

THE AUTHORSHIP AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI.

BY THE REV. J. K. FRASER, B.A., B.D.

The personal history of the author of the book which, as it stands in our canon, bears the title *Burden or Oracle of the Word of Jehovah to Israel by the hand of Mal'akhi*, is wrapped in obscurity. Whether the word Mal'akhi denotes the actual name of the writer, as has been generally held by the church since the time of the second century, or whether it is merely an ideal one given him by a later editor to denote his office and suggested by the appearance of the word in chapter iii: 1, (my messenger), as recent criticism seems to think, is a question of no importance except as a matter of literary interest. Its answer cannot affect in any way the book itself or the value of its teaching. The two are quite independent of each other. This article is concerned with the date of the prophecy. As we intend making use of the traditional name in speaking of the writer, however, it may be well to state briefly our opinion on the question of its authorship.

There can be little doubt, we think, that the book was originally anonymous. A comparison of its title with those of the two prophecies which have been annexed to the book of Zechariah—the first commencing with chapter ix, and the second with chapter xii—seems to point to this conclusion. These two passages which have been incorporated with the prophecy of Zechariah in our canon are without doubt anonymous. Their whole style, as well as their subject matter, show most conclusively that they do not belong to the post-exilic prophet whose messages we find recorded in the previous eight chapters. The placing of them in the position in which they now stand must be due to some accident or confusion of names. Being anonymous then, the words