

track, led by the divine hand, and yet in a manner harmonious with human freedom. I would observe further that Cyrus made the proclamation of his own free will. God stirred his heart, but did not compel him to take this course. What I mean is just this. God acted upon the mind of Cyrus in such a way that he willingly made the proclamation. It may have been that God influenced the heart of Cyrus indirectly rather than directly, through human means and instrumentalities. It is possible that Daniel may have had an interview with this noble prince in Babylon, and pointed out to him the grand opportunity that he had to confer special favor upon the desolate Jews, who were pining for their native land. Josephus distinctly states that Cyrus was shown the places in Isaiah where he was mentioned by name, and his duty indicated to him. Granted that this was the case, nevertheless God was behind controlling and directing all these agencies, so that they might have the desired effect. Still, we must guard against supposing that God wrought upon the mind of Cyrus in any arbitrary manner, that God compelled him to do what he was unwilling to do. It was a free, spontaneous action on the part of Cyrus. A great change came over his motives, a strange impulse came upon him, and he of his own free will issued the great proclamation. Man is free. Yet, he would not be free, if he were forced to do right. Mind cannot be governed by the same laws as matter. "Mind cannot be controlled by force." "Compulsion is an impossible element in the government of mind." You may compel a person to do a thing, but all the same, you have not carried his volitions. God has access to the human mind, to the source of motive and volition, but he acts in such a way that the human will thus acted upon will freely, and of itself, originate good action. Persuasion, drawing, not compulsion, is the divine method. God will not violate human freedom. God never compelled anyone to do a right action, nor to become a Christian. Christ himself refusing, although possessed of divine power, to use any coercive measures, mournfully said, admitting the freedom of the will to choose good or evil, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life" Cyrus freely, willingly, made the proclamation.

III. We come to notice briefly the substance of the proclamation. The great central topic is evidently—"the building of an house." Even the return of the captives, if we take a profound conception of the ethical signification of the record, is but a means