The suggested emendation, of course, is only a conjecture offered to provide balance and meaning to the couplet and the psalm.

Washington, D.C. George Wesley Buchanan

1) The Septuagint has translated "because it is better to sit in your courts than a thousand; I have chosen to cast my lot in the house of God rather than to dwell in the tents of sinners".

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

Recent discussions of the authenticity of the Cyrus decrees in Ezra i and vi have centred on the question of their consistency with what is known of Cyrus’ policy from other sources, and on the form and content of the passages themselves. But there is a prior question: does not the evidence of Haggai and Zechariah that the Second Temple was founded in 520 B.C. preclude the possibility of an earlier attempt at restoration in 536? For Pfeiffer this point is conclusive:

“Cyrus, whose liberal policy toward the religions of his subjects is well known, would not have forbidden the rebuilding of the Temple, if the Jewish community in Jerusalem had expressed a desire to undertake the work. Cyrus, under the suggestion of Jewish leaders in Babylonia, could even have issued a decree ordering the rebuilding of the Temple at his own expense... But the gap between historical possibility (and even plausibility) and historical fact should never be lightly overlooked... The unimpeachable testimony of Haggai and Zechariah shows that in 520 nothing was known of any decree of Cyrus issued in 538. More significant still, these prophets had never heard... of any previous plans for rebuilding the Temple”.

The evidence of Haggai and Zechariah is more than an argument from silence; both prophets refer to the “foundation” of the Temple. Haggai looks back to the time “before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD”, and recalls “the day that the foundation


of the LORD’s temple was laid (יָקָם)" (ii 15, 18). Zechariah is still more explicit: “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation (יָקָם) of this house; his hands shall also finish it” (iv 9), and he too refers to the “day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid (יָקָם), even the temple, that it might be built” (viii 9).

The crucial point in these passages from Haggai and Zechariah is the meaning of יָקָם. If in fact the prophets are referring to the laying of fresh foundations by Zerubbabel in 520, PFEIFFER’S case may be said to be established. But there are reasons to suggest that this is not the case; that no new foundations were laid in either 536 or 520, and that the word יָקָם is susceptible of a less specific interpretation.

P. R. ACKROYD ¹) recognizes the importance of this point:

“The passage Hagg. ii, 15-19, might itself be held to afford some evidence for a refounding of the Temple at an earlier period than 520. . . . If a historical basis for the tradition—namely that the foundation was originally laid in 536—were forthcoming, then this passage in Haggai takes on a slightly different meaning. . . . The evidence is insufficient to enable us to choose this alternative, but it is surely not completely excluded. Much depends upon the meaning of Hagg. ii 19 and the interpretation of the two phrases ‘stone upon stone’ and ‘was founded’. Was Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction so systematic as to necessitate a new foundation stone? This is implied by the Ezra passage [i.e. iii 8ff.], and presumably also by Haggai’s words. Hagg. i, on the other hand, speaks of hewing wood for the rebuilding, and does not mention laying stones”.

It is difficult, as ACKROYD recognizes, to envisage the necessity of a completely new structure, involving the laying of new foundations. The account of the destruction of the First Temple in 2 Kings xxv 9 is meagre: Nebuzaradan “burnt the house of the LORD”. Unfortunately it is not supplemented by evidence from Babylonian sources. But the fact that we are explicitly told (ib. v. 10) that the city walls were broken down, suggests that this was not done to the Temple, though no doubt the fire and the subsequent ravages of time would have made it a sorry ruin. GALLING ²) thinks that the entire superstructure must have collapsed, but that it is impossible to assess the extent of the damage to the actual foundations. It is doubtful, however, whether the walls had completely collapsed, as there are signs that the ruin was still used for worship. In Jeremiah xli 5 we read of a group of northern pilgrims

¹) JJS III i (1952), p. 2n.
²) op. cit., pp. 129-131.

Vetus Testamentum XVI 15