

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

who *died to sin*, how shall we live any longer therein? Know ye not that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried, therefore (not *are* buried) with Him, through baptism, into death,' etc.—the death and burial of a sinful life.

Again, in 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all *died*' (in His death), not 'all *are dead*' (A.V.).

In the great scene of the resurrection of Lazarus, the significance of the act depends upon the aorist getting its strict *preterite tense*. As the resurrection of the dead was the greatest of our Lord's miracles, so this of Lazarus was designed to be the most stupendous display of His divine power, performed, as it was, in presence of a multitude of spectators. But that it might be seen *in what capacity* He was acting—that He was not seeking to snatch from the Father what was His supreme prerogative, but acting *as His Father's agent*, with His concurrence, and in His presence—before proceeding to performance of it, He offered *aloud* this prayer, that all might hear it: 'Father, I thank thee that Thou *heardest* Me; and I know that Thou hearest Me always; but *because of the multitude that stand around I said it, that they may believe that Thou sentest Me.*' This done, He ordered the stone to be removed and the grave opened; and before all He spake with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth,' and the dead man stood alive before them.

Again, at the Last Supper, a scene occurred which equally illustrates the importance of observing the strict *preterite* sense of the aorist, but which, by the neglect of this distinction, is obscured in the A.V. 'Simon, Simon, Satan *hath desired* to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I *have prayed* for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Here the reader is apt to think that this is only the constant desire of the enemy of souls to shake the steadfastness of His disciples' attachment to Him; and, on the other hand, Christ's care and prayer for Peter, as in special danger. But when we read the passage as in the R.V., and observe there the *preterite* sense of the aorist, a new light is thrown upon the scene: 'Simon, Simon, Satan *asked*'—and, as in the *margin*, '*obtained* by asking (*ἐξήρῆσεν*) to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but *I made supplication* for thee, that thy faith fail not,' we see that a scene had been going

on in the unseen world—all unknown to those disciples at the Supper table. Satan had asked permission (as in the case of Job, ch. ii.) to test their attachment to Christ, hoping that he might find much chaff among the wheat. And *at the same time*, Jesus, knowing the danger Peter was in at that moment, had made a *definite supplication for him*, that his faith might not fail. And his faith did *not* fail, but his *courage* did. His bitter tears after his fall, and his restoration to favour and office in presence of all his fellows, sufficiently showed that his *faith* did not fail.

But there is a peculiar use of the *aorist* which I wish to illustrate by some examples. It is this, that when a *general principle* or a *law* of procedure, either invariably or usually operating, is expressed, the aorist is to be rendered in the *present* tense. Some scholars, as Winer and Meyer, dispute this principle. But A. Buttmann, who did for the grammar of the Greek Testament what his distinguished father did for the grammar of classical Greek, has sufficiently established this usage of the word. It is called the *gnomic aorist*, or the aorist of *habitude*. Even the A.V. recognises it in two or three places. Thus in Matt. iii. 17, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I *am* well pleased.' But, literally, it is 'in whom I *was* well pleased' (I *am*, and ever *will* be well pleased)—expressing the *enduring complacency* of the Father in His beloved Son; and therefore the present tense is properly used, *I am*. Again, in Jas. i. 11, 'The sun *is* no sooner *risen* with a burning (or scorching) heat, than it *withereth* the grass, and the flower thereof *falleth*, and the grace of the fashion of it *perisheth*.' Here are three aorists, not rendered in the preterite ('*rose, fell, perished*'), but properly in the *present*; because it is the expression of a *law* in the vegetable kingdom. But the Revisers have not acted on this principle in the cases I am now to mention. John iii. 19, 'This is the condemnation, that the light is come into the world, and men *love* (not *loved*) the darkness, because their works *are* evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.' This is the expression of a fixed *law*, known to everyone, the bad men and good men act consistently with their character.

Another important application of this use of the

aoiŕt occurs in Rom. viii. 29, 30. Here are five aoiŕts, all rendered in the *past tense* in the A.V. and R.V.: 'Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. And whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.' Here the common reader, if he thinks at all on the subject, would like to know whether this is spoken of one class of Christians, and *when* it all took place. But an intelligent Christian would tell him that the apostle is speaking here of God's *plans* of salvation for *all* that are to be saved, and that all the steps of it which are here enumerated were purposed by Him before the foundation of the world; but as it was all planned from everlasting, the apostle here states the successive steps of it from first to last, all in the *past tense*. But there is no need that *we* should do this. For, as this is just the *law* of God's procedure in the salvation of all who or shall be saved, I think the whole passage should be expressed in the *present tense*. 'Whom He foreknoweth, them He also foreordaineth to be conformed to the image of His Son . . . : and whom He foreordaineth, them He also calleth: and whom He calleth, them He also justifieth: and whom He justifieth, them He also glorifieth.'

Again, in the *Magnificat*, that outburst of inspiration which broke from the lips of the blessed Virgin, in the house of her kinswoman Elizabeth—a song which swept the strings of Hannah's song (1 Sam. ii.), but raised so much higher as her prospects were so much brighter. In this hymn there are four aoiŕts, which, when I come to

them, I will *italicise* to mark the great *general principle*, or *law* of God's procedure, in His dealings with men—a procedure no more true in the *past* than in the present and all future time; and which, therefore, should be rendered in the *present tense*. Thus, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. For He hath looked upon the low estate of His handmaiden; for from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done for me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is unto generation and generation on them that fear Him. He *showeth* strength with His arm, and *scattereth* the proud in the imagination of their heart. He *putteth* down the mighty from their thrones, and *exalteth* them of low degree. He *filleth* the hungry with good things, and the rich He *sendeth* away empty. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spake to our fathers, Abraham, and to his seed for ever.'

Again, in 1 John v. 4 (A.V.): 'Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that *overcometh* the world, even our faith.' R.V. . . . 'this is the victory which *hath overcome* the world, even our faith.' Here, the apostle is thought (in the R.V.) to be referring to victories over the world *already obtained* by believers. To me it appears that the apostle here is not stating a *fact*, but expressing a *great principle*, the secret of all the victories over the world that are or ever will be gained over the world, even the *faith* of believers. I therefore hold that the A.V. gives the true sense of the statement, by rendering the aoiŕt in the *present tense*, as does also the Vulgate.