

The Theology of Malachi.

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III. CLOSELY connected with Malachi's theocratic sympathies, as treated of in our former paper, is his ideal of the Priesthood. That ideal had once been realised, but it was in the dim and distant past; 'in the days of old and in the ancient years' with which period the zealous study of the Law had made all the people familiar; and the model priest, in whom zeal for religious separatism and indignation against foreign sensualistic worship had become incarnate, was Phinehas. In Num. xxv. 12, 13 are found the words, 'Behold, I give unto him [Phinehas] my covenant of peace: and it shall be to him, and his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.' Paraphrasing these words, Malachi says, in the name of the Lord, 'My covenant with him was "Life and Peace," and I gave them to him: "Fear," and he feared Me, and stood in awe of My name' (ii. 5). The terms of the covenant on the divine side were (1) 'an everlasting priesthood,' that is, 'Life' and (2) 'Peace,' *i.e.* prosperity and general wellbeing; on the human side, the requirement was 'Fear,' and Phinehas had feared the Lord, and revered His name. Between these halcyon days and his own, Malachi deploras a terrible contrast. The priesthood formed a Hagocracy, and many in high rank resented the arrival of Ezra and of Nehemiah as a reflection on themselves, and an interference with their authority. When Ezra came with such costly *avathimara* for the temple, we do not find Eliashib, the high priest mentioned as the one who received the gifts (Ezra viii. 33); and his name is absent amongst the signatories of the national covenant (Neh. x. 1-8). Possibly the Aaronites resented some new arrangements between themselves and the Levites (Neh. x. 37, 38); but apart from this, they were men of dull, moral sensibility. Nehemiah had enjoined that every Jew should pay one-third of a shekel annually 'for the service of the house of God; for the shewbread, and for the continual meal offering, and for the continual burnt offering,' etc. (Neh. x. 32, 33). During the troubles that took place in Nehemiah's absence, the temple-dues were not regularly paid; and the priests, though

many of them were men of wealth and position, actually 'offered polluted bread' for the meal offering, and 'blind, lame, and sick' victims for the burnt offering (Mal. i. 6, 7). Religious ceremonial was to them a mere *opus operatum*. They had no faith and no joy in worship. 'The table of the Lord is contemptible' they said; and the constant routine of duties in which they had no interest drew from them the dismal groan: 'Oh, what a weariness it is!' (i. 13). That such men should be a channel of communion between God and man was, of course, an absurdity; and in i. 9 the prophet indulges in irony at their impotence, as he says: 'Propitiate God that He may be gracious to us! Will he accept any one because of you?'

Further, Malachi's ideal Priest was also a Teacher. 'The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and did turn many from iniquity' (ii. 6). He acknowledges that the priests should be the conservators of knowledge; that they should be the medium of oracular communications from God to man; and the interpreters of the Torah on matters legal, ethical, and ceremonial (ii. 7); thus apparently surrendering prophetic functions to the priests, acknowledging the supremacy of 'the law of Moses' (iv. 4), and confessing himself the last of the prophets till Elijah should come. But the priesthood of Malachi's day fell miserably below this ideal. They had respect of persons in giving decisions and responses (ii. 9), and thus the Torah became a stumbling-block to those who sought the Lord through them, and in consequence the priests, instead of being 'the messenger of Jehovah Sabaoth' (ii. 7), were 'contemptible and base in the eyes of all the people' (ii. 9).

IV. Side by side with what might be regarded as conservative sympathies: with a decided conviction that the proper course for Israel to pursue at that time was an exclusive, separatist policy, Malachi was far from being narrow in his views. He had an outlook worthy of the greatest of the prophets—the glory and credit of the name of

Jehovah in all the earth. This is clearly expressed in three passages (i. 5, i. 11, i. 14). In the first of these, the perpetual desolation of Edom is foretold; and the prophet says that when Israel shall see the frustration of the efforts of their inveterate foes to regain possession of their country, they shall recognise in it the hand of Jehovah outside the 'holy land,' and shall say, 'Jehovah is great beyond the border of Israel.' In i. 14 we read: 'I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and My name is terrible among the Gentiles.' The other passage (i. 11) is much more difficult, and claims careful attention. In the Authorized Version it reads: 'From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name (shall be) great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense (shall be) offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name (shall be) great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.' It will be observed that in each case the indication of futurity is added by the translator. The addition smooths over the difficulty doubtless, and was prevalent in the Early Christian Church; where, as Dr. Pusey has elaborately shown, almost every father regarded it as a prediction of the Lord's Supper; as Romanists regard it as a prediction of the Mass.

If, however, we are to be 'translators first, and exegetes afterwards,' we must admit, as our Revisers do, that the insertion of the *future* auxiliary is unwarranted. The only translation warranted by the Hebrew is, 'My name *is* great . . . incense *is* offered unto My name, and a pure meal offering.' If so, what interpretation is to be put upon these words?

1. We have the view of Kuenen and Stanley, and of Cheyne in *Monthly Interpreter* (ii. 79), that 'the true God is, however ignorantly, worshipped by the nations whom the Jews looked down upon as "unclean"; "all the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting." Their sacrifices may have been of less deep spiritual import than those of the Mosaic Law, but they were the best the worshippers could bring, and were offered with pure and sincere hearts.' Hence, on this view, the reasonableness of Pope's invocation—

Father of all, in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove or Lord!

Into the abstract truthfulness of this position we are not called upon now to enter. The

point is, Is this such a view as Malachi could endorse? and this, in my judgment, is very improbable. He shared, as we have seen, the theocratic exclusiveness of Ezra and Nehemiah. The pious of that age had an exceptional abhorrence of heathenism; otherwise Ezra could never have sanctioned such an extreme interference with the sanctities of home as the divorce of heathen wives and the deprivation to hundreds of children of the rights of fatherhood. When the same problem presented itself in the Christian Church, Paul refused to sanction divorce, merely on the ground that the husband or the wife had become a Christian (1 Cor. vii. 12, 13); but Nehemiah was in thorough accord with Ezra—nay, what the scribe did by suasion the Tirshatha did by force (read Neh. xiii. 23-25); and Malachi, who was Nehemiah's guide and counsellor, favoured the same policy, as appears from his words, 'An abomination is committed in Israel and Jerusalem, . . . for Judah hath married the daughter of a strange god' (ii. 11). Is it probable, then, that he who held the surrounding nations in such detestation could say of them that the name of Jehovah was 'great' among them, and that they offered unto Him 'a pure offering'?

2. Other scholars (e.g. Dr. Schultz, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, p. 387) maintain that the reference is to the pious Jews of the Dispersion, and perhaps their proselytes, who were scattered in every part of the then known world. Many of them doubtless were devotedly attached to the law of Moses; but the objection is, they did not literally burn incense to Jehovah nor offer any *minchah*, being far distant from Jerusalem. The only way in which this view could be made tenable would be by proving that Malachi belonged to what Mr. Montefiore (*Hibbert Lecture*, p. 350) calls the 'small third party which was discontented with the religion of the law and its particularising tendencies, not from motives of ease and indifference,'—as were the priests,—but from a conviction that 'to obey is better than sacrifice.' This school eventually found an exponent in the author of Ecclesiasticus, who says: 'He that keepeth the law bringeth many offerings. He that taketh heed to the commandments offereth a thank offering. He that requiteth a good deed offereth fine flour, and he that giveth alms sacrificeth a thank offering' (xxxv. 1, 2). There was such a school, or rather such a 'tendency,' in

Malachi's time, but we have quite mistaken his religious attitude if our prophet belonged to it. We have deemed rather that he was 'exceedingly zealous for the law,' and therefore would not be likely to designate the ethical service of the Jews of the Dispersion as 'incense and a pure *minchah*.'

3. What, then, is the explanation of Mal. i. 11? We think that the reference is to the singularly pure monotheistic worship of the Persians. There is no doubt that the early Persian kings were worshippers of one supreme God, and that they despised idolatry. In the only fragment of Artaxerxes I. that is known there occur these words: 'A great god is Ormuzd, who created the heaven, who created the earth, who created man, who has given blessings to men, who made Artaxerxes king, sole king of many kings.' Now, it is only natural to suppose that the kings who, amid almost universal polytheism, held such a faith would feel drawn to the Jews; and that this was the case is evident. In the supplication sent to Darius by the Jews in the days of Zerubbabel, they claimed his favour on the ground that they were servants of the God of heaven and earth (Ezra v. 11); and Darius, a rigid monotheist, admits the claim in his decree (Ezra vi. 9, 10). The mission of Ezra was purely religious—to re-establish divine worship; and for this purpose Artaxerxes and his counsellors gave liberally of their gold and silver, besides commanding the treasurers in the West to assist Ezra out of the royal revenues (Ezra

vii. 15, 16, 21). The king readily accorded to the God of Israel the title 'God of Heaven,' designating Ezra a 'scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect and so forth'; and this was the title used by Nehemiah in his prayer (Neh. i. 4, 5). Besides this, Artaxerxes contributed specially to the maintenance of the singers in the temple at Jerusalem (Neh. xi. 23). This we deem to be a fact of exceptional importance. A syncretist might contribute to the sacrifices to propitiate a foreign divinity, but to contribute to the service of praise shows quite another and higher kind of reverence for Jehovah than the mere offering of sacrifice. From this evidence I am disposed to infer that the Jews and Persians recognised one another as worshippers in common of the God of heaven—as did also Abraham and Melchizedek. The Persians were singularly scrupulous as to matters of purity; and as they were zealous in the propagation of their faith, it is probably true that in every province arrangements were made for the worship of the God of heaven: and thus 'in every place incense was offered to Him, and a pure *minchah*.' Hence the vexation of the prophet Malachi that in Jerusalem, in the venerable temple of the one God, such fearful laxity should exist as to the victims offered in sacrifice. The admission by the prophet that the monotheistic worship of the Persians was virtually the worship of Jehovah, is quite consistent with his abhorrence of the sensualistic idolatry of the Phœnicians, Ammonites, and Philistines.

(To be concluded.)

The Aorist in the Greek Testament.

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THOUGH the aorist in Greek corresponds in general to the English *preterite* there is this difference between them, that our preterite is a *purely past* tense, whereas the aorist expresses not only what is purely past, but also the *result* of a past event or occasion. Thus, when I say, 'He called on me last week,' I express what is purely past; but when I say, 'My daughter arrived here last night,'—implying that she is here still,—this carries the sense into the present tense. And it is the business of a translator to find out, from the subject in hand, whether the

one or the other of these is in the view of the writer. Unfortunately, by overlooking this distinction, the A.V. has in many places failed to express the exact sense. Thus, in Rom. vi. 2, 3, 4, the reader will observe that the apostle is speaking of the *baptism* of believers, and what that public transaction *expressed*. It told all who witnessed it, that in the death of Christ for sin they themselves *had died* to a life of sin. These verses, therefore, ought not to be expressed in the *present* tense, as in the A.V., but as in the R.V. in the *past*—not 'We who *are dead*,' but, 'We