

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

scholars who appear to find nothing better than solemn music in the English version of words of life, and to admit no hope of riper knowledge from the discipline of two centuries and a half. In any case, he will recognise that he must bring self-control and reverence to an inquiry which reminds us at every step of the feebleness of our own thoughts; and, if any particular results prove disappointing, he will draw strength from the modest endeavour to gain a clearer vision even of one fragment of the truth.

BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT.

MALACHI.

I.

TURNING from the autobiography of Nehemiah to the brier and pointed utterances of Malachi, we readily recognise that they were contemporaries. The abuses which Nehemiah strove to correct, the neglect of the Temple service and the mixed marriages, are the prevalent scandals against which the indignant denunciations of the prophet are directed. He would seem to have stood in the same relation to Nehemiah as Haggai and Zechariah occupied towards Zerubbabel, and to have uttered the closing words of Old Testament prophecy about the year 430 B.C. Of his personal history so little is known that it is even doubted whether any prophet of the name of Malachi ever lived. For, singularly enough, the word "Malachi" occurs in the first verse of the third chapter, where it is translated "my messenger," being necessarily accepted in that verse as an official, not a personal name. This title was not an unknown one, nor was it of novel application to the prophets of Jehovah, for we find Haggai speaking of himself (i. 13) as "Jehovah's messenger." Accordingly it is an old tradition among the

Jews, favoured in modern times by so sagacious a critic as Calvin, that this prophet was no other than Ezra himself. But as it was certainly usual for the Hebrew prophet to give his own name in the title of his prophecies, the probability is that Malachi was the personal name of him who uttered these words.

If then Malachi prophesied between the first and second visits of Nehemiah to Jerusalem, the degeneration of the people must have been very rapid. Nehemiah had provided a national endowment for upholding religious services. In Malachi's day, immediately after this compulsory endowment, everything was venal. All voluntary, generous service, such as Nehemiah himself had freely rendered, was at an end. A hireling spirit was apparent in priests and worshippers alike. The people brought their sacrifices; but such beasts were never seen in the market. Lame, blind, wretched skeletons that they would not have dared to offer to the Persian governor, disgraced the Temple courts. The priests, on their side, let it be seen that they performed their functions merely for the sake of the pay attached. These cheap offerings and heartless services met with the reception usually accorded to such services: the Lord declared, "I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept an offering at your hand."

Nehemiah had also done his utmost to put a stop to mixed marriages. But the very correction of this abuse had introduced practices still more detrimental to morals. The precise form of the sin against which Malachi feels himself called to protest is, groundless divorce. "The Lord hateth putting away." "The Lord is witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously." This is susceptible of either of two interpretations. It may be aimed at the man who had been attracted by the beauty of an alien, and, in order to marry her, had divorced his Hebrew wife. Or he may be

rebuking those who took advantage of Nehemiah's reform to divorce foreign wives who had adopted the religion of Israel. In any case the abuse which Malachi so vigorously denounced was precisely that which to this day brings misery into thousands of households in the East—facile divorce. In Egypt a man may change his wife as often as he pleases. He has but to pronounce a form of words, and the woman must return to her parents. It is easy to believe what residents in Egypt tell us—that this liability to unmerited divorce produces misery and destitution among the women, profligacy and hard-heartedness among the men. Malachi unmasks the treachery and baseness of such offenders, and reminds them that what strikes the eye of God when He looks upon them is the misery of these broken-hearted women. When they came into His presence with their petitions for prosperity, it was this vile oppression that seemed to God to call most loudly for redress.

But in the first words which Malachi utters he pierces to the root of all immorality in their life: they had lost faith in God's love, and had assumed towards Him an attitude of sullen hostility or indifference. "I have loved you. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" This was God's controversy with them. This was what grieved Him, that He was misunderstood. A parent is not hopeless about his child, though his orders are forgotten or even disobeyed. But when he sees his child settling down into a sullen, hostile attitude towards him, he is roused to bitter complaint and grief. Deeper far than all outward transgression lies this alienation of heart.

Considering what human nature is, it was not unlikely that many in Jerusalem should question God's love. Is it, they might say, evidence of love, that, after being for seventy years in slavery to a cruel people, we should be suffered to return to freedom, only that we might the more keenly feel our own febleness? Is it evidence of God's

love, that we have been left all these years exposed to the scorn, violence, and robbery of troops of Samaritans and Ammonites? When our harvests are swept away by armed bands of marauders, when our seed is washed out of the ground by unseasonable rains, or rendered useless by parching droughts, when we have to listen to our children crying for bread, and see their lips blue with famine, are we to find in these things evidence of God's love? Our fathers returned to this land, encouraged to expect the blessing of God in it: where is that blessing?

Such is the sullen unbelief which often possesses the soul when God's love is not shown in precisely the ways we expect and desire. As with Israel, so with us all; there are times when everything seems to go wrong with us, when a curse seems to have entered our life, when it seems to us that if we had been given over into the hands of a cunning and cruel tormentor things could not have been more nicely contrived to pain us at every point. Our nature seems to have been studied with a view to discover our most tender and vulnerable spots, and our circumstances to have been arranged so as to expose these spots to the utmost pain. It is a triumph indeed when a man in such a condition can put aside the impatience and unreason and resentment which naturally rise within him. It is the triumph of faith when he can look in the eye that guides the knife to his heart by slow degrees, and can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Some men are called upon to look forward to years of steadily increasing pain and anxiety, and to measure in their own experience how sad and weary and apparently cruel a thing life can become; and if in that prospect they put aside unbelief and find evidence of God's love in unlikely quarters, they pay a tribute to God of more value than a hecatomb, a sacrifice of which God will show His appreciation.

When challenged to prove His love for His people, God replies in a manner unexpected and startling: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet I loved Jacob, but Esau I hated." And then the prophet goes on to exhibit the different results of love and hatred. The desolation of Israel is but for a time; that of Edom is lasting. And this difference is to be referred to the fact that God loved the one and hated the other. The essence of this reply is contained in the affirmation of the freeness, permanence, and substantial result of God's love. There was no reason but God's own love for Jacob's prosperity. Jacob was not a very attractive person. Certainly he did nothing that could merit that his children should for many centuries enjoy the exceptional countenance of God. But love never goes by merit. And deep love, a love that aims at great things for its object, demands faith. Present interests must often be postponed to future interests; and in order that love may effectually care for future interests, it must be trusted.

This passage has assumed a permanent significance from the circumstance that the subtle mind of Paul laid hold of it as his proof text for the doctrine of election. God loves one and hates another; chooses men to this and that destiny, irrespective of their antecedent conduct. "The children," says Paul, "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him who calleth." It would be difficult to contrive a form of words more definitely conveying the idea that God's election of one man and rejection of another are due to His own purpose, and not to the character of the men. Paul quite appreciated the difficulty of holding this position, and anticipated the indignant exclamations which in all ages have risen to men's lips when this doctrine of election is affirmed. He himself states the objection. "If the con-

duct and destiny of men depend on God's will, why doth He yet find fault ; for who hath resisted His will ?" And he does not untie this knot. He recognises the difficulty and leaves it unsolved. But the very fact that he sees and states the indignant remonstrances of those to whom the doctrine is announced, proves that the doctrine he held was the distasteful and repellent doctrine that the character and destiny of men are determined by the will of God.

That this was the teaching of Paul, I myself have no doubt whatever. Augustinians and Calvinists may in some particulars have drawn conclusions from his teaching which he might disown, but in the main they have interpreted him truly. And modern critics who study his writings merely as historical documents and without any religious bias, find in these writings what is usually known as the Calvinistic doctrine of election. And indeed, it was impossible, or most unlikely, that Paul should on a point of this kind separate himself from the belief in which he was trained, and which is held by the great majority of Semitic and indeed of Oriental peoples. Had he lived now and been trained in a different school of thought, he might have laid greater emphasis on the self-determining power of man and the freedom of the human will.

But if any one is disposed summarily to throw over Paul's doctrine of election, and expose it to the abhorrence and ridicule of men on account of the frightful inferences which may be drawn from it, it should in fairness be remembered that Paul disclaimed, though he could not disprove these inferences. He saw that these inferences were dishonouring to God, and he could not deny that they seemed to be legitimately drawn from his teaching ; but he could not on that account surrender the doctrine of God's determination of all things. And if we repudiate with all our strength the unworthy conceptions of God which seem

to flow from Paul's teaching, we must beware of rejecting with them the ideas of God's all-pervading power and love, and so, according to the German proverb, throw away the baby with the water of the bath. The essential thought which Paul wishes to enforce, is one which no serious mind will lightly repudiate, that God's will lies deeper in the matter of salvation than our own, that it is the love of God and no merit of ours which initiates our restoration to holiness and to God. And if in pressing this truth Paul makes statements or uses arguments which you think do less than justice to God's love, you must measure all by the revelation of Himself God has given you in Christ. We know but one God, and that is He who is known through and in Christ. Every view of God which does not harmonize with that, you must reject wherever you find it.

In this prophet of an expiring dispensation signs of the end are apparent. There was a growing insensibility to sin. This was very distinctly present to the mind of Malachi. At each new charge he brings against them, he represents them as exclaiming in astonishment and conscious innocence, "Ye have despised My Name. Yet Ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy Name! Ye offer polluted bread, and ye say, Wherein have we polluted Thee? Ye have wearied the Lord with your words, yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him?" and so on throughout. The people of Malachi's time had so lost moral sense that they could not any longer distinguish between profanity and reverence, honourable and dishonourable conduct. By their worship with which they expected to propitiate God, they insulted Him. Malachi felt it was almost hopeless work, trying to beget in such persons an apprehension of God's holiness and a love of it. They had not the requisite organ. The colour-blindness which mistakes red for green is a fatal defect in an engine-driver; this loss of moral sense

is equally fatal in those who, likewise, are running fast on through all manner of spiritual dangers.

In Malachi's time this fatal insensibility to moral distinctions had grown up in close connexion with a growing spirit of intellectual inquiry. This book reflects the questioning spirit which was abroad when it was written. In captivity the Jews, as they mingled with men of other religions and habits, had seen and learned much, which suggested to them many new trains of thought, and prompted them to look with more critical eyes on their own relation to God and to all things. It might be supposed that this newly awakened intellectual activity and spirit of inquiry could do nothing but good. But there are many things which eventually and to the mass do good, which at first and in individual cases do incalculable harm. Pestilence does good, but only by first spreading death and dismay. War frequently does good, but only through blood and hardship and sorrow. And good comes of intellectual inquiry, but neither is its path to victory a bloodless one. Scepticism, the disposition to take nothing on trust, the resolution to have clear proof and verification of everything, is but one side of a keen hunger for truth, the only food of the inner man. Wherever the supreme importance of truth is felt there is a determination to rest on nothing but what is immovable, to dig down to the living rock. But the sceptical spirit, though easy to cultivate, is difficult to satisfy. Questions may always be asked which it is impossible to answer. And hence the need of concentrating faith on the one or two fundamental truths which cannot be shaken, and which suffice for our present needs. Finding our feet firm even on one point, we can wait with equanimity till the day dawns and a wider view is opened.

It was indeed a radical question which the Jews of Malachi's day were putting. "What profit is there in

“serving God?” they were asking. “There is no difference made between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. Where is the God of judgment: the God who makes a difference, and makes a difference in accordance with character?” This tone of thought finds its most elaborate utterance in the book of Ecclesiastes, and it is directly and vigorously met by Malachi. Every day he was meeting doleful and sullen spirits who bluntly declared it was vain to serve God. “We have walked mournfully before Him, and kept His ordinance, and what profit is it? The proud, who do not humble themselves before God at all, are the prosperous men. They that work wickedness and take their own way of making gain, are set up. Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of God, and He delighteth in them. Where is the God of judgment?”—all which goes as near blasphemy and atheism as this muttering sullenness dares to go.

But of course such questions had to be asked, and have still to be asked. How does moral character affect our relation to things external? Is the good man exempt from suffering; and if not, why not? There is apparently an instinct in man which claims happiness as the accompaniment or result of well-doing. It is felt that though prosperity is not the object the good man has in view, yet prosperity must ultimately accrue to the righteous. The human heart claims to profit by integrity; claims, in other words, to be in a world in which all things are subordinated to moral ends and moral uses. The repugnance we feel in presence of successful iniquity, the instinctive rebellion against suffering evil when we are not doing evil, are just so many acknowledgments that we are under a moral government in which we naturally expect that things external will be ruled in accordance with our inner state.

But as soon as we look closely at the matter we learn to distinguish. We distinguish between a world adapted for

training moral beings, and a world in which they can most appropriately live when trained. This world, with its physical laws which make no distinction between the good man and the bad, is admirably fitted for a place of training, badly fitted for a permanent abode. Connected with this physical world by our own body, subjected to its laws, exposed to its accidents, open at every pore to its presence, its influences, and its temptations, we are in the very best condition for being trained and tested as moral beings. Were we in a world in which immediate and visible punishment followed every transgression, and in which the good man escaped shipwreck and earthquake, illness, loss, and death, we should be under a system of bribery and corruption under which it would be impossible to know who loved virtue for its own sake and who pursued it as the most profitable course. If things outside of us, the world and all its laws, at once and in every case accommodated themselves to the character of men's actions, if bodily disease never attacked the spiritually healthy, and worldly prosperity never fell to the lot of the ungodly, then virtue and pleasure would be so confounded that we should never know whether it was the one or the other of things so essentially different that we were choosing; and the love of pleasure would so draw us towards righteous action that no love of virtue for its own sake could ever possibly be educated in us. It would dwindle into nonentity like the unused muscle.

Let us then be content to submit to our own individual share of the disappointments, perplexities, and sorrows which form so essential a part of this school in which we now are. When we suffer and keenly feel what a pain life has become to us, let us remember that such suffering is the only known or conceivable means of sifting the desire for pleasure from the love of righteousness in our hearts, the only means of giving our character that final form

it receives when we accept righteousness bare and for righteousness' sake. It is thus our love for one another is deepened and acquires a strength subject to no decay. Sacrifice is the food of love; and the suffering involved in sacrifice shakes the soil about love's roots and lets them strike deeper. Our love for our friend receives a new quality and becomes a new thing when we learn to love in spite of appearances and consequences and for our friend's own sake. And only so can there ever be produced in us that genuine, inherent love of righteousness which is the one essential of eternal happiness and worth. It is this we must somehow attain to; and in proportion as a man recognises the importance of attaining it will he submit to the actual training through which God is bringing him to it.

But though in this world a man's circumstances and worldly status give little clue to his character, the belief remains that the time will come when things outward and things inward will be more in harmony, and when happiness and holiness, after their long courtship here below, will be permanently married. This consummation Malachi announces in the words, "The Lord will suddenly come to His temple." This holy men always felt; that the Judge was at the door. In our present condition we are by our body made subject to physical laws; and through the temptations thus occasioned we have to fight our way to true spiritual superiority to physical allurements and physical threatenings. And when this is accomplished the body perishes and we rightfully inherit a spiritual body in which this superiority to things physical can be maintained with less of shame and failure, less also of anxiety and strain. And for aught we know the world itself may be going forward to a condition in which a finer and easier life may be possible. Amid all the groanings and travailings of creation, a new heavens and a new earth, a new adjustment of elemental

forces, new climatal conditions, new relations of physical laws, may be being prepared, so that in ages far distant there may be found a home suitable for those who have by determined spiritual preference attained to a spiritual body.

II.

Malachi was face to face with a generation characterized by scepticism and insensibility to moral distinctions. They had no loyalty to God, nor any inward impulse towards holiness, but kept a profit and loss account with God, and saw no reason why they should serve God if they made nothing by it. They must have been as pleasing an object of contemplation to Satan as Job was displeasing. But with the strange infatuation that possesses mankind in dealing with God, they continued to offer sacrifices, but such only as could insult God. Men are often blamed for thinking of God as a magnified man. But really no great harm comes of this, if they magnify Him sufficiently; the harm begins when men deal with God as they would not deal with any good and sensible man, offering Him a formal worship which any sensible man would recognise as hollow, and repudiate accordingly, or a grotesque and mumming worship, which a sensible man, with his eye upon realities, would pity and wonder at, if he did not scorn.

To his duller-souled contemporaries Malachi has sound advice to give. First, he says, "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." So long as a man keeps a profit and loss account with God, he is sure to be a sceptic, and in all probability will be profane as well. No man can understand God who criticises His doings with a hostile eye. For much that happens in providence is liable to be misread, and it will be misread where the reader is in an attitude antagonistic to God. The first step towards reconciliation with God and readjust-

ment of our religious belief is to credit the Supreme with wisdom and love. Put aside resentment at the miseries that have fallen to your share in life, and take a wider survey of things, and admit that on the whole, intelligence and holiness and love are the ruling powers in the world. Gradually out of chaos, physical and moral, life, light, and love are arising, are they not?

But all return to God must be practical, not intellectual only, not sentimental only. "Ye say, Wherein shall a man return?" Why need ye ask? "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me." Return then by bringing your tithes into the storehouse. No repentance is to be trusted which does not utter itself in practical shapes. A religion which is not inward is no religion at all, but a religion which is exclusively inward is also a delusion. Return to God is of course a spiritual act, but if it is nothing more, it is not even that. The faith which saves is a spiritual act, but if it assumes no practical forms, it does not save. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"—yes, if belief takes the practical form of using the help of Christ to save you from your sin. But not by some clever, dexterous manipulation of the inner man is any one saved.

Secondly, Malachi assures the people that when they speak to one another for the purpose of encouragement in patience and holiness, the Lord hearkens and writes in His book of remembrance that such and such persons fear His name. God knows, Malachi would say, that it is not easy to maintain faith in a time like ours. He knows it calls for no common fortitude, no ordinary faith, to hear with patience the worst tidings and to say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." He knows how hard it is for the innocent to be as the guilty without resentment. If we are, like Christ Himself, driven sometimes to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He cannot

be surprised and will not condemn. Nay, nothing moves God so much as to see this man and that man suffering in darkness, and yet retaining undiminished faith in God's goodness and love. How is a whole nation touched when it sees a few brave men hold a post against overwhelming odds! How eager are the people whose name they have kept from stain to reward them for their constancy! How certain are their names to be set down for everlasting remembrance in their country's annals! And God does not forget those who suffer for His name's sake. Happy are they who have passed through times of anxiety, loss, sorrow, temptation, and have maintained their faith. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

Thirdly, Malachi closes his book and sums up all his advice in the words, "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant." This was the only way out of the despondent and doubting frame of mind into which the people had fallen. Similarly the book of Ecclesiastes, which reads like a sceptic's hand-book, or cynic's *vade mecum*, closes with the remarkable words, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." There are, at all events, many persons who must be content with that. The problems of human life they cannot solve. Significance in human life they see none. Results from human toil are in their judgment vanity and vexation; life is a compulsory, weary, hopeless treadmill, that merely reckons time and grinds itself away, accomplishing no single good result of all the labour that keeps it going. Such persons are happy, or at least their misery is dulled, if they can fall back on duty, and possess their souls in some assurance that duty remains, and that it is not their part to question but to obey. To many natures an abiding satisfaction, if no very

ecstatic joy, accompanies the blind performance of their part in life. They have no light on the meaning of things, but they have a conscience, and in obeying it they feel sure they are doing right.

Better advice could not be given to sceptics of any age than to remind them of the permanent satisfaction and abiding reality of duty. The state of mind in which Malachi found his contemporaries is frequently produced in our own day. Conscious failure in life naturally tends to embitter a man. If he has any pride, it is galling in the extreme to find that all he has spent himself on has turned to dust and ashes in his hand. Many, in such circumstances, brand life as a cruel deception. Nothing, they tell you, can be made of it, there is no aim worth living for; all that professes to be so is either a lie or a mistake. It takes a pure and strong nature to stand the test of failure. Where there is not genuine humility, the results of failure are apt to be disastrous. Men are tested when summoned in providence to accept blame, to confess mistake, to admit weakness. The secret of much of the cynicism, aimlessness, bad temper, and unhappiness of men is that the objects they have all their life aimed at turn out to be worthless or unattainable. But not to believe in life is not to believe in God. To gird at the present order of things, and sneer at success and earnestness, is to sneer at God. To lose hold of the faith that there is a purpose in life, and that it is worth living, is to lose hold of faith in God.

But a man may doubt many things, he may doubt everything, yet if he retains faith in duty and in a Divine order, this grain of mustard seed will grow to a faith that gives shelter and a resting-place to all vagrant thoughts. Each man must begin with what is clear to himself. And he who honestly does what he feels sure is right will, by living up to his moral convictions, arrive at all the faith he

needs. It is not intellectual conviction, but moral conviction, that gives men entrance to God's presence. "Without holiness" no man shall see God; without any knowledge to speak of, many a man may. And if you find a man following the light that is in him, turning to it and cherishing it and using it; if he has truth and integrity in his own soul, and esteems duty above all, then you cannot fix a limit to that man's advance. For all truth and duty are one, and the narrow and obscure path he is on leads infallibly to God. If a man denies himself and sets duty as his guiding light, it will lead him on till it is absorbed in eternal day.

Above all, Malachi sought to impart to his contemporaries the assurance that the day of the Lord's appearing was at hand. To those who question God's government, because it is not apparent, he announces that a day is coming when that difficulty shall no longer be felt. Although, he says, you cannot now get any clue to a man's character by surveying his outward circumstances,—though no difference is immediately and uniformly made between the righteous and the wicked,—it is certain that such a difference will be made in the future. The great burden of the prophets was: "The day of the Lord is coming." "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." "The Lord whom ye seek, whose absence you scoffingly remark upon, or murmuringly complain of, and whose presence and judgment you invite, He shall suddenly come to His Temple," like the priest whose duty it was to superintend the Temple arrangements, and who might at any moment knock and demand admittance; who came suddenly and unexpectedly, no one knew when, and of whom the Rabbis used to say, "Sometimes he came at the cock-crowing, sometimes

a little earlier, sometimes a little later. He came and knocked, and they opened to him. Then said he unto them, All ye who have washed (all ye who are ready) come and cast lots," that is, for the privilege of ministering to the Lord in the daily service.¹ Thus shall the Lord come suddenly to His Temple, and judgment shall begin at the house of God. The coming of the Lord is no such time of universal prosperity as you imagine. You are deceived if you fancy that the presence of the Lord will necessarily be welcome to you. On the contrary, He shall sit as a refiner, carefully sifting the pure metal from the dross, destroying as much as He saves, blasting as many hopes and expectations as He satisfies.

This received a remarkable fulfilment in the Lord's first coming. The cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem was the first sign He gave of the thorough work He meant to make with the people to whom He was sent. John had warned them that He would come with His fan in His hand, and that it would be a bad day for all chaff and light corn. He had warned them that His baptism would no longer be a mere drop or two of water, that would roll over them and let them retain much impurity, but that He would baptize them with fire that would find its fuel in their sin, and would live and burn till all was consumed. This our Lord began to fulfil in His cleansing of the Temple. It was a hard, distasteful task, more arduous than any prophet had undertaken. The Baptist preached to those who *came to him*, but our Lord penetrated single-handed into the stronghold of inviolable traditions, and made the very masters of Israel, the priests and teachers, bow before the blazing light of true zeal for God and obedience to His word. To meet the gaze of an exasperated crowd, to make enemies of a whole class and interest in the community, by expelling those who made gain of God's

¹ See Edersheim's *Temple Service*.

service, is what no one would have done who was making a mere pretence of doing a work of reform. Thus always Christ makes thorough work, does not blink the requirements of any case, does not cleanse so that the thing needs again to go back to the fuller's lye. We shrug our shoulders and pass by where matters are difficult to mend; we think it good if a little improvement has been made, or if even there is some promise of amendment; but not so Christ. He carries matters through, and makes thorough work. Nothing that defileth shall enter His kingdom; not the seeming good, but the really good; not those who please men, but those who satisfy God; not those who say Lord, Lord, but those who do His bidding; not those who see the propriety of being unworldly, but those who are so; not those who wish godliness were compatible with self-seeking, but those who know what it is to *love God*, and are content to serve Him.

The question then with these people should have been, not, Will God never come? but, Are we prepared for His coming? What would happen to us, were He to come? So with all who say, Let God show Himself. If He will have us serve Him with fidelity and self-devotion, if He will have us be persuaded that He is, and that He loves righteousness and will reward it, let Him show this love of righteousness. But are you prepared for this manifestation? Suppose God were to come with manifest judgment, running a clear and sharp line between good and evil, are you quite sure that this would be to your immediate advantage? Suppose He were to appear as a refiner of silver, are you sure that you would be found true metal, and not merely silver-washed?

The other figure used by Malachi seems to be intended to convey the same meaning and the same warning. "The Sun of righteousness shall arise," but though inspiring and health-giving to some, it will be scorching and con-

suming to others. "The day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble: . . . but unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." The manifestation of God's righteousness, while it will be life to some, will be death to others. The same sun will carry life and death in its rays,—life to all that has its roots deep sunk in the moist soil of simple godliness, death to all that is only superficially rooted and has but a shallow hold of religion.

This Sun arose in our Lord's first coming. The light He brought gladdened and revived many, but to others it brought exasperation and doom. The presence of pure truth cheered all who had waited for God, but withered the expectations and plans of many, and caused them to feel they had chosen outer darkness as their portion. This Sun of righteousness has for a while set, and we are living in the short arctic night through which the afterglow of sunset shines till the swift dawn arrives and absorbs it in the fuller blaze of the newly risen sun; or we live in a kind of moonlight, in a light reflected from the sun that has set, but which thus proves its existence, and helps us to believe it will rise again.

It is those who have known darkness who can best appreciate the promise of light. So characteristic of our present state is doubt, that it is difficult to imagine with distinctness a state in which all questioning will be past, and in which we shall proceed upon truths we here grope after, and have unquestioning assurance of the existences which here evade the grasp of our faith. The whole spiritual experience of many men is made up of attempts to pass on to a securer faith; of attempts to read the lessons of nature, of revelation, and of providence; to decipher the worn and broken fragments of other men's experience, and so to win to a faith so assured as to become the actual foundation of their life. When we reach this faith, and no longer have the

slightest dubiety about God's existence and love for us, when we reach the same kind of unhesitating and irresistible and spontaneous belief in God as we have in those who live in the same house with us, we feel as if we had now attained, and as if life could do no more for us. But really we then only begin. Only when our faith in God is of this kind can we go forward with full strength and single aim to the life God means us to live. Only when we as little question God's existence and love as we question the existence and utility of the sunshine; only when we live in God in the same way as we live in the light, counting on it, accepting it as the great fact,—are we filled with the energy and freedom and joy that fit us for true life.

Therefore this light is described as "healing." All the weakness that comes of doubt is necessarily healed in presence of all-penetrating, all-pervading righteous judgment and government. To have all doubt of God's love for us removed, to know as we are known, this will make all things new to us. If we were quite sure that God is our portion, and that not for one moment can He cease to desire and work for our good, we should delight in this and find it enough, and cease to hanker after material advantages and comforts. We should, that is to say, be "healed" of that weakness which directly springs from want of assurance. How many good men lessen their influence and diminish their happiness by this weakness in calamity! How much is every Christian profession spotted by what spectators recognise as mere worldliness! But if Christians believed in the constant, uniform, and sleepless love of God, this could not be so. Those ordinary men who are exposed to the ordinary reverses of life have that in them which can make light of worldly loss and rejoice in tribulation, if only they are assured that God is their portion.

The effects of this full light are described in the words: "Ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And

ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet." These words have been excellently paraphrased by the late Dean Stanley. The day, he says, "was to be like the glorious but terrible uprising of the Eastern sun, which should wither to the very roots the insolence and the injustice of mankind; but as its rays extended, like the wings of the Egyptian sun-god, should by its healing and invigorating influences call forth the good from their obscurity, prancing and bounding like the young cattle in the burst of spring, and treading down under their feet the dust and ashes to which the same bright sun had burnt up the tangled thicket of iniquitous dealing." The sunshine of righteousness flooding the world and conquering the darkness shall be so congenial to God's people, that they shall leap as stall-fed calves. Existence at last shall be a joy to them. They shall feel as if a great weight had been lifted off them. They shall feel that exuberance of life which causes children and animals to skip and bound in the overflow of spirits, and superfluity of energy, and absolute freedom from care. Very different is the present condition of many of God's people. Many are so burdened that not one day in the year do they recover any of this youthful exuberance of joy and of life. They have perhaps never been successful in life; have never attained to circumstances so easy that they need not overwork themselves nor be over-anxious; they are hard-driven at all times, go exhausted to bed at night and rise weary and languid in the morning, they have never energy enough, go as it were panting through life and sink exhausted at last. Others, again, are haunted by a more inward gloom. They can never find the satisfaction and strength and joy in their religion they know they ought to find; they either prevent themselves from doing so by a want of singleness of eye, by looking really to the world for comfort, or they fret themselves with scruples, entangle themselves in

perplexities, are content to remain in doubt, and live depressed and weakened. How seldom do you see a Christian exulting like a strong man rejoicing to run a race, taking all duty and hardship easily and lightly, as one who has abundant strength to spare! Liker are most Christians to the weary, hard-driven beasts, that drag their age-and-toil-stiffened limbs out of the stall with a groan, as they are led to their daily task. But instead of this reluctance and conscious weakness, and pain and despondency, there will be in God's presence, and there ought to be now in all who are God's people, a full consciousness of His love and of the glory of serving Him, and of the fairness of His government, which make men exult in present strength, and feel glad that life is eternal.

MARCUS DODS.

PAUL AND TITUS AT JERUSALEM.

GALATIANS ii. 1-5.

BAUR says in his *Paulus*,¹ "The *παρεισάκτοι ψευδαδέλφοι* (of Gal. ii. 4) are those *τινὲς κατελθόντες ἀπὸ τ. Ἰουδαίας*, of whom Acts xv. speaks. They were thus called because they came to Antioch as members of the Church of Jerusalem, in order to investigate on the spot the report which had reached Jerusalem, that in Antioch the Mosaic law was completely shaken off; and then that they might immediately bring to bear their own stringent Jewish principles."

Now as a description of the *character* of the men in question this statement is most inadequate. The supposition that Paul's Judaizing opponents were genuine representatives of Jewish Christian orthodoxy, on which the Tübingen reconstruction of the New Testament so largely

¹ English translation, pp. 127, 128, *note*.