in wrath, thou wilt remember mercy."

Vers. 3-15.—§ 3. *The prophet or the congregation depicts in a majestic theophany the coming of God to judge the world, and its effect symbolically on material nature, and properly on evil men.*

Ver. 3.—In this episode Habakkuk takes his imagery from the accounts of God's dealings with his people in old time, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Sinai, at the Jordan, in Canaan; he echoes the songs of Moses and Deborah and the psalmist; and he looks on all these mighty deeds as anticipative of God's great work, the overthrow of all that opposes and the establishment of the kingdom of Messiah. God (*Eloah*) came from Teman. The words are connected with Moses' description of the Lord's appearance at Sinai (Deut. xxxiii. 2; comp. Judg. v. 4). As he then came in glory to make a covenant with his people, so will he appear again in majesty to deliver them from the power of evil and to execute judgment. The verbs throughout are best rendered in the present. The prophet takes his stand in time preceding the action of the verb, and hence uses the future tense, thus also showing that he is prophesying of a great event to come, symbolized by these earlier manifestations. Habakkuk here and in ch. i. 11 uses the word *Eloah*, which is not found in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or the other minor prophets; it occurs once in Isaiah, twice in Deuteronomy, and frequently in Job.

There is no ground for the contention that its employment belongs to the latest stage of Hebrew. *Teman*; i.e. Edom; Vulgate, *ab Austro* (see notes on Amos i. 12 and Obad. 9). In Moses' song the Lord is said to come from Sinai. Habakkuk omits Sinai, says Pusey, which was the emblem of the Law, and points to another Lawgiver, like unto Moses, telling how he who spake the Law, God, should come in the likeness of man. **The Holy One.** A name of God (ch. i. 12), implying that he will not let iniquity pass unpunished, and that he will preserve the holy seed. **Mount Paran.** The mountainous district on the north-east of the desert of *Et-Tih*. The glory of the Lord is represented as flashing on the two hilly regions separated by the Arabah. They both lay south of Canaan; and there is propriety in representing the redeemer and deliverer appearing in the south, as the Chaldean invader comes from the north. The LXX. adds two translations of the word "Pharan," viz. "shady," "rough;" according to its etymology it might also mean "lovely." *Salah*; Septuagint, *ὑψώματα*. This term occurs also in vers. 9, 13, and frequently in the Psalms, but nowhere else, and indicates some change in the music when the ode was sung in the temple service. What is the exact change is a matter of great uncertainty. Some take it to indicate "a pause;" others, connecting it with *salah*, "to lift up," render it "elevation," and suppose it means the raising of the voice, or the strengthening of the accompaniment, as by the blast of trumpets. The meaning must be left undetermined, though it must be added that it is always found at the end of a verse or hemistich, where there is a pause or break in the thought, or, as some say, some strongly accented words occur. **His glory covered the heavens.** His majestic brightness spread over the heavens, dimming the gleam of sun and stars; or it may mean his boundless majesty fills the highest heavens and encompasses its inhabitants. **His praise.** This is usually explained to signify that the earth and all that dwell therein, at this glorious manifestation, utter their praise. But there is no allusion as yet to the manner in which the appearance is received, and in ver. 6 it produces fear and trembling; so it is best to take "praise" in the sense of "matter of praise," that glory "which was calculated to call forth universal adoration" (Henderson).

Ver. 4.—His brightness was as the light; brightness appeareth like light. The sunlight is meant, as Job xxxi. 26; xxxvii. 21; Isa. xviii. 4. He had horns coming out of his hand; i.e. rays of light on either side. The comparison of the first rays of light to the horns of the gazelle, according to Keil,

is common in Arabic poetry (comp. Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30). In the original passage, Deut. xxxiii. 2, we read, "At his right hand was a fiery Law unto them"—a reference to the two tables of stone, perhaps resplendent with light. The "hand" in our text is a general expression, and is not to be taken with any special reference to lightning launched by the hand (which is not a scriptural expression), nor to works effected by God's agency, but simply as signifying that the light of his presence streamed forth from both sides, *i.e.* everywhere. There was the hiding of his power. There, in that ineffable light, was the hiding-place of his majesty. He clothes himself with light as with a garment (Ps. civ. 2), and the splendour is the mantle of that presence which eye of man cannot behold (Exod. xxiv. 17; 1 Tim. vi. 16). Farrar quotes Ps. xviii. 11, "He made darkness his secret place;" and Milton—

"Dark with excess of light his skirts appear."

Septuagint, Ἐθετο ἀγάπησιν κραταιῶν ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ, which rendering has arisen from taking the adverb *sham* as a verb (*sam*), and mistaking the meaning of the following word.

Ver. 5.—After describing the splendour of the theophany, the prophet now turns to the purpose and effects of God's appearing. He comes to avenge and judge, therefore before him went the pestilence. Before him stalks plague, to punish his enemies and the disobedient, as in Egypt, in Canaan (Exod. xxiii. 27; 1 Sam. v. 9, 11); and among his own people (Numb. xi. 33; xiv. 37, etc.; Lev. xxvi. 25). For "pestilence" the LXX. reads "word." Burning coals went forth at his feet. "Fiery bolts" followed his advance, "hailstones and coals of fire" (Ps. xviii. 12, 13); as in Ps. xcvi. 3, "A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies on every side." But, regarding the parallelisms of the hemistiches, it is better to take *resheph* in the sense of "fever heat," as in Deut. xxxii. 24; scorching fever follows in his train. Jerome translates the word, *diabolus*, looking on the evil spirit as the agent of the Divine vengeance. The Jews, he says, had a tradition that Satan was called *Reseph*, from the speed of his movements. The LXX. has, "It (the word) shall go forth into the plains," which Jerome interprets, "shall make the crooked straight and the rough ways smooth."

Ver. 6.—He stood, and measured the earth. God takes his stand, and surveys the earth which he is visiting in judgment. As his glory filled the heavens, so now he with his presence paces the earth, measuring it, as it were, with his foot. He con-

siders, too, all the doings of the children of men, and requites them accordingly. Vulgate, *Stetit, et mensus est terram*. So the Syriac. On the other hand, the LXX. gives, Ἐστη καὶ ἐσαλεύθη ἡ γῆ, "The earth stood and quaked." Thus the Chaldee, and many modern commentators, "rocketh the earth." This rendering seems to anticipate what follows, and is not so suitable as the other, though it is quite admissible. Drove asunder. Dispersed and scattered. Septuagint, διετάχθη ἔθνη, "nations melted away." Others translate, "made to tremble" (Exod. xv. 15, etc.). The everlasting mountains. Mountains that have lasted as long as creation, and are emblems of stability and permanence (Deut. xxxiii. 15). Were scattered; or, were shattered (comp. Micah i. 4; Nah. i. 5). His ways are everlasting. This is best taken alone, not as connected grammatically with the preceding clause, and epexegetical of the "hills and mountains," which are called God's "ways," *i.e.* his chief creative acts, as Job xl. 19; Prov. viii. 22; but it means that, as God acted of old, so he acts now; "The ancient ways of acting are his" (Prov. xxxi. 27). "He reneweth his progresses of old time" (Delitzsch). The eternal, unchangeable purpose and operation of God are contrasted with the disruption of "the everlasting hills." The Greek and Latin Versions connect the words with what precedes. Septuagint, Ἐράκησαν βουνοὶ αἰώνιοι ποταμοὶ αἰώνιος, "The everlasting hills melted at his everlasting goings;" Vulgate, *Incurvati sunt colles mundi ab itineribus eternitatis ejus*, where the idea seems to be that the high places of the earth are God's paths when he visits the world.

Ver. 7.—As God moves in his majesty the various nations are struck with fear, as of old were the peoples that heard of the Exodus (see Exod. xv. 14—16). I saw. In prophetic vision (1 Kings xxii. 17). The tents of Cushan; LXX., σκηνώματα Αἰθιοπῶν, "the tents of the Ethiopians;" Vulgate, *tentoria Æthiopiae*. "Cushan" is not Chushan-Rishathaim, the Mesopotamian king mentioned in Judg. iii., but is a lengthened form of Oush (as *Lotan* for *Lot*, Gen. xxxvi. 20), the biblical name for Ethiopia. Here the African country is meant, lying along the west coast of the Red Sea. In affliction. Panic-stricken. The prophet particularizes what he had said above generally of the nations hostile to the people of God. The curtains; the tent curtains; Vulgate, *pelles*. Both "tents" and "curtains" are used by metonymy for their inhabitants. Midian. The country on the Gulf of Akaba, the eastern arm of the Red Sea. Ethiopia and Midian are named, as God is supposed to advance from the south.

Ver. 8.—Interrupting his description of the theophany, the prophet asks the motive of this wrathful revelation. This is done, not with expectation of an answer, but giving life and vigour to the composition. Such sudden transitions are not uncommon (comp. Judg. v. 12; Ps. lxxviii. 19, etc.). Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was it against the rivers, O Jehovah? was thy wrath kindled against the rivers? Was God angry with inanimate nature, when he showed his power, for instance, in the Nile and the Jordan and the Red Sea? God meant more by these acts. He showed his supremacy over all creation, and his will to save his people and to crush all opposition to the execution of his great design (see Ps. cvi. 9; cxiv. 3, etc.). That thou didst ride upon thine horses. The prophet speaks of the Lord as a Leader of a mighty host which came with chariots and horses to defend the Israelites and to crush their foes (comp. Ps. xviii. 10). And thy chariots of salvation. "And," which is not in the Hebrew, is better omitted, the clause being an explanation of "thine horses." The chariots come for the salvation, i.e. the deliverance, of Israel (ver. 13). Some translate, "Thy chariots are salvation;" as the Septuagint, *καὶ ἡ ἰσχυρία σου σωτηρία*: and Vulgate, *et quadrigæ tuæ salvatio*. It comes to the same thing, whichever rendering we adopt.

Ver. 9.—The prophet continues his description of the Lord as "a man of war" (Exod. xv. 3). Thy bow was made quite naked. The sheath of the bow was laid aside to make it ready for use. In the Assyrian monuments the bow-case forms part of the quiver, and holds only the lower half of the bow (Rawlinson, 'Anc. Mon.,' ii. 55, edit. 1864). It was fastened to the side of the chariot or carried at the back of the archer. (For the general sense, comp. Deut. xxxii. 40, etc.; Ps. xlv. 5.) In the Revelation (vi. 2) he that sits on the white horse has a bow. According to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word; i.e. thou doest all this to confirm the promises of deliverance and salvation made to the tribes of Israel. This sense is satisfactory; but the Hebrew text is corrupt, and cannot be explained with any certainty. The Revised Version gives, "The oaths to the tribes were a sure word;" in the margin, "Sworn were the chastisements (Hebrew, 'rods') of thy word." Thus Dr. Briggs: "Sworn are the rods of thy word." Orelli translates, "Oaths, rods of the word," and explains the clause to mean that the Lord comes to execute the denounced punishment, which proceeds from his mouth like chastising rods. The word *mattoth* is translated "tribes" (as in 2 Chron. v. 2) or "rods." Keil contends

for the latter, as instruments of chastisement, rendering, "Rods are sworn by word." Henderson, taking the words as a military signal, curiously translates, "'Sevens of spears' was the word." Pusey supports the Authorized Version, which, indeed, gives a good sense, and is probably correct. It is virtually supported by Jerome, who has, "Suscitans suscitabis arcum tuum, iuramenta tribubus quæ locutus es," "Thou wilt awaken the oaths," which, so long as the evil prospered, seemed to be forgotten and sleeping. The LXX. omits the word rendered "oaths," and translates *mattoth*, *σκήπτρα*, thus: "Ἐντείμων ἐντείμας τόξον σου ἐπὶ σκήπτρα, λέγει Κύριος, "Thou didst surely bend thy bow against sceptres." Selah. A pause ensues before the introduction of a new series of natural phenomena, accompanying the Lord's epiphany (see on ver. 3). The next clause would be more fitly joined with ver. 10. Thou didst cleave the earth with (or, into) rivers. This refers to some catastrophe like that which happened at the Flood, when "the fountains of the great deep were broken up" (Gen. vii. 11; comp. Ps. lxxvii. 16). Others think that the allusion is to the miracles at the Red Sea, or Sinai, or Rephidim in the wilderness, as in Ps. lxxiv.; lxxviii.; cv. But though the prophet glances at such particular circumstances, his scope is more general.

Ver. 10.—The mountains saw thee, and they trembled; literally, *were in pain*; Septuagint, *ὀδυνήσουσι*. The words point to the phenomena of an earthquake, as Sinai shook at the presence of the Lord (Exod. xix. 18; Ps. cxiv. 6). So Virgil, 'Æn.,' vi. 256—

"Sub pedibus mugire solum, et juga cœpta moveri
Silvarum . . .
Adventante dea."

For "mountains," the LXX. reads, "peoples." The overflowing of the water passed by; the torrent of water passed along. Cataracts of rain fell, as in the Deluge. "The windows on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake" (Isa. xxiv. 18). Those who confine the reference to past events see here an intimation of the passage of the Jordan (Josh. iii. 15, 16). The deep uttered his voice. The mass of waters in the ocean and under the earth roars mightily as it bursts forth (Gen. xlix. 25; Deut. xxxiii. 13). His hands. Its waves (Ps. xcvi. 8). Septuagint, *ὕψος φωνησας αὐτῆς*, "the height of its form."

Ver. 11.—The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; or, *stand still*, or *with-draw into their habitation*. They hide themselves in the tabernacles whence they are said

to emerge when they shine (Ps. xix. 4, etc.). Overpowered with the splendour of God's presence, the heavenly luminaries hide their light in this day of the Lord (comp. Isa. xiii. 10; Joel ii. 2, 10, 31; iii. 15; Amos v. 20; Matt. xxiv. 29). The miracle of Joshua (Josh. x. 12, etc.) may have suggested some of the language here, but the idea is quite different. At the light of thine arrows they went; i.e. the sun and moon fled away discomfited at the glory of God's weapons, his arrows gleaming with light. The idea may be that, in the absence of the sun and moon, the terrific scene was illuminated only by flashes of lightning. "Lightnings" are sometimes called God's "arrows," as in Ps. xviii. 14; lxxvii. 17, etc.; but the image here is rather of the arms of a warrior. Many supply the relative in the sentence, and render, "arrows which shoot along." This seems to be unnecessary, and is not supported by the versions. There is no special reference to the hailstorm at Beth-horon, which discomfited the Canaanites, but enabled the Israelites to pass on to victory (Joshua, *loc. cit.*). It is the terror of the judgment that is adumbrated, when the Lord shall come in flames of fire (2 Thess. i. 8), and the heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (2 Pet. iii. 12).

Ver. 12.—*Thou didst march through the land in indignation; thou treatest the earth in fury.* The mighty Judge stalks over the earth (ver. 6; comp. Judg. v. 4; Ps. lxxviii. 7). It is a general statement, and not to be confined to the successes of Joshua and the destruction of the Canaanites. Septuagint, *Ἐν ἀπειλῇ ἀλυγῶσεις γῆν*, with the alteration of a letter, "Thou wilt bring low the land with threats." *Thou didst thresh the heathen (nations) in anger*; Septuagint, *ἐν θυμῷ κατάρξεις* ("thou wilt break in pieces") *ἔβην*. Jerome here renders the verb, *obstupefacies*; but elsewhere, as Isa. xxviii. 28; Hos. x. 11; Amos i. 3, he uses *triturare*, which gives the best meaning. The kindred figure is found in Micah iv. 13; Isa. lxiii. 1, etc.

Ver. 13.—*Thou wentest forth.* The prophet specifies the end which these manifestations were designed to effect. God is said to "go forth" when he intervenes for the aid of his people, as Judg. v. 4; 2 Sam. v. 24; Isa. xlii. 13. *For salvation with thine anointed*; *In salutem cum Christo tuo* (Vulgate); *τοῦ σώσαι τὸν χριστόν σου (τοὺς χριστούς σου, Alex., Sin.)*, "to save thine anointed" (Septuagint). If the signification of the word "with" (*eti*) be pressed, the passage is taken to mean that, as God manifested himself in old time for the salvation of his people with his chosen "Christ," Moses; so he will hereafter reveal

his power for the destruction of the Chaldeans with his chosen "Christ," Cyrus. But this is too definite, and cannot be shown to be intended. The "anointed one," again, is not the nation of Israel, for the term is always applied to a single individual and never to the people collectively; so here it is the theocratic king who is meant—first, the representative of David; and secondly, the Messiah. God reveals himself for the salvation of his people in union with the work especially of his anointed Son, Christ. This is how the passage is taken by Eusebius ('Dem. Evang.' iv. 16), *Εἰς σωτηρίαν λαοῦ σου σὺν Χριστῷ σου*. It must be confessed, however, that most modern commentators translate, "for the salvation of thy anointed," taking the last expression (contrary to all usage) to mean the Israelites, as being a kingdom and nation of priests (Exod. xix. 6). In this case the present clause is merely a repetition of the preceding one. *Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked; thou dashest in pieces the head.* As in the following clause the metaphor of a house is plainly employed, "the head" must be taken for the gable or topmost ridge. "The house of the wicked" is an allegorical description of the Chaldaic dominion and its king; and the prophet declares that God will smite with destruction both the ungodly monarch and the kingdom that opposes itself. Some commentators see here an allusion to the primeval sentence (Gen. iii. 15); others to the destruction of the Egyptians' firstborn; others to the incident of Jael and Sisera (Judg. v. 26). If the prophet's language was influenced by any of these matters, his view and his oracle are concerned with the mighty future. The LXX. has, "Thou wilt cast death upon the heads of the evil." *By discovering (literally, making naked) the foundations unto the neck.* "By" is better omitted. Keil supposes that "the neck" is the central part of the house, looking from the gable downwards; though why this should be so called is not apparent; and the wording of the original, "the foundations even to the neck," compels us to connect the two words together, and will not allow us to interpret "the neck" of some higher part of the building. The general meaning is plain—the metaphorical house is destroyed from summit to base, the destruction beginning at the gable is carried on to the very foundations. According to this view, "the neck" should mean the very lowest basis of the walls. Henderson (after Capellus and others) suggests that we should read "rock," a word derived from the same root. Septuagint, *Ἐθέγγειρας δεσμούς ἕως τραχήλου*, "Thou didst raise chains unto the neck." It is possible that the mention of "the

head," just above, has led the prophet to use the term "neck" in order to express the utter destruction of the whole body. *Selah*. Another solemn pause ensues.

Ver. 14.—Thou didst strike through with his staves; thou didst pierce with his own spears. Thou dost turn on the Chaldeans and all thine enemies the destruction which they intended for others. The people meet with the same fate as the royal house (ver. 13); Vulgate, *maledixisti sceptris ejus*, which seems to be a mistranslation. The head of his villages (סְרִיס). There is a difficulty in arriving at the meaning of this last word. The LXX. renders it, "mighty men;" Jerome, "warriors;" Chaldee, "army;" Delitzsch and many modern critics, "hordes" or "inhabitants of the plain;" others again, "rulers" or "judges." The most probable version is either "warriors" or "hordes." The head, i.e. collectively the heads of his warlike troops. They came out (or, *who rush*) as a whirlwind to scatter me (see the description of the Chaldees, ch. i. 6, etc.). The prophet identifies himself with his people. (For the figure of the whirlwind, comp. Isa. xli. 16; Jer. xiii. 24; Hos. xiii. 3.) Dr. Briggs renders, "Thou dost pierce with his rods the chief, when his rulers are rushing in to scatter me." Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly; or, as in ambush, to devour the helpless. They exult in acting the part of robbers and murderers, who lurk for the defenceless and afflict the poor (Ps. x. 8, etc.). As is equivalent to "as it were." Vulgate, *Sicut ejus qui*. "The poor" are primarily the Israelites, and then all meek worshippers of God.

Ver. 15.—The Exodus is the type of the deliverance of God's people. Thou didst walk through (*didst tread*) the sea with thine horses; literally, thou treatest the sea, thy horses, the horses being explanatory. The prophet takes his imagery from Exod. xv. 1-19. He represents God as a warrior in his chariot, leading the way through the waters to the destruction of his enemies and to the salvation of his own people. Through the heap of great waters; or, upon the surge of mighty waters. The verse may also be rendered, *Thou treatest the sea—thy horses (tread) the heap of great waters* (Ps. lxxvii. 19). Past mercies and deliverances are types and pledges of future.

Vers. 16, 17.—§ 4. The contemplation of the Divine judgments produces in the people of God at first, fear and trembling at the prospect of chastisement.

Ver. 16.—When I heard. "When" is better omitted. "I heard" the report of thee (ver. 2). The LXX. refers to ch. ii. 1,

rendering, "I watched." If the former part is the pæan of the congregation, the present is the prophet's own utterance expressive of his dismay at the prospect before him. My belly trembled. My inmost part, my inward self, trembled with fear (comp. Isa. xvi. 11). My lips quivered at the voice. My lips quivered with fear at the voice of God that sounded in me (ch. ii. 1), proclaiming these awful judgments. The word rendered "quivered" (*tsalal*) is applied to the tingling of the ears (1 Sam. iii. 11; 2 Kings xxi. 12), and implies that the prophet's lips so trembled that he was scarcely able to utter speech. The LXX. renders, "from the voice of the prayers of my lips." Rottenness entered into my bones. This is an hyperbolical expression, denoting that the firmest, strongest parts of his body were relaxed and weakened with utter fear, as if his very bones were cankered and corrupted, and there was no marrow in them. And I trembled in myself. The last word (*tachtai*) is rendered variously: "under me," according to the Greek and Latin Versions, i.e. in my knees and feet, so that I reeled and stumbled; or, "in my place," on the spot where I stand (as Exod. xvi. 29). That I might rest in the day of trouble; better, *I who shall rest in the day of tribulation*. The prophet suddenly expresses his confidence that he shall have rest in this affliction; amid this terror and awe he is sure that there remaineth a rest for the people of God. This sentiment leads naturally to the beautiful expression of hope in the concluding paragraph (ver. 17, etc.). Keil and others render, "tremble that I am to wait quietly for the day of tribulation;" that I am to sit still and await the day of affliction. But Pusey denies that the verb (*nuach*) ever means "to wait patiently for," or "to be silent about;" its uniform signification is "to rest" from labour or from trouble. Thus the Septuagint, Ἀναπαύσομαι ἐν ἡμέρᾳ θλίψεως, "I will rest in the day of affliction;" Vulgate, *Ut requiescam in die tribulationis*. When he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. This should be, *When he that invades with bands comes up against the people*; i.e. in the day when the Chaldeans attack the Israelites (comp. 2 Kings xxiv. 2, where the word "bands" is also used). Septuagint, Τοῦ ἀναβῆναι, εἰς λαὸν παροικίας μου: "To go up against the people of my sojourning;" Vulgate, *Ut ascendam ad populum accinctum nostrum*, which is thus explained: "I will bear all things patiently, even death itself, that I may attain to the happy company of those blessed heroes who fought for their country and their God." It is obvious to

remark that this is a gloss, not on the original text, but on the erroneous version.

Ver. 17.—The prophet depicts the effects of the hostile invasion, which are such as to make the natural heart despair. Although the fig tree shall not blossom. The devastations of the enemy leave the country bare and uncultivated. The Chaldeans, like the Assyrians and Egyptians, cut down and burnt the fruit-bearing trees of the countries which they invaded (comp. Deut. xx. 19; Isa. ix. 10; xxxvii. 24; Jer. vi. 6). The trees most useful and abundant in Palestine are mentioned (comp. Deut. vi. 11; Hos. ii. 12; Joel i. 7; Micah iv. 4; vi. 15, etc.). The labour of the olive shall fail; literally, *shall lie*. The "labour" is the produce, the fruit. Though the yield shall disappoint all expectation. The use of the verb "to lie" in this sense is found elsewhere; e.g. Isa. lviii. 11; Hos. ix. 2. So Horace, 'Carm.' iii. 1. 30, "Fundus mendax;" and 'Epist.' i. 7. 87, "Spem mentita seges." The fields; the corn-fields (Isa. xvi. 8). The flock shall be cut off from the fold. There shall be no flocks in the fold, all having perished for lack of food. "Omnia hæc," says St. Jerome, "auferentur a populo, quia inique egit in Deum creatorem suum."

Vers. 18, 19.—§ 5. *In spite of the terror produced by these judgments, the true Israelite is blessed with hope of salvation and joy in the Lord.*

Ver. 18.—Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. Unshaken in confidence, the prophet, representing the faithful Israelite, expresses his unbounded joy at the prospect of salvation which opens to him beyond the present affliction. The psalmist often thus shows his exulting faith (see Ps. v. 7; xiii. 6; xvii. 14, 15; xxxi. 19). I will joy. I will shout for joy; my joy shall express itself outwardly. The God of my salvation (see note on Micah vii. 7). The God who judges the nations to procure the final salvation of his people. Septuagint, *Τῷ Θεῷ τῷ σωτῆρι μου*, "God my Saviour;" Vulgate, *In Deo*

Jesu meo. From this gloss of St. Jerome some of the Fathers have argued for the existence in this passage of a revelation of the incarnation of Christ and the redemption wrought by him.

Ver. 19.—The Lord God is my strength; more accurately, *Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength*, from Ps. xviii. 32; comp. Ps. xxvii. 1. He will make my feet like hinds' feet (Ps. xviii. 33). He makes me active and swift-footed as the gazelle, as a lusty warrior (2 Sam. i. 23; ii. 18) should be. So by the help of God I shall be superior to my enemies. He will make me to walk upon mine high places. The expression is used properly of God (Micah i. 3), and elsewhere, says Keil, to denote the victorious possession and government of a country (see Deut. xxxii. 13; xxxiii. 29). Here it signifies that believing Israel shall overcome all opposition and dwell in safety in its own land. To the chief singer (*musician*) on my stringed instruments (*neginoth*). This is a musical direction, answering to the heading in ver. 1, and implies that the ode is committed to the conductor of the temple music, to be by him adapted for the public service to the accompaniment of stringed instruments. Such directions are elsewhere always found at the beginning, not the end, of psalms (see Ps. iv.; vi.; liv.; lv.; lxvii.; lxxvi.). It has been thought that the suffix of the first person, "my stringed instruments," denotes that Habakkuk had a right to take part in the temple service, and was therefore a Levite; but it is very doubtful whether this suffix is not a clerical error, as Kuenen and Ewald suppose, or merely paragogic. Certainly neither the Greek, Latin, nor Syriac Versions afford it any confirmation. These versions make the subscription part of the ode. Thus LXX., 'Ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλά ἐπιβῆα με, τοῦ νικῆσαι ἐν τῇ ὁδῇ φύτου, "He maketh me to mount upon the high places, that I may conquer by his song;" Vulgate, *Super excelsa mea deducet me victor (victori, Cod. Amiat.) in palmis canentem*.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*The prayer of an alarmed prophet.* I. THE PROPHET'S ALARM. 1. *Its cause.* The report of Jehovah; i.e. the communication received from Jehovah concerning the punishment of Judah and the destruction of Chaldea. Habakkuk not the first man that had been afraid at the hearing of God's voice (Gen. iii. 10; Exod. iii. 6), at the thought of his presence (Job xxiii. 15), at the manifestation of his power (Ps. lxxv. 8), at the contemplation of his judgments (Ps. cxix. 120). Nor will they who hear the fame of his doings in the past or the announcement of his "judgments to come," as both of these are unfolded in Scripture, fail to be similarly affected. Like the Canaanites before the advance of Joshua and his host, their hearts will melt in them for fear (Josh. ii. 11). What excited terror in the breast of Habakkuk was the prospect Jehovah's "report" opened up before him! Though a pious man and a

prophet, he was at the same time a philanthropist and a patriot, who could not contemplate without a shudder the decimation of his people or the desolation of his country; and neither can the Christian anticipate without apprehension those chastisements that are promised to himself for correction of his backslidings, and to the Church for her recovery from doctrinal aberration or spiritual declension. It may be better to fall into God's hands, because his mercies are great, than to fall into those of man (2 Sam. xxiv. 14); but in any case it is a fearful thing to fall for judgment into the hands of the living God (Heb. x. 31). Again, the fierce whirlwind of retribution, which in the end should throw down the eagle's nest of Chaldean pride and blow up the crackling flames in which its palaces and temples were to be destroyed, raised within him awe-inspiring conceptions of the omnipotence of Jehovah which made him tremble, even though the downfall of Chaldea meant the deliverance of Judah; and so, although the final destruction of the ungodly will be to the saints a cause of rejoicing (Rev. xviii. 20), it will also inspire them with a solemn awe of the Divine holiness and justice, majesty and power. 2. *Its cure.* Prayer. Different from Adam, who, having heard God's voice, ran from God, Habakkuk, in his alarm, betook himself to God. Hiding from God, the custom of sinners; hiding in God, the comfort of saints (Ps. cxliii. 9). Suitable for all times (Eph. vi. 18; Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17), prayer is specially appropriate for bad times (Ps. l. 15). In addition to the promise that God will be a Refuge for the oppressed, a Refuge in times of trouble (Ps. ix. 9), and to the fact that good men in all ages have found him so (Ps. xlviii. 3; xci. 2; Jer. xvi. 19), the practice of pouring one's fears (Ps. xxxiv. 4) as well as complaints (Ps. cxliii. 2) and requests (Phil. iv. 6) into the ear of God seems justified by this, that he who by his judgment causes, is by his wisdom and mercy best able to remove alarms.

II. THE PROPHET'S PRAYER. 1. *Its fervour.* Intimated by the repetition of the term "Jehovah," and by the three short sentences of which the prayer is composed. Souls labouring under strong emotion commonly express themselves in brief and broken ejaculations, rather than in long and polished periods. 2. *Its tenor.* A three-fold petition. (1) For the acceleration of Jehovah's work. "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years." The work referred to was the purification of Judah by means of the Chaldean exile, and the salvation of Judah by the ultimate overthrow of her oppressor. It was thus a picture of God's work in all ages—the deliverance of the individual believer and of the Church in general, first through the afflictions and trials of life from the moral defilement of sin; and second, through the overthrow (by Christ's cross and rule) of the enemies of both from the legal and spiritual bondage of sin. The prophet craved that Jehovah might not defer the completion of Judah's redemption till the end of the time which had been appointed for this purpose, but that he might cause his work to live (not suffer it to go to sleep, but quicken and revive it), so that it might be finished in the midst of the years, and Judah's reformation and emancipation brought about long before the stipulated period had arrived. Thus his prayer was one the believer might offer for himself, that God would perfect that which concerned him (Ps. cxxxviii. 8), would carry on his work of grace within him (Phil. i. 6), making all things work together for his good (Rom. viii. 28), causing tribulation to work in him patience, etc. (Rom. v. 3), and afflictions to yield him the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Heb. xii. 11), as well as to work out for him a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. iv. 18); and would crown that work by completely effecting his deliverance from the curse and power of sin, from the terror of death, the darkness of the grave, the misery of hell. It was also a petition which the Church might present for herself, that she might be purified, extended, completed, glorified, not after long waiting, but soon, in the middle of the years. "Even so, come [quickly], Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20). (2) For the manifestation of Jehovah's glory. "In the midst of the years make it known." Make it known, the prophet meant, that the work of punishing and purifying Judah by means of exile in Babylon is thy work; so shall it comfort Judah and awe Babylon. Make it known that the deliverance of Judah by means of the overthrow of Babylon is thy work; so again shall Judah rejoice and the nations of the earth be afraid. The believer and the Church may also ask that God's work in dealing with them should be manifest, not to themselves merely, but to the world at large. This would both sustain them and impress the world.

Until affliction is seen to be God's work, it does little good to the soul; till the world perceives that God is in the Church, it will not cease to persecute and hinder the Church. (3) For the dispensation of Jehovah's mercy. Habakkuk's plea was not merit. He knew well that what he asked could not be granted on the score of justice.

"'Tis from the mercy of our God
That all our hopes begin."

LESSONS. 1. That God's voice should excite alarm even in the hearts of good men is no mean proof of the fallen state of mankind generally. 2. It is a good sign of grace when an alarmed soul betakes itself to God. 3. The pre-eminence which belongs to redemption over all the other works of God. 4. The only power that can awaken dead souls or revive unspiritual and decadent Churches is God. 5. The chief hope of man lies in the mercy of Heaven, not in the goodness of himself.

Vers. 3—5.—*An ideal theophany: 1. The onward march of the Deity.* I. HIS PERSON DESIGNATED. 1. *God, or Eloah, the Strong or Powerful One.* A name for the Supreme used for the first time by Moses (Deut. xxxii. 15) to portray God as the Creator of Israel, and employed by Habakkuk "to designate God as the Lord and Governor of the whole world" (Keil). Omnipotence an essential attribute of Divinity (Gen. xvii. 1; Josh. iv. 24; 1 Chron. xxix. 12; Job xxxvi. 5; xlii. 2; Ps. lxii. 11); the impotence of heathen idols was the best proof that they were no gods (Isa. xlv. 20; Jer. ii. 28). 2. *The Holy One.* An appellation given to God at least three times in the Psalter (Ps. lxxi. 2; lxxviii. 41; lxxxix. 18), twice in Jeremiah (l. 29; li. 5), once in Ezekiel (xxxix. 7), once in Hosea (xi. 9), twice in Habakkuk (i. 12; iii. 3), and occurring frequently in Isaiah. Equally with strength is purity an indispensable quality in the Supreme; and this no less than that in an infinite measure and degree. An unholy God could not be all-powerful, all-wise, all-just, or all-good. Holiness the guarantee and guardian of the other attributes of his nature. Least of all could an unholy God be either a Saviour or a Judge of men.

II. HIS GLORY DEPICTED. 1. *Its extent.* All-pervading, irradiating the entire universe, covering the heavens and spreading over the earth (Ezek. xliii. 2). What is here declared of the material or symbolic presence of Deity is true of his real, though unseen, presence (Ps. viii. 1; xix. 1; Isa. vi. 3). 2. *Its brightness.* Resembling the light, i.e. the sun, to which Scripture likens God himself (Ps. lxxxiv. 11), and Christ (Mal. iv. 2; John ix. 5), who is God's Image (2 Cor. iv. 4), the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his Person (Heb. i. 3). In exact accordance with the prophet's thought, God is represented as covering himself with light as with a garment (Ps. civ. 2), and as dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto (1 Tim. vi. 16); while Christ is ever set forth as the highest expression of the uncreated glory of the Supreme (John i. 14). 3. *Its manifestation.* Emitting rays or shooting forth beams on all sides, like the rising sun (Keil, Delitzsch), an emblem suggestive of the partial and gradual, though universal, manner in which the Divine glory unveils itself to intelligent spectators on earth (Job xxvi. 14). 4. *Its power.* Emanating from his hand, like rays darting forth from the sun's disc, or like horns shooting out from the head of a gazelle (Pusey, Fausset). The allusion may have been to the lightnings which flashed forth from the cloud upon Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 16); but the underlying thought is that one principal aspect of God's glory is the exhibition of power which he furnishes to men in the material creation (Isa. xl. 26, 28), in the phenomena of nature (Job xxxvi. 22, etc.), and in the scheme of grace (1 Cor. i. 24). 5. *Its essence.* Hidden, unsearchable, unfathomable, the above-mentioned coruscations of his glory being not so much unveilments as concealments of his ineffable Personality, not so much exhibitions as hidings of his power. That which may be known of God from the outshinings of his glory is the fact, not the fulness, of his power and Godhead. The grand truth symbolized by the cloudy pillar infolding brightness, viz. that Israel's God was a God that, while discovering, yet hid himself (Isa. xlv. 15), was in the Incarnation exemplified and emphasized (cf. John i. 14 with vii. 27), and is receiving confirmation by every advance the human mind makes in knowledge (Job xi. 7—9; xxvi. 9; xxxvii. 23; Ps. cxlv. 3; cxlvii. 5; Isa. xl. 28; Rom. xi. 33). Agnosticism a witness to the truth here stated.

III. HIS ADVANCE DESCRIBED. 1. *The quarter whence he comes.* Teman and Paran, i.e. the country south of Judah or Idumea, and Paran the desert region lying between Judah and Sinai (see Exposition). Separated only by the Wady-el-Arabah, the two localities were intended to indicate the Sinaitic region as the spot whence this sublime theophany of the future should proceed. In so defining its starting-point, the prophet probably wished to suggest a variety of thoughts, as e.g. that the future glorious manifestation of Jehovah was rendered possible, and even probable, by what had in the past occurred at Sinai; that it would proceed in the line of that earlier theophany, and be a carrying out of the Divine policy therein revealed—a policy of mercy and judgment, of salvation and destruction; and that in it, as in the ancient Apocalypse, both the power and the holiness of God would be signally displayed. True of the Divine advent in the overthrow of Babylon, these thoughts were also realized in the advent of the fulness of the times, and will be conspicuous in the final advent at the close of human history. 2. *The purpose for which he comes.* To execute judgment upon the ungodly world, and so to effect the deliverance of his people. This was to be the object of his interposition in the overthrow of Babylon, as it had been in the destruction of Egypt; this was the end aimed at in the first coming of the Saviour, the redemption of his Church by the annihilation of her foes; this will be the purpose of his appearing at the end of the world, to complete the redemption of his people by completing the punishment of the ungodly. 3. *The attendants by whom he is served.* Pestilence in front, and fiery bolts in the rear, signifying that God will be accompanied with sufficient instruments to effect his purpose. "Death and destruction of all sorts are a great army at his command" (Pusey).

Learn: 1. The certainty of a future manifestation of Jehovah in the Person of the glorified Christ. 2. The double object for which that glorious manifestation of Christ will take place.

Vers. 6, 7.—*An ideal theophany: 2. The wonderful acts of the Deity.* I. MEASURING THE EARTH, AND DRIVING ASUNDER THE NATIONS. 1. *Measuring the earth;* i.e. either surveying it with his all-seeing glance whereat there is universal consternation (Fausset), or measuring it out among the peoples on its surface, as Joshua partitioned the Holy Land after its conquest among the tribes (Pusey). Both ideas are historically true, no Divine interposition of any magnitude occurring among earth's inhabitants without bringing with it to thoughtful minds a conviction that the hand and eye of God are at work, and leaving after it, as a result, a rearrangement of the map of the globe. The marginal reading, "shaking the earth," causing it to reel (Delitzsch, Keil), as David says it trembled on the occasion of Jehovah's coming down on Mount Sinai (Ps. lxxviii. 8), presents also a valuable truth that the Divine providential government of the world, especially when it takes to deal with long-established iniquity for the purpose of punishing and destroying the same, is calculated to inspire awe among earth's inhabitants (Ps. xcix. 1), as it did when it broke the pride of Egypt (Exod. xv. 14), as it was to do when it overthrew the Chaldean power, and as it will do when it hurls the mystical Babylon to the abyss (Rev. xviii. 19). This the thought contained in the parallel clause. 2. *Driving asunder the nations.* "He beheld and drove asunder [or, 'made to tremble'] the nations." He so paralyzed them with fear that he drove them asunder, rendering combination amongst them impossible.

II. SCATTERING THE MOUNTAINS AND BOWING THE HILLS. Not the lesser heights of comparatively recent formation, but the primeval altitudes, whose hoary peaks have witnessed the passing by of millenniums, and whose roots go down amid the granite bars of the earth (Ps. xc. 2). These by his encampment on their summits he causes to crumble, resolve themselves into dust, and vanish into nought (Nah. i. 5; Micah i. 4). The image may point to "the convulsions on Mount Sinai and to the earthquake which announced the descent of the Most High" (Adam Clarke), but it signifies the utter impossibility of even the strongest forces of nature, whether in matter or in man, resisting the advance of God, and that because his ways are older than even the everlasting hills (Ps. xc. 2), are the only things on earth to which everlastingness belongs. "The everlasting ways of the everlasting God are mercy and truth" (St. Bernard, quoted by Pusey).

III. TERRIFYING THE HEATHEN AND PUNISHING THE ADVERSARIES OF HIS PEOPLE.

In prophetic vision Habakkuk beheld the impression made upon the neighbouring nations through which Jehovah passed on his march from Teman to the Red Sea—the Cushites or African Ethiopians on the west “in affliction,” and the Midianites towards the east, “trembling.” A different interpretation makes Cushan the Mesopotamian king, Chushan-Rishathaim, who oppressed Israel eight years in the time of the Judges (Judg. iii. 8—10), and Midian the last enemy who seduced Israel into sin when on the borders of the promised land (Numb. xxv. 17), and came up against them after they had settled in it (Judg. vi. 4—11). In this case the prophet selects the judgments executed upon these—upon the first by Othniel, upon the second by Gideon—as typical of the inflictions that would fall upon Jehovah’s enemies at his future coming.

Learn: 1. The sovereignty of God over men and kings. 2. The duty and wisdom of recognizing God’s hand in the movements of nations and in the phenomena of nature. 3. The impossibility of defeating the ultimate realization of God’s purposes, whether of judgment or of mercy.

Ver. 8.—*An ideal theophany: 3. The terrible wrath of the Deity.* I. ITS VISIBLE MANIFESTATIONS. The prophet conceives Jehovah as “a warlike hero equipped for conflict,” depicts him as marching forth against his enemies, and throwing all nature (especially its rivers and seas, emblems of the earth’s populations) into consternation, and inquires of him what had been the cause of his vehement displeasure. The form of the question suggests that Jehovah’s anger had not been directed against inanimate nature, but that the commotions visible in the rivers and the seas were only symbols of his wrath against men.

II. ITS SECRET DESTINATION. It was aimed at a threefold purpose. 1. *The destruction of his enemies.* Of these the rivers and seas were merely emblems (ver. 14). 2. *The salvation of his people.* Jehovah’s horses and chariots were horses and chariots of salvation (ver. 13). “The end of God’s armies, his visitations and judgments, is the salvation of his elect, even while they who are inwardly dead perish outwardly also” (Pusey). 3. *The vindication of his own honour.* His bow had been (and was to be) made quite bare, i.e. drawn from its scabbard in fulfilment of the oaths he had given to the tribes—first to Abraham, then to Isaac, next to Jacob, and afterwards to David—that he would deliver them from the hand of their enemies (Luke i. 73—75); or, accepting the marginal translation, because “sworn were the chastisements [literally, “rods”] of his word,” i.e. because the threatenings he had uttered against his people’s enemies (Deut. xxxii. 40—42) were as sure as the promises of deliverance bestowed upon his people themselves.

Learn: 1. That the wrath of God is as much a reality as the love of God is. 2. That the destruction of God’s enemies is as sure as is the salvation of his friends. 3. That in both God will be glorified.

Vers. 9—16.—*An ideal theophany: 4. The glorious interposition of the Deity.* I. NATURE’S HOMAGE TO THE JUDGE. (Vers. 10, 11.) Jehovah’s presence on that great and terrible day will be attested by a succession of marvels. 1. *Wonders in the earth.* (1) The cleaving of the earth with rivers (ver. 9) may point to the bursting forth of waters from the deep places of the earth, which are again opened as at the Flood (Gen. vii. 11) through violent convulsions, or to the overflowing of the land by the agitated and swollen waters, as also happened on the occasion of that appalling catastrophe (Gen. vii. 11, 17, 19). (2) The trembling of the mountains, which writhe as if in pain, may contain an allusion to earthquakes and similar cataclysms. 2. *Wonders in the sea.* “The tempest of waters passed by, the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high” (ver. 10). These words possibly allude to what occurred both in the Flood and in the dividing of the Red Sea and the Jordan. 3. *Wonders in the sky.* “The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, at the shining of thy glittering spear” (ver. 11), as they did in the time of Joshua, when Jehovah fought for Israel against Gibeon (Josh. x. 13). Compare the description in the Apocalypse of the great day of the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. vi. 12—16).

II. THE WRATHFUL PROCEDURE OF THE JUDGE. 1. *Marching through the land in indignation.* The land referred to is in the foreground Chaldea, and in the back-

ground the whole earth, which, no less than Babylon, will have become an object of Divine displeasure. 2. *Threshing the nations in anger.* Not the Chaldean people only, but all the peoples who, like them, shall have become the oppressors of God's heritage, all the nations that have not known or served God, will experience the strokes of his anger. 3. *Wounding the head of the house of the wicked, laying bare the foundation even to the neck.* The wicked one is first the Chaldean king, the head of the Chaldean power, and lastly that wicked one whom Christ will destroy with the brightness of his coming (1 Thess. iv. 8). The image is that of complete destruction (see Exposition). 4. *Piercing with his own staves the head of his warriors or hordes.* These were the Chaldean troops, whom the prophet saw coming up against himself and Israel as a whirlwind to scatter them, as highway murderers lying in wait to devour the poor secretly, but whom he also beheld falling upon and destroying one another, wounding themselves with their own swords (cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 20; 2 Chron. xx. 23, 24). So will God's enemies in the end consume and devour one another. 5. *Overcoming every obstacle that might be supposed to hinder his purpose,* viz. the execution of wrath upon his foes, or the deliverance of his people.

III. THE MERCIFUL PURPOSE OF THE JUDGE. This was (and always will be) the salvation of his people and of his anointed, i.e. of his people Israel and Judah with their Davidic king, then of his believing Church with its anointed Head. If God executes judgment upon the ungodly, it is because otherwise the salvation of the godly cannot be secured.

LESSONS. 1. The certainty of a day of judgment. 2. The terrifying aspect to the wicked of the glory of God. 3. The infinite fierceness of the wrath of the Almighty. 4. The ability of God to execute his purposes both of judgment and salvation. 5. The graciousness towards believers of all God's interpositions.

Vers. 17—19.—*Sorrowing, yet rejoicing.* I. THE CASE SUPPOSED. A complete failure of all creature comforts. 1. *Extremely unusual.* Even the worst are seldom reduced to the bare boards of absolute privation (Ps. cxlv. 9; Matt. v. 45). David confesses in old age that he had "never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. xxxvii. 25). 2. *Not impossible or unknown.* Persons, and these by no means always the ungodly, but sometimes the good, the excellent of the earth, the pious, the people who fear God and keep his commandments, who believe in his Word and delight in his ways, have been known to be placed in circumstances of utter destitution, such as Habakkuk so touchingly describes. Whether Habakkuk himself was in it, he expected that he might be, as he foresaw that many of his countrymen would be when the terrible Chaldean invasion came. Job had experience of such a situation as Habakkuk portrayed (Job i. 13—22); Paul (2 Cor. xi. 27) and many others both before and since have known it. 3. *Always sad.* No blossom on the fig tree, no fruit upon the vine, no harvest from the olive trees or corn-fields, no flocks in either fold or stall. Everything gone. Every prop and stay taken—money scattered to the winds by unsuccessful trading, household furniture arrested and sold to pay debt, means of earning a livelihood gone, friends vanished just at the moment when most required, children laid down with sickness when money to pay for medical relief is wanting, health precarious through age or infirmity. When a case like this occurs it is sad. 4. *Yet it might be worse.* It would be if a Christian were to lose not the creature comforts merely, but the Creator himself, from whom these comforts flow. Let a man lose what he may, so long as he has God and Jesus Christ, the Bible and the throne of grace, with the gift of forgiveness and the hope of heaven, he is not utterly undone.

II. THE RESOLUTION TAKEN. To "rejoice in the Lord." 1. *Sensible.* If a man loses three-fourths of his fortune, it may be natural to grieve over what is lost, but it cannot fail to strike one as more sensible to make much of and rejoice in what remains. So a good man, when he sees his creature comforts taken from him, will show himself a wise man by letting these go without too great indulgence in sorrow and cleaving to the Creator, who is infinitely more precious than all besides. 2. *Satisfactory.* What remains to the good man after the departure of creature comforts is the best part of his estate. It is the part he can least want; he might do without his fig trees, etc., but not without his God; and the part that is most satisfying—fig trees, etc., might feed

the body, but only God can support a soul; and the part that is most permanent—the only part that is permanent, all earthly things being subject to decay. 3. *Sanctifying*. No man can make and keep it without becoming holier and better because of it. He who rejoices in God will gradually grow like God. 4. *Profitable*. It will come back to him who adopts it in blessings upon his head. If any man will delight in God, God will delight in him, will rejoice over him to do him good.

III. THE CHERISHED EXPECTATION. That God would perfect his salvation. 1. *By imparting to him strength*. "Jehovah, the Lord, is my Strength." The man who used these words had made three great discoveries: (1) that man's strength at the best is little better than weakness—in the domain of the body, and in that of the mind, but chiefly in that of the spirit; (2) that the source of all strength, whether physical, intellectual, or spiritual, for the human being, is God (Zech. x. 12; 2 Cor. iii. 5; ix. 8; x. 4; Eph. iii. 20; Col. i. 11); and (3) that this Divine strength is indispensable for enabling the soul to cling to God in the day of trouble and season of calamity (Phil. i. 6; ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 5). 2. *By inspiring him with alacrity or zeal*. "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet;" i.e. maketh them lithe and nimble, active and steady, skilful to climb, and tenacious to hold on like those of the female deer, which quickly scents danger, and bounds along with safety among the crags and cliffs of its native haunts. The language is descriptive of one who, in the season of adversity, in the hour of trial, temptation, and danger, is quick to discern, eager in adopting, and steadfast in pursuing the path of duty, which for him, as for all, is the path of safety. Moreover, the man who rejoices in God will commonly find himself advised in due season of the approach of danger, assisted in ascertaining the path of duty, and strengthened both to enter upon and adhere to it. 3. *By exalting him to safety*. "He maketh me to walk upon mine high places." The man who can rejoice in God will sooner or later find that God has begun to exalt him beyond common men: (1) has set him on a high place of safety beyond the reach of condemnation; (2) is setting him upon a high path of moral and spiritual elevation; and (3) will set him in the end upon a high throne of glory.

Learn: 1. The vanity of creature comforts. 2. The sweetness of Divine comforts. 3. The secret of true happiness. 4. The certainty of final glory.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Prayer and praise*. This chapter records the remarkable "prayer" or "ode" of Habakkuk. The superscription contained in the first verse and a cursory glance at the chapter as thus described may be found suggestive of important teachings respecting the sacred exercises of prayer and praise. Note—

I. THE TEACHINGS CONCERNING PRAYER. 1. We do well to solicit present blessings. "In the midst of the years make known" (ver. 2); i.e. he sought the Divine manifestation in mercy to be granted to his people *in his own day*. 2. We should recount God's goodness in the past. The prayer abounds in reminiscences of God's favour as bestowed upon his chosen in the days of yore. 3. The comprehensive nature of prayer. This prayer of Habakkuk contains (1) petition; (2) adoration; (3) devout contemplation of God in his character and works; (4) review of his providential doings; and, (5) pervading the whole, the spirit of confiding and joyous trust.

II. THE TEACHINGS CONCERNING PRAISE. 1. The desirability of employing in this exercise the devout compositions of God's servants in past ages, which have been preserved in his Word. 2. The appropriateness of the language of prayer as the medium of expressing praise to God. "The prayers of David the son of Jesse" are contained and expressed in his Psalms. "The prayer of Habakkuk" is also "an ode" set to music, and used at his suggestion in the liturgical services of the temple. 3. The importance of cultivating correct musical expression in the presentation of the sacrifice of praise to God. The tones should be in harmony with the character of the thoughts and sentiments of the words being sung. This is probably the meaning of the expression, "upon Shigionoth" (ver. 1), *'al shiggýnôth* meaning "in wandering measures," the tones to be varied according to the character of the thoughts and words. The term "Selah," used by him (vers. 3, 9, 13), and the direction, "To the chief singer on my stringed instruments," with which he closes his book, also indicate the careful-

ness in execution the prophet would have exercised. All true worship to God must proceed from humble and trusting hearts, and be presented "in spirit and in truth," and this is perfectly compatible with regard for all that is cultured and artistic in method. Our motto should be, "The best for the Lord."—S. D. H.

Ver. 2.—*Prayer for revival.* The revival of God's work stands intimately connected with prayer. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all true quickening of the Divine life in the souls of men, and his renewing and sanctifying influences are secured in response to earnest supplication (Ezek. xxxvi. 37; Mal. iii. 10; Acts i. 14; ii. 1). "It is visionary to expect an unusual success in the human administration of religion unless there were unusual omens. Now, an emphatic spirit of prayer would be such an omen. And if the whole or greater number of the disciples of Christianity were, with an earnest unflinching resolution of each, to combine that Heaven should not withhold one single influence which the very utmost effort of conspiring and persevering supplication would obtain, it would be the sign of a revolution of the world being at hand" (John Foster). Observe—

I. PRAYER FOR REVIVAL INVOLVES AN INTELLIGENT APPREHENSION OF THE STATE OF THE AGE, AND THE CHURCH IN THE AGE, IN WHICH IT IS OFFERED. The language of the prophet in the former part of his prophecy indicates the possession by him of an insight into the character and needs both of the Hebrew nation and Church in his day; and this acquaintance prepared his mind and heart for pleading so earnestly for a revival of God's work. Our own age and the state of religion in it claims our thoughtful regard. Reflection upon it will show the imperative need there is for the possession of a higher measure of spirituality, consecration, Christian intelligence and courage, and will impel the utterance of the earnest cry, "O Lord, revive thy work" (ver. 2).

II. PRAYER FOR REVIVAL WILL BE PROMPTED BY ANXIOUS CONCERN IN VIEW OF THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM THE PREVAILING DEGENERACY. "O Lord," cried the prophet, "I have heard thy speech, and I was afraid." Jehovah had spoken unto him in vision, unfolding the terrible judgments which should overtake his people in consequence of their apostasy, and this vision of coming Divine chastisement filled him with terror; and with the real concern of a true patriot in view of the disastrous issue to which, through the prevailing iniquity, the national interests were tending, he implored Divine interposition and help ("O Lord, revive," etc.). The Christian patriot in our own land has reason for anxious solicitude as he views the present in its relation to the future. He knows that there is danger lest the *temporal prosperity* enjoyed in this age should result in the cherishing of pride, in conformity to the world, and in apathy in holy service; and lest the *intellectual activity* prevailing should lead to the weakening of conviction, the cherishing of doubt, and resulting in complete indifference in relation to spiritual realities. All this occasions him serious concern, which is intensified as he beholds multitudes in whom these dire effects have been already wrought; and in this spirit of solicitude he is led to the throne of grace, and to cry with impassioned earnestness, "O Lord, revive thy work."

III. PRAYER FOR REVIVAL IS EVER DIRECTED TO THE SECURING OF SPIRITUAL RESULTS. "In wrath remember mercy" (ver. 2). The seer knew by revelation that his nation, owing to its sinfulness, should be overtaken by judgment, and should fall into the power of the Chaldeans; and in his prayer he did not ask for the reversal of this. Divine wrath must follow transgression, but he prayed that in the midst of this God would "remember mercy," in other words, that he would so interpose as to sanctify the dark experiences looming in the future, drawing his erring people nearer to himself, so that they might trustfully pass through the painful discipline in store for them, and come out of it at length purified as gold. And so ever true prayer for revival seeks the spiritual renewal of men; it solicits the manifestation of the Divine mercy in delivering the plants of his own planting from the blighting effects of sin, and in causing them to abound in all holy excellence and grace.

IV. PRAYER FOR REVIVAL IS IMPATIENT OF DELAY. It seeks a present blessing. "In the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known" (ver. 2); i.e. without lingering, without postponement, forthwith, in the seer's own time. "How long, O Lord, how long?" "Thy kingdom come;" "It is time for thee to work."—S. D. H.

Vers. 3—18.—*God in history.* On reading these verses containing the ode of Habakkuk we find that they abound in historical allusions. The prophet recalled to mind the Divine interpositions both in mercy and in judgment which had taken place in the bygone days, and in the light of them contemplated the position and prospects of his people in his own time. This course was a very customary one with the Hebrew bards. They were eminently patriotic, and delighted to touch upon the national experiences of sorrow and conflict, of joy and triumph; and, indeed, to such an extent did they carry this, that an acquaintance with the facts of Jewish history is essential in order that we may apprehend the meaning and appreciate the beauty of their poetic strains. But whilst thus national, these sacred songs, in that they refer to principles which are of general application, and to experiences which are common to humanity, are felt by us to be universal in their character, and to belong unto us as well as to the Hebrews, that in reference to them “there is neither Jew nor Greek,” in that they are calculated to instruct and edify, to stimulate and strengthen us all. Viewing in this light the celebrated “ode” of Habakkuk here recorded, we see illustrated in it the great fact of God’s working in human history, together with the design and influence of this Divine operation.

I. SEE ILLUSTRATED HERE THE FACT OF THE DIVINE WORKING IN HUMAN HISTORY. Looking back, the prophet traced this working: 1. In the giving of the Law on Sinai (comp. vers. 3, 4, with Deut. xxxiii. 2; Judg. v. 4, 5; Ps. lxxviii. 8; Teman being another name for Seir). The manifestation of “the eternal light” is thus fittingly compared to the rising of the sun, heaven and earth reflecting his glory. The coming of God in judgment was the thought which, in the circumstances, was necessarily the most vividly present to the prophet’s mind; and his allusion here to the manifestation of God in his infinite purity served as an appropriate prelude to this. 2. In the plagues which fell upon the Israelites in the desert, as the result of their disobedience (comp. ver. 5 with Deut. xxxii. 24). The plague is referred to as going before God, like the ancient shield-bearer before the warrior (1 Sam. xvii. 7), or the courier before the man of rank (2 Sam. xv. 1); and pestilence as coming after, as an attendant following his master. 3. In the effects produced upon the Midianites by the advance of the hosts of God’s chosen (comp. vers. 6, 7 with Exod. xv. 13—15). 4. In the dividing of the Red Sea and the passage of the Jordan (comp. ver. 8 with Exod. xv. 8; Ps. cxiv. 3—5). Ver. 8 clearly has reference to these Divine interpositions, although the poet, rising with his theme, looked beyond those events and took a wider sweep, and beheld God as going forth, the Divine Warrior in his chariot of salvation, to put his foes to confusion and to effect deliverance for his own. 5. Expressions also are used in vers. 11—15 which, though somewhat veiled, doubtless suggested to the Hebrews, as they raised this song of praise, the sun standing still in Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, in the time of Joshua’s victory over the Amorites (ver. 11); the tragedy of the slaughter of Sisera, the representative of the head of the Canaanitish tribes (vers. 13, 14); and the complete discomfiture of the Canaanites (ver. 12). So that the “ode” sets forth God’s hand in the events connected with the Jewish nation, and in this way illustrates most forcibly the great fact of the Divine working in human history through all the ages.

II. SEE EXPRESSED HERE THE DESIGN OF THE DIVINE WORKING IN HUMAN HISTORY. This is ever wise and good (ver. 13). God rules over all, making all events contribute to the working out of his purposes of love and mercy in the interests of the whole race. Earthly rulers pursue their own ends, and are prompted by considerations of glory and ambition, but their working is in subjection to the Divine control. “The king’s heart,” etc. (Prov. xxi. 1). Nothing can befall us, whether individually or nationally, without the permission of our heavenly Father—nothing, too, which he cannot or will not overrule to the advancement of our highest interests.

“All change changing
Works and brings good;
And though frequent storms, raging,
Carry fire and flood;
And the growing corn is beaten down,
The young fruits fall and moulder,
The vessels reel, the mariners drown
Awing the beholder;

Yet in evil to men is good for man.
 Then let our heart be bolder,
 For more and more shall appear the plan
 As the world and we grow older."

(T. T. Lynch.)

By a process of Divine evolution, God causes the upheavings and commotions of all kinds which occur in the history of the world to result in the good of humanity; and whilst there is occasion for us, as we note his hand in human history, to say to him with reverence and awe, "In anger thou marchest through the earth; in wrath thou treadest down the nations" (Revised Version), yet we find abundant reason for adding, in the spirit of true adoration, "*Thou goest forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thine anointed*" (ver. 13).

III. SEE SUGGESTED HERE THE INFLUENCE THIS THOUGHT OF THE DIVINE WORKING IN HUMAN HISTORY EXERTS UPON LOYAL HEARTS. 1. In view of God's terribleness in judgment which marks his working in human history, such are filled with sacred awe. The prophet represents his whole being as convulsed with terror as he thought of the retributions God would, in righteousness, inflict (ver. 16). 2. In view of God's gracious purpose, in all his interpositions to save, restore, and bless the race, such are inspired with holy joy. Hence, strange paradox! whilst oppressed in spirit they are also glad in heart. "They tremble and rejoice," and this is their rapturous song in the night, expressive of their whole-souled trust through all, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," etc. (vers. 17—19).—S. D. H.

Ver. 4 (last clause).—*The Divine concealments.* "The hiding of his power."

I. IN THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE NATURE AND OPERATIONS OF OUR GOD WE ARE MET BY THE DIVINE CONCEALMENTS. He is a God "that hideth himself" (Isa. xlv. 15); "He doeth great things past finding out," etc. (Job ix. 10); "He giveth no account of any of his matters" (Job xxxiii. 13); "He maketh darkness his secret place" (Ps. xviii. 11); "How unsearchable," etc. (Rom. xi. 33). 1. We realize this as we think of his Being and perfections. "Who by searching," etc.? (Job xi. 7). He is veiled to us by the very covering of his splendour. "Who coverest thyself," etc. (Ps. civ. 2). 2. And we also realize this as we think of his *working*. Mystery meets us in every department of his operations. The scientist and the theologian alike become baffled in their researches, the former having to admit his partial failure as he strives to penetrate the mystery of the universe, and the latter being perplexed at the seeming inequality of God's ways in the providential government of the world, and feeling himself enclosed as with a veil when he ventures to inquire into the high themes of revelation. "There is the hiding of his power." Notice—

II. CERTAIN COURSES ARE OPEN TO US IN VIEW OF THIS GREAT FACT. 1. There is that which is pursued by the sceptic. He reasons—God cannot be known; therefore all thought on the part of man concerning him is needless and vain; all worship of him is folly; all structures reared by his servants to his honour mean waste; his very existence is but a possibility. Here we have the old atheism, banishing God from his universe; the old atheism, only arrayed in a newer and more subtle guise. 2. There is, however, "a more excellent way." Though our God is infinitely beyond our poor stretch of thought, yet he may be known by us. Beyond the comprehension of human reason he is nevertheless present to faith, and deigns to reveal himself to the pure and loving heart. And we do well to remember this, and to repose the trust of our hearts in him, and then to set ourselves to inquire whether, after all, the partial obscurity of the Divine nature and operations may not be wisely and graciously as well as necessarily designed. And pursuing this course, such quieting thoughts as the following, bearing upon the Divine concealments, will be suggested to us. (1) That our personal well-being is advanced by this partial concealment which characterizes our God. It would not be well for us to have complete knowledge of him or his purposes and plans, since then there would be no room for the exercise of faith, patience, resignation; life would cease to be a time of discipline; and there would be no scope for trial and no stimulus to earnest and thoughtful inquiry. (2) That these Divine concealments, whilst they are for our good, also contribute to the advancement of the Divine glory. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing" (Prov. xxv. 2). It

is in this way that he makes his power felt; that he indicates his superiority to man and his independence of him (Isa. xl. 13, 14). (3) That whilst much is thus concealed, everything essential to man's salvation is clearly unfolded.

III. GOD SOMETIMES CAUSES LIGHT TO FALL UPON HIS HIDDEN WAYS AND REVEALS HIMSELF AND HIS OPERATIONS MORE FULLY TO THE VIEW. 1. It has been so in reference to the sacred Scriptures. During the lapse of ages God gradually drew back the veil, revealing more of his will than had been unfolded before. 2. It has been so in the working out of the purpose of redeeming mercy. In the cross of Christ there was expressed the power as well as the wisdom of God; but there was the hiding of this Divine power. The spectators of the scene at Calvary saw only the weakness, and the cross was suggestive to them of shame and reproach and dishonour; but there was power there, although hidden, which soon began to be felt, one of the criminals crucified at the side of the Saviour being the first to experience it. The macerated body of the Redeemer was taken down from the cross, and laid in the sepulchre hewn out of the rock; and again there was the hiding of God's power, and it seemed as though death had conquered; but with the dawn of the first day of the week this power became revealed—the mighty Victor rose, despite seal and guard, the earnest pledge of the ultimate resurrection of all his saints. 3. And it has been so in human experience. In the dark days of sorrow there has been realized "the hiding of God's power;" but there has followed the revelation of his loving purpose and the making clear to troubled hearts that in all "his banner over them was love." And this shall be made still more manifest hereafter, for the eternal day shall break, and the shadows flee away for ever!—S. D. H.

Vers. 17, 18.—"*Songs in the night.*" The thought underlying these intensely human words is that of holy and triumphant joy manifesting itself on occasions when in the ordinary course of things the very opposite experience might naturally have been expected. The writer was under the elevating influence of sincere piety, and his rapturous outburst sets forth the truth that true religion excites within its recipients such thoughts, inspires within them such emotions, and imparts to them such confidence, as to enable them, even when all is adverse in their experience, to rejoice and shout aloud for joy. These songsters can break forth in song, not only in fair weather, when the sun is shining and the sky is clear and blue, and when all nature is full of exhilaration, but also when the sun is withdrawn, and when no rift can be traced in the dark clouds.

I. THE GOOD IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF EXTREMITY. 1. The language employed is figurative, and strikingly suggests to us circumstances of the deepest human need. The fruit of the fig tree was an extensive article both of food and commerce. The vine was diligently cultivated from the earliest times, and, with its rich clusters of grapes and its refreshing shade, became a very appropriate symbol of prosperity; whilst the olive, living from age to age, and yielding an abundant supply of oil, was also typical of abundance. Hence the failure of all these indicates the deepest affliction, the direst calamity (Ps. cv. 33), and the picture of desolation is rendered still more complete when, in addition to these, the bread-corn is represented as ceasing, and the flocks and herds as being cut off (ver. 17). 2. These adverse circumstances befell the nation, and, as the result of the Chaldean invasion, the direst woes had to be experienced. 3. The children of men still have to pass through such dark seasons. There is extremity arising from (1) temporal want occasioned by reverses in circumstances; (2) slander, charges having no foundation in truth, being made and resulting in mistrust and alienation; (3) mental depression, the strongman being brought down to the weakness of the child, the sturdy oak becoming feeble than the bruised reed; (4) bereavement, home being rendered "desolate as birds' nests, when the fledglings have all flown."

II. THE GOOD, CIRCUMSTANCED THUS, STATING THEMSELVES UPON GOD, AND ON HIM AS WORKING IN ALL FOR THEIR SALVATION. "In God," "the God of my salvation" (ver. 18). The thought which appears specially to have been present to the mind of the prophet was that of adversity as being God's loving discipline to result in the perfecting of the tried, and resulting in their salvation: "the God of my salvation." A picture called "Cloudland," by a German painter, viewed at a distance appears a mass of gloom and cloud, but on closer inspection every cloud is an angel

or an angel's wing; and so our sorrows, when interpreted in the light of this gracious design of our God, become changed into blessings. The thought that God is with us in our darkest experiences, working for our salvation and to secure to us the highest good, that the narrow path through which he, our Captain, causes us to fight our way will bring us to "the prize of our high calling," is indeed inspiring, and grasping it we may well press on, raising high our banners, and cheering the way and the conflict with music and song.

III. THE GOOD, THUS RESTING IN GOD AND APPREHENDING HIS GRACIOUS DESIGN, BEING RENDERED TRANQUIL AND TRIUMPHANT AND INSPIRED WITH HOLY JOY. "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy," etc. (ver. 18). The joy of the wicked ceases when the fig trees cease to blossom, and the vines to yield their fruit (Hos. ii. 11, 12), for it lies upon the surface; but the joy of the holy lies deep in the soul, and is a settled and abiding possession, and triumphs under the darkest circumstances of life. Illustrations: David (Ps. xlii. 7—9); Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 2, 24, 25); Paul and Silas (Acts xvi. 25). Resting in God and apprehending his loving working in our life-experiences, he will prove himself our Strength and Song, and will become our Salvation.—S. D. H.

Ver. 19 (first clause).—*God our Strength.* "The Lord God is my Strength."

I. THE LORD GOD IS OUR STRENGTH IN THE CONFLICT WITH SIN. Men are drawn into sin in the hope of securing some personal gratification; they yearn after some unattained good, some unrealized satisfaction, and they yield to the enticements of evil in the hope of securing that for which they are thus craving. But the man whose hope is in God, and to whom he is his "exceeding joy," has parted with these earthly yearnings; in proportion as the higher and the eternal has gained an influence over him, this attachment to the lower and the fleeting has been rooted out. With hearts uncentred from the true God, the Chaldeans craved worldly dominion, and in seeking this "rejoiced to devour the poor secretly" (ver. 14), whereas Habakkuk with God as his Portion was as unaffected by the vanities of earth as dwellers inland are by the noise of the distant sea. So the good, rejoicing in God, are unallured by the baits of temptation, and are rendered strong to war against evil.

II. THE LORD GOD IS OUR STRENGTH IN THE MIDST OF THE ADVERSE SCENES OF LIFE. Man, seeking his satisfaction in earthly things, must be feeble indeed when these fail him, since, with thoughts and affections centred in these, as they depart they leave him without comfort and in a state of orphanage. But he who has sought and found his satisfaction in God has remaining with him, when things seen and temporal have taken their flight, the unseen and the eternal to cheer and gladden his soul. Hence he is strong, and in the light of the Divine teaching and the Divine love can calmly look at his sorrows until, interpreted thus, they become to him light afflictions which are but for a moment, and which work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

III. THE LORD GOD IS OUR STRENGTH IN HOLY SERVICE. Such service is ever attended with difficulties and discouragements, and it is only as we lift up our eyes to the everlasting hills, rejoicing in God and becoming strengthened by him, that we can grapple with these and overcome them. It was this prophet's strong faith and delight in his God that enabled him to prove himself so true a witness in the corrupt age in which his lot was cast. It has ever been the case that the men who have been the most effective workers for God have been the men to whom his living Presence has been an intense reality.

IV. THE LORD GOD WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE STRENGTH OF HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEIR TIME OF SERVICE SHALL CLOSE. Whether this prophet lived to see the devastation of his country which he predicted, we cannot tell, the accounts of his life being so meagre and for the most part apocryphal. We know, however, that, from the state of mental doubt and distress in which he was when he commenced his prophecy (ch. i. 2), he fought his way to unswerving trust in God; for his brief prophecy, opening with the expression of his ardent yearning for more light in reference to the mystery of God's ways, closes with notes of triumphant confidence and hope. Often, doubtless, as his faith became strengthened, did he feel himself in life to be so raised and elevated through his hope and joy in God, as to be like the hind bounding joyously to the high places; and raised above the tumults of earth, though not in heaven, yet in "heavenly

places" he communed with his God. Even so we should believe that, as his life terminated, he calmly departed in peace, having seen God's salvation. And all faithful servants of Heaven shall find that when heart and flesh fail, God will be the Strength of their hearts and their Portion for ever. Happy, then, in life and in death such as can say from their inmost souls, "The Lord is my Strength."—S. D. H.

Vers. 1, 2.—*God devoutly addressed.* "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." This chapter is considered to be one of the most magnificent compositions of the inspired volume. It was intended undoubtedly to impart consolation in view of the tremendous calamities which were approaching from the Babylonian invasion. "It exhibits," says Dr. Henderson, "a regular ode, beginning with a brief but simple exordium, after which follows the main subject, which is treated in a manner perfectly free and unrestrained, as the different topics arose one after the other in the excited mind of the prophet, and finishes with an epigrammatic resumption of the point first adverted to in the introduction." The whole chapter presents to us God in three aspects—as *devoutly addressed*, as *poetically portrayed*, and as *triumphantly enjoyed*. These two verses present him to us in the first aspect—as devoutly addressed. "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth." Henderson renders the word "shigionoth," "with triumphant music," which indicates that the ode was in all probability intended for the liturgical service in the temple, but to be set to the freest and boldest music. Perhaps the prophet himself was an accomplished musician, as well as a bard of the first order. Three things are to be observed in relation to this devout address.

I. IT WAS COMPOSED FOR GENERAL USE. It is not an *extemporaneous* address; it is a settled form of devotion. Prearranged forms of devotion are both scriptural and expedient. There is a set form given to the priests for blessing the people in Numb. vi. 23—26. Ps. xcii. is called "a psalm for the sabbath," Ps. cii. "a prayer for the afflicted." Hezekiah commanded the Levites to "praise the Lord in the words of David, and of Asaph the seer," which is Ps. cvi. And Christ himself gave his disciples a form of prayer. Whilst it is scriptural, it is also *expedient*. It is absurd to suppose that a minister can properly lead the devotions of a congregation by impromptu utterances. The well-known apathy of congregations under the influence of extemporaneous prayers shows it cannot be done. For the *individual* himself, the extemporaneous prayer is all that is needed, for it is the "soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." But to get a whole congregation into the channel of devotion, a prearranged form seems desirable.

II. IT WAS IN PROSPECT OF A TERRIBLE CALAMITY. "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid." Terrible was the calamity now looming on the vision of the prophet. The Chaldean army was approaching; the ruthless troops would soon be in his country, sack Jerusalem its metropolis, and bear his countrymen away into captivity. In view of this calamity the prayer is addressed. The threatened judgments of hell may well drive men into the presence of God to sue for mercy. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," etc. Surely, if men fully realized the predicted judgments that will fall on this world, prayer would be the habitude of their souls.

III. IT WAS FOR A REVIVAL OF DIVINE WORK. "Revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Keil thus renders the passage: "Jehovah, thy work in the midst of thy years call to life, in the midst of the years make it known." This may mean—Perfect the work of delivering thy people; let not thy promise lie as it were dead, give it new life by performing it. Do it now, in the midst of the years, when our calamities are at their height, when thy wrath seems to be at high tide and terrible. Now, "revive thy work." Three thoughts are suggested: 1. *The work of human deliverance is the work of God.* This is true of all deliverances—personal, domestic, national, temporal, and spiritual. He alone can effectually deliver man. 2. *This work of God may appear to decline.* The perils may thicken, the disease grow more desperate, and all things seem as if God had given up his work. This is often the case with religion in the soul. 3. *This decline of God's work can only be overcome by his intervention.* "Revive thy work."—D. T.

Vers. 3—15.—*God poetically portrayed and practically remembered.* “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah,” etc. The Bible contains many grand songs and odes. There is the song that Moses taught Israel to sing (Exod. xv. 1). There is the triumphant song of Deborah and Barak (Judg. v.). There is the song of Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Sam. ii. 1). There is the song of David bewailing the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. i. 19), and his song of thanksgiving after the communication of Nathan respecting the building of the temple (2 Sam. vii. 18). There is the song of Hezekiah after he had received comfort in his sickness and recovered his health (Isa. xxxviii. 9—20). There is the song of the blessed Virgin, *Magnificat*; the song of Zacharias, *Benedictus*; the song of Simeon, *Nunc dimittis*. But this song of Habakkuk stands in peerless splendour amongst them all. Here the majesty of God in Jewish history is *poetically portrayed and practically remembered*.

I. POETICALLY PORTRAYED. God is here presented, not as he is in himself—the Absolute One, whom “no one hath seen or can see,” nor as he appears to philosophical or logical minds, but as he appears to a lofty imagination divinely inspired. To the prophet’s imagination he appears as coming from Teman and Mount Paran, which refers to the visible display of his glory when he gave the Law upon Mount Sinai amidst thunders and lightnings and earthquakes. Then, indeed, his glory covered the heavens. People at a distance witnessed the splendour of his appearance and shouted his praise. He seemed encircled in surpassing radiance; his brightness was as the light; he “had horns coming out of his hand,” and there was the “hiding of his power.” Henderson renders it, “Rays streamed from his hand, yet the concealment of his glory was there.” The idea, perhaps, is that the brightness that was seen was not his full glory, but mere scintillations or emanations of those infinite abysses of his unrevealed and unrevealeable glory. What is revealed of God is as nothing compared with the unrevealed. “Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.” Or, as Keil renders it, “Before him goes the plague, and the pestilence follows his feet.” The reference is, perhaps, to the plagues which he brought upon the Egyptians in order to obtain the deliverance of his people. “He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.” “He stands, and sets the earth reeling: he looks, and makes nations tremble, primeval mountains burst in pieces, the early hills sink down: his are the ways of the olden time” (Keil). “While,” says Henderson, “Jehovah is marching forth to the deliverance of his people, he stops all of a sudden in his progress, the immediate effects of which are universal consternation and terror.” “I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.” “When he drove asunder the nations of Canaan,” says an old writer, “one might have seen the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian trembling, and all the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries taking alarm. He struck consternation into the heart of his enemies.” “Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? The bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word? Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.” “‘Was it against rivers, O Jehovah, against the rivers, that thy wrath was kindled? that thou ridest hither upon thy horses, thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow lays itself bare. Thou splittest the earth into rivers.’ The ode, taking a new turn, now passes from the description of the coming of God to an address to God himself. To the mental eye of the prophet God presents himself as Judge of the world, in the threatening attitude of a warlike hero equipped for conflict, so that he asks him what is the object of his wrath. The question is merely a poetical turn given to a lively composition, which expects no answer, and is simply introduced to set forth the greatness of the wrath of God; so that in substance it is an affirmation. The wrath of God is kindled over the rivers, his fury over the sea” (Keil). The riding upon horses is a figurative representation of the celerity of his triumphant progress. “The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.” “The mountains saw thee, they were in pain: the inundation of water overflowed; the abyss uttered its voice, it raised its hands on

high." "The mountains being the most prominent objects on the surface of the globe, Habakkuk reiterates in a somewhat prominent form what he had expressed in the sixth verse in order to preserve the impression of the tremendous character of the transactions to illustrate which they had been figuratively introduced" (Henderson). "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear" (see Josh. x. 12, 13). Some, however, suppose that the reference here is to the surpassing splendour of the Divine manifestation, that the heavenly orbs withdraw altogether from the fear and horror that pervade all nature, which are expressed in the mountains by trembling, and in the waters by roaring, and in the sun and moon by obscuration. God is here viewed as a warrior whose darts are so brilliant that sun and moon pale before them. "Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger." The special reference here may be to his march in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, and smiting down his enemies. "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck." "Having described, in language of the most sublime and terrible import, the manifestations of Jehovah in reference to his enemies, Habakkuk now proceeds to specify in express terms the end which they were designed to answer, viz. the deliverance and safety of the chosen people, and then depicts their fatal effects in the destruction of every hostile power" (Henderson). "Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters." Thou goest out to the rescue of thy people, to the rescue of thine anointed one: thou dashest in pieces the head from the house of the wicked one, laying bare the foundation even to the neck. Thou piercest with his spears the head of his hordes which storm hither to beat me to powder, whose rejoicing is as it were to swallow the poor in secret. Thou treadest upon the seas: thy horses upon the heap of great waters. The Lord, at whose coming in the terrible glory of the majesty of the Judge of the world, all nature trembles and appears to fall into its primary chaotic state, marches over the earth, and stamps or tramples down the nations with his feet (compare the kindred figure of the treader of the wine-press in Isa. lxiii. 1, 6). Not all nations, however, but only those who are hostile to him; for he has come forth to save his people and his anointed one. The perfects in vers. 13—15 are prophetic, describing the future in spirit as having already occurred" (Keil). Now, all this sublime representation of God is *poetic*, highly poetic. It is the characteristic of poetry that it ascribes to one class of objects attributes that belong to another; and in this ode we find attributes ascribed to the Creator which belong to the creature. For example, he is here represented as moving from one place to another, from Teman and from Paran; as standing, "he stood," etc.; as conquering his enemies by human weapons; as riding upon horses and driving in chariots; and as fired with indignation. All this is human. The Infinite One does not move from place to place, does not stand in any one spot, knows no rage, fury is not in him. Whilst in this ode the attributes of the creature are applied to the Creator, we find also the attributes of the living ascribed to dead and insentient existences. The mountains are here represented as writhing and in pain, the deep as uttering its voice and lifting up its hands. But whilst we take this as a poetic representation, we must not fail to notice some of the grand truths which it contains. 1. *That God's glory transcends all revelations.* The brightness of the Shechinah, in which he appeared on Sinai and elsewhere to the Jews, however effulgent, was but a mere scintillation of the infinite splendour of his Being, the mere "hiding of his power." All his glory as seen in nature, both in the material and spiritual universe, is but as one ray to the eternal sun. 2. *That God's power over the material universe is absolute.* He makes the mountains tremble, and the seas divide, and the orbs of heaven stand still. In the Apocalypse the refulgent glory of the judgment-throne is represented as causing the material universe to melt away before it. And before a full manifestation of himself, what are mountains, rivers, sun, and stars? Mere vapours on the wings of the storm. 3. *That God's interest in good men is profound and practical.* All his operations, as here poetically described, are on behalf of his chosen people. Though he is high, he has respect to the lowly, and to that man he ever looks who is of a contrite and humble spirit.

II. PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED. Why did the prophet recall all these Divine manifestations made to the Hebrew people in past times? Undoubtedly to encourage in himself and in his countrymen unbounded confidence in him at the critical and dangerous period in which they were placed. The Chaldean hosts were threatening their ruin, the political heavens were black with thunder-clouds under which his countrymen might well shiver and stand aghast. Under these perilous circumstances he turns to God; he calls to mind and portrays in vivid poetry what he had been to his people in ancient times. 1. He recalls the fact that God *had delivered his people in ancient times from perils as great as those to which they were now exposed.* From the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Philistines, etc. 2. *That God had done this by stupendous manifestations of his power.* Manifestations of his power in the sea, in the mountains, in the orbs of heaven, etc. 3. *That what God had done for his people he would continue to do.* "His ways are everlasting," or, as Keil renders it, "His are ways of the olden times." The idea, perhaps, is that he has an eternal plan, fixed and settled. What he has done for them he will still do. Thus the prophet remembered the days of old, and took courage.—D. T.

Ver. 16.—*Horror of God.* "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops." "Having finished the poetic rehearsal of the mighty acts of Jehovah on behalf of his people in ancient times, which he had composed in order to inspire the pious with unshaken confidence in him as their covenant God, Habakkuk reverts to the fear which had seized him on hearing of the judgments that were to be inflicted upon his country by the Chaldeans" (Henderson). Our subject is *horror of God*; and we offer three remarks on this state of mind.

I. IT IS AN ABNORMAL STATE OF MIND. The benevolent character of God, and the moral constitution of the soul are sufficient to show that it was never intended that man should ever dread his Maker or be touched with any servile feelings in relation to him. Unbounded confidence, cheerful trust, loyal love,—these are the normal states of mind in relation to the Creator. How has the abnormal state arisen? The history of the Fall shows this, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and was afraid." Having sinned, a sense of guilt came to the conscience, and conscience under the sense of guilt invested almighty love with attributes of terror. Horror of God springs from a sense of guilt.

II. IT IS AN UNNECESSARY STATE OF MIND. God is not terrible. There is nothing in him to dread. "Fury is not in me." He is love. His voice to man: 1. In all nature is, "Be not afraid." The smiling heavens, the blooming earth, the warbling songsters of the air, in all he says to man, "Be not afraid." 2. In all true philosophy is, "Be not afraid." All things which true philosophy looks into show benevolence or intention, and breathe the genius of love. 3. In all true Christianity is, "Be not afraid." Corrupt Christianity, it is true, makes him horrific; but the Christianity of Christ reveals him in love and in love only. In Christ he comes down in man to man, and demonstrates his love.

III. IT IS A PERNICIOUS STATE OF MIND. * Horror is a *pernicious* state of mind in every way. It is pernicious to the *body*. The language of the text implies this, "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself." The prophet's alarm drove back the blood from the extremities to the heart, his flesh grew cold, contracted, his voice quivered, and his very bones seemed to rot. Horrific feeling is inimical to physical health. But dread of God is even more pernicious to *soul*. 1. It *destroys its peace*. Fear shakes every power of the soul as the winds shake the leaves of the forest. 2. It *depresses its powers*. All the faculties of the soul shrink and shiver under the influence of fear, as the herds of the mountain at the approaching thunder-storm. 3. It *distorts its views*. Fear of God gives men horrid ideas of him. It has forged all the theologies, both in heathendom and Christendom, that have frightened men. It is fear that has given men that Calvin Deity which frightens the millions away from the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

CONCLUSION. Let us preach to men the God of Christ, the God who says to all men, "It is I: be not afraid."—D. T.

Vers. 17—19.—*The possibilities in the life of a good man.* “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation,” etc. “The desolation here so graphically and forcibly described is that which was to be effected by the Chaldeans, whose army would consume or destroy the best and most necessary productions of the land; not only seizing upon the cattle and devouring the fruits of the earth, but so injuring the trees as to render them incapable of yielding any produce. The passage contains the most beautiful exhibition of the power of true religion to be found in the Bible. The language is that of a mind weaned from earthly enjoyments, and habituated to find the highest fruition of its desires in God. When every earthly stream is dried up, it has an infinite supply in his all-sufficient and exhaustless fulness.” Our subject is—*The possibilities in the life of a good man.*

I. THE GREATEST MATERIAL DESTITUTION IS POSSIBLE TO A GOOD MAN. It is possible for the fig tree not to blossom, etc. Man lives by the fruits of the earth. These may fail from one of two reasons. 1. From *human neglect*. It is the eternal ordinance of God, that what man wants from the earth for his existence he must get from it by labour—skilful, timely, persevering labour. The earth gives to the brute what he wants without his labour, because the brute is not endowed with qualifications for agricultural work. But man must labour, and this arrangement is wise and beneficent. It promotes health, imparts vigour, and develops faculties both intellectual and moral. Let man cease to cultivate the soil, and the earth will fail to support him either with the right animal or vegetable productions. 2. From *Divine visitation*. The mighty Maker can, and sometimes does, wither the fruits of the earth, destroy the cattle of the fields. He does this sometimes without instrumentality, by mere volition; sometimes with the feeblest instrumentality—locusts, worms, etc.; sometimes with human instrumentality—war, etc. We say the greatest material destitution is *possible* to a good man. Possible? It is frequent. In all ages some of the best men have been found in the most destitute circumstances. Even Christ himself had nowhere to lay his head; and the apostles, what had they?

II. THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL JOY IS POSSIBLE TO A GOOD MAN. “I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” “Spiritual joy,” says Caleb Morris, “is a free, full, and overflowing stream, that takes its rise in the very depth of the Divine essence, in the immutability, perfection, abundance, munificence, of the Divine nature. While there is a God, and that God is happy, there is no necessity that there should be any unhappy Christians.” What is it to “joy in God”? 1. *It is the joy of the highest contemplation*. The joys of contemplation are amongst the most pure and elevating which intelligent creatures can experience. These rise in the character according to their subjects. The highest subject is God, his attributes and works. 2. *It is the joy of the most elevating friendship*. The joys of friendship are amongst the chief joys of earth; but the joys of friendship depend upon the purity, depth, constancy, reciprocity of love; and friendship with God secures all this in the highest degree. 3. *It is the joy of the sublimest admiration*. Whatever the mind admires it enjoys, and enjoys in proportion to its admiration, whether it be a landscape or a painting. Moral admiration is enjoyment of the highest kind, and this in proportion to the grandness of the character. Admiration of Divine excellence is the sublimest joy. “I will joy in God.” To joy in God is to bask in sunshine, is to luxuriate in abundance, is to revel in the immensity of moral beauty, is to dwell with God.

III. THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL JOY IN THE MIDST OF THE GREATEST MATERIAL DESTITUTION IS POSSIBLE TO A GOOD MAN. “Although” every material blessing is gone, “I will rejoice.” Good men have always been enabled to do so. They have been happy in poverty, exultant in prisons, and even triumphant in the martyr’s flames. Having God with them, they have had the reality without the forms, they have had the crystal fountain rather than the shallow and polluted streams. Like Paul, they have “gloried in tribulation,” etc. All things have been theirs. In material destitution they felt: 1. In God they had *strength*. “The Lord God is my Strength.” “As thy day, so shall thy strength be.” 2. In God they had *swiftness*. “He will make my feet like hinds’ feet.” The reference is here, perhaps, to the swift-

ness with which God would enable him to flee from the dangers which were overtaking his country. It is, however, a universal truth that God gives to a good man a holy alacrity in duty. Duty to him is not a clog or a burden, but a delight. 3. In God they had *elevation*. "He will make me to walk upon mine high places." "They that wait upon God shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles," etc., up upon the mountains, far too high for any enemies to scale. "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. vi. 17, 18).—D. T.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

CHAPTER I.

THEME	PAGE
A Prophet's Burden ...	4
The Lamentation of a Good Man ...	6
Judgment on the Wing ...	7
The Triumph of Faith ...	9
The Title ...	11
The Elegy ...	11
The Divine Working against Evil and its Doers ...	12
The Inspiration of Hope ...	13
The Benefits of Life's Adversities ...	14
The Pride of Human Sufficiency ...	14
Dark Problems and Man's True Attitude in Relation to them ...	15
The Cry of a Good Man under the Perplexing Procedure of God ...	16
The Doom of a Nation of Conventional Religionists ...	18
The Eternity, Providence, and Holiness of Jehovah ...	19
Rapacious Selfishness in Power ...	20

CHAPTER II.

The Prophet upon his Watch-tower ...	28
The Unjust Man and the Just: a Contrast ...	30
A Parable of Woes: 1. Woe to the Rapacious! ...	31
A Parable of Woes: 2. Woe to the Covetous! ...	32
A Parable of Woes: 3. Woe to the Ambitious! ...	33

THEME	PAGE
A Parable of Woes: 4. Woe to the Insolent! ...	33
A Parable of Woes: 5. Woe to the Idolatrous! ...	34
The Temple of Jehovah ...	34
Waiting for the Vision ...	35
The Life of Faith ...	36
Covetousness ...	38
Corrupt Ambition ...	39
The Two Kingdoms: a Contrast ...	39
God's Retributive Justice ...	40
Worship, False and True ...	40
Man's Moral Mission to the World ...	41
The Portraiture of a Good Man ...	42
Moral Wrong: Some of its National Phases ...	43
National Wrongs ending in National Woes. No. 1 ...	44
National Wrongs ending in National Woes. No. 2 ...	45
National Wrongs ending in National Woes. No. 3 ...	46
National Wrongs ending in National Woes. No. 4 ...	47
National Wrongs ending in National Woes. No. 5 ...	48
Silence in the Temple ...	49

CHAPTER III.

The Prayer of an Alarmed Prophet ...	56
An Ideal Theophany: 1. The Onward March of the Deity ...	58

THEME	PAGE	THEME	PAGE
An Ideal Theophany: 2. The Wonder- ful Acts of the Deity	59	The Divine Concealments	65
An Ideal Theophany: 3. The Terrible Wrath of the Deity	60	"Songs in the Night"	66
An Ideal Theophany: 4. The Glorious Interposition of the Deity	60	God our Strength	67
Sorrowing, yet rejoicing	61	God devoutly addressed	69
Prayer and Praise	62	God poetically portrayed and praeti- cally remembered	69
Prayer for Revival	63	Horror of God	71
God in History	64	The Possibilities in the Life of a Good Man	72