

Malachi

The Argument

Concerning this prophet, some have thought (but without good and sufficient ground) that he was an angel in the form of a man; others think him to be Ezra; but as it is the plainer, so the surer, opinion that he was a prophet of that name, and a man distinct from Ezra, and sent the last of all the prophets. His time of appearing among the Jews cannot be determined precisely, but it is best guessed to have been about the times of Nehemiah's reforming the strange marriages, [Ne 13:23, 28](#), with [Mal 2:11](#), and when he reformed the sacrilegious detaining of tithes, [Ne 13:10-11](#), with [Mal 3:8](#), as Doctor Lightfoot observeth. Now this reformation of Nehemiah was about A.M. 3519, as Doctor Lightfoot, or 3545, as Helvicus, or 3589, as Archbishop Usher's Annals. Whatever was his time of appearing, it is certain he lived in a very vicious age, in which priests as well as people were leavened with either perverse thoughts of the Divine Providence, or brutish atheism, denying the Deity and Providence, contemptuous thoughts of the worship of God, sacrilegious practices, robbing God of tithes and offerings, shameless justifying these their practices, boundless or monstrous unfaithfulness to their wives, casting off Jewish to marry Gentile wives, or else superinducing the Gentile women, and enslaving the Jewish to them; casting off the law of God, or, which is equally bad, if not worse, wresting it to their own sinful sentiments. All which he doth severely reprove, and requires them to reform, and foretells the day of the Messiah's coming to sit as a refiner and purifier; whose appearing such sinners and sins would not be able to bear; and tells them of his forerunner, who in the spirit and power of Elias should come, and prepare a people for the Messiah: till then, (as their duty was,) he commands them in the name and by authority from God, that they remember the law of Moses, which God commanded in Horeb; hereby intimating some great change in the law at the coming of the Messiah; and intimating also, that they should expect no more prophet till the Great Prophet himself should come unto them.

Chapter 1

God by Malachi complaineth of Israel's ingratitude, [Mal 1:1-5](#) and of the profane disrespect shown to God's worship, [Mal 1:6-13](#). The curse of corrupt offerings; [Mal 1:14](#).

[Mal 1:1](#)

The burden: see [Zec 9:1](#); [Na 1:1](#). Usually it imports sad threats against those concerned in it, though sometimes it may be no more than the message of God.

Of the word of the Lord: the authority was Divine on which this prophet spake.

Malachi: my messenger, (saith the Lord,) so the Hebrew sounds. My angel, as some, though they err who take him to be an angel conversing with Jews in the form of a man; but angel, taken in the grammatical sense, i.e. messenger, he was, and God's messenger, the last of the prophets sent to Israel before the great Prophet Messiah came. That he was Mordecai, or Ezra, as some conjecture without good ground, or who he was, of what tribe or family, the Scripture gives us no account, and we make no guess. His prophecy is of Divine authority, and so cited by three of the four evangelists, [Mt 11:10](#); [Mr 1:2](#); [Lu 1:16](#); and by St. Paul, [Ro 9:13](#).

Mal 1:2

I have loved you: God asserts his ancient love, that which he had in many generations past showed: I have, time out of mind, yea, from before the birth of your father Jacob, and in truth before Abraham was, designed more kindness to you than to others, and from the time of Jacob I have undeniably showed it. And this deserved, what I have not found from you, a love corresponding somewhat to mine; but instead of such love, some are ready to say they saw no such thing, or to dispute perversely in what it appeared.

You; both personally considered and relatively, as you were in your fathers and progenitors.

Saith the Lord: their ingratitude extorts this solemn protestation, they should readily have owned, and not put God to avow the love he had shown them.

Yet ye say; or, and you do querulously and with ignorance enough object to me, and put me on it to vindicate my love, and expose your ingratitude.

Wherein? or, for what? is there not some cause? did not Abraham's love deserve a love for us his posterity? Most perverse pride!

Wherein hast thou loved us? who have been captives and groaned under the miseries of it all our days till of late; is this love to us? Since they are supposed thus to object, by cutting questions, God will give them answer: *Was not Esau Jacob's brother?* had they not one and the same grandfather? was not Abraham as near to one as to the other? did not one father beget them, and one mother bear them? did they not lie together in the same womb? was there not as much of Abraham and Isaac in Esau as in Jacob? Or what of nature, consanguinity, and outward privilege was there in one more than in the other, whatever that was, Esau might claim, for he was the eldest. In Esau's person his progeny is included, as appears next verse.

Yet I loved Jacob; the younger brother, and your father, O unthankful Jews! I preferred him to the birthright, and this of free love, before any merit could be dreamed of; I did love his person, and have loved his posterity, with an unparalleled love, and showed it to all.

Mal 1:3

I hated; I loved not Esau or his posterity as I loved Jacob and his posterity: this not loving, comparatively, is a hating, God showed not the same kindness to the twin brothers; the one was more enriched with the fruits of God's love, and had cause to be thankful; the other had no cause to complain, for God did him no wrong.

Esau; containing his posterity with him; for though the hatred or lesser love began towards Esau's person, yet the effects of it appeared more manifestly in Esau's posterity.

His mountains and his heritage; Mount Seir with the neighbouring mountains given to Esau [De 2:5](#); [Jos 24:4](#) for inheritance, as here it is said, and which he and his posterity did enjoy about one thousand two hundred years.

Waste, by Nebuchadnezzar's arms five years after the sacking of Jerusalem, as foretold by Ezekiel, [Eze 35:1-15](#). The people were slain or captivated, or forced to lice from the sword of

the enemy, their cities taken, plundered, and burnt. It is possible that they might meet with worse usage than the Jews met with herein; however, their state seems equal, and here is no token of unequal hatred; but what follows doth manifestly discover it, for whereas Jacob's captivity returned, and their cities were rebuilt, Esau's never were.

For the dragons; or jackals, or owls, for the word is so used and explained by some; or all these with dragons doleful creatures, which delight in desolate places; by which the utter desolation, and the perpetuity of the desolation, of Esau is signified.

[Mal 1:4](#)

We are impoverished: here the prophet introduceth Edom reflecting on its present low condition, and taking up resolutions of bettering their condition: We are now, as the Jews were five years before, exceedingly spoiled by Nebuchadnezzar, who hath rifled our houses, burnt our cities, and captivated our citizens.

We will return; this speaks their insolence: or shall; this speaks their hopes of such a return as Jacob's posterity had after seventy years.

Build the desolate places; repair their cities, as Jerusalem was repaired by the returned captivity. They may do so for a while, but, saith God, I will throw it down; as he did in the times of the Maccabees.

They shall call them, The border of wickedness; they will be by their flagitious lives, after they a little recover themselves, a most wicked people, and so notorious that all their neighbours shall brand them for it, and presage a curse will follow them.

The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever; they will so highly provoke God, that his indignation will be kindled against them, and will burn for ever.

[Mal 1:5](#)

You Jews who are now returned from captivity, and are blest with a rebuilt temple and city, who are settled in civil and sacred concerns, *your eyes shall see;* some of you must needs, more will, and all might, observe what I have said, that my love is toward you, whom I plant, build up, and prosper, while I root up, pull down, and destroy your neighbouring kindred Edom.

Ye shall say; you should in point of duty, and some of you will take notice of it, and confess it.

The Lord will be magnified; or, Let the Lord be magnified, let his name be great and his praise great for his free love to Israel, for his great displeasure against the border of wickedness, for his truth in both.

From the border of Israel; let Israel from all his borders give God this praise.

Mal 1:6

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: this is a practical principle engraven on the hearts of mankind, a law which all own, a truth written with a sunbeam, and which is violated by none but unnatural, brutish men.

If then I be a father: this if no way doubts, but it is made a supposition grounded on a confessed, ancient, and peculiar adoption and redemption, by virtue whereof the seed of Jacob had God to their Father and Master; and this undisputed relation, *If I be, &c.*, doth more piercingly affect the mind when it is demanded, Where is your performance of duty, where the honour you give me?.

Where is mine honour? the internal, in high apprehensions and esteem with answerable affections; the external, in dutiful behaviour and carriage; where the ready, ingenuous, and delightful obedience, &c.?

If I be a master, where is my fear? servants do fear their masters, and this fear, though servile, yet is due to a master, it is a quality suiting the relation; and now where is either of them?

Unto you, O priests: had undutifulness and irreverence been found among the ignorant people who knew not the law, nor were in capacity of knowing me as yon, it might have been a little excusable, yet a great sin; but you, O priests, nearest of any to me, whose business is to know me, who live upon my sacrifices, have me in a most peculiar manner your portion, you have, like Eli's sons, despised me yourselves, and made others do so too; thought and spoke contemptibly of what is most venerable.

My name; God, his sacrifices and oblations, his law and worship.

And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? proud and hardened, they dispute it with God and his prophets.

Mal 1:7

Ye offer polluted bread; you through covetousness take any the people bring, whether such as the law requires or no. If it answer not the perfection of the law, yet you first make it serve me, through your contempt of me, and then to serve your turn to feed you and yours.

Polluted; either by ill-managing it, and misordering what is good and allowable, or accepting what is disallowed and forbidden, because of its blemishes.

Bread; either the shew-bread, of which [Ex 25:30](#); or meat-offerings, [Ex 29:41](#); [Lev 2:1-16](#); [Nu 28:5](#); or, in a more large sense, all that was to be offered unto God, sacrifices and oblations.

Upon mine altar: by this it appears bread is to be expounded here of sacrifices, and not to be confined to the narrow bounds of this one kind.

And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? they stand upon their own justification, and proudly contend with God, either implying they did not offer such polluted things, or if they

were defective, and in law sense polluted, yet that this did redound to God, or affect him no more than the perfection of them could add to him.

In that ye say; perhaps in words, however by your deeds you speak your thoughts and judgment; you think so, and then act so.

The table; before it was altar, now it is table, not to be opposed each to other, but comprehending both, and all that was offered unto God on both.

Is contemptible; as if they measured sacrifice and oblation by the splendour and riches of the temple and altar; the first were more pompous than the second, and these priests probably thought they might abate in the qualities of the offerings, as this temple abated in its splendour; they contemned this, and then contemn those offerings.

Mal 1:8

If ye offer the blind: this *if* implies they had done so, it chargeth them with somewhat in matter of practice among them; the lame and sick also they had offered.

Is it not evil? is it not against the express command of God, [Lev 22:22-24](#); [De 15:21](#)? The living God should have living sacrifices, and God who is perfect should have perfect sacrifices. But the people bringing such, the priests accepting such, do in effect tell the world they thought such sacrifices good enough for that God they were offered to: so great profaneness runs through this whole carriage.

Offer it now unto thy governor; not their king, for they had none; but governors they had, and these the Jews revered, and would not dare do that to them they do boldly with God daily.

Will he be pleased with thee? your governor would not thank you, he would be angry with you, and account it an affront; and shall not the Lord of hosts much more account it an indignity offered unto him? People in bringing, priests in accepting, these blemished oblations, which were not good enough for a man, did sin greatly, and spake their apprehensions of God to be contemptible and slight.

Mal 1:9

And now I, Malachi, pray you, O priests, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us; intercede with God for this sinful people, among which (with the modesty that is usual among God's saints) he rangeth himself; entreat they may find grace with God, and be pardoned.

This detestable contempt of God, his altar, and worship, hath been by your means; you, O priests, have been great occasions of this, it is more your sin, though too much theirs; beg, then, that it may be forgiven, repent and pray, or you will not be regarded. Some think the whole verse to be an irony against those priests and their sacrifices.

Mal 1:10

Some make this verse to be a kind of wish that there were some among them that would shut up the doors of the temple, and keep out such sacrifices and sacrificers; it would be less displeasing to God, it were better not done at all that so ill done, and so long as it is so ill

done God can have no pleasure in it or them. Others make it a reproof of the priests upbraided for their profane contempt of God, and for their inexcusable negligence, while they are so well paid for all their service, be it ever so little and inconsiderable, as the lighting a fire on the altar, or shutting the doors of the temple: Inexcusable dishonesty, to receive large wages, and neglect your work!

I have no pleasure in you; I cannot be pleased with such servants and services: or it is a meiosis, I am very greatly displeased with you.

Neither will I accept an offering at your hand; whilst you are thus profane and contemptuous, I will never accept your gifts, but reject you and them.

Mal 1:11

This verse is a very full and plain prediction or promise made on behalf of the Gentiles, that they should be a people to the Lord, and should exalt his name, and worship him in a pure way, and well-pleasing to the Lord. That when he casteth off ceremonial services and carnal ordinances, he will set up spiritual and heavenly, and all nations, from east to west, shall submit to them, and sanctify the holy and reverend name of God in them.

Incense; a law term for a gospel duty; and under this type is contained the prayers and praises, nay, the whole gospel worship is that incense which shall be offered unto God, which is in the verse called a pure offering.

A pure offering; both sincere, in opposition to hypocrisy, and holy, in opposition to impurity, and purged from superstition and idolatry. The sum of this verse is contained in that [Joh 4:21-24](#).

Mal 1:12

But ye, O priests, principally and first; the people next, by their examples; *have profaned it;* used it as a common thing, and valued it at a strange undervalue, as if neither excellent nor useful.

Ye say; by your deportment you say so; perhaps you do not say so in words, this were two impudent indeed.

The table of the Lord is polluted; not a sacred thing, or to be revered.

His meat; either the meat which fell to the priests' share, and was for them to live upon, this they despised; or else the portion which did belong to God himself, and was laid upon the altar; they were neither pleased with that the Lord did reserve to himself, nor with that he gave to them, but they found fault with both.

Is contemptible; a poor, sordid allowance, scarce fit for meaner persons and less service.

Mal 1:13

Ye said also; to those sins before mentioned, the priests chiefly, and the people with them, added this also, that they openly complained of God's service.

Behold, what a weariness! what a toil and drudgery is it to observe every point of the law about ordering ourselves and the sacrifices!

Ye have snuffed at it, in token of discontent, and that you thought it was all needless labour; would not examine your sacrifices as you should.

Ye brought that which was torn, &c.: for want of value for the ordinance, and patience in examining whether the sacrifice were perfect and according to law, you priests accepted and offered the torn, and blind, &c., which are expressly forbidden to be made sacrifices: see [Mal 1:8](#).

Thus ye brought an offering; with such minds, snuffing at my service, and with such sacrifices, unfit for mine altar, have they wearied themselves somewhat, but their God more.

Should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord, i.e. it is not at all fit to be accepted, nor will our God receive it.

[Mal 1:14](#)

Now comes a thunder-clap from heaven against sinners, who were before reprov'd.

Cursed be the deceiver; the hypocrite, that doth deceive man, and would deceive God; the false heart, that intends one thing and pretends another, would seem to offer a sacrifice of the best, but puts God off with the worst.

A male; a perfect male, such as God requireth and accepteth.

Voweth: in vows God required very perfect and unblemished offerings, [Lev 22:18-19](#); but there are jugglers that vow corrupt things, when they have what is perfect, and should vow that.

And sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; solemnly sacrificeth the worst, wholly unfit for acceptance. Any thing but the best we have is this corrupt thing, for the best we have is justly commanded, and that only is acceptable to the Lord.

I am a great King; very full of majesty, and therefore will by no means be slighted.

My name is dreadful among the heathen: heathens reverence this name, and will do so when converted, and you Jews ought not to undervalue it.

Chapter 2

The priests are sharply reprov'd for profaning the covenant which was given them, [Mal 2:1-9](#); and the people for marrying strange wives, [Mal 2:10-12](#), and treacherously putting away their former ones, [Mal 2:13-16](#); and for impiety, [Mal 2:17](#).

[Mal 2:1](#)

This commandment; either this which he had already minded them of about the sacrifices, what ought to be offered and what refused; if the people brought defective sheep or oxen,

they who were priests ought not to have admitted, they ought not to have offered them upon God's altar: or this commandment he now brings from God to them, and which is contained in this chapter.

Is for you; by especial direction it is sent to you, and look to it that you obey it.

Mal 2:2

If ye will not hear: this *if* to the prophet was dubious, but to God, who sent the prophet, it was not doubtful; but it was for monition to the priests and Jews, and implied a condition of mercy if they would yet hear, but an inevitable curse if they did not hear.

If ye will not lay it to heart; if you do not consider what you hear, to do the good, to forbear the evil.

To give glory unto my name, by a due and holy manner of sacrificing and offering incense; in neglect of which you have greatly sinned, and dishonoured me, and polluted my name and altar.

I will even send a curse: it is a comprehensive threat, many miseries in one word; it is a blast on their good hoped for, and it is poison in the good possessed, and when it is, as here, sent of God, it will surely do both, it will be a blast on hopes, it will be poison in what is possessed and should be enjoyed.

Upon you; all, both priests and people, but especially on the priests.

Your blessings; all the good, sweet, necessary supports of life, and comforts of yourselves and yours.

I have cursed them already; you have so long polluted my name, and would not reform, that I have already sent out the curse, and it is in part upon you, though you are not sensible of it, nor will feel it, and this is forerunner of greater curses yet coming, unless you repent.

Because ye do not lay it to heart: the sin was great in that you polluted my name, but it becomes much greater when you add impenitence to it, and harden yourselves, and will not lay it to heart; therefore the curse is gone out with commission from God to seize you.

Mal 2:3

Behold; note it well, and consider.

I will corrupt your seed; take away the prolific virtue and strength of it, that it shall bring forth none or little fruit: your seed you make plentiful, but you cannot make your harvest so, nor will I, till you give me the glory I contend for, and will have ere I have done. I will rebuke or check your seed, which will surcease to grow thereupon: though your vices checked thrive still, your seed for harvest cannot grow up under my checks.

Spread dung upon your faces: it is an expression of greatest contempt cast upon a person; it is a token of utmost undervalue and scorn: so I will expose you, as you have exposed my name to contempt.

The dung of your solemn feasts; your most solemn days and feasts, which are by you accounted most holy, and in which you think you offer the most holy and acceptable sacrifices, shall be as loathsome to me as dung, and shall make you, who offer them illegally, as polluted, unclean, and loathsome as if I had thrown the dung of those sacrifices into your faces.

One shall take you away with it; you shall be taken away with it, removed as unclean as the dung itself, as unfit as that to be in the temple, as fit to be cast out to the dunghill; so contemptible shall you be, if you lay it not to heart.

[Mal 2:4](#)

And ye, O priests, shall know, by sense and feeling, by woeful experience; or, know ye, i.e. but what I speak now, and will do among you. I have sent this commandment; admonition, reproof, and exhortation, to look more carefully for the future, that you do not dishonour me, and make mine altar and sacrifices contemptible; but repent of what is past, and for time to come amend all; this I call for at your hands.

That my covenant might be with Levi; that you do not null the covenant of priesthood made with Levi, and which I would have continued in his posterity, in you, and yours after you, which I would not have your sins and high provocations should abrogate; but if you will not thus confirm, settle, and keep Levi's covenant among you, I will make it firm as to what is on my part to be done herein, to punish the violators of it.

Saith the Lord of hosts; God Almighty, Lord of hosts, hath spoken this, and will do it.

[Mal 2:5](#)

Here is one covenant that is more particular than any, a covenant of priesthood between God and a particular tribe.

With him: Levi is named [Mal 2:4](#), and I will rest there, though I know some would have it be Aaron, or Phinehas.

Of life and peace; of long life, and prosperous, by covenant under the provisos therein contained, assured to the Levites in their due ministrations before God.

I gave them, both lives, (the word is dual,) or life and prosperity.

For the fear wherewith he feared me; religious fear, or that gracious qualification which appeared in the acts of it, for he feared before God.

And was afraid before my name; behaved himself with reverence and trembling before God. It is the same repeated for confirmation of the former, or perhaps it may imply the habitual name of reverence from a contrite heart, which is here pointed at, and commended in this person under the name of Levi.

Mal 2:6

The law of truth; the law of God which is the truth, the doctrine of the law according to the true meaning thereof.

Was in his mouth; he did teach it to the people, he resolved all cases by this law; Aaron, Eleazar, Phinehas, or, as we must understand it, every one of those godly priests or Levites, in what age soever they lived, who, as [Mal 2:5](#), feared God, and were humble. They taught the people (as was their duty) first to know the law of God, and then to obey it; this by their example, the other by their instruction. The law of truth was in his mouth, he pronounced according to the law truly, pronouncing that unclean which the law determined unclean, and that clean which was clean.

Iniquity was not found in his lips; he judged not with respect to persons, nor for bribes perverted judgment, nor judged that lawful which was unlawful, or that unlawful which was lawful.

He walked with me; his whole life was a continual walking with God, as Enoch's was, and Noah's was, and as God required Abraham's should be, in holy fear of his majesty, in true love of his precepts, and reverent observing his ordinances; he lived with God, and to him.

In peace, with God, and with men; it was his aim to live peaceably towards others, that God might make them peaceable toward him, and God gave him much of that he desired.

And equity; in rectitude of mind, or in sincerity and uprightness, free from hypocrisy; or else in all righteousness among men.

And did turn many away from iniquity; by his instructions, and by his excellent example, he converted many from ways of sin.

Mal 2:7

Those forementioned excellent priests did so teach, and so live, forasmuch as they did well consider it was their duty to be well acquainted with, and to have a great insight into, the law of God.

The priest's lips should keep knowledge; it is that their office binds them to; it is the duty of all God's people to know his law, but the priest's duty to know it more than others, [Lev 10:11](#), for they were to teach Israel, [De 33:10](#).

And they, the people of Israel, should seek the law at his mouth; in difficult cases, in controversies, &c., the people were to consult and advise with the priests, and inquire what the law said in the case.

For he is the messenger, interpreter, ambassador, or legate, of the Lord of hosts with the people, lieger among them, and who therefore ought to be advised with about his Lord's mind.

[Mal 2:8](#)

But ye, priests that now are in office, now live, when I, Malachi, am sent to preach, are departed, have shamefully degenerated and turned away from your duty, are apostates, out of the way of God's law, and of those holy priests your predecessors; out of the way of truth, holiness, peace, and equity.

Ye have caused many to stumble at the law; your expositions of the law, your manner of worshipping God, and your manner of living, all together were great scandals to very many; and too many of these, that were offended by these things, these faults of yours, fell to sinning with you.

Ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, the covenant of priesthood, [Ne 13:29](#), chargeth them with this sin, and therefore they have no reason to expect the blessings of this covenant, viz. life and peace, since their making the covenant void on their part had cut off all claim and right to the blessings promised in that covenant, and had exposed them to the curses God threatened them with.

[Mal 2:9](#)

Therefore, because you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, and have dishonoured me, and made my sacrifices contemptible, have I also made you contemptible and base; I have left you under the contempt of the people, who think basely of you, as you deserve; you have dishonoured me, and I have made, and will make, good my word, you shall be lightly esteemed.

Before all the people; there are none but account you an unworthy, unthankful, profane, and unjust generation, neither fit to serve God nor guide man.

According as ye have not kept my ways; your punishment is as your sin; you forsook the law of God, and made his table and his bread contemptible, now I make you contemptible; you were weary of my service, and the people age weary of such priests.

But have been partial in the law; you have perverted the law to please great men, or to favour yourselves; or, to speak all in few words, you have declined the true judgment of God's law to serve some unworthy design or other. so that none could be sure of a right interpretation, or of a just judgment, or of a safe and sure direction from you.

[Mal 2:10](#)

Have we, we Jews, not all one father? either Abraham, or Jacob, (not Adam here intended,) with whom God made the covenant by which the posterity was made a peculiar people, separated from other nations, and on very weighty reasons forbid to join and intermix with strange nations. Hath not one God created us? the prophet speaks of that great and gracious work of God, creating them to be a chosen people, a nation formed to show forth his praise, [De 32:6, 18](#); [Isa 43:1, 7](#); and so we Christians are created in Christ Jesus, [Eph 2:10](#), and are in him new creatures, [2Co 5:17](#).

Why do we? the prophet was not guilty of the fault, yet speaks as one of the community, partly to take off the envy of the Jews, and to cut off all occasion of quarrelling against his

word, and partly to insinuate the sense he had of this thing, and the affection he had for them, though he reprov'd them.

Deal treacherously; despise, so some, break our faith in the marriage contract engaged, so carry it disloyally, against the duty we owe to God's law, which equally binds us as our wives to mutual love, honour, and faithfulness; and why then do we take heathen wives, (it is bad if a Jew unmarried do it, but here now the case is worse,) Jewish wives being disliked, rejected, and so greatly despised? Why do we this against the bond of consanguinity? And do we sons of Abraham abuse thus the daughters of Abraham? Why do we so little regard the bond of religion? We are people, sons and daughters, of one God, who hath called us, separated us from the heathen to keep religion pure and unmixed; why then do we transgress thus?

Every man; the fault was very common, among the people and priests too, and since their return out of Babylon.

Against his brother: this wrong was done immediately against the wife, but the father, brothers, or kinsmen of the wronged wife are mediately, and by consequence, wronged; the whole family of the wife thus used is perfidiously abused, but brothers, as principal of the family, are named.

By profaning the covenant; violating the covenant of God, the law, which approves no polygamy, and forbids marrying of idolaters.

[Mal 2:11](#)

Judah: though Judah only is named, yet the rest of the returned captives are included.

Dealt treacherously: see [Mal 2:10](#).

An abomination; such treachery is a very abominable thing, God and all good men abhor it, and yet here it is committed in Israel, who are God's peculiar people, and above others should have been holy.

And in Jerusalem; under the eye of the governors, the high priest and sanhedrim, nay, under the eye of God, who dwelt at Jerusalem; this could not but greatly provoke God.

Profaned the holiness of the Lord: profanely violated the necessary cautionary law of marriage, confining Israel to marry within themselves, and not to endanger themselves and religion by joining affinity with idolaters, who would draw them and their children from the holy law, worship, and temple of God, which are the holiness that he loved.

Which he loved; which he, i.e. Judah, once loved; so it was apostacy in Judah. Or which *he*, i.e. the Lord, loved above all; so it is a neglect of a main duty, it is slighting what God so greatly loved.

And hath married the daughter of a strange god: [Ezr 9:1](#); [10:2](#), mentions what nations they were whose daughters were by these Jews taken for wives, they were idolatrous nations, and the women were idolatresses when the Jews did marry them. This was bad; but these Jews had wives before, and they cast them off, or else took in these strangers and despised their former wives: this is the treachery and abomination that is here committed.

Mal 2:12

The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this; the family of those who do this shall be destroyed utterly by the hand of God, he will punish this crime.

The master and the scholar; him that calleth and him that answereth; there shall be left neither any to teach nor any to learn, none to call nor any to answer, all the living cut off.

Out of the tabernacles of Jacob: this points to the people, or laity, who dwelt in the cities of Jacob, they shall be rooted out of the land.

And him that offereth an offering; the priests that are guilty of this fault shall be put out of the office of priest, and minister no more before the Lord.

Mal 2:13

This have ye done again; beside that first fault, you have committed another, you slight, misuse, and afflict your Jewish wives, whom alone you should have loved and cherished, but you make them drudges and slaves to idolatresses, your new and illegal wives.

Covering the altar of the Lord with tears; your despised and misused wives flee to the temple, weep, and cry out unto God for redress of their injuries.

With weeping; this is added to show the abundance of their tears.

With crying out; with vehemency crying to God against such husbands.

Insomuch that he, the Lord, who seeth their tears and heareth their cries, *regardeth not the offering any more;* valueth not such offerings made to him by such people and such priests; or receiveth it with good will at your hand; is not at all pleased with such offerings, whether expiatory or peace-offerings, none of them from such people shall ever avail them.

Mal 2:14

Yet ye say, Wherefore? though the fault was so great in the nature of it, and so notorious in the evidence of it, these impudent sinners will not see, but dispute what just cause God hath to reject their offerings.

Because the Lord hath been witness: the prophet answers them God was witness both of the matrimonial contract, when you promised other deportment and affections, and he is witness also of your violating this contract, and hath seen how false and perfidious you have been, what inhumanity you have showed against your wives.

Between thee and the wife of thy youth; whom in thy youth thou marriedst, and hast had the best of her time and strength, and in age shouldst love and deal kindly with.

Dealt treacherously: see [Mal 2:10](#).

Yet is she thy companion; yet she is, what she was by the sacred institution of God made, thy companion, not thy drudge, or slave; thou art most unjust to her, thus to change thy affection and deportment when there is no change in her state and relation.

And the wife of thy covenant: covenants ought to be very exactly kept, and those especially which are of our own freest and most voluntary making, our covenants; such was this between the unnatural husband and his despised wife: all which, as they should have been arguments to his duty, so they are aggravations of his neglect of duty, and provocations to God. And now judge, ye disputing, quarrelling hypocrites, whether God hath not justest cause to reject your offerings.

[Mal 2:15](#)

And did he, God our Creator, not make one, but one man and one woman?

Yet had he the residue of the spirit; yet he could have made more men and women; and if it had been good, and well-pleasing to him, he could have made many women for one man; but though by his power he could, yet in his wisdom, goodness, and holiness he would not make more; from the beginning marriage was ordained to be between one man and one woman alone at once. So Christ argued [Mt 19:4-6](#).

And wherefore one, one couple, and no more?

That he might seek a godly seed; or, a seed of God; either an excellent seed, as the Hebrew expresses the excellency of a thing by the addition of the name God to it; or rather a holy seed, born to God in chaste wedlock, and brought up under the instructions and virtuous examples of parents living in the fear of God, and love of each other, which in polygamy cannot be expected.

Take heed to your spirit; keep your heart from wandering after strange wives, as you tender your life and souls.

Let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth; though many have done so, let none now do it any more.

[Mal 2:16](#)

The prophet enforceth his former exhortation, [Mal 2:15](#), with the arguments laid here close together from the odiousness of the thing he exhorts them to forbear. It is odious to the Lord, who changeth not, but resents this evil practice as much as ever. God, Judge of wrongs and the wronged, hates such wrong.

God of Israel by covenant, and in peculiar relation, and so much more engaged to punish it; and he now declares his hatred of these things.

Putting away; divorce, such putting away of wives as these petulant Jews used to make way for some new wives.

For one covereth violence with his garment; rather, and covering violence, &c., which God hates as much as divorcing or putting away. This superinducing of violence by a second wife

taken in upon, or with, or over the first wife, called here a *garment*, God hateth. In sum, neither your divorces nor your polygamy may with safety be practised, for God hateth both.

Therefore take heed to your spirit, and therefore be advised, take heed, as you love your life, your souls, your peace, and welfare, that ye deal not treacherously; neither on dislike divorce, nor yet, with unbridled lust, take another wife in to the former; both are perfidious treachery against her, thy covenant, and thy God; and what canst thou expect from such courses that God hateth, but to be cut off.

Mal 2:17

Ye; ye priests and people, slight in your religion toward God. Unfaithful in your covenant with your wives.

Have wearied the Lord (after the manner of man this is spoken of God) with your words; your perverse reasonings, or impious quarrellings against God, among which, one most ungodly and atheistical does come to be remarked on.

When ye say; when your discourse and reasoning is managed to the overthrow (if it were possible) of all morality and goodness.

Every one, not one excepted by these illogical atheists, *that doeth evil is good*; that is a wicked man, and doth wickedness, (as you prophets preach to us,) is misrepresented by you; such are good men, and what they do is good. Thus they call evil good: woe then to them!

In the sight of the Lord; in the account and judgment of God.

And he delighteth in them; as appears (say these atheists) by his prospering of them: did he not delight in them, would he so enrich and prosper them? Or, *Where is the God of judgment?* or if they be evil, and their ways, designs, and doings be evil, and punishable, where is that God of judgment? or why doth he delay execution of his displeasure against such men and ways? I am apt to think that the irreligious sentiments of the priests, their superficial managing of the solemn worship of God, their adulteries, and multiplying of wives, hitherto unpunished, had brought them either to think there was no such thing as moral goodness or moral viciousness in men's actions; or that if there were, since no punishment was laid on the vicious, nor any encouragement or present reward bestowed on the virtuous, that God did not, nor ever would, concern himself to judge it; and so by an undue way of arguing, had concluded themselves into atheism, the very height of wickedness. That this is likely enough, our age confirms, in which unpunished enormities are atheists' arguments against God and his providence; and unless he damn them, they will not believe the being of a God. But such must remember, they shall know and believe it at last, if not too late.

Chapter 3

The forerunner, and coming of the Messiah to cleanse his church, and to judge the wicked, [Mal 3:1-6](#). The people are warned to repent, and turn from their sins, [Mal 3:7](#); particularly their sacrilege, [Mal 3:8-12](#), and impious blasphemy, [Mal 3:13-15](#). God's blessing promised to those that fear him, [Mal 3:16-18](#).

Mal 3:1

The former chapter, as we have it cast, ended with an inquiry made by vicious and ungodly priests and people, who either doubted or denied the present government. or future judgment of God over the world. This being reproved ill the last verse of the second chapter, now God condescends to give a very full and particular answer to this question, for the instruction and consolation of the good, whatever use the evil will make of it.

Behold: this note in this place, and on this occasion, requires our best attention; consider it well, therefore, all ye that inquire with doubt, and all ye that inquire who belief, that he will come, who is God of judgment.

I will send; or, I am sending, I will shortly send: it is Christ who here speaketh, and who sendeth.

My messenger; John Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, as evidently appears from [Mt 11:10](#); [Mr 1:2](#); [Lu 7:27-28](#). He is this messenger, whom some by mistake have taken to be an angel; but though the word so signifieth, it doth also signify a messenger, and so it is very fitly rendered in this place: see [Mal 1:1](#).

He shall prepare the way before me, by preaching repentance because the kingdom of heaven was at hand, by baptizing, by calling them to believe on the Messiah, who should now ere long be revealed, &c.: so John Baptist made ready the people to entertain Christ, and to believe in him. This was he who came in the spirit and power of Elias, and such a one the Jews expected.

The Lord; Messiah, who is Lord and Christ, [Ac 2:36](#); Lord of lords, [Re 17:14](#); [19:16](#).

Whom ye seek; you ungodly disputers seek, but not aright, for you seek, i.e. inquire whether there be such a God of judgment. Beside these, there are others also, who did seek, i.e. humbly, longing and praying that he would come, and waiting, assured that he will come: it is these chiefly intended.

Shall suddenly come, after the coming of his forerunner: this *suddenly* in the text is not very fitly interpreted of a time so long as between this prophecy and the coming of Christ, but it very well suiteth to the time between John Baptist's appearing to prepare the way, and Christ's appearing now the way was prepared.

To his temple; that temple which was the second temple at Jerusalem, lately built by Zerubbabel and Joshua, into which the Messiah was to come; and so he did. There old Simeon met him, there he disputed with the doctors, thither he went to drive out buyers and sellers, and this according to what was foretold of him, [Hag 2:7](#); and all the religious Jews, who lived and died before the desolation of this second temple, did believe, and did confess, that the Messiah would come whilst that house did stand. He is then come, for that temple hath been ruined long since by the Romans.

The messenger of the covenant; the Angel of the covenant, not Elias, but Christ, the Messiah, in whose blood the covenant of grace was confirmed, for whose sake it is performed to us.

Whom ye delight in; you Jews, among whom few there are who do not please themselves to think of his coming, for the expectation of the best among the Jews was fixed on salvation, as that they hoped for by Christ. Others expected great but worldly advantage by his coming and setting up his kingdom among them.

Behold; behold again, saith the prophet, consider thoroughly what is foretold.

He shall come, at the time, to the place, in the manner foreshowed.

Saith the Lord of hosts; all confirmed by the word of the great God.

[Mal 3:2](#)

But, Heb. And. Who may abide the day of his coming? among the Jews were two sorts of inquirers after the day of the Messiah's coming: some inquired with doubt of the truth of the promises, that he should come to set all right, like them [Mal 2:17](#), *Where is the God of judgment?* Others inquired hoping for preferment in the kingdom of the Messiah: of these, who shall be able to endure, to abide this day, when the unparalleled afflictions of that time shall cut off so many Jews, when the sword of the God of judgment shall destroy the ungodly scoffers, when so many must, as in [Zec 13:8-9](#), *be cut off*, and so many must pass through the fire? This will be a terrible day to these ungodly ones. Nor will it be much better with those who, disappointed of the expected worldly grandeur of the Messiah, shall stumble and fall, and be snared and broken; who will reject that Messiah who appears in a character so extremely different from that they had preconceived; and when God shall punish for the rejecting the Messiah, it will be a dreadful day, as it is described, [Mt 24:6-8](#), &c.; [Mr 13:2, 8, 12-14](#): the righteous will scarcely be saved; what then will become of the sinner?

Abide; think of, as the Latin Vulgate: the forethought of those calamities would be a burden; who shall be able to stand under the heavy weight of those crosses which in that day will fall on all sorts of men?

The day of his coming: this day was from his preaching till the utter destruction of the city Jerusalem, about seventy years after the birth of Christ: days they were, had they not been shortened, which would have worn out all; but for the elect's sake they were shortened, [Mt 24:22](#).

Who shall stand when he appeareth? an elegant ingemination, to confirm the thing, and to affect us with it.

For he is like a refiner's fire: some are like metals, which nothing but a fierce fire can purge; such fire shall the troubles of these days be.

And like fullers' soap; another allusion; though this may express the troubles of those times somewhat more tolerable, yet troublesome enough. The boiling waters into which spotted clothes are thrown, where they lie soaking ere they are taken out; the rubbing of them with the soap, by which the clothes are whitened and cleansed indeed, but withal fretted, weakened, and in time worn out: so that day of the Lord will prove to all a day of great trial, to purge and refine.

Mal 3:3

And he, King Messiah, Christ Jesus our Lord, shall sit; as resolved to attend this work, he will set to it vigorously, and continue in it constantly, till it is finished.

As a refiner and purifier of silver; overlooking the furnace, that it be hot enough to melt down the silver and gold, and to consume the dross, and purify the best part of the gold.

He shall purify; the effect of this fiery trial, of this scouring, shall be the thorough cleansing of the persons that are to pass through it: these sufferings, together with his word, shall, by the power of the Spirit accompanying them, thoroughly purge the good, and they shall be a fire hot enough to burn up the wicked.

The sons of Levi; either the Jewish Levites, or all Christians, who are made priests unto God, to offer sacrifices to him, even prayers, praises, and alms, &c.; or such as should minister more immediately to God, in the services of the spiritual temple, as the Levites did in the material temple.

And purge them as gold and silver; that they may be vessels of honour, purified for holy employments.

That they may offer unto the Lord an offering: by the law phrase is set forth gospel worship, for it cannot be meant of legal offerings, which the Messiah did abolish at his coming.

In righteousness; in right manner, purely and uprightly.

Mal 3:4

Then; when the Lord, Messenger or Angel of the covenant, the King Messiah, shall be come, and set up his kingdom, framed his gospel church.

The offerings; the services and duties required of the church, and performed by it, expressed here in an allusion to the law services: such are now fervent prayers, [Ps 141:2](#), lively praises, thankful memorials of the death of Christ in the sacraments, attentive hearing the word, and giving up ourselves, soul and body, a holy, living sacrifice to God, [Ro 12:1](#); and alms, [Heb 13:15-16](#).

Of Judah and Jerusalem; the Christian church, expressed by the names of its type. Pleasant; delightful, as sweet odours to the smell, as savoury meats to the taste, as comely objects to the eye, every way acceptable to God.

As in the days of old, and as in former years; this acceptance God will give shall be as great and gracious as ever he gave to any of the services of his saints of old. We need not determine the precise times to which these expressions refer; it is certain God did greatly delight in the sacrifices and offerings of his people, when they offered them in right manner. He will give as gracious acceptance still, which implieth a continuance of these sacrifices which he will accept, and inferreth that this coming of Christ is not his coming to judge the world, his last coming.

[Mal 3:5](#)

And I; either God the Father, or Christ the Messiah, to whom the Father hath committed all judgment, [Joh 5:22](#).

Will come near; you have spoken as if you thought I was far off, but by what I do you shall see I am near to you, and you shall feel my hand, that you may believe I am a God of judgment, and they happy who wait for him, and they miserable who fall under his judgments.

To you O Jews; not those very persons Malachi preached to, but those who should be then living when the Messiah cometh, which was more than four hundred years after Malachi's preaching, by which time his hearers were all dead.

To judgment, against the wicked, to whom he would be what fire is to the dross in the furnace; to the righteous what the fire is to purer parts of the gold: he will consume the wicked, he will refine the good, he will be terrible to both in doing this.

I will be a swift witness: in that he will be a witness, they may be assured that they should not be quitted in judgment for want of evidence; and in that a swift witness, they may be sure he will come in timely enough against them. And further yet, he that comes near as Judge to call them to an account, was always near them to observe all they did, all they spake, or thought, and he will be near as witness against them.

Against the sorcerers: sorcery was forbidden, and God testifies his detestation of the sin, and such as practise it, [De 18:10-14](#): the people of God, who may consult with their God, his word, and prophets, do very abominably if they consult with the devil; a sin their fathers learnt among the Egyptians, a sin they had learnt among the Chaldeans during the captivity, and practised under the second temple.

The adulterers; who transgressed the law of nature and of God, [Ex 20:14](#); [De 5:18](#); [22:22](#); and were by the law to die for it.

False swearers; perjury, against which [Zec 5:3-4](#), and God hateth this sin, [Zec 8:17](#).

Those that oppress the hireling in his wages; either detaining it, or lessening it, [Jer 22:13](#); [Jas 5:4](#).

The widow; who should be relieved, [De 24:19-21](#), not oppressed, [Isa 1:17](#).

The fatherless: such are not only those who have lost their fathers by death, but all friendless ones; God requires us to assist and help such, not oppress them, [Ps 82:1-4](#).

That turn aside the stranger from his right; pervert judgment, or wrest the law, or admit false witness against a stranger. Not doing right is ill, though to an enemy, but it is a crying sin to do wrong to a stranger, and God will punish it when it crieth, as he did upon your fathers, [Eze 22:7](#), with [Mal 3:13-16](#).

And fear not me; neither reverence my precepts to keep them, not tremble at my threats to prevent the execution of them by declining the sins I threaten. Irreligion is the root of all these oppressions, and God will punish them.

Mal 3:6

This introduceth the final and full confirmation of what hath been foretold in the verses before, the God of judgment will come, &c.

I change not: as he loved righteousness, and hath purposed to defend and reward it, yea, hath promised it shall be well with the righteous, so he now loveth righteousness, and purposeth to deal well with them that love and practise it; these may rejoice, I change not. And so on the other hand, I do, as I ever did, hate wickedness, and will, as I have threatened, punish it; I change not, my mind toward the things or persons that are wicked is the same.

Therefore ye sons of Jacob; either taken for all the natural branches of Jacob, or taken for such as are the sons of Jacob according to the faith, who did indeed fear God.

Are not consumed; since the same hatred of sin and resolution to punish is accompanied with the same longsuffering and patience, that you, sons of Jacob by nature, (but not by imitation,) who have provoked me, and deserve to be destroyed, might yet have time to repent and amend, since my long-suffering changeth not, you are not yet consumed in your sins. So for the good, though they are oppressed and suffer, yet not consumed, for God changeth not, he now doth love as he ever hath loved them, and preserveth them. In brief, God is the same in his wisdom to order the rewards of good and bad in fittest season, and therefore neither the one or other are consumed, but both preserved to the season appointeth of God, the just Judge, and then each shall be dealt with according to what they are.

Mal 3:7

Even from the days of your fathers: we need not fix a particular time or age wherein this apostacy began; it is an old apostacy that is here charged on them, and they were notoriously guilty of it.

Ye are gone away; are turned away by the examples and by the corrupt doctrines of your fathers and false teachers; yea, you have voluntarily and of choice gone away.

From mine ordinances; which either directed my worship, or your dealings one with another; so that you have sinned greatly by polluting my temple with your own additions or diminutions, with idolatry, or corrupt manner of performing my service; and you have sinned against one another by injustice, unfaithfulness, and cruelty, since you have gone away from my laws, which direct the way of righteousness and equity.

And have not kept them: it is a further asseveration, confirming the truth of the charge, and added to make them more sensible of their sin. Some tell us that this chargeth on them their sins against negative precepts, as the other charged them with sins against positive precepts; so the whole law was now, and had long been, broken by their fathers and themselves.

Return unto me; it is the only course you can take, repent ere it is too late, return whilst there is hope.

And I will return unto you; I will yet pardon, accept you, establish, and bless you; amend your ways and doings, and I will soon amend the state of your affairs.

But ye said, Wherein shall we return? as to other, so now to this advice, they return a proud, shameless, and self-justifying question; Wherein, or what is the evil from which we should return to thee? what is our sin?

[Mal 3:8](#)

Will a man rob God? among the many deviations from God's law (which they do not, because they will not, see) the prophet chargeth them with this kind of sacrilegious theft; they had detained his tithes, shortened him in that portion which he had reserved to himself and for his service, which is, as our version expresseth it, a robbing of God. And as the words lie in the original, they do, by arguing from the less to the greater, aggravate this sin; as they may be read, *Will a man rob a great man, or, a judge?* for the word used will bear these notions. Or, *Will a man rob the gods?* i.e. do not heathens abhor the foulness of such a fault, and fear the punishment of sacrilege, and therefore would not rob their idols? as another prophet asked once the question, *Have any of the nations changed their gods, which yet are no gods?* [Jer 2:11](#); so now, *Have the nations robbed their gods? Yet ye have robbed me;* but blush, ye shameless priests and Jews, you have robbed not a great man, but the great God; not judges, but the Judge of judges; not an idol, but the living God! How great is your crime!

Wherein have we robbed thee? a question just like those [Mal 1:7](#); [2:17](#); [3:7](#), which see.

In tithes: the people robbed God not paying the full tenth, which God appointed should be paid to him. The priests robbed God in tithes, while they took too much, or it may be all, for their own particular and family use, and did not distribute them to all that by God's law had a right to a proportion of them.

And offerings; either first-fruits, or other oblations and gifts, which were appointed to be brought to the temple for the service of God; in all which the people and priests had given him less than his due.

[Mal 3:9](#)

Ye, O priests, your sin, your sacrilege, of which you are guilty, hath provoked me.

Are cursed with a curse; are greatly cursed, and are likely still to be cursed, the curse shall continue whilst you continue in this your sinful course.

For ye have robbed me; this brought, increased, and multiplied your curse. Or, as some, *yet ye do rob me!* Strange that you dare sin, whilst I am punishing for this very sin! Or by way of question, and *do ye rob me?* will you go on thus to sin when you are under the curse for it? will you, as Ahaz, sin when in distress; or, Pharaoh-like, harden under the judgment?

Even this whole nation: like priest like people; the priests and Levites did unduly employ the tithes and offerings, and the people did unduly pay: it is like the people observed how much of the tithes were laid out otherwise than the law directed, and they were ready to think they might do well enough to keep that for a use better (as they did think) than the use the priests and Levites put it to, they thought it was ill spent by the priests, and well saved by them; but

this, however seemingly excuse them to themselves, it leaves them guilty before God: the whole nation is sacrilegious, and the whole nation cursed for it.

[Mal 3:10](#)

Bring ye: if these persons spoken of be the priests, then they are required not to detain the tithes in their own hands, but, as was their duty, to bring them into the public storehouse. If the people are the persons, ye, people, it requires them to make g punctual and full payment of all tithes of corn, wine, oil, &c.: about this did Nehemiah contend with the rulers, and made them honester, and all Judah obeyed and did the like, [Ne 13:10-13](#).

The storehouse; which was one or more large rooms built on purpose for this use, to lay up the tithes, and to keep them for holy uses. It was some large and stately chamber, for we find that Eliashib had befriended Tobiah, letting him have it for an apartment to dwell in, [Ne 13:5-7](#), &c.

That there may be meat in mine house, for the priests and Levites to live upon; that they flee not, as many had done, from the service of God in the temple, to take care of their country affairs, and by their industry provide maintenance for themselves and theirs, [Ne 13:10](#).

Prove me now herewith; make the experiment. The prophet doth in the name of God offer to put it to a short trial: By doing your duty try whether I will not make good my promise, and give you a blessing instead of a curse.

Open the windows of heaven: this form of speech is used [Ge 7:11](#), when those mighty rains that helped to drown the world were poured forth; and now here plentiful and fruitful rains are promised in the same phrase, in a kind of proverbial speech, to express great abundance of the thing intended.

Pour you out a blessing; first of rain, to water the earth, and to make it fruitful; next a blessing of corn, wine, and oil, and all other products of the earth, for the use of man and beast.

That there shall not be room enough; your barns and storehouses shall not be large enough to receive it all. Your *fats shall overflow*, [Joe 2:23](#), [24](#). Or, as it is [Am 9:13](#), you shall have harvest work, and vintage work, and sowing work, as much, or more, than your labourers can well finish in their seasons.

[Mal 3:11](#)

I will rebuke; lay a restraint upon, or prohibit, and the prohibition shall be effectual; if God so check, no creature is or dares be deaf to it; such a check not only quiets the unruly sea, but can dry it up.

The devourer; all kinds of devourers, the locust, the canker-worm, caterpillar, &c., pests of those countries very often; though they are in mighty armies and incredible multitudes, yet a rebuke from God will check them all at once as if they were but one.

For your sakes; not for merit in you, but for good to you.

He shall not destroy; consume and eat it, as those vermin always did wherever they came.

The fruits of your ground; corn sown by your hand, and grass springing up of its own nature, both which these locusts devour wheresoever they come, and leave penury or famine behind them.

Neither shall your vine cast her fruit; no blasting or burning winds shall make them drop, no frosts or hails shall destroy your vines. This was once the plague of Egypt, [Ps 105:33-36](#).

Before the time; your vines shall carry their fruit till they are fully ripe.

In the field; where they had large vineyards and oliveyards planted, and God will make them prosper if this people will return to him.

[Mal 3:12](#)

All nations, all that are about you, that know you, and see God's dealings with you, shall call you blessed; praise the state and condition you are in, and pronounce you to be a very happy people, whose God is the Lord, and whose mercies come thus from God.

Ye shall be a delightful land; of delights, or desirable for its pleasantness; a land so good man would desire it; and when purged, it will be a land the Lord will delight in, and give it the name Hephzibah.

Saith the Lord of hosts; added as an assurance that it shall be according to this promise, forasmuch as he who is Lord of hosts hath engaged his word to do it, and his word will do it, can make all creatures co-operate for that purpose.

[Mal 3:13](#)

Your words; your discourses concerning my providences over you and others, your reasonings, censures, and verdicts passed on your own ways, and on the ways of your God.

Have been stout; proudly justifying yourselves as deserving better usage from God, or insolently arraigning God for his kindness to others, who in your judgment are worse than yourselves, by such words as those [Mal 2:17](#).

Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? you think you have spoken nothing so proudly and stoutly, and challenge me to tell you wherein, or with what words you have showed such insolence.

[Mal 3:14](#)

Ye; ye that are the children of forefathers who had this good land given to them, and ever made fruitful while they feared and obeyed their God; you that have been well rewarded for your obedience, or you priests who have tithes, sacrifices, offerings, and first-fruits given you for your services.

Have said; have thought first, and next have discoursed it; unthankful to your God, you have atheistlike maintained it in disputes, that *it is vain to serve God*; all is lost labour, no profit to God nor any to yourselves; therefore better sit still and do nothing, than to no purpose.

What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance? while what they have before their eyes is the fruit of God's goodness, and what they want is punishment of their not doing it better; whilst a very unsuitable observing the ordinances of God hath so much profit for you, dare you say there is no profit? *Sottish atheists!* who will not try what a more agreeable service would do.

And that we have walked mournfully: so the hypocrites and ungodly object against God, [Isa 58:3](#); yet their dissembled mournings, as Ahab's, had their reward, and infinitely better than they.

[Mal 3:15](#)

And now, or now therefore; on these false reasonings of these deceived ones, they proceed to further impiety and audacious blasphemy.

We call the proud happy; we (say they) see before our eyes, and must pronounce what we see, that the proud contemners of God and his law are the flourishing ones; they are at present happiest, and there appears no sign of any change of affairs to them. They do boldly and despitefully oppose God, and yet prosper. And could this be, say they, if there were a God of judgment to call men to account, and to deal with them according to their ways?

They that work wickedness are set up who contrive, and then work wickedness; who choose it, study it, and glory in it, as the whole of their life; are built up, are advanced to honours, and filled with riches, and have fair probability that all this will last to them and theirs. And could this be, say these priests and Jews, under the eye of a just and sovereign Judge? where is the God of judgment when such disorders are every where seen?

They that tempt God are even delivered; they that dare him to his very face, that do the highest affronts to God, purposely to prove whether he would or could punish the sinners amongst men. Those escape punishment though the law and prophets threaten them; and would you have us (say these men) believe there is such a God of judgment, when all is so disorderly carried in the world? Thus far the proud behaviour of these against God.

[Mal 3:16](#)

Then; when atheism and bold contempt of God was grown so high, and was so plainly and smartly reproved by the prophet.

They that feared the Lord; those that were truly religious, that knew God's judgments were a great deep, and that his ways were as high above our ways as heaven above the earth.

Spake often one to another; discoursed aright of God's mercy, justice, patience, holiness, and wisdom in his government and manage of the sells of men; established one another against the assaults of such proud, contemptuous disputers; encouraged each other to wait for God in the way of his judgments. Though it is not said what they spake, we have reason to believe it was as good of God and his proceedings as the discourse of the wicked was evil. The godly

spake things that did as much become the ways of God, as what the wicked spake did disparage the ways of an omniscient, holy, patient, and just God.

The Lord hearkened: after the manner of man, the Lord is represented as if he did listen to hear more distinctly, and as if he did incline his ear.

And heard it; clearly, perfectly, and fully understood and observed, and what the godly spake of him and for him.

A book of remembrance was written before him; a registry was made of the persons and their discourses. This is after the manner of men spoken of God, whose omniscience seeth, knoweth, and remembereth all; but this book is written before the Lord, he will have every good man, every good word of such, and every good thought such have for him, entered under his eye, that they may be assured of a comfortable reward for it.

For them, on their behalf, that feared the Lord: see above.

That thought upon his name, with love, esteem, and holy admiration.

[Mal 3:17](#)

They shall be mine; though now they seem to lie unregarded, as if they were not worth the owning, they shall appear to be mine.

In that day; the day wherein God will sever between men and men, and between actions and actions, which day, though ye know it not, is well known to the Lord; and beside the great day of final discrimination, God hath several other days of visitation, which are times where in he will own his, as the good figs, &c. [Jer 24:1-10](#). The day that God hath appointed, and will and did bring upon this people in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasianus.

When I make up my jewels, or peculiar treasure, that which I highly value and keep most safely; now they are packed up among things of no great value, but when the casket is opened these jewels shall be laid up among the richest treasures: as when they were all sent to Pella, not one Christian left in Jerusalem; and which shall be fully made good in the last great day of final judgment, and in heaven to eternal ages.

And I will spare them; in the mean time they shall be spared, pitied, preserved, and loved: now their weaknesses covered and pardoned, their good-will approved and accepted; then their worth owned, published, and rewarded.

As a man spareth his own son that serveth him; as a tender father doth with his son, his own son, that serveth him, so will God spare such as in an atheistical world do speak for God, do fear God, and highly value both his law and government, and so obey him.

[Mal 3:18](#)

Then, when that day of the Lord punishing the Jews by the Romans shall come, and he shall do thus for his jewels, shall ye, the blasphemous scoffers, proud contemnors of God and religion, return; return to your reason, enforced by the convincing power of God's judgments to come to yourselves, or to change your opinion of God and his government.

Discern between the righteous and the wicked; clearly see, with envy towards them, with horror and grief in yourselves, the unexpected escape and happiness of the righteous who served God and your misery that served him not, but were wicked, and perish now in your wickedness.

Chapter 4

God's judgment on the wicked, [Mal 4:1](#), and his blessing on the good, [Mal 4:2-3](#). He exhorteth to the study of the law, [Mal 4:4](#), and telleth of Elijah's coming and office, [Mal 4:5-6](#).

[Mal 4:1](#)

The words immediately foregoing (which, as we have the chapters divided, did end the third chapter) foretold a day to come then, though it is now long since past, in which such judgments should be executed upon the Jewish nation, as should make the stoutest contemners of God to see and acknowledge his different respects and providences toward the good and toward the evil. Now in this verse (which continueth the discourse) he accounteth how it should be.

Behold; mark well what now the Lord doth foretell *The day*, before mentioned, the day of visitation and discerning of men, cometh; though it be at some four hundred years' distance from you, yet it is coming, and will overtake you, and overwhelm you too about that time; nay, you shall have some tastes of bitter cups before, some less and shorter troubles, the presage and assurance of that dreadful day I now speak of, saith our prophet.

That shall burn as an oven: the refiner's fire, [Mal 3:2](#), is now represented to us as a fire burning more dreadfully, which really was more dreadful in the fulfilling than here it is in the prediction; when Jerusalem and the temple were on fire, and none could quench it; when the fire raged every where, but burnt most fiercely where the arched roofs did make it, as in ovens or furnaces, to double itself, and infold flames with flames, and with dreadful roarings increased its terrors. This day may well be an emblem of the day of judgment, and this place may be accommodated thereto, but it principally speaks of the times of vengeance on Jerusalem in its final desolation.

All the proud; such as are described [Mal 1:13](#); [3:13-15](#). All that do wickedly: this is another part of the character of these persons, and explicatory of the former passage; proud men, such as the text mentions, will be wicked workers.

Shall be stubble; dried and cast into the oven, consumed as soon as cast in.

The day that cometh; of which already, [Mal 3:17](#), and in this verse.

Shall burn them up; totally and speedily consume them.

Saith the Lord of hosts; added to confirm the certainty of the thing; the Lord of hosts hath said it shall be, and he can do what he saith he will.

It shall leave them neither root nor branch; in allusion to the utter extirpation of trees for the fire, whose branches lopped off, the body cleft, and the roots stocked up, and all cast into the

fire; so that nothing remains but the ashes, into which all is turned: and this was fully accomplished upon the irreligious Jews, when the Romans burnt their city and temple, and destroyed the people.

[Mal 4:2](#)

You that fear my name; so are they described to us who were written in the book of remembrance, [Mal 3:16](#); who loved the law of their God, and kept it; who believed his promises, and rejoiced in expectation of the good promised; who believed his threats and trembled at them, that they might rest in the day of trouble, as [Hab 3:16](#); who walked humbly with their God.

The Sun; Christ, who is the day spring from on high, [Lu 1:78](#); or, as most elegantly described [Isa 60:1-3](#), who is very fitly compared to the sun; Fountain of light and vital heat to his church, he enlightens and enlivens every one [Joh 1:4, 9](#).

Of righteousness; and of mercy and benignity, for the Hebrew word imports both, and neither may be here excluded. His justice is seen in executions of judgment on the proud and wicked, who are consumed in the fire of his wrath; and his righteousness and mercy are seen in the preservation and remuneration of those that fear the Lord: so greatly different shall this time be to the wicked and the godly; to these a day of benign light and kindly influences through the mercy of God, to the wicked a day of destruction. and utter extirpation.

Arise with healing in his wings; his beams and rays shall bring health and strength, with delight and joy, safety and security: it may be (as some have observed from the word) an intimation of the healing virtue that from Christ went forth to such as in faith touched the hem of his garment, [Mt 9:20-21](#), and is as effectual for the healing of soul maladies and infirmities as of bodily diseases.

Ye shall go forth; go out of harm's way, out of Jerusalem, before the fatal siege, obeying the call from heaven, *Go hence to Pella*, and that of Christ, [Mt 24:15-16](#).

And grow up, in strength, rigour, and spiritual stature, as calves of the stall; where they are safe guarded and well ordered. So will the Lord keep safe and look well to his preserved ones when the wicked are destroyed.

[Mal 4:3](#)

And ye: see [Mal 4:2](#).

Shall tread down the wicked: now the ungodly, proud, and atheistical despisers of God, providence, and future judgments. do tread down those that fear God and are godly, but it shall not be so always; that word, [Ps 58:10-11](#), and that, [Isa 66:24](#), and that, [Re 18:20](#), shall be fulfilled in the overthrow of the bad, and in the triumphs of the good. But, more particularly, this treading seems to be intended of those who, after the sacking and burning of Jerusalem, should return either to view the ruins. or to dwell there, and so should, in going lip and down. tread upon the wicked, either buried in the ruins or consumed to ashes.

For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet: by this it appears that these preserved ones did not barbarously tread upon the entire bodies of the wicked, but upon the ashes of

those bodies, by the fire consumed and turned into ashes, and mixed with the ashes of their houses and goods.

In the day that I shall do this; burn Jerusalem and the temple, with the citizens and priests whose carcasses were slain by the sword, or their persons, surprised with the flames, shall be burnt up. And so both this and much of the first verse may be literally understood, and was so fulfilled by Titus and his soldiers, A.D. 73.

[Mal 4:4](#)

Now take leave of all prophecy, for you shall have no more till the great Prophet, till Shiloh come; and attend ye diligently to the law of Moses, keep its precepts and directions.

The law; in the full extent: the moral precepts; rules of a holy and religious life for all. The ceremonial precepts; rules of your worship, so long as your temple shall stand a type of Christ to come. The judicial precepts; whilst you have any government, or power of judicatures. By a due keeping this you may escape future judgments and obtain future blessings, [Lev 26:1-46](#); [De 28:1-68](#): besides, by this attending to the law, they might be enabled to see the Messiah, and own him of whom Moses wrote in the law. Now though the law only be expressed, the prophets are included, who also wrote of Christ, [De 18:15](#); [Joh 5:46-47](#); [Ac 13:27](#). This was excellent advice to this people, who (had they taken it) had escaped the sins they ran into and the miseries they fell under; they had not crucified the Lord of glory, nor rejected their own mercy, nor pulled fiery judgments on their own heads, to their utter ruin.

Of Moses; whose memory you venerate, in whom you glory, whose law therefore you ought to obey. My servant; who was my servant, and delivered my commands to you. I do therefore expect that my authority, and Moses's esteem among you, prevail with you to study most carefully this law.

Which I commanded unto him in Horeb, with most majestic circumstances, to awe you to the observance of all its precepts; and which was an emblem of that terror and majesty wherein the Lawgiver would appear to judge, to give rewards, or adjudge to punishments.

For all Israel; so long as they should be a people and church.

With the statutes and judgments; be not partial; statutes and judgments, i.e. the whole law, must you attend to, and remember it as God requires, not turn aside from any of its precepts.

[Mal 4:5](#)

I will send; though the spirit of prophecy cease for four hundred years, yet at the expiring of those years you shall have one sent, as great as Elijah, and therefore he is now called Elijah, that shall prepare Messiah's way.

Elijah; not the same in person who reprov'd idolatrous Israel, who destroyed Baal, though both Jews and many Christians would gladly have it so, in favour of some errors they have adopted and would maintain. But this person here called Elijah was John Baptist, as is clear from [Mt 17:12](#); [13:1-58](#), *Elias is come*, and they have done to him whatsoever they listed. Then the disciples understood that he spake of John the Baptist. And he was that Elias, if they

would receive him, [Mt 11:14](#). Elias, was to come when Malachi lived; Elias was come, and the Jews had ill treated him, and Herod had beheaded him, when Christ here lived; this Elijah then was John the Baptist, who came *in the spirit and power of Elias*, [Lu 1:17](#), and therefore bears his name in this prophecy.

The prophet; who foretold Christ the true Messiah's sudden manifestation, who indeed was already among them, but had not yet discovered himself; on whom he persuades the Jews to believe, and receive his person and his law, [Lu 1:15-17](#); [Mr 1:7-8](#); who was greater than a prophet, [Mt 11:9](#); nor doth John's denying himself to be a prophet, [Joh 1:21](#), in their sense contradict this.

Before; that is, immediately before; so he was born six months before Christ, and began his preaching but few years before Christ began to exercise his public office.

Great: this day was great indeed, yet it is not the day of the last and great judgment, though the Jews perversely affirm it to evade the acknowledgment of Messiah's being already come. But this day of Messiah was great for the alterations he was to make in worship and church affairs, taking down the Mosaic ceremonies and enlarging the church; great for the miracles he wrought, and empowered others to do; great for the reconciliation between God and man, for the conquering of Satan, and casting him out of his throne. It was great too against the Jews his obstinate enemies.

Dreadful: it was a time of vengeance executed upon a people whose sins were full ripe; and such sufferings fell on the Jews at that time, as may very well be an emblem of the day of judgment, and which may be remotely meant hereby. But the first, the literal and plain, meaning of the words refer to the times of vengeance upon the Jews from either the birth, or first preaching, or death of Christ to the final desolation of the city and temple, and irrecoverable overthrow of their government, of which Christ speaks at large, [Mt 24:1-51](#); [Mr 13:1-37](#); which places point out first the sad and dismal miseries of the Jews, and next, by accommodation, the end of the world and last judgment. Such a description of this day, [Joe 2:31](#), by St. Peter interpreted and applied to this day of Christ, [Ac 2:20](#), more fully clears this. *The Lord*; Jesus Christ, preaching to the Jews, calling them to repentance, reproving their sins, encouraging their compliance, threatening their impenitence, and labouring to gather the children of Jerusalem together under his wings, but they would not, [Mt 23:34-39](#); and therefore at last destroying by the Romans these obstinate and incorrigible sinners.

[Mal 4:6](#)

And he; John the Baptist, who comes in the spirit and power of Elias.

Shall turn; it shall be his office and work to turn, as it is the office of every preacher. The success is of God, who also gives it as he pleaseth, and did give it to John's ministry; and so the words include the event of John's preaching, which did, as here it is foretold he should, convert many.

The heart of the fathers to the children: there were at this time many great and unnatural divisions and quarrels among the Jews, in which fathers studied mischief to their own children; they were divided and spitefully bent against them, in civil matters and on account of religion, and these turned their hearts from the dearest relations. Some by *fathers* and

children understand Jews and Gentiles, whose souls being converted to Christ, their hearts were turned one to another.

And the heart of the children to their fathers; undutiful children estranged by the same means and on the same accounts from their fathers, but now, by obeying the call to repentance, embracing the doctrine of the Messiah immediately to be revealed, and baptized into it, religious quarrels cease, and both parents' and children's hearts unite to Christ first, and then to each other, and all to God.

Lest I; God or Christ, who indeed first tenders the blessings of grace and peace, and gives them to such as accept; but this the Jews would not, the rulers, the priests, the body of the people, refused them: the next thing Christ (Lord and King, rejected and disowned) will do, is to curse and destroy.

Smite the earth, the land of Judea, and the inhabitants of it, *with a curse;* which brings with it and ends in utter destruction; as at this day we read in the story of the Romans invading, subduing, captivating the Jews, and razing their city and temple. That time is past now one thousand six hundred and forty-four years since a stone was not left upon a stone, as was foretold by Christ, [Mt 24:2](#), since those unparalleled hardships and miseries befell the Jews, which no heart almost can read and not bleed at reading, (though at this distance of time,) and the sufferers so deservedly endured such a curse as leaveth Jerusalem a desolate heap, and a perpetual monument of God's displeasure against a people that finally sin against his sovereignty and his mercy.