

The second passage is Proverbs iii. 9, 10 : ' Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase : so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.' It was the divine ordinance that the Jews should present to God the first-fruits of their fields and vineyards ; and they enjoyed abundance when they conscientiously did so. But this passage goes further than the Mosaic statute. It calls upon men to honour God, not only ' with the first-fruits of all their increase,' but ' with their substance,'—thus showing that it is applicable to all times ; and it annexes to willing liberality the promise of large recompense. " Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase : so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.' Let the farmer, the merchant, and the man of business ponder these words.

The third passage is Haggai i. 2-11, and ii. 15-19. It was the duty of the Jews, on their return from the captivity in Babylon, to rebuild the temple. This was the work to which they were divinely called. But their means were scanty.—They had to erect houses for themselves, and to cultivate their fields ; and they said that if they should devote their time, their labour, and their money to the building of the temple, they would be reduced to poverty ; and for this reason they refused to continue the work, averring ' The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' And what was the result ? The neglect of this duty brought upon them the very evils which they feared. The Lord sent a parching drought upon their fields, and smote them with blasting, and mildew, and hail in all the labour of their hands. ' Ye have sown much,' it is said, ' and bring in little ; ye eat, but ye have not enough ; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink ; ye clothe you, but there is none warm ; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little ; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why ? Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.' But observe what happened when these Jews, instructed by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, saw and repented of their sin and their folly, and resumed earnestly the building of the temple. The prophet was sent to them with the cheering message, ' From this day I bless you.'

And the fourth passage to which we invite special attention, is 2 Corinthians ix. 6 : " But this I say, He who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly ; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.' The Apostle is here urging upon the members of the Church in Corinth the duty of raising a sum of money for the relief of the poor saints that were in Judea. He points out the arguments and motives by which they should be influenced in doing so ; and then adds, ' But this I say'—bear this specially in mind—' He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly ; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.' These words have generally been explained in a spiritual sense, as holding out the promise of spiritual blessings ; but it seems to us manifest, both from the import of the terms and from the connection, that they are to be taken literally, and that the recompense of which they speak is a liberal return for the money contributed. Every one knows that the crop reaped corresponds to the seed sown ; that the man who sows corn, reaps corn, and that the amount of the produce in harvest depends upon the quantity of seed sown. Now the seed which these persons were asked to sow was money ; they were to cast it into the field of Christian benevolence ; and the assertion made is, that it would return to them, and that the amount which each was to realize would correspond to that which he gave. He that gave little would get little and he that gave much would have a large return. They were not to imagine that what he asked them to contribute for the help of the poor Jewish saints were lost ; no, it would, as he said to the Philippians, produce ' fruit that would abound to their account.' It is true that, like the grain cast into the earth, it would disappear for a time ; but, like sown grain, it would, in the recompensing providence of God, reappear, and come back to them with a rich increase. That this is the meaning, is obvious, we think, from the appeal which the Apostles make to the power of God. Persons were disposed then, as they are still, to ask, How can this be ? The reply of Paul is, ' God is able to do it.' He does not, as is usual with him when speaking of