

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### ZECHARIAH AND MALACHI.

#### ZECHARIAH.

These, with Haggai, constitute the prophets of the restoration, i.e., those who discharged their office after the return from Babylon. The most important of them is Zechariah. Of his personal history little is known. While yet a young man he came up from Babylon with his grandfather Iddo (Neh. xii. 16), one of "the priests, the chief of the fathers," who accompanied Zerubbabel the leader of the first colony of returning exiles, 536 B.C. Zechariah was therefore, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, a priest as well as a prophet, but also like them obtained his chief distinction in the latter office. His first recorded utterance is dated in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, two months after the first address of Haggai. The two prophets, therefore, were contemporary, and as we learn from Ezra v. 1, acted in concert so far as concerned their first object—the rebuilding of the temple. In this Haggai led the way, and then left the work to the younger man, who, however, by no means confined his prophetic activity to this narrow scope.

This book consists of two parts, widely distinguished from each other. The first (chaps. 1-8) has its separate portions dated, and applies immediately to the circumstances of those to whom it was delivered; the second (chaps. 9-14) bears no date, and was probably delivered long after what precedes it. It appears to be a general outlook upon the future, reaching even to the time of the end.

The first part is distinguished by a series of symbolical visions, all given in the course of one night and all closely connected together. The first one represents a horseman in a lowly valley, who receives reports from other horsemen as to the result of their mission through the earth, and learning that all things there are peaceful while the chosen people are still in a sad state, begins to intercede for them. The prophet announces that this intercession is successful. The second vision shows four fierce horns, emblems of strength and violence, confronted by four carpenters or smiths, able to beat them down; thus indicating that the friends of Zion are as numerous as her foes and that for every evil there is a remedy. The third vision (ii. 1-13), by the symbol of a man with a measuring line in his hand, shows that the despoiling of the nations is to secure the enlargement as well as the defence of the people by the indwelling of their covenant Lord. The fourth vision exhibits the forgiveness of sin, which had been the cause of all the previous troubles. The high priest is seen standing before God in filthy garb and accused by Satan; whereupon Satan is rebuked, and the filthy garments are replaced by festal raiment and a spotless mitre in token that iniquity is freely forgiven. The necessary counterpart to this is set forth in the fifth vision (iv. 1-14), representing the church as a golden candlestick whose lamps are filled with oil from living trees on either hand, so that she is not only justified, but sanctified by divine grace. The next vision, that of the flying roll filled with curses against transgressors, guarded the preceding from misapprehension, as if there were impunity for the impenitent. The seventh, that of the woman crushed into a measure and carried to Shinar, enforces the same point by suggesting another and yet longer exile. The eighth vision returns to the point of beginning, and by its chariots of war indicates the fulfilment of what there was pledged. The symbolical action which follows, viz., the crowning of the high priest with crowns made from gold and silver brought from Babylon, represented the consecration of the nations with their wealth to the Messiah.

The foregoing visions and symbols exerted a happy influence in stimulating the restored exiles in rebuilding the temple. The two following chapters give the prophet's answer to the question whether it was needful to continue the fasts commemorating the steps of Jerusalem's overthrow. The prophet, after rebuking the formalism which suggested the inquiry, announces a period of great prosperity, declares that the fasts shall become festivals, and then predicts the conversion of the nations.

The second part of the book looks forward to the future. Chapter ix. describes the conquests of Alexander, foretells the Messiah's kingdom, and then returns to set forth the victory of the covenant people

over the Seleucidae. Chapter x. continues the prediction of blessings. Chapter xi., in a mysterious form, sets forth the rejection of the good Shepherd by those whom He would fain guide and deliver. The next chapter describes under the forms of the Old Dispensation the struggle and victory of the early church (vs. 1-9), and then the repentance and faith which are the inward conditions of this struggle. Then follows, in chapter xiii., a vivid description of the fruits of penitence, winding up with a picture of the suffering Messiah. The last chapter sets forth the final conflict and triumph of God's kingdom.

The book is, in many respects, difficult of exact interpretation, but its whole tone is edifying and consolatory. Its predictions of the Messiah are clear and striking—first, as Jehovah's lowly servant, the Branch (viii. 8); then, that servant as priest and king building the temple (vi. 12, 13); thirdly, as a peaceful but universal monarch (ix. 9, 10); fourthly, a shepherd, scorned and betrayed for a mean price (xi. 12, 13); fifthly, His pierced form a means of conversion (xii. 10); and lastly, the fellow of Jehovah smitten by Jehovah himself (xiii. 7). Its references to the ultimate diffusion of the truth, far beyond the limits of the historic Israel, are frequent and animated. See ii. 11; vi. 15; viii. 20-23; ix. 10, and especially the vivid and picturesque description in xiv. 16-21, where the conversion of the nations is set forth under the figure of a universal pilgrimage to keep the feast of tabernacles, and even the bells on the horses bear the same motto which once flashed from the diadem of the high priest—"HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

#### MALACHI.

Nearly a century had passed after Zechariah when the last prophet of the Old Testament appeared. He appears to have been a cotemporary of Nehemiah, and encountered some of the same difficulties which called out the energy of that upright ruler. The Jews had been cured by the exile of their proneness to idolatry, but while firmly adhering to the ancestral faith, were led into the error of formalism. And not finding the brilliant predictions of the earlier prophets fulfilled in their experience, fell into an ungrateful, murmuring spirit, and questioned the existence or the fairness of God's providential government. They had relapsed also into the old sin of marrying heathen wives, which Ezra had sternly rebuked nearly fifty years before. It is not surprising, therefore, that the tone of Malachi is stern and threatening; yet, as usual, in the Old Testament the severest denunciations of judgment are relieved by glowing references to the great deliverance to come. Thus we are told (i. 11) of a day when from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, God's name shall be great among the nations, and that not merely in Jerusalem, but in every place, incense and a pure offering shall be offered to that name. Again, it is expressly said (iii. 1-4) that the Lord's messenger shall come to prepare His way, and after him the Lord himself, even the angel of the covenant; and though he shall be like a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap, yet the issue of his purifying process shall be the acceptance of the people and their services, just as in the best days of old. And the pledge of this is the fact that the Lord changes not.

Of a like character is the precious promise (iii. 10) that the punctual payment of the tithes would secure a blessing so large as to surpass their room to receive; the assurance (iii. 17) that they, who, amid gloom and discouragement, fear God and think upon His name, are His peculiar treasure, whom He guards as one does a loving and obedient child; and finally, that upon them, even in the great and dreadful day of the Lord, the Sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings.

The book, as a whole, is a fitting close to the Old Testament. It resumes the ethical tone of Moses and Elijah, holds fast ritual and righteousness at once, vindicates the ways of Providence in the present, and opens bright glimpses of the better days to come. That its last verse ends with the word *curse* only sharpens the contrast with the later revelation whose title is the gospel or the good news of God.—*Rev. Talbot W. Chambers, D.D., in Westminster Teacher.*

#### VICTOR HUGO'S IDEAL POPE.

A few months ago a little book in verse was published by Victor Hugo, entitled "Le Pape," of which very little has been said in America, and yet it is quite worthy of notice on account of its original conception,

its life-like pictures, and its severe blows at the Papacy. It has had a wide circulation in France, where anything in this line is now eagerly sought after.

The great poet first presents to us the Pope in his bed at the Vatican, yielding to sleep. Then we are made to listen to the words uttered by the "Holy Father" in his dreams. His interview with the kings is quite characteristic. He opposes their pretensions, affirming that God has not made kings, and that man is equal to man. The kings are astonished, and ask the Pope if he is not himself a king, to which he replies, "I? to reign? Not I!" "Then what do you do?" "I love," answers the Roman pontiff. The next scene, for this dream is a little drama, the Pope, from the steps of the Vatican, speaks to the city of Rome and to the world:

"Listen! O ye men, covered with shadows, and whom servile imposture has so long led astray! the sceptre is vain, the throne is black, the purple is vile. Whoever you are, sons of the Father, listen one and all! There is under the great heavens but one purple, love; but one throne, innocence. The dawn and the dark night struggle in man as two combatants striving to kill each other; the priest is a pilot; he must accustom himself to the light, so that his soul may be illumined. All seek to grow in the sunlight, the flower, man, thought. . . . I am blind like you all, my friends! I am ignorant of man, of God and of the world. Three crowns have been placed on my brow, the symbols of a three-fold ignorance. He who is called a pope is clothed with appearances. Men who are my brethren seem to be my valets; I know not why I dwell in this palace; I know not why I wear a diadem. They call me Lord of Lords, Supreme Chief, Sovereign Pontiff, King by Heaven chosen. O peoples, nations, listen! I have discovered that I am a poor man. Hence I depart from this palace, hoping that this gold will pardon me, and that this wealth and all these treasures and the frightful luxury from which I escape, will not curse me to have lived in this purple, I a phantom, who am made to dwell under the thatch. Human conscience is my sister; I am going to commune with her. . . . As Noah went out of the ark thoughtful, so I leave this palace. . . . I set out to run to the help of every mind that doubts and every heart that sinks. I go into the deserts, in the hamlets, wandering among the briars and the stones of the ravine as did Jesus, the Divine barefooted one. He who owns nothing takes possession of the world when he unites with humanity, cheers hearts, increases faith and gives life to souls. I give up the earth to kings, I restore Rome to the Romans. . . . Let me pass, people. Adieu, Rome."

Thus the Pope takes leave of the purple of the Vatican to go on errands of beneficence to men. He soon meets the Patriarch of the Eastern Church, who does not recognize him at first in the dress of a poor pilgrim. A long conversation takes place between these two great dignitaries, from which we must quote:

*The Patriarch*—"It is you, Father, wrapped up in a shroud!"

*The Pope*—"I am sad."

*The Patriarch*—"You, the first on the earth!"

*The Pope*—"Alas!"

*The Patriarch*—"What makes you sad?"

*The Pope*—"The grief of all and thy joy."

Advancing a step and looking steadfastly at the Patriarch, he continues: "Priest, men are suffering, and odious luxury surrounds thee. Commence by throwing down thy crown. The crown spoils the halo of glory. Choose thou between the gold of earth and the splendour of heaven."

The converted Pontiff is very eloquent in denouncing the vain pomp he has forsaken, and expresses deep sympathies for the sufferings of the poor, to whom he advises the Patriarch to give his treasures. His condemnation of the gross worship of Rome is very graphic. "We, priests," he says, "we old men, wearing furbelows, more loaded with jewels than courtesans. . . . we offer and show to the astonished crowds, under the purple of a dais and the folds of a camail, a little rose-coloured God with eyes of enamel! a Jesus made of pasteboard, a Jehovah of wax! We carry Him about and cause Him to glitter, while we sing, and walk slowly for fear that a jolt, in shaking the altar, might break the Most High!"

Those of our readers who have witnessed Catholic processions on great holidays will recognize this picture.

Victor Hugo goes on in his bold style to denounce the shameful perversions of Christianity, attributing