

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.

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H A G G A I.

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

Homiletics  
BY REV. T. WHITELOW, D.D.

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

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# THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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### § I. SUBJECT OF THE BOOK.

FROM the time when Zephaniah prophesied of judgment to come to the day when Haggai lifted up his voice, some hundred years or more had elapsed. In this interval God had not left himself without witness; the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel had carried on the torch of prophecy, and had not suffered the light of inspiration to be extinguished. Meanwhile startling events had happened. That which earlier seers had foretold had come to pass; warnings unheeded had ripened bitter fruit. Israel had long ago been carried into captivity; Judah had suffered a similar fate. For seventy years she had sat weeping by the waters of Babylon, learning a hard lesson and profiting thereby. But the period of punishment came to an end at the appointed moment. God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus King of Elam, to allow and to urge the return of the Hebrews to their own land and the rebuilding of their temple. Not that Cyrus was a monotheist, who believed in one supreme God. This idea, which has long obtained, is proved to be erroneous by the inscriptions which have been discovered, and which may be read in Professor Sayce's 'Fresh Light from the Monuments,' pp. 142, etc. From these it is clear that he was a worshipper of Bel-Merodach, the patron god of Babylon, and that, as it was his first care on the capture of that city to reinstate its deities in their shrines, so his edict respecting the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem was a result of his usual policy to adopt the gods of conquered countries, and to win their favour by supporting their worship. That God used him as his instrument for the restoration of the Hebrews proves nothing concerning his personal religion. Unworthy agents often perform most important service. Obeying the king's edict, many of the Jews, assisted by donations and bearing with them the rifled treasures of the temple, B.C. 536, prepared to return to their native land under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a prince of the house of David, and Joshua the high priest. They were, indeed, but a small body,

amounting, according to the enumeration of Ezra (ii. 64, 65), to 42,360, exclusive of menservants and maidservants reckoned at 7337. But they set to work with vigour on their arrival at Jerusalem, and in the second year of Cyrus, B.C. 534, erected the great altar in its old place, and established regular worship according to the Mosaic ritual. They then proceeded to lay the foundations of a new temple in the second year after their arrival. The prosecution of this undertaking met with unexpected obstacles. The mixed population which had been settled by the Assyrian conquerors in Central Palestine claimed, on the score of brotherhood, to take part in this sacred work. Such a claim could not be entertained. These Samaritans, as they are named, were not of the holy seed, did not worship Jehovah with pure worship, mixed idolatrous rites with their devotions to the true God. It would have been an abandonment of their unique position, treason to their Lord, for the Israelites to have admitted such syncretists to a participation in the erection of the temple. Zerubbabel, therefore, rightly declined their offered assistance. This rejection was bitterly resented. By representations made at court, they endeavoured to hinder the work, and were so successful in their opposition that the building was stopped during the remainder of the life of Cyrus, and during the reign of his successors, Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis (Artaxerxes I.). Other causes combined to bring about the suspension of operations. The zeal with which the labour was begun grew cold. The exiles had returned with high hope of happiness and prosperity; they had expected to enter into possession of a home prepared and ready for their reception; in their fervid imagination peace and plenty awaited them, and the blessings promised to obedience in their old Law were to be theirs with little labour or delay. A very different state of things awaited them. Cities ruined and desolate, a land sterilized by want of cultivation, neighbours unfriendly or openly hostile, scantiness of bread, danger, toil,—these were the objects which they had to contemplate. And though the spirit that animated their first enterprise, and the enthusiasm that accompanied a great national movement, excited them to commence the work with earnestness and ardour, their hearts were not sufficiently engaged in its prosecution to enable them to rise superior to inward distraction and outward opposition; and so they grew less interested in the completion of the undertaking, and they acquiesced with stolid complacency in its enforced cessation. They learned to look on the ruins of their holy house with a certain desponding equanimity, and turned to the furtherance of their own personal concerns, contentedly leaving the restoration of the temple to other times and stronger hands than theirs. But a happier condition of affairs arrived under the rule of Darius, the son of Hystaspes, who succeeded to the throne of Persia B.C. 521. The interdict which had stopped the building of the temple was removed, the original decree of Cyrus was discovered and re-enacted, and every assistance was given to the Jews to carry out their original design. Nothing but the will was now wanting. It was the design of Haggai's prophecy to inspire this will, to shame the

people into a display of energy and self-denial, and to encourage them to continue their efforts till the whole work was satisfactorily completed.

Steiner and others have questioned the fact that the rebuilding of the temple was begun under Cyrus. They say that no genuine passage in the Book of Ezra gives any countenance to the statement, and that it was only in consequence of the interference of Haggai and Zechariah that the work was first commenced in the second year of Darius, being then carried on without interruption till it was completed four years afterwards. Haggai himself does not expressly mention any earlier attempt at laying the foundation, and indeed places this event in the four and twentieth day of the ninth month of the second year of Darius (ch. ii. 18). But this passage is capable of another interpretation; and the direct statement of Ezra iii. 8, that "in the second year of their coming . . . they began to set forward the work of the house of the Lord," and "the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid" (ver. 11), can only be surmounted by arbitrarily denying the genuineness of this chapter and the authenticity of its details. The grounds of this rejection are weak and inconclusive. When we consider the enormous importance attached to the rebuilding of the temple—which, indeed, was the test of fidelity to the Lord, and the desire to abide by the covenant—it is inconceivable that the good men who guided the nation should allow some sixteen years to elapse before making any attempt to set in hand the good work; so that the very nature of the case confirms the statement of Ezra, while nothing in the books of Haggai and Zechariah really militates against it. On the contrary, there are passages in Haggai which distinctly involve its truth. Thus in ch. ii. 14 it is implied that formal sacrifices were offered before Haggai's public interference, and in ch. ii. 3 that the temple was already so far built that its future appearance and condition could be conceived.

The book comprises four discourses, which make natural divisions, and are accurately dated. The first, uttered on the first day of the sixth month of Darius's second regnal year, contains an exhortation to Zerubbabel and Joshua to take in hand at once the rebuilding of the temple. The people are sternly reproached for their indifference, which they think to excuse by affirming that the time for this work has not yet come, while they expend their energies in increasing their own material comfort. The prophet shows them that the barrenness of their land and the distress which they suffer are a chastisement for this neglect. He concludes with an account of the effect of this expostulation, how that the chiefs and all the people listened to his words, and "came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts" (ch. i.). The following month witnessed the second address, wherein the prophet comforts those who, contrasting the new with the former temple, depreciated the present undertaking, and assures them that, although its appearance is humbler, the glory of the latter house shall far exceed that of the former, because of the splendid donations of princes, and because of Messiah's presence there (ch. ii. 1—9). The third exhortation

was uttered in the four and twentieth day of the ninth month. By certain legal questions concerning the communication of holiness and pollution, Haggai demonstrates that the people's tendency to rest in external righteousness is sinful, and that their lukewarmness in the holy work before them vitiated their worship and occasioned want and misery, which would only be relieved by their strenuous efforts to finish the temple (ch. ii. 10—19). The prophecy ends with a promise to the scion of the house of David, that amid the destruction of the powers of the world, his throne should be exalted and glorified, "for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts" (ch. ii. 20—23).

The reason why the rebuilding of the temple is made of such singular importance is found in the light in which the house of God is regarded, and the opportunity thus afforded for displaying zeal and fidelity towards God. The temple is the visible token of the Lord's presence with his people, the material sign of the covenant; its restoration showed that the Israelites desired to maintain this relation with Jehovah, and to do their part in the matter. Here alone could the federal relation be renewed and sustained; here alone could the daily worship be duly offered. While the temple lay in ruins, the covenant was, as it were, suspended; for its re-establishment the Lord's house must be rebuilt and adapted to Divine service. And yet this covenant was not simply a revival of the old one in its Sinaitic form; it was a new one, without the visible cloud of glory, without the ark and mercy-seat and the tables of the Law, but one attested by the very presence of Messiah himself, and the laws of which were written in the heart and mind of the faithful. Of this the material building was a symbol, and therefore its reconstruction was an imperative duty.

## § II. AUTHOR AND DATE.

Of the Prophet Haggai we know nothing save what may be gathered from his book and a few words in Ezra. The name Haggai, in Greek Ἀγγαῖος, is explained by St. Jerome to mean "Festive;" for, he says, he sowed in tears that he might reap in joy, when he witnessed the re-erection of the ruined temple. Reinke deems that he was so named because he was born on some great feast-day. He is mentioned with Zechariah in Ezra (v. 1; vi. 14) as prophesying unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, urging them to continue the work of rebuilding the house of the Lord. It has been conjectured, from ch. ii. 3, that he had seen the temple of Solomon, that he was one, as Dr. Pusey says, "who had lived among the outward splendour of the former temple, who had himself been carried into captivity, and was now part of that restoration which God had promised." But this idea is not supported by the language of the passage on which it is founded: "Who is left among you that saw the house in her first glory?" If the conjecture were true, he would have been at least eighty years old at the time of his prophecy, the date of which he himself

states as the second year of Darius the king, *i.e.* B.C. 520. He continued his addresses at intervals during four months of that year; but whether he lived to see the full result of his labours by the completion of the building in the sixth year of Darius, is uncertain. Jewish tradition makes him to have been a member of the great synagogue, and other accounts, equally unsubstantiated, assign to him an honoured burial in the sepulchre reserved for priests.

Some manuscripts of the Septuagint attribute to Haggai and Zechariah the authorship of Ps. cxxxvii. and cxlv.—cxlviii. To them, too, in the Syriac are assigned Ps. cxxv., cxxvi., cxlv.—cxlvii., and in the Latin Vulgate Ps. cxi. and cxlv. "It may be," says Mr. Wright ('Dict. of Bible,' *sub voce* "Haggai"), "that tradition assigned to these prophets the arrangement of the above-mentioned psalms for use in the temple service, just as Ps. lxiv. is in the Vulgate attributed to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the name of the former is inscribed at the head of Ps. cxxxvi. in the LXX." From certain coincidences in style, and for other reasons connected with the minuteness of details given, it has been conjectured that Haggai is the author of that part of the Book of Ezra which extends from ch. iii. 2 to the end of ch. vi., with the exception of the fragment in ch. iv. 6—23. The grounds for this opinion are given in Smith's 'Dict. of the Bible,' i. 607; but they do not seem very conclusive. Pseudo-Epiphanius says ('De Vit. Proph.') that Haggai and Zechariah were the first to sing "Hallelujah" and "Amen" in the second temple, which probably means that they took the lead in chanting the Hallelujah psalms. References to Haggai occur in Heb. xii. 26; Ecclus. xlix. 10, 11; 1 Esdras vi. 1; vii. 3; 2 Esdras i. 40.

### § III. GENERAL CHARACTER.

The language of Haggai is generally considered tame and featureless, indulging in unnecessary repetitions, and rarely rising above the level of ordinary prose. But in estimating the character of his addresses, we must remember that in their present form they are probably only the outline of the original utterances, and that what may seem poor and curt in the summary may have been telling and eloquent in its fuller form when spoken. Even as we have them, the addresses in their simplicity are full of force; outward ornament and rhetorical artifice were not needed in order to set forth the work which the people were expected to perform. Haggai had one distinct message to deliver, and he announced it in plain, unvarnished language, which came home to the hearts of his hearers, not only with conviction, but with persuasive force, so that they did not merely say, "How true!" and do nothing in consequence, but they put their conviction into action, and began at once to build. He is indeed concise, antithetical, and impressive; but the great point is that he gained the end which he had in view. The highest efforts of oratorical power could attempt and effect no more.

## § IV. LITERATURE.

The chief commentaries on Haggai are these: Abarbanel, Heb. cum Vers. Lat. a Scherz. (Lips., 1663); Melancthon, Opp. ii.; Eckius (Salignac, 1538); Pilkington, 'Exposition' (London, 1560); Mercier (Paris, 1581); Grynæus (Genev., 1581), translated into English by C. Featherstone (London, 1586); Tarnovius (Rost., 1624); Raynolds (London, 1649); Pfeffinger (Strasburg, 1703); Köhler, 'Die Weissag. Hag.' (Erlangen, 1860); Moore, 'The Prophets of the Restoration' (London, 1858); Reinke (1868); McCurdy (Edinburgh); Pressel (1870); Archdeacon Perowne, in 'The Cambridge Bible for Schools' (Cambridge, 1886).

## § V. ARRANGEMENT IN SECTIONS.

The book is divided into four addresses, delivered at specified dates.

Part I. (Ch. i.) The first address: Exhortation to build the temple, and its result.

§ 1. (Ch. i. 1—6.) The people are reproved for their indifference with regard to the erection of the temple, and admonished that their present distress is a chastisement for this neglect.

§ 2. (Ch. i. 7—11.) The prophet urges them to work zealously at the building as the only remedy for the unfruitfulness of the season.

§ 3. (Ch. i. 12—15.) The appeal is obeyed, and for a time the people apply themselves diligently to the work.

Part II. (Ch. ii. 1—9.) The second address: The glory of the new temple.

§ 1. (Ch. ii. 1—5.) The prophet comforts those who grieve at the comparative poverty of the new building, with the assurance of the Divine protection and favour.

§ 2. (Ch. ii. 6—9.) He foretells a future time when the glory of the new temple should exceed that of the old, adumbrating the Messianic era.

Part III. (Ch. ii. 10—19.) The third address: The cause of their calamities, and promise of blessing.

§ 1. (Ch. ii. 10—17.) By an analogy drawn from the Law Haggai shows that residence in the Holy Land and offering of sacrifice do not suffice to make the people acceptable, as long as they themselves are unclean through neglect of the house of the Lord. Hence comes the punishment of sterility.

§ 2. (Ch. ii. 18, 19.) On their obedience the blessings of nature shall again be theirs.

Part IV. (Ch. ii. 20—23.) The fourth address: Promise of the restoration and establishment of the house of David, when the storm bursts on the kingdoms of the world.

# THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER I.

Vers. 1—15.—Part I. THE FIRST ADDRESS: EXHORTATION TO BUILD THE TEMPLE, AND ITS RESULT.

Vers. 1—6.—§ 1. *The people are reproved for their indifference with regard to the erection of the temple, and admonished that their present distress is a chastisement for this neglect.*

Ver. 1.—In the second year of Darius the king. This is Darius Hystaspes, who reigned over Persia from B.C. 521 to B.C. 486. He is called in the inscriptions *Daryavush*, which name means "Holder," or "Supporter." Herodotus (vi. 98) explains it as "Coercer" (*ἐπτείνς*). Hitherto the prophets have dated the time of the exercise of their office from the reigns of the legitimate Hebrew monarchs; it shows a new state of things when they place at the head of their oracles the name of a foreign and a heathen potentate. The Jews had, indeed, now no king of their own, "the tabernacle of David had fallen" (Amos ix. 11), and they were living on sufferance under an alien power. They had returned from exile by permission of Cyrus in the first year of his occupancy of the throne of Babylon sixteen years before this time, and had commenced to build the temple soon after; but the opposition of neighbours, contradictory orders from the Persian court, and their own lukewarmness had contributed to hinder the work, and it soon wholly ceased, and remained suspended to the moment when Haggai, as the seventy years of desolation drew to an end, was commissioned to arouse them from their apathy, and to urge them to use the opportunity which was afforded by the accession of the new monarch and the withdrawal of the vexatious interdict that had checked their operations in the

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previous reign (see Introduction, § I.; and comp. Ezra iv. 24). The sixth month, according to the sacred Hebrew calendar, which reckoned from Nisan to Nisan. This would be Elul, answering to parts of our August and September. In the first day. This was the regular festival of the new moon (Numb. x. 10; Isa. i. 13), and a fitting time to urge the building of the temple, without which it could not be duly celebrated. By; literally, *by the hand* (as in ver. 3), the instrument whom God used (Exod. ix. 35; Jer. xxxvii. 2; Ho. xii. 11; Acts vii. 35). Haggai the prophet (see the Introduction). Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel; Septuagint, *Εἰρὴν πρὸς Ζοροβάβελ τὸν τοῦ Σαλαθιήλ*, "Speak to Zerubbabel the son of Salathiel." The temporal head of the nation, the representative of the royal house of David, and therefore with the high priest jointly responsible for the present state of affairs, and having power and authority to amend it. The name, as explained, and rightly, by St. Jerome, means, "Born in Babylon," and intimates the truth concerning his origin. He is called Sheshbazzar in Ezra i. 8; v. 14, which is either his name at the Persian court, or is an erroneous transliteration for a synonymous word (see Knabenbauer, *in loc.*). The name is found in the cuneiform inscription, as *Zir-Babulu*. Shealtiel (or Salathiel) means, "Asked of God." There is a difficulty about Zerubbabel's parentage. Here and frequently in this book, and in Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as in Matt. i. 12 and Luke iii. 27, he is called "son of Shealtiel;" in 1 Chron. iii. 19 he is said to be the son of Pedaiiah the brother of Salathiel. The truth probably is that he was by birth the son of Pedaiiah, but by adoption or the law of the *levirate*, the son of Salathiel. He was regarded as the grandson of Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah. Governor (*pechah*). A foreign word, used in 1 Kings x. 15, in Isaiah (xxxvi. 9), and



frequently in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, to denote an inferior satrap or subordinate governor. Strassmaier (*ap. Knabenbauer*) notes that in Assyrian the word is found in the form *pachu*, that *pichatu* means "a province," *pachat*, "a district." It seems natural, though probably erroneous, to connect it with the Turkish *pashah*. But see the discussion on the word in Pusey, 'Daniel the Prophet,' p. 566, etc. Instead of "Governor of Judah," the LXX. here and ver. 12 and ch. ii. 2 reads, "of the tribe of Judah." One of the house of David has the government, but the foreign title applied to him shows that he holds authority only as the deputy of an alien power. Judah was henceforward applied to the whole country. The prophecy in Gen. xlix. 10 still held good. Joshua. The highest spiritual officer (Ezra iii. 2, 8; iv. 3). This Joshua, Jehoshua, Jeshua, as he is variously called, was a son of Josedech who, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, had been carried captive to Babylon (1 Chron. vi. 15), and grandson of that Seraiah who, with other princes of Judah, was slain at Riblah by the Babylonians (2 Kings xxv. 18, etc.). The parentage of Zerubbabel and Joshua is specially mentioned to show that the former was of the house of David and the latter of the family of Aaron, and that even in its depressed condition Israel retained its rightful constitution (see note on Zech. iii. 1).

Ver. 2.—*The Lord of hosts.* Haggai, as the other prophets, always uses this formula in enunciating his messages (see note on Amos ix. 5). Trochon justly remarks that this expression is not found in the earlier books of the Bible—the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges. If these books were contemporary with the prophets, the phrase would certainly occur in them (see a valuable note in the Appendix to Archdeacon Perowne's Commentary on Haggai, in 'The Cambridge Bible for Schools'). *This people; populus iste* (Vulgate), with some contempt, as if they were no longer worthy to be called the Lord's people (ch. ii. 14). It looks as if they had often before been admonished to proceed with the work, and had this answer ready. *The time is not come*; literally, *it is not time to come* (comp. Gen. ii. 5), which is explained by the new clause, *the time that the Lord's house should be built*. The versions shorten the sentence, rendering, "the time for building the Lord's house has not come." The excuse for their inaction may have had various grounds. They may have said, reckoning from the final destruction of Jerusalem (B.C. 586), that the seventy years' captivity was not complete; that there was still danger from the neighbouring population;

that the Persians were adverse to the undertaking; that the unfruitful season rendered them unable to engage in such a great work; and that the very fact of these difficulties existing showed that God did not favour the design.

Ver. 3.—*Then came the word of the Lord, etc.* The formula of ver. 1 is repeated to give more effect to the Lord's answer to the lame excuses for inaction. This emphasis by repetition is common throughout the book.

Ver. 4.—*For you, O ye; for you, yourselves*; such as ye are (see Zech. vii. 5). He appeals to their consciences. You can make yourselves comfortable; you have time and means and industry to expend on your own private interests, and can you look with indifference on the house of God lying waste? *Your cieled houses; your houses, and those cieled*—wainscoted and roofed with costly woods (1 Kings vii. 3, 7; Jer. xxii. 14), perhaps with the very cedar provided for the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra iii. 7). *Septuagint, ἐν οἰκοῖς ὑμῶν κοίλοστέθοις*, "your vaulted houses," or, as St. Cyril explains, "houses whose doorposts were elaborately adorned with emblems and devices." They had naught of the feeling of David (2 Sam. vii. 2), "I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains."

Ver. 5.—*Consider*; literally, *set your heart upon* (so ver. 7; ch. ii. 15, 18). *Your ways.* What ye have done, what ye have suffered, your present projects, and the consequences thereof.

Ver. 6.—*Their labours for years past had lacked the Divine blessing.* Though they had fine houses to dwell in, they had been visited with scanty harvests and weak bodily health. *Ye have sown much, and bring in little; but to bring in little* (Hebrew). And this infinitive absolute is continued in the following clauses, giving remarkable force to the words, and expressing an habitual result. We see from ch. ii. 15-17 that these unfruitful seasons had visited them during all the continuance of their negligence (Deut. xxviii. 38). *But ye have not enough.* The food which they ate did not satisfy them; their bodies were sickly and derived no strength from the food which they took (Lev. xxvi. 26; Hos. iv. 10) or from the wine which they drank (see note on Micah vi. 14). *But there is none warm.* Perhaps the winters were unusually rigorous, or their infirm health made their usual clothing insufficient to maintain their bodily heat. To put it into a bag with holes. A proverbial saying. The money gained by the hired labourer vanished as if he had never had it, and left no trace of benefit. Comp. Plaut., 'Pseudol.,' i. 3. 150—

"In pertusum ingerimus dicta dolium; operam ludimus."

Vers. 7—11.—§ 2. *The prophet urges the people to work zealously at the building; only thus could they hope for the removal of their present disasters.*

Ver. 7.—(See note on ver. 5.) The repetition of the call to reflection is needed (comp. Phil. iii. 1). Former experience opens the way to the injunction in ver. 8.

Ver. 8.—Go up to the mountain. The hill-country in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, whence by their own personal exertions they might procure material for the building. The temple mount is certainly not meant, as if they were to bring wood from it. Nor can Lebanon be intended, as in Ezra iii. 7; for the injunction looks to an immediate actual result, and in their depressed circumstances they were scarcely likely to interest the Sidonians and Tyrians to provide cedar for them. There was abundance of wood close at hand, and the "king's forest" (Neh. ii. 8) was in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem. There is no mention of stone, probably because the foundations had long been laid, and the ruins of the old temple supplied material for the new one; and, indeed, stone was to be had in abundance everywhere; or it may be that the prophet names merely one opening for their renewed activity, as a specimen of the work required from them. Not costly offerings were desired, but a willing mind. *I will be glorified; I will glorify myself* by showering blessings on the house and the people, so that the Hebrews themselves and their neighbours may own that I am among them (comp. Exod. xiv. 4; Lev. x. 3; Isa. lxi. 5).

Ver. 9.—He shows the real cause of the calamities that had befallen them. *Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little.* Emphatic infinitive, as in ver. 6. "To look for much, and behold! little." They fixed their expectations upon a rich harvest, and they reaped less than they had sown (Isa. v. 10). And when they had stored this miserable crop in their barns, *I did blow upon it; or, did blow it away* (ἐφεύθησα, Septuagint), dissipated it as if it were mere chaff, so that it perished. Doubtless, as Dr. Pusey observes, they ascribed the meagreness of their crops to natural causes, and would not see the judicial nature of the infliction. The prophet brings the truth home to their conscience by the stern question, *Why?* And he answers the question for them, speaking with God's authority. *Because of mine house that is waste.* The reason already given in ver. 4, etc., is repeated and enforced. *And (while) ye run.* Ye are indifferent to the miserable condition

of the house of God, while ye haste with all diligence to your own houses for business or pleasure, being entirely absorbed in worldly interests, or eager only to adorn and beautify your own habitations. Or, your zeal is all expended on your own private dwellings.

Ver. 10.—Over you. This would be a reference to Deut. xxviii. 23. But the preposition is probably not local, but means rather, "on your account," i.e. on account of your sin, as Ps. xlv. 22. This is not tautological after the preceding "therefore," but more closely defines and explains the illative. *Is stayed from dew; hath stayed itself from dew;* withholds not only rain, but even dew (comp. Zech. viii. 12). On the importance of dew in the climate of Palestine, see note on Micah v. 7. The dews generally are remarkably heavy, and in the summer months take the place of rain. Dr. Thomson speaks of the dew rolling in the morning off his tent like rain ('Laud and the Book,' p. 491). *The earth is stayed from her fruit; hath stayed her fruit;* according to the threat (Deut. xi. 17).

Ver. 11.—I called for a drought. So Elisha says (2 Kings viii. 1) that "the Lord hath called for a famine." There is a play of words in the Hebrew; as they had let the Lord's house lie "waste" (*chareb*) (vers. 4, 9), so the Lord punished them with "drought" (*choreb*). The Septuagint and Syriac, pointing differently, translate this last word "sword," but this is not suitable for the context, which speaks of the sterility of the land only. *The land, in contradistinction to the mountains, is the plain country.* Nothing anywhere was spared. *All the labour of the hands* (Ps. cxxviii. 2, etc.). All that they had effected by long and wearisome toil in the corn-field, the vineyard, etc. (comp. Hos. ii. 9; Joel i. 10).

Vers. 12—15.—§ 3. *The appeal meets with respect and attention, and for a time the people apply themselves diligently to the work.*

Ver. 12.—All the remnant of the people (ch. ii. 2); i.e. the people who had returned from the Captivity, who are technically named "the remnant" as being only a small portion of all Israel (Isa. x. 21, 22; Zech. viii. 6; Micah ii. 12). Others, not so suitably, understood by the expression, all the people beside the chiefs (ver. 14). Obeyed; rather, *listened unto*. The active obedience is narrated in ver. 14. *And the words.* The prophet's words are the voice of the Lord; and the people heeded the message which the Lord had commissioned him to give. *Did fear.* They showed that true religion which the Bible calls "the fear of the Lord." They saw their faults,

perhaps dreaded some new chastisement, and hastened to obey the prophet's injunction (Ezra v. 1, 2).

Ver. 13.—**Then spake Haggai.** God hastens to accept their repentance and to assure them of his protection. **The Lord's messenger.** Haggai alone of the prophets uses this title of himself, implying that he came with authority and bearing a message from the Lord (comp. Numb. xx. 16, where the word "angel" is by some applied to Moses). Malachi's very name expresses that he was the Lord's messenger, and he uses the term of the priest (ii. 7), and of John the Baptist, and of Messiah himself (iii. 1). **In the Lord's message** (1 Kings xiii. 18). In the special message of consolation which he was commissioned to deliver. The Septuagint rendering, ἐν ἀγγέλοις Κυρίου, "among the angels of the Lord," led some to fancy that Haggai was an angel in human form, which opinion is refuted by Jerome, *in loc.* I am with you (ch. ii. 4). A brief message comprised in two words, "I with you," yet full of comfort, promising God's presence, protection, aid, and blessing (comp. Gen. xxviii. 15; xxxix. 2; Josh. i. 5; Jer. i. 8; Matt. xxviii. 20).

Ver. 14.—**The Lord stirred up, etc.** The Lord excited the courage, animated the zeal, of the chiefs of the nation, who had themselves succumbed to the prevailing indiffer-

ence, and had suffered their ardour to be quenched (comp. 1 Chron. v. 26; 2 Ohron. xxi. 16; Ezra i. 1, 5). **They came and did work.** They went up to the temple and began to do the work which they had so long neglected.

Ver. 15.—**In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month.** The first admonition had been made on the first day of this month; the three intervening weeks had doubtless been spent in planning and preparing materials, and obtaining workmen from the neighbouring villages. The note of time is introduced to show how prompt was their obedience, and the exact time when "they came and did work in the house of the Lord" (ver. 14). Some, on insufficient grounds, consider this clause to be an interpolation from ch. ii. 10, 18, with a change of "ninth" to "sixth month." In the Latin Vulgate, in Tischendorf's Septuagint, and in many editions of the Hebrew Bible, the whole of this verse is wrongly annexed to the following chapter. St. Jerome arranges it as in the Authorized Version. It is possible that, as St. Cyril takes it, the words, in the second year of Darius the king, ought to begin ch. ii. The king's reign has been already notified in ver. 1, and it seems natural to affix the date at the commencement of the second address.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Divine revelations.* I. **SELECT THEIR OWN TIMES.** These are: 1. *Often unexpected.* In the present instance this was probably the case. The band of exiles who, availing themselves of Cyrus's permission (Ezra i. 3), returned to Judah and Jerusalem—nearly 50,000 persons in all (Ezra ii. 64, 65), though Pusey estimates the company of immigrants at 212,000, counting free men, women, children, and slaves—had for sixteen years at least not heard a prophet's voice. The last that had fallen on their ears had been Daniel's in Babylon (Dan. ix. 1), which had predicted the going forth of a commandment to build and restore Jerusalem, and the coming, "seven weeks and three score and two weeks" thereafter, of Messiah the prince (Dan. ix. 25). Now, in the second year of Darius the king (Ezra iv. 24), i.e. about B.C. 520, the interval of silence terminated, and the lips of a new prophet were unsealed. That God reserves in his own hands "the times and seasons" of his special supernatural interpositions in human history, while it should keep men alive to every movement of the Divine presence in their midst, ought to guard them against presumption both in making and in interpreting prophecy. 2. *Always appropriate.* The interpositions of Heaven are never *post horam*. The clock of eternity always keeps time. When the hour comes, so does the man. Man often speaks at an inopportune moment; God, never. When Haggai stood forth among the Jews who had returned from Babylon, they were in urgent need of such a messenger from heaven as he proved himself to be. Sixteen years at home in their own land, for a year and a half they had been disheartened about the building of their temple, and had even discontinued work. Some had even begun to lose interest in the restoration of the sacred edifice (ver. 2). Hence they much wanted rousing from indolence and rebuke for unbelief, as well as comfort in sadness and succour in weakness; and all this they received from the new monitor from Jehovah that had arisen in their midst. So have God's revelations ever been as suitable to men's necessities as to time's urgencies. Notably was this the case with his

showing of himself to Moses at the bush (Exod. iii. 2), and his disclosure of himself to mankind in the Person of Christ (Gal. iv. 4). 3. *Sometimes suggestive.* This was so in the case under consideration. First, the year in which Haggai appeared was suggestive of the people's sadness; having no more a king of their own to count from, they reckoned the date as that of the second year of Darius, *i.e.* of Darius Hystaspes (*Dārajaṣus* of the cuneiform inscriptions), who reigned from B.C. 521 to B.C. 486. Next, the month—the sixth of their ordinary Jewish year (corresponding with our August or September), and therefore towards the close of harvest—ought at least, by the comparatively barren fields they had reaped, to have reminded them of their chastisement (vers. 10, 11), and so induced in them a spirit of humility. Lastly, the day of the month, the new moon's day, which the Law had directed to be kept as a day of special sacrifice (Numb. xxviii. 11), which their forefathers had observed as a popular festival (Prov. vii. 20, margin Authorized Version), and marked by religious gatherings at the local sanctuaries (Isa. i. 13, 14; 2 Kings iv. 23), and which probably they also celebrated as a holiday, might have spoken to them of their sin in preserving the outward forms of religion while neglecting its inward spirit, and perhaps also of their duty, to attend with true docility to the admonition which proceeded from the new prophet's lips.

II. FIND THEIR OWN INSTRUMENTS. These also are: 1. *Mostly humble.* Only once did Divine revelation find an organ that was truly exalted, viz. when he who, as the only begotten Son, had been in the Father's bosom, made him known (John i. 18)—although even then it was needful that that Son should empty himself of his glory and veil his Divinity behind a garment of humanity before he could properly accomplish his work (Phil. ii. 6, 7). But in all other instances the instruments selected by Jehovah for the transmission of his will to mankind are humble and lowly in comparison with him whose will they bear (Isa. xl. 18), even when they are angels; how much more when men, as they mostly are! And of these it is seldom the most exalted in rank or wisdom that he selects, but most frequently the lowliest—persons in obscure stations, like Moses when a stranger in Midian (Acts vii. 29—31), like Elisha when holding the plough (1 Kings xix. 19), or like Amos when among the herdsmen of Tekoa (Amos i. 1); and persons of unknown family, like Elijah the Tishbite, or Nahum the Elkoshite, or Habakkuk, of whom almost nothing is known. 2. *Always suitable.* Men frequently err in choosing instruments to execute their will; God, never. He can always discern spirits, while men only think they can. Men judge according to appearance; he, according to the heart. Haggai was, perhaps, not such a vehicle as man would have pitched upon to be the medium of a Divine communication. But for God's purpose he was fitted beyond most. Though not absolutely certain, it is most probable he was an old man of eighty years (Ewald, Pusey), who had seen the first temple in its glory (ch. ii. 3), and who could therefore speak with greater emphasis and solemnity as one standing on the confines of eternity, who knew the vanity of earthly greatness, and could appreciate the superior excellence and desirability of things inward and spiritual. Besides, his very name—Haggai, or “Festive”—fitted him to be the bearer of a message to desponding builders. What they wanted was inspiring incitement, encouragement, and hope; and of that there was a promise in the old man's designation—Haggai, or “The Festal One”—especially if this only expressed the habitual disposition of his soul. 3. *Generally efficient.* “It has been the wont of critics, in whose eyes the prophets were but poets,” writes Pusey, “to speak of the style of Haggai as ‘tame’ and ‘destitute of life and power;’” but, for all that, it was adapted to the object sought to be accomplished. Haggai had no need to complain, as the eloquent Isaiah (first or second), “Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” (Isa. liii. 1); of him it is recorded that his words awoke an immediate response in his hearers' hearts, and “they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God” (ver. 14). Man cannot always say of his instruments, however finely polished, that they will never fail; God can always predict of his, however rude, that they will certainly succeed.

III. CHOOSE THEIR OWN RECIPIENTS. These are commonly diverse, as in the present instance. Haggai's message was directed: 1. *To Zerubbabel*; concerning whom may be noted: (1) His names. Sheshbazzar (Ezra i. 8), most probably Chaldean or Babylonian, and perhaps signifying “Worshipper of Fire” (Gesenius); Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 1),

obviously Hebrew, and meaning "Born in Babylon;" and Tirshatha (Ezra ii. 63; Neh. vii. 65), most likely Persian, and equivalent to "The Feared." (2) His descent. Described in the text as the son of Shealtiel, who was the son of Jeconiah the captive (1 Chron. iii. 17, Authorized Version), or, if Assir be taken as a proper name (1 Chron. iii. 17, Authorized Version), the grandson of Jeconiah; or again, if Luke's register be followed (iii. 27), the son of Neri;—Zerubbabel is expressly stated by the chronicler to have been a son of Pedaiah, a brother of Shealtiel (1 Chron. iii. 19). Probably as good a solution of the difficulty as any other is Keil's, that Jeconiah, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah (xxii. 30), had no sons, but only a daughter, who married Neri, a descendant of David, and became by him the mother of Shealtiel and Pedaiah, who accordingly were reckoned sons of Jeconiah, and that Shealtiel having died without issue, his brother Pedaiah married his widow, and raised up for him a son named Zerubbabel. (3) His office. As a descendant of the royal house of Judah, he was the recognized head of the Jewish exiles in Babylon, and as such was by Cyrus appointed governor of the pilgrim band who returned to their native land. 2. *To Joshua*; who also is described by his ancestry as the son of Josedech, who had been carried away by the Chaldeans to Babylon (1 Chron. vi. 15), when his father Zeraiah had been put to death by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings xxv. 18—21; Jer. lii. 24—27), and by his office as the high priest of the young community that had returned to Judæa and Jerusalem. As Zerubbabel was their civil, so was Joshua their religious, head; and "together they are types of him, the true King and true Priest, Christ Jesus, who by his resurrection raised again the true temple, his body, after it had been destroyed" (Pusey). 3. *To the people*. Though Haggai's words were directed in the first instance to Zerubbabel and Joshua, they were in the second instance designed for the whole congregation; and that the whole congregation received them, whether directly from the prophet's own lips or indirectly through those of the prince and the priest, is expressly stated (vers. 12, 13).

LESSONS. 1. The possibility of revelation. 2. The human medium of inspiration. 3. The greater privilege of the Christian Church in having as a revealer of the Divine will, not a human prophet merely, but the incarnate Son. 4. The higher responsibility which this entails.

Vers. 2—5.—*The mistakes of the temple-builders: a warning.* I. **THEY FAILED TO DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.** They imagined the time had not come for them to build the Lord's house, whereas it had fully arrived. 1. *What led them to suppose or say so, though not stated, may easily be inferred.* (1) They were disheartened by the opposition they encountered (see next head). (2) The original grant obtained from Cyrus (Ezra iii. 7) was probably then exhausted. (3) They had been interdicted by a decree of Artaxerxes, or of pseudo-Smerdis (Ezra iv. 23, 24). And (4) they were suffering from bad trade and worse harvests (ver. 6), and consequently were unable to contribute towards the expense of the building. 2. *The indications that the time had fully come were so plain that they should hardly have been misread.* (1) The seventy years during which the whole land of Judah was to lie desolate, and its inhabitants should serve the King of Babylon (Jer. xxv. 11, 12), and at the end of which the exiles should return to their own land (Jer. xxix. 10), had manifestly rolled by. (2) The very deliverer of whom Isaiah had spoken by name, Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. 1), had appeared, and opened the two-leaved gates of Babylon (Ezra i. 2, 3). (3) The sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried off to Babylon (2 Kings xxiv. 13), and Jeremiah (xxviii. 3) predicted would again be brought from Babylon, had actually been delivered over into the hands of Zerubbabel by Cyrus (Ezra i. 8). (4) The bad harvests and depressed trade from which they were suffering were a manifest token of the Divine displeasure on account of their negligence, and were no real excuse for their illiberal conduct, since they could obviously find money enough to build ceiled mansions for themselves. (5) The decree of Artaxerxes only forbade the building of the city (Ezra iv. 21), not of the temple; and even though it had been directed against the latter, Artaxerxes himself no longer reigned, having been driven from the throne he had usurped, and his place having been occupied by Darius Hystaspes, so that the repressive edict, had they been anxious, might easily have been revoked. This mistake of the builders has often been committed; as e.g. by Moses in Egypt, who misread the signs of the times, and thought the hour had struck for Israel's deliverance,

when it had not (Exod. ii. 11—15; Acts vii. 25); by the Jewish rulers in Christ's day, who failed to discern in the Galilæan Prophet the manifest tokens of Messiah (Matt. xvi. 3, 4); by the city of Jerusalem, which knew not the day of her visitation (Luke xix. 42); and by the present-day unbeliever, who cannot see that "now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2).

II. THEY WERE TOO EASILY DAUNTED BY OPPOSITION. 1. *The nature and source of this opposition is described in the Book of Ezra (iv.).* Prevented from taking part in the building of the temple, the Samaritan settlers first "weakened the hands of the builders," next "hired counsellors against them," and ultimately obtained an interdict commanding them to cease. It was certainly annoying, but: 2. *They should not have been so easily discouraged.* No enterprise of any moment was ever carried through without encountering difficulties and frequently hostilities, and without calling for patient perseverance in well-doing. How otherwise would Israel have been brought from Egypt at the first, or Judah from Babylon a few years before? 3. *The same mistake is committed still* by those who imagine the spiritual temple of Jehovah, either in the individual soul or in the Church as a whole, can be built without difficulty, without experiencing resistance from enemies within and without, or in any other way than by indomitable perseverance. 4. *"Never despair" and "Never give in" should be the twin mottoes of every one engaged in temple-building for God*—of the individual believer, of the Christian minister, of the foreign missionary.

III. THEY PREFERRED THE MATERIAL AND TEMPORAL TO THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS. The ordinary occupations of life had more attraction for them than the duties of religion. To assert that they cared nothing for religion would, perhaps, be wrong, since what had brought them back from Babylon, where for the most part they had comfortable settlements, was a true feeling of piety no less than an ardent spirit of patriotism. Yet were they not long back upon their much-loved ancestral soil before they showed they had brought back with them from Babylon a passion stronger than even their love for religion, namely, devotion to the earthly and material pursuits of life. Their zeal in temple-building was quickly damped, but not so their enthusiasm in ploughing and sowing their fields, in working for wages, in erecting magnificent mansions, sumptuous palaces like those they had seen and perhaps lived in in Babylon, with walls of polished stone and roofs of cedar. With much ease they could see that "the time for building God's house was not come," as they supposed; they had large difficulty in perceiving it was not the season to attend to their ordinary avocations. So do many on becoming Christians carry over with them into their new life "passions for things material and temporal," which, while religious feeling is fresh, are kept in abeyance, but which, the moment this begins to abate, assert themselves to the hindrance of what is properly religious work, and to the detriment of the soul's religious life. This constitutes a third mistake against which Christians should be on their guard.

IV. THEY FOLLOWED THEIR OWN INTERESTS RATHER THAN THE GLORY OF GOD. One cannot help thinking that, had the building of the Lord's house been a matter that concerned their own glory, comfort, or interest, they would not have suffered it to lie waste as they did; but only the honour of the Deity was involved, and what was that to their material advantage and temporal felicity? Was it not of greater moment that they themselves should be well housed, well fed, well clothed, than that even God, who dwelleth not in temples made with hands, and requireth not to be worshipped as though he needed anything, should be well lodged? If it came to the worst, they could do without a temple altogether, could worship in the open air, as they had done since coming from Babylon, but they could not well do without well-stocked farms and finely ceiled houses. And so they let the work, which had only God's glory as its motive, drop, and applied themselves to that which contemplated man's or their own material good. Is it wrong to find in this a parable for Christians? Is not the essence of Christianity just this—that a man, like Christ whom he follows, shall seek, not his own glory, but God's; shall do, not his own will, but the will of him who hath sent him into the world? Yet among professing Christians are those who cannot see beyond their own little selves, and who imagine that a man's chief duty upon earth, even after having become a Christian, is to do the best he can for himself, whereas it is to do the best he can for God. Acting on the former principle leads to spiritual blindness,

to cowardice, to this-worldism, all of which are deplorable mistakes; acting on the latter principle terminates in no such disastrous results, but brings with it to the individual so acting spiritual insight, moral courage, and heavenly-mindedness, three qualities which ennoble all by whom they are possessed.

LESSONS. 1. The duty of discerning the signs of the times. 2. The necessity of combining courage with forethought. 3. The propriety of guarding against the disturbing influence of supposed self-interest.

Vers. 5, 7.—*Considering one's ways.* I. AN EXALTED PRIVILEGE. The faculties of introspection and reflection, which enable man to consider his ways, constitute a lofty endowment, which places him incontestably at the apex of creation. 1. *It distinguishes him from the lower animals.* These may be possessed of capabilities which enable them to perform actions in some degree resembling the fruits of intelligence—it may even be conceded are, in some instances at least, endowed with faculties of memory, imagination, and judgment; but they are wholly devoid of the powers of self-inspection and reflection here ascribed to man. Of the noblest of brute beasts it still remains to be proved that it ever said to itself, “I communed with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search” (Ps. lxxvii. 6); or “I thought on my ways” (Ps. cxix. 59). 2. *It sets him in the neighbourhood of God.* The Hebrew psalmist conceived the ideal man as a being only a little short of Divinity (Ps. viii. 5); and though the basis on which he rested this conception was man's manifest dominion over the creatures, yet this arose, as he well knew, out of the fact that man, as distinguished from the lower creatures, had been made in the Divine image (Gen. i. 26); which again, in part at least, consisted in his capacity to consider his ways, or to look before and behind in whatever way he was treading. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts xv. 18); “He declareth the end from the beginning” (Isa. xli. 10); and though the Preacher affirms that “no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end” (Eccles. iii. 11), yet to each man has been granted the ability to consider the way in which he himself goeth (Eccles. v. 1), and in this high capacity of pondering the path of his feet he possesses an endowment that in him a finite being corresponds to the omniscience of the infinite God.

II. AN URGENT DUTY. The consideration of one's ways required by two things. 1. *Divine commandment.* In addition to the twice-repeated exhortation here addressed to the builders, the admonition frequently occurs in Scripture (Ps. iv. 4; Prov. iv. 26; 1 Cor. xi. 28; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; Gal. vi. 4) to commune with one's own heart, to search and try one's ways, to examine carefully into one's spiritual condition. And this to a good man is enough to constitute an imperative obligation. “Where the word of a king is”—much more where the word of the King of kings is—“there is power.” 2. *Present safety.* No one can travel long securely or comfortably along the path of life who does not ponder well at the outset from what point the course he is pursuing starts, who does not frequently pause to notice whither it is tending, and who does not always have an eye upon the where and the how it shall terminate. The man that lives purely by haphazard, that rushes on blindfold into whatever enterprise he takes in hand, whether in business or religion, is sure to come to grief, if not to fall into the ditch. 3. *Future responsibility.* There might be less need for attending to this duty if the issues of our ways and actions always exhausted themselves on earth and in time. But they do not. “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether these be good or whether they be bad” (2 Cor. v. 10). The ways of every man project themselves into the unseen beyond. Every man is making his future by the ways he is travelling and the deeds he is doing in the present.

III. A PROFITABLE EXERCISE. Apart altogether from the duty of it, the advantages to be derived from it should go far to recommend this practice. 1. *Self-knowledge.* No one will ever attain to a trustworthy or valuable acquaintance with his own heart who does not frequently undertake a review of “the issues of life” (Prov. iv. 23) that proceed from it. Yet next to the knowledge of God and Christ, which constitute the essence of “life eternal” (John xvii. 2), the knowledge of self is the highest attainment to which one can rise. 2. *Moral discernment.* The power of distinguishing between right and wrong, which belongs to all as an intuitive endowment, is nevertheless

susceptible of improvement or deterioration, according as it is exercised or neglected. It may be clarified, intensified, quickened, strengthened; or it may be dulled, darkened, weakened, deadened. Through diligent personal culture the soul may become sensitive to nicest distinctions of right and wrong as an aneroid barometer to smallest variations in the atmosphere; or, through want of use, it may become hard as a fossilized organism or as a petrified log of wood. 3. *Spiritual improvement.* No one is likely to make progress in religion without an intimate acquaintance with his own ways. Without this one may even not suspect that his religion is defective. In proportion as one knows what in himself is dark and needs illumining, or feeble and requires strengthening, or low and demands upraising, or deficient and calls for supplementing, or wrong and wants correcting, will one advance in moral and spiritual attainment.

Learn: 1. The dignity of man. 2. The responsibility of life. 3. The duty of circumspection.

Vers. 6—11.—*Hard times.* I. A FREQUENT OCCURRENCE. Poor harvests and profitless trade, famine and idleness, lack of bread and want of employment, nothing to eat and nothing to do. The two commonly go together. Examples of famines were in ancient times those which occurred in Canaan (Gen. xii. 10), in Egypt (Gen. xli. 54), in Samaria (1 Kings xvii. 2; 2 Kings vi. 25), in Jerusalem (Jer. lii. 6); in modern times those which have taken place in India, China, and other parts of Asia.

II. A SORROWFUL EXPERIENCE. When the husbandman has laboured, and, perhaps through long-continued drought, has obtained an altogether insufficient return for his labours. When through deficient harvests the people of a country are reduced to a state of semi-starvation. When through this failure in the sources of wealth the wheels of a nation's industry are stopped. When strong men who would willingly work can find no work to do. When wages already scanty are eaten up by exorbitant prices.

III. A PROVIDENTIAL JUDGMENT. Hard times: 1. *Are of God's sending.* To say that bad harvests and dull trade are the results of natural (physical and social) laws does not show them to be disconnected with God. The Almighty is behind both nature and society. Jehovah claimed that the state of matters in Judah after the exile was his doing. 2. *Have their occasions, if not their causes, in sin.* Haggai's countrymen had been made to suffer because of their indifference to religion and devotion to self-interest (ver. 9). Were modern nations to reflect more deeply, they might discover connections between their characters and their conditions, their sins and their sufferings.

IV. A SALUTARY DISCIPLINE. Intended as all chastisement is: 1. *To arrest attention.* Inconsiderateness a principal sin of men and nations. 2. *To convince of sin.* A remarkable proof of depravity that moral perceptions require to be awakened by physical corrections. 3. *To excite repentance.* Though confessions under the lash are not the same thing as penitence, yet they may and should be, and often are, accompanied by penitence. 4. *To promote amendment.* Though punishment is not exclusively reformatory in its character, yet it is mostly (on earth at least) inflicted with design to benefit the sufferer.

LESSONS. 1. Religion in individuals and nations the best defence against hard times. 2. Repentance and prayer the best resort in bad times.

Vers. 12—15.—*Ancient temple-builders.* I. UNIVERSAL ACTIVITY. "They came and did work"—all of them; "Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and all the remnant of the people." There was not an idler amongst them. Every person was engaged at something in connection with the building. The spectacle was: 1. *The reproduction of an old scene,* when in the wilderness of Sinai, orders having been issued for the construction of a tabernacle, "as many as were willing-hearted came, both men and women," and contributed their aid to the work (Exod. xxxv. 20—29). 2. *The foreshadowing of a later scene,* when the infant Church of the New Testament was assembled in the upper room, and "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting," and "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and all began to speak with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts ii. 1—4). 3. *The picture of a (possibly) present scene.* What is wanted is the carrying over of this scene of universal activity into the



Christian Church, and the spectacle of every professing disciple of Jesus Christ contributing his quota of work to the building of that spiritual edifice which is to-day being erected on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone, for the inhabitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. ii. 20—22). "The kingdom of heaven is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work" (Mark xiii. 34).

II. CHEERFUL WILLINGNESS. "They all came." Not one required to be coerced or in any way dragged forth against his will. Nobody skulked or came forward with a grudge, but each was readier than his neighbour. So was it in the erection of the tabernacle; so should it be in the building of the Christian Church. Yet how to realize this ideal in the latter case is one of the problems of the day. 1. *The backwardness of Christians to engage in specifically Christian work is a too evident fact.* It may arise with some from constitutional timidity, with others from undue depreciation of their own ability, with a few from inability to discern a sphere suitable to their supposed gifts, but with most (it is to be feared) from a depressed condition of religion in the soul. The cure for the first may be found in the grace of God (2 Cor. xii. 9); for the second, in a high conception of God's ability (Phil. iv. 13); for the third, in doing the first thing that comes to hand (Eccles. ix. 10); and for the fourth, in a quickening of the soul by the Holy Ghost (Ps. lxxx. 18). 2. *The forwardness of Christians to engage in Christian work might be expected on many grounds.* Gratitude to God, if nothing else, should constrain them (Ps. cxvi. 12). Love to Christ might impel them (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). The nobility of the work might attract them; it would be walking in the footsteps of Christ (Acts. x. 38). The splendour of the reward might induce them (Dan. xii. 3; Matt. xxv. 40; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Rev. ii. 10; xiv. 13). The clamant need there is for such work might move them (1 John v. 19). The good it would do might urge them (Titus iii. 8).

III. ARDENT ENTHUSIASM. They came and *did* work. Not merely "putting in the time," as the workmen's phrase is; or simply dragging on with heartless indifference; or hurrying up the job with utmost speed and in careless fashion, anxious to get it done, no matter how; but toiling honestly and earnestly, with a business-like energy and determination, doing good work, and doing it with a will. Such had been the manner in which the tabernacle-makers worked; such should be the style of working in the Christian Church. 1. *The Founder of the Christian Church was an enthusiastic Worker.* From the commencement of his ministry (Mark iv. 23; John ii. 17) to its close (Luke ix. 51; xii. 50), Jesus was consumed with a burning devotion to his work of glorifying God and blessing men. 2. *The apostles and early preachers of the Christian Church were enthusiastic workers.* The eleven (Mark xvi. 20); the twelve (Acts v. 42); Paul (Phil. iii. 13); Apollos (Acts xviii. 25); Epaphroditus (Phil. ii. 27). 3. *The Christian Church has in almost every age possessed workers of a like spirit.* Ministers, like Augustine, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Cyril, Calvin, Knox, Latimer, Baxter, Wesley, Chalmers; missionaries, like St. Augustine, St. Columba, St. Aidan, St. Mungo, Brainerd, Martyn, Carey, Williams, Moffat, Livingstone; private Christians, like the late Earl of Shaftesbury and others.

IV. INDOMITABLE PERSEVERANCE. Too soon discouraged on the first occasion by the angry speeches and malicious threats of their enemies, on this occasion the temple-builders met their adversaries with a bold front (Ezra v. 11), and rested not until they brought the work to completion (Zech. iv. 7, 9). Perseverance: 1. *A characteristic of all sincere Christian workers.* Exemplified in the history of Jesus, of Peter and John, of Paul, and of others who have followed in their steps. 2. *A necessary condition of all true success in Christian working.* The greater the work, the more does it demand patient perseverance. Enterprises that can be carried through with a rush and an effort are seldom of moment. 3. *A certain guarantee of ultimate success.* The man who perseveres wins—in ordinary life commonly, in religious life certainly.

CONCLUSION. The Christian worker's encouragement. "I am with you, saith the Lord" (ver. 13; cf. Matt. xxviii. 20). 1. For aid, to help you with needed strength in your labours (Ps. cxxvii. 1; Isa. xli. 10; Zech. xii. 1). 2. For protection, to defend you against the machinations of your adversaries (Ezra v. 5; Ps. xci. 1—7; Prov. ii. 7; Zech. ii. 5; 1 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. iii. 10). 3. For approbation, to accept your service when it is finished (ch. ii. 9).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The introduction.* The Bible student, with a view to the clear understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures, should fix in his mind the order of the prophetic writings. These books of prophecy may appropriately be arranged under three heads. 1. Those which stand related to the Assyrian period, including the books of Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Nahum. 2. Those connected with the Babylonian period, including Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Obadiah. 3. Those associated with the return from the exile: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. The introduction of this brief prophecy by Haggai suggests to us—

I. THE CHANGES MARKED BY THE REVOLVING WHEEL OF TIME. We are able, through this opening verse, to fix the exact date of this prophecy. It was "in the second year of Darius the king" that Haggai fulfilled this special mission, *i.e.* B.C. 521. Hence upwards of a century had passed away since Zephaniah had declared so faithfully the terrible Divine judgments which should overtake the nation on account of its guilt. His words had proved strictly true, and had been very literally and completely fulfilled. The land had been rendered utterly desolate; its cities had been entirely destroyed; its temple reduced to a heap of ruins; and its people carried away into exile. No King of Judah was referred to by Haggai in commencing his book, for the simple reason that the throne had fallen, and he had to recognize the authority of a Persian sovereign, and to speak of his favoured land as a province of a foreign power (ver. 1). The dispersion, however, had in a measure been followed by the regathering. Zephaniah had prophesied respecting the return of "a remnant," and his prophecy had, in a sense, now been fulfilled, for Cyrus permitted the Jews to colonize their own land, and a number had availed themselves of this permission, and had now spent some years in the land given to their fathers, seeking to repair the waste and desolation which the march of events and the lapse of time had wrought.

II. THE WILL OF GOD AS COMMUNICATED THROUGH HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY. The returned exiles commenced well. Their first concern had reference to the rebuilding of the house of the Lord, and with all possible speed they laid the foundation of the second temple. They were, however, weak and poor; they laboured amidst untold difficulties and discouragements, and it is not surprising that, their hearts becoming downcast and depressed, their ardour declined and their zeal languished. They needed stimulus; they required some message from the Lord their God declarative of his will and purpose; and this need was supplied, for they heard "a voice from heaven" speaking unto them through Haggai and Zechariah (Hag. i. 1, 2; Zech. i. 1). In every age God has communicated his will and intention through the instrumentality of man. He has made holy men, full of human sympathies, the medium of communicating his purposes. His agents in this instance, as ever, were admirably chosen. Haggai was advanced in life; he had probably seen the former temple; he was a link connecting the old with the new, and brought to bear upon the difficulties of the times a ripened and matured experience; whilst Zechariah was young, and with all the enthusiasm and warmth of youth. They worked together in perfect harmony and for the common good, their prophecies being at times admirably interwoven. There are two elements in the Bible—the Divine and the human. God speaks to us in every page, and he does so all the more emphatically, in that he addresses us through men who possessed throbbing hearts and who passed through experiences like our own.

III. THE RAISING UP IN THE ORDER OF PROVIDENCE OF EFFICIENT LEADERS TO DIRECT GREAT MOVEMENTS. "The word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest" (ver. 1). Zerubbabel, of royal descent from David, and Joshua, who was in the priestly line, had secured the confidence and esteem of the Jewish community in the land of captivity; and the former had won the regard of Cyrus, the Persian monarch; so that when the time for the return came, leaders, esteemed alike by the Jews and their foreign rulers, were prepared to guide the movement and to carry it through successfully. God's work shall never fail through lack of suitable agents to do his bidding, but he will raise up a bright succession of leal-hearted men to carry on his cause, until the ruin and desolation wrought by sin has

been completely repaired, and the top-stone of the temple of redeemed humanity be "brought forth" amidst rapturous praise.—S. D. H.

Ver. 2.—*Procrastination*. "This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." There are several ways of accounting for the delay which occurred in the work of re-erecting the temple in Jerusalem. 1. In part it arose from the returned exiles being preoccupied in seeking to secure to themselves material prosperity. 2. Then they were daunted by the opposition they had to encounter as they engaged in this work. The powerful neighbouring tribes, being alike antagonistic to the restoration of Jerusalem as the centre of the pure and unadulterated worship of God, combined to place obstacles in the way of the repairers of the breaches. 3. Further, they had grown somewhat accustomed to being without the structure. Comparatively few of them had seen "the first house." 4. It is to be feared also that they had lost, through the changes they had experienced, that strong sense of the need of the Divine abiding presence in their midst. Influenced by such considerations as these, and forgetful that "good is best when soonest wrought," they kept postponing carrying out the great undertaking to which they had pledged themselves, and excused themselves by saying, "The time is not come," etc. (ver. 2). This habit of delay is far too general, and is not limited to any age or race. It prevails widely to-day as in all past times; and in no respect more so than in matters affecting man's relation to God. Time was when man was wholly devoted to his Maker's praise. God formed him in his own image, holy, spotless, pure; but he mournfully fell. He who had been the temple of God became a moral waste. "Ichabod" became inscribed upon the once consecrated spiritual man. Every power of the soul became corrupt, every propensity became drawn to that which is evil. "The gold became dim, and the most fine gold changed." And the voice of God calls us to the glorious work of rebuilding this temple. He has presented to us, in the perfect life of his own Son, the pattern after which we should seek to raise in ourselves the superstructure of a holy life, and offers us his gracious aid so that we may build into our character the noble materials of truth and virtue, wisdom and love. And it is just at this point that the temptation to delay meets men. 1. They are not insensible to the claims of God, nor are they altogether indifferent about attending to these, but they say, "The time is not come," etc. (ver. 3). 2. They are immersed in other matters at present: (1) the cares of the world; (2) the pursuit of riches; (3) the pleasures of life, absorb them; they are pre-occupied just now; they say, "The time is not come" (ver. 3). 3. They reason that there is the whole future yet before them, and that ample opportunity will be given them in due course. So they go on robbing themselves of "aspirations high and deathless hopes sublime."

"Procrastination is the thief of time;  
Year after year it steals, till all are fled,  
And to the mercies of a moment leaves  
The vast concerns of an eternal scene."

S. D. H.

Vers. 3—11.—*The stirring appeal*. It must not be supposed that, for purposes of revelation, there was any suspension of the powers of the men who were honoured of God in being the medium of communicating a knowledge of his will; rather there was the retention of their own individual peculiarities and natural gifts, the Divine Spirit operating through these, and turning them to the most profitable account. One beauty of the Bible lies in the fact that, whilst upon the writings of each of its contributors there is unmistakably the impress of the operation of the Spirit of God, there is likewise throughout the whole clear indications of the preservation of those natural endowments which the respective writers possessed, and hence the remarkable variety in style and form of presentation meeting us in the Holy Word, and which constitutes one great charm of the volume. Viewing this particular book of Scripture from this human standpoint, biblical writers have described it as being inferior in respect of literary merit as compared with other prophetic writings; and it must be granted that we find lacking here "the poetical swing" and "the finished beauty" characteristic of "the earlier prophetic diction." The circumstances, however, under which he gave utterance

to his message will account for this. It did not devolve upon him to any extent, as it had done upon his predecessors, to make prophetic announcements concerning the future age; his simple mission was to stimulate and stir a lethargic people to renewed action, to reprove them for their neglect of solemn duty, and to impel them to fulfil their trust. And whatever there may be lacking here of poetic genius, the picture presented to us of this noble-hearted man standing "in grey-haired might" amidst the ruins of Jerusalem, and, strong in conviction that the favour and blessing of Jehovah was the great essential in order to the happiness of his people, urging them to acknowledge him in all their ways, and without further delay to rear his sanctuary, is one truly beautiful, and which we could have ill spared from these holy records. Consider his stirring appeal.

I. HIS SUMMONS TO REFLECTION. "Consider your ways" (vers. 5, 7); i.e. "Set your heart upon your ways"—your conduct, actions, designs, purposes. Thoughtlessness is the source of so much evil. Men do not always intend to do wrong or to fail in respect of duty, but they do not "give heed." They allow their minds to wander into other courses, and to be preoccupied with other matters.

"Evil is wrought by want of thought,  
As well as want of heart."

It is in view of men's highest interests, then, that God by his providential dealings, or the ministry of his servants, or the inward voice of conscience, says to them at times, "Consider your ways." We should consider: 1. Whether our ways are true and right. 2. How they stand affected to the claims which God has upon us. 3. The motives by which we are being influenced. 4. The results to which our actions are tending, whether the sowing is such as will yield a harvest of good. The momentous importance of the admonition is seen in its repetition here. Man is wondrously free. He can choose good or evil. This freedom increases his responsibility, and the sense of this should lead to frequent self-examination. "Let each man prove his own work" (Gal. vi. 4).

II. THE WEIGHTY CONSIDERATIONS HE URGED UPON THEIR ARRESTED ATTENTION. Their great excuse for the unwarrantable delay which had taken place in the work of rebuilding the temple was the hardness of the times; and in his stimulating address Haggai kept this excuse before his mind, and completely exposed to them its hollowness, and swept it away by setting before them two important facts. 1. He brought home to them a *sense of their own inconsistency*. Hard though the times were, the fact remained that in these hard times they had built for themselves durable dwellings, and had enriched these with costly adornments; and surely if they could do all this for themselves, they might have done something by way of proceeding with the erection of the house of the Lord (ver. 4). Clearly they had lacked not so much the ability as the disposition to do their duty. 2. Admitting the severity of the times, Haggai pointed out that the way in which to have improved these would have been by their discharging more faithfully their duty to their God. In vivid language he described the depressed state of things then prevailing (ver. 6), but his contention was that God had visited them with such adverse experiences in retribution. They had forgotten his claims, and had selfishly cared only for their own interests; and he, knowing their hearts and observing their ways, had withheld from them the dews of heaven, and had caused drought to prevail, that by failure and loss they might be led to reflection and to a truer and more devoted life (vers. 9—11). When the times are hard—trade slack and commercial depression prevailing—men too often begin retrenchment by withholding from God his due, and long before they sacrifice a single luxury of life will they plead inability to sustain his cause. Wiser far would it be for them to give full recognition to him and to his claims, and, whilst thus honouring him, to look to him for his blessing and the renewal of the temporal blessings of his providence.

III. THE PROMPT ACTION, IN VIEW OF THESE THOUGHTS, UPON WHICH HE SO STRONGLY INSISTED. "Go up to the mountain," etc. (ver. 8). This stirring appeal of the prophet was made on "the sixth month, in the first day of the month" (ver. 1), i.e. the new moon's day. That day was a special day amongst the people. A festal sacrifice was offered (Numb. xxviii. 11—15), and a solemn assembly of the people at the sanctuary took place (Isa. i. 13; 2 Kings iv. 23). On this occasion, therefore, we

may suppose the people as gathered together on the site of the temple, the bare foundations of which silently testified against their inertness, and the prophet appearing amongst them, addressing words of stern reproof to them, and then bidding them without longer delay go to the mountains and fetch the cedars, and build forthwith the house for God. Such he declared to be the will of God, obedience to which, on their part, would yield pleasure to the Most High, and bring glory to his Name, and would result in the promotion of their own temporal and spiritual well-being (ver. 8).—S. D. H.

Ver. 4.—*The house of the Lord lying waste.* The temple was designed to be the centre of hallowed influence to the Jewish nation. It was the recognized dwelling-place of God, the shrine where, in bright symbol, his glory was specially revealed. The pious Jew rejoiced to repair to it, and wherever his lot might be cast he looked towards it with ardent and longing desire. The desecration of it by the introduction of idolatrous practices into its courts had materially contributed to the nation's collapse. It was of the utmost importance, therefore, that the work of its restoration should be pressed forward with all zest, now that the captives had been permitted to return, and at first it seemed as though this course would have been pursued, but unhappily they soon allowed their zeal to flag, and year after year passed by and nothing was done. The house of the Lord lay "waste." The Divine Teacher, when he came to usher in a new dispensation, declared that God is a Spirit, and is to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 23, 24). He taught that place has but little to do with worship, and that there is no spot we may not consecrate by our praises and prayers, and render to us "hallowed ground." Still, he constantly resorted to the temple, and we read of his apostles how that they went up to the temple "at the hour of prayer" (Acts iii. 1). The erection and maintenance of Christian sanctuaries is most thoroughly in harmony with his will, and is calculated to promote the truest interests of the race. Close all such sanctuaries, and (1) good men would be left to sigh for the holy fellowship they had lost; (2) spiritual darkness would steal over the land; (3) the streams of true benevolence would rapidly diminish; (4) men in general, losing sight of the common relationship they sustain to the Eternal, would also overlook the interest they ought to feel in each other's weal; (5) iniquity would pass unproved, and vice unchecked. As lovers of God, our country, and our fellow-men, we do well to sustain Christian sanctuaries, and not to allow them to "lie waste." Notice, "the house of the Lord" may "lie waste"—

I. IN THE SENSE OF THE MATERIAL STRUCTURE BEING NEGLECTED. There should be correspondence in respect of beauty and adornment, comfort and cleanliness, between the houses in which we live and the sanctuary in which we meet for worship, and where this is lacking, the want indicates a wrong state of mind and heart.

II. IN THE SENSE OF ITS PECUNIARY RESOURCES BEING OVERLOOKED, AND THERE BEING THUS STRAITNESS IN RESPECT TO MEETING THE EXPENSES NECESSARILY INCURRED IN ITS MAINTENANCE. Giving should be regarded as an act of worship. "Bring an offering, and come into his courts" (Ps. xcvi. 8). Contributions for the maintenance of the worship of God ought not to be regarded in the light of charitable gifts, but as the discharge of bounden obligation.

III. IN THE SENSE OF ITS SEATS BEING UNOCCUPIED. There is far too much of "waste" in this respect. The growing habit of attending only one of the services on the sabbath, and none during the week-days, needs to be checked. Personal influence should be brought more to bear upon the inhabitants of a locality with a view to securing their presence. "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxix. 1).

IV. IN THE SENSE OF THE EXERCISES CONDUCTED THEREIN BEING MARKED BY BALDNESS AND INEFFICIENCY. The services should be marked by culture, variety, heart; the worshippers should throw their whole souls into all its engagements, and render each part of the service "heartily" and as "unto the Lord."

V. IN THE SENSE OF PAUCITY OF SPIRITUAL RESULTS. With a view to the prevention of this, let us "pray for Jerusalem," that its services may yield comfort to the mourning and guidance to the perplexed, and that through these the cold in heart may regain the fervour of their "first love," and "the dead in trespasses and sins" be quickened to a new and heavenly life. "Save now, O Lord; O Lord, we beseech thee send us now

prosperity" (Ps. cxviii. 25); "Repair the waste places of Zion" (Isa. lviii. 12); "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Ps. li. 18).—S. D. H.

Vers. 12—15.—*The hearty response.* The human spirit is so backward in respect to the performance of the duties and the fulfilment of the obligations it is under in relation to the higher life, that it requires stimulus, and acts of renewed dedication to the service of God cannot fail to be spiritually helpful. There are moments in life when we become specially impressed as God's servants with a sense of his claims to our most devoted service, and when holy emotions rise within us, moving us to a more unreserved consecration of ourselves to his service. And we do well to make these impressions permanent by placing upon them the stamp of holy resolution. It is wonderful how soon, if we do not take this course, these impressions and emotions vanish. We should therefore foster all holy impulses, and take advantage at once of all emotions and aspirations which would constrain us to render to the Lord our God a truer service than we have rendered in the past. Such impressions are buds we should not nip, sparks of heavenly fire we should not extinguish, the breathings of God's own Spirit, from the influence of which it is at our peril that we remove ourselves. The interest in these closing verses (12—15) lies in that they present to us a bright example of this wise course being pursued. The earnest address of the aged seer touched the hearts of his hearers; they became painfully conscious of past omission and shortcoming and neglect of duty, and were led to consecrate themselves anew to the service of him who had brought them up out of captivity and to their own land.

I. THE SPIRIT THAT WAS CHERISHED. 1. It was the spirit of obedience. "They obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet" (ver. 12). 2. It was the spirit of reverential fear. "And the people did fear before the Lord" (ver. 12). "Whom God would make strong for his service he first subdues to his fear." 3. This obedient and devout spirit was cherished by *all*. Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and all the remnant of the people alike made this full surrender of themselves to the service of their God (ver. 14).

II. THE EFFECTS THAT FOLLOWED. 1. *The Divine favour was experienced.* Haggai was again commissioned to speak to them in the name of the Lord, and to say to them for God, as his messenger, "I am with you, saith the Lord" (ver. 13). The abiding sense of God's presence with them had made the heroes of their nation the men they were. Moses could face the whole Israelitish tribes when they were murmuring against him and against Aaron; David could confront the mail-clad Goliath; Daniel could be steadfast in the performance of his religious duties despite the lions; Ezekiel could utter burning denunciations against ungodly nations;—because they realized in their inmost hearts the consciousness of the presence and power of God. And now this same presence was pledged to them, and in the Divine might they would be able to overcome every obstacle. The promptness with which this assurance was given is instructive. "God is waiting to be gracious, and will meet the returning wanderer even before his hand has begun the work of service." 2. *The spiritual life was quickened.* "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel," etc. (ver. 14). He gave new life to them all, so that they were ready with zeal and alacrity and with holy courage to do his bidding. 3. *The good work was advanced.* "And they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God" (ver. 14).—S. D. H.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Duty revealed.* "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Haggai is the first of the three prophets who lived and taught after the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. It is generally supposed that he returned with the Hebrew exiles under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, in the year B.C. 536. He prophesied in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, who ascended the Persian throne B.C. 521. He and Zechariah were employed by Jehovah to excite and encourage the

Jews to the rebuilding of the temple. This book consists of four messages, which were delivered in three months of the year B.C. 520, and all refer to the work of temple restoration. His style, being somewhat interrogatory, has much vigour and vehemence. The grand subject of this whole chapter is *duty*—*duty revealed*, *duty postponed*, *duty vindicated*. These two verses direct us to the revelation of duty. Here we have: 1. The *time* of its revelation. Every duty has its time, every true work has its hour. Woe to us if that hour is neglected! 2. The *organ* of its revelation. "Came the word of the Lord by Haggai." God speaks to humanity through individual men whom in sovereignty he appoints. In all ages there are certain great men through whom God speaks to the world. They are his messengers. 3. The *order* of its revelation. Haggai had to deliver the message to men nearest to him, with whom he was most identified, and the men, too, who had the most power in influencing others. To the greatest man in the state, Zerubbabel; to the greatest man in the Church, Joshua. I make two remarks as suggested by this subject.

I. DUTY IS THE BURDEN OF DIVINE REVELATION. The great purpose of Haggai's mission was, in the name of God, to urge his countrymen to the fulfilment of a work which was morally incumbent on them, viz. the rebuilding of the temple. It was the purpose of God that the temple should be rebuilt, and he required the Jews to do that work. He could have restored the structure by a miracle or by the hands of others; but he imposed the building of it on the Jewish people for reasons best known to himself. What was the burden of Haggai's mission is in truth the burden of the whole Divine revelation—*duty*. It contains, it is true, histories of facts, effusions of poetry, discussions of doctrine; but the grand all-pervading substance of the whole is duty; its grand voice teaches, not merely to believe and feel, but *to do*; it regards faith and feeling as worthless unless taken up and embodied in the right act. It presents the *rule* of duty, it supplies the *helps* to duty, it urges the *motives* to duty. This fact shows two things. 1. *That the Bible studies the real well-being of man*. According to our constitution, our strength, dignity, and blessedness consist, not merely in our ideas and emotions, but in our settled character. But what is character? Not an assemblage of beliefs and emotions, but an assemblage of acts and habits. 2. *That unpractised religion is spurious*. There is the religion of *creed*, of *sentimentality*, of *sacerdotalism*, of *routine*. These are all spurious; it is the *doer of the Word* that is blessed; it is the doer of the Divine will that God approves. "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not," etc. (Matt. vii. 26).

II. DUTY IS INCREASED BY SOCIAL ELEVATION. This is implied in the circumstance that Haggai went directly with the message from God to the most influential men in the state, to "Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest." The former was one of the head men in the *state*, the commander-in-chief at the head of the Jews in their return from their captivity in Babylon; the latter was the head man in the *Church*, he was the high priest. It was the duty of all the Jews to set to the work; but the obligation of these men, on account of their high position, had an increased force. These men had greater opportunities of knowing the Divine will, and greater facilities for carrying it out. The influence of men in high position is a great talent that God requires to be used. This fact serves two purposes. 1. *To supply a warning to men in high places*. The man who is in a high position, and disregards his great responsibilities, is more an object of pity than envy. "Unto whom much is given, of him much will be required." Elevated positions in life invest men with an immense social power—power which God intended to bless, but which is often used to curse men. 2. *A lesson to ministers*. Let the ambassadors of Heaven carry their messages first, if possible, to men in authority. Do not be afraid; none need your message more; none, if they receive it in faith, can render you better assistance in the great work of spiritual reformation. It is common to lecture the poor on duty. How seldom the Divine voice of duty is made to ring into the hearts of men in authority and power!—D. T.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Duty adjourned*. "Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" The seventy years of the Babylonian captivity had passed away. The Babylonian empire had fallen; and Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire, gave the

Jews permission to return to their land, and commanded them to rebuild the temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem. Hence fifty thousand captives, with their menservants and maidservants, went forth, led by Zerubbabel and by the high priest Joshua, to their own lands. Forthwith on their arrival they commenced restoring the altar of burnt offering and re-establishing the sacrificial worship, and began to lay the foundation of the new temple. The Samaritans speedily interfered and impeded their progress. Because the chiefs of Judah would not accept their co-operation in the undertaking, they set themselves to the work of obstruction. They made the hand of the people of Judah idle, as we read, in frightening them while building, and hiring counsellors against them to frustrate their design, so that the work at the house of God at Jerusalem ceased and was suspended until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia (Ezra iv. 24). Hereupon the zeal of the Jews so cooled down that they relinquished the work altogether, and simply began to provide for their own necessities and to build their own houses. Hence Heaven employs Haggai to rouse them again from their wickedness. The subject of these verses is the *adjournment of duty*. "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." They do not question the *desirableness* or the *obligation* of the work. This indeed seems to be assumed. During the Captivity, we are told elsewhere that they hanged their harps upon the willows, and wept when they "remembered Zion." Often, perhaps, in those circumstances did they resolve, should they ever be restored, to rebuild that temple which was the glory of the land; but now that they are there on the spot, and the ruins lying before them, their ardour is cooled, and they say, "The time is not come." We see three evils coming out here, which, perhaps, are always connected with the *adjournment of duty*.

I. COWARDICE. They did not say, "We will not build the temple, we will leave it to remain in ruins;" they were too cowardly for that. Their consciences rendered them incapable of making such a decision. Men who neglect duty are too cowardly to say, "We will never attend to it, we will never study the Scriptures, worship God." 1. Sin is *cowardice*. 2. Sin is cowardice because *conscience*, the truly heroic element, is ever against it.

II. SELFISHNESS. What was it that prompted them to adjourn this duty? The answer is at hand, *Selfishness*. "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" They set to work for their own *private* interests. Virtually they said, "We must build houses for *ourselves* first, for all is in ruin about us; we must cultivate our own land first; we must attend to our own business, and after all that is completed we will see to the temple." 1. *Selfishness is a perversion of self-love*. 2. *Selfishness is fatal to self-interest*.

III. PRESUMPTION. "The time is not come." How did they know that? Were they judges of times and seasons? Had they the hardihood to suppose that circumstances can set aside or modify our obligations? Are they imperious enough to plead Providence as a patron of their disobedience? "Go to, now, ye that say, To-day and to-morrow" (Jas. iv. 13). 1. Such presumption is always *guilty*. It implies that we know better than our Maker about times and seasons. 2. Such presumption is always *perilous*. It treads upon an awful precipice.—D. T.

Vers. 5—11.—*Duty divinely vindicated*. "Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes," etc. Their efforts to improve their secular condition were all *unsuccessful*. The ground brought forth little, etc. Why was this? Not because they did not work; not because either the soil or the seed was bad. The reason was a moral one—they neglected the great duty that Heaven had enjoined upon them, the rebuilding of the temple. They neglected this, and the curse of Heaven rested as a mildew upon all their operations. Had they rightly discharged this duty, prosperity would have attended all their efforts. *Real success in any labour, so as to obtain happiness, depends upon the spiritual state of the soul*. This is a point which has, perhaps, seldom occupied your attention; nevertheless, it is a point of overwhelming moment. It is common for men to refer success to industry, ingenuity, fortune, luck, or some such cause; the real cause of success or failure is to be referred to the moral state of the soul.



They were selfish motives that brought secular disasters to the Jews now. The verses teach us that *duty is vindicated by the Divine government*. We offer two remarks here.

I. THAT THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES THE SELFISH MOTIVES THAT ACTUATE MEN. Men are governed in everything by motive. Motive is the mainspring that keeps the world in action; motive is the fountain from which all the streams of life proceed; motive is the germ from which springs every branch and leaf of the great tree of character. We judge each other from appearance; God, from motives. God sees theft, blasphemy, and all other crimes where they have never been expressed in words or acts. This Divine inspection of motives argues three things. 1. *The necessity of moral reformation in the world*. If all pertaining to human life springs from motive, and the motives of the world are depraved, then the grand necessity of the world is reformation. Knowledge, civilization, refinement, social order, mercantile prosperity, wholesome legislation,—these will be of no real service where the motives are bad. Hence the great Reformer has said, “Ye must be born again.” To accomplish this reformation is the great aim of the gospel. It is the fire to burn up false motives, it is the axe to strike the upas at the roots. 2. *The necessity for attending more to the spiritual than the formal in the Church*. It is not conformity to standards of faith, however scriptural, attention to rituals, however æsthetic and impressive, the repetition of prayers, however beautiful in language, devout in sentiment, and correct in doctrine; it is not, in fact, in any externalism that religion consists or that God delights; it is in holy motive. “Neither circumcision . . . nor uncircumcision,” etc. (Gal. v. 6). In all true worship man is at once the temple, the sacrifice, and the priest. When will the time come that men shall regard the Church, not as a piece of timber carved into certain forms by the hand of art, remaining the same from age to age, but as a living tree, working itself by the power of its own life into living forms with every season that passes over it? 3. *The possibility of solemn disclosures on the last day*. Here men conceal their real hearts from each other. We only know each other after the flesh. Sometimes here Providence takes off the mask from those whom we thought friends, and we recoil from their hideousness with horror. At the last day all will be uncovered. “The hidden things of darkness will be brought to light” (1 Cor. iv. 5). What a revelation on that day!

II. THAT THE DIVINE GOVERNOR AVENGES THE SELFISH MOTIVES OF ACTION. “Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little.” The passage shows two ways in which God opposes the labour of selfish men. 1. *He neutralizes the results of their labour*. “I will blow upon it.” The man may realize the means which he thought would make him happy; God will hinder it from doing so. One selfish man may get wealth in abundance; another may acquire vast treasures of knowledge; another, immense power in society; yet in all cases there may be unhappiness, because God “blows” upon the whole. In fact, nothing can make a selfish man happy. 2. *He renders ineffective the materials of their labour*. Labour always employs three things—*agent, instrument, and materials*. The materials of labour are here specified—“light,” “air,” “water,” “earth.” On these men operate. Out of these we weave our clothing, of them we construct our dwellings. God acts upon these and renders them all ineffective for happiness. “Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land.” (1) *God directs the universe*; not necessity, not chance. (2) *God directs the universe for mind*. (3) *God directs the universe so as to meet the state of every heart*. “To the pure all things are pure.”—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1.—ch. ii. 9.—Part II. THE SECOND ADDRESS: THE GLORY OF THE NEW TEMPLE.

Ver. 1—5.—§ 1. *The prophet comforts those who grieve at the comparative poverty*

*of the new building with the assurance of the Divine protection and favour.*

Ver. 1.—In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month. The seventh month is Ethanim or Tisri, answering to parts of September and October. The

twenty-first was the last and great day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 34, etc.), when it was the custom to celebrate the ingathering of the harvest. The joyous nature of this festival was sadly marred on this occasion. Their crops were scanty, and they had no temple in whose courts they might assemble to pay their vows and offer their thank-offerings. The building which had begun to make some progress only the more showed its poverty. Everything tended to make them contrast the present with the past. But God mercifully relieves their despondency with a new message. By the prophet Haggai (see note on ch. i. 1).

Ver. 2.—**Speak now to Zerubbabel.** The message is addressed to the heads of the nation, temporal and spiritual, and to all the people who had returned (see notes on ch. i. 1 and 12).

Ver. 3.—**Who is left among you?** etc. It is quite possible that there should be some old people present who had seen Solomon's temple. Many have thought that Haggai himself was of the number. It was sixty-eight years ago that the temple was destroyed, and we can well believe that its remarkable features were deeply impressed on the minds of those who as boys or youths had loved and admired it. Ezra tells us (iii. 12) that "many of the priests and Levites [when the foundation first was laid] and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, . . . wept with a loud voice." This house. The prophet identifies the present with Solomon's temple, as being adapted for the same purposes, to fill the same place in the national life, built on the same hallowed spot, and partly with the same materials. In the Jews' eyes there was one only temple, whatever might be the date of its erection or the comparative worth of its decorations and materials. **First; former,** as ver. 9. **How do ye see it now?** (Numb. xiii. 18). In what condition do ye see this house now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? The words, "in comparison of it" ought to be omitted, as not required by the Hebrew idiom. Does it not seem in your eyes as if it had no existence? If the injunction of Cyrus (Ezra i. 3, etc.) had been carried out, the dimensions of the new temple would have exceeded those of the old; but Zerubbabel seems to have been unable, with the small resources at his disposal, to execute the original design, though even so the proportions were not greatly inferior to those of the earlier temple. But the chief inferiority lay in the absence of the splendour and enrichment with which Solomon adorned his edifice. The gold which he had

lavished on the house was no longer available; the precious stones could not be had. Besides these defects, the Talmudists reckon five things wanting in this second temple, viz. the ark of the covenant, with the cherubim and mercy-seat; the holy fire; the Shechinah; the spirit of prophecy; the Urim and Thummim. It was, according to Josephus, only half the height of Solomon's—sixty cubits ('Ant.,' xv. 11. 1), and it appears to have been in many respects inferior to the first building ('Ant.,' iv. 2). Hecabaenus of Abdera gives the dimensions of the courts as five hundred feet in length and a hundred cubits in breadth (double the width of the court of the tabernacle), and the size of the altar as twenty cubits square and ten cubits high (see Josephus, 'Cont. Ap.,' i. 22; Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 370).

Ver. 4.—**Be strong.** This is repeated three times for emphasis' sake. The same exhortation was given by David to Solomon before the building of the first temple (1 Chron. xxviii. 10; comp. Josh. i. 6, 7, 9). Haggai seems to suggest comfort in the thought that such admonition was needed at that time as well as now when they are so depressed (comp. Zech. viii. 9). **And work;** literally, *and do*; *travailler: facile*. The word is used absolutely, as often (comp. Isa. xlv. 23; Amos iii. 6, and note there). Here it means, "Work on bravely, finish what you have begun." I am with you (see ch. i. 13, and note there). The consciousness of God's presence gives confidence and strength.

Ver. 5.—According to the word that I covenanted. The Hebrew is simply, "the word that I," etc. Hence some have connected it with the verb "do" in the preceding verse, the intervening words being parenthetical. But there is intended no injunction respecting the observation of the old covenant, but a consolatory message under present despondency. Others take it with the verb that follows: "the word and my Spirit remain among you." But it is best to leave the clause in the abrupt fashion in which it is introduced: "(Here is, here stands) the word that I covenanted with you." If anything is supplied, we might insert, "I will confirm." The promise of present help is confirmed by the remembrance of God's former covenant with Israel, that they should be his peculiar people, and possess the right of access to him and a claim on his help (Exod. xix. 5, 6; xxix. 45, 46; Deut. vii. 6; Jer. vii. 23). This clause is entirely omitted by the Septuagint. **So my Spirit remaineth among you;** Revised Version, *and my Spirit abode among you*. But the clause refers to God's presence among them now,

which was shown by the revelations made to the prophets, as Haggai and Zechariah, and which exhibits itself in his providential ordering of events, the removal of obstacles, the furthering of the good work. Wordsworth notes that "Christ was with the ancient Church in the wilderness (see I Cor. x. 9; Heb. xi. 26); and now, when the eternal Word became incarnate, and when the Holy Spirit was sent to be in the midst of God's faithful people, then this prophecy was fulfilled." *Fear ye not.* "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31; and comp. Zech. iv. 6).

**Vers. 6—9.**—§ 2. *The prophet, to reconcile the people to the new temple, and to teach them to value it highly, foretells a future time, when the glory of this house shall far exceed that of Solomon's, adumbrating the Messianic era.*

**Ver. 6.**—*Yet once, it is a little while; ἔτι ἅπαρ* (Septuagint); *Adhuc unum modicum est* (Vulgate). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (xii. 26, 27) quotes and founds an argument on this rendering of the LXX. The expression is equivalent to "once again within a little time." I will shake, etc. Some difference of opinion exists as to the events here adumbrated. All, however, agree in seeing an allusion to the promulgation of the Law on Mount Sinai, which was accompanied with certain great physical commotions (see Exod. xix. 16; Ps. lxxviii. 7, 8), when, too, the Egyptians were "shaken" by the plagues sent on them, and the neighbouring nations, Philistia, Edom, Moab, were struck with terror (Exod. xv. 14—16). This was a great moral disturbance in the heathen world; the next and final "shaking" will be under the Messianic dispensation for which the destruction of heathen kingdoms prepares the way. The Israelites would soon see the beginnings of this visitation, e.g. in the fall of Babylon, and might thence conclude that all would be accomplished in due time. The prophet calls this interval "a little while" (which it is in God's eyes and in view of the vast future), in order to console the people and teach them patience and confidence. The final consummation and the steps that lead to it in the prophet's vision are blended together, just as our Lord combines his prediction about the destruction of Jerusalem with details which concern the end of the world. The physical convulsions in heaven and earth, etc., spoken of, are symbolical representations of political revolutions, as explained in the next verse, "I will shake all nations," and again in vers. 21, 22. Other prophets announce that Messiah's reign shall be ushered in by the overthrow or conversion

of heathen nations; e.g. Isa. ii. 11, etc.; xix. 21, 22; Dan. ii. 44; Micah v. 9, etc.

**Ver. 7.**—*All nations* (Luke xxi. 25, where our Lord refers to the end of this world). But before Christ's first advent there was a general shaking of empires. Persia fell; Alexander's dominion was divided and gradually shattered before the might of Rome; Rome herself was torn with civil wars. The faith in the power of national gods was everywhere weakened, and men were prepared to receive the new revelation of one Supreme Deity, who came on earth to teach and save. Now is mentioned the object or consequence of this shaking of nations. The desire of all nations shall come. This is the rendering of the ancient Jewish expositors, the Chaldee Targum, and the Vulgate, which gives, *Veniet desideratus cunctis gentibus*. The words in this case point to a person, and this person can be no one else than the Messiah, for whom "all nations consciously or unconsciously yearn, in whom alone all the longings of the human heart find satisfaction" (Perowne). But there is difficulty in accepting this view. The word rendered "the desire" (*chemdah*) is singular, the verb "shall come" (*bau*) is plural, as if it was said in Latin, *Venient desiderium omnium gentium*. The LXX. translates, "Ἡεὶ τὰ ἐκλεκτὰ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν," "The choice things [or, 'portions'] of all the nations shall come." The plural verb seems fatal to the idea of a person being spoken of; nor is this objection answered by Dr. Pusey's allegation that the object of desire contains in itself many objects of desire, or Bishop Wordsworth's refinement, that Messiah is regarded as a collective Being, containing in his own Person the natures of God and man, and combining the three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. Every one must see that both these explanations are forced and unnatural, and are conformed rather to theological considerations than to grammatical accuracy. *Chemdah* is used for "the object of desire," as 2 Chron. xxxii. 27, where it refers to Hezekiah's treasures, and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10, "the goodly vessels" of the temple (comp. Jer. xxv. 34; Nah. ii. 9). Nowhere is any intimation given that it is a name applied to the Messiah; nowhere is any such explanation offered of the term so applied. The word is a common one; its meaning is well ascertained; and it could hardly have been understood in any but its usual acceptance without some preparation or further definition. This acceptance is confirmed by the mention of "the gold and silver" in ver. 8. The Revised Version cuts the knot by rendering, "the desirable things;" Perowne affirms that the plural verb denotes the manifoldness and variety

of the gifts. This seems scarcely satisfactory. May it not be, as Knabenbauer suggests, that "the desire of all nations" forms one notion, in which the words, "all nations," have a predominating influence, and so the plural ensues by *constructio ad sensum*? The meaning, then, is that all nations with their wealth come, that the Gentiles shall devote their treasures, their powers, whatever they most highly prize, to the service of God. This is what is predicted elsewhere (e.g. Isa. lx. 5—7, 11, 13, 17), and it is called, metaphorically, coming with treasures to the temple. To hear of such a glorious future might well be a topic of consolation to the depressed Israelites. (For a further development of the same idea, see Rev. xxi. 24, 26.) I will fill this house with glory. There is a verbal allusion to the glory which filled Solomon's temple at the dedication (2 Chron. vii. 1), but the especial mode in which it is to be manifested in this case is not here mentioned. The previous clause would make the reference rather to the material offerings of the Gentiles, but a further and a deeper signification is connected with the advent of Messiah (as Mal. iii. 1), with which the complete fulfilment commenced.

Ver. 8.—The silver is mine. All the riches of the world are the Lord's, and he disposes of them as he wills; if he has promised that the Gentiles shall offer their treasures for his service, be sure he will perform his word. There may also be intended a word of comfort for the desponding; they need not grieve because they had but poor offerings to bring to the house; he wanted not gold or silver, for all was his.

Ver. 9.—The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former. Revised Version, following the Septuagint, "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former." "This house" means the temple at Jerusalem, regard not being paid to the special building (ver. 3), whether of Solomon, or Zerubbabel, or Herod. As understood by the hearers, this promise referred to the material riches, the precious things offered by the Gentiles. To us it speaks of the presence of Christ, God incarnate, in the holy city and in the temple itself, and of his presence in the Church, wherein he abides for ever. Here is the complete answer to the complaint of ver. 3. In this place will I give peace. Primarily this means in Jerusalem, the place where the temple stood, God would grant peace from enmities, freedom from danger, and quiet enjoyment of promised blessings (comp. Isa. lx. 18; Joel iii. 17; Micah v. 4, 5). But the promise is not fulfilled by this; the peace promised to the spiritual temple is that peace of heart and

conscience which is given by him who is the Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6), and which includes all the graces of the Christian covenant (Ezek. xxxiv. 25). The first temple was built by the king whose name is "Peaceful;" the second is glorified by the presence of the "Peace-bringer" (Gen. xlix. 10). At the end of this verse the LXX. has an addition not found in the Hebrew, "even peace of soul for a possession to every one who buildeth, to raise up this shrine."

Ver. 10—19.—Part III. THE THIRD ADDRESS: THE CAUSE OF THE CALAMITIES WHICH HAD BEFALLEN THE PEOPLE, AND A PROMISE OF BLESSING.

Ver. 10—17.—§ 1. *By an analogy drawn from the Law, Haggai shows that residence in the Holy Land and the offering of sacrifice do not suffice to make the people acceptable, as long as they themselves are unclean through neglect of the house of the Lord. Hence comes the punishment of sterility.*

Ver. 10.—In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month. The ninth month is Chisleu, answering to parts of November and December. It was now three months from the time the people had commenced to build, and two from the day when the second address was delivered. On the weather at this time depended the hope of the yearly crops. Between the second and third address Zechariah's first prophecy was uttered (Zech. i. 2—6).

Ver. 11.—Concerning the Law. Others translate, "for instruction." Ask the priests these two legal questions, such as they were appointed to expound (Deut. xvii. 8, etc.; xxxiii. 10; Mal. ii. 7). By this appeal the prophet makes his lesson sink deeper into the people's mind.

Ver. 12.—If one bear; literally, *behold, one beareth*, which is equivalent to "suppose a man bears." Perowne compares Jer. iii. 1, "Lo, a man puts away his wife;" and 2 Chron. vii. 13. *Holy flesh*. The flesh of animals sacrificed to God, which was set apart from profane uses, and might be eaten only by the priests or persons ritually pure (Lev. vi. 26; vii. 15—20; x. 13; comp. Jer. xi. 15). *The skirt of his garment*; literally, *wing of his garment*, as Deut. xxii. 12; 1 Sam. xv. 27. *Any meat*; *παντός βρώματος*: anything eatable. And said, No. The priests answered correctly according to Lev. vi. 27. Whatever touched the hallowed flesh became itself holy, but it could not communicate this holiness to anything else.

Ver. 13.—Unclean by a dead body; Septuagint, *ἀκαθάρτος ἐν ψυχῇ*: *Vulgate, pollutus in anima*. These versions are closer to the Hebrew, "unclean by a soul," than

the Authorized Version, but not so intelligible. "Soul" (*nephesh*) is used to mean a person, and, with the attribute "dead" understood, a corpse, as Lev. xxi. 1. The full phrase is found in Numb. vi. 6, 11. Contact with a dead body produced the gravest ceremonial uncleanness, which lasted seven days, and could be purged only by a double lustration and other rites (Numb. xix. 11, etc.). This uncleanness was doubtless connected with the idea that death was the result of sin. Any of these. The things mentioned in the preceding verse. It shall be unclean. In accordance with Numb. xix. 22. A polluted human being communicated his pollution to all that he touched. It was owing to the defilement that accompanied contact with the dead that the later Jews used to whiten the sepulchres every year, that they might be seen and avoided (Matt. xxiii. 27, and Lightfoot, 'Hor. Hebr.' in loc.).

Ver. 14.—Then answered Haggai, and said; then Haggai continued and said. He applies the principles just enunciated to the case of the Jews, taking the communication of uncleanness first. So is this people. Not, my people, because by their acts they had disowned God (ch. i. 2). This people is defiled in my sight like one who has touched a corpse, and not only they themselves, but so is every work of their hands; all their labour, all that they put their hands to, is unclean, and can win no blessing. Their pollution was their disobedience in not building the house of God. They had calmly contemplated the lifeless symbol of the theocracy, the ruined temple, and made no determined effort to resuscitate it, so a blight had rested on all their work. That which they offer there (pointing to the altar which they had built when they first returned, Ezra iii. 2) is unclean. They had fancied that the sanctifying influence of the altar and its sacrifices would extend to all their works, and cover all their shortcomings; but so far from this, their very offerings were unclean, because the offerers were polluted. They who come before the Holy One should themselves be holy. Neither the altar nor the Holy Land imparted sanctity by any intrinsic virtue of their own, but entailed upon all an obligation to personal holiness (Wordsworth). The LXX. has an addition at the end of the verse, "Ἐνεκεν τῶν λημμάτων αὐτῶν τῶν ὀφειλῶν, ὀδυνήθησονται ἀπὸ προσώπου πόνων αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐμισθεῖτε ἐν πύλαις ἐλέγχοντας," "On account of their morning gains [or, 'burdens'] they shall be pained in the presence of their labours, and ye hated those who reproved in the gates." This is expounded by Theodoret thus: As soon as morning dawned ye employed yourselves in

no good work, but sought only how to obtain sordid gain. And ye regarded with hatred those who reproved you, who sitting at the gate spake words of wisdom to all who passed by. The passage is found in no other version.

Ver. 15.—The prophet bids the people look backwards, and consider how their neglect had been visited by scanty harvests; their own experience would teach them this lesson. From this day; viz. the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, when this address was delivered (ver. 10; comp. ver. 18). And upward; i.e. backward. He bids them go back in thought fourteen years when they first intermitted building. Before a stone, etc. This does not mean before the building was first begun, but before they began to build on the foundation already laid.

Ver. 16.—Since those days were. The word "days" is supplied. Revised Version, "through all that time," viz. the fourteen years spoken of in ver. 15. Septuagint, ἦτε, "what ye were;" the Vulgate omits the words. When one came to an heap of twenty measures. The word "measures" is not in the Hebrew; it is supplied by the LXX., *odra* (equivalent to *seah*), and by Jerome, *modiorum*. But the particular measure is of no importance; it is the proportion only on which stress is laid. The prophet particularizes the general statements of ch. i. 6, 9. The "heap" is the collection of sheaves (Ruth iii. 7). This when threshed yielded only half that they had expected. There were (in fact) but ten; καὶ ἐγένετο κρίσις δέκα ὄτρα, "and there were ten measures of barley." The press-fat; the wine-fat, the vat into which flowed the juice forced from the grapes when trodden out by the feet in the press. A full account of this will be found in the 'Diet. of the Bible,' arts. "Wine-press" and "Wine." Fifty vessels out of the press. The Hebrew is "fifty *purah*." The word *purah* is used in Isa. lxiii. 3 to signify the "press" itself, hence the Authorized Version so translates it here, inserting "out of," and supplying "vessels," as "measures" above; but it probably here denotes a liquid measure in which the wine was drawn. LXX., μετρητάς (equivalent to Hebrew *baths*). Jerome, *lagenas*; and in his commentary, *amphoras*. They came and examined the grapes and expected fifty *purahs*, "press-measures," but they did not get even half that they had hoped. There were but twenty. Knabenhauer suggests that the meaning may be—looking at the crop of grapes, they expected to draw out, i.e. empty (*chasaph*), the press fifty times, but were egregiously deceived.

Ver. 17.—I smote you with blasting and with mildew. It was God who inflicted

these calamities upon them judicially, according to the threats in Deut. xxviii. 22 (comp. Amos iv. 9, and note there). These two pests affected the corn; the vines were smitten with hail (Ps. lxxviii. 47). In all the labours (*work*) of your hands. All that you had cultivated with toil, corn, vines, fruit of every sort. Yet ye turned not to me. The clause is elliptical, "yet not ye to me." The LXX. and Syriac translate as the Authorized Version, supplying the verb from the parallel passage in Amos iv. 9. The Vulgate (not according to precedent), *Non fuit in vobis qui revertetur ad me*. In spite of these visitations there was not one among them who shook off his idle inaction and worked for the Lord.

Vers. 18, 19.—§ 2. *On their obedience the blessings of nature shall again be theirs.*

Ver. 18.—Consider now from this day and upward (see note on ver. 15.) For "upward" Jerome has here in *futurum*, though he translated the same word *supra* in ver. 15. Such a rendering is allowable, and affords a good sense, the prophet directing the people's attention to the happy prospect in the future announced in ver. 19. But it seems best to keep to the same interpretation in two passages so closely allied. The prophet bids the people consider the period from the present, the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, when this prophecy was uttered (ver. 10), to the other limit explanatory of the term "upward" or "backward." Even from the day that the foundation, etc.; rather, *since the day that*, etc. This is obviously the same period as that named in ver. 15, after the foundation was completed, but before "stone was laid upon stone" of the superstructure (comp. Zech. viii. 9).

Ver. 19.—Is the seed yet in the barn? Is there any of your poor crop still left in your granaries? Is it not already expended? "The seed" is here the produce of the seed, the grain (1 Sam. viii. 15; Job xxxix. 12). The corn crop is mentioned first, then the fruit harvest. The Vulgate has, *Numquid jam semen in germine est?* Has the seed begun to grow? Is there any sign of abundance? Yet the harvest shall be prolific. But there is no doubt that *megurah* means "barn," not "sprout." LXX., *Εἰ ἐν γῆραι σῆται ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀλω*, "If it shall be known upon the threshing-floor." Jerome must have read γῆς for τῆς, as he renders, "Si ultra cognoscetur super terram area." He expounds it thus: So abundant shall be the produce that the threshing-floor shall not recognize its own corn, or that the threshers shall be forced to join floor to floor to make room for all the grain, "et arcum separatio nesciatur in terra." *Yea, as yet; καὶ εἰ ἐτι*

(Septuagint); *et adhuc* (Vulgate); as Judg. iii. 26; Job i. 18. Others translate, "as regards." Though there was no sign of leaf or fruit on the trees, nothing by which one could judge of the future produce, yet the prophet predicts an abundant crop, dating from the people's obedience (Lev. xxvi. 3, etc.; Deut. xxviii. 2, etc.). From this day will I bless you. "This day" is the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (ver. 10). From now the improvement in the season should begin and make itself evident. "Bless" is a term often used for sending fruitful seasons (Deut. xxviii. 8; Mal. iii. 10).

Vers. 20—23.—Part V. THE FOURTH ADDRESS: PROMISE OF THE RESTORATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID, WHEN THE STORM BURSTS ON THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD.

Ver. 20.—Temporal blessings had been promised to the people generally; now spiritual blessings are announced to Zerubbabel as the head of the nation and the representative of the house of David. And again; and a second time; *ἐκ δευτέρου* (Septuagint). This revelation took place on the same day as the preceding one.

Ver. 21.—Zerubbabel (see note on ch. i. 1). I will shake the heavens and the earth. He repeats the prediction of ver. 6 in this chapter (where see note). This is the general statement, expanded and explained in the next verse.

Ver. 22.—I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms. No events in Zerubbabel's time satisfied this prediction, which waits for its fulfilment in the Messianic age (Luke i. 52). "The throne" is used distributively for "every throne of kingdoms;" Septuagint, "thrones of kings." Of the heathen; of the nations. Chariots, etc. Emblems of the military power by which the nations had risen to eminence (Ps. xx. 7; Zech. x. 5). Shall come down. Be brought to the ground, perish (Isa. xxxiv. 7). By the sword of his brother. The heathen powers shall annihilate one another (Ezek. xxxviii. 21; Zech. xiv. 13).

Ver. 23.—In that day. When the heathen nations of the earth are overthrown, Israel shall be safe, and be the more exalted by the Divine favour and protection. Will I take. The verb simply serves to introduce the following act as one of importance, and does not signify, "take under my protection" (comp. Deut. iv. 20; 2 Kings xiv. 21; Keil). My servant. An honourable title used especially of David (1 Kings xi. 13, etc.; Jer. xxxiii. 21, etc.), and his future successors (Ezek. xxxiv. 23, etc.; xxxvii. 24). Make thee as a signet. I will make

these most precious in my sight (comp. Cant. viii. 6). Among Orientals the signet-ring was an article of great importance and value (see Rev. v. 1; ix. 4; and 'Diot. of the Bible,' art. "Seal"). The allusion is particularly appropriate here, because Zerubbabel is set at the head of the nation in the place of his grandfather (?) Jeconiah, whose rejection from the monarchy had been couched in these terms: "As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoia-kim King of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence" (Jer. xxii. 24). The Son of Sirach, in his praise of great men, refers to this promise, "How shall we magnify Zorobabel? even he was as a signet on the right hand" (Ecclus. xlix. 11). The signet, too, is the sign of authority (Gen. xli. 42; Esth. iii. 10); so Zerubbabel has authority delegated to him from God, the type of him who said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father" (Matt. xi. 27). "The true Zerubbabel, i.e. Christ, the Son and Antitype of Zerubbabel, is the signet in the hand of the Father, both passively and actively, whereby God impresses his own majesty, thought, and words, and his own image, on men,

angels, and all creatures" (Corn. & Lapide, ap. Pusey). I have chosen thee. This is not a personal assurance only to Zerubbabel, for neither he nor his natural seed reigned in Jerusalem, or rose to any special eminence in the kingdoms of this world. The fulfilment must be looked for in his spiritual progeny and in Christ. Promises are often made in Scripture to individuals which are accomplished only in their descendants; witness those made to Abraham and the other patriarchs, the prophecies of Jacob to his sons, and many others of a similar nature in the Old Testament. Those large promises made to David in old time, that his seed should endure for ever, that his throne should be as the sun before God (Ps. lxxxix. 36, 37; 2 Sam. vii. 16), were now passed on to Zerubbabel and to his line, because of him was to spring Messiah, in whom alone these wide predictions find their fulfilment. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i. 32, 33).

### HOMILETICS.

VERS. 3—5.—*Past and present.* I. A SUGGESTION—of the continuity of human history. Haggai's question assumes that the structure then erecting was not a new edifice (which it really was), but the old building set up again, though in faded splendour, which also it was, inasmuch as it was based on the foundations of the earlier pile. "This house in its former glory" meant that the prophet looked on the two houses as one, and the two eras represented by these houses, not as two distinct and separate periods, but as one continuous period. As it were the national life, for seventy years interrupted by the exile, again flowed on, restoring the temple, reinstituting the religion of Jehovah, and pervading the whole fabric of society. The present was not so much a fresh commencement as a prolongation of the past. And this is true of human history and life in general. No age or individual is entirely disconnected from and independent of the ages and individuals that have gone before. A perfectly new beginning in human history or in individual life has never yet taken place. Even in the Incarnation, the second Adam was connected with the first through his human nature. The civilization of the nineteenth century is built upon the foundations laid by preceding centuries. The maturity of manhood in wisdom or virtue is developed from the gains in knowledge and goodness made in youth.

II. AN ILLUSTRATION—of the tendency to glorify the past at the expense of the present. "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do you see it now?" asks the prophet; "is it not in your eyes as nothing?" In certain respects this depreciation of the post-exilic temple, in comparison with the Solomonic, was justifiable—the material splendour of the second building was vastly inferior to that of the first; but in other respects the glory of the latter house would ultimately far eclipse that of the former (ver. 9)—it would be the centre and scene, the instrument and support of a purer worship than had been maintained in the former, and would be honoured by the visit of a greater potentate than Solomon himself, even by the Messenger of the covenant and the Lord of the temple, after whom were going out the desires, not of Israel alone, but of all nations (ver. 7). And just as these aged temple-builders were inclined to disparage the meaner edifice rising

upon the foundation of the old structure of cedar wood and gold, and to glorify the old which seventy years before had perished in the going down of their nation before the might of Babylon, so does it seem to be a tendency in human nature to exalt the past and to depress the present, to extol the men and institutions, the characteristics and occurrences of other days at the expense of the present, even when there is as little ground for doing so as there was for the depreciatory remarks of the builders. It is not difficult to account for either this laudation of the past or this disparagement of the present. On the one hand, lapse of years allows the memory of past discomforts, irritations, deficiencies, imperfections, blemishes, to fade away, while present evils obtrude themselves upon the notice and press upon the hearts of the passing generation; on the other hand, the present is too near for its peculiar excellences to be rightly gauged, while the glories of the past, like distant mountains, shine out with augmented splendour. Yet the verdict which prefers the past to the present is incorrect (Eccles. vii. 10). Unless the world is a hopelessly bad world, which it is not (Rom. viii. 20), and the grace of God that bringeth salvation is effete, which is not the mind of Scripture (Titus ii. 11); unless the predictions of the Word of God are to be falsified (Isa. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14; Rev. xi. 15), which cannot be (Isa. lv. 11; Matt. xxiv. 35), and the aspirations of good men's hearts are to be disappointed, which would be clean contrary to what God has led them to expect (Ps. cxlv. 19);—there can be little doubt that the world is and must be surely but slowly becoming better.

“For I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs;  
And the thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns.”

(Tennyson.)

To the widening of the thoughts add the purifying of the hearts and the elevation of the lives of men.

III. AN EXHORTATION—to earnest diligence in discharge of present duty. “Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord,” etc. The duty of the builders was to prosecute the work in which they were engaged, the erection of the temple, even though the temple should be inferior to its predecessor, and the circumstances for its erection less favourable than had been those for the construction of the former—perhaps all the more their duty on that account. So were the present age inferior to the ages which had gone before, the same duty would be incumbent on all ranks and classes—the duty, viz. of working with earnest diligence at one's daily calling, “the trivial round, the common task,” if assigned by God, and more especially at the upbuilding of God's spiritual temple in the individual soul and in the world at large. Without this the present age cannot grow better than the past, and is certain to grow worse.

IV. A CONSOLATION—in the guaranteed fellowship of God. Jehovah would be with them—always, of course, conditionally if they continued with him (2 Chron. xv. 2). 1. *Not merely externally*, as through his immanent presence he is with all, *but internally*, by his Spirit abiding amongst them as a community, and in their hearts as individuals, as he still does in the midst of his Church and in the souls of believers, when these remain true to him, no matter how degenerate the age may be in which their lot is cast. 2. *Not now for the first time, but as he had ever been* since the day when they came forth from Egypt; without which, indeed, they had never become a nation having access to Jehovah through their priests and sacrifices, and receiving from him revelations and spiritual quickenings through the medium of their prophets (Heb. i. 1); and without which they could not now be prospered in their undertaking. God's Spirit is the secret source and ultimate cause of all good in either Church or nation. 3. *Not of constraint, but willingly*, according to his own covenant engagements, which are never imposed on him by any of his creatures, but always freely proposed and executed by himself—whence they are rightly styled covenants of grace. It is the existence of such a covenant that guarantees the indestructibility and perpetuity of the Christian Church. 4. *Not as an unseen presence only, but as an actively co-operating power*, imparting to them strength for their work as well as boldness in it (see homily on ch. i. 13, 14), both of which would be theirs in proportion as they realized the cheering truth that they were fellow-labourers with God. In like manner also, and for similar ends and purposes, is Christ, by his Spirit, present with his Church (Matt. xxviii. 20; John xiv. 6).



LESSONS. 1. The inheritance of the past a cause of thankfulness. 2. The imperfections of the present a stimulus to duty. 3. The glorious times of the future a reason for cheerfulness and hope.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The shaking of the heavens and the earth.* I. HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS. 1. *At Sinai*, when Jehovah manifested himself to Israel (Exod. xix. 16—19; Ps. lxxviii. 7, 8). Preparatory and prophetic. 2. *At the birth of Christ*, when Jehovah appeared on earth in the Person of his Son (Joel ii. 30, 31; Luke ii. 8—14; Acts ii. 19, 20). Furthering and fulfilling. 3. *At the end of time*, when Jehovah will a third time appear, in the Person of the glorified Christ, to save his people and judge his foes (Isa. xxiv. 19, 20; 2 Pet. iii. 10). Culminating and completing.

II. SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATIONS. According to the writer to the Hebrews, "This word, Once more, signifieth the removing of the things that are shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. xii. 27). In other words, the object of each successive Divine interposition has been and will be the abrogation of institutions that have served their day, the correction of errors that have hindered the truth, the alteration of circumstances and conditions that are no longer suited to the new era about to be introduced. 1. *At Sinai were shaken and removed* (1) the polytheism which Israel had in large measure brought with her from Egypt; (2) the individualism which had hitherto prevented Israel from forming herself into a nation; and (3) the serfdom which had rendered the realization of Israel's calling impossible; while *the things that could not be shaken and remained* were (1) the unity of God, or the monotheistic element which still survived in Israel's religion; (2) the covenant relationship in which Jehovah stood towards Israel; and (3) the capacity for religion which no amount of oppression had been able utterly to destroy. 2. *At the birth of Christ were shaken and removed* (1) the Mosaic institute which had then served its day, and was even ready to vanish away (Heb. viii. 13); (2) the partition wall between Jew and Gentile (Eph. ii. 14), which had repelled each from, rather than attracted each to, the other; and (3) the externalism and literalism in worship, which had converted it into mere mechanism; while *the unshakable things that remained* were (1) the covenant of grace which underlay the Mosaic institute, and shone the brighter when that was removed which for centuries had been superimposed upon it; (2) the brotherhood of man, which was henceforth to be placed in the forefront of the gospel message (Acts xvii. 26; Rom. ii. 11; iii. 29; Col. iii. 11; Gal. iii. 26); and (3) the spirituality of religion, which was no more to be confined to either places or seasons, persons or forms, but to find its seat in the heart and its priest in the renewed soul (John iv. 21—24). 3. *At the end of time will be shaken and removed* (1) the present state and condition of things (1 Cor. vii. 31; xv. 50—57; 2 Pet. iii. 10, 12; 1 John ii. 17); (2) the presence and power of sin (Rev. xxii. 3); and (3) the mediatorial sovereignty of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 23); while *as things that cannot be shaken, shall remain* (1) the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. iii. 13); (2) the redeemed family of believers (1 John ii. 17); and (3) the eternal supremacy of God, who shall then be all in all (1 Cor. xv. 23).

Learn: 1. That nations and individuals mostly advance by means of struggle and commotion. 2. That peace and quietness may often mean stagnation and death rather than progress and life. 3. That truth and right will eventually prevail over falsehood and wrong.

Ver. 7.—*"The desire of all nations."* I. ALL NATIONS HAVE DESIRED A VISIBLE DIVINITY; AND SUCH A MANIFESTED OR REVEALED DIVINITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO MANKIND IN CHRIST. That all nations from the beginning downward have believed in the existence of a Supreme Being has been sufficiently demonstrated by the universality in man of the instinct of worship. Nor have all nations merely wished to possess a god, but the Deity they have longed for has been, not a god remaining always little more than a conception of the mind, an infinitely exalted being with whom they could not enter into fellowship, but a God whom they could look upon, or at least think of, as not far from any one of them, a God who could not only come near to them, but to whom they in turn could come near. The lowest forms of religion that have existed on the earth, the religions of men in most degraded conditions, have

made this perfectly apparent no less than the elaborate rites of the cultivated and civilized nations of antiquity. What the savage means by putting a spirit into the various forms of nature by which he is surrounded, or by making an idol of wood or stone, and setting it up before him as an object of adoration; what the untutored child of nature thereby means, viz. to express his belief in a power above himself and above nature, and his desire to bring that invisible power or divinity forth into visibility or nearness; that the old religions of Chaldea, Egypt, and Phœnicia did when they deified the hosts of heaven and the forces of nature, or looked upon these as instruments and embodiments of supernatural powers. In their case it was one more effort of the human mind to fetch God out of the far distance and make him a distinct object of contemplation and worship. Then the later religions that prevailed in Persia, India, Greece, and Rome, with their "incarnations," or beliefs in gods who assumed the likeness of men, evinced the same longing of the human heart for a God at hand rather than afar off, a God visible rather than a god who remained always unseen, a God who might be approached in thought, at least, if not in space, rather than a god who so transcended his worshippers as to be practically inaccessible. And this longing Christianity—whether it be true or no may meantime be left undetermined—meets, as no other religion has done or is likely to do, by placing before man as an object of religious contemplation and worship One who claimed to be the Image of the invisible God, saying, "I and my Father are One," and "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

II. ALL NATIONS HAVE DESIRED AN ATONEMENT FOR SIN; AND SUCH ATONEMENT HAS BEEN PROVIDED AS NOWHERE ELSE BY CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY. It is not meant that everywhere and always men have possessed the same clear, definite, exalted, and correct ideas on the subject of sin, sacrifice, propitiation, atonement, as are presented in the Hebrew or the Christian Scriptures. The most affirmed is that while everywhere men have possessed a deep instinctive longing after God, along with this they have always been more or less conscious of unworthiness and unfitness to enter into fellowship with him, have had a secret conviction that the Deity whom they wished to serve was displeased with them, and that they could not enjoy his favour without the intervention of some atonement or propitiation. Hence, wherever man has been found to have a god, there also he has owned an altar. The practice begun at the gate of Eden, of worshipping the Deity by means of sacrifices, and carried forward in the altar-building of Abraham and the patriarchs, and finally developed in the Mosaic ritual of priest and victim, has been discovered, on investigation, not to have been confined to these, but to have been followed, with more or less closeness of adherence to the primitive pattern, by every nation under heaven that has shaped for itself a religion. In religions of the most rudimentary type, as well as in those of the highest culture, a place has been reserved for the practice of sacrificing and for the notion of expiation. "The sense of impurity and of the need of expiation," writes Pressensé, "are manifested in the most barbarous modes of worship. We admit that the atonement to which they have recourse is often as cruel as the wrath of the deity whom the worshippers seek to appease. There is a phase in which sacrifice is nothing more than food offered to the gods. But a higher idea soon manifests itself. Remorse comes in, the consciousness of guilt prompts the sacrifice, and the priest who at first was regarded in the light of an enchanter becomes a mediator between man and the deity" ('The Ancient World and Christianity,' p. 12). In addition it might easily be shown that the same ideas of sin, penitence, forgiveness, propitiation, sacrifice, atonement, were present in the religions of ancient Chaldea and of Egypt (*ibid.*, pp. 47, 87). And the inference from all is that, irrespective of age or country, and however overlaid with superstition, the deep conviction of the human heart is that man has sinned against God and requires the assistance of a Mediator who shall in some way make peace with the offended Deity, and secure for the offender forgiveness of his transgressions. Well, here again Christianity steps in to supply this demand of the human heart, to answer this pathetic wail for a Deliverer, for One who can make peace and bring forgiveness—steps in as no other religion known to man does, by exhibiting Jesus Christ as Son of God and Son of man (John i. 49, 51), and therefore as possessed of authority to act as Daysman or Mediator between God and man, laying his hand upon both (Job x. 33; 1 Tim. ii. 5), by discovering him as standing

in the room of sinful man (Rom. v. 6), and as making peace by the shedding of his blood (Eph. ii. 14), by presenting him to view as One whose blood is able both to wipe away the guilt of sin and to break its enslaving power. And this, again, is a high certificate in favour of Christianity as the only true religion. For what is a religion worth if it cannot or dare not meet the demands of the human heart and conscience?

III. ALL NATIONS HAVE DESIRED A DIVINE REVELATION, OR AN AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION OF THE DIVINE WILL; AND THIS CHRISTIANITY MEETS IN A WAY THAT NO OTHER RELIGION HAS DONE OR CAN DO. Not only have men in every age and country believed that God is, and that by means of sacrifices it might be possible to appease his anger and secure his favour; they have also supposed it within their reach to receive trustworthy information from God as to his will and their duty. In the rudest forms of religion, the media through which such Divine communications have been conjectured to come have been signs in the sky above or on the earth beneath. In unusual phenomena of nature, in unaccustomed sights and sounds, in dreams and visions, men have been wont to see indications of a higher will than their own made known to them for the guidance of their earthly lives. As religion has advanced in intelligence and refinement, special persons have come to be regarded as oracles through whom responses from the heavenly world might be obtained, and messages from the unseen received. Priests and priestesses, seers and sages, have been viewed as standing in immediate connection with the Deity, and as serving to transmit to men the utterances he might wish to make known. Then, too, in many of the world's religions, as in those of Egypt and Persia, India and Arabia, that is to say, in the most developed religions of which we have any knowledge, but especially in Parseeism, Brahminism, Mohammedanism, there have been sacred books in which the revelations vouchsafed to mankind through the founders of these religions have been preserved. Now, in all this, irrespective of the truth or falsehood of these religions, a signal testimony arises to the strength and depth of the desire on the part of man to possess some authorized expounder of the Divine will in the shape of man, or book, or perhaps both; and there is no need to say that God has never gratified this desire outside of the Hebrew or the Christian Church; but of this one may be certain, that the longing for a Heaven-sent teacher was not confined to the Hebrews, with their Moses who spake with God face to face as a man talketh with his friend, but existed as well among the Greeks, Plato, in one of his dialogues, putting into the mouth of one of his disputants the ever-memorable words, "It is therefore necessary to wait until one teach us how to behave towards the gods and men," and into that of another, "And when shall that time arrive? and who shall that teacher be? for most glad would I be to see such a man." Just such a man was felt to be one of the world's greatest wants before Christ came; and when he came just such a man appeared. The verdict pronounced by the officers on Jesus, "Never man spake like this Man," has never been reversed; nor is there the least likelihood that it ever will.

IV. ALL NATIONS HAVE DESIRED AN ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY; AND THAT ASSURANCE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY CHRIST IN A WAY THAT HAS BEEN DONE BY NO OTHER. Whether apart from Divine revelation the reality of a future life beyond the grave can or could be demonstrated, may be doubtful; but this much is undoubted, that in all ages men have believed in the existence of such a life, and have expressed that belief in their religions. The lowest races by their worship of ancestors, the Egyptians by their elaborate ritual of the Book of the Dead, and the ancient Chaldeans by their mythological narrative of the descent of Ishtar into Hades, each in turn showed that they clung to the idea of the persistence of the human soul after death. But, indeed, the notion that death ends all, though the assertion of some philosophers, and though supposed to be the teaching of science, has never at any period been the faith of the generality of mankind, and has never won the assent of the human heart in its inmost and truest convictions. Nor must it be overlooked that this universal belief in a future state is a clear testimony to the heart's longing for a continued existence beyond the grave, and to the heart's wish for some authentic tidings about that unknown land; and nothing surely can be less in need of demonstration, than that Jesus Christ answers man's inquiries about the future life with a clearness and fulness of information in comparison with which the teaching of all other religions, the Hebrew Scriptures not excepted, is as darkness.

LESSONS. 1. The pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, and of the Christian religion. 2. Gratitude for God's unspeakable Gift. 3. The duty of seeking in Christ satisfaction for the soul's true desires.

Ver. 8.—*The silver and the gold: a sermon on money.* I. A FORGOTTEN TRUTH RESTATED. That God is the sole Proprietor of money: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (cf. Joel iii. 5). The proof lies in three things; that the silver and the gold are: 1. *Of God's making.* They belong to him as part of that earth and its fulness which he hath created (Ps. xxiv. 1; 1. 12), as David acknowledged in his prayer, "All that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine;" and again, "Of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chron. xxix. 12, 14). 2. *Of God's giving.* God claimed that he had multiplied Judah's silver and gold (Hos. ii. 6); and David owned that "all things," including "riches and honour," were of him (1 Chron. xxix. 12). The same sentiment is involved in the words of the Baptist (John iii. 27), in those of Paul (1 Tim. vi. 17), and in those of James (i. 17). 3. *Of God's keeping.* As no man can obtain wealth from other than God, so with no help but his can man retain the wealth he has got. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watcheth in vain" (Ps. cxxvii. 1). Nor can any one keep it longer than God chooses. At any moment can he recall what he has given.

II. AN IMPORTANT INFERENCE DEDUCED. That no man is the owner of his money, but merely its selected steward, its casual recipient and temporary holder. What Benhadad of Syria said to Ahab of Israel, "Thy silver and thy gold is mine" (1 Kings xx. 3), expresses God's thought concerning millionaires and paupers alike; while the answer of Ahab, "My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have," exactly utters the response which every one possessed of silver and gold, whether much or little, should give to the Divine declaration. Few things are more difficult for men to realize than that that is not their own for which they have laboured, sometimes like galley-slaves, and not unfrequently sinned. The habitual attitude of men towards their silver and their gold is that of the rich farmer in the Gospels, "my fruits," "my barns," "my goods" (Luke xii. 17, 18). A recognition of man's stewardship in respect of silver and gold would secure three things of immense consequence, both for the religious life of the individual, and for the moral welfare of the world. 1. *A just estimate of money.* As one of God's gifts, it would be highly valued, but as only a gift it would never be regarded as a permanent endowment, or preferred above the Giver. 2. *A proper use of money.* As a trust it would be carefully kept, wisely used (Matt. xxv. 16), faithfully administered (1 Cor. iv. 2), and correctly accounted for (Luke xvi. 2). It would not be prodigally squandered (Luke xv. 13), or in miser fashion hoarded (Matt. xxv. 25), or selfishly expended (Hos. x. 1), but skilfully, lovingly, and unweariedly employed for the Master's glory. 3. *A right feeling with regard to money.* Neither inordinate desire after it (1 Tim. vi. 10), nor over-estimate of one's self on account of it (Hos. xii. 8), would arise in one's bosom; but feelings of contentment with what one has received (Phil. iv. 11; 1 Tim. vi. 6), and of gratitude that one has received any (Gen. xxxii. 10).

Ver. 9.—*The latter glory of "this house;" or, "the glory that excelleth."* I. THE HOUSE. 1. *The temple of Zerubbabel*, then building, which, however, was regarded as a continuation of and as one with the temple of Solomon (cf. ver. 3). 2. *The Christian Church*, which on a similar principle of interpretation was viewed as an outcome and development of the Hebrew temple (cf. John ii. 20, 21).

II. THE GLORY. Called by Haggai "the latter glory" of this house, in contradistinction to the earlier or former glory which belonged to it before the Captivity, this can only signify the glory which, in Messianic times, should pertain to the temple when it should have reached its ideal form in the Christian Church, whose "glory," in comparison with that of the Solomonic structure, should be a glory that excelleth. 1. *The glory of spiritual magnificence*, as opposed to that of merely material splendour. The temple of Solomon was, after all, but an "earthly house" of polished stone, carved cedar, and burnished gold; but the temple of Jesus Christ is a spiritual house, constructed of lively stones, or believing souls (1 Pet. ii. 5), "an holy temple" erected out of quickened and renewed hearts "for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph.

ii. 21). 2. *The glory of an indwelling Divinity*, in contrast with that of a merely symbolic residence therein. The ark with its mercy-seat overshadowed by the cherubim, between whose outstretched wings shone the visible glory or the Shechinah—this ark which occupied the holy of holies in the Solomonian temple, was not Jehovah, but only the material token of his presence. Though in the Christian Church there is, as in Zerubbabel's temple there was, no ark, yet the Divine presence fills it. Not only does Paul describe it as a temple which God inhabits (see above), but he represents it as the body of the glorified Christ, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. i. 23), and even speaks of individual believers as temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 9) and of the living God (2 Cor. vi. 16); while Christ expressly promises to his Church a perpetual indwelling in their midst, not collectively alone, but individually as well (Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20; John xiv. 17, 23; xv. 4; xvi. 7, 22). 3. *The glory of diffusing spiritual and eternal peace*, as distinguished from a peace which should be merely temporal and temporary. The Solomonian temple was indeed built by one whose name was Peace, whose reign was undisturbed by foreign or domestic wars, and whose spirit was neither military nor aggressive; but it is doubtful if the whole period during which the Solomonian temple stood could with truthfulness be characterized as one of peace (see the books of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles). Nor could it be asserted that the era of the temple of Zerubbabel was throughout peaceful. "Temporal peace they had now, nor was there any prospect of its being disturbed; . . . (but) in later times they had it not. The temple itself was profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes. . . . Again by Pompey, by Crassus, by the Parthians, before it was destroyed by Titus and the Romans" (Pusey). But the temple of Jesus Christ was the building of One who was by pre-eminence the Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6), who came to teach men the way of peace (Luke i. 79), who bequeathed to his disciples as his parting legacy his own peace (John xiv. 27), who died to make peace between God and man through his cross (Eph. ii. 14), and who has since come to men in and through his gospel, preaching peace (Acts x. 36), and by his Spirit shedding peace abroad in the hearts of them who believe (Rom. v. 1; viii. 6; xiv. 17; Gal. v. 22; Phil. iv. 7; Col. iii. 15).

III. THE LESSON. 1. *The certainty of God's Word*. What Haggai predicted has at length been fulfilled. So will all God's promises reach realization. 2. *The superiority of the gospel dispensation*. A dispensation not of letter and form, but of spirit and life; not of condemnation and death, but of justification and glory; not of temporal duration, but of eternal continuance. 3. *The perfectibility of the race*. Human history has hitherto progressed according to the law—"first that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual;" there is no reason to believe it will do otherwise in the future.

Vers. 10—19.—*The parable of the holy and the unclean*. I. THE LETTER OF THE PARABLE. Directed by Jehovah, Haggai proposes two questions to the priests. 1. *Concerning the law of communicated sanctity*. Supposing the case of a man carrying in the skirt of his garment holy flesh, i.e. flesh of animals slain in sacrifice, and with his skirt touching bread, pottage, wine, oil, or any meat, the prophet desires to be informed whether the holiness which according to the Law (Lev. vi. 27) was imparted to the skirt extended further so as to reach also anything with which the skirt might come in contact. To this the priests properly answer, "No." 2. *Concerning the law of legal defilement*. Stating a contrary case, that of a person defiled by having himself touched a dead body (Lev. xxi. 11; Numb. xix. 16), Haggai asks whether contact with such a person would render any of the above articles unclean, and is promptly answered that according to the Law it would (Numb. xix. 22).

II. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE. "So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord." 1. *Any sanctity possessed by the nation could not pass beyond themselves*. The sanctity which they possessed arose from the fact of their having an altar in Jerusalem, which had been built immediately on their return from Babylon, and of their maintaining in connection therewith the festal and sacrificial worship appointed by the Law of Moses (Ezra iii. 1—6). Yet this could not transmit itself to the soil so as to render it holy and cause it to become fruitful in corn and wine and oil, notwithstanding their disobedience in neglecting the building of the temple. On the other hand: 2. *Whatever defilement was on the nation would affect all that*

*belonged to the nation.* But the nation, through its disobedience in neglecting to build the temple, was defiled, since according to Jehovah "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. xv. 22). Hence their uncleanness rendered all about and around them unclean. In particular, it put the land beneath a curse which made its harvests scanty.

III. THE APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE. 1. *To the days before the building of the temple was resumed.* (1) In character those were days of scanty harvests and bad trade (ch. i. 6), of fruitless labours and disappointed expectations. Whereas the farmer might have anticipated from a heap of sheaves twenty measures of wheat, on threshing it out he found only ten; and the vine-dresser who hoped to draw off fifty vessels of wine from the pressing-trough, had to content himself with twenty (ver. 16). (2) The reason of all this was, though it never seemed to strike the people, that Jehovah had, in punishment for their disobedience, smitten the land with blasting and mildew and hail (ver. 17). 2. *To the days since the temple foundation was laid.* Not at the first (Ezra iii. 10), but then, under Haggai, in the four and twentieth day of the ninth month of the second year of Darius (Ezra v. 2; Zech. viii. 9). As yet there was, comparatively speaking, no seed in the barn, and only a small supply of vines, figs, pomegranates, and olives, since the preceding harvest had been bad, so that no evidence as yet appeared that, as regards their condition, any change for the better had begun, nevertheless they were confidently to anticipate that from that day forward Jehovah would bless them.

Learn: 1. The limitations of personal religion. 2. The greater contagion that belongs to sin. 3. The blindness of the human heart to Divine judgments. 4. The certainty that piety will be rewarded. 5. The ability of God to do beyond what reason warrants or sense expects.

Ver. 23.—*Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel.* I. THE SUBJECT OF A SPECIAL DIVINE CALLING. This alluded to in the words, "I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts." By this was meant, not merely that his birth in Babylon, preservation and growth to manhood, high esteem and favour among his countrymen and with Cyrus, as well as obvious natural abilities, had all come about in accordance with that general providence by which God appoints to all men the times of their coming into life and of their going out at death (Eccles. iii. 1, 2), the bounds of their habitation (Acts xvii. 26), and the particular circumstances of their lot (Ps. xvi. 6); but, in addition to this, that God had specially selected, endowed, and trained him for the office into which he had been thrust, that of leading the people forth from Babylon, and for the work he had now to do, that of laying the foundations, not of a second temple merely, but of a second empire. What Haggai wished to impress upon Zerubbabel was that the position he occupied at the head of the new community was one that had come to him, not by accident, but, as in the earlier cases of Abraham (Isa. xli. 2), Moses (Exod. iii. 10), and Cyrus (Isa. xlii. 28), by Divine appointment. One can imagine the inspiration a thought like that must have imparted to Zerubbabel, the stimulus it must have given to every good impulse of his heart, the elevation and dignity it must have lent to even the least significant action he performed. Similar inspiration, stimulus, and dignity might be enjoyed by all, were all to realize that "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Ps. xxxvii. 23), and that for each man's life there is a plan existing in the mind of God, into which each will be surely guided, if only he will meekly put himself into the hand of God (Ps. xxv. 9).

II. THE POSSESSOR OF A LOFTY FAITH. This distinction may be claimed for Zerubbabel, though not assigned a place in the magnificent picture-gallery of Heb. xi.; because it is difficult to see how Zerubbabel, being the man he was, a descendant of the royal line of David, and located where he was in the prosperous city of Babylon, and situated as he was in the manifest enjoyment of the Persian monarch's favour, would have acted as he did, had he not been possessed of faith. In comparison with those who remained behind in Babylon, but a handful set forth to seek the land of their fathers; and it is little probable that Zerubbabel would have cast in his lot with the pilgrims, had he not been persuaded that the movement was of God, that the journey upon which they were about to enter had been marked out for them by Heaven, and that the insignificant and feeble company itself was a true representative of Jehovah's Church upon the earth. That spirit, it may be added, which was present

in Zerubbabel, the spirit of faith, which can recognize the superiority of things spiritual and religious to things earthly and secular, that is not ashamed to espouse the cause of truth and righteousness on earth, however humble and obscure, because it is the truth of God, and that is always ready, when the voice of God cries within the soul, "Who will go for us?" to respond, "Here am I, Lord; send me!" lies at the basis of all true greatness in the soul.

III. AN EXAMPLE OF INDOMITABLE COURAGE. Few things rarer, even among Christians, than a fortitude that can brave all difficulties and defy all oppositions, especially in matters of religion. Yet is nothing more indispensable. Thousands of brilliant schemes, private as well as public, in Church as in state, have come to nothing for want of manly resolution to go on with them and carry them through. Had Zerubbabel been a craven, he never would have done so outwardly foolish a thing as join himself with a handful of pilgrims who proposed to quit their comfortable homes and prosperous estates in Babylon, and undertake a long and perilous journey to a promised land on the other side of the Syrian desert. Nor, had he been a weakling, would he have succeeded in carrying these pilgrims in safety to their destination. Traced out on a modern map, it seems not a far journey between Babylon and Jerusalem. Most likely Zerubbabel took the road that Abraham had travelled by when he departed from Ur of the Chaldees, moved northwards to Haran, rounded the head of the Syrian desert, and came down upon Palestine by Damascus. Yet to Abraham, with his comparatively small company, the feat must have been immensely easier than it could have been to Zerubbabel, with fifty thousand heads of families and nearly a quarter of a million souls in all to take charge of. But with the help of God and his own stout heart he did it. It was a feat only second to that of Moses, who brought their fathers out of Egypt, led them through the scorching and fiery wilderness, and set them down at the gate of Canaan. Nor again, unless Zerubbabel had been a hero who was not easily discouraged, could he have brought the temple to completion, working, as he did, with a company of builders who became alarmed at every menace uttered against them by the people of the land, and who threw down their tools on encountering the smallest resistance. So difficult was the task to keep them at their work, and so formidable were the obstacles he had to encounter, that Zechariah, a younger prophet than Haggai, likened the work he had to do to the levelling of a great mountain, encouraging him at the same time with the assurance that it would be levelled, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." And become a plain it did. Reinforced by a fresh company of builders who came up from Babylon under the leadership of Ezra, Zerubbabel and his band pushed on the work till it was finished, and the temple received its top-stone with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it" (Ezra vii. 6—8; Zech. iv. 7).

IV. AN ILLUSTRATION OF CONSPICUOUS PROMOTION. A great honour was conferred on Zerubbabel when chosen by Jehovah to be his servant, and as such appointed the leader of his people. A greater when assured that God would graciously assist him until the task assigned to him had been successfully carried through. The greatest when, in reward for his faithful service, it was promised that he and his would be sharers in the future Messianic glory reserved for Israel; for this is what the clause means, "I will make thee as a signet-ring, O Zerubbabel, my servant." It lends a remarkable interest to this verse of Haggai to be told that in recent excavations upon Temple Hill, a ring has been discovered with the name of Haggai inscribed upon it ('Recent Discoveries on the Temple Hill,' pp. 78—80). In the eyes of Orientals the finger-ring, or signet, was regarded as a valuable possession, to lose which was esteemed a dire calamity. To speak of one as a signet-ring was to assure him of tender regard and watchful preservation. Reversing the threat pronounced against Jeconiah, the last King of Judah, and the grandfather of Zerubbabel (Jer. xxii. 24), Jehovah promises that Zerubbabel shall be as a signet-ring upon his own finger, i.e. shall be indissolubly associated with himself and regarded with sincere affection; and this promise may be said to have been fulfilled, so far as Zerubbabel was concerned, in that he was henceforth inseparably linked with the history of God's people, and in fact constituted an ancestor of Messiah, who afterwards sprang from his line. But as the day when the promised distinction should be conferred on Zerubbabel was expressly specified as the day when the process begun by Jehovah of shaking the heavens and the earth should have been

brought to a completion, at which time Zerubbabel should have been long dead, it becomes obvious that the promise must be understood as having reached its highest fulfilment in Zerubbabel's distinguished descendant, who should then be made Jehovah's signet-ring, in reward for a greater work of emancipation and temple-building than had been performed by Zerubbabel. And in this reward all share who, whether before his coming or since, have been fellow-workers with him by serving the will of God in their day and generation.

LESSONS. 1. The value of great men to their own age and to the world at large. 2. The certainty of a Divine fore-ordination in ordinary life. 3. The impossibility of faithful work on earth losing its reward.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Returning despondency and renewed stimulus.* In these verses we have the third of the earnest addresses delivered by the devoted seer to these temple-builders. In the first (ch. i. 3—11) he reproved them for their neglect and stimulated them to the performance of their duty. In the second (ch. i. 13), in few words, a single pregnant sentence, indeed, he assured them of God's presence with them now that they had repented of their negligence and were prepared to consecrate themselves to the important enterprise. In this third address (vers. 1—9) he expatiated upon the glory of the second temple. The people had again become discouraged and depressed, despondent and downcast, and he sought to impel them to fresh endeavour by indicating the brightness and blessedness of the coming times. Consider—

I. THE CAUSES OF THEIR DESPONDENCY. This despondency *very soon* again took possession of them. They had been less than a month engaged in earnest endeavour to carry on the great work when they gave way once more. It was "on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month" that, stirred up by the word of God through the prophet, they devoted themselves afresh to the service of rearing the sanctuary for the Lord, and now on the twenty-first day of the seventh month their hands tired and their hearts grew faint. Why? 1. *The failure of their harvests.* This was brought conspicuously before them by the fact that "the Feast of Tabernacles" was now going on. This festival stood out amongst the Jews as "*the feast*," and is described by Jewish writers as "the holiest and greatest feast" of the nation. It served a double purpose, for whilst it commemorated the goodness of God as manifested to the fathers during their desert-wanderings, it also commemorated his goodness in the harvest just gathered in, and was therefore not only called "the Feast of Tabernacles," but likewise "the Feast of Ingathering." In prosperous times, during its celebration, the holy city wore quite a holiday aspect. It became converted into a vast camp for all the people, and, with a view to make more vivid to them the tent-life of their ancestors in the wilderness, they dwelt for the time being in booths, which they constructed of boughs of olive and palm, pine and myrtle; all the courses of the priests were employed in the religious exercises, bullocks were offered in sacrifice, the Law was read, the trumpets were sounded daily, and each who took part in the commemoration bore in the left hand a branch of citron, and in the right a palm branch entwined with willows and myrtle. When we remember how that on this occasion, in celebrating this feast, they would have, of necessity, to dispense with many of the usual accompaniments, and also that the blight had been upon their crops, and hence the ingathering had been only scanty (ch. i. 6), we need not be surprised at the depression from which they were suffering. 2. There was, however, another cause of their despondency, viz. *the unfavourable contrast presented as they compared the structure they were rearing with the first temple.* (Ver. 3.) There were old men among these returned exiles who had seen the temple of Solomon, and who, when the foundations of this second temple were laid, conscious that the new structure would be very inferior in character to the former building, gave way to demonstrations of grief (Ezra iii. 11—13). And it would seem that, as the work of reconstruction proceeded, these hoary-headed men continued to revert to the glories of the past, and instituted so many unfavourable comparisons between that age and the times as they were now, that the builders grew weary and faint-hearted in their work.

II. THE CONSIDERATIONS URGED BY THE PROPHET SO AS TO STRENGTHEN THEIR HAGGAI.



HEARTS AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO RENEWED CONSECRATION. Haggai was aged, yet, unlike his contemporaries, instead of dwelling despondingly upon the past, he looked on hopefully to the future. With prophetic insight he saw the golden age as lying, not in the days of yore, but in the coming time. His thoughts were centred upon Divine blessings to be bestowed richly and bountifully upon the true and faithful, and he sought to animate the drooping faith and hope of the workers by directing their minds to these. He reminded them of: 1. The abiding presence with them of the Lord of hosts, in fulfilment of the covenant made with their fathers (ver. 5). 2. The national upheavings which should take place, and which should be overruled to their good (vers. 6, 7). 3. The halo of glory which should eventually rest upon the shrine they were rearing (vers. 7, 9). 4. The Divine proprietorship of all material resources (ver. 8). 5. The deep and durable tranquillity which should be experienced as the result of the development of the Divine purposes (ver. 9). The sense of despondency is experienced still by those engaged in holy service, and the way to get roused out of this is by anticipating the brighter days that are in store, when rectitude shall mark every character, and truth be on every tongue; when holy virtue shall adorn every life; when the heavenly fruits of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance," shall everywhere abound, and the Lord of hosts shall have a home and dwelling-place in every heart.—S. D. H.

**Vers. 6—9.—The prophet's Messianic prophecy.** In studying the Old Testament, it is deeply interesting to trace therein the gradual development of the Messianic hope. Three distinct stages are observable. 1. From the promise made at the Fall (Gen. iii. 15) until the death of Moses. The indefinite promise respecting "the Seed of the woman" was made more definite in the promise to Abraham (Gen. xii. 3), and was revealed still more explicitly in "the Prophet" who was declared by Moses as at length to arise, and who should be Law-giver, Ruler, and Deliverer (Deut. xviii. 15). 2. During the reigns of David and Solomon, the idea of the Kingship of the Messiah was developed, and this Divine royalty was the theme of the Messianic psalms. 3. From Isaiah to Malachi we have a yet further unfolding, the Incarnation and Passion of the world's Redeemer being declared (see Liddon's Bampton Lectures on 'Our Lord's Divinity,' lect. ii.). The mission of Haggai had special reference to encouraging the temple-builders in their arduous toil; but the verses now before us (vers. 6—9) connect him with this development of the Messianic anticipation, since only in the light of the Christian age can the full significance of his teaching as contained here be realized.

**I. CONSIDER WHAT THIS PROPHECY PROBABLY SUGGESTED TO THE JEWS OF THIS SEER'S OWN TIME.** 1. Freedom from the yoke of servitude. These returned exiles were under the power of the Persian monarch; and they would understand their seer (vers. 6, 7) to mean that political agitations would soon occur among the nations, and which their God would overrule to the effecting of their enfranchisement. 2. The temple they were rearing to become enriched with material wealth. "And the desire of all nations shall come," etc. (vers. 7, 8). "*Chemdâh* signifies desire, then the object of desire, that in which a man finds pleasure and joy, valuables. *Chemdâth haggôyîm* is therefore the valuable possessions of the heathen, or, according to ver. 8, their gold and silver or their treasures and riches. The thought is the following: That shaking will be followed by this result, or produce this effect, that all the valuable possessions of the heathen will come to fill the temple with glory" (Keil and Delitzsch, on 'The Minor Prophets,' vol. ii. 193, 194). 3. A time of settled peace and prosperity (ver. 9). This restricted apprehension of the meaning underlying the prophet's words would cheer the hearts of the builders and impel them to renewed endeavour.

**II. CONSIDER THE PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THIS PROPHECY DURING THE LATER JEWISH AGE.** We know that the national convulsions hinted at in the prophecy did arise—that Persia was subdued by Greece; that Greece was shaken into fragments at the death of Alexander; and that the Eastern world became the prey of Rome; and we know also that whilst these conflicts were going on the Jews prospered, and material wealth flowed into their temple, the heathen, with the decay of their systems, coming and consecrating their possessions to the Lord of hosts. Nor were tokens wanting

of the partial fulfilment of the prophecy in its spiritual significance. "Rites and ceremonies retired more into the background; and prayer began to assume its true place in public worship. The religious knowledge of the people was kept up through the regular public reading and distribution of the Scriptures, which were early collected into their present canonical form. Synagogues were established, the people having learnt at Babylon that God's presence might be enjoyed in their assemblies in any place or circumstances. Thus there was kept alive throughout the nation a higher and purer type of religion than it had known in the days when the first temple with its outward splendour and gorgeous ritual excited the admiration of the people, but too seldom led their thoughts to the contemplation of the truths it expressed and prefigured" (McCundy; see Lange's 'Commentary on Haggai,' p. 19).

III. CONSIDER THE COMPLETE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECY IN THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION. The prophecy is Messianic. Underneath its letter there lies a deep spiritual meaning. The prophet saw, afar off, the day of Christ, and testified beforehand of the latter-day glory of the Lord and his Christ. We see its full accomplishment: 1. In the shaking of the nations by the power of the Divine Spirit. 2. The consecration by the good of all their gifts and endowments to the service of the Lord. 3. The realized spiritual presence of God in Christ with his Church, and which constitutes her true glory. 4. The inward rest and tranquillity all his people shall experience as his bestowment.—S. D. H.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The real presence.* In contrasting the house the builders were now raising for God with the first temple, many a reference was doubtless made by the "ancient men" to "the ark of the covenant" and "the Shechinah," which had been the visible symbols of the Divine presence. What, after all, they would urge, could this new structure be without these precious tokens of the Lord, as being with them in all his majesty and might? Haggai therefore most appropriately laid great emphasis upon the glorious fact that they had with them the spiritual presence of the Lord Most High, who would remain with them, and would faithfully fulfil to them every covenant engagement made with their sires (vers. 4, 5).

I. THE GLORIOUS FACT OF THE REAL PRESENCE OF THE LORD WITH HIS CHURCH. 1. This truth is constantly declared in the oracles of God. 2. It was brought home to the Israelites in the olden times by means of symbolical representations. 3. It was impressed upon these returned captives by the raising up of faithful men to declare the Divine will, and to stimulate them to renewed devotion. 4. It is made manifest to us in the Incarnation of God in Christ. Not only will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth, but he has even taken man's nature into union with his own. He has come to us, affecting us not only with the glory of his majesty, but revealing to us his very heart, and unveiling to us the intensity of his infinite love.

II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THIS GREAT TRUTH SHOULD EXERT UPON HIS SERVANTS. 1. It should be to them in times of depression the source of strong consolation. "Be strong" (ver. 4); i.e. "Be comforted." 2. It should take from them all craven fear, inspiring them with holy courage: "Fear ye not" (ver. 5). 3. It should impel them to renewed consecrated endeavour: "and work" (ver. 4).—S. D. H.

Ver. 7.—*God's temple filled with glory.* "And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts."

I. VIEW THIS DIVINE PROMISE AS FULFILLED IN THE ADVENT OF CHRIST TO THIS PARTICULAR SANCTUARY FOR GOD. 1. Thither the Child Jesus was taken in his infancy by Joseph and Mary, that they might present him before the Lord. So far as material splendour was concerned, no trace of it was to be seen in this introduction of the Child Jesus to that house. The rich were required to bring a lamb as an offering when they came to present their children thus, but Joseph and Mary were too poor to bring so costly an offering, and hence they brought the humbler gift the Law required. But whilst earthly glory was lacking on this occasion, a higher glory was expressed. See those distinguished servants of God! And as you behold old age gazing with holy joy upon that helpless Babe, regarding him as the Deliverer of Israel, as in imagination you witness the one, Simeon, taking that infant form into his arms, exclaiming

"Lord, now testest," etc. (Luke ii. 29), and as you behold the other, Anna, "giving thanks to God, and speaking of the Redeemer to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 38), do you not see the promise realized, "I will fill," etc. (ver. 7)? 2. When he attained the age of twelve years, we find him again in that temple, sitting as a learner, hearing those who gave instruction there, and asking them questions. We can form no idea as to the nature of the questions he proposed to the masters in Israel; but when we think of those teachers as being confounded by the questions and answers of that Galilean Youth, when we remember how that all who heard him were astonished at his understanding, and when we reflect upon the Divine light and knowledge which was then communicated, we see how that on the day when the sorrowing parents were searching diligently for their lost Son, God was fulfilling the promise made ages before to his people, "I will fill," etc. (ver. 7; Luke ii. 42—51). 3. Whenever he entered that temple it became filled with the glory of the Lord. This was so, no matter whether he approached it for the purpose of performing some of his mighty works, or to give utterance to his wondrous words, or to drive from the shrine those who were desecrating it and causing it to become a den of thieves. Never did he enter it without imparting to it a glory such as was unknown to the temple of Solomon. That temple in all its glory could not bear comparison with this second, when this latter house was favoured with the visits and the holy influence of the Christ of God; and it was not until they who ought to have rejoiced in the light he imparted and in the halo his presence shed had rejected and crucified him that the glory departed from this temple as from the former one, and that irreparable ruin was brought upon the house which had been repeatedly filled with the glory of the Lord.

II. VIEW THIS DIVINE PROMISE AS HAVING ITS APPLICATION TO EVERY SANCTUARY IN WHICH GOD IS WORSHIPPED IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH. Every such structure is as much God's temple as the Jewish temple ever was. The Christian worshipper may adopt, in reference to the sanctuary to which it is his happiness to repair, such utterances as Ps. lxxxiv. 1; lxxv. 1, 2; cxxii. 1, 2; and he can apply to these modern sanctuaries the grand old promise of his God, "And I will fill," etc. (ver. 7). There is but one essential in order that any sanctuary may be filled with glory, *even the presence of Christ*, not the visible, but the spiritual, presence of the Divine Redeemer. Let this be wanting, and it is immaterial how magnificent may be the structure reared or how imposing the outward form. Vestments may be worn, the whole assembly may assume a reverential aspect, the music may be of the most attractive character, the pulpit may be occupied by one who may charm and captivate by his eloquence; yet if the presence of Christ is not realized, the house will not be lighted up with the true glory; whereas much of this may be wanting, but if Christ's presence is realized, glory shall fill the place. What a contrast there was between this temple and the upper chamber in which the chosen disciples were assembled, waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of their risen Lord! And yet, on the second sabbath after the Ascension, a glory filled that upper chamber such as was unknown to the Jewish temple, simply because he who had been driven from the temple, and who, during his appearances there, had been invariably rejected by its worshippers, was a welcome Guest in that upper room. His presence was fully realized there, and hence the place was filled with the Divine glory, and was rendered "the very gate of heaven." The spiritual presence of the Divine Redeemer thus constitutes the true consecration of any building reared for Christian worship and teaching; this is what is needed in order that any sanctuary in our own day may be filled with God's own glory. Then, clothed with true sincerity of spirit, partaking of his love, his purity, his spirituality, his consecration, walking as he walked, honestly, uprightly, consistently, and so fulfilling the conditions upon which his manifestation depends, may we feel him near, as in the sanctuary, dear to us by hallowed associations, we engage in acts of worship; near us the Imparter of a Divine life, the Inspirer of all our songs, our prayers, our words, our toils; the Bestower of large blessings upon us and upon all who come within the range of our influence. "Now therefore arise, O Lord God," etc. (2 Chron. vi. 41).—S. D. H.

Ver. 8.—*The consecration of wealth.* "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts."

I. THE DIVINE RIGHT TO EVERYTHING WE POSSESS. God is our Sovereign, and as

such he exercises dominion over us, and disposes of us as it seemeth him good. This sovereignty is exercised by him in strict accordance with the principles of wisdom, rectitude, and goodness. This Divine right has reference, not only to ourselves, but extends also to all that we possess. "All things come of him;" we are but stewards of his bounty. The recognition of this fact contributes to a man's real welfare. If a man views his possessions as being his own, he is in danger of that love of money which is the root of all evil. Hence it is with a view to man's spiritual preservation, as well as with a due regard to the benefit of the race and the progress of his cause, that God insists upon his right, saying, "The silver is mine," etc. (ver. 8).

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RECOGNITION OF THIS DIVINE RIGHT ON THE PART OF MAN, AND THE CONSECRATION OF HIS SUBSTANCE TO THE SERVICE OF GOD. 1. *Neglect of this involves loss.* The young ruler an example (Matt. xix. 16—22). "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." He kept his wealth, but at a terrible sacrifice, for he forfeited intercourse with Christ, the joys of the Christly life, and the unfading treasures with which the Saviour was prepared to enrich him.

"For mark the change! Thus saith the Lord,  
'Come, part with earth for heaven to-day.'  
The youth, astonished at the word,  
In silent sadness went his way."

2. *Regard to this ensures gain.* Cornelius an example (Acts x. 1, 2). He viewed property as a trust. He rendered unto God his due. His prayers and his alms "came up for a memorial before God." And the result was that God blessed him, granting unto him the ministry of angels, guiding him into truth by his servant, imparting to him the consciousness of his love, and filling him with the graces of his Spirit. Let us readily render unto God his just claim in reference to the possessions of earth (1) when help is required in order to the maintenance of his worship; (2) when the cry of distress, occasioned not by improvidence, but by unavoidable adverse influences, rises into our ears; (3) when fresh openings for doing the work of God both at home and abroad are found, and call for increased liberality that they may be embraced, let God's voice be heard in these, intimating that he has need of those resources which have come to us as his gifts, and let us cheerfully give to him of his own. For who has such right to what we possess of this world's goods as he whose free gifts these are, and who in the bestowment of them has blessed the work of our hands?—S. D. H.

Ver. 9.—*The peace of God.* "And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Various theories have been propounded concerning how temporal peace and prosperity may be secured to a people. One will tell you that everything turns upon which political party happens to be in power; a second will cry, "Free Trade;" a third will respond, "Protection;" a fourth will dilate upon "the reform of the land laws;" a fifth will enlarge upon the importance of the maintenance of our military prestige, affirming that peace is best guaranteed by being prepared for war; but we may rest assured that the foundations of national peace and prosperity lie deeper far, and are laid in rectitude and righteousness. True peace, and, as a consequence, lasting prosperity, come to a people only in a secondary sense through their rulers and legislators, and men of mark in the various departments: they come primarily through the people themselves. In proportion as they become God-fearing and Christ-like, submissive to the Divine authority and guided by the principles of God's Word, will he bless them and make them prosperous and happy. But there is a higher form of peace than that which is denominated temporal, and to that more exalted blessing the Divine promise contained in this text referred. Temporal peace was now being enjoyed by the returned from exile. They dwelt in quietude, although the subjects of a foreign power. But the Lord of hosts promised them spiritual peace, and assured them that, in association with the sanctuary they were raising to his honour, they should experience inward tranquillity and rest. "In this place will I give peace," etc. (ver. 9).

I. GOD FULFILLS HIS GRACIOUS PROMISE TO HIS SERVANTS AS THEY GATHER AT HIS SANCTUARY BURDENED WITH A SENSE OF SIN. In our daily life we are continually contracting fresh sins. We stray from God's ways, undesignedly we err from his precepts, and as the result are rendered restless and disquieted. And coming thus to his house,

as we bow in worship, and as we listen to the story of redeeming love, we become humbled in spirit and filled with penitence, and we find peace in Christ. He who controlled the winds and the waves controls also the passions and tumults of the wilder human spirit as he says in gracious tones, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

II. GOD FULFILLS HIS GRACIOUS PROMISE TO HIS SERVANTS AS THEY GATHER AT HIS SANCTUARY OPPRESSED WITH A SENSE OF SORROW. In every congregation assembled for worship there are to be found sorrowing hearts. "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness," and we little know how many and varied are the trials being experienced by those who form our fellow-worshippers; and as such in their deep need, and oppressed with griefs they could not disclose to others, turn to him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, they feel themselves divinely soothed and succoured, and realize the fulfilment of the ancient promise, "And in this place," etc. (ver. 9).

III. GOD FULFILLS THIS GRACIOUS PROMISE TO HIS SERVANTS AS THEY GATHER AT HIS SANCTUARY HARASSED THROUGH A SENSE OF MISGIVING AND MISTRUST. Doubts arise within the mind, problems are presented concerning God's truth and his providence that baffle and perplex, and as it was with Asaph in the olden time, so has it been with many since—they have found light cast upon the hidden way as they have come to the sanctuary of God (Ps. lxxiii. 16, 17). And so at all times and under all our experiences he can breathe over us the peace that calms the troubled soul and makes the weary heart at rest.—S. D. H.

Vers. 10—19.—*The past and the future.* Two months had now elapsed since, stimulated by the prophet's glowing words, the temple-builders had resumed their labours (comp. ver. 1 with ver. 10). These months were of great importance with reference to agricultural interests, being the usual season for sowing the seed and planting the vines. That at such a time they should manifest so much zest in the work of rebuilding the temple proved how thoroughly in earnest they were; and this earnestness is the more evident as we remember that the previous harvests having failed, the people must at this time have been in very straitened circumstances. It is not surprising if, whilst engaged in these combined operations, renewed depression took possession of their hearts, and if in sadness they asked themselves what they would do if the next harvest should likewise fail. The address of Haggai recorded in these verses (10—19) was designed either to anticipate or to meet such gloomy apprehensions; and we have only to bear this design in mind, and the meaning of his words, otherwise somewhat ambiguous, becomes very clear.

I. THE CAUSE OF PAST ADVERSITY. 1. He traced this to their own moral defection. The method he adopted was peculiar—it was by means of parables that he sought to make vivid to them their past sinfulness, and which had caused their sorrow. (1) The first parable and its application. He referred them to the priests, bidding them ask whether, if a man carries holy flesh in the lappet of his garment (*i.e.* flesh of animals slain as sacrifices), and he happened to touch any food with the lappet, the food thus touched would become consecrated. The priests, in accordance with the ceremonial Law (Lev. vi. 27), answered, "No" (vers. 11, 12), contending that the lappet of the dress was made holy, but that it was not said in the Law that it could communicate this holiness. So, the prophet implied (ver. 14), was it with his nation. God had chosen their land to set his Name there. His worship had been established in their midst, they had been constituted a favoured people, and their land had been consecrated through this association with the Lord. This, however, did not affect that which had been planted in the soil; the earth was not bound to yield an abundant increase by virtue of these sacred associations. It was only by their being faithful to their high calling, diligently cultivating the soil, and looking up to Heaven for the blessing, that temporal prosperity could be enjoyed, and the lack of this spirit had been the cause of all their sorrow. (2) The second parable and its application. The appeal was again made to the priests, to know whether, if one who had been defiled by contact with a dead body happened to touch anything, the thing thus touched would be unclean. The priests unhesitatingly replied that it would, the declarations of the ceremonial Law upon this point being very explicit (Numb. xix.). So the prophet affirmed that his people, neglecting the claims of Jehovah, had rendered themselves morally unclean, and the blight had consequently rested upon the works of their hands (ver. 14). Their adversity was traceable to their

and defection from holy duty and devotedness to the Lord their God. 2. He intimated that because of this defection God had visited them in judgment. He had in chastisement smitten them with blasting and mildew and hail, rendering their labour so abortive that their sheaves had yielded but a scanty return (vers. 15—17). 3. He recorded the fact that, despite these judgments, they had persisted in their neglect of duty. "Yet ye turned not unto me, saith the Lord" (ver. 17). The prophet's strong faithful speech indicates that there had been amongst these returned captives much of indifference, coldness, and deadness in reference to the work of God, and it was only right that they should be reminded of this, and that by the painful memory of past failure they should be stimulated to more thorough and entire consecration in the future, and to which we may be sure the devoted seer gladly turned. The past is irrevocable and irretrievable. No tears, no regrets, can win it back to us.

**"Thou unrelenting Past!**

Strong are the barriers of thy dark domain;  
All things, yea, even man's life on earth,  
Slide to thy dim dominions and are bound."

The future, however, is available, and hence, leaving the past, with all our shortcomings in relation to it, and rejoicing in God's mercy and in the strength he is so ready to impart, let us "go and sin no more."

II. THE ASSURANCE OF FUTURE PROSPERITY. (Ver. 19.) Their action had now completely changed. They fully recognized God's claims; instead of seeking their own personal and selfish ends, they now consecrated themselves heart and soul to the work of God, striving in every way to advance his glory. The temple rose, and "they finished it according to the commandment," etc. (Ezra vi. 14). And their attitude towards God and his work being thus changed, his attitude towards them became likewise changed. They must still for a while experience the effects of their past neglect in that time must elapse before rich fruitfulness should appear where formerly there had been dearth and barrenness, but they might rest assured of the returning favour of the Lord; yea, from that moment this joy should be theirs. "From this day will I bless you" (ver. 19). So is it in our life, that whilst the cherubim with the flaming sword sternly guard the door of the past, so that there is no possibility of our return (Gen. iii. 24), there is also the angel of the Lord opening up the path before us through the wilderness, and prepared to guide us, if we will, to the brighter Eden that lies beyond (Exod. xxiii. 21, 22).—S. D. H.

Vers. 20—23.—*The final message.* We gather from this last recorded message of this prophet, and addressed to Zerubbabel—

I. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF JUDGING RESPECTING THE FUTURE FROM PRESENT APPEARANCES. The seer referred to coming commotions and upheavings in national life (vers. 21, 22); but at the time he gave utterance to these intimations all was peace and tranquillity. Rawlinson refers to the Persian empire as spreading over two millions of square miles, or more than half of modern Europe, and this vast power was at this time unassailed. In the opening vision of Zechariah, having reference to this time, the representation made was, "Behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest" (Zech. i. 11). We cannot forecast the future; we know not what a day may bring forth.

II. THE RECOGNITION OF GOD IN THE OVERTHROW OF NATIONS. Repeatedly in vers. 21, 22, the Most High refers to his own action in the convulsions and revolutions to take place. "I will shake," etc. Whilst civil broils and contentions and military conflicts contribute to the effecting of such desolation, these are but agents unconsciously fulfilling the Divine behests. "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth;" "He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings and setteth up kings" (Dan. ii. 21); "This is the finger of God."

III. THE SECURITY AMIDST ALL THESE CHANGES OF SUCH AS ARE TRULY CONSECRATED TO THE SERVICE OF THE LORD. (Ver. 23.) The signet-ring was a precious token. It was worn by the Eastern prince on one of the fingers of his right hand, and was prized by him above all things. The symbol, as used here, suggests that Zerubbabel the prince, who had so faithfully fulfilled his trust, should be loved and cared

for by God; that the Lord would cherish him even as the signet-ring was cherished by its owner. Zerubbabel is regarded by some as a symbolical character, as typical of Christ, the Prince of Peace, who was to come; and such regard this assurance addressed to him as having its application to the Messiah, and as setting forth the Divine Father's delight in him. The emblem may be still further extended in its application. All true and loyal hearts are cared for by him as his chosen ones, and he will preserve them unto his everlasting kingdom.—S. D. H.

Vers. 1—5.—*God's message to his people by Haggai.* "In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people," etc. Here is the second Divine message addressed by Haggai to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the residue of the people. Observe: 1. The Divine message often comes from *one* man to *many*. It now came by Haggai. 2. *All temples* but the temple of nature are to be built by man himself. God could have studded the world with temples; but he has honoured human nature by leaving it to men to do. 3. Any *postponement* of duty is opposed to the will of God. All duty requires the utmost promptitude. The Jews were now dallying with duty. The subject of these verses is—*God requires human labour purely for religious objects*. We have to labour for many things—for material subsistence, for intellectual culture and scientific information, but *in all* for a religion. True labour in every form should be religious. Whatsoever we do in word or deed, we should do all to the glory of God. Three thoughts are here suggested in relation to this subject—

I. THAT THIS LABOUR SHOULD BE STIMULATED BY THE VIEW OF RELIGIOUS DECADENCE. The temple, once the glory of the country, was now in ruins, etc. "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now?" Into what a low state has genuine religion sunk in our country! It is cold, formal, worldly, conventional.

II. THAT THIS LABOUR SHOULD BE PERFORMED BY THE MOST VIGOROUS EXERTION. "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, . . . be strong, O Joshua, . . . be strong, all ye people of the land." All the powers of our nature should be concentrated in this work, the work of resuscitation. Why? 1. Because it is *right*, and therefore you may throw your conscience into it. 2. Because it is *worthy* of all your faculties. Call out and honour all the faculties of your nature. 3. Because it is *urgent*. The highest interests of your countrymen and your race depend upon it.

III. THIS LABOUR SHOULD ENLIST THE CO-OPERATION OF ALL. All are called upon here to work. The men in office, and the people. All should unite in this work. It concerns all—young and old, rich and poor. The energies of all should be enlisted in this grand work of religious revival.

IV. THIS LABOUR HAS A GUARANTEE OF DIVINE ASSISTANCE. "For I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts," etc. Those who are engaged in this work are labourers together with God. He is with them, inspiring, directing, encouraging, energizing. Christ says to his disciples, "Lo, I am *with you alway, even unto the end of the world*."—D. T.

Vers. 6—9.—*The moral progress of the world.* "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land," etc. Humanity is undoubtedly progressing in certain directions—in secular information, in scientific discoveries, in useful and ornamental arts, in the extension of commerce, in the principles of legislation. But whether it is progressing in moral excellence is undoubtedly questionable, and yet there is no real progress without this. The real progress of man is the progress of moral goodness. Three thoughts are suggested by the passage in relation to this moral progress.

I. IT REQUIRES GREAT SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS AMONGST MANKIND. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." Perhaps the primary reference here is to the changes which were to be effected in the Jewish system and commonwealth, preparatory to the Christian dispensation. Judaism was, as we know, shaken to its

centre by the appearance of Christ. Revolutions in society seem to me essential to the moral progress of the race. There must be revolutions in theories and practices in relation to governments, markets, temples, Churches. How much there is to be shaken in the heaven and earth of Christendom before the cause of true moral progress can advance! May we not hope that all the revolutions that are constantly occurring in governments and nations are only the removal of obstructions in the moral march of humanity? In the clash of arms, in the fall of kingdoms, one ought to hear the words, "Prepare ye the way," etc.

II. IT INVOLVES THE SATISFACTION OF THE MORAL CRAVINGS OF MANKIND. "The desire of all nations shall come." Whether this refers to Christ or not has been questioned. Still, philosophy and history show that he meets all the moral longing of humanity. The moral craving of humanity is satisfied in Christ, and in Christ only.

1. *Man's deep desire is reconciliation to his Creator.* 2. *Man's deep desire is to have inner harmony of soul.* Christ effects this. 3. *To have brotherly unity with the race.* Moral socialism is what all nations crave for. Christ gives this. He breaks down the middle wall of partition. He unites all men together by uniting all men to God.

III. IT ENSURES THE HIGHEST MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD TO MANKIND. "I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord." 1. *God will be recognized as the universal Proprietor.* "Silver is mine, and gold is mine," etc. In the good time coming, men will feel that all is God's, not theirs. They will act as trustees, not as proprietors. God will be all in all. 2. *God will be recognized as the universal Peace-giver.* "I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."—D. T.

Vers. 10—14.—*Human duty.* "In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Thus said the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the Law," etc. "On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of the same year, that is to say, exactly three months after the congregation had resumed the building of the temple (ch. i. 15), and about two months after the second prophecy (ch. ii. 1), a new word of the Lord was uttered through Haggai to the people. [This is the prophet's third address, extending over vers. 10—19.] It was now time, since the despondency which had laid hold of the people a few weeks after the recommencement of the building had been dispelled by the consolatory promises in vers. 6—9, and the work was vigorously pursued, to confirm the people in the fidelity which they had manifested, by bestowing upon them the blessing which had been withdrawn. To this end Haggai received the commission to make it perfectly clear to the people that the curse, which had rested upon them since the building of the temple had been neglected, had been nothing but a punishment for their indolence in not pushing forward the work of the Lord; and and that from that time forth the Lord would bestow his blessing upon them again" (Delitzsch). The passage suggests two facts.

I. THAT THE QUESTION OF HUMAN DUTY IS TO BE DECIDED BY AN APPEAL TO DIVINE AUTHORITY. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the Law." The question, of course, implies two things. 1. That there is a *Divine written law for the regulation of human conduct.* Though the Law here refers to ceremonial institutes which were contained in the Levitical code, there is also a divinely written law of a far higher significance—that moral law which rises out of man's relations, and is binding upon man as man, here and everywhere, now and for ever. 2. *That there are divinely appointed interpreters of this law.* "Ask now the priests." Under the old economy there were men appointed and qualified by God to expound the Law to the people; and in every age there are men endowed with that high moral genius which gives them an insight into the eternal principles of moral obligation. They descry those principles, not only in the words of God, but in his works; they have that ethical and spiritual "unction from the Holy One," by which they know all things pertaining to duty. Thus, then, the question of duty is to be decided. It cannot be decided by the customs of the age, the enactments of governments, or the decrees of Churches. "To the Law and to the testimony." The will of God is the standard of moral obligation.

II. THAT THE DISCHARGE OF DUTY REQUIRES THE SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE. It was the duty of the Jews now to rebuild the temple; but that duty they discharged not



by merely bringing the stones and timbers together and placing them in architectural order. It required further the spirit of consecration. The prophet sought to impress this upon the mind of his fellow-countrymen engaged in this work by propounding two questions referring to points in the ceremonial law. The first had reference to the communication of the holiness of holy objects to other objects brought into contact with them. "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy?" In other words, whether, if a person carry holy flesh in a lapet of his garment, and touched any food with the lapet, it should become holy in consequence? The priests said, "No;" and rightly. Mere ceremonial holiness cannot impart virtue to our actions in daily life; cannot render our efforts in the service of God acceptable to him. Ritualism without righteousness is morally worthless. The second question was this: "If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean?" The priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean." "The sum," says an old writer, "of these two rules is that pollution is more easily communicated than sanctification; that is, there are many ways of vice, but only one of virtue, and a difficult one. *Bonum oritur ex integris; malum ex quolibet defectu*, 'Good implies perfection; evil commences with the slightest defect.' Let not men think that living among good people will recommend them to God, if they are not good themselves; but let them fear that touching the unclean thing will defile them, and therefore let them keep at a distance from it."

CONCLUSION. Mark: 1. *The transcendent importance of the spirit of obedience.* What are ceremonial observances, and what are all intellectual or bodily efforts, in connection with religion, apart from the spirit of obedience? Nothing, and worse. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice;" "What have I to do with the multitude of thine oblations," etc.? 2. *That man can more easily communicate evil to another than good.* As a legally unclean person could impart his uncleanness to anything, and a legally holy person could not impart his sanctity to anything, so it is suggested that evil is more easily communicated by man to man than good. This is a sad truth, and proved by universal observation and experience. Briars will grow without cultivation, but not roses. A man can give his fever to another easier than he can give his health.—D. T.

Vers. 15—19.—*Man's temporalities.* "And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord," etc. The subject of these verses is *man's temporalities*; or, in other words, his earthly circumstances, his secular condition. And the passage suggests three ideas in relation to this subject.

I. THAT MAN'S TEMPORALITIES ARE AT THE ABSOLUTE DISPOSAL OF GOD. Here the Almighty is represented as at one time, namely, the period during their neglect of rebuilding the temple, withholding from the Jewish people temporal prosperity. But after they had commenced the work in earnest, the stream of prosperity would begin to flow. Here are the words: "Before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord: since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the press-fat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty." "It was I that gave you only ten instead of twenty measures, only twenty instead of fifty vessels in the vat. It was I that smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail." So it ever is. Man's temporal circumstances are at the disposal of God. Out of the earth cometh all man's temporal good; but he can make the earth barren or fruitful as he pleases. He can bind it with frosts, inundate it with floods, or scorch it with heat. Man, cease to pride thyself in thy temporal prosperity!

II. THAT GOD SOMETIMES REGULATES THE TEMPORALITIES OF MAN ACCORDING TO MAN'S MORAL CHARACTER. The Almighty here tells the Jewish people that in consequence of their neglect of his command to rebuild the temple, temporal distress would befall them. He smote them with "blasting" and with "mildew" and with "hail" in all the "labours of their hands." But as soon as they commenced in earnest he said, "From this day will I bless you." The fact that God sometimes and not always regulates man's temporalities according to his moral obedience or disobedience suggests: 1. *That the cultivation of a high moral character is important to man even*

as a citizen of this earth. "Godliness is profitable to all things." 2. *That even this occasional expression of God's regard for moral conduct is sufficient to justify the belief in the doctrine of a future and universal retribution.* Antecedently, we should infer that, under the government of an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-just God, man's secular circumstances would be according to his moral worth. It would have been so, had man not fallen, no doubt. It is sometimes so now, as in the case before us. It will be universally so one day—the great day that awaits humanity.

III. *THAT THESE FACTS OUR MIGHTY MAKER REQUIRES US PROFOUNDLY TO STUDY.* "Now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward." This call to consider the facts is thrice repeated. Consider why the adversity came upon you in the first case, and why the blessing is promised in the second case. It was, in one case, because you neglected your moral duty, and in the second because you began to discharge it. Why should these facts be studied? 1. That we may have a practical consciousness that God is in the world. In all the elements of nature, in all the seasons of the year, in all the varying temperatures and moods of nature, we see God in all things. "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." 2. That we may have a practical consciousness that God recognizes moral distinctions in human society. Good and evil are not alike to him. The good he sees, he approves; the evil he beholds, he loathes. 3. That we may have a practical consciousness that *retribution is at work in the Divine government.*—D. T.

Vers. 20—23.—*Terrible revolutions.* "And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, Governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms," etc. This is the fourth address. These verses remind us—

I. *THAT THE REVOLUTIONS AMONGST MANKIND ARE SOMETIMES VERY TERRIBLE.* Here we read of the "shaking of the heavens and the earth," the "crash of thrones," the "destruction of kingdoms," the "overthrow of chariots," etc. What the *particular* revolutions referred to here are cannot be determined. Alas! we know well enough that such terrible catastrophes have been too common in every age and land. During the last forty years what tremendous revolutions have occurred in Europe and in America! The political heavens and earth have been shaken to their very centre, and even now the political world throughout Christendom is heaving with earthquakes and thundering with volcanoes. Such revolutions imply the existence and prevalence of two antagonistic moral principles in the world—*good and evil*. These are the Titanic chieftains in all the battles, the elemental forces in all the convulsions of the world. It is truth against error, right against wrong, liberty against thralldom, virtue against vice.

II. *THAT GOD HAS TO DO EVEN WITH THE MOST TERRIBLE OF THESE REVOLUTIONS.* "I will shake the heavens, . . . I will overthrow the throne," etc. "I will destroy the strength," etc. Inasmuch: 1. *As God is eternally against the false and the wrong and the tyrannic, he may be said to be the Author of these revolutions.* 2. *As he can prevent them, he may be said to be the Author of these revolutions.* He does not originate them, but he permits them. He could annihilate all wicked doers by a volition; he allows them to fight themselves often to death in battling against the right and the true. Hence God permits and controls all human revolutions. This should inspire us with confidence in the most terrible scenes. "The Lord sitteth upon the flood." He sits in serene majesty, controlling all the fury of the battling forces. He "holds the winds in his fist."

III. *THAT THE GOOD MAN IS SAFE IN THE MOST TREMENDOUS REVOLUTIONS OF TIME.* "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts" (ver. 23). What is here said of Zerubbabel suggests three thoughts. 1. *That good men sustain the highest office.* Zerubbabel was not only a servant, but a "chosen servant." He was selected for the work of rebuilding the temple. The highest honour for moral intelligence is to be the appointed servant of Jehovah. 2. *That good men will receive the highest distinction.* "I will make thee as a signet." A signet indicates: (1) Worth. It was a ring with a seal on it, worn

on the finger, as an ornament of great value. Good men are elsewhere represented as God's jewels. (2) Authority. The signet of an Eastern monarch was a sign of delegated authority. A good man is invested with the highest authority—the authority to fight against wrong and to promote right, at all times and in every place. 3. *That good men will always be safely kept.* Jehovah says this to Zerubbabel. Amidst all evil, "God is my Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble."  
—D. T

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