

is a mighty movement, and it is easy to prophesy that it has a mightier future before it.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH. BY PHILIP LAFARGUE. (*Constable*. Crown 8vo, pp. 240. 3s. 6d.) The title is perhaps too strong, too good to use just here. These men are noble enough, but there are nobler I have seen (especially in the use of language), and I am not sure that they

would salt the earth so preservingly. They are worth knowing most assuredly, in a book. They are full of interest, to themselves most of all. They are better a thousand times than the miserable men who do not believe that there is any saltiness in manhood, or any virtue in womanhood. We have had enough of these: this is delightful after.

There are six stories. The first strikes the deepest note.

## The Theology of Malachi.

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BIBLICAL THEOLOGY is, from its very conception, precluded from detailed critical investigation as to the origin of the several books of Scripture. It borrows from the department known by the unfortunate name of 'higher criticism' its information as to the genuineness, date, and authorship of the separate books; and, with the exegesis well in hand, it endeavours to extract the doctrinal teaching of each book as though *that* was the only portion of Holy Writ that had come down to us. And it does this under a fixed conviction that biblical theology will form a secure basis for biblical dogmatics; that the knowledge of the teaching of each part of Scripture in its entirety will form a far more reliable basis for the unification of biblical doctrine than the usual practice of theologians of culling 'proof texts' from various parts of Scripture, without due regard to their contextual relations.

In many instances it happens that historical-critical introduction has not arrived at results which are undisputed; and in such cases the work of the biblical theologian must be to some extent provisional, for our knowledge of the precise significance of many passages in the non-historical books must depend on the circumstances of the writer's own day.

The Book of Malachi is one of few happy instances in which, side by side with the prophecy, we possess a contemporaneous history in considerable detail. The author of our book certainly belongs to the age of Ezra and Nehemiah; but within this narrow range there is difference of opinion as to the precise date of composition. It is disputed whether the prophecy was written

before the arrival of Ezra in B.C. 458 (Bleek, Reuss, Duhm, Wellhausen), or before the arrival of Nehemiah on his second visit in B.C. 432 or later (Schrader, Köhler, Keil, Orelli, Baudissin, Driver, and most others). The decision of this question is of importance to some pentateuchal theories, and affects slightly the exegesis of some passages in Malachi; but happily it leaves untouched most, if not all, those passages in our author which are of doctrinal import. In my own judgment, the evidence for the later date is overwhelming, the former view resting mainly on presumed exigencies of pentateuchal hypotheses.

Passing over, as a question that does not now concern us, the disputed point as to whether Malachi was the personal name of the author, or whether he wrote anonymously, and the name Malachi = 'My messenger,' or, if an abbreviation of Malachijah = 'messenger of Jah,' was given by a compiler as descriptive of his office, we will briefly narrate the history of the period.

It was in B.C. 458 that Ezra the priest and scribe left Babylon at the head of the second band of colonists, with the law in his hand, and with royal instructions to re-establish divine worship according to the law (Ezra vii. 11-26). One of his first undertakings was to persuade the people to put away their foreign wives: but this stirred up the hatred of their neighbours so as to put a stop to further aggressive work; and before twelve years had passed away, the doleful news was carried to Nehemiah, in the court of Shushan, that the returned exiles were 'in great affliction and reproach,' and the walls still unrepaired. How Nehemiah secured the post of Governor of Judah

is well known. The walls were rebuilt; Ezra's copy of the Law of Moses was read in the hearing of the people, and adopted in solemn covenant as the national code to which they swore rigorously to adhere. After a successful governorship of twelve years, Nehemiah was recalled; and at once a reaction set in, as sudden as the Romanist reaction after the death of Edward VI. The new governor had, probably, no sympathy with theocratic aims (cf. Mal. i. 8), and the animosity of Eliashib the high priest, who had not been a signatory to the great covenant, asserted itself. Eliashib married his grandson to the daughter of Sanballat (Neh. xiii. 28; cf. Mal. ii. 11). Tobiah the Ammonite, who was doubly related by marriage to the priestly house, was, in defiance of Nehemiah's precautions to have none but pure Israelites dwelling in Jerusalem, allowed to dwell in a large court in the outer temple (Neh. xiii. 7). The Sabbath was profaned. The behaviour of the priesthood so disgusted the people (Mal. ii. 9) that they left off paying tithes and temple dues (Mal. iii. 8), and thus the Levites, who were probably innocent, lost their stipends, and were obliged to flee to their homes (Neh. xiii. 10). The 'store-house' which Nehemiah had prepared for the Aaronite tenth of the tithes (Neh. x. 38) was empty (Mal. iii. 9). Divorce was common (Mal. ii. 16); and the deserted women, put aside probably in favour of wealthier foreigners (Neh. xiii. 23-25), flocked to the altar, and covered it, as in the early days of Ezra, 'with tears, with weeping, and with sighing' (Mal. ii. 13).

There had also been a sad scarcity of rain (Mal. iii. 10), and this had been followed by famine (ii. 3). The locust, too, was devastating the crops, and the vine dropped its fruit untimely (iii. 11). The ruling classes were rapacious. The central authority was so weak that the unjust, if bold enough (זָרִים, Mal. iii. 15), succeeded, and the yielding (עֲנָוִים) were impoverished. The people suffered so severely that many lost faith in God's justice, and said: 'It is vain to serve God'; 'They that work wickedness are built up' (iii. 14, 15). More than this, there was disunion in the home (Mal. iv. 6). There were some, probably the sons, who thought the new theocratic régime a huge failure. Such were their calamities that they sceptically asked, 'What profit is it that we have kept His charge?' (iii. 14). The fathers, in many cases, clung tenaciously to Mosaism; but even the saintliest of

them thought very seriously on the dark outlook. They often met to strengthen each other's faith, being deeply concerned for the honour of God's name (iii. 16), and distressed at the way in which God's character was lightly spoken of (i. 6), nay, even profaned (i. 12).

In these sad circumstances they probably decided to send for Nehemiah as the only one who could deliver them. But God had also an instrument nearer home. About the time of Nehemiah's return, God raised up a man of true prophetic spirit, with keen intuition to discern the plague spots in the nation's life, and fearless zeal to expose them; and yet withal touched with tender pathos for the nation's woes. This man was in office, probably also in name, 'the messenger of Jah'—Malachi. And the first message which he brought to this afflicted, sorrow-stricken people was, GOD LOVES YOU. 'I love you, saith the Lord.' What a startling message! Might they not well say, God loves us! Look at our parched fields, our locust-eaten foliage, our bare vines! Look at our faithless priests and rulers! Look at our wretched homes, where Judean women have been chased away, that wealthy heathen women may take their place! See the discord in our homes—our sons and daughters resenting the rigour of the new régime! Had you brought this message some years ago we had accepted it, but not now. 'Where is the God of justice?' (ii. 17). He has deceived us or forsaken us. To this the prophet could only reiterate the message God had given him: 'I love you.' 'I, Jehovah, change not' (iii. 6).

The message of God's unchangeable love must also have been sorely needed for the establishment of the prophet's own faith; for was he not commissioned to utter statements which seemed quite to contradict his great initial message? Was he not bidden to say to the priests, 'I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord' (Matt. i. 10); 'I will curse your benedictions; yea, I have cursed them already' (ii. 2)? And again addressing the people at large, he says: 'Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye rob Me, even this whole nation' (iii. 9). Nothing short of a revelation, which the prophet recognised as divine, could have kept the prophet's faith unswerving in the unchangeable love of God to Israel, when appearances seemed so flatly to contradict it. He was thus taught that the hiding of God's face, the drought, the mildew, the poverty,

were God's 'strange work' (Isa. xxviii. 21); that calamity is not always punishment, but the discipline of a loving hand; that love inexorably spends itself in making its beloved more lovable that it may love the more. The prodigal children were far from God, poor and desolate, every scheme frustrated, every prospect blighted, every priestly benediction thwarted, and yet the divine message comes in clear, unmistakable tones: 'I love you.' 'I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.'

Let us now inquire what proofs Malachi offers as to the Divine Love. The first is one which would appeal more strongly to people of those times than to us who have heard the Sermon on the Mount. He bids the Judeans contrast themselves with the Edomites, their kinsmen, but their most inveterate foes (read Ps. cxxxvii. 7; Obad. 16; Ezek. xxxv. 5). Bad as their temporal position was, that of Edom, their enemy, was far worse. They had been invaded by the Nabathean Arabs, probably under Geshem (Neh. ii. 19, iv. 7); their homes desolated, and a remnant had sought a home in Southern Judah. They hoped shortly to return and rebuild their waste places, but the prophet was caused to see that this was a vain hope. Their cities would remain a perpetual ruin, and themselves the 'people against whom God would have indignation for ever' (Mal. i. 4).

When God, through the prophet, says, 'Esau I hated,' we must of course interpret the words as an Orientalism; that is, take the phrase relatively and not absolutely. Hatred is used of the absence of love or even of a lesser love; as when we read in Gen. xxix. 14, that 'Leah was hated' by Jacob; and when in Luke xiv. 26 we are told that a condition of Christian discipleship is that one should 'hate his own father, and mother, and children.' Our passage then means that God in the exercise of His wisdom and foreknowledge preferred Jacob to Esau as the recipient of spiritual gifts, and the medium of a divine revelation. And now, of late years, the Edomites had, by their wickedness (Mal. i. 4) and implacable hostility to Israel, forfeited all claim to be continued as a separate nation. Edom had performed its duties as a nation very unworthily, and He who for nations 'has determined their appointed seasons and the boundaries of their habitation' (Acts xvii. 26) had decided that Edom should drop from the roll of

nations. This is Malachi's first proof of God's love for Israel.

The next is found in Mal. iii. 7-12, especially in the words, 'Return unto me, and I will return unto you.' This clearly shows that the only obstacle to their restoration to divine favour lay in themselves. God was waiting to be gracious; and when they were prepared to return to the conditions of the theocratic covenant, God would return to them, 'rebuke the devourer,' make their fields and vines productive, and make them 'a delightful land,' so that 'all nations should call them happy' (iii. 11, 12).

Another token of the Divine Love is the tender way in which the Lord speaks of those who had remained true to the divine covenant, and were concerned for the honour of God's name: 'They shall be mine in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure' (*segullah*). There are very few alterations in the Revised Version which give us a keener pang than this one. The time-worn phrase, 'When I make up my jewels,' has been so precious that it seems almost sacrilege to touch it. But, except for the hallowed associations of the Authorized Version, the Revised Version is equally precious. The word *segullah* is one of the most endearing terms in the Hebrew language. Its *locus classicus* is to be found in 1 Chron. xxix. 3, where we find that David had prepared for the temple 3000 talents of gold and 7000 talents of silver; but over and above this, David had a *segullah*, 'a private treasure of his own of gold and silver,' and this he was willing to dedicate to the same purpose. That part of a man's possessions, then, which he values most of all is his *segullah*. The word occurs in Ex. xix. 5: 'If ye will obey . . . ye shall be to Me a *segullah* above all peoples'; Deut. vii. 6, 'Jehovah has chosen thee to be a *segullah* to Himself'; and in the passage before us, the Lord says, 'In the day that I do make'—'that day,' 'the day of the Lord,' 'the unique day' so often mentioned in the prophets—'they shall be Mine, a peculiar treasure.'

II. The next theological feature of interest in the prophecy of Malachi is the author's thorough sympathy with the theocratic covenant into which the people had entered under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. This covenant was formed on the basis of the entire pentateuchal code. The people entered into a curse and into an oath (Neh. x. 29) to observe the Mosaic law in its entirety,

as a condition of the enjoyment of the divine favour and earthly blessedness. And it must be conceded that Malachi, though a prophet, was in thorough accord with Ezra. He saw the necessity that Israel should be a separate people in the period on which they were now entering, and he believed that the Mosaic-ritual was an excellent, if not the only, means of effecting this. Hence he was 'zealous for the law.' The ethical and ceremonial were inseparable in his mind. Both formed part of the divine law, and both must equally be obeyed by those who had entered into covenant with God. And hence disregard to observances of the ceremonial law evokes his censure equally with violations of the moral law. 'Equally,' we say, but not more so. Malachi was no formalist, to ignore the vital importance of righteous living. He reproves the wickedness of his contemporaries in a truly prophetic spirit, as, for instance, when he declares that God would be 'a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless . . . and fear not Me, saith the Lord' (iii. 5); and when he announces that in the day of the Lord 'the proud, and they that work wickedness, shall be as stubble' (iv. 1). The attitude of our prophet may be summed up in his own words, that when the Lord shall purify the sons of Levi 'they shall offer unto the Lord offerings *in righteousness*' (iii. 3).

Duhm (*Die Theologie der Propheten*, p. 320) does injustice to the Book of Malachi when he says that it makes religion to consist of the law of

sacrifice; and that 'if Amos, Isaiah, Micah, etc., are prophets, Malachi can hardly be regarded as one.' There is, as we have seen, the genuine ring of prophecy in his denunciations of prevalent wickedness; and more than that, like the rest of the Hebrew prophets he has an unmistakable intuition as to eternal principles. The objections that he raises against improper ceremonial are such as must be of constant significance in all religion. He fixes on the permanent, not the transient; and this bespeaks the genuine prophet. Does he stand aloof from the other prophets in insisting on payment of tithes? Is not this because he grasped the eternal principle that the service of God demands self-sacrifice, and even in times of scarcity the claims of divine worship must not be ignored? Does he seem to have priestly affinities when he censures the Aaronites for offering unclean victims? Was it not, because they were guilty of enormities which shocked even ethnic notions of propriety? They offered to God what they would not dare to offer to the governor. We have simply here, then, the religious axiom that God deserves our best. Similarly his indignation about vows (i. 14) is purely ethical at the core; and his annoyance at foreign marriages (ii. 11) had the same motive as urged the Apostle Paul to say: 'Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?' Malachi blends in himself, in happy unison, the priestly and the prophetic, and of his teaching one might almost say: 'This is the law *and* the prophets.'

(To be concluded.)

## Requests and Replies.

In popular representations of the Crucifixion, English and Continental, Christ is depicted as *nailed* to the cross; but the thieves on either hand as *bound* to the cross. Is there any reason to think that such a distinction was made?—J. A. B.

THERE is nothing in the New Testament to support the view that the crucifixion of the 'thieves' differed in mode from Christ's, and all the probabilities of the case are against any such difference. Luke xxiv. 39; John xx. 25, as well as Rev. i. 7, show that Christ was *nailed* to the cross,

and the absence of any mention in the narrative of the use of a different method with the 'thieves' is *prima facie* evidence against it. Nailing, moreover, was the usual mode of crucifixion among the Romans, and, unless the contrary is stated, is to be assumed.

In Mrs. Jameson's *History of our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art* (completed by Lady Eastlake), vol. ii. p. 167, several explanations are offered of the traditional distinction made in this matter in pictures of the Crucifixion. It is said to