

MALACHI

TRANSLATED BY
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Introduction

Person of the Prophet. — The circumstances of *Malachi's* life are so entirely unknown, that it is a disputed point whether מְלָאכִי in the heading (Mal. 1: 1) is the name of a person, or merely an ideal name given to the prophet who foretels the sending of the messenger of Jehovah (מְלָאכִי, Mal. 3: 1), and whose real name has not been handed down. The LXX rendered the בֵּיד מְלָאכִי of the heading by ἐν χειρὶ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ, and therefore either had or conjectured as their reading מְלָאכִי; and the Targumist *Jonathan*, who adds to בֵּיד מְלָאכִי *cujus nomen appellatur Esra scriba*, has also taken מְלָאכִי in an ideal sense, and given the statement that Ezra the scribe is the prophetic author of our book, as a conjecture founded upon the spirit and contents of the prophecy. The notion that *Malachi* is only an official name is therefore met with in many of the fathers, and has been vigorously defended in the most recent times by Hengstenberg, who follows the lead of Vitringa, whilst Ewald lays it down as an established truth. But the arguments adduced in support of this, especially by Hengstenberg in his *Christology*, are not conclusive. The circumstance “that the heading does not contain any further personal description, whether the name of his father or the place of his birth,” is not more striking in our book than in the writings of Obadiah and Habakkuk, which also contain only the name of the prophet in the heading, without any further personal descriptions. It is a striking fact, no doubt, that the LXX and the Targumist have taken the name as an appellative; at the same time, it by no means follows from this “that nothing was known in tradition of any historical person of the name of Malachi,” but simply that nothing certain had been handed down concerning the circumstances of the prophet's life. The recollection, however, of the circumstances connected with the personal history of the prophet might easily have become extinct during the period of at least 150 or 200 years which intervened between the lifetime of the prophet and the Alexandrian version of the Old Testament, if his life was not distinguished by any other facts than the prophecies contained in his book. And *Jonathan* lived, at the earliest, 400 years after Malachi. That all recollection of the person of Malachi was not lost, however, is evident both from the notice in the Talmud to the effect that Malachi was one of the men of the great synagogue, as Haggai

and Zechariah had been, and also from the statements made by Psa. Dorotheos, Epiphanius, and other fathers, to the effect that he was a Levite of the tribe of Zebulun, and was born in *Supha*, or Σοφά, or Σοφίρα (see the passages in Koehler, *Mal.* pp. 10, 11), although all these statements show that nothing certain was known as to the circumstances of his life.

But the principal reason for taking the name not as a *nomen proprium*, but simply as a name adopted by the prophet for this particular prophecy, is to be found, according to Hengstenberg, in the character of the name itself, viz., in the fact that it is not formed from מְלָאָךְ and יְהוָה = יְהוָה, and cannot be explained by *angelicus*. But neither the one nor the other can be regarded as established. The formation of proper names by adding the termination ם to appellative nouns is by no means unusual, as the long list of examples of words formed in this manner, given by Olshausen (*Heb. Gramm.* § 218, *b*), clearly shows; and the remark that “this formation only serves to denote descent or occupation” (Hengstenberg) is beside the mark, since it does not apply to such names as גְּרָמִי, זְכָרִי, and others. The interpretation of the name as a contraction of מְלָאָכְיָהּ, messenger of Jehovah, is quite as possible as this derivation. We have an unquestionably example of a contraction of this kind in אָבִי in 2Ki. 18: 2, as compared with אֲבִיָּהּ in 2Ch. 29: 1. And just as the הָ is there omitted altogether in אָבִי, so is the other name of God, אֱלֹהִים, omitted in פְּלִטִי in 1Sa. 25:44, which is written פְּלִטִי אֱלֹהִים in 2Sa. 3:15. This omission of the name of God is by no means rare. “The Hebrews very often drop the names of God at the end of proper names” (Simonis, p. 11). The formation of such a name as מְלָאָכְיָהּ would be perfectly analogous to these cases; and no objection whatever can be brought against such a name, since the ם need not be taken as a suffix of the first person (*my* messenger is Jehovah), but is rather to be taken as *Yod compaginis*, like יְחִזְקִיָּהּ formed from יְחִזְקִי (for יְחִזְקִי) and הָ, “messenger of Jehovah.” This name might very well have been given by parents to a son whom God had given them, or sent to them in fulfilment of their wishes. Which of these two derivations deserves the preference, cannot be determined with certainty; at the same time, there is more probability in the latter than in the former, partly because of the obvious play upon His name in the words הֲנִנִי שִׁלְחַ מְלָאָכְיָהּ (Mal. 3: 1), and partly because of the Greek form of the name Μαλαχίας in the heading of the book. Since, then, there is no valid argument that can be brought against the formation of such a name, there is all the more reason for regarding the name in the heading (Mal. 1: 1) as the real name of the prophet, from the fact that the idea explanation would be without any distinct analogy. “All the prophets whose writings have come down to us in the canon, have given their own names in the headings to their books, that is to

say, the names which they received at their birth; and the names of the rest of the prophets of the Old Testament are also their real names” (Caspari, *Micha*, p. 28). Even in the case of the names *Agur* (Pro. 30: 1) and *Lemuel* (Pro. 31: 1), which Hengstenberg cites as analogies, it is still doubtful whether the first, Agur the son of Jakeh, is not a historical name; and even if the ideal use of the two were established beyond all doubt, no conclusion could be drawn from a collection of proverbs bearing upon a prophetic writing. A collection of proverbs is a poetical work, whose ethical or religious truth is not dependent upon the person of the poet. The prophet, on the contrary, has to guarantee the divinity of his mission and the truth of his prophecy by his own name or his own personality.

The period of Malachi is also a disputed point, although all are agreed that he lived and prophesied after the captivity. We may gather from his prophecy, not only that he commenced his prophetic labours after Haggai and Zechariah, since, according to Mal. 1: 6ff. and 3:10, the temple had been rebuilt and the temple-worship had been restored for a considerable time, but also, as Vitranga has shown in his *Observ. ss. ii. lib. 6*, that he did not prophesy till after the first arrival of Nehemiah in Jerusalem, i.e., after the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes Longimanus. The chief reason for this is to be found in the agreement between Malachi and Nehemiah (Neh. 13), in the reproof administered for the abuses current among the people, and even in the priesthood, — namely, the marriage of heathen wives (compare Mal. 2:11ff. with Neh. 13:23ff.), and the negligent payment of the tithes (compare Mal. 3: 8-10 with Neh. 13:10-14). The first of these abuses — namely, that many even of the priests and Levites had taken heathen wives — found its way among the people even on Ezra’s first arrival in Jerusalem; and he succeeded in abolishing it by vigorous measures, so that all Israel put away the heathen wives within three months (Ezr. 9 and 10). But it is evidently impossible to refer the condemnation of the same abuse in Malachi to this particular case, because on the one hand the exhortation to be mindful of the law of Moses (Mal. 3:22), as well as the whole of the contents of our book which are founded upon the authority of the law, apply rather to the time when Ezra had already put forth his efforts to restore the authority of the law (Ezr. 7:14, 25, 26), than to the previous time; whilst, on the other hand, the offering of unsuitable animals in sacrifice (Mal. 1: 7ff.), and unfaithfulness in the payment of the tithes and heave-offerings (Mal. 3: 8), can evidently be only explained on the supposition that Israel had to provide for the necessities of the temple and the support of the persons engaged in the worship; whereas in Ezra’s time, or at any rate immediately after his arrival, as well as in the time of Darius (Ezr. 6: 9, 10), the costs of worship were defrayed out of the royal revenues (Ezr. 7:15-17, 20-24). But after the abolition of the heathen marriages by Ezra, and after his reformatory labours as a whole, such breaches of the law

could not have spread once more among the people in the short interval between the time of Ezra and the first arrival of Nehemiah, even if Ezra had not continued his labours up to that time, as is evident from Neh. 8-10. Moreover, Nehemiah would no doubt have attacked these abuses at that time, as he did at a later period, if he had detected them. Consequently the falling back into the old sin that had been abolished by Ezra cannot have taken place before the period of Nehemiah's return to the king's court, in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (Neh. 13: 6). If, therefore, Malachi condemns and threatens with the punishment of God the very same abuses which Nehemiah found in Jerusalem on his second arrival there, and strove most energetically to exterminate, Malachi must have prophesied at that time; but whether immediately before Nehemiah's second arrival in Jerusalem, or during his presence there, so as to support the reformatory labours of Nehemiah by his prophetic testimony, cannot be decided with certainty. What Malachi says in Mal. 1: 8 concerning the attitude of the people towards the Persian governor does not necessarily presuppose a non-Israelitish vicegerent, but might also apply to Nehemiah, since the prophet's words may be understood as relating to free-will gifts or presents, whereas Nehemiah (Neh. 5:14, 15) simply says that he has not required from the people the governor's supplies, and has not burdened them with taxes. The circumstance, however, that Nehemiah finds the abuses still existing in undiminished force, renders the assumption that Malachi had already prophesied improbable, and favours rather the contemporaneous labours of the two; in which case the work of Malachi bore the same relation to that of Nehemiah as the work of Haggai and Zechariah to that of Zerubbabel and Joshua; and the reformatory labours of Nehemiah, which were chiefly of an outward character, were accompanied by the more inward labours of Malachi, as was very frequently the case in the history of Israel; for example, in the case of Isaiah and Hezekiah, or of Jeremiah and Josiah (see Hengstenberg, *Christology*, iv. p. 157).

2. The Book of Malachi contains one single prophecy, the character of which is condemnatory throughout. Starting with the love which the Lord has shown to His people (Mal. 1: 2-5), the prophet proves that not only do the priests profane the name of the Lord by an unholy performance of the service at the altar (Mal. 1: 6; 2: 9), but the people also repudiate their divine calling both by heathen marriages and frivolous divorces (Mal. 2:10-16), and by their murmuring at the delay of the judgment; whereas the Lord will soon reveal Himself as a just judge, and before His coming will send His messenger, the prophet Elijah, to warn the ungodly and lead them to repentance, and then suddenly come to His temple as the expected angel of the covenant, to refine the sons of Levi, punish the sinners who have broken the covenant, and by exterminating the wicked, as well as by blessing the godly with salvation and

righteousness, make the children of Israel the people of His possession (Mal. 2:17-4: 6). The contents of the book, therefore, arrange themselves in three sections: Mal. 1: 6-2: 9; 2:10-16; 2:17-4: 6. These three sections probably contain only the leading thoughts of the oral addresses of the prophet, which are so combined as to form one single prophetic address. Throughout the whole book we meet with the spirit which developed itself among the Jews after the captivity, and assumed the concrete forms of Phariseeism and Saduceeism. The outward or grosser kind of idolatry had been rendered thoroughly distasteful to the people by the sufferings of exile; and its place was taken by the more refined idolatry of dead-work righteousness, and trust in the outward fulfilment of the letter of the divine commands, without any deeper confession of sin, or penitential humiliation under the word and will of God. Because the fulness of salvation, which the earlier prophets had set before the people when restored to favour and redeemed from captivity, had not immediately come to pass, they began to murmur against God, to cherish doubts as to the righteousness of the divine administration, and to long for the judgment to fall upon the Gentiles, without reflecting that the judgment would begin at the house of God (Amo. 3: 2; 1Pe. 4:17). Malachi fights against this spirit, and the influence of the time in which he lived is apparent in the manner in which he attacks it. This style is distinguished from the oratorical mode of address adopted by the earlier prophets, and not unfrequently rises into a lyrico-dramatical diction, by the predominance of the conversational form of instruction, in which the thought to be discussed is laid down in the form of a generally acknowledged truth, and developed by the alternation of address and reply. In this mode of developing the thought, we can hardly fail to perceive the influence of the scholastic discourses concerning the law which were introduced by Ezra; only we must not look upon this conversational mode of instruction as a sign of the defunct spirit of prophecy, since it corresponded exactly to the practical wants of the time, and prophecy did not die of spiritual exhaustion, but was extinguished in accordance with the will and counsel of God, as soon as its mission had been fulfilled. Malachi's language, considering the later period in which he lived and laboured, is still vigorous, pure, and beautiful. "Malachi," as Nägelsbach says in Herzog's *Cyclopaedia*, "is like a late evening, which brings a long day to a close; but he is also the morning dawn, which bears a glorious day in its womb."

For the exegetical literature, see my *Lehrbuch der Einleitung*, p. 318; also Aug. Koehler's *Wiessagungen Maleachi's erklärt*, Erl. 1865.

EXPOSITION

God's Love, and the Contempt of His Name — Ch. 1: 1-2:

Mal. 1: 1-2: 9. The Lord has shown love to Israel (Mal. 1: 2-5), but Israel refuses Him the gratitude which is due, since the priests despise His name by offering bad sacrifices, and thereby cherish the delusion that God cannot do without the sacrifices (vv. 6-14). The people are therefore punished with adversity, and the priesthood with desecration (Mal. 2: 1-9).

Mal. 1: 1-5. The first verse contains the heading (see the introduction), “*The burden of the word of the Lord,*” as in Zec. 9: 1 and 12: 1. On *massa*’ (burden), see Nah. 1: 1. The prophet commences his address in v. 2, by showing the love for which Israel has to thank its God, in order that on the ground of this fact he may bring to the light the ingratitude of the people towards their God.

V. 2. “I have loved you, saith Jehovah; and ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Is not Esau a brother of Jacob? is the saying of Jehovah: and I loved Jacob, V. 3. And I hated Esau, and made his mountains a waste, and his inheritance for jackals of the desert. V. 4. If Edom says, We are dashed to pieces, but will build up the ruins again, thus saith Jehovah of hosts: They will build, but I will pull down: and men will call them territory of wickedness, and the people with whom Jehovah is angry for ever. V. 5. And your eyes will see it; and ye will say, Great is Jehovah over the border of Israel.”

These four verses form neither an independent address, nor merely the first member of the following address, but the introduction and foundation of the whole book. The love which God has shown to Israel ought to form the motive and model for the conduct of Israel towards its God. אהבה denotes love in its expression or practical manifestation. The question asked by the people, “Wherein hast Thou shown us love?” may be explained from the peculiarities of Malachi’s style, and is the turn he regularly gives to his address, by way of introducing the discussion of the matter in hand, so that we are not to see in it any intention to disclose the hypocrisy of the people. The prophet proves the love of Jehovah towards Israel, from the attitude of God towards Israel and towards Edom. Jacob and Esau, the tribe-fathers of both nations, were twin brothers. It would therefore have been supposed that the posterity of both the Israelites and the Edomites would be treated alike by God. But this is not the case. Even before their birth Jacob was the chosen one; and Esau or Edom was the inferior, who was to serve his brother (Gen. 25:23, cf. Rom. 9:10-13). Accordingly Jacob became the heir of the promise, and Esau lost this blessing.

This attitude on the part of God towards Jacob and Esau, and towards the nations springing from them, is described by Malachi in these words: I (Jehovah) have loved Jacob, and hated Esau. The verbs אָהַב, to love, and שָׂנֵא, to hate, must not be weakened down into loving more and loving less, to avoid the danger of falling into the doctrine of predestination. שָׂנֵא, to hate, is the opposite of love. And this meaning must be retained here; only we must bear in mind, that with God anything arbitrary is inconceivable, and that no explanation is given here of the reasons which determined the actions of God. Malachi does not expressly state in what the love of God to Jacob (i.e., Israel) showed itself; but this is indirectly indicated in what is stated concerning the hatred towards Edom. The complete desolation of the Edomitish territory is quoted as a proof of this hatred. V. 3b does not refer to the assignment of a barren land, as Rashi, Ewald, and Umbreit suppose, but to the devastation of the land, which was only utterly waste on the western mountains; whereas it was by no means barren on the eastern slopes and valleys (see at Gen. 27:39). *Tannōth* is a feminine plural form of *tan = tannim* (Mic. 1: 8; Isa. 13:22, etc.), by which, according to the Syrio-Aramaean version, we are to understand the jackal. The meaning dwelling-places, which Gesenius and others have given to *tannōth*, after the LXX and Peshito, rests upon a very uncertain derivation (see Roediger at Ges. *Thes.* p. 1511). "For jackals of the desert:" i.e., as a dwelling-place for these beasts of the desert (see Isa. 34:13). It is a disputed point when this devastation took place, and from what people it proceeded. Jahn, Hitzig, and Koehler are of opinion that it is only of the most recent date, because otherwise the Edomites would long ago have repaired the injury, which, according to v. 4, does not appear to have been done. V. 4, however, simply implies that the Edomites would not succeed in the attempt to repair the injury. On the other hand, vv. 2 and 3 evidently contain the thought, that whereas Jacob had recovered, in consequence of the love of Jehovah, from the blow which had fallen upon it (through the Chaldaeans), Esau's territory was still lying in ruins from the same blow, in consequence of Jehovah's hatred (Caspari, *Obad.* p. 143). It follows from this, that the devastation of Idumaea emanated from the Chaldaeans. On the other hand, the objection that the Edomites appear to have submitted voluntarily to the Babylonians, and to have formed an alliance with them, does not say much, since neither the one nor the other can be raised even into a position of probability; but, on the contrary, we may infer with the greatest probability from Jer. 49: 7ff., as compared with 25: 9, 21, that the Edomites were also subjugated by Nebuchadnezzar. Maurer's assumption, that Idumaea was devastated by the Egyptians, Ammonites, and Moabites, against whom Nebuchadnezzar marched in the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, is perfectly visionary. The threat in v. 4, that if Edom attempts to rebuild its ruins, the Lord will again destroy that which is built, is equivalent to a declaration that

Edom will never recover its former prosperity and power. This was soon fulfilled, the independence of the Edomites being destroyed, and their land made an eternal desert, especially from the times of the Maccabees onwards (see p. 251). The construction of אֶדוֹם as a feminine with תְּאִמֶר may be explained on the ground that the land is regarded as the mother of its inhabitants, and stands synecdochically for the population. Men will call them (לְהֵם, the Edomites) נְבוֹל רְשָׁעָה, territory, land of wickedness, — namely, inasmuch as they will look upon the permanent devastation, and the failure of every attempt on the part of the nation to rise up again, as a practical proof that the wrath of God is resting for ever upon both people and land on account of Edom's sins.

Mal. 1: 5. These ineffectual attempts on the part of Edom to recover its standing again will Israel see with its eyes, and then acknowledge that Jehovah is showing Himself to be great above the land of Israel. מֵאֵל לְגִבּוֹל does not mean “beyond the border of Israel” (Drus., Hitzig, Ewald, and others). מֵאֵל לְ does not mean this, but simply over, above (cf. Neh. 3:28; Ecc. 5: 7). יִגְדֵל is not a wish, “Let Him be great, i.e., be praised,” as in Psa. 35:27; 40:17, etc. The expression מֵאֵל לְגִבּוֹל יִ does not suit this rendering; for it is an unnatural assumption to take this as an apposition to יְהוָה, in the sense of: Jehovah, who is enthroned or rules over the border of Israel. Jehovah is great, when He makes known His greatness to men, by His acts of power or grace.

Mal. 1: 6-14. The condemnation of that contempt of the Lord which the priests displayed by offering bad or blemished animals in sacrifices, commences with the following verse.

V. 6. “A son honoureth the father, and a servant his master. And if I am a father, where is my honour? and if I am a master, where is my fear? saith Jehovah of hosts to you, ye priests who despise my name, and yet say, Wherein have we despised Thy name? V. 7. Ye who offer polluted bread upon my altar, and yet say, Wherewith have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of Jehovah, it is despised. V.8. And if ye offer what is blind for sacrifice, it is no wickedness; and if ye offer what is lame and diseased, it is no wickedness. Offer it, now, to thy governor: will he be gracious to thee, or accept thy person? saith Jehovah of hosts. V. 9. And now, supplicate the face of God, that He may have compassion upon us: of your hand has this occurred: will He look upon a person on your account? saith Jehovah of hosts.”

This reproof is simply directed against the priests, but it applies to the whole nation; for in the times after the captivity the priests formed the soul of the national life. In order to make an impression with his reproof, the prophet commences with a generally acknowledged truth, by which both priests and people could and ought to measure their attitude towards the Lord. The statement, that the son honours the father and the servant his master, is not to

be taken as a moral demand. **כְּבוֹד** is not jussive (Targ., Luth., etc.); for this would only weaken the prophet's argument. The imperfect expresses what generally occurs, individual exceptions which are sometimes met with being overlooked. Malachi does not even appeal to the law in Exo. 20:12, which enjoins upon children reverence towards their parents, and in which reverence on the part of a servant towards his master is also implied, but simply lays it down as a truth which no one will call in question. To this he appends the further truth, which will also be admitted without contradiction, that Jehovah is the Father and Lord of Israel. Jehovah is called the Father of Israel in the song of Moses (Deu. 32: 6), inasmuch as He created and trained Israel to be His covenant nation; compare Isa. 63:16, where Jehovah is called the Father of Israel as being its Redeemer (also Jer. 31: 9 and Psa. 100: 3). As Father, God is also Lord (*ādōnīm: plur. majest.*) of the nation, which He has made His possession. But if He is a Father, the honour which a son owes to his father is due to Him; and if a Lord, the fear which a servant owes to his lord is also due to Him. The suffixes attached to **כְּבוֹדִי** and **מִן־רֵאִי** are used in an objective sense, as in Gen. 9: 2, Exo. 20:17, etc. In order now to say to the priests in the most striking manner that they do the opposite of this, the prophet calls them in his address despisers of the name of Jehovah, and fortifies this against their reply by proving that they exhibit this contempt in their performance of the altar service. With regard to the construction of the clauses in the last members of v. 6, and also in v. 7, the participle **מִן־נִשְׂיָם** is parallel to **בְּזוּי שְׁמִי**, and the reply of the priests to the charge brought against them is attached to these two participial clauses by "and ye say;" and the antithesis is exhibited more clearly by the choice of the finite tense, than it would have been by the continuation of the participle.

V. 7aa is not an answer to the question of the priests, "Wherein have we despised Thy name?" for the answer could not be given in the participle; but though the clause commencing with *maggīshim* does explain the previous rebuke, viz., that they despise the name of Jehovah, and will not even admit that this is true, it is not in the form of an answer to the reply of the opponents, but by a simple reference to the conduct of the priests. The answer is appended by **בְּאִמְרַכֶּם** in v. 7b to the reply made to this charge also; and this answer is explained in v. 8 by an allusion to the nature of the sacrificial animals, without being followed by a fresh reply on the part of the priests, because this fact cannot be denied. The contempt on the part of the priests of the name of Jehovah, i.e., of the glory in which God manifested Himself in Israel, was seen in the fact that they offered polluted bread upon the altar of Jehovah. *Lechem*, bread or food, does not refer to the shew-bread, for that was not offered upon the altar, but is the sacrificial flesh, which is called in Lev. 21: 6, 8, 17, the food

(*lechem*) of God (on the application of this epithet to the sacrifices, see the remarks in our comm. on Lev. 3:11, 16). The prophet calls this food **מִגְזָל**, polluted, blemished, not so much with reference to the fact, that the priests offered the sacrifices in a hypocritical or impure state of mind (Ewald), as because, according to v. 8, the sacrificial animals were affected with blemishes (*mūm*), or had something corrupt (*moshchâth*) about them (Lev. 22:20-25). The reply, “Wherewith have we defiled *Thee*?” is to be explained from the idea that either touching or eating anything unclean would defile a person. In this sense they regard the offering of defiled food to God as defiling God Himself. The prophet answers: In that ye represent the table of Jehovah as something contemptible. The table of Jehovah is the altar, upon which the sacrifices (i.e., the food of God) were laid. **נִבְזָה** has the force of an adjective here: contemptible. They represent the altar as contemptible not so much in words or speeches, as in their practice, viz., by offering up bad, despicable sacrificial animals, which had blemishes, being either blind, lame, or diseased, and which were unfit for sacrifices on account of these blemishes, according to the law in Lev. 22:20ff. Thus they violated both reverence for the altar and also reverence for Jehovah. The words **אֵין רָע** are not to be taken as a question, but are used by the prophet in the sense of the priests, and thus assume the form of bitter irony. **רָע**, bad, evil, as a calumny of Jehovah. In order to disclose to them their wrong in the most striking manner, the prophet asks them whether the governor (**פְּחָה**: see at Hag. 1: 1) would accept such presents; and then in v. 9 draws this conclusion, that God also would not hear the prayers of the priests for the people. He clothes this conclusion in the form of a challenge to supplicate the face of Jehovah (**חָלָה פָּנַי**: see at Zec. 7: 2), that God would have compassion upon the nation; but at the same time he intimates by the question, whether God would take any notice of this, that under the existing circumstances such intercession would be fruitless. **פָּנַי אֵל** is selected in the place of **פָּנַי יְהוָה**, to lay the greater emphasis upon the antithesis between God and man (the governor). If the governor would not accept worthless gifts graciously, how could they expect a gracious answer to their prayers from God when they offered such gifts to Him? The suffix in **חָלָנִי** refers to the people, in which the prophet includes himself. The clause “from your hand has **זָאת** (this: viz., the offering of such reprehensible sacrifices) proceeded” (cf. Isa. 50:11), is inserted between the summons to pray to God and the intimation of the certain failure of such intercession, to give still further prominence to the unlawfulness of such an act. The question **הֲשָׂא וְגוֹ** is appended to the principal clause **חָלֹנֵנָא**, and **מִפְּנֵים** does not stand for **פְּנִיכֶם**: will He lift up your face, i.e., show you favour? but **מִפְּנֵים** is causal, “on your account” (Koehler): “will He regard a person, that is to say, will He show favour to any one, on your

account, viz., because ye pray to Him for compassion, when these are the actions ye perform?” The view of Jerome, Grotius, and Hitzig, that the challenge to seek the face of God is an earnest call to repentance or to penitential prayer, is at variance with the context. What follows, for example, is opposed to this, where the prophet says it would be better if the temple were closed, since God does not need sacrifices.

Mal. 1:10-13.

V. 10. *“O that there were one among you, who would shut the doors, that ye might not light mine altar to no purpose! I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, and sacrificial offering does not please me from your hand. V. 11. For from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is burned and sacrifice offered, and indeed a pure sacrifice to my name; for my name is great among the nations, saith Jehovah of hosts. V. 12. And ye desecrate it with your saying: the table of Jehovah, it is defiled, and its fruit — contemptible is its food. V. 13. And ye say: behold what a plague! and ye blow upon it, saith Jehovah of hosts, and ye bring hither what is robbed and the lame and the sick, and thus ye bring the sacrificial gift; shall I take pleasure in this from your hand? saith Jehovah.”*

The construction **מִי בְּכֶם וְיִסְגֵר** is to be explained in accordance with Job. 19:23: “Who is among you and he would shut,” for “who is there who would shut?” and the question is to be taken as the expression of a wish, as in 2Sa. 15: 4, Psa. 4: 7, etc.: “would that some one among you would shut!” The thought is sharpened by *gam*, which not only belongs to **בְּכֶם**, but to the whole of the clause: “O that some one would shut,” etc. The doors, the shutting of which is to be desired, are the folding doors of the inner court, in which the altar of burnt-offering stood; and the object of the wish is that the altar might no more be lighted up, not “by lights which burned by the side of the altar” (Ewald), but by the shining of the sacrificial fire which burned upon the altar. **הִנֵּה**, in vain, i.e., without any object or use, for Jehovah had no pleasure in such priests or such worthless sacrifices. *Minchâh* here is not the meat-offering as distinguished from the slain-offering, but sacrifice generally, as in 1Sa. 2:17, Isa. 1:13, Zep. 3:10, etc. Such sacrifices God does not desire, for His name proves itself to be great among all the nations of the earth, so that pure sacrifices are offered to Him in every place. This is the simple connection between vv. 10 and 11, and one in perfect harmony with the words. Koehler’s objection, that such a line of argument apparently presupposes that God needs sacrifices on the part of man for His own sake, and is only in a condition to despise the sacrifices of His nation when another nation offers Him better ones, has no force, because the expression “for His own sake,” in the sense of “for His sustenance or to render the perpetuation of His being possible,” with the conclusion drawn from it, is neither to be found in the words of the text, nor in

the explanation referred to. God does indeed need no sacrifices for the maintenance of His existence, and He does not demand them for this purpose, but He demands them as signs of the dependence of men upon Him, or of the recognition on the part of men that they are indebted to God for life and every other blessing, and owe Him honour, praise, and thanksgiving in return. In this sense God needs sacrifices, because otherwise He would not be God to men on earth; and from this point of view the argument that God did not want to receive the reprehensible sacrifices of the Israelitish priests, because sacrifices were offered to Him by the nations of the earth in all places, and therefore His name was and remained great notwithstanding the desecration of it on the part of Israel, was a very proper one for attacking the delusion, that God needs sacrifices for His own sustenance; a delusion which the Israelitish priests, against whom Malachi was contending, really cherished, if not *in thesi*, at all events *in praxi*, when they thought any sacrificial animal good enough for God. Koehler's assumption, that v. 11 contains a subordinate parenthetical thought, and that the reason for the assertion in v. 10*b* is not given till vv. 12, 13, is opposed to the structure of the sentences, since it necessitates the insertion of "although" after אֲפֹרָאֵי in v. 11.

It is must more difficult to decide the question whether v. 11 treats of what was already occurring at the time of the prophet himself, as Hitzig, Maurer, and Koehler suppose (after the LXX, Ephr., Theod. Mops., etc.), or of that which would take place in the future through the reception of the heathen into the kingdom of God in the place of Israel, which would be rejected for a time (Cyr., Theod., Jerome, Luther, Calvin, and others, down to Hengstenberg and Schmieder). Both of these explanations are admissible on grammatical grounds; for such passages as Gen. 15:14 and Joe. 3: 4 show very clearly that the participle is also used for the future. If we take the words as referring to the present, they can only mean that the heathen, with the worship and sacrifices which they offer to the gods, do worship, though ignorantly yet in the deepest sense, the true and living God (Koehler). But this thought is not even expressed by the Apostle Paul in so definite or general a form, either in Rom. 1:19, 20, where he teaches that the heathen can discern the invisible being of God from His works, or in Act. 17:23ff. in his address at Athens, where he infers from the inscription upon an altar, "to the unknown God," that the unknown God, whom the Athenians worshipped, is the true God who made heaven and earth. Still less is this thought contained in our verse. Malachi does not speak of an "unknown God," whom all nations from the rising to the setting of the sun, i.e., over all the earth, worshipped, but says that Jehovah's name is great among the nations of the whole earth. And the name of God is only great among the Gentiles, when Jehovah has proved Himself to them to be a great God, so that they have discerned the greatness of the living God from His marvellous works

and thus have learned to fear Him (cf. Zep. 2:11; Psa. 46: 9-11; Exo. 15:11, 14-16). This experience of the greatness of God forms the substratum for the offering of sacrifices in every place, since this offering is not mentioned merely as the consequence of the fact that the name of Jehovah is great among the nations; but in the clause before the last, “the latter is also expressly placed towards the former in the relation of cause to effect” (Koehler). The idea, therefore, that the statement, that incense is burned and sacrifice offered to the name of Jehovah in every place, refers to the sacrifices which the heathen offered to their gods, is quite inadmissible. At the time of Malachi the name of Jehovah was not great from the rising to the setting of the sun, nor were incense and sacrifice offered to Him in every place, and therefore even Hitzig looks upon the expression **בְּכֹל-מְקוֹם** as “saying too much.” Consequently we must understand the words prophetically as relating to that spread of the kingdom of God among all nations, with which the worship of the true God would commence “in every place.” **בְּכֹל-מְקוֹם** forms an antithesis to the *one* place, in the temple at Jerusalem, to which the worship of God was limited during the time of the old covenant (Deu. 12: 5, 6). **מִקְטָר** is not a *partic. nominasc.*, incense, *suffimentum*, for this could not signify the burnt-offering or slain-offering as distinguished from the meat-offering (*minchâh*), but it is a *partic. verbale*, and denotes not the kindling of the sacrificial flesh upon the altar, but the kindling of the incense (*suffitur*); for otherwise **מִנְשָׁה** would necessarily stand before **מִקְטָר**, since the presentation preceded the burning upon the altar. The two participles are connected together *asyndetos* and without any definite subject (see Ewald, § 295, *a*). It is true that *minchâh t^hôrâh* does actually belong to *muggâsh* as the subject, but it is attached by *Vav explic.* in the form of an explanatory apposition: offering is presented to my name, and indeed a sacrificial gift (*minchâh* covering every sacrifice, as in v. 10). The emphasis rests upon *t^hôrâh*, pure, i.e., according to the requirements of the law, in contrast to sacrifices polluted by faulty animals, such as the priests of that day were accustomed to offer. ^f

In the allusion to the worship, which would be paid by all nations to the name of the Lord, there is an intimation that the kingdom of God will be taken from the Jews who despise the Lord, and given to the heathen who seek God. This intimation forms the basis for the curse pronounced in v. 14 upon the despisers of God, and shows “that the kingdom of God will not perish, when the Lord comes and smites the land with the curse (Mal. 4: 6), but that this apparent death is the way to true life” (Hengstenberg).

To this allusion to the attitude which the heathen will assume towards Jehovah when He reveals His name to them, the prophet appends as an antithesis in vv. 12, 13 a repetition of the reproof, that the priests of Israel desecrate the name

of the Lord by that contempt of His name, which they display by offering faulty animals in sacrifice. V. 12 is only a repetition of the rebuke in v.7. **חַלַּל** is really equivalent to **בָּנָה שָׁם** and **נָאֵל** in vv. 6 and 7, and **מִנְאֵל** to **נְבִיָּה** in v. 7, which occurs in the last clause of v. 12 as synonymous with it. The additional words **וְנִיבוֹ וְגוֹ** serve to strengthen the opinion expressed by the priests concerning the table of the Lord. **נִיבוֹ** is placed at the head absolutely, and is substantially resumed in **נִיב. אֲכָלוּ**, *proventus*, produce, income; the suffix refers to *shulchan Y^ehōvâh* (the table of the Lord). The revenue of the table of the Lord, i.e., of the altar, consisted of the sacrifices offered upon it, which are also called its food. The assumption is an erroneous one, that the sentence contains any such thought as the following: “The revenue drawn by the priests from the altar, i.e., the sacrificial flesh which fell to their share, was contemptible;” according to which the priests would be represented as declaring, that they themselves could not eat the flesh of the sacrifices offered without disgust; for they could not possibly speak in this way, since it was they themselves who admitted the faulty animals. If the flesh of blind, lame, or diseased animals had been too bad for food in their estimation, they would not have admitted such animals or offered them in sacrifice (Koehler). Even in v. 13 this thought is not implied. **מִתְלָאָה** is a contraction of **מִה־תְּלָאָה** (cf. Ges. § 20, 2, *a*): What a weariness it is! The object, which the priests declare to be a burdensome and troublesome affair, can only be inferred from the following expression, *v^ehippachtem* *ōthō*. *Hippēäch* signifies here to blow away, like **הִפִּיחַ בִּ** in Psa. 10: 5, which is radically connected with it, i.e., to treat contemptuously. The suffix **אוֹתוֹ** does not refer to **אֲכָלוּ**, but to **שִׁלְחַן יְיָ**. The table of Jehovah (i.e., the altar) they treat contemptuously. Consequently the service at the altar is a burden or a trouble to them, whereas this service ought to be regarded as an honour and a privilege. Jerome thinks that instead of **אוֹתוֹ**, we might read **אוֹתֵי**, which is found in a good number of codices; and according to the Masora, **אוֹתוֹ** has found its way into the text as *Tikkun Sopherim* (compare the remarks at Hab. 1:12 on the *Tikkune Sopherim*). But in this case also the reading in the text is evidently original and correct. They manifest their contempt of the altar by offering in sacrifice that which has been stolen, etc. (cf. v. 8). The first **הַבְּאֵתָם** is to be understood as referring to the bringing of the animals upon the altar; and **וְהַבְּאֵתָם אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה** is to be interpreted thus: “And having brought such worthless animals to the slaughter, ye then offer the sacrificial gift.” There is indeed no express prohibition in the law against offering *gâzûl*, or that which has been stolen; but it was shut out from the class of admissible sacrifices by the simple fact, that robbery was to be visited with punishment as a crime. The reproof closes with the question, which is repeated from v. 8 (cf. v. 10),

whether God can accept such sacrifices with pleasure. The prophet then utters the curse in the name of God upon all who offer bad and unsuitable sacrifices.

Mal. 1:14.

“And cursed is he who deceives whilst there is in his flock a male animal, and he who vows and sacrifices to the Lord that which is corrupt; for I am a great King, saith Jehovah of hosts, and my name is feared among the nations.”

This verse is not attached adversatively to v. 13*b*, but *Vav* is the simple copula, for the question in v. 13*b* has a negative sense, or is to be answered by “No.” To this answer there is attached the curse upon all the Israelites who offer such sacrifices to God as have not the characteristics required by the law. Two cases are mentioned. In the first place, that when according to the law a male animal ought to have been sacrificed, the person offering the sacrifice offered a female, i.e., one of less value, under the pretence that he did not possess or could not procure a male. The prophet calls this *nâkhal*, cheating. The second case refers to votive sacrifices; for which as *zebhoch sh'lamim* (Lev. 22:21) both male and female animals could be used, though only such as were free from faults, inasmuch as animals having any *moshchâth* are declared in Lev. 22:25 to be not acceptable. *Moshchâth*, according to the Masoretic pointing, is the feminine of the *hophal* participle for מְשַׁחֲתָהּ, like מְשַׁרְתָּהּ for מְשַׁרְתָּהּ in 1Ki. 1:15 (cf. Ewald, § 188, *b*, and Olshausen, p. 393), according to which we should have to think of a female animal in bad condition. This pointing, however, is probably connected with the view still defended by Ewald, Maurer, and Hitzig, that the words וְיִשׁ וְגוֹי are a continuation of the circumstantial clause וְיִשׁ וְגוֹי, and that v. 14 only refers to votive sacrifices: Cursed is the deceiver who has in his flock a male, but vows and sacrifices a corrupt female. This view, however, is evidently opposed to the meaning of the words. If וְיִשׁ וְגוֹי were a circumstantial clause, we should expect וְיִשׁ וְגוֹי. Moreover, since even female animals were admissible for votive sacrifices, the vowing and offering of a female animal could not be blamed in itself, and therefore what was reprehensible was not that a female animal was vowed and offered in sacrifice by any one, but that, instead of offering a faultless animal (*tâmilim*), he presented a blemished one. We must therefore follow the ancient translators and many commentators, who read *moshchâth* (*masc.*), according to which the curse is pronounced upon any one who vowed a sacrifice and afterwards redeemed his vow with a faulty and unsuitable animal. An animal was *moshchâth*, corrupt, when it had any fault, which rendered it unsuitable for sacrifice. The reason for the curse is explained by reminding them of the greatness of God. Because Jehovah is a great King and His name is feared among the nations, to offer a corrupt animal in sacrifice is an offence against His majesty.

Mal. 2: 1-9. The rebuke administered to the priests for their wicked doings is followed by an announcement of the punishment which they will bring upon themselves in case they should not observe the admonition, or render to the Lord the reverence due to His name when discharging the duties of their office.

V. 1. “*And now, ye priests, this commandment comes to you.* V. 2. *If ye do not hear and lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, saith Jehovah of hosts, I send against you the curse and curse your blessings, yea I have cursed them, because ye will not lay it to heart.* V. 3. *Behold I rebuke your arm, and scatter dung upon your face, the dung of your feasts, and they will carry you away to it.* V. 4. *And ye will perceive that I have sent this commandment to you, that it may be my covenant with Levi, saith Jehovah of hosts.*”

V. 1. introduces the threat; this is called *mitsvâh*, a command, not as a commission which the prophet received, for the speaker is not the prophet, but Jehovah Himself; nor as “instruction, admonition, or warning,” for *mitsvâh* has no such meaning. *Mitsvâh* is rather to be explained from *tsivvâh* in Nah. 1:14. The term command is applied to that which the Lord has resolved to bring upon a person, inasmuch as the execution or accomplishment is effected by earthly instruments by virtue of a divine command.

The reference is to the threat of punishment which follows in vv. 2 and 3, but which is only to be carried out in case the priests do not hear and lay to heart, namely, the warning which the Lord has addressed to them through Malachi (Mal. 1: 6-13), and sanctify His name by their service. If they shall not do this, God will send the curse against them, and that in two ways. In the first place He will curse their blessings; in fact, He has already done so. *B^erâkhôth*, blessings, are obviously not the revenues of the priests, tithes, atonement-money, and portions of the sacrifices (L. de Dieu, Ros., Hitzig), but the blessings pronounced by the priests upon the people by virtue of their office. These God will curse, i.e., He will make them ineffective, or turn them into the very opposite. אָרֹתֶיךָ וְגַם אָרֹתֶיךָ is not a simple, emphatic repetition, but אָרֹתֶיךָ is a perfect, which affirms that the curse has already taken effect. The emphatic *v^egam*, and also, and indeed, also requires this. The suffix תֶּךָ attached to אָרֹתֶיךָ is to be taken distributively: “each particular blessing.” In the second place God will rebuke אֶת־הַזֶּרַע, i.e., the seed. But since the priests did not practise agriculture, it is impossible to see how rebuking the seed, i.e., causing a failure of the crops, could be a punishment peculiar to the priests. We must therefore follow the LXX, Aquila, Vulg., Ewald, and others, and adopt the pointing אֶת־הַזֶּרֶם, i.e., the arm. Rebuking the arm does not mean exactly “laming the arm,” nor manifesting His displeasure in any way against the arm, which the priests raised to bless (Koehler). For it was not the arm but the hand that was raised to bless (Lev. 9:22; Luke 34:50), and rebuking signifies something more than the

manifestation of displeasure. It is with the arm that a man performs his business or the duties of his calling; and rebuking the arm, therefore, signifies the neutralizing of the official duties performed at the altar and in the sanctuary. Moreover, God will also deliver them up to the most contemptuous treatment, by scattering dung in their faces, namely, the dung of their feasts. *Chaggim*, feasts, is used metonymically for festal sacrifices, or the sacrificial animals slain at the festivals (cf. Psa. 118:27). The dung of the sacrificial animals was to be carried away to an unclean place outside the camp and burned there, in the case of the sin-offerings, upon an ash-heap (Lev. 4:12; 16:27; Exo. 29:14). Scattering dung in the face was a sign and figurative description of the most ignominious treatment. Through the expression “dung of your festal sacrifices,” the festal sacrifices offered by these priests are described as being themselves dung; and the thought is this: the contempt of the Lord, which they show by offering blind or lame animals, or such as are blemished in other ways, He will repay to them by giving them up to the greatest ignominy. The threat is strengthened by the clause **וְנִשְׂא אֶתְכֶם אֱלֹהֵי**, which has been interpreted, however, in different ways. The Vulgate, Luther (“and shall remain sticking to you”), Calvin, and others take *peresh* as the subject to **נִשְׂא**: “the dung will draw the priests to itself, so that they will also become dung.” But **נִשְׂא** has no such meaning; we must therefore leave the subject indefinite: they (*man*) will carry you away, or sweep you away to it, i.e., treat you as dung. When they should be treated in this ignominious manner, then would they perceive that the threatening had come from the Lord. “This commandment (*mitsvâh*) is the *mitsvâh* mentioned in v. 1. The infinitive clause which follows announces the purpose of God, in causing this threat to come to pass. But the explanation of these words is a disputed point, since we may either take *b^erithî* (my covenant) as the subject, or supply *hammitsvâh* (the commandment) from the previous clause. In the first case (“that my covenant may be with Levi”) the meaning could only be, that the covenant with Levi may continue. But although *hâyâh* does indeed mean to exist, it does not mean to continue, or be maintained. We must therefore take *hammitsvâh* as the subject, as Luther, Calvin, and others have done (“that it, viz., my purpose, may be my covenant with Levi”). Koehler adopts this, and has explained it correctly thus: “They will perceive that just as Jehovah has hitherto regulated His conduct towards Levi by the terms of His covenant, which was made with it at the time of its departure from Egypt, so will He henceforth let it be regulated by the terms of the decree of punishment which He has resolved upon now, so that this decree of punishment takes the place, as it were, of the earlier covenant.” *Lēvî* is the tribe of Levi, which culminated in the priesthood. The attitude of God towards the priests is called a covenant, inasmuch as God placed them in a special relation to Himself by choosing them for the service of the sanctuary, which not only secured to them

rights and promises, but imposed duties upon them, on the fulfilment of which the reception of the gifts of divine grace depended (vid., Deu. 10: 8, 9; 33: 8-10; Num. 18: 1ff., 25:10ff.).

Mal. 2: 5-7. To explain and show the reason for this thought, the real nature of the covenant made with Levi is described in vv. 5-7; and vv. 8 and 9 then show how the priests have neutralized this covenant by forsaking the way of their fathers, so that God is obliged to act differently towards them now, and deliver them up to shame and ignominy.

V. 5. “My covenant was with him life and salvation, and I lent them to him for fear, and he feared me and trembled before my name. V. 6. Law of truth was in his mouth and there was no perversity on his lips, he walked with me in salvation and integrity, and brought back many from guilt. V. 7. For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and men seek law from his mouth, because he is a messenger of Jehovah.”

In v. 5a **הַחַיִּים וְהַשְּׁלוֹם** are the nominative of the predicate. “My covenant was with him life,” etc., means, my covenant consisted in this, that life and salvation were guaranteed and granted to him. The elliptical mode of explaining it, viz., “my covenant was a covenant of life and salvation,” gives the same sense, only there is no analogous example by which this ellipsis can be vindicated, since such passages as Num. 25:12, Gen. 24:24, and Hos. 14: 3, which Hitzig adduces in support of it, are either of a different character, or different in their meaning. *Shālōm*, salvation (peace), is the sum of all the blessings requisite for wellbeing. Jehovah granted life and salvation to Levi, i.e., to the priesthood, for fear, viz., as the lever of the fear of God; and Levi, i.e., the priesthood of the olden time, responded to this divine intention. “He feared me.” *Nichath* is the *niphāl* not of *nâchath*, he descended, i.e., humbled himself (Ewald, Reincke), but of *châthath*, to terrify, to shake, which is frequently met with in connection with **יָרָא** (e.g., Deu. 31: 8, Jos. 1: 9, Jer. 1:17). Vv. 5 and 6 state how Levi preserved this fear both officially and in life. *Tōrath ʿemeth* (analogous to *mishpat ʿemeth* in Zec. 7: 9) is instruction in the law consisting in truth. Truth, which had its roots in the law of Jehovah, was the rule not only of his own conduct, but also and more especially of the instruction which he had to give to the people (cf. v. 7). The opposite of *ʿemeth* is *ʿavlâh*, perversity, conduct which is not regulated by the law of God, but by selfishness or sinful self-interest. Grammatically considered, the feminine *ʿavlâh* is not the subject to **נִמְצְאָה**, but is construed as the object: “they found not perversity” (cf. Ges. § 143, 1, b; Ewald, § 295, b). Thus he walked in peace (salvation) and integrity before God. *Bʿshālōm* is not merely in a state of peace, or in peaceableness, nor even equivalent to **בְּלִבְבֵּי שְׁלוֹם** (2Ki. 20: 3), but according to v. 5, “equipped with the salvation bestowed upon him by God.” The *integritas vitae* is affirmed

in **הִלְךְ אִתִּי**, **בְּמִשׁוֹר**, to walk with Jehovah, denotes the most confidential intercourse with God, or walking as it were by the side of God (see at Gen. 5:22). Through this faithful discharge of the duties of his calling, Levi (i.e., the priesthood) brought many back from guilt or iniquity, that is to say, led many back from the way of sin to the right way, viz., to the fear of God (cf. Dan. 12: 3). But Levi did nothing more than what the standing and vocation of the priest required. For the lips of the priest should preserve knowledge. **דָּאָתָה** is the knowledge of God and of His will as revealed in the law. These the lips of the priest should keep, to instruct the people therein; for out of the mouth of the priest men seek *tōrâh*, law, i.e., instruction in the will of God, because he is a messenger of Jehovah to the people. **מְלָאָךְ**, the standing epithet for the angels as the heavenly messengers of God, is here applied to the priests, as it is in Hag. 1:13 to the prophet. Whilst the prophets were extraordinary messengers of God, who proclaimed to the people the will and counsel of the Lord, the priests, by virtue of their office, were so to speak the standing or ordinary messengers of God. But the priests of that time had become utterly untrue to this vocation.

Mal. 2: 8, 9.

V. 8. “*But ye have departed from the way, have made many to stumble at the law, have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith Jehovah of hosts.* V. 9. *Thus I also make you despised and base with all the people, inasmuch as ye do not keep my ways, and respect person in the law.*”

הִדְרִיךְ is the way depicted in vv. 6 and 7, in which the priests ought to have walked. **הִכְשַׁלְתֶּם בְּתוֹרָה** does not mean “ye have caused to fall by instruction” (Koehler); for, in the first place, *hattōrâh* (with the article) is not the instruction or teaching of the priests, but the law of God; and secondly, **כִּי** with **בְּשַׁל** denotes the object against which a man stumbles and which causes him to fall. Hitzig has given the correct explanation: ye have made the law to many a **מִכְשׁוֹל**, instead of the light of their way, through your example and through false teaching, as though the law allowed or commanded things which in reality are sin. In this way they have corrupted or overthrown the covenant with Levi. **הַלְוִי**, with the article, is not the patriarch Levi, but his posterity, really the priesthood, as the kernel of the Levites. Hence Jehovah also is no longer bound by the covenant, but withdraws from the priests what He granted to the Levi who was faithful to the covenant, viz., life and salvation (v. 5), and makes them contemptible and base with all the people. This is simply a just retribution for the fact, that the priests depart from His ways and have respect to men. *Battōrâh*, in the law, i.e., in the administration of the law, they act with partiality. For the fact itself compare Mic. 3:11.

Condemnation of Marriages with Heathen Women and of Divorces — Ch. 2:10-16

Mal. 2:10-16. This section does not stand in any close connection with the preceding one. It does not furnish an example of the stumbling upon the law mentioned in v. 8; nor is the violation of the covenant of the fathers (v. 10) or of the marriage covenant (v. 14) appended to the neutralizing of the covenant of Levi on the part of the priests (vv. 8 and 4). For there is no indication in vv. 10-16 that the priests gave any impulse through their bad teaching to the breaches of the law which are here condemned; and the violation of the covenant of the fathers and of the marriage covenant forms no more a thought by which the whole is ruled, than the violation of the covenant with Levi in the previous section (Koehler). The prophet rather passes over with v. 10 to a perfectly new object, namely, the condemnation of marriages with heathen women (vv. 10-12), and of the frivolous dissolution of marriages with Israelitish women, which was the natural consequence of the former (vv. 13-16). This sin the priests have only so far participated in, that they set a bad example to the people in their own unprincipled treatment of the law, which might easily lead to contempt of the divine ordinance of marriage.

Mal. 2:10-12.

v. 10. *“Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? wherefore are we treacherous one towards another, to desecrate the covenant of our fathers? V. 11. Judah acts treacherously, and abomination has taken place in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has desecrated the sanctuary of Jehovah, which He loves, and marries the daughter of a strange god. V. 12. Jehovah will cut off, to the man that doeth this, wakers and answerers out of the tents of Jacob, and him that offereth sacrifices to Jehovah of hosts.”*

Malachi adopts the same course here as in the previous rebuke, and commences with a general clause, from which the wrongfulness of marriages with heathen women and of frivolous divorces necessarily followed. The *one* father, whom all have, is neither Adam, the progenitor of all men, nor Abraham, the father of the Israelitish nation, but Jehovah, who calls Himself the Father of the nation in Mal. 1: 6. God is the Father of Israel as its Creator; not, however, in the general sense, according to which He made Israel the people of His possession. By the two clauses placed at the head, Malachi intends not so much to lay emphasis upon the common descent of all the Israelites, by virtue of which they form one united family in contrast with the heathen, as to say that all the Israelites are children of God, and as such spiritual brethren and sisters. Consequently every violation of the fraternal relation, such as that of which the Israelite was guilty who married a heathen woman, or put away an Israelitish wife, was also an offence against God, a desecration of His covenant. The idea that the

expression “one father” refers to Abraham as the ancestor of the nation (Jerome, Calvin, and others), is precluded by the fact, that not only the Israelites, but also the Ishmaelites and Edomites were descended from Abraham; and there is no ground whatever for thinking of Jacob, because, although he had indeed given his name to *Israel*, he is never singled out as its ancestor. *Nibhgad* is the first pers. plur. imperf. *kal*, notwithstanding the fact that in other cases *bâgad* has *cholem* in the imperfect; for the *niphal* of this verb is never met with. The Israelite acted faithlessly towards his brother, both when he contracted a marriage with a heathen woman, and when he put away his Israelitish wife, and thereby desecrated the covenant of the fathers, i.e., the covenant which Jehovah made with the fathers, when He chose them from among the heathen, and adopted them as His covenant nation (Exo. 19: 5, 6; 24: 8).

The reason for this rebuke is given in v. 11, in a statement of what has taken place. In order the more emphatically to describe this as reprehensible, *bâg^cdâh* (hath dealt treacherously) is repeated and applied to the whole nation. *Y^hhūdâh* (Judah), construed as a feminine, is the land acting in its inhabitants. Then what has taken place is described as **תועבה**, abomination, like idolatry, witchcraft, and other grievous sins (cf. Deu. 13:15; 18: 9ff.), in which the name *Israel* is intentionally chosen as the holy name of the nation, to indicate the contrast between the holy vocation of Israel and its unholy conduct. In addition to Israel as the national name (= Judah) Jerusalem is also mentioned, as is frequently the case, as the capital and centre of the nation. What has occurred is an abomination, because Judah desecrates **קֹדֶשׁ יי**, i.e., neither the holiness of Jehovah as a divine attribute, nor the temple as the sanctuary, still less the holy state of marriage, which is never so designated in the Old Testament, but Israel as the nation which Jehovah loved. Israel is called *qōdesh*, a sanctuary or holy thing, as **אֵם קֹדֶשׁ**, which Jehovah has chosen out of all nations to be His peculiar possession (Deu. 7: 6; 14: 2; Jer. 2: 3; Psa. 114: 2; Ezr. 9: 2: see Targ., Rashi, Ab. Ezra, etc.). Through the sin which it had committed, Judah, i.e., the community which had returned from exile, had profaned itself as the sanctuary of God, or neutralized itself as a holy community chosen and beloved of Jehovah (Koehler). To this there is appended, though not till the last clause, the statement of the abomination: Judah, in its individual members, has married the daughter of a strange god (cf. Ezr. 9: 2ff.; Neh. 13:23ff.). By the expression **בַּת אֵל נָכַר** the person married is described as an idolatress (*bath*, daughter = dependent). This involved the desecration of the holy calling of the nation. It is true that in the law it is only marriages with Canaanites that are expressly forbidden (Exo. 34:16; Deu. 7: 3), but the reason assigned for this prohibition shows, that all marriages with heathen women, who did not give up their

idolatry, were thereby denounced as irreconcilable with the calling of Israel (see at 1Ki. 11: 1, 2). This sin may God punish by cutting off every one who commits it. This threat of punishment (v. 12) is indeed only expressed in the form of a wish, but the wish has been created by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Very different and by no means satisfactory explanations have been given of the expression **עַר וְעָנָה**, the waking one (**עַר** the participle of **עוֹר**) and the answering one, a proverbial description of the wicked man formed by the combination of opposites (on the custom of expressing totality by opposites, see Dietrich, *Abhandlung zur hebr. Gramm.* p. 201ff.), in which, however, the meaning of the word **עַר** still continues a matter of dispute. The rabbinical explanation, which is followed by Luther, viz., teacher and scholar, is founded upon the meaning *excitare* given to the verb **עוֹר**, and the *excitans* is supposed to be the teacher who stimulates by questioning and admonishing. But apart from all other reasons which tell against this explanation, it does not suit the context; for there is not a single word to indicate that the prophet is speaking only of priests who have taken foreign wives; on the contrary, the prophet accuses Judah and Jerusalem, and therefore the people generally, of being guilty of this sin. Moreover, it was no punishment to an Israelite to have no rabbi or teacher of the law among his sons. The words are at any rate to be taken more generally than this. The best established meaning is *vigil et respondens*, in which **עַר** is taken transitively, as in Job. 41: 2 in the *chethib*, and in the Chaldee **עַר**, watcher (Dan. 4:10 [13] and 14 [17]), in the sense of *vivus quisque*. In this case the proverbial phrase would be taken from the night-watchman (J. D. Mich., Ros., Ges. *Thes.* p. 1004). It is no conclusive objection to this, that the words which follow, **וּמְגִישׁ מִנְחָה**, evidently stand upon the same line as **עַר וְעָנָה** and must form part of the same whole, and therefore that **עַר וְעָנָה** cannot of itself embrace the whole. For this conclusion is by no means a necessary one. If the two expressions referred to portions of the same whole, they could not well be separated from one another by **מֵאֵהֱלֵי יַעֲקֹב**. Moreover, the limitation of **עַר וְעָנָה** to the age of childhood founders upon the artificial interpretation which it is necessary to give to the two words. According to Koehler **עַר** denotes the child in the first stage of its growth, in which it only manifests its life by occasionally waking up from its ordinary state of deep, death-like slumber, and **עָנָה** the more advanced child, which is able to speak and answer questions. But who would ever think of calling a child in the first weeks of its life, when it sleeps more than it wakes, a waker? Moreover, the sleep of an infant is not a “deep, death-like slumber.” The words “out of the tents of Jacob,” i.e., the houses of Israel, belong to **יִבְרָת**. The last clause adds the further announcement, that whoever commits such abominations shall have no one to offer a sacrificial gift to the Lord. These words are not to be taken as

referring to the priestly caste, as Hitzig supposes; but Jerome has given the correct meaning: “and whoever is willing to offer a gift upon the altar for men of this description.” The meaning of the whole verse is the following: “May God not only cut off every descendant of such a sinner out of the houses of Israel, but any one who might offer a sacrifice for him in expiation of his sin.”

Mal. 2:13-16.

V. 13. “And this ye do a second time: cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, with weeping and signs, so that He does not turn any more to the sacrifice, and accept the well-pleasing thing at your hand. V. 14. And ye say, Wherefore? Because Jehovah has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, towards whom thou hast acted treacherously; whereas she is nevertheless thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. V. 15. And not one did so who had still a remnant of spirit. And what (did) the one? He sought seed of God. Therefore shall ye take heed for your spirit, and deal not faithlessly to the wife of thy youth. V. 16. For I hate divorce, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel; and he will cover wickedness over his garment, saith Jehovah of hosts. Thus shall ye take heed to your spirit, and not deal treacherously.”

In these verses the prophet condemns a second moral transgression on the part of the people, viz., the putting away of their wives. By *shēnith* (as a second thing, i.e., for the second time) this sin is placed in the same category as the sin condemned in the previous verses. Here again the moral reprehensibility of the sin is described in v. 11, before the sin itself is named. They cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, namely, by compelling the wives who have been put away to lay their trouble before God in the sanctuary. The inf. constr. introduces the more minute definition of זאת; and בְּכִי וְאִנָּקָה is a supplementary apposition to דָּמְעָה, added to give greater force to the meaning. מֵאִין עוֹד, so that there is no more a turning (of Jehovah) to the sacrifice, i.e., so that God does not graciously accept your sacrifice any more (cf. Num. 16:15). The following infinitive וְלִקְחָת is also dependent upon מֵאִין, but on account of the words which intervene it is attached with לְרִצּוֹן, the good pleasure or satisfaction, used as *abstractum pro concreto* for the well-pleasing sacrifice. V. 14. This sin also the persons addressed will not recognise. They inquire the reason why God will no more graciously accept their sacrifices, whereupon the prophet discloses their sin in the plainest terms. אֵל-אִשֶׁר = אֵל-כִּי, as in Deu. 31:17, Jud. 3:12, etc. The words, “because Jehovah was a witness between thee and the wife of thy youth,” cannot be understood as Ges., Umbreit, and Koehler assume, in accordance with Mal. 3: 5, as signifying that Jehovah had interposed between them as an avenging witness; for in that case הָעֵיד would necessarily be construed with בָּ, but they refer to the fact that the marriage took place before the face of God, or with looking up to God; and the objection that nothing is

known of any religious benediction at the marriage, or any mutual vow of fidelity, is merely an *argumentum a silentio*, which proves nothing. If the marriage was a *b^orith* *‘Elōhim* (a covenant of God), as described in Pro. 2:17, it was also concluded before the face of God, and God was a witness to the marriage. With the expression “wife of thy youth” the prophet appeals to the heart of the husband, pointing to the love of his youth with which the marriage had been entered into; and so also in the circumstantial clause, through which he brings to the light the faithless treatment of the wife in putting her away: “Yet she was thy companion, who shared thy joy and sorrow, and the wife of thy covenant, with whom thou didst make a covenant for life.”

In v. 15a the prophet shows still further the reprehensible character of the divorce, by rebutting the appeal to Abraham’s conduct towards Hagar as inapplicable. The true interpretation of this hemistich, which has been explained in very different, and to some extent in very marvellous ways, is obvious enough if we only bear in mind that the subordinate clause **וְנִשְׂאָר רוּחַ לּוֹ**, from its very position and from the words themselves, can only contain a more precise definition of the subject of the principal clause. The affirmation “a remnant of spirit is (was) to him” does not apply to God, but only to man, as L. de Dieu has correctly observed. *Rūāch* denote here, as in Num. 27:18, Jos. 5: 1, 1Ki. 10: 5, not so much intelligence and consideration, as the higher power breathed into man by God, which determines that moral and religious life to which we are accustomed to give the name of virtue. By *‘echād* (one), therefore, we cannot understand God, but only a man; and **לֹא אִשָּׁחָד** (not any one = no one, not one man) is the subject of the sentence, whilst the object to **עָשָׂה** must be supplied from the previous sentence: “No man, who has even a remnant of reason, or of sense for right and wrong, has done,” sc. what ye are doing, namely, faithlessly put away the wife of his youth. To this there is appended the objection: “And what did the one do?” which the prophet adduces as a possible exception that may be taken to his statement, for the purpose of refuting it. The words **וְיָמָה הָאִשָּׁחָד** are elliptical, the verb **עָשָׂה**, which may easily be supplied from the previous clause, being omitted (cf. Ecc. 2:12). **הָאִשָּׁחָד**, not *unus aliquis*, but the well-known one, whom it was most natural to think of when the question in hand was that of putting away a wife, viz., Abraham, who put away Hagar, by whom he had begotten Ishmael, and who was therefore also his wife (Gen. 21). The prophet therefore replies, that Abraham sought to obtain the seed promised him by God, i.e., he dismissed Hagar, because God promised to give him the desired posterity, not in Ishmael through the maid Hagar, but through Sarah in Isaac, so that in doing this he was simply acting in obedience to the word of God (Gen. 21:12). After meeting this possible objection, Malachi warns his contemporaries to beware of faithlessly

putting away their wives. The *Vav* before *nishmartem* is the *Vav rel.*, through which the perfect acquires the force of a cohortative as a deduction from the facts before them, as in **נְשַׁמְרֵם בְּרוּחֹו** in 1Ki. 2: 6 (see Ewald, § 342, c). **נְשַׁמְרֵם בְּרוּחֹו** is synonymous with **נְשַׁמְרֵם בְּנַפְשׁוֹ** in Jer. 17:21, and this is equivalent to **לְנַפְשׁוֹ** **נְשַׁמְרֵם** in Deu. 4:15 and Jos. 23:11. The instrumental view of **בְּ** (“by means of the Spirit:” Koehler) is thus proved to be inadmissible. “Take heed to your spirit,” i.e., beware of losing your spirit. We need not take *rūāch* in a different sense here from that in which it is used in the clause immediately preceding; for with the loss of the spiritual and moral *vis vitae*, which has been received from God, the life itself perishes. What it is that they are to beware of is stated in the last clause, which is attached by the simple copula (*Vav*), and in which the address passes from the second person into the third, to express what is affirmed as applying to every man. This interchange of *thou* (in wife of thy youth) and *he* (in **יְבִגְדֵךְ**) in the same clause appears very strange to our mode of thought and speech; but it is not without analogy in Hebrew (e.g., in Isa. 1:29; cf. Ewald, § 319, a), so that we have no right to alter **יְבִגְדֵךְ** into **הַיְבִגְדֵךְ**, since the ancient versions and the readings of certain codices do not furnish sufficient critical authority for such a change. The subject in **יְבִגְדֵךְ** is naturally thought of as indefinite: any one, men. This warning is accounted for in v. 16, first of all in the statement that God hates putting away. **שְׁלַח** is the inf. constr. *piel* and the object to **שְׁנֵא**: “the sending away (of a wife), divorce.” **שְׁנֵא** is a participle, the pronominal subject being omitted, as in *maggid* in Zec. 9:12, because it may easily be inferred from the following words: **אָמַר יְיָ** (saith the Lord of hosts). The thought is not at variance with Deu. 24: 1ff., where the putting away of a wife is allowed; for this was allowed because of the hardness of their hearts, whereas God desires that a marriage should be kept sacred (cf. Mat. 19: 3ff. and the comm. on Deu. 24: 1-5). A second reason for condemning the divorce is given in the words **לְכִסֵּת חַמְסוֹ אֵל לְ**, which do not depend upon **בִּי שְׁנֵא**, but form a sentence co-ordinate to this. We may either render these words, “he (who puts away his wife) covers his garment with sin,” or “sin covers his garment.” The meaning is the same in either case, namely, that wickedness will adhere irremoveably to such a man. The figurative expression may be explained from the idea that the dress reflects the inward part of a man, and therefore a soiled garment is a symbol of uncleanness of heart (cf. Zec. 3: 4; Isa. 64: 5; Rev. 3: 4; 7:14). With a repetition of the warning to beware of this faithlessness, the subject is brought to a close.

The Day of The Lord — Ch. 2:17-4:

Mal. 2:17-4: 6. In this section the prophet's words are directed against the spirit of discontent and murmuring which prevailed among the people, who lost faith in all the promises of God, because the expected manifestation of the glory of the Lord for the good of His people did not take place at once, and in their despair called even the holiness and justice of God in question, and began to deny the coming of the Lord to judge the world. The prophet lets the feelings of the people express themselves in Mal. 2:17, for the purpose of meeting them with an announcement of the day of the Lord and its true nature, in Mal. 3 and 4. Before His coming the Lord will send a messenger, to prepare the way for Him. He Himself will then suddenly come, and that to refine His people by the fire of judgment and to exterminate the sinners (Mal. 3: 1-6). The people are retarding the revelation of the promised salvation through their unfaithfulness to God (vv. 7-12), and preparing destruction for themselves by their impatient murmuring; for in the day of judgment none but the righteous find mercy: the judgment will make manifest the distinction between the righteous and the wicked (vv. 13-18), and bring destruction to the wicked, and salvation to the godly (Mal. 4: 1-3). The prophecy then closes with the admonition to lay to heart the law of Moses, and with an announcement that the Lord will send the prophet Elijah before the day of His coming, to call the degenerate nation to repentance, in order that when He appears the land may not be smitten with the curse (vv. 4-6).

Mal. 2:17.

“Ye weary Jehovah with your words, and say, Wherewith do we weary? In that ye say, Every evil-doer is good in the eyes of Jehovah, and He takes pleasure in them, or where is the God of judgment?”

The persons who are introduced as speaking here are neither the pious Israelites, who were not only pressed down by the weight of their heavy afflictions, but indignant at the prosperity of their godless countrymen, and were thus impelled to give utterance to despairing complaints, and doubts as to the justice of God (Theodoret); nor a middle class between the truly pious and perfectly godless, consisting of those who were led by a certain instinctive need to adopt the faith inherited from the fathers, and sought to fulfil the commandments of the moral law of God, but the foundations of whose faith and piety were not deep enough for them humbly to submit themselves to the marvellous ways of God, so that whenever the dealings of God did not correspond to their expectations, they lost their faith in Him and turned their backs upon Him (Koehler). The whole of the contents of this section are opposed to the first assumption. Those who murmured against God were,

according to Mal. 3: 7ff., such as had departed like the fathers from the law of God and defrauded God in the tithes and heave-offerings, and with whom those who feared God are contrasted in vv. 16ff. Moreover, the reproach brought against them in Mal. 2:17, “Ye weary Jehovah with your words,” and in Mal. 3:13, “Your words put constraint upon me,” show that they do not belong to the righteous, who, while bending under the burden of temptation, appear to have raised similar complaints; as we read for example in Psa. 37, 49, and 73. The second view is precluded by the absence, not only of every trace of the nation being divided into three classes, but also of every indication that those who murmured thus had endeavoured to fulfil the commandments of the moral law of God. The answer of the Lord to this murmuring is addressed to the whole nation as one which had departed from His commandments, and defrauded God with the tithes and sacrifices (Mal. 3: 7, 8). The judgment which they wanted to see would fall, according to Mal. 3: 5, upon the sorcerers, adulterers, and other gross sinners; and in Mal. 3:16-18 the only persons distinguished from these are the truly righteous who remember the name of the Lord. It clearly follows from this, that the feelings expressed in Mal. 2:17 and 3:13 were not cherished by the whole nation without exception, but only by the great mass of the people, in contrast with whom the small handful of godly men formed a vanishing minority, which is passed over in the attack made upon the spirit prevailing in the nation. This disposition vents itself in the words: Every one who does evil is good in the eyes of God, and Jehovah takes pleasure in the wicked. By עֲשֵׂה רָע the murmurers mean, not notorious sinners in their midst, but the heathen who enjoyed undisturbed prosperity. To give a reason for this fancy, they inquire, Where is the God of judgment? אִי, “or,” i.e., if this be not the case, as in Job. 16: 3; 22:11, why does not God punish the ungodly heathen? why does He not interpose as judge, if He has no pleasure in the wicked? Such speeches as these the prophet calls הִנָּנֶה, a wearying of God (cf. Isa. 43:23, 24).

Mal. 3: 1-6. Coming of the Lord to judgment.

V. 1. *“Behold, I send my messenger, that he may prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to His temple, and the angel of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold he comes, saith Jehovah of hosts.”*

To the question, Where is or remains the God of judgment? the Lord Himself replies that He will suddenly come to His temple, but that before His coming He will send a messenger to prepare the way for Him. The announcement of this messenger rests upon the prophecy in Isa. 40: 3ff., as the expression יְרֵךְ וּפְנֵה, which is borrowed from that passage, clearly shows. The person whose voice Isaiah heard calling to make the way of Jehovah in the desert, that the

glory of the Lord might be revealed to all flesh, is here described as מַלְאָךְ, whom Jehovah will send before Him, i.e., before His coming. This *mal'akh* is not a heavenly messenger, or spiritual being (Rashi, Kimchi), nor the angel of Jehovah κατ' ἐξοχήν, who is mentioned afterwards and called *mal'akh habb'erith*, but an earthly messenger of the Lord, and indeed the same who is called the prophet Elijah in v. 23, and therefore not “an ideal person, viz., the whole choir of divine messengers, who are to prepare the way for the coming of salvation, and open the door for the future grace” (Hengst.), but a concrete personality — a messenger who was really sent to the nation in John the Baptist immediately before the coming of the Lord. The idea view is precluded not only by the historical fact, that not a single prophet arose in Israel during the whole period between Malachi and John, but also by the context of the passage before us, according to which the sending of the messenger was to take place immediately before the coming of the Lord to His temple. It is true that in Mal. 2: 7 the priest is also called a messenger of Jehovah; but the expression הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ (behold I send) prevents our understanding the term *mal'akh* as referring to the priests, or even as including them, inasmuch as “sending” would not apply to the priests as the standing mediators between the Lord and His people. Moreover, it was because the priests did not fulfil their duty as the ordinary ambassadors of God that the Lord was about to send an extraordinary messenger. Preparing the way (פִּנְיָה דְרַךְ), an expression peculiar to Isaiah: compare Isa. 40: 3; also, Isa. 57:14 and 62:10), by clearing away the impediments lying in the road, denotes the removal of all that retards the coming of the Lord to His people, i.e., the taking away of enmity to God and of ungodliness by the preaching of repentance and the conversion of sinners. The announcement of this messenger therefore implied, that the nation in its existing moral condition was not yet prepared for the reception of the Lord, and therefore had no ground for murmuring at the delay of the manifestation of the divine glory, but ought rather to murmur at its own sin and estrangement from God. When the way shall have been prepared, the Lord will suddenly come. פְּתָאִם, not *statim*, immediately (Jerome), but unexpectedly. “This suddenness is repeated in all the acts and judgments of the Lord. The Lord of glory always comes as a thief in the night to those who sleep in their sins” (Schmieder). “The Lord” (*hâ'âdōn*) is God; this is evident both from the fact that He comes to His temple, i.e., the temple of Jehovah, and also from the relative clause “whom ye seek,” which points back to the question, “Where is the God of judgment?” (Mal. 2:17). The Lord comes to His temple (*hēkhâl*, lit., palace) as the God-king of Israel, to dwell therein for ever (cf. Eze. 43: 7; 37:26, 27). And He comes as the angel of the covenant, for whom the people are longing. The identity of the angel of the covenant with the “Lord” (*hâ'âdōn*) is placed beyond the reach of doubt by the parallelism of the clauses, and the notion is thereby

refuted that the “covenant angel” is identical with the person previously mentioned as מְלֹאֲכֵי (Hitzig, Maurer, etc.). This identity does not indeed exclude a distinction of person; but it does exclude a difference between the two, or the opinion that the angel of the covenant is that mediator whom Isaiah had promised (Isa. 42: 6) as the antitype of Moses, and the mediator of a new, perfect, and eternally-enduring covenant relation between God and Israel (Hofmann, *Schriftbeweis*, i. p. 183). For it was not for a second Moses that the people were longing, or for a mediator of the new covenant, but for the coming of God to judgment. The coming of the Lord to His temple is represented as a coming of the covenant angel, with reference to the fact that Jehovah had in the olden time revealed His glory in His *Maʿakh* in a manner perceptible to the senses, and that in this mode of revelation He had not only redeemed Israel out of the hand of Egypt (Exo. 3: 6ff.), gone before the army of Israel (Exo. 14:19), and led Israel through the desert to Canaan (Exo. 23:20ff., 33:14ff.), but had also filled the temple with His glory. The covenant, in relation to which the *Maʿakh*, who is of one essence with Jehovah, is here called the angel of the covenant, is not the new covenant promised in Jer. 31:31ff., but the covenant of Jehovah with Israel, according to which Jehovah dwells in the midst of Israel, and manifests His gracious presence by blessing the righteous and punishing the ungodly (cf. Exo. 25: 8; Lev. 25:11, 12; Deu. 4:24; Isa. 33:14): (Koehler). The words “Behold he (the covenant angel) cometh” serve to confirm the assurance, and are still further strengthened by אָמַר יְיָ (saith Jehovah of hosts). This promise was fulfilled in the coming of Christ, in whom the angel of the covenant, the Logos, became flesh, and in the sending of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Him. (See also at v. 24.)

Mal. 3: 2-4. With the coming of the Lord the judgment will also begin; not the judgment upon the heathen, however, for which the ungodly nation was longing, but the judgment upon the godless members of the covenant nation.

V. 2. *“And who endures the day of His coming? and who can stand at His appearing? for He is like the smelter’s fire, and like washers’ lye: V. 3. And will sit smelting and purifying silver, and will purify the children of Levi, and refine like gold and silver, that they may be offering to Jehovah His sacrifice in righteousness. V. 4. And the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant, as in the days of the olden time, and as in the years of the past.”*

The question “who endures the day” has a negative meaning, like מַי in Isa. 53: 1: no one endures it (for the fact itself compare Joe. 2:11). The prophet is speaking to the ungodly. The second clause is synonymous. עָמַד, to remain standing, in contrast with falling, or sinking under the burden of the judgment. The reason for this is given in the second hemistich. The Lord when He comes will be like a smelter’s fire, which burns out all the corrupt ingredients that are

mixed with the gold and silver (cf. Zec. 13: 9), and like the lye or alkaline salt by which clothes are cleansed from dirt (cf. Isa. 4: 4). The double figure has but one meaning; hence only the first figure is carried out in v. 3, a somewhat different turn being given to it, since the Lord is no longer compared to the fire, but represented as a smelter. As a smelter purifies gold and silver from the dross adhering to it, so will the Lord refine the sons of Levi, by whom the priests are principally intended. The *yâshabh* (sit) serves as a pictorial description, like *âmad* (stand) in Mic. 5: 3. The participles *m^{tsârêph}* and *m^{tahêr}* describe the capacity in which He sits, viz., as a smelter and purifier of silver. זָרַק: to strain, or filter; a term transferred to metals, because in smelting the pure metal is allowed to flow off, so that the earthy ingredients are left in the crucible (Psa. 12: 7; Job. 28: 1, etc.). The fact that the sons of Levi are named, as the object of the refining action of the Lord, is to be explained from what is mentioned in Mal. 1: 6ff. concerning their degeneracy. Since they, the supporters and promoters of the religious life of the nation, were quite corrupt, the renovation of the national life must begin with their purification. This purification, however, does not consist merely in the fact, that the individuals who are displeasing to God will be cut off from among them (Koehler), nor merely in their being cleansed from the sins and crimes adhering to them (Hitzig), but in both, so that those who are corrigible are improved, and the incorrigible cut off. This is implied in the idea of purification, and is confirmed by the result of the refining work of the Lord, as given in the last clause of the verse. They are to become to the Lord offerers of sacrifices in righteousness. *Bits^{dâqâh}* does not refer to the nature of the sacrifices, viz., righteous sacrifices, i.e., such as correspond to the law, but to the moral character of the offerers, viz., that they will attend to the offering of sacrifice in a proper state of heart, as in Psa. 4: 6. הָיוּ מְנִיְשִׁי is a *constructio periphr.* to denote the permanence of the action (cf. Ewald, § 168, c). The *tsaqeph-qaton* does not compel us to separate הָיוּ לְיְהוָה (compare, on the contrary, Gen. 1: 6b for example). Then, namely when the priests offer sacrifices in righteousness again, will the sacrificing of the whole nation be pleasant to the Lord, as was the case in the olden time. The days of the olden time and years of the past are the times of Moses, or the first years of the sojourn in the desert (Jer. 2: 2), possibly also the times of David and of the first years of the reign of Solomon; whereas now, i.e., in the time of Malachi, the sacrifices of the nation were displeasing to God, not merely on account of the sins of the people (Mal. 2:13), but chiefly on account of the badness of the sacrificing priests (Mal. 1:10, 13). Moreover, we must not infer from vv. 3 and 4, that Malachi imagined that the Old Testament worship would be continued during the Messianic times; but his words are to be explained from the custom of the prophets, of using the forms of the Old

Testament worship to depict the reverence for God which would characterize the new covenant.

Mal. 3: 5, 6.

V. 5. "And I will draw near to you to judgment, and will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against those who swear for deceit, and those who press down the wages of the hireling, the widow and the orphan, and bow down the foreigner, and fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts. V. 6. For I Jehovah, I change not; and ye sons of Israel, ye are not consumed."

The refining which the Lord will perform at His coming will not limit itself to the priests, but become a judgment upon all sinners. This judgment is threatened against those who wanted the judgment of God to come, according to Mal. 2:17. To these the Lord will draw near to judgment, and rise up as a swift witness against all the wicked who do not fear Him. The word **קָרַבְתִּי** does not imply that the judgment announced will actually commence at once. The drawing near to judgment takes place in the day of His coming (v. 2), and this is preceded by the sending of the messenger to prepare the way. The words affirm nothing as to the time of the coming, because this was not revealed to the prophet. Nor is there any intimation on this point in the word **מִמְהָר**, but simply the announcement that the Lord will come with unexpected rapidity, in contrast with the murmuring of the people at the delay of judgment (Mal. 2:17). **מִמְהָר** answers substantially to **פִּתְאֹם** in v. 1. God comes as a practical witness against the wicked, convicting them of their guilt by punishing them. The particular sins mentioned here are such as were grievous sins in the eye of the law, and to some extent were punishable with death. On sorcerers and adulterers see Exo. 22:17, Lev. 20:10, Deu. 22:22. That sorcery was very common among the Jews after the captivity, is evident from such passages as Act. 8: 9; 13: 6, and from Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 6, *de bell. Jud.* ii. 12, 23; and the occurrence of adultery may be inferred from the condemnation of the marriages with heathen wives in Mal. 2:10-16. On false swearing compare Lev. 19:12. The expression to press the wages of the labourer is unusual, since the only other passage in which **עָשָׂק** is construed with a neuter object is Mic. 2: 2, and in every other case it is applied to persons; for **עָשָׂק שְׂבִיר** compare Lev. 19:13 and Deu. 24:14, 15, to which the reproof refers. **אֶלְמָנָה וַיְתוּם** are not genitives dependent upon **שְׂבִיר**, but further objects to **עָשָׂקִי**. For the fact itself compare Exo. 22:21-23, Deu. 24:17; 27:19. To **מִמֵּי גֵר** we are not to supply **מִשְׁפַּט**, after Deu. 24:17 and 27:19; but **הִטָּה** is used of the person as in Amo. 5:12: to bow down the stranger, i.e., to oppress him unjustly. The words, "and fear not me," point to the source from which all these sins flowed, and refer to all the sinners mentioned before. This threat of judgment is explained in v. 6 in the

double clause: that Jehovah does not change, and the sons of Israel do not perish. Because Jehovah is unchangeable in His purposes, and Israel as the people of God is not to perish, therefore will God exterminate the wicked out of Israel by means of judgment, in order to refine it and shape it according to its true calling. The perfects are used to express established truths. The unchangeableness of God is implied in the name *Jehovah*, “who is that He is,” the absolutely independent and absolutely existing One (see at Gen. 2: 4). For the fact itself compare Num. 23:19, 1Sa. 15:29, Jam. 1:17. *Jehovah* is in apposition to *אֲנִי* (I), and not a predicate in the sense of “I am Jehovah” (Luther, Hengstenberg, etc.); this is evident from the parallel *וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב* (and ye, the sons of Jacob), where no one thinks of taking *בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב* (sons of Jacob) as a predicate. *Kâlâh*, to come to an end, to be destroyed, as the parallel passage, Jer. 30:11, which floated before the prophet’s mind, clearly shows. The name “sons of Jacob” (poetical for sons of Israel) is used emphatically, denoting the true members of the people of God, who rightly bear the name of *Israel*. These do not perish, because their existence rests upon the promise of the unchangeable God (cf. Rom. 11:28, 29).

Mal. 3: 7-9. After the Lord has announced to the murmuring people that He will suddenly draw near to judgment upon the wicked, He proceeds to explain the reason why He has hitherto withheld His blessing and His salvation.

V. 7. “From the days of your fathers ye have departed from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, saith Jehovah of hosts; and ye say, Wherein shall we return? V. 8. Dare a man indeed defraud God, that ye have defrauded me? and ye say, In what have we defrauded Thee? In the tithes and the heave-offering. V. 9. Ye are cursed with the curse, and yet ye defraud me, even the whole nation.”

The reason why Israel waits in vain for the judgment and the salvation dawning with it, is not to be found in God, but in the people, in the fact, that from time immemorial they have transgressed the commandments of God (see Isa. 43:27; Eze. 2: 3; Hos. 10: 9). And yet they regard themselves as righteous. They reply to the call to repentance by saying, *בַּמָּה נָשׁוּב*, wherein, i.e., in what particular, shall we turn? The prophet thereupon shows them their sin: they do what no man should presume to attempt — they try to defraud God in the tithe and heave-offering, namely, by either not paying them at all, or not paying them as they should into the house of God. *קָבַע*, which only occurs here and at Pro. 22:23, signifies to defraud, to overreach. *הַמַּעֲשֵׂר וְגוֹתֵר* is either an accusative of free subordination, or else we must supply the preposition *ב* from the question itself. On the tithe see Lev. 27:30ff., Num. 18:20ff., and Deu. 14:22ff. (see also my *Bibl. Ant.* i. p. 337ff.); and on the heave-offering (*t̄rūmah*), the portion of his income lifted off from the rest, for the purposes of

divine worship, see my *Bibl. Ant.* i. p. 245. And this they do, notwithstanding the fact that God has already visited them with severe punishment, viz., with the curse of barrenness and of the failure of the harvest. We may see from vv. 10-12, that the curse with which they were smitten consisted in this. **וְאָרְרִי** is adversative: yet ye defraud me, and indeed the whole nation, and not merely certain individuals.

Mal. 3:10-12.

V. 10. "Bring ye all the tithe into the treasure-house, that there may be consumption in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I do not open you the sluices of heaven, and pour you out a blessing to superabundance. V. 11. And I will rebuke the devourer for you, that he may not destroy the fruit of your ground; and your vine will not miscarry in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. V. 12. And all nations will call you blessed; for ye will be a land of good pleasure, saith Jehovah of hosts."

In v. 10a the emphasis lies upon *kol*: the *whole* of the tithe they are to bring, and not merely a portion of it, and so defraud the Lord; for the tithe was paid to Jehovah for His servants the Levites (Num. 18:24). It was delivered, at least after the times of the later kings, at the sanctuary, where store-chambers were built for the purpose (cf. 2Ch. 31:11ff.; Neh. 10:38, 39; 12:44; 13:12). *Tereph* signifies here food, or consumption, as in Pro. 31:15, Psa. 111: 5. **בְּזֹאת**, through this, i.e., through their giving to God what they are under obligation to give Him, they are to prove God, whether in His attitude towards them He is no longer the holy and righteous God (Mal. 2:17; 3: 6). Then will they also learn, that He causes the promised blessing to flow in the richest abundance to those who keep His commandments. **אִם לֹא** is not a particle of asseveration or oath (Koehler), but an indirect question: whether not. Opening the sluices of heaven is a figure, denoting the most copious supply of blessing, so that it flows down from heaven like a pouring rain (as in 2Ki. 7: 2). **אֲדַבְּרֵי דָי**, till there is no more need, i.e., in superabundance. This thought is individualized in v. 11. Everything that could injure the fruits of the land God will take away. **וְאָרְרִי**, to rebuke practically, i.e., to avert the intention. **אֹכְלֵי**, the devourer, is here the locust, so called from its insatiable voracity. *Shikkēl*, to miscarry, is affirmed of the vine, when it has set a good quantity of grapes, which perish and drop off before they ripen. In consequence of this blessing, all nations will call Israel blessed (v. 12), because its land will be an object of pleasure to every one (cf. Zec. 7:14; 8:13, 23).

Mal. 3:13-18. THE IMPATIENT MURMURING OF THE NATION. —

V. 13. "Your words do violence to me, saith Jehovah; and ye say, What do we converse against Thee? V. 14. Ye say, It is vain to serve God; and what gain is it,

that we have kept His guard, and have gone about in deep mourning before Jehovah of hosts? V. 15. And now we call the proud blessed: not only have the doers of wickedness been built up, but they have also tempted God and have been saved.”

After the Lord has disclosed to the people the cause of His withholding His blessing, He shows them still further, that their murmuring against Him is unjust, and that the coming day of judgment will bring to light the distinction between the wicked and those who fear God. **הִזָּק** with **אֵל**, to be strong over any one, does not mean to be harsh or burdensome, but to do violence to a person, to overpower him (cf. Exo. 12:33; 2Sa. 24: 4, etc.). The niphal *nidbar* has a reciprocal meaning, to converse with one another (cf. Eze. 33:30). The conversations which they carry on with one another take this direction, that it is useless to serve God, because the righteous have no advantage over sinners. For **שָׁמַר מִשְׁמֵרָתוֹ** see the comm. on Gen. 26: 5. *Hālakh q^dōrannith*, to go about dirty or black, either with their faces and clothes unwashed, or wrapped in black mourning costume (*saq*), is a sign of mourning, here of fasting, as mourning for sin (cf. Psa. 35:13, 14; 38: 7; Job. 30:28; 1 Macc. 3:48). **יְהִי מִפְּנֵי**, from awe of Jehovah. The fasting, and that in its external form, they bring into prominence as a special sign of their piety, as an act of penitence, through which they make reparation for certain sins against God, by which we are not to understand the fasting prescribed for the day of atonement, but voluntary fasting, which was regarded as a special sign of piety. What is reprehensible in the state of mind expressing itself in these words, is not so much the complaint that their piety brings them no gain (for such complaints were uttered even by believing souls in their hours of temptation; cf. Psa. 73:13), as the delusion that their merely outward worship, which was bad enough according to what has already been affirmed, is the genuine worship which God must acknowledge and reward. This disposition to attribute worth to the *opus operatum* of fasting it attacked even by Isaiah, in Isa. 58; but after the captivity it continued to increase, until it reached its culminating point in Pharisaism. How thoroughly different the persons speaking here are from the believing souls under temptation, who also appeal to their righteousness when calling upon God in their trouble, is especially clear from their further words in v. 15. Because God does not reward their fasting with blessing and prosperity, they begin to call the proud sinners, who have happiness and success, blessed. **וְאֵתָהּ** is the particle of inference. The participle **מֵאֲשֵׁרִים** has the force of a *futurum instans* (cf. Ewald, § 306, *d*), denoting what men prepare to do. *Zēdīm*, the haughty or proud, are the heathen, as in Isa. 13:11, who are called **עֲשֵׂי רָשָׁעָה** in the following clause. The next two clauses are placed in a reciprocal relation to one another by *gam...gam* (cf. Jer. 12:16, 17; Exo. 1:21), and also, notwithstanding the fact that they have tempted God, are delivered when they fall into

misfortune. *Bâchan Elohim*, to prove or test God, i.e., to call out His judgment through their wickedness.

Mal. 3:16-18. With these foolish speeches the prophet proceeds in vv. 16ff. to contrast the conduct of those who fear God, pointing to the blessing which they derive from their piety.

V. 16. "Then those who feared Jehovah conversed with one another, and Jehovah attended and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for those who fear Jehovah and reverence His name. V. 17. And they will be to me as a possession, saith Jehovah of hosts, for the day that I create, and I will spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him. V. 18. And ye will again perceive the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."

וְכֵן, then, indicates that the conversation of those who feared God had been occasioned by the words of the ungodly. The substance of this conversation is not described more minutely, but may be gathered from the context, namely, from the statement as to the attitude in which Jehovah stood towards them. We may see from this, that they strengthened themselves in their faith in Jehovah, as the holy God and just Judge who would in due time repay both the wicked and the righteous according to their deeds, and thus presented a great contrast to the great mass with their blasphemous sayings. This description of the conduct of the godly is an indirect admonition to the people, as to what their attitude towards God ought to be. What was done by those who feared Jehovah ought to be taken as a model by the whole nation which called Jehovah its God. Jehovah not only took notice of these conversations, but had them written in a book of remembrance, to reward them for them in due time. Writing in a book of remembrance recalls to mind the custom of the Persians, of having the names of those who deserved well of the king entered in a book with a notice of their merits, that they might be rewarded for them at some future time (Est. 6: 1); but it rests upon the much older idea, that the names and actions of the righteous are written in a book before God (cf. Psa. 56: 9, Dan. 7:10). This book was written לְפָנָיו, before Jehovah, i.e., not in His presence, but in order that it might lie before Jehovah, and remind Him of the righteous and their deeds. וְהִשָּׁב שְׁמִי is a *dat. com.*: "for those who fear God," i.e., for their good. וְהִשָּׁב שְׁמִי, to consider or value the name of the Lord (cf. Isa. 13:17; 33: 8). This writing was done because the Lord would make them His own on the day of His coming, and show them mercy. *Layyôm*: for the day = on the day; the *lamed* denoting the time, as in Isa. 10: 3, Gen. 21: 2, etc. The day which Jehovah makes is the day of the judgment which attends His coming. *S^egullâh* is the object, not to *ōseh*, as we might suppose according to the accents, but to *hâyû*: they will be my possession on the day which I create. This is evident partly from

a comparison of v. 21, where the words **יֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה** recur, and partly from the original passage in Exo. 19: 5: ye will be to me *s^egullâh*, i.e., a valued possession (see the comm.). The righteous will then be a possession for Jehovah, because on that day the glory of the children of God will first be revealed, and the Israel of God will reach the mark of its heavenly calling (see Col. 3: 4). The Lord will spare them in the judgment as a father spares his son who serves him. The expression *to spare* may be explained from the contrast to the punishment of the ungodly. In v. 18 the prophet bids the murmurers consider what has been said concerning the righteous, by telling them that they will then see the difference between the righteous who serve God, and the wicked who do not serve Him, that is to say, will learn that it is always profitable to serve God. **שָׁבָתָם** before **רְאִיתָם** is to be taken adverbially: ye will see again. The expression “again” presupposes that the difference between those who feared God and the ungodly was to be seen before, and that the Lord had already made it manifest by former judgments. This had been the case in Egypt, where the Lord had caused such a separation to be made (Exo. 11: 7). The words do not imply that the persons addressed had previously stood in a different relation to this question from that in which they were standing then (Koehler). **רְאָה בֵּין** does not mean to look in between (Hitzig), but **בֵּין** is used in the sense of a substantive, signifying that which is between the two, the difference between the two. That **בֵּין** was originally a noun is evident from the dual **הַבֵּינִים** in 1Sa. 17: 4, 23.

Mal. 4: 1-3. This admonition to the ungodly is explained in Mal. 4: 1ff. by a picture of the separation which will be effected by the day of judgment.

V. 1. “For behold the day cometh burning like a furnace, and all the proud and every doer of wickedness become stubble, and the coming day will burn them, saith Jehovah of hosts, so that it will not leave them root or branch. V. 2. But to you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise and healing in its wings, and ye will go out and skip like stalled calves, V. 3. And will tread down the ungodly, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I create, saith Jehovah of hosts.”

The day of judgment will be to the ungodly like a burning furnace. “A fire burns more fiercely in a furnace than in the open air” (Hengstenberg). The ungodly will then resemble the stubble which the fire consumes (cf. Isa. 5:24, Zep. 1:18, Oba. 1:18, etc.). **עֹשֶׂה רְשָׁעָה** and **זָדִים** point back to v. 15. Those who are called blessed by the murmuring nation will be consumed by the fire, as stubble is burned up, and indeed *all* who do wickedness, and therefore the murmurers themselves. **אֲשֶׁר** before **לֹא יֵאָזֵב** is a conjunction, *quod*; and the subject is not Jehovah, but the coming day. The figure “root and branch” is borrowed from a tree — the tree is the ungodly mass of the people (cf. Amo. 2: 9) — and

denotes total destruction, so that nothing will be left of them. To the righteous, on the other hand, the sun of righteousness will arise. *Ts^edâqâh* is an exegetical genitive of apposition. By the sun of righteousness the fathers, from Justin downwards, and nearly all the earlier commentators understand *Christ*, who is supposed to be described as the rising sun, like Jehovah in Psa. 84:12 and Isa. 60:19; and this view is founded upon a truth, viz., that the coming of Christ brings justice and salvation. But in the verse before us the context does not sustain the personal view, but simply the idea that righteousness itself is regarded as a sun. *Ts^edâqâh*, again, is not justification or the forgiveness of sins, as Luther and others suppose, for there will be no forgiving of sins on the day of judgment, but God will then give to every man reward or punishment according to his works. *Ts^edâqâh* is here, what it frequently is in Isaiah (e.g., Isa. 45: 8; 46:13; 51: 5, etc.), righteousness in its consequences and effects, the sum and substance of salvation. Malachi uses *ts^edâqâh*, righteousness, instead of **יְשׁוּעָה**, salvation, with an allusion to the fact, that the ungodly complained of the absence of the judgment and righteousness of God, that is to say, the righteousness which not only punishes the ungodly, but also rewards the good with happiness and salvation. The sun of righteousness has **כְּפָלַיִם**, healing, in its wings. The wings of the sun are the rays by which it is surrounded, and not a figure denoting swiftness. As the rays of the sun spread light and warmth over the earth for the growth and maturity of the plants and living creatures, so will the sun of righteousness bring the healing of all hurts and wounds which the power of darkness has inflicted upon the righteous. Then will they go forth, sc. from the holes and caves, into which they had withdrawn during the night of suffering and where they had kept themselves concealed, and skip like stalled calves (cf. 1Sa. 28:24), which are driven from the stall to the pasture. On *pûsh*, see at Hab. 1: 8. And not only will those who fear God be liberated from all oppression, but they will also acquire power over the ungodly. They will tread down the wicked, who will then have become ashes, and lie like ashes upon the ground, having been completely destroyed by the fire of the judgment (cf. Isa. 26: 5, 6).

Mal. 4: 4-6. CONCLUDING ADMONITION. —

V. 4. *“Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him upon Horeb for all Israel, statutes and rights.”*¹² V. 5. *Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the day of Jehovah comes, the great and terrible one.* V. 6. *And he will turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, that I may not come and smite the land with the curse”*

(*mit dem Banne*, with the ban). The admonition, “Remember ye the law of Moses,” forms the conclusion not only of the last section (Mal. 3:13-4: 3), but of the whole of the book of Malachi, and cannot be connected with v. 3 in the

sense of “Remember what Moses has written in the law concerning Christ, or concerning the judgment,” as Theod. Mops. and others maintain; nor must it be restricted to the time previous to the coming of the Messiah by the interpolation of *interim* (v. Til and Mich.). It is rather a perfectly general admonition to lay to heart and observe the law. For this is referred to here, “not according to its casual and transient form, but according to its real essence as expressing the holiness of God, just as in Mat. 5:17” (Hengstenberg). Malachi thus closes by showing to the people what it is their duty to do, if on the day of judgment they would escape the curse with which transgressors are threatened in the law, and participate in the salvation so generally desired, and promised to those who fear God. By the expression “my servant,” the law is traced back to God as its author. At the giving of the law, Moses as only the servant of Jehovah. **אוֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי** is not to be rendered “whom (**אוֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר**) I charged with statutes and rights to all Israel” (Ewald, Bunsen), for we do not expect any further explanation of the relation in which Moses stood to the law, but “which I commanded him upon (to) all Israel.” *Tsivvâh* is construed with a double accusative, and also with **ל** governing the person to whom the command refers, as in Ezr. 8:17, 2Sa. 14: 8, Esther 4: 5. The words *chuqqîm ûmishpâtîm* are an exegetical definition belonging to **אֲשֶׁר**: “which I commanded as statutes and rights,” i.e., consisting of these; and they recal to mind Deu. 4: 1 and Deu. 8:14, where Moses urges upon the people the observance of the law, and also mentions *Horeb* as the place where the law was given. The whole of the admonition forms an antithesis to the rebuke in v. 7, that from the days of their fathers they went away from the ordinances of Jehovah. These they are to be mindful to observe, that the Lord when He comes may not smite the land with the ban.

In order to avert this curse from Israel, the Lord would send the prophet Elijah before His coming, for the purpose of promoting a change of heart in the nation. The identity of the prophet Elijah with the messenger mentioned in v. 1, whom the Lord would send before Him, is universally acknowledged. But there is a difference of opinion as to the question, who is the Elijah mentioned here? The notion was a very ancient one, and one very widely spread among the rabbins and fathers, that the prophet Elijah, who was caught up to heaven, would reappear (compare the history of the exposition of our verse in Hengstenberg’s *Christology*, vol. iv. p. 217 translation). The LXX thought of him, and rendered **אֲלֵיָהּ הַנְּבִיאַ** by *Ἠλίαν τὸν Θεσβίτην*; so also did Sirach (ch. 48:10) and the Jews in the time of Christ (Joh. 1:21; Mat. 17:10); and so have Hitzig, Maurer, and Ewald in the most recent times. But this view is proved to be erroneous by such passages as Hos. 3: 5, Eze. 34:23; 37:24, and Jer. 30: 9, where the sending of David the king as the true shepherd of Israel is promised.

Just as in these passages we cannot think of the return or resurrection of the David who had long been dead; but a king is meant who will reign over the nation of God in the mind and spirit of David; so the Elijah to be sent can only be a prophet with the spirit or power of Elijah the Tishbite. The second David was indeed to spring from the family of David, because to the seed of David there had been promised the eternal possession of the throne. The prophetic calling, on the other hand, was not hereditary in the prophet's house, but rested solely upon divine choice and endowment with the Spirit of God; and consequently by Elijah we are not to understand a lineal descendant of the Tishbite, but simply a prophet in whom the spirit and power of Elijah are revived, as Ephr. Syr., Luther, Calvin, and most of the Protestant commentators have maintained. But the reason why this prophet Elijah is named is to be sought for, not merely in the fact that Elijah was called to his work as a reformer in Israel at a period which was destitute of faith and of the true fear of Jehovah, and which immediately preceded a terrible judgment (Koehler), but also and more especially in the power and energy with which Elijah rose up to lead back the ungodly generation of his own time to the God of the fathers. The one does not exclude but rather includes the other. The greater the apostasy, the greater must be the power which is to stem it, so as to rescue those who suffer themselves to be rescued, before the judgment bursts over such as are hardened. For v. 5*b*, compare Joe. 3: 4. This Elijah, according to v. 6, is to lead back the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers. The meaning of this is not that he will settle disputes in families, or restore peace between parents and children; for the leading sin of the nation at the time of our prophet was not family quarrels, but estrangement from God. The fathers are rather the ancestors of the Israelitish nation, the patriarchs, and generally the pious forefathers, such as David and the godly men of his time. The sons or children are the degenerate descendants of Malachi's own time and the succeeding ages. "The hearts of the godly fathers and the ungodly sons are estranged from one another. The bond of union, viz., common love to God, is wanting. The fathers are ashamed of their children, the children of their fathers" (Hengstenberg). This chasm between them Elijah is to fill up. Turning the heart of the fathers to the sons does not mean merely directing the love of the fathers to the sons once more, but also restoring the heart of the fathers, in the sons, or giving to the sons the fathers' disposition and affections. Then will the heart of the sons also return to their fathers, turn itself towards them, so that they will be like-minded with the pious fathers. Elijah will thereby prepare the way of the Lord to His people, that at His coming He may not smite the land with the ban. The ban involves extermination. Whoever and whatever was laid under the ban was destroyed (cf. Lev. 27:28, 29; Deu. 13:16, 17; and my *Bibl. Archäol.* i. § 70). This threat recalls to mind the fate of the Canaanites who were smitten with

the ban (Deu. 20:17, 18). If Israel resembles the Canaanites in character, it will also necessarily share the fate of that people (cf. Deu. 12:29).

The New Testament gives us a sufficient explanation of the historical allusion or fulfilment of our prophecy. The prophet Elijah, whom the Lord would send before His own coming, was sent in the person of John the Baptist. Even before his birth he was announced to his father by the angel Gabriel as the promised Elijah, by the declaration that he would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the unbelieving to the wisdom of the just (Luk. 1:16, 17). This address of the angel gives at the same time an authentic explanation of vv. 5 and 6 of our prophecy: the words “and the heart of the children to their fathers” being omitted, as implied in the turning of the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the explanatory words “and the unbelieving to the wisdom of the just” being introduced in their place; and the whole of the work of John, who was to go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, being described as “making ready a prepared people for the Lord.” The appearance and ministry of John the Baptist answered to this announcement of the angel, and is so described in Mat. 3: 1-12, Mar. 1: 2-8, Luk. 3: 2-18, that the allusion to our prophecy and the original passage (Isa. 40: 3) is obvious at once. Even by his outward appearance and his dress John announced himself as the promised prophet Elijah, who by the preaching of repentance and baptism was preparing the way for the Lord, who would come after him with the winnowing shovel to winnow His floor, and gather the wheat into His granary, but who would burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Christ Himself also not only assured the people (in Mat. 11:10ff., Luke 7:27ff.) that John was the messenger announced by Malachi and the Elijah who was to come, but also told His disciples (Mat. 17: 1ff.; Mar. 9:11ff.) that Elijah, who was to come first and restore all things, had already come, though the people had not acknowledged him. And even Joh. 1:21 is not at variance with these statements. When the messengers of the Sanhedrim came to John the Baptist to ask whether he was Elias, and he answered, “I am not,” he simply gave a negative reply to their question, interpreted in the sense of a personal reappearance of Elijah the Tishbite, which was the sense in which they meant it, but he also declared himself to be the promised forerunner of the Lord by applying to his own labours the prophecy contained in Isa. 40: 3.

And as the prophet Elijah predicted by Malachi appeared in John the Baptist, so did the Lord come to His temple in the appearing of Jesus Christ. The opinion, which was very widely spread among the fathers and Catholic commentators, and which has also been adopted by many of the more modern Protestant theologians (e.g., Menken and H. Olshausen), viz., that our prophecy was only provisionally fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist and the incarnation of

the Son of God in Jesus Christ, and that its true fulfilment will only take place at the second coming of Christ to judge the world, in the actual appearance of the risen Elijah by which it will be preceded, is not only at variance with the statements of the Lord concerning John the Baptist, which have been already quoted, but as no tenable foundation in our prophecy itself. The prophets of the Old Testament throughout make no allusion to any second coming of the Lord to His people. The day of the Lord, which they announce as the day of judgment, commenced with the appearance on earth of Christ, the incarnate Logos; and Christ Himself declared that He had come into the world for judgment (Joh. 9:39, cf. 3:19 and 12:40), viz., for the judgment of separating the believing from the ungodly, to give eternal life to those who believe on His name, and to bring death and condemnation to unbelievers. This judgment burst upon the Jewish nation not long after the ascension of Christ. Israel rejected its Saviour, and was smitten with the ban at the destruction of Jerusalem in the Roman war; and both people and land lie under this ban to the present day. And just as the judgment commenced at that time so far as Israel was concerned, so does it also begin in relation to all peoples and kingdoms of this earth with the first preaching of Christ among them, and will continue throughout all the centuries during which the kingdom spreads upon earth, until it shall be ultimately completed in the universal judgment at the visible second coming of the Lord at the last day.

With this calling to remembrance of the law of Moses, and this prediction that the prophet Elijah will be sent before the coming of the Lord Himself, the prophecy of the Old Testament is brought to a close. After Malachi, no other prophet arose in Israel until the time was fulfilled when the Elijah predicted by him appeared in John the Baptist, and immediately afterwards the Lord came to His temple, that is to say, the incarnate Son of God to His own possession, to make all who received Him children of God, the *s^egullâh* of the Lord. Law and prophets bore witness of Christ, and Christ came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them. Upon the Mount of Christ's Transfiguration, therefore, there appeared both Moses, the founder of the law and mediator of the old covenant, and Elijah the prophet, as the restorer of the law in Israel, to talk with Jesus of His decease which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem (Mat. 17: 1ff.; Mar. 9: 1ff.; Luke 9:28ff.), for a practical testimony to the apostles and to us all, that Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for us, to bear our sin and redeem us from the curse of the law, was the beloved Son of the Father, whom we are to hear, that by believing in His name we may become children of God and heirs of everlasting life.

FOOTNOTES

^{ft1} In Mal. 1:11 the Romish Church finds a biblical foundation for its doctrine of the bloodless sacrifice of the New Testament, i.e., the holy sacrifice of the mass (see *Canones et decreta concil. Trident. sess. 22*), understanding by *minchâh* the meat-offering as distinguished from the bloody sacrifices. But even if there were any ground for this explanation of the word, which there is not, it would furnish no support to the sacrifice of the mass, since apart from the fact that the sacrifice of the mass has a totally different meaning from the meat-offering of the Old Testament, the literal interpretation of the word is precluded by the parallel “burning incense” or “frankincense.” If burning incense was a symbol of prayer, as even Reincke admits, the “sacrificial offering” can only have denoted the spiritual surrender of a man to God (Rom. 12:1).

^{ft2} The LXX have put v. 4 at the end of the book, not to call attention to its great importance, but probably for the very same reason for which the *Masora* observes, at the close of our book, that in the **יְתִקֵּק**, i.e., in the books of Isaiah, the twelve prophets, the Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes, the last verse but one of these books was to be repeated when they were read in the synagogue, namely, because the last verse had too harsh a sound. The transposition is unsuitable, inasmuch as the promise in vv. 5 and 6 does not fit on to the idea expressed in vv. 2 and 3, but only to that in v. 4. According to the *Masora*, the **ז** in **זְכָרוּ** should be written as *litera majusc.*, although in many codd. it has the usual form; and this also is not to show the great importance of the verse, since these Masoretic indications have generally a different meaning, but in all probability it is simply to indicate that this is the only passage in the book of the twelve prophets in which the word is pronounced **זְכָרוּ** (cf. **זְכָרוּ** in Hos. 12:6; 14:8), whereas in the other books, with the exception of Job. 18:17, this is the only pronunciation that is met with.