

scribe, some three-quarters of a century later ; and the last company thirteen years later went up under the patriotic Nehemiah. Among the first company (under Zerubbabel) was very likely Haggai, the prophet whose messages are recorded in this book. For some time he prophesied, spake for God, in Jerusalem to those who had returned from the captivity. His main work, so far as indicated in this book which bears his name, was encouraging and urging the returned people to go on heartily with the work of God desired them to perform, especially rebuilding the temple. It is with that our text has to do so largely. From these verses we may, we think, very fairly deduce the theme.

God's Jealousy for His Cause, in connection with which let us notice :

I. The state of God's Cause as indicated by the Text.

In what state was God's cause among the returned in Jerusalem at the time ? That may be judged by the condition in which God's house was, and their attitude towards it. That is usually a safe test. The state of God's house may be taken as an index of the interest taken in His cause. When the house of God is neglected and out of repair we may be sure religion is at low ebb. When private residences are beautiful, costly and well furnished, and the house of God dilapidated the religious spirit is sickly. When, in the house of God, the rain comes through a leaky roof, currents of autumn or winter winds come through open crevices or broken windows ; when cobwebs occupy the corners and dust covers pews and floors, and clouds of smoke issue from poorly kept stoves or furnaces, there is no room for doubt that God's cause does not occupy a supreme, not even a prominent place in the thoughts or heart. It is indeed possible to have grand and imposing edifices set apart for religious purposes, to have them gorgeously furnished and to have all the appointments attended with jealous care—it is we say possible to have these—where there is little pure and undefiled religion ; but it will still hold true that where God's house is treated with indifference and ne-