

THE
BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR:

OR

ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, EXPOSITORY,
SCIENTIFIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND HOMILETIC,
GATHERED FROM A WIDE RANGE OF HOME AND
FOREIGN LITERATURE, ON THE VERSES
OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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HAGGAI.

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INTRODUCTION TO HAGGAI.

It is marvellous how much light has been thrown by recent discoveries in the East upon many passages of Old Testament Scripture. The bricks and inscriptions, the tablets and monuments, of Assyria and Babylonia, after having been hidden from the knowledge of men for thousands of years, have at last disclosed their secrets to us. They carry us back through the long dark vista of centuries. It is possible for us now to frame some adequate idea of that "great Babylon" which Nebuchadnezzar boasted that he had built for the house of the kingdom, and within whose walls many of God's captive people found a home when they were carried away from Judah and Jerusalem. It must have been one of the most splendid cities which the world has ever seen. In the centre of it rose the temple of Baal, towering stage above stage towards the sky, with a gigantic image of the god adorning its summit. The palace of the king stood not far distant, with its courts and corridors and famous hanging gardens. Round the city ran a wall, pierced by a hundred gates of bronze, and itself so broad that two chariots could pass one another without difficulty on the roadway which crowned it. And the great river Euphrates flowed through the midst of the houses and palaces and temples, with handsome quays and frequent drawbridges, and boats plying constantly up and down. Such was the golden city against which Isaiah and Jeremiah hurled their threats, the chosen home of luxury and refinement, and of a people who cared only for their own gratification. Its renown filled the earth. It exalted its throne above the stars of God. There was no other city half so proud or glorious. But it was doomed to shame and defeat, as more than one Hebrew prophet had foretold. Men have loved to think of Cyrus, whom the Lord raised up to do His own work of humbling Babylon and of liberating His captives from thralldom, as a worshipper of one God only. They have imagined that the chief motive which prompted him to attack the great city was his burning desire to destroy its idols. They have said that he allowed the Jews to return to their own land because, like them, he had but one supreme deity—the Ormazd, or good spirit of the Zoroastrian creed. But just as science, according to the poet, has withdrawn "the veil of enchantment" from creation, and has forced its visions of beauty to yield to "cold material laws," so the tablets and inscriptions have robbed Cyrus of this great honour with which succeeding generations had crowned him. He was a devotee, we are compelled now to believe, of the many gods of Babylon. His first care, after making himself master of the town, was to restore some of these gods to the shrines from which they had been removed by Nabonidos. He prayed for their help and blessing on all his enterprises. Bel and Nebo and the countless divinities of the Chaldean pantheon were revered by him with implicit faith.¹ But he was tolerant, too, of other creeds. Moreover, he was

¹ The following is part of the inscription on the cylinder of Cyrus, lately discovered in Babylonia by Mr. Rassam: "The gods of Sumer and Accad, whom Nabonidos, to the anger of the lord of gods (Merodach), had brought into Babylon,

anxious to ingratiate himself into the favour of the Jews, who formed no inconsiderable part of the population of the city. Therefore he dealt kindly with them. He published the decree which permitted them to go back to their native land and to rebuild the ruined Temple of Jehovah. He gave them many privileges which they had not previously enjoyed. The prophet Haggai was in Babylon, we may be sure, that day when Cyrus marched into it "with banner and with music, with soldier and with priest." No doubt he had more than once looked the great conqueror in the face. He lived in the period of the Exile—lived to see its ending, and to witness the dawning of the time appointed by the Lord to favour Zion. He is the earliest of those three prophets whose work lay after the long Captivity. I. I am to try to sketch THE PROPHET'S SURROUNDINGS. He was one of those who had known from personal experience what banishment and exile mean. He had remembered Jerusalem by the rivers of Babylon. And he had rejoiced with all the best souls in the nation when God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to perform His will. We can picture him journeying homeward across the bleak desert with the caravans of pilgrims. At times the only feeling of the travellers was one of overflowing joy. It was all like a dream to them, too good to be true—like the rush of the waters in the rainy season into the dry torrent-beds in the south of Palestine; like the reaper bearing on his shoulder the sheaves in summer which he had sown in the dull days of winter. But at other times there was grief mingled with the gladness. Tears of penitence and words of prayer broke freely forth. They came "with weeping and with supplications," as Jeremiah says, asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. Full of such thoughts as these, he and his companions made the long journey of four months' duration across the stony and arid desert. Guarded by God, they escaped the perils of the wilderness and the perils of robbers. They arrived safely in Jerusalem, the city of their fathers, the home and seat of their Lord. These pilgrims were not the whole of Israel. They were but forty-two thousand men, with their dependants.¹ The great majority of the Jews preferred to remain in exile. Many of them had gained high positions in the state which they could not easily resign; others had acquired property or had formed connections from which they were unable or unwilling to part; numbers were charmed and detained by the glory and greatness of Babylon—its streets, its pleasure-grounds, its storehouses, its busy river. They found it hard to prefer Jerusalem, a town grass-grown and desolate, to this splendid city. So the company of travellers who faced the desert, and made their way to the fatherland which held their hearts captive, was by no means so large as it might have been. And their souls must have been like to fail them when they saw Jerusalem itself. Its walls were crumbled into ruins. Its houses were mere wrecks, blackened with smoke and fire. Its Temple was demolished. Yet, saddening though all their surroundings were, they refused at first to be discouraged. This was the city, they reminded themselves, where David and Solomon had reigned; the city in which God had chosen to put His name. They began by erecting the altar of burnt-offering; and then they made preparations for rebuilding the Temple and the walls. But now trouble came. They had righteously refused to permit the Samaritans to aid them in what was really a holy work—the Samaritans who joined to their worship of Jehovah the worship of heathen gods. Thus they turned those Northern neighbours of theirs into bitter enemies, who annoyed them perpetually, who strove to thwart all their undertakings, who maligned and slandered their character at the Persian Court. The intrigues of these unscrupulous foes were only too successful. They persuaded Cambyses and Smerdis, who held the throne after Cyrus, to forbid the prosecution of the Temple works. For fifteen years everything came to a standstill. Worse still, during the long delay the zeal of the people for the sanctuary of God grew cold. They submitted to what appeared to them inevitable. They looked on the unfinished work and

I settled in peace in their sanctuaries by the command of Merodach, the great lord. In the goodness of their hearts may all the gods whom I have brought into their strong places daily intercede before Bel and Nebo, that they should grant me length of days; may they bless my projects with prosperity, and may they say to Merodach, my lord, that Cyrus the king and Cambyses his son deserve his favour."

¹ The whole company that returned with Zerubbabel consisted of 42,360 free men, or some 200,000 free persons—men, women and children, together with 7237 male and female slaves, of whom 200 were "singing men and women."

said, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." They turned aside to selfish objects and pursuits, erecting rich and comfortable homes for themselves, and decorating them with that wainscot of cedar which had been reckoned hitherto the peculiar ornament of the sanctuary. It was a sad declension after the hopeful start which had been made. What Haggai thought during this time of retrogression we can have little difficulty in guessing. Surely it cut him to the heart. Surely he mourned for the lukewarmness of his friends. But at length a fresh morning broke and a happier day. Darius Hystaspis¹ ascended the throne of Persia—Darius, who was a Zoroastrian and a worshipper of one God. His sympathies were entirely with the Jews. He promulgated a new decree, bidding them resume the building of the Temple, and giving them revenues for the purpose. And, contemporaneous with the king's accession, came the prophetic activity of Haggai. After long silence the Spirit of the Lord impelled him to speak. It was the autumn of the year 520 B.C.—the month of September, we may say—and by December of the same year Haggai's work as a prophet was finished. But he accomplished a great deal during these few weeks. God gave him a reward which is often denied to men and women whose labours extend over a much longer period of time. II. Remembering that these were the circumstances in which he commenced to speak on God's behalf, let us pass briefly in review **HIS PROPHECIES THEMSELVES**. There have been some who have thought that, when he stood up to deliver his message to the people, he was already an old man. He refers in his words to the glory of the former house of the Lord, the magnificent Temple of Solomon which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed. And it has been argued that he was speaking from his own recollections of that fair and noble structure. It may be a slender foundation on which to base an assertion of any kind, indeed, we can have no certainty about the matter; but I for one like to think of this prophet as going forth to do God's work in the twilight of life, with feeble steps and a face furrowed by age and trouble and hair white as the snow, yet with a childlike faith and a firm and resolute heart. Let this be as it may, however, we know that he appeared at a most critical juncture in the history of the people; and we know, too, that whether young or old, he justified the choice which God had made of him.² Four times over in this autumn of the year 520 the burden of the Lord was laid upon him. Four times over he went out to deliver his short and pregnant messages to his countrymen. The earliest occasion was on the first day of the month Elul, when the harvest had been quite gathered in. Then Haggai broke the silence, addressing himself directly to Zerubbabel, the Hebrew ruler of Jerusalem, and to Joshua the high-priest, but intending to reach through them the whole body of the people. In the name of the God of Israel he summoned his fellow-citizens to arise and work, encouraged by the manifest favour with which the new king regarded them. He did not spare their faults; like a skilful surgeon, he probed the wounds of the little commonwealth to the bottom. Let them look the facts, unwelcome as they were, in the face, Haggai said. Let them return to their first love and their first zeal. Let them resume without further delay the holy Temple work which they had laid aside so selfishly and sinfully (i. 2-11). A month later, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles—the most joyous and glad some of all the Hebrew solemnities—Haggai spoke again. This time his words were full of good cheer; for his former message of stern rebuke had had an immediate effect, and had roused the people from their lethargy. Some of the builders, he felt, might contrast the new Temple with the old, to the disparagement of that about which they were now busy. There were among them grey-haired men, *laudatores temporis acti*, who passed slighting comments on each feature of the growing structure, and who told with fond regrets of the "exceeding magnificent" house that had once been there. Therefore the prophet urged the workmen to pursue their toil with unflagging earnestness, because God was with them in as real a sense as He had been with their fathers. He went further still. He assured them that the glory of the new Temple would outshine that of the old. It might not ever be so splendid outwardly. But the new sanc-

¹ That is, Darius, the son of Hystaspes.

² Other conjectures with regard to Haggai are: that he was one of the men who were with Daniel when he saw his vision "by the side of the great river which is Hiddekel"; and that he was the author, along with Zechariah, of certain of the Psalms, notably Psalms cxlv.-cxlviii., which in the Septuagint and the Vulgate bear these prophets' names. "Haggai" means "festive."

tuary was to be invested with a spiritual majesty to which its predecessor could not lay claim. God was to do wonders of grace and power within its courts. Yet again, having performed his errand and uttered his brief message, Haggai was silent—on this occasion for rather more than two months. Then he spoke a third time. A new fear had arisen among the people—the fear that God was not about to bless them, even although they had given themselves afresh to Him. Dearth and blight and disappointment were still dogging their footsteps; the sky seemed as dark and stormy as before. The prophet of the Lord had a solemn lesson to teach his hearers now. By a reference to the Levitical law, and by a question put to the priests, he reminded the citizens that, while a holy thing did not communicate its holiness to whatever might touch it, a thing which was unclean contaminated all with which it came into contact. The speck within the garnered fruit moulders the whole basketful; the hand that is stained with blood incarnadines the multitudinous seas, “making the green one red.” Just so it had been with the Jews. Their good deeds had not compensated for their lukewarmness; but on the contrary, their lack of zeal for God, their sin in neglecting the Temple, had spread its moral pollution over every work of their hands. But yet they must not despair. God would not deal with them in mere righteousness and unbending justice. Nay, He would forget all their ingratitude. Because they were now seeking to serve Him, He would commence among them a new era of prosperity. “From this day—the four-and-twentieth day of the ninth month—will I bless you”—such was His pitiful and loving assurance. It had been all failure hitherto; it was to be only peace and joy and strength and fruitfulness henceforward (ii. 10–19). Once more Haggai spoke—a little further on in the same day. God bade him tell Zerubbabel that he need feel no alarm about the civil liberties of the people in the future. Disturbances and commotions of no ordinary kind were impending, but through them all the Jewish prince and those committed to his care would dwell secure. The grand words of the 91st Psalm would be realised in their history: “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling” (ii. 20–23). That was Haggai’s latest utterance.

III. THERE WAS NO NEED WHY HE SHOULD REMAIN LONGER IN THE PUBLIC VIEW. He had finished the task which God assigned him, and had finished it successfully. Critics have sometimes found fault with his style. They have said that there is little eloquence or poetry in it—that it is bald and rugged and uninviting. But work that is sharp and stern requires weapons of a similar sort. Haggai’s short emphatic sentences are exactly what was best suited to the occasion. They compelled attention, and not attention only, but obedience too. They pricked men to the heart. They kindled within them that godly sorrow which needeth not to be repented of. The best results followed the ministry of Haggai. He had no sooner uttered the first of his prophecies ere he saw it bear fruit. Moved with holy fear, Zerubbabel and Joshua and the people obeyed the call of God’s messenger. They flocked to the work which had been so long and shamefully neglected. Within a month the building of the Temple was being vigorously pressed forward. Few, indeed, of His ambassadors have had a harvest so speedily and so copious as Haggai had. Haggai is in truth one of the “last” who shall be “first.” How long he had to wait before God called him to utter a single word! How few his opportunities were even after his ministry had commenced! How very quickly his time of speech and action was drawn to a close! Yet he did a mighty and far-reaching work. He quickened a backsliding people to repentance. He restored their souls, and led them again in the ways of truth and holiness.

IV. Finally, let us draw from Haggai’s prophecy one or two TRUTHS SUITABLE FOR OURSELVES, who live at such a distance from him. 1. It seems to me that here we get no little insight into the cause and the cure of dull times. The Jews of the prophet’s day had to complain of depression and hardship. Their harvests had been poor; they could earn little, and what they did earn leaked imperceptibly away. And the preacher told them plainly why. It was because they had forgotten to give to God—to give Him their time and their thought and their substance. Let them contribute heartily to His cause, and their troubles would vanish; from that hour He would bless them and make them prosperous. Do not we require the reproof? 2. Haggai teaches us, too, not to despise our own generation and the work that is being done in it. He condemned the men who spoke of the glory

of Solomon's Temple as if it surpassed altogether that of the later house ; he told them that God would do greater things in the new sanctuary than in the old. The tendency which he combated lives among us yet. We remember the deliverances of the past ; but we question whether there can be any such deliverances in the present. We are proud of the faith and struggles and achievements of our fathers ; but we doubt whether their descendants can ever come within sight of them. And it is good to recall the years of the right hand of the Most High—years long since fled. But it is wrong to speak as if God had departed from the earth to-day. He is active still. He is in intimate relations with mankind even now. He fainteth not, neither is weary. 3. This prophet tells us also that no amount of holy services will cleanse and renew us if we be ourselves unholy. The parable which he drew from the ancient Levitical law has this for its moral. Men are always prone to imagine that, if only they render to God an outward religion, it will atone for the blemishes and shortcomings and selfishness and sin of their lives. It is a fatal and wicked error. Our God looks beneath the surface into the inner man. He demands that we should rend our hearts and not our garments. He asks from us a simple and true and earnest faith in His crucified and risen Son. He bids us welcome His Holy Spirit into our souls. He will not bless us unless this is our attitude and character. Can we say that it is yours and mine ? (*Original Secession Magazine.*)

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HAGGAI.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1, 2. **Came the Word of the Lord by Haggai.—Duty revealed:—**The grand subject of the whole chapter is duty. Duty revealed, duty postponed, duty vindicated. These two verses direct us to the revelation of duty. Here we have—(1) The time of its revelation. Every duty has its time, every true work has its hour. (2) The organ of its revelation. “Came the Word of the Lord by Haggai.” (3) The order of its revelation. Haggai had to deliver the message to men nearest to him, with whom he was most identified, and the men too who had the most power in influencing others. **I. DUTY IS THE BURDEN OF DIVINE REVELATION.** The great purpose of Haggai’s mission was, in the name of God, to urge his countrymen to the fulfilment of a work which was morally incumbent on them, namely, the rebuilding of the temple. What was the burden of Haggai’s mission is in truth the burden of the whole Divine revelation—duty. It contains, it is true, histories of facts, effusions of poetry, discussions of doctrine; but the grand all-pervading substance of the whole is duty; its grand voice is not merely to believe and feel, but to do; it regards faith and feeling as worthless unless taken up and embodied in the right act. It presents the rule of duty, it supplies the helps to duty, it urges the motives to duty. This fact shows two things—1. That the Bible studies the real well-being of man. Not an assemblage of beliefs and emotions, but an assemblage of acts and habits. The fact shows—2. That unpractised religion is spurious. **II. DUTY IS INCREASED BY SOCIAL ELEVATION.** This is implied in the circumstance that Haggai went directly with the message from God to the most influential men in the state, to “Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest.” This fact serves two purposes. 1. To supply a warning to men in great places. 2. A lesson to ministers. Let the ambassadors of heaven carry their messages first, if possible, to men in authority. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. **This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.—Church extension:—**The people said this, because they thought the undertaking too great, too arduous, too expensive for a nation circumstanced as they were. These returned captives were but a small remnant of the population of the land. They had not yet fully established themselves in their own habitations. They had formidable enemies around them, bent upon impeding their work. They were labouring at present under extraordinary distress, from the failure of their vintage and their crops; and therefore, though they admitted that the work was one needful to be done, they said, “Not yet; not in these days.” How many good works are put by by being put off! How much of the business we are sent into the world to do is not done, under pretence that it is too soon to set about it. But the prophet shows this people that their present poverty and distress were sent by God as a chastisement for their past negligence, and a warning as to their future course. The poverty which they thought to prevent by not building the temple, God brought upon them for not building it. Having thus opened to them the nature of God’s dealings with them, he calls upon them to reflect upon them,

"Consider your ways." Then he urges upon them the immediate duty of amending their ways—"Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house"; and adds also the promise of encouragement—"And I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." The message and exhortation of the prophet were not in vain. The message was given on the first day of the sixth month, and on the four-and-twentieth day of the month the people were at work. When the Jews were led, on account of feebleness and poverty, to neglect their duty in the restoration of the temple, God visited and chastised them with the increase of that very distress which was the excuse for their sloth; and though they misunderstood the lesson, He withdrew not His hand till, under the teaching of the prophet, they had learnt its meaning. Has no similar working of Almighty wisdom developed itself in our case? When we have been led to forgetfulness of our duty to God, not by distress, but by the full-fed arrogance of worldly prosperity, has not He drawn for us lessons of chastisement out of that which has been the very cause of our sin? Our great manufacturing and commercial towns are the offspring, the development, the very characteristic embodiment of the sort of prosperity which God has permitted a careless nation to work out for itself. And if such prosperity be a blessing, may we not well question whether the Almighty have not brought upon us the last and worst denunciation of prophetic word, and "cursed our blessings because we have departed from His ways"? Now at length the conviction seems to be slowly forcing itself upon us, that our disabilities are so great because in building up our social fabric we have omitted the temple of God. These are the providential chastisements with which God corrects a nation, which has allowed a population to grow up estranged from Him—untaught in His Divine law. And as yet we seem to be in the state of the Jews when God first visited them with dearth and poverty for their forgetfulness of Him and His temple. We are making the consequences of our sinful neglect reason for its continuance. We need all of us to have our spirits stirred within us to do the work of God, yea, even those who may think that they are already awakened to a sense of their duties. When the foundation of the second temple was laid amid general joy and congratulation, the elders, who had seen the first house, "wept with a loud voice." They were afflicted at the thought of the humbled state of the Church of God. But if man in his niggardliness now builds meanly, God can give to His temple a splendour of its own. The glory of the latter house may be greater than the glory of the former. Into the second temple came the glory of the incarnate Son of God. And into our temple now may come that spiritual presence which will give it even greater glory. Then be strong in that which your duty calls you to do, and strong in that self-denying devotion by which alone it can be done. And doubt not that God will prosper and bless the work so taken in hand. (*Bishop E. Denison, D.D.*)

Objections to religious work.—For about four months Haggai was employed in delivering prophetic sermons to encourage the people to rebuild the second temple. The people were disheartened. They prepared their own houses, they were ceiled, and painted, and decorated, but the Lord's house was permitted to lie waste. This neglect arose from a principle prevalent in the human heart, which leads men to fancy that an exclusive attention to their own selfish concerns is the only way to promote their interests; it does not enter into their narrow calculation that the first interest of man is to glorify God. Indifference to the cause of God has brought many a multiplied sorrow to the person, or community, who have manifested such a spirit; nor has it ever been known that zeal for God and love to His cause have passed unnoticed or unregarded by Him. . . . Every effort, of whatever kind it be, for the welfare of the souls of men, will be liable to objection. If we wait until all such objections are satisfied, we shall act like the fool, who stood by the side of the stream, waiting till all the water was gone by, that he might pass over. Objections arise from three classes of persons. The profane man is disgusted at the enthusiasm and madness of such attempts. Interested persons, whose narrow souls are incapable of a large grasp, have some certain line of action, but are alarmed at every new, magnificent, and extensive undertaking. Good and intelligent men sometimes suffer their minds to be prejudiced against particular forms of work. Illustration may be taken from objections to the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews." 1. The first objection made to the attempts of this Society is this,—That, considering the present state of the Jews, the work of their conversion appears so very arduous, that success can scarcely be hoped for. We admit the difficulty, because our aim is not merely to produce a change of sentiment

concerning the Messiah, but to do an internal and spiritual work in souls. But as this is the work of God, we cannot and must not despair. The power belongeth unto God, and He has promised to work by His servants. 2. Another objection is this,—The time for the conversion of the Jews is not yet come, because the fulness of the Gentiles is not yet brought in. But Christ has said it is not for us to know times and seasons. If I do not know the time, how can I say that it has not come? We are to be guided, not by what God has delivered as a prediction, but by what He has enjoined as a duty. 3. Others are ready to say, Is there anything in the state of the Christian Church at present that flatters us with peculiar hopes of success respecting the Jews? While Christianity continued pure and unsophisticated, there were many of the Jews converted. By what power were they converted? It was by that instrument which God always employs in the conversion of souls, the pure testimony of Jesus. When the Gospel lost its purity and simplicity, the power of preaching was lost also. The inquisition compelled many Jews to become Christians in name. True, when the Church was reformed, little was done for the Lord's ancient people. Little could be done, because party spirit, sectarian bigotry, narrowness of mind crippled and enfeebled all their efforts. 4. It is said a difficulty arises because the Jews find we want to convert them to some particular sect. 5. It is said that the present state of the Jewish nation is specially unfavourable to the reception of Christianity. But these difficulties are not likely to vanish of themselves, if we take no pains to lessen them. 6. It is also said that the plans of this Society are utopian, for where are their means? 7. It is said, There is no door open; wait till God opens a door in His providence, and then go forward. The way to get further opportunity is to seize and use the present. 8. It is said, What right have you to interfere with the religion of the Jews? If we have a *better*, we must share it with others. Other objections are that this Society is actuated by interested motives; that the Jews have to be bribed to make a Christian profession; that none but poor Jews are turned from their ancient faith; that all Jews are impostors; and that this Society uses unjustifiable means. (*E. J. Jones.*) *Procrastination*.:—The Lord was displeased with this people for their demur. They should have obeyed the command given them at once and earnestly. The prophet expostulated, and his expostulation was not in vain. I. A REJOINDER WITH WHICH MANY OF YOU ARE FAMILIAR. Such and such things are presented for your consideration, and they are presented kindly and intelligently. And you admit the importance of the things. For example, you listen respectfully when the necessity is set before you for sorrow for your personal sin. Yet, when you have admitted this necessity, you quietly say, "But I must be excused at present—not now—the time is not come." Again, you give heed when the minister points out the necessity for the abandonment of sin. But, many and many a time, when the effort has been made to urge the actual relinquishment of bad habits—the immediate, continuous, and permanent abandonment of them, you have said, "What a case that is!" Well, what then? "Ah! but you must be excused at present. Not now. The time is not yet!" Again, how respectfully you listen when the minister points out the necessity for the forgiveness of sin. It is shown you that however deep may be the sorrow, and however complete and entire may be the abandonment of sin, there is the sin after all; there is the sin, with its pollution, on your conscience; and there is the sin, with its guilt, waiting settlement in the book of God's remembrance. That guilt is to be cancelled; that pollution is to be cleansed. But what was the upshot in this case of pleading? "We must be excused for the present. Not now. The time is not yet." Again, how respectfully you have listened when the effort has been made to show the necessity for co-operation in counteracting sin. Yet this has been met by the same procrastinating response. II. CERTAIN REASONS WHEREBY YOUR REJOINDER IS JUSTIFIED. "The time is not yet." Why not? 1. The answer from some of you is that your situations are especially unfavourable to a religious life. 2. Others say they are so entirely absorbed with secular avocations and with worldly care. 3. Others say, Oh, my passions and predilections are so entirely beyond my control. 4. Others say, I have never yet been visited by any overpowering communication from on high. And all the time you admit that sin shall be confessed and abandoned, that forgiveness shall be solicited, and that you should take your place amongst those who, in God's name, are attempting to counteract sin. III. HOW UTTERLY UNWARRANTABLE, AND HOW UTTERLY UNSOUND YOUR JUSTIFICATION IS. If there is a commandment in this book that is imperative, it is the commandment to be sorry for sin.

If there is a duty incumbent, it is the duty of abandoning sin. If there is an obligation paramount, it is the obligation to seek, through Christ, the forgiveness of sin. If there is a responsibility brought to bear upon human intelligence by the Divine authority at all, it is the responsibility to take your place on the Lord's side. Your reasons are indefensible, untenable. I pray you to mark the untenableness, and to have done with them. (*William Brock, D.D.*) *Not yet* :—The cause of God, in all ages, suffers more from its professed friends than from its open foes. It was the selfishness, sloth, carelessness, and apathy of the Jews which caused the work to cease, after the foundation had been laid. So it is now. If I had a Church of two hundred communicants, all of whom were constantly meeting every claim which they constantly acknowledge, and if I had grace to do the same, I should not be afraid that any opposition would be able to break our moral power over this community. It was not the Samaritan intrigue but the Jewish apathy, which permitted the temple to lie so long unfinished. The apathy, not the opposition. The address of the prophet is to those who admitted the claim, but answered, "Not yet." The work was to be done at some time, but "not yet." This describes the temper of thousands who crowd our Churches in this day. Orthodox but inactive. Your inactivity produces disastrous results, from which your orthodoxy cannot save you. Correctness of opinion and ruinousness of conduct may co-exist in the history of the same individual. A postponement of action, in things that are imperative at the present moment, is a denial by the conduct of that which the intellect affirms and urges. It sets the whole life on a contradiction, which weakens the powers and breaks the influence. 1. There is the subject of attention to one's personal salvation. There can be no controversy as to that. No serious attendant on Christian worship will deny that it is a man's duty to give serious attention to his soul. Yet how many are wholly neglecting the culture of their soul. They intend to concern themselves about this matter, but not yet. 2. "The time is not come," causes also the postponement of honest self-examination. Every reasonable man admits that it is of the utmost importance that every man know all about himself. Self-deception does no good. It is senseless to prefer a brief enjoyment of false security. But a strictly honest self-examination is painful. It is always a revelation of defects, often of deformities. Self-searching would lead to repentance, and faith, and a Christian life. 3. This same plea leads to a postponement of a public confession of Jesus. Christ naturally expects a public acknowledgment of my friendship for Him. It is His due. It is my duty. 4. Lastly, we come inside the Church. Professing Christians all unite in acknowledging that the greatest things should be done for Jesus. Why are not those things done by us? Because we are the people who say, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." There are three influences producing in us this injurious spirit of procrastination. (1) We exaggerate the difficulties. (2) Our covetousness. (3) A disposition to wait until all things are ready. No experience seems able to cure men of this propensity. There probably never was an undertaking of any magnitude for which all things were completely ready. If all the great improvements of the age had been held back until all things were ready, they never would have been brought forward. They have had to fight their way. How many evils come of procrastination, especially to those who admit that what they put off must certainly be done. How it deadens the conscience by blinding the senses, and blunting the sensibilities! This spirit of procrastination sets us in opposition to God's plan, which must be the best plan. God's time is now. There never will be a time for coming to Jesus better than this time. Do not put it off. Let not selfishness, covetousness, or sloth, make you postpone. Your return to God, your acknowledgment of Jesus, your new life must begin in some now; oh, for the sake of your peace, and growth, and everlasting happiness, let it be this "now." (*Charles F. Deems, D.D.*) *Waiting for the right time* :—1. It is a fearful though usual sin in the Church, when that which is the principal fruit and end of all their deliverances, and a chief means of their happiness, and which they seemed to esteem most when they wanted it, is most neglected when they are delivered, and have occasion to testify their affection and thankfulness: such was the building of the temple to this people, and yet this "house lies waste." 2. It is a most dangerous way of sinning, when the sinner pretends affection to God, when he wrongs Him and His matters most, and when he thinks himself able, by fair pretences, to excuse, if not to justify his way: so did this people sin, alleging no disaffection, but that "the time is not come," &c. 3. As the Lord may permit very great obstructions to be laid in the way of

a work which yet He will carry on; so a people, who do not openly disaffect the work, may sinfully concur in obstructing of it. This they do—(1) When they are not sensible of obstructions in the way, but are soon hindered. (2) When they neglect or pass from a known duty upon any pretence of providence, or God's secret will. (3) When they are hindered from their duty in advancing the work of God by any hazard whatsoever. (4) When they look for times wherein there shall be no difficulties, but all advantages for doing God's work in, and in expectation of such times do lie from present duty. (5) When the true cause of men's negligence, which layeth many a lion in the way, is their love to their own things and private interests. 4. Men's own consciences, when they speak impartially, will convince them of heinous sin, when they study to promote their own interest, to the neglect of God's affairs. 5. A people's sinful negligence in God's matters, though times were never so perilous, renders them contemptible, whatever their privileges be, and provokes God to bring them down to know themselves better. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Duty adjourned* :—"The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." They do not question the desirableness or the obligation of the work. During the captivity, we are told elsewhere, that they hanged their "harps upon the willows," and wept when they "remembered Zion." Often, perhaps, in those circumstances did they resolve, should they ever be restored, to rebuild that temple which was the glory of their land; but now that they are there on the spot, and the ruins lying before them, their ardour is cooled, and they say, "The time is not come." I. COWARDICE. They did not say, "We will not build the temple, we will leave it to remain in ruins," they were too cowardly for that. Their consciences rendered them incapable of making such a decision. Men who neglect duty are too cowardly to say, "We will never attend to it, we will never study the Scriptures, worship God." 1. Sin is cowardice. 2. Sin is cowardice because conscience, the truly heroic element, is ever against it. II. SELFISHNESS. They set to work for their own private interests. 1. Selfishness is a perversion of self-love. 2. Selfishness is fatal to self-interest. III. PRESUMPTION. "The time is not come." How did they know that? Were they judges of times and seasons? Are they imperious enough to plead providence as a patron of their disobedience? "Go to, now, ye that say to-day and to-morrow." 1. Such presumption is always guilty. It implies that we know better than our Maker about times and seasons. 2. Such presumption is always perilous. It treats upon an awful precipice. (*Homilist.*) *Excuses for neglecting religious duty* :—"While the people were taking care of themselves, and consulting their own interest, the building of the temple was neglected. That the temple was not built till the reign of Darius, was occasioned by the fact that the prefects of Cyrus gave much annoyance to the Jews, and Cambyzes was most hostile to them. But when liberty was restored to them, and Darius had so kindly permitted them to build the temple, they had no excuse for delay. It is however probable that they had then many disputes as to the time; for it may have been, that they, seizing on any pretext to cover their sloth, made this objection,—that many difficulties had occurred, because they were too precipitate, and they had been thus punished for their haste, because they had rashly undertaken the building of the temple. And we may also suppose that they took another view of the time as having not yet come, for easily might this objection occur to them: "It is indeed true that the worship of God is to be preferred to all other things; but the Lord grants us this indulgence, so that we are allowed to build our own houses; and in the meantime we attend to the sacrifices. Have not our fathers lived many ages without a temple? God was then satisfied with a sanctuary; there is now an altar erected, and there sacrifices are offered. The Lord then will forgive us if we defer the building of the temple to a suitable time. But in the meantime, every one may build his own house, so that afterwards the temple may at leisure be built more sumptuously." However this may have been, we find it true, that the Jews were so taken up with their domestic concerns, with their own ease, and with their own pleasures, that they made very little account of God's worship. This is the reason why the prophet was so greatly displeased with them. He declares that they said, "The time is not yet come to build the house of Jchovah." He repeats here what the Jews were wont to allege in order to disguise their sloth, after having delayed a long time, and when they could not, except through consummate effrontery, adduce anything in their own defence. We however see that they hesitated not to promise pardon to themselves. Thus also do men indulge in their sins, as though they could make an agreement with God, and pacify Him with some

frivolous things. We see that this was the case then. But we may also see here, as in a mirror, how great is the ingratitude of men. And how is the case at this day? We see that through a remarkable miracle of God, the Gospel has shone forth in our time, and we have emerged, as it were, from the abodes below. Who does rear up, of his own free will, an altar to God? On the contrary, all regard what is advantageous only to themselves; and while they are occupied with their own concerns, the worship of God is cast aside; there is no care, no zeal, no concern for it; nay, what is worse, many make gain of the Gospel, as though it were a lucrative business. No wonder, then, if the people have so basely disregarded their deliverance, and have almost obliterated the memory of it. As God's temple is spiritual, our fault is the more atrocious when we become thus slothful; since God does not bid us to collect either wood or stones or cement, but to build a celestial temple, in which He may be truly worshipped. When therefore we become thus indifferent, as that people were thus severely reprov'd, doubtless our sloth is much more detestable. The building of the spiritual temple is deferred, whenever we become devoted to ourselves, and regard only what is advantageous to us individually. (*John Calvin.*) *The duty of building the Lord's house*:—These people were glad to have an excuse for turning away from building the Lord's house to build houses for themselves. Though they found plenty of time and means for adorning their own houses in a costly manner, the Lord's house was left to lie waste. Are they the only people who have ever acted after this fashion? Have we not been equally slack in doing the Lord's work? We may not be called to build up the Lord's house of stone and mortar; but there is another work requisite, even soul work; and from that neither we nor any other Christians can be spared. Every Christian is called to bear his part in building up the Church of the Lord spiritually, by prayer and thanksgiving, by faith and righteousness, by holiness and love; for this is the Lord's true Church. The New Testament Church is the congregation of believers. But any hindrance, however petty, is now deemed insurmountable—any excuse, however trifling, is held to be perfectly valid—if it is only to keep a person away from Church. Even when we come to Church, are we all diligently employed in building the house of the Lord? It is not of the bodies of men, but of their hearts, and souls, and minds, that the Lord's house is built. When we come to Church, as members of Christ's congregation, we come, or at least we ought to come to Christ. Moreover, every Christian ought himself to be a temple of God. He is so already, as St. Paul tells the Corinthians; and he ought to become so more and more entirely. This should be the great work of his life, to build himself up as such, with the help of God's Spirit dwelling in him. This is our work—a long and laborious work—to fit all our thoughts and feelings for being built up into the house of God, by purging them from the untempered mortar of this world. When so purged, how are we to cement them together? By good works; by works of holiness and love. It behoves us, one and all, to make it the great work of our lives to build up the Lord's house, both in our own hearts and souls and minds, and in the congregation of His people. We must be careful to carry on both works together; for neither will prosper without the other. (*Julius C. Hare, M.A.*) *The waste house*:—One of the most palpable effects of the Fall is that it has led man to live for himself. Sin is essentially selfish, and one of the first effects of redemption is to make man live for others. Real Christianity always takes a man out of himself. Yet the Christian carries about with him a sinful body, which is always craving for indulgence. The Christian's constant danger is lest his Saviour's glory should cease to be paramount to every other consideration. Christ must be first, or the soul will find a want in everything. Observe the name God takes here—"Lord of hosts." When God is about to ask His people for anything, or to supply His people with anything, this is the name by which He generally addresses them in the Old Testament. Observe the sin of the people here. "The time is not come that the Lord's house should be built." It was not a denial of God's claim upon them, it was a putting God off. Is not *this* the sin of the present day? God asks for His place in the heart of the sinner, and the answer is, "Not yet." The sin of all, converted and unconverted, is that of putting God off. We have not the courage, the straightforwardness, to disallow His claim altogether. We add mockery to our sin by acknowledging the justice of a claim which we have inwardly determined shall never be met. While we are dwelling in our ceiled houses, and the Lord's house is lying in ruins, what is the consequence even in *this* life? The end of everything they did, these people missed. Christ is the end, the satisfy-

ing thing in all. Toil without Him must end in vanity. God reminds them of their disappointment in everything, and the cause of it. "Because of Mine house that is waste." What is this breath wherewith the Lord blows upon everything? The breath of His Spirit withering everything we do, because His house is in ruins. What is the Divine remedy? "Consider your ways." Pass in review your heart, your life, your daily history. Set about the duty of the hour, and put your heart into the doing of it. (*F. Whitfield, M.A.*) *The judgment on neglecting to build the Lord's house*:—God is never content with confounding His enemies. He does not confound to destroy; He confounds in order that He may save. The courses by which He brings this purpose to pass are various. One of the commonest is the one set before us in the text. Seeing that the motive why we forsake His service is that we may give ourselves up to our own service,—seeing that self is the mask which Satan puts on, to lure us away from God, and that the baits with which he tempts us are the pleasures of sin and the charms of self-indulgence, God mercifully shows us the vanity of those pleasures, the misery and deceitfulness of that self-indulgence. He sends some heavy affliction to humble our pride, to prove to us that, in leaning on earthly things, we lean on a broken reed. Then, at the height of our distresses, He sends His messengers to explain their meaning and purpose. He sharpens the stings of conscience; He brings out the letters of the law, like the letters which the hand wrote on the wall of the palace of King Belteshazzar. These people regarded the earth as their servant, spread out beneath their feet for no other purpose than to do their bidding, to feed their wants, and to pamper their lusts. Wherefore God vouchsafed to show them that the earth was *not* their servant, but His; that it was not spread out beneath their wings to do their bidding, but His. If the sun and rain were locked up in heaven, the earth would yield no increase, notwithstanding all that man could do to make it. God's prophet bids the people "consider their ways," and that all God's dealings were designed to prove to them how, in the ways in which they were walking, although they were to sow much, they would reap little,—although they ate, they would not have enough,—although they drank, they would not be filled with drink,—that they might clothe themselves, but none would be warm,—and that the wages which they earned would be put into a bag with holes. All this God did, not in order to leave them in their confusion, but in order to raise them out of it. If they will arise and work, and build the house of the Lord, He will still take pleasure in it, and will be glorified in the house they shall build for Him. This message is also sent to us. It is a message of misery; but it is also a message full of warnings, a message of mercy following upon warnings, to the end that the warnings may not be misunderstood, but may be seen in their true light, and may produce the effect they were intended to produce. But the message is not merely sent to nations, it is sent also to individuals. No one ever gave himself up to the work of building the Lord's house, without allowing his heart to be distracted by the desire to build some house or other for himself. The message applies to us in all its parts. We, like them, have been delivered out of captivity. We have been called to the work of building up the house of the Lord who delivered us,—of building it up outwardly, whenever an occasion for doing so comes across us,—of building it up continually by joining with our neighbours in His worship,—and of building it up daily in our own souls. As we are like the Israelites in having this duty, so we are like them in neglecting it. Instead of doing the Lord's work, we do what we regard as our own work. But if self is the lord of the house we build, whatever the materials may seem to be, when the gilding is rubbed off, they are found to be cares, and jealousies, and disquietudes. Every house in which self is set up as master, is a house of death. It may seem full of life; but it is the house of death, of moral death, which is the first death, and always brings the other in its train. This must be the condition of those who neglect their duty of building up the house of the Lord. Whatever they do will be empty and unprofitable. Those who build up the house of the Lord always have enough. (*Julius C. Hare, M.A.*) *National religion*:—Great as any man's duties are which he is called to discharge, or great as his sins may be on account of their past neglect, he is not left either without the hope of forgiveness or the promise of succour. This passage was intended as a rebuke for the neglect of a duty seen and acknowledged. That duty was a pious and holy regard for the temple and service of the Lord. The neglect was that, while they were anxious about the splendour and comfort of their own dwellings, they suffered the Lord's house to lie waste. The fault lay not with the

people only, but also with their princes and rulers. Taking all the circumstances of this case into due account, the following propositions are offered for our due consideration—1. That rulers and heads of nations, being the servants of God, and bound to conform to His will, and to seek above all things to promote His glory, are as responsible to God for all their ways and works, both individually, officially, and supremely, as any other person whatsoever. But we live in strange times. Principles of the most dangerous character, and utterly subversive of all holy feeling and good government, are openly broached and boldly patronised in the grand assemblies of the nation. A double duty is therefore incumbent upon all who wish well for the nation's good, and for the true welfare of their fellow-beings. The mutual responsibilities of each, the governing and the governed, must be plainly and practically enforced, on the ground of the Divine Word, which is their proper authority. (1) We maintain that all men, everywhere, are accountable to God. All souls are in the hand of God. Man cannot be divested of this responsibility, wherever he may be placed, or however he may be circumstanced. (2) This obligation and responsibility rest with a far greater weight upon some. Where more is given, more will be required. (3) Rulers and heads of nations are as responsible in their individual capacity as others, and in their official capacity even more than others. (4) They are the positive servants of God. Not in the *saving* sense of the word, but in the *responsible* sense of the term. (5) Therefore rulers and heads of nations are under the positive, unvariable, and unchanging obligation of seeking above all things to promote the Divine honour and glory. Nothing can release them from these demands; nothing can lessen or alienate these claims. (6) They are as responsible to God for all their ways and works in their ruling or official, as they and others are accountable to God for all their doings in their merely personal or individual capacity. It is often said that the ruling power is above law, and therefore accountable to none. But this is a most dangerous doctrine, and calculated to lead to the most lawless licentiousness. 2. That they are bound, by every motive and consideration, both of alarm and encouragement, seriously to lay this to heart; to consider how the matter stands with them; and to inquire what may be its probable termination, both with themselves and others; whether in judgment or mercy; whether in the gracious approbations, or the heavy wrath of Almighty God. (1) Can any man with safety neglect the duties which God requires at his hands? (2) Must it not be a fearful thing to incur the displeasure of Almighty God? His wrath is like a consuming fire. (3) Will not God, in the final day of account, deal as impartially and justly with the mighty and great as with the humble and mean? (4) Can any man set aside the Divine authority, or nullify the creature's responsibility? (5) Will the Lord ever leave any man, who sincerely aims to do His will, without His help and blessing? (6) What blessings might not the exercise of such an authority, in such a manner, be the means of diffusing! Reflections—1. How needful is it that princes and rulers should be clearly informed of what God requires at their hands. 2. How careful they should be not to abuse the power with which they are charged! 3. How great must be the guilt of all who attempt to hinder such princes and rulers in the conscientious discharge of their duties. 4. How very far are we yet from that state of things which ought to exist. (*R. Shittler.*) *Temporal consequences of sin:*—In God's dealings with His ancient people, we find the principles of His government in all ages of the world. God took no greater interest in the history of the world then than He does now. He did not interfere more constantly in the affairs of men then than He does now. The only difference is, men used to see the hand of God where we find no trace of it at all. In all the calamities and blessings of life they heard the voice of God. And God still speaks to us in all the events of life. We can find many philosophical reasons for them, but who ever hears the name of God in connection with them? This persistent denial of the government of God is one of the saddest phases of public life amongst us. The prophet tells the people that their poverty and distress are due directly to their selfish care for themselves, and their neglect of God's house. The underlying principle may be thus stated—neglect of the laws and claims of God, either in this world or the next, never results in any good. . . . In the particular direction which God gave concerning this temple, we may find the principles which should guide us in the erection of all houses for His glory and worship. We find a severe condemnation of that specially modern custom of lavishing wealth in increasing the luxuries and beauties of our private dwellings and public buildings, whilst we are content that the Lord should dwell in a house

scarcely equal to our granaries or our stables. . . . How easy it is to find intimations of providence against a work for which we are little disposed. Indolence, selfishness, a fear of the trouble and expense, were the real causes of the delay in building the Lord's house in Haggai's time. What unbounded faith people have in providence when providence seems to speak on the side of their own inclinations : but how deaf men are to the voice of providence when it contradicts their own desires ! God says to these people, "Consider your ways." What have you gained by your neglect of My house ? You thought by so doing to escape poverty, yet poverty has come. Have your selfishness and niggardliness produced the results you expected ? God says nothing about the insult offered to Himself in this neglect. This is the final argument against sin, and the one which perhaps touches men most. Sin is a violation of God's law ; but men care little for that. It is the basest ingratitude ; but men care little for that. More still—it is the most consummate folly. The man who does wrong is not only a sinner, he is a fool. Consider,—what has sin done for you ? Does sin answer your purpose ? The laws of God are for this life as well as the next. The most sure way of securing prosperity and happiness is to acknowledge them. The most certain way to bring upon ourselves adversity and misery is to live in defiance of them. God's laws vindicate themselves now. Prosperity and happiness here are as much dependent on our acknowledgment of God's laws as prosperity and happiness in the world to come. What did this people's neglect of God's house imply, and how would this affect their material prosperity ? 1. It implied the fear of a little expense. But niggardliness never pays. 2. It exhibited great selfishness. In time of disaster, who has the selfish man to fall back upon ? Selfishness won't do in the world nowadays. In three different ways God may destroy our prosperity. (1) He may make our labour unproductive. (2) He may take away the power to enjoy what we have gained. (3) Our earnings may slip away as quickly as they come. Let me ask you again, What do we gain by neglecting God ? What prosperity can we secure or enjoy without His blessing ? Of what happiness have we such a firm grasp that He cannot take it away from us ? What is our strength if we provoke the Lord to fight against us ? Is it wise to forget God ? God says, "He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul." (*B. G. Wilkinson.*) *Indolence* :—Indolence in the Lord's work is a great sin. Many a Christian crying out "Oh, my leanness !" had better be honest and cry "Oh, my laziness !" So much of an anomaly is an indolent Christian that Dr. Dwight gives the following testimony :—"Among all those who, within my knowledge, have appeared to become sincerely penitent and reformed, I recollect only one lazy man. And this man became industrious from the moment of his conversion." (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*) *Idle Church members* :—In a former charge, one Sabbath, I took into the pulpit the Church records, and I laid them on the pulpit and opened them, and said : "Brethren, here are the Church records. I find a great many of you whose names are down here are off duty." Some were afraid I would read the names, for at that time some of them were deep in the worst kind of oil stocks, and were idle as to Christian work. But if the ministers of Christ in Brooklyn, and New York, and in all the cities, to-day, should bring the Church records into the pulpit and read, oh, what a flutter there would be ! (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Shirking the burden* :—Thomas Highat lay dying. He was a foreman in a large ship-building yard in Greenock. There was a long heavy log of wood to be lifted, and he had taken his place along with the men under him to assist in the carrying. As the procession was moving on, one mean fellow who liked to scamp his work, dropped his shoulder and the load came down with sudden force upon the shoulder of Thomas Highat, who was not so tall. There was serious injury done, the doctor pronounced it fatal. As he lay on his death-bed, he said to his minister, the Rev. A. Davidson, "I ought not to be here just yet. It was because so and so didn't stand up to his burden." It is in many Churches as in that shipyard, that some are made to suffer seriously and needlessly, because the heavy end of the work is left to them—because certain of their comrades don't stand up to their burden. *Irreligious delay* :—1. Men are always prone to put religion off with scraps and leavings, and serve God with what costs them nothing. In the outward things of religion, they are much more disposed to work for themselves than for God ; and if they have time that cannot be otherwise used, or funds that are not very current, to give them to the treasury of the Lord, and if any larger expenditure of either is urged, to plead that "the time has not come" to do this work. In

the inward things of religion the same spirit is shown. The young, the middle-aged, and the old, all alike procrastinate the great work, on the plea that "the time is not come," the convenient season that, like the horizon, recedes as we advance (ver. 2). 2. Our expenditures on ourselves, whilst we pretend to have nothing for God, will bear emphatic and fearful testimony against us. The carved ceilings and costly ornaments will have a tongue in the day of judgment (ver. 4). 3. No man ever gains anything by trying to cheat God. He makes a fool's bargain, bartering a real good for a perishing bauble, and losing at last even what he gained (ver. 6). 4. A careful pondering of God's dealings with us will often indicate to us God's will regarding us. The events of life are the hieroglyphics in which God records His feelings toward us, the key to which is found in the Bible (ver. 6). 5. Obedience to God is an advancement of His glory (ver. 8). 6. Disobedience to God will often, even in this life, issue in disappointment and disaster (vers. 9, 10). 7. God has not abandoned the universe to the sightless action of general laws, but is so related to that universe as to be able to direct its laws to the fulfilment of His purposes, whether in rewarding the good, punishing the evil, or answering prayer, without deranging or destroying the normal action of those laws themselves (ver. 11). 8. True religion manifests itself in fearing the Lord, and in obeying the voice of His servant (ver. 12). 9. The presence of God with a man is the best blessing he can receive, for it includes everything else (ver. 13). 10. God is waiting to be gracious, and will meet the returning wanderer, even before his hand has begun the actual work of His service (ver. 13). 11. Every good impulse, or reviving of religion in the hearts of men, is produced by the direct power of God, through the Holy Spirit (ver. 14). 12. Obedience to the commands of God will always end in a blessing, whilst disobedience will always end in a curse, if not in time, surely in eternity. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?*—*Church building*.—The decree of Artaxerxes prohibited the building both of temple and city, but it seems that the people had persisted, spite of the decree, in building dwellings for themselves, though no progress had been made with the temple. The mission of Haggai and Zechariah was to rouse the people to the long-neglected work, to reprove the indolent, and encourage the desponding. The excuses of the people, like those commonly of men who defer religious duties to more convenient seasons, were but marks of a secret resolve to escape, if possible, altogether from a labour which must interfere with more congenial pursuits. Our text contains the prophet's expostulation, meeting the excuse that the time was not come for building the Lord's house. The temple may not be indispensable in spiritual Christianity, but it is certainly valuable. There may be privileges attached to it which we have no right to expect elsewhere. We need not confound our case with that of the Jews, though we address to Christians the expostulation of the text, as if the change in dispensation had made no difference in its pertinence and force. Christianity, unlike Judaism, is not tied to places; its ordinances may be everywhere celebrated. Then what necessity is there, under this new and better covenant, for structures devoted to sacred uses, or what loss is it to us if "this house lie waste"? It is contrary to the established order of providence that miracles should be employed where the result might be accomplished through ordinary means. The propagation of Divine truth has been entrusted to the Church. The public ordinances are therefore indispensable; and suitable places for such ordinances must be provided. We can safely contend for the indispensableness, under the existing dispensation, of sanctuaries, or Churches, maintaining that cities without these sacred edifices would be cities that must ere long be wholly sunk in irreligion, and occupied by a population with no fear of God. We can no better spare our Churches than the Jews could their temple. In proportion as we allow any city, or any portion of our population to be destitute of the public means of grace, we fasten on that city or population something of the same religious incapacity as was fastened on Jerusalem, whilst its temple lay in ruins. The Jews are not blamed for having built their own houses, but for not having, at the same time, built the house of God. Wherever there is a community, there ought to be a house devoted to God. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Diligence in the work of God*.—I propose to excite you to greater diligence, and to a more fervent zeal in the work and cause of God. I. AN EXISTING DEPRESSION IN THE CAUSE OF GOD. There is a painful imperfection in the work of God as it exists in the present day. The

cause of God is by no means in the state that Christians desire. What are the scenes presented to our view in lands where Christianity is professed? In our own land, what do we see? What in other Christian and heathen lands? We are compelled to confess that the temple of God lieth waste. We are too apt to triumph: we are prone to forget the present state of things. We despair not; but we do not feel enough. II. TEMPORAL GRATIFICATION MAY BE PURSUED TO THE NEGLECT OF THOSE EXERTIONS WHICH GOD SO JUSTLY DEMANDS. These people were dwelling in ceiled houses, while the temple of God was in ruins. We see now wealth, talents, genius, property, fully used for self-interests, and estranged from the cause of God. Especially may be noticed neglect of claims of Christian missions. Viewing our efforts in connection with the claims of God and of men, we must surely confess that there are many claims not answered, many duties not fulfilled. Regard the text. III. AS CHALLENGING THE EMPLOYMENT OF OUR VARIOUS TALENTS, AND URGING THE CLAIMS OF GOD. 1. Consider the nature of those obligations under which you are placed by God, with regard to the services you are called to render. 2. Consider the peculiar nature of the system of the Gospel you have embraced. Is there not a sentence pronounced on all those who are ungrateful and disobedient? 3. Consider that, while there is not this energy in the cause of God, there is an amount, an awful amount of misery resting on your fellow-men. 4. Consider the prospect of success. Let then the vast importance of the work, and the consideration of the past neglect of it, urge you to exertion. (*James Parsons.*)

Ver. 5. Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.—*Preparation for self-amendment*.:—The design of this prophecy is to persuade the Jews off from that slothful security in the neglect of their duty which had already exposed them to the displeasure of God. They had outward difficulties of circumstance, but their chief hindrance was their own neglect and dulness, their want of respect for God and holy things. It was this state of insensibility that God sent His prophet to bring them out of. His words here primarily import no more than that it was time for that rebellious people to observe and consider diligently of all their labour and pains, and the works of their hands, and see what it all came to. This, however, is not the *only* design. They were to consider with a view to amending their lives, and getting free of those sins which were causing God's displeasure. How much our case is like that of the Jews in Haggai's time. The temple we are now to build up, is the Church and body of Christ; not with stones and wood from the mountains, but with living materials, Christ being the foundation and chief corner-stone. The building up this holy temple consists in advancing the credit and honour of religion among men, and in discountenancing, in the course of our lives, and the whole tendency of our discourse, all vice and profaneness, and everything that is inconsistent with religion; and this, it is too certain, we have not had the courage and the constancy to do. We of this nation, too generally, have not been advancing the public interest, and the Protestant cause, as we ought to have done. The prophet's words are therefore applicable to us. I. THE PERSON SPEAKING. It is that Being who has furnished you with all the blessings you have enjoyed; who has been your continual safety and protection. He can never lay any commands on us but what are necessary for us, and highly tending to our own interest. He is infinitely wise, and so knows perfectly well what will conduce most to our interest and happiness. Other arguments there are, perhaps of more force than these. In the text He is called by that awful title, "The Lord of hosts," importing that He has a right to us and all our actions, because He created us and all things. II. THE ADVICE OR COMMAND WHICH IS GIVEN. "Consider your ways." A very plain and easy command. The original is, "Set your heart upon your ways." Observe, attend to, watch over all your actions. 1. Show the mischiefs of inconsideration. (1) We give ourselves up by it to the most stupid and insuperable ignorance imaginable. (2) We lay ourselves open entirely to the power of our lusts. (3) It subjects us to the tyranny and insults of our great spiritual enemy. 2. Some of the advantages and necessity of consideration. The blessed advantages of consideration can never be enumerated. It gives us strength and vigour in the performance of all our duties. It is the only means to furnish us with suitable arguments and victorious resolutions against every temptation and artifice of the devil. And as it suffers us to omit no duty, it effectually destroys and conquers every beloved lust and inclination. 3. Answer some objections by the devil

raised in our minds against consideration. (1) It is exceeding difficult and troublesome to be always upon the guard, and watching against ourselves. But the question for us concerns not the difficulty but the necessity and the duty. (2) To be always filled with notions of the power, justice, and vengeance of God, must needs make us very melancholy. But enter into religion aright, and you will soon find that, instead of melancholy, your souls will be filled with the truest and most satisfactory joy and life and vigour. (*John Gale, D.D.*) *The great importance in life of frequent reflection and self-examination*.—The faculty of reviewing our past lives carries with it an evident obligation upon all men to exercise it constantly and uprightly. It is a principle that implies in its very nature an authority over the whole of our conduct; and we every one feel ourselves most intimately bound to obey its dictates. God our Maker saith to each one of us continually, by the inward voice of our own breasts, "Consider your ways." In the midst of so many passions and appetites as compose our frame; so many disorders in it as we are born with; such powerful temptations as surround us on every side, we cannot hope that the carefullest attention to ourselves will keep us entirely free from faults. By a little neglect of culture, a soil so fruitful of ill weeds will soon be covered with them. The best inclinations of the best minds, if left to themselves, will run wild and degenerate. A duty thus plain and necessary, God will doubtless expect us to perform very faithfully. What the Almighty commands, we shall find it our interest to do, never to omit. The cowardice of not searching our wounds will inevitably make them fatal. Possibly we are not convinced that our behaviour is of such infinite and eternal importance. It is important to examine, whether it be or not. Perhaps we have inquired, and think there is reason to doubt of what we are commonly taught concerning these matters. But *when* did we begin to think so? And what do we doubt of? Not surely of all the articles of faith, and all the obligations of life. Have we considered well what the undoubted ones are, and how far they ought to influence our conduct? We find it but too easy, if we will, to judge very favourably of almost the worst actions we have ever done. But God sees everything in its true light and magnitude, and surely then it is our concern to see it so too. Have we then examined, as in His presence, our lives and hearts? By what standard have we tried their innocence or guilt? The practice of others can no more justify us than ours can them. Have we done our utmost to divest our examination of self-partiality, to enlighten it by the instruction of pious and judicious friends and books, and above all, to direct it by the unerring Word of God? Our business is so to examine ourselves now, as to live more Christianly than ever. And whence can we better begin than from what we owe to Him that made us? We owe Him worship, faith in what He teaches, obedience to what He commands. How fully soever we own the authority of religion, do we practise it? Do we live to any unworthy passion? If we are clear both of worldliness and vanity, still what can we answer with respect to pleasure? In regard to other indulgences, have we acted as becomes rational natures, designed to prepare ourselves, by the discipline of this life, for spiritual happiness in a better? Another very material head of examination is our resentments. Do we bear ill-will to no one? Again, what is the tendency of our common discourse and conversation? Is it favourable to religion, to probity, to decency, to goodwill among men, or the contrary? Our behaviour must be regulated, not only towards our fellow-creatures in general, but with a closer view to the more general relations of life. Are we careful what sort of example we set others to copy after? Nor should we stop at considering what our faults have been; that alone would be a speculation of little use: we should proceed to think what must follow from them. Are we deeply sensible that, in all we have done amiss, we have provoked a most holy God; and have no claim to pardon, much less to happiness hereafter, but through the mercy procured by our blessed Redeemer? (*T. Secker.*) *The use and benefit of Divine meditation*.—Two things remarkable in the text. The repetition and enforcing of it again (ver. 7). The benefit that came by it; it brought them to repentance. Doctrine—Serious meditation of our sins by the Word is a special means to make men repent. Meditation is a settled exercise of the mind for a further inquiry of the truth. Four things in meditation—1. An exercise of the mind. 2. A settled exercise. Not a sudden flash of man's conceit, but it dwells upon a truth. 3. It is to make a further inquiry. It would fain know more of those truths that are subject to it. Meditation pulls the latch of the truth, and looks into every closet, and every cupboard, and every angle of it.

4. It labours to affect the heart. Meditation musters up all weapons, and gathers all forces of arguments for to press our sins, and lay them heavy upon the heart. Meditation, having bundled up all items against the soul, and brought in all bills of account, fastens sin upon the soul, makes the soul feel it, so that it must needs be convinced without any evasion. It is with the Word as it is with a salve. If a man have ever so good a salve, it will not heal if it be constantly taken on and off. Only if it be let *lie on* will the salve heal the wound. What shall we think of them who are loth to practise this duty of meditation, but keen enough to meditate on their own worldly affairs? The poor man thinks he has no time for this tedious duty; the rich man thinks he needs it not; the wicked dare not do it; so no man will. The *lets* or hindrances of serious meditation are—1. Vain company. 2. Multitude of worldly company. He that over-employs himself, his meditations of heaven are dreaming meditations; his thoughts dreaming thoughts, he can never seriously meditate on the good of his soul. A good meditating mind no man came to surfeited with employments. 3. Ignorance. A man cannot meditate of a thing he knows not, nor thou of thy sins, if thou be not skilful in God's catalogue of thy sins. 4. Averseness of the heart; which consists in three things—(1) In the carelessness of the heart. (2) In runnings of it. The heart is like a vagrant rogue, he would rather be hanged than tied to his parish. (3) In the wearisomeness of the heart. This may serve for terror unto all those who, for all this that has been spoken, dare sit down without it. If thou wouldest meditate aright, separate yourself for other things. Observe the times of privacy: morning, evening, when the heart is touched at sermon or sacrament. Rub up thyself and thy memory. Rouse up thy heart. Use meditation for reprehension; for men usually make slight account of their sins. But you will say, How shall I come to feel my burden? Three things are here to be discovered. 1. The ground upon which our meditation must be raised. (1) Meditate on the goodness, patience, and mercy of God, that hath been abused by any of your sins. (2) Meditate on the justice of God; for He is just as well as merciful. (3) Meditate on the wrath of God. (4) Meditate on the constancy of God. 2. The manner how to follow meditation home to the heart. (1) Weigh and ponder all these things in thy heart. (2) Strip sin, and look upon it stark naked; for sin has a way of covering and disguising itself with pleasure, profit, ease. (3) Dive into thy own soul and heart. There is a tough brawn over thy heart, that it feels not its sins. (4) Anticipate and prevent thine own heart. Meditate what thy heart will one day wish, if it be not humbled; and tell thy soul as much. 3. How to put life and power into meditation. (1) Let meditation haunt the heart, dog thee with the hellish looks of thy sins, and follow it with the dreadful vengeance of God. (2) Let meditation trace thy heart, as it should haunt thee, so let it trace thee in the same steps. Because the heart is most cunning, and hardest to be tracked by its scent, when the heart hath taken up with abundance of good duties, and attained unto sundry graces. These good duties and common graces drown the scent of the heart's wickedness. (3) Hale thy heart before God, and let meditation bring it before His throne. Make complaint to God; and thy complaint must be full of sorrow. It must be a full complaint of all thy sins, and of all thy lusts. It must be with the aggravation of all the circumstances of thy sins, which may show them to be odious. It must be a self-condemning complaint. Let meditation, when it hath haled thy heart before God, there cast thee down before Him. Motives—1. It is a folly not to meditate. 2. Thou wouldest be loth to have the brand of a reprobate. 3. Thou wouldest be loth to rob God of His honour. 4. Or that all the worship thou givest to God should be abominable; but so it will be without meditation, before it, and after it. (*W. Fenner, B.D.*) Consider your ways:—Nearly twenty years had passed away since a remnant of God's people had returned from captivity. During the whole of that time nothing had been done to restore the temple. Yet the people had thought of their own comfort. They dwelt "in ceiled houses." Haggai arose to point out their mistake. He cries, "Consider your ways." So they would discover—1. The reason of their misfortunes. Which was that they had thought of themselves and had forgotten God. It is the explanation of all unhappiness. If you wish to be miserable—be selfish. Selfishness looks not at what it has, but at what it has not; casts covetous eyes on what others have. The selfish man thinks more of what he has than what he is, and disregards the needs of others. All these are so many doors to unhappiness. He that will save his life shall lose it. 2. The secret of blessed-

ness. "Render to God the things that are God's." "Build the temple," said Haggai. Put yourselves in harmony with God and His purposes. Philosophers have discovered that happiness is not found when it is sought directly. Seek it obliquely. "Live for others." But the doctrine fails because men are sinful. To join them is to join them in their sin, and sin is the gate of all wretchedness. Happiness can only come by living for another, when that other is sinless. Live for God, and the secret of all blessedness is discovered. This is the true "Imitation of Christ," whose "meat and drink" it was to do His Father's will. (*Herbert Windross.*)

Lenten thoughts.—Lent is the season which our forefathers have appointed for us to consider and amend our ways, and to return, year by year, heart and soul to that Lord and Heavenly Father from whom we are daily wandering. We need a particular time in which we may sit down deliberately and look our own souls steadily in the face, and cast up our accounts with God, and be thoroughly ashamed and terrified at those accounts, when we find, as we shall, that we cannot answer God one thing in a thousand. The hurry and bustle of business is daily putting repentance and self-examination out of our heads. Much for which a man ought to pray, he forgets to pray for. Many sins and failings of which he ought to repent slip past him out of sight in the hurry of life. Much good that might be done is put off and laid by, often till it is too late. It may be said that the bustle will go on just as much in Lent as ever. "How can we give up more time to religion then than at other times?" There is a sound and true answer to this. It is not too much more *time* which you are asked to give up, as it is more *heart*. The time will come when you will see yourselves in a true light; when your soul will not seem a mere hanger-on to your body, but you will find that you *are* your soul. Then there will be no forgetting that you have souls, and thrusting them into the background, to be fed at odd minutes, or left to starve,—no more talk of giving up time to the care of your souls; your souls will take the time for themselves then—and the eternity too; they will be all in all to you then, perhaps when it is too late! Then try, for this brief Lenten season, the plan which the Lord of heaven and earth advises, and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. You need not be idle a moment more in Lent than at any other time. You can get ten minutes more in the morning, and ten at night. When there is a will there is a way. Then make up your minds that there shall be a will. Examine yourself and your doings. Ask yourself, "Am I going forward or back?" Can we not all find time this Lent to throw over these sins of ours,—to confess them with shame and sorrow,—and to try like men to shake them off? (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

Of consideration and meditation attended with resolution.—I. THE NATURE OF THIS RELIGIOUS EXERCISE. Meditation seems to be of a higher nature than consideration. This latter is an operation of the mind in order to conversion and reformation of life; but the former is the continued work of those that are already changed in their hearts and lives, and have attained to some improvements in religion and godliness. Meditation includes in it consideration, but it is something more, yea, much more. They agree in this, that they are both of them a serious reflecting and animadverting on those matters relating to religion that are set before us, to the end that we may receive advantage by fixing our thoughts on them, and thereby become more pious and holy. Consider the proper objects of meditation. These are ourselves; God; His Word; His works; men's actions; those solemn entertainments of our thoughts, which are commonly called the "four last things."

II. THE WORTH AND EXCELLENCY, THE VAST USEFULNESS AND ADVANTAGE OF MEDITATION. 1. It is the proper employment of rational minds. 2. This exercise well ordered, will banish idleness and vain diversions. 3. It mightily improves the faculties of the soul. Knowledge, reason, judgment, and a right apprehension of things, with composure and consistency of mind, are the fruits of it. 4. It wonderfully promotes all the parts of devotion and religion. (1) It fixes the mind, and thereby is useful to preserve in us a constant sense of God in our souls, and to keep up a steady disposition in our minds towards goodness and holiness. (2) It begets heavenly-mindedness. (3) It promotes prayer, which is the very key of devotion, and the chief office of our religion. (4) It helps all the duties of religion and the exertment of all the graces of the Holy Spirit, by seasoning the heart with savoury and pious thoughts. (5) It not only promotes religion, but also the comforts and solaces which attend it. III. THE MISCHIEF OF INCONSIDERATION; or the neglect of this excellent duty of meditation. This is the fault of Christian men, and that by which they generally miscarry,—they

will not reflect on their ways. The complaint is, "My people doth not consider." Men seldom sin out of ignorance. Want of consideration is the great spring of all their disasters. IV. DIRECTIONS FOR THE RIGHT MANAGING OF OUR MEDITATIONS. 1. You are not to give yourselves up to immoderation in this exercise, but to use prudence and discretion. 2. When we meditate on Divine things we should keep ourselves within due bounds. Many are too inquisitive and curious in their contemplations. They would be "wise above that which is written." 3. Some fit place for meditation should be chosen: some retreat from the noise and bustle of the world. 4. When thus alone, you must be very busy; for privacy and solitude are not commendable unless well employed. 5. Some appropriate time must be set apart. The close of the day is very suitable. The Lord's day is arranged to provide opportunity. After reading or hearing God's Word a time of meditation is useful. At the Lord's Supper. In time of trouble or distress. And in times of great mercy and deliverance. The proper qualifications of this duty are the following. Prayer must always accompany meditation. It must be accompanied with the affections, or else it is a very dry and useless exercise. And resolution should follow meditation. Meditation must not only produce resolution, but also action. Devout thoughts minister to religious endeavours and enterprise. (*John Edwards.*) *On the duty of considering our ways*:—"Lay them to heart." Ponder them, meditate upon them, maturely weigh them. It is the want of this reflection and consideration that now brings difficulties and distress upon us, and will soon bring severer judgments. To the warning voice of Haggai the people prudently listened. To us, however, the words would convey a meaning not precisely the same with that which the Jews would collect from them. To us the command would enjoin the scrutiny of our lives and conduct, but it would bid us compare them with the precepts of a new and more perfect law, the covenant of grace. But how few do consider their ways! How seldom is it possible, even by alarm, to bring to life those that are dead in trespasses and sins! Without considering your ways, without practical reflection, your state is one of imminent danger. To the young, more especially, this advice is most necessary. (*A. B. Evans, D.D.*) *Self-examination*:—At the encouraging voice of their Divine Protector, through the prophet, the spirit of the Jews revives, their zeal is inflamed, and their hands are joyfully given anew to do the work of the Lord. We may learn that the Almighty knows and observes all human actions, and will sooner or later in this life, and certainly in the next, punish the negligence of those who disobey His commands. The text contains "instruction in righteousness." The power of reflection is one of those characteristics by which our nature is adorned. The other animals enjoy or suffer only for the present. The exalted spirit of man, made in the image of supreme intelligence, subjects to his view the future and the past. As this power distinguishes us from all other animals, it is most becoming in us to employ it. We should strive to be acquainted with our spiritual state, that we may know, when at a throne of grace, what we have to confess, what to ask to be forgiven, wherein to pray to be encouraged and strengthened. The negligent and careless worshipper cannot be acceptable unto God. This self-examination is a matter of some difficulty. I. ILLUSTRATE THE NATURE OF THIS DUTY. For the regulation of our conduct we have the power of judging between right and wrong: the knowledge of God and His perfections: a revelation of the Divine will, and promised assistance of God's Spirit: and the certainty of a future state of retribution. All these means for regulating our ways point out the same line of conduct. Christians should consider their ways in reference to each of these different means of direction, and they will enable them to ascertain their state with regard to knowledge, faith, love, repentance, and new obedience. 1. Consider your ways by the power of knowing right from wrong. Though we be called into the "marvellous light of the Son of God," this original power of our minds is not extinguished, neither is its exercise superseded. In many cases it must be our sole guide, because Divine revelation does not descend to minute particulars. This power is often biassed and weakened by prejudice and passion. 2. Consider your ways in reference to God. Consider in what light your actions must appear to this all-seeing God: whether they have been such as He had a right to expect, and it became you to perform. Compare your conduct with the rectitude of the Divine nature, and with the obligations under which you lie. 3. Consider your ways in reference to the revealed will of God. As our judgments are often defective, it is expedient that we examine ourselves by that clearer

rule which is given us in the Scriptures, in which are distinctly unfolded the duties which we owe to God, to society, to individuals, and to ourselves. 4. Consider your ways with reference to immortality, and a state of retribution. This life is of uncertain continuance. II. MAN SHUNS THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DUTY OF CONSIDERING HIS WAYS. He is unwilling to weigh his actions, because he knows that, in so doing, most unpleasant feelings are prepared for him. But is this conduct rational or judicious? From considering our ways there arises perseverance in holiness. A man must examine himself that he may reform. There can be no apology for setting aside this work. It is difficult, indeed, but it is commanded by our God, on whom our fate depends. It is necessary for promoting that holiness on which our happiness must be founded. Shall we be deterred by this difficulty from taking those salutary measures which are essential to our everlasting peace? (*L. Adamson.*)

Ver. 6. **He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.**—*The bag with holes*.—The prophet lifted his warning voice, and entreated his sinful brethren to “consider their ways,” to solve for themselves the curious and alarming fact, that while toiling for their temporal gratification, and sowing broadcast with liberal hand, the return for such labours was so meagre and unsatisfactory, even as if one had been shortsighted enough to deposit his hard-earned wages in a bag with holes. The history of nations, like that of individuals, is ever repeating itself. 1. Those persons come under this description who pride themselves on the accumulation and possession of wealth. 2. That man is dropping his money into a “bag with holes,” who is spending any large proportion of it in things which minister chiefly to pride and vain glory. Ruskin says, “A tenth part of the expense which is sacrificed in domestic vanities, if not absolutely and meaningly lost in domestic comforts and incumbrances, would, if wisely employed, build a marble church for every town in England.” 3. Those persons are putting their wealth “into a bag with holes,” who are robbing God’s Church of her lawful tithes, that they may have the more to leave to their children. Inherited wealth is as often a curse as a blessing. Idleness is a source of misery, and there is no deadlier bane of character. The wise father will give his son the education which will fit him for the trade or the profession which he may prefer, and then allow him the privilege of pushing his own fortune in the world. Bishop Doane said of the men who should “make a State,” that “they are made by self-denial.” Instead of the selfish question of the votary of the world, “How much can I get out of this life in the way of dress, high-living, envy, admiration, amusement?” may our endeavour be this, “How much shall this life of mine (so short and so uncertain) get out of me in loving devoted service to my Lord?” (*John N. Norton, D.D.*) *A bag with holes* (a talk with children).—In olden times folk kept their money in bags, and still people keep it in little bags which we call purses. “What is the good of a money-bag if it is full of holes?” Yet the prophet says that the people of his day put their money into such bags. He means that they tried to keep something far more precious than money in this reckless fashion. He speaks of their “wages.” We are always sorry to lose anything valuable. Yet the way to lose anything is to put it in a bag with holes. What disappointment therefore is expressed here by the prophet! The feeling of loss is all the keener when we lose something that we have earned. There are some people who have what we call windfalls. Such a “windfall” has generally, like fallen apples, a bruise about it. It is not half so good as when we earn it ourselves. Now these people in the text had earned what they lost. The word here used for “wages” denotes hard earnings. I hope you children will learn in life to earn wages of your own. The best thing in life is to work for what we get. They are few who know how to use money without first knowing how to earn it. These people knew how to earn money, but they did not know how to take care of it. Half the battle of life is to earn; and the other half is to know where to place and how to use what we earn. But I have seen people who worked very hard, and yet at the close of life entered eternity as paupers. They took care of what we call money: they did not put their wealth into a bag with holes. But they never remembered that the money of this world does not pass current in the next. There is another kind of coin necessary for the next world. To die rich in the things of the world very often means to die poor with regard to the world to come. (*David Davies.*) *The worst foe of labour*.—The most persistent, most overpowering enemy of the working-classes is intoxicating liquor. It is to labour a worse foe than monopoly, and worse than associated capital.

It annually swindles industry out of a large percentage of its earnings. I proclaim a strike universal against strong drink, which, if kept up, will be the relief of the working-classes and the salvation of the nation. When you deplete a workman's physical energy, you deplete his capital. The stimulated workman gives out before the unstimulated workman. When an army goes out to the battle, the soldier who has water or coffee in his canteen marches easier and fights better than the soldier who has whisky in his canteen. God only knows what the drunkard suffers, in his body, in his home, and above all, in the loss of his soul. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *National improvidence*.—Objection may be urged against introducing social and political questions into Christian pulpits. Objection cannot, however, fairly be made against the pulpit treatment of that branch of social politics, national improvidence. Here, in Haggai's time, the means of life were abundant, and yet men were dissatisfied. The national improvidence of the Jews was a punishment of their neglect of God, while our national improvidence is a hindrance to our true approach to Him as a nation. See the enormous waste of means and comfort caused by our national self-indulgence, and the absolute want, and almost starvation, resulting thence to millions of our fellow-men; or, when we think of the growing passion for destructive drink, must we not see a wonderful description of our present state in this other thing which God tells us to consider, "Ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but are not satisfied with drink." It is a common but mistaken notion that Bible teaching generally is opposed to worldly notions of prudence. Men quote our Saviour's words, "Take no thought for the morrow," without our Saviour's context. His object was to prevent their letting care for providing earthly things cause them to neglect providing heavenly things. The possession of competence is not a crime. Our Saviour shows waste to be wicked, and wilful destitution a sin, not merely as being an offence and trouble to social politics, but as an iniquity against the honour of God, who, in ordaining that man should eat bread at the sweat of his brow, has laid on every man the duty of self-provision. The apostles point to the sin of improvidence in no measured terms. They never contemplate a state of things in which men shall expect fellow-men in every case of need to supply all their necessities. They teach, as our Saviour did, dependence on God, but not on man. Consider the prevalence of this sin of improvidence. National improvidence exists in England without a parallel in all creation. (*W. L. Blackley, M.A.*) *A bad investment*.—I. With respect to MUCH OF THE MONEY MEN GAIN we may say it is put into a bag with holes. Look at one man who is a type of those who put earnings into a bag with holes. He works hard. With the dawn he arises. He eats the bread of carefulness. He is ever on the watch for the "main chance," that is, for increasing the accumulations of No. 1. He does not trouble always as to the methods by which he gains. He cares only to see his balance increase. He is never known to be taken with a fit of generosity. He stints himself, and it may be his family, of all pleasures that he may increase his savings. Thus grubbing and grasping, puffing and lying, he makes the mickle into muckle. He finds the pennies become pounds, the tens grow to hundreds, and the hundreds to thousands. He gets respect, is favoured with applications for help. But he has been putting his gain into a bag with holes, if he has wrongly gained his wealth, and if he has bowed down to that, worshipping it alone. Remember that he cannot take it with him at death. It were useless if he could. There are many who, even without gaining much, make themselves slaves to their particular line of work. They give no thought to the higher concerns of life. But all their life they toil without content; they have murmured and fretted, envied others, even misrepresented them. Into a "bag with holes" they have placed all they have so hardly gained. Then there are many who really could earn and do earn much, but they waste it. They know not where the money has gone, and if they knew where it has gone they would not confess it to themselves or to others. II. With respect to MANY OF THE PLEASURES men seek, the truth of the text is manifested. We say "many," because all pleasure is not sinful, and seeking it at times may be a strong duty. Alas! some spoil lawful and sufficient recreation by taking unlawful pleasure. They are certainly putting their efforts into a "bag with holes." Thus also with stolen, secret pleasures. Souls yield to the desires of the heart, the lusts of the flesh, and because the thing is hidden up they rub their hands and say I have done no wrong. In no sinful indulgence can we find a gratification that shall be enduring. That deed, the memory of which causes the face to crimson, has no quality in it that can be really satisfactory. III. With respect to OUR UNAIDED EFFORTS AT REFORM OF LIFE, the truth of the

text applies. We find out that the devil is a bad master, that the wages of sin is death. We begin to see that this life has been wasted, that we have lived for self. We then begin to struggle, in our own strength, to improve character and conquer sins. Perhaps we do make some little progress for a time. Soon we discover that it has been only for a time, and that the root of sin is still in our soul. Then the fact begins to stare us in the face, that if we could avoid all sin in the future, if we could conquer all tendency to sin in our hearts, we have yet a great account of sin which is unforgiven. Law must not be violated and dishonoured. Hence He takes up, in the Person of Christ, our sins and bears them. "He magnifies the law." He then freely forgives us for Christ's sake. The whole past can be as though it had not been. All sin can be fully expunged. God in Christ has provided a way of dealing with sin such as we cannot understand, but which we can accept. Confucius said, "A blemish may be taken out of a diamond by carefully polishing it, but if your words have the least blemish there is no way to efface them." This is true of the sinful dispositions of the soul. Only Christ can efface them. Our self-righteousness, which is effort to atone in our own strength, is like wages put into a bag with holes. IV. With respect to ATTEMPTS OF MANY TO GAIN VARIOUS KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE we may assert the principle of the text. There are those who are incessantly inquiring, reading, and yet who know but very little. They go about, but although seeing much, they retain little. Many hear abundance of lectures, of sermons, but seem to know little more. They read their Bibles, but they increase little in knowledge of it. Now, just look back and see how much you have read and heard and known. What has been the effect on the character, the heart, the life? Has it not been put into a bag with holes? How often have you heard of the sacrifice of Christ and the infinite love of God. Has it had any effect? Has there been any effect on the life? Bitter was the wail of the mother who after ten years of care of an imbecile child said to me, "After all my love she never seems to notice me more readily than she would a stranger." Ah! that is just what Jesus has to say of us. His love has been thrown away upon us, it has been put in a "bag with holes." (*Homiletic Magazine*.) *The bag with holes*:—To apply this figure of the prophet's to our own times and circumstances, in a word to ourselves, let us see what is "the bag with the holes" into which honest earnings are too often put. I. EXTRAVAGANCE is such a bag. I mean the spending more on a thing than our income justifies. Bishop Patrick begins a chapter with a notable warning, "Consider thine own sufficiency." Weigh well what you are equal to, and this may as well apply to our income as anything else. If we allow ourselves in any instance an expenditure, no matter what be the subject of it, which is unsuitable to our circumstances and inconsistent with our means, there is no other name for this that I know of than extravagance; i.e. (to trace the word to its derivation) a wandering beyond the just limits within which our course should lie. There is a certain suitability between our position and circumstances on the one hand, and our expenses on the other, which good taste will discern instinctively; any squandering in one direction must involve poverty in the other: I do not say a "bag with holes," but a bag with one hole will let out all the money, that which is for necessary wants, as well as that which is spent upon the luxury. Is not extravagance the fault of the age? Do not men of all classes live so near to their income that it is hardly possible to avoid going beyond it? There are but two ways of meeting that difficulty: we must earn more or spend less. II. There is another bag with holes—WASTE. This, though it resembles extravagance in some respects, is a different thing, for extravagance is in superfluities; waste may be of things necessary. I fear this is an increasing fault. I see it wherever I go: waste of fuel and of food, waste of money, waste of land, waste of its produce. Yet He who, by a miracle twice repeated, made bread enough and to spare for thousands in the wilderness, had an eye to what was over; and left us a memorable lesson: "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." Young people hardly know how much can be done simply by wasting nothing. I have an honest shepherd near me who once offered me a loan of £200. I know another who has saved enough to buy him a little farm. What was their secret? They wasted nothing. They have had enough for livelihood, enough for health, for comfort, and this to spare when the day of feebleness and dearth shall come. Their bag was not one with holes. III. Akin to extravagance and waste is EXCESS. This does, indeed, partake of the character of the other two; but it has this element in addition, that it is extravagance and it is waste, both employed on self, and both to the detriment of self. If you will just call to mind some of the calculations which are now familiar to us all you will

see what a bag with holes this is for the earnings of the nation at large. More than 100 millions are spent in the kingdom every year on drink ! This is *the* great bag with holes into which skilful earnings, hard earnings, costly earnings, are too apt to be put. That dreadful, that pitiable habit of intemperance is a solvent which will melt down a fortune however great, and a man however strong. No matter what is put into the bag, through that one hole it disappears, and leaves the owner of it like the tattered bag itself. (*A. C. Bishop, M.A.*)

Ver. 7. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.—*The call of God*.—I. THE PERSON WHO ISSUES THIS COMMAND. Note the Divine character of the speaker. The "Lord of hosts." This name, containing in it every perfection, commands our regard and challenges our awe. Omnipotence, omniscience, and unlimited authority unite their beams in one blaze of glory in this truly august character, "The Lord of hosts." II. THE COMMAND ITSELF. "Consider your ways." Fix your thoughts upon them with diligence, earnestness, and heart application. Be honest with yourselves, serious and particular in the inquiry into your real character in the sight of God. The command implies that—I. God has given to us a revelation of His will as the rule of our duty, and the standard by which we are to examine our conduct. The Scriptures form the directory and rule by which we are to try our ways, and which God has in mercy given to us by His own revelation for this purpose. 2. God hath endowed us with the powers of recollection and reflection. By these we can bring the transactions of our whole lives into present view, and arrange the several actions of them in their proper order and colours. It is our wisdom to converse with our departed hours, that we may learn to redeem the time. 3. As God has given both the rule and capacity for the exercising of this duty, so the discharge of it is necessary and advantageous. (1) The frequent and impartial consideration of our ways has a tendency to humble us before the footstool of the all-glorious Jehovah, and to convince us of our weakness, unworthiness, meanness, and insignificance. (2) The diligent and frequent consideration of our ways will be accompanied with this further advantage, of leading us to a cordial, entire dependence upon God, both for direction and assistance in every duty. (3) Compliance with that required in our text will lead us to see and own that the salvation of a sinner is, and must be, all of grace and mercy. We shall then no longer boast of our good hearts, the integrity of our conduct, or our regular duties. We shall cry for mercy. If you would be humble Christians, dependent upon and sensible of your obligations to the free grace of God, be frequent and impartial in the consideration of your ways. III. APPEAL TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. 1. Address the careless unconcerned part of the hearers. 2. Those who have experienced only some slight convictions of sin, and but a transient concern about their salvation. 3. Those who are backsliders. Invite them to serious thought about their present state and danger. 4. Those who are real believers. How crooked even their ways will appear in the review ! How slow their progress in the path of duty and obedience. On the whole, as the consideration of our ways is a great duty, so it requires our present and most serious attention. The present *now* is the season that demands dispatch. To-day we must hear God's voice, before disease incapacitate, or death prevent us. (*J. King, B.A.*) *An address to servants*.—It should be the great concern of every one of us to "consider our ways"; to think over them; to search and try them. Applied to servants, we treat—I. THEIR DUTIES. 1. Your first duty is to God. You must turn unto Him as real penitents, seek forgiveness through the merits of Jesus Christ, wash in His precious blood, and believe the promises which He has given in His Gospel. 2. Earnest prayer is a duty which servants too often neglect. Weariness at night, and late rising in the morning, are the causes. 3. The diligent reading of the Scriptures. The busiest may find or make time for this spiritual improvement. 4. Attending constantly at the house of God. Whenever, that is, you can secure an opportunity. "Faith cometh by hearing." 5. Consider your duty towards your employers. Such as the duty of fidelity or faithfulness; a strict regard for truth; obedience; keeping your temper. It is helpful and wise to make a friend, as we call it, of your master and mistress. 6. Consider your duty to your fellow-servants. You ought to show great care, tenderness, and affection for the welfare of each other. Endeavour to lead your fellow-servants into the paths of peace, by recommending, both by precept and example, religious habits. Aid them according to the ability which God giveth you, when they are in any distress. II. THEIR TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS. 1. Your early removal from

your friends. Service is not like home, however comfortably you may be located. Home is home, however homely. 2. If a Christian servant, the irreligious habits of the families with whom you dwell is another trial. 3. The worldliness of your fellow-servants. These trials bring temptations. And there are special moral temptations for female servants. III. THEIR PRIVILEGES. 1. Wants supplied without involving personal anxiety. 2. Opportunity for receiving the Lord's Supper. 3. Power to assist in the Lord's work. (*James R. Starey, M.A.*) *Whither art thou going?*—Every work, with every secret thing, shall reappear at the judgment-seat of Christ, whether good or whether evil. A journey ends somewhere; each step of it is somewhither. Whither, then, are we each going? Of some changes you must be aware, in some you have doubtless rejoiced. But what as to your souls? In what way have they changed? Are they fitter for their end, for that for which God created them? If you have not used God's grace in the last year, you are, humanly speaking, less in the way to use it this next. Would you prepare for anything, which you care about in this life, as you prepare for eternity? You would not so prepare for any race in this life. God has divided our lives into lesser portions. But each resting-place should give us pause, and force us into ourselves, and make us think, for a time at least, whether we have made ever so little progress in the way, or have sat down in the way, or have turned altogether aside out of the way. "Consider your ways." Consider what you have been doing, what you are doing, and whither those doings are tending. "Set your heart upon them," your heart, the seat of your affections. How, if you have not done it, are you to set about this considering your ways? How would you do if you suspected that you were out of your way on this earth? You would, if you could see it, look back to your starting-point, and see how, little by little, you had swerved from the right path. Then look back to earliest days, see by what lesser or greater steps thou first departedst from the narrow way; look how evil habits strengthen by repetition. "Sift thyself through and through," says the prophet, "and so sift on." Then shalt thou make progress, not if thou findest not what to blame, but if thou blame what thou findest. When thou didst not set thy heart upon thy ways, thou didst incur daily, well-nigh countless sin, in thought, word, desire, deed, yea, and in omission of duty. Then judge thyself, that thou be not judged of the Lord. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **Bring wood, and build the house.**—*The building rising*:—I. AN IMPORTANT OPERATION ENGAGED IN. "Building the house." 1. Its actual nature. The building of the temple of God on Mount Zion. Solomon's temple had been dismantled and razed to the ground. The first act of the restored captives was to rebuild the temple, so that they might once more perform Divine worship. The spiritual import of it was the formation and the gradual perfecting through successive generations of time, of the spiritual Church of God, under the dispensation of the Gospel of His Son, which in Scripture is known by the similitude of a house or a temple. 2. Its attendant difficulties. External adversaries around them. Powerful obstacles arose from the Jews themselves. Their numbers were scanty, and their resources were feeble; some were depressed and fearful, and some were indifferent and apathetic. Subtle objections against undertaking the work just then were started. Difficulties which common agency and common exertion might well despair of removing. These facts suggest the circumstances attendant on the erection of the spiritual temple of Divine grace, under the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The work has to progress amidst immense difficulty and opposition. External enmity has abounded, arising from the radical depravity and alienation of the human heart against God, and employing against His truth all the weapons of tact and force: heathen imposture, antichristian superstition, Mohammedan fanaticism, infidel impiety, worldly contempt and neglect. And the professed friends of the Gospel have themselves interposed serious difficulties in the path of progress and success. What injuries have come through the corruptions of the Church; by the divisions of the Church; and by the indolence of the Church. The inerness of some among us has been a most serious injury to the progress of truth and righteousness. It has contracted the resources of the Church; it has given to the Church a false aspect, and a false reputation in the eyes of the world. It has damped the zeal and paralysed the energies of pious, active, and devoted men; and it has prevented the announcement of saving principles to multitudes, who thus have lived in ignorance, have died in darkness, and have gone down in

despair. II. AN AGENCY IN CONNECTION WITH WHICH THIS OPERATION IS TO BE CONDUCTED. 1. It is instrumental and secondary. The personal exertions of the Jews themselves were demanded, and were enlisted under the guidance of certain men who had been specially appointed by God for that purpose. The instrumental and secondary agency, appointed for the purpose of promoting the designs of Divine mercy, under the Gospel of our Redeemer, consists in the devoted labours of men who have been themselves redeemed. When the Saviour had completed His own personal mission among the sons of men, He consigned the instrumentality we have noticed, mainly to those whom He had constituted His ministers: some amongst them to labour in temporary offices, and others again to be raised up in long succession, and in such succession to labour until the end of time. 2. It is an agency efficient and supreme. The Divine agency, connected with the instrumentality of men, was to direct them in their counsels, and to give efficiency and success to their movements. It is the agency of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the agency of the Holy Spirit. Zechariah presents Christ as the foundation-stone of the building, and as the architect of the building. The Spirit is presented under the figure of the "seven eyes." Obstacles would remain undiminished, the "great mountain" would always frown upon us in equal and unmitigated power, were it not for the agency asserted and vindicated here. The best instrumentality devised and employed by man, and operating with whatever of industry and skill, would not advance one solitary step, were it not for the agency asserted and vindicated here. III. A RESULT, IN WHICH THIS OPERATION, SO CONDUCTED, SHALL TERMINATE. The operation shall be triumphantly completed. The head-stone of the temple was brought on. And we can securely anticipate the certain and appointed consummation of the efforts, which in the cause of God we are now, although inadequately, assisting to promote. There is to be the completion of the structure of Divine grace. Nothing can injure the progress and the advancement of our religion. And being triumphantly completed, it will eminently redound to the Divine glory. And the final triumph will be hailed with ecstacy and rapture by all holy created beings. Application—1. What encouragement to those already engaged and labouring for God! 2. What rebuke to those, professing the religion of Jesus, who are yet indolent and inactive! 3. What warning to those who are avowedly hostile to God and to His truth! (*James Parsons.*) *The sanctuary built*:—It is vain to contend that there exists an exact correspondence between the Jewish and the Christian Church. Yet, as they were constituted and ruled by the same authority, and for the same great ends, the history of the former cannot be otherwise than pregnant with instructions suited to the condition and wants of the latter. The principles of truth and righteousness are immutable. These remarks are applicable to the present portion of Jewish history. The returned captives let the house of God lie waste until they had made ample provision for themselves and their families. With this course God was displeased, and He punished them in a manner exactly corresponding with the offence. They wanted to accumulate more of the world for themselves and families. But God rendered abortive every labour of their hands. By drought and famine He dried up the sources of their gains, and withered their hopes. There is nothing to render this case inapplicable to the Christian Church. The great law of God's providence, in this respect, is maintained even down to the present day. 1. God has, from the beginning, been worshipped in temples made with hands. While the Jews were passing through the wilderness, they built a portable tabernacle for God's worship. When their migrations were ended, they built a costly and magnificent temple to the honour of Jehovah. Thus it has been in all time where Jehovah has been known. Even heathen nations have everywhere had public edifices devoted to the rites of their idolatrous worship. There never was a community that did not consecrate to the object of its worship some structure. 2. As respects the true religion, these edifices have been built by command of God. See injunctions given to Moses and to Solomon. History records not one instance of the pervading and sanctifying power of religion in any community where the regular and stated convocations of the people for the worship of God had been abolished. 3. A house of worship, where the people may convene to make a public recognition of God, and offer to Him their homage, is indispensably necessary to a diffusion of the blessings of religion, and a perpetuation of its institutions. The advantages resulting from a convocation of the people at stated periods for religious instruction are perfectly obvious. Let the house of God go to decay, let the sanctuary be demolished, and the strongest bonds of the social state will be

dissolved, and all combinations of effort or sympathy to sustain the ordinances, or propagate the doctrines of religion, come to an end. Religion could, under these circumstances, have no organised existence. The solemn convocations of the Church of Christ constitute the heart, whose pulsations send the vital fluid through all the ramifications of the system. Let its Sabbath assemblies be given up, and its existence would speedily come to an end. 4. The ministrations of the house of God have a powerful influence upon the intelligence and good order of the community. There are susceptibilities to religious influence which belong to man's nature. They must either be developed and trained under scriptural instruction, or they must take on a character from some superstitious and inadequate culture. The objects presented before the mind in the sanctuary, by an able and scriptural ministry, are of the most exalted and commanding character. How is it possible that the constant exhibition of themes like these should fail of producing an elevation and expansion of intellect through all the grades of society that no other agency is capable of producing? How great must be the moral power of the pulpit. The principles of the Gospel are all holy. Whence come the perpetrators of crimes? I have no recollection of even one individual who was an habitual worshipper in the sanctuary being convicted of a States' prison offence. There are still higher interests to be secured by this agency—the interests of the soul. In the house of prayer there are peculiar manifestations of the Divine glory. Here souls are trained for heaven. 5. The building destined to this high purpose should, in some sense, correspond to the great design of its erection. (1) It should be a true exponent of the estimation in which the people hold the institutions of religion. (2) It ought to be rendered as attractive, by its architectural beauty without, and by its well-appointed arrangements within, as is consistent with the sacred and holy purposes which it is designed to subserve. (3) When it becomes necessary to erect a house for the worship of God, the people should well consider the character of the Being to whom it is to be consecrated, and take care that the structure be such a one as they will not be ashamed to present to Him as an expression of their gratitude and love. Closing remarks—I. We owe primarily to the sanctuary the intelligence, refinement, good order which prevail in Christian communities, and the security of life and property which we enjoy. 2. We do not recommend extravagant expenditures in building a house for the worship of our God. We would have everything simple and chaste, but, if the ability of the people permitted, rich and commodious. 3. To accomplish a work of such magnitude, the utmost harmony is demanded; a perfect union of views and efforts. Divided counsels always tend to weakness and ruin. 4. Nothing but the spirit of an enlightened and enlarged liberality will be equal to the demands of such an emergency, as the erection of a house to be consecrated to the worship of Jehovah. 5. The condescension of God, in recording His name in temples made with hands, and in permitting Himself there to be sought and worshipped by His sinful creatures, ought to excite our highest wonder, and gratitude, and love for ever. (*J. W. Adams, D.D.*) *The encouragement to build the Lord's house*:—In the Word of God warnings and threats are always accompanied with exhortations and promises. Were it not so, the threats would profit us little. It is true that only in the Gospel is the love of God made manifest in its fullness. Only in the Gospel do the promises prevail mightily over the threatenings. As God bids the Jews go up to the mountain and fetch the wood to build His house, so does He command us likewise to go up to the mountain for the same purpose. To what mountain? To the mountain of faith; to the mountain of duty. Faith is a hard mountain to climb for all, above all for those who have been living in unbelief. Duty too is a hard mountain to climb for all, above all for those who have been living in self-indulgence. This is the reward He promises us, if we will climb the steep mountain of faith and duty to seek the graces with which we are to build God's house. He assures us He will take pleasure in that house, and will be glorified in it. What a mighty motive is this! It ought to have great sway over every one of us. If God takes pleasure in our work, that work must be blessed upon ourselves also. God is infinitely more merciful and bountiful than man can believe or conceive. He sees the very first stirrings of an obedient spirit in the heart; and when He sees them, He blesses them, and strengthens them, and helps them forward. No sooner had Zerubbabel and the remnant of the people begun to obey the voice of the Lord, than the prophet Haggai was sent to say, "I am with you, saith the Lord." He had been with them long before. He had shown forth His wonderful loving-kindness in a number of ways.

Yet He sent them this comforting assurance. Nor is He less kind, less gracious, less bountiful, less merciful to us who have become His children in Christ Jesus. He comes to us from the very first by His Spirit. He has been with us, as our Guide, Teacher, and Director, during the whole of our journey through the wilderness of the world, from our childhood upward. It is through Him that we have been brought, whenever we have been brought, into the assembly of His people upon His holy hill of Zion. He has ever and anon sent His prophets to us. Yet when we do begin to turn our hearts towards Him, as soon as we earnestly desire to obey Him, and serve Him, He comes to us more plainly, more openly, more manifestly, and sends us a message to cheer us with the assurance that He is and will be with us. This blessed assurance is vouchsafed to all who sincerely desire and strive to obey God. They feel that they have a wisdom above their own to guide them, that they have a strength beyond their own to support them. May we all be brought to that state in which God will take pleasure and be glorified in us! (*Julius C. Hare, M.A.*) *God glorified in the building of Churches*.—What are the walls which we raise, unless God take pleasure in them? Just what a body is without a soul, hopeless, spiritless, unprofitable. Will God indeed be glorified of men? There is one thing more strange, it is that God should be so little glorified of men. It would be profane and impious to speak of those as glorifying God, who live with no "fear of God before their eyes." When is God glorified? 1. When any are converted to Him who, heretofore, either in accordance with bad principles, or in contradiction to better principles, have been alienated from Him, or transgressing against Him. 2. When men accept the way of salvation which He has prepared. When the Gospel offer is accepted, and men thank God for His unspeakable gift, God is glorified. 3. When they who have repented do "works meet for repentance," live "righteously, soberly, and godly," and wait for His heavenly kingdom. God is dishonoured when any who profess to take His yoke upon them walk unworthily "of the vocation wherewith they are called"; when any, who pretend to be His friends, are really enemies of the Cross of Christ. 4. When men are saved. This is the crown of all; and truly is it the glory of God. Whoever is made meet for the heavenly inheritance, will ascribe it to God alone. "He that glorieth will glory in the Lord"; will acknowledge that His Spirit influenced him, His wisdom guided him, His goodness converted him, His power defended him, and that with anything less than that all-sufficient hand, he must have sunk under the dangers with which he was assailed. (*T. B. Sumner, D.D.*) *The duty of building the spiritual house of God*.—God's material temple at Jerusalem was typical of the spiritual temple to be erected in the hearts of the people. The words of text are applicable—I. TO THE SPIRITUAL HOUSE TO BE RAISED IN EVERY INDIVIDUAL'S HEART. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "Ye are the temple of God; and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Yet what minister can look over his congregation and not see manifest proof that in the case of too many this temple is altogether in ruins. Even where there is good reason to believe that the rubbish of sinful habits has been cleared away, the foundation been rightly laid, and the building is making progress, will not most allow that the lets and hindrances perpetually occurring, render the exhortations of the prophets both salutary and expedient? Some may say, What can we do in this matter? Is not the building of this spiritual house the work of God? Yes, it is. But because God's material temple was to be raised, not by human power, but by God's Spirit, therefore the people were urged to persevere and fear no obstacle: and it is because God worketh in us both to will and do, therefore we are exhorted to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Man can do nothing in spiritual things without God, and God seldom acts without being pleased to use the co-operation of man. We are to be active in the carrying on of this spiritual building, that the Lord may take pleasure in it, and that He may be glorified thereby. II. TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN OUR OWN LAND. But there are many living in our land without Christian ordinances, and in a state of heathenism. Then there is a call to "build this house." III. TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. Our charity should indeed begin at home, but it should not stay there. Missionary exertion has a reflex effect. If ever there was a Church, or nation, to which God, by His providential dispensations, might be supposed in an especial manner to say, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel," that Church and that nation is our own. (*T. Grantham, B.D.*)

Ver. 10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.—*Nature penalties*.—With respect to the withholding of dew and of produce, we know that the prophets took from the law what served to teach the people, and accommodated it to their own purposes. The curses of the law are general (Deut. xi. 17). It is therefore the same thing as though the prophet had said that what God had threatened by Moses was really fulfilled. It ought not to have been to them a new thing, that whenever heaven denied its dew and rain, it was a sign of God's wrath. But as, at this day, during wars, or famine, or pestilence, men do not regard this general truth, it is necessary to make the application: and godly teachers ought wisely to attend to this point, that is, to remind men, according to what the state of things and circumstances may require, that God proves by facts what He has testified in His Word. God intimates that the heavens have no care to provide for us, and to distil dew so that the earth may bring forth fruit, and that the earth also, though called the mother of men, does not of itself open its bowels, but that the heavens as well as the earth bear a sure testimony to His paternal love, and also to the care which He exercises over us. God then shows, both by the heavens and the earth, that He provides for us; for when the heavens and the earth administer and supply us with the blessings of God, they thus declare His love towards us. So also, when the heaven is, as it were, iron, and when the earth with closed bowels refuses us food, we ought to know that they are commissioned to execute on us the vengeance of God. For they are not only the instruments of His bounty, but, when it is necessary, God employs them for the purpose of punishing us. (*John Calvin.*)

Ver. 12. Obeyed the voice of the Lord their God.—*The voice of the Lord*.—1. The Word of God in the mouth of His servants will not take effect till His authority be seen and acknowledged in it, and His servants looked on as coming in His name. They look on this message as “the voice of the Lord, and the words of Haggai.” 2. It will be a notable means to make the Word effectual, when beside the absolute authority of God, speaking in His Word, His interest in His people is considered and believed by them, and that He who speaks, reproofs, and directs, is their confederate God, whom they should be loth to offend or disobey, so much the rather as His relation stands, notwithstanding their faults; for thus is the Lord named here, “The Lord their God.” 3. When God is seen speaking in His Word as a party to the sinner, and when His love is believed for all that, even in His reproofing it will make the guilty and smitten sinner to stand in much awe, will both break and melt him, and will make him look on his former ways, wherein he hath lain secure, with much affrightment and horror; for the fruit of the former is, “And the people feared before the Lord.” 4. When the awe of God, speaking in His Word, in His majesty and goodness, hath had place in the heart, it will put men to give obedience in some measure to what is commanded; for the people, in this temper, “obeyed the voice of the Lord.” 5. It is a sweet and blessed like case, when men in power are patterns and encouragements unto others, in submitting to the Word of the Lord in the mouth of His servants, and when a people's affliction doth not hinder their respect to the commandments, as is here marked. 6. It may encourage the servants of God to go on with their work, when they consider what a great blessing God can, and sometimes doth give to their endeavours beyond all probability; for here, by one sermon, all the people are set about a long-neglected work, in the midst of many difficulties. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Duty followed*.—I. Duty followed is OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE VOICE. “The people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God,” &c. God has a voice to men. 1. His voice is revealed. He speaks to them in nature, history, the Bible; in these last days, specially, by His Son. The Divine voice is ascertainable. It can be distinguished from all other voices that fall on the ear of the human soul. 2. His voice is authoritative. Obedience to this voice is right, wise, urgent. II. Duty followed SECURES THE DIVINE FAVOUR. “Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord.” This promise means more than presence. He is with all; He fills the universe; He is with the evil and the good. It means to bless, to enlighten, guide, support, dignify, and make happy. God is always on the side of the dutiful. III. Duty followed IMPLIES DIVINE ASSISTANCE. What prompted these men who had so long neglected duty to set now in earnest about it? “The Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerub-

babel," &c. Men will never give themselves to duty unless the Lord stirs them up. This He is constantly doing. By—1. The admonitions of providence. 2. The dictates of conscience. 3. The preaching of the Gospel. 4. The strivings of the Spirit. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 13. Then spake Haggai, the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message unto the people.—*The message of Jehovah*.—This means in his official capacity as a messenger or ambassador of Jehovah, with the authority of Him in whose name he spake. There is something very beautiful in the sudden change of tone manifest in the message of God. The people had not yet begun to work, but as soon as they showed a disposition to do so, the stern and reproving tone of God is changed for one of the most exquisite tenderness. It is as if He hastened to forget their former unfaithfulness, and to assure them that, in spite of all, He was not only willing to be with them, but actually was with them as soon as their hearts turned towards Him. This presence of God is regarded rightly as being the highest blessing that could be bestowed on them, and the surest guarantee of success. They had the same jealous enemies yet round them that had arrested the work before, but God assures them that now He was with them, and nothing should be allowed again to hinder the work. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The Lord's messenger proclaiming union*.—I. **JEHOVAH'S MESSENGER.** Ministers are messengers. It is not every man that gets into a pulpit that is a messenger. God only can appoint messengers. II. **THE LORD'S MESSAGE.** Their message is one of mercy, of everlasting life. It is the Gospel. Salvation as the gift of God. Not of works. All boasting is excluded. III. **THE MESSAGE IS TO THE PEOPLE.** Jehovah's elect are a peculiar people, a purchased people, a special people, elect and redeemed. We cannot tell who the elect are. IV. **THE SPECIAL MESSAGE IN THE TEXT.** "I am with you." Jehovah is always with His people, and has been, and will be so everlastingly. (*J. J. West, M.A.*)

Ver. 14. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel.—*Stirring up the Spirit*.—It is not right to restrict the influence of the Spirit to one thing only, as some do, who imagine that the Israelites were confirmed in their good resolution, as they say, having before spontaneously obeyed the Word of God. These separate, without reason, what ought to be read in the prophet as connected together. For God roused the spirit of Zerubbabel and of the whole people; and hence it was that they received the message of the prophet and were attentive to his words. Foolishly, then, do they imagine that the Israelites were led by their own free will to obey the Word of God, and then that some aid of the Holy Spirit followed, to make them firmly persevere in their course. But the prophet declared, in the first place, that his message was respectfully received by the people; and now he explains how it was, even because God had touched the hearts of the whole people. We ought to notice the expression, when it is said that the *spirit* of Zerubbabel and of all the people was *stirred up*. For much sloth, we know, prevailed, especially among the multitude. But as to Zerubbabel and Joshua, they were already willing, but delayed until the coldness under which they laboured was reproved. But the prophet here simply means that they became thus obedient through the hidden impulse of God, and also that they were made firm in their purpose. God does not form new souls in us, when He draws us to His service, but changes what is wrong in us; for we should never be attentive to His Word, if He did not open our ears; and there would be no inclination to obey, were He not to turn our hearts; in a word, both will and effort would immediately fail in us, were He not to add His gift of perseverance. (*John Calvin.*) *The duty of rulers, ministers, and the community, to promote and increase the means of grace*.—However vast may be the indifference to the cause of Christ, and, therein, to the well-being of the human race, it is a source of encouragement to feel that there is not only pervading our land "a holy seed, which is the substance" of the Church, from whence its fruit-bearing branches spring; but that the number is increasing—slowly, perhaps, but certainly—of those who, professing to believe the Gospel, feel the obligation of applying its truths and its responsibilities to the guidance of their conscience, and the regulation of their practice. 1. Consider the necessity of enlarged means of grace for our countrymen. This necessity arises from the incalculable increase of our population. Of these people, the immense majority are congregated in masses in the metropolis, and in the trading and manufacturing districts. But what are

the moral circumstances under which they have arisen, and are hourly arising? Is it with an expansion of the national Church, commensurate with the wants of the nation? Unhappily not. Where then is the basis on which social duty is to stand? How can we indulge such wild fanaticism as to expect the fruits of honesty, sobriety, and affection, respect for property or office, authority, regard to decorum, peace, and virtue, among multitudes who are growing up utterly unacquainted with the only tie by which moral obligation binds the conscience; ignorant of the only fountain from whence relative and social affection flow, and unhabituated to that softening influence which familiarity with the means of grace, and the kind sympathy of pastoral intercourse engender and maintain? Moreover, every agency of mischief is set on foot to corrupt men more and more, to enlist their innate passions, and to array their imagined happiness and interest in opposition to all that is holy, venerable, and good. Few of us, perhaps, are acquainted with the extent of that agency of Satan—an evil press—working amongst us. The necessity being admitted, upon whom does the duty of meeting it devolve? Upon all, upon every one, according to the ability which God has given. 1. The voice of heaven appeals to the civil ruler. On him devolves the obligation of providing for the moral well-being of those who are entrusted to his charge, since by this alone can the ends of government, peace, order, and security be attained. 2. The obligation especially devolves upon the ministers of religion. The Church of Christ is to be a witness for God, bearing testimony to man of the things of eternity; to be a light of truth, dispersing the dark and troubled desolation of falsehood, superstition, and impiety. 3. The duty devolves upon “all the remnant of the people,” the whole community of professing Christians. He who speaks of the “Church” as embracing the clergy alone, and not the “whole congregation of faithful men,” speaks unscripturally, untruly, and unwisely. If there is any class of persons upon whom this duty devolves with more responsibility than others, it is upon the land-owners, merchants, and manufacturers, who derive their wealth and their enjoyment by congregating multitudes to dwell upon their lands, or to labour for them. (*John Garbett, M.A.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1, 2. Came the Word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai.—*Encouraging the people*:—The recovery of the Jews from the disasters attending the Babylonian Captivity was necessarily slow and painful. The handful of patriots who returned with Zerubbabel were poor, weak, and despised. They found Jerusalem and the temple heaps of ruins, covered with weeds and rubbish. The first two years witnessed the rebuilding of the altar, the re-establishment of the burnt sacrifices, and the laying of the foundation of the second temple amid the liveliest conflict of emotions. Just at this point a second oracle, full of Divine encouragement, came to Haggai. Weak hands were strengthened, timid hearts were cheered, religious faith and patriotic zeal were kindled into a glow of enthusiasm that never failed until the work was done. We note four considerations by which the prophet wrought this happy change in the temper of his people. I. **JEHOVAH'S ABIDING PRESENCE.** Regarded from a merely human point of view there were many and cogent reasons either for an abandonment of the work, or for its postponement until a more auspicious time. The hostility of the neighbouring peoples showed itself in persistent plots to harass the returned exiles, in fomenting discords among them, and in discrediting them at the Persian court. In comparison with the number, wealth and influence of their adversaries, were not the Jews themselves weak and contemptible? Only a few years had passed since their return to a ruined city and a desolate land. In their poverty and distress would it not be audacious folly to undertake the rebuilding of a structure that had taxed the resources of the kingdom in its meridian glory and power? Had not this generation borne burdens enough without being crushed under another? Why not relinquish this enormous load to a better equipped posterity? Moreover, since they returned from Babylon, had not the Lord withheld the legitimate increase of the fields and vineyards? In these straitened circumstances did not the care of their families demand all their time and substance? It might be a pardonable,

but was it not a rash enthusiasm in the prophet that had incited them to waste a month of labour on this hopeless task? Religious leaders are always unreasonable! These discouraged Jews could have invented a hundred excuses for abandoning the work. Self-justification is easy when one is eager to recede from an unwelcome task or duty. All human objections, however, are as chaff before an explicit Divine command. The voice of prophecy, re-awakened after long silence, had spoken the authoritative word. However sore the discipline to which their sins had subjected them, they were His people still, a "holy seed," a "very small remnant" indeed, but one over whose preservation He had watched with jealous care. With loving reiteration Jehovah exhorts them to forget their own weakness in joyful recognition of His omnipotence; to assure themselves that "the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, is not as a sojourner in the land, nor as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night." As He covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt, so "His Spirit abideth among them." "Be strong and work, saith the Lord of hosts; for I am with you, and fear ye not." There is no better ground for victorious confidence than that. His presence is infinitely more desirable than unlimited worldly wealth and power. We, likewise, face the depressing problems of our own day, grappling with them as we can, only to be overwhelmed by the consciousness of our inability. Through repeated failures we learn that without Divine help we can do nothing. We are overmatched in the battle. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." II. JEHOVAH'S INEXHAUSTIBLE RESOURCES. What if Jehovah's people are poor, insignificant, despised? He who is in the midst of them is the rightful owner of the world's treasures. The silver and the gold are His. He will "shake all the nations, and the costliest things of all the nations shall come" into His sanctuary. Now, see, when the people really trusted the Lord and went to work (Ezra vi. 3-9), how wonderfully the prophet's word was fulfilled; how the expense of rearing the massive walls, and the cost of the wood-work were defrayed from the treasury of the Persian Empire; how the priceless vessels of silver and gold, that Nebuchadnezzar had carried to Babylon for his own glory, as he thought, but really for safe keeping during the exile, were all restored again; how the adversaries of the Jews, who had plotted against them, were compelled by the royal decree to furnish them day by day with young bullocks, rams and lambs for sacrifices, and with wheat, salt, wine, and oil as the priests had need. Not only this, but from the very day (Hag. ii. 19, 20) when the rebuilding of the temple began, Jehovah would bless their land with affluence, instead of smiting it with blasting, with mildew, and with hail. God's work never stops for lack of means when men are willing to obey Him, and to launch out confidently on His promises. The silver and the gold are forthcoming, not by miracle, but through natural channels, as surprising sometimes as actual miracles. Is the time ripe for carrying the Gospel into the heathen world? See how the millions are poured every year into the Lord's treasury. If men will not give spontaneously, as did Darius, to the furtherance of God's purposes, He compels them to bring the best of their substance, as the Samaritans were forced to do. God scatters His resources neither extravagantly nor in conformity to the whims of men. The law of parsimony withholds Him from giving so freely as to make unnecessary the discipline of anxiety and struggle. Even when social and moral reformations are greatly needed He does not purchase transient success by lavish expenditures. Moral results are not permanently secured by material agencies. God could have supplied the early Church with means enough to have freed every slave in the Roman Empire. Instead, He projects into humanity two lofty ideals, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, confident that these ideals will ultimately and for ever accomplish what neither gold nor force can do. Nor does He waste His resources in perpetuating institutions that have survived their usefulness. Local churches, as well as individual saints, are but temporary factors. "Holy relics" He suffers with absolute indifference to moulder into common dust. III. JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS PURPOSES. Haggai prophesied in a transition period. The older men who heard him had witnessed the wreck of the Jewish monarchy. The return of the captives to Jerusalem was the glimmering dawn after a dark and stormy night. The glory of the past was a memory; that of the future a dream. Transition periods are always charged with doubts and fears, with peril and pain. The sorest trials are alleviated by an assurance that they lead to higher and richer experiences.

And yet men would often forego these if they could thereby escape the trial. They cling to long-cherished errors because they dread the effort and pain of adjusting themselves to new truths. Hoary abuses linger in the community, in the State, in the Church, because men shrink from the sharp but transient evils attending a crisis. Modern science, philosophy, criticism,—the forces that are continually precipitating these crises—are not enemies but friends. God's purposes do not move backward. A new and better world always emerges from the chaos of the old. So long as God's hand directs the development every transition will be, not toward darkness and anarchy, but toward truth and order. Haggai encouraged his people with the assurance that their sufferings were not meaningless. Painful as their national discipline had been, it was but an unavoidable step in the evolution of a sublime purpose. Not only did he assure them that Jehovah, their covenant-keeping God, was still in the midst of His people; not only were His resources inexhaustible, and ready to be poured out in their behalf; but He had also a purpose of grace concerning them and the whole world, immeasurably exceeding the brightest memories of the past. Despicable as this new house might appear to those who had seen the splendours of Solomon's temple, the new would nevertheless outshine the old. "Greater shall be the latter glory of this house than the former, saith the Lord of hosts." Observe that it is the "latter glory" (R.V.) and not the "latter house" (A.V.); for whatever be its material condition, Jehovah knows of but one abiding dwelling on His holy hill of Zion. That messianic day, moreover, will be characterised by universal peace. For "in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Peace, first of all, between man and God, that which every true heart yearns for supremely, but which is not found in the world. Peace also between man and man. International rivalries, the ambition of conquerors, royal greed of power will no longer hurl nation against nation in bloody strife. Peace, finally, between man and the wild beasts of the field (Isa. xi. 6-9). The distrust between them will cease. As nature has shared in man's curse, so it will share in the benefits of man's redemption. IV. JEHOVAH'S "LITTLE WHILE." Some of the despondent ones might have retorted, "Such glowing pictures were painted by the older prophets, but they are as far from realisation as ever." "No," says Haggai; "it is only one period more, a very brief one, and then Jehovah will work signs and wonders among the nations to arouse them from indifference, to turn them unto Himself, and thus prepare for the golden age." In a measure His utterance was fulfilled at once, but in its larger signification it still awaits complete fulfilment. The centuries after the Exile were really a brief preface to the messianic period which began with the coming of Christ into His temple, and which still continues. Men are impatient at the moderate pace of events in the kingdom of God. They wonder why He does not force men into swift obedience by stupendous displays of power. Because love and obedience are not wrought by force. Love conquers the kingdom of hatred only inch by inch. Viewing these things by and by from the side of eternity, men will see that earth's longest periods are only Jehovah's "little whiles." The world is ripening faster than we think. Who knows but that the full glory of the messianic time may be close at hand? Whether near or far, every man's supreme duty to God and to his fellow-man is so to live, by the Holy Spirit's help, as to make the world better, and thus to hasten the advent of that golden age. (*P. A. Nordell, D.D.*) *God's message to His people by Haggai.*—1. The Divine message often comes from one man to many. It now came by Haggai. 2. All temples but the temple of nature are to be built by man himself. God could have studded the world with temples; but He has honoured human nature by leaving it to men. 3. Any postponement of duty is opposed to the will of God. All duty requires the utmost promptitude. The Jews were now dallying with duty. The subject of these verses is—God requires human labour purely for religious objects. True labour in every form should be religious. I. THIS LABOUR SHOULD BE STIMULATED BY THE VIEW OF RELIGIOUS DECADENCE. The temple, once the glory of the country, was now in ruins, &c. Into what a low state has genuine religion sunk in our country! It is cold, formal, worldly, conventional. II. That this labour should be PERFORMED BY THE MOST VIGOROUS EXERTION. "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, be strong, O Joshua, be strong, all ye people of the land." Why? 1. Because it is right, and therefore you may throw your conscience into it. 2. Because it is *worthy* of all your faculties. Call out and honour all the faculties of your nature. 3. Because it is *urgent*. The highest interests of your countrymen and your race depend upon it. III. This

labour SHOULD ENLIST THE CO-OPERATION OF ALL. It concerns all—young and old, rich and poor. IV. THIS LABOUR HAS A GUARANTEE OF DIVINE ASSISTANCE. "For I am with you, says the Lord of hosts." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 3. Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?—*The contrast between the two houses*:—A despondency, such as the Israelites must needs have felt, is very apt to come over those who have begun to engage in a good work, after the first flash of their zeal has faded away. When we are labouring for ourselves, indeed, our carnal heart urges us forward; but when we are doing anything for the good of our brethren, or in the service of God, our carnal heart lies like a heavy drag upon the will. This is especially the case at first. It is long before we grow humble enough to labour diligently, although the fruits of our labour are not to be seen even by our own eyes. For example, when our hearts have been moved to undertake any work for the strengthening or spreading of Christ's Church on earth, and when we have been thus led to look round and consider what she is, must not our hearts faint within us as we think how she is nothing in comparison with her first glory, in the time of the Holy Apostles? How do we see the Church of Christ now? Is she not almost as nothing in comparison of her primitive glory? The same question may be asked with regard to man in his natural state. At first made in the image of God, and unsullied by sin, how do we see him now? When we compare these two pictures together in thought, fallen man, in his best and most flourishing estate, may seem to us as nothing by the side of his first glory. Let us cast our eyes on our own selves. They who watch the growth of the young must often have seen a time in their history which was like the teeming and blossoming of spring. And they will also have seen how the blossoms have fallen off, without leaving any fruit, even if they have not been wholly blighted. The prophet says, "And now be strong." How were they to find strength? Not in the thought which had just been so forcibly put before them, that their work was as nothing in comparison with the first temple. Such a thought will never strengthen a man, will never make him work. Nor will it strengthen us, and make us work, to call to mind how far the Church of Christ has fallen back from the zeal and holiness of the primitive ages, or how far human nature has fallen from what it was in the Garden of Eden. Where are we to look for strength? Not to ourselves. Not to friends. The prophet gives this assurance from God, "For I am with you." This same assurance is granted to all who earnestly desire to build up the house of the Lord, either in the world around them or in their own hearts. If they will work, they shall be strong; for the Lord of hosts is with them. We have God's covenanted word that He will be with us. God does not give His Spirit like a gleam of sunshine bursting for a moment through the clouds. His Spirit remaineth with those to whom it is given. He has remained with the Church from the day when the Father and the Son sent Him down from heaven; and He will remain with it unto the end of the world. The first lesson we are to draw from this assurance is, that we are to be strong and work. Many foolishly think that if the Spirit is with them, irresistible impulse will stir them to work without and against their will. It is through the power of the Spirit they who work continually in His strength do truly become strong. The second lesson is drawn from the words, "Fear ye not." They who work and are strong in the strength of God's Spirit abiding with them may boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper: I will not fear what man can do unto me." They may even say, "I will not fear myself, what I can do to myself, having this Helper against myself." Even the fear of God, if we felt that His Spirit remains with us, would by degrees lose all that is painful and oppressive and repelling in fear, and would be transfigured, by a constant living communion with Him, into reverent, dutiful love. (*Julius C. Hare, M.A.*) *Glory of the new temple*:—Just as in the second year of the return from Babylon, when the foundation for the temple, which was about to be rebuilt, was laid in the reign of Cyrus, many old men, who had seen the temple of Solomon, burst out into loud weeping when they saw the new foundation; a similar feeling of mourning and despair appears to have taken possession of the people and their rulers immediately after the work had been resumed under Darius, and doubts arose whether the new building was really well-pleasing to the Lord, and ought to be carried on. The occasion for this despondency is not to be sought in the fact that objections were made to the continuance of the building, and that the opinion prevailed in consequence

that the works ought to be stopped till the arrival of the king's authority. This view not only has no support whatever in our prophecy, but is also at variance with the account in the Book of Ezra, according to which the governor and his companions, who had made inquiries concerning the command to build, did not stop the building while they sent word of the affair to the king (Ezra v. 5). Moreover, the conjecture that the people had been seized with a feeling of sadness, when the work had so far advanced that they were able to institute a comparison between the new temple and the earlier one, does not suffice to explain the rapid alteration which took place in the feelings of the people. The building could not have been so far advanced in three weeks and a half as that the contrast between the new temple and the former one could be clearly seen, if it had not been noticed from the very first; a fact, however, to which Ezra iii. 12 distinctly refers. But although it had been seen from the very beginning that the new building would not come up to the glory of the former temple, the people could not from the very outset give up the hope of erecting a building which, if not quite equal to the former one in glory, would at all events come somewhat near to it. Under these circumstances their confidence in the work might begin to vanish as soon as the first enthusiasm flagged, and a time arrived which was more favourable for the quiet contemplation of the general condition of affairs. This explanation is suggested by the time at which the second word of God was delivered to the congregation through the prophet. It was the feast of tabernacles, the great festival of rejoicing. The return of this festal celebration, especially after a harvest which had turned out very miserably and showed no sign of the blessing of God, could not fail to call up vividly before the mind the difference between the former times, when Israel was able to assemble in the courts of the Lord's house, and so to rejoice in the blessings of His grace in the midst of abundant sacrificial meals, and the present time, when the altar of burnt sacrifice might indeed be restored again and the building of the temple resumed, but in which there was no prospect of erecting a building that would in any degree answer to the glory of the former temple; and when the prophecies of an Isaiah or an Ezekiel were remembered, according to which the new temple was to surpass the former one in glory, it would be almost sure to produce gloomy thoughts, and supply food for doubt whether the time had really come for rebuilding the temple, when after all it would be only a miserable hut. In this gloomy state of mind consolation was very necessary, if the hardly awakened zeal for the building of the house of God was not to cool down and vanish entirely away. To bring this consolation to those who were in despair was the object of the second word of God, which Haggai was to publish to the congregation. (*C. F. Keil, D.D.*) *The sorrow of the old men*.—How was it that the people became negligent after they had begun their work? Even because it grieved the old men to see the glory of the second so far inferior to the first temple. For though the people animated themselves by the sound of trumpets, yet the old among them drowned the sound by their lamentations. As this temple was in no way equal to the ancient one, they thought that God was not as yet reconciled to them. Had they said, that so great an expense was not necessary, that God did not require much money to be laid out, their impiety should have been openly manifested; but when they especially wished that the splendour of the temple would be such as might surely prove that the restoration of the Church was come, such as had been promised by all the prophets, we doubtless perceive their pious feeling. We are thus reminded that we ought always to beware of the intrigues of Satan, when they appear under the cover of truth. When our minds are disposed to piety, Satan is ever to be feared, lest he should stealthily suggest to us what may turn us aside from our duty; for we see that some leave the Church because they require in it the highest perfection. They are indignant at vices which they deem intolerable when they cannot be corrected; and thus, under the pretext of zeal, they separate themselves, and seek to form for themselves a new world, in which there is to be a perfect Church; and they lay hold on those passages in which the Holy Spirit recommends purity to the Church, as when Paul says, that it was purchased by Christ, that it might be without spot or wrinkle. In all this there is some appearance of piety. How so? Because they would have God to be revered so that they would have the whole world to be filled with the fear of His majesty; or they would have much wealth to be gathered, so that sumptuous offerings might be made. But Satan cunningly insinuates himself; and hence we ought to fear his intrigues, lest, under plausible

pretences, he should dazzle our eyes. The best way of caution is to regard what God commands, and so to rely on His promises as to proceed steadily in our course, though the accomplishment of the promises does not immediately correspond with our desires; for God designedly keeps us in suspense in order to try our faith. Though then He may not as yet fulfil what He has promised, let it yet be our course to attempt nothing rashly, while we are obeying His command. It will then be our chief wisdom, by which we may escape all the crafts of Satan, simply to obey God's word, and to exercise our hope so as patiently to wait the seasonable times when He will fulfil what He now promises. (*John Calvin.*) *Thoughts of the past* :—The glorious past is never disdained. There ought not to be any past in the sense of exhaustion or annihilation. The past should be the most vivid and graphic influence in the present. Because we have seen greatness we shall see glory, should be the tone of every man who undertakes to teach the mysteries of the Divine Kingdom, and lead the enterprises of the elect and consecrated Church. The house, indeed, had gone down; in that sense it was nothing in comparison with the house in its first glory. There is a past that humbles the present, that makes the present insignificant and worthless; but the Lord never regards that past as the end of His own opportunity; it is rather the occasion of the beginning of new revelations of His omnipotence. The Lord never stops His kingdom in its darkest hour and says, this is all. The Lord never interrupts a prayer at the point of confession; He listens until the prayer glows with thankfulness, until it becomes violent in sacred ambition, until it would seize the treasures of the kingdom, and appropriate them all with a grateful heart. It is thus that God leads us and educates us. He takes us at our best point, not at our worst. The Lord promised that the house should assume a glory to which the first glory was as nothing. Here is a principle in the Divine economy; it is a principle of development, of progress, of gradual and assured consummation. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. *Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord;—for I am with you.—The Church of the future* :—These prophecies of Haggai are all concerned with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The first of them is a prophecy of rebuke, in which God censures the people for devoting all their care and interest to the rebuilding of their own houses, and neglecting the temple, the site of which lay desolate and bare. But the second prophecy, "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts," is of a different character. It is spoken for the encouragement of the people who had begun to be despondent as they compared the old temple, or their memories of the old temple, with the promise of the new that was at present before their eyes. No doubt it is a kind of misfortune to be born in a little age, to be born when there are none but little men, and when no great things seem to be in process of achievement either for God or for the world. Sometimes people speak as if the age in which we ourselves live were open to that kind of reproach. We have no men now in the service of the State like Chatham or like Peel. There are no names in our literature just now like the names of Scott and Thackeray, or Wordsworth and Tennyson. We have no preachers in our pulpits now like Chalmers. Even science itself seems to have fallen in many departments on little times, and there are not the discoveries made that thrill the imagination and give man's mind a new sense of its own possibilities. Now, it is against that kind of spirit that this prophecy is directed. It is not only a misfortune to be born in a time like that, but there is such a thing as temptation to give way to a spirit like that, and think the age in which we live is destitute of opportunities when it is not, and that there is nothing for us to do because we are not disposed to set our minds to the work that awaits us. That kind of mood assumes nothing, and it forgets a great deal. It forgets that man has always great duties, and that man is always accompanied in his life through this world by a great Presence, and that if he has faith in his duties and faith in the presence of God which goes along with him, his life may be as great as human life has ever been. That kind of despondency and disparagement of our own time and of the work that God has given us to do is a thing that tends to fulfil its own lugubrious prophecies. Where there is no faith even Christ cannot do any mighty work, and we ought to remember these two things,—that God's work is always waiting to be done, that God always needs us, and surely also that if it is little

we can do, it is all the more urgent that we should do that little and leave nothing of it undone. Now look at the encouragement that God in this prophecy gives to Israel and to us when we think of the work to which He calls us. First of all, there is the great encouragement contained in the fact that God has made a covenant with His people. "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt." That word carried back the minds of the Israelites to the crossing of the Red Sea and to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. The covenant which God makes with men is a kind of relation into which God enters with men by which His faithfulness and love are pledged to them. Now, when we in the Christian time think of the work to which God calls us, think of our own powers, think of our duties, and especially when we are tempted to despondency, the thing we have to remember, the thing to which we have to go back, is the Cross of Christ. The blood of Christ is the blood of an everlasting covenant; the death of Christ is the pledge that God has given us of a love from which He can never retreat; and the Cross has in our religion just the same kind of historical significance that the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt had for these Jews. It is something in which God has committed Himself to us in a way from which He can never withdraw. And surely, when we think of it, we can understand how much it must mean, and how securely we can lean upon it. Does anybody think, can anybody think, that God made that awful demonstration of His love for nothing, or that He made it for some little cause, or that He can lightly, or at all, back out of it? And let appearances in the Christian Church be never so mean, let the things that we see with our eyes at any particular time be as discouraging as we please; suppose the Church is a small handful in an unfriendly world; suppose the Church had to worship in no church instead of in a fine building; suppose it had to take ungifted men for leaders, men like Haggai instead of men like Isaiah; that does not alter the fact that the Church is built upon the Cross of Jesus Christ, that it has the people that God has made His own people by the blood of the everlasting covenant, that it has the greatest future before it of any society in the world, that it has God with it and infinite possibilities of service put within its reach. But, then, God gives special promises. Besides recalling to Israel the memory of His covenant, besides recalling to us the Cross of Christ and the infinite faithful promise and hope that there is in that, He gives special promises, and tells them that the great days to which they look back will be renewed, and far more than renewed. In that old time when God called His people out of Egypt there were physical convolutions—Mount Sinai shook before the Lord—but now God says the time is coming that I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and more than that, the thrill will pass out of the natural into the moral world, I will shake the nations, and the nations will come trembling and bring all their wealth to lay it at the service of God and His house. "The Desire of all nations shall come." The word translated "desire" is a collective word, and it means "the desirable things" of all the nations shall come. God will stir the nations and they will come to His house, and they will bring along with them everything on which they set store, and though the house looks a bare, poor, unfurnished, desolate house at present, it will be adorned with the wealth of all peoples. Everything on which human hearts set store will be lavished upon the house of God. And what does it mean now when God says to us, "The desire of all nations shall come"? It means that everything on which human beings set value will be bestowed, and ought to be bestowed, on the enrichment and service of the Church. If we think what the history of the Church has been it will help us to see the meaning of that promise. Bishop Westcott has pointed out that there have been three great epochs in the history of the Christian Church. First, there was the time when the great creeds of the Church were constructed, the time when the Church devoted itself to the intellectual understanding and interpretation of the Christian religion, when it built up the Christian doctrine of God, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the Christian doctrine of the Person of Christ, such as we find them in the great creeds accepted by all Christians. What did that mean? That meant the consecration of the Greek genius to the enrichment and service of the Church. Then we come to a different period. The great society of the ancient world crumbled into pieces, and as that old social order was dissolved the Christian society consolidated itself in its place, and a Catholic Church arose, covering all the civilised world of the time—a Catholic Church—a Church with one uniform government, a Church with one

visible head, a Church that gathered into itself all that had been characteristic of the old Roman world. And what did that mean? That meant the consecration of the Roman genius to the Christian Church. And then, since the Reformation we have had another epoch in the history of the Church. The Orthodox and the Catholic have been succeeded by the Evangelic Church, and the Evangelic Church has found its place and career among the free, expansive, aggressive peoples of Northern Europe and America. And what is it these nations value most? What they value most is individual liberty. And in that way, age after age, as the Gospel has invaded and conquered one branch of the human race after another, the dearest spiritual possession of that race—its intellect, or its sense for government, or its apprehension of liberty and responsibility—has been baptized into Christ, has been taken into the Church and made part of its strength and of its beauty. And that process has not finished the prophecy, "The desire of all nations shall come." The things that all the peoples prize will yet contribute to the strength and beauty of God's sanctuary. Now, when we see that we see not only the promise of God—"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God"—we see not only the promise of God, but surely we see also a suggestion of our own duty. Whose fault is it that the Church is a poor affair? Whose fault is it that the Church is imperfect and bare and unadorned and unattractive? It is in great part our fault, the fault of those who are in the Church and come about it. God expects our best for it; not the things we do not care for. He expects our youth. God does not want us to give Him the dregs of a misspent life after we have bestowed the freshness of our youth in following our own passions and desires. God expects our best men, the most gifted in head and heart, in mind and affection, to offer themselves for His work in the world. There are two things God says He will do, in particular in connection with the Church, that we must remember. He says, "I will fill this house with glory." It looked a bare and unpromising place, but God assures His people it will have a splendour answering to its purpose. It will be a glorious house when the nations bring their gifts into it. And our Church will be a glorious place also when we bring into it everything that is dear to us, and when we consecrate all that to our God. The Church is full of glory when it is full of people who belong to God in the bonds of the new covenant, and who keep back nothing from Him; when it is full of people who are matured in their Christian experience, and who are clear in their Christian convictions and ardent in all their Christian duties. When God fills the Church with that kind of life, with the presence and the tokens of His Spirit in that shape, then it is full of that which we can understand as glory, full of all the splendour that God can set on our weak human nature. Again, He says, "In this place will I give peace." Now, peace may not seem a very great thing to mention after the things that we have been speaking about already. It may seem a little gift after glory, but God knows best, and I fancy there are few things that do more to bring people into the house of God, even at the present time, than just the hope of peace. These poor Jews were harassed with their enemies, and it would be a comforting thought to them when they were in the house of God that they were in sanctuary and in a safe place. Peace is a gift of God. It can only be obtained when it is obtained from God. It can only be obtained when we come face to face with God. (*J. Denney, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. Work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts.—*An incentive to work:*—When Darius Hystaspes began to reign, Haggai and Zechariah urged that the work of rebuilding the temple should be renewed. The ever-recurring plan which they urged on the people was that they should work because the Lord of hosts was with them. Since then times have altered. Religion has become a more personal matter. Its sphere has been shifted from temples made with hands to what Milton calls "the upright heart and pure." Religion has been shifted from the outward to the inward realm. "The kingdom of God is within you." That is the true shrine, from which influence may reach out to wider realms. And since the sphere has changed, the work of rearing the temple has also changed. Then the work was hard, but it only tired the hand. Now the heart, rather than the hand, needs to be engaged. The tax is on the spirit rather than on the limbs. To labour in the invisible is far more trying than in the visible realm. The highest things cannot be weighed in scales and set down in columns. What is true of the work within is also true of the spiritual work we attempt in the world. It is invisible—wrought in the hidden chambers of the heart. It

is true that the fruit sometimes becomes visible in the life. But the spiritual temple we are seeking to rear may be growing in strength and beauty, and we see it not, or only catch momentary glimpses of the growing building. Now and then we are permitted to see that our work is not in vain in the Lord. The higher the realm, the less visible or tangible are the results. Manual work is more visible than intellectual. Intellectual work is more visible than spiritual. But the thinker accomplishes more than the artisan; and the spiritual more than the intellectual teacher. This is the true incentive to work—"the Lord is on our side." The conviction that God is with us will make us work. (*W. Garrett Horder.*)

Encouraging the people:—The people had grown indifferent and neglectful of God, as is the case with all who are not earnestly engaged in religious activities, giving their attention to fitting up and adorning their own dwellings, while the house of the Lord was left unbuilt. Haggai was sent to reprove them for their neglect, to call their attention to the blighting curse upon them because of this neglect, and encourage them to resume the work on the temple of God. The new temple was to be of the same dimensions as the old. But it was not to be overlaid with gold, or to have such imposing accessories for worship. It seems that the ark had been lost, and the tables, and the mercy-seat. There was no visible glory, and no Urim and Thummim. Hence the lamentations of the ancient men, who could make contrasts. We have narrated here sadness and rejoicing over the same thing. But such is life all round the world. Age made unfavourable comparisons, while youth, whatever the comparisons, delighted in the new and promiseful. The aged naturally, and almost inevitably, live in things behind them; the young in things around them, and before them. The danger is, that echoes of the past will mar the music of the present, and that the music of the present will mar the echoes of the past. Haggai's encouraging reference to God as with their fathers, and pledge of the same God as with them, was to the people a revelation and inspiration. It, however, seemed to this people that the times had changed. The prophet, therefore, is sent to encourage them with assurances that God is with them in their work, as truly as He was with their fathers. They may miss something of the grandeur and glory of the former temple; but what of this if God is still their God? The Divine presence would be in the new temple more manifestly than in the old. Therefore they should resume their work in confidence and rest in peace. We fall into the same false ways of judging. When present possessions and conditions seem to compare unfavourably with past possessions and conditions, we grieve and murmur and lose heart. Human lives do not always run in the same channels. Change after change is the lot of universal man. Where is rest? Where is inspiration? In the assurance that God is with us as He was with our fathers, and as He was with us in former times. At that very moment when the Jews were repining God had in mind a temple whose glory should far outshine the old, and He had all power to bring in this glory. He was to accomplish convulsions in the earth, and bring in the "Desire of all nations." Five stages in human history were then passed, from Adam to Noah; thence to Abraham; thence to Moses; thence to Solomon's temple, and thence to the Captivity. Only one stage remained—thence to the kingdom of the Messiah. These halting, hesitating Jews saw not that kingdom, and hence they were heavy-hearted. We are often blind, hence heavy-hearted. What we need to remember is that we have a present personal God, whatever the age of the world, or whatever the wants of our lives. Memories of blessing should make us glad instead of sad, even though present conditions may seem less favourable than former ones. Everything in heaven and earth is under the control of God for the perfection of human character, and for the world-wide end of righteousness and peace. Christian workers ought never to be discouraged. Whatever the present seeming, this world is not going from bad to worse, but from better to better; and best of all, the best things await every true child of God. We set you in the midst of memories, and let you enlarge upon them. 1. Think of self. 2. Think of associated lives and labours. God never failed those loved ones who are now at rest and out of sight. Beacon fires have blazed on all the mountain-tops. They shall burn on until far lands have been lighted up, and the new temple of peace and truth shall have completion; when He who was the glory of Israel's temple shall come again for crowning. (*Sermons by Monday Club.*)

Encouraging the people:—A ruined church is oftentimes a sad comment on religion; an unfinished church is a sadder one. What had arrested the work that began so auspiciously? 1. The enthusiasm of the people was but a transient

fervour. Steadfastness is a cardinal virtue. The reward is to him that overcometh. 2. Then they began to question and calculate. Might it not be that the project was premature? The altar was restored, why could not the temple wait? Some said, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." 3. Meanwhile there was the natural concern as to temporal affairs. One by one the workmen left the temple walls, and turned their energy to affairs of more personal moment. Perhaps if they had continued to devote themselves to God's sanctuary, He might have devised some plan for providing for their wants. 4. There were other things that conspired to arrest the work. The adjacent tribes had set themselves against it. . . . Not until Darius came to the throne did the Jews pluck up courage to resume the work. Haggai's prophecies are brief and fragmentary, consisting of three addresses all delivered within a period of three months. In the first he admonished them that self-seeking at the expense of the Lord's work is a losing venture. Their own prosperity had suffered. It may seem that Haggai appealed to a low motive, but the Jews were always sensitive at this point. They had ever an eye to the main chance, and they have to this day. The Lord knew how to move their sluggish natures. When Darius issued an order endorsing the original permission to build, Haggai delivered his second address. The resources seemed inadequate to a great enterprise, and it seemed hardly worth while to build what must be an inferior house. Haggai is to assure them that God was with them, and the glory of the latter house should surpass that of the earlier one. How could that be? (1) God would here manifest Himself in the outpouring of His power. Sublime messages of truth, announcements of Divine faithfulness in the fulfilment of old-time shadows, flaming prophecies of ultimate glory were to be heard amid these rising walls. (2) But, better still, Messiah Himself was to worship at the altar, and walk among these porches. If the light of the golden candlesticks was quenched, what mattered it? The Light of the World was here to shine forth. (3) If God were so minded He might adorn the second temple with wealth incomputable. "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine." (4) Still further, the latter house was to be beautified with salvation. "For in this place will I give peace." With such considerations as these did the prophet encourage the builders. Then came Haggai's third message. He began by admonishing them that sin disqualifies for holy service. Then he touches upon their sordidness and want of faith. Let them turn and trust God. Still it holds true that godliness, obedience, simple trust, is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come (1 Tim. iv. 8). On the same day when this address was made to the people a special word of encouragement was sent through the prophet to Zerubbabel. Haggai's work was soon ended. His work was to encourage the builders, and he did it. What more could be asked of any man? God has a commission for every one. To heed and endeavour is to make an assured success of life. This is the very best that can be written of any mortal man, that he had something to do, and did it for God. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*)

Encouraging the people :—For sixteen years, just because of a little opposition, the Jews had left God's house to lie waste. In the first chapter of this prophecy Haggai rebukes them for this neglect in vigorous language. He accuses them of putting off their duty by the plea, "The time is not come, the time for the Lord's house to be built"; and points with sarcasm to the coiled houses which they had been building for themselves in Jerusalem and its suburbs. Stirred by his words, Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all the remnant of the people set to work, while the prophet encouraged them by the message, "I am with you, saith the Lord." After a month had been thus occupied, and when the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles had arrived, Haggai was sent to his countrymen with another message. It is contained in the first nine verses of the second chapter of his prophecy. There is no rebuke in it, nothing but mercy and encouragement; for rebuke had accomplished its purpose, the people had willingly offered themselves for the work, and it was courage and hope that they needed in order that they might conduct it to a successful issue. God deals with us according to our attitude toward Him, and according to our need. If we climb the steep path of obedience He sends us smiles, helps, benefactions, so that the steepness is forgotten, and the hearts that resolved in fear and weakness are made to sing with joy. There were three promises given by the prophet in God's name for the encouragement of the people. I. THE PROMISE OF GOD'S ABIDING PRESENCE. "Be strong, for I am with you." Their history had taught them by many illustrious

interpositions and widespread calamities that in God was their hope. When they continued in His ordinances with willing hearts He crowned them with mercies. Blessings of the field and blessings of the flock were theirs, because He ordered all things for them, and protected them from their enemies round about. But when they forsook the Lord, and turned aside to idolatry, He visited them with His judgments. The mildew and cankerworm, hail and earthquake, devastated their land, while their foes rejoiced on every side. The exile from which they had just returned had fixed deep in their souls the truth that if God withheld His favour they were helpless and exposed to oppression and disaster. So that this promise, "I am with you," was better fitted than any other to make them strong and brave. And the prophet supports the promise by an appeal to God's past faithfulness, and to His covenant which could not be broken. "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt." II. THE PROMISE OF MIRACULOUS INTERPOSITION. "I will shake the heavens." "I will shake all nations." The Jews had already encountered opposition, and they were likely to meet with more. But God, who possessed all resources, who had displayed His energies at Sinai, would again rise and put forth His power on their behalf. God would not leave them to the operation of ordinary forces and the vicissitudes of hurrying events. He would Himself be the chief Actor, as in the days of old, when He brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm. III. THE PROMISE THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING APPEARANCES TO THE CONTRARY, THE LATTER GLORY OF THE TEMPLE SHOULD BE GREATER THAN THE FORMER. The old men had wept when the foundations of the temple were laid, because of its inferiority to the temple of their memory. They were deceived partly by the illusion of fancy which surrounds what is past with a halo, which it never had at the time, and partly by that disposition, common enough to man, which sees nothing in that which is passing, and which is before their eyes. But God's message to them and to us is one of hope. The golden age, which pagan and heathen nations put in the far-off past, God puts into the future. "God goes forward and not back, and is never so baffled as to be compelled to suspend progress. Let us not despise our own work nor our own generation. It also has a place in the history of God's work in the world." (*T. Vincent Tymps.*) *Inspiring anticipations*.—1. Men are always prone to be deluded by externals, and to suppose that the absence of outward splendour is indicative of the absence of God's blessing, forgetting that God often chooses the weak things of the earth to confound the mighty, that no flesh may glory in His presence (ver. 3). 2. The presence of God with His people is sufficient ground for encouragement to work in His service, whatever be the external difficulties, and sufficient comfort in distress how great soever be the calamity (ver. 4). 3. The covenant of God, and the Spirit of God, are the great grounds of hope to His people, in engaging in His service, and the promises made to the fathers may be pleaded by the children (ver. 5). 4. The kingdoms of the world are but the scaffolding for God's spiritual temple, to be thrown down when their purpose is accomplished (ver. 6). 5. The uncertainty and transitoriness of all that is earthly should lead men to seek repose in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (ver. 7). 6. The various changes of life in both individuals and nations are designed to lead them to bring their choicest offerings, and dedicate them to God. 7. The New Testament in all its outward lowliness has a glory in its possession of a completed salvation, through the atoning work of a crucified Saviour, far above all the outward magnificence of the Mosaic dispensation (ver. 9). 8. The kingdom of Christ makes peace between God and man, and in its ultimate results will make peace between man and man, and destroy all that produces discord and confusion, war and bloodshed on the earth (ver. 9). (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. *My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not.*—*The patience of the Spirit*.—Some, more especially the older men of the nation, remembering the magnificence of the temple of Solomon, and contrasting with it the meanness of the present temple, were continually discouraging the builders; so the Lord sent His prophets again the second time to say,—“My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.” So we are often tempted to give up in despair, because our efforts seem so puny and so weak; but God's message comes to us to-day with this encouragement, “My Spirit remaineth among you.” 1. There are those who are continually putting off. They are busily engaged in their own pursuits, but are putting off the demands and claims of Almighty God. The

text ought to speak to such some heart-searching and heart-breaking appeals. Is not the patience of the Spirit wonderful? To think that the Holy Spirit of God should still keep on waiting while we were saying to God, "When I have a convenient season I will call for Thee." 2. There are men who profess to be Christian men. But they seem satisfied with being sure that they have escaped the damnation of hell. They are like the returned exiles who were satisfied with having an altar, and were not anxious about getting a temple. Yet God's Spirit is still waiting. Do not trust in any fancied security. 3. There are those who feel that unless they are found working for Christ they cannot reasonably hope that they have been saved by Christ. If God's Spirit is with us He reveals to us that we are in this world to do some good to our fellow-men. If we are despondent as we think how little we have done, the assurance of the text is encouraging, "My Spirit remaineth with you." Trusting in the patient, abiding, indwelling Spirit, may we be more and more inspired, in spite of every temptation to despondency, to rise and build the temple of our God. (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*)

The presence of God's Spirit in the Church.—The conduct of God towards His Church in ancient time is an ennobling and a comforting study: ennobling because it brings His character before our view in a light in which we cannot see it in the fields of nature and in the works of creation; comforting because it brings to our view God in all those glorious relations which nature has no knowledge of. The ancient Jewish Church was set apart by God for the purpose of illustrating those deeper and, if I might dare so to speak, final aspects of the Divine nature. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit's presence and power in the Church is not less vital to her interests than the doctrine of salvation by the finished work of Christ.

I. THE PROMISE ITSELF. "So My Spirit remaineth among you." 1. The indispensability of the blessing here spoken of. "The Spirit of God." The doctrine of spiritual influence was not so prominently taught, nor was it so clearly understood, under the old economy as we know it, and as it is taught to us. There was so much that was external, formal, and typical that the great truth of the absolute necessity of spiritual influence was apt to be laid aside and forgotten. That doctrine was not, however, altogether kept out of sight. It is not a doctrine exclusively confined to the Christian economy, as some have supposed. We have a more full and copious display of the Spirit's power in the Church of Christ now than there was in those olden times. There is no single believer who is not himself the possessor of the Holy Spirit's influence. We have the Holy Spirit not only as a Teacher, but as a Comforter. We all know the difference between the reading of the Word of God without Divine illumination, and with it. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and brings them home to us. He deadens us to the things of the world, and quickens us to all Divine realities. Without the Spirit of God within us there can be no real holiness. There may be external consistency. The Spirit is the only agent that can dive deeply down into the secret recesses of the human heart, that can command the energies and feelings of the soul one by one, and bring them all into a loving subjection to the obedience of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Revealer also to us of the glories of our future inheritance. The things which the eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard, and the heart of man hath not conceived of, are made known to us by the Spirit of God. 2. The Divine mercy as displayed in the giving of the promise. On what ground could that Spirit have been given to the children of Israel except on this? 3. The adaptation of the blessing to all times and all circumstances. The gift which the text promises I should desire most for the welfare of this, or any other church. As Jehovah Himself lives ever, so His Spirit shall follow us ever through all the changing scenes of time. 4. The certainty of the blessing. We are told that this promise of the Spirit was covenanted. The covenant assures us a new heart and a right spirit.

II. THE GREAT TRUTH WHICH THIS PROMISE FORCES UPON OUR ATTENTION. "Fear not." "There is nothing for you to fear now I have given you this promise," says Jehovah. 1. Fear no local change. 2. Fear not personal apostasies in the history of the Church. 3. Fear not, for the existence of God's Church among you is of some importance to the surrounding locality. (*W. Barker.*)

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church an antidote to her fears.—The Lord showed great favour to His Church during the Old Testament Dispensation, in the frequency with which He revealed to her His mind and will, and in His special appearances for her preservation and deliverance. At the return of the Jews to their own land at the termination of the seventy years' captivity the Lord was very

gracious to His Church, against which He had had indignation so long. At that time the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices were all filled by eminent men. The prophets were Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Barachiah. The governor was Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and the high priest was Joshua, the son of Josedech. By the instrumentality of the two prophets who have been mentioned the Jews were encouraged to begin to rebuild the house of God, and to persevere in the work till it was accomplished. Although the people began the work with ardour, so soon as they had laid the foundation they began to be discouraged. There were various reasons for this, such as the vexatious opposition which their enemies carried on against them, and the mean appearance of their work in comparison with the grandeur of the former temple built by Solomon. In order to encourage them to persevere the Lord sent the prophet with a new message, which we have in this chapter from verse 2 to 9. The words which precede the text contain a supplement by the translators which give a good sense. But they may be read more forcibly in connection with the preceding verses without the supplement, thus, "For I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, I, the Word that covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you : fear ye not." These words may be regarded as the language of God in the Person of the Son or of Christ. In them Christ assures His ancient people that He was now graciously present with them by His Spirit, and exhorts them not to be afraid. Most important is the presence of Christ by His Spirit in the Church. It is essential to the Church's vitality, increase, and general spiritual prosperity.

I. WE ARE TO MENTION SOME EVIDENCES OF THE SPIRIT'S REMAINING AMONG A PEOPLE, OR IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. One evidence of this is—1. Purity of doctrine and of worship enjoyed in the Church. God has been pleased to grant unto His Church a supernatural revelation of His will which we possess in the completed Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It is the duty of the Church thus favoured so to receive that Word as to embrace the whole system of revealed truth. The Holy Spirit delights to dwell only where truth and purity reign. Purity of doctrine and worship is also spoken of by Christ as the effect of His Spirit's presence in the Church, when He says of Him, "He shall glorify Me for He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you," and "He shall testify of Me, and shall lead you into all truth." Men may be as zealous as they choose, and as fervid and fervent about their own devices and inventions in God's worship as they will; but, departing from the rule of the Divine Word, they are under the guidance only of their own spirits. Another evidence is—2. Unity in the maintenance of a scriptural profession and purity of Church fellowship. As the Church of Christ is a society separated from the rest of the world for the service and glory of God, it has an essential unity belonging to it; and this unity ought to be manifested by it, both in its profession of faith and in its holy practice, for it is the will of its Divine Head who hath founded and established it, that is the rule in respect of both. The presence of the Spirit in the Church causes the members of it to speak the same things and to walk by the same rule. We are aware that there are some who imagine that such unity in the truth, and purity of Church fellowship, is too chimerical an idea to be realised. "It is not possible," say they, "unless we are to conceive men to have only one mind, and to be divested of volition and of independence." But we reply that all the sacred writers disprove this, for they had volition and independence, and yet spoke the same thing. The state of the early Christian Church disproves it, when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." 3. Power accompanying God's Word and ordinances. 4. The exercise of grace, and the cultivation of a holy walk and conversation evidences the remaining of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit resides in every believer as the spirit of life, of light, of holiness, and of comfort. He not only carries on all those operations in the soul which recover it from ignorance, and enmity, and unhappiness, and bring it to the knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God, but He carries on the good work which He has begun, until it is perfected in complete conformity to the Divine image. 5. The abounding in prayer.

II. TO SHOW WHAT FEARS THE SPIRIT'S REMAINING AMONG A PEOPLE OR IN THE CHURCH IS CALCULATED TO REMOVE. Generally, the Spirit's remaining in the Church may remove all fears about the maintenance and success of the Lord's work and cause. But, more particularly, the Spirit's presence in the Church is fitted to remove—1. The fear occasioned by open and secret enemies to the work and cause of God. The Jews were greatly discouraged in building the second temple by the number and power of their enemies, and by their open

hostility, secret plots, and contrivances to defeat them in the work in which they were engaged. So great, indeed, was their power, that they prevailed for a season to induce Artaxerxes, King of Persia, to put a stop to the work altogether. And so, when the Lord's people have His Spirit remaining among them, they have no reason to fear that the work and cause of God shall be overthrown, either by temporal or by spiritual enemies. Whatever may be their number, influence, or power, however great their malice and crafty their devices, the Spirit of God is able to defeat them, for He is almighty, omniscient, and omnipotent, and He is possessed of every infinite perfection. 2. The fears occasioned by the falling away of professed friends. When the Jews were engaged in building the temple and city they were tried by the desertion of some who once professed themselves to be friendly, and this was followed, as often happens in such cases, by open opposition. Among those who acted so basely the most conspicuous were Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite. In a similar way the people of God have been tried in all ages. 3. The fears occasioned by the removal of true friends of the work and cause of God. There are various ways in which the true and tried friends of the cause and work of God may be removed. In His providence they may be placed at a great distance from their brethren, so that they cannot be with them, as they were wont, nor so serviceable to them as they used to be. Sometimes affliction detains them for a long time from countenancing and encouraging by their presence those who delight in their company, and hold them in high esteem for their steadfast attachment to the truth and fidelity to the cause of Christ. The removal is sometimes, however, more permanent, and the separation more painful, for death takes them away from the world and from the Church below. But they are gone! And surely not without cause do we weep. We have not, we fear, improved our privileges aright, nor rendered unto the Lord according to the benefits we have received; and in judgment the Lord has recalled His gifts. Who, we well may ask, fill their places? But while we wish to lay to heart the Lord's dealings, and justly fear that His servants are taken away from the evil to come, we ought not to give way to desponding fears as to the Lord's cause and work. If the Lord's Spirit remain among us we have no cause to be afraid. He is able to give a double portion of His Spirit to those who remain, and to raise up Elishas upon whom the mantle of Elijah has fallen. We shall only add—4. The fear of sufferings and of trials which the people of God may meet with in their adherence to the cause and work of the Lord. In prosecuting the work and cause of God His people are often called by Him in His providence to make many sacrifices of their own ease and comfort, and of their worldly substance; they have also to bear much reproach and scorn for the truth's sake, not only from the world, but from those who bear the Christian name. These things are apt to discourage and fill them with fear. But the promise and evidence of the Spirit's remaining among them is an antidote to this fear. He will not allow any trial to befall them without making His grace sufficient for them. His promise is, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." In conclusion—1. This subject teaches us that the Holy Spirit is the very life of the Church and people of God. 2. This subject teaches us, further, that the Spirit's presence among His people is sufficient to remove their fears about the maintenance of the Lord's cause and the continuance of His work. So long as the Spirit remains among His people they may rest assured that He will continue His work and maintain His cause in spite of all opposition and hindrances. 3. Again, this subject teaches us that there are many sad evidences of a great departure of the Spirit and withdrawal of His gracious influences at the present day. The withdrawal of the influences of the Spirit, and His departure through being grieved, is an evil that the Church and people of God ought greatly to fear. (*J. Ritchie.*)

Vers. 6-7.—**Yet once . . . and I will shake the heavens.**—*Divine shakings*:—What are these shakings? They have generally been referred to the establishment of the New Testament dispensation, from the text in Hebrews. This interpretation we cannot receive, because—1. The designation of the interval before their commencement as "yet only a little while" leads us to look for a nearer future than five hundred years. 2. The force of the Hiphil participle here is properly to denote a continuance of shakings for an indefinite time. 3. The same phrase in vers. 22, 23 obviously refers to something outside of the Messianic kingdom, and not inside of it. 4. The usual meaning of this symbolical act is

that of a visitation of vengeance on the enemies of God, and not an unfolding of His dispensations of mercy. And—5. The future establishment of the Messiah's kingdom would not be as directly comforting to them as the nearer and more closely connected even to which the prophet alluded. This event was the speedy shaking of the social and political systems that were around and above them, before and beneath which they were in such dread as to hesitate about going forward in their work. That this fact would be an encouragement to them is obvious. They trembled before the consolidated power of Persia, and the craft of Samaria that might bring that power upon them again in restraint, if not in vengeance. The prophet assures them that they need not tremble, for in a little time this stupendous fabric would totter, and others be thrown up in its place. As these powers were soon to be prostrated, the people of God need not fear before their enemies, that were so soon to fall before them. This gives the key to all history. God will allow men to rear the loftiest fabrics, as individuals and as nations, but He will shake them down, that they may then seek for some immovable basis on which to rest. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The shaking of the nations* :—They who know that the Spirit of God remains with them, will not fear when God shakes the earth. What will a wise man fear? Nothing but that which would draw him away from God. Least of all would he fear that which is meant to bring him nearer to God. But this is the very purpose for which God shakes the earth, that He may burst the doors of our earthly prison, and the chains which bind us to the earth. This is the end for which God will overthrow a man's health, that he may learn how fleeting a possession bodily health is, and may seek that spiritual health which will abide with him for ever. It was by shaking the earth and the nations that God brought Israel out of Egypt, and established a people upon earth who were to be the shrine of His presence, the tabernacle of His law. It is by the shaking of our hearts and souls that the Son of God is made manifest to us. He shakes our earthly riches that we may be led to desire heavenly riches, which will never make themselves wings and flee away. This is the one great lesson which we may learn from our text, that they whom God shakes, if the Spirit of God remains with them, will not fear; because they know that, through this shaking, the desire of all nations will come to them, and fill their souls with His glory. (*Julius C. Hare, M.A.*) *The nations shaken, and the desire of all come* :—Three things are foretold in this remarkable prediction. 1. Great commotions and tribulations in the earth. 2. Wonderful and unexpected revolutions. 3. The glorious and happy issue of all these commotions, in the final triumph of Christ and His Gospel. He is properly called the "desire of all nations," because the whole creation groans for deliverance from guilt, for an interposing Mediator, who can make atonement for sin, satisfy Divine justice, and give peace to a wounded conscience. To Christ, therefore, and to His religion, this prophecy belongs. I. TEXT REFERS TO THE PERIOD WHEN JESUS WAS MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH. To prepare the way for this grand event, we may see the omnipotent Jehovah shaking the heavens, earth, and seas. II. VIEW TEXT AS RECEIVING ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT IN OUR OWN DAY. 1. He is shaking many kingdoms by awful judgments and unexpected revolutions. Concerning the shaking of the nations, note three things—(1) They are from God. (2) To the nations visited, the judgments of God are in wrath, and correctors of iniquity. (3) The effect of these visitations will be either unfeigned repentance and reformation, or utter ruin and destruction. 2. Though the shaking of the nations bring deserved calamity on guilty lands, yet the final issue of all will be the wide extent of our glorious Redeemer's kingdom, and the universal triumph of His Gospel. These predictions are now being fulfilled. All these present tumults and desolations are connected with events which shall bring peace, and righteousness, and joy to the whole earth. (*A. Bonar.*) *The nations shaken* :—We find here two things spoken of—1. The arrival of Him who is called "the desire of all nations": and 2. The introductory circumstances, "I will shake all nations." The one of these clauses was meant historically to be introductory and precursory of the other. We have, in this verse, a set of antecedent circumstances, and a given result and fulfilment. I. THOSE NATIONAL CONVULSIONS WHICH PRECEDED THE ADVENT OF MESSIAH. The expression, "the shaking of the nations," is put to signify other things besides mere national and mere political convulsions, but it clearly includes these. Sometimes it means those mental commotions that overspread the minds of individuals. We all know what is meant by a person being "disturbed in thought." "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled,"

&c. Sometimes it means a removal of religious dispensations, as in Heb. xii. Apply to the five centuries which lay between the utterance of this prophecy by Haggai, and its fulfilment in the coming of our Master. What changes were there, both political, mental, and religious, precursive of the Christian dispensation. Give account of the Medo-Persian Empire, of Alexander's conquests, of the military power of Rome. Great thought-leaders arose in this period, and their opinions always bred convulsions. Philosophical schools were always at enmity with one another. Opinions held by some were utterly repudiated by others. As far as intellect was concerned, there was a desperate shaking of the nations. And as to religion, everything seemed to tell that Judaism was fast passing away. It was doubted by its own adherents. II. THE CONNECTION OF CHRIST'S ADVENT WITH THESE SHAKINGS. One great object of Christ in coming to the world was the establishment of peace. He was to be the Prince of Peace. He designed to establish a reign of peace. All His teachings go to the same point. How is it then, that though eighteen centuries have passed, the empire of peace has not come? The answer is that the world has not accepted the principles of Christianity. It is one thing to say that a step is taken towards the effectuation of an object, and another to say that the object has been effected, because there may be impediments put in the way of the effectuation which, while they hinder the fulfilment, by no means at all nullify the statement that the original intention was to produce that effect. A second object of our Master's coming was, the resolution of all those doubts and misgivings that keep the minds of men in perpetual agitation. If the Master came to resolve doubts, why do doubts still exist? Because men love darkness rather than light. Another object of our Saviour's coming was to do away with Judaism. This was to be accomplished by an act of supplantation. When instead of a Jewish priest there came a real priest; when instead of the typical sacrifice there came the real sacrifice; when instead of the prostration of body there came the sanctification of the spirit, the substance of Judaism was reached, and the type of Judaism might pass away. Learn—1. That though we are living in times of great disturbance, we may take this comfort, as convulsions introduced the first advent, so other convulsions may introduce the second. 2. There may be some whose hearts are disquieted, distressed, disturbed by many anxious spiritual cogitations; and we tell you to cease to be your own master, and let God's Bible teach you. Make it your comfort, stay, director, instructor. There is a time coming when mystery shall be dispelled, for it is written in the page of Scripture, "Then shall I know even as also I am known." (*Archibald Boyd, M.A.*) **The desire of all nations shall come.**—*Christ the desire of all nations*.—As the prophet's affirmation was not verified in a material sense, Christian commentators of all schools have generally agreed that it must refer to the actual presence of the Redeemer in the second temple. The title, "Desire of all nations," requires some explanation. It is reasonable to suppose that it has some respect to the design of the Father in sending Him into the world. The Jews could not believe that salvation was intended for any but themselves. But this fond conceit was at variance with their own Scriptures. While Christ has not, up to this time, been the actual desire of all of every nation, nor even of all of any one nation, yet very many of different nations have owned and adored Him as their Lord. A spectator of that scene at Pentecost could scarcely have repressed the feeling, "Surely, the desire of all nations has come." He is the only being that has appeared in the world of whom this could be affirmed. Every nation, pagan, Mohammedan, and Christian, has its heroes and sages. Within their respective countries they have received general homage—in some cases, indeed, a world-wide celebrity. But for none of them could it be claimed that he was the desire of all nations in the sense in which this title is challenged for Jesus of Nazareth. Christ is the one paramount desire of those who have scarcely anything else in common. Men who are the poles apart on other topics,—on questions of literature, of politics, of trade, of metaphysics, of Church government,—use the same language when they bow before the mercy-seat, sing the same psalms of praise to the Redeemer, and labour with the same zeal to make Him known to others. Where He is concerned, all their hopes and aspirations coalesce, like needles pointing to the same pole. This, however, seems to apply only to those who have a personal knowledge of Christ as their own Redeemer. Is He, in any wider sense than this, the desire of all nations? He cannot be the conscious desire of nations who have never heard of Him, but He may be, He is, their unconscious desire. He is their desire—1. Inasmuch as they long for a

competent and infallible Teacher. The love of truth is natural to man. There is a latent yearning that is not to be pacified until it finds the truth which God has appointed as its nutriment. Left to their blind guides the nations have lived and died, wandering sadly through the mazes of error. Worn and wearied with perpetual disappointments, humanity has longed for the advent of one who could resolve its doubts, allay its fears, and re-inspire its hopes, by unfolding to it immortal truth. 2. They long for a clearer manifestation of the Deity. Man must have a God. If he cannot have the true God, he will fashion gods for himself. Man has hoped, in some way, to behold God as a sharer of our humanity. This universal yearning is alone met in the mission of Jesus Christ. 3. Christ is the desire of all nations in His redeeming work. Universal is the sense of sin and danger: a feeling of exposure to penalty; the dread of an offended Deity. The needful expiation has been made, once for all. In the Cross of Christ is that which will satisfy even these yearnings—the deepest, the saddest, the most abiding, the most universal known to fallen humanity. Then—1. No nation can enjoy true and permanent prosperity except by receiving and honouring Him. 2. The cause of missions deserves our support as the great interest of earth. If Christ be the desire of all nations, what is He to us individually? (*Henry A. Boardman, D.D.*) *The desire of all nations* :—The ancient Jews regarded this prophecy as relating to the advent of the Messiah. It is remarkable that the prophet should describe the Messiah as the desire of *all nations*. He foresaw a salvation which should reach to the end of the earth. I. THE NEED ALL NATIONS HAD OF A REDEEMER. No one can look abroad into the state of the world, either as it is recorded in history, or reported by travellers of the present day, without seeing with grief and horror their general ignorance of God; their devotion to idolatry; their ignorance of a future state; and their vicious practices, particularly their impurity and cruelty. If we lead you to the morality of the heathen, how dreary, or how disgusting is our report! In these things, in which the nations of the world so greatly needed a Divine instructor, the religion of Jesus was peculiarly calculated to supply their wants; to remove their ignorance, to purify their hearts, to soften their ferocity. With the preaching of the Gospel a change was effected, like that which is wrought by the mightiest powers of the natural world. Both Jews and Gentiles had need of One who should reconcile them to God, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth. That One is found alone in Christ. II. THE EXPECTATION OF A REDEEMER WHICH SUBSISTED PREVIOUS TO CHRIST'S APPEARING. We find everywhere prevailing an idea of the need of a mediator between God and man, either to reveal the will of the former, or to render the prayers and offerings of the latter acceptable. The wisest philosophers confess that the Deity must Himself reveal His will if it is to be known. This idea the Almighty suffered to be promulgated by means of oracles, auguries, divinations. Everywhere is the desire to propitiate the Deity by offerings and sacrifices. As proofs of an actual expectation of this Divine Person, take the testimonies of two Roman historians, Suetonius and Tacitus. Both say that "some One coming out of Judea should possess the empire." Some rays of Divine light illuminated even the thickest darkness; some remains of a former promise lived in the minds of the heathen; some Divine impressions showed them their wants, and their inability to supply them; some gracious communications instructed them whither to look for deliverance from ignorance and superstition. These faint gleams were lost in that glorious light which burst upon the earth when the Sun of Righteousness rose to bring wisdom, and sanctification, and redemption. But they served to guide many a wandering traveller through the thick night which enveloped the Gentile world, and to preserve the doctrine of a Divine providence. How gloriously did our blessed Lord relieve all doubts, and satisfy all expectations. But the great things which have been revealed kindle in our hearts a hope of future mercies. (*T. Bowdler, A.M.*) *Christ the desire and glory of His Church* :—I. THE TIME WHEN OUR LORD WAS TO COME. "It is a little while." Yet it proved to be five hundred years. A short period compared with the time the Church had already been kept waiting for the Messiah. It was short in Jehovah's own sight. II. A SOLEMN CIRCUMSTANCE THAT IS TO ATTEND THE MESSIAH'S COMING. "I will shake," &c. What is this mighty shaking? The language has been interpreted as pointing out those political convulsions and changes which agitated the world between the uttering of this prophecy and our Lord's birth, one great empire giving way to another, and that in its turn yielding to a third. St. Paul applies it, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, to the uprooting and destruction of the

whole Mosaic dispensation. We may put another interpretation on this prediction. There may be a further reference in it to those moral and spiritual effects which have ever attended and followed the Gospel in its progress through the world. Wherever it has come, it has come with a shaking. It has startled the world, surprised it and changed it. Let the Gospel find its way into a sinner's heart, what a convulsion, what a complete uprooting and change does it often effect there! III. A DESCRIPTION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "The desire of all nations." 1. In the sight of God He is desirable for all nations. 2. Some of all nations have desired Him. But we must look forward for a full explanation of this title. 3. All nations will desire this Saviour. Imagine these prophecies fulfilled, let this glorious scene be realised, bring before your minds a holy and rejoicing earth, and then cast your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, its holy and rejoicing King—what would you call Him? Just what the great God, the Lord of hosts, calls Him here, "The desire of all nations," the joy of the sons of men, the one great blessing, hope, and comfort of a regenerated world. IV. THE GLORIOUS CONSEQUENCE OF THE PROMISED REDEEMER'S ADVENT. "I will fill this house with glory." "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." The former house was Solomon's. How was this magnificent promise fulfilled? The promise seemed to have no fulfilment. At last an Infant enters that temple, brought thither from a stable and a manger, and borne in a peasant's arms. Here in this second temple God Himself was manifest in our mortal flesh. A twofold application—(1) It shows us wherein consists the chief glory of any Church. In the presence and manifestation within it of the Lord Jesus Christ. A real spiritual presence. (2) It tells us wherein consists the chief happiness of every really Christian heart. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Christ the desire of all nations*:—The Church engages our thoughts both on the first and second advents of our Lord. For we, like them of old, are "waiting for the consolation of Israel." We exhibit Messiah as the desire of all nations with respect to both His advents. There are two kinds of predictions in the Holy Writings; the one anticipating a dispensation of grace and mercy, the other speaking of awful and tremendous judgments, seasons of tribulation such as the world had never before witnessed. Though our Lord was the Prince of Peace, yet through human perversity the result of His mission was a sword, the kindling of the fire of evil passions, the setting of the members of a household one against another. Whatever we expect hereafter, here we look not for the fulfilment of our hopes. Knowing the issue, the perpetual feud between the Church and the world, the weary persecutions by which the faithful have been harassed, how can the bringer-in of such a dispensation be the desire of all nations? Still less, seeing what must be the result of His future manifestation, how can He assume this character as the righteous Judge of an apostate world? The distinction may be thus made. The prophets do not say that when He appears, the desires of all nations shall be satisfied; but that He who is the desire of all nations shall come; He, that is, whom they desire by anticipation. With respect to His first coming, it is certain that, from the Fall downwards, the sons of men have ever looked for some mighty deliverer. However deeply men might err as to the object of faith,—however speculative their notions as to the nature of the Eternal Godhead and their own nature,—however depraved their ideas how they were to propitiate the Supreme Being,—they could not avoid the conviction that, if they were to be saved at all, it must be by the advent of a Son of God in human form, as the connecting link between the Creator offended, and the creature sinning. Such foreshadowings of the truth, originally impressed upon the human mind, the sacred oracles confirm. The streams of tradition and Scripture unite in one deep channel of expectation. But how did He, in whom these anticipations centred, fulfil them? Not in the way in which the sons of men imagined He would. If, dwelling on the train of miseries which the destroyer has brought upon the earth, and unable to reconcile what they saw around and felt within them with His righteous rule whose offspring they knew themselves to be, they yet had faith to see that He in whose hands their destinies lay, ever brings good out of evil, and that every affliction happens to man as part of a discipline of love, and will one day cease altogether—if such were their thoughts, then their fulfilment in God's good time was verily assured to them. The proof that Christ's kingdom has been set up, is seen in the rescue of men from the bondage of slavery and sin; in the daily, hourly, victories gained over the powers of darkness by those in whose weakness His "strength is made perfect." The same desires

which Messiah so graciously met, so far as our necessary trial admits, at His first advent, will receive their full and complete satisfaction only at His second coming. One point more. It is to the temple of the Lord that the desire of all nations shall come: it is there that He shall take up His abode. The words of Haggai and Malachi find their primary accomplishment in the presentation of the infant Jesus. But the true temple is our humanity. We know that He is with us, whether we assemble ourselves together to worship and adore Him, to pour out the plaints of our hearts in holy litanies, to praise Him "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," or whether we bend our knees in the silence and privacy of our closets. Let me ask you, then, have you such desires as the Lord at His next coming will be likely to satisfy? Ye have seen what they are. They are such as earth, and the things of earth, cannot fill. (*G. Huntington, M.A.*) *The desire of all nations*:—This is one of the most difficult, yet most interesting texts of the Old Testament. Many critics would rob the passage of its Messianic element, and degrade the glory of the temple into material gifts and privileges. They assert that the translation is not correct. 1. "The desire of all nations" should be "the desirable things of all nations," as the *LXX* τὰ ἐλκτὰ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν. The prophet describes, say they, not the coming of a person, but the contributions made to the rebuilding of the second temple (ver. 8; Isa. lx. 5), "the forces of the Gentiles (the wealth of the nations) will come to Thee," i.e., be brought to Jerusalem. The Hebrew word *Khemdāth* (from *Khamād*, to wish or desire) signifies wish or desire (2 Chron. xxi. 20), and as applied to persons means the best, the noblest, and most precious. "A man of desires," i.e., as the margin, one desired or desirable (Dan. ix. 23, x. 3, 11). "He is altogether lovely" (Song v. 16). In Heb. the same word as here is used, "all desires," or object of desires. But if the term refers to things, the glory of the second temple could not excel the glory of the first, for it wanted many treasures which the first contained (cf. Ezra iii. 12). 2. It is objected that a singular noun is followed by a plural verb "shall come"; hence the text should be altered and amended by ancient versions. But if we have any right at all to alter, have we not as much right to change the verb in number as the noun? The Vulgate agrees with the Eng. Ver., "desideratus cunctis gentibus." Why not take the word as a collective noun, and understand the Messiah as concentrating all excellences in His person, in whom the desires of all nations find their centre and satisfaction? This title seems to suit prophecy concerning Him (Gen. xlix. 10); and Christ was called by the Jews "the hope of Israel," "the blessing of Abraham to the Gentiles" (1 Tim. i. 1; Tit. ii. 3; Acts xxviii. 20, xxvi. 7, 8; Gal. iii. 14). It is not likely that the gifts of proselytes and worshippers, contributions from heathen princes, and the devotion of surrounding countries, would be esteemed by Jews greater glory than the magnificence of Solomon's temple; and is it not unreasonable to think that the prophet would direct men to material treasures as constituting the "greater glory"? In what can this august prediction find its fulfilment if not in the Saviour of the world, who alone could give the "peace" mentioned in verse 9? If we carefully examine its words and catch its drift, the difficulties may not all be cleared away; but this sense seems to be furnished by collateral evidence, to agree with the context, and is in harmony with the spirit of the prophet, and with the exordium of his prophecy. "The desire of all nations" we believe to be the Saviour of the world, whom the Magi from the East and the Greeks from the West desired to see. Moral and physical changes prepared for His coming. The "greater glory" was exhibited in the presentation, teaching, and personal ministry of Jesus. The nearness of the time appears to oppose this view. "Yet once, it is a little while," or yet a little while, lit., "one little," only a brief space. But with the Lord a thousand years are as one day. The Divine mode of reckoning is not like our own. We are to look beyond the first to the second temple—from the present to the future—from the beginning to the end of these grand events. Sacrifices were abolished, the temple ritual was completed, and "peace" was given in the doctrine, and by the death of Christ. Hence, God's Spirit remains with His people (ver. 5). Wherever Jesus dwells, He imparts a glory surpassing the splendour of the Shekinah and the glory of Solomon's temple. He can transform the character and beautify the soul. We need Him. Shakings within must prepare for His reception. He has been once, and He will come a second time. Do we desire Him? Have we found Him? May Christ dwell in our hearts the hope of glory! (*Jas. Wolfendale.*) *The moral progress of the world*:—I. It requires great social revolutions amongst

MANKIND. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." Revolutions in society seem to me essential to the moral progress of the race. There must be revolutions in theories and practices in relation to governments, markets, temples, churches. How much there is to be shaken in the heaven and earth of Christendom before the cause of true moral progress can advance! May we not hope that all the revolutions that are constantly occurring in governments and nations are only the removal of obstructions in the moral march of humanity?

II. IT INVOLVES THE SATISFACTION OF THE MORAL CRAVINGS OF MANKIND. "The desire of all nations shall come." The moral craving of humanity is satisfied in Christ, and in Christ only. 1. Man's deep desire is reconciliation to his Creator. 2. Man's deep desire is to have inner harmony of soul. Christ does this. 3. To have brotherly unity with the race. Moral socialism is what all nations crave for. Christ does this. He breaks down the middle wall of partition. He unites all men together by uniting all men to God. III. IT ENSURES THE HIGHEST MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD TO MANKIND. "I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord." 1. God will be recognised as the universal proprietor. "Silver is Mine, and gold is Mine," &c. 2. God will be recognised as the universal peace giver. "I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (*Homilist.*) *Christ the world's desire* :—The desire for a revelation of God is a desire of all nations. Men have never been able to rest satisfied with the bare knowledge or assurance that God is, they have ever yearned for some conception of what God is. What are all the gods of the heathen but human answers to the question, "What is God?" That question has, as yet, found no true answer. There is still a desire as deep as man's need, as universal as humanity itself, to know what God is, to see a revelation of the Deity. It is fulfilled in Christ. His mission is to satisfy the desire of all nations to see God. Let us take our place at the feet of the God-revealing Christ. The desire to be reconciled to God is a universal longing in the heart of man. In Christ is the fulfilment of this desire. In all its stages, here and in heaven, we see in Christ reconciliation between man and God, so that, as the way to the Father, He satisfies the desire of all nations. To all men, conscious of these restless longings and desires, Christ's invitation is, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." (*Alex. Marshall, M.A.*) *The desire of nations* :—How was this prophecy fulfilled? The second temple was never equal to the first in outward appearance. How, then, could the glory of the second temple exceed that of the first? God incarnate, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, stood in the second temple, and that made its glory greater. The text foretells the coming of Christ, and says that coming should be preceded by great commotions. How truly this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ those who know the history of the period before His coming will understand. It would seem as if neither civil nor religious benefits could ever be bestowed upon our world except as preceded by such commotions. Whether it is that men become so rooted down in old prejudices in favour of existing evils, that nothing short of bloodshed and revolution will tear them up, or whether God thus punishes old errors, and by His chastening produces a reformation, certain it is, that civil liberty and religious progress have usually dated their most important epochs from seasons of war and political disturbance. So let us regard the present crisis. Let our eye be directed upward to Him who rides upon the storm, and our prayer to Him be, that this, and every other which passes over our globe, may purify more and more, until earth shall have the very atmosphere of heaven. Scripture teaches that the millennial day is to be preceded by a great shaking of the nations. The text has an individual application to ourselves. Christ is, or ought to be, the desire of every heart. Just as God shakes the nations before the desire of nations comes, so does He arouse sinners before Christ can enter into their hearts. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *The desire of all nations* :—The text foretold a strange phenomenon. It declared that the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity would be seen among sinful men. I. DESIRE, AS REFERRING TO THE EXPECTATION OF THE WHOLE HUMAN FAMILY. It is a fact deserving attention, that among the nations there has ever existed a widespread, if not universal expectation of a glorious Person, to be the renovator of mankind, and to impress a new character on the spirit, habits, and morals of the earth. The expectation was not confined to the Jews. II. DESIRE, AS REFERRING TO THE WANTS OF THE WHOLE HUMAN FAMILY. Wherever a human being is found, there will be found a conscience, a moral sense. Let men seek by repentance to atone for guilt, it is in vain. Everywhere the

imploping cry is heard for some medium, some mediator between God and man. To the want produced by guilt, add that created by the corruption which sin hath shed through our nature. III. DESIRE, AS REFERRING TO THE HAPPINESS OF THE WHOLE HUMAN FAMILY. Jesus alone can confer true happiness; because the mind of man can rejoice only in truth, and Christ is "the truth"; because the heart of man can only be satisfied with objects worthy of it; and because God is the life of the soul, and Christ alone reveals this Being, and reinstates us in His favour and love. (*R. Fuller, D.D.*) *Christ the desire of all nations*:—I. WHY CHRIST MAY JUSTLY BE CALLED THE "DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS." 1. Because of the general expectation that prevailed in the world previously to His coming. 2. Because all mankind required such a Saviour as He is, whether they knew Him or not. 3. Because the Lord Jesus is so attractive in Himself, that all would actually desire Him if they knew Him. 4. Because many, in all nations, have actually desired Him. 5. Because ultimately all the families of the earth shall be blessed in Him. II. HOW DID CHRIST'S PRESENCE RENDER THE SECOND TEMPLE MORE GLORIOUS THAN THE FIRST? In the second temple Jesus displayed the condescension, wisdom, power, and glory of the Deity, in such a manner as far more than made up for its want of external magnificence or internal memorials. The former temple had seen grand men, but now a sinless man. There is yet another temple which is honoured with the presence of Christ. Christians themselves are a building fitly framed together, and growing unto a holy temple in the Lord. There is yet another temple which is filled with the same glory,—the temple which is above, and in which believers serve God day and night. (*J. F. Osborne.*) *The desire of all nations*:—Here was a distinct prophecy of the Saviour's coming, and it can be appropriately referred to Him alone. That such a Divine personage was looked for by the Jews is seen in the uniform testimony of their prophets. He was the "desire of all nations," because He only could bestow those precious blessings which the world needed. Without Christ human nature was guilty, polluted, wretched, lost. He was to be the regenerator of that nature; the author of its deliverance, its happiness, and its eternal rest. The Lord Jesus was, emphatically, "The desire of all nations," because all nations shall one day be made happy in Him. His blessed reign is to be that of righteousness and peace, and the song of universal joy which shall swell forth at last in harmony with harps of gold, will be, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." For four thousand years the accomplishment of the prophecy had been looked for, and at last, in the fulness of time, the long-expected Messiah came. He appeared—1. At the very period marked out for His birth. 2. In the very manner which had been foretold. 3. He came for the performance of the very work which had been before marked out for Him. Certain remarkable events should distinguish the Messiah's coming. (1) All nations were to be shaken. (2) The Jewish temple should be filled with His glory. In several important particulars the second temple was far inferior to the first. It was not in riches, nor in outward splendour that the superiority of the second temple would consist, but in the personal presence of the Divine Redeemer. He was the infallible oracle, making known God's will: the perfect sacrifice for sin, faintly shadowed forth by the mercy-seat of the ark; the true fire, to rekindle the expiring flame in the perishing soul. In that second temple the Prince of Peace appeared, making peace between God and man, and proclaiming the Gospel of peace, whose provisions of mercy are freely offered to all. (*John N. Norton, D.D.*) *The advent of the Lord ushered in amidst the shaking of the nations*:—Though heaven be God's throne, and earth His footstool, and all space His temple, yet, in condescension to human weakness, He who fills immensity deigns to manifest Himself in a temple built by human hands. I. A GREAT PERSON, THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS, SHALL COME. There was no human probability that this part of the prophecy would be fulfilled. Who is the desired object? It can be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christ may literally be said to be the desire of all nations, inasmuch as He was the object of their earnest expectation: because to all He was and is most desirable. That the promise of His coming to the temple was fulfilled, see the records of our Lord's visits to the temple, as given in the Gospels. II. THE PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING. "I will shake all nations." God bids us look for the precursors of His Son in the shakings of nations. This was prophetic, and has been exactly fulfilled. When God is about to introduce any great improvement into His Church, any era of light and enlargement, He generally precedes it by one of

trouble and commotion. This often removes serious obstacles to the establishment and welfare of the Redeemer's Church. **III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE COMING OF THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.** "I will fill this house with glory." This is prophetic. Any one who had seen the temple of Solomon, would hesitate in believing that anything could surpass its glory. Christ now comes to His Church in remarkable dispensations of providence. As part of the Church visible, we have a great deal to do for Christ, in endeavouring, both at home and abroad, to prepare the temple for the advent of the Lord. (*J. G. Lorimer.*) *Christmas-day sermon*:—This text is a prophecy and prediction of our Saviour's incarnation. The Jews indeed pervert this text. We apprehend it as a prophetic prediction of that great benefit and mystery of our religion that the Christian Church doth this day celebrate. **I. WHAT OCCASIONS THE PROPHET NOW TO MENTION OUR SAVIOUR, AND FORETELL HIS NATIVITY?** The mentioning of Christ's incarnation comes in without any straining or impertinent digression. The prophet finds the people in a low condition, and the main consolation he ministers to them is this gracious assurance that the Messiah was ere long to be born, and to come among them. This promise of Christ had a threefold virtue in it that made it seasonable in the time of distress. It sweetened their sorrow in their present affliction. It revived their hope of a full restoration. It prevents and removes all doubts and suspicions that their fear may forecast against their deliverance. Shall their temple be built again out of so great ruins? There may be doubts whether such a restoration can be possible, and whether God can be so good as to accomplish it. **II. WHAT IS THE NATURE, CONDITION, AND SUBSTANCE OF THIS PROMISE?** Conceive the words as a lively description of our Saviour's coming. 1. Here is a solemn preparation for it. "I will shake all nations." The times before Christ were troublesome times; nation dashing against nation, and all subdued by the Roman Empire. 2. There was a stirring up of the nations to the expectation, and looking for, of the Messiah. 3. This shaking foretells a shaking of all things unto a great alteration. The coming of Christ wrought a great change. (1) *In statu rerum.* (2) *In moribus dominum.* (3) *In modo rituum.* 4. This shaking is a powerful drawing of men to a Christian conversion. The second subject to consider is the gracious performance of this blessed promise. "The desire of all nations shall come." Christ is the desire of all things in heaven and earth, and His incarnation that great work that all things looked for. 1. He was the delight and joy of His Father. 2. He was the desire of the angels. 3. He was the desire and longing of all creation. 4. The desire of the patriarchs. 5. The desire of the nations. Desire implies longing and wishing; attaining and possessing; enjoyment and fruition. This is not a single promise, but a promise pregnant. It includes and implies other promises with it. Here is a door set open for the Gentiles: it concerns us nearly; it is the tenure we hold by. All nations pitched upon one desire; all expect the same common salvation. Christ's Church shall be gathered out of all nations. Desire fulfilled and accomplished turns to joy, and that is the happy condition of the Christian Church. (*Geo. Stradling, S.T.P.*) *The presentation of Christ in the temple*:—Regard Christ as satisfying the craving of mankind for a perfect ideal of goodness. **I. SUCH A YEARNING UNIVERSAL.** Man made to look upward. Distinguished from lower animals by capacity for indefinite advance. 1. For this advance an ideal is necessary, up toward which men may struggle. "Intense admiration is necessary to our highest perfection." Nothing is so ennobling as looking up. 2. The absence of this upward tendency is a sure precursor of moral ruin. Too common now, especially among young men. Thou hast "fine" to crush down all admiration; to carp and sneer at goodness. This lie against man's instincts terribly revenges itself. **II. THE POWER OF THIS INSTINCT PROVED.** By the reverence felt by all nations for their legislators, philosophers, generals. 1. The abiding power over the human mind of Solon and Lycurgus, Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed, shows the preparedness of the human heart to welcome One whose moral standard is higher than its own. The secret of this influence is that each manifested some features of the desire of all nations, some rays of the "light that lighteneth every man," some fragments of the truth that all are yearning after. 2. Show in the passionate devotion of soldiers for their generals. **III. BUT ALL THESE COME SHORT OF THE TRUE DEVOTION TO THE ONE PERFECT IDEAL.** 1. Napoleon's estimate of the superiority of the influence of Christ. 2. Secret of this universal power—the Incarnation. The "desire of all nations" must be at once man and God. Nothing short of perfection of sympathy and perfection

of holiness will satisfy man's demand. In Jesus Christ, "the second Adam; the Lord from heaven," &c., we see One whom we can love, adore, and imitate. The faultless pattern is set before us that we may copy it. In Christ, our brother-man, we see what God is, and by His Spirit's help we may strive to copy Him. (*Edmund Venables, M.A.*) *Christ the hope of the world*:—The words of the original do not refer at all to Messiah, but to the glory of the second temple, which was then being erected and into which it is foretold the riches of the Gentiles should be brought. The words may, however, be used as the motto of a sermon. Can the words, "the Desire of all nations," be justifiably employed in regard to our Lord? None of the names of Christ is more appropriate. The Messiah has always been the Desire of all nations. More or less vaguely a Christ was universally hoped for and expected. How noble a conception we obtain of the relation between an universal Saviour and universal need! I. CHRIST IS THE WORLD'S GRAND IDEAL, FOR WHOM IT WAITED, AND IN WHOM IT HOPED. It is a historical fact that all nations have desired to see such a person as our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice three ideas in which this desire to reconcile man to God became embodied.

1. There grew up the doctrine, or tradition, asserting the union of God and man in one person. The doctrine of the Incarnation is not peculiar to Christianity.
2. The belief that there would come a time of familiarity between God and man.
3. That there would come, or had come, a perfect God-man to better the condition of the human race in this world, and to teach them about the next. Whole races have believed that certain men were heaven-sent prophets, Divine teachers. Heathen records show that birth from a pure virgin has been attributed to several of these founders of religion. This is related both of Buddha and of Zoroaster. The story of Osiris is even more remarkable. He is represented as visiting the earth, suffering and dying, and rising again to become judge of quick and dead.

II. CHRIST IS FITLY SPOKEN OF AS THE "DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS," BECAUSE HIS WORK IS SUCH AS MEN HOPED TO SEE PERFORMED.

1. The world hoped that One would come who should establish justice, peace, and truth in the earth. It was such a moral kingdom that Jesus came to found.
2. The world was craving deliverance from powers of evil to which they felt themselves to be in bondage.
3. Men longed for some means of securing pardon of sin. Consider a summary of the theory of sacrifice among the heathen, and see how it points, in company with the Mosaic system, to the Lamb of Calvary. (1) In this act they symbolically offered up themselves. (2) It was necessary that the life of the victim should be taken, and the blood must be shed, for "the blood is the life." Life for life is the first principle of the theory of sacrifice. (3) The victim must be faultless when brought to the altar. (4) More noteworthy still is the fact that sacrifice meant the giving up of that which was valued and beloved. These views with regard to sacrifice have prevailed almost universally. The faultless and treasured offering was to appease the wrath of heaven. It scarcely needs that I remind you how precisely our blessed Lord is the embodiment of this phase of the world's faith.
4. The world longed to see harmony and peace restored in place of the discords of human life, and in place of apparent incongruities in the natural world. Men saw so much around them that was problematical. Human life was so strange a puzzle. "There shall come," wrote a Persian prophet, a "righteous King, whose reign shall be universal. At His advent, poison and poisonous weeds and ravenous beasts shall be expelled from the earth. He shall make streams break forth in the desert, and there shall be no more a hot simoom. The bodies of men shall be unsubstantial, and shall cast no shadows. They shall need no food to sustain their life. That King shall cast out for ever poverty, sickness, old age, and death." What but the work of our King can fulfil such aspirations? Some argue against the triumph of Christianity. But Christ shall surely triumph; not one tittle of prophecy shall pass till all be fulfilled. But not as we expect may it come about. God's way of governing the world differs very widely from our very rational-looking theories of how it ought to be done. (*Edwin Dukes.*) *Christ suited to all nations*:—If you want to know what it is that makes the living centre of Christianity, go and ask a missionary what it is that he finds it best to tell people that gather round him. Is it not the one story—the universality of sin and the redeeming Christ? Wherefore we say with confidence, and I wish it were deeper in the hearts of all of us, that Christianity—not all the minutiae of reticulations of the net in which we carry it, but the treasure which we carry in the net—that our Christianity is the only religion on the face of the earth that has got stamped upon it universality.

Mohammedanism bears the stamp of Mahommed, and dissolves before Western civilisation. It is needless to ask whether Buddhism or Brahmanism can live beyond certain degrees of latitude and longitude, or outside certain stages of human thought and progress. They are all like the vegetation of the countries in which they had their origin. You cannot transplant palm trees and bamboos into our northern latitudes. But the seed which the great Sower came to scatter is like the bread-corn, an exotic nowhere, and yet an exotic everywhere, the bread of God that came down from heaven. All these other religions are like water that is strongly impregnated with the salts or the mineral matters which it has dissolved out of the strata through which it rises; but the river of the Water of Life that proceedeth from the throne of God and of the Lamb has no taste of earthly elements in it, and in spite of all the presumptuous crowing of some whose wish is father to the thought, it will flow on till it covers the earth, and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) *Christ expected*:—1. There was spread over the whole of creation a universal expectation of some One called in this place the "Desire of nations." Three great wants were pressing upon the minds of men, and these wants became fulfilled in the advent of our Master. 1. A distinct knowledge of the true God. 2. Answer to the question, "How can man be just with God?" 3. Light on the mystery of the future world. Put these wants together—the true nature of God; the true nature of an expiation; and a true knowledge of immortality, and you see the void, or vacuum, in the human soul. 2. How far was this threefold want met by the Lord Jesus Christ in His advent? Outside of Jesus Christ no true and adequate knowledge of God can be possessed. When Jesus Christ came to the world as Mediator between God and man, He fulfilled all the required conditions of expiation. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus gives the satisfying light on the mystery of immortality. Christ thus met the world's needs, and we may say, the "Desire of all nations" has come. (*Archibald Boyd, M.A.*) And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.—*The glory of the presence of Christ*:—The glory here spoken of was not any external splendour, pomp, and beauty, for in this respect the second temple fell vastly short of Solomon's. It must therefore refer to the presence of Christ, His personal appearance again and again at the temple; which was a greater glory to it than any external ornaments could possibly be. It was not, however, the mere bodily presence of Christ, but the heavenly doctrine which He preached, and the miracles which He wrought there; the pains He took to rescue the Divine law from the corruptions of the Jewish teachers, and especially the spiritual blessings which He so freely offered to all who were willing to receive them. It was, in one word, the manifestation of the goodwill and mercy of God made by Him, and the influence of His Spirit, which accompanied His preaching and miracles, to turn men from darkness to light, and bring them to repentance, faith, and holy obedience. Infer, that the brightest ornament and truest glory of any place of worship is the spiritual presence of Christ in it; or, the influences of His Spirit, accompanying the means of grace, to make them effectual for the edification and comfort of the souls of men. The thing to be anxious about, as a Christian Church, is, that we may have the special and gracious presence of Christ with us, to fill His house with His glory. The evidences of this presence are—regular and careful attendance upon all the ordinances and institutions of Christ; serious and devout behaviour; worship of the Father in spirit and in truth; singing God's praises with understanding and lively devotion; fixing the attention and engaging the affections with Divine truth. Particularly when, at the Lord's table, the thoughts are fixed upon the sufferings and love of Christ, and grateful affections are excited towards Him; and when their souls are filled with love of the brethren. (*Job Orton.*) *Divine agency*:—1. Divine agency in the affairs of the world. "I." 2. Divine order. "I will shake." Disturbance precedes repose; war, peace; death, life. This law is seen in the operations of nature, in the government of nations, in individual life, and in the Church of God. The prophecy of the text was fulfilled. The wars of Alexander the Great, of his successors, and of Rome, shook the world. Political, social, and religious convulsions prepared the way for the Desire of all nations. 3. Christ's advent. When He appeared the temple of Janus was closed. The world, weary and worn, was unconsciously longing for His presence. The cry of all religions was reconciliation with God. For this, temples were erected, altars built, priests maintained, sacrifices offered. Christ alone is the Reconciler, Mediator, Prince of Peace. 4. Christ the glory of the temple. The old men

wept at the inferiority of the second temple. But of it God said, "I will fill this house with glory." The Jews say five signs of Divine glory were in the first temple, which were wanting in the second,—Urim and Thummim. Ark of covenant. Fire upon the altar. The Shechinah. And the spirit of prophecy. But in Christ all these signs of the Divine glory were united and signally manifested. Thus by His coming to the second temple Haggai's prophecy was fulfilled. And He is still coming in like manner to hearts, to churches, and to nations; but He will come yet more gloriously. All changes, revolutions, and convulsions are preparing the way for His triumphal chariot. (*"The Study."*) *The presence of the Messiah, the glory of the second temple*:—The modern Jews will by no means have this text to be understood of the Messias. The ancient Jews did so understand it. The Messias is He whom all nations had reason to desire, because of those great blessings and benefits which He was to bring to the world. Show how the several parts of this prediction agree to our blessed Saviour, and to no other. **I. THERE SHOULD BE GREAT CHANGES AND COMMOTIONS IN THE WORLD BEFORE HIS COMING.** This was fulfilled in a most remarkable manner between the time of this prophecy and the coming of our blessed Saviour. In those four hundred years happened greater commotions, and much more considerable revolutions, than in above two thousand years before, and in almost two thousand since. **II. THE WORLD SHOULD BE IN A GENERAL EXPECTATION OF MESSIAS AT THE TIME OF HIS COMING.** The Jews were in general expectation. Their tradition was, that Messias would appear at the end of the second two thousand years. Some Jewish doctors determined that the Messias would come within fifty years of their time. And Suetonius and Tacitus voice the heathen expectation. **III. HE WHO IS FORETOLD, WAS TO COME DURING THE CONTINUANCE OF THE SECOND TEMPLE.** Not long after Christ's death this second temple was destroyed to the ground. Then it could have been no other than Jesus who "filled this second temple with glory." **IV. THE COMING OF MESSIAS WAS TO BE THE LAST DISPENSATION OF GOD FOR THE SALVATION OF MEN.** "Once more" implies "once more only." The inference may be thus expressed, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." What could God have done more for us than He hath done? (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*) *The glory of the second temple*:—**I. WHEREIN THE GLORY OF THE FORMER HOUSE CONSISTED.** Properly speaking, there were three temples in Jerusalem. From Joshua to Solomon there was no permanent edifice. The tabernacle was fitted to the needs of a wandering people. Nearly five hundred years passed before the project of building a permanent house for worship could be carried out. Solomon's temple is familiar. It was destroyed after an existence of over four hundred years. The second temple was founded by Ezra. The third was built by the munificence of Herod. It was strictly no new house, only a reparation of the old. Notice the magnificence of the first temple with regard to its materials. The whole world was laid under contribution, so to speak, for the erection of that magnificent edifice. Notice the contents of this temple. There were three of surpassing magnificence—the ark, the altar, and the light. Each of these was symbolical of a deeper and more recondite truth. Consider its dedication by the coming to it of the sign of God's presence—the cloud symbol. One other fact added to the magnificence of the temple. It was the spot where God chose to hold communion with man. **II. WHEREIN DID THE GREATER GLORY OF THE LATTER HOUSE CONSIST?** Here we find there is a passing from the material to the spiritual. Things symbolical and things material were in no respect to constitute the glory that belonged to the second temple. The peculiar glory of the second temple consisted in this—the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The material glory, the splendour of the former house, was all eclipsed in this consideration, that to the second temple came God manifest in the flesh. It was in the second temple that the world's peace was made. In the first temple the voice of prophecy was heard, but in the second it was altogether silent. At last the voice of prophecy came. The Master said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor." Jesus Christ, in uttering His prophecies in that temple, made that temple still more glorious by the character of those utterances. His word came with power. The subject teaches the manifest glory of the spiritual over the material. (*Archibald Boyd, M.A.*) *The glory of God's house*:—The glory of Israel consisted in God's visibly dwelling in their midst. The rabbis remind us that the second temple was inferior to the first in five essential particulars:—1. The original ark of the covenant, containing the two tables of

Sinai, and the Mercy-seat, were lost. 2. The Shechinah, or Divine presence, appeared no more. 3. The Urim and Thummim, connected with the miraculous breastplate of Aaron, had vanished. 4. The holy fire, which God Himself had kindled upon the altar, and which was ever kept burning, and from whence the sacrifices were to be ignited, was extinguished for ever. 5. The Holy Spirit of prophecy spake no longer as in times past; it was silent for four hundred years after Malachi's removal. These causes conspired to damp the fervour of the people in the work of restoration. Haggai was bidden to acknowledge the visible inferiority of the second temple; but he was to say that the deficiencies were only apparent. The true essentials of worship, the veritable consciousness of God's faithful guardianship, the unseen consolations of His Spirit, should more than compensate for the absence of the former tokens of His proximity. And to this, at present, unpretending shrine the Lord of hosts Himself would come; the Prince of peace should adorn it with His own life-giving presence. The dearest aspiration of all nations—for that is the meaning of the Hebrew word translated "the Desire of all nations"—should be realised in the person of Jesus the Messiah. Here, then, was true glory; here was substantial consolation! Here was consolation amply sufficient to counterbalance the absence, not only of material splendour, but also of the gorgeous symbolism, the departed externals of God dwelling in their midst. The consolation offered by Haggai consisted in the assurance that the temple which they were rebuilding should witness the arrival of the promised Saviour of the world, even of Him who should "gather together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad." Salvation, and not the symbols and types thereof, is the one thing needful. (*Joseph B. McCaul.*)

Vers. 8, 9. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.—*The superiority of the latter house:*—The prophet's declaration that the silver is the Lord's and the gold is the Lord's is full of comfort to those who are disquieted about their own work, if they will receive it rightly. You who are poor, who have no gold and no silver to give, is it not a comfort that God does not need silver and gold from you? Rich as some may be in the eyes of the world, and in their own eyes, in God's eyes they are miserably poor, and only the poorer the richer they deem themselves. If our riches be our own, it is poverty; if our knowledge is our own, it is ignorance; neither can be true unless it be God's already. As the prophet's words are meant to cheer those who are troubled by a false humility, so do they cast down our pride, which always lies at the bottom of such false humility. What, then, are we to give to God? Only the things which are especially our own, our own hearts and souls. How could the glory of the latter house be greater than that of the former? It is declared that the Lord of hosts would "fill His house with glory." The manner in which this should be done is set forth thus—"The Desire of all nations shall come." Through the coming of the Desire of all nations what had waned and decayed may be restored and renewed, until the glory of its latter state is greater than that of its former. The condition of man after the Fall was as nothing in comparison with his first glory. In Christ human nature, regenerated by the power of His Spirit, is raised to a far higher state of glory than that from which man fell. So too it is with each individual man. Under the dominion of natural impulses and passions, he may look with shame on his early years; but they who have been truly and effectually regenerated by the Spirit of Christ know how, here again, the glory of the latter house is greater than that of the former. Such is the glory which we see in St. Paul's life after his conversion. (*Julius C. Hare, M.A.*) *The presence of Christ in the temple:*—From the earliest period of time particular places were set apart for the peculiar worship of God. The shady grove and the elevated mountain were at first chosen by most nations as places of devotion. David first formed the design of building the temple. Though in many respects inferior, there was to be in the second temple a brighter glory than was in the temple of Solomon. It is the presence of Christ in it which more than compensated for the want of other things. The great truth for us to consider is, that the presence of Christ constitutes the chief glory of any Church. How is His presence in a Church displayed, and the building rendered glorious by His presence? 1. By the faithful preaching and the cordial reception of His Gospel. 2. If the ordinances of religion are regularly administered and properly prized. 3. When the professors of religion are distinguished for holiness and spiritual

joy, and where sinners are converted. (*H. Kollock, D.D.*) *The glory of the second temple*:—The great and overpowering honour of the building which Solomon raised was this, that it was the only building on earth erected to the true God. By what peculiarity, then, was the second temple distinguished? The second temple was built by the children of the Captivity when they returned poor, dispirited, and feeble from the oppression of Babylon. It never approached in outward magnificence and real grandeur the original temple. And the emphatic glory of the first temple was awaiting in the second. There was no visible symbol of the Divine presence; no awful cloud of brightness. There the Son of God was made manifest in the likeness of human flesh. We are to seek, in the appearance of the Son of God in our flesh, for the circumstances that were to constitute the superior honour of the latter temple. Give the occasions when our Lord visited the temple. And also, the glory of the latter house was greater than the glory of the former, inasmuch as the manifestation of God in the flesh has brought down the character of God to the level of the understanding and the sympathies of men. The cloud of glory in the former temple did not immediately address itself either to the understandings or to the hearts of the people. But the nature of the Godhead has now been embodied in human flesh. We are now privileged to look upon God as He was seen in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We see the doings of the Eternal One when we see the actions of Christ Jesus. And the glory of the latter house is greater inasmuch as there the Son of God was manifested as the messenger of mercy and reconciliation to sinners. "In this house will I give peace." (*J. Bannerman, D.D.*) *A dedicatory sermon*:—Comparing the two structures, the prophet saw, in the vision of the future, what was far more glorious than the splendour of the former house. It is in allusion to the advent of Christ that God says, "I will fill this house with glory." This was the one transcendent event which made the second temple more glorious than the first. The tabernacle and the temple, as the dwelling place of God on earth, continue still to be the central symbols of all the higher forms of human organisation. The sanctuary stands to-day—the visible throne of the Deity among men, the house of Divine authority and Divine worship, the fountain of light and life, of health and blessing, to all generations. 1. How and in what respects does Christ become the glory of the sanctuary? (1) In due time Christ withdrew His bodily presence, that His spiritual presence might abound. (2) Christ, in the sanctuary, survives every change and outlives every foe. (3) Christ, in the sanctuary, draws after Him the whole range of human intelligence and culture. (4) He propagates Himself and His Spirit in the souls of all believers; and (5) He adds new dignity and grandeur to human souls in themselves, both for the present and the future life. 2. What is the demonstration of this manifested glory of Christ in the sanctuary? (1) Every house of Christian worship is a testimony that God exists, and that His promises continue. (2) Every Christian temple is a visible protest against all forms of infidelity, and opposition to the Gospel scheme of redemption. (3) It is a sign of that everlasting covenant of peace which God has made with His people. (4) It is a dwelling-place of a spiritual Christ on earth. (5) It is a witness of the faithfulness and constancy of God's providence over His people. (*B. Sunderland, D.D.*) *The glory of the latter house*:—The temple of Zerubbabel was inferior to the temple of Solomon in architectural beauty. Wherein, then, was its greater glory? The Kingdom of Christ rose out of the ruins of the old dispensation, and is become the eternal order of worship (see Heb. xii. 27, 28). I. THE GREATER GLORY OF THE GOSPEL APPEARS IN THE WIDER AREA IT COVERS. The tabernacle and temple were objects of national interest. Palestine was the only bright spot among all the countries of the world, and so great was the exclusiveness that the light did not travel beyond its boundaries, as if a wall had been built round it as high as heaven. It was the partition wall which Jesus came to break down. There was a breadth in the teachings of Jesus diametrically opposed to the prejudices of His countrymen. We, whose lives have fallen in the nineteenth century, can now survey the area of the latter temple better than they could. II. THE GREATER GLORY OF THE GOSPEL APPEARS IN THE GREATER STABILITY OF THE CHURCH. The temple of Solomon seemed a permanent building, but it was razed to the ground. The temple of Zerubbabel gave way to that of Herod. Three stages are visible in the development of the spiritual. God in creation was power and wisdom at some distance from us. God in the temple was nearer, and assumed the personal living form which communed with the people from the Mercy-seat. The Spirit

of God in us is the last stage, when all manifestations have given way to the real presence. III. THE GREATER GLORY OF THE GOSPEL WILL APPEAR IN THE GREATER RESULTS. Our lot is fallen in the "last days." We see the march of intellect and civilisation. We see kingdoms bowing to the authority of the Messiah. A succession of revolutions has brought us forward to the Gospel dispensation. We see another temple looming in the promise, the temple of God and the Lamb. (T. Davies, M.A.) *The greater glory of the latter house*:—1. The absolute dominion of the riches and splendour of the world belongs unto the Lord, who hath all these things in His power to dispose of as He pleases, and who is to be eyed, acknowledged, and submitted unto by every man in his portion or lot according as He dispenseth it. 2. It may satisfy the people of God in their wants to consider that God hath all they want at His command, and would not withhold it unless He saw such a dispensation tending to their good. 3. When the Lord withholds any glory or splendour from His people and work, it is for their advantage and flows from a purpose to give what is better, if they had eyes to see it; for when He withholds silver and gold, which they so much desired, He purposeth that "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." 4. The spiritual things of Christ's kingdom do far surpass all the legal administrations in glory, and do put more real splendour on any place where they are administered, than all the pomp of the world beside can do. 5. As peace and reconciliation with God is the allowance of Christ's subjects, which outshines all the splendour and glory of the world, so it is the great glory of the Gospel administrations that by them peace may be had through Jesus Christ, which was attainable by none of the works or ceremonies of the Law being rested on; therefore instead of their wonted splendour, and in opposition to former administrations, it is promised, that by Christ's coming, His death and doctrine, "in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (George Hutcheson.) *The glory of the second temple*:—Fifteen years after the commencement of the second temple Haggai uttered this prediction. Progress had been hindered by the indifference or the despair of those who were building it. Their hands became slack, and their hearts waxed faint in the work of the Lord. To furnish a stimulus and encouragement to them, Haggai was commissioned to utter this prediction. By the "former house" is to be understood the temple erected by Solomon. The great and overpowering honour of the building which the king of Israel raised was this, that it was the only building on earth erected to the true God. And God there vouchsafed to make visible to the very eyes of flesh a display of His uncreated majesty and glory. The prophet says that the "glory of the latter house" of the second temple was to be greater than the glory of the former. By what peculiar glory, then, was the second temple distinguished? In architecture or material there could be no comparison between the two. And the visible symbol of the Divine presence was never to be seen in the "latter house." 1. The glory was greater inasmuch as there the Son of God was made manifest in the likeness of human flesh. He was brought to this latter house as an infant for presentation. He visited it as a youth of twelve. He taught in its courts. He made public entry into Jerusalem, and exerted authority in purifying the temple. The simple fact of the Son of God assuming human nature is calculated to awaken a feeling of more profound admiration and awe than any such visible display of the Divine Majesty as that which dwelt of old above the mercy-seat. 2. As the manifestation of God in the flesh has brought down the character of God to the level of the understanding and the sympathies of men. 3. As there the Son of God was manifested as the messenger of mercy and reconciliation to sinners. (J. Bannerman, D.D.) *The future glory of the Church*:—The second temple was to be more glorious than the first. The temple spiritually is the Church. There being two temples among the Jews prefigured the fact that there would be two spiritual temples, two great churches among the Christians, the first and the second Christian Church. The first was given to the apostles, but has degenerated into mystery and superstition; the second is the Church meant by the New Jerusalem. The first would be destroyed by the spiritual Babylonians; the second would have greater glory than the former, but chiefly in this, that the Lord Himself would be more intimately present therein; there He would be Immanuel (God with us). Explain in what this greater glory consists. The glory of a Church is its wisdom. The glory of the New Church now forming by the Lord under the name of the New Jerusalem surpasses the glory of the former Church in the grand and beautiful character

of its disclosures on all subjects, but chiefly on the following—the Lord; His Word; the life which leads to heaven; death; the life after death. The chief glory, or the chief misfortune of man in the religion of thought, is his idea of God. He is infinite love and infinite wisdom in a Divine human form. The whole Divine trinity is in Him, as a human trinity is in a man. He is our Father. There is in all forms of nature a resemblance to humanity. All nature is human, and must have come from a Divine human Creator, a Divine Man in His infinite essence of love, wisdom, and power, from eternity, whom, therefore, it is not incredible to behold descending as a Divine Man in last principles as the Blessed Jesus. The Word of the Lord is glorious as seen in the light of the New Jerusalem. It is Divine wisdom clothed in human language. In all its sacred pages, whether they are history, prophecy, parable, or vision, there is a spiritual sense. The outside of the Scriptures is their least valuable part, the lowest step of the ladder. The Lord, the Church, the soul are everywhere the subjects. For want of a knowledge of the spiritual sense a large portion of the Bible is, to many readers, a dead record, and another large portion quite unintelligible. Then look at the life which leads to heaven. In many professors of religion the conduct of life has a very minute place. Much has been made of creeds, and but little of life. The great redeeming powers of religion have been held off by the prevalence of the dogma that good works do not contribute to salvation, but rather tend the other way. Religion, having been severed from the world, has made a sour, narrow religion, and a bad world. The spirit of love and the spirit of truth, like two guardian angels, should preside over every act of life, and sanctify the whole. Justice, in its widest sense, and religion, are the same (Micah vi. 8). Never will the world's work be rightly done until its labourers derive their motives from love to God and love to man. Now we come to death. What has the old dispensation to say about death? It speaks hesitatingly about the soul, as to whether it is in any shape or not. What becomes of it after death it cannot tell. The New Church teaches that the spirit is the man in perfect human form. It formed the body to itself, and whatever life the body had, it had from the spirit. Free from the body, the spirit will live more perfectly than before, because it will be no longer clogged by a body unequal to its wants. What about the life after death? The spiritual world is an inner sphere of being, filling the natural world as the soul does the body; visible to spiritual sight, and perceptible to all the spiritual senses, as the natural is to bodily sense. Into the realities of that world we come when we awake after death. (*J. Bailey, A.M.*) *The glory of the two houses*:—By the “glory” is here meant the Shechinah, or bright cloud, emblematic of God's presence and protection, which hovered over the Holy of Holies. I. THE TWO PERMANENT BUILDINGS WHICH THE JEWS ERECTED. David was grieved because, while he was accommodated in a palace of cedar, the Divine presence dwelt within curtains. He made preparations for a magnificent and durable temple. By the building of this structure, in the time of Solomon, an important promise was faithfully performed. At the consecration of it the personal Jehovah descended His radiant cloud, which filled the house as an emblem of His taking possession of it. In a night vision He assured Solomon that He had chosen this house as the home where His honour, His glory should dwell. Solomon's temple subsisted upwards of four hundred years, when it was utterly demolished by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. When the captives returned to Jerusalem they began to rebuild the temple, but were discouraged and delayed. To cheer them Haggai was sent, and he was to give this assurance, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.” II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH FULFILLED THIS PREDICTION. It is said to be clearly proved that Herod reared his temple on the yet standing foundations of the temple of Zerubbabel. The superior glory of the second temple could not have been any glory that Herod added to it; it must have rested on something spiritual. Haggai explains thus,—“He who should be desired and expected by all nations, both Jews and Gentiles,—“shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” Four years after the superstructure of Herod was fully built upon the foundations of the temple of Zerubbabel, the infant Jesus was introduced into that temple. The presence of Christ is the grand circumstance which verified the prediction of Haggai. Another point in which the glory of the latter house was greater than the glory of the former was the Court of the Gentiles. The temple of Solomon had only two courts—that of the priests and that of the Israelites. The Gentiles were considered as profane; and unless

converted, and wholly adopting the Jewish religion, disregarded and despised. This outer court in the second temple admitted all men to a certain consideration among the chosen people. This was a step toward the further admission of the nations into the entire covenant of peace. (*J. Grant.*) *Utility superior to beauty*:—There is an oriental proverb to the effect that the useful outlasts the beautiful, and I remember how an ingenious author illustrates this bit of practical philosophy by allusions to several famous works and names. The tomb of Moses, Israel's greatest chieftain, has never been known, but the traveller continues to quench his thirst at the Well of Jacob. Solomon's magnificent temple is gone, but the same king's reservoirs and conduits are still available. The ancient buildings of the Holy City are not to be found, but the Pool of Bethesda is clear and limpid and refreshing to-day. The columns of Persepolis, Persia's royal capital, are crumbling into decay, but its cisterns and aqueducts remain intact. The golden house of Nero at Rome is in ruins, but the Aqua Claudia pours into the city of the seven hills its bright and healthful stream. Many other triumphs of grandeur and beauty, that in their time commanded the admiration of the world, have disappeared, while humbler works of utility of the same period survive them. Certain it is that in the service of Christ usefulness alone is immortal. Many a brilliant discourse has been admired and forgotten, many a thrilling solo from a sacred oratorio has obtained a few days' enthusiastic praise, while a humble preacher's blunt appeal, or an uncultured singer's simple hymn, has had enduring results. The former were efforts of human genius, like the grand edifices adorning once famous cities; the latter were the lowly channels through which God's "living water" reached thirsty human souls. (*J. Grant.*)

Ver. 9. In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.—*The nature, source, and means of spiritual peace*:—Inquire—I. INTO THE NATURE OF THE PEACE HERE SPOKEN OF. It includes peace with God, i.e., forgiveness, acceptance, reconciliation with Him. When this is witnessed to the soul by the Spirit of God the enmity is removed, or the will is subdued, and the affections are brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Peace of conscience, arising from pardon of past sin, and power over sin. A peaceful, serene, tranquil frame of mind; and peace with all men. II. THE AUTHOR OF THIS PEACE, AND THE WAY IN WHICH HE WILL GIVE IT. It is not ourselves. Our own works cannot purchase it, nor reconcile us to God. It is not others; not their absolutions, prayers, or advices. It is the gift of God. He is its Author, and it comes from Him as a free gift. III. WHO ARE THE SUBJECTS OF IT, OR THE PERSONS TO WHOM HE WILL GIVE IT? It is purchased by Christ for all, and offered to all. But it cannot be possessed by the wicked. It cannot be the portion of the unbeliever. Repentance and faith are both the gifts of God, and must be sought in the use of prescribed means, such as hearing the Word of God and prayer. IV. THE PLACE WHERE HE WILL GIVE IT, AND THE TIME WHEN. All times and places may be considered holy under the Gospel. Nevertheless, when and where the Gospel is preached, and prayer offered to God, repentance and faith are usually given, and Christ in His Word and Spirit is peculiarly present. (*J. Benson.*) *God's gift of peace*:—The Jews were taught to entertain new and more spiritual ideas of what it was in which the true glory of God's house consisted,—that it was not in the grandeur of its elevation, nor the beauty of its decorations, nor the costliness of its furniture, though wrought in gold of Ophir, but in the presence of God there, and in the communication of peace to the contrite and humble spirit. I. WHAT IS THE PEACE HERE SPOKEN OF? It is a sense of reconciliation with God. When paradise was the abode of holiness, it was also the abode of peace; when once sin had entered, there was no peace to our first parents, so long as the taint of their disobedience remained unwashed away. The peace for which we are seeking is far removed from servile fear and bondage, and has in it the very spirit of a child. There is peace for us when we are enabled to look up to God as our heavenly Father, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope through Christ. II. WHAT IS OUR WARRANT FOR EXPECTING THIS PEACE? WHENCE IS IT TO BE OBTAINED? AND HOW ARE WE TO KNOW THAT IT IS OURS? The Gospel is specially the dispensation of peace; Christ is our peace. He is "the repairer of the breach," the way, the truth, the life, the door which leadeth unto the Father. There are systems full of error which, nevertheless, hold out fair promises of peace, and pretend that they alone can secure its possession. The infidel boasts that he can

give peace. Our peace depends on what Christ has done for us, and has promised to do in us, and not on what we can do in and for ourselves; and our possession of peace depends on the confidence with which we believe His word and rely upon His power. This is the teaching which gives peace to the troubled conscience, and we confidently assert that it is the teaching of our Church. (*Bishop Shirley.*) *Spiritual rest in political strife*:—It is Christ who really speaks to us, both out of the Old Testament and out of the New, this blessed message of the Lord, "In this place will I give peace." It is His Spirit which revealed it to the prophet; it is His Word which is uttered in the Gospel; it is He Himself who gives it to us now and for evermore. "He is our peace" (Eph. ii. 14). This was the glorious prospect lifted up before those who, coming back from the captivity of Zion, set to work on the restoration of that temple which they had never forgotten in a strange land. There was much, it is true, to sadden them. The place looked not like the ancient and beautiful house from which they had been driven seventy years before. And yet God told them to be strong and work, for He was with them. "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place I will give peace." Five centuries passed away, and all the nations were in expectation; and all the nations happened by Divine appointment to be at peace. This was but an outward thing, however blessed, compared with that holy rest prepared for the people of God, and brought into the world by that eternal Son of God, in whom righteousness and peace kissed each other. That Son of God was made a human babe, and the angels sang, "On earth peace." He grew to manhood, and always, though with warnings mingled, He spake of peace. He sailed upon the stormy waves, and said to them, "Peace be still." And so throughout His life. It is His promise concerning His sanctuary. "In this place will I give peace." I. HE HIMSELF IS IN THE MIDST OF US. There is a holy presence here, and this should quiet our hearts with reverence and godly fear, and yet fill us with peace and joy. We draw nigh to Him, and He draws nigh to us. We lift up our hearts to Him in supplication, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. II. HE GIVES US HERE HIS "GOSPEL OF PEACE." Even if the clergyman's heart is heavy, the lips of the evangelist utter the blessed tidings, and the word in season helps the soul of the weary. But the Gospel is only a pleasant song to us, until we act upon it in penitence and faith; but then obedience is the path to peace. III. HE KEEPS US SECRETLY IN HIS TABERNACLE FROM THE STRIFE OF TONGUES. Though His presence, realised even in common life, keeps us peaceful in the midst of strife, yet there is a special calm about His house which gives us pause and refreshment after we have striven, and before we go again into conflict—a calm which bids us, on the Lord's day and in the Lord's house, set aside all thoughts of party, all the bitterness of controversy, and, instead, pray for one another, that thus, as far as lieth in us, we may live peaceably with all men. Then, let all the occasions of your life, all the changes which you experience, be sanctified in the place where He, according to His promise, is sure to be found. Christ is here, so here is liberty and light, here is strength and comfort. Christ is here, and so when we come before Him with an "humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart," He meets us with that priceless blessing, "Peace be unto you." (*G. E. Jelf, M.A.*)

Vers. 11-14. Ask now the priests concerning the law.—*Human duty*:—

I. That the question of human DUTY IS TO BE DECIDED BY AN APPEAL TO DIVINE AUTHORITY. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Ask now the priests concerning the law." The question, of course, implies two things. 1. That there is a Divine written law for the regulation of human conduct. Though the law here refers to ceremonial institutes which were contained in the Levitical code, there is also a Divinely written law of a far higher significance—that moral law which rises out of man's relations, and is binding upon man as man, here and everywhere, now and for ever. It implies—2. That there are Divinely appointed interpreters of this law. "Ask now the priests." Under the old economy there were men appointed and qualified by God to expound the law to the people; and in every age there are men endowed with that high moral genius which gives them an insight into the eternal principles of moral obligation. The will of God is the standard of moral obligation. II. That the DISCHARGE OF DUTY REQUIRES THE SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE. It was the duty of the Jews now to rebuild the temple; but that duty they discharged not by merely bringing the stones and timbers

together and placing them in architectural order. It required the spirit of consecration. The prophet sought to impress this upon the mind of his fellow-countrymen engaged in this work by propounding two questions referring to points in the ceremonial law. The first had reference to the communication of the holiness of holy objects to other objects brought into contact with them. "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy?" In other words, whether, if a person carry holy flesh in a lappet of his garment, and touched any food in the lappet, it should become holy in consequence? The priests said, No! and rightly. Mere ceremonial holiness cannot impart virtue to our actions in daily life; cannot render our efforts in the service of God acceptable to Him. The second question was this: "If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean?" The priests answered and said: "It shall be unclean." "The sum," says an old writer, "of these two rules, is, that pollution is more easily communicated than sanctification; that is, there are many ways of vice, but only one of virtue, and a difficult one. Good implies perfection; evil commences with the slightest defect. Let not men think that living among good people will recommend them to God, if they are not good themselves. Conclusion. Mark—1. The transcendent importance of the spirit of obedience. 2. That man can more easily communicate evil to another than good. (*Homilist.*) If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean?—*The contagion of evil*:—The warning of the text is not addressed solely to those whose hearts have always been estranged from God, but also to those who have felt the power of God, and whose hearts have been lifted up by Him, and who have been enabled to work for a time in His strength. For even the latter are very apt to fall back into the notion that they have a spring of strength in themselves. The warning is taken from the ordinances of the Levitical law. The uncleanness and holiness spoken of are those pronounced to be such by that law. But the ordinances of the ceremonial law were designed to be types and witnesses of moral and spiritual truths. Indeed, the prophet himself in the latter part of the text declares this. Thus far we can readily go along with the text. You all know that if a man's hand is covered with dirt, it will defile everything it touches, even that which before may have been clean. In like manner a soul that is covered with any sort of filth or pollution must defile that which it touches. As a jaundiced eye sees the reflection of its own jaundice in the things around it, so does a jaundiced heart. If a soul is full of impurity, though you pour in clean water, it immediately becomes foul. There is a taint of sin in your hearts which runs through all your thoughts and feelings, through all your words and deeds. The first truth we have seen is, that they whose souls are defiled by some great moral impurity, must carry that impurity along with them into everything they may take in hand. Sin is itself death, spiritual death; and the uncleanness from this contact also spreads on everything around. The second truth is, that we are utterly unable to bring forth anything, whether in thought or deed, that shall be perfect in the sight of God. Hereby we betray a secret corruption of our nature, the taint of which spreads through our whole lives. We have seen that, when a man is unclean, he makes everything he touches unclean. But alas! the converse does not hold. Though he were clean, he would not make what he touches clean. We have the power of defiling; but we have not the power of purifying. In every part of the land it may be seen how catching vices are: the plague itself is scarcely more so. Sins will produce sins, rapidly and abundantly, even as the foulest vermin breed the most rapidly and numerous. There are habitual vices to which each age and class are prone—this is a proof how catching uncleanness is. What must the state of the world have been in the eyes of Him who beholds the secrets of the heart, and to whom every impurity is an abomination? As God abhors all manner of impurity, He willed to purge it away from the earth. He willed to speak to the world, "Be thou clean." He sent His Son to speak that word to the world, that word which God alone can speak effectually, either to the world at large, or to any individual soul. It is by the body and blood of Christ that our souls must be purified and washed from our sins. By the offering up of that holy body and blood on the Cross a change was wrought in the whole order of the world. The prince of this world was judged. These truths are full of practical consequences with regard to the whole regulation of our lives. We shall fly at once to the Purifier when the sense of our impurity oppresses us; and we shall be very careful in our choice

of companions. Moral disease being no less catching than bodily, you should be no less careful in shunning vicious companions. It is indeed the duty of every Christian to go to those who are unclean, with the purpose of making them clean, through the power of God, and the Word of God. At the same time, let us pray continually that He, who alone can purify our hearts, and keep them pure, will vouchsafe to do so, until the time arrives when all the world shall enjoy the blessed vision promised to the pure in heart—when all mankind, being cleansed from every idolatry of the flesh and spirit, shall see God. (*J. C. Hare, M.A.*)

Pollution.—1. Ritualism is the natural religion of the unsanctified heart, and the same tendencies to it that have created popery in the New Testament ages, existed also in the Old (vers. 11–13). 2. Pollution is much more readily given and taken than purity. One drop of filth will defile a vase of water, many drops of water will not purify a vase of filth. “Evil communications corrupt good manners” (vers. 11–13). 3. No tithings of mint, anise, and cummin, will compensate for neglecting the weightier matters of the law. Obedience is better than sacrifice. A pure hand is necessary to a pure offering (ver. 14). 4. Men are prone to assign any other cause for their sufferings than their sins, yet this is usually the true cause (ver. 15). 5. Disappointment of our hopes on earth should make us lift our eyes to heaven to learn the reason (ver. 16). 6. Affliction will harden the heart if it is not referred to God as the author (ver. 17). 7. Pondering the past is often the best way of providing for the future (ver. 18). 8. We may and ought to trust God’s promise to bless us, even though we may see no visible appearance of its fulfilment. “The vision will surely come and not tarry” (ver. 19). (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. So is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there is unclean.—*Works and pure hearts.*—They who have imbibed the true fear of God, do rightly serve Him though they may bring only a crumb of incense, and that others only profane the worship of God, though they bring many oxen; as a heathen poet says, “An impious right hand does not rightly worship the celestials.” The philosophers ever hold this principle—that no sacrifice is rightly offered to God except the mind be right and pure. But yet the philosophers, as well as the poets, adopted this false notion, by which Satan beguiled all men, that God is pacified by ceremonies: hence have proceeded so many expiations, in which foolish men trusted, and by which they thought that God would be propitious to them, though they obstinately continued daily to procure for themselves new punishments, and, as it were, avowedly to carry on war with God Himself. The prophet says that men not only lose all their labour, but also contract new pollution, when they seek to pacify God by their sacrifices, unaccompanied by inward purity. Works, however splendid they may appear before our eyes, are of no value or importance before God, except they flow from a pure heart. The fountain of works I consider to be integrity of heart, and the design and end is, when the object of men is to obey God, and to consecrate their life to Him. (*John Calvin.*)

Ver. 15. Consider . . . from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord.—*The house of God.*—1. These places of worship are strongholds of the religious principle of the community. The only thing in the form of religious sentiment which can do any good to the soul is that which recognises God, not as a mere existence, or mere abstraction, but as the author of life and blessing to all that live. This religious sentiment may become a religious principle. The religious sentiment, then, embracing the idea of obligation, is that which the service of this house is meant to inspire and cherish. What sort of an obligation must it be? If there is a God, He is a living person, standing in a certain relation to us, and having certain claims which must be answered. It is an obligation to lead respectable and decent lives. But is that high enough to reach up to God? The religious sentiment cannot be rightly felt except in the Christian way—by looking up to God as our Father with childlike confidence, united with awful veneration. When a man feels bound to form himself for holiness and heaven, then the religious spirit is intimately connected with the sweet influences of the house of God. 2. The object of the service of this house is to keep before the eyes of men a standard of character higher than they meet with in common business and care. Every one who cares to cherish the religious sentiment in himself loves the service of the house of God. Our great care should be that our “house for God” answers the purpose for which it is set apart,—that of awakening

and confirming religious principle in those who worship within its walls. Without this, the building will cumber the ground; with it, it will become in very deed the house of God, and the gate of heaven. (*W. B. O. Peabody, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. I smote you with blasting, and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labours of your hands.—*Blasting and mildew*:—Very useful and important are the fungi in the world's busy household. They are working at "chemical problems which have puzzled a Liebig and a Lavoisier," converting the noxious products of corruption into comely forms and nutritious substances, absorbing into living tissues effete matters which are fast hastening downwards to join the dark night of chaos and death. Parasites, most of them, upon dead plants, they economise the gases which would otherwise escape into the atmosphere and pollute it; and conserve, for the use of nobler forms, the subtle forces of life which would otherwise pass unprofitable into the mineral kingdom. It is one of the strangest things in the world, when we seriously think of it, to see a vigorous life-full cluster of fungi springing, phoenix-like, from a dead tree, exhausted of all its juices, bleached by the sun and rain of many summers, and ready to crumble into dust at the slightest touch. Death is here a new birth, and the grave a cradle. It is one of nature's many analogies of the human resurrection. But the resemblance is superficial and incomplete. Wisely have the fungi been provided, in the rapidity of their growth, the simplicity of their structure, the variety of their forms, and their amazing numbers, for their appointed task in the economy of nature. Not a leaf that falls from the bough, not a blade that withers on the lea, but is seized by the tiny fangs of some special fungus ordained to prey upon it; not a spot of earth can we examine, where vegetable life is capable of growing, but we shall find a vegetable as well as an insect parasite, keeping its growth in check, hastening its decay, and preserving its remains from being wasted. And out of the eater, too, cometh forth meat. In carrying out the wise and gracious purposes for which they have been designed, the fungi not unfrequently overstep the limits of usefulness, and commit wholesale destruction. They purify man's atmosphere, but they also destroy man's food. If their ravages could be confined to useless plants; if they were employed solely in reducing weeds to decay, they would be welcomed by man as among his greatest helps and blessings. But nature knows no straight, arbitrary line of demarcation, such as we draw, between what is useless and what is useful. To every natural good there is a recoil of evil. The fungi are indiscriminate in their attacks. They seize upon the corn which strengthens man's heart, as readily as upon the thorns and briars which cause him to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. In this our fallen condition, we must always count upon the blasting and the mildew; upon the years to be eaten by the locust, the canker-worm, the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, as surely as upon the covenant faithfulness of Him who promised that seed-time and harvest would never cease. Nature with reference to nature completely accomplishes her purposes; but nature with reference to man is not a perfect means to an end. Blasting and mildew were very frequent in Bible times and lands. So terrible were the ravages committed by these scourges, so sudden their appearance, so rapid their progress, so mysterious their origin and cause, that they were universally regarded not merely as a visitation of God, but as a special product of God's creative power. The cause and the effect were confounded. Fear prevented the Israelites from investigating the nature of the phenomenon. Modern science has given the true interpretation of the riddle. Blasting and mildew are conclusively ascertained to be produced by plants,—to be the diseases occasioned by the growth of minute fungi. Ever since plants have existed, these vegetable parasites have preyed upon them. They appear in greater or less abundance every year. They are fostered into excessive growth by certain favourable conditions of soil and climate, and checked in their development by certain unfavourable conditions. They are the commonplace everyday product of nature's laws. They are not special creations of God, but the ordinary growths of the vegetable kingdom. The miraculous element, in connection with God's judgments, was their extraordinary development and sudden appearance in immediate connection with Divine threatenings. As science advances superstition retires, and the phenomena attributed to supernatural causes are found to have been produced by the operation of physical law. But the miracles of the Bible are untouched by this principle. Science may teach us the economy of miracles, but it cannot persuade us of their unreality

and impossibility. A brief glance at the nature of the fungi concerned in the production of blasting and mildew may be interesting and instructive. It will teach us that nothing is so weak and small that the strength and wisdom of God cannot accomplish great ends by its instrumentality. There are four diseases in corn produced by fungi—smut, bunt, rust, and mildew. The black heads, covered with a soot-like dust, noticeable in the cornfields, are caused by a parasitic plant—a true fungus, capable of reproducing and extending itself indefinitely. The seed-vessels of this plant are exceedingly minute. One square inch of surface contains no less than eight millions; and if the seed-vessels be so small, what must the seeds themselves be? Bunt is even more destructive. It has an intolerable odour, like that of putrid fish. It is one of the common diseases to which wheat is subject. It confines its ravages entirely to the grain. It is rare to find any wheat-field altogether free from rust, or Red Robin. It is sometimes so abundant that a person passing among the stalks is completely painted with its rusty powder. It is found upon the wheat-plant at all stages of growth. The term mildew is vague and unsatisfactory. Properly it should be applied to a disease produced by a fungus known to botanists as *Puccinia graminis*. It is derived from the Saxon words, *Mehl-than*, meaning “meal-dew.” It makes its first appearance in the cornfields in May or June, and first takes possession of the lower green leaves, which become sickly. When the corn is nearly or fully ripe, the straw and the culm are profusely streaked with blackish spots, ranging in length from a minute dot to an inch. These evils are found all over the world, wherever corn is grown. All these blights and mildews on the corn-crops and the green crops may well be called by God, “My great army.” Individually minute and insignificant, by the sheer force of untold numbers they are mightier for harm than storms and earthquakes. It is indeed a fortunate circumstance that they refuse to grow generally except in stagnant ill-drained places, and under peculiar conditions of warmth and moisture; for, otherwise if, quick with life as they are, they were to germinate wherever they alighted, the fig-tree would not blossom, and there would be no fruit in the vines, the labour of the olives would fail, and the fields would yield no meat. (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*)

Insensibility under material evil:—This insensibility, which prevents people from turning to the Lord, is a moral evil, and ought to be charged on the guilty.

1. Instances and examples of this insensibility (Isa. v. 24, 25, ix. 17, 20, 21; Amos iv. 6–11; Jer. v. 3; Rev. ix. 20, 21). Human nature continues always the same. Some vices have a local and temporary prevalence. Insensibility is the palsy of the soul; a stupor that with respect to spiritual things seizeth all its faculties. Hence in its nature it is both immoral and penal; penal, as a judicial stroke on the minds and consciences of men from a righteous and provoked God; immoral, as a course of opposition to His Word and providence, comprehending what Scripture means by stopping the ear, shutting the eyes, hardening the neck, pulling away the shoulder, walking contrary to the Lord, and in the way of our own heart. This insensibility is a reigning principle in natural men. Redemption by Christ from the curse of the law secures His people against its dominion, and yet it frequently prevails and hurts the spiritual life.
2. Investigate its cause. That is atheism, which may be either gross or refined. Though seldom avowed, gross atheism has a secretly malignant influence on manners in the middle and lower ranks of society. There is a refined atheism among persons who profess to know God, and in works deny Him. The truths they hold are not operative and holy principles.
3. Charge this insensibility upon the guilty as a moral evil, which prevents them from turning to the Lord when He smites them with material evil.

- (1) Those charged with it are the Lord's people.
- (2) The charge is made by a man invested with the authority of a prophet.
- (3) The charge is made in the name of the Lord.
- (4) He in whose name the charge is made knew it to be just.
- (5) The charge was delivered publicly, in the hearing and presence of the guilty.
- (6) The charge was designed to bring former misconduct to remembrance, and to encourage them to present duty.

Application—1. Sinners are destroyers of their own comfort. 2. The course of nature filleth the purpose and performeth the Word of the Lord. 3. The Lord hath kind intentions in smiting His people. 4. Sensible and material things are uncertain property. (*A. Shanks.*)

Material evil the scourge of moral evil:—There are no dispensations prosperous or adverse, with which we are favoured or chastised, but in the Word of God everything may be found that is necessary to assist our exercise and regulate our behaviour under them.

When people refuse to hear, they are sometimes smitten on a tender part, and constrained to feel. 1. Deal with material evil: such as blasting, mildew, and hail. 2. Deal with moral evil. This must be sin. Such as—(1) Love to the world. (2) Neglect of temple-building. (3) A notion that material powers act of themselves, independent of God. This is a branch of atheism, and a virtual denial of the Divine overruling providence. 3. Show the efficiency of God in scourging with the one for the other. (1) The Lord hath determined to smite and afflict with these evils. (2) The Lord createth this evil, and giveth its commission. Till He have occasion for its service, it doth not exist. (3) The Lord hath appointed and always observeth the seasons of smiting. The scourge is neither taken up nor laid down at random. (4) Places where the evil is collected and inflicted are marked out by the justice of God. (5) A portion of evil is measured out and allotted for each body of the executioners. Consider—1. Moral evils among us have a striking resemblance to those which prevailed among the Israelites in the days of Haggai. 2. The Lord would be just were He to smite us, as He smote them. We have given Him provocation. Our light is clearer, our privileges are richer, and our iniquities exceed theirs in number and aggravation. Material evil is still at the Lord's call, and ready to fulfil His Word. (*Ibid.*) *Temporal chastisements*.—The scope of the second part of this sermon is to show that however God will put difference betwixt workers, and knoweth who are sincere and who are not, yet to encourage them to be diligent in it, as being a work which He approves in itself, and which He will reward with temporal blessing, and a change of His former dispensations. 1. Though the Lord's dispensations be visible and felt by all, yet the right considering and understanding of them is a work of much difficulty, and to which men need serious stirring up, especially to take up the right cause of them. 2. Famine and scarcity is one of the public scourges whereby the Lord chastises the sinful contempt and negligence of His people in His work and service; and He will be conspicuous in inflicting of it. 3. As it is the usual plague accompanying common judgments that they do not work upon the hearts of men, to draw them nearer God, but rather harden them; so such an impenitent disposition when God strikes, is a ground of further controversy; therefore He marks by the way their stupidity. "Yet ye turned not to Me, saith the Lord." 4. However temporal things are not to be looked on as the chief reward of serving God, nor as absolutely promised, nor yet are they to be so much looked to under the Gospel, as the Church of the Jews might under their pedagogy; yet in this the promise, even concerning these things, holds good, that following God hath the promise of this life, in so far as it is for the followers' good; that God's changing adversity into prosperity when a people set about His work, should be a confirmation to their faith, and strengthen their hands; that whatever adversity come on the Church, it is not to be fathered on God's work, as if it had been the cause of her woe; that as neglecters of God's work are real losers in their own affairs, and will prove so in the end, so followers of His work have a real advantage in it; and, in a word, that God's work is never followed without a blessing evidenced some way or other to the godly's satisfaction. 5. It is a profitable study to remark the advantages of following God, and to study encouragement in that duty. So much are we taught by the Lord's exciting them to consider the change of His dealing, as trying with the very day of their amending their fault. 6. God is so sovereign and absolute a Lord of all things, and hath times and seasons, blessings and cursings so in His hands, as He may undertake to do things, whereof there is no visible probability or certainty in the second causes, and can certainly perform them: therefore doth He undertake to bless them, when second causes and the season could speak no such thing. 7. It is the prerogative of God only to know future contingent events, which depend on times and seasons, and uncertain second causes, and their influences, but only by immediate revelation; this is held forth as God's prerogative, by His extraordinary prophet, to foretell in the midst of winter, what the succeeding harvest should produce. (*George Hutcheson.*)

Ver. 19. *From this day will I bless you.*—*The birthday of blessing*.—The cause of much ill success in life is often to be found in the want of zeal for God's house. The temple was a type of that Church of which every individual believer is a living stone. From the day when the foundation of that temple is laid, the promise of the text is ours. When is the foundation day from which the blessing

dates? In one sense it is from everlasting, for God's people are, in purpose, part of the building from before all time. But the day of conversion is the day on which is laid—as far as our experience is concerned—the foundation of our salvation. I. A SPECIFIED DAY. This blessed day goes by different names in Scripture. A day of espousals: the day in which Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, wins the heart of His bride. A day of power. It is a mighty act to convert a sinner, infinitely beyond the power of man, and glorifying even to the omnipotence of God. The "day of salvation." This name describes itself. 1. This day often has a cloudy dawning. The day of grace begins before there is actual light. Just before the light breaks in, the power of darkness makes its most desperate resistance. 2. The day has often a secret dawning. There are those who cannot say exactly when or how they were converted. Foolishly they fear they can never have been converted at all, as they are unable to say it was then, and it was there. 3. Sometimes this day has an early, and sometimes a long-delayed dawn. God has no fixed age at which to convert. 4. This day, like all others, has a silent dawn. It is seen, but not heard. 5. The dawning of this day, like the dawning of all other days, is irresistible. If it is the work of God, it must stand. 6. The dawn is but the commencement of the day. The morning is the noon in childhood; the noon is but the dawn fully developed. II. A DECLARED BLESSING. It includes all spiritual blessings; pardon, peace, &c. It rests on all our temporal affairs. It extends to all future things. (*Archibald G. Brown.*) *Promises to bless encouragements to work:*—1. Concerning the great Promiser, the following considerations are interesting. (1) He is Jehovah. (2) The Promiser is the God of the people to whom the promises are made. (3) The Promiser is strong and faithful round about. (4) The Promiser is Lord of elements and seasons. 2. Concerning the good things which the Lord our God promises. Comprehended in the term, "bless." Includes—(1) The removal of material evils. (2) Means of fertility and plenty. (3) A blessing with the means. (4) A blessing upon the possession and use of those good things which the Lord produces by the means. 3. The people whom the Lord promiseth to bless. (1) They were His own people. (2) A people for whom the Promiser had lately done great things. (3) A people who had been negligent and slothful in the work which the authority of the Promiser required, and gratitude to their Redeemer bound them to perform. (4) A people whose negligence had been chastised. (5) A people who were now learning to do well. 4. The day on which the Lord promiseth to bless His people. (1) A specified day. (2) The day on which they turned to the Lord, and began to build. (3) The day on which the promise began to be performed. Learn—1. For the good things of this life the people of God have His covenant and promises. 2. Operations of material power are operations of God. 3. The zeal of the Lord of hosts hath done great things for the house of His name. 4. Building the house of the Lord is connected with blessing. (*A. Shanks.*) *The benediction of Haggai:*—These are the words of Haggai, whom the Lord raised up in his old age for the purpose of calling His people from the sin of religious indifference to the earnest performance of duty. As God's prophet, it was his duty to expostulate, to trace the connection between sinful neglect and its effects, to picture in dark but true colours the woes of the people, but also to pronounce the promise of benediction and peace. I. THE PROMISE ASSERTS THAT IN GOD AND FROM GOD IS THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. There is nothing we can satisfactorily substitute for the blessing of God. 2. If we have it we need fear no evil from any other source. II. THE PROMISE DIRECTLY REFERS TO TEMPORAL BLESSING, BUT INCLUDES SPIRITUAL. The picture presented is descriptive of the people's estate. We ought to connect the goodness and love of God with all the material blessedness of life, as well as with the higher spiritual side of it. There is no department of life from which God need be shut out. But the promise certainly includes the higher blessings belonging to spiritual life and development. III. THE PROMISE IS GIVEN AS THE RESULT OF OBEDIENCE, THE SINCERITY OF WHICH PRACTICAL PROOF HAS BEEN SUPPLIED. We must not try to drive a bargain with God. The service our Lord wants is the service of faith and love. Let that be rendered and the blessing may tarry, but come it will, and just because it has tarried it may be all the richer and better. IV. THE PROMISE IS FIXED AND CONTINUOUS. "From this day." That is definite enough. The benediction had been stored up—now it was to fall like the refreshing rain over all the land. And the blessing is to be continuous. To-day, and every succeeding day, I will bless you. The promise is most reliable. From the words

of the promise we look to Him who made it. He is able to fulfil it. (*Adam Scott.*) *The day of dedication to God is the day of blessing*:—I. THE PROMISE—blessing. This blessing of the Lord conveys a promise that He would not only withdraw the evils under which they suffered, and send fertility and plenty, but also pour down on them the Spirit of His grace. Esau was blessed with outward prosperity. Jacob had the full blessing, spiritual and temporal. He whom God blesses is blessed here and hereafter, in body and in soul. II. THE TIME OF IT:—"from this day"; that is, from the day the foundation of the temple was laid. On this the prophet lays great stress. Who has not noticed a turn of providence in favour of those who have returned into the way of duty; and that, from that very day, God has blessed them? Indeed, this is an unchangeable law in God's government of the world. III. THE REASON OF THIS PROMISE OF THE LORD. It seems that the people busied themselves with their own temporal affairs, purposing to build the temple when they could better afford it. God frustrated their selfish policy, by sending blasting and mildew in their fields, and causing their money to waste away insensibly, as though it had been put into a bag with holes. But when they reversed their mode of proceeding, from that very day God blessed them. God ordinarily proceeds to deal with men as they deal with Him. They who freely offer to Him their goods to carry on His work are blessed by Him with increase. IV. THIS TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM WAS TYPICAL OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, OF WHICH HE IS THE FOUNDATION AND THE SUPERSTRUCTURE. In this spiritual house we are all more immediately interested than in the building of the material temple. As Christians, we are all members of this spiritual building. Are we building on Christ, the only foundation? (*Alfred Jones, T.A.*)

Vers. 20-23. *And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms.*—*The blessing of calamities*:—These are the concluding words of the prophecies of Haggai. The Old Testament is one continual declaration and showing forth of this truth, that sin, when it has conceived, brings forth death, and all the family of death. On the contrary, the godly, who give themselves up to doing the Lord's will, still find that God blesses them,—with peace; with all manner of spiritual graces; with the light of His countenance; and, may be, with worldly prosperity. Whenever God executes judgment it must be against evil. Nothing but evil can move the wrath of God. Nor does God ever shake, or overthrow, or destroy anything, except by reason of evil. The natural man imagines a God who cares not about the life or death of His creatures, who merely creates them to show forth His power and His skill. This image is altogether different from the true God, as He has revealed Himself to mankind in His Word, and by the incarnation of His only-begotten Son. The true God has no pleasure in the ebb and flow of life and death. He wills life, not death. The only thing God wills to destroy is sin—not the sinner, but the sin. When He destroys the sinner, it is solely for the sake of the sin. The works of destruction spoken of in the text are a part of that warfare which God is continually waging against sin and all manner of evil, and accordingly agree in their spirit and purpose with the barrenness and blasting and mildew sent upon the Israelites, because they had neglected their appointed work of building the house of the Lord. When God takes in hand a work of destruction, it is never purely and entirely a work of destruction. Whenever God executes judgment, mercy is always going along with judgment. Were not this God's purpose, He would be giving up the victory to the spirit of evil, and death would triumph over life. This then is the end and purpose of Haggai's prophecy. It speaks of terrible and awful things; but it ends with words of comfort and peace. It says that, while the nations around Judea were to be shaken and disturbed by wars and divers disasters, and while many were to perish, Zerubbabel would establish the remnant of God's people in the land of their fathers; and so, we know, he did. The coming of Zerubbabel, which is spoken of as the coming of the desire of all nations, whereby the house of the Lord was to be filled with glory, was a type of a threefold fulfilment, one of which has already taken place once for all; one of which has been continually taking place ever since, and is continually taking place at this day; and one of which will take place hereafter: and all these fulfilments are accompanied by signs more or less like those foretold in the text, as ordained to attend the coming of Zerubbabel. Thus the coming of Zerubbabel was a type of Christ's coming in the flesh. Zerubbabel was not really the Desire of all nations, but Christ was. Zerubbabel could not fill God's house with glory, but Christ did fill it with an infinite,

undying, heavenly glory. . . . Whenever God has purposed to raise His Church to a higher stage of power and glory, the world has been shaken by the new life which has entered and taken possession of it. The heart of the Christian will not fail when he sees the shaking of the nations, or of the powers of heaven. He will not be troubled or disquieted by fears, as though evil were about to gain victory over good. Our Lord's promise is, that, from amid the clouds and the storm, the sign of the Son of Man shall come forth with power and great glory. (J. C. Hare, M.A.)

Terrible revolutions.—These verses remind us—I. THAT THE REVOLUTIONS AMONGST MANKIND ARE SOMETIMES VERY TERRIBLE. Here we read of the "shaking of the heavens and the earth," the "crash of thrones," the "destruction of kingdoms," the "overthrow of chariots," &c. What the particular revolutions referred to here are, cannot be determined. Such revolutions imply the existence and prevalence of two antagonistic moral principles in the world—good and evil. These are the Titanic chieftains in all the battles, the elemental forces in all the convulsions of the world. It is truth against error, right against wrong, liberty against thralldom, virtue against vice. II. THAT GOD HAS TO DO EVEN WITH THE MOST TERRIBLE OF THESE REVOLUTIONS. "I will shake the heavens, I will overthrow the throne," &c. "I will destroy the strength," &c. Inasmuch (1) As God is eternally against the false and the wrong and the tyrannic, He may be said to be Author of these revolutions. Inasmuch (2) As He can prevent them, He may be said to be the Author of these revolutions. He does not originate them, but He permits them. He could annihilate all wicked doers by a volition, He allows them to fight themselves often to death in battling against the right and the true. "The Lord sitteth upon the flood." He sits in serene majesty, controlling all the fury of the battling forces. He "holds the winds in His fist." III. THAT THE GOOD MAN IS SAFE IN THE MOST TREMENDOUS REVOLUTIONS OF TIME. "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts." What is here said of Zerubbabel suggests three thoughts. (1) That good men sustain the highest office. Zerubbabel was not only a servant, but a "chosen servant." He was selected for the work of rebuilding the temple. It suggests (2) That good men will receive the highest distinction. "I will make thee as a signet." A signet indicates, (a) Worth. It was a ring with a seal on it, worn on the finger, as an ornament of great value. Good men are elsewhere represented as God's jewels. A signet indicates, (b) Authority. The signet of an Eastern monarch was a sign of delegated authority. A good man is invested with the highest authority—the authority to fight against wrong and to promote right, at all times and in every place. It suggests (3) That good men will always be safely kept. Jehovah says this to Zerubbabel. Amidst all evil, "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (*Homilist.*) *The safety of God's people amidst the coming commotions.*—1. Great political convulsions may be expected in the future, as well as in the past, because the same reason exists for them; the ungodly nature of existing political forms (ver. 21). 2. Wars, revolutions, and tumults of nations are all working out God's designs of mercy to the world, by means of His Church (ver. 22). 3. Amidst all the convulsions of human history, the people of God are safe, the gates of hell can never prevail against the Church. The past in this respect is prophet of the future (ver. 23). 4. The best protection for any nation, the surest guarantee for its political existence, is a living, working Church in its midst, for as long as the stream of national life carries the vessel in which Christ is carried, that stream shall flow on in safety. Sodom shall stand as long as a righteous Lot is found in it (ver. 23). The general drift of this prophecy by Haggai may now be perceived. His specific work was to urge the rebuilding of the temple. This work was important, because the temple was the seat of the theocracy, and the theocracy was the existing form of the great work of redemption. To erect that, and thus prepare for the re-inauguration of the temple-worship, was the great work of the restoration. To urge them to this work, the prophet tears away their subtleties and excuses; shows them how they had already suffered by its neglect; develops to them the real greatness of the work, in spite of its outward littleness, as a necessary link in the great purposes of redemption; and guarantees the safety of the theocratic people amidst all the convulsions that were to come on the earth. All these predictions have been fulfilled to the letter, proving that Haggai was what he claimed to be, a true prophet of Jehovah. (T. V. Moore, D.D.)

Ver. 23. Will make thee a signet: for I have chosen thee.—*God's acceptance of Zerubbabel*.:—This text acquaints us with God's gracious purpose to magnify Zerubbabel, and to put honour upon him. Consider it in a three-fold notion. I. AS A PROPHECY. Directed to Zerubbabel, acquainting him with the future events in the world, and what shall betide him, and his people under him. It is the privilege of His Church, and chosen ones; they have those *arcana imperii* made known unto them. It is His care for them to settle, and support them against future events. II. AS A PROMISE. It betokens good to him. It is a reward assured to Zerubbabel for what he had done. He had been zealous for his God, for His temple and worship; a promise of his future advancement. In a mystical sense the text is understood of Christ. The text is a Royal Charter made to Zerubbabel. Here is the time set; "in that day." The person to be advanced; "Zerubbabel, My servant." The author of the advancement; that is God. The advancement itself; "I will make thee a signet." The ground and reason; "for I have chosen thee." The ratification of this promise; it is sealed with the seal of the living God. Apply this text to ourselves. 1. It is our comfort that we may do so, that we stand in such terms with God, that the promises to His ancient people may, with good warrant, be applied and transferred to us. 2. Is it not a blessing and comfort that we have a Zerubbabel to be prince and captain of this people of God? (By Zerubbabel the preacher here refers to Charles I.) (*Geo. Stradling, S.T.P.*)