

posed the last of the Maccabean family from his office, and Palestine has never since been an independent state. Ever since the Babylonish captivity the great bulk of the Jewish nation have been scattered abroad, without home, without Temple, without an altar, and strangers have been masters in the land of promise. It is therefore clear that all the prophecies that relate to the glorious restoration of the Jews must be understood of a restoration yet future, a very important fact for the right understanding of those prophecies.

THE LAST PROPHETS OF THE OLD COVENANT.

But to return to our subject. It has been already stated that the first care of the returned exiles was to re-establish their religion. To do this they were under the necessity of having new revelations. True, they had the writings of Moses and of the prophets, and they had inspired interpreters like Ezra and Nehemiah. True, their aim was not to construct a new economy, but simply to re-establish the old one. And yet even this they could not do acceptably to God without the aid of revelation. Hence God raised up three prophets—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the last three of the old covenant. What an overwhelming proof of the necessity of continuous revelation!

HAGGAI, B. C. 520-518, is thought to have been born in Babylon and to have emigrated with Zerubbabel.

His book contains four prophetic messages. In the first the people are reproved for neglecting to build the Temple, while they were adorning their own houses, and a command is given to begin the construction immediately (Ch. 1: 1-11) to which command the people, led by Zerubbabel and Joshua, willingly responded (1: 12-15). But in a month the zeal of the people seems to have cooled off, and the second message is delivered, declaring that the Spirit of God was still with the people. "A little while," God says, "and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land" (which, according to Paul, Hebrews xii: 22-28, was fulfilled when the old dispensation was superceded by the Gospel dispensation), "and the desire of all nations (Messiah) shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts," (ch. 2, v. 1-9), which "glory" is thought to refer to the presence of Christ in this second temple instead of the Shekinah that had illuminated the first temple. In a third message, delivered two months afterwards the people are being rebuked for polluting themselves while working in the holy building and offering sacrifices. God reminds them that He had blessed them abundantly, from the time they had laid the corner-stone of the temple (ch. 2-10 19.) The fourth message is delivered the same day. It contains a general prediction of the overthrow of the kingdoms of the world and the promise of a special blessing to Zerubbabel at that time. It is clear enough that the right interpretation of this promise can be comprehended by no man,

until divine revelation shall make it known.

Zechariah was, like Haggai, born in Babylon and went to Palestine with Zerubbabel. The general object of his ministry is identical with that of Haggai, and through the encouragements and wise counsels of these prophets the people prospered, and the temple was completed in six years. But besides this general object, Zechariah describes through direct predictions, symbolical acts, and the history of the Jews until the end of time. Daniel deals with the history of the world; Zechariah with the history of the covenant people. Among the predictions of this prophet we will here notice some of the last. According to the 9th chapter, the surrounding heathen nations are to be destroyed. Messiah shall come as a King (v. 9) and establish His reign upon the earth. "His dominion shall be from sea even to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth," (verse 10,) scenes of destruction are to intervene, however, but the Lord will deliver His people, both Judah and Ephraim (ch. 10-12.) "I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man," a glorious prediction of the restorative work, commenced in our own day by God through His servant Joseph, the Prophet. We are further told that Jerusalem shall be besieged by many nations and will be the issue thereof (ch. 12: 1-14); Christ shall finally appear and all the world will become "Holliness to the Lord." (ch. 14.)

Thus prophecy, so far from leading us to expect that revelation finally will cease, being superfluous, expressly states that Christ Himself in person will appear and communicate His will to men. "Why?" it may be asked; and the answer is clear: Because revelation is essential to true religion.

MALACHI, B. C. 420-397, was the successor of Haggai and the last prophet of the old covenant. The temple had now been finished and the service of the altar established. But a spirit of worldliness and insincerity is getting hold of both the priesthood and the people, and this prophet is especially commissioned to warn them against their sins.

But his warnings are not heeded. The people prepare themselves for calamities. The spirit of prophecy is withdrawn for a period of 400 years. The temple and the people are given into the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes. The old dispensation is virtually closed.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FOREGOING.

The conclusions arrived at now are clear and need only to be briefly stated. We have seen that no book of the Old Testament, although all are written and preserved for the instruction of the human race in all ages, contains anything that is of such a nature as to exclude further

revelation. Not one single passage, nor all the passages combined, are so written as to exclude the necessity of the revelations contained in the New Testament, for instance. On the contrary, one revelation leads to another, God always giving "line upon line, precept upon precept," imparting knowledge as men are willing and able to receive it. For it is through revelation that God educates His servants and His people; and as in any branch of study we are led on from the fundamental principles and find that each new truth suggests others, so here: each new truth revealed leads us to others until—were such a case possible—we have been permitted to exhaust the entire fulness of divine knowledge.

We have also seen that the servants of God in the old covenant declare the continuation of revelation. They do not consider the prophetic gift or the gift of receiving revelations as peculiar to their own dispensation. They point to "the last days" as a time in which the Spirit of the Lord is to be poured out more abundantly than in any former period. And His presence is to be manifested through "dreams and visions." The withdrawal of these they designate as a calamity. They speak of the time in which such heavenly gifts are withdrawn as "night" and "darkness," while, consequently, the presence of them indicate day and light. Now, are day and light necessary for the physical welfare of man? If so, revelations are also necessary for his spiritual advancement.

We have further seen that the establishment of new economies requires new revelation. Moses was familiar with the revelations given to the patriarchs before him. But when he was called upon to usher in the dispensation of the law, he could not do this without new revelations. Nor could Zerubbabel re-establish this dispensation after the return from Babylon without the aid of revelation. Through the revelations given to the Prophet Haggai the people "prospered" and were able to complete their work as commanded by the Lord (Ezra 6: 14). Without this, they would not have been able to prosper.

Sometimes we see that revelations are given to faithful servants of God as a special favor to them. In such cases, what is seen or heard must not be recorded—as was the case with some visions of Paul in the New Testament—or, if recorded, is sealed up in mystical expressions, unintelligible to the common reader, until the Spirit of revelation gives the true interpretation thereof. This was the case with some of Daniel's visions, and with at least one of the visions of John, (Rev. 10: 4, 5).

Are revelations, then, given in order to establish new economies, to preserve the children of God from falling into darkness, to instruct them about things known to God alone, in one word to lead men unto salvation? Surely, there never can be a time when revelation is not necessary.

J. M. S.

[To be Continued.]