

of Malachi, we find that constant reference is being made to "*The Law*." Indeed, in the mind of the writer, the great sin of his contemporaries consists in a departure from "the Law," and it is only by a return to that Law that the judgments which are to be inflicted upon the nation can be avoided. Here then, we naturally ask, have we not material for fixing somewhat more precisely the date of the prophecy? If it was written subsequent to the introduction of the priestly code in the year 444 B.C., have we not a right to expect to find in it some reference to the code, especially since "the Law" is so prominent in the thought of the writer? The question is then to what law does the prophet refer? This, in the opinion of not a few critics, is the only question to be considered; the answer to it must settle finally the question whether the book was written prior to or subsequent to the year 444 B.C. This is the position taken by Geo. Adam Smith: "The whole question," he says, "depends upon what law was in practice in Israel when the book was written." This law he finds, upon examination, to be not the "priestly" code, but the "Deuteronomic," and hence he places the date prior to the year 444 B.C. Robertson Smith, in his "Old Testament in the Jewish Church" takes the same position, substantially on the same grounds. Prof. A. B. Davidson also places it prior to 444 B.C., as well as others who might be mentioned. Now this question as to what law is referred to by Malachi, is one which we are not called upon to discuss here. Suffice it to say, that so far as our examination has enabled us to judge, we perfectly agree with Geo. Adam Smith in holding that the "Deuteronomic" code and not the "priestly" is the one which the prophet mainly has in mind in his reference to "the Law," although we cannot agree with him in holding that this closes the discussion and makes a date prior to the year 444 B.C., the only one possible. Here, however, we find the chief evidence in favour of such a date.

But the evidence in favour of a later date is also strong. The prophecy seems to reflect the times of Nehemiah. When we compare the two books—that of Malachi and that of Nehemiah—the ecclesiastical and social conditions of the times