

THE  
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

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Z E C H A R I A H.

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Homilies by Various Authors.  
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# THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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### § I. SUBJECT OF THE BOOK.

THE prophecy of Zechariah (at least that contained in the first eight chapters) continues and supplements that of his contemporary Haggai. These two prophets were raised up and inspired to animate the flagging energies of the Jews, who, on their return from Babylon (B.C. 536), had begun to rebuild the temple, but were soon disheartened, and at length, owing to opposition of neighbours and adverse circumstances, ceased altogether from the work. Now after sixteen years' intermission, encouraged by the accession of Darius Hystaspes, who looked with favourable eyes on their undertaking, the Jews had an opportunity of resuming their operations. Almost simultaneously with Haggai, Zechariah comes forth to enforce the same lesson, urging them to restore the house of the Lord, and inspiring them with hopes of a glorious future. The rest of the prophecies, if they belong to the same age and author, without special mention of the return from the Captivity, reach to far distant time; they are supposed to speak of the preservation of the temple under Alexander the Great, of the victories of the Maccabees; they certainly speak of the rejection of Christ; they speak of the repentance of the Jews for this rejection, and the final conversion of them and of the Gentiles.

The temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius (B.C. 515); and the latter part of Zechariah's prophecies may have been spoken after that event, and possibly many years subsequent.

The book consists of three parts. The first, after a brief prelude, describes certain visions revealed to the prophet, and ends with a symbolical action typifying the completion and glory of the new temple. The second part comprises an answer to certain questions about the observance of fasts, and a comfortable assurance of the future happiness of Jerusalem. In the final portion the prophet foretells the struggle of God's people against the powers of the world, and Messiah's victory, and announces the

conversion of Israel, the destruction of the enemies of the theocracy, and the final exaltation of God's kingdom.

The following is a brief analysis of the book, considered as one harmonious whole, applying to the condition of the chosen people, their dangers and errors, their connection with the powers of the world, God's purposes towards them, and the future that awaits the Church. The first part, consisting of ch. i.—vi., commences with an introduction, giving the title, date, and author's name, followed by a warning from the past and a call to repentance and renewed energy. Then the prophet describes eight visions which came to him on the same night, descriptive of events near at hand and far distant, the interpretation of which is imparted by an angel. In the first vision (ch. i. 7—17) the prophet sees, in a myrtle grove, a rider upon a red horse with attendants. These announce that the whole earth is quiet as yet, unshaken by the storm that is to fall upon it; but God assures the angel that the temple shall be completed, the cities of Judah restored, and Zion comforted. To confirm and explain this promise a second vision is granted (ch. i. 18—21). Four horns, symbols of hostile powers, are destroyed by four craftsmen ("carpenters," Authorized Version). All impediments being thus removed, the various steps to the restoration of the theocracy are revealed. The prophet is shown, in the third vision (ch. ii. 1—13), a man with a measuring-line, who is checked in marking out the ground-plan of Jerusalem by an intimation that the city of the future shall be too large to be compassed by any wall, so abundant will be its population, but that God himself will be her defence and her glory. At this prospect, and at the thought of the affiliation of many heathen nations, Zion is bidden to exult. But the restoration of the material temple would be of no avail without a holy priesthood to minister therein; so the fourth vision (ch. iii. 1—10) exhibits Joshua the high priest engaged in some official duty clad in filthy garments, not in the spotless garb required. But he is pardoned and purified, invested with robes of honour, and reinstalled in his office; and he is promised the Divine protection, and receives an announcement of the advent of Messiah, "The Branch," of whom his office is typical. The spiritual support of the theocracy is next displayed by the vision (the fifth) of the golden candlestick of the holy place (ch. iv. 1—14), which is fed by two olive trees, representing the agencies which convey God's grace to the Church. Zerubbabel is taught to rely upon this, for by it he shall bring his work to completion. The people and the land are now to be sanctified; accordingly, the sixth vision (ch. v. 1—4) represents a huge roll, on which is inscribed the curse against the evil, flying rapidly through the air in token of the speed with which its mission shall be executed. God thus reveals his wrath against sinners in the land. Similarly, in the seventh vision (ch. v. 5—11), the unclean thing, represented by a woman, is caught and confined in an ephah, pressed down by a sheet of lead, and transported out of the Holy Land unto Babylon, the proper home of all that is wicked. The final vision, the

eighth (ch. vi. 1—8), discloses four chariots issuing from between two brazen mountains, which are sent as the messengers of God's wrath in the four quarters of the world, till his judgments are satisfied. The destruction of the enemies of God's people is the inauguration of Messiah's kingdom; what glory is reserved for the future temple and who should be the priest to build it up, is set forth by a symbolical action (ch. vi. 9—15). The prophet is directed to take the silver and gold, which some Jews had just brought from Babylon as offerings for the temple, and of them to make crowns, which he was first to place on the head of Joshua, the high priest, the type of Messiah, in whom were united the offices of king and priest, and then to hang them up for a memorial in the temple.

The second part (ch. vii., viii.) is shorter and simpler than the preceding. It is after a silence of two years that the prophet now speaks. A deputation comes to the temple to ask whether the fasts instituted in memory of the calamities of Jerusalem are still to be observed. Zechariah, as chief of the prophets as well as priest, is commissioned to answer. He teaches them that God loves justice and mercy better than outward observances; that they had not listened to previous warnings, and that their hearts were hard even while they fasted. Obedience, he tells them, is the only warrant for blessing from God; and to urge them to this he draws a glowing picture of the prosperity of restored Jerusalem, in whose happiness the once alien nations shall share, esteeming it an honour to be associated with an Israelite.

The interpretation of the rest of the book depends largely upon the view taken of its unity and integrity. If we regard ch. ix.—xi. and ch. xii.—xiv. as written by the same Zechariah as the first part (which seems to me to be the most reasonable hypothesis), the following is the most acceptable explanation of them.

The temple rebuilt and its worship restored, after, it may be, the lapse of many years, Zechariah is inspired to utter the prophecies which compose the third part of his work (ch. ix.—xiv.). He has two "burdens" to deliver, contained respectively in ch. ix.—xi. and xii.—xiv. At the time when these last prophecies were uttered the Jews needed encouragement. Things had not prospered as they hoped; they were still in a depressed condition, vassals of a foreign lord, endangered by the proximity of bitter enemies. The heathen had not come flocking to Jerusalem, eager to embrace the Jewish religion; the temple was not enriched by the gifts of distant nations; their country suffered much from the passage of alien armies which traversed their territory. They had no king; the family of David had fallen into utter insignificance, and their political degradation seemed complete. Now the prophet is commissioned to raise their spirits by a series of fresh communications. And first he gives them hopes of renewed prosperity by foretelling the chastisement of those nations which held territory originally granted to the Israelites—Syria, Philistia, Phœnicia, and over which David and Solomon had actually ruled. So he opens

with announcing the judgment on these nations in the neighbourhood, and the preservation of Judæa amid the coming calamities (ch. ix. 1—8). Then shall come to Zion, in meek and lowly fashion, her King, no lordly warrior, but a peaceful Prince, who shall cause the weapons of war to perish, unite in one the divided people, restore the captives, give fertility to the land, and found one universal kingdom (ch. ix. 9—17). Such happy results can be expected only from the God of Israel, not from the idols and teraphim to which once they had recourse. It was for such sins that they had evil rulers set over them; but these shall be removed, and the theocracy shall be established on a firm and lasting foundation, victory and happiness shall be theirs, and the scattered tribes shall be gathered from every part of the world, and serve the Lord in their own chosen land (ch. x.). But there is another side to the picture. They shall not receive this Prince, this Shepherd, when he comes; and punishment falls upon them, first in the north and then in the lowlands and the south. The prophet is bidden to personate Jehovah's Shepherd, and he relates what he himself did in carrying out his commission, the treatment which he received, and how he threw up the office in disgust. The section ends with the prediction of the calamitous rule of "a foolish shepherd," who shall himself be in turn destroyed. The second "burden" is concerned with events chiefly future, but all connected with Israel and the theocracy. The prophet sees Jerusalem surrounded with enemies, but saved by the intervention of Jehovah, who strengthens the people to fight valiantly. This great deliverance shall be followed by a national repentance, which shall be deep and full, resulting in the abolition of the very memory of idols and false prophets, and a general purification (ch. xii. 1—xiii. 6). Recurring to the statement of the rejection of the Shepherd, the prophet shows the result of this sin—the Shepherd smitten, the sheep are scattered, and a remnant only is saved through much tribulation (ch. xiii. 7—9). Then Jerusalem is introduced vanquished, plundered, desolate, when suddenly the Lord comes to her rescue; mighty convulsions of nature accompany his appearance; he raises the holy city to the highest splendour; the enemies perish in terrible fashion; all that are left of the nations shall come hither to worship, and everything henceforward shall be "holiness to the Lord" (ch. xiv.).

"Through the ages, ever since the Christ took his seat on the throne, 'crowned with glory and with honour,' his prediction has been and is being fulfilled. In degree as the kingdom extends and its influence is felt, the curse is lifted from the race, and 'holiness to the Lord' becomes inscribed on those who have been in arms against him, enemies by a mind in evil works. The end is not yet; we see not yet all things put under him. But we see the kingdom advancing, and in due time the mystery of God shall be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets (Rev. x. 7)—that mystery which is also 'the mystery of Christ,' that the Gentiles (*τὰ ἔθνη*, those outside the Israel of God) are fellow-heirs (with Israel) and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel

(Eph. iii. 3—6). This mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but is manifested now in this latter time, it was given to Zechariah as to other prophets of the former dispensation to make known" (Alexander 'Zechariah's Visions,' pp. 334, 335).

## § II. AUTHOR AND DATE.

The name *Zechariah* was not uncommon among the Jews; more than twenty bore it in the Old Testament. It is interpreted, "The Lord remembers." The prophet calls himself (ch. i. 1) "the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo," which words the LXX. translates, *Ζαχαρίαν τὸν τοῦ Βαραχίου, υἱὸν Ἀδδῶ τὸν προφήτην*, as if he was son of Barachias and Iddo, one his natural father, the other his by adoption. But the English Version is doubtless correct in calling him "son of Berechiah," who was son of Iddo. The only objection to this genealogy is that he is termed in Ezra v. 1 and vi. 14, "the son of Iddo;" but the word "son" is used loosely for "grandson," as Laban in Gen. xxix. 5 is called "son" of Nahor, and in Gen. xxxi. 28 Laban calls Jacob's children his "sons." Probably Barachias died young, and Iddo, being more celebrated, and being the immediate predecessor of his grandson, was alone mentioned in the historical books. Iddo was one of the priests who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Neh. xii. 4). Zechariah, therefore, was one of the family of Aaron, and exercised his sacerdotal office in the days of Joiakim, the son of Jeshua (Neh. xii. 12, 16). But he acted as prophet before this, if we can reason on the term "young man" possibly applied to him in ch. ii. 4 (comp. Jer. i. 6). He must have been born in Chaldea, as he commenced his prophetic office eight years after the return, some two months later than his elder contemporary, Haggai, both of these seers having the same object in view—the encouragement of the people in the interrupted work of rebuilding the temple. Jewish tradition makes him a member of the great synagogue, and to have had some share in providing for the liturgical services of the temple. As has been noted in the Introduction to Haggai (§ II.), these two prophets are credited with the production of some eight of the psalms, the contents of which are quite consistent with their supposed authorship. The latest note of time in the prophecy is the fourth year of Darius (ch. vii. 1); but it is with reason conjectured that Zechariah lived to see the temple finished two years later (see Ezra vi. 14, 15). Tradition makes him arrive at extreme old age, dying in Judæa, and being buried in a tomb near to the last resting-place of his fellow-seer Haggai, in the neighbourhood of Eleutheropolis. The sepulchral monument called after him on Mount Olivet is of much later date. Many early writers identified our prophet with the "Zacharias son of Barachias" slain, as our Lord says (Matt. xxiii. 35), "between the sanctuary and the altar." But it is most improbable that the Jews should have committed such a crime at that time, when they had just hearkened to the prophet's voice and done his bidding; there is no

hint of any such ending to Zechariah's career in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, or Malachi, nor is any tendency to such a national crime imputed to his contemporaries. And it is now well recognized that the name Barachias in the text of the Gospel is an interpolation or alteration, and that the incident mentioned has nothing to do with our prophet, but concerns the son of Jehoiada, whose murder is recorded in 2 Chron. xxiv. 20—22.

The first prophecy of Zechariah being uttered in the second year of Darius, and his third in the fourth, the period of the active exercise of his office extended from B.C. 520 to B.C. 518. The headship in the college of priests became his subsequent to this last date, probably on the death of Iddo, his grandfather. It is well pointed out by Dean Perowne ('Dict. of Bible,' iii. 1821, etc.) how important for the due discharge of his special duty was Zechariah's priestly origin. In the history of Israel "too often the prophet had had to stand forth in direct antagonism to the priest." When the latter was a mere formalist, and ignorant of the inner meaning of the holy things which he handled, the former had to recall men's minds to the truth enshrined in the outward ritual. At this time there was danger of apathetic neglect of religion, that the soul and the expression of it would fade entirely away. "At such a time, no more fitting instrument could be found to rouse the people, whose heart had grown cold, than one who united to the authority of the prophet the zeal and the traditions of a sacerdotal family."

Concerning the genuineness of the first eight chapters of the Book of Zechariah, no question has ever been raised. It is quite different with regard to the remainder, the authorship of which has been the subject of dispute since the days of Joseph Mede until the present, and is still undecided. Mede was led to dispute the unity of the book by the fact that in Matt. xxvii. 9 the well-known passage concerning the thirty pieces of silver in ch. xi. 12, 13 is attributed to Jeremiah. Acting on this hint, Mede and his followers found what they considered ample grounds for considering these six last chapters to belong to pre-exilic times, "disputing," as Calmet dryly remarks, "several chapters of Zechariah in order to restore a verse to Jeremiah." Various explanations of the statement in St. Matthew have been offered, e.g. that the name "Jeremiah" is an interpolation, or a clerical error, or that the evangelist quoted from memory, or that the Book of Jeremiah being placed first gave its name to the writings of the other prophets. Any one of these answers would be sufficient to overthrow the argument that is built on this quotation. It cannot be denied that the opposition to the opinion of the unity of our book is of quite modern growth. It was absolutely unknown to antiquity. Neither Jew nor Christian ever disputed the genuineness of these six chapters till some two hundred years ago. It must be remembered that the sacred canon was fixed soon after Zechariah's death, when the question of authorship could most easily have been settled, and there is no proof whatever that

the book was not then such as it has reached our hands, and such as all the versions make it to be. The care exhibited in assigning the other prophetic works to their rightful authors, even in the case of the brief prophecy of Obadiah, would surely not be wanting in the case of this long and important oracle. The uniform consensus of antiquity can only be overborne by most cogent arguments. If, indeed, later critics were of one mind on the subject; if, induced by weighty considerations, supported by the new appliances of modern scholarship and fresh discoveries, they were unanimous in affixing a definite date or author to the disputed chapters, there would be, perhaps, sufficient reason to subvert the traditional opinion. But unanimity is remarkably wanting in the theories that have been published. While some affirm merely that the six last chapters are not written by the author of the first eight, others assert that this portion of the book is the work of two authors living at different periods. Many later critics assign ch. ix.—xi. to an anonymous prophet who lived in pre-exilian times, and ch. xii.—xiv. to another Zechariah who flourished just before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The diversity of date assigned to these supposed authors is wide indeed. Dr. Pusey, in his edition of the 'Minor Prophets,' gives (p. 511, etc.) a curious "Table of dates which in this century have been assigned to Zech. ix.—xiv." By this it appears that the evidence which satisfies one critic that Zechariah wrote in Uzziah's reign (B.C. 770), convinces another that he lived some four hundred and fifty years later—about B.C. 330. The internal evidence which produces such astonishing results must be very uncertain in itself, or be manipulated and interpreted in the loosest manner. The arguments on both sides of the question have been discussed at great length, and will be found set forth in order in the 'Dictionary of the Bible,' and in the works of Dr. Pusey, Dr. Wright, and many others, and succinctly in Archdeacon Perowne's useful edition of 'The Prophet Zechariah.' We add here a brief view of the matter, the objections against the unity of the book and the answers to these objections following one another.

The objections may be classed under two heads, viz.: A, differences in style in the two parts of the book; and, B, historical and chronological references which are inconsistent with the traditional view of the authorship.

*A. Differences in style.* That there is a marked difference between the style of ch. i.—vii. and the other parts is evident. 1. The first is prosaic, unimaginative, cold; the second is fervid, poetical, lofty, mysterious. But this variety is accounted for by the change of subject. The description of certain visions which really occurred to the writer required a plain, unvarnished narrative, in which flights of imagination and oratorical effects would have been unsuitable. The grand prophecies which follow, uttered probably many years later, and which bear a great similarity to the later Jewish apocalyptic literature, allowed a different treatment. The writer's



individuality might here appear; he might bestow care on the form and diction of his communications, and make his language equal his theme. The prophetic inspiration came, it may be, slowly and gradually, giving him time to elaborate the scenes presented and to paint them with the hues of imagination. Many men write both prose and poetry, and it would often be very difficult to decide from internal considerations that these compositions were the work of the same author. It must also be observed that the passage ch. ii. 10—13 rises into poetry, while ch. xi. 4, etc., sinks to ordinary prose. 2. Special phrases and idioms which occur in one part are not found in the other. Thus the introductory formulæ, "The word of the Lord came" (ch. i. 7; iv. 8; vi. 9, etc.), "Thus saith the Lord of hosts" (which occurs very frequently), "I lifted up mine eyes, and saw" (ch. i. 18; ii. 1; v. 1; vi. 1), are never found in the second part; while the phrase, "in that day," which is very common in the latter (e.g. ch. ix. 16; xi. 11; xii. 3, 4, etc.), is entirely absent from the former. Now, Hosea uses introductory formulæ in the first five chapters of his book, but none in the last nine; yet no one disputes the integrity of that work. How little dependence can be placed on such variations may be seen by an examination of three of Milton's poems by Professor Stanley Leathes, quoted by Dr. Pusey, p. 505, note 9, by which it appears that in 'L'Allegro' there are 325 words not in 'Il Penseroso,' and 315 not in 'Lycidas,' and that in 'Il Penseroso' there are nearly 440 words not in 'Lycidas.' Some of the formulæ mentioned are not needed in the second part, and their absence proves nothing. On the other hand, there are certain rare expressions common to both portions. Thus: "None passed through nor returned" (ch. vii. 14 and ix. 8); "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come" (ch. ii. 10 and ix. 9). There is a peculiar use of the word "eye" in ch. iii. 9; iv. 10; and ch. ix. 1, 8. The appellations, "Judah and Israel," "Ephraim and Joseph," are applied to the theocracy (ch. i. 12; ii. 2, 12; viii. 15; and ix. 13; x. 6; xi. 14, etc.). In both divisions the destruction of the enemies of Israel is predicted (ch. i. 14, 15; vi. 8; and ix. 1—6; xii. 2, etc.; xiv. 14); Messiah is celebrated and highly exalted (ch. iii. 8; vi. 12; and ix. 9, 10); the tribes are invited to return (ch. ii. 6, 7 and ix. 11, 12); the nations shall be converted and join themselves to Israel (ch. ii. 11; vi. 15; viii. 22; and xiv. 16, 17); holiness shall be found pre-eminently in the restored community (ch. iii. 2, etc.; v. 1, etc.; and xiii. 1, etc.; xiv. 20, 21). We may compare also the promises of abundance, peace, and happiness, in ch. i. 16, 17; ii. 2, 12; iii. 2; viii. 3—5, with those in ch. ix. 8, etc.; xii. 2, etc.; xiii. 1; xiv. 8, etc.; and of the return of the tribes and their consolation in ch. viii. 8, 9 and x. 6, 10 (Knabenbauer). 3. The mention of the prophet's own name or the names of his contemporaries (ch. i. 1, 7; iii. 1; iv. 6; vi. 10, 14; vii. 1, 2, 8); the notes of time (ch. i. 1, 7; vii. 1); the introduction of Satan (ch. iii. 1, 2). All these things, found in the first part, are absent in the second. Naturally so. The earlier section deals directly with contemporary persons and events, the

later contains dark prophecies of the future, the date and place of whose delivery were of no practical importance. The course of his predictions did not lead the prophet to speak of Satan in the second part, and the omission of all mention of the evil spirit is equally a feature in the books of other prophets. 4. The absence of visions and the change of figures and imagery entirely separate the second from the former part. But really the answer already given to objection 1 applies equally to this criticism. The changes observed are no more than such as might reasonably be expected from the differing subjects. In the one case the prophet had to narrate visions, and to give practical warnings and exhortations; in the other he was carried away into the distant future, rapt in anticipations of coming glory. What wonder is it that the form of his utterances was altered, and tropes and figures hitherto unused were introduced? We may add, too, that Amos has visions in one part of his book, and in the other only denunciations, and that the first part of our book comprises two chapters in which there are no visions; yet no one has disputed the integrity of the prophecy of Amos, or doubted that the author of ch. i.—vi. of Zechariah and vii., viii., was one and the same. But there is another positive argument for the integrity of the book (which also helps to decide its date) that must not be neglected, and this is the apparent use made in both parts of the earlier and post-exilic prophets. In his opening address, and afterwards, Zechariah refers to "the former prophets" (ch. i. 4—6 and vii. 7, 12), and commentators have gathered numerous such allusions. Thus the mention of the vine and fig tree (ch. iii. 10) seems to come from Micah iv. 4; the remarkable prediction that when the king came to Zion chariots and horses should be cut off from Jerusalem (ch. ix. 10), is also renewed from Micah (v. 10); the exhortation to "flee from the land of the north" (ch. ii. 6, Authorized Version) is founded on that of Isaiah (xlviii. 20), "Flee ye from the Chaldeans;" the words, "Every one that is left of all the nations shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (ch. xiv. 16), are a remembrance of Isa. lxvi. 23, "From one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord" (comp. Isa. lx. 6—9); the words (ch. xiii. 9), "I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God," are almost verbally from Hos. ii. 23; the use of the title of the Messiah, "The Branch" (ch. iii. 8; vi. 12), is in accordance with Isa. iv. 2 and Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15; the loosing of the exiles from the pit, and the rendering of double unto them (ch. ix. 11, 12), are found in Isa. li. 14 and lxi. 7; ch. ix. 5, in which is announced the desolation of Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron, is taken from Zeph. ii. 4; the language (ch. x. 3) concerning "the shepherds" and the "goats" is borrowed from Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 17; from Ezek. xxxiv. comes the whole allegory of ch. xi.; from Ezek. v. 2, 12 is derived the warning (ch. xiii. 8, 9) that two parts of the people shall be cut off, while a third is left in the land; the prophecy of the four chariots (ch. vi.) would be unintelligible without the

visions in Dan. ii., vii.; the expression, "the pride of Jordan" (ch. xi. 3), is taken from Jer. xii. 5; xlix. 19. We need not multiply instances further. If these examples are worth anything, and are themselves genuine, they are sufficient to show that the author makes ample use of the prophets that were before him, and likewise, in the second part, quoted largely from post-exilic writers, thus determining, one would infer, his own date.

B. The second head of objections is concerned with *historical and chronological references*. Critics, as we said above, have divided ch. ix.—xiv. among two writers, sometimes assigning ch. ix.—xi. to one, a contemporary of Amos and Isaiah; and the remainder to another, whose date is more uncertain, but at any rate was pre-exilic. Another theory, which places the author in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, needs no refutation in the face of the only consistent exegesis. The point of the former objection is that the whole part is thought to show indubitable proof that it was written before the Captivity. 1. The kingdom of the ten tribes is supposed to be still standing (ch. ix. 10, 13; x. 6, 7, 10; xi. 14); the prophecy against Damascus, etc. (ch. ix. 1—7), would have been meaningless if the peoples therein denounced had already lost their national existence and suffered punishment for their sins against the Hebrews. But this prophecy may be regarded as especially applicable to the Persian period, and the territory named is that which Persian armies would traverse in their march southwards; it belonged according to promise to the Israelites, and the fate announced for its inhabitants was intended as an assurance to the returned Jews that God watched over them still, and would in the end punish those who usurped their privileges. Nothing can be inferred from the use of the terms "Ephraim," "Judah," and "Israel," for they are employed indiscriminately to express the whole people in or after the Captivity (comp. Jer. xxx. 3, 4; xxxi. 6, 27, 31; xxxiii. 14; Ezek. xxxvii. 16; Ezra i. 3; iii. 1; iv. 1, 3, 4; vii. 13, 14). 2. Idolatry is still practised (ch. x. 2), which was not the case after the return. But it is very probable that the prophet in this passage is referring to past transgressions; nothing is said of idolatry being a sin of his days; though a warning against superstitious practices connected with teraphim and divination may have been needed then, as indeed it might be now in the case of some of the inhabitants of Palestine. 3. The mention of Assyria instead of Babylon in ch. x. 10 shows that the prophecy was composed when Assyria was still a flourishing kingdom. In answer it may be said that the country is referred to whither the tribes had been deported, and where doubtless they had suffered much cruelty at the hands of the Assyrians, though these were now a conquered people. The name "Assyria," too, is used in a loose way for Babylon and Persia in Ezra vi. 22; Judith i. 7; ii. 1 (comp. 1 Esdras ii. 30 and vii. 15). 4. The state of things described in ch. xi. 2, 3, 6, 8, belongs to the period of anarchy after the death of Jeroboam II. (2 Kings xv. 8—16). The description, however, would equally well suit any invasion which occasioned widespread ruin and destruction, and might be applied to the Roman or

any other attack; and whatever explanation we give of the cutting off of the "three shepherds," nothing compels us to see in it the violent deaths of Shallum, Zechariah, and a third (?) Menahem—a suggestion which Dr. Pusey calls "even absurd." So it is affirmed that the statements in ch. xiii. 9 and xiv. 2 apply to times before the Captivity; whereas it is plain that the prophet is here speaking of the future, not of the past. To touch briefly on the positive side of the question, we may say that there are details and passages and allusions which could have been written only after the exile. Zechariah mentions governors; he never hints that there was any king in Judæa at the time when he writes; Judah and Israel had been in exile, and some of them still remained in the land of their captivity (ch. ix. 11, 12; x. 6—10); the Jewish nation, Judah and Ephraim, shall wage successful war against "Javan," the Greek rulers of Syria (ch. ix. 13); for the jealousy between the two divisions of the chosen people is ended, and they form one nation, dwelling in Judah and Jerusalem. This could never have been said of pre-exilian times.

Many other alleged proofs of pre-exilian authorship are capable of easy solution, as will be seen by examining their treatment in the Exposition. Suffice it here to say that, while adhering to the traditionary view of the unity and integrity of the book, we lay no great stress on the consideration that Zechariah is the author of the whole; and as long as it is allowed that the writer was gifted with predictive powers, and exercised his prophetic office under the inspiration of God, we deem it a matter of secondary importance whether the words that pass under his name are assigned to one, two, or three authors. It is conjectured that these last chapters had been placed at the end of the minor prophets before Malachi was added to the canon, and thus became appended to Zechariah without further examination. While generally adopting the traditional theory in the Exposition, we have not been unmindful of modern criticism, and, where practicable, have introduced the interpretation which other views of the author's date have constrained some commentators to maintain.

### § III. GENERAL CHARACTER.

Regarding the Book of Zechariah in its integrity, we meet with great diversity of style, in accordance, as we have seen above, with the varying subject-matter. Visions that came before the prophet's own eyes are narrated in simple prose; in uttering prophecy he rises to a higher level, employing figures and symbols such as Jeremiah and Daniel used, but also showing an originality which gives a peculiar character to his work. The grandest and most powerful passages are found in ch. ix.—xi. These are as fine as any in Hebrew poetry. But in other places the prophet is often harsh, inharmonious; emphasizes by repetition; passes from one point to another abruptly, without connecting link. His parallelisms want the neatness and harmony which are found in earlier writings; his

language is tolerably pure and free from Chaldaisms. Many causes have combined to render his oracles difficult of comprehension, so that Jerome speaks of Zechariah as the longest and most obscure of all the twelve prophets. But it must be observed that many of the difficulties found in his work have been imported by commentators themselves. Jewish expositors have refused to acknowledge in his pages a humbled and suffering Messiah; and modern critics, coming to the study with prejudiced notions concerning the prophet's office, have endeavoured to discover sanction for their views in the text, and naturally find the task an arduous one. Scholarship without faith is of little use in interpreting dark places of Scripture.

#### § IV. LITERATURE.

The special commentaries on the Prophet Zechariah are very numerous. We select a few out of many that are noteworthy. Among the Jews we have David Kimchi's 'Commentary,' translated by A. McCaul (London, 1837), and other commentaries by Rashi (1713) and Aben Ezra. Of Christian and modern commentators we may mention the following: Grynæus (Geneva, 1581); Ursinus (Frankfort, 1652); W. Pemble, 'Exposition' (London, 1629); Nemethus, 'Proph. Zech. Explic.' (Ultr., 1714); Venema, 'Serm. Acad.' (Leovard., 1787); Blayney, 'A New Translation' (Oxford, 1797); Koester, 'Meletemata' (1818); Stonard (London, 1824); Baumgarten, 'Nachgesichte Zach.' (Braunschweig, 1854, 1855); Moore, 'Prophets of the Restoration' (New York, 1856); Neumann, 'Die Weissag. d. Sakh.' (Stuttgart, 1860); Kliefoth, 'Der Pr. Sach. übers.' (Schwerin, 1862); Köhler, 'Die Nachexil. Proph.' (Erlangen, 1860, 1865); Von Ortenberg, 'Die Bestundtheile d. Buch. Sach.' (Gotha, 1859); Pressel, 'Comm. zu Hag., etc.' (Gotha, 1870); Dr. C. H. H. Wright, 'Zech. and his Prophecies' (London, 1879); W. H. Lowe, 'Hebr. Student's Comm. on Zech.' (London, 1882); Dr. W. L. Alexander, 'Zechariah, his Visions and Warnings' (London, 1885); Archdeacon Perowne, in 'Cambridge Bible for Schools' (1886).

Besides the above-named commentators, there are numerous writers who have discussed the question of the integrity of the book, a list of the chief of whom will be found in the 'Dictionary of the Bible,' and a further selection in the Introduction to Dr. Wright's work.

#### § V. ARRANGEMENT IN SECTIONS.

The book consists of three parts.

Part I. (Ch. i.—vi.) A series of eight visions, and a symbolical action.

§ 1. (Ch. i. 1.) Title and author.

§ 2. (Ch. i. 2—6.) The prophet admonishes the people not to follow their forefathers' evil example, but to turn to the Lord with all their heart.

§ 3. (Ch. i. 7—17.) The first vision: the horsemen in the myrtle grove.

§ 4. (Ch. i. 18—21.) The second vision: the four horns and the four craftsmen.

§ 5. (Ch. ii. 1—13.) The third vision: the man with the measuring-line.

§ 6. (Ch. iii. 1—10.) The fourth vision: Joshua the high priest before the angel.

§ 7. (Ch. iv. 1—14.) The fifth vision: the golden candlestick.

§ 8. (Ch. v. 1—4.) The sixth vision: the flying roll.

§ 9. (Ch. v. 5—11.) The seventh vision: the woman in the ephah.

§ 10. (Ch. vi. 1—8.) The eighth vision: the four chariots.

§ 11. (Ch. vi. 9—15.) A symbolical action—the crowning of the high priest.

Part II. (Ch. vii., viii.) Answer to a question concerning the observance of certain fasts.

§ 1. (Ch. vii. 1—3.) A deputation comes from Bethel to ask whether a fast instituted in calamitous times was still to be maintained.

- § 2. (Ch. vii. 4—7.) In answer they are told that fasting is in itself an indifferent thing, but is to be judged by the conduct of those who observe it.
- § 3. (Ch. vii. 8—14.) They are further reminded that they had been disobedient in old time, and had been punished by exile.
- § 4. (Ch. viii. 1—8.) The Lord promises to show his love for Zion, to dwell among his people, and to fill Jerusalem with a happy populace.
- § 5. (Ch. viii. 9—17.) The people are exhorted to be of good cheer, for God will henceforth give them his blessing, which, however, was conditional on their obedience.
- § 6. (Ch. viii. 18—23.) The fasts should be turned into joyful festivals, former calamities being forgotten; the heathen should worship the God of Israel, and esteem it an honour to be received into fellowship with the Jewish nation.
- Part III. (Ch. ix.—xiv.) The future of the powers of the world and of the kingdom of God.
- A. (Ch. ix.—xi.) The first burden.
- § 1. (Ch. ix. 1—8.) To prepare the land for Israel, and to prove God's care for his people, the neighbouring heathen shall be destroyed, while Israel shall dwell in safety and independence.
- § 2. (Ch. ix. 9, 10.) Then shall the righteous King come to Zion in lowly fashion, and inaugurate a kingdom of peace.
- § 3. (Ch. ix. 11—17.) All Israel united into one people shall wage successful war with adversaries, and attain to glory, and increase largely in numbers.
- § 4. (Ch. x. 1, 2.) These blessings are to be asked from the Lord, not from idols or teraphim.
- § 5. (Ch. x. 3, 4.) The evil rulers set over them for their sins shall be removed, and Israel shall be firmly established.
- § 6. (Ch. x. 5—7.) Israel and Judah together shall triumph over their foes.
- § 7. (Ch. x. 8—12.) The scattered people shall be gathered from all parts of the world, and dwell in their own land, under the protection of Jehovah.
- § 8. (Ch. xi. 1—3.) The Holy Land is threatened with judgment.
- § 9. (Ch. xi. 4—14.) The punishment falls because the people reject the good Shepherd, personified by the prophet, who rules the flock and punishes evil-doers in vain, and at last flings up his office in indignation at their contumacy.
- § 10. (Ch. xi. 15—17.) In retribution the people are given over to a foolish shepherd, who shall destroy them, but shall himself, in turn, perish miserably.
- B. (Ch. xii.—xiv.) The second burden.
- § 1. (Ch. xii. 1—9.) Hostile nations gather together against Jerusalem, but shall themselves be overthrown; for the inhabitants and their leaders, trusting in the Lord, will overcome all opposition.
- § 2. (Ch. xii. 10—14.) There shall ensue an outpouring of God's Spirit, which shall produce a great national repentance.
- § 3. (Ch. xiii. 1—6.) This repentance will lead to purification from past defilement, and a reaction against idolatry and false prophets.
- § 4. (Ch. xiii. 7—9.) For the smiting of the good Shepherd Israel is punished, passes through much tribulation, by which it is refined, and in the end (though but a remnant) is saved.
- § 5. (Ch. xiv. 1, 2.) Jerusalem is represented as taken and plundered.
- § 6. (Ch. xiv. 3—7.) Then the Lord himself comes to her help, great convulsions of nature accompanying his presence.
- § 7. (Ch. xiv. 8—11.) The land shall be transformed and renewed, and the Lord shall be owned as the sole King of all the earth.
- § 8. (Ch. xiv. 12—15.) Further details concerning the destruction of the enemies: they shall perish by plague, by mutual slaughter, by the sword of Judah.
- § 9. (Ch. xiv. 16—19.) The heathen shall be converted and join with the Hebrews in the regular worship of Jehovah.
- § 10. (Ch. xiv. 20, 21.) Then everything alike shall be holy, and the ungodly shall be wholly excluded from the house of the Lord.

# THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—ch. vi. 15.—Part I. A SERIES OF EIGHT VISIONS, AND A SYMBOLICAL ACTION.

Ver. 1.—§ 1. *Title of the book, and author.* **The eighth month.** This was called Bul before the Captivity (1 Kings vi. 38), and afterwards Marchesvan (Josephus, 'Ant.,' i. 3. 3); it answered to parts of October and November, and was a time of rain. Haggai had first prophesied two months earlier. **The second year of Darius.** Being now under foreign rule, the prophet uses the regnal years of the king to whom his people were subject (see note on Hag. i. 1). **Son of Berechiah** (see Introduction, § II.). **The prophet.** This appellation belongs to "Zechariah," as the LXX. and Vulgate take it. A comma should be inserted after "Iddo" here and in ver. 7. **Saying.** The visions virtually spoke to him, communicated to him the Lord's will; but first he has to deliver the following warning.

Vers. 2—6.—§ 2. *The prophet admonishes the people not to follow their forefathers' evil example, but to turn to the Lord with all their heart.*

Ver. 2.—**Hath been sore displeased**; literally, *displeased with displeasure*, which the version render, ἀργισθῆν ὀργὴν μετὰ ἑαυτοῦ: *iratus iracundia* (cf. ver. 15). Not only events connected with their earlier history proved that God had been incensed with their forefathers, but the ruin of their kingdom, and the late Captivity, and the desolation around them, were evidence of the same sad truth.

Ver. 3.—**Say thou unto them.** The prophet shows why he has reminded them of their forefathers' sins and punishment. **Saith the Lord of hosts.** The expression recurs three times in this verse; it denotes the almightiness and infinite resources of God

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(see note A in the appendix to Archdeacon Perowne's edition of this prophet). Its constant repetition, as in Haggai, gives a certain heaviness to the prophet's style. **Turn (return) ye unto me.** He calls the people to repentance, partly, doubtless, with a view to their taking an active part in rebuilding the temple, thus carrying on the exhortations of Haggai, but also with reference to their general ind devotion and laxity which Ezra afterwards had to reprove (see Ezra ix. 2). **Saith the Lord of hosts**; literally, (*it is*) *the utterance of Jehovah of hosts*. This is a more threatening form than the mere "saith" in the other two places in this verse. **And I will turn (return) unto you** (Mal. iii. 7). God promises his favour on their repentance and better conduct; as Haggai had been commissioned to proclaim a return of fruitful seasons as soon as the people obeyed his word and attended diligently to the work before them (Hag. ii. 19). They were called now to attend to the pure worship of the Lord, as the sole condition of prosperity (comp. 2 Chron. xxx. 6; Jas. iv. 8). It has been well observed that when it is said, "Turn ye unto me," etc., we are reminded of our free-will; and when we cry, "Turn us, good Lord, and we shall be turned," we acknowledge the need of God's preventing grace.

Ver. 4.—**The former prophets have cried. Omit "have."** The prophets referred to are those before the Captivity, both those whose writings are extant, as Hosea, Joel, Amos, etc., and those whose names are mentioned in the historical books, e.g. Nathan, Gad, Shemaiah, Azariah, Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah (Pusey). (See similar complaints in 2 Kings xvii. 13; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, etc.; Jer. xxv. 3—8, which last passage seems to have been in Zechariah's mind.)

Ver. 5.—**To compel them to listen to the warning, he asks them, Your fathers, where are they?** What became of those who paid

no heed to the admonitions of the prophets? Have they not suffered dire calamities and perished miserably? **And the prophets, do they live for ever?** They can teach and threaten no longer. It is true that the seers who warned your fathers are no more, but did not their words come true (see ver. 6)? Jerome referred these words to the false prophets, resting, doubtless, on Jer. xxxvii. 19. But it is more natural to refer them to the "former prophets" mentioned above and in the following verse.

Ver. 6.—**My words.** The words that God put into the mouths of the prophets (Jer. xxxix. 16; Lam. ii. 17). **Statutes**, usually applied to the Law, which the prophets had to announce and enforce; but it may mean "decrees" which God appointed (Zeph. ii. 2). The LXX. inserts "receive ye" to govern these nouns. **I commanded.** The LXX. adds, *ἐν πνεύματι μου*, "by my inspiration." **Did they not take hold of your fathers?** *Did they not overtake, etc.?* Did not their threatened chastisements, however long delayed, reach your fathers in the end? **And they returned;** *turned*, as vers. 3, 4. They turned so far as to acknowledge that the threats had been fully accomplished (see Dan. ix. 5; Ezra ix. 6, etc.). **Thought to do;** *παράτακται* (Septuagint), "designed, purposed to do" (comp. Lam. ii. 17).

Vers. 7—17.—§ 3. *The first vision: the horsemen in the myrtle grove.*

Ver. 7.—In a series of visions it is now shown what is the nature of the restored theocracy, and what shall befall it. Thus were the people comforted by hearing God's purposes of mercy and the great future that awaited Israel. In this first vision it is revealed to Zechariah that the Gentile nations should be overthrown, and that whatever might be the present condition of the Jewish people, God's purpose of mercy toward them was unshaken and would be fulfilled. The four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month *Sebat*. This month (called here by its Chaldean name) answered to parts of January and February. It was three months since Zechariah had been called to the prophetic office, and five since the building of the temple had been resumed at Haggai's remonstrance. Meantime Haggai had concluded his mission by uttering his final prophecies two months ago, and now Zechariah carries on the revelation. A comparison of the months in the cuneiform inscriptions with the Hebrew will be found in Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' 379, and in Dr. Wright's note on this verse. The word of the Lord. The visions with their explanations are in effect the oracle (see note on ver. 1).

Ver. 8.—**I saw by night;** *in the night*; i.e.

the night of the twenty-fourth day (ver. 7). The visions were seen in this one night at short intervals. There is nothing to make one suppose that they came in dreams (Isa. xxix. 7). The prophet is awake, but whether he sees these scenes with his bodily eyes, or was rapt in ecstasy, cannot be decided. **A man riding upon a red horse.** This is the Angel of Jehovah, mentioned again in ver. 10 and in ver. 11, in both of which places the description, "that stood among the myrtle trees," serves to identify him. He is different from the interpreting angel, and is the leader of the company of horsemen that follow him. Keil and Wright consider that the rider on the red horse cannot be identified with the Angel of Jehovah, because otherwise he would have been represented as standing opposite to the other horsemen to receive the information which they brought him, and they would not have been spoken of as "behind" him. But the expression in ver. 8 may mean merely that the prophet sets his eyes first on the leader and then on the attendants. Or in ver. 10 he is the spokesman who begins the account of the riders' doings, which these themselves complete in ver. 11. Thus there are in the scene only (1) the prophet; (2) the angel-rider and his attendants; and (3) the interpreting angel. The red colour of the horse is supposed to represent war and bloodshed, as in Rev. vi. 4; but this seems unsuitable in this place, where nothing of the kind is intimated, but rather the contrary (ver. 11). It is, indeed, impossible to affix any satisfactory explanation to the colour. If, as we may well suppose, this personage is the Angel of the covenant, who was the leader and guide of the Israelites (comp. Josh. v. 13), his standing in the valley among the myrtles may represent the depressed and humbled condition of the chosen people, which yet was well-pleasing unto God, like the sweet scent of odiferous myrtles is agreeable to men. **The myrtle trees.** The myrtle is indigenous in the hilly regions of Northern Palestine, and is still seen in the glens near Jerusalem, though no longer on the Mount of Olives, where the returned captives found it when celebrating their first Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. viii. 15). **In the bottom; the valley.** Myrtles love such places. "Amantes littora myrtos" (Virgil, 'Georg.' iv. 124). The term would suit the valley of the Kidron. Others render, "the shady place," or "the tabernacle," but not so appropriately. LXX., *ἀμείνον τῶν* [Alex., *δύο*] *ὀρέων τῶν κατασκίων*, "between the shady mountains." The Greek translators seem to have borrowed their reading from ch. vi., where the chariots issue from between two mountains of brass. Behind him were there red horses; i.e.



horses mounted by riders (ver. 11). **Speckled.** It is not clear what colour is meant by this word. The Revised Version gives *sorrel*; Wright, "bay or chestnut;" LXX., *ὑποκαὶ ποικίλοι*: "dapple-grey and spotted;" Vulgate, *varii*. The Septuagint Version is probably a double rendering. The word occurs elsewhere only in Isa. xvi. 8, where it is applied to the tendrils of the vine. What is intended by the different colours of the horses is a matter of great dispute, and cannot be known. There is some reason for considering that they represent the world-powers at this particular period—the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek; three of those concerning which Daniel prophesied; the fourth, the Roman, not having yet come in view. The notion of tutelary angels, presiding over countries, was familiar to the Hebrew mind (see Dan. x. 12, 13, 20, 21). These horsemen are evidently not post-couriers, but warriors on military service.

Ver. 9.—**O my lord.** The prophet speaks to the angel of the Lord, who answers briefly, and is succeeded by the interpreting angel. **What are these?** Not "who," but "what;" i.e. what do they signify? (comp. Amos vii. 8). That talked with me; literally, as the LXX. and Vulgate, *that spake in me*. So vers. 13, 14, and in the following visions. Hence some regard the expression as intimating a communication borne inwardly to the soul without the aid of external organs, or that the angel overpowered and influenced the prophet as the evil spirit possessed the demoniac. But the same term is used, as Dr. Wright points out, in the sense of to commune with a person (Numb. xii. 6, 8; 1 Sam. xxv. 39), and to speak to a person (Hos. i. 2; and perhaps Hab. ii. 1). It may, however, be that the angel of the Lord presented matters objectively, and the prophet's own angel interpreted subjectively. But the Authorized Version is probably correct. **I will show thee.** This he does through the chief angel (ver. 10).

Ver. 10.—**The man that stood,** etc. The rider upon the red horse of ver. 8, the leader of the company of horsemen. **Answered** the question which the prophet had proposed, or answered in response to a sign from the interpreting angel. **They whom the Lord hath sent,** etc. These angelic ministers had been sent to traverse the earth and to report its condition (comp. Job i. 7; ii. 2; Heb. i. 14), and to guide it to the carrying out of God's purposes.

Ver. 11.—**They answered.** Having said who they were, the angel directs them to tell of their doings. **The angel of the Lord.** The "man riding upon the red horse" (ver. 8) is now called "the Angel of Jehovah." This term is usually held to denote a mani-

festation of the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, assuming an angelic form or imparting his immediate presence to the revealer of his will. **Sitteth still, and is at rest.** The world was lying in proud security. There was no sign of that shaking of nations which Haggai (ii. 7, 21, 22) had foretold should precede the coming of Messiah and the restoration of Israel. In this second year of Darius, the empire, though suffering from internal disturbances, was outwardly at peace, and was threatened by no enemy at a distance. But the condition of the Jews was sad and disheartening; the temple still unbuilt, the walls of Jerusalem lying in ruins, themselves only a small remnant, exposed to the insults and attacks of jealous neighbours, living on sufferance as subjects of a heathen power, and no sign of the predicted salvation appearing,—this was their state. And the angel sees their despondency, recognizes their disappointment, and intercedes for them.

Ver. 12.—**Answered.** He answered the feeling in the prophet's mind, the unexpressed longing of his heart. **O Lord of hosts.** The angel is the intercessor for the people. So Christ prays to the Father (John xvii.). **How long wilt thou not have mercy, etc.?** He prays that the weary waiting for deliverance may speedily come to an end, and Jerusalem be restored, and Judæa be again inhabited by a happy population. **These three score and ten years.** The predicted seventy years of captivity (Jer. xxv. 11; xxix. 10) were past; it was time that the punishment should cease. There are two computations of this period. The first dates from the first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, B.C. 606, when Judæa was made tributary to Babylon (2 Kings xxiv. 1; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6; Dan. i. 1, etc.), unto the return of the company of exiles under Zerubbabel, B.C. 536; the second dates from the final destruction of Jerusalem, B.C. 588, unto the second year of Darius, B.C. 519, when Zechariah saw these visions. However reckoned, the dark period was now over; might they not now expect the commotion among the nations which was to precede their own restitution?

Ver. 13.—**The Lord answered.** The Angel of Jehovah is thus called as the representative of God, whether we regard him as the Logos or a created angel empowered by God (see note on ver. 11). This personage is often seemingly identified with Jehovah (comp. ch. iii. 2; Gen. xviii. 1, 2, 13, 17, 22; Josh. v. 14, 15; vi. 2). He gives the answer to the interpreting angel, which the latter is to convey to the prophet, which he, in turn, was to announce to the people. **Good words,** promising blessing and salvation

(1 Kings xii. 7); and these are **comfortable words** (Isa. lvii. 18), a message calculated to bring comfort to the people's desponding hearts. What the message is is given in the following verses (14—17).

Ver. 14.—**Cry thou** (Isa. xl. 6). The prophet has to publish two things: (1) God's love for his people, however humiliated and miserable their present position might be; and (2) the promise of coming prosperity. **I am jealous**. The term implies ardent love, which cannot bear itself to be slighted, or the object of its affection to be injured (comp. ch. viii. 2, and note there; Numb. xxv. 11, 13; Joel ii. 18). **For Jerusalem**, as the capital of the kingdom; and for **Zion**, as the seat of worship.

Ver. 15.—**The heathen; the nations**, who were God's instruments in punishing Israel. That are **at ease**. Living in proud security and self-enjoyment (Isa. xxxiii. 9, 11; Amos vi. 1; comp. ver. 11). Septuagint, *τὰ συνεπιθέμενα*, "which join in attacking her;" Vulgate, *opulentas*, "wealthy," their riches giving them self-confidence. I was but a **little displeased**. God had been angry with his people, it is true, but only in measure, chastising them, like a parent, for their good. Others take "a little" (*parum*, ὀλίγα) to mean "for a little time," in allusion to the seventy years' captivity. **And they helped forward the affliction**; or, in the LXX., *συνεπέθετο εἰς κακὰ*, "helped for evil;" Vulgate, *adjuverunt in malum*. They exceeded their part as mere instruments in God's hands, and wished to destroy Israel altogether, or to oppress them beyond the purposed period of their chastisement. A similar complaint is made against the Assyrians (Isa. x. 5, etc.) and the Babylonians (Isa. xlvii. 6).

Ver. 16.—**Therefore**. Because God loved his people and was incensed with the heathen. **I am returned; I return**. According to the promise in ver. 3 (see note on ch. viii. 3). **A line shall be stretched forth**. A measuring-line shall now be used to mark out the city for rebuilding (Job xxxviii. 5). The first proof of God's renewed mercy would be seen in the restoration of the temple, the symbol of the theocracy, and in the revival of the city, the type of national life. The "line" had been used for purposes of destruction (2 Kings xxi. 13; Isa. xxxiv. 11; Lam. ii. 8).

Ver. 17.—**Cry yet, saying**. This introduces the second part of the prophet's message. The LXX. begins the verse with the words, "And the angel that spake in me said unto me." **My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad**. "Yet," in this verse, is better rendered *again*. God calls the cities his, to show his love for Judah; and he promises that they shall not only be reoccupied

by returning immigrants, but increased in extent and number by reason of the enlarged population. So Josephus tells us that in later times Jerusalem had outgrown its walls, and that the fourth quarter, Bezetha, was added ('Boll. Jud.,' v. 4. 2). But it seems best to translate the clause thus: "My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity." Vulgate, *Adhuc affluent civitates max bonis*; LXX., *Ἐτι διαχυθήσονται πόλεις ἐν ἀγαθοῖς*. **Shall yet comfort Zion**, for all her afflictions. **Shall yet choose Jerusalem** (ch. ii. 12 [16, Hebrew]; iii. 2). God will show that the election of Israel remains unimpaired and secure (comp. 2 Kings xxi. 7; 2 Chron. vi. 5). The partial fulfilment of the items of this prophecy are to be found in the rebuilding of the temple, the restoration of Jerusalem by Nehemiah, and the prosperity of Judah under the Asmonean princes. A hint of further blessings is given in the final clause, but their nature is not expressly mentioned.

Vers. 18—21.—§ 4. *The second vision: the four horns and the four craftsmen.*

Ver. 18.—**I lifted up mine eyes, and saw**. This vision is closely connected with the former. The prophet had been told that the hostile nations should be punished and scattered; he now is shown this threat being executed. **Four horns**, belonging to four beasts but dimly seen or wholly invisible. Horns are symbols of strength and power (comp. Ps. lxxv. 4, 5; Dan. viii. 3; Amos vi. 13). Here they mean powers hostile to Israel, and the number "four" (the symbol of completeness) points to the four winds from which they come, *i.e.* from every side. In the Hebrew ch. ii. begins at this verse.

Ver. 19.—**Which have scattered, etc.** Some see here an allusion to the prophecy of Daniel concerning the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Macedonians, and Romans. Against this view it is urged that the prophet is speaking of past events, not of a far-distant future. Others take the four horns to represent Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and Medo-Persia, all of which had scattered Israel. But it is well to lay no special stress on such explanations of symbolical language, which are at best mere conjectures, liable to be overthrown by a new theory. The word "scattered," which Jerome renders *ventilaverunt*, means properly, as Wright observes, "to winnow," to separate and scatter by means of the wind. The perfect tense of this verb must not be pressed so as to exclude all notion of coming events. The prophets see at one glance past and future, and combine in one expression far-distant occurrences. Doubtless Zechariah's vision has some relation to

Daniel's, and his description of the powers hostile to the Church of God runs on parallel lines with that of his predecessor. Whether he refers to the same four empires must be left in uncertainty. **Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.** All the tribes and the capital. According to Ewald, Judah is named first as occupying the place of honour, even as Benjamin is named before Judah in Ps. lxxviii. 27, because the capital city lay in its territory. Jerusalem was the centre of worship and government for all the people, the northern tribes being represented by Israel, the southern by Judah. Some critics cancel the word "Israel" here, and there is no doubt that it is often written for "Jerusalem" by mistake (comp. Jer. xxiii. 6 [where see Professor Cheyne's note]; xxxii. 30, 32; li. 49; Zeph. iii. 14; Mal. ii. 11). Grätz supposes that in the present passage the scribe discovered his mistake, and wrote the right word "Jerusalem" after the wrong one "Israel," but leaving the latter still in the manuscript. Of course, there is no proof of this supposition. Some manuscripts of the Septuagint omit "Jerusalem" here.

Ver. 20.—**Four carpenters; craftsmen;** Revised Version, *smiths*, in which case "the horns" would be made of iron. The word is applied to workers in wood, stone, and metal; therefore an ambiguous rendering

seems most suitable here. LXX., *τέκτονες*; Vulgate, *fabros*. They represent the human agencies employed by God to overthrow the powers hostile to the Church. Their number is the same as that of the "horns," thus showing their adequacy for the work which they have to execute. It is quite unnecessary to attempt to identify the four "craftsmen." Some take them to be Zerubbabel, Joshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah; or Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Cambyses, and Alexander the Great; or the four evangelists; or generally, angels. We shall be safer if we look upon them merely as God's instruments and servants without further identification.

Ver. 21.—**And he spake.** The interpreting angel spake. **Which have scattered Judah.** The LXX. adds, "and broke Israel in pieces." **Did lift up his head.** These powers laid Judah prostrate. **To fray them.** To terrify the powers symbolized by the four horns, and disturb their self-complacent security (ver. 15). The LXX., mistaking the sense, gives, *Τοῦ ἀξύναι αὐτὰ εἰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν τὰ τέσσαρα κέρατα*, "To sharpen them, even the four horns, in their hands." **To cast out; to cast down,** to overthrow these proud powers. **Over (against) the land.** The nations had treated Judah as a wild bull treats things that oppose him, tossing and scattering them to the wind.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*A timely warning.* "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet," etc. Special attention seems invited in the opening verse of this opening prophecy to the question of time. Probably because the time of its utterance was a time of much hope, as shown by the contemporaneous prophecies of Hag. i. 13—15 ("sixth month"); ii. 1—9 ("seventh month"); and ii. 18, 19 ("ninth month"). Probably also because a time of much hope is a time of much fear; the season of bloom is the season of blight. Accordingly, the whole of this opening message—a kind of prologue to the visions that follow—is one of admonition and warning, a warning which turns (1) on the *present position*, and (2) on the *past experience*, of the Jewish people and Church.

I. **PRESENT POSITION.** 1. *The fact.* How did they stand before God? As the children of sinners (ver. 2). This is the first thing to be remembered by them, as also by us all (Eph. ii. 3, end). 2. *The significance of the fact;* and that in two opposite directions. (1) As to God's attitude towards them. His favour was turned away from them. As he had been "displeased" with their "fathers," so also, though not irretrievably, with themselves. This implied in the very promise of ver. 3, "I will turn to you." This same truth, again, both in the second commandment, and also in the gracious declaration of Exod. xxxiv. 5—7, is set forth as part of God's uniform rule. (2) As to their (natural) attitude towards God. Their hearts were turned away from him. Hence the exhortation of ver. 3. Their attitude was one even of malignant aversion, if so we may speak, always tending of itself, like certain malignant bodily diseases, to become aggravated and worse. The longer we postpone our repentance the more difficult it becomes. This is the most serious consideration of all.

II. PAST EXPERIENCE. (See vers. 5, 6.) In these they are reminded: 1. *That some things belonging to the past had indeed passed away*, as it were. "Their fathers," e.g. who had received so many warnings, and despised them. Even "the prophets" also, who had delivered these warnings, and believed them, had fulfilled their days, and departed. Like a scene in a play, like a picture in a magic-lantern, there was something else in their place. 2. *Some things belonging to the past were still remaining*. The truth of God's Word, for example (see Ps. vi. 6—8). This manifest to their senses. Did not "my words and my statutes take hold of your fathers"? All their recent history, their complete and long-enduring captivity, their partial return, their present condition, an affirmative answer to this question. This same truth acknowledged, too, by those gone. They acknowledged the fact: "As God thought to do, so he did." They acknowledged its justice: "According to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he" done (comp. Lam. ii. 17, 18; and as to the general principle, Judg. i. 7). This the special triumph of God's Word, that it is vindicated and preached at times by its bitterest foes (Gal. i. 23; John xi. 49—52. Also the saying attributed to Julian the Apostate, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilæan!").

In conclusion, we may note and admire in this passage: 1. *The discrimination of Scripture*. How exactly suited the whole tenor of this passage to the case of those here addressed! Reminding us of the "wise steward," who gives to "every one a portion of meat in due season." Also of the declaration of the apostle, that all inspired Scripture is so variously profitable as to make "the man of God" complete, or perfect, as to all that he needs (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). 2. *The faithfulness of Scripture*. How different all this from the flattery with which most nations are addressed by their teachers; and which most nations also demand! Contrast "When France is content, Europe is tranquil," also, as to our own country, the words of the poet—

"Thou shalt flourish, great and free,  
The dread and envy of them all."

3. *The mercy of Scripture*. Notwithstanding all provocations—all personal, all patrimonial, iniquity—the language of God here is, with outstretched hand (Rom. x. 21), "Be ye reconciled unto me" (2 Cor. v. 20; comp. also Hos. iii., and the emphatic "only" in Jer. iii. 12—14). Note also how greatly this mercy is set forth by the greatness of the faithfulness before named. In the words of our English laureate—

"He showed me all the mercy,  
For he showed me all the sin."

Vers. 7—11.—*A vision of rest*. "Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet," etc. Several points in this vision, as in many others, cannot certainly be explained. The nature and significance of the colours of the horses is one of these points. Another is as to the identity or otherwise of the "angel" of ver. 9 with that of the "rider" of ver. 8, who seems undeniably to be the "man" of ver. 10 and the "angel of the Lord" of vers. 11, 12. The idea of identity is favoured by Pusey's rendering, "talked in me," compared with Numb. xii. 6—9; Hab. ii. 1; 1 Pet. i. 11; also by the high probability of the person *promising* in ver. 9 being the same as the person *performing* in ver. 10; and by the similar probability that the person *asking* in ver. 12, and the person *answered* in ver. 13, should be one and the same. From these very uncertainties, however, we may, perhaps, learn an incidental truth of importance. We may learn, e.g., that the agents of God are not less manifold, and not less mysterious to us, than his works. Also that whether the "angel of the Lord" speaks to us directly, or only by the instrumentality of one of his accredited servants, it comes to much the same in the end. In the rest of the vision we may notice (1) *the King himself*; (2) *the King's servants*; and (3) *the King's work*.

I. THE KING HIMSELF. Under this head we learn: 1. *His condition*. He appears as a Rider; i.e. as one who has left his home and is on a journey for a season. 2. *His rank*. He has many and various attendants, but all "behind him" (comp. Rev. xix. 14, where the rider probably appears on a white horse, because riding in triumph).

3. *His place*; amongst the myrtle trees in the hollow; representing, it is thought, the people of God, humble yet pleasing to him, in their then low estate (see Isa. xli. 19; iv. 13). 4. *His apparent purpose*; viz. to "visit" and save his people (Gen. i. 24; Exod. iii. 16; iv. 31; Luke i. 68).

II. THE KING'S SERVANTS. Of these we find that they are the objects: 1. *Of special inquiry*. Who the Leader is the prophet understands. Who these are that attend upon him he cannot tell, yet much wishes to know, probably because of something very special in their numbers and variety and general appearance of readiness and expectation. "What is it the King means to do with all these?" 2. *Of special explanation*. Explanation very readily given. Your difficulty is natural. Your inquiry is legitimate. "I will show thee what these be." Explanation also very sufficiently given. Who are they? They are persons "sent;" they have a mission indeed to accomplish. Who sent them? The Lord himself. For what purpose? For that of special investigation. To investigate where? In all parts of the earth. This is why God has visited his people, viz. to learn, by means of these his servants, how things are with them in the world.

III. THE KING'S WORK. The nature and completeness of this are shown to us by his servants' report. For example, we see: 1. *Its great promptitude*. The next thing we hear of this report is of its completion (ver. 11). No time, apparently, has been lost. While the prophet's question has been put and acknowledged, their mission has been accomplished (comp. Dan. ix. 21; Ezek. i. 14). 2. *Its perfection*. They have examined the whole earth. They have examined it all so thoroughly that they challenge any one ("behold") to do more. 3. *Its purport and unanimity*. This is how they all found the world, viz. "sitting still and at rest"—like a weary traveller (so the figure may mean) who has finished his long journey, and taken his seat, and only asks to sit still.

See, therefore, in conclusion, respecting this vision: 1. *How specially encouraging it was at that time*. By the Jews, just then exhorted to recommence the restoration of their temple, two things only were specially required. The one was to know, as to God, that his eye was upon them for good (see Ezra v. 5). The other was to know, as to men, that they would be let alone in their work (Ezra iv. 3). And these, we see, were just the two things of which this vision assures them. With everything to help them in heaven, and nothing to hinder them on earth, what more could they ask? 2. *How instructive for all times*. When any direct work for God, such as that of building his house or enlarging his Church, has to be done, this is how it often pleases him to order the world. So Solomon was raised up as a "man of rest" to build the original temple. So Christ was born, and the foundations of the Christian Church were laid, when all the world was at peace. So we read also in Acts ix. 31. Compare also the language of the Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity; and the connection between vers. 2 and 4 in 1 Tim. ii.

Vers. 12—16.—*A vision of mercy*. "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said," etc. In the last portion (vers. 7—11) we saw Christ, or the Angel-Jehovah, presented to us as a King, exercising visitatorial powers. In the present we seem to read of him under those two other principal aspects in which he is revealed to his people, viz. (1) as their *great High Priest interceding for them with God*; and (2) as their *great Teacher or Prophet instructing and comforting them in God's name*.

I. INTERCESSION. We find this to be: 1. *Exceedingly apposite*. Much had already been done for the remnant of the Captivity; but much also remained. A mere handful (some fifty thousand all told, Ezra ii. 64, 65), compared with the many thousands of Israel, had been brought back; a few scattered centres of population only were to be found in the land, and Jerusalem itself was more like a city of the dead than of the living (compare the description of it in Neh. vii. 4, many years afterwards). This state of things is exactly recognized in the Angel-Jehovah's petition, "How long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah?" (For similar and, probably, nearly contemporaneous request for further mercy after much mercy received, comp. Ps. cxxvi. 4 and 1.) 2. *Very judicious*. See what this intercession allows, viz. the justice of God. "Thou hast had indignation;" and rightly, so it implies. (For similar confessions of God's justice in pleading for mercy, comp. Gen. xviii. 25; Jer.

xii. 1.) See also what this intercession relies on, viz. on the one hand, God's character, as delighting to exercise mercy (so to speak) as soon as he can; and, on the other hand, on God's faithfulness, as being sure to confine his indignation strictly to the duration specified by him. "These three score and ten years" (see Jer. xxvi. 11, 12). 3. *Very effectual*. This shown by the answer obtained, which consisted, on the one hand, of "good words," i.e. words promising good; and on the other hand, of "comfortable words," literally, words "sighing with," or full of sympathy, in the spirit of Rom. xii. 15; Isa. lxiii. 9; and so being all that could be wished for, both in matter and manner.

II. INSTRUCTION. The Angel-Jehovah, having received this reply, then proceeds—either personally or, as some think, through the instrumentality of some subordinate angel—to instruct the prophet accordingly. In this we may notice: 1. *His commission*. The satisfactory answer just received by the Angel-Jehovah the prophet was now to make known in his turn: "Cry thou." He was also to tell it *aloud*, to *proclaim* it: "Cry" (*bis*); comp. Gen. xli. 43; 2 Chron. xxxii. 18, where the same word is employed. And he was to do so being thus commissioned (this also is mentioned twice, vers. 14, 17) in God's name. 2. *His message*. This corresponds, as might be expected, with the "words" of ver. 13. For example, it is a message (1) of great sympathy; being one, we find, in which God identifies himself with the interests of his people (observe "my," in vers. 16, 17), and even speaks of himself as sharing to some extent in their anxieties and purely national jealousies and rivalries. It was no pleasure to him to see other nations at ease, and them in trouble, however deserved. No doubt he had been "displeased" with them (ch. i. 1, 2); but he was still more so with their foes (ver. 15). A message (2) of great hope. Much good, in fact, had begun. Not only had the remnant returned to Jerusalem; God himself also had done so (ver. 16), and that "with mercies;" to stay amongst his people, and not merely to "visit" them. More good was to follow. The "house" now building was to be finished; the rest of the now desolate city to be marked out and finished; and the scattered cities of Judah to be so filled as to overflow ("spread abroad;" comp. ch. ii. 2) on all sides. All this, however apparently unlikely, was, nevertheless (observe "yet" three times), being God's settled purpose, to be accomplished; and the prophet also was to go on saying so until this was the case ("Cry yet," ver. 16).

Do we not see illustrated in all this, finally? 1. *The perfection of the gospel*. "Good words and comfortable words"—"glad tidings of great joy"—so we see it to be. How full of sympathy! How full of hope! Its excellency culminating in this, perhaps, above all, that we have not only such a "Propitiation" (1 John ii. 2), but such a perpetual "Advocate" (1 John ii. 1) and Intercessor to plead it (see also Heb. vii. 25; Luke xxii. 31, 32; xiii. 8, 9; Acts vii. 55). 2. *The certainty of the gospel*. As to its essence and source, on the one hand. As in ver. 13, it is, in effect, the promise of God to his Son (comp. Ps. ii. 7—9; cx., *passim*). As to its conveyance to us, on the other; being, in effect, as in ver. 14, the message of Christ himself to us through those appointed by him. Compare the visions of Christ to Isaiah (vi.; John xii.) and Daniel (x. 5, 6, and references); also John xiv. 26; xvi. 13, 14; Col. iii. 16, etc.

Vers. 18—21.—*A vision of help*. "Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw," etc. In these verses, and some that follow, certain detached portions of the previous general prophecy seem to be set before us again in greater amplitude and detail—like maps of England, France, and so on, in an atlas, following the general but smaller-scaled map of the whole "quarter" of Europe. In the verses now especially before us, it is the previous message concerning the enemies of God's people (vers. 14, 15) which seems to be thus followed up and enlarged. And the twofold purpose in view seems to be that of reminding his people in this connection (1) of their *special danger*; and (2) of their *special defence*.

I. THEIR SPECIAL DANGER. On this point they are shown: 1. *Its reality*. Though God was sorely displeased with the heathen, though he had done much already to restrain them, so that the earth now was "at rest" (*supra*, ver. 11), and the returned people were able to rebuild his house, he had by no means destroyed them as yet. The four "horns" seen in the vision—the well-known symbols of authority and strength

and hostility (Ps. lxxv. 4—7, 10; Jer. xlviii. 25; Deut. xxxiii. 17; 1 Kings xxii. 11) —suffice to prove this. However restrained at that moment, the ability and the disposition to injure were still in existence. 2. *Its peculiar greatness.* This (1) as to *power.* How much evil those same Gentile horns had already done in the past (see end of vers. 19 and 21)! Also perhaps (2) as to *direction*; the “four” horns representing that they had such enemies on all sides (comp. Ps. lxxxiii. 5—8, where every side of Palestine seems to be represented). Or possibly (3) as to *duration*; first one enemy, then another, as in the very similar description of Jer. l. 17; or else with some reference to the four successive world-empires of Daniel’s visions, and as meaning to intimate, in that case, that, whichever of such “horns” should be specially exalted for the time, it would be a horn *against them.* So much was their condition, of itself, like that described in Luke x. 3.

II. *THEIR SPECIAL DEFENCE.* 1. *The fact itself.* This manifest—having such enemies as they had—from their still continued existence. Though “scattered,” it was not beyond recovery; though so prostrate that no man could “lift up the head,” they were not destroyed (comp. Ps. cxxix. 1, 2). Who could have caused this but Jehovah himself? 2. *The peculiar nature* of this defence. Jehovah restrains the many enemies of his people by “fraying” or frightening them from going too far (comp. Ps. lxxvi. 9, 10; also Gen. xxxv. 5; Exod. xv. 16; 2 Kings xix. 6; 2 Chron. xvii. 10; and to some extent the cases of Abimelech, Gen. xx. 6, 7; and Balaam, Deut. xxiii. 5). 3. *The peculiar instrument* of this defence. Not other “horns” to push against these; not other men of war to overcome these; but artificers only, men of peace. Possibly also artificers of the class engaged in building, as though to intimate that the work of building God’s temple was the best defence at that time to God’s people. 4. *The peculiar completeness* of this defence. As shown, perhaps, by there being as many in number thus to defend as there were to attack. From whichever side, at whatever time, the attack, there also would be prepared against it this kind of defence (comp. Ps. xxxii. 7, 10).

We see all this abundantly illustrated: 1. *In the subsequent history of the literal Israel.* How often since assaulted! how apparently close, at times, to extermination! how utterly powerless, frequently, in themselves! yet how wonderfully preserved in existence, by similar restraints of their enemies, from that day until this! 2. *In the history of nations and Churches.* It is at least worthy of consideration, in this connection, that since the day when the Reformation found its most congenial home in this island, every projected hostile invader has been restrained from reaching our shores. Also, perhaps, the remarkable (true) prosperity and preservation of the Moravian and Waldensian Churches, are cases in point. 3. *In the history of the spiritual Israel at large.* How many its enemies from the first (Acts xxviii. 22; Luke xxi. 17; Eph. vi. 12)! How incapable of defending itself (Matt. x. 16, as before)! Yet how wonderfully preserved until now; and also, to be preserved to the end (Matt. xvi. 18)! 4. *In the experience of individual believers.* See lives of such men as Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, Simeon, and others. We may almost say of each of such, as just now of the Church at large, “Each man immortal till his work be done.” So in truth of every one who truly believes in Christ Jesus. The righteous *scarcely* is saved, but he *is* saved, after all.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*God’s call to repentance.* Repentance is turning from sin unto God.

I. *THE CALL IS FOUNDED ON GOD’S ABSOLUTE RIGHT TO OBEDIENCE.* “Lord of hosts.” Sublime title. Thrice used, to give the greater impressiveness. Implies that God’s rule is wide as creation. Mark the “host” of stars (Isa. xl. 26). Higher, behold the “angels and principalities and powers” (Ps. ciii. 20, 21). God is Lord of all, and it is this God that claims our homage. To turn *from* him is folly and ruin; to turn *to* him is the highest wisdom and blessedness.

II. *URGED BY GOD’S JUDGMENTS ON TRANSGRESSORS.* Israel is our “ensample” (1 Cor. x. 11). The sun does not ripen the corn more surely than God’s favour attended the Jews when they were steadfast to walk in his ways; nor are thorns and

briers more certain to spring up in a neglected field than God's judgments to fall on Israel when their hearts were set in them to do evil. God is not changed. The world is governed now on the same principles as in the past.

III. ENCOURAGED BY GOD'S PROMISES. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." So of God's Word. It reveals his heart. There is no bar on God's part to the sinner's return. He himself has opened the way, and his promise is to those who turn to him. "I will turn unto you." Here is hope held out, help graciously offered, joyful welcome assured. We have not only doctrines, but facts. Great cloud of witnesses, who can say each for himself, like Paul, "I obtained mercy."

IV. ENFORCED BY THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE. Every man's life is separate. But much common. The *brevity* of life. Delay is dangerous. The *confessions* of life. God's Word is truth. Faithful are his promises and his threatenings. The *monitions* of life. Voices of the past, of the good, and of the evil, of earth and heaven, all combine and cry with awful and convincing force, "Repent!"—F.

Ver. 5.—*Are we better than our fathers?* I. "FATHERS" IMPLIES SUCCESSION. Changes are constant. Not a whole generation together, but men go, as they come, one by one. Seems common to all existences. Necessary also. If all lived on, there would not be room for the ever-increasing multitudes. Part of God's great plan for the education of the race.

II. "FATHERS" IMPLIES INTERDEPENDENCE. There is a close relationship between fathers and children. Physically, mentally, and even morally, we are to a large degree what others have made us. "How shall a man escape from his ancestors, or draw off from his veins the black drop which he drew from his father's or his mother's life?" (Emerson).

"Tis law as steadfast as the throne of Zeus,  
Our days are heritors of days gone by."  
(Æschylus.)

And as we have been influenced by the past, so we shall influence the future. Our children not only receive a certain impress from their birth, but are moulded for good or evil by the teaching and example of their parents, and by the environment of their daily life.

III. "FATHERS" IMPLIES RESPONSIBILITY. "Be not as your fathers." There should be reflection and choice of the good. Whether we are better or worse is a difficult question. The term "fathers" is indefinite. We should fix some point for comparison. But where? Our immediate fathers, or those of earlier times? Besides, difficult to get evidence for a fair comparison. History defective. Tradition unreliable. The "fathers" stand out like hills enshrouded in mist, or as stars that take a glory from being far. Besides, who are to judge? Ourselves. Then risk of partiality. We naturally lean to the party to which we belong. Suppose you take the *old*. They are apt to side with the past. Their day is over. Their vigour is gone. They dwell on what has been done. Rarely will you find an old man who does not say, "The former days were better" (Eccles. vii. 10). Suppose you take the *young*. They side with the present. The world is all before them. They are eager for the strife. "Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield." But in any case, our judgment is liable to be affected by circumstances. Our own state, the love of society, the spirit of the age, influence us largely (cf. Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 4). *Are we better than our fathers?* There is no question but *we ought to be*. Progress is the law. We have the higher advantages. The great thoughts and the great deeds of others should inspire us. We are the "heirs of all the ages." In some respects we are certainly better. As to food, clothing, habitations, means of education, political and social rights, intercourse with other nations, and so forth, there has been an immense advance. But what availeth this, if morally and spiritually we stand, not higher, but lower than our fathers? "Christ is our Hope." Individually we are bound to strive after a better life, and thus we can best influence society. There may be much in our past that is bad; but it *is* past; and let us take hope. If there are sins, they are forgiven. If there are bad habits, they have been broken off. If there



are failures, they have been retrieved. We can look on. Stirred with a holy ambition, sustained by precious promises, animated by noble examples, we can press on to the brighter and better days to come. Our standard should be, not the conventional standard of the Church or the day, but the perfect law of Christ (Matt. v. 20—48).—F.

Ver. 5.—*The transitoriness of life.* I. COMPARED WITH THE PERMANENCE OF THE EARTH. Objects of nature remain. There are changes, but they are not so great within the limit of our brief lives as to attract much notice. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever" (Eccles. i. 4).

II. COMPARED WITH THE CONTINUITY OF THE RACE. The individual withers; families disappear; kingdoms decay and fall; but the race of man remains. Our life is as a tale that is told, but the story of the generations of the past reaches back beyond our ken.

III. COMPARED WITH THE IMMENSE LABOUR BESTOWED ON MEN. What a preparation going before! What long and arduous toils there have been to fit us for our place and our work! and then how short the time we have for accomplishing anything! How often early promise fails, and the dear hopes cherished are disappointed!

IV. COMPARED WITH THE EXPECTATIONS FORMED. What plans, schemings, enterprises! What high ambitions! And yet how little is achieved! Man's promise is always better than his performance. Once, perhaps, we took a forward place; our names were on the lips of many—looked to win great fame. But the end is "vanity."

V. COMPARED WITH THE IMMORTALITY OF GOD'S WORD. Fathers and prophets alike pass away. They cannot continue by reason of death. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. i. 24, 25).—F.

Ver. 6.—*God's Word taking hold.* I. THE FLIGHT. Men strive to get away from God. Some try one device, some another (cf. Adam, Gen. iii. 10; Jonah i. 3; Paul, Acts xxvi. 9). Such conduct is unnatural, wicked, and vain (Ps. cxxxix. 7).

II. THE PURSUIT. The sinner followed. He feels that God knows all, and that the day of reckoning will come. Memory, conscience, Law, Scripture, prophecy of judgment. The officer of justice is on the sinner's track. Any moment he may feel his hand on his shoulder, and hear the awful words, "You are my prisoner."

III. THE OVERTAKING. Certain, for good or for evil. In the day of conviction, of true penitence, or of righteous retribution—amidst the songs of rejoicing angels or the weeping and wailing of lost souls. What has been our experience? God's Word "takes hold," as *truth* of the intellect, as *righteousness* of the conscience, as *love* of the heart. Mark Augustine in the garden at Milan (Rom. xiii. 13, 14); Luther painfully climbing the church steps at Rome (Rom. i. 17). Study Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding.' So of all the redeemed. Happy are we when we recognize that God's Word comes, not as a foe, but as a friend; not to compel by force, but to constrain by love; not to drag us with fear and trembling before the Judge, but to draw us gently to the cross and the Saviour.—F.

Vers. 8—13.—*The Church and Christ.* The vision may suggest—

I. THE HIDDEN RICHES OF THE CHURCH. "Myrtle in the bottom" symbolizes the Church in a low condition. Obscure, despised by the world; but fresh, fragrant, and beautiful in the sight of God. The object of increasing care. Grand future.

II. THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH'S HEAD. Christ supreme. All forces are under his control. The resources of heaven and earth are at his disposal. He is ever on the watch. He scans the horizon with clear, far-seeing eye. He is always quick to do what he deems best for the defence and good of his people. Here is comfort for times of depression and fear. We have our personal troubles. We are distressed because of the state of the Church, and the slow progress of religion in the world. But let us take courage. Christ is Head over all things for the Church. In the darkest hour, when we pray, the heavens are opened. We behold Christ on the throne, and cry with the holy angels, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (cf. Eph. i. 16—23).—F.

Ver. 11.—*The wonder of indifference.* “‘At rest;’ i.e. secure, proud, and licentious, as if there were no God in heaven” (Wordsworth). May be taken to illustrate a common state of mind as to religion. Indifference seems wonderful when we consider—

I. THE VAST INTERESTS AT STAKE. What questions so deep and urgent as those that concern God and truth and immortality?

II. THE BRIEF TIME FOR DECISION. Life is short. Delay, and youth is gone; delay, and manhood is past; delay, and all is lost. Besides, what uncertainty and what constant interruptions and claims of other things! “The world is too much with us.”

III. THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF EARNESTNESS. See how men act in other matters. Firm and decided. “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.”

IV. THE CEASELESS ACTIVITY OF THE POWERS OF EVIL. (1 Pet. v. 8.)

V. THE URGENT APPEALS OF GOD. How much of Holy Scripture is taken up with calls, and pleadings, and remonstrances, and beseechings! Then, how often does the voice of God in providence give the deeper force and significance to the warnings of his Word! Surely what lies so near the heart of God should be the chief thing for us. Surely what moved the eternal Son to come to earth should be the supreme interest with us. His mind should be our mind, and our highest blessedness should be to consecrate ourselves, like him, to the service of God and of humanity.—F.

Ver. 15.—*The wrath of God and the wrath of man.* I. GOD’S WRATH IS THE HIGHEST REASON. It is not a mood or passion; not the outburst of arbitrary power; but the calm expression of the Eternal Mind. He who does wrong identifies himself with the wrong, and so far must be an object of indignation. God feels towards things as they are. How different the wrath of man (cf. Jas. iv. 1)!

II. GOD’S WRATH IS THE PUREST JUSTICE. Law must stand. Government and order must be maintained. Else anarchy. But nothing will be done beyond what is necessary for the ends of justice. God’s wrath is just, in measure and duration. How different with the wrath of man! Often carried beyond the bounds of right, and becomes oppression. Often continued beyond the limits of justice, and becomes revenge (Isa. xlvii. 6).

III. GOD’S WRATH IS THE HOLIEST LOVE. There is much in the ways of God that we cannot understand, but we should never forget what he himself has taught us as to his Spirit and purpose (cf. Ezek. xxxiii. 11). God’s wrath is consistent with pity for the sufferer, mercy for the penitent, and deliverance for the oppressed. In his hand pains are disciplinary, trials are remedial, chastisements are benedictions in disguise. “The end of the Lord is merciful.” But with men how often is wrath pitiless and cruel, working evil instead of good, rejoicing in destruction instead of deliverance!

“Father and Lover of our souls!  
Though darkly round thine anger rolls,  
Thy sunshine smiles beneath the gloom,  
Thou seek’st to warn us, not confound,  
Thy showers would pierce the hardened ground  
And win it to give out its brightness and perfume.”  
(Keble.)

F.

Vers. 18—21.—*The dark and the bright side of things.* Prophet depressed. Heart failing for fear. Roused. Vision twofold. Like the mystic pillar of the wilderness, it is dark and lowering towards God’s enemies, but bright and cheering towards his friends.

I. THE POWERS OF EVIL. Beasts dimly seen. “Horses” indicate the strength and malice of the world-powers. The results are terrible. The unity of Israel is broken. Strength dissipated in party conflicts. Gored and tossed and sore oppressed by their enemies. Dispirited, “so that no man did lift up his head.” But man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. Let us feel and confess in true humility our sin, and the justice of our sufferings, and cry mightily to God; then deliverance will surely come.

II. THE POWERS OF GOOD. (Vers. 20, 21.) Cf. Elisha and his servant (2 Kings vi. 17). So here. “Carpenters;” “workmen.” 1. *Equal in number.* Four indicates

completeness. There will be sufficiency for God's purpose, and yet the number will not be in excess of that on the other side, as if the victory were to be obtained by might and not by right. 2. *Greater in authority.* Law at their back. Ministers of justice. Power not usurped or wrongly used, but employed under the authority of God. 3. *Completer in equipment.* (Ezek. xxi. 36.) Men of free souls, sympathetic hearts, and invincible courage. Men of trained intelligence and executive ability. The right men in the right time.—F.

Vers. 1—6.—*The importance of repentance.* "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers," etc. Zechariah and Haggai were contemporaries—prophets of the restoration. The former began to prophesy about two months after Haggai. Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, he was of priestly descent; a son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo, the chief of one of the priestly families that returned from exile along with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Neh. xii. 4). He commenced his prophetic labours in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, B.C. 520. The most remarkable portion of the book consists of the first six chapters, where we have a record of a series of extraordinary visions, all of which seem to have been vouchsafed to the prophet during one night. The two succeeding chapters (vii. and viii.) contain an answer to a question which the inhabitants of Bethel proposed, respecting the observance of a certain fast. The remaining six chapters contain a variety of predictions. The authenticity of these chapters is denied by some scholars, and doubted by many more. His style is varied, sometimes almost colloquial; at other times sublimely poetic, abounding with gorgeous symbols. The subject suggested by these words is—*the importance of repentance.* There are three grounds in this passage on which this subject is urged.

I. FROM THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE TOWARDS THE IMPENITENT MEN OF THE PAST. "The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers." This "may be interpreted as bearing reference to the whole of their previous history. They had all along shown a mournfully strong and inveterate propensity to depart from God and from his ways. They had needed incessant repetitions of Divine admonitions, entreaties, promises, and threatenings; and many a time all had proved unavailing. Jehovah bound them to himself with 'cords of love.' But 'they brake the bands asunder, and cast away the cords from them.' They chose their own ways; they followed the wicked devices of their own hearts. They thus provoked him to anger; they drew down upon themselves his judicial visitations. From one of these visitations the people whom the prophet now addressed had but recently, in the faithfulness and mercy of a covenant-keeping and compassionate God, been delivered. And I cannot doubt that to *that* most recent manifestation of the Divine displeasure Zechariah specially referred. Their fathers had by their sins brought that heavy seventy years' judgment upon themselves. And he who in justice had executed the judgment, had returned in mercy, and rescued them from their second bondage" (Dr. Wardlaw). Now, the displeasure of God to sinners of the past is here referred to in order to induce the Jews to repent of the selfish negligence which they had evinced concerning the building of the temple (Hag. i. 2—7). The argument here is the kind called enthymeme, in which one premiss only is expressed, and the consequent proposition is left to be supplied by the reader. It means this: the great God has been displeased with your fathers on account of their sins, and he will be displeased with you except you repent. This is an argument that preachers may well urge at all times. They may call up to their hearers the judgments that have fallen on the wicked of the past ages, in order to urge reformed life on the existing generation.

II. FROM GOD'S ASSURANCE OF A WELCOME TO ALL THAT TRULY REPENT. "Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." Blessed truth this! Proved: 1. *By his invitation to the impenitent.* "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," etc.; "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord," etc.; "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The infinite Father is infinitely more ready to welcome true penitence than the father of the prodigal to welcome the return of his long-lost son. 2. *By the*

*experience of mankind.* Manasseh, David, Saul, Bunyan, and millions more returned to him, and he not only received them, but rejoiced over them. This being the case, how powerful is the exhortation here, "Be not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying," etc.! Your fathers, who rejected the call of my prophets of the past, bad as they were, would not have met with their terrible fates had they returned to me. Be not like them; take warning from the past.

III. FROM THE TRANSITORINESS OF HUMAN LIFE, WHETHER WICKED OR GOOD. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" By "the fathers" here undoubtedly reference is to those spoken of in the former verses with whom the Almighty is displeased. These have disappeared; they have vanished from the earth. The prophets, too, the good men who spoke to them and whose call they rejected, useful men as they were, they did not live for ever. The impenitent hearers and their faithful preachers are both gone. How solemnly true this is! All pass away from the stage of life, whether good or bad, useful or mischievous. The life of a generation is but a vapour that will endure for a little and then vanish away. What an argument this: 1. *For the wicked to repent!* Impenitent hearers of the gospel, you will soon be gone. Ere another century passes over this globe, your bodies will be in the dust and your spirits in the awful Hades of retribution; therefore listen and repent. Ye preachers of the gospel, what an argument this: 2. *For faithfulness and for persevering zeal!* You will soon have finished your mission. A few more sermons, and all will be over. "The prophets, do they live for ever?" etc. "Fathers," the ungodly men of the past, where are they? Ah! where are they? Echo answers, "Where?"—D. T.

Vers. 7—17.—*The first vision: God's government of the world.* "Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse," etc. About three months after the call of Zechariah to the prophetic office, he had no less than seven, or, as some count, eight visions in *one night*. And this night, we are told, was in the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, *i.e.* "the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius." Exactly five months before this night the rebuilding of the temple would be resumed. Amongst the various manners in which God revealed himself to men of old, visions were perhaps the most frequent and impressive. He sometimes employed articulate sounds, sometimes the *Urim* and *Thummim*, sometimes the apparitions of the dead, sometimes internal suggestion. In some direct way he touched the springs of thought. But here in *one night* he appears to the prophet in many distinct visions. The visions were marked by these four characteristics. They were: 1. *Mental*. Unlike all other creatures on the earth, so far as we know at present, man has an inner visual organ; he can see with his mind. This is seen in poets, such as Milton, Spenser, etc.; allegorists, such as Bunyan, etc. 2. *Symbolic*. Strange and grotesque objects were seen. These objects were all symbolic; they had a spiritual significance. 3. *Divine*. All men, unless they are utterly destitute of the poetic sentiment, have visions sometimes, not only sleeping but waking visions. But seldom, perhaps, are these visions Divine. 4. *Prophetic*. They point here to the future of God's moral kingdom upon the earth. Men of lofty, sanctified genius often in their visions have a glance of "things that are to come." This vision seems to give us a look into God's moral government of the world. It takes us behind the veil of phenomena, and shows us principles and agencies that move, fashion, and control all. Three facts are suggested in relation to God's government in the world.

I. IT IS CARRIED ON IN CONNECTION WITH MYSTERIOUS AGENCIES. What did the prophet see? "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white." It is idle to attach special ideas to each of these objects; the grand idea is that God has ministers in his empire fully equipped for his work, and prompt to obey his behests. Who are these? *Unfallen angels*. These by millions stand near his throne, ready to do his bidding. In relation to these agents two thoughts are suggested. 1. *That they are under the command of a trans-*

*cedent mind.* Most expositors regard the man on the red horse, and who stood among the myrtle trees, as no less a personage than the Angel of the covenant, the great Messiah. The subsequent verses sustain this idea. This same man appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, to Jacob before his meeting with Esau, to Moses at the burning bush, to Joshua at Jericho, with the sword drawn in his hand. Here he is on the "red horse," emblem of war. He is a great moral Chieftain. 2. *That there are varied orders.* "Behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white." This is the troop that followed the man. When the eyes of Elisha's servant were opened, he beheld a "mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Horses are emblems of force and fleetness. In Christ's army there are hosts, mighty in power and swift in motion. "Are they not all ministering spirits?" How infinitely varied are God's ministers—varied in kind and measure of faculty, in experience, attainment, and aspect too—thrones, principalities, powers, and dominions! 3. *That the whole world is their sphere of action.* "These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth." (1) They "go to and fro" through the earth. They are ever journeying; some are swift as lightning in their speed; some of them are "full of eyes," and see all things. (2) They know the state of the world. "We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." "At rest," not in the rest of righteousness, not in the repose of goodness, but in carnal security and sin.

II. THAT IT HAS NOT ONLY DIFFICULTIES, BUT AN INTERPRETER ALSO. "Then said I, O my lord, what are these?" Observe: 1. *The difficulties of God's government.* "What are these?" The prophet understood not these strange appearances; and in amazement he exclaims, "What are these?" What thoughtful man has not asked such a question as this concerning the Divine government over and over again? "What are these? What are these elements, forces, laws, existences, events? What are they? Are they messengers of mercy or of justice? O my lord, what are these?" We are all moving in mystery. 2. *The interpreter of God's government.* Who answered the question? "The man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they." Some other creature, the angel that talked with him, was asked first; but the answer came not from him, but from the Man Christ Jesus. In Rev. v. 2 "a strong angel" is represented as crying with a loud voice concerning the mysteries of God's government, inquiring who was worthy to "loose the seals;" but no one was found in heaven, in earth, or under the earth, able to "open and read the book." There was only one found: "It was the Lamb in the midst of the throne." Christ is the only Interpreter of God. He is the *Logos*.

III. THAT IT IS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED IN THE INTERESTS OF HIS PEOPLE. His people are supposed to be here represented by the "myrtle trees." The Jewish Church at this time was not like a forest of stately cedars, but a grove of myrtles, fragile and obscure. 1. *These seem to be the centre of Divine operations on the earth.* Now, in the myrtle trees is the man "riding upon a red horse." And in the myrtle trees were the "red horses, speckled, and white"—the whole troop was there. The "myrtle trees" seemed to be the centre of all the agents. From it they started on their mission, and to it they returned. The true Church is the temple, the residence of God himself. 2. *The object of special intercession.* "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these three score and ten years?" The duration of their captivity in Babylon. Who is the angel that makes this appeal? It was he that "ever liveth to make intercession for us." "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." 3. *The subjects of the Divine communication.* "The Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words." The prophet is here commissioned to proclaim: (1) God's zeal on behalf of Jerusalem. "Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts." (2) His displeasure for the enemies of Jerusalem. "I am very sore displeased with the heathen." His merciful purpose was to bestow blessings on Jerusalem. "Therefore thus saith the Lord," etc.

CONCLUSION. Though we are far enough from presuming to have given a correct interpretation of the passage, or of maintaining that the thoughts we have suggested are contained in it, we conscientiously believe that the ideas are scriptural, and adapted

for spiritual usefulness. The subject of God's government in the world is one of the sublimest that can engage the human mind, and is beset with difficulties that often baffle the profoundest thinkers. It is our happiness to know that, small as is our planet in comparison with millions of other orbs that people immensity, and insignificant as are its human tenants, the infinite Father superintends it in wisdom and in love.—D. T.

Vers. 18—21.—*Second vision: four horns and four carpenters.* "Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem," etc. This is the second vision that the prophet had that night. The "horn" in the Bible is a symbol of power (Amos vi. 13). The horns here represent possibly those worldly kingdoms which had been, or were to be, opposed to the Jewish people, namely, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. These four were symbolized in the colossal figure which filled the imagination of Nebuchadnezzar in his dream. Whom do the "four carpenters" symbolize, or, as some translate it, the "four smiths"? Undoubtedly, those instruments by which the moral Governor of the world overcomes all the enemies of truth and right. The interpreting angel says, in relation to these four smiths, or workmen, that they had "come to fray," or terrify and cast down, the hostile powers represented by the horns. This vision presents to us the *cause of right on the earth*, and suggests two thoughts in relation to it.

I. THAT THE CAUSE OF RIGHT ON THE EARTH HAS STRONG ANTAGONISTS. Here are four horns, four mighty powers, all of which are in dead hostility to the covenant people. They are represented as those who have "scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head." The enemies of the true *scatter and crush*. Though Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome have long since passed away, the horns, or the mighty powers of evil, are still here, and are at work. What are they? *Reigning materialism* is a horn; *practical atheism* is a horn; *intolerant superstition* is a horn; and *dominant selfishness* is a horn. All these mighty forces are ever at work in order to destroy the cause of right and truth upon the earth. They are the "principalities and powers of darkness," against which all that is righteous, true, and pure upon the earth have to wrestle for existence.

II. THAT THE CAUSE OF TRUTH UPON THE EARTH HAS DIVINE DEFENDERS. Here are four carpenters, or smiths, who appear to "fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles." Mark, the defenders were: 1. *Men*, not angels. God saves man by man. Who were the first apostles? 2. *Working men*. Toilers, labourers. It is man as man, not philosopher, poet, king, millionaire, that has to battle for the right. The greatest moral victories have been won by men in the lower walks of life. 3. They were *skilled men*. These men had a trade; they were craftsmen; they had been trained to the work they undertook. There is a skill required in order to strike effectively at the errors and wrongs of life. Stupid men, however good their intentions, accomplish but little, if anything, in the noble cause. They must be men of good natural sagacity, and that sagacity trained by the Spirit of God. A man to convert souls must have as much aptitude for the work as the carpenter has in order to shape the wood to his purpose, or the smith to mould and shape the metals.

CONCLUSION. Thank God that if the "horns" are here, there are carpenters here also to bring them to ruin, and to build up the blessed kingdom of truth and righteousness.—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER II

Vers. 1—13.—§ 5. *The third vision: the man with the measuring-line.*

Vers. 1.—(Heb. ii. 5.) I lifted up mine eyes again (comp. ch. v. 1; vi. 1; Dan. viii. 3). This third vision makes a further

revelation of God's mercy to Israel. Consequent on the destruction of enemies shall be the growth and development of the chosen people till the time of their final glory (comp. ch. i. 16). There is some difficulty in arranging the details of this vision, depending in great measure on the decision we arrive at with regard to the

identification of the "young man" of ver. 4. Those who, as Theodoret, Hitzig, Schegg, Trochon, Wright, Perowne, etc., consider him to be the man with the measuring-line of ver. 1, do not explain why the message should be given to him instead of to the prophet who had asked for information. Nor is it at all certain that the measurer is meant to be regarded as having made a mistake in attempting to define the limits of what was practically unlimited—viz. the restored Jerusalem—and was stopped accordingly in his proceedings. It seems preferable, with Jerome, Cornelius à Lapide, Pusey, Keil, Knabenbauer, etc., to regard the "young man" as Zechariah himself. Then the vision is thus presented: The prophet sees a man with a measuring-line; he asks whither he is going, and is answered that he was going forth to measure Jerusalem. Upon this the interpreting angel leaves the prophet's side to receive the explanation of the man's proceedings, and is met by a superior angel, who bids him hasten to tell the prophet the meaning of the vision. **A man.** Probably an angel in human form, as ch. i. 8. **A measuring-line.** This is not the same word as that in ch. i. 16; but the idea there proposed is taken up here, and its fulfilment is set forth (comp. Ezek. xl. 3; Rev. xi. 1; xxi. 15, 16).

Ver. 2.—What is the breadth thereof. The man measures to see what shall be the dimensions of the restored city, for from ver. 12 it is apparent that the building is not yet completed, nor are we to think that the rebuilding of the material ruined walls is meant.

Ver. 3.—Went forth. The interpreting angel leaves the prophet, and goes away to meet another angel who advances from the opposite side. Septuagint, *εἰστήκει*, "stood." Another angel went out; *went forth*, the word being the same as before. This latter angel, sent by God with a revelation, is superior to the interpreter, as the latter receives the message from him to deliver to the prophet.

Ver. 4.—And said unto him; i.e. the second angel said to the interpreter. Run. He was to hasten and deliver the message, because it was a joyful one and calculated to allay the prophet's solicitude. This young man. The Prophet Zechariah. The term applied to him is thought to show that he was still young when the vision appeared; but the word is used also for minister, or servant, or disciple, without necessarily defining the age. Others, not so suitably, consider that the measuring angel is meant, who is thus stopped in his intention of measuring Jerusalem, as being ignorant of God's counsels. Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls. Jerusalem

shall be as open villages in a plain country. The word *perazoth* is used in Ezek. xxxviii. 11, meaning "unwalled villages," where men dwelt "without walls, having neither bars nor gates." So Esth. ix. 19, where it means, "country towns," in contrast to the metropolis, which was walled and fortified. The idea in the text is that Jerusalem in the future shall be so extended that walls shall no longer contain its inhabitants, but they shall spread themselves in the open country on every side. It is certain that the city did greatly increase in after-time, if we may believe Aristæus's account in his famous letter to his brother Philocrates; and the annunciation of this prosperity would be a comfort to the prophet (comp. Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.' v. 4. 2). But no material increase of this nature satisfies the prophecy, which can only have its fulfilment in the spiritual Jerusalem, whose Builder is Christ, in whose light the nations of them that are saved shall walk (Rev. xxi. 24; see Isa. xlix. 18, etc.; liv. 2, 3). This open condition implies not only extent, but peace and safety also. The reason of this quiet security is given in the next verse. Septuagint, *Κατακάρπῳ κατοικηθήσεται Ἱερουσαλὴμ*, "Jerusalem shall be abundantly inhabited."

Ver. 5.—A wall of fire. She will not need walls. God will be her protection, not only defending her from attack, but consuming the enemy who may presume to assault her (comp. Deut. iv. 24; Ps. lxxviii. 2). The glory; *εἰς δόξαν ἑσται* (Septuagint). God will make his glory conspicuous by the mighty deeds he will do in Jerusalem and the providential care he will take of her. He shall be known to be dwelling there, as he revealed his presence by the pillar of fire and the Shechinah (comp. Isa. lx. 1, 2, 19).

Ver. 6.—The superior angel of ver. 4 continues to speak. He calls on all the Hebrews still in dispersion to come and share this glorious state and escape the punishment which was about to fall upon the hostile kingdom. The exaltation of Jerusalem is connected with the downfall of her enemies. Ho, ho, come forth, and flee; Hebrew, "Ho, ho! and flee," or, "flee thou" (comp. Isa. xlviii. 20; Jer. li. 6, 45.) A great number of the exiles had remained in Babylonia, having established themselves there, according to the injunction in Jer. xxix. 5, etc., and grown rich. These people had refused to exchange their present prosperity for the doubtful future offered by a return to their desolate native land. But they are now called upon to "flee" from the danger that menaced the country of their adoption. Babylon is said to have been twice taken in the reign of Darius (see note on ver. 7). The land of the north; i.e.

Babylonia (comp. Jer. i. 14; iv. 6; xxxiii. 8). We should have called the Babylonians an Eastern people if we had dwelt in Palestine; but they always invaded this land from the north, and the great caravan route entered the country from the same quarter, so they were deemed to be a northern power. I have spread you abroad as the four winds (Ezek. xvii. 21). The Jews had been dispersed through all parts of the extensive Babylonian empire, and that with a violence which is compared to the force of the combined winds of heaven. Keil, Wright, and others regard the words as a promise of future extension only to be obtained by a return to the promised land, translating, "I will spread you," the perfect of the text being taken to express prophetic certainty. But it is surely incongruous to comfort the dispersed Jews by the promise of a still wider dispersion. This appears to be as erroneous as the Septuagint rendering of the verb, *συνάγω*, "I will gather."

Ver. 7.—*Deliver thyself. Escape from the danger. O Zion.* The exiled Jews are thus designated. Septuagint, *Εἰς ζῶν ἀνασώζεσθε*, "Go to Zion, and save yourselves." *That dwellest (thou that dwellest) with the daughter of Babylon.* The inhabitants of Babylon are called "the daughter of Babylon," in analogy with the common phrases, "the daughter of Zion," "the daughter of Jerusalem" (comp. Jer. xvi. 19). There is some reproach implied in the clause, as if these Jews were content to dwell and remain in this heathen city. The immediate danger that menaced Babylon arose from two severe rebellions, in the course of which the city was twice taken. The first revolt was headed by Nidinta-Bel, B.C. 519, who was slain by Darius at Babylon. The second took place under Arakha, B.C. 514; he was defeated by a general of Darius, named Intaphernes, taken prisoner and crucified. A record of these occurrences is found in Darius's inscription on the rock at Behistun, translated in 'Records of the Past,' vol. i. The merciless Persians would doubtless treat the inhabitants of the captured city with their wonted cruelty.

Ver. 8.—*After the glory hath he sent me. After glory* (there is no article in the original), i.e. to win honour, *hath Jehovah sent me*—the superior angel who speaks. As the words, "thus saith the Lord," precede, we should have expected, "have I sent thee," but such change of persons, and indirect address, are common in Hebrew (comp. ch. xiv. 5). The angel is sent to get glory over the heathen by taking vengeance on them (comp. Exod. xiv. 18). Such judgments are often represented to be inflicted by angelic agency (Gen. xix. 13; 2 Kings xix. 35; Ezek. ix.). *The apple of his eye.*

The language is human. Israel is very precious to God; and they who vex and harass him are as they who hurt that which God prizes inestimably, and which a mere touch offends and injures. The word rendered "apple" is usually considered to mean "aperture," or "gate," the pupil being the entrance to the visual organ; but Dr. Wright regards it rather as a natural word of endearment, like the Latin, *pupa*, *pupilla*, indicating "a doll," "little maiden of the eye." Similar, though not identical, expressions occur in Deut. xxxii. 10; Prov. vii. 2; Ps. xvii. 8.

Ver. 9.—*I will shake mine hand upon (over) them.* The angel reports Jehovah's message now in the first person, or speaks as the representative of Jehovah. The action of shaking the hand over a nation is one of menace (Job xxxi. 21; Isa. xi. 15; xix. 16). *Shall be a spoil to their servants;* to their slaves, those who once served them. This was true only in a spiritual sense, when the nations were won over to the true faith (see ver. 11; and comp. Isa. xiv. 2; xlix. 22, etc.; Ezek. xvi. 61). Septuagint, *τοῖς δουλεύουσιν αὐτοῖς*, "to them that serve them." *Ye shall know, etc.* (ch. iv. 9; vi. 15). When this comes to pass, the Israelites shall recognize and own the Divine mission of God's messenger.

Ver. 10.—*Sing and rejoice.* The Jews released from Babylon, and the whole Jewish nation, are bidden to exult in the promised protection and presence of the Lord. *Lo, I come;* Septuagint, *ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἔρχομαι*. So Christ is called, *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, "he that cometh" (Matt. xi. 3). *I will dwell in the midst of thee* (ch. viii. 3; ix. 9). Not merely the rebuilding of the temple is signified, and the re-establishment of the ordained worship (though without the Shechinah), but rather the incarnation of Christ and his perpetual presence in the Church. *Κατασκηνώσω ἐν μέσῳ σου* (Septuagint), which recalls John i. 14, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt (*ἐσκήνωσεν*) among us" (comp. Isa. xii. 6; Ezek. xliii. 9; xlviii. 35; Mal. iii. 1).

Ver. 11.—*Many nations shall be joined (shall join themselves) to the Lord;* "shall fly for refuge unto the Lord" (Septuagint). *My people; unto me for a people;* Septuagint, "shall be unto him for a people" (comp. ch. viii. 20). No mere conversion of individuals among the heathen satisfies this promise. Whole nations shall become the Lord's people. That title shall be shared with Israel by countless multitudes (comp. Isa. ii. 2, 3; xi. 10; Micah iv. 2; Zeph. ii. 11). *I will dwell, etc.* The promise of ver. 10 is repeated for assurance' sake. The LXX. has, "And they shall dwell in the midst of thee." *Thou shalt know* (as ver. 9).



Ver. 12.—**Shall inherit Judah.** The Lord, though it is true that many other nations shall be converted, shall take Judah (*i.e.* the whole Jewish nation) as his portion, in accordance with Deut. xxxii. 9. In the holy land. This expression is not found elsewhere applied to Judæa, nor is it to be confined to that nation here. Every land is holy where the Lord dwells. The conversion of the heathen should emanate from Judæa (Luko xxiv. 47), and spread through all the world, and thus the earth should be holy ground. **Shall choose Jerusalem again;** Revised Version, "shall yet choose Jeru-

salem" (comp. ch. i. 17). This points to Christ as King of the spiritual Zion.

Ver. 13.—**Be silent;** *hush* (comp. Hab. ii. 20; Zeph. i. 7, and notes there). In the expectation of these mighty events, men are called upon to wait in awe and reverence. **He is raised up;** *he hath arisen.* He had seemed to sleep when he let his people be trodden down by the heathen; but now he, as it were, waketh and cometh from heaven, **his holy habitation** (Deut. xxvi. 15), to inflict the threatened judgment on the nations, and to succour his own people (comp. Ps. xlii. 23, etc.).

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*A vision of safety.* "I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring-line in his hand," etc. We have here another case of repetition and expansion. In the end of ch. i. 16 we had a brief promise of the full restoration of Jerusalem as a city—a place of dwellings with dwellers therein. In the present passage we have the same promise expressed at more length. In other words, we are asked to observe (1) how *immediate its application*; (2) how *emphatic its repetition*; and (3) how *profound its significance*.

I. HOW IMMEDIATE ITS APPLICATION. So immediate, in fact, that the first steps towards its accomplishment had already begun. Whatever may have been previously resolved on in private in regard to building operations, the first visible and overt step in those operations themselves is that of measuring and staking the ground. The very children understand the meaning of that. Jehovah, accordingly, in the opening verses of this chapter, accommodates himself to this truth. The prophet sees manifestly (he "lifted up his eyes, and looked"), but apparently much to his surprise ("behold"), a man with a measuring-line in his hand. Where is he going? so the prophet asks; and is told—He is going to "Jerusalem" with his line. For what purpose? To "measure" it, to survey it as for building, to ascertain its length and its breadth. What does all this amount to? It amounts to "business," as we should now express it. Consultation, deliberation, decision,—the time for all these is now past. It is the time for doing, for actual fulfilment. The work, in one sense, therefore, as we said, has begun. Compare "The hour is coming, and now is," in John iv. 23; v. 25; also Luke xii. 49.

II. HOW EMPHATIC ITS REPETITION. This shown: 1. *By the dignity of the speaker.* Two angels are now spoken of (vers. 3, 4), about whom and their respective doings much difference of interpretation exists. If, however, we assume the "young man" of ver. 4 to be the prophet himself (see Pusey, *in loc.*; and comp. Jer. i. 6; 2 Kings ix. 4, "the young man the prophet"), it seems clear that the one of these angels, speaking as he does (in ver. 5) in Jehovah's name, is that Angel-Jehovah mentioned before in ch. i. 11, 12, and afterwards in ch. iii. 1; as also that it is this same Angel who commissions the other to communicate to the prophet the declaration of ver. 4. No speaker, therefore, in regard to dignity, can go beyond him (Matt. xxi. 37; Heb. i. 5). 2. *The earnestness of the action.* (1) On this great Speaker's part, "going forth" as with some special purpose in view. (2) On the other angel's part, going forth to "meet him," as though to learn his will as soon as possible. (3) In the command given, to "run and speak," as men do who carry good tidings (2 Sam. xviii. 27). 3. *The explicitness of the language.* Jerusalem was to more than recover (ver. 4) its former population and size. Now its population and dwellings were much too few for its ancient limits. By-and-by they should be as much too many. What evidence this of increase! What a picture of security, of population, of wealth (comp. Gen. xiii. 2; xxiv. 35; Job i. 3)! What a promise, in short, of blessing and good!

III. HOW PROFOUND ITS SIGNIFICANCE. The features already noticed, however striking, were only, as it were, on the surface. There were others deeper and still more worthy

of notice which accounted for these. 1. *How came Jerusalem to be thus secure and enlarged?* Because the Lord Jehovah himself was as "a wall of fire round about;" such a defence, i.e., as would not only keep the enemies out, but also destroy them if they essayed to draw near (comp. Ps. cxxv. 2, a psalm, like cxxvi., probably belonging to this time; 2 Kings vi. 17). 2. *How came Jerusalem to be thus protected and favoured?* Because God himself had returned to dwell in her; and to do so, moreover, as her peculiar "glory." These two points illustrated by Ps. xlv. 5; and Acts ii. 5—11; viii. 27, 28. This, in short, was why there should be so many other inhabitants in Jerusalem, viz. because of this most glorious Inhabitant of all.

We are reminded by this subject yet further: 1. *How swift and willing is the service of the angels of heaven.* Compare the word "run," etc., with Dan. ix. 21, 23; Ezek. i. 14; and Ps. ciii. 20, 21. This described by the poet—

"Thousands at his bidding speed,  
And post o'er land and ocean."

This partly at the root, perhaps, of the common notion that angels have wings. This also a thing to be imitated and aimed at by us. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." 2. *How blessed the effects of the presence of Christ.* As to safety (Matt. viii. 24—26); as to success (Matt. xviii. 19, 20); as to comfort (Mark ii. 19); as to hope (Col. i. 27, "Christ among you, the Hope of glory"); as to all that constitutes heaven (1 John iii. 2; John xiv. 3; xvi. 24).

Vers. 6—9.—*A promise of triumph.* "Ho, ho! come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord," etc. Soon after the time of the deliverance of this prophecy, Babylon suffered greatly at the hands of Darius. The primary reference of the verses before us is to this fact, in the judgment of some—vers. 6, 7 being an urgent call to flee from that city and land, and vers. 8, 9 a solemn prediction of the calamities about to come upon it, uttered in support of that call. It will, perhaps, be safer for us to use the passage in a general way, and as showing to us (1) *Zion's perpetual duty towards God*; and (2) *God's constant devotion to Zion*.

I. *ZION'S DUTY TOWARDS GOD.* God's people called here by that name because the prophet has been speaking specially of Jerusalem, and because the "time to favour Zion," as the life-centre of their whole community, had now come. Being so named, observe: 1. *To what they are called*; viz. to be separated from Babylon, and her doings, and, to a certain extent, from her people (comp. Rev. xviii. 4; Isa. xlviii. 20; 2 Cor. vi. 17; 2 Chron. xix. 2, etc.). 2. *How they are called to this*; viz. (1) with a very loud call ("Ho, ho!"), as though overcome with slumber, and not aware of the danger arising, as with persons sleeping through cold, from the peculiar insidiousness of the things of this world (Matt. xiii. 28; 1 Tim. vi. 9); also (2) with a very urgent call, as though to "flee" for their lives (Gen. xix. 17); and, once more, (3) with a peculiarly imperative call, "Thus saith the Lord." 3. *Why they are called to it.* (1) Partly on account of their experience in the past. Because of their previous lack of separation from God's enemies (see Hos. vii. 8; iv. 17), God had spread them abroad, or completely scattered them, as by the four winds of heaven, leaving no corner untouched (compare the similar effect produced by the different figure of 2 Kings xxi. 13). (2) Partly on account of their then present condition. The people specially addressed seem to have been those belonging to Zion, who were dwelling in Babylon (ver. 7) at that time, where the name of Jehovah was scorned and despised (Ps. cxxxvii. 3, 4; 2 Kings xviii. 35), and where they were specially exposed, therefore, to the temptations here referred to (Dan. i. 5, 8; iii., *passim*). Avoid her snares; avoid her fate (see Jer. i. 8, 9; li. 6, 45).

II. *GOD'S DEVOTION TO ZION.* If God thus calls upon his people to be peculiarly his (1 Pet. ii. 9), he is ready and willing, on his part, to be peculiarly theirs. "After the glory" just previously spoken of—i.e. (perhaps) *besides* being the invisible glory and defence, as there described, of his Zion—there were two further things he would do. 1. *He would openly identify himself with their cause.* He would let it be seen; he would "send" the Messenger-Jehovah himself to proclaim it, that they were part of himself, as it were—nothing more intimately so, in real truth (see end of ver. 8; and

comp. Deut. xxxii. 10; also Exod. iv. 22; Acts ix. 4; Matt. xxv. 40). 2. *He would as openly manifest himself against their enemies.* "I will shake my hand over them," and spoil those that spoil thee (comp. vers. 9 and 8). This a special proof of the presence of God with his servants, and of their mission to speak in his Name (end of ver. 9). So of Moses (comp. Exod. iii. 21, 22; xii. 35, 36); of Barak (Judg. v. 12); of Christ himself (Ps. lxxviii. 18; Eph. iv. 8; Col. ii. 15).

All this: 1. *A glorious picture of the state of God's people at the time of the end.* (1) As to their nearness to God (see such passages as Ps. lxxvii. 6, 7; Rev. xxi. 2, 3; xxii. 4). (2) As to their separation from evil (Ezek. xliii. 7; Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 3; ch. xiv. 20, 21). (3) As to their triumphs in Christ (Rev. xxi. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 52—57; Ps. cx.; Heb. i. 13; x. 13, etc.). 2. *An instructive lesson as to the great thing to be aimed at by us now.* (Cant. ii. 16; John xv. 4, etc.; compare also what is shown of the importance of "holding the Head," in Col. ii. 19, and context; and of being "found in Christ," in Phil. iii. 9.)

Vers. 10—13.—*The benefits of God's presence.* "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee," etc. In these verses the prophecy takes us back to a thought twice touched on already (see ch. i. 16; ii. 5), viz. the manifested presence of God with his people. Three times over in the present passage is this same thought referred to (observe "I will dwell," both in vers. 10 and 11; and "habitation," in ver. 13). Taking this, therefore, as the main idea of the passage, we may learn from it, in a general way, how such a presence of God in Christ is connected (1) with the *extension* of his kingdom; (2) with the *establishment* of his people; and (3) with the *confutation* of unbelief.

I. THE EXTENSION OF HIS KINGDOM. "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day." So says the Angel-Jehovah here as the Representative and Equal of Jehovah. In what day? The "day" so often referred to of his "dwelling" or being amongst them. "Joined," in what manner? So as to become his "people" themselves. The illustrations of this general principle, whatever be the special application thereof primarily intended in this passage, are many and close. Compare the command ("make disciples") and the promise ("I am with you") of Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; also the connection, in Rom. xi. 12, 15, between the restoration of Israel to God's favour (equivalent to his presence among them) and the conversion of the world; also Ps. lxxvii. throughout; Gen. xlix. 10; 1 Cor. xiv. 25; Isa. xlv. 14; Zech. viii. 23.

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIS PEOPLE. "Thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me." 1. This partly due to the *direct results* of the manifested presence of Christ. Contrast the language of Cleophas ("we trusted," Luke xxiv. 21), when he supposed Christ to be absent, with the language of the disciples, not long before, in his presence (John xvi. 30). 2. Partly due to its *indirect effects* as referred to just now. It greatly confirms our own faith in Christianity when we see strangers brought to believe it. The more widely a remedy is found to succeed, the more our trust in it is augmented. This truth seems recognized or implied in such passages as Rom. i. 13; Acts xi. 22, 23; Col. i. 3—6, 23, etc.

III. THE CONFUTATION OF UNBELIEF. "Be silent, O all flesh." All "flesh and blood"—human nature at large. Compare, after the presence and power of the Captain of the Lord's host (Josh. v. 13—15) had been so signally manifested in the events recorded in Josh. x., how we read in the twenty-first verse of that chapter, that "none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel" (see Exod. xi. 7; Ps. lxxvi. 7—9; Zeph. i. 7; Hab. ii. 20). Also Rom. xi. 33—36, where we have the same arising of God to manifest his presence by restoring Israel to his favour (note expressions, "choose Jerusalem again," and "raised up," in vers. 12, 13), and the same call to "silent awe and reverential contemplation" (Wardlaw) of his greatness. May we not also compare what is said in the prophecy of Enoch as quoted in Jude 14, 15? When "every eye shall see him" (Rev. i. 7) every mind shall believe.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS. 1. *How deep the foundations of gospel truth!* Some of the most vital of these are connected with the Person and office of Christ, viz. as already referred to, his being at once the appointed Messenger and the personal Equal of God. Observe how each of these separate lines is woven into the whole tenor and structure of the passage before us. Three times over the person speaking is described as being

"sent" (vers. 8, 9, 11); yet nowhere can we find any distinction as to authority between the speaker and Jehovah himself. So far from this, in fact, as to lead to an appearance of utter confusion between him who is sent and him who sends; like the apparent confusion to be found in the language of the Angel-Jehovah in Gen. xxii. 11, 12. A confusion, however, which, when viewed in the more explicit light of New Testament teaching, becomes comparatively clear, and even natural. How striking, because—on the human writer's part—how undesigned a coincidence! 2. *How peculiarly important in these days the duty of preaching the gospel "afar off"!* The best answer to sceptical questionings at home is to be found in missionary conquests abroad. Other religions, being the inventions of particular "races," suit those races alone. Christianity suits "every creature" (Mark xvi. 15), because the Creator's own work.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Measuring the Church.* "Jerusalem" stands for the Church. The "man" (ver. 1) seems the same person who is afterwards spoken of as "young," and who is implicitly rebuked for taking in hand a task beyond his powers. The passage suggests for consideration—

I. **MAN'S IDEA OF THE CHURCH AS CAPABLE OF STRICT DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT.** There has always been a disposition to fix and limit the boundaries of the Church. 1. *Irrational.* The visible Church may be defined, but not the invisible. Truth is not to be measured by our belief, or godliness by the piety of the party to which we belong, or the community of the good by the little systems of our day. 2. *Presumptuous.* This work cannot be done by man. He has neither the capacity nor the means. "We mete out love as if our eye saw to the end of heaven." It demands higher powers—a purer eye, a deeper insight, a more far-reaching vision. Even Elijah failed, and Peter greatly erred. Only the Lord himself knoweth them who are his. 3. *Injurious.* Mistakes must occur. Some excluded who ought to have been included, and others included who should have been excluded. Hence evil both to the judge and to the judged—pride, injustice, uncharitableness. See Saul "breathing out threatenings and slaughter." Mark John, the beloved disciple, wanting to call down fire on the Samaritans. Behold the Corinthian Church—sample of many others down to our own day—torn by factions and blighted by party spirit. How often, in the world, have grievous wars arisen from paltry questions as to boundaries! So the Church has suffered incalculable evils from "profane and vain babblings" and questions which minister strife.

II. **GOD'S IDEA OF THE CHURCH AS TRANSCENDING ALL HUMAN LIMITATIONS.** God is the Supreme and only Judge. He sees things as they are. He knows not only the outward works, but the heart, and the end from the beginning. In the woman whom Simon the Pharisee despised our Lord saw a true penitent. In the man who was casting out devils in his name he discerns an ally, though he followed him not openly as a disciple. In the devout Cornelius he acknowledged a true worshipper and servant of God, though he was as yet unknown to the apostles. His love overflows the letter of our Creeds and the boundaries of our Churches. And as in the past, so in the future. The picture is grand and inspiring. It foreshadows the glory of the latter day. Here is: 1. *Vast extension.* (Vers. 6, 7.) The Church is like a city that outgrows its walls, that absorbs the outlying villages and hamlets, that gradually includes the whole land in its benign embrace. As Jerusalem, so the Church, in the day of prosperity, would far surpass all former bounds. 2. *Inviolable security.* The figure is vivid and striking. It recalls the story of the prophet (2 Kings vi. 15—17) and the more ancient records of Moses and of Israel in the wilderness. The true defence is not material, but spiritual—not of the world, but of God. 3. *Divine blessedness.* The life and splendour of the Church are in the inhabitation of God. This secures the supremacy of goodness, and the brotherhood of man in Christ Jesus. God is in the midst. "God is Light," "God is Love," God is Holiness; therefore the people will live and move and have their being in light and love and holiness. It will be the days of heaven on earth.—F.

Vers. 6-9.—*The exiles' return.* "Return." This call implies—

I. KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR CONDITION. In the dark days we are apt to say, "Doth God know?" This is our weakness. The cries of the poor, the needy, and the oppressed are ever heard on high.

II. CONTINUED INTEREST IN THEIR WELFARE. Israel, though scattered, was not forsaken. Affliction witnesses both as to our sin and God's mercy. If God did not care, he would let us go on in sin. But because he loves and pities us and yearns for our home-coming, he ceases not to cry, "Return."

III. ADEQUATE MEANS PROVIDED FOR THEIR RESTORATION. God does not require the impossible. His commands are promises. The way is open. The exiles are free to come back. Welcome and peace are assured on the word of the Lord. But self-effort is needed. We must ourselves act.

IV. GRANDEST ENCOURAGEMENT TO OBEDIENCE. The best reasons to convince the judgment. The most powerful motives to sway the heart. God appeals: 1. To the *sense of right*. What should be the best and the noblest? "We needs must love the highest when we see it." 2. The *feeling of brotherhood*. The old unity might be restored. The Jews looked back with pride to the days of David and Solomon. So of the Church. 3. *Their consciousness of the real dignity of their being*. They were precious in God's sight. Specially protected and dear "as the apple of his eye." Such thoughts fitted to raise our hearts, to inspire us with worthier ideas of our nature and destiny (1 John iii. 1). 4. *Their hope of better times*. Obedience would bring blessedness.—F.

Vers. 10-13.—*The joys of the Church in her great Head.* "It is a great jubilee of joy to which Zion is invited. Thrice besides is she invited with the same word (Isa. liv. 1; Zeph. iii. 14, 15; Isa. xii. 6), and all for the restored and renewed presence of God" (Pusey).

I. THE GLORY OF HIS PRESENCE. Absenteeism is a sore evil among men, but the King of Zion is always in residence.

II. THE VASTNESS OF HIS DOMINION. Not material but moral. Souls. "The riches of his inheritance in the saints." Far and wide. People of every kindred and tongue. Constant accessions of territory, till the uttermost parts of the earth are possessed.

III. THE SPLENDOUR OF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS. The cross means death to evil and life to good. As when our Lord was in the world, wherever he went he brought light and blessing, so it is still. There is joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth, and this joy is shared by the saints on earth.

IV. THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS REIGN. He rules not by force, but by love. The homage of his subjects is from the heart, and their service is freely and joyously rendered. The honours of his kingdom are not to the noble and the great of the earth, but to the good. At last the old word is fulfilled, "In his days shall the righteous flourish" (Ps. lxxii. 7).—F.

Vers. 1-5.—*Third vision: an interesting future for the world.* "I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and, behold, a man with a measuring-line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof," etc. Here is the third vision which the prophet had the same night. It is a continuation of the subject of the former one, namely, the rebuilding and reoccupation of Jerusalem and the temple. Observe: 1. *What he saw*. "A man with a measuring-line in his hand." In Ezek. xl. 3; xlii. xlii., you have the same image. Who was this man? The general impression is that it was the Messiah in human form. He is the great Moral Architect, the Builder of the great temple of truth in the world. Then the prophet sees angels. "Behold, the angel that talked with me went forth." Who was this angel? The interpreter. Then there is another angel he sees, who went out to meet him. Who is he? Some suppose, the same as the "man with the measuring-line." In addition to this he sees a young man. "Run, speak to this young man." Who is this young man? He is generally believed to be the prophet himself; and Christ is here represented as commissioning an angel to run and speak. 2. *What he says to him*. "Whither goest thou?" The "man with the measuring-line" excites his curiosity. His appearance, gait, speed, as he carried the measuring-

line in his hand, would naturally give occasion to the question. 3. *What he heard.* He heard the answer to his question: "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof." He heard the commission given to the angel: "Run, speak to this young man." He heard a description given of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls," etc. And he heard the Divine promise made concerning it: "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about." This part of his vision may be fairly taken to illustrate the future increase, security, and glory of good men on the earth.

I. THE FUTURE INCREASE OF GOOD MEN ON THE EARTH. Two remarks are suggested concerning the extent of genuine religion. It is: 1. *Measurable only by the Divine.* Who had the "measuring-line"? Not a mere man, not any created intelligence, but the God-Man, the Messiah. Men cannot measure the growth of piety in the world. They attempt it, but make fearful mistakes. They deal in statistics, they count the number of Churches in the world and the number of professed worshippers. But piety cannot be measured in this way. When you have summed up the number of temples and the number of professed worshippers, you have not approached a correct estimate as to the amount of genuine piety in the world. Have you scales by which to weigh genuine love? any numbers by which to count holy thoughts, aspirations, and volitions? any rules by which to gauge spiritual intelligence? Have you any plummet by which to fathom even the depths of a mother's affections? No one but God can weigh and measure the holy experiences of holy souls. By his method of measurement he may discover more piety in a humble cottage than in crowded tabernacles and cathedrals. He hath the true "measuring-line," and no one else. Hence endeavour not to determine the usefulness of a minister by the numbers of his congregation or the funds contributed by them. 2. *Unrestricted by material bounds.* "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein." The literal idea is that so many shall be its inhabitants that all could not be contained within the walls, but shall spread out in the open country around (Esth. ix. 19), and so secure shall they be as not to need shelter behind walls for themselves and the cattle. So hereafter Judæa is to be "the land of unwall'd villages" (Ezek. xxxviii. 11). We are told that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

II. THE FUTURE SECURITY OF GOOD MEN ON THE EARTH. "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about." "A wall of fire." Who shall penetrate a massive wall of fire? But that wall is God himself, omnipotent in strength, immeasurably high. "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God;" "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 3, 23). Conventional Christians talk about the Church being in danger. Are the stars of heaven in danger? The true Church is founded on a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Omnipotence is the Guardian of the good. "He shall give his angels charge over thee," etc.

III. THE FUTURE GLORY OF THE GOOD MEN ON THE EARTH. "And will be the Glory in the midst of her." The reference here is to the Shechinah and the mercy-seat. Good men are the recipients and the reflectors of Divine glory. They are the temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in, and they reveal more of him than the whole material universe. Holiest souls are his highest manifestations.—D. T.

Vers. 6—9.—*Soul-exile.* "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord," etc. This is a call of Jehovah to the Jews in Babylonian captivity to return to their own land. Cyrus had made a way for them, and publicly proclaimed their deliverance. There are expressions in these verses, as indeed in almost every verse of the book, the exact meaning of which cannot be settled: it is idle to attempt to interpret their precise significance. For example, what is meant by "I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven"? Some say that it means that the proclamation was to be made to every part of the land. Some, that it refers to the extent of their dispersion, that they had been scattered by the four winds of heaven. But

what matters it? Again, what is meant by "After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you"? Some suppose the prophet to be the person who here speaks of himself as being sent. Others, the angel mentioned in ver. 4. Some read the words, "after the glory," "to win glory." And again, what is meant by "Behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants"? The expression, perhaps, is indicative of a threatening attitude of Jehovah when about to inflict punishment upon his enemies. Dr. Wardlaw says of vers. 8, 9, "That the simplest and most natural interpretation is that which makes them refer to the fulfilment of the promise in ver. 5, 'I will be the Glory in the midst of her.'" When this has been fulfilled—when Jehovah's house has been built, and he has returned and taken possession of it, and become anew the glory of his people and his city—then, says the speaker, "He hath sent me unto the nations which spoiled you,"—words of which, in this connection, the most appropriate interpretation seems to be that Jehovah hath given him a commission against those nations. These words may be fairly taken to illustrate *the moral exile of humanity*. As the Jews in Babylon were exiled from their own land, souls are away from God in the "far country" of depravity. The point suggested is *the reluctance of the exile to return*. This reluctance is here seen—

I. IN THE EARNESTNESS OF THE DIVINE APPEAL. "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord." Though Providence, through the interposition of Cyrus, had removed all physical obstacles to their return, still they had such lingering attachments to the land of their captivity that they seemed loth to break away. Hence the appeal of the Almighty to "flee from the land of the north." Is not this an illustration of the moral state of sinners? Though their way to return back to God has been made clear by Christ, yet return they will not. Hence how earnest and persevering the Divine call! What is the voice to humanity of the Almighty Word, the voice sounding through nature, through all history, and especially through Christ? Does it not amount to this, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord," etc.? "Return" is the word. "Flee from the land of the north." It is the land of corruption, the land of tyranny.

II. IN THE POTENCY OF THE DIVINE REASONS. Several things are suggested by God as reasons why they should attend to his call and "return." 1. *The greatness of their separation*. "I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven." You ought to be one people, united as loving brethren—united in spirit and aim, in a common worship and a common purpose of life; but you are divided far apart. You are not in one part of the country, but at every point of the compass—east, west, north, south. Do not be separated any more. Gather together into one fold. Is not this a good reason why sinners should return to God? So long as they are away from him they are divided amongst themselves. They are not only apart from each other, they are not only without sympathy with each other, but in antipathy. What a motive this to "return"! 2. *The tender interest of God in them*. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." Some regard this as meaning, "He that injures you injures himself;" as if the words meant, "He that toucheth you toucheth the pupil of his own eye." There is a great truth in this. He that *injures another injures himself thereby*. This is a law manifestly just and eternally irrevocable. You cannot wrong another without wronging yourself. But although this is a truth, the words, I think, convey something more than this; they convey the idea of God's tender interest in his people. It is a charming figure. The eye is one of the most intricate and delicate structures in the human frame; and the pupil of the eye—the opening by which the light of heaven enters for the purposes of vision—the most sensitive, as well as important, part of that structure. Nothing can more finely convey the idea of the exquisitely tender care of Jehovah for the objects of his love. Such interest the Bible teaches with frequency and fervour. Hence we read, "In all their affliction, he is afflicted." We read, "As a father pitieth his children," etc. We read, "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" We read, "He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities," etc. What an argument is this for man's moral return! If the Almighty Father is so tender towards us, ought we not to hurry home to his presence! The father of the prodigal son represents the universal Father of mankind. "When he was yet a great

way off, his father saw him," etc. 3. *The opposition of the Almighty to their enemies.* "For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them." This can be the language of no other than Jehovah, and yet is the language of one who speaks of "*Jehovah*" as having "*sent him*." There does not appear to be any reasonable explanation of this but our considering the speaker as the Divine Angel of the covenant. This is a strong reason why they should "return." They need not be afraid, therefore, of their enemies. God is against them. Is not this a good reason why sinners should return to him? They need not dread their enemies, whether they be men or devils. God says, "I will shake mine hand upon them."

CONCLUSION. Why should sinners be so reluctant to return to God? What made the Jews so reluctant "to flee from the north"—to break away from Babylon and return to their own land? Was it *indolence*? Did they so love ease as to dread exertion? Was it *love of the world*? Had they established prosperous businesses, and amassed such property as to tie them to the spot? Was it *old association*? Had they formed acquaintances in which they were interested, associates whose services promoted their private advantage, and whose fellowship yielded pleasure to their social natures? Perhaps each of these acted—*indolence, love of the world, old associations.* And do not all these act now to prevent sinners from coming out of moral Babylon (see Rev. xviii. 4)?—D. T.

Vers. 10—13.—*The joy of the millennial Church.* "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord," etc. "The daughter Zion, or the Church of the Lord, delivered out of Babylon, is to rejoice with joy, because her glorification is commencing now. The Lord comes to her in his angel, in whom is his Name (Exod. xxiii. 21) and his face (Exod. xxxiii. 14), i.e. the Angel of his face (Isa. lxiii. 9), who reveals his nature, to dwell in the midst of her. This dwelling of Jehovah, or of his Angel, in the midst of Zion, is essentially different from the dwelling of Jehovah in the most holy place of his temple. It commences with the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, and is completed by his return in glory (John i. 14; Rev. xxi. 3). Then will many, or powerful nations, attach themselves to Jehovah, and become his people (cf. ch. viii. 20, 21; Isa. xiv. 1). This kingdom of God, which has hitherto been restricted to Israel, will be spread out and glorified by the reception of the heathen nations which are seeking God (Micah iv. 2). The repetition of the expression, 'I dwell in the midst of thee,' merely serves as a stronger asseveration of this brilliant promise" (Keil). These words may be fairly taken to represent the *joy of the millennial Church*. The words, as we have seen, point to the bright periods when Messiah's kingdom shall so extend as to embrace "many nations." Three remarks are suggested concerning this joy. It is *righteous, reasonable, and reverential*.

I. IT IS **RIGHTEOUS**. It is not only divinely authorized, but commanded. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion." Often we are informed by religious teachers that joy is a *privilege*, but seldom told that joy is a *duty*. But joy is in truth as much a duty as honesty; for he who has commanded us not to steal has also commanded us to "rejoice evermore." It is as truly a sin against Heaven to be spiritually gloomy and sad as to be socially false and dishonest. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion." Similar commands are found elsewhere on the pages of Holy Writ. "Break forth into joy, sing together" (Isa. lii. 9); "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion" (Isa. xii. 6); "Rejoice evermore" (1 Thess. v. 16); "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4). God in nature says to all, "Be happy." God in Christ says to all, "Be happy." "These things have I spoken unto you, that your joy may be full." *Gratitude* is joy; and ought not gratitude to fill every soul? *Admiration* is joy; and ought not every soul to be filled with admiration of the Divine excellence? *Love* is joy; and ought we not to love all creatures with the love of benevolence, and the Creator with the love of adoration?

II. IT IS **REASONABLE**. What is righteous is of course always reasonable. True morality is true policy. But here are reasons suggested for this joy. What are they? 1. *The presence of God.* "Lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." The highest happiness of an intelligent creature is the presence of the object it supremely loves. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." To be with God is to be



with the Fountain of all joy. 2. *The increase of the good.* "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day." There is a bright prospect for the true Church; though it has been and still is small, uninfluential, and despised, it is destined to grow, extend its boundaries, and embrace nations. The stone shall become a mountain and fill the whole earth. Is not this a good reason for joy—to see the clouds of error in the human sky breaking, dissolving, vanishing, and the Sun of truth rising, spreading, and penetrating the whole earth with its life-giving beams? Is not this a sublime reason for life-giving joy—"Many nations shall be joined to the Lord," as the branches are joined to the roots of the tree, as the members of the body are joined to the head? 3. *The restoration of the Jews.* "And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again." As all the language of this book is highly figurative, to give a literal meaning to this expression is neither necessary nor just. It is not a literal but a spiritual restoration that is meant. Paul's words are a commentary on this (Rom. xi. 25-32), "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

III. IT IS REVERENTIAL. "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation." "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." The profoundest emotions of the soul are always mute. Superficial feelings are noisy and chattering. The shallow stream babbles amongst the hills. The deep river rolls by unheard. There are emotions of a pleasurable kind, that go off in the boisterous laugh, or the jocund song, or the sentimental hymn. But deep joy is silent as the stars. The real lover of art has joy in gazing at a magnificent piece of art, but his joy is inarticulate. The real lover of nature has deep joy in surveying some landscape of unparalleled grandeur. It is a joy that cannot go out in laughter, or speech, or song; it is silent. It is so with the godly soul. In the presence of the supremely beautiful it is filled with a joy that cannot speak, "a joy unspeakable, but full of glory."

CONCLUSION. Are we "joined to the Lord," loyal subjects of his great spiritual empire? If so, we might well be happy.—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1-10.—§ 6. *The fourth vision: Joshua the high priest before the angel.*

Ver. 1.—**He showed me.** The Septuagint and Vulgate give, "The Lord showed me." Some suppose that it was the interpreting angel who showed this vision; but his duty was to explain, not to present, the visions. So in ch. i. 20 it is the Lord who shows the "four craftsmen." This vision is closely connected with the last. In that it was declared that the Lord would again dwell in Jerusalem, and visit his people with blessings. But to fit them for the presence and favour of Jehovah they must be pure. To this end they must have a holy priest-

hood to train them in righteous ways, to oppose the attacks of the adversary, and to intercede for them effectually. The removal of their impurity is represented in the fourth vision. **Joshua the high priest** (see note on Hag. i. 1). The name is written Jeshua in Ezra ii. 2, etc. He was the first of the high priests after the Captivity, succeeding, as by hereditary right, his father Josedech, who died in Babylon. For his services in restoring the temple he is praised among great men in Eccles. xlix. 12. **Standing before the angel of the Lord.** Joshua is the representative of the priesthood, and through that also of the whole people. The angel of Jehovah (see notes on ch. i. 11, 13) is the representative of and endowed with attributes of Jehovah, the Friend and Leader

of Israel. The phrase, "standing before," is used in a ministerial sense, as of a servant rendering service to a superior (Gen. xli. 46; 1 Kings xii. 6, 8), and a priest or Levite performing his official duties (Deut. x. 8; Ezek. xliv. 15); also, in a judicial sense, of a person appearing before a judge, either as plaintiff (Numb. xxvii. 2; 1 Kings iii. 16) or defendant (Numb. xxxv. 12). Many commentators find in this scene a judicial process, Joshua appearing before the angel as before his judge; and Ewald supposes that it adumbrates his actual accusation at the Persian court. The mention of the adversary at the right hand (Ps. cix. 6) is supposed to confirm this interpretation. But it is obvious that the adversary might stand at the right hand, not as a formal accuser in a trial, but in order to resist and hinder Joshua's proceedings; the angel, too, is not represented as sitting on a throne of judgment, but standing by (ver. 5), and there is no further intimation of any judicial process in the vision. It is therefore best to conceive that Joshua is interceding for the people in his official capacity in the presence of the representative of Jehovah. The locality is not specified; it may have been before the altar, which, we know, was built and used at this time. The special mention of his garments implies that he was engaged in official duties in a consecrated spot; but the place is immaterial. **Satan; the adversary, or accuser.** The personality of Satan is here plainly recognized, as in Job i. 6, etc.; ii. 1, etc., rendered by the LXX. in all these places, *ὁ διάβολος* (see Appendix B, in Archdeacon Perowne's 'Commentary on Zechariah'). **At his (Joshua's) right hand.** Not as a judicial accuser, but as an enemy to resist his efforts for the good of the people, and to thwart his interests with the angel of the Lord. **To resist him; to act the adversary to him.** The verb is cognate to the noun above. From what follows we must suppose that Satan objects against Joshua both his own personal sin and the transgressions of the people whose burden he bore (comp. ver. 9, where his sin is called "the iniquity of the land," which would include the guilt which had led to the Captivity, their dilatoriness in building the temple, and all their backslidings since the return).

**Ver. 2.—The Lord said.** The Angel of Jehovah speaks. The appellations are often here used interchangeably. **The Lord rebuke thee.** The Lord's rebuke falls with effect where it is directed; it paralyzes the hostile power (comp. Ps. cvi. 9; Nah. i. 4). Satan's accusation may have been well founded, but it sprang from malice, and was directed against the people whom God was receiving into favour, and therefore it was rejected

and rendered innocuous. Some commentators have supposed that St. Jude is alluding to this passage when (ver. 9) he quotes the words of Michael contending about the body of Moses, "The Lord rebuke thee;" but it is more probable that Jude is referring to some rabbinical tradition, or to the apocryphal 'Assumption of Moses' (see the matter examined in Dissertation I. of Dr. Gloag's 'Introduction to the Catholic Epistles'). **That hath chosen Jerusalem** (ch. i. 17; ii. 12). God's election of Israel and renewed acceptance of her is the reason why Satan's accusation is rejected (Deut. vii. 7, 8). She is not to be abandoned to the consequences of her sins, nor were God's gracious purposes towards her to be frustrated. "God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew;" and, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. viii. 33; xi. 2, 29). **This.** This man, Joshua, saved from his father's and grandfather's fate (see on Hag. i. 1), a type of the deliverance of Israel. **A brand plucked out of the fire.** Israel had been already punished by defeat, captivity, distress, and misery. From these evils, which had almost destroyed her, she had been delivered; and the deliverance would be completed; she should not be cast again into the fire (see Amos iv. 11, and note there). The expression is proverbial (comp. 1 Cor. iii. 15; Jude 23).

**Ver. 3.—Clothed with filthy garments.** The soiled, or dark mourning garments represent not so much the low estate to which the Aaronic priesthood had been reduced, as the defilements of sin with which Joshua was encompassed, especially, perhaps, his error in allowing his descendants to intermarry with heathens (Ezra x. 18). But the sin was not only personal; he appeared laden with the guilt of the priesthood and his people. He is a type of Christ in this. Christ, indeed, was without sin; yet he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and was made sin for us (Rom. viii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 21). Some consider that the soiled garments denote the mean address in which an accused person appeared in court. But this is to import a Roman custom (comp. Livy, ii. 54; vi. 20) into Hebrew practice. Others deem it incongruous to make a high priest violate the decency of his office by officiating in unclean apparel. But the violation of propriety was a requirement of the vision, that thus the defilement of sin might be symbolical. **He stood before the angel.** To ask his aid and protection (ver. 4).

**Ver. 4.—He answered.** The Angel of Jehovah answered the mute petition of Joshua. **Those that stood before him.** The attendant angels, who waited on the Angel

of Jehovah to do his pleasure (see note on *vor.* 1). **Take away the filthy garments.** This symbolized remission of sins and restoration to favour, as the following words explain. **I will clothe thee with change of raiment;** Revised Version, *with rich apparel*. The word *machalathoth* occurs also in Isa. iii. 22, and may mean either "change of raiment;" or "costly raiment;" or the meanings may be combined in the sense of "festal robes," only worn on great occasions and changed after the occasion. They are used here as symbols of righteousness and glory. Not only is the sin pardoned, but the wearer is restored to the full glory of his state. The LXX. makes the words to be addressed to the attendants, "Clothe ye him in a robe flowing to the feet" (*ποδήρη*, the word used for Aaron's priestly garment, *Exod.* xxviii. 4; *Ecclus.* xiv. 8).

**Ver. 5.—I said.** If this is the true reading (which Ewald doubts), we must consider that the prophet, excited by what has passed, cannot stand by as a mere spectator, but feels constrained to take part in the scene, and to request that the change of garments may be completed by the addition of the fair head-dress. The LXX. omits the word, continuing the address to the attendant. The Vulgate has, *et dixit*. So the Syriac and the Targum and some few manuscripts. But the received reading is confirmed, as Dr. Alexander points out, by the change in the mood of the following verb from the imperative to the optative, "let them put," "would that they put." There is nothing incongruous in the prophet thus intervening in his own person. Thus Isaiah, in the midst of a solemn vision, gives vent to his feelings (*Isa.* vi. 5), and St. John in the Apocalypse often mingles his own sentiments and actions with what he beheld (*comp. Rev.* v. 4; x. 9; xi. 1). Mitre (*tsaniph*); Septuagint, *κίθαριν*: so the Vulgate, *cidarim*. This is not the same word as that used in *Exod.* xxviii. 4, etc. (which is *mitsnepheth*), for the official head-dress of Aaron, though it is probably a synonym for it; and the prophet's wish is to see Joshua not only reinstated in his office and dignity, but found holy also. For the fair linen mitre, or tiara, was that which bore upon its front the golden plate inscribed, "Holiness unto the Lord" (*Exod.* xxviii. 36—38), and therefore showed that he was qualified to intercede for the people. **Stood by.** The Angel of Jehovah continued standing in his place, contemplating, sanctioning, and directing what was being done.

**Ver. 6.—Protested.** Solemnly and earnestly admonished, adjured. *Διευαγγίζω* (Septuagint; *Gen.* xliii. 3; 2 Kings xvii. 13. The Angel sets before Joshua his duties, and urges him to keep in the right way, promis-

ing to him and to the nation blessing and honour, and proceeding to prophecy of a great future.

**Ver. 7.—Walk in my ways.** God's ways are his commandments, as the next words explain (*comp.* 1 Kings iii. 14). **Keep my charge.** The Vulgate retains the Hebraism, *Custodiam meam custodieris* (*comp. Gen.* xxvi. 5; *Mal.* iii. 14). The charge means the laws and ordinances of the Mosaic institution. **Then.** The apodosis rightly begins here, though Kimchi and others make it commence at "I will give thee," taking the following two clauses as denoting parts of his duties, the observance of which conditioned his acceptance. **Thou shalt also judge my house.** The mention of "my courts" in the following clause requires that "house" here should mean, not people or family, but, in a more restricted sense, the temple, looked upon as the spiritual centre of the nation. If the high priest kept the ordinances and commandments, he should rule and order Divine worship, and "judge," *i.e.* govern, the ministers of the sanctuary. **Keep my courts.** He was to preserve the temple, and that which the temple represented, from all idolatry and ungodliness. This duty, as Hengstenberg observes, is introduced as a reward, because it was an honour and a privilege to be entrusted with such an office, and the greatest favour which God could confer upon man. **Places to walk.** The LXX. takes the word as a participle, translating, *ἀναστρεφόμενους*, "persons walking:" so the Syriac; Vulgate, *ambulantes*. This is explained to mean that God will give him, out of the band of angels (*ver.* 4), some to accompany and aid him in his ministrations. But the word is best taken as a noun meaning "walks," "goings." The Revised Version gives, "a place of access" in the text, restoring the Authorized Version in the margin; but there seems to be no good reason for the Revised rendering. The translation, "goings," "walks," gives much the same signification, and is consonant with the use of the word elsewhere (*comp. Neh.* ii. 6; *Ezck.* xlii. 4; *Jonah* iii. 3, 4). It means that Joshua should have free access to God. The gloss of the Targum, that it is here intimated that the high priest should be admitted to the company of the angels after the resurrection, is unsuitable, as the other parts of the promise have respect to this present world. **Among these that stand by;** *i.e.* among the attendant angels who wait upon God to do his will, and a company of whom were gathered round the Angel of Jehovah in the vision (see *vor.* 4). It is natural piety to believe that the hosts of heaven join in the worship of the Church on earth, and assist godly ministers with

their presence and fellowship. Here is adumbrated that access to God which the Christian enjoys in Christ (John xiv. 6; Eph. ii. 18). This is more fully revealed in the next verse.

Ver. 8.—**Hear now**; *ἀκούε δὲ* (Septuagint). Joshua is called upon to give all his attention to the important announcement that follows, which promises a very great boon in the future. **Thy fellows that sit before thee**. His fellow-priests, who took their orders from him and sat with him in council (comp. 2 Kings iv. 38; Ezek. viii. 1, etc.). These priests were not seen in the vision. Keil considers that the address, to which Joshua's attention is called, begins at "Thou and thy fellows." **For (or, yea) they are men wondered at**; Septuagint, *ὁδοὶ ἀνδρες περὶασκόμοι εἰσὶν*, "men observers of wonders;" Vulgate, *Quia viri portendentes sunt* (see Isa. viii. 18). The phrase would be better rendered, "men of portent, sign, or type." Revised Version gives, "men which are a sign," i.e. who foreshadow some future events, whose persons, office, duties, typify and look forward to good things to come. **I will bring forth my Servant the BRANCH**. This is why they are called typical men, because God is making the antitype to appear. The word rendered "branch" (*tsamach*) is translated by the Septuagint *ἀνατολήν*, which is used in the sense of "shoot" as well as "sunrise" (see Jer. xxiii. 5; Ezek. xvi. 7; xvii. 10), and by the Vulgate, *orientem*. So the Syriac and Arabic (comp. Luke i. 78). Most interpreters rightly see here a reference to the Messiah. Some few have fancied that Zerubbabel and Nehemiah are meant; but the appellation, "my Servant Branch," has already been applied in prophetic language to Messiah, and cannot be distorted to any inferior subject, such as a mere civil ruler. Messiah is often called the Lord's "Servant," e.g. Isa. xlii. 1; xliii. 10; lii. 13, etc. And the terms, "Branch," or "Rod," or "Shoot," referring to Messiah, are found in Isa. iv. 2; xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15. From the depressed house of David a scion should spring, in whom all that was prophesied concerning the priesthood and kingdom of Israel should find its accomplishment.

Ver. 9.—**For behold**. This gives the reason why the "Branch" is brought forth; the Church is to be firmly established and all iniquity to be abolished. **The stone that I have laid (set) before Joshua**. In the vision a stone is seen lying at the feet of Joshua, either the foundation-stone of the temple, say the commentators, or the cornerstone, or the coping; or, as the Talmud testifies, a stone that rose some three fingers' measure above the ground, and upon which the high priest used to set the censor of

incense. But it was more probably none of these, but some rough, unhewn block, not yet polished or fitted into its place. What does it represent? Many critics of note answer at once, the Messiah. He who was above called "Branch" is now called the "Stone." And certainly this term in applied unto him in prophetic language, as in Isa. xxviii. 16; Ps. cxviii. 22; and references are made to the appellation in the New Testament as to a well-known title, e.g. Matt. xxi. 42; Eph. ii. 20. But there are objections to taking this as the primary sense. As Knabenbauer points out, it is not likely that in one verse the Lord's Servant Branch is said to be destined to be brought forth, and in the next the same is called the stone which is set before Joshua and has to be graven by a hand Divine. Besides, if both terms mean Messiah, we have the very lame conclusion: I will bring Messiah because I have already placed him before Joshua. The stone, too, is represented as somewhat under the management of Joshua, and needing graving and polishing, neither of which facts apply to the Messiah. Putting out of sight other interpretations which are all more or less inadmissible, we shall be safest in considering the stone to represent the theocracy, the spiritual kingdom of Israel, now indeed lying imperfect and unpolished before Joshua, but ordained to become beautiful and extensive and admirable. So Daniel (ii. 35, 45) speaks of the stone cut out of the mountains without hands, which filled the whole earth, a figure of the Church and kingdom of God, small in its beginning, but in the end establishing its rule over the world. **Upon one stone**; LXX., *ἐπὶ τὸν λίθον τὸν ἓνα*, "upon the one stone." The stone is termed "one" in contrast with the number seven that follows. **Shall be (are) seven eyes**. Upon this stone the eyes of God are directed in watchful care (comp. ch. iv. 10; and for the phrase, see 1 Kings viii. 29; Ps. xxxiii. 18; xxxiv. 15; Jer. xxxix. 12). "Seven" is the number of perfection, and may denote here the infinite care which God takes of his Church, even as St. John in the Revelation (i. 4; v. 6) beheld the Lamb "having seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The expression is metaphorical, and we are not to suppose, with Ewald, that the eyes were graven on the stone, or that Zechariah derived his notion from the tenets of Zoroaster or the degrees of rank in the Persian court. There may be an allusion to the seven gifts of the Spirit with which Messiah is anointed (Isa. xi. 2), and which animate and strengthen his body, the Church. **I will engrave the graving thereof**. As God engraved the tables of the Law (Exod.

xxxii. 16). I will out and polish this rough stone to fit it for its place in the temple. The verb is used of the bold engraving and ornamentation of stone-work, the finishing which it undergoes to perfect its preparation (comp. 1 Kings vii. 36; 2 Chron. ii. 7; iii. 7). Those who regard the stone as typifying the Messiah, see in this clause an intimation of the Passion of Christ, who "was wounded for our transgressions." The LXX. has, "I dig a trench," which Jerome explains of the wounds of Christ on the cross. I will remove the iniquity of that land. The shaping of the stone involves the bestowal of purity and holiness. God will pardon the inhabitants of the land of Israel, and make them a holy nation (Jer. xxxiii. 7, 8). But the promise stretches far beyond the limits primarily assigned to it. In one day. The day when Christ died for the sins of men. There is an allusion to the great Day of Atonement, when the high priest went once a year into the holy of holies with the blood of sacrifice. This, however, was an imperfect reconciliation, and had to be repeated annually. "But Christ being come an High Priest of the good things to come . . . through his own blood

entered in once for all (*ἐφάπαξ*) into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. . . . Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 11-26; comp. Heb. vii. 27; x. 10).

Ver. 10.—*Shall ye call every man his neighbour, etc.* In this cleansed and purified kingdom shall be found peace, happiness, and plenty, recalling the prosperous days of Solomon (1 Kings iv. 25). (For a similar picture of prosperity, see Micah iv. 4, and note there.) This is fulfilled in Christ, who says to his true disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). Dr. Wright notes, "We are told in the Talmud ('Yoma,' vii. 4) that when, on the great Day of Atonement, the high priest had performed the various duties of that solemn day, he was escorted home in a festive manner, and was accustomed to give a festal entertainment to his friends. The maidens and youths of the people went forth to their gardens and vineyards with songs and dances; social entertainments took place on all sides, and universal gladness closed the festival of that solemn day."

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-5.—*The priesthood restored.* "And he showed me Joshua the high priest," etc. Here begins a new vision, which, like that described in ch. ii. 1-4, takes us back to the date of utterance. In that we saw the restoration of the ancient city Jerusalem. In this we seem shown the restoration of the ancient Levitical priesthood. For seventy years the functions of that priesthood appear to have been in abeyance. Nowhere in Daniel and Ezekiel do we read of sacrifices being offered by the children of the Captivity. It was desirable, therefore—possibly necessary—to have those functions restored (compare, perhaps, the restoration of Peter's apostleship in John xxi. 15-17). Understood as describing a kind of heavenly council called for this purpose, the present vision sets before us (1) the *offender*; (2) the *adversary*; (3) the *Advocate*; and (4) the *decision*.

I. THE OFFENDER; viz. Joshua the son of Josedech, the lineally descended high priest of that day (1 Chron. vi. 3-15; Ezra iii. 2), and, therefore, the proper and natural representative of the priesthood which had lapsed. As such we see him here: 1. *Appearing in guilt.* This shown, of course, by the "filthy garments" (Isa. lxiv. 6) in which he is clothed, and by which may be understood more especially those sins of himself and of his predecessors and people by which, in a measure and for a season, the former priesthood had been forfeited. 2. *Coming up to be judged.* This shown by his "standing" (as noticed both in vers. 1 and 3; comp. Acts xxv. 10; Rom. xiv. 10) before the Angel-Jehovah, his proper Judge (comp. John v. 22; Rom. xiv. 10). Such, be it remembered, in each respect, if without a Saviour, is the condition of us all.

II. THE ADVERSARY. As his name (margin of ver. 2), so his work in this place (comp. Job i. 9-11; ii. 4, 5; Rev. xiii. 10). This a great aggravation of the evil of Joshua's case. It is one thing to be guilty and deserving of punishment. It is another, and even worse, to have a powerful and malignant adversary claiming, as it were, the actual infliction of that punishment upon us. Sin itself cries out for justice against the offender (Gen. iv. 10; Heb. xii. 24). The adversary cries out against the injustice of allowing him to be spared (2 Sam. xix. 21).

III. THE ADVOCATE; viz. the Judge—i.e. Jehovah himself (see beginning of ver. 2). This greatly to be admired (comp. Ps. xxxii. 7, "Thou art my Hiding-place;" also Ps. cxix. 114). Note, also, the two cogent pleas which this great Advocate (1 John ii. 1)

urges. These are: 1. *The settled purpose* of God in this matter. God had long ago "chosen Jerusalem." He must not now be asked to reject it. 2. *The past action* of God in this matter. Having already so far begun to deliver as to "pluck this brand from the burning," it would be inconsistent of him now to go back (comp. 1 Sam. iii. 12; also the great maxim of Rom. xi. 29). Even to ask anything opposed to that is to incur the "rebuke" of Jehovah.

IV. THE DECISION. It is very complete. It embraces, as we should describe it in New Testament language: 1. The "*justification*" of Joshua, or the acceptance of his person. This signified, as we are expressly told here, by the change of his raiment (see also Isa. lxi. 10; Luke xv. 22; Rev. xix. 8). 2. The "*sanctification*" of Joshua, or the acceptance of his ministrations. This represented by that "fair mitre," which—either at the request of the prophet, or, as some take it, of the great Angel himself, who, in any case, is described as "standing by" and assenting—was next placed on Joshua's head; and in which mitre also (though the word is different) there seems (see Pusey, *in loc.*) a reference to that "beauty of holiness" described in Exod. xxviii. 36—38. So completely now was that fulfilled of which we read in Ezek. xx. 41, and which was afterwards described in Mal. iii. 4.

Two very remarkable omissions may be noted, to conclude. These illustrate: 1. *The wonderful freeness* of God's mercy. We find nothing whatever offered to God by Joshua and Israel towards recovering these lapsed privileges. Nothing whatever, also, is demanded of them as a necessary condition thereto. The whole thing is spoken of as a matter of grace or favour from beginning to end. 2. *The wonderful fulness* of God's mercy. No mention is made, in the account of this great transaction, of the precise nature of the accusations and charges brought by the adversary against Joshua. Whatever they are, they are treated as done with; and done with altogether. Their very memory, as it were, is to perish. So, "I will not remember their sins," in Isa. xliii. 25 (see Jer. xxxi. 34; also, in a somewhat different connection, Ezek. xviii. 22; xxxiii. 16). "To err is human; to forgive, Divine." Especially so to forgive in this manner (compare, "Who is a God like unto thee?" in Micah vii. 18—20).

Vers. 6—10.—*The priesthood eclipsed.* "And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua," etc. The ancient Jewish priesthood, as we saw in our last, being fully restored, what was to become of it in process of time? The answer to this was partly conditional, partly not so. If faithfully discharged by Joshua and his fellows and successors, that priesthood would be for many generations a thing of honour and blessing. In any case, it would ultimately be altogether eclipsed by another priesthood of a far more glorious kind. Such seems to be the full purport of the rest of this chapter. We may consider the *conditional promise* in the first place, and the *unconditional* in the second.

I. THE CONDITIONAL PROMISE. (Vers. 6, 7.) Under this head we may notice: 1. *The marked solemnity of its manner.* By whom made? The Angel-Jehovah. In what attitude? That of standing, as most impressive (see Pusey, *in loc.*). With what language? That of protestation, and protestation in God's name. 2. *Its twofold condition.* Being, on the one hand, apparently personal—"walking in God's ways," and, on the other, apparently ministerial—keeping God's "charge" or ordinances (compare "Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine," of 1 Tim. iv. 16; also Acts xx. 28). 3. *Its threefold blessing.* The preceding conditions being observed, Joshua and those after him, representing the restored priesthood, should have the honour and privilege (1) of administering justice, and so being a blessing to God's people or "house" (compare the semi-civil position occupied afterwards by Ezra the priest, Ezra viii. 11, etc., specially vers. 25, 26; also x. 4; also, in New Testament, by Caiaphas and others, and, in the history of Josephus, by Jaddua and others); (2) of taking charge of God's courts, and leading his worship and service—a blessing this, indeed, as shown by such passages as 1 Sam. ii. 28; Ps. cxxxiv.; also lxxxiv. 10 and xxvii. 4; and, (3) as we understand it, of taking rank, after death, even with those holy angels who were then in attendance, and whose appointed place of honour and dignity was close to God's throne (see ch. iv. 14; vi. 5; Luke i. 19; Matt. xviii. 10).

II. THE UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE. However things might turn out with this Joshua (or Jesus) and his successors regarding this restored Levitical priesthood, they were but "men of marvellous signs" (so Pusey and others). In other words, they

were but types and figures of a far greater and holier "Jesus"—a Priest who was some day to be "brought forth." This Priest, while like these in some respects, was to differ from them in many others. For example, besides being a Priest who was to be "brought forth" and to supersede these, he was also to be: 1. *From a wholly different line*; viz. that of "David" and Judah (see Heb. vii. 13, 14). 2. *In a very different position*. Not merely a Judge (see *supra*) as well as Priest, under Persian or other chief rulers, but a King (compare what is said of the "Branch" in Jer. xxiii. 5; also ch. vi. 12, 13). 3. *Of a far superior nature*. Divine, i.e., as well as human (compare, once again, what is said of the "Branch" in Jer. xxiii., as "*Jehovah* our Righteousness"; also what is said here of the "stone" and the "seven eyes," with Dan. ii. 34, 35, 44, 45; Zech. iv. 10; Rev. iv. 5; Col. ii. 9). 4. *Doing a far higher work*; viz. partly because suffering in his own glorious Person (as shown by the "graving" engraven on this "stone"), and not merely offering sacrifice; partly, also, because "removing iniquity" fully and once for all ("in one day"), and not merely partially and for a time (Heb. x. 11—14; ix. 13, 14); and partly because, by so doing, he brought in perpetual peace (comp. ver. 10 with Gen. xiv. 18; Ps. lxxxv. 10; Isa. xxxii. 17; Rom. v. 1).

The whole passage, thus interpreted, serves to illustrate: 1. *A peculiar feature of Holy Writ*. We can hardly believe that the prophet himself understood all that we have now gathered from his words. This taught us about the Old Testament prophets generally in 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, and almost necessarily implied, in fact, in the Divine inspiration of Scripture. This exemplified also in the case of bad men (Numb. xxii. —xxiv.; John xi. 51, 52) when "carried away" (φερόμενοι, 2 Pet. i. 21) by the Spirit of God. Even in the case of demoniac inspiration (so to describe it), something like this is true, the speech of the man or woman possessed expressing more than they themselves can be supposed to mean or to know (Mark i. 23, 25; Acts xvi. 16, 17). 2. *The great object of Holy Writ*; viz. to testify of the "Branch," the "Day-spring" (Luke i. 78, see margin), the "Lord our Righteousness" (comp. John v. 39; Luke xxiv. 26—27; 1 Pet. i. 11, as before; 1 Tim. iii. 15). Always, as here, the Scriptures seem to hasten away from what is temporary and conditional to what is eternal and, in one sense, unconditional, viz. to those sufferings and subsequent glories of the Incarnate Word which the apostle seems to understand by that remarkable expression, "the sure mercies of David" (Isa. lv. 3; Acts xiii. 34). So true is that which we find written in Acts x. 43 and in the end of Rev. xix. 10.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Satan and Christ*. Joshua was the representative of the people, not personally, but in his public character. What was done to him in a figure was to be done to them and for them in fact. The great object was to restore confidence in God and in his servants, and to raise the hopes of the people that the work of grace would triumph in spite of all opposition.

I. THE POWER OF SATAN TO RESIST. The adversary. Cunning and strong. Maliciously working as he has done from the beginning, to keep man apart from God. But his power is usurped, and his devices are doomed to exposure and defeat. He may plead in the guise of justice, but it is not from love of right. He may work upon a guilty conscience, but it is not to lead to penitence, but to engender fear and distrust, and to widen the breach between the soul and God.

II. THE POWER OF CHRIST TO REDEEM. 1. *Founded in righteousness*. He is the true "Daysman." 2. *Inspired by love*. He has vindicated his claim to plead for us because he died for us. Whom he "chooses" he will never forsake. 3. *Adequate to the greatest emergency*. He is able to "rebuken" the adversary; to "rescue" the prey from the hands of the mighty; to "restore" the lost purity, and the failing confidence, and the faltering service. He was manifested to "destroy the works of the devil." In this there is hope for the sinner, comfort for the downcast believer, encouragement to all true servants of the Lord.—F.

Vers. 1—5.—*Three things which concern the soul*. I. GUILT. "Filthy." The out-  
ZECHARIAH. D

ward symbolizes the inward. Satan pleads that there is no remedy. He would anticipate the day of doom. "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." But all is not lost.

II. **MEDIATION.** Christ our Representative. Pleads for us on the ground of his sacrifice. Pledges himself to raise us from our low and lost estate. Not only removal of guilt, but restoration of character. He is stronger than the strong man, and rejoices to rescue the prey from his hands.

III. **HOLY SERVICE.** Begins with conversion. But there must be renewed consecration. Satan resists. Pleads at the bar of conscience, to crush the rising hopes of the heart; at the bar of God, to hinder, if he can, the return of the soul to its true allegiance and service. All obstacles to good are of the devil. Christ is for us, therefore let us not be afraid. Highest encouragements. God's love, Christ's work of grace. The Holy Spirit the Sanctifier.—F.

Ver. 5.—We may take this as a picture of Christ and the soul. "Stood by."

I. **TENDER CONCERN.** The beginnings of life are full of interest. So it is with the budding of the flower; the lisps of infancy; the first tokens of love. How carefully the gardener watches the germinating of some rare seed! With what tender solicitude friends wait for the signs of returning health to the loved one brought low by disease! So in an infinitely higher way as to our Lord. Our souls are precious in his sight (Luke xv. 20; John i. 48).

II. **HOLY SATISFACTION IN THE DEFEAT OF THE GREAT ENEMY.** Sympathetic. Ever on the alert. Ready to interpose effectively at the right moment. The wilderness, Gethsemane, Calvary, testify to his love and mighty power. His victory was our victory. Every sinner converted, every backslider restored, every believer strengthened and fitted for higher service, is to the shame of Satan and to the glory of Christ.

III. **EXULTING JOY IN THE RESCUE OF SOULS.** "Standing" implies continued interest. Lasts all through, from the first struggle to the final victory (cf. Stephen, Acts vii. 36). Christ's love never faileth, and his joy is the joy of eternity and of God. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."—F.

Vers. 6, 7.—*"If" and "then;" or, the great things of God's promises.* I. **THE GREAT IN CHARACTER.** How described. 1. *Obedience.* Life regulated by the Divine will. "Walk in my ways." 2. *Fidelity of service.* Life devoted to God's glory. So Moses (Heb. iii. 5).

II. **THE GREAT IN HONOUR.** Not place, or outward distinction, or arbitrary rewards. "Knighthoods and honours borne without desert are titles but of scorn" (Shakespeare). Three things. 1. *"Judge my house."* 2. *"Keep my courts."* 3. *"Walks among those that stand by."* Dignity. Power with God and power with man. Society of the noblest.

III. **THE GREAT IN BLESSEDNESS.** Freedom of soul. Holy living. Harmonious development. Grandest fellowship. Immortal hope. The promises of God are gracious in character, elevating in purpose, faithful in fulfilment.—F.

Ver. 8.—*Portents.* "Men wondered at." There are times when there are signs in the heavens and on the earth—prodigies which rouse attention. So in society. There are men who stand out from others. Their characters have a special significance. Their lives are prophecies. Perhaps most of the great men of the Bible were of this sort. So here—

I. **REPRESENTATIVE OF THEIR GENERATION.** They breathe the spirit of the age. The evil and the good, of their times, are seen in them at the highest. "There were giants in those days."

II. **ADUMBRATE GREAT FORCES.** Powers have been at work for long that come out. Embodied. We see the height to which corruption may rise. Intellect without conscience, passion without principle, power without God. Or it may be otherwise. Men of genius and resolution faithful to the truth, ardent for the good of their brethren—reformers, professors, martyrs, whose glory was to live not to themselves, but to God.

III. **FORESHADOW COMING JUDGMENT.** Like Pharaoh, they have been raised up for God's glory. Like the Jews, they are "ensamples" of God's judgments. What they



do, what they suffer, what they enjoy, are as forecasts and foreshadowings of what will be, on to the perfect end. Often such men obtain a certain worship. "There is so much of chance in warfare, and such vast events are connected with the acts of the single individual, that the proper temperament for generating and receiving superstitious impressions is naturally produced" (Coleridge). But they are "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world have come."—F.

Vers. 8—10.—*Messiah's mission.* I. THE TIME OF HIS COMING DIVINELY FIXED. There was the ancient promise, and long-waiting generations came and went. Manifold changes. Overturning of kingdoms and dynasties. The old stock of David seemed as good as dead. But life preserved. "Branch" destined to spring and bud in his season. There is "a time to every purpose" (Eccles. iii. 1). Christ came "in the fulness of time."

II. THE CHARACTER OF HIS WORK DIVINELY APPOINTED. "Servant." Christ came to do the will of the Father. As the Law was hidden in the ark, so the law of God was hidden in his heart. What God ordained, he freely chose. What God commanded, he delighted to carry out. He never wavered, never wearied. Why? Because the work given him to do accorded both with eternal righteousness and the highest good of man. Faithful even to the death of the cross.

III. THE RESULTS OF HIS MINISTRY DIVINELY SETTLED. Removal of sin. Upbuilding of the Church of God in the strength of righteousness and the beauty of holiness and the joys of love. What he began he would surely finish. Solomon's temple was "finished," and king and people rejoiced with great joy. Zerubbabel's temple was also to be "finished," and this should be a sign and seal of the forgiveness of past iniquity, and of the outshining of God's favour on the land. So these prophesy of greater things to come. Christ's exulting cry on the cross, "It is finished!" proclaimed the opening of heaven to all believers, the new heaven and the new earth, and the restitution of all things.—F.

Vers. 1—6.—*The good man on earth in his intercessory function.* "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him," etc. Our prophet here delivers to the Jews who had been restored from Babylon a vision which he had witnessed, in order to encourage them in the work of rebuilding the temple. The scene of the vision seems to have been the precincts of the temple. He saw Joshua, the high priest, standing before the Lord on their behalf, robed in "filthy garments." He saw "Satan," the great enemy of humanity, oppose him in his intercessory engagements; but Satan was, nevertheless, rebuked by Jehovah; and the seer heard a Divine voice commanding the "filthy garments" to be taken away from the priest, declaring the removal of his iniquity, commanding a "mitre" to be put on his head, ordering him to be clothed in a new raiment, and promising him other blessings if he would but "walk" in the "ways" of God. Regarding the vision as a symbolical revelation of Joshua, in his *representative* aspect as the high priest of the Jewish people then existing, we feel authorized to infer from it two or three ideas touching the *intercessory functions of good men while on earth.*

I. THAT THE GOOD MAN, IN HIS INTERCESSORY FUNCTIONS ON EARTH, HAS TO BEAR BEFORE GOD THE MORAL IMPERFECTIONS OF HIS RACE. Joshua had on "filthy garments." This was evidently intended to represent the corrupt state of the Jewish people. The seventy years' captivity had not purified them; for now, instead of setting themselves to the work of rebuilding the house of the Lord, they were taken up with their own personal concerns, and excusing themselves by saying, "The time is not come" (Hag. i. 2). Here, then, is a *characteristic feature* of a good man's intercession while on earth. He has to bear the imperfections of his fellow-creatures before God. *Intercession* itself we consider to be an obligation resting on all minds, in all worlds, for ever. *Prayer*, either for self or others, is not confined to earth. What is prayer for self but a living *sense of dependence* upon God? And where is there a virtuous mind in the universe without this sense? This, indeed, lies at the root of all true religion. And what is prayer for others, or intercession, but a deep, loving sympathy with them, a desire for their highest interests? And does not this *benevolent* feeling lie at the basis of all moral excellence? There is not a saint nor an angel in heaven, we suppose,

who does not desire the progress of kindred spirits; and what is this but intercession? But that which *distinguishes* the intercession *on earth* is that we have to remember the *moral corruption of our race*. In heaven there is no *defilement*. All there are clad either in the robes of pristine holiness or in garments washed and made white by the cleansing influences of redemptive love. But here all are in "filthy garments"—garments stained by sensuality, worldliness, idolatry, falsehood, and dishonesty. Here the pious parent has to appear before God for sinful children, the minister for sinful people, and the pious sovereign for a sinful nation.

II. THAT THE GOOD MAN, IN HIS INTERCESSORY FUNCTIONS ON EARTH, HAS TO CON-TEND WITH A MIGHTY SPIRITUAL ANTAGONIST. The prophet saw Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. The existence of some mighty spirit or spirits, who are determined foes of truth, virtue, and the happiness of man, is rendered more than probable by a number of considerations, independent of the testimony of the Bible. Such, for example, as the *general belief of the race, the conflicting phenomena of the moral world, the unaccountable opposite impressions of which all are conscious*. But the Bible is most clear on this subject. Under various names, "the serpent," "the devil," "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air," this great enemy of the race is brought under our notice. Now, this enemy stood up to resist Joshua in his intercessions. And who will say that he is not now specially active with the good man, when he draws near to God? In how many ways may he hinder our prayers? Sometimes he may suggest to us, even in the very time of our prayers, doubts as to the existence of God; we may be tempted to ask—Are we sure there is a God? May not the idea be a delusion, for who has ever seen or heard him? Or, granting his existence, he may suggest whether he would condescend to attend to the affairs of an individual. We may be tempted to the supposition that he takes care of the great but overlooks the little; or that the universe is so thoroughly and absolutely under a system of laws, that he will not interpose on behalf of any of his creatures. Or, granting that he does exist, and that he attends to the prayers of some, Satan may suggest that I am too worthless for his notice, that it is presumptuous for me to address his awful majesty; I am too great a sinner ever to be attended to. In such suggestions as these Satan may be said to stand up against us when we appear before the Lord. This, again, is a peculiarity of our intercessory functions on earth. In heaven, we presume, no enemy will intrude on our devotions, no Satan will stand up to resist as we appear before God. No power there to darken our faith with cloudy doubts, nor to cool the ardour of our devotions!

III. THAT THE GOOD MAN, IN HIS INTERCESSORY FUNCTIONS ON EARTH, HAS THE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE OF A DIVINE HELPER. Whilst Satan stood up against Joshua, there was One who stood up for him—the Lord, called also "the Angel of the Lord." Who is this? All acknowledged expositors are agreed in concluding this to be Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. And he, indeed, is man's great spiritual Helper. He is our Advocate, our Intercessor. He helps us in our prayers, he attracts us to the throne of grace. "Seeing that we have a great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens." His Spirit makes intercession within us, awakens in us those desires which agree with the will of God. The scene illustrates two thoughts concerning the help rendered. 1. *It was rendered sympathetically*. "Is not this a brand?" etc. Consider the suffering to which the petitioners have been subject. Christ is full of sympathy. "We have not a high priest," etc.; "Him that cometh unto God through him he will in no wise cast out." 2. *The help was rendered effectually*. The old "filthy garments," the emblems of impurity and guilt, were taken away, and he was clothed in other garments; that is, their guilt was removed, they were restored from their degradation. And the "mitre," the emblem of dignity, was put on his head. They were raised once more to the glory of an independent nation. See: (1) That if you would effectually help your race, you must appear before God as an intercessor. Other means are also to be employed. Promote general knowledge, advance the arts, help on commerce, above all, diffuse the gospel of Jesus; but, in connection with all, you must appear before God, as Joshua did for Israel. It is in this way you will change the world's "filthy garments," and get for them the "raiment" of purity and the "mitre" of honour. (2) That if you would effectually appear before God, you must have the help of Jesus Christ. What is the vision before us but an adumbration of a common fact in the spiritual

history of *every* praying man? Ever as we attempt to approach the everlasting Father in devout thought and worship, do we not find some opposing force like this Satan, or rather, this Satan himself, "standing" "at our right hand to resist" us? What is to be done? Are we to retire?—cease all endeavour to commune with the loving Parent of our souls? God forbid! Our doom is sealed in midnight and anguish, should this be so. There is no happiness for any finite spirit but that which flows from intercourse with the eternal Fountain of good. Our only hope is in getting him, the great Mediator, with us, who shall repel our foe—drive him from our presence with the words, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan!"—D. T.

Ver. 7.—*The Bible and true greatness.* "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by." The words direct us to the Bible and true greatness.

I. THE BIBLE DIRECTS US TO THE SPHERE OF TRUE GREATNESS. The promise made to Joshua here is, "Thou shalt also *judge* my house, and shalt also keep my courts." The words convey this idea: *Great authority.* By the house of God is here probably meant the people of Israel; and the keeping of God's courts, the regulation of the temple. The literal meaning here is that Joshua's piety should be rewarded by the long continuance of his exalted office of High Priest. Godliness raises: (1) *To dignified positions.* It makes us "kings and priests unto God." (2) *To high fellowship.* "I will give thee places to walk among *these that stand by.*" With the general consent of commentators, the angels of God are meant by "these that *stand by.*" The angels of God minister in his house. They are "ministering servants." We are come "to an innumerable company of angels." Good men are brought by religion into fellowship with those lofty intelligences.

II. THE BIBLE PRESENTS TO US THE PATH OF TRUE GREATNESS. "If thou wilt walk in my ways," etc. Two things are stated here as the conditions of elevation. 1. *Obedience.* "If thou wilt walk in my ways." God has ways for men to walk in. His ways are his laws. "Blessed are they who walk in the Law of the Lord." Walking in his ways implies: (1) The abandonment of our own ways. "Let the wicked forsake his way." (2) The entrance on God's ways. Walking in them implies that we are on them, and the way into them is by faith in Christ. He is the "Door." (3) Progress in God's ways. We must add to our faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge, etc. (2 Pet. i. 5). 2. *Fidelity.* "Keep my charge." We have all a trust committed to us. Our time, talents, and possessions are all given in trust. We are not owners of them, but stewards. "It is required of a steward that he be found faithful." Paul felt, as he was leaving the world, that he had finished his course, and kept the faith. Such is the path to greatness—the *only* path, the *sure* path.

III. THE BIBLE GIVES US A GUARANTEE FOR TRUE GREATNESS. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts." The word of God is the pledge. 1. His word has been *fulfilled in the experience of the good in all ages.* All who have walked in God's ways and kept his charge have reached this sublime elevation. They are the illustrious heroes of the ages; and they have high authority in the empire of God. 2. His word can *never fail of its accomplishment.* "Heaven and earth shall pass away," etc.

Brother, art thou walking in the ways of God? If so, grand distinctions await thee. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—D. T.

Vers. 8-10.—*The world's wants and God's provisions.* "Hear, now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my Servant the BRANCH," etc. It is admitted by most acknowledged expositors of Holy Scripture that the sacerdotal institutions of the Mosaic system were typical of gospel realities; they were, as St. Paul has it, the "shadows of good things to come." This passage undoubtedly points to the Messiah and his times. Joshua, here called "the high priest," is a type of Christ, who is represented as "my Servant the BRANCH." A name by which he is designated in other parts of the Bible. Thus, for example: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots," etc. Again, "In that day shall

the branch of the Lord be beautiful," etc. And again, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch," etc. Indeed, the men who are here spoken of as those who "sit before" Joshua, "men wondered at," are typical men. This, indeed, is the meaning of the expression, "men wondered at," which some translate, "men appointed" (Isa. viii. 18), that is, typical men. Literally, the reference is to the members of the subordinate priesthood; and as the high priest, Joshua, was the type of Christ, these men were the types of his disciples in every age. I shall take the words as presenting *the world's wants and God's provisions*.

I. THE WORLD WANTS A MORAL HELPER, AND IN THE GOSPEL ONE IS PROVIDED. Morally, man is enslaved, diseased, exiled, lost to the great uses and purposes of his being. God has provided a great Helper, here called his "Servant the BRANCH." In Isaiah (xlii. 1) we have these words, "Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." He is *the* "Branch," God is the Root, and all holy souls are branches, deriving their life, beauty, and fruitfulness from him; but Christ is the "Branch," the oldest Branch, the largest Branch, the strongest Branch, the most fruitful Branch, etc. He is the Branch on which there hang clusters of perennial fruits for the "healing of the nations."

II. THE WORLD WANTS DIVINE GUARDIANSHIP. "Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes." What is here meant by the "stone"? Not the foundation-stone of the temple, which was now being rebuilt, for that had been laid long before. "The stone," says Keil, "is the symbol of the kingdom of God, and is laid by Jehovah before Joshua, by God's transferring to him the regeneration of his house and the keeping of his courts (before, *ephraim* in a spiritual sense, as in 1 Kings ix. 6, for example). The seven eyes which watch with protecting care over this stone are not a figurative representation of the all-embracing providence of God; but, in harmony with the seven eyes of the Lamb, 'which are the seven Spirits of God' (Rev. v. 6), and with the seven eyes of Jehovah (ch. iv. 10), they are the seven-fold radiation of the Spirit of Jehovah (after Isa. xi. 2), which show themselves in vigorous action upon this stone, to prepare it for its destination." Perhaps the meaning is that upon the kingdom of Christ, here symbolized by the stone, God's eyes are fixed (*engraved*) with deep and settled interest. "The eye is the natural hieroglyphic for knowledge; and 'seven,' as every reader of the Bible is aware, is the number used to denote completeness, perfection. Seven eyes denote the perfection of observant knowledge; and as the 'eyes of Jehovah' mean Jehovah's observation and knowledge, his 'seven eyes' express the perfection of both—omniscient observation." Two thoughts are suggested. 1. *God has a special interest in Christ and his followers.* His eyes are on the "stone," there in all their completeness—seven. He has a *general* interest in the universe, but a special interest here. His eyes, which "run to and fro through all the earth," glance with a wonderful tenderness upon the "stone." 2. *God has a settled interest in Christ and his followers.* The eyes are said to be *engraved* on the stone, not written in ink, not painted with colour which time would erase, but cut into its very heart; the stone itself must moulder before the engraving is destroyed. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed," etc.

III. THE WORLD WANTS MORAL PURIFICATION, AND IN THE GOSPEL IT IS PROVIDED. "I will remove the iniquity of that [this] land [that is, Palestine] in one day." The "iniquity of that land," the land of the Jews, was multiform, aggravated, immeasurable; but in one day provision should be made for its removal, the day on which Christ died upon the cross. "The work of the Messiah had a primary respect to Israel. The offer of salvation was to the Jew first." "Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts iii. 36). These words of Peter to the Jews of his day are a commentary on those before us. The great want of man is moral purification. Thank God, "Christ came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

IV. THE WORLD WANTS SPIRITUAL REPOSE, AND IN THE GOSPEL IT IS PROVIDED. "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree." "When iniquity is taken away," says Matthew Henry, "(1) We reap precious benefits and privileges from our justification, more precious than the products of the vine or the fig tree (Rom. v. 1). (2) We repose in a sweet

tranquillity, and are quiet from the fear of evil. What should terrify us when iniquity is taken away, when nothing can hurt us? We sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and by it are sheltered from the scorching heat of the curse of the Law. We live as Israel in the peaceable reign of Solomon (1 Kings iv. 24, 25), for he is the Prince of Peace."—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1—14.—§ 7. *The fifth vision: the golden candlestick.*

Ver. 1.—*The angel that talked with me.* The interpreting angel is meant. *Came again, and waked me.* It is thought that the angel, who is said (ch. ii. 3) to have gone forth, now rejoined the prophet and renewed his colloquy with him. But the expression in the text is probably only equivalent to "aroused me again" (comp. Gen. xxvi. 18; 2 Kings i. 11, 13, etc.). Absorbed in awe and wonder at the contemplation of the preceding vision, the prophet had fallen into a state of exhaustion and torpor, as Daniel slept after his great visions (Dan. viii. 18; x. 8, 9), and the apostles were heavy with sleep on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke ix. 32). From this mental prostration the angel arouses him to renewed attention. Or what is meant may be that the change wrought on the faculties by the Divine influence was as great as that between natural sleeping and waking.

Ver. 2.—*What seest thou?* The angel does not show the vision to the prophet, but makes him describe it, and then explains its import. This vision of the candlestick, with its seven lamps fed by two olive trees, signifies that the work of rebuilding the temple, and preparing the way for the Church of the true Israel, was to be accomplished by relying, not on human resources, but on Divine aid. Thus were Zerubbabel and his people roused to perseverance and energy in their good work, of which the final success is assured. *I have looked; éώρακα* (Septuagint), "I have seen." *A candlestick all of gold.* The candelabrum as described differs in some particulars from that in the tabernacle, though the same word, *menorath*, is used in both cases (Exod. xxv. 31; xxxvii. 17, etc.). In Solomon's temple there were ten candelabra (1 Kings vii. 49), which were carried away to Babylon when Jerusalem was taken (Jer. lii. 19). The single candelabrum of Zerubbabel's temple is mentioned in 1 Mac. i. 21; iv. 49, 50. The one sculptured on the arch of Titus may be a truthful representation of that in Herod's temple, but probably

is not the same as that in the second edifice (comp. Josephus, 'Ant.' xiv. 4. 4). The candelabrum in the vision differed from the original one in three particulars: it had a central reservoir; it had also seven pipes; and it was supplied with oil by two olive trees. *With a (its) bowl upon the top of it.* The "bowl" (*gullah*) is a reservoir for oil placed at the top of the candelabrum; and from it tubes led the oil for the supply of the lamps. In the tabernacle each lamp was separate, and trimmed and filled by the ministering priests; the mystic lamps needed no human agency to keep them supplied. They were fed by the "bowl." The word is translated in the Septuagint, *λαμπάδιον*: in the Vulgate, *lampas*; hence some have supposed that, besides the seven lamps, there was another large light in the centre; but the Greek and Latin rendering is mistaken, the word meaning "a fountain" (Josh. xv. 19), or "a ball" (1 Kings vii. 41), or "a round bowl" (Eccles. xii. 6). *And seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof.* The Hebrew is, literally rendered, *seven and seven pipes to the lamps which are upon its top.* The LXX. translates, *καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐπαυστηρῆδες τοῖς λύχνους τοῖς ἐπάνω αὐτῆς*, "and seven vessels for the lamps which are upon it;" so the Vulgate, *Septem infusoria lucernis, quæ erant super caput ejus*. These versions imply that there was one supply pipe to each of the lamps, which seems most natural. In this case, the first "seven" in the text must be an interpolation. Commentators who regard the present reading as correct have taken various ways in explaining it. Some multiply the number into itself, and make the pipes forty-nine; but this is unwarranted by Hebrew usage (Henderson). Others add the numbers together, making fourteen; but here again the copulative *et*, which implies diversity, is an objection. The Revised Version has, "There are seven pipes to each of the lamps," taking the words distributively; but the number of tubes seems here to be unnecessarily large. Dr. Wright considers that there were two pipes to each lamp, one set connecting each to the central bowl, and one connecting the several lamps together. One, however, does not see of what particular use the second set is. Dr. Wright, p. 84, gives a drawing of the candelabrum with

its appurtenances, according to his notion of the vision. The Authorized Version seems to give the correct idea of the passage, whether we arrive at it by rejecting the first "seven," or by considering that it is repeated for emphasis' sake, as Cornelius à Lapide and Pressel think: "Seven are the lamps upon it—seven, I say, and seven the pipes." Take it as we may, the point is that the oil is well and copiously supplied to the several lights.

Ver. 3.—**Two olive trees.** These, as explained in ver. 12, discharged the oil from their fruit-bearing branches into conduits which led to the central reservoir. Without man's agency the oil is separated from the berry and keeps the lamps constantly supplied (comp. Rev. ii. 4).

Ver. 4.—**What are these, my lord?** The question may refer to the two olive trees, which were a novelty to the prophet, who, of course, was well acquainted with the form and use, if not the symbolism, of the candelabrum. But it may also be taken as desiring information about the whole vision.

Ver. 5.—**Knowest thou not?** The angel speaks not so much in surprise at the prophet's slowness of comprehension (comp. John iii. 10) as desirous of calling his most serious attention to the coming explanation.

Ver. 6.—**This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel.** The Lord's message unto Zerubbabel is the purport of the vision, viz. that his work will be accomplished through the grace of God alone. **Not by might.** Septuagint, "not by great might;" but the Vulgate, "not by an army." The word is almost synonymous with the following, **translated power**; and the two together mean that the effect is to be produced, not by any human means, however potent. Doubtless Zerubbabel was dispirited when he thought how much there was to do, how feeble the means at his disposal (Neh. iv. 2), and how formidable the opposition; and nothing could better reassure him than the promise of Divine aid. **But by my Spirit.** The angel does not say expressly what is to be done; but the purpose that filled the minds of Zechariah and Zerubbabel applied the word. The operations of the Spirit are manifold, and his aid alone could bring these mighty things to pass. The oil is a figure of the grace of the Holy Spirit; and as the lamps are not supplied by human hands, but directly from the olives, so the good work now undertaken shall be supported by Divine means (see on ver. 14).

Ver. 7.—**Who art thou, O great mountain?** The "mountain" is a figurative expression to denote the various difficulties that stood in Zerubbabel's way and impeded the carrying out of his great design. **Before Zerubbabel.** The Vulgate affixes these words

to the former part of the clause, but the accent is in favour of the Authorized Version. Thou shalt become a plain; literally, *into a plain!* A command. All obstacles shall be removed (comp. Isa. xl. 4; xlix. 11; Matt. xvii. 20; Luke iii. 4, 5). Septuagint, *τοῦ κατορθῶσαι* (intrans.), "that thou shouldst prosper;" "ut corrigas" (Jerome). **He shall bring forth the headstone thereof.** "He" is evidently Zerubbabel. He shall commence and put the finishing stroke to the work of rebuilding the temple. Many commentators take this stone to be the one that completes the building, "the top-stone." But it may well be questioned whether a building like the temple could have any such stone. An arch or a pyramid may have a crowning stone, but no other edifice; nor is there any proof that such a top-stone was known or its erection celebrated. It may be a mere metaphor for the completion of the work. It is better, however, to take it as the corner-stone, to which we know great importance was attached (comp. Job xxxviii. 6; Ps. cxviii. 22, etc.). This stone, on which the building rests, Zerubbabel will bring forth from the workshop; as the next verses say, his hands have laid the foundation. That action, already past, is represented as future, the regular commencement of the work under Zerubbabel's direction being intimated, and its happy conclusion promised. Septuagint, *Καὶ ἐξοίσα τὸν λίθον τῆς κληρονομίας*, "And I will bring forth the stone of the inheritance"—the meaning of which is obscure, though Jerome explains it by considering it an allusion to Christ. With shoutings, crying, **Grace, grace unto it!** All the by-standers, as the stone is placed, shout in acclamation, "God's favour rest upon it!" (Ezra iii. 10). The LXX. seems to have mistaken the sense, rendering, *ἰσότηρα χάριτος χάριτα αὐτῆς*, "The grace of it the equality of grace" (John i. 16); and to have led St. Jerome astray, who translates, "Et exæquabit gratiam gratiæ ejus," and comments thus: "We all have received of his fulness, and grace for grace, that is, the grace of the gospel for the grace of the Law, in order that the Israelites and the heathen who believe may receive equal grace and a like blessing." The Targum recognizes here a Messianic prophecy: "He will reveal the Messiah whose Name is spoken of from all eternity, and he shall rule over all the kingdoms."

Ver. 8.—**The word of the Lord came unto me.** The word came through the interpreting angel, as is clear from the expression in ver. 9, "The Lord hath sent me unto you." He explains more fully what had been already announced figuratively.

Ver. 9.—**Have laid the foundation.** Zerub-

babel had commenced the rebuilding in the second year of the return, in the second month (Ezra iii. 8); it had been hindered by the opposition of the neighbouring people (Ezra iv. 1—5, 24), and was not resumed till the second year of Darius. **Shall finish it.** The temple was finished in Darius's sixth year (Ezra vi. 15). **Thou shalt know,** etc. The truth of the angel's mission would be proved by the event, viz. the successful issue (comp. ch. ii. 9, 11; vi. 15; Deut. xviii. 22). The completion of the material temple was a pledge of the establishment of the spiritual temple, the Church of God.

**Ver. 10.—For who hath despised the day of small things?** The "small things" are the weak and poor beginning of the temple (Hag. ii. 3); as the Targum glosses, "on account of the edifice, because it was small." Small as the present work was, it was a pledge of the full completion, and was therefore not to be despised. So the question is equivalent to, "Can any one, after these promises and prophecies, presume to be doubtful about the future?" **For they shall rejoice,** etc. The subject of the verbs is that which comes last in position, the seven eyes of Jehovah; and the verse is best translated thus: "For (*i.e.* seeing that) these seven eyes of Jehovah, which run through all the earth, behold with joy the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel." The work is not contemptible, since the Lord regards it with favour, watches, and directs it. The LXX. and Vulgate (followed nearly by the Authorized Version) make the despisers the subject of the verbs, and lamely dissociate the final clause entirely from the preceding. The version given above is in accordance with the Masoretic accentuation. **The plummet;** literally, *the stone, the tin;* τὸν λίθον, τὸν κασσιτέρεινον (Septuagint); *lapidem stanneum*, "the stone of tin" (Vulgate). Tin is not found in Palestine; it was imported by the Phœnicians in great abundance, and from them the Jews obtained it. The supply must have come from Spain or Britain. **With those seven.** The preposition is an interpolation of the Authorized Version. It should be, "even these seven," explaining who are "they" at the head of the clause. **The eyes of the Lord.** The "seven eyes" have been already mentioned (ch. iii. 9, where see note). They are expressive of God's watchful providence and care. **Which run to and fro.** This clause further enforces the previous image (2 Chron. xvi. 9; Prov. xv. 3).

**Ver. 11.—Then answered I.** The prophet had received a general explanation of the vision; he had probably understood that the candelabrum represented the theocracy, of

whose restoration and life the temple was the symbol and vehicle. One point was still obscure, and he asks, **What are these two olive trees?** (ver. 3). To this question no answer is immediately forthcoming, the answer being delayed in order to augment the prophet's desire of understanding the vision, and to induce him to make the question more definite.

**Ver. 12.—The prophet perceives the chief point in the mystic olive trees,** so he alters his question the second time, asking, **What be these two olive branches?** (*shibbolim*); Vulgate, *spicæ*, "ears," as of corn, so called, as Kimchi supposes, because they were full of berries, as the ears are full of grains of corn. **Which through the two golden pipes,** etc.; rather, *which by means of two golden tubes are emptying the golden oil out of themselves.* The oil dropped of itself from the fruit-bearing branches into two tubes, spouts, or channels, which conveyed it to the central reservoir. The Revised Version renders, "which are beside the two golden spouts;" like the Vulgate, *quæ sunt juxta duo rostra aurea.* The LXX. has, *οἱ κλάδοι . . . οἱ ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ τῶν δύο μυκωτήρων* ("beaks," "noses") τῶν χρυσῶν—where "in the hands" or "by the hands" may be a Hebraism for "by means of." **The golden oil;** Hebrew, *the gold.* The oil is so called from its colour. The Greek and Latin versions lose this idea altogether, *In quibus sunt suffusoria ex auro* (Vulgate); "leading to the golden vessels" (Septuagint).

**Ver. 13.—Knowest thou not?** (comp. ver. 5). The angel wishes to impress upon the prophet whence came the power of the theocracy and the Divine order manifested therein.

**Ver. 14.—The two anointed ones;** literally, *the two sons of oil*; so the Revised Version; Vulgate, *filii olei*; Septuagint, *υἱοὶ τῆς πιδότητος*, "sons of fatness" (comp. Isa. v. 1). By them are intended the two powers, the regal and the sacerdotal, through which God's help and protection are dispensed to the theocracy. Oil was used in appointing to both these offices (comp. Lev. xxi. 10; 1 Sam. x. 1). The expression, "son of," in many cases denotes a quality or property, like "son of Belial," "son of might;" so here Dr. Alexander considers that "sons of oil" means people possessed of oil, oil-bearers, channels through which the oil flowed to others. Zerubbabel and Joshua are representatives of the civil and priestly authorities, but the text seems expressly to avoid naming any human agents, in order to show that the symbol must not be limited to individuals. Nor, indeed, must it be confined to the Jewish Church and state; it looks forward to the time when Jew and Gentile shall unite in

upholding the Church of God. **That stand by the Lord of the whole earth;** i.e. ready as his ministers to do him service. There is a reference to this passage in Rev. xi. 4, where the "two witnesses" are called "the two olive trees . . . standing before the Lord of the earth" (Perowne). The vision, as we have seen, prefigures primarily the completion of the temple and the restoration of its worship, and secondly the establishment of the Christian Church by the advent of Messiah. The several parts of the vision may be thus explained. The candelabrum is a symbol of the Jewish Church and theocracy, in accordance with the imagery in the Apocalypse, where the seven candlesticks are seven Churches (Rev. i. 20). It is made of gold as precious in God's sight, and to be kept pure and unalloyed; it is placed in the sanctuary, and has seven lamps, to indicate that it is bright with the grace of God, and is meant to shed its light

around at all times, as Christian men are bidden to shine like lights in the world (Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 15). The oil that supplies the lamps is the grace of God, the influence of the Holy Spirit, which alone enables the Church to shine and to accomplish its appointed work. The two olive trees are the two authorities, viz. the civil and sacerdotal, through which God communicates his grace to the Church; these stand by the Lord because, instituted by him, they carry out his will in the ordering, guiding, extending, and purifying his kingdom among men. The two olive branches remit their oil into one receptacle, because the two authorities, the regal and priestly, are intimately connected and united, and their action tends to one end, the promotion of God's glory in the salvation of men. In Messiah these offices are united; he is the channel of Divine grace, the source of light to the whole world.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The Church revived.* "And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me," etc. The imagery of these verses is twofold; but their subject seems one. By the "candlestick" expressly mentioned in ver. 2 (comp. Rev. i. 13; ii. 1; also Matt. v. 14, 15; Phil. ii. 15), and by the temple tacitly referred to in ver. 7, we understand, spiritually, the same thing, viz. in the first instance certainly the Jewish Church of that time. And what this twofold imagery seems intended here to set before us respecting this Church is (1) the *secret*, and (2) the *completeness* of its restoration to life.

I. THE SECRET OF ITS RESTORATION TO LIFE. Under this head we have set before us the question: 1. *Of Church work.* What is the great duty of a Church in this world? Is it not, like a lamp or candlestick, to give light, to be a continued witness to men respecting things unseen and eternal—a standing testimony in favour of truth and righteousness, and against error and sin? in other words (Art. XX.), "a witness and keeper of Holy Writ"? See again references *supra*; and note, in connection with this duty of spiritual light-giving on the part of a Church, the various grounds of the praise or blame administered in Rev. ii. and iii. 2. *Of Church needs.* The returned remnant of the Captivity, with their altar again set up (Ezra iii. 3), their feasts again begun (Ezra iii. 4), their temple in course of re-erection (Ezra iii. 10; vi. 14), and their ancient priesthood again restored (Zech. iii. 1—5), had now become such a witness. They were a "candlestick" or lamp again "lighted." How unequal in themselves to so important an office! How weak, how inexperienced, also how greatly endangered! Above all, how greatly needing that sacred unction, or "oil," of God's grace, of which we are told here (comp. also Acts x. 38)! 3. *Of Church supplies.* How ample, according to the vision described in vers. 2, 3, the provision made for supplying this revived lamp with this oil! What besides is meant by the different features of this vision the prophet knows not (ver. 4), and the angel tells not, at present. But, at any rate, they seem to signify that abundant provision is made. (1) For supplying such oil. There are "two" olive trees, e.g., to yield a double supply. Two "trees," also, things always growing and always producing, and able to yield, therefore, a continual supply. (2) For storing it up, viz. in the "bowl" placed at the "top," whence it could naturally flow out and down as required. (3) For distributing it in every needed direction, viz. by means of the twice-seven pipes (or even, as some take it, the seven-times-seven pipes), to the seven lamps of which we are told. So mysterious, yet so sufficient, was the secret source of life in this case. Let Zerubbabel, as the successor of David, and earthly guardian of his Church, know this for his comfort (see ver. 6).



II. THE COMPLETENESS OF THIS RESTORATION. In the seventh verse, as noted before, the figure is changed. The Church of the restored Captivity is before us now under the metaphor of a building inhabited by God himself, as often in God's Word (see Heb. iii. 6; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21, 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 5). And the purport of this change seems that of representing, not only as before the adequacy, but also now the actual effectiveness, of the provision here made. It should eventually be with that spiritual house as with the material house which they were then building as its image and type. This true: 1. *As to external obstacles.* The greatest of these, even if like a "great mountain" itself in bulk, should become, "before Zerubbabel"—having the Spirit of God on his side—like a plain. 2. *As to final victory.* To use a well-known modern expression, there should be "the crowning of the edifice" of the Church. All that the pre-Captivity Jewish Church had really been in the world this restored Church should now be, up to the very "headstone"—the last stone to be put in its place—with every mark of triumph ("shoutings") and favour ("grace") as well (ver. 7).

Observe, in conclusion: 1. *How strikingly these promises were fulfilled.* Besides all that we read concerning the days of the Maccabees (as referred to probably in Heb. xi. 35—38), how much more spiritual life remained in the Jewish Church even to the times of the gospel! See indications of this in Luke ii. 25, 38; Matt. xxvii. 53; Mark xv. 43; Acts ii. 5, etc. See indications, also, as to the extent to which the witness or "light" of this Church had told on the Gentile world in Luke vii. 5; John xii. 20; Acts x. 1; xiii. 43, 50 (*τὰς οἰκουμένης*); xvii. 4, 17. 2. *How great a lesson this teaches.* There was nothing in this case but the secret working of God's Spirit thus to keep this Church in existence; no "might," no "power." On the contrary, many obstacles—persecutions, enemies, corruptions, and so on. So plain is it how much can be done (and done only) in the way of Christian organization, labour, and progress by the sacred oil of God's Spirit. "*Utilis lectio, utilis eruditio, sed magis utilis unctio, quippe quæ docet de omnibus.*"

Vers. 8—14.—*The Church sustained.* "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house," etc. These verses continue the metaphors of the previous portion, but in the opposite order. Vers. 1—7 begin with the "olive trees" and end with the "house;" vers. 8—14 begin with the "house" (vers. 8—10) and conclude with the "trees." We may look on this latter passage, therefore, as a kind of additional message ("moreover," ver. 8) on the same general subject and to the same general purport as before. The principal difference is in connection with the questions of order and depth. As we learned before not a little, first as to the secret, and secondly as to the completeness, of the restored life of the Jewish Church, so here we learn very much more (1) as to that same completeness, and (2) as to that same secret, of this same restored life.

I. ITS COMPLETENESS. As conveyed, we suppose, by what is said respecting the material "house" (or typical Church) then in process of erection. We find this described in vers. 9, 10. And of the promise contained therein we may notice: 1. *How peculiarly explicit it is.* Not only is the work which Zerubbabel had begun to be finished; it is to be finished by "his hands," and therefore, of course, in his time. Not only, again, is it to be so far finished as to be capable, as it were, of habitation and use; but so far finished as to be ready for that most absolutely ultimate of all building processes, the process of testing the work done. How graphic the description of this! "They shall see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel." 2. *How exceedingly deliberate it is.* To start the work of erecting this temple—to begin such a true spiritual Church-restoration—was a great thing. To accomplish it, a still greater. If accomplished, indeed, that of itself would be a sufficient proof of a true mission from God (see the end of ver. 9; also, to some extent, 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13). Especially would this be so in that "day of small things," when even well-wishers—persons ready to "rejoice" in such a thing, if really accomplished—as it were "despised" the idea. All this was known, all this was recognized, when the promise was given. 3. *How fully assured it is.* Was there not One "sent" to accomplish this, even that Angel-Jehovah represented by the "stone" of ch. iii. 9? And was there not sent also, of necessity, together with him, a full supply of all that was necessary to accomplish

these wonders? (See end of ver. 10, and the reference there to "those seven" eyes to be found on that "stone;" also Rev. v. 6; 2 Chron. xvi. 9; and compare end of ver. 6 in this chapter.) To secure that "stone" is to secure that sevenfold blessing, and all it involves.

II. ITS SECRET. A yet further point, in regard to this, seems revealed to us in that which comes next. It is not enough to have the blessing referred to, so to speak, in reversion. If the Church is to shine as a living witness, some channel of communication must be in existence by which it can be always supplied therewith without fail. To understand the emblem employed (as before described in ver. 3) to represent this, we may notice: 1. *The prophet's ignorance of its meaning.* See this five times referred to, viz. in vers. 4, 5, 11, 12, 13. Whatever he meant, therefore, it is evidently something the nature of which is so far occult and secret that even the eyes of a prophet might fail to discern it at first. 2. *The angel's surprise at his ignorance.* "Knowest thou not?" (see vers. 5 and 13; and comp. John iii. 10; Mark iv. 13; Rom. vi. 3, 16; vii. 1). The prophet ought to have discerned it, although he did not. 3. *The explanation that follows.* (Ver. 14.) An explanation which seems to show us: (1) Why the prophet ought to have understood the emblem, viz. because it represented an ordinance carefully ordered and arranged, even that of certain persons "anointed" for special service; an ordinance, also, ancient and settled ("stand by," as a custom or habit); an ordinance of most extensive import, even affecting the whole earth. (2) What we may understand thereby, viz. that God always maintains in the world a succession of special witnesses for him, who "stand by" him, as it were, so as to be informed of his will, and who are "anointed," as it were, so as to keep alive in turn the general witness of his Church (see 2 Cor. v. 18—20; iv. 7; 2 Tim. ii. 2; Gen. xviii. 17; Amos iii. 7); and who also, either as being always sufficient in number (2 Cor. xiii. 1, and references; also Rev. xi. 3, 4), or else as being usually divided, as were Zerubbabel and Jeshua, in the spirit of Luke x. 24 and 1 Tim. v. 17, are set forth to us as "two" in number. In these ways it is that it pleases God always to keep alive the life of his Church (1 Cor. i. 21).

See illustrated here also, in conclusion: 1. *God's great love for his people.* He gives his Son for them in order, afterwards, to give them his Spirit as well (John iv. 10; Gal. iv. 4—6). He buys these earthen vessels for a sum beyond cost, in order, then, to fill them with an ointment which is also beyond cost! 2. *God's great care for his Church.* Whatever the objects of the "ministry of angels," God has entrusted specially to men the duty of keeping alight among men the "candlestick" of his truth. How often this light has been all but extinct (Gen. vi. 5—8; xii. 1 compared with Josh. xxiv. 2; 1 Sam. iii. 1; vii. 3; 1 Kings xix. 10, 14; Ps. xii. 1; Isa. liii. 1; Micah vii. 2; Rev. xi. 7—10)! Yet how wonderfully preserved throughout; and to be preserved to the end (Matt. xvi. 18)!

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The Church in three aspects.* I. SYMBOLICALLY REPRESENTED. (Vers. 2, 3.) Candelabrum.

II. DEVOUTLY CONTEMPLATED. (Ver. 5.) Humble, earnest, reverent inquiry.

III. DIVINELY INTERPRETED. 1. *The unity of the Church.* 2. *The spiritual use of the Church.* 3. *The Divine care of the Church.* 4. *The future glory of the Church.* The Church should be: (1) *Receptive* of the Divine. (2) *Communicative* of the Divine. "They empty themselves," etc. Freely, constantly, rejoicingly. (3) *Reflective* of the Divine. Life and work. Not only true of the Church as a whole, but of every individual member. "Let your light shine before men."—F.

Ver. 2.—*On seeing.* The question, "What seest thou?" suggests—

I. THE SLUMBER OF THE SOUL. (Ver. 1.) Want of consciousness and activity. Delusions (Isa. xxix. 7). Peril (Mark xiii. 36).

II. THE AWAKENING OF THE SOUL. (Ver. 1.) "The angel" may be taken to illustrate the various ministries employed by God to quicken and rouse his people. *Providence.* Loss of health, property, friends, and such-like incidents. *Word of the*

*truth.* Law and gospel. *The Spirit of Christ.* (1 Kings xix. 11, 12; John xvi. 8—13; Rev. i. 10—20.)

III. THE GLORIOUS THINGS REVEALED TO THE AWAKENED SOUL. The question. Mark: 1. *The time.* When the soul was awakened; not before (Isa. l. 4; Luke ix. 32). 2. *The purpose.* To stimulate activity. "I have looked." Must use our own faculties. 3. *The result.* Manifold things revealed. As *we* are, so will our sight be. Press the question, "What seest thou?" *In nature.*

"O lady, we receive but what we give,  
And in our lives alone does nature live."

(Coleridge.)

*Human life.* Life all confused and dark, a maze without a plan, or the hand of God. *Holy Scriptures.* God. Truth. Immortality. Christ. "*We see Jesus*" (Heb. ii. 9).—F.

Ver. 5.—*The learner and the learned.* I. THE SPIRIT OF THE LEARNER. *Humility.* The first thing to know, as the ancient sage said, is that we know nothing. *Love of truth.* For its own sake. To be sought for as hidden treasure—with ardour and delight. *Obedience.* Not merely readiness to receive, but courage to act. Faithful carrying out of principles. Progress. Step by step, in the spirit of self-sacrifice. "When first thine eyes unveil, give thy soul leave to do the like" (Vaughan).

"Study is like the heaven's glorious sun,  
That will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks;  
Small have continuous plodders ever won,  
Save base authority from others' books."

(Shakespeare.)

II. THE SPIRIT OF THE LEARNED. 1. *Wisdom.* Not mere knowledge, but insight into character, and capacity to turn knowledge to the best account. 2. *Kindness.* Hence patience with ignorance and prejudice. Loving endeavour to give to others what has been good and a joy to themselves. 3. *Faithfulness.* Not hiding what should be told; not making compromises of principle; not striving for the mastery, but for the victory of truth. 4. *Humility* is as much the character of the learned as of the learner (cf. Newton likening himself to a child gathering shells).

"Were man to live coeval with the sun,  
The patriarch-pupil would be learning still,  
And dying leave his lesson half unlearn't."

F.

Ver. 6.—*The secret of power.* Power is indispensable. It is not in numbers, or organization, or method. These are good, but not enough. It is not of man, though it is by man. Must look higher. It is of God. Life is from life. The highest life can only come from the highest life. "Not by might," etc. Apply to—

I. THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH. Talent, culture, wide sympathies, zeal and eloquence, not enough. Even truth not enough. Need more. "My Spirit." There must be a right relation to God. There must be the quickening of the soul with the life of God—the energizing and elevating of the natural powers to the highest capacity and use. This influence is necessary both for preachers and hearers.

II. THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH. In the Church God draws near to us and we draw near to God. As a Father to his children he speaketh unto us; as children unto a Father we should speak unto him. 1. Praise. 2. Prayer. 3. Hearing of the Word. 4. Communion. 5. Times of refreshing. It is only as we are quickened from above that our worship is hearty and true (cf. John iv. 23), acceptable to God, and profitable to ourselves.

III. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH. Life must precede work. As individuals, in the society to which we belong, and in our daily life, we are called to serve God. Every one has his place and his work. It is as we carry out faithfully the duty committed

to us that the cause of the Lord will prosper, and "his kingdom come" at home and abroad.—F.

Vers. 7—10.—*Encouragement to Christian workers.* I. THOUGH THE WORK BE DERIDED, IT IS GOD'S WORK. Therefore we are sure it is right and good. We can throw ourselves into it with all our heart. Patience. What is of God cannot fail.

II. THOUGH THE DIFFICULTIES BE GREAT, THEY ARE CAPABLE OF BEING OVERCOME. Difficulties are a *test*. They show what spirit we are of. They separate the chaff from the wheat. Remember "Formality" and "Hypocrisy" in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Difficulties are a *challenge*. They put us on our mettle. Courage mounteth with occasion. Once we can say, "It is our duty," nothing should daunt us (Acts v. 29; xx. 24). In A.D. 1800 Napoleon wanted to cross the Alps with his army into Italy. He asked Marescot, chief of the engineers, "Is it possible?" He replied, "Yes, but with difficulty." "Let us, then, set out," was the order of the great captain (1 Cor. ix. 25). Difficulties are our *education*. It is not ease but effort that makes men. "Our antagonist is our helper," said Burke. "He who has battled, were it only with poverty and hard toil, will be found stronger and more expert than he who could stay at home from the battle, concealed among the provision-waggons, or even resting unwatchfully, abiding by the stuff" (Carlyle). So it is in all spheres of activity. "To overcome, we must conquer as we go." Difficulties lead us to a deeper and truer appreciation of our dependence upon God (Rom. v. 3—5; viii. 31, 37).

III. THOUGH THE PROGRESS BE SMALL, ULTIMATE SUCCESS IS CERTAIN. God's Word is sure. He is truth, and cannot lie. He is love, and cannot betray. He is almighty, and cannot be defeated. The laying of the foundation-stone, in his Name, implies the completion of the structure; and, by faith, we already hear the shoutings and the jubilant cries as the work is finished. "Grace, grace unto it!"—F.

Vers. 1—10.—*Man as a student of the Divine revelation and a doer of Divine work.* "And the angel that talked with me," etc. "It is needful to keep in mind that all these successive scenes were presented to the mind of the prophet in vision; and that each vision was distinct, forming a whole of itself, independently of the scenery of those which preceded it, although not so as to preclude connection in the lessons taught, and occasional reference (such as we shall find in the one now before us) to the earlier in the latter. The fourth in the series of visions, then, was now closed; and at the close of it, the prophet represents himself as having fallen into a kind of reverie arising from its disclosures, or from some particular part of them, by which his mind was absorbed and unconscious of aught that might be passing around him. From this state he was roused, as the first verse indicates, by the touch and the voice of the ministering angel, and his attention arrested to a new scenic representation, and the explanation of its meaning" (Wardlaw). I have to confess that the more I look into this vision, as well as into the previous visions, the more I feel my utter inability to attach a satisfactory meaning to all the strange and grotesque symbols that are presented. And my sense of inability has been deepened as I have examined the explanations that have been put forth by biblical critics—some most fanciful and absurd, and many most conflicting. Indeed, it requires a Daniel to interpret dreams; the objects in a dream are generally so unnatural, grotesque, shadowy, and shifting, that men seldom try to attach any definite idea to them. I may regard this passage as setting before us man in two aspects, viz. as a student of the Divine revelation, and as a doer of the Divine purposes.

I. AS A STUDENT OF THE DIVINE REVELATION. "I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?" This candelabrum made of gold, with a bowl on the top, its seven lamps and seven pipes, etc., is taken by most expositors to represent the Church of God, and popular preachers go on to draw analogies between the candlestick and the Church. Of course, this is easy work. But the Church of God, as the phrase is, has not, alas! been very golden or very luminous. The *ideal* Church is all this. The candlestick

may, I think, fairly represent the Bible, or God's special revelation to man: that is *golden*, that is *luminous*, that is *supernaturally supplied* with the oil of inspiration. In fact, in the passage, the interpreting angel designates this candlestick, not as the Church, but as the "word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel." I make two remarks concerning this revelation. 1. *It has in it sufficient to excite the inquiry of man as a student.* The prophet, on seeing these wonderful objects, exclaimed, "What are these, my lord?" He seemed to feel as Moses felt in relation to the burning bush, when he said, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not consumed." What wonderful things are in this Bible! It is a museum of wonders; and the greatest of all wonders is God manifest in the flesh. 2. *It has an interpreter that can satisfy man as a student.* The angel to whom the prophet directed his inquiry promptly answered. "Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The prophet here displays two of the leading attributes of a genuine student of the Divine. (1) *Inquisitiveness.* He inquires; and because he inquires, he receives an answer. Had he not inquired, the object would have remained an unmeaning symbol. The Bible is an unmeaning book to the great masses of mankind, because they do not inquire into its significance. Truth is only got by genuine inquiry. (2) *Ingenuousness.* The first reply of the interpreting angel to the prophet was, "Knowest thou not what these things mean? and he said, 'No, my lord.'" At once he confesses his ignorance. "Let us," says Dr. Wardlaw, "imitate the twofold example—both that of inquisitiveness and that of ingenuousness. Let us be on the alert in our inquiries after knowledge; and in order to our acquiring it, never foolishly, and to save our pride and vanity, affect to have what we have not." The man who develops these two attributes in relation to God's Word, has a Divine Interpreter at his side, namely, the Spirit of God, who will lead him into all knowledge.

II. AS A DOER OF THE DIVINE WILL. Man has not only to study, but to work; not only to get Divine ideas, but to work them out. "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it! Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you." The work of the prophet was to convey a message from God. Zerubbabel, and the message he conveyed was a message to work. Man is to be a "worker together" with God. I offer two remarks concerning man as a worker out of the Divine will. 1. *That though his difficulties may appear great, his resources are infinite.* Zerubbabel, in rebuilding the temple, had enormous difficulties. Those difficulties hovered before him as mountains. But great as they were, he was assured that he had resources more than equal to the task. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." By this is meant, not that human might and power are not required, or are utterly useless, but Divine might would give aid to all honest effort and endeavour. The difficulties in a good man's path of duty rise oftentimes like mountains before him; but let him not be disheartened; those mountains are nothing compared with the might that is guaranteed. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove," etc. 2. *That though his efforts may seem feeble, his success will be inevitable.* (1) *The feebleness of human efforts is here implied.* "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (a) It is common to despise small things. Proud man will only honour what seem to him great things—conventionally great. A small house, a small business, a small book,—these are despised. (b) It is foolish to despise small things. All great things were small in their beginnings. London was once a little hamlet; the oaken forest once an acorn. We do not know what really are small things; what we consider small may be the greatest things in the universe. (c) It is contemptible to despise small things. Truly great souls never do so. (2) *The success of feeble efforts is here guaranteed.* "He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with

shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." Literally, the promise is that Zerubbabel, notwithstanding all the difficulties he had to contend with in rebuilding the temple, should see it completed, should see the crowning stone laid on the building, amid the hosannahs of the people: "Grace, grace unto it!" So it will be with every genuine work to which a true man puts his hand in the name of God. It will be finished; there will be no failure, success is inevitable. "As I live, saith the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory" (Numb. xiv. 21).—D. T.

Vers. 11—14.—*The olive trees and the candlesticks: model religious teachers.* "Then answered I, and said unto him," etc. This is not another vision, but an explanation of the one recorded in the preceding verses. The explanation is that the two branches of the olive tree which, by means of the two tubes of gold empty their oil, is that they represented "two anointed ones," or sons of oil. Perhaps Joshua and Zerubbabel are particularly referred to. "Because," says Henderson, "when installed into office they had oil poured upon their heads as a symbol of the gifts and influences of the Holy Spirit, which alone could fit them rightly to discharge their important functions. Their services to the new state were of such value that they might well be represented as furnishing it, instrumentally, with what was necessary for enabling it to answer the purpose of its establishment." I shall take these two "anointed ones" as types of model religious teachers. Three things are suggested.

I. THEY HAVE A HIGH ORDER OF LIFE IN THEM. They are represented by the olive branches. There are few productions of the vegetable kingdom that are of such a high order as the olive. Though not large, seldom rising higher than thirty feet, it has a rich foliage, beautiful flowers, abundant fruit, and withal is filled with precious oil. One tree contains often not less than a thousand pounds of precious oil. Its fatness was proverbial (Judg. ix. 9); it is an evergreen, and most enduring. In short, it is marked by great beauty, perpetual freshness, and immense utility. It was one of the sources of wealth in Judæa, and its failure was the cause of famine. The emblems of a true teacher are not dead timber or some frail vegetable life, but an olive tree. Religious teachers should not only have life, but life of the highest order. They should be full of animal spirits, full of creative genius, full of fertile thought, full of Divine inspiration. Men whose vitality is of a low order are utterly disqualified to be public religious teachers. They should not be reeds, fragile, and with temporary foliage, but like a "green olive tree in the house of God." The curse of the modern pulpit is its lack of *vitality, freshness, and power.*

II. THEY COMMUNICATE THE MOST PRECIOUS ELEMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE. They "empty the golden oil out of themselves." Whether the expression "golden" here signifies merely the richness of its colour or the preciousness of its property, it scarcely matters. It has been observed by modern travellers that the natives of olive countries manifest more attachment to olive oil than to any other article of food, and find nothing adequate to supply its place. Genuine religious teachers feed the lamp of universal knowledge with the most golden elements of truth. They not only give the true theory of morals and worship, but the true theory of moral restoration. What a high value Paul set on this knowledge! "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." What are the true genuine religious teachers doing? They are pouring into the lamps of the world's knowledge the choicest elements of truth.

III. THEY LIVE NEAR TO THE GOD OF ALL TRUTH. "Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." They "*stand*," a position of dignity; "*stand*," a position of waiting—waiting to receive infallible instructions, ready to execute the Divine behests. All true religious teachers live *consciously* near to God. To "stand by the Lord of the whole earth" is one thing, to be *conscious* of it is another. All "stand by" him; but few of the race are practically conscious of the position, and these few alone are the true teachers.

CONCLUSION. Let us, who are engaged in the office of public teaching, try ourselves by these criteria. The olive tree gave what it had in it—gave out its nature. So must we. Manufactured discourses, intellectual speculations, rhetorical flourishes,—these have no oil.—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1—4.—§ 8. *The sixth vision: the flying roll.*

Ver. 1.—Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes; *i.e.* I lifted up mine eyes again, and saw the vision that follows. The prophet had seen, in the fourth vision, how in the new theocracy the priesthood should be pure and holy; in the fifth how the Church should be restored; he is now shown that sinners should be cut off, that no transgression should be left in the kingdom of God. A flying roll; *volumen volans* (Vulgate); comp. Ezek. ii. 9, 10. The Hebrews used parchment and leather scrolls for writing; the writing was divided into columns, and when completed the document was rolled round one or two sticks and kept in a case. In the present vision the scroll is unrolled and exhibited in its full length and breadth, showing that it was to be made known to all. Its flight denotes the speedy arrival of the judgment, and, as it is seen in the heaven, so the punishment proceeds from God. Theodotion and Aquila render the word, *διφθέρα*, "leather;" the Septuagint, by mistake, *σφέραρον*, "a sickle."

Ver. 2.—He said. The angel-interpreter spoke (ch. iv. 2). The length thereof, *etc.* Taking the cubit at a foot and a half, the size of the roll is enormous, and may well have aroused the prophet's wonder. The dimensions given correspond to those of the porch of Solomon's temple (1 Kings vi. 3), twenty cubits long by ten broad. These are also the dimensions of the holy place in the tabernacle, and of Solomon's brazen altar (2 Chron. iv. 1). The careful statement of the size of the roll indicates that some special meaning is attached to these measurements. We do not know that any symbolical signification was recognized in the porch of the temple; but these dimensions may well contain a reference to the sanctuary and the altar, as Knabenbauer explains, "The curse is of the same measure as that altar which was the instrument of expiation and reconciliation, and as that sanctuary which was the entrance to the holy of holies." Others consider that the curse is pronounced according to the measure of the sanctuary, *i.e.* according to the Divine Law; or that all might thus know that it came from God, and that the possession of the temple did not secure the people from vengeance unless they were pure and obedient.

Ver. 3.—This is the curse. The roll contained the curse written upon it on both

ZECHARIAH.

sides. (For the curse of God upon guilty nations, comp. Isa. xxiv. 6; Dan. ix. 11.) Earth; land; for Judæa is meant. The curse was ready to fall on all who might come under it by their transgressions. This would be a warning also to exterior nations. Every one that stealeth . . . every one that sweareth. Thieves and perjurers are especially mentioned as incurring the curse. Perjury is a chief offence in one table of the Law, theft in the other; so these sins may stand for all offences against the Decalogue (comp. Jas. ii. 10, *etc.*). But probably they are named because they were particularly rife among the returned Jews. During their long sojourn in Babylon they had engaged in commercial pursuits and had fallen into the lax morality which such occupations often engender. These bad habits they had brought with them and practised in their new home (comp. ch. viii. 17, and note there). Shall be cut off as on this side according to it; Revised Version, *shall be purged out on the one side* (margin, *from hence*) *according to it*; Ewald, "driven hence like it." The reference is to the two sides of the roll, answering to the two tables of the Decalogue. Sinners shall be "cleansed away," *i.e.* utterly consumed, according to the tenor of the roll. The Vulgate has *judicabitur*; the LXX., *ὡς θανάτου ἐκδικηθήσεται*, "shall be punished unto death." That sweareth; *i.e.* falsely, as is plain from ver. 4; Septuagint, *πᾶς ὁ ἐπιόρκος*, "every perjurer."

Ver. 4.—I will bring it forth. God will not keep the curse confined and inoperative (Deut. xxxii. 34, *etc.*), but it shall enter into the house of the thief. The curse shall not fall lightly and pass quickly by, but shall fix its abode with the sinner till it has worked out its fell purpose. It shall remain; it shall pass the night—take up its lodging; LXX., *καταλύσει*. With the timber thereof, *etc.* A hyperbolic expression of the terrible effects of Divine vengeance, which consumes utterly like a devouring fire—an adumbration of the destruction at the day of judgment (comp. Deut. iv. 24; Mal. iii. 2; Matt. iii. 12).

Vers. 5—11.—§ 9. *The seventh vision: the woman in the ephah.*

Ver. 5.—Went forth. While the prophet meditated on the last vision, the interpreting angel retired into the background or among the company of angels; he now comes into view again to explain a new revelation closely connected with the former. That goeth forth. That comes into sight from the surrounding darkness. As the

preceding vision denoted that sinners should be extirpated, so the present vision shows how iniquity itself, the very principle of evil, should be removed from the Holy Land.

Ver. 6.—**What is it?** The prophet did not clearly discern the object, or his question may mean, "What does it signify?" **An ephah;** *the ephah*, as "the curse" (ver. 3). The ephah was the largest of the dry measures in use among the Jews, and was equal to six or seven gallons. It was, of course, too small to contain a woman. The LXX. calls it simply "the measure;" the Vulgate, *amphora*; and it must be considered as an imaginary vessel of huge size. It may have a tacit reference to dishonest dealings (comp. Amos viii. 5; Micah vi. 10). **This is their resemblance;** literally, *this is their eye*. The Authorized Version explains the meaning accurately. "Eye" is often used for that which is seen, as in Lev. xiii. 55, where the Authorized Version has "colour;" and Numb. xi. 7, where in reference to the manna we read, "The eye thereof was as the eye of bdellium" (comp. Ezek. i. 4, 16). So here the meaning is: This ephah and this whole vision represent the wicked in the land. Some take "the eye" to mean the object of sight, that to which they look. But the ephah was not set forth for all the people to examine. The LXX. and Syriac, from some variation in the reading, have ἀδικία, "iniquity," and some critics have desired to adopt this in the text. But authority and necessity are equally wanting.

Ver. 7.—**There was lifted up a talent of lead.** As the prophet gazed, the leaden cover of the ephah was raised, so that the contents became visible. The word rendered "talent" (*kikkar*) denotes a circle. It is used in Gen. xiii. 10, 12, for the tract of country of which the Jordan was the centre, and in 1 Sam. ii. 36 for a round loaf. Here it means a disc or circular plate which formed the cover of the round-shaped ephah. In the next verse it is called, "the weight of lead." **And this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah;** *and there was a woman sitting*, etc. When the leaden lid was raised one woman (*mulier una*, γυνή μία) was seen in the measure. She is called "one," as uniting and concentrating in her person all sinners and all sins.

Ver. 8.—**This is wickedness.** This woman is the personification of wickedness. It is very common to find backsliding Israel represented as a faithless and adulterous woman (comp. Isa. i. 21; Jer. ii. 20; Hos. ii. 5; and the parable of the two women in Ezek. xxiii.). **He cast it;** *her*—the woman. As the woman rose, or tried to rise, from the ephah, the angel flung her down into it,

It is possible, as some commentators suppose, that the ephah into which wickedness is thrust represents the measure of iniquity which, being reached, constrains God to punish (see Gen. xv. 16, where the dispossession of the Amorites is postponed till their iniquity is full). **The weight of lead;** literally, as the LXX., *the stone of lead*; Vulgate, *massam plumbeam*. This is the cover of the ephah, that which is called the "talent of lead" in the preceding verse. This heavy cover the angel cast upon the mouth of the ephah, in order to confine the woman therein (comp. Gen. xxix. 2, which passage may explain why the cover is called "a stone"). Dr. Wright and some other commentators, referring the passage to theft and perjury alone, consider that the woman held in her hand the leaden weight with which she weighed her gains, and was sitting in the ephah which she used in her traffic; so that she represents dishonesty in the matter of weight and measure. She is punished by the means of the instruments she had used unrighteously; the weight is dashed upon her lying mouth, and the ephah, her throne, is made the vehicle that carries her out of the land. But it seems a mistake to confine the iniquity mentioned to the two special sins of theft and perjury; nor would the talent and the ephah be natural instruments of stealing and false-swearing; and the point of the vision is not the punishment of wickedness, but its expulsion from the land. It is true that the pronominal suffix in the mouth thereof is feminine, and that the LXX. makes it refer to the woman, τὸ στέμα αὐτῆς. But it may equally refer to *ephah*, which is also feminine.

Ver. 9.—**Then lifted I up mine eyes.** This is the conclusion of the vision. **And looked; and saw.** **There came out (forth) two women.** These two women who now come in sight have been supposed to represent the Assyrians and Babylonians, who were the agents in the deportation of Israel; or else are considered abettors of the woman in the ephah, who for a time save her from destruction. This latter supposition proceeds on the erroneous idea that wickedness is herein rescued from punishment, whereas the notion that underlies the whole vision is that the Holy Land is purged of wickedness. That the two nations hostile to Israel are represented is an untenable suggestion; for why should they carry off iniquity from Jerusalem and fix it in their own land? Probably by the two women carrying away the evil woman is signified (if the details are capable of explanation) that iniquity brings with it its own destruction and works out its own removal. **The wind was in their wings.** They were borne



along so quickly that they seemed to be carried by the wind; or the wind helped their flight. **A stork;** Septuagint, *ἐποπος*, "the hoopoe;" Vulgate, *milvi*. The Authorized Version is certainly correct. The stork is common enough in Palestine, and is reckoned among unclean birds in the Pontateuch (Lev. xi. 19; Deut. xiv. 18), for which cause some have thought it is here introduced as bearing the sin-laden ephah. But its introduction more probably has reference to its migratory habits, the power and rapidity of its flight, and, as some think, to its skill in constructing its nest.

Ver. 11.—**To build it (her) an house.** The LXX. refers the pronoun to the ephah, but it seems more natural to refer it to a person, the woman. The feminine gender of the original would apply to either. She is carried away from Judæa to have a permanent dwelling in a land more suited to her. Pusey thinks that possibly a temple may be intended, "a great idol-temple, in which the god of this world should be worshipped." In the land of Shinar; i.e. the ideal land of unholiness, where the world-power first

arrayed itself against God in the attempt at Babel. Septuagint, *ἐν τῇ Βαβυλῶνος* (Gen. xi. 2, etc.). *Shinar*, equivalent to *Sumer* in the Assyrian monuments, denotes Lower or Southern Babylon; *Accad*, Upper or Northern Babylon. And it shall be established. The house shall be firmly fixed there. Others render, "when it is ready." And set there. The gender shows that the woman is meant, not the house: "And she shall be set there in her own place." Thus from the spiritual Zion all wickedness shall be abolished (ch. iii. 9) and sent to its own place prepared for the enemies of God and holiness. Doubtless, too, a warning is here conveyed to those Jews who still lingered in Babylon, that they were dwelling in a land accursed of God, and were liable to be involved in the fate which pursues ungodliness. Orelli and some others see in these two visions an analogy to the two goats on the Day of Atonement, of which one was sacrificed for the sins of the people, and the other bore away their iniquity to the demons' abode, the wilderness (Lev. xvi.).

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The reassertion of the Law.* "Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll," etc. Most of the distinguishing privileges first given to Israel after leaving Egypt for Canaan were gradually restored to Israel on its partial restoration to Palestine after the captivity of Babylon. This illustrated, as noted before, as to the altar (Ezra iii. 3); the daily sacrifice (Ezra iii. 5); the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezra iii. 4); the tabernacle or the temple itself (Ezra iii. 10; vi. 15). This also illustrated, as we have just seen, as to the revival of the Levitical priesthood (ch. iii. 1—5); and also as to the rekindling of that temple "candlestick" which typified the restoration and maintenance of the Jewish Church as a witness for God amongst men (ch. iv. 1—3, 11—14). In the present passage we think we perceive a similar reassertion and, as it were, restoration of that written statement of man's duty and God's will which was given originally on Mount Sinai, on the two tables of stone; this second proclamation differing from that, however, according to the differences of the exigency and time. This we hope to show by considering the vision before us (1) as to its *general nature*; and (2) as to its *special characteristics*.

I. ITS GENERAL NATURE. As with the original Decalogue, so we are shown here in vision: 1. A message in *writing* from God; a message, therefore, like the other, peculiarly deliberate and explicit in its character, and peculiarly permanent in its form (Exod. xxxiv. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 7; see also Isa. viii. 1; Jer. xxxvi. 18; xxx. 2; Luke i. 3, 4; Acts xv. 23, etc.). 2. A message of *judgment*; in other words, containing a "curse," or solemn declaration of anger against sin and wrong-doing (Deut. xxvii. 26; Jer. xi. 3, 4; Gal. iii. 10). 3. A message of great *breadth* and *extent*, being written on a roll of the same dimensions (so it has been noted) as the sanctuary, or temple, and applying, therefore (so it may be intended), to the whole duty of man (see again Gal. iii. 10); or else, possibly, showing that this proclamation of God's will, like the former one, had to do especially with his "house" (1 Pet. iv. 17; Amos iii. 1, 2). 4. A message, however, of *universal applicability*, as shown by its "flying" "over the whole earth," or land (comp. Rom. ii. 9, 12—16). 5. A message of a *twofold* purport or form—the words written on one side of the "roll" referring to a commandment contained in the first table of the Decalogue, and those written on the other to a commandment in the second. On all these points we see there is a more or less marked similarity between those tables of stone and this flying roll.

11. ITS SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS. These to be seen, if we mistake not, somewhat remarkably: 1. *In the special transgressions here denounced*; being just those to which we have reason to believe, from other sources, that the post-Captivity Israelites were especially prone. Note, e.g., in the first table of the Law, with regard to the sin of "false swearing," what evidences we find (as in Rom. ii. 17, 23, 24, and elsewhere) of their falsely professing supreme reverence for the very Name of Jehovah, even using a periphrasis instead of it, as in Mark xiv. 61; but how few evidences, if any—so different from pre-Captivity times—of open violations of the first and second commandments; and what an extreme solicitude, if to some extent a blind one, as to the outward observance of the fourth (Luke xiii. 14; John v. 16; ix. 16, etc.). Note also, in the second table of the Law, with regard to the sin of "stealing," how many evidences we have, after the return from Babylon, of the special prevalence of that cruel spirit of covetousness which lies at the root of all theft (see Neh. v. 1—13; Mal. iii. 5, 8—10; Luke xii. 15; xvi. 14; xx. 46, 47; to say nothing of the modern history of the Jews since the destruction of Jerusalem). 2. *In the special punishment here threatened*, viz. just that which persons prone to such transgressions would be afraid of the most. The great objects aimed at by such in their lip-worship and fraud (observe connection of thought in beginning of Luke xx. 47) would be the establishment and enrichment of themselves and their "houses." Instead of this, the very opposite, viz. the total destruction thereof, is described figuratively, but most graphically, as being the result. God himself should "bring forth" the appointed evil or "curse," which should reach its appointed place; and stay there its appointed time; and thoroughly perform there its appointed work, destroying not the house only but its very materials (ver. 4). How strikingly suitable, how emphatic a method of re-enacting his Law!

See, in conclusion, from this view of the passage: 1. *The immutability of God's Law*. In every successive dispensation alike, obedience to it is demanded. In the patriarchal, under Noah. In the legal, under Moses. Here, also after the Captivity; and that in closest connection, as just seen, with prophecies about the priesthood of Christ, and the work of his Spirit. And not less so, finally, in the gospel itself, with its blaze of mercy and love (Matt. v. 17—20, etc.; Rom. iii. 31; viii. 4; Titus ii. 12, 13; iii. 8). 2. *The elasticity of its application*. In each several case God causes those parts of it which are most needed to be most emphasized too. So in the instance before us, as we think we have shown. So also, under Noah, as shown by comparing Gen. vi. 13; ix. 5, 6. Compare, again, as to Moses, the length and emphasis of the second commandment with Exod. xxxii. 1—6, and the subsequent history of the nation. And see, finally, under the gospel, how specially suited such language as that in Matt. xxii. 36—40 was to the mere formalism of those times.

Vers. 5—11.—*The vindication of Law*. "Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes," etc. The last vision was one of warning. This, as we take it, is one of judgment. The subject appears, however, to be the same. What the prophet previously dreaded and threatened he now describes as fulfilled. In other words, in a mystical fashion, and in language (it may be) only partially understood by himself, he foretells how the warning just uttered by him would be, on the one hand, *completely despised* by the Jewish people and Church; and, on the other hand, *completely vindicated* by the course of events.

I. *THE WARNING DESPISED*. This is predicted, in vision, by certain similitudes, which convey to our minds: 1. *The idea of measure*. An "ephah," a common measure, sometimes put (according to some, see Deut. xxv. 14, margin) as a representative of all measures, is seen "going forth." What for, except to be used? And how used, unless for measuring? As also—if Dr. Pusey is right in speaking of it as the largest measure in use—for measuring something of very unusual magnitude. 2. *The idea of national sin*. Of sin, by what is said of the contents of this ephah, viz. (ver. 8), "This is wickedness." Of nationality, by its being presented to us under the figure of a woman (see Isa. xxxvii. 22; Ezek. xvi. 2, 4; and other Scriptures; and comp. Isa. iii. 26 with the figure and legend of "Judæa Capta" on the coin struck in commemoration of the destruction of Jerusalem), and perhaps, also, by the remarkable declaration in end of ver. 6. 3. *The idea of repletion*. This large measure being so filled up as only to require the closing up of its mouth; and that with so heavy a closing as a "talent of

lead," as though never requiring to be opened again. See what our Lord long afterwards said to the Jews in Matt. xxiii. 32 (comp. Gen. xv. 16), with apparent reference to this very prophecy, and, as some think (Matt. xxiii. 35), to this very prophet. Also compare what is said concerning the sin of "stealing," in ver. 4 of this chapter, with what our Saviour also said to the Jews of that day in Matt. xxi. 13; and see Dan. viii. 23; 1 Thess. ii. 16.

II. THE WARNING FULFILLED. This seems shown us by the following emblems: 1. *The emblem of captivity.* The "woman," or nation, with its "wickedness," being, as already noted, shut up in the ephah. 2. *The emblem of settled purpose.* As exhibited by the appearance of "two" persons to effect the same thing. Compare such passages as Amos iii. 3; Gen. xix. 1; xli. 32; and note how "two" angels declare both the resurrection and the second coming of Christ (John xx. 12; Acts i. 10). 3. *The emblem of irresistible removal.* The "two women" spoken of are naturally able to overcome and lift up the one in the ephah (Eccles. iv. 9, 10). The same idea may also be conveyed by their having the "wings of a stork," the most familiar of all birds of migration (Jer. viii. 7); also by their having "the wind" in their wings, their natural strength being made stronger still (so this may mean) by the appointed course of events (comp. Ps. cxlvii. 18; cxlviii. 8); also once more, perhaps, by the ephah being so "lifted up from the earth" that nothing earthly could have the power to prevent its removal. 4. *The emblem of permanent stay.* The ephah being taken to "Shinar," or Babylon, a land of long captivity to Israel in the past (Jer. xxix. 4, 5), and having a house "built" for it there, and being "established" there on a base of its own. All which seems to have been fulfilled when the Romans came, after the "filling up" of the sins of the Jews by their rejection of Christ, and took away their "place and nation" (John xi. 48), carrying them away captive by irresistible might and evidently Divine assistance into their long exile in the great city of that mystical "Babylon," which is also, spiritually, "called Sodom and Egypt" (Rev. xi. 8; xiv. 8; xvii. 1, 5, 18, etc.), and settling them there (so it possibly means) on a "base" of their "own," i.e. in a kind of life and under a Divine dispensation peculiar to themselves (comp. Numb. xxiii. 9, end).

We see, in this prophecy so viewed, in conclusion: 1. *The cumulative nature of sin.* As nations and men continue in disobedience, so also, and even more, does the amount charged against them, as by a terrible kind of compound interest, continue to increase. The sins of yesterday greatly aggravate the sins of to-day. Besides passages *supra*, see Rom. ii. 5; Jas. v. 3; Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. 2. *The necessary limits of sin.* Sin, in its ultimate essence, is simply rebellion against God (1 John iii. 4; Ps. li. 4). Even in the case, therefore, of Israel, who was dealt with in especial mercy and love, there must be some boundary beyond which the accumulation of sin cannot be allowed to proceed. What becomes, else, of God's rule? What of his holiness too? *Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur* (see Gen. xviii. 25, end). 3. *The ultimate issue of sin.* If not repented of, if not atoned for, what can this issue be except "banishment"? And what can such banishment mean except "death" (Matt. xxv. 41; Ps. xvi. 11; Rom. vi. 23; Prov. xxix. 1)?

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Retribution.* I. PROVOKED. Sin is the transgression of the Law. Here two kinds singled out. 1. Sins against the second table. "Stealeth." Fraud, injustice of all kinds. False to man. 2. Sins against the first table. "Sweareth." Profanity. Self-will. False to God. These are samples of sins infinite in number and variety. Bold and flagrant offences, opposed to all law and order, defiant of God.

II. PROCLAIMED. Symbolically set forth. Sin will be judged, not according to custom or public sentiment, but by the measure of the sanctuary, the eternal Law of God. "Flying roll." 1. Broad enough to cover all offences. 2. Swift to seize all transgressors in its fatal embrace. The warning comes in mercy. "Flee from the wrath to come." See refuge under the shadow of the cross. Justice pursues the sinner, but it stops satisfied at Calvary.

III. INFLICTED. Sooner or later judgment will come. Inevitable and sure, just

because God is God. Society must be purified. The bad will have to give place to the good. The earth will end with Eden, as it began.

"My own hope is, a sun will pierce  
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;  
That, after last, returns the first,  
Though a wide compass round be fetched;  
That what began best can't end worst,  
Nor what God blessed once prove accurst."

(Browning.)

F.

Vers. 5—11.—*Worldliness in the Church.* I. SADLY PREVALENT. "This is their eye"—what they mind and what they lust after. There is a climax. First two classes of sinners are figured, next one great indistinguishable mass. Then "wickedness" is personified, as one woman. This teaches how *worldliness* is: 1. Common. 2. Absorbing. 3. Debasing—corrupting all that is beautiful and fair.

II. SPECIALLY OFFENSIVE. Bad in the world; infinitely worse in the Church. 1. Opposed to the Spirit of Christ. 2. Incompatible with the service of God. 3. Obstructive to the progress of the gospel.

III. RIGHTEOUSLY DOOMED. Even now restrained. Limited as to place and power. But the end cometh. The judgment set forth implies: 1. *Disinheritment*. They defrauded others, and will themselves be impoverished. Like Satan, cast out. Like Esau, lose their birthright. 2. *Banishment*. Judgment based on sympathies. What is right in law is true to feeling. Society cleansed. The bad go with the bad. Ungodliness is driven to the land of ungodliness. Captivity leads to captivity. Judas went "to his own place." 3. *Abandonment*. Judgment swift, thorough, irresistible. There is a terrible retention of character. "The wicked are driven away in their wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death."—F.

Vers. 1—4.—*The flying roll: Divine retribution.* "Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll: the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits," etc. This is the sixth vision of the series of visions which the prophet had during the night. He now saw a "flying roll." We have mention made of such rolls by Ezra, by Isaiah, by Jeremiah, and by Ezekiel. Ezra speaks of search being made in "the book of rolls," the depository of the public archives or records, and of a "roll" being found there in which was recorded the decree of King Darius respecting the Jews; and Jeremiah speaks of "a roll of a book." The book might be considered as consisting of several "rolls," over each other, and forming one volume. This is illustrated by the book which John saw "in the right hand of him that sat on the throne," which was "sealed with seven seals," and of which the contents were brought to view as each of the seals was unfolded. "The ancients wrote on a variety of materials—the papyrus, or paper-reed, the inner bark of particular trees, and the dressed skins of animals, forming a kind of parchment. These, when written, were rolled up, for convenience and for preservation of the writing, either singly or in a number over each other. The roll seen by the prophet was a 'flying roll,' but not flying through the air in its rolled-up state. It was expanded, and was of extraordinary size. Reckoning the cubit at a foot and a half, it was *ten yards* in length by *five* in width, the measurement being guessed by the prophet's eye" (Wardlaw). "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth." This is the explanation given by the interpreting angel. Without presuming to give an accurate interpretation of all the particulars of the symbolic representation, I think it may be fairly and usefully employed to exhibit the sublimely awful subject of *Divine retribution*. And this subject it serves to illustrate in two aspects.

I. AS FOLLOWING SIN. Notice: 1. *The particular sins which retribution pursues*. They are: (1) *Theft and sacrilege*. "Every one that stealeth." Stealing, here, refers not only to any property taken from man, but especially to the appropriation of worldly wealth to the decoration of their "ceiled houses," instead of applying it to the rebuilding of God's house. Hence Jehovah said, "Ye have robbed me in tithes and offerings.

Ye are cursed with the curse, even this whole nation" (Mal. iii. 8). This is the worst of all robberies. In fact, it embraces all robberies, the applying to our own selfish purposes what belongs to God. (2) *Perjury and false swearing.* Their sacrilegious conduct appears to have been sustained by false oaths, which increased the heinousness of their offence. The sins here noted are not mere specimens, but root or fountain sins. The "flying roll" of Divine retribution followed sin with its curses. There is a curse to every sin, and this is not vengeance, but benevolence. It is the arrangement of love. 2. *The way in which just retribution pursues them.* (1) *Openly.* The roll is spread open, and is written in characters that are legible to all. Divine retribution is no secret to man. It is not some intangible, hidden, occult thing. It is open to all eyes. Every man must see the "flying roll," not only in the history of nations and communities, but in his own domestic and individual life. The "flying roll" hovers over every sin. (2) *Rapidly.* Retribution is swift. It is a "flying roll." No sooner does a man commit a sin than he suffers in some form or other. The Nemesis is at the heels of the criminal. Retribution follows sins swifter than the sound of the swiftest thunder-peal follows the lightning-flash. (3) *Penetratingly.* "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my Name." Wherever the sinner is, it will find him out. No mountain so high, no cavern so deep, no forest so intricate and shadowy, as to protect him from his visitation. "The flying roll" will reach the sinner everywhere. "There is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."

II. AS ABIDING WITH SIN. "It shall remain in the midst of his house." Not only does it rule the house of the sinner, "it remains in the midst of it," like a leprosy, infecting, wasting, consuming, destroying. It is a curse that embitters every sweet, and gives more than twofold intensity to every bitter. It dooms to destruction the man and all his possessions. And from this world it must accompany and follow him to another, and settle with him there for ever. "The special reference made to their houses, with the 'stones thereof and the timber thereof,' forcibly points to the care which they had been taking of their own accommodation, in comfort and elegance, while Jehovah's was neglected" (Wardlaw). It abides in the house to curse everything, even the timber and the stones. Guilt, not only, like a ravenous beast, crouches at the door of the sinner, but rather, like a blasting mildew, spreads its baneful influence over the whole dwelling. The sin of one member of a family brings its curse on the others. The sins of the parents bring a curse upon the children. "Between parents and children," says Jeremy Taylor, "there is so great a society of nature and of manners, of blessing and of cursing, that an evil parent cannot perish in a single death; and holy parents never eat their meal of blessing alone; but they make the room shine like the fire of a holy sacrifice; and a father's or a mother's piety makes all the house festival, and full of joy from generation to generation."

CONCLUSION. Sinner, wouldst thou escape the tremendous curses which Heaven has written on this "flying roll," this book of Divine retribution? Then abandon a sinful life, exorcise the sinful temper, inhale the spirit of him who came to put away sin from humanity and to destroy the works of the devil.—D. T.

Vers. 5—11.—*A materialistic community.* "Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth," etc. Here is another (the seventh) vision in the wonderful series of visions which the prophet had that night. This is one of the strangest of the whole, one, perhaps, admitting of no certain interpretation—a "*woman in the ephah.*" We know what an "ephah" was. It was the greatest measure of capacity which the Hebrews had for dry goods, and was about the size of a cubic foot. It contained about an English bushel. The woman is generally regarded, and with probable accuracy used, as the symbol of a Jewish community—a community that had become by this time most mercenary. Mammon was their god. The interpreting angel said, "*This is wickedness.*" And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof." "Because it was wickedness or abhorrent worldliness that this woman symbolized, the angel threw her down in the midst of the ephah, and threw the weight of lead on the mouth of it" (Henderson). Utter mercenariness is an abhorrent object

to an angel's eye. The prophet still looks, and what does he see? "Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven." The meaning of this new scene may easily be discovered. The ephah, with the woman in it, is carried away between earth and heaven, *i.e.* through the air. Women carry it, because there is a woman inside; and two women, because two persons are required to carry so large and heavy a measure, that they lay hold of it on both sides (נִשְׂאָה with the נ dropped; cf. Gesenius, 74, 3, A. 4). These women have wings, because it passes through the air; and a stork's wings, because these birds have broad pinions, and not because the stork is a bird of passage or an unclean bird. "The wings are filled with wind, that they may be able to carry their burden with greater velocity through the air. The women denote the instruments or powers employed by God to carry away the sinners out of his congregation, without any special allusion to this or the other historical nation. This is all that we have to seek in these features, which only serve to give distinctness to the picture" (Keil and Delitzsch). "Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base." There is no necessity for regarding Shinar here as designating any particular geographical spot, such as the land which Nimrod founded. The idea may be that this utter worldliness bears men away for ever from the Divine scenes of life. The most practical use I can turn this mysterious passage to is to employ it to illustrate the condition of a truly materialistic community.

I. SUCH A COMMUNITY IS ENCASED BY THE MATERIAL. This woman, the emblem of the worldly Jews, was not only "in the midst of the ephah," but was closely confined there. "He cast the weight of the lead upon the mouth thereof." To an utterly worldly man matter is everything. He is utterly shut out from the spiritual; there is no glimpse of it, no interest in it. Like the woman in the ephah, he is encompassed by that which shuts him in. The bright heavens and the green fields of the spiritual world are over and around him, but they are nothing to him. He is in the ephah. 1. Your *secular scientist* is in the ephah. He sees nothing but matter, believes in nothing but matter. 2. Your *sensuous religionist* is in this ephah. He judges after the flesh. He lives in the horrors of Sinai, in the tragedies of Calvary; his talk is of blood, and fire, and crowns, and white robes, etc. The spiritual is shut out from him, or rather he is shut out from it. 3. Your *man of the world* is in this ephah. All his ideas of *wealth, dignity, pleasure*, are material. He judges the worth of a man by his purse, the dignity of a man by his pageantries, the pleasures of a man by his luxuries. Verily a sad condition this for humanity. For a soul that was made to realize the invisible, to mingle with the spiritual, to revel in the infinite, to be shut up like this woman in the ephah of materialism, may well strike us with shame and alarm.

II. SUCH A COMMUNITY IS BEING DISINHERITED BY THE MATERIAL. This woman in the ephah, emblem of the worldly Hebrew, is borne away from Palestine, her own land, into a foreign region; borne away by two women who had "wings like a stork, and whose wings were full of wind." Materialism disinherits man. His true inheritance as a spiritual existent is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away." But materialism carries him away from it—away to the distant and the gross. 1. *The process was rapid.* No bird so fleet with wing and foot as the stork, and with this fleetness this woman in the ephah was borne. How rapidly do animalism and worldliness bear away the spirit of man from the realm of spiritual realities, from a love of the true and the beautiful! 2. *The process was final.* "And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base." "To be carnally minded is death." "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Materialism bears the soul away into the "bondage of corruption." Well might the apostle say, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. iii. 19). "As you love your soul," says Mason, "beware of the world; it hath slain its thousands and ten thousands. What ruined Lot's wife? The world. What ruined Achan? The world. What ruined Haman? The world.

What ruined Judas? The world. What ruined Simon Magus? The world. What ruined Demas? The world. And, 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 1-8.—§ 10. *The eighth vision: the four chariots.*

Ver. 1.—I turned, and lifted up mine eyes (see note on ch. v. 1). Four chariots. These are war-chariots. The angel explains, in vers. 5, etc., what these chariots mean, how that they represent God's judgments on sinners in all the world. Though evil is removed from the Church, God's vengeance pursues it wherever it is located. If we compare this vision with the first (ch. i. 8-11), we shall see that the quiet there spoken of is here broken, and that the shaking of the nations, which is to accompany Messiah's advent (Hag. ii. 7), has begun. That the four chariots are to be identified with the four powers of Daniel's visions (ii. and vii.)—the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Macedonian, and Roman—is an opinion that does not commend itself. These four kingdoms and their fate have been already symbolized in the horns of the second vision (ch. i. 19-21), and it is most unlikely that they should be again introduced under a different figure. This would mar the orderly development of the revelation. And how could these kingdoms, such as they were, be said to issue from the seat of the theocracy and to be attentive to God's commands? Further, how could the chariots symbolize the kingdoms which were to be the objects of punishment, when at the same time they are themselves the instruments which inflict the chastisement? Neither does the angel's explanation suit this notion; for kingdoms are nowhere found under the figure of winds, and such a symbol would have been unintelligible to the prophet without further elucidation. Two mountains. The Hebrew has the article, "the two mountains," two well-known mountains. The scene of the vision is Jerusalem or its neighbourhood; hence the two mountains mentioned are thought to be those of Zion or the temple-mount, and Olives (comp. ch. xiv. 4; Joel iii. 16). It is impossible to identify them; and probably nothing more is meant than that the chariots came forth from a defile between the two mountains which appeared in the vision. Mountains of brass; or, copper. These impregnable, undecaying mountains represent the immovable, invincible nature of the theocracy and of God's decrees respecting it. From it the chariots

go forth, because for the sake of God's kingdom and to promote its objects the world-powers are destroyed (Knabenbauer) (Isa. lxvi. 15). The number "four" represents completeness; the judgment shall leave no quarter unvisited.

Ver. 2.—Red horses (see note on ch. i. 8). The colours of the horses are significant, though the symbols are not undisputed. "Red" symbolizes bloodshed and war (Isa. lxiii. 2; Rev. vi. 4); "black," sorrow and mourning (Isa. i. 3; Jer. iv. 28; Rev. vi. 5); "white," victory and joy (Eccles. ix. 8; Rev. vi. 2; xix. 11). What the colour of the horses in the fourth chariot means is very doubtful (see below on ver. 3).

Ver. 3.—Grisled and bay; rather, speckled, strong; Septuagint, ἵπποι ποικίλοι ψαροί, "horses pied and dapple-grey." But ψαρός is explained by the Scholiast in Aristophanes, 'Nub.' 1225, as "swift;" and possibly the LXX. used it in that sense here. The Vulgate has *fortes*; Aquila, κατῆροι. One would have expected a colour to be named, but why these are specially mentioned as strong or active is seen in ver. 7. The word *beruddim*, "speckled," occurs only in Gen. xxxi. 10, 12, where it has no symbolical character. As it denotes a combination of colours, probably spots of white on a dark ground, it may signify a quality of a mixed nature, thus indicating a visitation of war and pestilence, the sword and famine.

Ver. 5.—The four spirits of the heavens. Both the Septuagint and Vulgate render, "the four winds of heaven;" and this is doubtless correct. It was a familiar symbol to the Jews. The winds are often introduced in executing God's will on sinners (comp. Ps. civ. 4; cxlviii. 8; Jer. xlix. 36; Dan. vii. 2). Which go forth from standing before the Lord (comp. Job i. 6; ii. 1). The winds are supposed to be God's servants, waiting his pleasure to be sent forth on his errands. The Septuagint and Vulgate translate, "which go forth to stand before the Lord." This denotes merely their usual obedience; but the text implies that the prophet sees them moving from their usual expectant attitude, and hastening forth to do God's commands.

Ver. 6.—The angel now (vers. 6, 7) indicates the various destinations of the chariots, except the first with the red horses. Why this is omitted has never been satisfactorily explained. Some regard ver. 7 as giving the destination of this chariot, by making a

slight change in the word rendered "bay" in the Authorized Version, which would cause it to mean "red." The Syriac, indeed, which omits the word in ver. 3, translates it here by "red." If we retain the Masoretic reading, we must let this difficulty remain unsolved, and suppose that the angel explains only part of the vision, leaving the rest for the prophet's meditation. **The black horses which are therein; literally, that wherein are the black horses, they go forth, etc.;** which is equivalent to "the chariot wherein are the black horses goeth forth." So the Revised Version. **The north country.** Babylonia (see note on ch. ii. 6). **After them; behind them.** The white horses go to the same quarter; and thus is indicated the overwhelming destruction that was coming on Babylon, and the victory and triumph of the conquerors over it. **The south country; i.e. Egypt** (Isa. xxx. 6; Dan. xi. 5), another hostile power, also, perhaps, Edom and Ethiopia. One chariot only is seen to go towards it, drawn by the speckled horses that denote a mixed judgment, perhaps of war and pestilence (see on ver. 3). The north and south symbolize the whole earth and the powers hostile to the true Israel.

Ver. 7.—**The bay; rather, the strong, as in ver. 3; the horses in the fourth chariot, whose special mission needed peculiar powers.** Septuagint, *οι ψαφοι*: but the Vulgate, *qui erant robustissimi*. **Sought to go.** These agents desired a wider sphere, and asked permission to extend their action, and to walk to and fro through the earth. Famine and pestilence, which this chariot symbolizes, come at different times and in different places mysteriously and unexpectedly "as arrows shot from the hand of God (Ezek. v. 16) on the objects of his displeasure" (Alexander). LXX., *καὶ ἐπέβλεπον* [S<sup>2</sup>, *καὶ ἐζήρουν καὶ ἐπέβλεπον*] *τοῦ πορεύεσθαι τοῦ [A, καὶ] περιδεῦσαι τὴν γῆν*, "And looked to go and compass the earth."

Ver. 8.—**Then cried he upon me.** The angel cried aloud (like a herald announcing a proclamation, Jonah iii. 7), to call the prophet's attention to what was coming, which was of most immediate consequence to his people. This angel speaks as in the person of God. **Have quieted my spirit; literally, have caused my spirit to rest; LXX., ἀνέταυραν τὸν θυμὸν μου, "quieted my anger," i.e. by satiating it. Many commentators take the clause as equivalent to "have caused my wrath to rest upon the land" (comp. John iii. 36), referring to Judg. viii. 3; Prov. xvi. 32; Eccles. x. 4, for the use of the word "spirit" (*ruach*) in the sense of "anger." Others see here an intimation of mercy and grace to the Jews still resident in Babylonia. But it is plain**

that the vision is one of judgment; and the Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of judgment and vengeance (Isa. iv. 4), which destroys evil that good may flourish.

Vers. 9—15.—§ 11. *A symbolical action—the crowning of the high priest.*

Ver. 9.—The preceding visions having come to an end, they are now confirmed by a public act which should show the glory of the future temple, the acceptance of the members of the theocracy, and the King and Priest who was to come. **Came unto me.** This was probably on the morning after the night of visions, or as soon as he had divulged them to the people.

Ver. 10.—**Take of them of the Captivity.** The verb is in the infinitive for the imperative, "take thou from the Captivity;" what he is to take is noted in the next verse. "Those of the Captivity" are certain envoys sent by the Jews who still dwelt in Babylon (Ezek. i. 1; iii. 11), bearing gifts for the temple. These messengers the prophet was to visit at the house of Josiah, their host. **Heldai; or, Cheldai,** in ver. 14 "Helem" or "Chelem," "The Enduring One" (Keil); "The Lord's Word" (Pusey). The name occurs in 1 Chron. xxvii. 15. Tobijah; "The Lord is good," a well-known name. Jedaiah; "God careth." The name is found in 1 Chron. ix. 10; xxiv. 7. The LXX. explains the names in symbolical fashion, *παρὰ τῶν ἀρχόντων, καὶ παρὰ τῶν χρησίων αὐτῆς, καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἐπεργνοῦντων αὐτήν*, "From the chief men, and from its good men, and from those that have understood it." **Which are come from Babylon.** This clause in the Authorized Version is transposed from its place in the Hebrew, which is at the end of the verse, where it refers to the house of Josiah, and should be rendered, "to which," or "whither they have come from Babylon." Septuagint, *τὸν οἶκον Ἰωσίου . . . τοῦ ἡκοντος ἐκ Βαβυλῶνος*, "The house of Josiah . . . who came from Babylon." The same day. There was to be no delay; the transaction was to be carried out "on that day," the day made known to the prophet, and by himself in person. **The house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah.** He was, perhaps, treasurer. At any rate, at his house the envoys were entertained, and there were stored the contributions which the Jews in exile had sent to their brethren in Jerusalem. Josiah is the same person as Hen, according to the Authorized Version and the Vulgate, in ver. 14 (where see note). He was probably son of the Zephaniah mentioned in 2 Kings xxv. 18 as in the second rank of priests among those who were deported to Babylon (comp. Jer. xxi. 1; xxxvii. 3).

Ver. 11.—**Silver and gold.** That which had been brought from Babylon. However



unwilling the Jews were to let the Samaritans take part in the good work, they were quite ready to receive contributions from their brethren in the dispersion, and likewise from heathen kings and princes (see Ezra vi. 8, etc.; vii. 15, etc.). **Make crowns.** The prophet was to get the crowns made (comp. Exod. xxv., *passim*). The plural may here be used intensively for "a noble crown," as in Job xxxi. 36; or it may signify the two metals of which the crown was made, two or more wreaths being intertwined to form it. It is certain that only one crown was to be made, and that that was to be placed on Joshua's head. There is no mention of Zerubbabel in the passage; so the plural cannot be taken to intimate that there was a crown for the high priest and a crown for the princely ruler, as Ewald and Bunsen assert. These critics, followed by Hitzig and Wellhausen, supply the passage thus: "on the head of Zerubbabel and on the head of Joshua." Zerubbabel had no kingly position. Rather, all mention of Zerubbabel is expressly excluded, in order to denote that in the Person of him whom Joshua symbolized, the offices of priest and king were united (Ps. cx.). We may note that in Rev. xix. 12 Christ is said to have on his head many crowns, by which is meant a diadem composed of many circlets. The high priest's mitre is never called a crown. That which was placed on Joshua's head was a royal crown, a token of royal dignity, not his own, but his whom he represented—Christ the eternal Priest, the universal King.

Ver. 12.—**Speak unto him, saying.** The prophet is to explain to Joshua the meaning of this public act. **Behold the Man whose name is The BRANCH;** literally, *behold the man, BRANCH is his name* (see note on ch. iii. 8). The Targum has, "Behold the Man, Messiah is his name." It is plain that the term "Branch" or "Shoot" (LXX., Ἀνατολή; Vulgate, *Oriens*) could not be addressed to Joshua; indeed, the very form of the sentence, "his name," not "thy name," shows this. All who saw the transaction and heard the words must have understood that they had reference to the "Shoot" of David, the Messiah that was to come, to whom was committed the regal and priestly dignity. **And he shall grow up out of his place;** Septuagint, *Kal ὑποκάτωθεν αὐτοῦ ἀνατελεῖ*, "And from beneath him he shall spring up;" Vulgate, *Et subter eum oriatur*; Drake, "He shall sprout forth from under himself;" Revised Version margin, "And it (or they) shall bud forth under him;" Hitzig, Ewald, "From under him there shall be sprouting." But there is no need to alter the rendering of the Authorized Version, which indicates that the shoot shall grow from its own soil, that Messiah shall

arise in his own country and nation, and shall spring from a lowly origin to the highest glory (see Isa. xi. 1; liii. 2). **He shall build the temple of the Lord.** He should build, not the material temple whose foundations Zerubbabel had laid, but the spiritual temple of which the tabernacle and the temple of Jerusalem were only the type and shadow—that new sanctuary which Ezekiel beheld (xli.), a house not made with hands, the Church of the living God (Eph. ii. 20, etc.; 1 Pet. ii. 5).

Ver. 13.—**Even he shall build.** A forcible repetition of the preceding statement, laying stress on the Person, "*He*, and no one else, shall build." The clause is omitted by the Septuagint. **He shall bear the glory.** The word rendered "glory" is used to denote royal honours here, as in 1 Chron. xxix. 25; Jer. xxiii. 18; Dan. xi. 21. Messiah shall have regal majesty. Compare the many passages where the glory of Christ is spoken of; e.g. John i. 14; ii. 11; xvii. 5; Luke ix. 32; xxiv. 26; Heb. ii. 9; Rev. v. 12, etc. **Shall sit and rule upon his throne** (comp. ch. ix. 10). Thus Christ says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18; see Luke i. 32). **And he shall be a Priest upon his throne;** Septuagint, *Kal ἔσται ἱερεὺς ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ*, "There shall be a Priest upon his right hand." The Authorized Version is doubtless correct, as the clause is intended to declare that Messiah should, like Melchizedek, combine the offices of Priest and King (Ps. cx. 4; Heb. v. 6, 10). **The counsel of peace shall be between them both.** The two offices or dignities are meant, which are combined in one person. The Messiah, in his two offices of Priest and King, has one common design, to bring peace to his people (Isa. ix. 6; Micah v. 5, where see note). Other interpretations are unsuitable. Thus: There shall be harmony between Joshua and Zerubbabel; but the two are nowhere mentioned together in the paragraph, and, indeed, the statement would be superfluous. There shall be perfect concord between the two offices; but a person is spoken of, not an abstraction. Others explain the "counsel of peace" to be between Jews and Gentiles, or the returned and the exiled Jews; but neither of these have been named. Pusey takes it to mean, "between the Father and the Son;" but there is nothing in the passage to lead to this. Knabenbauer expounds it of those who alone are mentioned in the text, Messiah and Joshua, seeing in it an exhortation to the latter to make the type correspond to the Antitype, so that all may see that there is perfect harmony between them.

Ver. 14.—**The crowns shall be . . . for a memorial.** The crown was to be taken from

Joshua's head and deposited in the temple as a memorial of this prophecy, and of the zeal of those who had come from far to bring offerings to the Lord, and likewise of the hospitality of Josiah, who had received them into his house. That such "gifts" were dedicated in the temple is well known (see Judith xvi. 19; 2 Macc. v. 16; ix. 16; Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' ii. 17. 3; 'Ant.,' xvii. 6. 3; xix. 6. 1; Philo, 'Legat. ad Cai.,' § 40, ii. p. 592). **Helem** is the same as *Heldai* (ver. 10), whether he bore both names, or whether, as is probable, this is a mere mistake of a copyist. To **Hen**. The Authorized Version considers this as a proper name. In this case it would be another name for Josiah. But it is really an appellative, and the rendering should be, "for the kindness of the son of Zephaniah." The crown would be also a memorial of his kindness in receiving and entertaining these exiles (comp. Matt. x. 41). The LXX. explains the names as in ver. 10, though not quite in the same way, 'Ἐσται τοῖς ὑπομένουσι, καὶ τοῖς χρησίμοις ἀδελφῆς, καὶ τοῖς ἐπεγνακόσιν αὐτήν, καὶ εἰς χάριτα υἱοῦ Σοφοῦ, καὶ εἰς ψαλμὸν ἐν οἴκῳ Κυρίου, "The crown shall be to them that endure,

and to its good men, and to those that have understood it, both for a favour to the son of Sophonias, and for a psalm in the house of the Lord."

Ver. 15.—**They that are far off**; of μακρὸν (Septuagint); comp. Eph. ii. 13, 17. The Jews who had come from Babylon to Jerusalem are a figure of the conversion of distant nations and their offerings to the Church (see Hag. ii. 7, and note there). **Build in the temple of the Lord**. They shall join in building up the spiritual temple, the universal Church of Christ. **Ye shall know**, etc. (ch. ii. 9, 11; iv. 9). The Angel of Jehovah is speaking in Jehovah's name (ver. 9). What takes place in the case of this material temple shall be a token and a prelude of the great fulfilment in Messianic times. **If ye will diligently obey**. Neither the restoration of the temple nor the advent of Messiah's kingdom was in itself doubtful; but the people's share in the former, and their participation in the blessings of the latter, depended on the preparation of the heart, obedience, zeal, and holiness (Dan. xii. 10; Mal. iv. 1, 2; John i. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12).

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The ministry of angels*. "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains." This, the last of the present series of visions, is perceptibly similar in several points to the first (ch. i. 7—11). We find mention in both, e.g., of "horses;" of the variety of their colours; of the prophet's inquiry respecting their meaning; of some of them going to and fro on the earth; and of final "quiet" (ver. 8) or "rest" (ch. i. 11). If we were right, therefore, in understanding the first as a "vision of angels," we may do the same, of course, of this last. This idea is confirmed by the frequent way in which "chariots," as here spoken of, are employed in Holy Scripture as descriptive of the angels of God (see Ps. lxxviii. 17; Deut. xxxiii. 2; Acts vii. 53; 2 Kings ii. 11; vi. 17); as also by what is said of those seen as "standing by the Lord of the whole earth" (1 Kings xxii. 19; Dan. vii. 10; Luke i. 19; also ch. iv. 14, *supra*, where we, perhaps, have an example of the placing of men on an angelic level; Ps. viii. 5; Luke xx. 36). Taking this general view of the passage, it may be understood as giving us instruction (1) respecting the *nature* of the angels; and (2) respecting their *work*.

1. **THEIR NATURE**. We are shown in this vision, for example: 1. How *mighty* they are. They are represented as chariots of war—chariots of "fire," in other places—probably because such chariots, in old days, were, like artillery in these days, the most formidable "arm" of an army (see Judg. i. 19; iv. 3; 2 Chron. xviii. 30, 31; and note how angels, whether elect or fallen, are spoken of in Rom. viii. 38; Eph. i. 21; vi. 10; 2 Pet. ii. 11). 2. How *orderly*. Each separate emblematical "colour" being distinguished from the others, and each coming forth in its turn. May we not trace similar ideas of perfect order and symmetrical arrangement, and consequent facility in ascertaining numbers, in Rev. v. 11; Dan. vii. 10 (comp. Mark vi. 40, 44; and the words of the collect, "the services of men and angels in a wonderful order")? 3. How *diverse*. This, also, seems intimated by what is said of the different "colours" of the horses. This also we can easily understand to be true. If the varieties of men are so many, who yet are all "men," however diverse (Acts xvii. 26), why not of the angels also? why not of the angels much more, being innumerable (Heb. xii. 22)?

This same truth seems intimated to us also in Col. i. 16; and, perhaps, of evil angels, in Mark ix. 29. A legitimate subject this for meditation and praise, though not for intrusion (Col. i. 18). 4. *How diversely employed.* Like "the four winds of heaven," *e.g.*, some go in this direction, some in that. Also some are to follow, some to precede. Some, again, to move in one direction only; some in every direction, "to and fro." Angels, in short, like the stars of the mighty firmament, and apparently bearing, therefore, the same name, "the host of heaven" (Gen. ii. 1; Ps. xxxiii. 6; Luke ii. 13; Job xxxviii. 6), are, as it were, some fixed, and some revolving; some of one light, some of another; some larger, some smaller; some single, some double or treble; some nearer, some more remote (1 Cor. xv. 41).

II. *THEIR WORK.* However mighty or diverse these angels, all that they here do is seen to be: 1. *In strict subordination to God's purposes.* These mystical "chariots" only run, as it were, "between," and not over the mountains—the unsurmountable and undecaying "brass" mountains of God's settled arrangements (see Micah iv. 13). Even of the mightiest angels Acts iv. 28 holds good. 2. *In strict obedience to God's directions.* Observe what is said in ver. 7 of those who "sought to go," but till expressly allowed, did *not* go, "to and fro" (comp. Dan. ix. 23; Heb. i. 14, "sent forth;" and see, even of evil angels, Luke viii. 32). 3. *To the complete satisfaction of God's Son.* See the emphatic declaration of the Angel-Jehovah in ver. 8. This is true, even if we understand that verse (with some), "These have made my anger to rest on the north country." Why else does this Divine Angel employ this word "my"? Why proclaim this fact thus "aloud" (Pusey; comp. Ps. ciii. 20, 21; Matt. vi. 10)? 4. *For the sake of God's friends.* What is this "north country" on which God's anger is thus caused to abide? What but that great enemy of his Zion—that mystic Babylon, or "Shinar," by banishment in which (see last chapter) he had punished his Israel for their sin? Compare this predicted fate of the future "Babylon" with that of the literal as described in Isa. xlvii. 6—9, and elsewhere; and compare ch. i. 15, and perhaps Rev. xviii. 5, 6.

From the whole, we may see, to conclude: 1. *The exceeding complexity of God's government.* How many instruments—what varied agents, both in heaven and earth—he employs (comp. Dan. iv. 35)! Much as there is to admire in that visible "cosmos" of which men have discovered (under one aspect) so much; how much more there is when we include also that invisible "cosmos" (Gen. xxviii. 12; John i. 51), of which revelation informs us! It is, in fact, only less marvellous than its Maker himself. 2. *The exceeding simplicity of its general principle.* So far as explained to us, it all turns on one point, *viz.* "Israel's" calling and work. This shown here of the literal Israel. This still more true of the spiritual. See two last references again; also such passages as 2 Cor. iv. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 21; Eph. iii. 10, 11. Note, also, how this principle was laid down once for all in Gen. xii. 3; and how it corresponds with and is partly explained by the remarkable declaration of Eph. i. 23.

Vers. 9—15.—*The ministry of Messiah.* "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying," etc. The series of striking visions which we have now been considering had a kind of "prologue" in ch. i. 1—6. We seem to have the corresponding "epilogue" here. It turns on the fact of the arrival (probably about the same season, no special note of time being given as in ch. vii. 1) of certain visitors at Jerusalem, with offerings for the temple, from a "far" country, *viz.* "Babylon" (see vers. 10 and 15; and comp. Isa. xxxix. 3). And what we seem invited to notice, respecting these visitors, is (1) the *welcome*; (2) the *instruction*; and (3) the *promotion* which they received.

I. *THE WELCOME ACCORDED THEM.* This is shown in several ways. 1. *As to their persons.* They are mentioned by name (ver. 10; comp. Exod. xxxi. 2; xxxiii. 12; 1 Kings xiii. 2; Isa. xlv. 3; John x. 3), including the name of the man who appears to have given them hospitality in his "house" (Matt. x. 41). Also, if it be true, as some suppose from comparing vers. 10 and 14, that two among them had more names than one, the second name in each case being one assumed because containing in it, like all the rest (see Pusey), the name of Jehovah or Jah (comp. Dan. i. 7; iv. 8; v. 12; Micah iv. 6), it is, perhaps, worthy of notice that their names seem mentioned in full; thus showing, further, it may be, how God is pleased to notice and honour the very least thing that is done by us in remembrance of his Name (Mark ix. 41). 2. *As*

to their offerings. These are not only not refused, but openly accepted—a very great point, and by no means such a matter of course as we are sometimes inclined to suppose (Gen. iv. 4, 5; Numb. xvi. 15; Exod. xxv. 2; xxx. 16; xxxv. 5, etc.). Also, when accepted, these offerings are honoured, and put to very dignified use, being employed to make “crowns” (ver. 11) for God’s chief minister then upon earth (compare, in some respects, the box of ointment mentioned in Mark xiv. 3—9).

II. THE INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED THEM. See what God says of Joshua, when thus adorned, as a type or sign (comp. ch. iii. 8), in vers. 12 and 13. With these two crowns on him, he seems to represent to us: 1. *The appearance of the coming Messiah in his humiliation.* We see him here (1) as a man (“Behold the Man!” ver. 12; John xix. 5); and, therefore, as sharing to the full man’s nature and circumstances (“growing up;” comp. Isa. liii. 2; Luke ii. 51, 52). We see him here (2) as the Representative Man, the Son of man (“The Branch,” ver. 12), engaged, as such, in doing man’s work, viz. in saving men or bringing them to glory (Heb. ii. 10, 11); in other words, in “building” God’s “temple,” or Church (Matt. xvi. 18). 2. *The appearance of the coming Messiah in his glory.* For example, we see him here (1) as a Builder or Teacher, doing all by himself. “*Even he*” (ver. 13). He, indeed, being such as he is! He, alone, having no one else with him (see Isa. lxiii. 3, 5)! More especially and clearly we see him (2) as both King and High Priest. This also foreshadowed by the case of Melchizedek (Gen. xiv. 18; Ps. cx. 4; Heb. vii. 14). This signified here by the interpretation apparently given to the two “crowns” in ver. 13 (“sitting and ruling on his throne,” and being “a priest on his throne”); and possibly, also, by the intimation at the end of that verse, of perfectly harmonious co-operation, in his case, of these generally divided and even incompatible offices. This afterwards accomplished, as to his priestly office, when, by being “lifted up” on the cross, he drew all men to himself (John xii. 32, where note also the connection between the inquiry of the Greeks, so “far off,” in vers. 20—23, and the “glorifying” of the Son of man in the subsequent verse); and, as to his kingly office, in that primary “building” up of his Church by the bestowment of the gifts mentioned in Acts ii. 33 and v. 31. Then most manifestly did he “bear” that twofold “glory” referred to here in ver. 13.

III. THE SPECIAL PROMOTION CONFERRED ON THEM. As shown by the final destination of their offerings. After doing their duty, as “crowns” to Joshua, in a typical way, they were to have a perpetual place amongst the treasures of God’s house (ver. 14). This: 1. *As a “memorial.”* (Ver. 14.) Future visitors should learn from them how these first visitors (as they appear to have been) had been welcomed. Possibly this may even help to account for the world-wide habit which afterwards prevailed amongst the Jews in this respect (Acts ii. 1—11, etc.; and compare, perhaps, Rom. xvi. 5; Eph. ii. 12). 2. *As a pledge.* Placed in the restored temple, these crowns would be a kind of standing prophecy: (1) Of the future calling of the Gentiles, when those now “as far off” should not only come and be welcomed, but should even help to “build” the true temple of God. (2) Of the coming glory of Messiah. Then, *i.e.* when this ingathering of the Gentiles (Gen. xlix. 10) has taken place, says the Angel-Jehovah here (in ver. 15), ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you (compare two clauses of Luke ii. 31). 3. *As a warning.* “Ye shall know,” if willing to know—so it means (see end of ver. 15; and comp. Dan. xii. 10; John vii. 17).

See how these various considerations show the *unity of the Bible*. 1. As to its *structure*. Joshua, or Jesus, after the Exodus, brings the Israelites, as Moses could not do, into rest. Another “Jesus,” after the Captivity, typifies, in ch. iii. 6—10, the two natures of Christ; and, in this passage, his two offices of King and Priest. In the “fulness of time” a third “Jesus” arises, in whom all these things are fulfilled. Is there no evidence, in all this, of “design”? 2. As to its *subject*. Wherever we penetrate far enough beneath the surface, we find this one “Rock.” Must it not, therefore, like the granite in geological formations, be the foundation of all? 3. As to its *source*. To what are we to attribute such singular unity of teaching, at such very different times, and in such very different circumstances, except virtual unity of origin, or of supervision, to say the least? Is not the true and only explanation in such passages as 2 Pet. i. 21; 1 Cor. xii. 6—11?

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The world ruled in the interest of Christianity.* I. THE POWERS OF THE WORLD ARE UNDER THE CONTROL OF GOD. East and west, north and south, all the world over, God is supreme. He is the Lord of all forces, the Ruler of all events, the Arbiter of all destinies. War, famine, pestilence, may be the result of natural causes, but, all the same, they are his servants; they come and go at his command; they accomplish what he pleases.

“Happy the man who sees a God employed  
In all the good and ill that chequer life.”

(Cowper.)

II. THE POWERS OF THE WORLD ARE CONTROLLED BY GOD IN THE INTEREST OF CHRISTIANITY. God takes a direct and living interest in his people. He is Enemy of their enemies, and the Friend of their friends. “All things work together for good to them who love God.” And there is nothing arbitrary in this. God is not partial, but just. As he is God, he must act as God. The true and the righteous and the holy must ever receive the protection and the blessing of the True and the Righteous and the Holy One. God’s government is marked by immutability of counsel, variety of method, universality of range, sovereignty of sway, and beneficence of result. How grand and benign must be the end that satisfies the mind of the Eternal! “Quieted my spirit.”—F.

Vers. 9—15.—“*Messiah the Prince.*” “Behold.”

I. THE COMING MAN OF THE AGES. “Branch.” Lowliness, and yet dignity. The heathens fabled that the Titans were sons of heaven and earth. Here is what they vainly imagined. “Grew up.” Natural development. Perfection of humanity. Long the cry was, “He cometh.” We see his shadow in every sacrifice. Find his presence in every prophecy. Hear his footfall in every promise. He was the Hope of Israel, and the Desire of all nations.

II. CHARGED WITH THE NOBLEST MISSION. “Build”—personally and instrumentally. Many whom he honours as “fellow-workers.” Temple slowly rising. Grandeur and beauty gradually unfolding. Implies the union and fellowship of men as “living stones” in the great temple of humanity.

III. DESTINED FOR THE GRANDEST EMPIRE. “The glory.” 1. *Priest.* Power with God. “For ever, after the order of Melchizedek.” 2. *King.* Power with men. The rule of righteousness and love. 3. *The recompense of his sufferings.* “Sit and rule.” First the cross, then the crown (cf. Heb. x. 12, 13; 1 Pet. i. 11).

IV. DESIGNATED FOR IMMORTAL HONOUR. Heaven is the perfect state. What do we see there? Let St. John declare (Rev. v. 6). Even on earth, what honour to Christ! Every day, and especially on the Lord’s day, what prayers in his Name! what offerings to his praise and glory! In how many lands, by what various voices, with what measureless love, is his name breathed forth! “Behold the Man!” Let each heart answer, with adoring gratitude and joy, “My Lord and my God!”—F.

Vers. 1—8.—*God’s government of the world.* “And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass,” etc. This is the last in the series of visions, which amount in all to eight, during that one night. All are so obscure that the more scholarly and enlightened the expositor, the less disposed will he be to regard his interpretation as absolutely correct. Certainly this is not more easy of interpretation than the preceding ones. The objects which were now revealed to the prophet’s vision are various and strange. 1. He sees four chariots. It does not say expressly whether they were chariots of war bearing the warrior out to battle or home in triumph, or whether they were chariots used for private or public conveyances; but it is implied that they were war-chariots. 2. He saw these four chariots proceeding from two mountains. These were not mountains of earth or stone, but mountains of brass; mountains, therefore, having peculiar solidity and

strength. 3. He saw these chariots drawn by horses of different colours. In the first chariot we have red horses; in the second, black; in the third, white; and in the fourth, grised or piebald grey. Now, the prophet seemed utterly unable to understand the meaning of these objects. But he is anxious to do so, and he addresses the interpreting angel, and says, "What are these, my lord?" Here is the answer: "And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth," etc. The chariots, then, are the four "spirits," or winds, as the margin has it. Some translate the word, "celestial spirits," and suppose that angels are referred to. The "four winds" probably represent the invisible agencies by which the Almighty is pleased to carry on the government of the world. These spirits stand before the Lord of all the earth, and are in his presence, at his disposal, ever ready to execute his behests. My purpose in these sketches is not speculative, but practical. Were it speculative, I should find a wide and fertile field for hypothetical thought. For example, a large variety of opinions exist concerning the four chariots and horses and their charioteers. Some suppose that they represent the great monarchies of the ancient world—the Chaldean, the Grecian, and the Roman. Some, indeed, have supposed them to refer to the four Gospels. And some have supposed them to refer to the history of the Church after Constantine—the *first*, to the wars of invaders of the Roman Empire, and the wars of controverted doctrines and opinions; the *second*, to the blackness of darkness, the ignorance, oppression, and misery of papal domination; the *third*, to the light and knowledge, the joy and triumph, of the Reformation; and the *fourth*, to the mixed condition of things, the confusion of false doctrine and true, right and wrong precepts, holy and unholy rites of worship, subsequent to that great revolution. But I take the vision to illustrate *God's government of the world*; and it illustrates four facts concerning that government—its variety, immutability, universality, and supremacy.

I. VARIETY. This is suggested by the colour of the steeds that bear onward the chariots of his plans. The "*red horses*," emblem of war and bloodshed. The "*black*," emblem of calamity, distress, and mourning. The "*white*," emblem of gladness and prosperity. The "*grised*" and "*bay*," or piebald, a mixture of events, prosperity and adversity, friendship and bereavement, sorrow and joy, etc. Has not this variety characterized the providence that is over man from the beginning until this hour? It is not only seen in every page of the history of nations and Churches and families, but in the history of individuals. The experience of every man is more changeable than the weather. There is a constant alternation—the red, the black, the white, the mixed. These changes are useful. 1. *They break the monotony of life.* They tend to keep the heart of humanity on the alert. There is but little opportunity for moral sleep. 2. *They create a desire for a state of certainty.* They prompt a search for a "city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." This is not our rest.

II. IMMUTABILITY. These chariots move between two "mountains of brass." Though they are borne by a variety of steeds, and move rapidly towards every point of the compass, and carry a variety of events wherever they go, they are overshadowed and hedged in by the immutable, represented by mountains of brass. God's immutable counsels of decrees keep all the motions and commotions, all the convulsions and revolutions of the world in their place. As the ocean, amidst all its ebbs and flowings, rage and fury, is bound to obey the moon, which remains serenely settled in her orbit, so all the agitations of the earth are bound to obey the immutable decrees of Heaven. Thank God, that in this changing world of ours there are mountains of brass, things that cannot be shaken. "All flesh is grass, . . . but the word of our God shall stand for ever;" "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

III. UNIVERSALITY. These chariots, borne by these varied coloured steeds, rolled towards every point of the globe, some to the north and some to the south. They walked "to and fro through the earth." Yes; through the earth—through every part of it. Not a spot unvisited or ignored. God's providence embraces all, matter and mind, great and small, good and evil. All we have, and all that every creature has, is borne to us in these chariots; they bear to us our trials and our joys. Hence we should bow with resignation under all our sorrows, and shout with gratitude in all our

enjoyments. Hence, too, we should practically realize our dependence upon him in every moment of our life. "Give us this day our daily bread," etc.

IV. SUPREMACY. "These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth." He is at the head of all. No evil spirit moves without his permission and control; no good spirit without his inspiration and guidance. He is the Lord of all the earth. How great must he be who manages all things!

"All good proceedeth from him, as sunbeams from the sun;  
All evils fall before him; his will through all is done."

Let us trust him with an unbounded confidence. Let us obey him with loving loyalty. "Of him, and by him, and to him are all things." "He is over all, God blessed for ever."—D. T.

Vers. 9—15.—*The matchless Man in history.* "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Take of them of the Captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day." The crowning, the work, and the position of Joshua spoken of in these verses are obviously employed to symbolize some coming Man who would be matchless in all history. Concerning this matchless Man, we are here taught—

I. THAT HE IS ONE WHOM HEAVEN COMMANDS THE PEOPLE TO HONOUR. "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Take of them of the Captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest." The prophet is commanded to go to certain of the more distinguished men who had returned from Babylonian captivity, representative men and envoys it may be. He was to take these men, whose names are here given, who were entertained in the house of another distinguished man, here called Josiah the son of Zephaniah. From that house the silver and gold which they had brought from Babylon were to be taken, with which crowns were to be made and placed upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest. By the general consent of expositors, this was a mere symbolical transaction—a transaction pointing to some great Man whom Heaven will require all men to crown with the highest dignity. The spirit of hero-worship is so strong in human nature that the servile multitudes of all times have been ready to fall down and render homage to most unholy characters. They hoist flags, ring bells, shout hurrahs, in honour of the laurelled butchers, crowned despots, and gorgeous millionaires. This is one of the worst features of human depravity, one of the greatest obstructions to the progress of men and nations. But here is a character symbolized by the name of Joshua, to whom the people are called upon by *God himself* to render honour. Who is this Man? Can you find him anywhere amongst the millions of your contemporaries in any land, or on the page of the history of the people of any time? anywhere but in the records of the four evangelists—the Man Christ Jesus? "When he bringeth in the First Begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." And all heaven worships him. "I heard the voice of angels round about the throne," etc.

II. THAT HIS PEDIGREE WAS STRIKINGLY SINGULAR. "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the Man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord." He is a "Branch;" he has root somewhere; he has life, and he grows. It is here said, "He shall grow up out of his place." The reference is to some Man who grows on the earth, who is not of the earth. What man on the earth can be said to have grown out of his place? The earth is the place of all men during their stay here. It is their native home. Only one such Man we know of—the illustrious "Son of Mary." He came down from heaven and tabernacled on this earth, which was not his place. And here he grew in body and mind, in the favour of God and man. Though there was nothing congenial with his Spirit here, still he grew and became the Prince of life, the Conqueror of death, and the moral Commander of the race. A great soul, dominated by a supreme sympathy with the Supremely Good, can grow anywhere, in its place or out of it. It

can subordinate the most hostile external elements and forces to its own will and interests.

III. THAT HE IS ONE WHOSE MISSION IS SUBLIMELY GLORIOUS. "He shall build the temple of the Lord," etc. Zerubbabel was now engaged in the work of rearing the material temple at Jerusalem; and a more glorious work than this is not given to man than to promote the public worship of God. The progress of nations is dependent upon morality, and morality is the growth of genuine religion. Philanthropy springs from piety; it is only as philanthropy grows that humanity can advance. Hence no work so transcendently important as that of promoting public worship, building temples, etc. Hence it is added here, "He shall bear the glory." The true promoter of public worship bears with him in every honest effort the glory, compared with which the glory of every other department of human labour pales into dimness. The building of the material temple is but the emblem of the rearing of the great spiritual temple. And the Man here referred to is the Builder of that. There is one and only one, and that is Christ. He is not only the Builder, but the Creator of the materials, and himself the Foundation of the whole. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, that is Jesus Christ." In doing this he bears the glory. "Now is the Son of man glorified." God is glorified in him. "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," etc. St. Peter gives a beautiful description of this temple when he says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Christ is the great Builder of the moral temple of the world, and no one else.

IV. THAT HE IS ONE WHOSE POSITION AND FUNCTIONS ARE TRANSCENDENTALLY EXALTED. He is on a throne. "He is exalted far above all heavens." But he is there: 1. *As a priestly King*. On behalf of humanity before God, he holds the reins of universal dominion. 2. *As a glorious Reconciler*. "The counsel of peace shall be between them both." What does this mean? Not that there is a covenant of peace between him and his Father. They were never at variance. And to suppose any contract or covenant between them is to derogate Infinite Majesty. The "counsel of peace" between the Infinite Father and his alien and rebellious children. He is the Mediator between God and man. He is the Reconciliation, the Atonement. (But see in the Exposition (ver. 13) another explanation, and one more conformable to the context.)

V. THAT HE IS ONE WHOSE POWER TO ATTRACT OTHERS TO HIS ENTERPRISE IS IMMENSELY GREAT. "And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you." "There can," says Dr. Wardlaw, "be no doubt here; to you who were far off, and to them that were near are the very terms of distinction between Gentile and Jew, which, in addressing the former, the apostle uses. 'I will bring my sons *from far*,' says Jehovah, 'and my daughters from the ends of the earth.' The Gentiles were to be themselves stones in the building, and agents in the rearing of it. And this was fulfilled in the beginning of the gospel, in the ministerial activity and usefulness of many a Gentile convert; and it is fulfilling to this day in every Gentile nation where Christianity has formed a settlement, and in every heathen country to which missionaries are carrying the message of salvation, and gathering sinners into the Church of God. For that Church of God is his temple (the members of it, how widely soever scattered, being all 'builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit'), in which 'spiritual sacrifices' will be offered to him—'acceptable through Jesus Christ,' in all time and for ever!"

CONCLUSION. "Behold the Man!" What manner of man is he? He stands alone, the majestic cedar amongst the saplings of the race, the sun amidst the satellites. He is the "Wonderful."—D. T.



## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1—ch. viii. 23.—Part II. THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION CONCERNING THE OBSERVANCE OF CERTAIN FASTS.

Vers. 1—3.—§ 1. *A deputation comes from Bethel to ask whether a fast instituted in memory of the calamity of Jerusalem was still to be observed.*

Ver. 1.—In the fourth year of King Darius. This happened, then, B.C. 518, nearly two years after the visions had occurred (ch. i. 7). In two years more the temple was finished (Ezra vi. 15), and the work of rebuilding was now proceeding vigorously; it seemed a fit opportunity for inquiring whether, in this period of comparative prosperity and success, it behoved the people to continue the fast appointed in sadder times. The word of the Lord came. This is the usual formula for introducing a revelation (ch. i. 1), but it is here placed in a peculiar position, dividing the date into two parts. Keil connects the last clause, which gives the day of the month, with the next verse; but this is against the traditional accentuation, and is not required by the wording of ver. 2. The prophet first gives the date generally when the word came to him, and then defines it more accurately. *Chisleu*; *Chislev* (Neh. i. 1). This month corresponded to parts of November and December.

Ver. 2.—When they had sent unto the house of God. The Vulgate supports this version, *Et miserunt ad domum Dei*; the LXX. gives, *Kal ἐξαπέστειλεν εἰς Βαθὴλ Σαρασάρ καὶ Ἀρβησεὲρ ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες αὐτοῦ*, "And Sarasar and Arbeseer the king and his men sent to Bethol"—which is far from clear. But the temple is never called *Beth-el*, while a mission to the town Bethel would be unmeaning. So "Bethel" is to be taken as the subject of the sentence, thus: "Now Bethel (i.e. they of Bethel) sent." The persons named may be taken either as the deputation or as the persons meant by "they of Bethel." The former seems most likely to be intended. The Bethelites sent these men to Jerusalem to make the inquiry. The exiles returned each to his own city, as we read in Ezra ii.; among them were many people of Bethel (Ezra ii. 28; Neh. vii. 32), which town they rebuilt (Neh. xi. 31). They seem to have tacitly acquiesced in the spiritual supremacy of Jerusalem, notwithstanding the associations connected with their own city. *Sherazer*. The names of the deputies are Assyrian; they seem to

have retained them on their return. *Sherazer*, equivalent to Assyrian *Sar-usur* or *Asur-ar-usur*, "Asur protect the King," is the name borne by a son of Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. 37). *Regem-melech*; "Friend of the King." The first half of the word is probably Assyrian (see Schrader, 'Die Keilschr. und Alt. Test.,' pp. 206, 417). And their men. Certain persons associated with them in the business. To pray before the Lord; literally, to stroke the face of the Lord (ch. viii. 21, 22; Exod. xxxii. 11); so Latin, *mulcere caput*. Hence it means, "to entreat the favour of God" for their city. This was one object of their mission. The other purpose is mentioned in the next verse.

Ver. 3.—The priests. They were addressed as interpreters of the Law (see Hag. ii. 11, and note there). Which were in; rather, which belonged to. The prophets. Such as Zechariah, Haggai, and perhaps Malachi, through whom God communicated his will. Should I weep in the fifth month? The use of the first person singular to express a community or a people is not uncommon; here it means the Bethelites (comp. Numb. xx. 18, 19; Josh. ix. 7; 1 Sam. v. 10, 11). Weeping is the accompaniment of fasting (Judg. xx. 26; Neh. i. 4; Joel ii. 12). This fast in the fifth month, the month of Ab, had been established in memory of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The temple was burnt on the ninth or tenth of the month (see 2 Kings xxv. 8, 9; Jer. lii. 12, 13). The only fast-day enjoined by the Law of Moses was the great Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month, *Ethanim* (Lev. xxiii. 26, etc.). But the Jews added others in memory of certain national events (see Judg. xx. 26; 1 Sam. vii. 6; Isa. lviii. 3, etc.). In ch. viii. 19 mention is made of four extraordinary fasts instituted and observed during the Captivity, viz. on the ninth day of the fourth month, in memory of the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; in the fifth month, in remembrance of the burning of the temple and city; in the seventh month, in consequence of the murder of Gedaliah (Jer. xli. 1, 2); and in the tenth month, in memory of the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (see note on ch. viii. 19). Separating myself. Abstaining from food and pleasure. Vulgate, *vel sanctificare me debeo*, such separation or abstinence being regarded as a consecration to the Lord. The LXX. has not understood the passage, rendering, *Εἰσελήλυθεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῷ μηνὶ τῷ πέπτω τὸ ἅγλασμα*, "The sanctification hath come in here in the fifth month."

These so many years. All the seventy years of exile. There is, perhaps, some Pharisaical complacency in this assertion.

Vers. 4—7.—§ 2. *In answer to the inquiry, the delegates are told that fasting is in itself an indifferent thing, but is to be estimated by the conduct of those who observe it.*

Ver. 4.—Then came the word of the Lord. This formula marks the several portions of the answer to the inquiry (see ver. 8; ch. viii. 1, 18). The present verse takes up the sentence in ver. 1, interrupted by the explanation of the object of the deputation (vers. 2, 3).

Ver. 5.—Unto all the people of the land. The message was not for Bethel only, but for all the restored Jews, for whose satisfaction the question had been asked. And to the priests. The prophet was to make known to the priests God's will in this matter, it not being a mere ritual question. Fifth month (see note on ver. 3). The original question referred only to this fast; the answer embraces also another fast appointed by human authority. The seventh month. This fast was instituted in consequence of the murder of Gedaliah, B.C. 587, just seventy years ago, when the greater part of the remnant of the Jews, contrary to the prophet's warning, fled into Egypt to escape the punishment of the crime (2 Kings xxv. 25, 26; Jer. xli. 2, 16, etc.). Did ye at all fast unto me? It was not by God's command, or to do him honour, that they fasted; not from hearty repentance or sorrow for the sins which had brought ruin upon their city and country; but from vexation at the calamity itself, and in a self-righteous spirit, with some idea of gaining merit by this punishment of the body; and God was not constrained by this formal observance to show them favour. Even to me. (For the forcible repetition of the pronoun, comp. Gen. xxvii. 34; Prov. xxii. 19; Hag. i. 4.)

Ver. 6.—When ye did eat, etc.; better, *when ye eat and when ye drink*. As in your fasts, so in your rejoicings and your daily life. Did not ye eat for yourselves, etc.? literally, *Is it not ye who are eating and ye who are drinking?* There the matter ends; it is self that is concerned, and there is no reference to God (comp. 1 Cor. viii. 8; x. 31).

Ver. 7.—Should ye not hear the words, etc.? A verb must be supplied. "Do ye not know the words?" or "Should ye not obey the words?" Syriac, Septuagint, and Vulgate, "Are not these the words?" By the former prophets (ch. i. 4). It had been a common cry of the prophets from early times that men must not put their

trust in the observance of outward ceremonies, but attend to the cultivation of moral obedience and purity (see 1 Sam. xv. 22; Prov. xxi. 3; Isa. i. 11, 12, 16, 17; lviii. 3, etc.; Jer. vii. 22, 23; Hos. vi. 6; Micah vi. 8, where see note). When Jerusalem was inhabited. Before its destruction and the deportation of its inhabitants. He recalls the former prosperity to their memory, contrasting it with the present low estate, to remind them of all they had lost in punishment of disobedience. The south (*Negeb*). The southern part of Judæa was so called (see on Obad. 19; and comp. Numb. xiii. 17; Josh. xv. 21). The plain (*Shephelah*); the low land, along the coast of the Mediterranean (Josh. xv. 33; 1 Macc. xii. 38). The above districts comprise two of the three divisions of Judæa (Judg. i. 9); the third, the mountain or hill country (Luke i. 39), is intended in the expression, "Jerusalem and the cities round about her." There was still a great dearth of population in the country, and the towns were not half inhabited, nor was the land half cultivated.

Vers. 8—14.—§ 3. *The people are further reminded that they had been disobedient in old time, and had been punished by exile.*

Ver. 8.—Unto Zechariah. The prophet speaks of himself in the third person, as in ch. i. 1. A further explanation of God's answer is next given. Some critics suppose that this verse is an interpolation, and that vers. 9, 10 are "the words" referred to in ver. 7.

Ver. 9.—Thus speaketh; thus saith. The Lord hath always so said, and saith so now. Revised Version, *thus hath the Lord of hosts spoken, saying*. Execute true judgment; literally, *judge ye judgment of truth*; i.e. judge according to truth without bias or partiality. The same phrase occurs in Ezek. xviii. 8. Exhortations to this effect are often found; e.g. Exod. xxiii. 6, etc.; Deut. xxiv. 14; Isa. i. 17; Jer. vii. 5—7; xxii. 3. Show mercy. Kindness and love in general. Compassions. Pity for the afflicted.

Ver. 10.—Oppress not the widow, etc. (Exod. xxii. 21, 22; Deut. x. 18, 19); Vulgate, *nolite calumniari*, where *calumniari* is used in the sense "to vex, torment." Imagine evil against his brother in your heart. God's Law forbids even a thought of revenge or injury against a neighbour, for this is only the first step to wrong-doing (comp. Micah ii. 1). Septuagint, *Καὶ ἕκαστος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ μὴ μνησικαίετω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν*, "Let none of you remember in your hearts the malice of your brother."

Ver. 11.—Pulled away the shoulder; they gave a stubborn, refractory shoulder,

like an ox which refuses to have the yoke put on his neck, or draws back when it feels the weight (Neh. ix. 29; Hos. iv. 16). **Stopped their ears.** Made their ears heavy. *Tà ἄρα αὐτῶν ἐβαρύναν* (Septuagint); Isa. vi. 10; lix. 1. Three degrees of obduracy are named in this verse: they refused to listen; they resisted the warners; they exhibited open contempt for them. The full climax is given in the next verse.

**Ver. 12.—They made their hearts as an adamant stone.** They made their hearts as hard as a stone which could receive no cutting or engraving; no message from God could find entrance; and this from their wilful obstinacy. The word rendered “adamant,” *shamir*, probably means “diamond,” a stone so hard, says Jerome, as to break all metals to pieces, but to be itself broken by none; hence it is called *adamas*, “unconquerable.” Ezekiel (iii. 9) notes that it is harder than flint (comp. Jer. xvii. 1). The LXX., paraphrasing, gives, *τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν ἔταξαν ἀπειθήν*, “They set their heart disobedient.” **The Law.** The various enactments of the Mosaic system. In his Spirit; rather, *by his Spirit*. The teaching which the Spirit of God inspired the prophets to deliver (comp. Neh. ix. 30; 2 Kings xvii. 13; Micah iii. 8). And for the succession of prophets from Solomon to the Captivity, see note on Amos ii. 11; and to those there enumerated, add Iddo, Shemaiah, Hanani, Micah, Huldah.

**Ver. 13.—As he cried.** As the Lord called to them by the prophets. Just retribution fell upon them (Prov. i. 24, etc.; Isa. lxx. 12, 13; lxxvi. 4). So they cried,

and I would not hear; rather, *so they shall cry, and I will not hear*. God will be deaf to their cry, and will give them up to their own ways (Jer. ii. 28). In the protasis Jehovah is spoken of in the third person, in the apodosis he speaks in the first.

**Ver. 14.—I scattered them; I will scatter them.** What had happened in the past is a sign of what shall befall them in the future in punishment of like obduracy. The form of the sentence denotes that God is recounting what he had said to the people in past time; hence it is best to translate the verbs in the future tense. **Scattered them with a whirlwind;** Septuagint, *ἐκβαλὼ αὐτοὺς*, “I will cast them out;” Vulgate, *dispersi eos* (comp. Job xxvii. 21; Amos i. 14). **Nations whom they knew not.** This is the usual phrase for people of strange tongue (Deut. xxviii. 33; Jer. xvi. 13). **Thus the land was desolate.** This was the result of God’s threatenings. Some make the words of Jehovah continue to “nor returned,” but the punctuation is against them. **After them;** i.e. after they were carried away in captivity. **No man passed through nor returned.** No one went to and fro—a picture of extreme desolation (comp. Isa. xxxiii. 8; Jer. ix. 12; and for the phrase, see ch. ix. 8; Ezek. xxxv. 7). **For they laid the pleasant land desolate.** The pronoun refers to the disobedient Jews, their sin being the cause of the desolation; or the verb may be taken impersonally, “So the pleasant land was made desolate.” “The pleasant land” is literally, “the land of desire.” Septuagint, *τὴν ἐκλεκτὴν* (Ps. cvi. 24; Jer. iii. 19).

## HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 1—7.—Hypocrisy unmasked.** “And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Darius, that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah,” etc. In the latter half of the last chapter we were told of an embassy to Jerusalem, which met with acceptance and honour. In the present passage we read of another, which meets with just the opposite treatment. The question asked by these messengers is not answered at all in this chapter. Not only so, those who ask it are indirectly rebuked for so doing. Why this remarkable difference of behaviour? Not in the *surface*, but in the *sub-surface*, view of affairs. So we will now try to point out—

**I. THE SURFACE VIEW.** At first sight what can appear more thoroughly deserving of approval than the inquiry here mentioned? This so, whether we consider: 1. *Its object.* What the men desire, apparently, is simply to know God’s will—a desire which we find, in so many other cases, so very warmly approved (Acts ii. 37; ix. 6; xvi. 30; Luke iii. 10, etc.). 2. *Or its subject.* They would learn God’s will as to “fasting,” i.e. as to one department of the proper worship of God. What, apparently, more proper and right (comp. Ps. cxvi. 12; Micah vi. 6, 7; and contrast Numb. xv. 30; 1 Kings xii. 33; Col. ii. 18, 23)? 3. *Or its method;* viz. that of going to God’s “house” (vers. 2, 3), and consulting his regular teachers, the “priests” (Lev. x. 11; 2 Chron. xv. 3; Hag. ii. 11; Mal. ii. 7), and his occasional and extraordinary teachers, the “prophets” (Jer. vii. 25; xxv. 4, etc.). 4. *Or its special occasion.* Seventy years, as predicted (Jer. xxv. 11), having now elapsed (viz. from B.C. 588 to 518) since that

burning of the temple on the tenth day of the fifth month (Jer. lii. 13), in commemoration of which this fast of the fifth month had been instituted; and the renewed building of the temple, commenced in the second of Darius (Ezra iv. 24; v. 1, 2), having now (in this fourth of Darius, see ver. 1) so far advanced that the priests could live in it (see ver. 3), what more natural and apparently opportune than this inquiry about the propriety of observing this fast any longer (comp. Dan. ix. 1—3)? 5. *Or its special channel*, so to describe it. How peculiarly befitting, to all appearance, the particular messengers sent! And that, whether we understand them (with some) to be persons sent by the inhabitants of "Bethel" (translated in our version, "the house of God," in ver. 2), a place so long and notoriously connected with idol-worship and the contempt of God's will (see 1 Kings xii. 32, 33; 2 Kings xvii. 28; Amos vii. 13); or whether, with others, judging from the Assyrian turn of their names (comp. 2 Kings xix. 37; and contrast ch. vi. 10), we suppose that they were Jews of the Captivity come up in person to make inquiry. In either case, such an inquiry, from such persons, seems eminently deserving of praise—at first sight.

II. THE SUB-SURFACE VIEW. Nevertheless, in all this same "fasting," about which they inquire, this Scripture, when further examined, shows us that their conduct had been only deserving of blame. This true, inasmuch as their conduct, during all that time, had been: 1. *Never wholly in the right*. "Fasting" is only valuable as an outward sign of repentance; but their repentance, during all "those seventy years" (ver. 5), had never been true repentance, i.e. "repentance toward God." Note, "Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" in ver. 5; and comp. Acts xx. 21; also the "sorrow *κατὰ θεόν*" of 2 Cor. vii. 10, and the sorrow of David (Ps. li. 4) and the prodigal (Luke xv. 18), for the evil of sin, with the sorrow of Saul (1 Sam. xv. 30), apparently for its consequences alone. 2. *Always eminently in the wrong*. Their solicitude, when engaged in their fastings, had not really been about God's pleasure and will; but it had been, and that most thoroughly, concerning their own; as much so, in fact, as when, at other times, they had eaten and drunk (ver. 6). So completely, we see, in some cases, may mere abstinence from food be one of the "sins of the flesh" (comp. Matt. vi. 16 and Isa. lviii. 3—7). 3. *Always inexcusably in the wrong*. (1) *For having sinned thus against light*. Long ago and often (see beginning of ver. 7) God's "prophets" had warned their fathers against thus drawing nigh unto him with their lips only (Isa. xxix. 13); and they had the remembrance and the record of this as their guide. (2) *For having sinned thus against experience*. When these prophets had so spoken all was happy and bright, "Jerusalem" and the "cities round about" "inhabited" fully and in "prosperity," as also at that time, even those comparatively barren and country districts, "the south and the plain." How awfully different their condition during "those seventy years"! How loudly, therefore, their own experience, and, as it were, their own land itself, had admonished them! And yet how entirely in vain!

May not all this illustrate, further, for our own admonition? 1. *The exceeding deceitfulness of formalism*. All God's people (they speak as one man in ver. 3), and even, apparently, all God's ministers (the "priests," ver. 5), being deceived thereby, in this instance, to so great an extent, and for so many years, and in such circumstances of trial (comp. John xviii. 28 with xii. 10, "Lazarus also;" and Matt. xxvii. 4, 6). 2. *The exceeding penetration of God's Word*. Unmasking thus, and making plain, and bringing to light all these deeply hidden deceits (comp. Heb. iv. 12, 13; also Luke xii. 2; Matt. ix. 4; 1 Cor. xiv. 25; Ps. l. 21, end; Ps. xc. 8). How easy, in short, to deceive ourselves! How impossible to mock God (see Gal. vi. 7)!

Vers. 8—14.—*Hypocrisy warned*. "And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts," etc. The severe rebuke of the previous verses seems followed up in these verses by a very solemn yet very merciful warning, intended apparently to save the Jews from the various evils to which their hypocrisy had exposed them. The language of God to their fathers, as referred to in ver. 7, appears still (note "thus *spake*," according to Pusey, Wardlaw, and others, in ver. 9) the theme of discourse. And three successive points of importance, in connection with this language and its consequences, seem described to us here, viz. (1) a most *gracious purpose*; (2) a *stubborn refusal*; and (3) a *terrible doom*.

I. A MOST GRACIOUS PURPOSE. What was it really that, by the "former prophets"

(ver. 7), God had demanded of men? Under one aspect, as before shown by us, "repentance towards" himself. Under another aspect, so it seems here explained in vers. 9, 10, only what was good for themselves. How many blessings, *e.g.*, if God's laws had been really kept, and their fathers had only done as God asked of them, would have been found in the land! We may describe them as being chiefly four, viz. (1) perfect and universal *fairness* of dealing; (2) perfect kindness and *generosity* of dealing, as in brotherly love; (3) *special and peculiar kindness* of dealing to those ("the stranger," etc.) needing it most; and (4) total absence, in any cause whatever, of *ill will in the heart*. Could anything have been better? So true is it (Rom. vii. 12), that "the Law" is not only "holy," or worthy of God; and "just," or fair in its requirements; but "good," also, or kind in its object, and intended, in fact, for men's highest benefit (compare, as a partial illustration, Mark ii. 27; and, in one sense also, Ezek. xx. 11, 13, 21; and especially Deut. vi. 24; x. 12, 13).

II. A STUBBORN REFUSAL. How had this message of goodness and mercy been received in the days referred to? 1. *With every outward sign of dishonour*. Such as (1) marked indifference, "refusing to hearken" (comp. Isa. xxx. 9—11); (2) open aversion, "pulling away the shoulder," as though saying, when special effort was made to gain their attention, "I am giving attention to something else;" and (3) utter contempt, "stopping their ears," as much as to say, "I had rather hear nothing than listen to you" (comp. Acts xxii. 22). 2. *With every inward feeling of rebellion to correspond*. This shown: (1) By their dread of its power. Notwithstanding their extreme unwillingness to hear, something of the meaning of God's gracious message would reach their understandings. Even if so, if they could help it, it should not penetrate to their consciences. So well were they aware of its power (see the words in ver. 12, "As an adamant stone, lest [in this sense] they should hear"). What a testimony on their part! What a precaution! (2) By their defiance of its authority. How many, as here implied, its claims to reverential submission! As being essentially a "law," or command; as containing "words" of command from the "Lord of hosts" himself, whom so many obeyed; as being his command in so express a manner, because delivered by messengers known to be appointed and inspired by himself (see, again, ver. 12). All this in addition to the fact above noted of its being a message for "good." Yet to all this their unconquerable, *i.e.* "adamant," obstinacy refused to submit.

III. A TERRIBLE DOOM. When such condescending goodness met with so perverse a return, what could ultimately ensue but "great wrath"? According to the moral laws of God's spiritual kingdom, which are as fixed, could we only believe it, as the natural laws of his physical creation, here was a clear case of cause and effect. This is declared to us: 1. *By the nature of the judgments*. See how they correspond to the offence. Israel had refused to hear God. So God now refuses to hear them (ver. 13; Mark iv. 24; Gal. vi. 7, 8; Hos. viii. 7). 2. *By the sentence of the Judge*. God speaks of all that afterwards came upon them as being inflicted (1) by his authority ("I scattered them," etc.); (2) on their account ("The land was made desolate after them"); and even, (3) in a certain sense, by the instrumentality of their transgressions ("They laid the land desolate;" comp. also Hos. xiii. 9; Mal. i. 9).

From this review of that portion of the past history of Israel here referred to, we get a sample of many other histories as they will appear at the last. This is true: 1. *Of many individual lives*. Lifelong entreaty, lifelong forbearance, lifelong rebellion, followed up by more than lifelong death, impossible as that sounds,—such will be in brief, and yet in full also, the history of many a soul. 2. *Of many individual communities*; both nations and Churches. How many cities, kingdoms, empires, and races, once great on the earth, might have all that is really essential to their history told in a precisely similar way (see, for one example, Gen. xiii. 13; xviii. 20, 21; xix. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 8; Jude 7)! See a succession of examples in the succession of world-empires in Daniel. See, also, as to religious communities, similar lessons taught by comparison of past and present condition of some of the Apocalyptic Churches. 3. *Of the whole world of the ungodly*. What a long history of gracious messages and of stubborn refusals will be found at the end of the whole completed history of the race of Adam and Eve (Rom. iii. 19, end; Jude 14, 15)!

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*God and men.* I. THE UNITY OF GOD'S PURPOSE. God's thoughts do not vary, though he varies his methods. His end for nations and individuals is always the same—advancement, not merely in knowledge and culture, but in moral goodness.

II. THE MERCIFULNESS OF GOD'S WARNINGS. At no time hath God left himself without witnesses. By word and providence and in countless ways his warnings come. We see this in the past. (Ver. 7, "former prophets.") So in the present. Every mercy has a voice calling for thankfulness. Every chastisement has a summons to moral thoughtfulness and prayer. There is no excuse for continuance in sin.

III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS. Persistence in transgression must bring punishment. God's laws fulfil themselves. Every rejection of God's counsels, every refusal of God's offers, every slighting of God's love, works for evil, blinding, hardening, alienating, bringing dire ruin nearer. Judgment is God's strange work, but it must come. "The pleasant land laid desolate."—F.

Ver. 3.—*Shall we fast?* This question has been often asked down to our own day.

I. There are NATIONAL FASTS. These are rare, and only appointed under very solemn circumstances. In 1853, when cholera prevailed, the Presbytery of Edinburgh (Church of Scotland) suggested to Lord Palmerston, then Home Secretary, the propriety of ordering a national fast. His lordship, in his reply, recommended observance of natural laws rather than fasting. If this were attended to, all would be well. Otherwise pestilence would come, "*in spite of all the prayers and fastings of a united but inactive nation.*" He does not seem to have understood that the two things were quite compatible. Prayer and inaction is folly; but prayer and action is the highest wisdom. Surely there is something grand and beautiful in a whole nation bowed in humility and supplication before the Most High. (Buckle, vol. ii., has a characteristic notice of this, where he falls into the odd mistake that in Scotland "fasting" meant abstinence from food!)

II. Then there are CHURCH FASTS. These are only binding on the members of the several Churches that appoint them. In Scotland it has for long been customary to have *fast-days* in connection with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; but as to this there is now a change. First their enforcement under penalties ceased; then the rigour of their observance was given up; then, from the necessities of modern life, and the knowledge that they were often the occasion of more evil than good, they have come in many cases to be discontinued. The question is one of Christian expediency, and requires to be dealt with both with wisdom and gentleness.

III. Besides these there is PRIVATE FASTING. As to this, no rule can be laid down (cf. Rom. xiv. 5, 6). But certain principles should be kept in view, such as that fasting has no virtue in itself; that what may be good for one Christian may not suit another; and that the great end of all such observances is spiritual good, "room to deny ourselves," a path "to bring us daily nearer God."—F.

Ver. 7.—*God's education of the people.* I. THE MORAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE PEOPLE. We are not absolutely separate existences. Related through birth, custom, association, and in other ways, we are connected, we are parts of one great whole. Hence in a large degree we are what others have made us. This must be taken into account as a factor in life.

II. THE CONTINUOUS SPIRITUAL EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE. The past speaks to us as well as the present. We learn from the dead as well as the living. Above all, we have the Bible. It is God's book, for it is man's book. In it God speaks to us. Shows us what he was, and therefore what he is; what he has done, and therefore what he will do. Reveals the laws and principles of government, and thus makes manifest his will, and that the only way to reach our true destiny is by loving and doing his will.

III. THE GROWING RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PEOPLE. Increased knowledge. Larger

experience. Grander opportunities. More may be learned, and therefore *ought* to be learned. Better lives may be lived, and therefore *ought* to be lived. Greater things may be done for the good of others and for the advancement of the cause and kingdom of the Lord, and therefore greater things *ought* to be done. Privilege is the measure of responsibility.—F.

Ver. 11.—*The history of ungodliness.* I. GERM. The question is—Self or God, our own will or God's will. Must be settled. Pressed by prophet after prophet. The answer shows the state of the heart. "Refused to hear."

II. PROGRESS. There is growth in evil, as in good. Stages. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." 1. *Wilful refusal.* "Pulled away the shoulder." Sinners will not submit to be guided by the higher will. Angry and fretted, they will not bow to God's yoke. 2. *Insolent rejection.* "Stopped their ears." Warnings and counsels are in vain. Pride rises to insolence. Refusal, to determined opposition and rebellion. 3. *Settled obduracy.* (Ver. 12.) This implies a steady process. The bad is more and more gaining the mastery. Every fresh victory brings the time nearer when the evil becomes "unconquerable" (Greek *adhimas*).

III. CONSUMMATION. (Ver. 13.) The end is come. 1. Ruined character. 2. Blasted life. 3. Hopeless future.

"Oh! where is that mysterious bourne,  
By which our path is crossed,  
Beyond which God himself hath sworn  
That he who goes is lost?"

"How far may we go on in sin?  
How long will God forbear?  
Where does hope end, and where begin  
The confines of despair?"

"An answer from the skies is sent,  
'Ye that from God depart,  
While it is called to-day, repent,  
And harden not your heart.'"

(Alexander.)

F.

Vers. 1—7.—*Religious beliefs that are right; religious services that are wrong.* "And it came to pass in the fourth year," etc. The preceding visions and symbolic actions recorded in this book occurred, we are informed, in the eighth month of the second year of King Darius. What is here recorded appears to have taken place in the ninth month of the fourth year of that king's reign—about two years later. The ninth month is here called Chisleu, and corresponds with the latter part of November and the first part of December. What was the prophet doing during these two years? We hear nothing of him, although we doubt not he was busy in his prophetic labours. Indeed, we are informed in the Book of Ezra (vi. 14) that the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophecy of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo. Their prophetic words stimulated the activities and prompted the efforts of the builders. Here is an account of a commission composed of two men, called Sherezer and Regem-melech, distinguished personages, no doubt, still remaining in Babylon, sent as envoys to the house of God, that is, the temple at Jerusalem; and their work there was "to pray before the Lord, and to speak unto the priests." It would be well, perhaps, to give Dr. Henderson's translation of these two verses; and his translation agrees with that of Keil: "And it came to pass in the fourth year of Darius the king, that the word of Jehovah was communicated to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev, when Babel sent Sherezer Regemelech and his men to conciliate the regard of Jehovah." Looking at these words homiletically, they present two subjects for thought—*religious beliefs that are right*, and *religious services that are wrong*.

I. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS THAT ARE RIGHT. There are three beliefs implied in this commission entrusted to Sherezer. What are they? 1. *The efficacy of prayer.* They

were sent "to pray before the Lord," or, as in the margin, "to entreat the face of the Lord." That men can obtain by prayer to the Supreme Being what they could not obtain without it is one of the fundamental and distinctive faiths of humanity. Instead of being against the law of nature, it is one of the most uniform and settled laws of the moral world. Hence all men pray in some form or other. Prayer springs out of the sense of man's dependence upon his Creator; and that sense is built upon a fact beyond dispute or doubt. 2. *The intercession of saints.* These men were sent to pray before the Lord, not merely for themselves, but for others. Those who sent them proved thereby their faith in the power of man to intercede with God on behalf of his fellow. The intercession of saints is not a doctrine merely of the Roman Church; it is an instinctive belief in the human soul. Men not only implore the Deity for those whom they love, but others implore them to pray for them. How natural it is for a father to pray for his son! how natural, too, for a son to ask the father to pray for him, and friend to ask friend the same! Intercessory prayer is also a law of nature. 3. *The special ability of some men to solve the religious questions of others.* This Sherezer and Regem-melech appealed unto the "priests which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?" They wanted a certain religious question answered, and they appealed to a certain class of religious men who they believed had the power to do so. The question they asked was one of a selfish character, "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?" From this it would seem that for seventy years during the period of their captivity they had, on certain days, wept, fasted, and humbled themselves before the Lord. Now that many had returned to their own land, and others were returning, they wanted to know whether all this fasting and humiliation would still be required. Would that which was done in Babylon be required in Jerusalem? Would not they in their own land be exonerated from such humiliations of soul? This was the question, and this question they addressed to the priests and the prophets. And they did it because they believed they had the special qualification to solve such problems. This also is an instinctive belief. All communities of men in all times and lands have had a certain class amongst them whom they regarded as qualified more than all others to answer the religious questions of the soul. Hence the existence of priesthoods. It may be that Heaven has never left in any age or country, any race, tribe, or community without such men amongst them, men gifted above their fellows, with a broad moral vision, far-reaching intellect, and even prophetic genius. God teaches man by man.

II. RELIGIOUS SERVICES THAT ARE WRONG. The Jews had performed religious services; they had "fasted," they had "mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years." This was right enough so far as the form is concerned; but in spirit the service was wrong, hence here is the reproof: "Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" 1. *Their services were selfish.* Mark the reproof: "Did ye at all fast unto me?" Was it not from selfish motives that ye did all this? Was it not with a view of obtaining release and securing my favour for yourselves? It is not because you have done the wrong thing against me. "It was not to me, even to me." The wrong you had done me was not thought of. Your outrages on morality, on the harmony of the universe, were not thought of at all. How much of the popular religion is of this type? The Almighty might well say to the conventional Churches of Christendom—You rear temples, you contribute property, you preach sermons, you offer prayers, you sing hymns; but it "is not unto me," it is not to me, it is all self. Whether you fast or feast in your religious services, it is all for "yourselves; it is not for me, not for me." *Religious services that are wrong, where are they not?* 2. *Selfish motives the Almighty had always denounced.* "Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?" Always has the Lord Almighty denounced a selfish religion (see Isa. lxvi. 1—3; Jer. xxv. 3—7; Amos v. 21, 27, etc.).—D. T.



Vers. 8—14.—*Religion, genuine and spurious.* “And the Word of the Lord,” etc. From this passage we infer three facts.

I. GENUINE RELIGION IS PHILANTHROPIC. (Isa. i. 16, 17; lviii. 6, 7; Matt. v. 44.) “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother,” etc. Here is the ritual, the manifestation, the proof of genuine religion, and it is practical philanthropy. The sign and evidence of genuine religion is not in ceremonial observances or mere devotional exercises, but in the spirit of Christly morality, in doing good to men. St. John says, “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, and that because Christ laid down his life for us” (1 John iii. 16). Our love to God is to be shown in the same way as God has shown his love to us, by *self-sacrifice*, and self-sacrifice for our *brother man*. What is the true and healthy development of our love to God? The Church has too often acted as if its development was entirely *theological*; hence the battling for dogmas. It has too often acted as if its development was *devotional*, as if psalmody and prayers were the only true expression. It has too often acted as if *proselytizing* was the true development of love to God; hence the zeal to make converts to its faith. The text teaches, however, that *self-sacrificing* benevolence is the true development. “Whoso hath this world’s good,” etc. The case supposed by the apostle is that of a brother in distress, looked on by a brother possessing this world’s goods, and rendering no help. John intimates that a *man* seeing his brother in need, having the power to help, and not helping him, cannot be a Christian. He may be a great theologian, a great pietist, a great propagandist, but no *Christian*.

II. SPURIOUS RELIGION IS INHUMAN. “But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.” This religious people not only neglected to do what they were commanded to do towards their fellow-men, but the very reverse of that, “they refused to hearken,” etc. The most inhuman force in the world is a spurious religion. All history shows this. Read the history of martyrdom as given by Fox or any other authentic historian. A spurious religion murdered the Son of God himself. A more cruel class of men I know not than religious men whose religion is not that of power, love, or a sound mind. Such men are ever ready to damn those who agree not with their narrow dogmas. Their dogmas make them as heartless as fiends. It makes their “hearts as an adamant stone.”

III. THAT AN INHUMAN RELIGION HAS A TERRIBLE DOOM. “Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts.” God will make inquisition here for blood. “The cries of the persecuted and neglected enter into the ears of the Lord God of sabaoth.” “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you” (Jas. v. 1—6). Because the religion of the Jews had become inhuman, Jehovah permitted them to be carried away into Babylon. “I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.” God will ever harden himself against those who have hardened themselves against their fellow-men. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1—8.—§ 4. *The Lord promises to show his love for Zion, to dwell among his people,*

*and to fill Jerusalem with a happy populace.*

Ver. 1.—*Again; rather, and.* This chap-

ter contains the second half of the Lord's answer concerning fasting, merging into prophecy.

Ver. 2.—**Thus saith the Lord of hosts.** This formula occurs ten times in this chapter, thus enforcing the truth that all the promises made to Zion come from the Lord himself, and are therefore sure to be fulfilled. *I was jealous; I am jealous*, as ch. i. 14 (where see note). **With great fury.** Against her enemies (ch. i. 15). "*Zelus*" is defined by Albertus Magnus: "*amor boni cum indignatione contrarii*." One side of God's love for Zion is shown in the punishment of her enemies. Knabenbauer likens this zeal or jealousy of God to the pillar of fire at the Exodus—light and protection to the Israelites, darkness and destruction to the Egyptians (Exod. xiv. 20).

Ver. 3.—**I am returned** (ch. i. 16); *I return*. When Jerusalem was taken and given over to the enemy, God seemed to have deserted her (Ezek. x. 18; xi. 23); but now the restoration of the exiles, the rebuilding of the temple, the voice of prophecy, showed that the Lord had returned, and that now he will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (ch. ii. 10). **A city of truth; city of truth**; no longer full of lies and treachery and infidelity. God dwelling therein, it shall be "*the faithful city*" (Isa. i. 26), in which all that is true and real shall flourish (comp. ver. 16; Zeph. iii. 13). **The holy mountain.** The hill whereon the temple is built shall be called the holy mountain, because the Lord dwelt in the sanctuary. The prophecy in this and the following verses received a partial fulfilment in the days between Zerubbabel and Christ; but there is a further accomplishment in store.

Ver. 4.—**There shall yet old men . . . dwell** (*sit*), etc. A picture of happy security and plenty, in vivid contrast to the desolation deplored in Lam. ii.; v. In the days of the Maccabees it is noted, among other tokens of peace and prosperity, that "the ancient men sat all in the streets, communing together of good things" (1 Macc. xiv. 9). For **very age**; Hebrew, *for multitude of days*. People shall reach the utmost limits of human life. According to the old Law, length of days was the reward of obedience (Gen. xv. 15; Exod. xx. 12; Deut. iv. 40), and an early death was inflicted as a punishment of sin (Deut. xxviii. 20; Ps. liv. 23; lxxviii. 33). Such promises are made also in Messianic times (Isa. lxx. 20), though in a different sense.

Ver. 5.—**Full of boys and girls.** Jerusalem and the other cities had long been strangers to any such happy sight. Large increase of population is a blessing often promised in the latter days (Hos. i. 10; Micah. ii. 12). Perowne remarks that our

Lord alludes to the games of children in the market-places as a familiar incident in his days (Matt. xi. 16, 17; comp. Jer. vi. 11).

Ver. 6.—**In these days**; rather, *in those days*. If what is promised in vers. 3-5 seems incredible to those who shall see the fulfilment. **The remnant.** The returned Jews and their posterity (Hag. i. 12-14). Should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? Certainly not. Nothing is impossible with God.

Ver. 7.—God promises to bring his dispersed people home again—a promise only yet partially fulfilled. **My people.** A title of honour (Hos. ii. 23). **From the east country, and from the west country.** Two regions are named, symbols of the whole world (comp. Ps. l. 1; Mal. i. 11). The return of the captives from Babylon was a prelude of the future restoration of the dispersed, when all Israel shall be saved (Rom. xi. 26). (See a similar promise, Isa. xliii. 5, 6; comp. John xi. 52.)

Ver. 8.—**In the midst of Jerusalem.** As the centre of worship (see ch. ii. 4, and note there). **In truth and in righteousness.** The words belong to both parts of the preceding clause: God will deal truly and righteously with them, but they must deal truly and righteously with him. If they are faithful to their obligations, God would be unto them all that he had promised to be.

Vers. 9-17.—§ 5. *The people are exhorted to be of good cheer, for God will henceforth give them his blessing, which, however, was conditional on their obedience.*

Ver. 9.—**Let your hands be strong** (comp. Hag. ii. 15-19). Be of good courage for the work before you (Judg. vii. 11; Isa. xxxv. 3; Ezek. xxii. 14). **By (from) the mouth of the prophets, which were.** Who came forward as prophets. These prophets, who prophesied after the foundations of the temple were laid, were Haggai and Zechariah; they are thus distinguished from the pre-exilian seers mentioned in ch. vii. 7. The same prophets who encouraged you in your work at first are they who have spoken to you words of promise in these days. **That the temple might be built**; Revised Version, *even the temple that it might be built*. This could not be predicated of the first foundation, which was followed by a long period of inaction (Ezra iv. 24), only terminated by the vigorous exhortations of the prophets, which led to a resumption of the work that might be called a second foundation of the temple.

Ver. 10.—The prophet reminds the people of the sad condition of affairs during the cessation of the good work, and how things

began to improve directly they showed diligence and zeal. There was no hire for man, etc. Either the yield was so small that no labour of men or beasts was needed to gather it in, or the general poverty was so great that labourers could not get their wages nor the oxen their well-earned share of provender (Hag. i. 11; ii. 17, 18). Neither was there any peace . . . because of the affliction; rather, *because of the adversary*. They could not go about their usual occupations, or pass in safety from place to place, on account of the enemies that compassed them about (Ezra iv. 4). The rendering of the Authorized Version is supported by the Septuagint and Vulgate, but the word (*tsar*) is often used for the concrete, "adversary." So the Syriac here. I set all men every one against his neighbour. There were internal dissensions as well as outward opposition. God had allowed this for his own wise purposes.

Ver. 11.—But now I will not be. God's attitude towards the people had already changed in consequence of their diligence in the work of restoration. Perowne renders, "Now I am not." The residue; *the remnant*; the returned Jews (ver. 12; Hag. i. 12). The former days. In the time of their inactivity, when a curse rested upon them and upon their land. The curse was now removed, and a marked amelioration had set in (Hag. ii. 15—19).

Ver. 12.—The seed shall be prosperous; literally, (*there shall be*) the seed of peace. The crops sown shall be crops of peace, safe and secure, in contradistinction to the threat in Lev. xxvi. 16, that the seed should be sown in vain, for it should be devoured by an enemy (Knabenbauer). Or, more generally, all farming labourers shall succeed and prosper. Jerome's paraphrase is, "There shall be universal peace and joy;" Septuagint, "But I will show forth peace."

Another way of understanding the words which has found much favour with modern commentators is to take the clause in apposition with the words immediately following; thus: "The seed (*i.e.* growth) of peace, the vine, shall give its fruit." But there is no especial reason why the vine should be called "the seed of peace." It is not peculiar among fruit trees for requiring a time of peace for its cultivation. And the term "seed" is very inappropriate to the vine, which was not raised from seed, but from cuttings and layers. Perowne also points out that such a rendering destroys the balance of the three following clauses, which explain and expand the general statement that agriculture shall prosper. Dr. Alexander takes "the seed of peace" to be that from which peace springs; *i.e.* that peace should be radically established

in the land, and from this fact the results following should ensue. This affords a very good sense; but it is probably a metaphor quite unintended by the prophet. The Syriac reads differently, "The seed shall be safe." The remnant (see on ver. 11). To possess; *to inherit*; Septuagint, *κατακληρονομήσω* (Rev. xxi. 7). This promise recalls the blessings in the old Law (Lev. xxvi. 4, etc.; Deut. xxxiii. 28; Ps. lxxvii. 6).

Ver. 13.—As ye were a curse among the heathen. As your fate was used as a formula of imprecation among the heathen; *e.g.* "May your fate be that of the Jews" (see examples of this, 2 Kings xxii. 19; Isa. lxv. 15; Jer. xxiv. 9; xxix. 22). The other way of taking the expression as meaning the object of curse (*i.e.* as the heathen once used to curse you), is not so suitable. Judah . . . Israel. This expression includes the twelve tribes, of all of which some members had returned, and continued to return, from the Captivity. They were united now and formed one nation (see note on ch. ix. 10). So will I save you. In as open and significant a manner will I show that I am delivering and favouring you. Ye shall be a blessing. This must be taken correspondingly to the former phrase, being a "curse;" ye shall be used as a formula for blessing; *e.g.* "God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh" (Gen. xlviii. 20; comp. Ruth iv. 11, 12). Fear not (Zeph. iii. 16). "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31; comp. Numb. xiv. 9). Let your hands be strong (see note on ver. 9). The LXX. takes the paragraph differently and erroneously: "And it shall be that in like manner as ye were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing;" *i.e.* a cause of blessing, Ἦτε ἐν κατάρᾳ . . . ἔσσεσθε ἐν εὐλογίᾳ.

Ver. 14.—The ground of the promise is the will of God, who cannot deceive. As I thought to punish you; as I purposed to do evil to you; *i.e.* to the nation whose continuity is thus intimated (comp. Hag. ii. 5; and for a similar contrast of punishment and blessing, see Jer. xxxi. 28). I repented not. God carried out the dread decree to the full (ch. i. 6; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16). (For the phrase applied to God, comp. Numb. xxiii. 19; Jer. iv. 28; Jonah iii. 10, where see note.) Vulgate, "I pitied not."

Ver. 15.—So again have I thought, etc. The past obduracy, which happened as it was threatened, is a guarantee of the fulfilment of the promised blessing. But there is a condition to be observed, which is set forth in the two next verses. The LXX. has, "So have I ordered and purposed." In these special blessings Judah and Jerusalem

alone were to share at the first; Israel's happy time (ver. 13) was to come later.

Ver. 16.—**These are the things.** To secure the fulfilment of the promise of good, they must do the will of God (ch. vii. 9, etc.). **Truth.** This was to be observed in all conversation and transactions with their neighbours. St. Paul quotes this injunction (Eph. iv. 25). **Execute the judgment of truth and peace;** literally, *judge ye truth and the judgment of peace.* So the Septuagint and Vulgate. **Practise perfect equity in judgments,** and so decide, according to truth and justice, as to secure peace and concord between the parties concerned. **In your gates.** Where the judges sat, and justice was administered (Deut. xvi. 18; xxi. 19; see note on Amos v. 10).

Ver. 17.—**Let none of you imagine** (see note on ch. vii. 10, where these words occur). **Love no false oath.** The prevalent sins at this time were not idolatry, but cheating and lying and injustice, vices learned in the land of exile, where they had turned their energies to traffic and commerce (see ch. v. 2—4, and note on ver. 3 there).

Vers. 18—23.—§ 6. Here follows the direct answer to the question originally proposed. *The fasts should be turned into joyful festivals, former calamities being forgotten. Then the change extending its influence, the heathen shall worship the God of Israel, and esteem it an honour to be received into fellowship with the Jewish nation.*

Ver. 19.—**The fast of the fourth month,** etc. (For the occasions of these fasts, see note on ch. vii. 3.) Jerome gives the later Jewish traditions concerning them. The fast of the seventh day of the fourth month commemorated the breaking of the two tables of the commandments by Moses, as well as the first breach in the walls of Jerusalem; that of the fifth month was observed in memory of the return of the spies sent to explore Canaan, and the consequent punishment of forty years' wandering in the wilderness, as well as of the burning of the temple by the Chaldeans; that in the tenth month was appointed because it was then that Ezekiel and the captive Jews received intelligence of the complete destruction of the temple. **Joy and gladness.** The observance of these fasts seems, by the Lord's answer, to have been neither enjoined nor forbidden; but as for their sins their festivals had been turned into mourning (Amos viii. 10), so now their fasts should be turned into joyful feasts, and former miseries should be forgotten in the presence of the blessings now showered upon them. **Therefore love the truth and peace.** This is the

condition of the fulfilment of the promise (ver. 16; ch. vii. 9), here again forcibly impressed.

Ver. 20.—**It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people; peoples.** The sight of the prosperity of the Jews shall induce surrounding nations to join in the worship of Jehovah. The same truth is expressed in Ps. cxxvi. 1—3. Perowne thinks that vers. 20, 21 refer to the tribes of Israel; but it seems unnatural to suppose the prophet asserting that it will yet happen that Israelites will seek the Lord, when there is no reason to think that they had not done so in some fashion, or that they would need the previous deliberation mentioned in the next verse. **Many cities.** So the LXX. and Vulgate. Others translate, "great, or, populous cities;" but this is less suitable.

Ver. 21.—**The inhabitants of one city shall go to another.** The LXX. has, "The inhabitants of five cities shall go unto one;" Vulgate, "The inhabitants go one to another." Let us go speedily. The Hebrew is an imperfect followed by an infinitive absolute—an idiom which implies combination, *Let us go on and on, continually.* So Pusey and Wright. **To pray before the Lord; to treat the favour of the Lord** (see note on ch. vii. 2). The Gentiles would be moved, not only to make pilgrimages to the great annual festivals, but to seek to know the Lord, and how to worship him acceptably. **I will go also.** The inhabitants answer willingly to those who exhort them. It is quite unnatural to take the clause to mean (as Drake does), "I, Zechariah, will go too, to see the alteration in the mode of observing these fast-days."

Ver. 22.—**Many people (peoples) and strong nations.** This explains ver. 20 more fully. The Jews were not actuated by the missionary spirit, yet even before Christ's advent their religion had spread into all parts of the world, as we see from the catalogue of proselytes in Acts ii. 9—11. Intimations of the same fact are given in Ezra vi. 21; Esth. viii. 17. **To seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem;** i.e. to keep the solemn festivals observed there (comp. Isa. ii. 2; lxvi. 20—23; Micah iv. 1, and note there). The literal fulfilment of this prophecy is not to be looked for. It declares the future conversion of the Gentiles, and their being made one with Israel in the Church of Christ, "one fold under one Shepherd" (John x. 16).

Ver. 23.—**Ten men.** The number ten is used for a large indefinite number (comp. Gen. xxxi. 7; Lev. xxvi. 26; 1 Sam. i. 8). **Out of all languages (the languages) of the nations.** The diversity of languages shall not hinder the unity in the faith (comp. Isa. lxvi. 18; Rev. v. 9; vii. 9). **Shall take hold**

of the skirt of him that is a Jew. Taking hold of the skirt implies a desire to share the privileges, and to be united in fellowship with (comp. Isa. iv. 1; Hag. ii. 12). St. Cyril considers the idea to be that the heathen shall cling to the Jews like children holding their fathers' dress for support and guidance. In "the man that is a Jew" St. Jerome discerns the Messiah. We will go with you. The picture presented to the mind by this verse is of a Jew journeying to Jerusalem from some distant country to keep a solemn festival, and a number of Gentiles clinging round him, asking permis-

sion to accompany him on his journey, because they have learned how good the Lord has been to his countrymen. But the ideal intended is much more than this. Salvation, indeed, is of the Jews; it began to be announced at Jerusalem; it was preached by the Jewish apostles; its founder was of the seed of David. But the true Israelites are not merely those who are of the natural posterity of Abraham, but all true Christians united under Christ, the Head. To their number all who would be saved must be joined (comp. Rom. iv. 11; Gal. iii. 7, 29; iv. 26, etc.).

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Assurance of favour.* "Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me." When warning is carried too far, it degenerates into threatening, and defeats its own end, producing despair instead of desire to escape. It is probably on this account that the solemn warning with which ch. vii. concludes gives place, in this chapter, to an animating series of encouragements and promises. (For somewhat similar transitions, see Heb. vi. 9; Isa. i. 18, etc.) In the verses now immediately before us, we have the beginning of these encouragements in a gracious *assurance of favour* to the remnant addressed by the prophet—an assurance conveyed to them in the way (1) of *emphatic repetition*; (2) of *graphic detail*; and (3) of *copious addition*.

I. EMPHATIC REPETITION. We have such repetition: 1. *Of the feelings of Jehovah towards the enemies of his Zion.* He had described himself before (ch. i. 14) as looking with an eye of displeasure and jealousy on the comparative "ease" of those foes. We have the same idea here (in ver. 2) in a still more forcible shape. "I was jealous for Zion with great fury." What can go beyond that? 2. *Of the purposes of Jehovah towards Zion herself.* On this point, also, God's former declaration (as found in ch. i. 16; ii. 10) is repeated and enforced. Not only would God again dwell in her, as prophesied before; but he would do so in such a manner as to make her a city of truth and holiness (ver. 3; and comp. Jer. xxxi. 23). All this as though to impress on his people how deliberately he had spoken. "I know what I said, and I mean it; I meant even more than I said." Such is the purport, such also the effect, of repetition like this. It is the natural language of steadfast purpose and conscious power to fulfil. Some persons think, accordingly, that the Epistle to the Ephesians is, virtually, such a repetition of that to the Colossians; and that the same holds good about the two Epistles to the Galatians and Romans.

II. GRAPHIC DETAIL. A previous prophecy (ch. ii. 4) had declared that Jerusalem should be inhabited as "towns without walls." Vers. 4 and 5 of the present chapter amplify this description under three principal ideas of great beauty and force. 1. *The idea of restoration and order.* Instead of being a city of waste places (compare sixty years afterwards, Neh. vii. 4, margin), we see it a city of populous "streets." This a wonderful touch. In a growing neighbourhood, where every new building is an event, we think most of the houses; in a completely built city, where there is no room for more buildings, we think most of the thoroughfares. 2. *The idea of safety and peace.* In times of warfare and tumult the first to succumb to violence and privation and terror are the aged. Streets, therefore, full of such (ver. 4) tell a twofold tale. Had there not been long peace in the past, these aged ones would not have survived. Were there not assured peace in the present, they would be in flight or concealment, and not in the streets. 3. *The idea of gladness and joy.* What happier sight on this earth than that described in ver. 5, in its comparative innocence, its abundant life, its musical utterances, its sweet faces and smiles, its graceful figures and movements, and the untold wealth of tender love and delighted looks, of which, in so many different homes, it gives proof! How all this detail would help men to realize what God's promises meant!

III. CAPIOUS ADDITION. Did these visions seem very marvellous in the eyes of those to whom they were shown? Almost too good, in fact, to be true. Let such persons remember: 1. *That they were not too marvellous for God's power.* Often had God shown this kind of thing to be true (see Gen. xviii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 6—17, where note connection with the subject of restoration after Captivity, as in this instance). Let such persons understand of these promises: 2. *That they were far beneath God's power, in real fact.* Besides the remnant now brought back from the Captivity, he would bring others as well; not only those from the east, but those from the west (ver. 7); not only also (ver. 8) those who were his people already, but those who should become so in the fullest manner. Most probably much of the meaning of this would be concealed at that time from the prophet's understanding, but even to see such distant peaks "afar off" (Heb. xi. 13), and above the clouds, as it were, would be a great help on the road.

Two important lessons derivable to conclude. 1. *How to receive God's Word, viz. as something not only perfectly sure, but also as something wonderfully significant and overflowing full.* It is with the secrets of grace as with those of nature; they can never be fully described, never altogether exhausted (see Eccles. iii. 11; viii. 17; Rom. xi. 33; Ps. xxxvi. 6; lxxvii. 19; and especially what is said in Job xi. 6, of the "secrets of wisdom," that they "are double to that which is"). 2. *How to set forth God's truth, viz. as having both a sombre side and a bright one.* Some are now preaching the gospel as though no such thing as repentance and judgment were mentioned in the Bible. Others confine themselves to repentance and judgment, as though there were no pardon or love. The right "proportion" (Rom. xii. 6) is shown us in our present passage combined with our last, and in such Scriptures as Ps. ci. 1; Rom. ii. 3—11, etc.

Vers. 9—17.—*Evidence of favour.* "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong," etc. In the beginning of these verses we have the opposite of that with which the previous verses concluded. There God confirmed his people in hoping for certain comparatively proximate blessings by assuring them of other and greater blessings which he designed afterwards to bestow. Here he confirms their hopes of what is more distant by pledging himself, as it were, to what is nearer. And this he does, we shall find, by drawing their attention (1) to the *mercies of the present*; and (2) to the *judgments of the past*.

I. THE MERCIES OF THE PRESENT. (Vers. 9—13.) Three things, especially, to be noted regarding these. 1. *How marked their character!* Great temporal mercies (ver. 12) are to be "now" (ver. 11)—abundant produce both in the open "ground" and cultivated enclosure, abundant blessing both in the soil itself and in that which came on it. These also all the more notable for coming after a widely different state of things, when, besides utter want (ver. 10), even for those most desirous to work, there was the common concomitant of such evils, viz. home dissension and strife; and that, wherever men were and whatever they did (see also Hag. ii. 16, 17, describing those same evil days). Who could avoid seeing and admiring so blessed a change? 2. *How striking their connection!* This happy change in their circumstances had taken place simultaneously with a corresponding change in their doings. From the very day when, as it were, for the second time they "laid the foundation" of God's house (ver. 9; Ezra iv. 24; v. 1, 2), God had begun to prosper thus the work of their hands. "Before" then (ver. 10) was trouble; but "now" (ver. 11) "I am not" (so some) as before. This, too, we find occurring (see Hag. i. 9—11; ii. 15—19) in accordance with express promise to this effect. 3. *How hopeful their bearing!* What was all this but plain evidence of a corresponding change, as it were, up above? And what might not be expected in future, such being the case? Even all promised in ver. 13, viz. that God's people should become as conspicuous now for their prosperity as formerly for their adversity (see also Jer. xxiv. 9; xxv. 18; xlii. 18, etc.). Much as when, from the very day on which a certain remedy is first employed, a sick man begins to improve. How easy then to believe the physician's assurance that he shall ultimately become better than ever!

II. THE JUDGMENTS OF THE PAST. This conviction further confirmed by going still further back in their history. For doing so shows: 1. *The steadfastness of God's*

*purposes.* (Vers. 14, 15.) When the state of things is such as to call for judgment, ye have seen how the thought of such judgment is carried out by *me* (comp. 1 Sam. iii. 12). Learn from this, when things, as at present, are different, to rely on the same steadfastness on my part. 2. So to describe it, *the easiness of God's terms.* All that he asks on their part, in order to ensure on his part the full accomplishment of his purposes of mercy, was that (as in the case of their fathers) which would be for their good. See previous remarks on ch. vii. 9, 10; and note that we have here, in vers. 16, 17, the same thoughts and almost words as before, followed up, however, by two remarkable additions which seem specially meant for those times—the mention of false swearing (comp. ch. v. 4); and the implied assurance that, if these evils were persisted in, they would stop the current of God's love. "All these things, being hurtful to you, are hateful to me. Therefore, on every account, do them not."

Do we not see here, in conclusion: 1. *The unchangeableness of God's nature?* His dealings with men vary often and widely; his character, never. He is always true to his purpose; never, as men are, turned from it by caprice. The very variety of his dealings helps to demonstrate this. The very same sunshine which melts the ice hardens the clay. See this illustrated by the opposite effects of mercy and favour, hardening some (Isa. xxvi. 10; Eccles. viii. 11, etc.) and melting others (Ps. cxxx. 4; cxvi. 1, 12); also of affliction or chastisement, humiliating some (Luke xv. 17—19; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12) and exasperating others (Gen. iv. 13; 2 Chron. xxviii. 22; Rev. ix. 20, 21). 2. *The certainty of God's promises?* Established, as we see, by God's very judgments, what wider base can they have (comp. Mal. iii. 6; also Ps. cxix. 52, "I remembered thy judgments of old, and comforted myself")? In this way, how many (apparently) unlikely things combine to preach Christ! Even the thunders of Sinai itself (see in one sense, Gal. iii. 24)! Other things, perhaps, more articulately as it were, but none with more power.

Vers. 18—23.—*Pre-eminent favour.* "And the word of the Lord of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; The fast of the fourth month," etc. The close of this chapter gives an answer at length to the question asked in ch. vii. 3. And this answer consists—unlike the intervening stream of mingled denunciation, warning, and encouragement—of an almost unbroken outburst of promise and hope. The only apparent exception, in fact, is to be found in the six brief words of admonition at the close of ver. 19. How far this abundance of promise was fulfilled in the experience of the literal Israel of the past, how far in that of the spiritual Israel of Christ's Church, and how far it yet remains to be verified in the case of either or both,—has been debated often and much. Taken simply as they stand (which is clearly the first thing to do with them), we may consider the words as setting before us (1) the *future happiness of Judah*; (2) the *eminence of Jerusalem*; and (3) the *future dignity of the Jew*.

I. THE FUTURE HAPPINESS OF THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH. We shall appreciate this best by noting: 1. *Their recollections* at the time of this prophecy. For seventy years they had been accustomed, on four different annual occasions (see ver. 19), to fast and weep in remembrance of four different and dreadful stages in their overthrow as a nation, viz. in the tenth month, in remembrance of the opening of the siege of Jerusalem (Jer. lii. 4); in the fourth month, in remembrance of its capture (Jer. lii. 6); in the fifth, in remembrance of the burning of the temple (Jer. lii. 12—16); and in the seventh, in remembrance of the flight of the last residue of the "seed royal," and army, and prophets, and people from Palestine into Egypt (2 Kings xxv. 25, 26; Jer. xli. 1—xliii. 7). What a succession, what a continual aggravation, what a climax, of ill! 2. *Their experience.* They had now got so far (as we noted on ch. vii. 3) that a remnant of the people had returned, and the temple had begun to rise again, and its full restoration seemed only a work of time. This being so, that fifth-month day of humiliation, which was connected with the destruction of the temple, appeared no longer in place. Why should they longer commemorate a loss which they had already begun to efface? 3. *Their prospects.* Why, indeed, seeing the time was coming (ver. 19) when all the calamities commemorated by all the four Captivity fasts here referred to would be so completely outbalanced by corresponding blessings as to call for "cheerful feasts" rather than fasts? Only let them "love truth and peace," and all their losses would be forgotten, as in the case mentioned in Gen. xli. 51.

II. **THE FUTURE EMINENCE OF JERUSALEM.** This capital of Israel was to become "yet" (i.e., however apparently unlikely, however apparently delayed) the religious capital of the world. As foretelling this, we have portrayed to us here: 1. *A great journey resolved on.* We see (1) many pilgrims assembling together, people who have "cities" and settled habitations ("inhabitants," *his*) of their own, leaving those cities to visit this (comp. Heb. xi. 8—10, 14—16; xiii. 14). These pilgrims have (2) a common purpose, the inhabitants of one city inviting those of others, and volunteering themselves, to go up (Ps. cxxii. 1). They have also (3) a very earnest purpose: let us go "perseveringly" (Pusey), till we obtain what we seek—till our feet actually "stand" (Ps. cxxii. 2) where we desire. And they have, finally, (4) a most suitable and laudable purpose, even that of finding that presence of Jehovah which is to be found in that city alone; and are not seeking to reach it merely as a means of reaching something beyond. 2. *A great journey accomplished.* (Ver. 22.) The pilgrims have arrived at last. How mighty in number! "Many people shall come;" and come to seek God. How mighty also in significance! "Strong nations," who might have come as invaders, are here as suppliants before God (comp. Isa. lx. 3, 11, etc.; ii. 2—4; and the almost identical passage in Micah iv. 1—8, noting specially "the first dominion").

III. **THE FUTURE DIGNITY OF THE JEW;** i.e. of every individual enjoying, in those days, the natural citizenship of this illustrious city. Even when far from its walls, every such citizen (something as with those referred to in Acts xvi. 37, 38; xxii. 25—29, etc.) would be almost as much an object of homage as that city itself. Note what is here shown: 1. *As to the depth* of this homage, men being willing even to sink their own distinctive names in that of an Israelite, even as a woman does when she marries (comp. Ruth iii. 9; Isa. iv. 1; and contrast Pilate's indignant question in John xviii. 35). 2. *Its extent.* How many would do thus! viz. as many as ten to each Jew. How manifold, also, they would be! viz. out of "all languages" upon earth. Wherever their dwelling, whatever their diversities of race, training, customs, or speech, they would break through all to do this. 3. *Its foundation.* On the one hand, negatively. The homage paid to this "citizen" is *not* due to anything else but his being "a Jew." On the other hand, positively. This homage is paid to him because, as being such, he is believed to be peculiarly favoured of God (see end of ver. 23; and Numb. x. 29, 32; and contrast John iv. 20; see also end of ver. 22).

Two brief lessons to conclude. 1. *As to Israel now.* Let us ever think of God's ancient people with peculiar tenderness and respect. With tenderness, as is only proper, because of their having "seen better days." With respect, as is only becoming, considering their "great expectations." Whatever the exact application of the present prophecy, of this much we are sure (Rom. xi., *passim*). Who, indeed, may not be proud of the name mentioned in John i. 47? 2. *As to ourselves.* When will the Jews be thus honoured? When they truly seek God. So, therefore, of us, in our turn. We must never forget what it took Peter so much trouble to learn (Acts x. 34, 35).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—23.—*The future glory of the Church.* God speaks. Formerly stern rebuke; here sweet encouragement. Glowing picture of the good time coming.

I. **GOD'S ABIDING LOVE TO HIS CHURCH.** There are times when it would seem as if God had cast off his people. "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" Here is the answer. "I am jealous," etc. There is real, intense, and abiding attachment. Words of good cheer verified by facts. "I am returned," etc.

II. **GOD'S GRACIOUS PURPOSE TO RESTORE HIS CHURCH.** God's withdrawal was because of sin. But for a season. When we return to God, he will return to us. The very righteousness that obliges him to punish the impenitent, binds him to bless the penitent. The light will shine more and more. Times of revival are times of refreshment. The release of the captives pledges freedom to all. The return of the exiles prophesies of the final restoration.

III. **GOD'S DELIGHT IN THE PROSPERITY OF HIS CHURCH.** (Vers. 4—6.) Sweet and ravishing picture. So far fulfilled in the heroic times of the Maccabees (1 Macc. xiv.



8—12). Finds a grander fulfilment under the gospel, and will be perfectly fulfilled in the latter days.

IV. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN FULFILLING HIS PROMISES TO HIS CHURCH. There are things which seem too great to be possible—too good to be true. It may be so with man, but not with God. Eternal Wisdom cannot err. Absolute truth cannot alter. Omnipotent love cannot fail.—F.

Ver. 21.—*The soul's response to the gospel call.* "I will go also." This resolution is—

I. PERSONAL. "I." Religion is a thing between the soul and God. We are brought face to face with Christ in the gospel. Free and responsible. Must decide for ourselves.

II. RESULT OF CONVICTION. Many careless, some anxious, others almost persuaded. He who says, "I will go," has considered the question, and made up his mind on evidence which to him is satisfactory and convincing. "God is with you."

III. PROMPTLY AND THOROUGHLY CARRIED OUT. Not a mere thought, or impulse, or sentiment. Not the result of transitory feelings in times of excitement. But the expression outwardly of the change wrought within—of the heart won to Christ (Ps. cxix. 59, 60).

IV. FORTIFIED BY THE SYMPATHY AND APPROVAL OF ALL THE GOOD. We crave sympathy. Alliance with others gives courage, especially at the outset. The fellowship of the saints intensifies our best emotions and increases our purest joys.

V. LEADING TO A TRUE AND NOBLE LIFE.—F.

Ver. 23.—*Right representation.* Much depends on whether religion is rightly represented. In order to be attractive, the representation should be—

I. AGREEABLE TO REASON. An irrational religion cannot stand. Christ and his apostles constantly appeal to the moral judgment.

II. CONGRUOUS TO MAN'S NECESSITIES. There is a certain condition of things. The feeling and the cry of sin. The craving for reconciliation with God. Aspirations after holiness. The longing for confirmed tranquillity. The gospel must be shown to meet these needs.

III. IN HARMONY WITH THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. Christ is the gospel. Those who witness for Christ must take heed that their witness is true. We behold in Christ utter truth, disinterested love, self-sacrificing earnestness, supreme sympathy with God.

IV. CONFIRMED BY THE CHARACTER AND LIFE OF ITS PROFESSORS. Conduct is the test of faith. The truth is identified with its advocates. To get others to believe, we must show that we believe ourselves. Life is better than doctrine. To do good, we must be good. Gehazi would never have won Naaman. Lot failed to move his sons-in-law. At home and abroad, Christianity is suffering from the faithlessness of Christians.

V. VERIFIED BY THE DIVINE EFFECTS WHICH IT PRODUCES. "God is with you" (cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 25). The gospel is its own best witness.—F.

Vers. 1—6.—*The blessed community of men yet to appear on the earth.* "Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury," etc. This chapter does not commence a new subject, but continues the subject of the preceding one. The awful consequences of disregarding the will of Heaven had often been set forth by the prophets; and here, in this chapter, we have the assurance of the renewal of Divine favour to those who had returned from the Captivity. Without concerning ourselves with "times and seasons," it is clear that in this section of Scripture there is sketched a state of human society which has never yet existed on the earth, and which is not likely to appear for many centuries, if not millenniums hence. It is to this *community*, as herein pictured, that I desire to call the attention of my readers. The following facts are eminently noteworthy in relation to this *blessed community*.

I. HERE IS A COMMUNITY SPECIALLY INTERESTING TO THE GREAT GOD. "Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury." The

rendering of Dr. Henderson is worth citation: "And the word of Jehovah was communicated to me, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: I have been jealous for Zion with great zeal, yea, with great indignation have I been jealous for her." Jerusalem was a city in which God had chosen "to put his Name;" there was his temple, there were the ark, the mercy-seat, and the memorials of his power and goodness in the history of Israel. This city had been destroyed by the Babylonian invaders, and during the whole period of its ruin Jehovah's hand was on it and its scattered and exiled people. During all this time, he says, "I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy." Instead of losing interest in his persecuted people, his feelings were intense concerning them. The Eternal is interested in all the works of his hand, interested in men even in their state of infidelity and rebellion; but *specially* interested in those whom he regards as his people. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word;" "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Isa. lvii. 15; Ps. ciii. 13).

II. HERE IS A COMMUNITY IN WHICH THE ALMIGHTY SPECIALLY RESIDES. "Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." Jerusalem was in a very particular sense the dwelling-place of God (Exod. xxix. 45; Lev. xxvi. 12). There shone the symbol of his presence for centuries; there he communed with his people from off the mercy-seat; there lived and laboured the priests whom he had chosen to represent his will. But he dwells with his people in a more *real* and *vital* sense than this. Know ye not that "ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people"? There are two senses in which the Almighty dwells with good men. 1. *By his sympathy*. The loving mother dwells with her loved child; yes, though separated by continents and seas. Jehovah's sympathies are with his children. 2. *By his presence*. The loving parent cannot always be personally with the loved child. In person they may be as far asunder as the poles. But God's presence is always with his people. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." What a blessed community that must be, where God not only by his sympathies but by his presence dwells!

III. HERE IS A COMMUNITY DISTINGUISHED BY REALITY AND ELEVATION. 1. *Reality*. "And Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth." What is moral reality? A *practical correspondence of the sympathies and life with eternal facts*. All whose thoughts, affections, and conduct are not in accord with the immutable moral laws of God, live in fiction, "walk in a vain show;" and in this state most, if not all, communities are found. Alas! "THE CITY OF TRUTH" is not yet established, it is in a distant future. 2. *Elevation*. "And the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain." Where are the communities of men now found in a moral sense? Down in the hazy, boggy, impure valleys of carnalities and falsehoods. But this community is up on the holy mountain; it is in a place of high moral exaltation.

IV. HERE IS A COMMUNITY IN WHICH THE VERY AGED AND THE YOUNG LIVE IN SOCIAL ENJOYMENT. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age." The promise of long life was esteemed one of the greatest blessings in the Jewish theocracy (Exod. xx. 12; Deut. iv. 40); and in Isa. lxx. 20—22 this is promised as one of the signal blessings of Messianic times. Through bloody wars and general disregard of the laws of health, only an insignificant minority of the human race reach old age. Blessed is that community in which aged people abound, ripe in wisdom, goodness, and experience. But not only are the very aged in this community, but the young. "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." No sight is more refreshing, more morally inspiring to the true-hearted of all ages, even to the oldest, than a community of guileless, bright, and blithesome children. They are the latest emanations and revelations of Infinite Love to the world. They are to adults as flowers growing on the sides of the dry and dusty walks of life. Beautiful city this! The children not filthy, half-starved, diseased arabs in crowded alleys, but bright creatures gambolling in the sunny streets.

V. HERE IS A COMMUNITY WHOSE ESTABLISHMENT, THOUGH INCREDIBLE TO MAN, IS CERTAIN TO GOD. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes?" As

if the Almighty had said, "The creation of such a social state amongst you may appear an impossibility; but it is not so to me." Indeed, to create such a community as this on the earth, to make the whole globe a kind of Jerusalem, whose members shall be all holy and all happy, does appear so wonderful that even the most believing amongst us are often filled with doubt. How far off is such a state of things from the present! How imperceptibly slow does the Christly reformation proceed! How vast and mighty is the reign of error and wrong everywhere! and how difficult to believe that the time will come "when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ"! Still, God has promised it; and what he has promised he is able to accomplish. Let us live and labour in faith. "Let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord."—D. T.

Vers. 7, 8.—*A twofold Divine restoration.* "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will save my people ['out of the land of the rising and the land of the setting' (Keil)] from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." "The east and the west are here put as parts for the whole. The meaning is, 'I will deliver my people from regions whither they have been scattered.' Were there any reason to believe that the prophecy has respect to a restoration of the Jews yet future, there would be a singular propriety in the use of *מִמְּזֶרֶת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ*, 'the setting of the sun,' the Jews being now, for the most part, found in countries to the west of Jerusalem; but there is every reason to conclude that it has an exclusive reference to what was to take place soon after it was delivered. Vast numbers were carried away captive after the time of Alexander. Not fewer than a hundred thousand were carried by Ptolemy, and were settled in Alexandria and Cyrene" (Henderson). We shall use these words as suggesting a *twofold Divine restoration—temporal and spiritual.*

I. HERE IS A DIVINE TEMPORAL RESTORATION. "And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." There is no sound reason for believing that the people here mentioned as those that were brought "from the east country and from the west" refer to the Jews in the far future, who, some suppose, will be restored to Jerusalem at last. I know of no authority for supposing that such a restoration will ever be effected. Nor does the passage point, I think, to the universal conversion of the Jews to Christianity in the last times. The reference is manifestly to those Jews who had been scattered abroad over various countries through the Babylonian Captivity and other disastrous causes. The point is that the restoration here promised is a *temporal* restoration to their own land and city. They had been exiled for many long years, and deeply did they deplore in a foreign land their expatriation. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down," etc. The Almighty by Cyrus restored them. And he is constantly restoring his people to those temporal blessings they have lost. He restores often (1) to lost *health*; (2) to lost *property*; (3) to lost *social status*. He is the temporal Restorer of his people. In all their distresses he bids them look to him. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," etc.

II. HERE IS A DIVINE SPIRITUAL RESTORATION. "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." This may mean, "I will become their God in good faith, or in reality, both on their side and mine." This is incomparably the most important restoration. In truth, all temporal restorations are of no permanent value without this. Observe: 1. *Man may lose his God.* He may be without "God in the world." Indeed, the millions are in this state. "They feel after him, if haply they may find him." 2. *The loss of God is the greatest loss.* A man separated from God is like a branch separated from the root, a river from the fountain, a planet from the sun. 3. *Restoration to God is the transcendent good.* He who can say, "The Lord is my Portion," possesseth all things. This restoration the Almighty is effecting now in the world. "He is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."—D. T.

Vers. 9—15.—*A Divine call to a Divine work.* "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words," etc. This paragraph is promising and cheerful; it is at once intended and suited to animate the

builders of the temple and to stimulate them to resolute diligence in their work. It accords with that of Haggai (see Hag. i. 2—6; ii. 15—19) respecting Heaven's displeasure at their apathy in God's work and their eagerness in their own. In the words we have a *Divine call to a Divine work*. This call is urged on two considerations.

I. THE WRETCHEDNESS CONSEQUENT ON THE NEGLECT OF DUTY. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built." The "prophets" here referred to were undoubtedly Haggai and Zechariah (see Ezra v. 1, 2). The words which they addressed to the people were words of stimulation and encouragement to arise and rebuild the temple. The prophet here reminds them, as an inducement to set in earnest to the work, of the wretched condition of the people before the work began. "For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace." That is, "before the days" the building commenced. They were then destitute of three elements essential to the well-being of any people. 1. *Industry*. "There was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast." The people were purposeless, lazy, and in a state of general lethargy and collapse. No great project inspired their interest, engrossed their intention, enlisted and marshalled their powers. The lack of industry is a curse to any people; it is an injury to health, as well as an obstruction to material and social progress. 2. *Peace*. "Neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction." The lack of earnest occupation naturally led to intestine broils and contentions. Nothing is more natural and more common than for people without employment to wrangle and dispute with one another. "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Men who are full of business have no time to quarrel. 3. *Social unity*. "For I set all men every one against his neighbour." In biblical phraseology, the Almighty is frequently represented as doing that which he only permits. It would be unreasonable and even blasphemous to suppose that the God of love and peace exerts himself in any way to inspire his human creatures with hostility towards one another. But for reasons known to himself, and which we are bound to regard as wise and kind, he often allows these feelings to rise and express themselves in malignant recriminations and bloody wars. He originates good, and good only; and the evil which he permits, he overrules for good, and for good only. The general truth here taught is that, so long as duty is neglected by men, certain terrible evils must ensue. Hence the Divine call, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong." Go with courage and energy into the work which is Divinely enjoined.

II. THE IMPROVEMENT WHICH ENSUES ON THE RESUMPTION OF DUTY. "But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts. For the seed shall be prosperous," etc. This means, "But now, as you have resumed the work and rebuilt the temple, I will bless you." There are three blessings here promised. 1. *Temporal prosperity*. "For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew." Material nature is in the hands of God, and he can at any moment make it a curse or a blessing to man. Here he promises to make it a blessing. "Godliness is profitable unto all things," etc. 2. *Social usefulness*. "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel [comprehending the whole of the Jewish people<sup>1</sup>]; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing." The expression, "a curse among the heathen," may mean either that they were "cursed" by the heathen—objects of their denunciation—or that they were a curse to the heathen by the influence of their corrupt example. The latter seems to me the most likely idea. (See another explanation of the phrase in the Exposition.) The whole of the Jewish people, prior to the Captivity—with a few exceptions—were sunk into almost the lowest depths of moral corruption. But now it is promised that on the resumption of the great duty which Heaven had enjoined upon them, they should be a "blessing." So it ever is; the disobedient are a curse

<sup>1</sup> The "house of Israel," or ten tribes, as distinguished from the "house of Judah," shared in the happy fulfilment of the prophecy. It follows that they also returned to Palestine in the very days to which it refers (Heuderson).

to any community; the obedient are evermore a blessing. "No man liveth to himself." We must either bless or curse our race. 3. *Divine favour*. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not: so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not." Where there was Divine displeasure there would be Divine favour.

CONCLUSION. On these two grounds men may always be urged to duty. Duty neglected brings misery on a people; duty resumed and faithfully prosecuted will utterly reverse the experience, turn the distressing into the joyous, the destitution into abundance, the discordant into the harmonious, the pernicious into the beneficent. Listen, then, to the voice of Heaven! "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong," etc.—D. T.

Vers. 16—23.—*A universal revival of genuine religion*. "These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour," etc. The whole of this paragraph may be taken as setting forth a *universal revival of genuine religion*; and, looking at it in this light, we have here two things: the *essential prerequisites*; and the *signal manifestations* of a universal revival of genuine religion.

I. THE ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITES. We discover in these verses four prerequisites or preparatories for a universal revival of genuine religion. 1. *There must be truthfulness in speech*. "These are the things which ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour." Truthful speech is somewhat rare in all social circles, and in all departments of life. Fallacious statements abound in markets, senates, courts, and even families. Men are constantly deceiving one another by words. It is not so *easy* a matter to speak truthfully as one might think. To speak is easy enough; but to speak *truthfully* is often very difficult. Truthful speaking involves two things. (1) *Sincerity*. To speak a true thing insincerely is not to speak truthfully. A man must conscientiously believe that what he speaks is true, before he can be credited with veracity. There is more truthful speaking in the man who is telling a falsehood sincerely than there is in the man who is telling the truth in insincerity. (2) *Accuracy*. A man may speak with sincerity, and yet, from ignorance or mistake, may not speak according to fact; and unless he speaks according to fact, he can scarcely be said to speak truthfully. His speech unintentionally conveys falsehood. Hence, truthful speaking requires a strong sense of right,—and an adequate acquaintance with the subjects of the speech. Considerable effort is herein demanded—effort to discipline the conscience and to enlighten the judgment. But difficult as truth-speaking is, it is incumbent. "Every man should be swift to hear, but *slow to speak*." 2. *There must be rectitude in conduct*. "Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates." In the East the courts of justice were held at the gates of the city; and perhaps the primary reference here is to the pronouncing of judgment on cases that were righteous and tended to peace. But rectitude of life is even more important and urgent than rectitude in judgment. In fact, scarcely can a man be morally qualified to sit as a judge in a court of justice who is not righteous in all his life and conduct; and yet, alas! it is not uncommon, even here in England, to have men of the lowest morality enthroned on the bench of justice. The great law of social life is, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." 3. *There must be benevolence in feeling*. "Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour." We must not only keep our hands from evil, but we must watch over our hearts that they imagine not any evil against our neighbour. Mischief must be crushed in the embryo. "Charity thinketh no evil," and this charity must be cultivated. 4. *There must be abhorrence of falsehood*. "Love no false oath." If the oath is false, whether sworn by others or yourself, do not bind yourself to it, recoil from it with horror and abomination. Don't espouse a falsehood because it is sworn to; nay, repudiate it the more resolutely and indignantly. A strong reason is here assigned for a practical respect to all these injunctions; it is this—God abhors the opposites. "For all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord" (see Prov. vi. 19). Whatever God hates, we should hate.

II. THE SIGNAL MANIFESTATIONS. It is suggested that where these prerequisites are found, *i.e.* where a revival takes place, three things are manifest. 1. *An increased*

*pleasure in religious ordinances.* "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts." "The fast of the fourth month was on account of the taking of Jerusalem (Jer. xxxix. 2; lii. 5—7); that of the tenth was in commemoration of the commencement of the siege (Jer. lii. 4). The Jews are distinctly informed that these fasts should be turned into festivals of joy" (Henderson). The idea is, perhaps, that these fast-days are no longer seasons of mourning and penitential confession, but seasons of rejoicing. The first sign of a true revival of religion, in an individual or a community, is a new and happy interest in the ordinances of religion. 2. *A deep practical concern for the spiritual interests of the race.* "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also." There will be a mutual excitation amongst the people to seek the one true and living God. Not only shall the inhabitants of one house go to another house, but the inhabitants of one city shall go to another city and say, "Let us go *speedily* to pray before the Lord." "*Speedily*;" there is no time to be lost; religion is for all, and for all an urgent duty. 3. *A universal desire to be identified with the people of God.* "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men [a definite number for an indefinite multitude, indicating many rather than a few] shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew." The Jew (the representative of the people of God), to him men shall go, they shall lay hold of the "skirt" of his garment—an expression conveying the idea either of anxious entreaty or conscious inferiority. Dr. Henderson says, in relation to this, "The prophecy is generally regarded as having respect to something yet future, and is often interpreted of the instrumentality of the Jews when converted in effecting the conversion of the world. I can find no such reference in the passage. 'Jerusalem' cannot be understood otherwise than literally, just as the term 'Jew' is to be so understood; but according to our Lord's doctrine respecting the new dispensation, that city is no longer the place where men are exclusively to worship the Father (John iv. 21—23). Incense and a pure offering are now presented to his Name in every place where his people assemble in the name of Jesus and with a view to his glory (Mal. i. 10, 11). It was otherwise before the advent of Christ. Jerusalem was the place which Jehovah had chosen to put his Name there; and thither all his true worshippers were expected to come to the great festivals, in whatever country they might reside. Thus the treasurer of Candace went all the way from Abyssinia (Acts viii. 27), and thus numbers from all parts of the Roman empire assembled in that city at the first Pentecost after our Saviour's resurrection. As the Hellenistic Jews and the Gentile proselytes travelled along in companies, they could not but excite the curiosity of the pagans through whose countries and cities they passed; and, celebrated as the metropolis of Judæa had become for the favours conferred upon it by some of the greatest monarchs of the times immediately gone by, and for the prosperity and warlike prowess of the Jewish people, it was impossible that it should not attract the attention of the surrounding nations to the character and claims of the God who was there adored, and who accorded such blessings to his worshippers. Men, for ages, had to go to the Jew for the true religion; the Gentiles in the apostolic times received it from the Jew; Christ and his apostles were Jews; but in these times the Jews have to come to the Gentiles for the true religion. Still, inasmuch as the Bible is a book of the Jews, Jewish histories, poetries, moralities, etc., and inasmuch as the grand Hero of the book was a Jew, it will, perhaps, ever be true that all nations shall take hold of the Jew in order to 'seek the Lord' with success."

**CONCLUSION.** When will this universal revival of religion take place? The signs are scarcely visible anywhere. We can only hasten it by attending to the prerequisites—truthfulness in speech, rectitude in conduct, benevolence in feeling, and abhorrence of falsehood.—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1.—ch. xiv. 21.—Part III. THE FUTURE OF THE POWERS OF THE WORLD AND OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Ver. 1.—ch. xi. 17.—A. THE FIRST BURDEN.

VERS. 1—8.—§ 1. *To prepare the land for Israel, and to prove God's care for his people, the neighbouring heathen shall be chastised, while Israel shall dwell in safety and independence.*

Ver. 1.—The burden (see note on Nah. i. 1). (On the circumstances connected with this prophecy, see Introduction, § I.) Destructive critics attribute ch. ix.—xi. to an anonymous prophet, whose utterances have been by mistake appended to the genuine work of Zechariah. We have given reasons for disputing this conclusion in the Introduction, § II. In (*upon*) the land of Hadrach. This expression is found nowhere else, and has occasioned great trouble to the commentators. But Assyrian inscriptions have cleared away the difficulty, and shown that it was the name of a city and district near Damascus, called in the monuments *Hatarakha* or *Hatarika* (see Schrader, 'Keilinschr. und das Alt. Test.', p. 453). Expeditions against this place are mentioned as occurring in various years, e.g. B.C. 772, 765, 755 (see G. Smith, 'Assyrian Canon,' pp. 46, etc., 63; 'Records of the Past,' v. 46; Schrader, pp. 482, 484, etc., 2nd edit.). Damascus shall be the rest thereof. The "burden" shall light upon Damascus in wrath, and settle there (comp. Ezek. v. 13). This district should be the first to suffer. The LXX. has, *Kal Damascusou theia autou*, "In the land of Sedrach and Damascus is his sacrifice." When the eyes of man, etc.; literally, *for to Jehovah (is, or will be) the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel*. This gives the reason why Hadrach and Damascus are thus united. Because Jehovah has his eye on men and on Israel. Septuagint, "because the Lord looketh upon men" (comp. ch. iv. 10; and ver. 8 below). We may then translate, "For to Jehovah is an eye over man," etc. He sees their evil-doings and their oppression of Israel, and therefore the judgment falls upon them (comp. Jer. xxxii. 19). The Authorized Version intimates a conversion of the Gentiles, of which, however, the context says nothing; and there is no sense in saying that judgment shall fall upon a particular nation when, or because, the eyes of all men look to the Lord. Wright explains thus: When the wrath of God falls on Damascus, the eyes of the

heathen, as well as those of Israel, will look to the Lord, and they will marvel at the judgment and the close fulfilment of the prediction. This would be a very sound and probable exposition of the passage if the expression, "the eye of man being towards Jehovah," can mean that man marvels at his doings. All the tribes of Israel. God watches over them to guard them from evil (Deut. xi. 12; Ezra v. 5; Ps. xxxiii. 18).

Ver. 2.—And Hamath also shall border thereby; Revised Version, *and Hamath also which bordereth thereon*. Hamath, which is near unto Damascus, shall share in the Divine judgment. The Authorized Version probably means that Hamath shall be the companion of Damascus in punishment. (For Hamath, see note on Amos vi. 2.) These Syrian towns, as well as those below in Phœnicia and Philistia, shall be visited, because they were all once included in the territory promised to Israel (see Gen. xv. 18; Exod. xxiii. 31; Numb. xxxiv. 2—12; Deut. xi. 24; and comp. 2 Sam. viii. 6, etc.; 1 Kings iv. 21; viii. 65; 2 Kings xiv. 25). The judgment was inflicted by Alexander the Great after the battle of Issus, B.C. 333, when Damascus was betrayed into his hands and plundered of all its enormous treasures. Tyrus and Zidon. Tyre was taken after a siege of seven months, its walls were demolished, its houses burnt, ten thousand of its defenders were massacred, the women and children sold as slaves; and it never rose to greatness again. Zidon, originally the chief city of the country, had long been eclipsed by its daughter, Tyre; it submitted to Alexander without a struggle. Though it be very wise; or, *because she is very wise*. The pronoun refers to Tyre, the mention of Zidon being, as it were, parenthetical. In spite of, or because of, its boasted wisdom, Tyre should suffer heavy punishment. The wisdom of Tyre is spoken of in Ezek. xxviii. 3, 4. Wright, as the LXX., makes the clause refer to both cities. "though they be very wise." Vulgate, *Assumpserunt quippe sibi sapientiam valde*.

Ver. 3.—Tyrus (*Zor*) did build herself a strong hold (*mazor*). Wright endeavours to imitate the periphrasis, "Tyre built for herself a tower." It was in her strong fortifications and her amassing of riches that Tyre showed her worldly wisdom. The city was built partly on the mainland, and partly on an island nearly half a mile distant, which rose abruptly out of the water in rocky precipices, and was surrounded with walls a hundred and fifty feet high. The insular portion of the town was that which so long mocked the Macedonian's

utmost efforts, which were only successful when he had united the island to the mainland by erecting an enormous mole between them. This causeway has now become an isthmus of some half-mile in width, owing to accumulations of sand and debris. As the dust (comp. 2 Chron. ix. 27; Job xxvii. 16).

Ver. 4.—**Will cast her out; will take possession of her;** i.e. will conquer her by the hands of her enemies, as Josh. viii. 7; xvii. 12. Septuagint, *κληρονομήσει*, "will inherit;" Vulgate, *possidebit*; Ewald and Hitzig render, "will impoverish her." **Will smite her power in the sea.** "Power" here includes all that made Tyre proud and confident—her riches, her fleets, her trade, her fortifications. God declares that she shall be smitten there as she stood in the midst of the sea, which formed her bulwark, and which should soon dash over her ruins. The LXX. translates, "shall smite into the sea." Zechariah seems here to have a reminiscence of Ezek. xxvi. 32, "What city is like Tyrrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?" (comp. Ezek. xxvi. 4). **With fire** (comp. Amos i. 10). The city was burned by Alexander (see note on ver. 2. The siege is narrated by Arrian, ii. 15—24; Quint. Curt., iv. 2, etc.; Diod. Sic., xvii. 46, etc.).

Ver. 5.—**Ashkelon shall see it.** The ruin of so mighty a city as Tyre naturally filled neighbouring people with dismay. The prophet directs his attention to Philistia, and threatens its chief cities. The cities are enumerated in the same order as in Jer. xxv. 20. Gath is omitted, as in Amos i. 6—8 and Zeph. ii. 4. It seems never to have recovered its destruction by Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 6). (For Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron, see note on Amos i. 6.) **Her expectation shall be ashamed.** The hope of aid from Tyre shall not be fulfilled. After the fall of Tyre, Alexander continued his march southwards towards Egypt, subduing the cities on his way. The siege of Gaza delayed him some months; and when it was taken, it shared the treatment of Tyre. Its governor, one Batis, a eunuch, was tied alive to the conqueror's chariot, and dragged round the walls, in cruel imitation of the fate of Hector. **The king shall perish from Gaza.** No particular king is meant; but the prediction says that henceforward no king should reign in Gaza. In contrast with the Eastern policy of allowing conquered nations to retain their own rulers as tributary sovereigns, Alexander always deposed or slew reigning monarchs, and consolidated his empire by replacing them with governors of his own. The various chastisements are meted out by the prophet among the various cities, though they equally apply to all.

Ver. 6.—**A bastard.** The word (*mamzer*)

occurs in Deut. xxiii. 2 (3, Hebrew), where it may possibly mean "a stranger." It is generally considered to signify one whose birth has a blemish in it—one born of incest or adultery. In Deuteronomy the LXX. renders, *ἐκ πόρνῆς*, "one of harlot-birth;" here, *ἀλλογενῆς*, "foreigner." The Vulgate has *separator*, which is explained as meaning either the Lord, who as Judge divides the just from the unjust, or the Conqueror, who divides the spoil and assigns to captives their fate. Here it doubtless signifies "a bastard race" (as the Revised Version margin translates); a rabble of aliens shall inhabit Ashdod, which shall lose its own native population. The Targum explains it differently, considering that by the expression is meant that Ashdod shall be inhabited by Israelites, who are deemed "strangers" by the Philistines. Ashdod (see note on Amos i. 8). **The pride.** All in which they prided themselves. This sums up the prophecy against the several Philistine cities. Their very nationality shall be lost.

Ver. 7.—**Personifying Philistia,** the prophet declares that she shall cease to practise idolatry, and shall be incorporated in Israel. **I will take away his blood out of his mouth.** This refers to the practice of drinking the blood of sacrifices as an act of worship, or of eating the victims with the blood—a practice strictly forbidden to the Israelites (see Lev. iii. 17; vii. 26; xvii. 10, 12; and comp. Gen. ix. 4). **Abominations.** Sacrifices offered to idols, and afterwards eaten. The two clauses intimate the entire abolition of idolatry. Many see in this prediction a reference to the doings of the Maccabees; how, e.g., Judas destroyed the altars and idols in Azotus (1 Macc. v. 68); Jonathan again took that city, and burned it and the neighbouring towns, and, besieging Ashkelon, was received with great honour by the inhabitants, and confirmed in the possession of this place and Ekron (1 Macc. x. 84, etc.); and Simon stormed Gaza (? Gazara, a place near Ashdod), cleansed the houses of idols, "put all uncleanness out of it, and placed such men there as would keep the Law" (1 Macc. xiii. 47, 48). But though such events partially fulfil the prophecy, the seer looks forward to a greater issue, and in these comparatively petty details beholds the working of the great principle that all nations shall be subdued to the faith. **He that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God; better, he too shall be left (or, a remnant) for our God.** The Philistine shall become a choice and elect remnant unto the God of the Israelites, and no longer regarded as alien and impure, **As a governor;** Septuagint, *χίλαρχος*, "head over a thousand," which the word *athluph*



means (ch. xii. 5, 6). It is used of the chiefs of Edom in Gen. xxxvi. 15, 16, etc., where the Authorized Version gives "dukes." The tribes of Israel were divided into thousands, consisting of families, each of which was held together by closer affinities than the mere tribal bond (see note on Micah v. 2). The meaning is that the Philistine shall be admitted into the commonwealth of Israel as one of her chiefs. **Ekron as a Jebusite.** "Ekron" is equivalent to "the Ekronite," who again stands in the place of all the Philistines. The Jebusites were the ancient possessors of Zion, who held their position till the days of David, and, when at last conquered by him (2 Sam. v. 6, etc.), were incorporated into his nation, and, as we may infer from Araunah's conduct, adopted his religion (2 Sam. xxiv. 22; 1 Chron. xxi. 23). God promises here that the Philistines, like the Jebusites, shall be absorbed into the Jewish Church. Mr. Drake ('Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*) curiously renders, "He shall be as Eleph (Josh. xviii. 28) in Judah, and Ekron as Jebusi," explaining that the cities of Philistia were to be incorporated into Judæa. The conquests of Alexander conducted to the conversion of the heathen and their reception into the Church of God; and the general principle enunciated by all the prophets was thus abundantly confirmed. But it is not easy to discover the exact historical fulfilment of the latter part of this prophecy, concerning the merging of the Philistines in the Jewish nation. Josephus ('Ant.,' xiii. 15. 4) tells us that, about B.C. 100, the Jews held most of their cities, destroying some whose inhabitants refused to become proselytes. In the time of our Lord, by reason of intermarriage and social intercourse, the Philistines had ceased to be regarded as a separate nation; and a little later Philistia, far from being considered as alien and hostile, under the form Palestine, gave its name to the whole country. Christianity, too, made rapid progress in this district, so that the psalmist's words received herein a fulfilment, "Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Cush; this one was born there" (Ps. lxxxvii. 4).

Ver. 8.—While the heathen world suffers the judgment of God, he protects his own people. I will encamp about (*for the protection of*) my house. God's house, or family, is the kingdom and Church of Israel, as Hos. viii. 1. Septuagint, ἵπποσθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ μου ἀνίστημι, "I will erect a fortification for my house." Because of the army. It may also be translated "against," or "from;" i.e. to defend it from the hostile army. Others, pointing differently, render, "as a garrison," or "rampart." Because of (*against*) him that passeth by, etc. Against

all hostile attacks. The phrase, "him that passeth by and him that returneth," is used of an enemy making incursions, or attacking at various points (see note on ch. vii. 14). The Vulgate gives the whole clause thus: *Circumdabo domum meam ex his, qui militant mihi euntes et revertentes*, "I will defend my house with a guard chosen from those who serve me and do my will," i.e. angels. But this seems far from the signification of the Hebrew. Pusey restricts the meaning to the proceedings of Alexander, who passed by Judæa on his way to Egypt, and returned by the same route, without doing any injury to Jerusalem. Here comes in the Talmudic story related by Josephus ('Ant.,' xi. 8). The Jews "repaid the protection of Persia with a devoted loyalty, which prompted them to refuse the demand of submission made by Alexander during the siege of Tyre. He marched to chastise them after the fall of Gaza, and the beautiful city had already risen before his view on the hill of Zion, when he found the high priest Jaddua waiting his approach at the watch-station of Sapha, clad in his robes of gold and purple, and followed by a train of priests and citizens in pure white. The conqueror bowed in reverence to the Holy Name upon the high priest's frontlet; and, being asked by Parmenio the reason of his conduct, said that in a dream at Dium, he had seen the God of Jaddua, who encouraged him to pass over into Asia, and promised him success. Then entering Jerusalem, he offered sacrifice in the temple, heard the prophecy of Daniel about himself, and granted certain privileges to all the Jews throughout his empire. The desire to honour a shrine so celebrated as the Jewish temple is quite in accordance with the conduct of Alexander at Ilium and Ephesus, Gordium and Tyre. The privileges he is said to have conferred upon the Jews were enjoyed under his successors, and some minor matters have been adduced in confirmation of the story. On the other hand, the classical writers are entirely silent on the subject, and the details of Josephus involve grave historical inconsistencies. It seems not an unreasonable conjecture that the story is an embellishment of some incident that occurred when the high priest came to Gaza to tender the submission of the Jews. But we must not dismiss it without a remark on the vast influence which the conquests of Alexander had in bringing the Jews into closer relations with the rest of Asia, and so preparing them to fulfil their ultimate destiny as Christians" (P. Smith, 'History of the World,' i. 60, etc.). Oppressor. The word is used for "taskmaster" in Exod. iii. 7. Septuagint, ἐξελαύνω, "one who drives away;" Vulgate, exactor. This latter rendering would

imply that Israel would no longer have to pay tribute to foreign nations, but should henceforward be independent. For now have I seen with mine eyes. It is as though, during Israel's calamities, God had not looked upon her; but now he notices her condition, and interposes for her succour (comp. Exod. ii. 25; iii. 7, 9; Acts vii. 34). This is done by sending the personage mentioned in the following section.

Vers. 9, 10.—§ 2. *Then shall the righteous King come to Zion in lowly fashion, and inaugurate a kingdom of peace.*

Ver. 9.—The prophet invites Jerusalem to rejoice at the coming of the promised salvation in the Person of her King; no mighty earthly potentate and conqueror, like Alexander the Great, but one of different fashion (comp. Zeph. iii. 14). *Thy King cometh unto thee.* St. Matthew (xxi. 5) and St. John (xii. 15) see a fulfilment of this prophecy in Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the first day of the week in which he was crucified. All attempts to disprove the Messianic import of this passage have been unavailing. Even critics who refer this part of Zechariah (ch. ix.—xi.) to an unknown author writing in the time of Hezekiah, allow that it is replete with Messianic ideas, and can be applied to no hero of Jewish story or event of Jewish history. There is no other "King" of Israel to whom it can refer. Our blessed Lord himself, by his abnormal actions on Palm Sunday, plainly assumed the part of the predicted King, and meant the people to recognize in him the promised Messiah (see the full discussion of the subject in Dr. Pusey's notes, pp. 556, etc.). *Thy King.* A king of thine own race, no stranger, but one predestined for thee. He who was foretold by all the prophets, who was to occupy the throne of David, and reign for ever (Ps. ii. 6; xlv. 1, 6, 7; Isa. xxxiii. 1). *Unto thee.* For thy good, to bless thee (Isa. ix. 6). *Just.* Righteous in character and in practice, ruling in equity (Ps. lxxii. 1—4, 7; Isa. xi. 2—4). *Having salvation;* Septuagint, *σώζων*, "saving." Vulgate, *salvator*; so the Syriac and Chaldee. The genius of the language requires the participle to be taken passively, as it is in two other passages where it occurs (Deut. xxxiii. 29; Ps. xxxiii. 16). The context has seemed to some to demand that it be understood in an active sense, thus contrasting him who came to save with the haughty Grecian conqueror, whose progress was marked by bloodshed. But the usual meaning of the word affords a satisfactory sense. The King who comes is "saved," endowed with salvation, either as being protected and

upheld by God (Ps. xviii. 50; ex. 1, 2, 5; Isa. xlii. 1; xlix. 8), or as being victorious and so able to aid his people. In this latter view, the active sense is included in the passive. His own deliverance is a sure sign of the deliverance of his people. *Lowly;* Septuagint, *πραῦς*, "meek;" Vulgate, *pauper*—meek and lowly, as Christ himself says (Matt. xi. 29), far removed from warlike pomp and worldly greatness. The word is also rendered "afflicted," and would then be in accordance with the description in Isa. lii. 13—liii. 5; Ps. xxii. 6. *Riding upon an ass.* In illustration of his poor or afflicted estate; it is this, and not merely the peacefulness of his reign, that is meant by this symbolical action, as we see by the following clause, where the youthfulness of the animal is the point enforced. And (*even, and that*) *upon a colt the foal of an ass*; such as she-asses bear, and one not trained; as the evangelist says, "whereon never man sat." Christ sat upon the foal. In old times judges and men of distinction rode upon asses (Gen. xxii. 3; Judg. v. 10; x. 4); but from Solomon's days the horse had been used, not only in war, but on all state occasions (Jer. xvii. 25); and the number of horses brought back on the return from Babylon is specially mentioned (Ezra ii. 66). So to predicate of a King that he would come to his capital riding, not on a war-horse, but on a young, unbroken ass, showed at once that he himself was not to be considered a victorious general or a worldly potentate, and that his kingdom was not to be won or maintained by carnal arms. This is signified more fully in the following verse, which describes the character and extent of Messiah's kingdom.

Ver. 10.—*I will out off the chariot.* All the apparatus of war will be removed, Messiah's rule being not established by physical force, or maintained by military defences. The Jews seem to have used war-chariots from the time of Solomon, who, we are told, had fourteen hundred of them (1 Kings x. 26). Ephraim . . . Jerusalem. The former term denotes the kingdom of the ten tribes; the latter, that of Judah; the two together comprising the whole Israelite nation. From the use of these terms here it cannot be concluded that the author wrote at a time when the two kingdoms existed side by side. In the first place, the description of the whole people is given poetically, and must not be taken to have more significance than is intended; and secondly, in ch. viii. 13, which is confessedly post-exilic, the "house of Judah," and the "house of Israel" are distinguished. Dr. Cheyne notes, too, that in Ezekiel (xxxvii. 15—28), who prophesied during the Captivity, the ten tribes are distinguished by the name of

Ephraim, and pertinently asks why such term may not be also used by one who wrote after the Captivity. The battle bow stands for all weapons of war. That Messiah's kingdom should be peaceful and peace-bringing, see the prophecies (Ps. lxxii. 7; Isa. ii. 4; ix. 4—7; comp. Micah v. 10, 11). **He shall speak peace unto the heathen.** He will extend this peace to all the world, teaching the heathen to receive his spiritual rule, to compose their differences, to lay aside their arms, and live as one united family (comp. Eph. ii. 17). **From sea even to sea.** Geographically, the phrase means from the Dead Sea on the east to the Mediterranean on the west, as in Exod. xxiii. 31 and Ps. lxxii. 8, from whence our passage is derived. Poetically, an Eastern sea, perhaps, is supposed to bound that side of the earth. **From the river even to the ends of the earth.** From the Euphrates unto the utmost limits of the world (see Amos viii. 12; Micah vii. 12). Both expressions obtain an unlimited significance, and show the universal extent of Messiah's kingdom; for in him, according to the promise made to Abraham, all the families of the earth should be blessed.

Vers. 11—17.—§ 3. *All Israel, united into one people, shall wage successful war against adversaries, and attain to high glory, and increase largely in numbers.*

Ver. 11.—**As for thee also.** The prophet addresses the daughter of Zion, the covenant people (comp. vers. 10, 13). "Also" is inserted to intimate that this deliverance is given in addition to the blessings promised in the two preceding verses. All who are living far from their native Zion are invited to come to her and partake of her good things. **By (because of) the blood of thy covenant.** The covenant is that made at Sinai, sealed and ratified by blood (Exod. xxiv. 4—8), which still held good, and was the pledge to the nation of deliverance and help. This was a token of that everlasting covenant sealed with the blood of Christ, by which God's people are delivered from the bondage of sin (comp. Matt. xxvi. 28; Heb. ix. 15; x. 14—23; xiii. 20). **I have sent forth; I send forth—the prophetic perfect.** The Greek and Latin Versions render, "thou sentest forth," not so correctly. **Thy prisoners.** Those members of the nation who were still oppressed or captives in foreign lands, as Babylon and Egypt (comp. Obad. 20; Joel iii. 6, etc.; Amos i. 6, 9, etc.). **The pit wherein is no water.** "Pit," or cistern, is a common name for a prison (Gen. xl. 15; Exod. xii. 29; Jer. xxxvii. 16). The absence of water may be notified either to imply that the tortures of thirst were

added to the horror of the situation, or to intimate that the prisoners were not hopelessly drowned therein. We Christians see in this paragraph a figure of the redemption of a lost world by the blood of Christ.

Ver. 12.—The prophet calls on the prisoners to avail themselves of the offered deliverance. **Turn ye to the strong hold.** Return ye to Zion, the city defended by God (ch. ii. 5), and able to afford you a safe asylum. (For the spiritual meaning, see Luke iv. 18—21.) **Ye prisoners of hope.** Captives who have good hope of deliverance because they are still in covenant with God. Septuagint, *δέσμοι τῆς συναγωγῆς*, "prisoners of the synagogue." Pusey remarks that "hope" here and nowhere else has the article, and that what is meant is "the Hope of Israel," that of which St. Paul spoke (Acts xxvi. 6, 7 and xxviii. 20). **Even to-day.** In spite of all contrary appearances. Septuagint, *ἀντὶ μιᾶς ἡμέρας παροικεσίας σου*, "for one day of thy sojourning." Double. A double measure of blessing in compensation for past suffering (Isa. xl. 2; lxi. 7). There ought to be a full stop at the end of this verse, as in the Revised Version.

Ver. 13.—The Lord proceeds to explain the promised blessings in detail. First is signified the victorious resistance of the Maccabees against the Seleucids—a figure of Messiah's victory over all the enemies of God. **When (for) I have bent Judah for me.** The verbs are in the prophetic perfect, and may be rendered future. By a grand figure God is represented as a warrior armed for battle, who uses his people for the weapons of his warfare. The Hebrews speak of "treading" the bow, where we say "bend," because they used the foot in bending it. In the present case Judah is God's bow. **Filled the bow with Ephraim.** Ephraim is the arrow (comp. Ps. cxxvii. 4, 5). Judah and Ephraim, the united people, are God's instruments, and fight against the world-power in his strength. **And raised up; better, and I will stir up;** Septuagint, *ἐγείρω*: Vulgate, *suscitabo*. Greece; *Javan*. Not a vague term for the far west, whither some prisoners had been carried, but to be taken strictly as the appellation of Greece. Nothing but inspiration could have enabled Zechariah and Daniel to foresee the rise of the Macedonian dynasty, and the struggle between the Jews and the Syro-Grecian power in Maccabean times, which is here plainly announced. The earlier the date assigned to this part of Zechariah's prophecy, the more incredible is it that any mere human sagacity or prescience should have enabled a man to foretell these events, or to see in Greece a power arrayed in conflict with the people of God. **And made thee; rather, and I will make**

thee. God will make his people into a hero's sword to execute vengeance on the enemy.

Ver. 14.—**The Lord shall be seen over them.** To encourage the chosen people in the contest, the Lord shall make his presence manifest as their Leader. **His arrow.** God's arrows are the judgments which he inflicts upon his enemies, which come forth suddenly as the lightning flash, and cannot be avoided (Ps. xviii. 14; Hab. iii. 11). **Shall blow the trumpet.** As the signal of battle and calamity (Numb. x. 9; Judg. vii. 19, 20; Ezek. vii. 14; Amos iii. 6; Zeph. i. 16). **Whirlwinds of the south.** He shall come upon the enemy and sweep them away with irresistible force. Storms from the south were the most violent, coming from the Arabian desert (Job xxxvii. 9; Isa. xxi. 1; Hos. xiii. 15). Septuagint, *Πορεύσεται ἐν σάλλῳ ἀπειλῆς αὐτοῦ*, "He shall go in the surge of his menace."

Ver. 15.—**Shall defend them; ὑπερασπίει αὐτούς, "shall put his shield over them"** (Septuagint). There are numerous examples, in the Books of Maccabees, of God's special interposition in his people's favour, and thus far and in part fulfilling this prophecy (see 1 Macc. iii. 16—24; iv. 6—16; vii. 40—50; 2 Macc. ii. 21, 22; iii. 24, etc.; v. 2—4; xi. 8; xii. 11, 15, 22, 28, 37; xv. 7, etc.). **They shall devour.** The prophet seems to have had in view Numb. xxiii. 24, where Israel is compared to a lion, eating of the prey and drinking the blood of the slain. So here he says they shall "devour," i.e. the flesh of their enemies (comp. Micah v. 8). **Subdue with sling-stones.** So the Vulgate, and virtually the Septuagint, taking the case of the noun as instrumental; but it is best to take it as accusative of the object, as in the margin of the Authorized Version, "They shall tread down the stones of the sling." The "sling-stones" are the enemies, as in the next verse "the stones of a crown" are the Jews; and the sentence means that the Jews shall tread their enemies underfoot like spent sling-stones, which are of no account. Or it may signify simply and without metaphor that they shall despise the enemies' missiles, which shall fall harmless among them (Job xli. 28, 29). **They shall drink the blood of the slain, like lions. Make a noise.** As men exhilarated with wine. Vulgate, *Bibentes inebriabuntur quasi a vino* (Isa. xlix. 26; Ezek. xxxix. 17—19). **Shall be filled like bowls.** They shall be filled with blood like the sacrificial vessels in which the blood of victims was received (ch. xiv. 20). **The corners of the altar.** The blood was also sprinkled on the corners or sides of the altar (Lev. i. 5, 11; iii. 2). There may be included the notion that the war against God's

enemies was a sacred war, and accepted by him as a sacrifice. In the Maccabean struggle the bloodshed was often very considerable (see 1 Macc. vii. 32, 46; xi. 47; 2 Macc. viii. 30; x. 17, 23, 31, etc.).

Ver. 16.—**Shall save them.** He shall give them a positive blessing beyond mere deliverance from enemies. Keil, "Shall endow them with salvation." **As the flock of his people; so the Vulgate; literally, as a flock, his people; Septuagint, ὡς πρόβατα λαὸν αὐτοῦ.** He will tend his people as a shepherd tends his flock (Ps. lxxvii. 20; c. 3; Jer. xxiii. 1; Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 8, etc.). So Christ calls himself the "good Shepherd," and his followers "little flock" (John x. 11; Luke xii. 32). **Stones of a crown.** The valuable gems set in crowns and diadems, or in the high priest's official dress. The people shall be in God's sight as precious as these in the eyes of men, and shall be highly exalted. The Septuagint and Vulgate render, "sacred stones;" and Knabenbauer thinks that by the term is meant the temple of God, which shall arise or shine in the Holy Land, as a reward for its faithful defence. But the sense given above is satisfactory and simpler. **Lifted up as an ensign upon his land; better, as the Revised Version margin, glittering upon his land.** "His" may refer to Jehovah, or Israel; probably the latter is meant. The "land" is the crown or diadem in which the precious stones, the redeemed people, are set. They shall be raised to the highest possible glory and honour. If the words be taken in the sense of "raised on high over his land," they must be considered to indicate that the crown which contained the gems shall be raised aloft in victorious triumph.

Ver. 17.—**His goodness.** The goodness, i.e. the prosperity, of Israel or the land. Revised Version margin, "their prosperity." If the affix "his" is referred to Jehovah, the nouns "goodness" and "beauty" must be taken, not as his attributes, but as gifts bestowed by him, the prosperity and beauty which he confers. But it is more suitable to the context to consider the reference to be to the people, who in the next clause are divided into young men and maidens, and to take the "goodness," or goodliness, as appertaining more especially to the former, and the "beauty" to the latter. **His beauty** (comp. Ezek. xvi. 14). (For the Messianic interpretation, see Ps. xlv. 2; Isa. xxxiii. 17.) **Corn . . . new wine.** This is an expression often found to denote great abundance and prosperity. The two are distributed poetically between the youths and maidens (Deut. xxxiii. 28; Ps. lxxii. 16; Jer. xxxi. 12, 13; Joel ii. 18, 19). **Make . . . cheerful; literally, make sprout.** It probably refers to the increase of population occurring in times

of plenty. This outward prosperity is a symbol of God's favour and the uprightness of the people. In these things, too, we may

see adumbrated the spiritual blessings of the gospel, which are, as corn and wine, to strengthen and refresh the soul.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*A visitation of judgment.* "The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach," etc. Whatever view is taken of the exact time of the fulfilment of the glorious promises with which the last chapter concludes, it was necessarily a time still future when those promises were uttered. Other things of a very different nature were first to occur. On some of these, accordingly, as constituting a kind of "burden" (ver. 1) on some of the lands and people contiguous to Israel, the tongue of the prophet, in the verses before us, next speaks—something, probably, after the fashion of Luke xix. 11; 2 Thess. ii. 3. Most commentators believe that what he thus predicts was fulfilled in connection with the Syrian conquests of Alexander the Great. Certainly we shall find this predicted "visitation of judgment" to correspond very strikingly with the history of those conquests in three principal ways, viz. in regard (1) to the *circumstances* it came in; (2) to the *path* it followed; and (3) to the *marks* it left.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IT CAME IN. It was a time when the "eyes of man," and especially (so Pusey, *in loc.*) "of all the tribes of Israel," should be "toward the Lord." This seems to describe, first and generally, a condition of expectation and wonder—perhaps also of fear (see Luke xxi. 26). Secondly, and more particularly, and it may be of the "tribes of Israel" especially, a spirit of trust and reverence (see Ps. v. 3; 2 Chron. xx. 12; Ps. cxlv. 15; cxxiii. 2; Isa. xvii. 7, 8). If so, we may find that in the history supposed to be referred to which corresponds in both respects very exactly. How certainly great, for example, was the expectation and wondering fear of the inhabitants of the East at large, after the astounding victory of Alexander at Issus, when he first sent his general and turned his attention to Syria and Damascus! How exceedingly natural, also, that the marvellous speed and completeness of his triumph should remind "the tribes of Israel" of Dan. viii. 1—8, 20, 21, and so fix their eyes on their own Jehovah in adoration and trust! This almost certain, indeed, if we believe what Josephus tells us of the prophecies of Daniel being afterwards shown to Alexander.

II. THE PATH WHICH THIS VISITATION FOLLOWED. Three principal stages are mentioned in the prophecy. 1. *Where the "visitation" began*; viz. (see ver. 1) in the land of Damascus and Hadrach, a principal city, as only lately known (see Pusey), of Syria, towards the north-east. 2. *Where it went next*; viz. to Tyrus and Zidon (vers. 2—4), cities of Phœnicia, travelling west. 3. *Where it went last*; viz. to the cities of the Philistines (vers. 5, 6), travelling south. Three corresponding stages are also traceable in the history referred to. So Pusey writes ('Daniel the Prophet,' pp. 277, 278), "The selection of the places and of the whole line of country corresponds very exactly to the march of Alexander after the battle of Issus, when the capture of Damascus, which Darius had chosen as the strong depository of his wealth, etc., opened Cœle-Syria; Zidon surrendered; Tyre was taken; Gaza resisted, was taken, and, it is said, plucked up." Also Eichhorn, as there quoted, "All the chief places, which Alexander, after the battle of Issus, either took possession of or conquered, are named one by one—the land of Hadrach, Damascus and Hamath, Tyre and Zidon, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod."

III. THE MARKS IT LEFT. Here, again, in the prediction, the description is threefold. In the country of Hadrach and Damascus and their neighbouring city Hamath ("Hamath, which bordereth thereby," so some), the great mark was the abiding character of the visitation, or "burden." There judgment was to come first, and there to remain. In the case of Tyrus (Zidon being only mentioned parenthetically), the result, notwithstanding all her wisdom (Ezek. xxviii. 2, 3), strength, wealth, and power, would be her total overthrow and destruction by fire. In the cities of Philistia the results would be fear, sorrow, disappointment; in one case, the loss of the ruler (ver. 5); in another (ver. 5), the loss of inhabitants; in all, the abasement of "pride." More briefly still—"subjugated," "ruined," "humbled"—so would this visitation,

according to this *prediction*, leave these three lands. According to the *history*, we read the same. "The *Syrians*, not as yet tamed by the losses of war, despised the new empire; but, swiftly *subdued*, they did obediently what they were commanded" (Q. Curtius, quoted by Pusey). Of Tyre we read, in the pages of history, as to her "strong hold" and her "power on the sea," and wealth, that the inhabitants "determined to resist Alexander, trusting in the strength of the island, and the stores laid up," as also that they "mocked at the king, as though he thought to prevail against Neptune." As to her "wisdom," we read of "unwearied inventiveness of defence," etc. As to the result, that "Alexander, having slain all save those who fled to the temples, ordered the houses to be set on fire." Of Gaza, which had had kings for fifteen hundred years, that Betis, its "king," after a two months' siege, was dragged to death at the chariot-wheels of his conqueror (see further Pusey and Wardlaw, *in loc.*).

This passage, thus interpreted, may seem to illustrate, in conclusion: 1. *The imperfection of man's knowledge*. This city, Hadrach, which turns out to have been most conspicuous and important for many generations, afterwards for many generations is so forgotten that its very name is a riddle. How much beside, therefore, has doubtless been so buried by time that all traces of it are gone! 2. *The perfection of God's knowledge*. He knows even the future infinitely better than we do the past. Doubtless, on this account, there are some touches in this prediction which we cannot appreciate, but which may, however, have been of peculiar interest to devout Jews at this time.

Vers. 7, 8.—*A visitation of mercy*. "And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth," etc. The key to this passage seems to be in its very last words (comp. Exod. iii. 7 and end of ver. 6). In the preceding verses we saw how God "visited" the nations bordering on Israel with a "visitation of judgment." Here we seem to read how he visits his own people with a "visitation of mercy." He does so, apparently, in two principal ways, viz. (1) indirectly, by *converting their enemies*; and (2) directly, by *defending themselves*.

I. IN CONVERTING THEIR ENEMIES. (Comp. Prov. xvi. 7.) Of this conversion, as described in ver. 7, three things should be noted. 1. *Its completeness*. This evidenced, partly, by the doing away of that especial outward token of religious distinction connected with "eating the blood" (see Lev. xvii. 10, 11; Ps. xvi. 4; Ezek. xxxiii. 25); and partly, also, by the fact of this greatly prized heathen indulgence being given up when "between the teeth," and so when most enticing and pleasant (comp. Jonah iii. 8, "the violence that is in their hands"). 2. *Its extent*. It would apply to all the Philistines that "remained;" and to all of them, also, in such a manner that every one of them individually ("he that remaineth, even he") should be on the God of Israel's side. 3. *Its importance*. Every individual so gained would be as great a source of strength as a "governor," or captain of a thousand; and every band of them (so the concluding phrase of ver. 7 may signify) as great an advantage as when their originally indomitable enemy, the "Jebusite," became, in the person of Ornan or Araunah, the king-like giver of the very site on which their temple was built (see Josh. xv. 60; Judg. i. 21; 1 Chron. xxi. 15; 2 Sam. xxiv. 18; 1 Chron. xxii. 1). In supposed fulfilment of all this, some have noticed what Josephus relates as to the way in which the Philistines, many years afterwards, identified themselves with the Jews. But we are, perhaps, on safer ground if we notice, with a similar view, how completely, in New Testament times, the Philistines have disappeared from sight as enemies of the Jews; and how much, also, we read of the early triumphs of the gospel in their part of the land (see the mission of St. Peter as related in Acts ix. 32—43; x. ; xi. 1—18). Was not Cornelius as important to the Gentile Church as Araunah to the Jewish temple?

II. IN DEFENDING THEMSELVES. Here also three features to be specially marked. Notice: 1. *The completeness* of this defence. In many ways there would be danger: in the mere existence of an "army" or hostile body; in its close proximity to them when in movement, and that, both when "passing by" and also when "returning;" perhaps, also, in the terrible character and exceptional might of that army's commander, as signified by what is twice said here so emphatically about "him" in connection with

its movements. From *all* these dangers defence is here promised. 2. *Its secret.* By God's own hand: "I will encamp" (comp. Ps. xx. 7; xxxiv. 7; 2 Kings vi. 17). For the sake of God's own house, some expressly render the words, "about mine house" (comp. Ps. cxii. 9; 1 Kings viii. 29). 3. *Its results*; viz. comparative freedom from oppression to God's people till their then work should be accomplished. They might be visited; they might be attacked; but they would not, as before, be left to the oppressor's mercy and will. In apparent fulfilment of this part of the prophecy, we may notice, in the pages of history, how Alexander, when engaged in besieging Tyre, demanded the assistance of the Jews; how the high priest, Jaddua, refused on account of his previous oath to Darius; how Alexander threatened Jerusalem in consequence; how, after destroying Gaza, he passed by them to subdue Egypt; how he returned thence, vowing vengeance; how Jaddua and the priests met him, and showed him the prophecies of Daniel; how Alexander is said to have recognized in Jaddua the same man as had long previously appeared to him in a dream; how, on all these accounts, he not only spared the Jews, but promoted them, and laid the foundation of a policy in regard to them which helped to preserve them till New Testament times (see Josephus and other authorities, as quoted by Wardlaw, and by Pusey in 'Minor Prophets,' and 'Daniel the Prophet').

Thus regarded, we seem taught for ourselves: 1. *How* God preserves those that are his—how variously; how wonderfully; how abundantly. Though unarmed themselves, they not only escape, they more than disarm, the vengeance of the conqueror of the world. 2. *Why* God preserves them, viz. because of their connection with his "temple"—in other words, with his Son (comp. John ii. 19—21; Col. ii. 9; 1 Tim. ii. 5; Acts iv. 12; x. 43; xiii. 39, etc.).

Vers. 9—12.—*A joyful kingdom.* "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem," etc. How sudden, how loud, how urgent, is this call to rejoice! No wonder; for in the bare fact announced here there is ample cause to rejoice. "Thy King cometh"—a King of thine own, not an alien king like him just spoken of. This possibly the connection of thought. Still greater the cause for rejoicing in what is said of this King; whether (1) to *Zion herself*; or (2) to her *Gentile neighbours*; or (3) to *mankind at large*.

I. TO ZION HERSELF. Consider: 1. *The purpose of his coming*, viz.: (1) To save his people, not to condemn them (Luke ix. 56; John iii. 17, etc.). This the more necessary to specify, because of the righteousness or justice so specially attributed to him in this place. Although "just," he is coming to pardon. (2) To save his people indeed. To save them not only from the guilt, but also from the practice and power of their sins; calling "sinners," but calling them to "repentance." Although coming to pardon, he is just (Rom. iii. 26). 2. *The manner of his coming.* How admirably this corresponds to his purpose! Being a King, he appears (for once at least) in befitting state, riding on an animal never employed before. Being also a Saviour, he comes in mercy and meekness, in the lowliest way a king could.

II. TO THE HEATHEN NEIGHBOURS OF ZION. As shown by the description given here: 1. *Of the aspect of his kingdom towards them.* "He shall speak peace to the heathen" (ver. 10). The Jews themselves seem to have expected otherwise; as shown to some extent by such passages as Acts i. 6; Mark x. 37; and specially by the extreme unwillingness of the Apostle Peter to treat any Gentile whatever (Acts x. 4) as otherwise than common or unclean. This "enmity" (Eph. ii. 16) was to be so completely "taken away" that the very weapons of warfare were to be "cut off" and perish. A cause for rejoicing, indeed, when accomplished, both to believing Jews (Acts xi. 18) and to Gentiles (Acts xiii. 48). 2. *Of the extent of his kingdom among them.* "From sea to sea," etc. (ver. 10). The reference, apparently, is to Ps. lxxii. 8; also to the promise to Abraham in Gen. xv. 18; and ultimately to Ps. ii. 8. How this was fulfilled in gospel times we learn from such passages as Acts xi. 26 and xvii. 6; Rom. xv. 19; Col. i. 6.

III. TO MANKIND AT LARGE. Whether we consider: 1. *The kind of persons saved.* These would appear (from ver. 11) to be the worst cases of all—persons needing salvation the most. They are described as being persons in prison; as being in its lowest part, perhaps in its "pit;" as being there without means of subsistence; as leaving their

life, in fact, like Joseph in Gen. xxxvii. 24, 27, only *not* gone. 2. *The kind of salvation vouchsafed.* (1) Its certainty. A matter of "covenant" (ver. 12)—of a covenant still binding, renewed "to-day;" a covenant made by the greatest of all beings ("do I declare"), and in the most solemn of all methods, viz. by shedding of "blood" (see 1 Pet. i. 19, etc.). (2) Its fulness. "I will render double unto thee." Not merely "as the offence" is this "free gift" (Rom. v. 15), though that would be surprising enough. It is very "much more," even "double" (comp. Isa. xl. 2; lxi. 7).

CONCLUSION. How great cause, in all this, for us, too, to rejoice! If the prospect was good, the fulfilment is better (Matt. xiii. 16, 17; Heb. xi. 13, 39, 40; 1 Pet. i. 10—12). If the mere hope was so bright, how much better the harvest! How great cause, also, for taking warning! The fuller the salvation, the greater the peril of rejecting it (Heb. ii. 1—3; x. 28, 29). 'The more complete, also, its provisions, the more final. "There remaineth *no more* sacrifice for sin;" "*Last of all* he sent unto them his Son."

Vers. 13—17.—*A successful campaign.* "When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim," etc. It is clear, from the beginning of these verses, that we have to do here, in some sense, with battle and war. It is equally clear, from the fact that the persons here mentioned have been described in ver. 10 as specially separated from battle and war, that we have only to do here with such things in some more literal sense. It seems most probable, therefore, that the "peace" spoken of in the latter portion of the passage must be something equally peculiar in its way. Let us endeavour to find, in each case, where the peculiarity lies.

I. AS TO WAR. Under this head we may notice: 1. *The description of the combatants.* On the one hand, "Judah," "Ephraim," and "Zion," representing probably the Jewish people at large, as specially identified with the worship of Jehovah, the true God (Ps. lxxxvii. 2). On the other hand, "Greece," as probably representing the heathen at large (ver. 10), in connection with those mythological fictions and philosophical inquiries in which the "sons" of Greece took the lead. When did these combatants and these systems of thought come into conflict? Even when God raised up those Jewish apostles of Christ (so it has been answered), who, by the preaching of the cross, attacked and overcame the religion and wisdom of Greece (1 Cor. i. 18—24). This was most truly a kind of "war," which also spoke "peace" (ver. 10); a war, also, in which the "Word of the Lord out of Zion" (Isa. ii. 3) was as a "sword" (Eph. vi. 17) in God's hand. 2. *The description of the conflict.* Was not the Lord truly "seen over," or with these combatants for his truth (Mark xvi. 20; Heb. ii. 3, 4)? Did not God's Word also, as spoken by them, find its mark like an "arrow" (Acts ii. 37; 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25)? Did it not shake and overthrow many deeply rooted convictions, like the "trumpet" of Jericho, as though by its sound (Acts xvii. 6)? And overcome apparently insuperable obstacles as though by a "whirlwind" (2 Cor. x. 4, 5)? Did not God again specially "defend" these combatants when endangered (Acts v. 23; xii. 1—17; xiv. 20, 21; xvi. 26; xix. 23—41; xxi. 32, etc.)? Did they not also, with their weapons of peace, "devour and subdue" those weapons of war, "the stones of the sling" (margin), spreading the gospel even when destroyed themselves (Acts xi. 19—21)? And altogether were they not like men carried along as though with a holy "wine" from the "altar," in their fervour of zeal and success (Acts ii. 13; xxvi. 24; 2 Cor. v. 13)? In all these respects we seem to have here a faithful description of the earlier conquests of Christ's cross.

II. AS TO PEACE. Corresponding to this singular and hallowed warfare shall be its hallowed results. The Church, or congregation of God's believing people, shall be made thereby a new thing on the earth. 1. *Externally;* and that in three ways. (1) As to members. Before "that day" the family of God was confined almost entirely to one little people and land. Now, those thus saved by him should be "as the flock of his people." (2) As to appreciation. Like "the stones of a crown," like so many jewels, that is to say, not only most valuable in themselves, also most appreciatingly employed, shall his people then be. Compare the name of Peter, signifying "a Stone," and such passages as 1 Pet. ii. 5; Rev. ii. 17; iii. 12. (3) As to effect. The Church becoming then, like a "standard" or "ensign," something easily seen, readily recognized, and faithfully followed (comp. Cant. vi. 10). So numerous, so illustrious, so con-



spicuous, was the New Testament Church, on the one hand, to become. Just so, on the other hand, with all its faults and corruptions, has it actually been! 2. *Internally*. And this, in turn, manifested in three different ways. (1) In a special sense of God's love. "How great is his goodness!" (comp. John iii. 16; 1 John iii. 1; iv. 16, 17; Rom. v. 6; Eph. ii. 4—7). (2) In a special sense of God's perfections. "How great is his beauty!" (Compare such passages as Rom. iii. 25, 26; xi. 33; 1 Cor. i. 24, 25, 30.) (3) In a special consequent sense of satisfaction and rest; and that amongst all. "Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." Illustrated, perhaps, by such passages as Matt. xi. 28—30; Rom. v. 1, 2; Acts xvi. 34; Rom. xv. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 21—23; and it may be also, if we look to the margin, by Acts ii. 16—18; xxi. 4, 9. Never have all these things been so deeply and so commonly felt in the "Israel of God," as since the days when the apostles first went forth to preach Christ.

From the various predicted changes thus accomplished, we may see, in conclusion: 1. *The supernatural origin of Christianity*. Physically, the Roman conquered the world. Intellectually, the Greek conquered the Roman. Spiritually, the Jew has conquered them both. A little society, formed originally out of the most despised of the nations, and principally, if not exclusively, out of the most despised of its provinces (Acts ii. 7; John vii. 52), has become the ruling society upon earth. Can we help saying as in Ps. cxviii. 23? 2. *The supernatural value of Christianity*. Is there any system to be compared with it as to the blessings it bestows? Can the statement of 1 Tim. iv. 8 be made of any other religion as it can of this one? Can anything else also so completely satisfy all the cravings of our nature (see John iv. 14)?

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*God's judgments*. I. THE DARK SIDE. "Burden." Word of ill omen to God's enemies. God's eye is on all. Storm gathering. Will soon burst in fury, just, universal, overwhelming. None so small as to be overlooked. None so great as to secure immunity. The wisdom of the wise, the resources of the rich, and the fame of ancient days will prove as vanity.

II. THE BRIGHT SIDE. Eye of kindness. Hand of gracious interposition. Incorporation of Jews and Gentiles in one glorious Church. 1. *Divine protection*. "Encamp," etc. 2. *Righteous freedom*. No more taskmasters, as in Egypt. 3. *Grateful service*.—F.

Ver. 9.—*The ideal King*. I. BEAUTIFUL VISION. Poets in rapt moments have had glimpses of the highest (Ps. xlv. 72). The character, the life and work of a true King, have passed before them as things fair to see. But where is the reality? "Find me the true king or able man, and he has a Divine right over me" (Carlyle).

II. PASSIONATE LONGING. The heart yearns for what is best. The need presses. Circumstances now and again arise that intensify the feeling and the cry. There is so much to be done—evils to remove, wrongs to be redressed, rights and liberties to be secured. Oh for the coming of the true King! "What he tells us to do must be precisely wisest, fittest, that we can anywhere or anyhow learn, the thing which it will in all ways behove us, with right loyal thankfulness and nothing doubting, to do. Our doing and life were then, so far as government would regulate them, well regulated" (Carlyle).

III. IMMORTAL HOPE. There have been kings, good, bad, and indifferent. Some began well, but did little. The best have come far short of the highest standard. The true King "not yet." Still hope. Faith in the possibilities of human nature; above all, faith in the promise of God.

"Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good. . . ."

"Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land.  
Ring in the Christ that is to be."

F.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The advent of the King.* The accession of a sovereign is a time of rejoicing (cf. Solomon, 1 Kings i. 40). But there may be disappointment. The early promise may fail, and the first joys end in bitterness. Not so with Messiah. The better he is known, the more he is loved. The longer experience of his reign, the greater the satisfaction.

I. THE GREATNESS OF HIS NATURE. Son of man. Son of God. Dignity commanding the highest homage.

II. THE BEAUTY OF HIS CHARACTER. Everything in him that is true and fair and good. He is altogether lovely. 1. *Just.* Fulfills all righteousness. 2. *Merciful.* stoops to the lowest. Kind to the poorest. Equitable to all. 3. *Humble.* Meek and lowly.

III. THE GLORY OF HIS REIGN. 1. *Empire spiritual.* His kingdom is "within." He writes his laws upon the heart. 2. *Based on the free convictions and love of the people.* His subjects do not bow the knee in form, but in truth. They honour him not with mere lip-service or state ceremonials, but with the homage of the heart. 3. *Characterized by righteousness and peace.* "Salvation" is brought by him to all. He not only pardons the rebel, but converts him into a loyal subject. He not only emancipates the slave, but binds him for ever to himself in grateful devotion. He not only rescues the lost, but unites them with all the redeemed in one holy and loving brotherhood. 4. *Destined to universality and immortality.* Of his kingdom there shall be no end.—F.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The sinner in three aspects.* I. SELF-BUINED. Joseph, Daniel, Jeremiah, were cast into "the pit" by wicked hands. The sinner has himself to blame. If there is gloom, chains, and misery, it is because of revolt from God. It is not the body but the soul that is "in prison," and no soul can be imprisoned save by its own deed and consent.

II. GOD-PITIED. Though we have cast off God, he has not cast off us. He is long-suffering and merciful. His voice to us is full of pity and inspires hope. "Prisoners of hope." Why? Specially: 1. As called of God. 2. Roused to a sense of danger. 3. Encouraged to seek deliverance.

III. CHRIST-RESCUED. Refuge is provided. "Stronghold." 1. Near. 2. Open to all. 3. Ample for the reception and defence of all who come. Hence the urgent and loving appeal, "Flee." Happy they who have responded, "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the Hope set before us" (Heb. vi. 19)!—F.

Ver. 13.—*Victory through God.* I. THE MARSHALLING OF THE FORCES. The "trumpet" calls to arms. On one side are the armies of heaven, and on the other the hosts of darkness.

II. THE TERRIBLENESS OF THE STRUGGLE. Characterized by: 1. Might, as of a storm carrying havoc far and wide. 2. Fury, as of wild beasts raging and ravaging. 3. Deadliness, as of arrows that strike quick, and with fatal effect.

III. THE SPLENDOR OF THE VICTORY. Complete overthrow of God's enemies. Establishment of his people as a flock, in unity and peace. Human agency, but Divine efficiency. Everything here to rouse ardour, to quicken flagging energies, and to nerve the soul to the highest endeavours, under the eye of the great Captain of our salvation.—F.

Vers. 1—8.—*The dark and the bright side of God's revelation to mankind.* "The burden of the word of the Lord," etc. This chapter begins that portion of the book whose genuineness, though denied by some, is accepted by most unbiassed expositors. As it is our main purpose, in preparing these sketches, to use the statements, whether *prophetic* or poetic, prophetic or historic, to illustrate truths of universal application, it

comes not within our purpose to discuss the questions of genuineness, authenticity, and inspiration. In the preceding chapters the prophet had in vision seen and said much concerning many of the more remarkable events connected with the continued rule of the Persians; he advances now to foretell some of the more striking circumstances which would transpire under that of the Greeks, during the military expeditions of Alexander and his successors, so far as they had a bearing upon the affairs of the Jewish people. "He describes," says Dr. Henderson, "in this chapter the conquest of Syria after the battle of Issus (ver. 1), and the progress of the army of Alexander along the coast of the Mediterranean, involving the capture of the principalities of the Phœnicians and Philistines, but leaving the Jews unmolested, through the protecting care of Jehovah (vers. 2-8). He then contrasts with the character and military achievements of that conqueror the qualities which should distinguish the Messiah and his kingdom, whom he expressly predicts (vers. 9, 10). After which he resumes the thread of his historical discourse, and describes the wars of the Maccabees with Antiochus Epiphanes, and the victory and prosperity with which they were followed (vers. 11-17)." These verses may be taken to illustrate the dark and the *bright side of God's revelation to mankind*. Here are threatenings and promises. The Bible, in relation to humanity, is something like the mystic pillar in the wilderness, as it appeared on the Red Sea; it threw a radiance on the chosen tribes as they advanced, and a black cloud upon their pursuing foes, overwhelming them in confusion. Notice, then—

I. THE DARK SIDE OF THE DIVINE WORD. Notice two things. 1. *In this aspect it is here called a "burden."* The word "burden" is almost invariably used to represent a calamity. Thus we read of the burden of Babylon, the burden of Moab, the burden of Damascus, the burden of Tyre, the burden of Egypt, etc. The general meaning is a terrible sentence. God's sentence of condemnation is indeed a terrible thunder-cloud. 2. *In this aspect it bears upon wicked men.* The doomed peoples are here mentioned. They are in "the land of Hadrach." Whether Hadrach here means the land of Syria or the common names of the kings of Syria, it scarcely matters; the people of the place of which Damascus was the capital were the doomed ones. Besides these, there are the men of "Hamath," a country lying to the north of Damascus and joining the districts of Zobah and Rehob. And still more, there are "Tyrus" and "Zidon," places about which we often read in the Bible, and with whose history most students of the Bible are acquainted. "Ashkelon," "Gaza," and "Ekron" are also mentioned. These were the chief cities of the Philistines, and the capitals of different districts. All these peoples were not only enemies of the chosen tribe, but enemies of the one true and living God. History tells us how, through the bloody conquests of Alexander and his successors, this "burden of the word of the Lord" fell with all its weight upon these people. Observe: (1) That the Bible is heavy with black threatenings to the wicked. It has not one word of encouragement to such, but all menace; not one gleam of light, but a dark mass of cloud. (Quote passages.) (2) That these black threatenings will inevitably be fulfilled. All the threatenings here against the land of Hadrach, Hamath, Tyrus, Zidon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashkelon, and the Philistines were fulfilled.

II. THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE DIVINE WORD. There is a *beam* of promise here. "And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes." The following is Dr. Keil's translation of these verses: "And I shall take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth, and he will also remain to our God, and will be as a tribe-prince in Judah, and Ekron like the Jebusite. I pitch a tent for my house against military power, against those who go to and fro, and no oppressor will pass over them any more; for now have I seen with my eyes." The promise in these words seems to be twofold. 1. *The deprivation of the power of the enemy to injure.* "I will take away his blood from between his teeth," etc. "The Philistines and other enemies of the Jews," says Scott, "would be deprived of their power to waste them any more; and the spoils they had taken by violence and the most abominable rapine would be taken away from them as prey from a wild

beast." The Bible promises to the good man the subjection of all his foes. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." 2. *Divine protection from all their enemies.* "I will encamp about mine house," etc. "They were not to be injured," says Henderson, "by the army of Alexander, on its march either to or from Egypt—a promise which was fulfilled to the letter, for while that monarch punished the Samaritans, he showed great favour to the Jews. Nor was any foreign oppressor to invade their land, as the Assyrians and Chaldeans had done, during the period that was to intervene before the advent of the Messiah, predicted in the verse immediately following. They were, indeed, subject to much suffering, both from the Egyptian and the Syrian kings, especially from Antiochus Epiphanes; but their nationality was not destroyed; and the evils to which they were exposed only paved the way for the Maccabean victories and for the establishment of the Asmonean dynasty. For this preservation they were indebted to the providence of God, which watched over them for good. This is emphatically expressed in the last clause of the verse." The Bible promises eternal protection to the good. "God is our Refuge and Strength," etc.—D. T.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The ideal Monarch of the world.* "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion," etc. "In the former part of this chapter," says Dr. Wardlaw, "we found in the progressive conquests of Alexander the Great and the favour which, in the midst of them, he showed to Jerusalem, the execution of God's vengeance, as here threatened, against the enemies and oppressors of his people, along with his protecting care over his people themselves. By the reference to these speedily coming events, and in them to the career of that mighty prince and warrior—of whom it has been strongly said that, having conquered one world, he sat down and wept that he had not another to conquer—the prophet, under the impulse of inspiration, is rapt into times more distant; and fixing his eye on a King and a Conqueror of a very different description, invites his people, in terms of exulting transport, to hail his coming." That these verses point to the advent of Christ is an opinion entertained both by Jewish and Christian expositors. The references in Matt. xxi. 1-5 and John xii. 12-16 contribute not a little to the confirmation of this opinion. Anyhow, the words depict a Monarch the like of whom has never appeared amongst all the monarchs of the earth, and the like of whom is not to be found on any throne in the world to-day—a Monarch, the ideal of whom is realized in him whom we call with emphasis the Son of man and the Son of God. There are five things here suggested concerning this Monarch.

I. HERE IS A MONARCH THE ADVENT OF WHOM IS A MATTER FOR RAPTURED JOY. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem." What sincere, thoughtful man, in any kingdom on the face of the earth, has any reason to look forward to-day with rapture to the successors of any of the monarchs of the earth? In most cases there are sad forebodings. Christ's advent to the world was announced by the gladsome music of angelic choirs. "Glory to God in the highest," etc. Why rejoice at his advent? Because he will (1) *promote all the rights of mankind*; (2) *remove all the calamities of mankind*.

II. HERE IS A MONARCH THE DIGNITY OF WHOM IS UNAPPROACHED. "Thy King cometh unto thee." *"Thy King."* Thou hast never yet had a true king, and there is no other true king for thee: this is *thy* King. 1. The King who alone has the *absolute right to rule thee*. Thou art his—his property. All thy force, vitality, faculty, belong to him. 2. The King who alone can *remove thy evils and promote thy rights*.

III. HERE IS A MONARCH THE CHARACTER OF WHOM IS EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD. 1. *He is righteous.* "He is just." The little word "just" comprehends all virtues. He who is just to himself, just to his Maker, just to man, is the perfection of excellence, is all that Heaven requires. 2. *He is humble.* "Lowly, and riding upon an ass," Where there is not genuine humility there is no true greatness; it is essential to true majesty. Pride is the offspring of littleness; it is the contemptible production of a contemptible mind. No man ever appeared in history whose humility approached the humility of Christ. "He was meek and lowly in heart;" he "made himself of no reputation." How different is this righteous, humble character from that of human monarchs! How often have their moral characters been amongst the foulest abominations in the foulest chapter of human history!

IV. HERE IS A MONARCH WHOSE MISSION IS TRANSCENDENTLY BENEFICENT. 1. *It is remedial.* "Having salvation." Salvation! What a comprehensive word! Deliverance from all evil, restoration to all good. Worldly monarchs often bring destruction. They have never the power, and seldom the will, to bring salvation to a people. Any one can destroy; God alone can restore. 2. *It is specific.* "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen." He will put an end to the "chariot," the "horse," the "battle bow," of war, and "speak peace" to the nations. Peace! This is what the nations have always wanted. War has been and still is the great curse of the nations. Here is a King who speaks peace to the nations. His words one day shall be universally obeyed. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid," etc. (Isa. xi. 6—9).

V. HERE IS A MONARCH THE REIGN OF WHOM IS TO BE UNIVERSAL. "And his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." The language here employed was universally understood by the Jews as embracing the *whole world*. He claims universal dominion; he deserves it, and will one day have it. "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ," etc.

CONCLUSION. Learn: 1. The infinite goodness of God in offering to the world such a King. It is the world's great want. 2. The amazing folly and wickedness of man in not accepting this Divine offer. Not one-tenth of the human population have accepted him. What ingratitude is here! and what rebellion! Yes, and *folly* too. It is his characteristic and his glory as a King that he does not force his way to dominion. He submits himself to the choice of mankind. This monarchy is a moral monarchy, a monarchy over thought, feeling, volition, purpose, mind.—D. T.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Historical facts illustrations of spiritual realities.* "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." In these verses we have three subjects which demand and will repay thought.

I. HERE IS A STATE OF WRETCHEDNESS WHICH REMINDS US OF MAN'S MISERABLE CONDITION AS A SINNER. "As for thee also"—that is, as for thee, daughter of Zion and Jerusalem—"by the blood of thy covenant"—that is, according to the covenant vouchsafed to thee on Mount Sinai, and ratified by the blood of sacrifices (Exod. xxiv. 8)—"I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." The Jewish people are here represented as having been prisoners in a pit without water. "Dungeons were often pits without water, miry at the bottom, such as Jeremiah sank in when confined (Gen. xxxvii. 24; Jer. xxxviii. 6). This image is employed to represent the misery of the Jewish exiles in Egypt, Greece, etc., under the successors of Alexander, especially under Antiochus Epiphanes, who robbed and profaned the temple, slew thousands, and enslaved more. In Zechariah's time, the time of the Persian rule, the practice was common to remove conquered peoples to distant lands, in order to prevent the liability to revolt in their own lands." Very fairly may this be taken as an illustration of that miserable moral condition in which all unregenerate men are found. They are in a "pit" of ignorance and depravity, shut out from the true light, and destitute of true liberty. It is a "pit" in which the soul is. A man's body may be in a "pit," and yet he may possess light and liberty within. Men have sung in dungeons ere now. But when the soul is in "a pit," the man himself is enthralled in darkness and bondage.

II. HERE IS AN ADMONITION WHICH REMINDS US OF MAN'S DUTY AS A SINNER. "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." The prisoners here undoubtedly signify the Jewish exiles who were in bondage in Egypt and Greece and other countries, and whose restoration is here promised. Though they were prisoners, they were "prisoners of hope." God was on their side, and had made to them the promise of redemption. 1. *All sinners are "prisoners of hope."* Though bound by the chains of guilt and corruption, there is "hope" for them; means of deliverance have been provided, and millions upon millions of prisoners have reached to the full enjoyment of that deliverance. There is hope; for—

“While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return.”

2. *They are “prisoners of hope” for whom a “strong hold” has been provided.* If these exiles would return to Jerusalem, they would be safe. Jehovah himself would be their Guard and Defence. Christ is the “Strong Hold” of sinners; he is their “Refuge and Strength;” “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth;” “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!” 3. *They are “prisoners of hope” who should flee to the “Strong Hold” at once.* “Even to-day.” When the prospect seems most gloomy, when the cloud of despair seems spreading over the heavens, and things are at the worst, “even to-day.” This is the “accepted time,” to-day is the “day of salvation.”

III. *HERE IS A PROMISE THAT GIVES ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE SINNER.* “I will render double unto thee.” As if Jehovah had said to the daughter of Zion—Great as has been thine adversity, thy prosperity shall be doubly greater (Isa. lxi. 7). “Turn you to the Strong Hold,” and you shall not only be saved, but more than saved. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

“God’s boundless mercy is to sinful man  
Like to the ever-wealthy ocean;  
Which, though it sends forth thousand streams, ’tis ne’er  
Known, or else seen, to be the emptier:  
And though it takes all in, ’tis yet no more  
Full and filled full, than when full-filled before.”  
(R. Herrick.)

D. T.

Vers. 13—17.—*God works amongst the nations in the interests of his people.* “When I have bent Judah for me,” etc. “The double recompense which the Lord will make to his people will consist in the fact that he not only liberates them out of captivity and bondage, and makes them into an independent nation, but that he helps them to victory over the powers of the world, so that they will tread it down, i.e. completely subdue it. The first thought is not explained more fully because it is contained *implicite* in the promise of return to a strong place, the ‘double’ only is more distinctly defined, namely, the victory over Javan. The expression, ‘I stretch,’ etc., implies that the Lord will subdue the enemies by Judah and Ephraim, and therefore Israel will carry on this conflict in the power of its God” (Keil). Referring our readers for minute criticisms on this passage to such authors as Henderson, Hengstenberg, Pusey, and Keil, we note the great facts which it contains.

I. *THAT GOD WORKS AMONGST THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH.* God is here represented as raising up Zion against Greece. “And raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece.” The literal reference, it may be, is to the help which he would render the Maccabees, as the heroic leaders of the Jews, to overcome the successors of the Grecian Alexander, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the other Grecian oppressors of Judah. He works with the Jew and the Greek, or Gentile—the two great divisions of mankind. He is in their conflicts and their battles. Three remarks are suggested concerning his work amongst men. 1. *He works universally amongst men.* He works with the “sons” of Zion and the “sons” of Greece. He operates with all, with the remote and the distant, with the little and the great, with the good and the bad; he is in all human history. All good he originates, all evil he overrules. 2. *He works by human agency amongst men.* “When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim.” Ephraim and Judah, which here represent the whole Jewish people, are, by a strong figure of speech, spoken of as the bows and arrows of Jehovah, the military weapons which he would employ in crushing the Grecians under Antiochus Epiphanes. God carries out his purposes with man by the agency of man; wicked kings are his tools, obscure saints are his ministers of state. 3. *He works manifestly amongst men.* “And the Lord shall be seen over them;” or, as Keil renders it, “Jehovah will appear above them.” What thoughtful student of human history has not felt disposed to

exclaim, as he has passed from page to page, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes"? We say, "thoughtful student;" for it is only manifest to the spiritually thoughtful. The hearts of others are so thickly veiled with depravity and wickedness that they see him not; they neither recognize his hand nor hear his voice.

4. *He works terribly amongst men.* "And his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south." "Like the lightning will his arrow go forth, and the Lord Jehovah will blow the trumpets, and will pass along in storms of the south" (Keil). "Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos iii. 6)—done it by permission? He is in the crashings of conflagrating cities, in the booming thunders of contending armies, in the wild whirlwinds of battling kingdoms; with him there is "terrible majesty" as he proceeds on his march in human history.

II. GOD WORKS AMONGST THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH IN THE INTERESTS OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. *He works for their defence.* "The Lord of hosts shall defend them;" or, "shelter them." He guards his saints; they are as the apple of his eye; he is their Shield and Defence. 2. *He works for their victory.* "They shall devour, and subdue with sling-stones," etc. "Jehovah of hosts shall protect them, and they shall devour and tread down the sling-stones, they shall drink, they shall be noisy, as those who drink wine; they shall be full as the bowl, as the corners of the altar" (Henderson). The idea is their complete triumph over their enemies. Hengstenberg observes that there is not the least indication that a spiritual conflict is intended. Quite true, but a spiritual conflict it may illustrate, and its victory too. In such a conflict we are all engaged, and God has promised, if we are faithful, to make us more than conquerors. 3. *He works for their salvation.* "And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people." They shall be restored to the fold and guarded by Jehovah as their Shepherd. God works for the entire salvation of his people—salvation from all evil, salvation to all good. 4. *He works for their glory.* "They shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land;" or, as Hengstenberg renders it, "For crowned jewels shall they be rising up upon his land." There is true glory awaiting the good. There is a crown of glory laid up in heaven, etc. 5. *He works for their perfection.* "For how great is its goodness, and how great is its beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." We accept the rendering of Keil here, which is not only faithful to the original, but in harmony with the context. The prophet is speaking of the high privileges of God's people, and not of the excellences of the Supreme. It is an exclamation of admiration of the high privileges of the godly.

CONCLUSION. As much of the writings of this prophet admit of so many interpretations, and are perhaps impossible fully to understand, we have thought, not only the most useful, but the safest way of treatment to be the employment of statements and phrases to illustrate those spiritual realities which are important to man in all times and places. It is true that God works amongst men, and it is true that he works amongst men in the interests of those who love and serve him. May we be of that number, and thus realize in our experience the fact that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"!—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER X.

Vers. 1, 2.—§ 4. A connecting link between the last section and the next. *The condition for obtaining the promised blessings is that they are to be sought from the Lord, not from idols.*

Ver. 1.—Ask ye of the Lord rain. The promise of abundance at the end of the last chapter suggests to the prophet to make a special application to the practice of his

countrymen. They must put their trust in God alone for the supply of temporal as well as spiritual bounties. The latter rain was due at the time of the vernal equinox, and was necessary in order to swell the maturing grain (comp. Deut. xi. 14). The early rain occurred at the autumnal equinox. It was considered as a special manifestation of God's providential care that these periodical rains were received (see Isa. xxx. 23; Jer. v. 24; Joel ii. 23). So the Lord shall make bright clouds; rather, *Jehovah*

*maketh the lightnings.* Thunderstorms accompany the periodical rains. Ye must ask of him, and ye shall have. Septuagint, Κύριος ἐποίησε φαντασίας, "The Lord makes flashes" (of lightning?); Vulgate, *Dominus faciet nubes*, where the right reading is supposed to be *nubes* (comp. Ps. cxxxv. 7; Job xxxviii. 25, 26). Give them showers of rain. Abundant rain, as Job xxxvii. 6. The address is now in the third person. Grass. All vegetable food for man and beast, as in Gen. i. 11, 29; Ps. civ. 14; Amos vii. 2.

Ver. 2.—**For.** The prophet supports his exhortation to pray to Jehovah by showing the worthlessness of trust in idols. Idols; *teraphim*. What these were is not known for certain. They seem to have been images of human form and sometimes of life size, corresponding in some degree to the lares or penates of the Romans (Gen. xxxi. 19; 1 Sam. xix. 13). They were supposed to be capable of bestowing temporal blessings and giving oracles (Judg. xvii. 5; xviii. 5, 24; Ezek. xxi. 21). Have spoken vanity. Gave worthless, misleading responses. The mention of *teraphim* in this passage is thought to indicate a date anterior to the Captivity; but the prophet is speaking of past events, of the results of these base superstitions in former, not present, time. Three kinds of superstition are mentioned. Septuagint, οἱ ἀποφθεγγόμενοι, "speaking" images. These are the first. Secondly come the soothsayers, the diviners, persons who pretended to predict the future (Jer. xxvii. 9; xxix. 8; Ezek. xxi. 21; Hab. ii. 18). Have told false dreams; Vulgate, *somniatores locuti sunt frustra*; LXX., τὰ ἐνύπνια ψευδῆ ἐλάλουν, "spake false dreams." The Vulgate seems to be correct, "dreams, i.e. dreamers, spake deceit." This is the third class among the practisers of superstitious observances. They comfort in vain, when they promise temporal blessings (Job xxi. 34). Therefore they went their way as a flock. Because they trusted in these vain superstitions, the Israelites had to leave their own place, were led into exile like a flock of sheep driven away for sale or slaughter (Jer. i. 17). They were troubled. They were and are still oppressed by the heathen. Because there was (is) no shepherd. Because they had no king to guard and lead them, they fell under the power of foreign rulers, who ill treated and oppressed them (Ezek. xxxiv. 5; Neh. v. 15).

Vers. 3, 4.—§ 5. The evil rulers set over them for their sins shall be removed, and Israel shall be firmly established.

Ver. 3.—Mine anger was (is) kindled against the shepherds. These heathen

rulers were indeed God's instruments in punishing his people, but they had exceeded their commission, and afflicted Israel in order to carry out their own evil designs, and now they themselves shall be chastised. Some commentators take "the shepherds" to be the rulers of Israel civil and ecclesiastical, comparing Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 5, etc. But the context leads us to consider them as those who took the place of rulers of Israel when she had no shepherd of her own (ver. 2). I punished (will punish) the goats (*belluethers*); literally, *will visit upon*; i.e. will chastise. The same word (*paquad*) is used in the next clause in a good sense. The "goats" are the leading men, those powerful for evil, as Isa. xiv. 9. Hath visited his flock. The reason why the evil shepherds are punished is because God visits his flock in love and care, to see their state and to relieve them from trouble (Zeph. ii. 7). The house of Judah here includes all the nation, to which it afterwards gave its name. Hath made (*shall make*) them as his goody horse. The Israelites shall not only be delivered from oppression, but God shall use them as a stately war-horse, richly caparisoned, to tread down enemies and triumph over them. So he said before (ch. ix. 13) that he would make Judah his bow and Ephraim his arrow. (For a description of the war-horse, see Job xxxix. 19—25; comp. Rev. vi. 2; xix. 14, where Christ is represented riding on a white horse, and his saints following him on white horses.)

Ver. 4.—The firmness and security of Judah, thus "visited," is announced in terms admitting of further application. Out of him came forth (*shall come*). Out of Judah, mentioned in ver. 3. Others, not so suitably, explain, "out of Jehovah," in contrast to Hos. viii. 4. The succeeding figures are taken from the building and furnishing of a house. The corner. The corner-stone (Isa. xxviii. 16). From Judah herself shall come the prince on whom the whole edifice shall rest; i.e. primarily, she shall be independent of foreign rulers; and secondly, from Judah shall come the Messiah, "the Head-stone of the corner" (Matt. xxi. 42; Eph. ii. 20; Heb. vii. 14). Septuagint (taking the noun as a verb), καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐτέβλεψε, "et ex ipso respexit" (Jerome). The nail. The word (*yathed*) is taken for the peg that fastens the cord of a tent, for a nail used in building with timber, or a peg for hanging up arms and utensils on the walls of a house. In whichever sense we take it here, it implies one who consolidates or upholds the political constitution (Isa. xxii. 23, 24). The battle bow. The people shall themselves have arms and military skill to protect them



against all assailants. Oppressor; rather, ruler, as Isa. iii. 12; lx. 17. Judah shall have every leader necessary for all emergencies. Septuagint, *πᾶς ο ἐξελάων ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ*, "he that expelleth together;" Vulgate, *omnis exactor simul*. If the word be taken in the sense of these versions and the Authorized Version, the clause would mean that the Israelites shall subjugate their enemies, and oppress them, and exact tribute from them. The word (*noges*) usually means "taskmaster."

Vers. 5—7.—§ 6. *Thus equipped, Israel and Judah united shall triumph over their foes.*

Ver. 5.—Which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets. "Their enemies" is supplied naturally from the context. Others take the participle "treading" intransitively, "treading upon street mire," the enemy being figuratively denoted by "mire." The Greek and Latin Versions give, "treading the mud in the streets" (comp. Ps. xviii. 42; Micah vii. 10). They shall fight. They shall carry on long-continued war successfully because God is with them. The riders on horses. The strong force of cavalry arrayed against them shall fall before Israel, and be put to shame. The Israelite forces were for the most part infantry, while the principal strength of their enemies consisted in cavalry (Dan. xi. 40).

Ver. 6.—House of Joseph; i.e. Israel, or the ten tribes, called Ephraim in the next verse (see note on Amos v. 6). Israel and Judah alike shall share in the contest and the victory, under the protection of God. I will bring them again to place them. This is one word in Hebrew, which may mean either "I bring them again," or "I make them dwell." The Authorized Version unwarrantably combines both significations. Septuagint, *κατοικίω αὐτούς*, "I will settle them;" Vulgate, *convertam eos*. It is better taken here, in contrast with "cast off" in a following clause, in the sense of "I will cause them to dwell," i.e. in safety and comfort. As though I had not cast them off. The happy restoration shall make them forget former troubles and the calamities of their rejection (Isa. xliii. 18, 19). Will hear them (ch. xiii. 9; Isa. lviii. 9).

Ver. 7.—They of Ephraim; i.e. as well as Judah, shall be heroes. Not many members of the northern kingdom returned at first from the Captivity; but the prophet gives the assurance that they shall come and prove themselves mighty warriors. As through wine. They shall hasten to the battle cheerfully and exultingly, like men refreshed and strengthened with wine (see

ch. ix. 15; Ps. lxxviii. 65, 66). Their children shall see it. Though unable to participate in the struggle, their children shall share the universal joy. Their heart shall rejoice in the Lord (Ps. lxxiii. 7; Isa. xli. 16; Joel ii. 23; Hab. iii. 18). Attempts have been made to find the fulfilment of these prophecies (ver. 3, etc.) in certain events of Maccabean times. Thus, according to Patritius, the sin for which the Hebrews suffered such distress at the hands of the Seleucidæ (ver. 2) was their imitation of heathen practices mentioned in 1 Macc. i. 13—15 and 2 Macc. iv. 7—17, when the high priest purchased his office by a bribe, and the other priests followed Greek customs. The prophet is supposed to refer specially to this state of things when he says, "They were troubled because there was no shepherd. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds." But we have shown above that Zechariah is here speaking of the past, not of the future. There is more verisimilitude in discerning the wars and victories of Judas, his brothers and successors, in the allusions of vers. 4—7. The truth is that such descriptions suit many different events, and have various applications. Though their complete fulfilment may be expected only in Messianic times and circumstances, yet we may see many anticipatory and preparative transactions, which are meant to introduce the final accomplishment. The Jewish prophet is not always foretelling certain definite events. Oftentimes he is teaching, warning, and exhorting; and generally he is enunciating great principles, the truth of which shall be clear in the future, rather than predicting particular facts. Not unfrequently commentators have neglected this consideration, and sought too curiously to restrict the prophet's words to some one issue. It may be noted, further, that where the prophetic language concerning the destiny of the restored people seems to be exaggerated and not borne out by subsequent facts, the promises are always conditioned by the moral state of the recipients. If they answered fully and consistently to God's call, the result would be such as was predicted. That the event in all respects did not correspond with the high ideal previously announced must be attributed, not to the prophet's mistake, but to the people's waywardness and disobedience.

Vers. 8—12.—§ 7. *The scattered people shall be gathered from all parts of the world, and dwell in their own land, under the protection of Jehovah.*

Ver. 8.—I will hiss for them; *σημανῶ αὐτοῖς*, "I will signal to them" (Septuagint);

*sibilabo eis* (Vulgate). The slightest summons will bring them when God wills the return of the dispersed. The "hissing" is the whistling or tinkling with which bees are allured to swarm (Isa. v. 26; vii. 18, 19). I have redeemed them. They were virtually delivered from captivity and exile, though all had not taken advantage of the deliverance. They shall increase as they have increased. The same promise is made in Ezek. xxxvi. 10, 11. The allusion is to the marvellous growth of the Israelite nation in Egypt (Exod. i. 7, 12). The prophets often announce this fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham (Gen. xiii. 16; xv. 5, etc.) after the return (see Isa. liv. 2; Hos. i. 10; Micah ii. 12).

Ver. 9.—I will sow them among the people (*peoples*). The "sowing" here does not mean scattering, but increase, and this was to go on while they were dispersed among the nations. The word is used in the same sense in Hos. ii. 23; Jer. xxxi. 27. This continued dispersion was a part of their discipline, a test of their loyalty to God. They shall remember me. In the countries where they are living they shall worship the Lord and observe his Law, and be a witness for him among the heathen. They shall live with their children (Ezek. xxxvii. 14). The promised blessing is not for a time only, but perpetual. Turn again; *i.e.* return to their own land (Isa. xxxv. 10). It cannot mean, "turn to the Lord," for they are said already to remember the Lord, and their "conversion must precede the promise of life." The next verse describes the return more particularly.

Ver. 10.—*Egypt . . . Assyria*. It is certain that there was a large body of Jews in Egypt at this time (Jer. xliii. 6, 7); and to Assyria the ten tribes, who are here specially mentioned under the name Ephraim, had been deported. Besides this, Assyria is often used loosely for Western Asia or Babylonia, of which, after its submission, it formed a most important feature (see 2 Kings xxiii. 29; Ezra vi. 22; and in the Apocrypha, 1 Esdr. vii. 15; Judith i. 7; ii. 1). In the 'Oracula Sibyllina,' the Assyrians are continually confused with Persians, Babylonians, and other Eastern nations. Egypt and Assyria are here used as types of the countries to which Jews had been banished (comp. Hos. xi. 11). Gilead and Lebanon. A designation of the northern district of Palestine, on both sides of the Jordan, in which these tribes had been originally settled. This region had been most exposed to hostile attacks, and was the first to be depopulated. Place shall not be found for them (Isa. xlix. 20). Josephus testifies to the teeming population of Galilee in later times ('Bell. Jud.,' ii. 3. 1; iii. 3. 2;

iv. 1. 2; 7. 5). Septuagint, "There shall not even one of them be left behind," *i.e.* in exile.

Ver. 11.—He shall pass through the sea with affliction. In bringing his people back the Lord is ready to repeat the miracles of the Exodus. This is the general meaning of the passage; but the details present difficulties. For "he shall pass" the LXX. gives, "they shall pass through." But the reference is plainly to Jehovah, as the following clause shows. The next two words are in apposition, "the sea," "affliction." Revised Version, "the sea of affliction;" Septuagint, *ἡ θαλάσση στενὴ*, "in a strait sea;" or, as the Hebrew cannot be so translated, "in a sea, a strait;" Vulgate, *in maris freto*. It seems best to take the two words simply as, "the sea, which is affliction." The Red Sea, through which Jehovah led his people, was a figure of the sufferings which they had endured in Egypt, and brought destruction upon their enemies (comp. Exod. xiv. 16, 17, 24, etc.). Smite the waves (Exod. xv. 8; Isa. xi. 15, 16; li. 10). The river. The Nile. The drying up of the waters of the Nile is a figure of the humiliation of the nations which have been guilty of enslaving the chosen people. The Nile, the representative of Egypt, is mentioned because of the allusion to the bondage in Egypt running through the paragraph. The pride of Assyria. Pride is noted as the characteristic of Assyria (comp. Isa. x. 7, etc.; Ezek. xxxi. 3, 10). The sceptre. This may refer to the decadence of the power of Egypt, and the transference of royal authority to strangers; but, regarding the immediate context, we had better translate, "the rod of Egypt," and see in it an allusion to the oppression of the taskmasters during the sojourn in that land. All such tyranny shall be at an end (comp. Isa. x. 24).

Ver. 12.—I will strengthen them in the Lord. I will strengthen them with myself—with my grace and power. They shall walk up and down in his Name. They shall live in obedience to, and dependence upon, the Lord (Micah iv. 5, where see note). The Septuagint reads, "They shall boast themselves." So God will work wonders to deliver his people from the captivity of the devil, destroying all enemies, visible and invisible, which array themselves against him. This is the final fulfilment of the prophecy. The complete restoration from the Captivity is the immediate subject of the prophet's words; and between these two we may see a reference to the conversion of the Jews in the time of Christ and the apostles, which shall go on until the end.

# HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The secret of victory.* "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time," etc. In the last passage the Church of God (in its new Testament form, as we supposed) was presented to us under the figures of an army (ver. 13, etc.); a flock (ver. 16); and a field which the Lord had blessed (ver. 17). In the present verses we find all these figures again employed: the field (ver. 1); the flock (vers. 2, 3); the army or host (vers. 3—5). It would appear, therefore, that we have also presented to us the same topic of illustration, viz. the New Testament Church; and that, further, under the same circumstances and at the same time as before. The distinction to be noted is, that, in the present passage, we have a deeper view of the subject—the secret nature of that Church being explained and enforced by describing to us (1) *a special gift*; (2) *a grievous failure*; (3) *a signal success*.

I. A SPECIAL GIFT. According to the first verse, there is something to be "asked of the Lord;" something appointed by him, having its proper "time;" something to be hoped for from him: "the Lord shall give;" something to be hoped for by all: "to every one." It is figured to us as "rain." What does it signify? In the present connection, what can it signify but the gift of God's Spirit (Isa. xlv. 3; Joel ii. 28)? How specially were men taught, in New Testament times, to "ask" for this gift (see Luke xi. 9—13, where men nine times over are encouraged in praying for this very blessing; also John iv. 10; vii. 37—39)! How expressly, again, were those "latter" days the appointed "time" for this blessing (Luke xxiv. 49; John xvi. 7; Acts i. 4)! In what abundant "showers," once more, was it given in these primitive times, as it were, "to every one" "in the field" (Acts ii. 17; viii. 17—19; xi. 17; Gal. iii. 2, 3)! These were some of the things which caused the dispensation then commenced to be called "the dispensation of the Spirit"! In short, without this holy "rain" from above, the strictly "Christian" Church could never have come into existence. Much less, of course, could it have continued alive.

II. A GRIEVOUS FAILURE. The state of things in the Jewish Church at the coming of Christ seems described to us next. In one sense that Church, as a body, though free from the grosser idolatry of earlier days, was worshipping "idols" of its own. Its members trusted to merely external rites, and names, and privileges, and professions (Rom. ii. 17—20; Matt. iii. 9; xxiii. 14, 23, 30, etc.). As a consequence, they never obtained (Jer. xiv. 2, etc.), as they never desired, the gift spoken of here. Failing of this, they failed altogether, notwithstanding all their privileges (Rom. iii. 1, 2), as a Church. This evidenced at the time—as apparently here predicted beforehand—in various ways. For example, by the absence among them: 1. *Of solid knowledge and truth.* "The diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams" (comp. Matt. xv. 14; xxiii. 16, 19, 24, 26; John ix. 40, 41). 2. *Of saving knowledge and truth.* "They comfort in vain" (see Matt. v. 20; Rom. ix. 31; perhaps also Mark x. 20, 21). 3. *Of proper pastoral oversight.* (See end of ver. 2; and comp. Matt. ix. 36.) Also by the presence among them: 4. *Of special judgments* on those who professed (Matt. xxiii. 2) to be "shepherds" (ver. 3). (See Matt. xxiii. throughout, with its sevenfold denunciation of "woe" on the "scribes and Pharisees.") Was there not "failure," indeed, when such language could be used as that found in Matt. xxiii. 33 and xxi. 13?

III. A SIGNAL SUCCESS. 1. *Its nature.* Being the same as that noted before on ch. ix. 14, 15, viz. success in preaching the gospel of Christ and bringing sinners beneath its power. 2. *Its secret.* This found in the fact that, by the coming of Christ, "the Lord of hosts" (ver. 3) had "visited" his people and "flock" (comp. Luke i. 68, 78, 79; vii. 16; and note, in ver. 5, the expression, "They shall fight, because the Lord is with them"). 3. *Its instruments.* These very notable, (1) as being men of "Judah," or Jews (as all the apostles were); men, i.e., belonging to that very Church and people which, in religious matters, as just now noted, had so egregiously failed. Possibly, also, (2) as being, some of them, men like Saul of Tarsus, who, at first, were "oppressors" (see also John i. 46). And certainly, (3) as being able to "read down" obstacles, and "confound" opponents in a very marvellous way (see Acts iv. 13; v. 33; vi. 10; ix. 22; xviii. 28; and perhaps, also, xxvi. 23).

How strikingly all this teaches us the absolute need of the Spirit of God! 1. For all

true religious *life*. It was the absence of this which made the Jewish Church the dead thing (Luke xvii. 37) that it was, like the old world and Sodom (Luke xvii. 27, 29) when Noah and Lot had gone out of them. All their many other privileges (see Rom. ii. 17—20; iii. 1, 2; ix. 4, 5) were of no avail without this. 2. For all true religious *work*. It was the presence of this, secured by that coming and work of Christ which we have supposed to be referred to in ver. 3 (comp. Acts ii. 33), which encountered and overcame both the Jewish Church and the Gentile world (see Acts i. 8; v. 32; 1 Pet. i. 12). How essential, indeed, was that gift, which more than supplied, in one sense, the presence of Christ himself (John xvi. 7—10)!

Vers. 6—12.—*The restoration of Israel*. "And I will strengthen the house of Judah," etc. The separate mention in this passage (vers. 6, 7) of Judah, Joseph, and Ephraim, taken together with that of Gilead, Lebanon, Egypt, and Assyria, in vers. 10, 11, seems an indication that we now have to do especially with Israel "after the flesh." The previous verses spoke of "the times of the Gentiles," and of the great spiritual conquests to be inaugurated amongst the Gentiles during those times by teacher-warriors of Jewish birth. "Jerusalem" itself, however, in all the mean time, was to be "trodden down of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24). What was to happen to it when that long "tribulation" (Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24) should be over? The present passage seems to reply, teaching us, apparently, that the literal Israel should then be restored (1) to their former *favour*; and (2) to their former *inheritance*.

I. THEIR RESTORATION TO FAVOUR. We may notice: 1. *Its reality*; as shown by the expressions, "I will strengthen" (comp. Ps. lxxx. 14, 15, 17); "I will save;" "I have mercy upon them;" "I will hear them" (comp. Ps. lvi. 18—20). 2. *Its universality*; as embracing both "Judah" and "Joseph," the two rival and long-divided leading families of Jacob (see Isa. xi. 13, 14; Jer. iii. 18; Ezek. xxxvii. 16, 17, etc.). 3. *Its completeness*. What "Judah" needs, viz. "strengthening," being accomplished for it; what "Joseph" needs, as having been more heavily punished, viz. "saving," being accomplished for it; and that, in both cases, so effectually as entirely to obliterate the evil past: "They shall be as though I had not cast them off." 4. *Its blessedness*. Causing special rejoicing and exhilaration, like that occasioned through "wine." 5. *Its solidity*. Causing joy in the "heart" (comp. Ps. iv. 7, and context). 6. *Its permanence*. Their "children" sharing in the joy as well as themselves (comp. Isa. lxxv. 22, 23, "their offspring with them").

II. THEIR RESTORATION (APPARENTLY) TO PALESTINE. See, generally, ver. 6, "I will bring them again to place them." And observe, more particularly: 1. *The call*. They are to be summoned aloud ("I will hiss," comp. Isa. v. 26), as people living afar off; also as people belonging to God, because "redeemed;" as rightly also belonging to that place in which they had formerly "increased" so amazingly; and possibly, once more, as having been long intended for this very destiny, like seed "sown" (ver. 9) with the ultimate object of reaping a harvest to correspond. 2. *The response*. However "far off," however widely dispersed, when that call is given, they will "remember" that voice, and hear it; and, together with their children (see end of ver. 9), prepare to return. 3. *The return*. In correspondence with this preparation, they are (1) to be "brought out" of the countries of their dispersion, whether lying, like "Egypt," to the south, or lying, like "Assyria," to the north; and (2) are also, in a manner as wonderful and as humbling to their enemies as when the Red "Sea" and the "river" Jordan in former days had been divided and dried up before them, to be "brought into" their ancient possession; and that further, (3) in such exuberant numbers as not only to occupy the trans-Jordanic region of Gilead, but even a territory like that of Lebanon, almost beyond the limits of ancient Israel; and not, even so, to have sufficient room (end of ver. 10; comp. Isa. xlix. 20). 4. *The happy result*. The strength of their enemies (end of ver. 11) being for ever broken, and they themselves being "strengthened in Jehovah," they shall be able to treat the whole land then as fully their own (comp. Gen. xiii. 14—17); they themselves, also, as God's own people, doing everything therein in his Name (Ps. lxxvii. 6; Micah iv. 5; Col. iii. 17).

These things may teach us, in conclusion: 1. *To take an ever-increasing interest in Israel's lot*. Whether right or wrong in our view of details, the general principle is undoubted. The future history of the world, as its past history, turns on the history

of Abraham's seed (Gen. xii. 3, etc.). 2. *To place ever-increasing confidence in Israel's God.* In whatever circumstances, through whatever vicissitudes, under whatever provocations, how amazingly faithful to his ancient promise (Rom. xi. 1, 28, 29)!

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Prayer for temporal blessings.* I. AGREEABLE TO OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. Dependent. In want. Instinctively turn to God. We have his Word to cheer us; the record of his deeds to comfort us; the testimony of his saints to encourage us.

II. CONDITIONED BY THE NECESSITY OF THINGS. There are limits. Plainly there are things which it would be reasonable, and others which it would be unreasonable and foolish, to ask. "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter," said our Lord. The flight was a necessity, but the time and manner were within the range of things unsettled. This seems hinted at here by the condition, "in the time of the latter rain."

III. SHOULD BE SUBORDINATED TO OUR SPIRITUAL GOOD. The soul is more than the body. It may not be necessary for us to live, but it is necessary that we should abide in the love of God and do his will. "Rain" is symbolic of spiritual blessings. Only God can give rain, and only God can give the quickening, invigorating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

IV. SHOULD BE OFFERED IN HUMBLE SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD. He is infinitely wise and holy and good. Let us trust him, for he cannot will us aught but good.

V. SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY EARNEST USE OF ALL LAWFUL MEANS. It is an old saying that "God helps those who help themselves." Prayer without work is fanaticism and folly; but prayer and work is the highest wisdom and the surest way to success. "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" said the Lord to Moses. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Exod. xiv. 15).—F.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Parable of the rain.* I. MAN'S GREAT NEED. Without rain the ground is impoverished and dead. So is the soul without God. No good fruit.

II. MAN'S GREAT RESOURCE. Not idols or enchantments, not human devices or philosophies, but appeal to God. He will withhold no good from them that walk uprightly.

III. MAN'S GREAT CONSOLATION. 1. *Sweet.* (Cf. Deut. xxxii. 2.) 2. *Timely.* God does not give in an arbitrary way, but according to his own wise and holy laws. When rain is most needed, it is most appreciated. So in spiritual things (cf. P. xliv. 3). 3. *Abundant.* "Showers." Rains sometimes slight, partial, or temporary. Here promise of "abundance of rain" (1 Kings xviii. 41), meeting the needs of all, reaching to the furthest limits of the parched land. 4. *Invigorating and fertilizing.* "To every one grass in the field." Calls for thankfulness and joy.—F.

Ver. 3.—*God's visits to his people.* Indicate—

I. HIS CONCERN FOR THEIR WELFARE.

II. HIS PURPOSE TO DO THEM GOOD.

III. HIS DELIGHT IN THEIR HEALTH AND PROSPERITY. Wordsworth gave as a motto for a dial, "Light, come, visit me." So we should lay open our souls to the coming of God, and welcome his visits.—F.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The strength of states.* I. CAPABLE RULERS. "Corner-stone," on which the fabric rests. The stability of the whole depends on the foundation.

II. JUST ADMINISTRATION. "Nail"—what binds and fixes. The laws must not only be just, but justly applied. Forms of government vary according to the circumstances and needs of the people. There is much truth in Pope's saying, "Whate'er is best administered is best."

III. AMPLE RESOURCES. "Battle bow" may stand for implements of war. Means of defence. The weapons are nothing compared to the men who wield them. True citizens, devoted to the right, giving themselves and their all for the defence of truth and liberty, and for the advancement of the general good.

IV. NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE. Enlightenment. Love of freedom and justice. Purity of domestic life. Superiority to passion and vain-glory. Courage in duty. Power not only to hold their own, but to bear themselves generously towards the vanquished, and to overcome evil with good.

“What constitutes a state?  
Not high-raised battlements or laboured mound,  
Thick walls or moated gate;  
Not cities proud, with spire and turret crowned,  
Nor bays, nor broad arm'd ports,  
Where, laughing at the storm, rich navies ride;  
But men, high-minded Christian men.”

F.

Vers. 5—12.—*Redemption*. I. CONFLICT RESULTING IN VICTORY.

II. VICTORY RESULTING IN UNION. This does not always happen. There have been wars that have bred more wars, and victories that have left strong hates and bitter memories prolonged for generations. Besides, union may be based on defeat in the interest of the conqueror and not of the conquered; more formal than real, more a thing of covenants and legal fictions than the free choice of the people. But here it is real and true. The middle wall of partition has been taken away. Enmity has given place to love. Jealousy and strife, to brotherhood and peace.

III. UNION RESULTING IN HAPPINESS. There have been examples of union with various results. The union of England and Scotland has been productive of the highest good to both countries. The union with Ireland has not been so happy. We see a beautiful example of prosperity under just covenants and laws in the United States of America. Here the highest and best results are foreshadowed. 1. Increase of strength. 2. General freedom. 3. Abounding prosperity.—F.

Ver. 9.—*The hand of God in Jewish history*. I. IN THEIR LONG DESCENT. Origin of nations is generally obscure. As difficult to find as the source of the Nile. The Jews are like their own Jordan. They are the only people that can trace their descent, “Children of Abraham.” Two friends were visiting the museum at Berlin. One said how strange it was to look at the intellectual features of Julius Cæsar, and to think of his triumphal march northward when the Britons were but roving barbarians. “Speak for your own ancestors,” answered the other, who was a Jew; “as for mine, they were singing the psalms of David, and worshipping God as members of his true Church on earth, centuries before Julius Cæsar was born!”

II. IN THE VICISSITUDES OF THEIR HISTORY. “As the modern traveller surveys the remains of the arch of Titus at Rome, he feels bewildered in endeavouring to realize the distant date of its erection; and yet it commemorates only the last of a long series of Jewish dispersions. You read of the fragments of antiquity dug up from the ruins of Babylon, and your mind is carried still further back than by the Roman arch; but the Jew possibly formed that Babylonian brick, and imprinted on it those arrow-headed characters. The pyramids of Egypt take your imagination still further back; the Jew not improbably helped to build the oldest of them. Time was young when God said to Abram, ‘I will make of thee a great nation’” (Dr. Harris). In the various dispersions we see the fulfilment of Scripture (Deut. xxviii. 64—67) and the preparation for the gospel of Christ (Acts ii. 5, 9—11).

III. IN THE PERMANENCY OF THEIR CHARACTER. From Jacob down to our own day we see the same prevailing elements of character. Their very physiognomy is that painted on the walls of Thebes. They are still a separate people. Their purity of blood, their education and training throughout the ages, have raised them high physically and intellectually. In the struggle for existence, they seem an instance of the survival of the fittest.

IV. IN THE GREATNESS OF THEIR DESTINY. Preserved—but why? Surely for some great purpose. Witnesses for God. Servants of righteousness. Ministers of the cross (Rom. xi. 1—27).—F.

Vers. 10—12.—*The great exodus*. From Egypt—the type (cf. Isa. xi. 11—16).

I. THE GATHERING. So now under the gospel. From far and near they come. At the call of Jesus they gather under the banner of the cross.

II. THE PASSAGE. (Ver. 11.) Like children of Israel—pilgrims in the wilderness. Manifold trials. Educated by adversity and prosperity. Course ever onward, under the hand and guidance of God.

III. THE SETTLEMENT. Canaan. Future glory of the Church—in increase and prosperity. "Place not found."—F.

Ver. 12.—*Manliness*. Of the true man, we might ask, as Delilah did of Samson, "Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth?" The answer includes several things.

I. SELF-MASTERY. Reason must rule, and not passion. The Spirit, not the flesh.

II. DIVINE INVIGORATION. Need constant aid. The plant thrives by commerce with the sun, so the soul gains energy from God. The prayer of all true men is that favourite one of David, "Quicken thou me."

III. DEVOTION TO THE RIGHT. Doing evil is dissipation of strength. Doing good brings its own recompense. The Sandwich Islanders believed that the souls of the braves slain in war pass into those who slay them, and that therefore the more a man kills the stronger he becomes. This is true spiritually. It was fabled of the giant Antæus that when he touched the earth he renewed his strength; so when we touch right we are renewed after the image of God.

IV. ASSOCIATION WITH THE NOBLEST. To be allied with the bad is not only criminal, but ruinous. Fellowship with the good elevates and ennobles.

V. GROWING NOBLENES OF CHARACTER. There is the consciousness of advance. Settled principles. Enlarged experience. Progress in faith and godliness. All this prophesies of victory. Peter was far stronger at Pentecost than when he made his great confession; when he wrote his Epistles than when Paul had to withstand him to the face for dissembling at Antioch.

VI. HOPE OF IMMORTALITY. The strength won will never be lost. The life given by God in Christ is everlasting.

"Whene'er right feelings fire thy languid heart,  
Let them not smoulder out in sighs and songs,  
But flash them into living acts forthwith.  
Thus strength Divine shall nerve thy mortal frame,  
And light from upper worlds shall fall upon thy path."

F.

Ver. 12.—*The true life*. I. HOLY CONSECRATION. "In the Name of the Lord." Sincere and thorough renewal of consecration essential to increase of faith and holiness.

II. HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT. "Walking" implies health, freedom, activity. Necessary to the right development of the soul. Not in part, but in all its powers.

III. SPIRITUAL USEFULNESS. Time, talent, opportunity, rightly employed. "Up and down" zeal and diligence in all good.

IV. HAPPY ASSOCIATIONS. We are continually forming associations in life. Places and persons. The result may be good or evil, sad and painful or bright and exhilarating.

V. DELIGHTFUL PROSPECTS. Not only memories to cheer, but the outlook of the future, bright with hope up to the very gates of heaven.—F.

Vers. 1—4.—*God in relation to the good and the bad*. "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field," etc. This chapter is a continuation of the subject with which the former concluded; and the words lead us to observe three facts in relation to the Almighty.

I. HE ATTENDS TO THE PRAYERS OF GOOD MEN. "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain." The abundance of corn promised in the last clause of the preceding chapter

depends upon rain, and this rain God will give in answer to prayer. Observe: 1. *God gives rain.* A pseudo-science would ascribe "rain" and "clouds" and "showers" to what they call the laws of nature; but what these laws are, and how they operate, they cannot tell. The Bible, giving us at once an adequate and an intelligible cause, is more philosophical than any meteorological science. "He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (Ps. civ. 13—15). "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness" (Ps. lxxv. 9—11). 2. *The God who gives rain attends to human prayer.* This is wonderful, but not absurd. Wonderful, that the God who created nature, and presides over it, should condescend to listen to the supplications of such an insignificant creature as man. But it is not absurd, because: (1) Man is greater than material nature. (2) Prayer is a settled law of the Divine government. To cry to the Almighty in distress is an instinct of the soul. Prayer, instead of interfering with the laws of nature, is a law of nature.

II. *HE ABOMINATES THE CHARACTER OF RELIGIOUS IMPOSTORS.* "For the idols [the household gods] have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats." This stands in contrast with the former verse, and is a reason for the duty there enjoined. Their false prophets—attaching themselves to idols and seducing the people to their worship, and those of them who, speaking in Jehovah's name, said, "Thus saith Jehovah," when Jehovah had not spoken, putting in his lips and clothing with his authority the "lies" and "false dreams" by which they sought to entice them from him and from his ways—had ever given promises and "vain comfort," all ending in bitterness and vexation of spirit. They had proved shepherds that only starved and scattered and exposed their flocks, instead of feeding and tending, gathering and protecting, them. "Thus, under such misleading guides, such selfish and unprincipled shepherds, the flock was driven about and 'troubled.' They had 'no shepherd,' no truly faithful shepherd, who took a concern in the well-being of the flock" (Wardlaw). Now, against such impostors, Jehovah says, "Mine anger was kindled." "That the shepherds and the goats," says Hengstenberg, "are the heathen rulers who obtained dominion over Judah when the native government was suppressed, is evident from the contrast so emphatically pointed out in the fourth verse, where particular prominence is given to the fact that the new rulers whom God was about to appoint would be taken from the midst of the nation itself." Are there no religious impostors now, no false teachers, no blind leading the blind, no shepherds fleeing the flocks?

III. *HE WORKS IN ALL FOR HIS PEOPLE.* "Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together." The words teach that all their help came from him. "Out of him came forth the corner," or corner-stone, that upon which the whole building stands firmly. It means that from him comes stability. All stability in moral character, in social order, and political prosperity, is from God. "Out of him the nail." With us a nail is a small thing; but with the Orientals it is not so. It is a large peg in the inside of the room, wrought into the wall when the house was built, and on which are hung the utensils of the household. It means, therefore, support. "Out of him the battle bow." This word is used synecdochically, to represent all effective weapons of war; power to conquer comes from him. "Out of him every oppressor together," or, as Keil renders it, "from him will every ruler go forth at once." Thus God is all in all to the true. Whatever we need comes from him. "Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father."

CONCLUSION. What a sublime view of the Almighty have we here! He is over all nature, yet listening to the prayers of the true; indignant with religious impostors, yet



tolerating their existence and permitting their pernicious influence; sending out from himself all that true souls require to fight bravely and triumphantly the great moral battle of life.—D. T.

Vers. 5—12.—*Victory, unification, and blessedness for the good.* “And they shall be as mighty men,” etc. This paragraph is a continuation of the preceding portions of the chapter. The various statements bring under our notice subjects which, if we give them a spiritual application, are of great and permanent interest, viz. the subjects of *victory, unification, and blessedness.*

I. *VICTORY.* “And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on the horses shall be confounded.” Or, as Hengstenberg renders it, “And they will be like heroes, treading street-mire in the battle: and will fight, for Jehovah is with them, and the riders upon horses are put to shame.” “Though the Jews were forbidden by the Law to multiply horses in battle (Deut. xvii. 16), they themselves figuratively are made Jehovah’s war-horses (Ps. xx. 7), and so on foot tread down the foe, with all his cavalry (Ezek. xxxviii. 4; Dan. xi. 40). Cavalry was the chief strength of the Syro-Grecian army.” This victory was: 1. *Complete.* The enemies were trodden down as “mire in the streets,” and were utterly discomfited. 2. *Divine.* “Because the Lord is with them.” They became victorious through him. 3. *Reinvigorating.* “I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them.” They would be strengthened by their victory, not only in wealth and security, but in courage. 4. *Extensive.* “And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord.” “The prophet had,” says Hengstenberg, “occupied himself first of all with Judah, the centre of the people of God. In ver. 6 he proceeds to speak of Judah and Ephraim together. In this verse, and those which follow, he fixes his attention peculiarly upon Ephraim, which looked in the prophet’s day like a withered branch that had been severed from the vine. He first promises that descendants of the citizens of the former kingdom of the ten tribes will also take part in the glorious conflict, and then announces the return of the ten tribes from their exile, which was to be the condition of their participating in the battle. Now, all these facts connected with this victory apply to that victory the grandest of all—the victory of all true souls over error and wrong. That victory will be *complete.* “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” That victory will be *Divine.* It is the Almighty himself that bruises Satan under their feet. That victory will be *reinvigorating.* Some savages have the belief that the strength of the creature they destroy passes into themselves, and gives new vigour to their frames. Every victory we achieve in morals adds new energy to our souls. This victory will be *extensive.* Millions in heaven have achieved it; millions on earth are achieving it now; the moral conquerors will at last be more numerous than the stars of heaven, or perhaps the sands that gird old ocean’s shores.

II. *UNIFICATION.* “I will hiss for them, and gather them,” etc. There is no sufficient reason for regarding this regathering, *re-collecting* of the world-scattered Hebrews as pointing to that far-distant period which some believe in, viz. the universal restoration of the Jews to their own country. Observe: 1. *The ease with which the regathering will be effected.* “I will hiss [or, ‘whistle’] for them.” The word is understood as referring to a particular whistle used by the shepherd for calling his scattered flock together, or by those who have the care of bees, to bring them into the hive. “As sheep flock together at the well-known call of the shepherd, as bees follow in swarms the shrill note of the bee-master, so should the Lord, by his own means, gather his scattered people from their dispersions, how widely soever distant, and bring them to himself and to their heritage.” With what ease God does his work—a mere look, a breath, a word! “He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.” 2. *The regions to which the regathering will extend.* “And I will sow them among the people [or, as some render it, ‘Though I have scattered them among the nations’]; and they shall remember me in far countries [distant regions]; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.” They had been scattered, not only

through Egypt and Assyria. It does not say that all Jews shall return, but a great multitude is implied. 3. *The scene at which the regathering will take place.* "I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon." This describes the whole of Palestine, with its two boundaries—the eastern, Gilead beyond Jordan; and the northern, that is, Lebanon. Large as that district is, there will not be room for all. "Place shall not be found for them." 4. *The national catastrophes which the regathering will involve.* "And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up." There is evidently an allusion here to their first deliverance from Egypt; and it means that something similar to that event will occur in the course of their regathering (see Exod. xiv. 4—14). "And the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away." The idea probably is that as "the haughty boastings of Sennacherib and the sceptred power of Pharaoh proved alike feeble and unavailing against the might of Jehovah in former days, so should all the combined opposition of the most inveterate enemies prove in days to come. Before him—when he had a purpose to fulfil or promise to his people to accomplish—all pride should be abased, all power baffled, all counsel turned to foolishness." Now there is a unification, of which this is but a faint emblem—the unification of the good of all ages. "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Isaac and with Jacob." What a blessed union is this! What countless millions will it include, and what overturning of the kingdoms of the world will its full realization involve!

III. **BLESSEDNESS.** Here is the highest *strength*. "And I will strengthen them in the Lord." 1. Whether this refers to their national strength, their security in their own country, or moral strength—strength of faith in him—or all, one thing is clear, that to be strengthened in the Lord is the highest strength we can have. The greatest blessing of life is strength: *physical* strength, to do with ease and to endure with patience; *intellectual* strength—strength to master with ease all the great problems of life, and to reach a theory of being in which the understanding can repose free from all disturbing doubt. These strengths are blessings; but *moral* strength—strength to resist the wrong, to pursue the right, to serve Almighty God with acceptance, and to bless the race of man with beneficent influences—this, indeed, is the perfection of our blessedness. This strength, which implies unbounded confidence in the procedure and an unconquerable love for the character of God, is the strength we all need. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," says Paul. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." 2. Here is the highest *exercise*. "They shall walk up and down in his Name, saith the Lord." (1) All living men must walk the road that is "up and down." Human life is made up of "ups" and "downs;" the road is not smooth and level, but rugged and hilly, sometimes up and sometimes down; up to-day and down to-morrow. (2) This road can only be walked happily by walking it in the "Name" of the Lord. A practical recognition of his presence, and of his claims to our supreme reverence and worship. Alas! how few walk this road in the Name of the Lord! They walk it in the name of pleasure, of greed, or of ambition, or, it may be, of intellectual research. Dreary and dangerous is this road without God.

**CONCLUSION.** Let us battle for this *victory*, cease not a stroke until the foe is beneath our feet; let us hail this grand *unification* of souls, hail the time when God shall meet and mingle with all noble and Heaven-born spirits. Meanwhile, let us walk this "up-and-down" road of life in the Name of the Lord. "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, but we will walk in the Name of the Lord" (Micah iv. 5).—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER XI.

**Vers. 1—3.—§ 8.** Restoration to their own land and material prosperity do not free the Israelites from probation or trouble. The prophet, therefore, darkens his late picture with some gloomy shadows. *The Holy Land is threatened with judgment* (vers. 1—3).

**Ver. 1.—Open thy doors, O Lebanon.** The prophet graphically portrays the punishment that is to fall upon the people. The sin that occasions this chastisement, viz. the rejection of their Shepherd and King, is denounced later (§ 9). Lebanon stood in the path of an invader from the north, whence most hostile armies entered Palestine. The “doors” of Lebanon are the mountain passes which gave access to the country. Some commentators, following an old Jewish interpretation, take Lebanon to mean the temple or Jerusalem; but we are constrained to adhere primarily to the literal signification by the difficulty of carrying on the metaphorical allusions in the following clauses. That the fire may devour thy cedars. That the invader may wantonly destroy thy trees which are thy glory and thy boast.

**Ver. 2.—Howl, fir tree.** A species of cypress is intended, or, as some say, the Aleppo pine. It is the tree of which Solomon made floors, doors, and ceiling in his temple (1 Kings vi. 15, 34), and David harps (2 Sam. vi. 5). The prophet dramatically calls on this tree to wait for the fate of the cedar, as being about to suffer the same destruction. The mighty; *μεγιστᾶνες*, “the chieftains” (Septuagint). Trees are being spoken of, and so the primary sense is, “the goodly” (Ezek. xvii. 23) or “glorious trees.” Metaphorically, the chiefs of Israel may be intended. Bashan, famous for its oaks, is next visited by the invading force, and its trees are felled for the use of the enemy. The forest of the vintage. The Authorized Version here follows, very inappropriately, the correction of the Keri. The original reading should be retained and translated, “the inaccessible forest”—an expression appropriate to Lebanon. If Lebanon is not spared, much less shall Bashan escape. LXX., *δ ἄφυκτος δ σάμψυρος*, “the close-planted wood;” Vulgate, *saltus munitus*, “defenced forest.”

**Ver. 3.—There is a voice.** The Hebrew is more terse and forcible, “A voice of the howling of the shepherds!” or, “Hark! a howling,” etc. (Jer. xxv. 34, etc.). The destruction spreads from the north south-

wards along the Jordan valley. Their glory. The noble trees in whose shadow they rejoiced. Young lions. Which had their lairs in the forests now laid waste (Jer. xlix. 19). The pride of Jordan. The thickets that clothed the banks of Jordan are called its “pride” (Jer. xii. 5). The lion is not now found in Palestine, but must have been common in earlier times, especially in such places as the brushwood and reedy coverts which line the margin of the Jordan. The prophet introduces the inanimate and animate creation—trees, men, beasts—alike deploring the calamity. And the terms in which this is depicted point to some great disaster and ruin, and, as it seems, to the final catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the punishment of the rejection of Messiah. This reference becomes plainer as we proceed. It is inadmissible to refer the passage (as some do) to the Assyrian invasions mentioned in 2 Kings xv. 29 and 1 Chron. v. 26. Holding the post-exilic origin of the prophecy, we are bound to interpret it in accordance with this view, which, indeed, presents fewer difficulties than the other.

**Vers. 4—14.—§ 9.** The punishment falls upon the people of Israel because they reject the good Shepherd, personified by the prophet, who rules the flock and chastises evil-doers in vain, and at last flings up his office in indignation at their contumacy.

**Ver. 4.—Thus saith the Lord.** The person addressed is Zechariah himself, who in a vision is commanded to assume the office of the good Shepherd (see ver. 15), and to tend the chosen people, the sheep of the Lord's pasture. God herein designs to show his care for his people from the earliest times amid the various trials which have beset them both from external enemies and from unworthy rulers at home. The flock of the slaughter; rather, *the flock of slaughter*—destined for, exposed to, destruction at the hands of their present shepherds (Ps. xlii. 22; Jer. xii. 3; Rom. viii. 36).

**Ver. 5.—Possessors; or, buyers.** Those who claimed to be owners by right of purchase. Hold themselves not guilty. They are so blinded by self-interest that they see no sin in thus treating the flock. But the expression is better rendered, *bear no blame*, i.e. suffer no penalty, commit this wickedness with impunity. Septuagint, “repent not;” Vulgate, *non dolebant*, which Jerome explains, “did not suffer for it.” Blessed be the Lord. So little compunction do they feel that they actually thank God for their

ill-gotten gains. The prophet is speaking of chiefs and rulers, civil and ecclesiastical, who played into the enemies' hands, and thought of nothing but how to make a gain of the subject people. Our Lord denounces such untrustworthy shepherds (John x. 11—13). Doubtless, too, the expressions in the text refer to the foreign powers which had oppressed the Jews at various times, Egypt, Assyria, etc. Amid all such distresses, from whatever cause, God still had tender care for his people, and punished and will punish their enemies. In this verse the offenders against Israel are of three classes—buyers, sellers, shepherds (see ver. 8). "Shepherd" appears sometimes in the Assyrian inscriptions as a synonym for "prince" (see Schrader, 'Keilinschr.', p. 453).

Ver. 6.—**The inhabitants of the land.** It is a question whether by this expression is meant the Israelites, or the dwellers on earth generally. In the former case, the verse gives the reason of the calamities depicted in ver. 5, viz. God's displeasure, and expounds the parable of the sheep as meaning men (so Cheyne). In the other case, the signification of the paragraph is that God intends to put an end to the state of things just described, by punishing the oppressing world-powers who had so cruelly executed their office of being instruments of God's judgment on his people. The latter seems the correct exposition; for the people of Israel have just been called the flock of slaughter, and they were to be fed, while these "inhabitants" are to be destroyed; nor could the Israelites be said to have kings, as just below. Thus far, at the beginning of the verse, introduces the reason why Jehovah tells the shepherd to feed the flock, because he is about to punish their oppressors; and "the inhabitants of the land" should be "the inhabitants of the earth;" i.e. the nations of the world, among whom the Israelites lived. I will deliver the men, etc. God will give up the nations to intestine commotions and civil war, so that they shall fall by mutual slaughter. Into the hand of his king. Each of them shall be delivered over helpless unto their tyrant's hands, and God will not interpose to succour them.

Ver. 7.—**And I will feed.** Thus the Greek and Latin Versions; but it should be, *So I fed.* It is the account of what the prophet did in accordance with the command in ver. 4 (see the end of this verse, "and I fed"). Even you, O poor of the flock. There is difficulty about the word rendered "you" (*lachen*), which may be the personal pronoun, or an adverb meaning "therefore," "therewith," "truly," or a preposition, "on account of;" Vulgate, *propter hoc*. The best rendering is, *I fed the flock therefore,*

*the poor among the flock.* "Therefore" refers to the previous command. It is also rendered "in sooth." The LXX., arranging the letters differently, translates, Ποιμαίνω τὰ πρόβατα τῆς σφαγῆς εἰς τὴν Χανααντίν, "I will go and tend the flock of slaughter in the land of Canaan;" some render the last words, "for the merchants." This Jerome interprets to mean that the Lord will nourish the Israelites for slaughter in the land of the Gentiles (but see note on ver. 6). And I took unto me two staves. Executing in vision his commission of feeding the flock, the prophet, as the representative of the Shepherd, took two shepherd's staves. The two staves intimate the manifold care of God for his flock from the earliest days, and the two blessings which he designed to bestow (as the names of the staves show); favour and unity. Beauty; Κάλλος (Septuagint); *Decorem* (Vulgate); "Graciousness" (Revised Version margin). It probably means the favour and grace of God, as in Ps. xc. 17. Bands; literally, *Those that bind*; Σχολινισμα, "Cord;" Vulgate, *Funiculum*. The name is meant to express the union of all the members of the flock, especially that between Israel and Judah (see ver. 14). These make one flock under one shepherd. I fed the flock. This repetition emphasizes the beginning of the verse, and expresses God's care in time past and in time to come also.

Ver. 8.—In executing the office of feeding the flock, three shepherds also I cut off in one month; Septuagint, "And I will take away the three shepherds in one month." The article in the Hebrew and Greek seems to point to some known shepherds, three in number, unless we take it as "three of the shepherds." Hence expositors have sought to find historical personages to whom the term might apply. Those who assert a pre-exilian origin for this part of the prophecy, suggest the three kings, Zachariah, Shallum, and Menahem; or, as Menahem reigned ten years, some unrecorded pretender, who started up at the time. Others see some Syrian monarchs in Maccabean times; or the three offices, king, prophet, priest; or the three dynasties that oppressed Israel, viz. the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Macedonian. All these interpretations fail in some point; and we are reduced to see herein a reference, as Cheyne says, to "the prompt and vigorous action of Jehovah's Shepherd in dealing with the evil shepherds, as well as in feeding the flock;" the number three being used indefinitely. Or we may find in this number an allusion to the three classes in ver. 5—the buyers, the sellers, and the pitiless shepherds. The oppressors, external and internal, are removed and cut off in one month. To the

prophet's eye all this seemed to take place in that short space of time. If anything more is intended, we may, with Keil and others, taking the month as consisting of thirty days, assume that ten days are assigned to the destruction of each shepherd, after each had fulfilled his allotted period—the number ten expressing perfection or completion. *And my soul loathed them; literally, but my soul was straitened for them; i.e. was impatient, weary of them.* These words begin a new paragraph, and refer, not to the three shepherds, but to the sheep, the Israelites. The prophet now shows how ill the people had responded to God's manifold care, and mingles with the past a view of their future ingratitude and disobedience which will bring upon them final ruin. God, as it were, was weary of their continual backslidings and obstinate perseverance in evil. (For the phrase, see Numb. xxi. 4; Judg. xvi. 16; Job xxi. 4.) It is the opposite to long-suffering. Their soul also abhorred me. They showed their abhorrence by their devotion to idols and their disinclination for all goodness.

Ver. 9.—*I will not feed you.* In consequence of their contumacy, the shepherd abandons the flock to their fate, as God threatened (Deut. xxxi. 17; comp. the very similar passage in Jer. xv. 1-3). Three scourges are intimated in the succeeding words—plague, war, famine, combined with civil strife. *Eat every one the flesh of another* (comp. Isa. ix. 20). Many see here a reference to the awful scenes enacted when Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans, and intestine feuds filled the city with bloodshed and added to the horrors of famine.

Ver. 10.—*Cut it asunder.* The breaking of the staff "Beauty" indicates that God withdraws his grace and protection; he will no longer shield the people from the attack of foes, as the following words express. *My covenant which I had made with all the people; rather, with all the peoples.* God calls the restriction which he had laid on foreign nations to prevent them from afflicting Israel, "a covenant." Similar "covenants," i.e. restraints imposed by God, are found in Job v. 23; Hos. ii. 20 (18, Authorized Version); Ezek. xxxiv. 25, etc. The restraint being removed, there ensued war, exile, the destruction of the kingdom and theocracy, the subjection of Israel to Gentile nations.

Ver. 11.—*It was broken.* The covenant just mentioned (ver. 10) was broken. *And so the poor of the flock that knewed upon me (that gave heed unto me) waited.* The punishment inflicted on the withdrawal of God's protection had some good result. Though the bulk of the nation took no heed, learned no lesson, yet the humble

and the suffering among them, who paid respect to his words, recognized that what happened was according to God's Word, and knew that all the rest would be fulfilled in due season. This was the effect of the Captivity; it forced the Israelites to see the hand of the Lord in the calamities that had befallen them, and it drove the thoughtful among them to repentance and amendment (Jer. iii. 13, 23; Dan. ix. 3, etc.). The breaking asunder of the first staff refers primarily to the time of the exile, and not to the absolute relinquishment of the flock. One staff is left, and for a time utter destruction is postponed. For "the poor," the LXX. reads, as in ver. 7, "the Canaanians," meaning probably "merchants." Ewald and others, who hold the pre-exilian date of this prophecy, see here an allusion to the invasion of the Assyrians under Pul (2 Kings xv. 19).

Ver. 12.—*I said.* The prophet is speaking in the person of the great Shepherd. *Unto them. Unto the whole flock. Give me my price; my wages.* He asks his hire of the flock, because the flock represents men. Acting far differently from the wicked shepherds, he used no violence or threats. He gives them this last opportunity of showing their gratitude for all the care bestowed upon them, and their appreciation of his tenderness and love. The wages God looked for were repentance, faith, obedience, or, in another view, themselves, their life and soul. It was for their sake he required these, not for his own. *If not, forbear.* He speaks with indignation, as conscious of their ungrateful contempt. *Pay me what is due, or pay me not. I leave it to you to decide.* I put no constraint upon you. So God has given us free will; and we can receive or reject his offers, as we are minded. *So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.* This paltry remuneration displayed the people's ingratitude and contempt. It was the compensation offered by the Law to a master for the loss of a slave that had been killed (Exod. xxi. 32). It was, perhaps, double the price of a female slave (Hos. iii. 2); and the very offer of such a sum was an insult, and, says Dr. Alexander, "suggested an intention to compass his death. They despised his goodness; they would have none of his service; they sought to cut him off; and they were ready to pay the penalty which the Law prescribed for the murder of one of so mean a condition." The word "weigh" was used in money transactions even after the use of coined money rendered weighing unnecessary.

Ver. 13.—*The Lord said unto me.* The Lord takes the insult as offered to himself in the person of his representative. *Cast it unto the potter; Kates abrovs eis to xavcu-*

ῥήσιον, "Lay them in the foundry, and I will see if it is approved;" Vulgate, *Pro-jice illud ad statuarium*; the Syriac and Targum have, "Put it into the treasury" (Mal. iii. 10). This involves an alteration of the text, and is in itself an improbable reading, as God could not be made to tell the prophet to throw this despicable wage into his treasury, unless, perchance, it is said ironically. There may be an undesigned coincidence here. In Matt. xxvii. 5 the council discuss the propriety of putting the thirty pieces of silver into the treasury. But taking our present text as genuine, commentators usually consider the phrase as a proverbial expression for contemptuous treatment; as the Greeks said, ἐς κό-πακας, as the Germans say, "zum Schinder," "to the knacker," and we, "to the dogs." There is, however, no trace elsewhere of any such proverb, nor do we know how it could have arisen; it likewise does not very well suit the last clause of the verse, "I cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." If we substitute the supposed analogous expression, "I threw them to the dogs," we see how unseemly would be the proverb in this connection. The rendering of the Jews in old time, adopted recently by Knabenbauer, "Cast them to the Creator," is considered by Dr. Pusey to be unidiomatic, and involves great difficulties. It seems simpler to consider that the command, "cast it to the potter," implies contemptuous rejection of the sum, and at the same time intimates the ultimate destination to which, in the sight of Omniscience, it was directed. The potter is named as the workman who makes the meanest utensils out of the vilest material. That this was ordered and executed in vision is plain; how much the prophet understood we cannot tell. The ambiguous and highly typical order was explained and fulfilled to the letter by the action of Judas Iscariot, as the evangelist testifies (Matt. xxvii. 5—10). A (*the*) goodly price, etc. This is ironical, of course. Such was the price at which they estimated the good Shepherd's services. Cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. This rejection of the paltry wage took place in the house of the Lord (in the vision), because the insult had been really offered to him, and this was the natural place where oblations would be made; thus the transaction was represented as formal and national. Whether the potter was seen in the temple we know not. The prophet was made to connect him in some way with the business; and we learn from the fulfilment that the potter did in the end receive the money, which was paid for his field applied to an unclean purpose. In Matt.

xxvii. 9 the two verses, 12, 13, with some variations, are quoted as "spoken by Jeremy the prophet." Hence some attribute this part of Zechariah to Jeremiah; and others think that in St. Matthew the present name is a mistake. The probability is that the evangelist did not name any prophet, but that some early transcriber, remembering the purchase of the field in Jer. xxxii. 6—12, attributed the quotation to that prophet. Or we may suppose that inspiration did not extend to all minor details, nor save the writers from unimportant errors.

Ver. 14.—I cut asunder mine other staff. As the flock, by their contemptuous payment, showed their alienation from the Shepherd, so he now, by his symbolical action, shows his rejection of them, and his surrender of them to anarchy, confusion, and ruin. The breaking of the first staff indicated that God withdrew his defensive care; the breaking of the staff called "Bands" signifies the utter dissolution of all the bonds that held the nation together, the civil and social disunion that paved the way for the victory of the Romans, and issued in the final disruption which sent the Jews wandering through the world. This in the vision is represented as the breaking of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel, the component parts of the nation. Thus was hinted the ultimate rejection of the Jews in consequence of their treatment of Christ, the good Shepherd, who came unto his own, and his own received him not (comp. Matt. xxiii. 36—38). This doom is declared more fully in the next section.

Vers. 15—17.—§ 10. *In retribution for their rejection of the good Shepherd the people are given over to a foolish shepherd, who shall destroy them, but shall himself, in turn, perish miserably.*

Ver. 15.—Take unto thee yet (*yet again*) the instruments of a foolish shepherd (comp. Hos. iii. 1). The prophet, in vision, is directed to do as he had done before (ver. 4, etc.), and enact the part of a shepherd, taking the dress, scrip, and crook, which were appropriate to the character; but this time he was to represent "a foolish," i.e. an evil, shepherd; for sin is constantly denoted by "folly" in the Old Testament; e.g. Job v. 2, 3; Ps. xiv. 1; cvii. 17; Prov. i. 7; vii. 22; xiv. 9, etc. (comp. ver. 17).

Ver. 16.—I will raise up a shepherd in the land. God explains the reason of the symbolical character which he directed the prophet to assume. He was going to allow the people to be chastised by an instrument whom he would permit to work his will upon them. As this evil shepherd was to arise to punish them for their rejection of

Messiah, he must represent some person or power that existed subsequent to Christ's death. Many consider that he symbolizes the Romans; but these people could not be deemed to exercise pastoral care over the Israelites, nor could their neglect of this (ver. 17) be attributed to them as a sin; nor, again, did their destruction follow upon the overthrow of the Jewish polity (ver. 18). Others see here a prediction of the coming of antichrist; but the character of "shepherd" does not suit his attributes as given elsewhere; at any rate, this cannot be the primary reference of the symbol, though all evil powers that oppose the Church of Christ are in some sense images and anticipations of antichrist. The genuine reference here is to the native chiefs and rulers ("in the land") who arose in the later times of the nation—monsters like Herod, false Christs and false prophets (Matt. xxiv. 5, 11, 12, 24; Mark xiii. 22), hirelings who made merchandise of the flock, teachers who came in their own name (John v. 43), and deceived the people to their destruction. Which shall not visit those that be cut off; or, *those that are perishing*. This foolish shepherd shall perform none of the offices of a good shepherd; he will not care for and tend those that are in danger of death (Jer. xxiii. 2). The young one; rather, *those that are scattered*; Septuagint, τὸ ἐσκοπισμένον: Vulgate, *dispersum* (Matt. xviii. 12). *That that is broken*. Bruised, or with limb fractured. *Feed that that standeth still*; literally, *that standeth*; i.e. is sound and healthy. This shepherd attended neither to the diseased nor to the healthy sheep. Septuagint, τὸ ἀλόκληρον, "that which is whole." *He shall eat the flesh of the fat.*

He thinks only how to get personal advantage from the flock (comp. Ezek. xxxiv. 2—8). *Tear their claws (hoofs) in pieces*, as some say, by making them traverse rough places, and not caring where he led them; but as such travelling would not specially injure sheep, and as the immediate context is concerned with their treatment as food, it is better to see here a picture of a greedy and voracious man who tears asunder the very hoofs to suck out all the nourishment he can find, or one who mutilates the fattest of his flock, that they may not stray, and that he may always have a dainty morsel at hand.

Ver. 17.—*Woe to the idol-shepherd!* rather, *woe to the worthless shepherd!* literally, *shepherd of vanity, or nothingness*, as Job xiii. 4, "physicians of no value." The LXX., recognizing that no special shepherd is signified, renders, Ὁ οἱ νομαλοῦντες τὰ μάταια, "Alas for those who tend vanities!" St. Jerome, expounding the verse of antichrist, "O pastor, et idolum!" *That leaveth the flock*. Thus Christ speaks of the hireling (John x. 12). *The sword shall be upon his arm, etc.* The punishment denounced is in accordance with the neglect of the shepherd's duties. *The sword* represents the instrument of punishment, whatever it be; the *right eye*, the severity of the retribution (1 Sam. xi. 2). The arm that ought to have defended the flock shall be withered up as by catalepsy; the eye that should have watched for their safety shall be blinded. This is the judgment on the foolish shepherd. Ewald thinks that the passage ch. xiii. 7—9 is out of place there, and belonged originally to the end of the present chapter.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*A final warning*. "Open thy doors, O Lebanon," etc. The prophet, after having foretold (ch. x. 6—12) the great future and final glory of the literal Israel, seems here, as it were, to "hark back" to a previous and very different scene, viz.—as most commentators, both Jewish and Christian, believe—to that which should happen in those evil days when Jerusalem should be destroyed. We noted a very similar transition at the beginning of ch. ix. (comp. also Luke xvii. 24, 25; xix. 11, etc.; 2 Thess. ii. 3). In the present case the destruction predicted seems to be of a threefold description. It was to be a destruction of the nation by being a destruction (1) of their *palaces*; (2) of their *princes*; and (3) of the *people* at large.

I. OF THESE PALACES OR CONSPICUOUS PUBLIC BUILDINGS, in which they came afterwards to glory so much (Matt. xxiv. 1; Mark xiii. 1; Luke xxi. 5). To this interpretation of vers. 1, 2 we seem pointed by the peculiar word "doors;" as also by the fact that the "doors" of the Jewish temple, and almost all its inner linings as well, are said to have been made of cypress ("fir") and cedar (see 1 Kings v. 8, 10); and, if so, we may notice: 1. *How thorough is the nature of the coming destruction*. What the "fire" can "devour" will be utterly destroyed in that way. What the fire cannot devour will "come down," or be levelled. Even if the stones remain, that is, the buildings will perish (see Matt. xxiv. 2, end). Also: 2. *How wide its extent*. All

the buildings they gloried in would thus perish. They would perish thus, (1) however costly, even though almost built, as it were, of the precious cedar (Jer. xxii. 13, 14); and (2) however varied, whether comparable to "cedar," or "oak," or cypress; and finally (3) however strong, or "mighty," even if comparable (see margin) to a "defenced forest." Nothing would save the whole collection of buildings from being utterly "spoiled" and destroyed. Well might those buildings be called upon, in the bold language of prophecy, to "howl" at such an outlook! And abundantly was all this fulfilled when the Roman ploughshares ploughed the ground on which the temple and fortress of Jerusalem had previously stood.

II. OF THE PRIESTS. These are compared, in ver. 3, to "shepherds" and "young lions," as showing, perhaps, on the one hand, what they ought to be to the commonalty of Israel, and, on the other hand, what they ought to be to its foes (see Ps. lxxviii. 70—72; Gen. xlix. 9, 10). We see: 1. How *complete* their destruction. This evidenced (1) by their "howl" of despair. With the destruction of Jerusalem came that of the whole Jewish polity and liturgical service; and with that also for ever departed all the glory of the then ruling classes of Jewry. How great the emphasis, in this connection, of Matt. xxiii. 38! Also (2) by their "roar" of fury like that of young lions, the "pride," or terror, of the whole valley of Jordan, when driven therefrom by its "swelling" (Jer. xlix. 19). What is there that so excites the deepest anger as the utter humiliation of pride (comp. John xi. 48; xii. 10, 11; Matt. xxvii. 18)? 2. How *just* their destruction, and that also in two separate ways. Namely, (1) by their neglect of others. Though they belonged to the flock, as being its "own" shepherds, appointed to tend and care for it, they "pitied" it "not" (contrast Matt. ix. 36). Though the flock belonged to them, as being, in a sense, its "possessors," instead of preserving the flock they "sell" and "slay" it (see Matt. xxiii., almost *passim*). Also (2) by their satisfaction with themselves. They see no sin in their conduct; "they hold themselves not guilty." They even see cause for thankfulness to God in its results: "Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich" (comp. Luke xii. 1; xvi. 14). Can any men more deserve to suffer than those who "glory" thus "in their shame" (Phil. iii. 19)?

III. OF THE PEOPLE AT LARGE—OF THE "FLOCK." Of this destruction, note: 1. *How solemnly it was predetermined.* The very appellation here given, viz. the "flock of slaughter," signifies as much. Almost all, also, that is said respecting the flock—"I will no more pity;" "I will deliver" to evil; "I will not deliver" therefrom—implies as much. 2. *How terribly it was accomplished.* Whether (1) as to extent—the very "land" itself, as well as its "inhabitants," being "smitten" for their sakes; or (2) as to the agency used, the destruction in question being effected partly by their mutual jealousies and internecine contentions as "neighbours," and partly by their common madness in preferring "Cæsar" to "Christ" as their "king." See the well-known account of Josephus, in which the final overthrow of Jerusalem and the Jews is traced almost equally to the unwilling action of Titus without, and the furious folly of the factions within. Under both aspects it was a marvellous case of political self-destruction, as described in this passage.

In conclusion, there are just two other points to observe and admire, viz.: 1. *How inexhaustible is God's mercy!* In this awful scene of destruction, with all its aggravated guilt, shameless hypocrisy, and suicidal infatuation, the light of that mercy is yet not wholly extinguished. There are some in this "flock of slaughter" who are to be "fed" (ver. 4). So, in the case of the Noachian Deluge, and in that of the destruction of Sodom, there were some to be saved. So it is said, also, that in the fearful, final destruction of Jerusalem—and the fact may possibly be referred to in the words now before us—the Christians were saved by their flight to Pella. 2. *How indiscriminating are God's judgments!* The people were guilty here as well as their leaders (Jer. v. 30, 31). Therefore the people are visited with anger as well as their leaders (see Isa. xxiv. 2; Hos. iv. 9). The people, however, being less privileged and instructed, are also, in some measure, less guilty (see Jer. v. 4, 5). The people, therefore, though punished as well, are not punished as much (see above, about some of these being "fed;" also below, in ver. 7, about the "poor of the flock;" compare such passages as Matt. xi. 20—24; Luke xi. 29—32). The acknowledgment of David in Ps. li. 4, end, will be the acknowledgment of all "in that day."



Vers. 7—14.—*A final opportunity.* “And I will feed the flock of slaughter,” etc. Although the “flock” of Israel was ripe for “slaughter”—as we saw in our last—there was to be, nevertheless, a certain measure of pause before that slaughter began (comp. 1 Pot. iii. 20). Israel should hear again, if only once more, an offer of peace. Our present very difficult passage may, perhaps, be understood as describing how such an offer was made to rebellious Israel—just previously to that destruction of Jerusalem which seems predicted in the preceding verses—by our Lord himself (the good Shepherd) and his apostles. Also it seems to describe to us how that final offer was met. These, accordingly, are the two points on which we would speak; viz. (1) that *momentous offer*; and (2) its *momentous results*.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS FINAL OFFER. This seems to be represented to us: 1. By the good Shepherd’s *resolve*. “I will feed the flock”—I will attend to them carefully; I will offer them all they require. Also: 2. By the good Shepherd’s *implements*. These are two, we read, called “Beauty” and “Bands.” By the one we may, perhaps, understand (see Ps. xc. 17; xxvii. 4; ch. ix. 17, *supra*; Isa. lii. 7) the abounding favour and grace and love of the message of Christ. Though he came to a “generation” altogether deserving condemnation and death (Matt. xii. 34, 39; xxiii. 32, 33; Acts ii. 40), he came not to condemn, but to save (John iii. 17; xii. 47; Luke ix. 56). By the other we may, perhaps, understand the special limitation of the personal message of Christ (Matt. xv. 24); as also, in the first instance, of that of his apostles (Matt. x. 5, 6; Acts xiii. 46). There was *especial* favour—there was almost *exclusive* favour—in this final offer of Christ to “his own” (John i. 11, second clause).

II. ITS MOMENTOUS RESULTS. These appear to have been of two very different kinds. 1. In the case of *the Jewish teachers and people at large* they proved to be of a very painful and calamitous kind. On the one hand, these teachers and people contemptuously rejected the gracious offers of Christ. To them there was no degree whatever of “beauty,” either in his character or his teaching (see ver. 8, end; and comp. Isa. liii. 2; John vii. 12, 13; xix. 7; Matt. xxvi. 66; xxvii. 63). By them, therefore, the peculiar favour he offered was utterly scorned (John xix. 15; xviii. 40; and such passages as Acts xiii. 45; 1 Thess. ii. 15, etc.); and he himself, in a certain most remarkable and significant manner, only estimated and valued at the price of a slave (vers. 12, 13; Matt. xxvi. 15; xxvii. 9, 10; Exod. xxi. 32). On the other hand, this being so, both the Saviour’s feelings and conduct towards them became changed. Instead of favour there comes “loathing” (or indignation and grief; see Mark iii. 5; Luke xix. 41—46); instead of a special offer of mercy, the coming down of special judgment, in a singularly rapid and terrible manner, on the highest persons or classes amongst them (“three shepherds in one month”); instead of deliverance, utter desertion (ver. 9 compared with Matt. xxiii. 38; Luke xxi. 22—24); and instead of the limitation of favour to them, the manifest transference of it from them to the rest of mankind (Acts xiii. 46; xviii. 6; xxviii. 28; Rom. xi. 11). 2. At the same time, in the case of the *less esteemed and less eminent* portion of the flock of Israel, there were results of a different kind. In their case the Shepherd’s gracious offer was not only made, but also received. As he resolved (“I will feed even you, O poor of the flock”) in their case, so he did (end of ver. 7; see also Matt. xi. 5; Luke iv. 18; Mark xii. 37). In their case, again, the Shepherd’s message was duly honoured and highly prized as being indeed “the Word of the Lord” (ver. 11, end; comp. Matt. xvi. 16; John vi. 68; xvi. 30). Even that comparative and temporary rejection of the Jews, which we suppose to be described in vers. 8, 9, 10, and 14, contributed greatly among the “poor” of the Gentiles to their establishment in this faith (see, again, ver. 11, and such passages as Rom. xi. 11, 25, beginning of 28, 30; 1 Cor. i. 26).

From this view of the passage—or, at any rate, from this review of those undoubted New Testament facts to which we have supposed it to point—two concluding reflections seem to arise. 1. *How obdurate is man’s nature!* We have become so familiar with the story of the rejection of Christ by his own people, that it does not always surprise us as it ought. Yet how exceedingly surprising it is! Greater power, greater wisdom, greater goodness, could not possibly have been combined. Should we not also have said, at first, that they could not possibly have been resisted? No wonder the apostle speaks with such evident amazement as he does in John i. 11 (*supra*); see also John xii. 11, 37. 2. *How wonderful are God’s ways!* The rejection of Christianity by those to whom it

first came has been overruled to furnish its best evidence in the eyes of the rest of mankind. By crucifying their Messiah the Jews crowned him as ours. It reminds us of the words of the poet—

“From seeming evil still educing good,  
And better thence again, and better still,  
In infinite progression.”

Vers. 15—17.—*A picture of antichrist.* “And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd,” etc. After the experience of the good Shepherd comes the description of the bad; after the right “instruments,” the wrong ones; after the Christ, the antichrist, the person *usurping* the true Christ’s position, that is to say, and so *opposing* his work. See (ver. 17) the “idol-shepherd”—the shepherd making himself the object of worship to his flock; and comp. 2 Thess. ii. 4; Luke iv. 7. Which of the “many antichrists” (1 John ii. 18) to appear in “the last time” is here intended primarily, we do not propose to discuss. It seems safer to take the description as applying to all. So interpreted, it may be understood as setting before us (1) their *true calling*; (2) their *chief characteristics*; and (3) their *final doom*.

I. THEIR TRUE CALLING. They are spoken of here (ver. 16) as “raised up” by God. By this we may understand: 1. That they do not come *without the knowledge of God*. By the typical action enjoined on his prophet (ver. 15), God not only shows here that he foreknew the appearance of these various enemies, but he also foretells it. As the prophet is ordered to do in figure, so will they do in fact (comp. Acts i. 16; 2 Thess. ii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 1; Matt. xiii. 25; and see 1 Cor. xi. 19). 2. Nor yet *without God’s will*. It is the natural tendency of corruption to come to a head, as it were, in this manner. An evil movement never continues long without producing evil leaders to guide it. But they cannot be fully developed till God permits (see the story of Jeroboam, 1 Kings xi. 13, 26, 35; xii. 2, 3; 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7, 8, beginning).

II. THEIR CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS. These appear to be three. 1. *Shameful negligence*. The things to which, in the position assumed by these idol-shepherds, they ought specially to attend are just those they neglect. Where their flocks are in danger (“cut off”), they forsake them; where weak, as the “young,” they pass by them; where “wounded,” they do not “heal” them; where unable to walk (standeth still), they do not “bear” them (see John x. 12, 13; Ezek. xxxiv. 4; and contrast Ezek. xxxiv. 16; Isa. xl. 11; John x. 15). 2. *Shameless selfishness*. Instead of feeding the flock, they feed themselves—“eating the flesh of the fat” (see Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 8, end, 10; also such passages as Matt. xxiii. 14; Luke xvi. 14; 2 Pet. ii. 1—3, 15; Jude 11; and contrast 2 Cor. xii. 15—18). 3. *Unblushing cruelty*. (See end of ver. 16, “tear, their claws in pieces;” and comp. Ezek. xxxiv. 4, end.) These perverters of God’s truth ever become, in due course, the persecutors of God’s people (see Rev. xvii. 6; xviii. 24; xix. 2).

III. THEIR FINAL DOOM. Judgment, though often long delayed, will always come upon them at last. The “sword,” in due time, will descend. Moreover, this judgment, when it does come, will be found: 1. *Peculiarly just*. It is on the negligent “eye,” and the cruel and grasping hand and “arm,” that the punishment comes (compare, perhaps, in Ezek. xxxiv. 16, how it is said of the “fat and the strong,” which had “fed themselves,” “I will feed them with judgment”). 2. *Peculiarly awful*; all their *power* being “clean dried up,” and all their *light* being “utterly darkened.” So 2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xviii. 8, 21, etc.; and compare such passages as 2 Kings ix. 35—37; Ps. ii. 9; Isa. xxx. 14; Matt. xxi. 44; and below ch. xiv. 12.

In contemplating these scenes we may frequently notice: 1. *How great is the forbearance of God*. When we see this succession of enemies permitted to arise and prosper in sowing tares in his field, we may well exclaim as in Rom. ix. 22. Not so would man have acted (Matt. xiii. 28). 2. *How great is the goodness of God*. This forbearance is partly for the sake of those who truly believe in his Name (Matt. xiii. 29); and partly, also (more wonderful still), for the sake of those who do not (Rom. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9). 3. *How great should be the humility of his people*. With our short lives and limited powers and many infirmities both of intellect and of temper, how little we can

understand of that widely scattered, often-shifting, far-spreading, long-enduring campaign of good against evil which he thus permits and directs! Well may even an apostle confess as in 1 Cor. xiii. 9, and beginning of ver. 12! And well may he admonish us all, therefore, as in 1 Cor. iv. 5!

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*Grief for the fall of a leader.* "Howl." This may be held to express—

I. SENSE OF A GREAT LOSS. The death of a good man is always a loss. But there are differences. Some stand higher than others in society. Not only "firs," but "cedars." Great men leaders in Church and state. Hence more deeply missed and mourned. There is not only loss of their work, counsel, prayers, but of their personal influence. There are times when the feeling is intensified. Some great work to do, some difficult enterprise to be carried out; or a national crisis, demanding the service of the wisest and the best.

II. COMPLAINT OF GRIEVOUS WRONG. Death is the lot of all. When it comes in the order of nature, may grieve, but cannot justly complain. But often death comes not of necessity, but through violence and crime. The "axe," which belongs of right to justice, is seized and foully used by tyrants and assassins. So with many of the prophets and apostles. So often in the history of nations—William the Silent, President Lincoln. So in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, when so many great and good men were cruelly murdered.

III. PRESAGE OF DIRE CALAMITY. Dark cloud. The stroke falls. Forecasts the storm. Greater disasters. If the first, the noblest, the usefulest are struck down, who shall escape?

"Freedom shrieked as Kosciusko fell."

LESSONS. 1. *Call to activity.* Close ranks. 2. *Challenge to the living to look to themselves.* We must all fall, but how and with what results? Robert Hall said of Robinson that "he fell like a noble tree." We should live so as to be missed. Better be mourned for, as friends and well-doers gone before, than die unhonoured and unblest.—F.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Oppressors and oppressed.* I. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON OPPRESSORS. Power great thing. Test of character. Few able to use it rightly. Even the "wise man" (Eccles. vii. 7) may have his head turned, and act as if "mad." The "shepherds" false to their awful trust. Hence the people became the prey of oppressors. Merciless, avaricious, godless, neither fearing God nor regarding man. Such oppressors are found in various forms. Landlords and other "possessors" have need to take warning. The people were not made for the land, but the land for the people. Property has its duties as well as its rights. "Unto whom much is given, of them shall much be required." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

II. GOD'S MERCY FOR THE OPPRESSED. The Bible is on the side of the weak, and not the strong; of the wronged, and not the wrong-doer. Prophet after prophet has spoken on behalf of the poor and the needy, and carried their cause to the throne of the Most High. God acts by means. "*Feed:*" 1. *With the gospel of love.* 2. *With the law of righteousness.* Binding on all. 3. *With the hope of immortality.*

"We were weary and we  
 Fearful, and we in our march  
 Fain to drop down and to die;  
 Still thou turnedst and still  
 Beckonedst the trembler and still  
 Gavest the weary thy hand.  
 If, in the paths of the world,  
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,  
 Toil or dejection have tried  
 Thy spirit, of that we saw  
 Nothing; to us thou wast still  
 Cheerful and helpful and firm."

Therefore to thee it was given  
 Many to save with thyself.  
 And at the end of thy day,  
 O faithful Shepherd, to come,  
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand."

(Matthew Arnold.)

F.

Vers. 7—14.—*The true Shepherd.* I. GOD'S IDEA OF THE TRUE SHEPHERD. His character and service. Faithful and disinterested. Not a hireling. He is for the sheep, not the sheep for him. If his recompense left to the free-will of the people, should be adequate and fair. "The workman is worthy of his hire." But the wage should be given in more than material form. "Themselves." Their trust, sympathy, prayers, and hearty co-operation in all good. "I seek not yours, but you," said Paul.

II. MAN'S TREATMENT OF THE TRUE SHEPHERD. 1. *Grossly unjust.* Remuneration mean and paltry. Not measured by the work done, but doled out by selfish and stupid hands. 2. *Basely insulting.* Instead of just appreciation, mockery. Put on the level of a slave. Such remuneration worthy of scorn. *Away with it.* 3. *Darkly menacing.* Take it or leave it. Nothing to us. Starve if you will. Murder is in their hearts. 4. *Reveals the baseness of the heart.* Indicates great social degeneracy. Fore-shadows the rejection of the Saviour (Matt. xxvii. 9, 10). Let us endeavour to be true to God's idea.

"The Christian pastor, bow'd to earth  
 With thankless toil, and vile esteem'd,  
 Still travelling in second birth  
 Of souls that will not be redeem'd:  
 Yet steadfast set to do his part,  
 And fearing most his own vain heart."

(Keble.)

F.

Vers. 7—10.—*The two staves.* Acted parable. May be taken to illustrate the two great blessings of Christ's kingdom.

I. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD. "Beauty" may indicate the covenant of peace. God's grace restraining, preserving, governing. "Broken." Sign of judgment and woe. "Ichabod!" But as whole, emblem of the fatherly love and care of God, and the fairness and beneficence of his rule.

II. BROTHERHOOD OF MAN. National covenant. Union of Judah and Israel. One people under the rule of Jehovah. Fulfilled in part in the restoration; more perfectly, and in a spiritual sense, under the gospel of Christ. His kingdom is one. In him all the kindreds of the earth shall be blessed (Gal. iii. 28; Eph. ii. 14—22).—F.

Vers. 15—17.—*The evil shepherd.* I. CHARACTER. Vain. Selfish. Hypocritical. Greedy of gain and popularity. Worthless for real good. Permitted, but not approved.

II. OFFENCE. 1. *Coldness.* No "pity." His heart is not in his work. 2. *Neglect.* Takes no pains to seek out the poor and needy. Does not "visit." 3. *Unfaithfulness.* No warnings. False teaching. Making gain of godliness. God's ideal of the shepherd lost. God's benign purposes in the ministry of grace frustrated. Souls perish, and their blood calleth from the ground.

"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
 But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:  
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace, and nothing fed:  
 But that two-handed engine at the door  
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

(Milton, 'Lycidas.')

(Cf. Ruskin's exposition in 'Sesame and Lilies.')

III. Doom. "Woe." 1. *Hardened in evil.* Degradation. Judicial blindness. 2. *Cursed with uselessness.* 3. *Destined to destruction.*

"Alas, my brother! round thy tomb  
In sorrow kneeling and in fear  
We read the pastor's doom,  
Who speaks and will not hear."  
(Keble.)

F.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The cedars, fir trees, and oaks of society.* "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down." This chapter, it has been said, divides itself into three sections. 1. The threat of judgment (vers. 1—3). 2. The description of the good Shepherd (vers. 4—14). 3. The sketch of the foolish shepherd (vers. 15—17). The expression, "Open thy doors [gates], O Lebanon," is, of course, quite dramatic in style. "The prophet, instead of announcing to Lebanon its future destruction, commands it as the servant of God to open its gates; the meaning therefore is, 'Thou Lebanon wilt be stormed and devastated by the foe'" (Hengstenberg). Lebanon, here, may be regarded as a symbol of the kingdom of Judah, its cedars as denoting the chief men of the kingdom. We shall take the words to illustrate three subjects in relation to mankind—a variety of distinction, a common calamity, and a natural alarm.

I. A VARIETY OF DISTINCTION. The "cedar" here, the "fir tree," or cypress, and the "oaks," are employed to set forth some of the distinctions that prevailed amongst the Hebrew people. Now, whilst all men have a common origin, a common nature, and common moral obligations and responsibilities, yet in every generation there prevails a large variety of striking distinctions. There are not only the cedars and fir trees, but even briars and thistles. There is almost as great a distinction between the highest type of man and the lowest as there is between the lowest and the highest type of brute. In the great forest of every generation there are a few tall cedars and oaks rising in majesty above all the other trees, down to mere brushwood and even fungi. There are intellectual giants and intellectual dwarfs, moral monarchs and spiritual serfs. This variety of distinction in the human family serves at least two important purposes. 1. *To check pride in the highest and despondency in the lowest.* The cedar has no cause for boasting over the fir tree or over the humblest plant: it owes its existence to the same God, and is sustained by the same common elements. And what have the greatest men—the Shakespeares, the Schillers, the Miltons, the Goethes—to be proud of? What have they that they have not received? And why should the weakest man despond? He is what God made him, and his responsibilities are limited by his capacities. 2. *To strengthen the ties of human brotherhood.* Were all men of equal capacity, it is manifest that there would be no scope for that mutual ministry of interdependence which tends to unite society together. There are the givers and the receivers; the delight of the former is in his gifts, the hope of the latter is in the helps he receives. The strong rejoices in bearing the infirmities of the weak, and the weak rejoices in gratitude and hope on account of the succour received. Between the least and the greatest, therefore, in human society there is ample scope afforded for the full play of the faculties, the sympathies, and the services of all.

II. A COMMON CALAMITY. "Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen." An expression which implies that the same fate awaits the fir tree. There is one event that awaits men of every type and class and grade, the tallest cedar and the most stunted shrub, and that is, *death*. "All flesh is grass;" "Wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others." 1. This common calamity *levels all distinctions.* The cedar and the fir tree—if not cut down by the woodman, scathed by the lightning, or uprooted by the tempest—must sooner or later rot, and their dust mingle with the earth; so with men of all distinctions, the prince and the pauper, the cedar and the bramble in the human forest, must bow to the stroke. "Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever." 2. This common calamity should *dematerialize all souls.* Since we

are only here on this earth for a few short years at most, why should we live to the flesh, and thus materialize our souls? Here we are only pilgrims, and we should be in quest of "the city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." To see the pinions of the noble eagle, made to pierce the clouds and bask high up in sunlight, buried in a foul pool of mud, is a lamentable sight; but ten thousand times more terrible is the sight of a human soul immersed in matter.

III. A NATURAL ALARM. "Howl, fir tree." It is the howl, not of rage, not of sympathy, but of alarm. The principle of alarm here implied is that when the higher falls the lower may well take the alarm. If the cedar gives way, let the cypress look out. This principle may apply to: 1. *Communities*. Amongst the *kingdoms* of the earth there are the "cedar" and the "fir tree." Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome,—these were cedars; they have "fallen." Let the smaller ones take the alarm. England is a "cedar," but it must fall; it has, I fear, even now the marks of decay on it; its multiplying branches of ambition are exhausting its roots. Its fall, when it comes, will be a just warning to all the smaller states of the world. The same may be said of *markets*. There are the "cedars" in the commercial world, great houses regulating almost the merchandise of the world. Some have recently fallen, others are falling: let the "fir trees" take the alarm and be cautious. 2. *Individuals*. When men who are *physical* "cedars," strong and stalwart, whose build is almost like the gnarled oak, fall, let weaker men take the alarm. When men who are *moral* "cedars," majestic in character and mighty in beneficent influences—great preachers, authors, philanthropists—fall, let the less useful take the alarm, still more the useless. "Howl, fir tree, for the cedar is fallen." This was the text of the funeral sermon which the famous Mr. Jay, of Bath, preached on the equally famous Rowland Hill; and commenting on it he spoke eloquently concerning the impressions made by the death of a man of mark.—D. T.

Ver. 3.—*Bad men in high office*. "There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled." We have here two subjects of thought.

I. BAD MEN IN HIGH OFFICE. The men referred to here are called "shepherds," which is a designation of men in power, men who politically and ecclesiastically presided over the people—the leaders. Communities of men everywhere and in all times have had "shepherds," men who guided and ruled them. These "shepherds" have sometimes reached their position irrespectively of the will of the people, sometimes with the will of the people, sometimes against the will of the people. In this country we have a number of "shepherds," politically from the mayor to the queen, ecclesiastically from the assistant curate to the archbishop. The "shepherds" referred to in the text had unfortunately what, alas! the leaders of the people in all ages have too frequently had—an ambitious character. Hence they are here called, "young lions," "a voice of the roaring of young lions;" or, as Keil has it, a "loud roaring of the young lions." They were *hungry, ravenous, and rapacious*, fattening upon the people of their charge. Elsewhere they are represented as "ravening wolves." How often have men in high office, both in state and Church, been of this character! Such as they care nothing for the people, only so far as they can make use of them, feed and fatten on them. Observe: 1. *That a man in high office who has a bad character is of all men the most contemptible*. A bad character in a pauper makes him contemptible; but a bad character in a king makes him ten times the more contemptible. When God commands us to honour our parents, and to honour the king, it implies that the parents and the king are honourworthy; if they are corrupt in character, they should be dishonoured and denounced. 2. *That it is the duty of all peoples to promote those alone to high office who have a high moral character*. Alas! they have not done so; hence they have often had unworthy magistrates, judges, kings, bishops.

II. BAD MEN IN HIGH OFFICE GREATLY DISTRESSED. "There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled." "The glory of these shepherds being spoiled," says Wardlaw, "signifies the bringing down of all their honour and power, and the wealth and luxury which, by the abuse of their power they had acquired, all becoming a prey to the sacking and pillaging besiegers. The pride of Jordan lay in its evergreens and brushwood with which its banks were enriched and adorned; and these being the

covert and habitation of the young lions, the two parts of the figure are appropriate. As the lions howl and roar in dismay and fury when dislodged from their refuges and dwelling-places, whether by the swelling flood sweeping over their lairs, or from the cutting down or the burning of their habitations, so should the priests and rulers of Jerusalem be alarmed and struck with desperation and rage, when they found their city, within whose walls they had counted themselves secure from the very possibility of hostile entrance, laid open to the outrage of an exasperated enemy, and all its resources given up to plunder and destruction—country as well as city thrown into confusion and desolation! Such rulers may well be distressed. Let them howl: 1. *Because all the keen-sighted and honest men over whom they preside despise them.* Though the hordes of miserable sycophants worship them on account of the glitter and pageantry of their elevated position, the Carlyles, the Thackerays, and the unsophisticated millions regard them with ineffable disdain. 2. *Because the righteous Governor of the world has denounced them.* “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (Matt. xxiii. 14, etc.).—D. T.

Vers. 4, 5.—*Oppressed people, and their oppressors.* “Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.” Notice two things.

I. HERE IS A DUTY ENJOINED TOWARDS OPPRESSED PEOPLES. “Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock [sheep] of the slaughter.” These shepherds, these rulers of the Hebrew people, “slaughtered” the people. Without figure, oppressed peoples are “slaughtered”—slaughtered, though they continue to exist, by unrighteous exactions. Their rights are “slaughtered,” their energies are “slaughtered,” their liberties are “slaughtered,” their independency is “slaughtered,” their means of subsistence and advancement are “slaughtered.” People “slaughtered” in these respects abound in every state and place in Europe. Alas! millions of them groan out a miserable existence in this highly favoured land of ours. What is our duty to these oppressed ones? “Feed the flock.” “Feed” them: 1. *With the knowledge of their rights as men.* Their rights as citizens to make their own laws, their rights as religionists to worship their own God in their own way, to form their own convictions and to work them out according to the dictates of their own conscience. 2. *With the knowledge of the true methods to obtain these rights.* Not by violence and spoliation, but by moral means, by skilful industry, by temperate habits, by economic management, by moral suasion, by skilful, honest, and persevering industry. 3. *With the knowledge of worthy motives by which to obtain these rights.* Teach them that they should struggle for their rights, not for their own selfish aggrandizement, nor for the crushing of others, but in order fully to develop and honour the nature with which Heaven has endowed them. Let the oppressed peoples of Europe be thus fed by a Christly ethical education, and despotism will soon be swept from the face of the earth.

II. HERE IS A SKETCH OF THE AUTHORS OF OPPRESSION. 1. *They are cruel.* “Whose possessors slay them.” Not only destitute are they of all practical sympathy for the rights and comforts of the people, but they treat them with a heartless inhumanity, they kill them. 2. *They are impious.* In all their cruelties they “hold themselves not guilty.” The greatest despots of the world have ever been ready to justify themselves to their own consciences. Rulers have been found in all ages, and are still found, who, in originating and conducting the most cruel wars, “hold themselves not guilty.” In war, the most fiendish of all the fiendish enterprises of wicked humanity, they have no qualms of conscience. 3. *They are avaricious.* “And they that sell them, say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich.” A miserable greed was their inspiration; they hungered, not only for power, but for wealth; and so base were they in heart that they hypocritically

thanked God for the riches which they had won by their cruelty and injustice. "Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich." There are men who say this now, men who say, "Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich," not thinking how the riches have come. The history of fortune-making is too often the history of crime.

CONCLUSION. Let it be ours to "feed," by wholesome knowledge, those who are "slaughtered" by oppression—political slaves and priest-ridden dupes.—D. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*A terrible doom, and an invaluable privilege.* "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock." These words contain two subjects.

I. A TERRIBLE DOOM. "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them." What is the doom? *The abandonment of God.* 1. *This abandonment came after great kindness.* For long centuries he had manifested the greatest kindness to the Hebrew people. From their rescue from Egypt down to this hour he had been merciful to them. He warned them, he threatened them, he besought them, he chastised them. Many a time they had provoked him, but still he bore with them. But now he delivers them up. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." 2. *This abandonment involved inexpressible ruin.* They were given up to the heathen cruelty of one another and to the violence of foreigners. What more terrible fate can befall people than this? If God abandons us, what are we? This will be the doom of the finally impenitent, "Depart from me."

II. AN INVALUABLE PRIVILEGE. "I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock." "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." In Christ, the great God acted thus in a most manifest and impressive way. He came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion towards them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." "I am the good Shepherd," said Christ.

CONCLUSION. Thank God, we are not *abandoned* yet. God is with us as a Shepherd. He is seeking the lost and feeding those who are in his fold. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."—D. T.

Ver. 8.—*A mutual dislike between God and man.* "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me." It would be idle to attempt to ascertain who are intended by the "three shepherds" that were "cut off in one month," and who are here represented as abhorring God and "loathed" by him. In running through the various conflicting explanations, as given by biblical critics, we feel such a task would be utterly hopeless and a waste of time. We take the words in order to illustrate a *mutual dislike between God and man*. That such a mutual dislike exists is proved by the moral history of the world, the consciousness of individuals, and the testimony of the inspired Word. Between God and man there is a mutual moral antagonism. We offer four general remarks on this subject.

I. *THIS MUTUAL MORAL ANTAGONISM IS MANIFESTLY ABNORMAL.* It is not conceivable that the all-wise and all-loving Maker of the universe would create beings whom he would loathe and who would abhor him. Such an idea is opposed at once to our intuitions and our conclusions. The Bible assures us, in language most explicit and in utterances most frequent, that mutual love, similar to that which exists between the most affectionate parents and their children, was that which existed in the pristine state of humanity. God loved man, and man loved God.

II. *THIS MUTUAL MORAL ANTAGONISM IMPLIES WRONG ON MAN'S PART.* For Infinite Purity and Righteousness to *loathe* the corrupt and the wrong is not only right, but a necessity of the Divine character. He abhorreth sin; it is the "abominable thing"



which he hates. This is his glory. But for man to *abhor* him, this is the great sin, the fatal sin, the source of all other sins. To abhor the infinitely Loving and Lovable is, indeed, a moral enormity. They "hated me without a cause."

III. THIS MUTUAL MORAL ANTAGONISM EXPLAINS THE SIN AND WRETCHEDNESS OF THE WORLD. Why does the world abound with falsehoods, dishonesties, and oppressions, unchastities, cruelties, and impieties? Because human souls are not in supreme sympathy with the supremely Good, because they are at enmity with God, and not "subject to the Law of God." And why all the miseries of humanity? Because God loathes sin.

IV. THIS MUTUAL MORAL ANTAGONISM ARGUES THE NECESSITY FOR A RECONCILIATION. The great want of the world is the reconciliation of man to the character and the friendship of God. Such a reconciliation requires no change on God's part. His loathing is the loathing of love—love loathing the wrong and the self-made miserable. The change must be on man's part. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Christ is the Atonement, the Reconciliation.—D. T.

Vers. 8—11.—*Divine rejection.* "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people." The subject of these words is *Divine rejection*. A time comes in the history of incorrigible nations and incorrigible individuals when they are rejected of Heaven. David said to Solomon, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chron. xxviii. 9). The text gives us the cause, the result, and the sign of this lamentable event.

I. THE CAUSE. "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me." A mutual moral antagonism (as we have seen) between man and God. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" The sinners' character becomes so repugnant to the Almighty that his patience is exhausted, and their rejection is the result. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man;" "Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone." There is a limit to the Divine forbearance. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" "Depart from me, I never knew you;" "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; . . . I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

II. THE RESULT. The results here are threefold. 1. *The cessation of Divine mercy.* "I will not feed you." You are no longer my sheep; no longer will I minister to your needs. 2. *Abandonment to self-ruin.* "That that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off." "The wages of sin is death;" "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Let the elements of moral destruction do their work. 3. *Deliverance to mutual tormentors.* "And let the rest eat every one the flesh of another." All these results were realized in a material sense in the rejection of the Jewish nation. Josephus tells us that in the destruction of Jerusalem pestilence, famine, and intestine discord ran riot amongst the God-rejected people. These material evils are but faint emblems of the spiritual evils that must be realized by every God-rejected soul.

III. THE SIGN. "And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people." The Divine Shepherd is represented as having two staves, or crooks; ordinary shepherds have only one. Expositors, in their interpretation of these staves, differ here as in many places elsewhere in this book. Some say they indicate the *double* care that the Divine Shepherd takes of his people; some, the different methods of treatment pursued by the Almighty Shepherd towards his people; some, that they refer to the house of Judah and to the house of Israel, indicating that neither was to be left out in the mission of the work of the good Shepherd; and some that the one called "*Beauty*"—which means grace—represents the merciful dispensation under which the Hebrew people had been placed; and the other staff, called "*Bands*," the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. One thing seems clear, that the

cutting of the staff called "Beauty" asunder was a symbol of their rejection from all future grace and mercy. It may be stated, as a general truth, that all Heaven-rejected souls have signs of their miserable condition. The sign of Samson was loss of strength; "he wist not that the Lord was departed from him," until his strength was put to the test and he failed. What are the general signs? 1. Practical ignorance of God. 2. Utter subjection to the senses. 3. Complete devotion to selfish aims. 4. Insensibility of conscience.

CONCLUSION. Let us not trifle with the patience of God, lest he cast us off for ever; but rather let us earnestly and perseveringly cultivate a stronger and more vital sympathy with him, and a closer identification with his loving heart and benevolent aims.—D. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*A model spiritual teacher.* "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." Why these words should have been referred to by the Evangelist Matthew (xxvii. 9, 10), and applied to Christ and Judas, I cannot explain. Nor can any one else, judging from the conflicting interpretations of biblical critics. Matthew not only misquotes the words, but ascribes them to Jeremiah, and not to Zechariah. The probability is that the "thirty pieces of silver" and the "potter's field," in connection with Judas, reminded the evangelist of these words, brought them to his memory, and from his memory he quotes them; for he gives them very incorrectly, neither according to the Greek version nor the original Hebrew. As the words, as they stand here, have an historical meaning entirely independent of St. Matthew's application of them, they may be fairly employed to illustrate a *model spiritual teacher in relation to secular acknowledgments of his teachings*. Three things are suggested concerning the shepherd in this capacity.

I. HE LEAVES THE SECULAR ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO THE FREE CHOICE OF THOSE TO WHOM HIS SERVICES HAVE BEEN RENDERED. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear." He does not exact anything, nor does he even suggest any amount. He leaves the matter entirely to themselves, give or not give, give this amount or that. This is as it should be. Ministers, whilst they have a Divine claim to a secular remuneration of their services, are neither authorized nor are they *disposed*, if they are true teachers, to enforce their claims upon the reluctant. "We have not used this power," says Paul (see 1 Cor. ix. 9—17). It may be asked—Why should the temporal support of the spiritual teacher be left entirely to the choice of the people? 1. Because contributions that are entirely free are the *only proofs to the minister that his services are really valued*. What proof is there in the amounts raised by tithes or rates, or, as in some Nonconformist Churches, by *diacunate guarantees*, that the service of the existing minister has been really valued? 2. Because the contributions that are entirely free are the *only contributions that are of any moral worth*. Those who give from custom or law, or in any way reluctantly, without a "willing mind," have no claim to moral credit; their contributions, however large, are counted worthless in the empire of virtue.

II. HIS SPIRITUAL SERVICES ARE SOMETIMES SHAMEFULLY UNDERRATED. "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Thirty shekels. An amount in our money of about £3 3s. 9d. This was the price they put on his services, just the price paid for a bond-servant (Exod. xxi. 32). 1. *Do not determine the real worth of a spiritual teacher by the amount of his stipend*. This is often done: all fools do this. Yet who does not know ministers who get for their labours £100 a year who are of far higher character, and render nobler services than many who get their £500, and even £1000? The fact is, the minister who wants a large income, as a rule, must get a large congregation; and he who would get a large congregation must pander to popular prejudices and tastes. 2. *Deplore the backwardness of the world in appreciating the highest services*. The highest service one man can render another is the impartation of those Divine ideas that will most quicken, invigorate, and ennoble his mind. But such services are, alas! the least valued. Men will pay their scullery-maid or their groom a larger sum every year than they pay their minister. "Thirty shekels," £3, for a minister;

£100 for a horse! Curates are starving, whilst cooks, dressmakers, and tailors are getting fat.

III. HIS INDEPENDENT SOUL REPUDIATES INADEQUATE SECULAR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. "And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." He felt the insult of being offered such a miserable sum. "Cast it unto the potter"—perhaps a proverbial expression, meaning, "Throw it to the temple potter." "The most suitable person to whom to cast the despicable sum, plying the trade, as he did, in the polluted valley (2 Kings xxiii. 10) of Hinnom, because it furnished him with the most suitable clay." A true teacher would rather starve than accept such a miserable acknowledgment for his services. Your money perish with you!

CONCLUSION. Oh for ministers of this lofty type!—ministers who feel as Paul did when he said, "I seek not yours, but you" (2 Cor. xii. 14).—D. T.

Vers. 15—17.—*Fraudulent shepherds of the people.* "And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol-shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." "After Israel has compelled the good Shepherd to lay down his shepherd's office, in consequence of its own sin, it is not to be left to itself, but to be given into the hand of a foolish shepherd, who will destroy it. This is the thought in the fresh symbolical action" (Keil). The "foolish" shepherd means the charlatan, or fraudulent ruler. Here we have—

I. FRAUDULENT SHEPHERDS OF THE PEOPLE DESCRIBED. We learn here: 1. *That their existence is a Divine permission.* "I will raise." In biblical phraseology, the Almighty is frequently represented as doing that which he only permits. Thus he is said to have "hardened Pharaoh's heart." He here practically respects that freedom of action with which he has endowed the human soul. Here, in this scene of probation, he allows it ample scope. Whilst he does not originate aught that is bad in the worst of men, he permits the worst of men to work out the bad that is in them, and to rise sometimes even to the highest positions in human society. In doing this, three purposes are answered. (1) *He inflicts punishment here upon the guilty by the agency of wicked men.* The Herods, the Neros, the Alexanders, the Bonners, and the most corrupt occupants of the papal chair become his instruments in the punishment of a guilty generation. For this purpose, it is intimated, these "foolish shepherds" were now raised up. (2) *He reveals to the universe the enormity of human depravity.* When bad men are allowed to reach the highest offices in Church and state, and give free scope and unrestrained development to all that is bad within them, an opportunity is afforded to all moral intelligences of receiving such an impression of the enormity of moral evil as otherwise would be impossible. (3) *He furnishes the most powerful assurance of future retribution for mankind.* To allow wickedness such liberty as this, liberty to rise to the highest positions, and to gratify its vilest propensities for ever, would be to condemn him in the eyes of the universe as an unrighteous Ruler. 2. *That under the profession of blessing their race, they are its greatest curse.* There are three features of wickedness in the character here described. (1) *Negligence.* "Which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still;" or, as Keil translates it, "That which is perishing will he not observe, that which is scattered will he not seek, and that which is broken will he not heal; that which is standing will he not care for." The groans of the people affect them no more than the roar of the breaking billows affects the granite cliffs. (2) *Selfishness.* "He shall eat the flesh of the fat." These fraudulent guides and guards of the people feed and fatten on their miseries. (3) *Cruelty.* "And tear their claws [hoofs] in pieces." If the people yield not to their exactions, contribute not to their aggrandizement, they will pounce upon them like hungry hounds, despoil them of their property, rob them of their liberty, and persecute them even unto death. "This," says Dr. Wardlaw, "was not a just character of Herod only, there were many such negligent, selfish, cruel

pretenders; false Christs and false prophets abounded, abounded then and abound now."

II. FRAUDULENT SHEPHERDS OF THE PEOPLE DENOUNCED. "Woe to the idol-shepherd!" Here is the doom of those "idol-shepherds"—idol because vain and worthless. "The woe pronounced," says an able expositor, "is striking and impressive. 'The sword shall be upon his arm and upon his right eye.' The sword is the sword, doubtless, of the invading foe. The faithless shepherd shall be among its surest victims. The 'arm,' which ought, as the emblem of power, to have been employed in defending the flock, shall be smitten and 'dried up:' he shall lose all power, not only for their protection, but, on account of his neglect of them, for his own. His 'right eye,' which, as the emblem of knowledge and vigilance and foresight, should have guided the flock, and been ever on the watchful look-out after every member of it, shall be 'utterly darkened.' Visited by a righteous God with judicial blindness, he shall grope in the noonday as in the night, deceiving and being deceived, and shall utterly perish in his own delusions."

CONCLUSION. Beware of "wolves in sheep's clothing." "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1.—ch. xiv. 21.—B. THE SECOND BURDEN.

Vers. 1—9.—§ 1. The prophet proceeds to announce Israel's conflict with heathen powers. *Hostile nations gather together against Jerusalem, but shall themselves be overthrown; for the people and their leaders, trusting in the Lord, overcome all opposition.*

Ver. 1.—The burden of the word of the Lord for (concerning) Israel. This is the title of the second oracle, corresponding to that at the head of ch. ix. Though the literal Israel has been rejected, as we saw in the last "burden," a new people of God arises (Hos. i. 10), the Messianic theocracy, which is also called Israel, whose fortunes the prophet herein delineates, describing its probation, its contests, triumph, and development. The body is like its Head; as the good Shepherd, Christ, was persecuted and rejected, so his members, the true Israelites, suffer at the hand of the world and Satan, before they are finally glorified. Some critics suppose that "Israel" here is written by mistake for "Jerusalem," as possibly in Jer. xxiii. 6 (see note on ch. i. 19). It is best to put a full stop after "Israel," and begin a new sentence with "Thus saith the Lord," or "The saying of Jehovah." Which stretcheth forth the heavens, etc. (comp. Isa. xlii. 5; Amos iv. 13). The attributes of God are mentioned here that all may believe that what he has promised, that he is able to perform. He is not only the Creator, but also the Preserver of all things (Ps. civ. 2—4; Heb. i. 3). *Formeth the spirit of man within him.*

God creates the souls of men, and moulds and guides them. In life and death men work out his purposes (Numb. xvi. 22; Heb. xii. 9).

Ver. 2.—A cup of trembling; a bowl of reeling—a bowl whose contents cause staggering and reeling, *ὡς πρόθυρα σαλευόμενα*, "as tottering porticoes" (Septuagint); *superliminare crapulæ* (Vulgate). This Jerome explains to mean that any one who crosses the threshold of Jerusalem in hostile guise shall totter and fall. Jerusalem is the capital and type of the Messianic theocracy; the hostile powers of the world crowd round her, like thirsting men round a bowl of wine; but they find the draught is fatal to them; they stagger back discomfited and destroyed. The figure of the cup and drunkenness is often employed to denote the judgment of God upon transgressors, which makes them incapable of defence or escape (comp. Isa. li. 17; Jer. xxv. 15, etc.; li. 39, 57; Hab. ii. 16). The people; the peoples (so vers. 3, 4, 6). The heathen nations who war against God's people. When they shall be in the siege, etc. This gives a good sense, but the Hebrew will not allow it. Septuagint, *Ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἔσται περὶ ὅλης τῆς Ἰερουσαλὴμ*, "In Judæa there shall be a blockade against Jerusalem;" Vulgate, *Sed et Juda erit in obediōne contra Jerusalem*, which may mean that Judah shall be among those that besiege Jerusalem, or when Jerusalem is beset Judah shall suffer the same calamity. Pusey and Revised Version render, "And upon Judah also shall it [i.e. 'the burden'] be in the siege against Jerusalem." Cheyne, "And also on [or, 'over'] Judah it [i.e. the protection and deliverance implied in the first clause of the verse] shall be, in the siege," etc. Any

interpretation of the passage which makes Judah join with the enemy in attacking Jerusalem is precluded by the very intimate union between Judah and Jerusalem denoted in vers. 4—7, and by the hostility of the nations against Judah. Cheyne's explanation is hardly a natural one, however suitable. Lowe ('Hebr. Stud. Comm.') renders, "And also on Judah [shall fall this reeling] during the siege [which is to take place] against Jerusalem." It seems best to render, with Alexander, "Also against Judah shall it be in the siege against Jerusalem," i.e. not only the mother city, but all the country, shall be exposed to hostile invasion. This suits ver. 5, where the chieftains of Judah are represented as trusting in the valour of the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they are incurring the same danger.

Ver. 3.—**A burdensome stone.** Jerusalem shall prove to all the nations that attack it a weight not only too heavy to lift, but one which, itself remaining unhurt, shall wound and injure those who attempt to carry it. Jerome supposes here an allusion to a custom in the towns of Palestine, which prevailed to his day (and, indeed, in Syria even now), of placing round stones of great weight at certain distances, by lifting which the youths tested their bodily strength. But we do not know that this custom existed in Zechariah's time; and the nations are not gathered together for amusement or display of strength, but for hostile attack. Septuagint, λίθον καταπατούμενον, "a stone trodden down," which reminds one of Luke xxi. 24, ἱεροσολαίμη ἔσται πατομένη ὑπὸ ἐθνῶν. **Shall be cut in pieces;** i.e. by the sharp edges of the stone, or, as the Revised Version, *shall be sore wounded*. **Though;** rather, *and*; Septuagint, καὶ ἐπισυναχθήσονται: Vulgate, *et colligentur*. **All the people (peoples) of the earth.** This indicates that the struggle spoken of is no mere local conflict, waged in Maccabean or other times, but the great battle of the world against the Church, which shall rage in the Messianic era.

Ver. 4.—**I will smite every horse with astonishment (consternation).** Cavalry represents the forces of the enemy. Astonishment, madness, and blindness are threatened against Israel in Deut. xxviii. 28; here they are inflicted on the enemy. **Madness.** The riders should be so panic-stricken that they knew not what they did, and shall turn their arms against each other (Hag. ii. 22). **Open mine eyes upon the house of Judah;** i.e. will regard with favour and protect (Deut. xi. 12; 1 Kings viii. 29; Ps. xxxii. 8). **With blindness.** They shall be blinded with terror. The previous threat is repeated with this emphatic addition.

Ver. 5.—**The governors (chieftains) of Judah shall say in their heart.** The leaders of Judah have a profound, settled conviction that Jehovah is on his people's side. **The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be (are) my strength.** When they see the enemy discomfited (vers. 2—4) each of them shall have confidence in the Divine election of Jerusalem, foregoing their former jealousy, and see in her success a token of God's protection and their own final victory.

Ver. 6.—**A hearth;** literally, *a pan*. The victory should be easy and complete. The chieftains of Judah shall be like a chafing-dish full of fire set among dry faggots (comp. Obad. 18; Nah. i. 10). **In a sheaf; among sheaves.** **Jerusalem shall be inhabited again;** rather, *Jerusalem shall yet again dwell*. Jerusalem is personified as a female. In spite of all the attacks of the enemy, who tried to destroy and remove her, she shall remain firm and unshaken in her own place. In Jerusalem, the centre of the theocracy where God has set her. So against the Church the gates of hell shall not prevail, and the persecutions which she suffers increase her stability and add to her numbers.

Ver. 7.—**Shall save the tents of Judah first.** Instead of "first," a preferable reading, supported by the Greek, Latin, and Syriac Versions, is "as in the beginning," or "as in former days." The prophet declares that the open towns and villages of Judah, which can offer no effectual resistance to an enemy like the fortified city Jerusalem, shall be saved by the aid of God, as so often has happened in old time. If "first" be the genuine reading, the meaning is that the country people shall first be saved in order to prevent Jerusalem glorifying herself at their expense. **That the glory . . . do not magnify themselves against** (*be not magnified above*) **Judah.** God will save the chosen nation in such a manner that each part shall have its share in the glory and honour. The leaders, represented by "the house of David" and "the inhabitants of Jerusalem," as the sanctuary of God and a strongly fortified city, shall not be able to exalt themselves as more favoured than the rest of the people. By God's help alone is the victory won, and all alike share in this. The expressions in this verse, could not have been written, as some assert, while the dynasty of David reigned.

Ver. 8.—**He that is feeble (literally, that stumbleth) among them . . . shall be as David.** God shall endue the inhabitants of Jerusalem with marvellous strength and courage, so that the weakest among them shall be as a hero such as David, who killed the lion and bear and overcame the giant (comp. Ps. xviii. 32). **The house of David shall be as**

God (*Elohim*). The chiefs of the theocracy shall be endowed with supernatural might, the expression, "as God," being explained in the next clause. Septuagint, *ὡς οἶκος Θεοῦ*, "as the house of God," as if it were of the heavenly family. The translators seem to have thought the genuine expression too unqualified. As the angel of the Lord before them. Even as the angel of the Lord, who led the Israelites in all their wanderings (comp. Exod. xiv. 19; xxiii. 20; xxxii. 34; Josh. v. 13). We see in this description an intimation of the graces and endowments bestowed upon every faithful member of the Church of Christ.

Ver. 9.—I will seek to destroy. It shall be always my aim and my care to destroy the enemies of the Church, that they shall never prevail against it. The words cannot apply to the literal Jerusalem, against which no such confederacy of nations was ever formed.

Vers. 10—14.—§ 2. *There shall ensue an outpouring of God's Spirit upon Israel, which shall produce a great national repentance.*

Ver. 10.—I will pour. The word implies abundance (comp. Ezek. xxxix. 29; Joel ii. 28). The house of David, etc. The leaders and the people alike, all orders and degrees in the theocracy. Jerusalem is named as the capital and representative of the nation. The spirit of grace and of supplications. The spirit which bestows grace and leads to prayer. "Grace" here means the effects produced in man by God's favour, that which makes the recipient pleasing to God and delighting in his commandments (Heb. x. 29). They shall look upon me whom they have pierced. The Speaker is Jehovah. To "look upon or unto" implies trust, longing, and reverence (comp. Numb. xxi. 9; 2 Kings iii. 14; Ps. xxxiv. 5; Isa. xxii. 11). We may say generally that the clause intimates that the people, who had grieved and offended God by their sins and ingratitude, should repent and turn to him in faith. But there was a literal fulfilment of this piercing, *i.e.* slaying (ch. xiii. 3; Lam. iv. 9), when the Jews crucified the Messiah, him who was God and Man, and of whom, as a result of the hypostatic union, the properties of one nature are often predicated of the other. Thus St. Paul says that the Jews crucified "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8), and bids the Ephesian elders "feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28; for the reading Θεοῦ, see the critics). St. John (xix. 37) refers to these words of Zechariah as a prophecy of the Crucifixion (comp. Rev. i. 7). The LXX. renders, Ἐπιβλέπονται πρὸς μέν ἄνθ' ὃν κατωχρήσαντο,

"They shall look to me because they insulted," either reading the last verb differently, or understanding it figuratively in the sense of assailing with cutting words; but there is no doubt about the true reading and interpretation. Vulgate, *Aspicient ad me quem confixerunt*. "Me" has been altered in some manuscripts into "him;" but this is an evident gloss received into the text for controversial purposes, or to obviate the supposed impropriety of representing Jehovah as slain by the impious. That St. John seems to sanction this reading is of no critical importance, as he is merely referring to the prophecy historically, and does not profess to give the very wording of the prophet. A suffering Messiah was not an unknown idea in Zechariah's time. He has already spoken of the Shepherd as despised and ill-treated, and a little further on (ch. xiii. 7) he intimates that he is stricken with the sword. The prophecies of Isaiah had familiarized him with the same notion (Isa. liii., etc.). And when he represents Jehovah as saying, "Me whom they pierced," it is not merely that in killing his messenger and representative they may be said to have killed him, but the prophet, by inspiration, acknowledges the two natures in the one Person of Messiah, even as Isaiah (ix. 6) called him the "Mighty God," and the psalmists often speak to the same effect (Ps. ii. 7; xlv. 6, 7; cx. 1, etc.; comp. Micah v. 2). The "looking to" the stricken Messiah began when they who saw that woeful sight smote their breasts (Luke xxiii. 48); it was carried on by the preaching of the apostles; it shall continue till all Israel is converted; it is re-enacted whenever penitent sinners turn to him whom they have crucified by their sins. Critics have supposed that the person whose murder is deplored is Isaiah, or Urijah, or Jeremiah; but none of these fulfill the prediction in the text. They shall mourn for him. There is a change of persons here. Jehovah speaks of the Messiah as distinct in Person from himself. As one mourneth for his only son . . . for his first-born. The depth and poignancy of this mourning are expressed by a double comparison, the grief felt at the loss of an only son, and of the firstborn. Among the Hebrews the preservation of the family was deemed of vast importance, and its extinction regarded as a punishment and a curse, so that the death of an only son would be the heaviest blow that could happen (see Isa. xlvii. 9; Jer. vi. 26; Amos viii. 10). Peculiar privileges belonged to the first-born, and his loss would be estimated accordingly (see Gen. xlix. 3; Exod. iv. 22; Deut. xxi. 17; Micah vi. 7). The mention of "piercing," just above, seems to connect the passage with the Passover solemnities

and the destruction of the firstborn of the Egyptians (see *Expositor*, vol. vi. p. 131, etc.).

Ver. 11.—As if the above comparisons were not strong enough, the prophet presents a new one, referring to an historical event, which occasioned a universal mourning in Jerusalem. As the mourning of (at) Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. This is generally supposed to refer to the death of King Josiah of a wound received at Megiddo, in the battle with Pharaoh-Necho (B.C. 609), and to the national lamentation made for him and long observed on the anniversary of the calamity (see 2 Kings xxiii. 29; 2 Chron. xxxv. 20—25). This universal and perennial mourning is a figure of the continual remembrance of the death of Christ in the Church. There is a difficulty about the identification of Hadadrimmon. St. Jerome says it was a place in the Plain of Megiddo, near Jezreel, and known in his day by the name of Maximianopolis. This is supposed to be *Rummâneh*, seven miles north-west of Jezreel, on the southern edge of the Plain of Esdraelon. But the identification is far from certain. The Assyrian name given to the place may, as Löwe suggests, be a confirmation of the post-exilic origin of the prophecy. The site of Megiddo also is undetermined, though Conder suggests *Mujedda*, a ruined city about three miles south of Bethshean. The opinion that the name Hadadrimmon is that of a Syrian or Phœnician god, whose rites were celebrated as those of Adonis ("the weeping for Tammuz" of Ezek. viii. 14), is preposterous; and the idea that the prophet would thus refer to the worship of an abominable idol is one that could have

occurred only to disbelievers in revelation. The LXX., mistaking the text, gives, *ὡς κότερος βοῶνος ἐν πεδίῳ ἐκκοπτομένου*, "as mourning for a pomegranate cut off in the plain."

Ver. 12.—The land. Not Jerusalem only, but the whole country. Every family apart. The mourning should extend to every individual of every family (comp. Ezek. xxiv. 23). David . . . Nathan. First the royal family is mentioned generally, to show that no one, however, high in station, is exempted from this mourning; and then a particular branch is named to individualize the lamentation. Nathan is that son of David from whom descended Zerubbabel (1 Chron. iii. 5; Luke iii. 27, 31). Their wives apart. In private life the females of a household dwell in apartments separate from the males, and in public functions the sexes were equally kept distinct (see Exod. xv. 20; Judg. xi. 34; 1 Sam. xviii. 6; 2 Sam. vi. 5).

Ver. 13.—Levi . . . Shimei. As before, the priestly family is first mentioned generally, and then individualized by naming Shimei, the son of Gershon, and grandson of Levi, of whom was the family of the Shimeites (Numb. iii. 17, 18, 21). The LXX. gives, "the tribe of Simeon," instead of "the family of Shimei." But there is no reason for singling out this tribe. In one sense, this prophecy began to be fulfilled when a great company of priests were converted by the preaching of the apostles (Acts vi. 7).

Ver. 14.—The families that remain. All the families that have not been mentioned already.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*A wonderful siege.* "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord," etc. These three concluding chapters seem to refer to one principal topic ("the burden of the Lord for Israel," ver. 1) and to one principal time (see the thirteen-times repeated expression, "in that day"). The general preface or introduction to the special succession of wonders which they announce to us is contained in ver. 1, setting forth, as it does, the wonder-working nature of the God who foretells them, in regard (1) to all above (the "heaven"); (2) all beneath (the "earth"); and (3) all within (the "spirit of man"). See somewhat similar preface to a somewhat similar announcement of wonderful doings in Rev. xxi. 5. After this introduction, in vers. 2—4, we have described to us, as the opening wonder of all, a certain future wonderful "siege." In which description we may notice three principal things, viz. (1) *the many enemies* of the city besieged; (2) *its one Defender*; and (3) *its complete defence*.

I. ITS MANY ENEMIES. Herein, evidently, is to be one leading peculiarity of this "siege" of Jerusalem. It is not only to be a complete investment, "all the people" being "round about" (ver. 2; see also Luke xix. 43), but it is also to be an investment by an exceedingly large assemblage of "peoples . . . gathered together" from all parts of the world. Considering, indeed, the frequent use in these verses (some six times in all) of the expressions "all" and "every," and the apparent definiteness of comprehension of the language in the end of ver. 3, we seem justified in believing that

every separate Gentile nation or people will be employed in this siege. All the rest of the world against Jerusalem. Such is what we seem to see here. Such is what we seem to see also in such passages as Ezek. xxxviii. 1-16 (where note special mention, as in ver. 4 here, of "horses" and "horsemen"); Joel iii. 9-17; Rev. xvi. 14-16; xx. 8, 9. Whether or not we consider all these passages to refer to exactly the same times and events, at any rate they illustrate, if they do not apply to, the universal league described here.

II. ITS ONE DEFENDER. With all the rest of mankind against the people of Jerusalem, there can be no man, of course, on their side. But they are not to be on that account without a defender. On the contrary, they will have the best of all, even Jehovah himself. Five times over, and in two separate ways, he gives them to understand this. He declares: 1. *That he will give heed to their case.* "I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah" (see Ps. xxxiii. 18; xxxiv. 15; Deut. xi. 12; 1 Kings ix. 3; Dan. ix. 18; and ch. ix. 8 above). 2. *That he will give help in their need.* He will give help by "making" Jerusalem (vers. 2, 3) that which it requires to be "made" in this time of extremity. He will give help also by "smiting" those many enemies (ver. 4) who are leagued together for their destruction, and who, therefore, require to be "smitten" on their behalf; and what, of its kind, could be more satisfactory than this double assistance? this weakening of their enemies? this concurrent strengthening of themselves (comp. 2 Sam. iii. 1)?

III. ITS COMPLETE DEFENCE. This twofold assistance was sufficient in degree as well as satisfactory in nature. What it proposed to do, that it did. In particular, God, in this manner: 1. *Bewildered the minds* of all the enemies of Jerusalem. He made Jerusalem, to these enemies, such a cup of trembling and of stupor and slumber that they were not able, and did not dare, in many respects, to attack them. Completely as they seemed, by being "round about" the city, to have it in their power, they were like men appalled and stupefied, and left it alone (comp. Gen. xxxv. 5). 2. Also, when these enemies did find themselves able to devise measures against Jerusalem, God *crushed their efforts*. They were as men trying their strength by endeavouring to lift a heavy stone from the ground, the only result being to crush themselves by its weight. So would Jerusalem be made to do thus to its foes—to all its foes, however numerous. It would not only bruise, but destroy them, as though the sword had "cut" them "in pieces." 3. Besides which, so we may perhaps understand ver. 4, God would himself *overwhelm their spirits*. Having failed so fatally in their efforts, those who survived, and their agents also, in utter panic, folly, and ignorance, would be so far from being able to do further injury that they would themselves be in need of defence. So surpassingly well can that one Defender do for those that are his.

We learn something here, in conclusion: 1. *As to the possibilities of the future.* Who can say that such a gigantic conspiracy of evil against a literally restored and renovated Jerusalem, and such a triumphant delivery from it, may not mark the end of this age? Certainly far greater things, both in the way of manifested evil and good, than have ever been witnessed hitherto, may yet be seen on this earth. 2. *As to the true character of the present.* This last conflict will be but the fully developed result of a long previous conflict of a similar kind. Compare the conspiracy and deliverance in long-ago days described in Ps. lxxxiii. (compare also, on the one side, Acts xxviii. 22; and on the other, Matt. xxviii. 20).

Vers. 5-8.—*A wonderful people.* "And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength," etc. In the preceding verses the dominant idea is that of Jerusalem as a city *besieged*. In these we have a vision of it as a city *inhabited* (note end of ver. 6, and the thrice-recurring expression, "the inhabitants of Jerusalem"). And there are three aspects in which, when so regarded, we seem called upon to admire it, viz. (1) as perfectly *safe*; (2) as properly *humble*; and (3) as amazingly *strong*.

I. JERUSALEM SAFE. See: 1. In the end of ver. 6, *how this condition of safety is described*. Jerusalem is spoken of as "inhabited again;" not deserted, i.e. as previously, because of the attacks of its foes. Also as "inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem;" as now, therefore, not even claimed as belonging to any but



those who had been identified with it for so many generations. 2. *How this description of safety is justified.* (1) It is so if we take ver. 5 as it stands, by the thorough confidence of the "governors" in the people of Jerusalem. They acknowledge this people to be their "strength," not with their lips only, but in their "heart." (2) Such confidence is a great element of safety, especially when combined, as in this instance, with an equal amount of confidence, on the part of both rulers and ruled, in Jehovah himself (see end of ver. 5). (3) For such a combination renders those rulers, like that famous general who spoke of his well-trying army as "able to go anywhere and do anything," an amazing power to their city in the way of protection and defence. At any rate, so it was God made them to be in this instance. Like flame when applied to things most inflammable, so would he make them amidst the foes of his people, viz. equally sure and equally swift to consume. How safe a city when all those who threaten it can thus effectually be destroyed!

II. JERUSALEM HUMBLE. See: 1. *Why this humility was secured*; viz. because of its vital importance. If either the leaders ("the house of David") or the people should begin to "magnify themselves" on account of those effectual means of defence just described, they would at once be in danger again (Prov. xxviii. 26; Jer. xvii. 5, 6, etc.). 2. *How this humility was secured.* The beginning of deliverance was to be in something apart from Jerusalem, as it were. In something, also, that at first sight she might be inclined to despise. Such deliverance will, therefore, be like a "soldiers' victory" in its way. Rather, like that deliverance we read of in 2 Kings vii., which began with certain despised outsiders, and was clearly not their work, but God's. "The Lord shall save the tents of Judah first." Observe the triple emphasis in these words.

III. JERUSALEM STRONG. Strong: 1. *Because of the gracious continuance of God's care.* Whatever he had already done for his people, so long as they are enabled to remain truly humble and trustful, that he will go on to do still (see Hos. xiii. 1; Prov. xviii. 12; Isa. lxvi. 2). 2. *Because of the abundant results of God's blessing.* The very feeblest amongst them should be made, in desire and intention, like the very strongest, in that way, previously known (1 Sam. xiii. 14; 1 Kings ix. 4; xv. 3, etc.). The leaders amongst them should be *leaders* indeed—persons deserving to be followed as closely and fully as the Angel-Jehovah, of whom we afterwards read, as in 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22; John xiii. 15; Phil. ii. 5; 1 Cor. xi. 1, etc. This state of things (apparently) the complete fulfilment of Deut. xxxiii. 29.

Three things, as illustrated here concerning the prophetic Scriptures generally, may be noticed to conclude. 1. Their *obscurity* in many points. On the one hand, e.g., the specially distinctive mention both of "Jerusalem" and of "Judah," and the singularly local complexion of the end of ver. 6, point us to a literal view of the whole. On the other, the mention of the house of David, which has so long since vanished from sight, and the apparent connection of it with our Divine Redeemer as the true New Testament "David" (Ezek. xxxiv.; xxxvii.; Acts ii. 29—31), point us almost as strongly to a figurative and spiritual interpretation. Who can decide confidently between them till all is decided by the actual fulfilment of the prophecy? 2. Their *plainness* in others. That some exceedingly blessed and glorious condition of things, either in the literal or the spiritual Jerusalem—or, it may be, in both together—is here fore-described, who can doubt? What this condition of things is to depend on, and how to be brought about, also seem very plain. This whole prophecy, in short, is at present, as are so many others, like a "proof before letters." We can only guess at present about the *name* of the landscape which it sets before us, but we can appreciate its *loveliness* to the full. 3. Their *profitableness* in all. So far as obscure, they serve to teach us the three great Christian duties of patience before God, humility as to ourselves, and forbearance towards others. So far as plain, they are fitted to animate our hope and sustain our courage and direct both our faith and our walk (2 Thess. iii. 5; 2 Pet. iii. 14; Rom. xv. 4, etc.).

Vers. 9—14.—*Wonderful sorrow.* "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations," etc. There is much that is striking in the apparent connection of this passage with that before. Just when God shall be seen by his people to be "seeking" and bringing about (see ver. 9) the overthrow and

destruction of their many enemies, they, on the other hand, will be seen to be overwhelmed with sorrow of heart. Their souls, as it were, will be plunged into darkness at the very breaking of day. The very thing they have hoped for seems close at hand; and, lo! they are as men in despair. Equally remarkable, next, with the time of this sorrow, is its character. So we shall find, whether we consider (1) its peculiar *origin*; or (2) its peculiar *magnitude*.

I. ITS PECULIAR ORIGIN. To what is it due? Not to those causes which bring about the ordinary "sorrow of the world" (2 Cor. vii. 10). On the contrary, being sorrow which is "according to God" (*κατὰ Θεόν*, 2 Cor. vii. 10), it has the "things of God" as its cause. In other words, it is occasioned: 1. *By the action of God on the hearts of his people.* He "pours on" them: (1) "The spirit of grace." He gives them, i.e., in overflowing abundance, those gracious influences of the Spirit of holiness by which men are enabled to believe in him as "the God of all grace," and so are encouraged to pray (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6). (2) "The spirit of supplications." He gives them, i.e., in similar abundance, those other gracious influences of that same Holy Spirit by which he is pleased both to guide men and also to assist men in their prayers (Rom. viii. 26; Eph. vi. 18; Jude 20). 2. *By the consequent thoughts of God's people about him.* (1) They think of him as having been "pierced" by their sins. This is an especial feature, we know, in "godly sorrow"—its horror at having sinned against God (Ps. li. 4; Gen. xxxix. 9; 2 Sam. xii. 13; perhaps also Isa. xliii. 24, end; Eph. iv. 30). (2) They think of him as having been alienated by their folly. They "mourn for him" like those mentioned in 1 Sam. vii. 2. After their privileges are gone from them, they see, with sorrow, how much they have lost. From none of these sources, we repeat, is man's natural sorrow found to flow forth.

II. ITS PECULIAR MAGNITUDE. Wide waters are generally shallow; deep waters are seldom broad; but here we have both. 1. *Peculiar depth.* On the one hand, (1) there is only one known *kind* of sorrow equally deep. As the shades of life's afternoon thicken around us, it is to our children we look to give us comfort and hope, and to keep up the interest of life in our hearts (Gen. v. 28, 29; John xvi. 21). How peculiarly great, therefore, the sorrow of losing a firstborn and only son (Gen. xxii. 2; xlix. 3; Prov. iv. 3, 4; Luke vii. 12)! The loss bewailed here is like that—loss of all! On the other hand, (2) there had never been but one previous *example* of sorrow equally deep, viz. the sorrow felt on the death of Josiah, almost the very best (2 Kings xxiii. 25; xviii. 5), and certainly the last real, king among the descendants of David—a sorrow the memory of which, in the prophet's own day, had not at all been forgotten, and the sound of which is to be heard still by the world in the Lamentations of Jeremiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 25; Lam. iv. 20). 2. *Peculiar diffusion.* We find this sorrow described as pervading not the city only, but all the "land." We find it affecting every separate "house" amongst the houses of Israel, whether in Church or state (Levi and David [?]), whether well known or only little known (David and Nathan), whether with good antecedents or evil ones (Levi and Shimei; see Deut. xxxiii. 8; 2 Sam. xvi. 5—13); also affecting every "family" of every separate "house;" also every adult member of every family, whether male or female. At once, therefore, in this tempest of sorrow, they were all united, yet all "apart." Even so, with their separate roots, are the "trees of the wood," when all moved by one wind (see Isa. vii. 2).

We see, in all this, something: 1. *To give us comfort and hope.* Without attempting to dogmatize on such a subject, we cannot but see, from this analysis of the passage, what it seems to foretell, viz. the future conversion of the whole people of Israel to belief in the gospel of Christ (comp. 2 Cor. iii. 13—16 with Rom. xi. 25—27; see also John xix. 37; Rev. i. 7; and, in addition to all that has been noted above, see how accurately this application of the passage to a future national recognition of Christ by Israel helps to explain the singular change of person, viz. from "me" to "him" in ver. 10, something the same as in that other passage where the Angel-Jehovah is speaking, viz. Gen. xxii. 12; and note, finally, as to the peculiar time and character of this sorrow, the very remarkable language of Hos. iii. 5, end; while as to the joyful importance of such an interpretation, if correct, see again Rom. xi. 12, 15). 2. *To give us instruction and warning.* Equally great, for example, ought to be our

sorrow for sin (Rom. iii. 9, 29). Equally, also, ought it to be founded on our thoughts about Christ (John xvi. 9; Acts ix. 4, 5; Matt. xxv. 40, etc.). And equally, finally, can we only hope to receive it as a gift from above (Acts v. 31; 2 Tim. ii. 25).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The security of Zion.* I. MIGHT OF HER KING. The worlds of matter and of mind are under his control. If so, there is no such thing as chance. Then whatsoever God has promised he will certainly perform. Then to trust and to obey God must be the great end of our being. God's friends are blessed (vers. 2, 4). His enemies, intoxicated by pride, muster for the fight. They are discomfited and driven back in headlong rout. Blindness seizes them, terror overpowers them; they perish, as at the Red Sea and in Midian's evil day (cf. Ps. cxxxii. 18).

II. ENERGY OF HER LEADERS. (Vers. 5—7.) Men of faith and capacity, commanding the confidence of the people. Bound together by their common faith in God and devotion to the highest interests of humanity.

III. HEROISM OF HER PEOPLE. (Vers. 8, 9.) Strength, Divine in its source, various in degree, adequate for every emergency, making the weak strong, and the strong stronger. A united people, with settled government, equal laws, courageous and faithful for the right. Zion united can stand against every assault, but divided becomes the prey of her enemies. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."—F.

Ver. 8.—*True greatness.* I. NOT INHERITED, BUT PERSONAL.

II. NOT IN CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT CHARACTER.

III. NOT IN SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT, BUT IN SOCIAL USEFULNESS.

IV. NOT BOUND BY HUMAN WEAKNESS, BUT RISING TO THE GLORY OF DIVINE STRENGTH.

V. NOT RESTRICTED TO INDIVIDUALS, BUT THE COMMON POSSESSION OF THE GOOD

VI. NOT LIMITED TO EARTH, BUT LEADING TO THE HONOURS OF ETERNITY.—F.

Vers. 11—14.—*The great mourning.* The scene depicted has reference first of all to the Jews. Already partially fulfilled. But the principles involved are of universal application. Take it to illustrate *true repentance*.

I. GOD FOR ITS CAUSE. Not man, but God. The Father of our spirits acting on our spirit. "The spirit of grace."

II. SINNERS OF MANKIND FOR ITS SUBJECTS. Not angels. We read of their fall, but never of their rising again. For them there seems no place for repentance. Not the righteous. If man were innocent, there would be no need for penitence. But sinners. As all have sinned, repentance is required of all.

III. THE CROSS OF CHRIST FOR ITS INSTRUMENT. On the one hand, how can the sense of sin be brought home to man's conscience? On the other, how can God, consistently with his righteousness, show mercy to the sinner? The answer is found in the cross. Here we see, and here alone: 1. The exceeding sinfulness of sin. 2. The exceeding greatness of God's love to sinners. "God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

IV. INTENSITY AND THOROUGHNESS FOR ITS GREAT CHARACTERISTICS. 1. *Intensity.* Thought and feeling. Sorrow deep and bitter. 2. *Thoroughness.* Goes to the very root of the matter; real and abiding.

V. REGENERATION OF SOCIETY AS ITS BLESSED RESULT. Society made up of individuals. Change them, and you change all. The whole lump will be leavened. When there is peace with God, purity of life, brotherly kindness and charity, the old glory of the land will be restored.—F.

Ver. 1.—*The universe.* "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." This chapter, and on to ver. 6 of the following, most expositors regard as referring to Israel's conflict and victory, conversion and ultimate holiness. The first verse announces how the conflict against Jerusalem and

Judah will result in the conquest of all enemies. The passage before us suggests a few thoughts concerning the universe.

I. THAT THE UNIVERSE INCLUDES THE EXISTENCE OF MATTER AND OF MIND. The phrase "heavens" and "earth" is used here and elsewhere to represent the whole creation. 1. *It includes matter.* Of the essence of matter we know nothing; but by the word we mean all that comes within the cognizance of our senses, all that can be felt, heard, seen, tasted. How extensive is this material domain! Science shows that it baffles all efforts and methods of mensuration. 2. *It includes mind.* Indeed, mind is here specified. "And formeth the spirit of man within him." Man has a spirit. Of this he has stronger evidence than he has of the existence of matter. He is conscious of the phenomena of mind, but not conscious of the phenomena of matter. Man's mind is only an insignificant part and a humble representative of the immeasurable universe of spirit.

II. THAT THE UNIVERSE ORIGINATED WITH ONE PERSONAL BEING. "The Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens," etc. It had an origin; it is not *eternal*. The idea of its eternity involves contradictions. It had an origin; its origin is not *fortuitous*; it is not the production of chance. The idea of its springing from chance may live in the region of speculation, but never in the realm of intelligent conviction. It had an origin; its origin is not that of a *plurality of creators*; it has one, and only one—"the Lord." This is the only philosophic account of its origin, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands."

III. THAT THIS ONE PERSONAL CREATOR HAS PURPOSES CONCERNING THE HUMAN RACE. "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord." This may mean, "the sentence of the word of the Lord concerning Israel." Now, this chapter, this book—nay, a large portion of the Bible—purports to be a revelation of his purpose to mankind. He has not created us without an object, nor placed us on this earth without an object; both in our creation and preservation he has a purpose. This being so: 1. No events in human history are accidental. 2. The grand purpose of our life should be the fulfilment of his will. "Not my will, but thine be done."

IV. THAT HIS PURPOSE TOWARDS MANKIND HE IS FULLY ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH. His creative achievements are here mentioned as a pledge of the purposes hereafter announced. Every purpose of the Lord shall be performed. Has he purposed that all mankind shall be converted to his Son? It shall be done. "There is nothing too hard for the Lord."—D. T.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Sin self-punishment.* "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." There is in this passage a principle by which the Governor of the world punishes malicious men. That principle is this—the *reaction of their efforts to injure others causing injury of themselves*. It is here said that Jerusalem would become confusion and destruction to the men who sought its ruin. It is here said that: 1. Jerusalem would become to them "a cup of trembling," or, as some render it, "a cup of intoxication." It does not say that Jerusalem will put forth any active efforts to wreak vengeance on its enemies, but that its effect upon the enemies would be as an intoxicating cup; it will make them reel and stagger in confusion. The thought of their own malicious conduct towards it would produce an effect upon their own minds that would make them tremble and become confused. 2. Jerusalem would become to them "a burdensome stone." The idea is that, in their endeavours to injure Jerusalem, they would crush themselves. I make three remarks in relation to this punishment by reaction.

1. IT IS WELL ATTESTED. 1. *It is attested by every man's consciousness.* Every man who attempts to injure another feels sooner or later that he has injured himself. There is a recoil and a regret. In truth, the malign passion itself is its own punishment. A man who cherishes anger towards another injures himself more than he can by any effort injure the object of his displeasure. In every malign emotion there is misery. 2. *It is attested by universal history.* It is a law that runs through all

history, that the "mischief" of a man "shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate" (Ps. vii. 16). The conduct of Joseph's brethren and of Haman may be cited as illustrations; but the conduct of the Jews towards the Messiah is an example for all times, most mighty and impressive. The blows which the old Jewish nation struck on him rebounded on their own heads and ruined them. "Whoso diggeth the pit," says Solomon, "shall fall therein; and whoso rolleth the stone, it will return on him" (Prov. xxvi. 27).

II. IT IS MANIFESTLY JUST. What man thus punished can complain of the righteousness of his sufferings? He must feel, and feel deeply, that he has deserved all and even more than he endures. Indeed, it is true that the punishment of the sinner is self-punishment; it is the fruit of his own doings. Witness Cain, Belshazzar, Judas, etc.

III. IT IS ESSENTIALLY BENEFICENT. It serves: 1. To guard men from the injuries of others. 2. To restrain the angry passions of men.

CONCLUSION. Let us in all our conduct to our fellow-men practically recognize the principle that with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again. "He that rolleth the stone, it shall return upon him." The stone of revenge and malice which you have rolled at another shall come back upon the head of you that rolled it—come back with a terrible momentum, come back to crush you.—D. T.

Vers. 4—9.—*A good time for good people.* "In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness," etc. These words, which are confessedly difficult if not impossible to interpret correctly (for some say they are to be taken literally, others spiritually; some historically, others prophetically), may be fairly used to illustrate *a good time for good people*. In relation to this good time, I observe—

I. IT IS A TIME WHEN THEIR ENEMIES SHALL BE VANQUISHED. "In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness." Here the overthrow of the enemies of Jerusalem is threatened. "The Lord," says Keil, "will throw the mind and spirit of the military force of the enemy into such confusion that, instead of injuring Jerusalem and Judah, it will rush forward to its own destruction. Horses and riders individualize the war-like forces of the enemy. The rider, smitten with madness, turns his sword against his own comrades in battle. On the other hand, Jehovah will open his eyes upon Judah for its protection (1 Kings viii. 29; Neh. i. 6; Ps. xxxii. 8). This promise is strengthened by the repetition of the punishment to be inflicted upon the enemy. Not only with alarm, but with blindness, will the Lord smite their horses. We have an example of this in 2 Kings vi. 18, where the Lord smote the enemy with blindness in answer to Elisha's prayer, i.e. with mental blindness, so that, instead of seizing the prophet, they fell into the hands of Israel. The three plagues, *timhākōn*, *shiggā'ōn*, and *ivvārōn*, are those with which rebellious Israelites are threatened in Deut. xxxviii. 28. The house of Judah is the covenant nation, the population of Judah, including the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as we may see from what follows." Now, whether this conquest refers to the triumphs of the Maccabees, or to some wonderful victories of the Jews in some future times, one thing is clear to us, that the *time will come for all good people when their enemies shall be entirely destroyed*. To every good man this victory is promised. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

II. IT IS A TIME WHEN THEIR POWER SHALL BE AUGMENTED. The power here promised is: 1. *The power of unity*. "The governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God." "Observe here," says Dr. Wardlaw, "the confidence of the leaders in the people. Without the people's concurrent aid, their counsels and plans and directions could, of course, be of little avail. This the rulers should feel, and should exult in seeing what ground they had for full reliance on them in time of pressure and danger, which implies unanimity and intrepid valour, combined with persevering effort, on the part of the inhabitants. This union and valour would be the 'strength' of their leaders, without which they must find themselves utterly powerless. A divided, dispirited,

heartless, dastardly soldiery or populace, is weakness, disappointment, and discomfiture to the best-conceived plans of the most bold, prudent, and experienced leaders." All good people over all the earth will one day be thoroughly united—united, not in opinion, for this would be, if possible, undesirable; but in devotion to Christ, the common Centre. This union is strength, Divine strength, "strength in the Lord of hosts." "Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." 2. *The power of conquest.* "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left;" or, as Dr. Henderson renders it, "In that day will I make the chiefs of Judah like a fire-pot among sticks of wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf, and they shall consume all the people around, on the right hand and on the left." As the fire consumes the wood and the sheaf of straw, so would the men of Jerusalem have power to conquer all the people "round about, on the right hand and on the left." God invests all good men with power to conquer their spiritual foes; this is the power of faith—faith that overcometh the world. This power, though weak in most, is triumphant in many (see Heb. xi.). It shall be all-conquering one day.

III. IT IS A TIME WHEN THEY SHALL BE SETTLED IN THEIR HOME. "And Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem." Jerusalem, in the first instance, stands for the Jews, and in the second instance for the city or the country. It means, therefore, that in this good time—whether it is past or to come—some, if not all, the Jews that were scattered abroad will return and settle in their own home. The language expresses reoccupancy and permanent possession. Those who return—whether from Egypt, Babylon, or elsewhere—will return and settle down in their old home. A time comes for all good people when they shall settle down in a permanent dwelling-place. Here they are "strangers and pilgrims," and have "no abiding city." But a glorious country awaits them, an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

IV. IT IS A TIME WHEN THEY SHALL BE BLESSED WITH EQUAL PRIVILEGES. 1. *They were to have equal honour.* "The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah." Dr. Henderson's translation expresses this: "And Jehovah shall deliver the tents of Judah first, in order that the splendour of the house of David and the splendour of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be magnified above Judah." 2. *They were to have equal protection.* "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." Here Jerusalem is promised protection against the foe, and "he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David." "To the Jew, David was the highest type of strength and glory on earth (2 Sam. xvii. 8), a man of war (2 Sam. xviii. 3); such shall the weakest citizen of Jerusalem become (Joel iii. 10)." "And the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." "The Divine Angel that went before them through the desert, the highest type of strength and glory in heaven (Exod. xxiii. 20; xxxii. 34). The house of David is the prince and his family sprung from David (Ezek. xlv. 7, 9). David's house was then in a comparatively weak state." Now, there is a time coming when all good people shall have distinguished-honour and complete protection. They shall settle down in the heavenly Jerusalem; and what a city is that (see Rev. xxi.)!

CONCLUSION. Though I have not been able to put forth what I feel to be a satisfactory interpretation of these words, or attempted to give to them a spiritual signification, I trust that, in using them as an illustration of the good time coming for the good, I have presented a legitimate and a useful application. A glorious time awaits all good men, in all lands, Churches, nations—a time when they shall be delivered from all evil and be put in permanent possession of all good. Seeing we look for such things, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" etc.—D. T.

Vers. 10—14.—*Penitential sorrow.* "And I will pour upon the house of David, and

upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn," etc. To whatever particular event this passage refers, the subject is obvious and most important, viz. that of *penitential sorrow*. And five things in connection with it are noteworthy.

I. THE SUBJECTS OF THIS PENITENTIAL SORROW. They are Jews, and not Gentiles. "The house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem"—expressions which designate the whole Israelitish people. The Jewish people had often been reduced to this state of sorrow. When in Babylonian captivity they wept when they "remembered Zion." "The scene," says Dr. Wardlaw, "depicted bears a very close resemblance to those recorded to have taken place on the restoration from Babylon, when Jehovah, having influenced them individually to return to himself, and to set their faces, with longing desire, to the land of their fathers, inclined their hearts, when thus gathered home, to social and collective acts of humiliation and prayer. The prayers of Ezra and Nehemiah on those occasions might be taken as models, in the 'spirit and even the matter' of them, for the supplications of Judah and Israel when brought back from their wider and more lasting dispersions."

II. THE CAUSE OF THIS PENITENTIAL SORROW. "I will pour." The Prophet Joel (ii. 28) refers to this outpouring of Divine influence. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." All genuine repentance for sin originates with God. He sends down into human souls the spirit of grace and of supplications. The spirit of grace is the spirit that produces in the mind of man the experience of the grace of God; and this experience works repentance and inspires prayer.

III. THE OCCASION OF THIS PENITENTIAL SORROW. "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." "The expression, 'upon me,'" says Hengstenberg, "is very remarkable. According to ver. 1, the Speaker is the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth. But it is evident from what follows that we are not to confine our thoughts exclusively to an invisible God who is beyond the reach of suffering, for the same Jehovah presently represents himself as pierced by the Israelites, and afterwards lamented by them with bitter remorse. The enigma is solved by the Old Testament doctrine of the Angel and Revealer of the Most High God, to whom the prophet attributes even the most exalted names of God, on account of his participation in the Divine nature, who is described in ch. xi. as undertaking the office of Shepherd over his people, and who had been recompensed by them with base ingratitude." "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." The "me" and the "him" are the same Person, and that Person he who says, in ver. 10, "I will pour upon the house of David." In the first clause he is speaking of himself; in the second clause the prophet is speaking of him. The Messiah was pierced, and pierced by the Jews: "They pierced my hands and my feet." A believing sight of Christ produces this penitential sorrow.

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,  
And my Redeemer die?  
Did he devote his sacred head  
For such a worm as I?"

IV. THE POIGNANCY OF THIS PENITENTIAL SORROW. "And they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." "There are few states of deeper and acuter sorrow than this—that which is felt by affectionate parents when bereft of those objects of their fondest affections; the one solitary object of their concentrated parental love; or the firstborn and rising support and hope of their household." As to the poignancy of this grief, it is further said, "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon," etc. Perhaps the greatest sorrow ever known amongst the Jews was the sorrow in the valley of Megiddon, occasioned by the death of King Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 24). Jeremiah composed a funeral dirge on the occasion, and other odes and lamentations were composed, and were sung by males and females. But true penitential sorrow is far more

poignant than that occasioned by the death of an only son or a noble king. It is tinged with moral remorse.

V. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THIS POIGNANT SORROW. "And the land shall mourn, every family apart," etc. All the families of the land shall mourn, and all shall mourn "apart." Deep sorrow craves loneliness.

CONCLUSION. There is one event in history—whether such an event is referred to here or not—that answers better to the description here of penitential sorrow than any other in the chronicles of the world; it is the Day of Pentecost. Thousands of Jews assembled together on that day from all parts of the known world. Peter preached to the vast assembly and charged them with having crucified the Son of God. The Holy Spirit came down upon the vast congregation, and the result was that, "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart" (Acts ii. 37). Far on in the future, it may be, a period will dawn in Jewish history when such penitential sorrow as is here described will be experienced by all the descendants of Abraham.—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIII.

Vers. 1—6.—§ 3. *This repentance will lead to purification from past defilement, and a reaction against idolatry and false prophets.*

Vers. 1.—In that day. At the time when the great mourning (ch. xii.) takes place, or, more generally, in the Messianic period, when all these things shall be fulfilled. Shall be a fountain opened, etc. Shall be opened and continue open. The allusion is to the lustral rites practised in the consecration of the Levites, who were to have "water of sin" sprinkled on them, and to "the water of separation," or "water of uncleanness" (the word found in our passage), used for purposes of legal purification (see Numb. viii. 7; xix. 9). Instead of this merely ceremonial cleansing, there should be in the Christian Church the cleansing of the soul by the blood of Christ (1 Pet. i. 2; 1 John i. 7). Septuagint, "Ἐσται πᾶς τόπος διανορύμενος," "Every place shall be opened." The house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem represent the whole nation, as in ch. xii. 10; the cleansing is as universal as the sin (see the announcement in Ezek. xxxvi. 25; xlvii. 1—12; Joel iii. 18). For sin and for uncleanness. The latter word is used for the separation on account of uncleanness (Lev. xv. 20, etc.); and the two terms together comprise all guilt and pollution.

Vers. 2.—I will cut off the names of the idols. Idols should be so utterly abolished that their very names should perish (Hos. ii. 17; Micah v. 12, 13; Zeph. i. 4). The prophet names the two chief sins which had brought ruin on the old theocracy—idolatry and false-prophetism, and declares that these shall not be found in the new theocracy. As these two sins were not specially prevalent after the Captivity, some see in their mention here an argument for the pre-

exilian authorship of this part of Zechariah. But the prophet, grounding his message on past history, does well to give assurance that such lapses shall not happen again. Nor is it altogether certain that the warning against these errors was not needed after the return. There were false prophets in Nehemiah's time (Neh. vi. 14); and we read in the Book of Maccabees that many Jews adopted heathen rites and customs, among which the worship of idols must have been included (1 Macc. i. 11, etc.; 2 Macc. iv. 13, etc.), and the people and even priests contracted marriages with heathen wives (Ezra ix. 2; Neh. xiii. 23); so that there was real danger of relapse. The prophets. The false prophets are meant, as is evident from their being associated with idols and the unclean spirit, and from vers. 3—6. The Septuagint has, "the false prophets;" so the Vulgate. The unclean spirit. This is the lying spirit which works in the false prophets (see 1 Kings xxii. 19—23), and which we find later denounced by apostles (Acts xvi. 16; 1 Cor. x. 20, 21; 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10; 1 Tim. iv. 1). Septuagint, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀνιδιότρον (comp. Matt. xii. 43; Rev. xviii. 2).

Vers. 3.—When any shall yet prophesy; i.e. if any man shall pretend to have predictive powers conferred on him by God. There is here no intimation that true prophecy should cease, as Keil and Köhler suppose; the man is punished, not because he prophesies, but because "he speaketh lies." His father and his mother. The passage is grounded on the enactments in Deut. xiii. 6—10 and xviii. 20, which commanded the death of a false prophet or of one who enticed others to idolatry. Here the holy zeal of the parents should put the law in force. This was quite a different state of things from that which obtained in former times. The earlier prophets continually



complain of the favour shown to these deceivers (comp. Isa. ix. 15; Jer. v. 31; Micah ii. 11); and we never read of the legal punishment being inflicted after due investigation, the test being the non-fulfilment of the prediction (Deut. xviii. 22). In the new theocracy, so great is the recoil from such pretenders, that their nearest relations shall at once punish them with death without any previous legal process. **Shall thrust him through.** Stab, pierce him, put him to death, as in ch. xii. 10. The gospel deals more tenderly with heretics (Luke ix. 55). "Defendenda religio non est occidendo," says Lactant. ('Div. Inst.,' v. 20), "sed moriendo; religio cogi non potest" (Wordsworth, *in loc.*).

Ver. 4.—**Shall be ashamed.** The falsity of their pretensions being now recognized, these prophets shall be ashamed to utter their oracles in public. **When he hath prophesied;** rather, *when he prophesieth.* **A rough garment;** a mantle of hair; Septuagint, *δέρμιν τριχίνην*; Vulgate, *pallio sacino*. Such was the mantle of Elijah (1 Kings xix. 13, 19; 2 Kings i. 8; ii. 13, 14) and of John the Baptist (Matt. iii. 4), and it seems to have become the distinctive badge of the prophet, and was assumed by these pretenders in order to inspire confidence.

Ver. 5.—**I am an husbandman.** The impostor shall confess the truth about himself, and own that he is only "a tiller of the ground (*ἄνθρωπος ἐργαζόμενος τὴν γῆν*)," as Gen. iv. 2. The abnegation in Amos vii. 14 is quite different in character. **Man taught me to keep cattle;** literally, *man bought* (or, *possessed*) *me*; Revised Version, *I have been made a bondman*. So eager is he now to hide his false pretensions, that he is willing, to be considered a slave, employed from his youth in farm work, and therefore incapable of executing the prophetic office. Vulgate, *Quoniam Adam exemplum meum ab adolescentia mea*; i.e. "I have followed the example of Adam in tilling the ground and in earning my bread by the sweat of my brow." St. Cyril and some modern commentators hold that the false prophet says this in sorrow and repentance, not with any idea of deceiving; and that herein is exhibited a signal instance of the grace of God in the Messianic period, when even such sinners are converted from the error of their ways.

Ver. 6.—**What are these wounds in thine hands?** or rather, *between thy hands*, i.e. on thy breast; Revised Version, *between thine arms*. Ohayne compares, "between his arms," i.e. in his back (2 Kings ix. 24) and "between your eyes," i.e. on your foreheads (Deut. xi. 18). Not satisfied with the assertion in ver. 5, the questioner asks the meaning of these wounds which he sees on

his body. Jerome considers these scars to be marks of correction and punishment at the hands of his parents. More probably they are thought to be self-inflicted in the service of some idol, according to the practice mentioned in 1 Kings xviii. 28; Jer. xlviii. 37. Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. This may be a confession of guilt, the impostor owning that his friends had thus punished him for his pretensions; or, as the word rendered "friends" is generally used in the case of illicit or impure love or spiritual fornication, it may be here applied to the idols whom he served. But it seems most probable that the answer is intentionally false and misleading; as if he had said, "The wounds were not made as you suppose, but are the result of something that happened to me in my friends' house." The LXX. renders, *ἡ ἐπλήγην ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τῶ ἀγαπητῶ μου*, "with which I was struck in my beloved house." To see in this passage a reference to our blessed Lord and his crucifixion, though such an opinion has the support of the Roman Liturgy and of many interpreters, is to do violence to the context, and to read into the words a meaning wholly alien from the subject of false prophets, which is the matter in hand.

Vers. 7—9.—§ 4. *For the smiting of the good Shepherd Israel is punished, passes through much tribulation, by which it is refined, and in the end (though reduced to a mere remnant) is saved.*

Ver. 7.—**Awake, O sword.** Zechariah proceeds to show the course of the purification of the people. The mention of the false prophet and the shameful wounds in his flesh leads him to the contrast of the true Prophet and the effects of his "piercing." The abruptness of the commencement of the verse is dramatic, and gives no sufficient cause for supposing that this paragraph ought to be transferred (as Ewald and others desire) to the end of ch. xi. (For a similar apostrophe, comp. Jer. xlvii. 6.) It is introduced here to show that all that happened to the Shepherd was done after the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; and as if the sword could never have dared to act thus except it were permitted by the Divine will. The "sword" represents any kind of instrument that inflicts death (comp. Exod. v. 21; 2 Sam. xii. 9; Isa. xxvii. 1). **My Shepherd.** The Shepherd of Jehovah, who is speaking. He is the good Shepherd, the Representative of Jehovah, mentioned in ch. xi. 4, etc., the Messiah, who is identified with Jehovah in ch. xii. 10. The Septuagint has, *τοὺς ποιμένας μου*, "my shepherds" (Vatican), as if no

particular person was indicated, but rather all the leaders of the people of God; but the next clause seems to render the reference definite. **The man that is my fellow.** The word rendered "man" means rather "mighty man;" that rendered "fellow" occurs often in Leviticus, but nowhere else (Lev. v. 21; vi. 2; xix. 11, 15, 17, etc.), and is usually translated "neighbour;" it implies one united to another by the possession of common nature, rights, and privileges. God could speak only of One thus associated with himself, that is, of him who could say, "I and my Father are One" (John x. 30). The term is variously translated by the versions. Septuagint, *Ἄνδρα πολὶτην μου*; Aquila, *Ἄνδρα σύμφυλον μου*; Vulgate, *Firum coherentem mihi*. That the Shepherd is Messiah is proved by Christ's application of the following clause to himself (Matt. xxvi. 31). **Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.** When Christ was apprehended, all the disciples forsook him and fled (Matt. xxvi. 56); and what they did was done by others. Even the faithful few were scandalized at the cross. The command, "Smite the Shepherd," like the apostrophe, "Awake, O sword," shows that it was God's purpose that was being there executed (see John xix. 11; Acts ii. 23). It is also thus intimated that the dispersion of the Jews, and their denationalizing, were results of this rejection and smiting of the Shepherd. This dispersion is further explained in vers. 8, 9, where it is shown that to some it will be ruin, to others salvation. I will turn mine hand. "To turn," or "bring back the hand over," is used in a good and a bad sense (comp. Isa. i. 25; Amos i. 8). There is a promise of comfort in the use of the phrase here. God's hand shall

cover and protect some, while he punishes the others. Those thus protected are called the little ones, the humble and meek. This recalls Christ's words to his disciples, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32).

Ver. 8.—**In all the land;** i.e. Palestine, the country in which the good Shepherd tended his flock (ch. xi.), and which is a figure of the kingdom of God (comp. ch. xii. 12; xiv. 9, 10). **Two parts therein shall be cut off and die;** literally, *the mouth, i.e. the portion of two*, as Deut. xxi. 17; 2 Kings ii. 9, where it denotes the double portion inherited by the firstborn. The inheritance is divided into three portions, of which two parts are given over to death. Compare a similar allotment in the case of the Moabites (2 Sam. viii. 2). The doomed portion is supposed to represent the multitudes who perished at the siege of Jerusalem. This may be; but by analogy it stands for those who shall not accept the Messiah or be purified by suffering, even as Christ said, "Many are called, but few chosen" (Matt. xx. 16; comp. Matt. iii. 12). **The third.** This third part represents the faithful among the Jews (Rom. xi. 5), and the Christian Church gathered out of all nations (comp. Isa. vi. 13; and especially Ezek. v. 2, 12).

Ver. 9.—**Through the fire.** This third part, like its Master, passes through much tribulation, and is thereby refined and purified (comp. Ps. lxi. 10; Isa. xlviii. 10; Jer. ix. 7; Dan. xii. 10; Mal. iii. 3; 1 Pet. i. 6, 7). **Call on my Name.** In their distress they shall turn in faith to Jehovah, as the covenant God, a very present Help in trouble (Isa. lxv. 24). Thus is represented God's dealing with his Church in every age.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—**The end of sin.** "In that day there shall be a fountain opened," etc. The close of the last chapter described certain persons as pouring forth "a fountain of tears" (Jer. ix. 1). This opens by describing a "fountain" of a different kind—a fountain opened for the especial benefit of those who thus mourned (comp. ch. xii. 10). In this last-mentioned verse their grief is attributed to their looking on him "whom they had pierced." Remembering how distinctly this expression is applied, in John xix. 37, to the death of Christ Jesus, we seem justified in concluding that there is a similar reference here. According to this, therefore, the "fountain" of ver. 1 is a figurative description of that flow of blessings which comes from Christ's cross; and its "opening in that day" to the people described is a similar description of their being then at last enabled to discover and partake of that flow. So "opened," what will be its results? Two principally, both of chief importance, viz. an end of sin (1) in regard to its *guilt*; and an end of sin (2) in regard to its *pollution*.

I. THE END OF ITS GUILT. Sin, as being the transgression of Law (1 John iii. 4; v. 17; Rom. iv. 15; v. 13), involves the displeasure, and that inevitably, of the Lawgiver. If the Law is worth enacting, it is worth enforcing. If not meant, indeed, to be enforced, why was it ever proclaimed? The wiser, also the better, the holier, the

higher the Lawgiver, the more this reasoning holds. The greater also, such being the case, and that both in itself and also before him, is the offence of rebelling against him. And it is this "offence," this deadly "offence," that the mystical fountain here described in the first place—providing, as it does, "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world"—so entirely brings to an end. See how emphatically this is taught generally in Rom. viii. 1; iii. 25. And see how the same appears to be taught specially concerning Jerusalem and its inhabitants in the future in such passages as Isa. xl. 2; xliii. 25; Jer. l. 20 (see also Dan. ix. 24). Now their "iniquities have separated," as described in Isa. lix. 2, "between them and their God, and their sins have made him [margin] hide his face from them, that he will not hear." Then, through that "opened fountain," this will all be reversed. No longer separated or concealed from them, he will accept their prayers with "delight" (see John iv. 23, end; Prov. xv. 8).

II. THE END OF ITS POLLUTION. Besides being an offence to God, sin is an injury to ourselves. Being altogether unworthy of us in every respect, it brings about, and that immediately, our own degradation and shame. It involves pollution, that is to say, as well as guilt. And it further involves, such being the case, in addition to the before-mentioned separation or alienation of God's favour from us, the separation or alienation of our nature from him. This second evil would seem to be described in our text (see margin) as "separation" for or by means of "uncleanness." How such alienation on man's part through the pollution of sin is evidenced, we may see in Gen. iii. 8; Luke v. 8; Isa. xxx. 11; Rom. i. 28, beginning; and also in that which is assumed respecting us in the gracious appeal of 2 Cor. v. 20. On the other hand, how entirely this second alienation can be overcome by the remedy of our text is seen in 1 John i. 7, end; John xii. 32. And how completely both this and the previously mentioned alienation are to be removed in the case of Judah and Israel at the last, as here described, we may perhaps see in Jer. xxxi. 31—34, especially as quoted and summarized in Heb. x. 16, 17 and elsewhere.

If this interpretation is accepted, we may learn hence for ourselves, in concluding: 1. *The necessity of Christ's death.* In all cases we see it is thus that God has appointed as to doing away with our sins. It is only by the "fountain" in this way provided, and not by any fountain of tears on man's part, however copious, however unexampled, however certainly due even to an influence from above (ch. xii. 10), that the "double cure" of sin can be wrought.

"Could my tears for ever flow," etc.

2. *The necessity of man's faith.* The necessity, we mean, of course, where there is the capacity for faith in existence. Till that capacity for faith is exercised, no matter what the object of faith, what can it do? Till the "fountain" in this way be "opened"—in other words, be discovered and used—whom can it cleanse? (See Rom. v. 1 and Acts xv. 9 respectively for the two sides of this truth.) 3. *The abundance of God's grace*—whether to pardon or heal. It is not a cistern, not even a well, but a fountain, to which we find it compared (comp. Jer. ii. 13; John iv. 12, 13). No limitation as to supply. No limitation as to use (see Deut. xi. 10, 11).

Vers. 2—6.—*The end of error.* "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols," etc. After the end of sin, the end of that which leads to sin, viz. of error. This gift completes the previous blessings by making them lasting and sure (comp. Ps. lxxxv. 8). This gift also, as we find it described here, is most complete in itself. It is so, whether we consider what is told us (1) as to the future *action of God*, or (2) as to the *action of men*, in bringing error to an end.

I. THE ACTION OF GOD. It is promised here that he will put an end to error: 1. *By abolishing its very symbols.* The "names" of idols are the symbols or words by means of which their supposed attributes or connection with different localities are set forth and commemorated; and under which also they are worshipped. Besides numerous classical examples, see in Acts xix. 34 how evidently the people of Ephesus considered it as equivalent to a declaration of their faith to repeat the mere name of Diana. What is promised here, therefore, is that it should be eventually with all

systems of error as it is now with many of the singular and subtle heresies which vexed the primitive Church. They are so far forgotten by this time that it is a matter of difficult antiquarian research even to ascertain their true meaning. 2. *By banishing its teachers.* Not only then shall the "tares" of falsehood be "rooted up," but the "enemy" also that sowed them shall be taken away. This, moreover, shall be done so completely that not only the false "prophet," but the "unclean spirit" also, his inspirer and confederate, shall "cease" to exist in the land (comp. 1 Sam. xxviii. 3 end, 9; and see Rev. xvi. 13, 14; xix. 20; xx. 1—3). Error, therefore, at that happy season, shall be twice dead, as it were; gone altogether beyond recollection; gone also beyond recovery.

II. THE ACTION OF MAN. Even should any persons qualified to act as false prophets be still left in existence (see again 1 Sam. xxviii. 7), there will be two further things effectually to prevent them from making use of their gifts. There will be the extent to which, at that time, the false prophet: 1. *Shall be hated by others.* He will be hated (1) by all others, including specially even those who, as having brought him into being, will naturally be the most disposed to befriend or endure him. Also (2) he will be hated by these in the bitterest manner, *their* mouths pronouncing against him, and *their* hands inflicting on him *sentence of death.* And finally (3) he will be hated thus on account of his connection with error (note "*for thou speakest lies,*" and "*when he prophesieth,*" in ver. 3). Acting also at that time in the same direction, will be the extent to which the false prophet shall be: 2. *Despised by himself.* For example, he will be ashamed (1) of his inward prophetic thoughts or "visions," not thinking more of them as guides to truth than a sensible man does of his dreams. He will be ashamed (2) of his outward prophetic garb, being so far from wishing to have it "seen of men" (Matt. xxiii. 5) that he will never clothe himself in it. And, finally, (3) he will be ashamed of both these things to such an extent as to be willing rather to be regarded as a bondman, or slave (so many understand ver. 5), and ready rather (so we may, perhaps, understand the difficult words of ver. 6) to seek shelter from the imputation of being a prophet in any subterfuge, however absurd. "Call me anything but a teacher of truth. Believe what you will of me except that I profess to be that!"

Whatever the special application of the passage which sets before us such a complete cessation of error, there are two general principles of much importance which seem illustrated thereby. 1. *The increasing light of the future.* Compared with the past, whether Jewish or pagan, how full of light the dispensation that now is (see Matt. xiii. 16, 17; Heb. xi. 13; 1 Pet. i. 10, 11; Acts xvii. 3; xxvi. 18)! Compared with the future, how full of darkness (1 Cor. xiii. 9—12; 1 John iii. 2; Col. i. 12; Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 4, 5)! Much, indeed, yet remains to be revealed to those described in Ps. xxv. 14. 2. *The great consequent blessedness of the future.* What a scene of distraction, with its "many masters" (see Revised Version, Jas. iii. 1) and discordant outcries (Matt. xxiv. 23—26), not unlike the scene described in Dan. vii. 2, is the present! How profound the tranquillity, how sweet the calm, caused by the cessation of all! Happy, indeed, to have the hope of travelling at last "to where beyond these voices there is peace"!

Vers. 7—9.—*A wonderful sentence.* "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow," etc. The prophet here seems again to "hark back," as at the openings of ch. ix. and xi. (where see remarks and references), from the "glory" that was to "follow" to the "sufferings" that were to precede. At any rate, we have the highest authority (Matt. xxvi. 31, 56) for understanding this passage of the "sufferings" and death of our Lord himself. This being so, how does its language present that great "Passion" to us? As something surpassingly wonderful (1) *in itself*; and (2) *in its results.*

I. WONDERFUL IN ITSELF. Here is a man spoken of—here is a command given respecting him—by the Lord of hosts. 1. *How wonderful the man spoken of!* (1) He is supreme in office. All other men are to him but as sheep. He is to them in the position of a shepherd. He is also recognized and appointed as such ("*my Shepherd*") by God himself. Nor is there any other whatever so appointed, except by his direction and in a subordinate place (see Isa. xl. 11; John x. 11; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet.

ii. 25; v. 4). (2) He is supreme in nature. He is Jehovah's "fellow," or equal, just as men dwelling together in Palestine as neighbours (see Lev. xix. 15, 17; xxv. 14, 15, etc., where the same word is employed) were fellows, or equals. Higher than this—higher, *i.e.*, than the highest—who can possibly be? 2. *How wonderful the command*, things being thus! (1) Consider its purport; viz. that such a one should be smitten at all; should be smitten also with such a weapon—a weapon of so judicial a nature (Rom. xiii. 4); a weapon of so deadly a character, aiming at life itself (Matt. xxvi. 52). Why should the "sword" be thus called upon to "awake"—as though previously "asleep" and neglecting its duty—against him? Who less deserving, in himself, to suffer thereby? Who more fit, rather, in every way, to employ it (see John v. 22; Acts xvii. 31, etc.)? (2) Consider its Author—the Lord of hosts. The marvel is the same as that we read of in Isa. liii. 10, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief" (see also Acts ii. 23; Rom. viii. 32). It is the Judge of judges, the eternal Father himself, who bids the sword awake against him!

II. WONDERFUL IN ITS RESULTS. For these, as described to us here, are: 1. *Most unexpected*. The immediate result, indeed, that of scattering the sheep, is not at all unexpected. What more likely, what more certain to follow, humanly speaking, from smiting the Shepherd? But the ultimate result, that of saving these "little ones" (so many understand end of ver. 7), that of preserving the sheep by thus slaying their Preserver (comp. John xviii. 8, 9; Matt. xxvii. 42, beginning; Gal. iii. 13; Isa. liii. 5, end), is unexpected indeed. Has not the very idea, indeed, seemed the height of "foolishness" to many (1 Cor. i. 23) who thought themselves "wise"? 2. *Most widely diverse*. This extraordinary method of preserving the flock was not expected to preserve all within reach of its influence. On the contrary, far too many amongst them—something like two to one of them, in fact, all taken together ("in all the land")—would decline to avail themselves of it. (1) Its effect upon these who despise it—for it would have effect upon these—would be their uttermost ruin. The method of deliverance, by being thus inverted, would become their destruction. The weapon of defence, by being turned thus against them, becomes a weapon of death (see 2 Cor. ii. 16, beginning; Luke ii. 34; Heb. ii. 3). (2) Its effect on those who embrace it, on the other hand, would be their uttermost salvation. Observe the various steps. First, they are "left;" that is (see Ezek. ix. 8), not destroyed. Next, they are purified by discipline—*i.e.* saved from the power of sin—as metals by fire; and this as thoroughly at the last (comp. Heb. xii. 23, end) as when gold has been "tried" till it requires trying no longer. Concurrently with this, on the other hand, they are saved so thoroughly from the condemnation of sin, that they have full access to God's presence and attention; and when they openly speak of God as their Portion (as such persons will do, Ps. xvi. 5; cxix. 57), are acknowledged by him as his portion in a similar manner (see Ps. lxxvii. 6; Jer. x. 16; li. 19; Deut. xxxii. 9; Cant. ii. 16). They are favoured by him, in fact, both secretly and openly too (Matt. vi. 6).

Three brief thoughts to conclude. 1. *How lofty the superstructure* of the gospel salvation! Salvation itself, understood rigorously (as we have noted), is only *not* being lost. Actually, as here described to us, it is all that heart can desire—the heirship of all things through Christ (Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iv. 7; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). 2. *How deep its foundations!* Penetrating to the very greatest depths, as it were, of the Divine nature and plans (Rev. xiii. 8). 3. *How certain its truth!* Like that house which the Saviour himself describes (Matt. vii. 24, 25) as being founded on a rock—founded, in fact, on that "Rock of Ages," which not all the "ages" can shake (comp. Heb. xii. 27, 28).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The fountain of grace*. Salvation through Christ. The glorious gospel.

I. THE EVIL. "Sin and uncleanness." All are sinners. Law, facts of life, testimony of conscience, prove our guilt. Sin defiles all that it touches. "Uncleanness," alas! how prevalent, and in manifold forms! 'Twas sin that brought it all into the world. If there were no sin there would be no uncleanness. Need for grief and prayer.

II. THE REMEDY. "Fountain," etc. 1. *Freedom of access*. Open, not shut. None

debarred. In the promise of God—by the atoning death of Christ—through the ministry of grace, the fountain has been opened for all (John xix. 34; 1 John i. 7; Heb. ix. 13). 2. *Plenitude of supply*. Not a pool or a cistern, but a fountain, with rich and ample supplies for all. Thousands and tens of thousands have already been blessed, and whosoever will may come, and will find that Christ is mighty to save. 3. *Perennial virtue*. Not like Bethesda, at certain times; but all the year round, and from generation to generation. After many years' absence, I visited the home of my youth. There were sad changes. Friends were gone. None to know me. But under the shade of firs, in the old place, I found the spring where I had often slaked my thirst. It was still the same—the water sweet and refreshing as ever. So Christ is "the Same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."—F.

Ver. 7.—*The sword*. There is here something of heaven and earth. Jehovah speaks. He lays his command on the sword of justice, to awake and "smite." This implies death, and death not of a common sort, but as a judicial act, under the sanction of law. We take the scene to illustrate the *tragedy of Calvary* (Matt. xxvi. 31; John xvi. 32). Three questions may be asked.

I. WHO? The rebellious Babylon, Rome, Jerusalem? No. "The man that is my fellow." Who is this? Search, and where can you find such a one? Abraham was God's friend, but not his "fellow." Prophets and kings, martyrs and confessors, all stand aside. None but Christ answers the description. He is the First and the Last and the only One, in human likeness, who could say, "I and my Father are One."

II. WHY? Justice has its reasons. All that God does must be in accordance with eternal right. But here is mystery. The Man who alone was "without sin," holy and perfect—the solitary man, in human form, who was nearest of kin to God himself—to be dealt with as if he were a transgressor, and as if he had done things worthy of death,—this is exceeding strange. The key is in the term "Shepherd." Implies covenant relationship. Substitution of person and of sufferings. The One for the many; the Shepherd for the sheep.

III. WHAT THEN? We reasonably expect results worthy of such a tragedy. Two-fold. 1. *Judgment*. Not only as to the disciples, but the Jewish people. 2. *Mercy*. Tender compassion. Gracious interposition. Glorious resolve. "I will turn my hand upon the little ones." Let us note that there is but one alternative—hand or sword. If we pass by God's hand stretched out to save, we must perish by the sword. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—F.

Vers. 1-6.—*The gospel age*. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered," etc. Concerning the preceding chapter and these six verses, Dr. Keil says, "This section forms the first half of the second prophecy of Zechariah concerning the future of Israel and of the world, viz. the prophecy contained in ch. xii.—xiv., which, as a side-piece to ch. ix.—xi., treats of the judgment by which Israel, the nation of God, will be refined, sifted, and led on to perfection through conflict with the nations of the world. This first section announces how the conflict against Jerusalem and Judah will issue in destruction to the nations of the world (ch. xii. 1-4). Jehovah will endow the princes of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem with marvellous strength to overcome all their foes (vers. 5-9), and will pour out his spirit of grace upon them, so that they will bitterly repent the death of the Messiah (vers. 10-14), and purify themselves from all ungodliness (ch. xiii. 1-6)." "The day" here is generally supposed by expositors to point to the gospel age; and three remarks are here suggested in relation to this day.

I. IT IS A "DAY" FOR THE ABOUNDING OF SIN-CLEANSING INFLUENCES. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." This phrase comprehended the whole Jewish nation. To the Jews, washing from sin and ceremonial impurity was an idea with which they were well acquainted. It was enjoined by the Law (Numb. vii. 7; see also Ezek. xxxvi. 25).

1. *That sin and uncleanness are in the world*. This is a fact written in all history,

patent to every man's observation and consciousness. 2. *The removal of sin is the world's great necessity.* Its existence is the cause of all the miseries of the world, physical, social, political, religious. 3. *Provisions for its removal abound.* "A fountain opened." Sin and uncleanness are not an *essential* part of human nature. Men have lived without sin, and men in the other world do now. It is a mere stain on human nature, separable from it, and the means of separation are provided—provided in the gospel. In the mediatory life, teaching, works, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God. In all this he has opened to the world a fountain of influence by which sin is to be cleansed. It is a fountain. This implies: (1) *Abundance.* It is not a rill, a brook, a lake, but a fountain. What is the fountain? Infinite love. (2) *Freeness.* Flowing, ever open to all. (3) *Perpetuity.* The hottest sun does not dry up the fountain. It has an under-connection with the boundless deep.

II. IT IS A "DAY" IN WHICH IDOLATRY SHALL BE UTTERLY ABOLISHED. The spirit of idolatry is *giving to any object that love which belongs only to the Supreme*; and this sin is perhaps as rife in regions where monotheism is professed as in those lands where polytheism holds its empire. The cutting off the "names of the idols" means their utter destruction (see Hos. ii. 17). But you may destroy all the million idols, involving those which are the workmanship of men and those which are the creation of God, before which men have bowed, and yet leave idolatry as rampant as ever. Nothing but the destruction of the spirit will be the destruction of Idolatry. Hence we have here suggested a time when men shall give their affection to the Supreme Being, and to him alone, when they shall worship the one true and living God. This is the idolatry the gospel comes to destroy; it is to turn men from idols to the living God. What a blessed age will that be, when all men on the face of the earth shall have their souls centred in love and devotion on the one great and common Father of us all! "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats" (Isa. ii. 20).

III. IT IS A "DAY" IN WHICH ALL FALSE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS SHALL CEASE. "And I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land," etc. The words here in relation to false prophets suggest the following thoughts. 1. *False religious teachers are great curses to a community.* This is implied in the promise here of their destruction. False teachers in any branch of knowledge, be it historic, scientific, philosophic, literary, or artistic, are for many reasons great evils; but in religion the evils they inflict are inconceivably great. They deceive souls on the most vital of all points. False religious teachers are not merely teachers of pantheism, idolatry, or Mohammedanism, but even those who are nominally teachers of the gospel. The man who gives a wrong interpretation of the gospel is a false teacher, and such men are found even in the pulpits of our England. What blasphemous ideas of God and degrading notions of his blessed Son have we in some of the popular sermons of the age! Whosoever teaches the conventional Christ is false to the Christ of the gospel. 2. *False religious teachers may become objects of indignation even to their nearest relations.* "And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth." It will be, indeed, a blessed time when the people of a country will have a greater love for truth than for their dearest relations, even their very children; when the appearance of a false teacher will awaken such a public indignation as will expose his very life to danger; when men's moral ears will be so attuned to truth, that the very sound of falsehood will become intolerable. Thank God, there is an age of moral reality coming, an age when men will recoil from shams as from "demons vile." 3. *False religious teachers will on this "day" be ashamed to exercise their mission.* "The prophets shall be ashamed." If any false prophets should continue to exercise their function, they will have to do it: (1) With secrecy. "Neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive." It is said, when Domitian banished philosophers from Rome, many persons shaved off their beards and flung away their cloaks, that they might not be included in the ban. So now the false prophet will be ashamed of his badge, his rough garment, made perhaps of untanned sheepskin, or a Bedouin blanket made of camel's hair, like that of John the Baptist. (2) Disclaiming their profession. "He shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman." If they carry on their work,

they will do it under a false character, such as farmers or herdmen. "I belong to that class in society which lies under the least suspicion of aspiring to a function in which knowledge of affairs, dexterity in making use of men's weaknesses, and some literary faculty are needed. Besides, 'men own me from my youth' (for this is the meaning of the words rendered, 'men taught me to keep cattle from my youth'); and so if I had had the will I could never have had the chance of setting up as a prophet. I have not been my own master. Not quite satisfied with this disclaimer, the supposed examiners ask to be allowed to look at his hands, as you can judge roughly of a man's calling by the state of his hands—at least, you can thus judge whether a man is earning his bread with his hands or his head. They at once detect suspicious marks on this man's hands, wounds which they evidently suspect to have been self-inflicted in accordance with some idolatrous rite. Self-mutilation and self-laceration have always been common accessories of pagan worship, and common accompaniments of manifestations of pagan fanatical ecstasy. They are far from uncommon still in heathen and in Mohammedan countries. Permanent marks of a distinctive kind were also frequently made upon different parts of the person, and especially upon the arms, in acknowledgment of allegiance to some particular god (Jer. xlviii. 37), where mourning is thus described: 'Every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings.' But the man denies that his wounds have any such significance; they are not, he says, religious marks at all: 'they are wounds which I received in the house of friends,' in some rustic frolic with his boon companions, or as the slave's brand in the house of his master" (Dr. Dods). Should their disclaiming be questioned, they will take shelter in falsehood. "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." "The doubting examiner asks him to show him his hands, that he may ascertain if he has the rough hands of a farmer; those hands he shows, but they have nevertheless marks of a prophet on them, and of these very marks he gives a false account." "I was wounded in the house of my friends."

CONCLUSION. Thank God, we live in this gospel age. The sin-cleansing fountain is here, sending forth its streams in all directions. They flow through all the good books we have, through all the good lives we meet with. Let the streams multiply. The fountain will supply streams equal to the exigencies of all. Let us remove obstructions, cut new channels, and strive to let them into every heart. These will multiply in power, and increase in volume, till all idolatry, false teaching, and every other form of iniquity that pollutes the heart of the world, be washed clean away, and the whole world be holy in character, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.—D. T.

Vers. 7—9.—*God's government of the world.* "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Here we have God's government of the world in two aspects, *bringing penal ruin on many in a community, and remedial discipline upon a few*; appearing as the sword of justice in the one case, and as a refiner's pot in the other. Here we have it—

I. AS BRINGING PENAL RUIN UPON MANY. 1. *The destruction of their leader.* "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd." In the Bible language political religious leaders are represented as shepherds. For example, it was applied to Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 28). The person defined is represented as "the man that is my fellow." Dr. Keil's rendering is, "the man who is my neighbour;" and Dr. Henderson's, "the man who is united to me." Who is this man? On this question there are different opinions. "Callon thought it was Zechariah himself as representative of all the prophets, and that the prophecy referred only indirectly to Christ. Grotius, Eichhorn, Bauer, and Jahne apply it to Judas Maccabæus; Ewald, to Pekah; Hitzig, to the pretended prophets spoken of in the preceding verses." The expression, "my fellow," does not necessarily mean one who is equal in nature and character. but rather one who has fellowship of



interests and aims. The poorest labourer in the cause of gospel truth is a "fellow" with the Archbishop of Canterbury, even a fellow-labourer of Christ, and fellow-labourer with God himself. Evangelical writers, however, apply the language to Christ, without much critical examination and without hesitation. They do this mainly on the ground that Christ himself quotes the passage, on the night in which he was betrayed, as an illustration of what was immediately awaiting him. "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad" (Matt. xxvi. 31). He does not say that the prophecy referred to him, but merely that the passage was about to be illustrated in his history. The Shepherd was to be smitten, and the sheep scattered. This, indeed, is a common fact in the history of the world; when the leader is gone the fold is scattered. Christ was, indeed, about to be smitten—smitten to death, not by the "sword" of Divine vengeance, as is impiously held by some, but by the wrath of his human enemies. "Awake, O sword." "These are words," says an old orthodox expositor, "of God the Father giving orders and commission to the sword of his justice to awaken to his Son." It is the sword of justice that he may die as a criminal on an ignominious tree; awaking to smite him, not with a drowsy blow, but with a mighty one." Dr. Watts has the same idea—

"The Father plunged his flaming sword  
In his atoning blood."

From all such representations of the benign God of the universe, and the Infinite Father of love, my reason and heart revolt as from a monstrous creed or cursed blasphemy. However, I am not going to debate either the question whether the words were intended for Christ or not, or, if they were, the accuracy or otherwise of the interpretations thus given. Our point is that *God often brings sufferings on a people by striking down their leader*. There are few greater calamities that can befall a people than when nations lose their shepherds and leaders, or when Churches lose their pastors. Even when families lose their heads the loss is incalculable. 2. *The dispersion of the flock*. This comes to most communities when the true leader is taken away. The removal of a leader in a family—a parent—often leads to a scattering of the children. So with the leader in a Church—the pastor; and so with the leader of a nation. When the shepherd has gone, the flock is scattered, and the scattering is a great evil. Unity is strength and harmony; division is weakness and disorder. When communities are broken up and dispersed, the various members often place themselves in antagonism with each other, and rivalries, jealousies, and envyings run riot. 3. *The ruin of multitudes*. "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein." Probably this refers primarily to the destruction of two-thirds of the inhabitants of Judæa by the Roman arms, and the famine or the pestilence and other destructive influences which are the usual concomitants of all wars. Thus the afflictions of the great majority of the human race, here represented as the two-thirds of a community, come upon them as the retribution of justice—the Divine sword here invoked. They are not disciplinary, but penal. The victims do not morally improve under them, they grow worse. They are "cut off and die."

II. BRINGING REMEDIAL DISCIPLINE TO A FEW. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." The very calamities which were penal and utterly ruinous to two-thirds of that population were morally disciplinary and improving to the remaining third. In the one case they were the strokes of the "sword" of justice. In the other the calamities were but fire in the "pot of the refiner." Just as the refiner purifies his silver and his gold by fire, God in mercy spiritually improves his people by the trial and the sufferings which he inflicts. These, taught by the purifying influence of trials: 1. *Pray and are heard*. "Shall call on my Name, and I will hear them." 2. *Are accepted of God as his people*. They acknowledge their relationship. "I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

CONCLUSION. Amidst all the difficulties connected with this passage, this doctrine stands out in sublime prominence—that afflictions which are penal and destructive to

*the many are remedial and merciful to the few.* All experience shows this to be true. Two men stand before me. Both are equally afflicted with similar sufferings. The one writhes, murmurs, and rebels under his afflictions; he becomes intensified in his enmity to God. Like Pharaoh, his heart is hardened; he dies a rebel, and is lost. The "sword" of justice has struck him. The other becomes spiritually thoughtful, repentant, resigned, humbled, and devout. The "fire" has purified him, and like David he says, "It is good for me that I was afflicted," and like Paul, "I glory in tribulation."—D. T.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIV.

Vers. 1, 2.—§ 5. The afflictions of the people and their results are set forth in figure and symbol. *Jerusalem is represented as taken and plundered.*

Ver. 1.—*The day of the Lord; a day of (or, to) Jehovah cometh.* The Greek and Latin Versions have the plural, "days of the Lord come." It is a time when he will specially manifest his glory and power, and be recognized as allowing the trial of his people for wise purposes. It is impossible to fix on any historical fulfilment of this prophecy. The details suit neither Macca-bean nor Roman times; the attempt to define exactly the period and matter of its accomplishment has proved a failure, and has led to a mingling of events of very different dates, and to a conglomeration of senses literal, metaphorical, and anagogical, which creates confusion while assuming to explain difficulties. The literal interpretation must be resigned, and the whole prophecy must be taken to adumbrate the kingdom of God in its trial, development, and triumph. *Thy spoil shall be divided.* Jerusalem is addressed; and the prophet intimates that the enemy shall get possession of the capital, plunder it, and divide its spoil among themselves in its very midst with the greatest security, the inhabitants being wholly at the conquerors' mercy.

Ver. 2.—How this shall come to pass is now shown. *For I will gather all nations.* God uses the Gentile nations as his instruments in this trial of his people; they are the fires by which he refines and purifies his elect (Joel iii. 2, 9—11). *The city shall be taken.* The outrages offered to the captive city are such as are indicated in the case of Babylon (Isa. xiii. 16; comp. Lam. v. 11, etc.). *Half of the city.* The term "half" must not be pressed, as if it contradicted the mention of the two-thirds that were to perish, according to the prediction in ch. xiii. 8. It is a mere rhetorical expression. Or it may apply to the city alone, while the other referred to the whole land. *Shall not be out off.* In the former captivity all the

people were carried away; in this capture of the city a remnant shall be left therein. It is plain from this statement that the prophecy cannot apply to the destruction of the city by the Romans; for, according to the account of Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' vi. 9), the city itself was razed to the ground, and all the inhabitants were either put to the sword or sold for slaves.

Vers. 3—7.—§ 6. *Then the Lord himself comes to her help, great convulsions of nature accompanying his presence.*

Ver. 3.—*Shall go forth.* God is said to "go forth" when he manifests his power by delivering his people and punishing their enemies (comp. Isa. xxvi. 21; xlii. 13; Micah i. 3). *As when he fought in the day of battle.* The Hebrew is in general terms, "as when he fighteth in a day of battle," or, "slaughter;" Septuagint, *καθὼς ἡμέρα παραρξέως αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ πολέμου*, "as a day of his battle in a day of war;" Vulgate, *sicut præliatus est in die certaminis*. There is nothing in the text to confine the reference to any one special interposition; it refers rather to the general course of God's providence in defending his people, though, doubtless, the prophet has in his mind the crowning act of mercy at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 13, 14, 25), which is so often referred to as a typical deliverance (comp. Isa. xi. 11; Jer. xvi. 14; xxiii. 8; Hab. iii. 15; and above, ch. x. 11).

Ver. 4.—*His feet shall stand.* By this theophany he shall come to the aid of his people; nature shall do his bidding, owning the presence of its Maker. *Upon the Mount of Olives . . . on the east.* This mount lay on the east of Jerusalem, from which it was separated by the deep valley of the Kidron, rising to a height of some six hundred feet, and intercepting the view of the wilderness of Judæa and the Jordan ghor. The geographical detail is added in the text to indicate the line of escape which shall be opened for those who are to be delivered. This is the only place in the Old Testament where the Mount of Olives is thus exactly named; but it is often alluded to; e.g. 2 Sam. xv. 30; 1 Kings xi. 7; 2

Kings xxiii. 13 (where it is called "the mount of corruption"), etc. Shall cleave in the midst thereof. As the enemy are supposed to beset Jerusalem, so as to make escape by any ordinary road impossible, the Lord will open a way through the very centre of the mountain (as he opened a path through the Red Sea), by cleaving the hill in sunder, the two parts moving north and south, and leaving a great valley running east and west, and leading to the Arabah.

Ver. 5.—*Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; ye shall flee by the valley of my mountains*; i.e. by the ravine made by the cleaving of Olivet into two, which God calls "my mountain," because effected by his special interposition. Septuagint, *ἡ φάραξ τῶν ὀρέων μου*, "The valley of my mountains shall be blocked;" Vulgate, *Fugietis ad vallem montium eorum*. The last word is probably an error for *meorum*. Into the chasm thus miraculously formed the remnant shall flee for refuge. Unto Azal; *ἔως ἱαρόδ* (Septuagint); *usque ad proximum* (Vulgate); so Symmachus. If Azal, or Azel, be a proper name, it is with some probability identified with Beth-ezel, mentioned in Micah i. 11, a village on the east of Olivet. The meaning in this case is that the valley should extend from the west unto the east side of the Mount of Olives, and that in it the people shall find an asylum, that they might not be involved in the judgments which fall on the enemy. Some take *Azal* to mean "union," and see in it a symbol of the union of the Law and the gospel, or the Jew and Gentile, in one Church—the valley of God's mountain extending to "union;" that is, to enfolding all the faithful (see Wordsworth, *in loc.*). The earthquake in the days of Uzziah. This is mentioned in Amos i. 1, but not in the historical books (see note on Amos, *loc. cit.*). The intervention of the Lord is here accompanied by an earthquake, which produces the same panic as on the former occasion, and drives the inhabitants to flight. Shall come. To smite his enemies and to defend his people. All the saints (*holy ones*) with thee. The versions have, "with him;" and thus many Hebrew manuscripts. But such abrupt changes of persons are not uncommon (see note on ch. ii. 8). The "holy ones" are the angels (comp. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Job v. 1; Dan. vii. 10; and the parallel predictions in Matt. xxiv. 30, 31; xxv. 31).

Ver. 6.—*The light shall not be clear, nor dark*. The Greek, Syriac, and Latin Versions have, "There shall not be light, but ('and,' Septuagint) cold and ice." With the absence of light and sun shall come bitter frost, which impedes all activity, and kills life; or, taking the Septuagint render-

ing, there shall no longer be the interchange of seasons, but one lasting sunshine. It is plain that a time of distress and calamity is intended, and that the passage is threatening and not consolatory, at any rate, at first. There is solid ground for the rendering of the Revised Version margin, adopted by Cheyne and others, which is according to the Khetib, "There shall not be light, the bright ones shall contract themselves;" i.e. the heavenly bodies shall contract their light, or be heaped confusedly together, and cease to shine. The prediction in this case may be compared with that in Joel iii. 15; Isa. xiii. 10; and in Matt. xxiv. 29; Rev. vi. 12, 13. The Authorized Version is explained in the margin, i.e. "It shall not be clear in some places, and dark in other places of the world"—a gloss which is inadmissible.

Ver. 7.—*One day*. A unique day, unparalleled (comp. Cant. vi. 9; Ezek. vii. 5). Which shall be (*is*) known to the Lord. Its peculiar character, and the moment of its arrival, are known to God, and God only (Matt. xxiv. 36). Not day, nor night. It cannot be called truly the one or the other, because there is darkness in the day and light at night, as the following clause says. This is symbolically explained by St. Ephraem, "It will not be altogether consolation, nor altogether affliction." It is not full daylight, for calamity presses; it is not deep night, because there is hope amid the distress. At evening-time it shall be light. In the midst of trouble and danger deliverance shall come. The whole section is a figurative description of the fortunes of the Church militant, even as Christ announced to his disciples: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33); "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John xv. 20); "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27).

Vers. 8—11.—§ 7. *Then shall occur a season of joy. The land shall be transformed and renewed, and the Lord shall be owned as the sole King of all the earth.*

Ver. 8.—*Living waters*; i.e. water fresh, pure, and perennial (Gen. xvi. 19; Jer. ii. 13), a figure of the spiritual blessings and graces bestowed by God upon his Church. From Jerusalem, as the centre and representative of the kingdom of God, as in ch. xii. 2. The city itself was, as we know, abundantly supplied with water by many conduits and subterranean channels; but standing, as it does, surrounded by hills higher than itself, it is physically impossible that the waters could literally flow as stated.

The description is symbolical, though the natural features of the country are supposed to be changed in order to preserve verisimilitude (comp. Ezek. xlvi. 1, etc.; Joel iii. 18). The former (*eastern*) sea . . . the hinder (*western*) sea. The Dead Sea is the eastern sea to one looking to sunrise from Jerusalem: the Mediterranean is the western sea, behind the observer's back. Into every quarter the salutary stream shall flow. In summer and in winter. Neither drought nor frost shall stop their perennial flow. "Alike in times of peace and of persecution those waters shall continue their course" (St. Jerome); Septuagint, "In summer and in spring"—a rendering which seems to indicate the home of the Alexandrian Version.

Ver. 9.—*All the earth; all the land of Israel* (vers. 8, 10)—a type of the kingdom of God in all its extent (Rev. xi. 15, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever"). Shall there be one Lord; rather, *Jehovah shall be one*. He shall be universally acknowledged as "the blessed and only Potentate" (1 Tim. vi. 15). His name one. Idolatry shall be abolished, and the one God shall be everywhere adored (comp. ch. xiii. 2; Deut. vi. 4). Men shall no longer attribute operations and effects to various heavenly powers, but shall see and confess that all are derived from and centre in him, and are only different revelations of his ineffable nature and attributes. We do not, indeed, see this prediction yet fulfilled, but the grace to accomplish it is ready and operating; it is only men's perverse wills that impede the gracious purpose of God.

Ver. 10.—*All the land shall be turned as a plain*. To indicate the exaltation and stability of the centre of the new theocracy, the prophet announces that all the country round Jerusalem shall be turned into a plain, dominated by the metropolis, which stands sublime on a lofty mountain. The Revised Version renders, "shall be turned as the Arabah," i.e. as the Jordan ghor, a valley of abnormal fertility. From Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; i.e. from the north of Judah to its southern boundary. Geba was a town and district on the edge of the great Wady Suweinit, five miles north of Jerusalem. It is identified with Jeba (1 Sam. xiii. 3), and it formed the northern boundary of the kingdom of Judah (Josh. xviii. 24). Rimmon is described as "south of Jerusalem," to distinguish it from a town of the same name in Galilee (Josh. xix. 13), and from the famous rock Rimmon, to which the Benjamites fled (Judg. xx. 45, 47). It was situated in the territory of Simeon (Josh. xv. 32; xix. 7), and has been identified

with *Umm-er-Rummamin*, a town ten miles north of Beersheba. It shall be lifted up. Jerusalem shall remain exalted on its hill, while all the country around sinks into a plain—a figure representing the spiritual exaltation of the new theocracy. Inhabited in her place; or, *shall dwell in her place*. Shall occupy her ancient limits, and abide there safely without fear (comp. Jer. xxxi. 38—40; Ezek. xlvi. 15, etc.). From Benjamin's gate, etc. (Jer. xxxvii. 13). It is difficult to define the given boundaries with certainty in every particular. Benjamin's gate is the same as the gate of Ephraim (2 Kings xiv. 13; Neh. viii. 16), so called as leading to the territory of Benjamin, and beyond again to that of Ephraim. It was situated in the north or second wall. From this point the course of the wall is followed, first to the west, and then to the east. The first gate. This was in the eastern part of this wall, and is the same as "the old gate," or "gate of the old town," of Neh. xii. 39. The corner gate (2 Kings xiv. 13; Jer. xxxi. 38) was at the north-west corner, west of the gate of Benjamin, at the angle where the first and second walls approached each other. These dimensions would give the breadth of the city from east to west. The tower of Hananeel (Neh. iii. 1) was at the north-east corner of the north wall, where the citadel Baris or Antonia afterwards stood. The king's wine-presses were probably near "the king's garden" (Neh. iii. 15), at the south-east extremity of the city. They may have been cut out of the rock, as was often the case. This description gives the extent of the city from north to south. Thus Zechariah illustrates the growth and stability of the Church of God by the figure of the earthly city Jerusalem, firmly and orderly built, and inhabited by a teeming population, as the following verse shows. There is no ground for expecting the literal fulfilment of this prediction.

Ver. 11.—*Men shall dwell in it*. There shall be no fear of exile and captivity, and no necessity to fly from a victorious enemy (vers. 2, 5). Utter destruction; literally, *curse, ban*; LXX. and Vulgate, "There shall be no more anathema." The inhabitants shall not incur the curse which is inflicted on transgressors, idolaters, and their cities by the old Law (see Exod. xxii. 20; Deut. vii. 2; xiii. 12—15; xx. 17; comp. Ezra x. 8; Isa. xliii. 28; Rev. xxii. 3). Shall be safely inhabited; or, *shall dwell safely*. Sin being removed, there will be no more occasion for chastisement; and the spiritual Jerusalem shall never be destroyed.

Vers. 12—15.—§ 8. *Having noted the blessings on the true Israelites, the prophet*

*gives further details concerning the destruction of the enemies: they shall perish by plague, by mutual slaughter, by the sword of Judah.*

Ver. 12.—**This shall be the plague.** These are the instruments which the Lord uses when he fights against the nations (not the people, as in the Authorized Version), ver. 3. The plague, or smiting (*maggephah*), is some contagious affliction sent by God, as in Exod. ix. 14; Numb. xiv. 37; 1 Sam. vi. 4. **Their.** It is, in the Hebrew, "his flesh, his feet," etc., to show that the general plague extends to every individual. In the last clause the plural is used, "their mouth." With body, eye, and tongue they opposed the holy city, and took pleasure in its discomfiture: in all their members they shall suffer retributive punishment. **While they stand upon their feet.** The flesh of each shall putrefy and moulder away, while he is still alive and arrayed against the city of God. **Holes; sockets.** The eyes had spied out the weak places in the defence, and looked with malicious pleasure on the defeat and fall. **Tongue.** They had blasphemed God, and cried against his holy place, "Down with it, even to the ground!"

Ver. 13.—**A great tumult from the Lord** (ch. xii. 4). A general panic or confusion sent by the Lord, such as befell the Midianites (Judg. vii. 22) and the Philistines (1 Sam. xiv. 20), which ends in mutual slaughter. **They shall lay hold every one, etc.** In this general panic each shall seize his neighbour's hand in fierce contention. The next clause gives the same meaning (comp. ch. xi. 6).

Ver. 14.—**Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem.** The *adversus Jerusalem* of the Vulgate and some Jewish interpreters is a mistake, and introduces a wholly irrelevant idea. The meaning is that the Judæans outside of Jerusalem, the nation at large, rallying to the attack, shall fall on the enemy, now thinned by pestilence and internecine conflicts within the walls of the city, and prevail against them (comp. ch. xii. 6). Septuagint, Ἰουδᾶς παρὰδέραι ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ, "Judah shall draw up his forces in Jerusalem." **The wealth of all the heathen (nations) round about.** The costly booty of the enemy shall fall into Judah's hands. Thus the Church emerges victorious from persecutions, and is enriched and adorned by the means of those who planned her overthrow.

Ver. 15.—**So shall be the plague of the horse, etc.** As was the plague that came on men (ver. 12), so shall be the plague that falls on their beasts and cattle. The brute animals suffer for their owners' sin according to the ban under the old Law (Deut. xiii. 15; comp. Numb. xvi. 32, 33; Josh.

vii. 24, 25). **Tents; camps;** Septuagint, παρεμβολαῖς. The verse illustrates the utter destruction which shall befall the enemies of God's Church.

Ver. 16—19.—§ 9. *Warned by these manifestations of God's power, the residue of the heathen shall be converted, and shall join with the Hebrews in the regular worship of Jehovah.*

Ver. 16.—**Every one that is left.** All the heathen that attacked the holy city shall not be destroyed; the remnant saved shall become subjects of the Divine kingdom. **Shall go up.** This is the usual phrase for going to Jerusalem for the purpose of worship (comp. Isa. ii. 2, 3; Micah iv. 2; Luke ii. 42; John vii. 8). The prophet here and in the following clause speaks as a Jew to Jews, who knew and observed only the prescribed form of worship. It is evident that the announcement could never be literally fulfilled; the Gentile world could never come yearly to pay their devotions at Jerusalem. The prediction can only signify that under Messiah's reign the Gentiles shall be converted to true religion and worship God in regular, orderly fashion, the prophet intimating this in terms derived from the old dispensation, which had the Divine sanction. **The Feast of Tabernacles.** The Israelites were required to appear before the Lord three times in the year (Exod. xxiii. 17; Deut. xvi. 16)—at the festivals of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. But the Gentiles are here required to present themselves only once. The Feast of Tabernacles is chosen for this occasion owing to its peculiar character and the associations connected with it. It commemorated not only the ingathering of the harvest, but also Israel's sojourn in the wilderness and the Divine protection there accorded to them, and their entrance into the promised land; it was therefore a fitting symbol of the rescue of the Gentiles from the devil's kingdom, and their entry into the Church of God, where they enjoyed the blessings of God's grace and protection. It was also a more catholic feast, in one sense, than the Passover or Pentecost, not being so distinctively Jewish, but one which all nations could keep in gratitude to the Giver of material benefits. We must remember, also, that it was at this feast that our Lord cried (John vii. 37), "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," and likewise he declared himself to be "the Light of the world" (John viii. 12), wishing us, it may be, to understand that this feast was the one we should need to keep, being the one which specially sets

him forth as the Sustainer and Guide through life's pilgrimage.

Ver. 17.—*Will not come up; goeth not up.* Those who neglected this yearly worship shall be punished according to the threat in Deut. xi. 16, 17. *No rain.* The failure of periodic rain in Eastern countries meant drought, famine, and widespread distress. In a spiritual sense, rain represents the grace and blessing of God; these are withheld from those who refuse to worship him and wilfully cut themselves off from the Church. The LXX. has, *καὶ οὗτοι ἐκείνοις προστεθήσονται*, "These shall be associated with those," i.e. shall be reckoned among those enemies whose punishment has been mentioned above.

Ver. 18.—*If the family of Egypt go not up.* Egypt is mentioned as the great typical enemy of God and Israel, and therefore most obnoxious to punishment if it did not obey the call. *That have no rain.* This rendering implies, what is not the fact, that Egypt is without rain, and is not dependent upon rain for its fertility. The expression in the text is elliptical, being merely, "then not on them," and it is obviously natural to supply, "shall there be rain." As the rise of the Nile depends upon the equinoctial rains in the interior, the failure of these would be disastrous. Another way of rendering the passage is to combine the clauses and append a note of interrogation; thus: "Shall there not be upon them the plague wherewith," etc.? The LXX. and Syriac omit the negative, *καὶ ἐπὶ τούτους ἔσται ἡ πῦρσις*, "Even upon these shall be the plague."

Ver. 19.—*The punishment; literally, sin; ἁμαρτία; peccatum;* here obviously the punishment of sin—sin with all its fatal consequences (comp. Numb. xviii. 22; Lam. iii. 39; iv. 6).

Vers. 20, 21.—§ 10. *Then everything alike shall be holy, and the ungodly shall be altogether excluded from the house of the Lord.*

Ver. 20.—*Upon the bells of the horses.* The prophet, describing the holiness of the theocracy, uses imagery drawn from the ritual customs of the Law. "The bells," says Henderson, "were small metallic plates, suspended from the necks or heads of horses and camels, for the sake of ornament, and making a tinkling noise by striking against each other like cymbals."

Probably these plates had the names of the owners eugraven on them. The Septuagint gives "bridle," which possibly the unusual word *metzilloth* may mean. **HOLINESS (holy) UNTO THE LORD; Sanctum Domino** (Vulgate); *ἅγιον τῷ Κυρίῳ παντοκράτορι* (Septuagint). This was the inscription upon the golden plate on the mitre of the high priest (Exod. xxviii. 36). The affixing of this inscription on the trappings of horses signifies that the commonest things shall become holy, all things that men use for work, profit, or ornament shall be consecrated to God's service. **The pots in the Lord's house.** The "pots" are vessels of inferior sanctity used for boiling the meat of the sacrifice (1 Sam. ii. 14; 2 Chron. xxxv. 13). **The bowls before the altar.** These held the blood of the victims for sprinkling on the altar, and the sacred libations, and were considered of superior sanctity. The prophet announces that now all shall be holy, the lower equal to the highest.

Ver. 21.—The last announcement is amplified. **Every pot.** All the vessels of the country shall be consecrated and used in Divine service. The Levitical distinction shall be abolished, and the Lord's service shall be perfect freedom. Every member of the Church, however humble his station or mean his acquirements, shall be a saint and fit for the Lord's use (comp. 2 Tim. ii. 21). **The Canaanite; mercator** (Vulgate). The word is used in the sense of "trafficker," or "merchant," in Job xl. 30 (xli. 6, Authorized Version); Prov. xxxi. 24 (comp. Zeph. i. 11). If any vessel might now be used in God's service, worshippers would no longer be obliged to buy special bowls from those who sold in the temple courts (Matt. xxi. 12). But it is best in agreement with the context to take "Canaanite" to mean any unclean or profane person (comp. Gen. ix. 25; Lev. xviii. 28, etc.). Thus Daniel, in the History of Susanna, ver. 56, addresses the wicked elder, "Thou seed of Chanaan, and not of Juda;" and Isaiah (i. 10) calls the chiefs of Israel "rulers of Sodom," and "people of Gomorrah." Henceforward the "people shall be all righteous" (Isa. lx. 21). There shall be one, holy, Catholic Church. Thus the vision of the golden candlestick (ch. iv.) is fulfilled; and that this should come to pass is the design of God's manifold providences and operations (comp. Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 15).

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*A signal revelation.* "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh," etc. The "day of the Lord" here referred to seems that of the second coming of Christ. We say this partly because it is a day to be marked by a signal exercise of Jehovah's

power against his enemies, "as in the day of battle" (2 Pet. i. 16; 2 Thess. ii. 8; Josh. x. 14, 42); partly, also, because he is then to appear in person in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem (ver. 4), as though in fulfilment of Matt. xxiii. 39; Acts i. 11, 12; and partly, again, because of those who are mentioned here (end of ver. 5) as then to appear in his suite (comp. Matt. xxv. 31; Dan. vii. 10; Jude 14, 15; Rev. xix. 11—16). Understood thus of that stupendous event, the prophecy seems to describe (1) *its immediate antecedents*; and (2) *its primary results*.

I. ITS IMMEDIATE ANTECEDENTS. These appear to be described here only so far as "Jerusalem" is concerned—whether we understand thereby, as some do, the literal city inhabited again and besieged (see above, ch. xii. 2) by the rest of the nations, or that great "spiritual city," the Christian Church (Gal. iv. 26; Heb. xii. 22; Rev. iii. 12). In either (or both) of these senses we see the condition of "Jerusalem" at the time intended (note "then" in ver. 3). For example, we see: 1. *The city itself wholly subdued*. Its bulwarks are all "taken," its separate "houses" "rifled," its choicest treasures boldly divided by the secure and triumphant enemy in its most central positions, and every refuge against the deepest indignities utterly gone. 2. *Its population half destroyed*. When the inhabitants of a neighbourhood are decimated by disease it is awful enough. Here we have a proportion of lost ones just five times as great! Every second house uninhabited! Every family less by one-half! What all this exactly points to it is hard to say; but there are passages connecting such unexampled excess of trial with the very eve of the Saviour's coming, in Dan. xii. 1; Matt. xxiv. 12, 13; possibly, also, in a spiritual sense, in Luke xviii. 8.

II. ITS PRIMARY RESULTS; viz. as might be expected, very great natural—or else spiritual—convulsions (comp. Hag. ii. 6, and beginning of 7; Mal. iii. 1, 2). Three things to be marked about these. 1. *How mighty they are in nature!* To divide the tideless waters of the upper Red Sea in old days had been much. To do the same by the flowing waters of Jordan (Josh. iii. 16) perhaps more. To separate, as prophesied here, into two districts, and far-removed portions, the solid range of Mount Olivet, more again. At any rate, nothing less. 2. *How momentous in results!* Jerusalem, with Mount Olivet practically gone from "before" it "on the east," where it had stood for so long the most conspicuous object all round about (comp. Ps. cxxv. 2), would be no longer the same place as before. Where once had been a mountain was now a valley; where a barrier, a way of escape—a way of complete escape to "Azal;" either, *i.e.*, as far as needed (so some), or else close at hand (as others). Certainly, if we may judge from the case of Zedekiah (2 Kings xxv. 4, 5), the "way of escape" in previous sieges had been by a very different route. 3. *How easily wrought!* viz. immediately on the Master's arrival, by the mere force of that arrival itself—by the mere touch, as it were, of his feet! Compare—itself not improbably another prediction of the same occurrence—the striking description of Hab. iii. 6; also 2 Thess. ii. 8, "Whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (or "presence," see margin of Revised Version), as darkness is destroyed, and that instantly, by the mere presence of light.

Observe, from all this, the inevitable consequences of every manifestation of Christ, specially, of course, of the latest of all. 1. *Amazing changes to all*. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill brought low." These will be partly, of course, in the world of feeling and thought. "Then shall the righteous shine forth," as they certainly do not at present (see also Matt. xx. 16, and elsewhere; and Acts iii. 20, 21). Partly, also, it is far from improbable, in the world of matter and sense. (See such passages, on the one side, as Ps. lxxvii. 6; Ezek. xxxiv. 25, 26; Amos ix. 13; the very ground which was cursed for the first Adam's sake being blessed then for the sake of the second. See, on the other, 2 Pet. iii. 10, etc.) 2. *Exceeding fear to some*. Many then will be found fleeing as though for their lives, even in such a way as they did on the occasion of that appalling earthquake in the days of Uzziah, the terror of which had engrained itself so deeply on the national mind. Never before had there been greater fear than there will be at "that day" (Matt. xxiv. 30; Isa. ii. 19; Rev. vi. 15—17). 3. *Corresponding triumph to others*. How many things which now divide Christ from his people—how many which now separate his people from one another—shall then be things of the past! All his "saints" shall be with him then (ver. 5), and with him for ever (1 Thess. iv. 17). Consequently (1 John iii. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 49), they shall be fully "like him" at last; and therefore, also, like one another;

and therefore, again, divided no more! No longer, when at last in the Master's presence, will they "dispute," as they once did "by the way" (Mark ix. 33, 34).

Vers. 6—11.—*A wonderful day.* "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark," etc. However obscure, in some respects, the opening verses of this passage, the "day" they speak of is to be, very manifestly, a day by itself. How strange, e.g., the character of its light! Is it the light of "day"? or the darkness of "night"? How strange, also, its time—so that it should be, apparently, at its brightest just when the light of day is no more (end of ver. 7)! Altogether, a kind of "day" only fully "known to the Lord" (see, though not in exactly the same connection, Matt. xxiv. 36). Corresponding to this, in other respects also, shall be the character of that day. In particular, "Jerusalem" shall then, as never before, be (1) *a centre of blessing*; (2) *a centre of rule*; and (3) *a centre of strength*.

I. A CENTRE OF BLESSING. This is represented to us under the figure of a flow of "living waters" therefrom (see Joel iii. 18; Ezek. xlvii., *passim*, and especially ver. 9; also John iv. 10; vii. 38). What is remarkable in this case is that the flow of these waters shall be: 1. *In most unusual directions.* Some will flow, naturally enough, along the intervening descent to the "former," or eastern sea; but some also, altogether supernaturally according to the lie of the land, to the "latter," or western sea. Countries and races, that is to say, which at present are hardly sprinkled with gospel influences, and to which at present it seems almost impossible to send them, shall then be overflowed by them as by a flood. 2. *At most unusual seasons.* How sadly intermittent, as things are now, is the flow of Church work! Now in decadence, now restored! Now frozen by indifference, now revived by warmth! Now exhausted by heat, now refreshed by rain (Ps. lxxviii. 9)! The flow of these days is to be independent of seasons—rivers all the year through (comp. Rev. xxii. 2).

II. A CENTRE OF RULE. Very naturally does this head follow from that before. Influence of such a gracious character, so universally and constantly in operation, will subdue the whole world in due time. This is what seems foretold in ver. 9. In the present divided rule of the world—and, in some measure, of the Church as well—it is difficult to give hearty subjection to this authority without rebelling against that. Not so when, in all the world, there shall be but one supreme Head. Not so, still more, when the possessor of that supreme authority shall only be known by one name. At present, in many cases, we have vast composite sovereignties, "united kingdoms," "dual empires," at best. The man obeyed here as Emperor of Austria is only obeyed next door as King of Hungary. Not so at all in "that day." "The King of 'Jerusalem'"—Christ in his Church—shall be the one title of that "only Potentate" (see Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27; Rev. xi. 15; xix. 16; Isa. xxiv. 23; also Ps. ii. and cx., *passim*; and Luke i. 32, 33).

III. A CENTRE OF STRENGTH. "Jerusalem" is to be strong then for three different reasons. There shall be: 1. *No facilities for attacking it.* Beginning from the ancient fortress of Geba on the north (Pusey, *in loc.*), down along the whole mountain range to Rimmon in the south, instead of lofty hills sheltering the invaders and dominating the hill of Mount Zion, the "whole land shall be a plain." 2. *Every facility for defending it.* What those other mountains lose, as it were, the hill of Zion shall gain. Remaining still "in her place," but "lifted up" (comp. Isa. ii. 2) far above her former elevation, the holy city shall look down then on the whole subject neighbourhood—every ancient wall and battlement being also restored and elevated together with it, and so made doubly effective as a means of defence. 3. Better still, the knowledge of the possession of these advantages shall prevent the *very thought of attack*. "Men shall dwell there"—shall choose to dwell there—knowing how secure it is from attack. What *had* been so often there shall be never again. "Jerusalem" now is a city which can never be touched. This shall be felt, this shall be acted on, by all without, by all within.

This glorious prospect of that future day of blessing and peace, whether comparatively near or far off, may console us greatly in the days that now are, whether in witnessing: 1. *Their cruel dissensions.* What a scene of selfishness, greed, competition, strife, suspicion, distrust, and violence is that now around us! Worse than a "struggle for existence," it is too often a struggle, even where existence is not imperilled,



to keep others down. See how the whole civilized (!) world is standing armed to the teeth, possessed of deadlier weapons, and, consequently, of deadlier determination, than ever. How restful to the spirit to look beyond all this to that described here! 2. *Their cruel disappointments.* Much as these evils have been bewailed and lamented, and often as many men have hitherto tried to relieve them, how little comparative success they have reached! Political endeavours to remedy these evils have only led to worse, as a rule. Even the religion of Jesus, the religion of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," in the very best (and perhaps only possible) sense, has become the occasion, too often, though not the cause, of that which it sought to remove. It is a comfort to know that another hand will itself apply this remedy in due time; and that that will be easily accomplished by him when he comes down from the "mount," which is now impossible to his friends (Mark ix. 14—27).

Vers. 12—21.—*A regenerate world.* "And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem," etc. A regenerate man is not a man without disposition to sin, but a man in whose case that disposition is habitually overcome. In that regenerate world partially described in the previous verses, something very similar is to hold good. All the elements of evil are not then altogether to cease; but there shall be in operation then a new principle of action, which shall prevent them from raising their heads. How exceedingly different a condition of things the full establishment of such a rule will result in seems to be taught us, in these concluding verses, in three different ways; viz. in regard (1) to those who shall *hate* "Jerusalem;" (2) to those who shall *despise* it; and (3) to those who shall *inhabit* it, in those days.

I. THOSE WHO HATE IT. For such persons there will be, even at that time, as at all previous times, in existence. There will even be some in existence—at any rate, at the very beginning of "that day"—who shall be bold enough to declare war against it. How will it be with such then? Not at all as it is with them now, when they seem so often and so mysteriously to have the "upper hand" (Ps. ix. 19, Prayer-book Version) against God. On the contrary, partly (1) by judgments *within* them, their very bodily organs, as it were, visibly withering away under God's displeasure; partly (2) by judgments *among* them, causing them, as in a kind of frenzy, to lay violent hands on one another; partly (3) by judgments *upon* them, which shall turn their very endeavours to injure "Jerusalem" into means for enriching it; and partly (4) by judgments *around* them, represented as coming even on the poor brutes they employ for their sakes;—God will testify openly what are his feelings and purposes with regard to such doings. In such circumstances, if evil be sometimes desired, it will very seldom be deliberately attempted, and never achieved. How total a contrast, in every respect, to that which we read of in Eccles. viii. 11!

II. THOSE WHO DESPISE IT. Besides that hostility which is open and active, there is that which is passive and half-concealed. Some men do not so much oppose religion as ignore its injunctions. Men disposed to act thus will not be lacking, even in that glorious "day." This illustrated here by a reference to that well-known ancient "Feast of Tabernacles," in which the settled Israelites commemorated the fact of their having been wanderers once in the wilderness (Lev. xxiii. 41—43). Something so far corresponding to this, at any rate, as to be fitly described by the same appellation, will be of universal obligation in the final settlement of that great sabbatical "day" (comp. Heb. iv. 1—9). How will things be with those who despise it and neglect to "come up" (ver. 17)? Not as now (see Matt. v. 45); but rather as it was in those days when Goshen was distinguished for Israel's sake, as by a special command from Heaven, from all the rest of the land. Every such contemptuous nation or "family," whatever the peculiarity of their circumstances and ordinary climate, shall be made to feel then the open displeasure of him who commandeth the clouds. How widely different in those days the language of Heaven! How widely different the conduct, may we not expect, therefore, of the most callous of men!

III. THOSE WHO INHABIT IT. These men shall find Jerusalem then "the holy city" indeed. Speaking here of the future, in language drawn from the usages of his own time; or possibly, as some have supposed, speaking so because there will be a certain measure of return to those usages in the future;—there are three great changes which

the prophet bids us expect in the "Jerusalem" of "that day." Its inhabitants will see: 1. *The previously "common" become "holy."* The very bells of the horses being outwardly marked for God's service, like the high priest's mitre was in ancient times (Exod. xxviii. 36—38; see also Isa. xxiii. 17, 18). 2. *The previously holy made holier still.* The ordinary temple "pits," only used of old days for "dressing the victims" (Pusey), being now regarded as like the sacrificial "bowls before the altar," containing the atoning blood itself; and even those vessels outside the "house," which were only so far holy before that they were found in "Jerusalem" (the holy city), or belonged to "Judah" (the holy people), shall now be regarded as fit for employment in the temple worship itself. 3. *The irreclaimably profane for ever shut out.* "The Canaanite," i.e., as representing those who, though not truly the children of promise, yet "would live" amongst them (Judg. i. 35) through all the ages, being never seen there again (comp. Isa. xxxv. 8; Joel iii. 17; Eph. v. 27; Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 15).

"Not yet! not yet! The faultless flock,  
The field without a tare,  
Come last of all the blessing sought  
By centuries of prayer!"

How fitting a close of the whole is this thought! How rightly does this chief prophet of the post-Captivity Jerusalem tell us thus, in conclusion, of that far more glorious Jerusalem which is some day to shine forth! It is much the same that the Prophet Daniel does at the end of his prophecy. It is the same also that "St. John the divine" does at the end of his song. They bring their message to an end when they have given us a glimpse of the end which God has in store. It is for us to take care that we are truly numbered with those for whom that "end" is prepared.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 5.—*Lessons of the earthquake.* "Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee." So said Job (xii. 8). The earthquake serves—

I. To IMPRESS US WITH THE GREATNESS OF GOD. There are forces great and terrible. But back of all, and controlling all, is God. So the prophets taught, and so we believe (Ps. lxxviii. 8; civ. 32; Job xxv. 9—14; Exod. xix. 18).

II. To HUMBLE US UNDER A SENSE OF OUR UTTER HELPLESSNESS. Many things possible to man. Can tame the wild beasts and subdue the earth. Can make fire and air and water his servants. But there are times when he feels his impotence. When the earthquake comes, can only say, "It is the will of the Lord" (Isa. ii. 19—22).

III. To CONVINCE US OF THE INSTABILITY OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS. The earth seems of all things the most stable. But there comes a crisis, and our old faith is gone for ever. "A bad earthquake at once destroys our oldest associations. The earth, the very emblem of solidity, has moved beneath our feet; one second of time has created in the mind a strange idea of insecurity which hours of reflection could not have produced" (Darwin).

IV. To ADMONISH US OF THE JUDGMENTS THAT ARE COMING UPON THE EARTH. Geologists tell us of internal fires, and the probability of some great catastrophe, sooner or later. "Coming events cast their shadows before." Earthquakes are prophecies. Confirmed by Scripture (2 Pet. iii. 10—12).

V. To TEACH US THE PERFECT SECURITY OF GOD'S SAINTS. Come what will, who shall separate us from the love of God? There are things which cannot be moved, and they are the heritage of God's people (Isa. liv. 10; Ps. xlvii.; Heb. xii. 25—29). "We look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—F.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The day of days.* The promise that "at evening-time it shall be light" is suggestive and comforting.

I. THE DAWN. Ordinary light seems withdrawn. Things are seen dimly. Discouragement and fear. Ready to say, "Darkness shall cover us." Call for faith. "God is light." "He will bring the blind by a way that they know not, making darkness light before them" (cf. Isa. i. 10).

II. PROGRESS. Still uncertainty. Neither wholly day nor night. Alternations. Now the sun seems about to break forth, now the gloom returns. Hopes and fears. But on the whole advance. Faith still finds firm footing. Hope brightens. Love never fails. Amidst all the conflicts with science and philosophy, Christianity abides in its power. There is promise of the "perfect day."

III. THE CLOSE. "Evening." After long waiting and many disappointments. When most needed and least expected. Not in the order of nature, but of grace. When the shadows are lengthening and the sun going down, the light shines forth with a sweet and beautiful radiance. Glorious ending to a dark and cloudy day. The history of the Church, and the experience of individual Christians, afford many illustrations. The promise sometimes finds a tender and comforting fulfilment in the last hours of the dying believer. Bunyan tells us of Mr. Fearing, that, at the entrance of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he was "ready to die for fear." But to him the valley was quiet from troublers. Then Greatheart notes, as something very remarkable, at the departure of this pilgrim, "The water of that river was lower, at this time, than ever I saw it in all my life; so he went over at last not much above wetshod."—F.

Vers. 8—11.—*Living waters.* Emblematic of the gospel.

I. SOURCE. "Jerusalem." Centre of supreme authority and law. The place of holy sacrifice. The city of the great King. Here is God's throne (Rev. xxii. 1). "Salvation is of the Jews." "Of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came."

II. DIRECTION. There is movement. Not arbitrary, but regulated. Not limited to one land, but for all people. "Beginning at Jerusalem." Such was the law; but from that starting-point the messengers of salvation were to go forth to the whole earth. Water seeks the lowest level, and the gospel comes down to the poorest, the most despised, "the chief of sinners."

III. AFFLUENCE. Rich supply—ample to meet the needs of all. In the wilderness the rock-waters followed the Israelites in all their wanderings. But this river is sufficient "for the whole world."

IV. PERPETUITY. There are rivers that vary. They run part of the year, and then they fail. But this river never fails. Neither the winter's cold nor the summer's heat can affect its flow. There are rivers that have disappeared—like old peoples and old civilizations—but this river runs on throughout the ages with unchanging life and virtue.

V. BENEFICENCE. Vitality. Life and the power of life. What so sweet an' refreshing as the streams of pure water? Carry blessings far and wide. So with the gospel. Converting souls. Purifying society. Advancing the world in the highest forms of civilization. Grand future. Universal subjection. Universal homage. "One Lord."—F.

Vers. 9—11.—*The elevation of Zion.* Morally and spiritually (Isa. ii. 2; Micah iv. 1; Ezek. xl. 2).

I. RAISED ABOVE THE STRIFE OF FACTIONS. Sects. Party spirit. Din and strife of tongues. Confusion and every evil work. But for Zion's children there is a purer atmosphere and serener skies.

II. RAISED ABOVE THE CORRUPTIONS OF THE WORLD. We hear much in our day of germs. The air is everywhere infected. The seeds of disease are on every side. But rise higher, and the danger ceases. So of Zion. Drunkenness, illegitimacy, worldliness, and other sins abound, and lower the tone of society. Need to rise nearer to heaven. "Ye are from beneath: I am from above," said our Lord.

III. RAISED ABOVE THE ASSAULTS OF THE WICKED. Storms. Enemies. Temptations. Cry, "Deliver us from the evil." The higher we rise, the greater our safety. The more we resemble Christ, with the more hope can we say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

IV. RAISED ABOVE THE VICISSITUDES OF TIME. Dispensations vary. Habits of society alter. Beliefs may change. But eternal truth and righteousness abide. "The true religion is built upon the rock, the rest are tossed upon the waves of time" (Bacon).

"Serene will be our days, and bright  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security."

(Wordsworth.)

F.

Vers. 16—21.—*The great harvest-home.* The Feast of Tabernacles had a threefold reference. It was a memorial of the past, it was a service of thanksgiving, and it was also foreshadowing of the better things to come. Well, therefore, may the prophet make it a symbol of the glory of the latter days, when under Messiah's reign the fullness of the Gentiles should be brought in, and all Israel should be saved. The glowing and beautiful picture may represent the great harvest-home of the world.

I. UNITY OF WORSHIP. No more many gods, but one. No more hostile sects and parties, but the holy Catholic Church of the living God. At last the old promise is fulfilled (Numb. xiv. 21).

II. JOYFULNESS OF SERVICE. The Spirit of Christ reigns. Love and joy and peace are in all hearts. From all lands and peoples come the songs of praise and the services of thanksgiving to the Father of lights, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

III. SANCTITY OF LIFE. Society is purified. Every life is consecrated to God. There is no need any more for the law of ordinances, for all things are cleansed. "Holiness" is the law everywhere. 1. *Common life.* 2. *Domestic life.* 3. *Religious life.*

"Ah! when shall all men's good  
Be each man's rule, and universal peace  
Lie like a shaft of light across the land,  
And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,  
Thro' all the circle of the golden year?"

F.

Vers. 1—3.—*A sketch on bad men.* "And thy spoil shall be divided," etc. There are three facts here suggested concerning bad men.

I. THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF PERPETRATING THE GREATEST ENORMITIES ON THEIR FELLOW-MEN. "The city of Jerusalem shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished." In the account given by Josephus of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, we have a record of enormities at which we might well stand aghast. Christ said, concerning this event, "There shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." "The particulars," says Dr. Wardlaw, "here noted, are such as usually, it might be said invariably, attend the besieging, the capture, and the sacking of cities; especially when, as in this case, the assailing army has been exasperated by a long, harassing, and wasting defence. The entrance of the un pitying soldiery, the rifling of houses, the violation of women, the indiscriminate massacre, and the division of the spoil, are just what all expect, and what require no comment. And never were such scenes more frightfully realized than at the destruction of Jerusalem, when God in his providence, in judicial retribution, gathered all nations against the devoted city to battle." "All nations," a correct description of the army of Titus, the empire of Rome embracing a large proportion of the then known world, and this army consisting of soldiers of all the different nations which composed it. And, while such was to be the destruction brought upon the "city," the desolation was to extend, and that in different ways, at short intervals, throughout "the land." The fact that men are capable of perpetrating on their fellow-men such enormities, shows: 1. *Man's apostasy from the laws of his spiritual nature.* To love supremely the supremely good, to do unto others what we would have others do unto us, to love and to be loved, seem to us to be truths inscribed upon the very constitution of the soul. They are instinctive truths. But in all such abominations as here recorded, all these are outraged. Men have fallen away from their own nature. Somehow or other they have become denaturalized. 2. *The great work which the gospel has to do in our world.* The great mission of the gospel (and admirably adapted it is to its mission), is morally to renew human nature, to bring it back to its true self and

its God. It has done so in millions of instances, it is doing so and will continue to do so until the present abominations shall be unknown amongst the race.

II. THAT WHATEVER ENORMITIES THEY PERPETRATE, THEY ARE EVERMORE INSTRUMENTS IN THE HANDS OF THE WORLD'S GREAT RULER. The period in which these abominations were enacted is in the text called the "day of the Lord," and he is represented as calling the Gentile armies to the work. "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished." If we are to particularize the predicted destruction, and are not satisfied with figurative explanation, we may look to the conquest under Titus, as in some sort fulfilling the announcement. Rome at this time was the mistress of the world, and the army of Titus, who besieged and sacked the holy city, was composed of soldiers of all the nations. These all moved freely, unconscious of any Divine restraint; still they were but the "sword" of justice in his hand—mere instruments. God in his retributive procedure *punishes the bad by the bad*. In this case: 1. *No injustice is done*. The men of Jerusalem deserved their fate. They "filled up the measure of their iniquity." So it was of old with the Canaanites, who were exterminated by Joshua and his triumphant hosts—the aborigines deserved what they received. Joshua was but the sword of justice. No injustice therefore is done. 2. *There is no infringement of free agency*. Good men might revolt from inflicting such enormities upon their fellow-creatures, but it is according to the wish of bad men. They go to it freely. It is the gratification of their malign nature. This is God's retributive method, to punish the bad by the bad. Thus he makes the very wrath of bad men to praise him.

III. THAT ALTHOUGH THEY ARE BUT INSTRUMENTS IN THE HANDS OF THE WORLD'S RULER, HE WILL PUNISH THEM FOR ALL THEIR DEEDS OF ENORMITY. "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle." That is, for example, he will fight against Rome, the instrument with which he inflicted just punishment upon the sinners at Jerusalem. By successive irruptions of the barbarous tribes of the north, the glory of Rome was extinguished, and its end hastened. Where is the justice of punishing men whom he employs to execute his own will? Two facts will answer this question. 1. *What they did was essentially bad*. Murder, plunder, rapine, etc., were all violations of his great moral laws, and repugnant to his holy nature. 2. *What they did was in accord with their own wills*. He never inspired them nor constrained them. They were free, and because they committed crimes of their own free accord, eternal justice required their punishment. Of the Divine government, the justice cried, "Awake, O sword!"

CONCLUSION. Do not let the abominations of war and the outrages on justice, truth, and humanity, which are rife in this country of ours, shake our faith in God. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice;" "The Lord sitteth upon the flood."—D. T.

Vers. 4, 5.—*God in relation to a suffering world*. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley," etc. The men in Jerusalem were in great suffering and imminent peril, and here is a figurative representation of the Almighty in relation to them.

I. HE OBSERVES THEIR TERRIBLE CONDITION. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." On this Mount of Olives Jesus often stood, and from it he commanded a view of the holy city; on one occasion, from its brow, he beheld the city, and wept over it on account of its approaching doom. But the idea suggested here is that God observes men in all their calamities and dangers. His eye is on them. He watches them with the interest of a Father. This is *especially the case with his people*. We are assured that his eye is ever upon the righteous. Job said, "He knoweth the way that I take." Let us remember, in our greatest trials and sufferings, that he stands on the Mount of Olives. In standing there: 1. *He sees what we have to endure*. 2. *He sees how we behave ourselves in our condition*, whether under our afflictions we are trustful, patient, and submissive, or otherwise; whether in our perils we are making an effort to escape. How comforting it is to feel that the eye of a tender, compassionate Father is ever on us, in all our

sufferings, in this world of sorrow, trial, and dangers! "Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways."

II. HE MAKES A WAY FOR THEIR DELIVERANCE. "And the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley." "These verses," says Dr. Henderson, "convey in language of the most beautiful poetical imagery, the assurance of the effectual means of escape that should be provided for the truly pious. We accordingly learn from Eusebius that on the breaking out of the Jewish war, the Christian Church at Jerusalem, in obedience to the warning of our Saviour (Matt. xxiv. 16), fled to Pella, a city beyond Jordan, where they lived in safety. As the Mount of Olives lay in their way, it is represented as cleaving into two halves, in order to make a passage for them." It is not necessary to suppose that the Mount of Olives was thus riven asunder. The idea is that the obstruction to their escape, though formidable as a mountain, should be removed. Christ had said, "Let them which be in Judæa flee unto the mountains," etc. It was their duty, therefore, to do so. And here is promised the removal of every obstruction. The Almighty would give them every facility to escape to the refuge. This he does for our suffering race. He makes a way for their escape. He makes the crooked places straight, and the rough places smooth. The way for their escape from guilt, ignorance, and misery, which has been blocked up by mountains of difficulties, he has made straight. The mountains have been cleft asunder, nay, removed. Christ is the Way.

III. HE PROVIDES A REFUGE FOR THEIR SAFETY. "And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah." Mark here three things. 1. *The scene of refuge.* "Azal." Where is this "Azal"? No one knows. Its position is a matter of pure conjecture. Nor does it matter. It was some asylum to secure them from danger. God has provided a refuge for sinners. We are exhorted to flee to the Refuge set before us in the gospel. 2. *The impulse of flight.* "Like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah." 3. *The necessity of the flight.* "The Lord my God shall come." Providential dispensations are often spoken of in the Scripture as the coming of the Lord. The destruction of Jerusalem is spoken of as his coming, and here it is assured as a certainty, the ruin was inevitable. "There is not a word," says a modern expositor, "concerning this earthquake as spoken of in Scripture history." The only other allusion to it occurs in the Book of Amos, who was amongst the herdmen of Tekoa, "which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah King of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash King of Israel, two years before the earthquake." It must have been something extraordinary, unusually extensive and awful, when it is thus used to date a period, and, at the same time, as having occasioned such a flight from the destruction wrought by it as to render it a suitable comparison for the prophet here. Fear was to be their inspiration in flight. As the people fled panic-stricken from the presence of the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, they were to flee from the dangers at Jerusalem. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

CONCLUSION. How thankful should we be to know that God has not deserted humanity in its sins and sorrows! His eye is on it. He has provided a Way for its escape, and a safe Refuge to which it should flee. Our world, bad as it is, is not a God-deserted world.—D. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Dark and bright periods in human life.* "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening-time it shall be light." The word rendered "clear" is in the margin "precious," and is in the plural. The word "dark" here is in the margin rendered "thickness." The following translation by Dr. Henderson gives, I think, the meaning: "And it shall be in that day, that there shall not be the light of the precious orbs, but condensed darkness. But there shall be one day, it is known to Jehovah, when it shall not be day and night; for at the time of the evening there shall be light." We have here two distinct periods—one of *unmitigated distress*, the other of *uninterrupted prosperity*.

I. HERE IS A PERIOD OF UNMITIGATED DISTRESS. "Shall not be clear nor dark," or, as it is rendered, "condensed darkness." Dr. Keil gives the same idea as Dr. Henderson, "And it will come to pass on that day, there will not be light, the glorious ones will melt away." This period of unmitigated calamity primarily refers, we have no doubt, to those long centuries of oppression, cruelty, mockery, and scorn, to which the Jewish people have been subjected ever since the destruction of Jerusalem. In the predictions of Joel (ii. 31; iii. 15) referring to the destruction of the holy city and the breaking-up of the Jewish commonwealth, the period is referred to as a period when "the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." The history of the Jews, indeed, for eighteen centuries has been the history of one long starless night. Two remarks are suggested concerning this dark day. 1. *Such a day is the hard destiny of some men.* It is so with *individuals*. There are hundreds and thousands of men in every age and country who pass through life from its beginning to its close with scarcely a ray of hope or a beam of joy. Their life is a day of darkness. It is so with some *nations*. The history of some nations and tribes is little less than a history of crushing oppression, bloody revolutions, and untold cruelties and sufferings. The precious orbs are seldom if ever seen in their political heavens. 2. *Such a day is deserved by most men.* All men are sinners, and deserve this blackness of darkness for ever. The very tendency of sin, in fact, is to quench every light in the firmament of the soul. Thank God, Christ has come a Light to the world, and into that light during our stay here we may all enter.

II. HERE IS A PERIOD OF UNINTERRUPTED JOY. "But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light." This is indeed a *unique* day. Even when evening might be anticipated, "it shall be light." 1. *Such a day as this is destined to dawn on every good man.* Heaven is a scene of light. No clouds of ignorance or suffering obstruct the rays, nor will the sun ever go down: "the Lord God is the Light thereof." 2. *Such a day as this is destined to dawn on the world in the future.* Some expositors consider that the millennium is here pointed to—that long bright period when "all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest." This period is promised, and it must come; for "heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall fail to be accomplished." When will it come? It is far off, I know. "It shall be known to the Lord;" "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons," etc.

CONCLUSION. Are there not *dark* and *bright* days in every good man's life? There are days when he walks in darkness, when neither sun nor star appears; and there are days too when all is cloudless and bright. He needs the dark day to prepare him for the full appreciation and enjoyment of the light. As the earth requires the dark cold days of winter as well as the bright and genial days of summer, in order to prepare it to yield the fruits that man and beast require, so doth the human soul require periods of gloom and tempest as well as periods of brightness and calm.—D. T.

Ver. 8.—*The gospel river.* "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be." The "former sea" here means the Dead Sea; the "hinder sea," the Mediterranean. The great populations of the world lie towards the west of Jerusalem, and these are to be refreshed by "living waters." Taking the passage as referring to the gospel, we will notice—

I. ITS NATURE AND ITS RISE. 1. *Its nature.* It is "living water." Water is the most precious element in nature; it may be regarded as the source, the substance, and the sustenance of all life. But then it is not so precious as the gospel. The gospel is often referred to in Scripture as the river of life, the pure *water* of life. It is a living water. Not a dead lake or stagnant pool, but a living stream. 2. *Its rise.* "It shall go out from Jerusalem." The gospel might be said to have commenced at Jerusalem. The apostles were commanded to commence there: "Beginning at Jerusalem." In Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, the river might be said to have broken forth.

II. ITS DIFFUSION AND CONTINUOUSNESS. 1. *Its diffusion.* "Half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea." It is to go from the east and from the west, from the sun's rising to its setting. The gospel is for all climes. It is world-

wide in its provisions, adaptations, and claims. 2. *Continuousness*. "Summer and winter." In all seasons of human life, individually and corporately. (1) It is constant in the *fitness* of its supplies for human wants. Men, through all changes, in all places, and through all times, want Divine knowledge, moral purity, heavenly forgiveness, fellowship with the Eternal. The man will never be born who will not require these things. (2) It is constant in the *fulness* of its supplies for human wants. It is an inexhaustible river. After countless myriads have had their wants supplied, it remains deep and full as ever. (3) It is constant in the *availableness* of its supplies for human wants. Faith is the great condition on which its blessings are communicated, and every man can believe. It is just that act of mind that comes within the power of the child and the adult, the learned and the rude, the savage and the sage, the bond and the free, to perform. How obvious, then, our duty and our interest!

CONCLUSION. How profoundly thankful should we be to Almighty Love for opening in our world such a "living" river as this! and how earnest should we be in our endeavours to let its waters flow into every heart and home and land, the world over!—D. T.

Vers. 9—11.—*The coming moral reign of God on the earth*. "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth," etc. The subject is the coming moral reign of God on the earth. We say *moral*, for physically he reigns everywhere. Morally, alas! his reign depends upon the will of men, and that will is hostile. As a moral Monarch, the Almighty has to be chosen by his subjects. Three things are suggested in the text as to his coming moral reign on the earth.

I. IT IS TO BE EXTENSIVE. "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth." Although in the next verse "all the earth" is rendered "all the land," meaning the land of Judæa, we are authorized to believe that he will one day reign over all the earth; that all souls will bow to his influence, as the ripened fields of autumn to the winds of heaven. His kingdom shall come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

II. IT IS TO BE EXCLUSIVE. "In that day there shall be one Lord, and his name One." He will be regarded as the one King whose laws all study and obey. The great question of all souls will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" No other power will rule the soul where he becomes the moral Monarch.

III. IT WILL BE BENEFICENT. "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem." Taking vers. 10 and 11, we gather at least two beneficent results of his moral reign. 1. *The removal of all obstructions* to the river of truth. "The land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon," etc. That is, from the northern to the southern boundary of Judæa. The levelling of this land would not only leave Jerusalem conspicuous, but allow the "living waters" to have free flow. 2. *The elevation and establishment of the good*. Jerusalem is here represented, not only as being raised and made conspicuous, but as settling down and dwelling securely. "It shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place." There shall be no more utter destruction; Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

CONCLUSION. Who will not pray, "Let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? Let God reign on earth, and all obstructions to the progress of truth will be removed, and his people will be exalted and established for ever.—D. T.

Vers. 12—15.—*The elements by which the Divine government punishes sin*. "And this shall be the plague," etc. In the third verse of this chapter we are told that "the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations," that is, against those nations comprehended in the armies which destroyed Jerusalem; and we have elsewhere endeavoured to illustrate how God punishes bad men by bad men. This passage is a further illustration of the idea. There are three elements of punishment which Jehovah is represented as employing in these verses—physical diseases, mutual animosity, and temporal losses.

I. PHYSICAL DISEASES. "And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth." "This description of



the plague-stricken people," says a modern author, "is shocking, but it is not more than what actually occurs" (see Defoe's 'Plague of London'). Kingsley says, "What so terrible as war? I will tell you what is ten times and ten thousand times more terrible than war, and that is outraged nature. Nature, insidious, inexpensive, silent, sends no roar of cannon, no glitter of arms, to do her work; she gives no warning note of preparation. . . . Man has his courtesies of war and his chivalries of war; he does not strike the unarmed man; he spares the woman and the child. But Nature . . . spares neither woman nor child . . . silently she strikes the sleeping child with as little remorse as she would strike the strong man with the musket or the pick-axe in his hand." One could scarcely imagine a more revolting condition of humanity than is here presented—a living skeleton, nearly all the flesh gone, the eyes all but blotted out, the tongue withered. Physical disease has ever been one of the instruments by which God has punished men in this world—pestilences, plagues, epidemics, and so on. But it is not merely a plague amongst the people, but also amongst the cattle, as we see in ver. 15. "And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague." These words remind us of Byron's description of the destruction of Sennacherib's host.

"And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;  
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf."

II. **MUTUAL ANIMOSITY.** "And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour." The idea is, perhaps, that God would permit such circumstances to spring up amongst them as would generate in their minds mutual misunderstandings, malignities, quarrellings, and battlings. "They shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour." "Every man's sword shall be against his brother." All the jealousies, envyings, contentions, that are rife in society may be regarded as the means by which sin is punished. Sin punishes sin, bad passions not only work misery, but are in themselves miseries.

III. **TEMPORAL LOSSES.** "And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem." Not against Jerusalem. "And the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in abundance." Earthly property men in their unrenowned state have always valued as the highest good. To attain it they devote all their powers with an unquenchable enthusiasm, and to hold it they are ever on the alert, and their grasp is unrelaxable and firm. To have it snatched from them is among their greatest calamities; and how often this occurs in society! By what we call accidents, by a commercial panic, legal flaws, chicaneries, and frauds, rich men frequently are deprived of their wealth, men who are born in palaces often die in a pauper's hovel. "Riches take to themselves wings, and fly away." This is another way in which Heaven punishes sin.

**CONCLUSION.** See those elements of retribution working everywhere around us. They have worked through all history. Because they are common we do not note them as we ought. We connect them not with the Justice that reigns over the universe. Albeit they are penal forces.—D. T.

Vers. 16—19.—*The public worship of Jehovah.* "And it shall come to pass," etc. Two remarks are suggested here concerning the public worship of Jehovah.

I. **IT IS A DUTY BINDING ON ALL PEOPLE.** "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles." "Keil thinks the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned because it was a feast of thanksgiving for the gracious protection of Israel, in its wanderings through the desert, and its introduction into the land flowing with milk and honey, whereby it foreshadows the blessedness to be enjoyed in the kingdom of God. But in rejecting Koehler's observation that there is a reference to the feast as a harvest thanksgiving, he overlooks the fact that, if this harvest reference is not recognized, the punishment threatened in the next verse, the absence of rain, loses its appropriateness. The Feast of Tabernacles

was meant to keep them in mind, amidst their abundant harvests, and well-cared-for fields and vineyards, that as in the desert so still it was God who gave the increase. It was therefore a festival most suitable for all the nations to join in, by way of acknowledging that Jehovah was the God of nature throughout the earth, however various might be the aspects of nature with which they were familiar. Besides, there can be little doubt that by the time of Zechariah, and probably long before, this feast had become a kind of symbol of the ingathering of the nations (John iv. 35)" (Dr. Dods). Whilst the thousands neglect public worship, not a few argue against it, they say it is uncalled for and unnecessary. In reply to this, we state, where there is genuine religion: 1. *Public worship is a natural development.* The being we love most we crave an opportunity for extolling; we want that all shall know his merits. If we are really religious, we love God supremely, and is it not natural to declare our affection in the presence of our fellow-men? 2. *Public worship is a happy development.* What delights the soul so much as to hear others praise the object we love the most? This at once gratifies the religious instinct and the social love. Every true worshipper in the great congregation can say it is a good thing to give praise—it is a happy thing. 3. *Public worship is a beneficent development.* There is nothing that tends so much to quicken and ennoble souls as worship, and nothing gives such a vital interest in one soul for another as public worship. In genuine public worship there is a close coming together of souls, an interblending of the deepest thoughts and the purest sympathies, a kind of spiritual amalgamation. "We should, therefore, not forsake the assembling of ourselves together."

II. ITS NEGLECT EXPOSES TO TERRIBLE CALAMITIES. "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles." Two things are to be observed here. 1. *The greatness of the punishment.* "Upon them shall be no rain." Now, the absence of rain involves every temporal evil you can think of—famine, pestilence, loss of physical enjoyment, loss of health, loss of life. 2. *The fitness of the punishment.* (1) To the *offence.* "The withholding of the rain," says Dr. Dods, "was not only one of the ways by which idolatry and apostasy were punished under the theocracy, but it was the appropriate punishment of those who refused to acknowledge Jehovah as the Giver of the harvest. This suiting of punishment to offence is a marked characteristic of God's government, and should probably be more used in education than it is (e.g. by secluding for a time, from all intercourse with his companions, the boy who has told a lie, and so on). Dante has largely utilized the principle in his great poem. In his vision of the realms of punishment he saw tyrants immersed in blood; gluttons exposed in all their pampered softness to a sleety tempest of cold, discoloured, stinking hail; the proud bending for ever under heavy burdens; schismatics, who have rent the Church, themselves cleft asunder; those who had pried into the future, and professed prophetic foresight, with faces reversed, unable to see their own way." (2) To the *offender.* The idea of not having rain would not, perhaps, terrify the Egyptians, for they had the Nile, which supplied them with abundance of water. Hence a plague is threatened to them, and no word to them was more terrible than the word "plague." They had not forgotten the ten plagues inflicted on them in the time of Moses. It was a land of plagues. Thus God punishes. But mark, the punishment was to come because of the neglect of public worship, and the neglect of public worship is punished: (a) Now; by the loss of the highest spiritual enjoyments. (b) Hereafter; by the reproaching of conscience and the banishment from all good.—D. T.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The bright future of the world—the reign of holiness.* "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses," etc. Looking at the passage as a portraiture of the future of the world, we are reminded that holiness will be its grand characteristic. There may be, and no doubt there will be, other things—great material and mental prosperity—but holiness will be its salient feature. The holiness will be universal.

I. IT WILL EMBRACE THE AFFAIRS OF COMMON LIFE. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses." It was common amongst ancient nations to have bells on horses for use or ornament, or perhaps for both. It is said that in Alexander's funeral procession the horses had gold bells attached to their cheek-straps. "Holiness unto the Lord," under the Law of Moses had been inscribed on the frontlet of the high priest, and nowhere else; now it was to be even on the bells of the horses, the commonest things of secular life. In this age no horses will be employed in wars and races, they will only be employed for right purposes and in a right way. The men who ride and drive them in state will be holy men, the men who use them in agriculture will be holy men. Horses, which for ages have been unrighteously treated and unrighteously used, in that day will be properly treated and properly employed.

II. IT WILL EMBRACE ALL DOMESTIC CONCERNS. "Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts." The idea is that holiness will extend even to the minutest concerns of domestic life, the members of families will be religious. The very pots in which the priests cooked their food should be as sacred as the bowls that caught the victim's blood. Observe (1) that the distinction between the sacred and secular is to be abolished; but (2) not by separation from the world, nor by making all things secular, but by making all things holy, by carrying into all occupations the spirit and delight of God's presence. "'Holiness unto the Lord' is not to be obliterated from the high priest's mitre, so that he might feel as little solemnized when putting on his mitre and entering the holiest of all, as if he were going into his stable to put the collar on his horse; but when he puts the collar on his horse and goes to his day's work or recreation, he is to be as truly and lovingly as one with God as when with incense and priestly garments he enters the holy of holies" (Dr. Dods).

III. IT WILL EMBRACE ALL RELIGIOUS CHARACTERS. "In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." "By 'Canaanite,'" says Dr. Henderson, "is meant 'merchant.' The Phœnicians who inhabited the northern part of Canaan were the most celebrated merchants of antiquity. The word may fairly be regarded as standing for mercenary men—men animated by the mercenary spirit." Such men are ever to be found in connection with religion. The old prophets bewailed this spirit. It was found in the earlier ages of the Christian Church. Men who considered "gain as godliness," the Canaanite or the merchant, do not necessarily belong to mercantile life, but to other avocations as well, and even to the priestly life. Perhaps the mercenary spirit is as rife in priests and ministers now as ever. But in the coming age there will be no more the Canaanite—the mercenary man—in the house of the Lord; all will be holy.

CONCLUSION. Hail, blessed age! May the chariot of time quicken its speed, and bring this blessed age to this world of depravity and sin!

Note: This closes our sketches on the prophecy of Zechariah. We confess that going through it *seriatim* we have found in various passages, expressions and allusions to which we were utterly unable to put any clear and intelligible interpretation. There is a haze more or less over the whole book, and our endeavour has been, wherever we have caught a glimpse of a great, practical truth, to bring it out and work it into the service of soul-culture. Though we may have failed to give the true meaning to many passages, we know that we have not intentionally misinterpreted any utterance, or turned a phrase or a word to any theological or ecclesiastical predilection, if indeed any such we have.—D. T.

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