

Reading Mal 3:19-24 as Mal 4:1-6 (VUL): Jerome's Vulgate as Approach to a Textual Problem

Bernhard Klinger

Dr. theol., lecturer for Old Testament
at the Department for Catholic Theology at the University of Passau (Germany)

bernhard-klinger@web.de • bernhard.klinger@uni-passau.de  133569942

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1726-5163>

ABSTRACT • Some scholars separate between Mal 3:19-21 (MT) and Mal 3:22-24 (MT), whereas Jerome translates these verses and combines them so that the Vulgate version states the section Mal 3:19-24 (MT) to be a unit as Mal 4:1-6 (VUL). The aim of this short paper is to outline both the textual problems within these verses and their solutions; furthermore, this short paper especially wants to consider value and prospects of Jerome's Vulgate version.

KEYWORDS • Jerome, Malachi, Book of the Twelve Prophets, Dodecapropheton, Canon (Old Testament), Vulgate

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG • Innerhalb der exegetischen Literatur wird häufig getrennt zwischen Mal 3,19-21 (MT) und Mal 3,22-24 (MT), während Hieronymus diese Verse übersetzt und zusammenfasst, so dass die Vulgata-Version den Abschnitt Mal 3,19-24 (MT) als eine Einheit mit Mal 4,1-6 (VUL) bezeichnet. Ziel dieses Beitrages ist es, sowohl die textlichen Probleme innerhalb dieser Verse als auch deren Lösungen zu skizzieren; darüber hinaus will dieser Artikel insbesondere den Wert und die Perspektiven der Vulgata-Version des Hieronymus betrachten.

SCHLAGWORTE • Hieronymus, Maleachi, Zwölfprophetenbuch, Dodekapropheton, Kanon (alttestamentlich), Vulgata

Introduction – magic of the end

One can read a lot out of a text—that is the business of interpretation—but one cannot read the opposite of what the text says into it (Umberto Eco). The text itself, through the way it is designed and how it is embedded in contexts, sets certain strategies and standards that lead to a successful reading. The text makes demands on its readers, guides them and gives them freedom.¹ This statement by Thomas Hieke applies all the more to the final section of a text—and in this sense also to the end of a biblical book such as the Malachi Scriptures.

The end of the Malachi Scriptures, which will be examined more closely in this short paper, is an end in several senses: On the one hand, it is the end of the Malachi Scripture itself, then of the Book of the Twelve and also of the *corpus propheticum* as a whole.

The fact that the Malachi Scriptures conclude the Book of the Twelve Prophets is the case throughout the Jewish canon—with a single exception². That it also concludes the *corpus propheticum* is predominantly true. In its role as the finale, Mal 3:22-24 decidedly refers back to the Torah and to the preceding prophetic books.³

As far as the variants of arrangement in the Christian tradition are concerned, a relatively wide range of variants of arrangement of the books and book groups is revealed.⁴ It should also be borne in mind that

“the historical question of an arrangement of writings on a larger scale does not arise before the book-technical transition from the scroll to the codex. Only here, through the binding of writings one after the other, does emerge a possible order of reading and perhaps even a kind of practice of reading. Canon lists, some of which are older than the appearance of the bound codex, do indeed give an order of books and writings, but since they do not have the text of these writings, they cannot reflect a possible reading process.”⁵

In this respect, it is by no means self-evident that within the Christian tradition or the Christian canon, the Old Testament scriptures end with the Book of Malachi. For very often in Christian editions of the Bible the Dodecapropheton is found before the Major Prophets, for example in

¹ Cf. Hieke, Thomas, Jedem Ende wohnt ein Zauber inne ... Schlussverse jüdischer und christlicher Kanonausprägungen, in: Hieke, Thomas (ed.), Formen des Kanons. Studien zu Ausprägungen des biblischen Kanons von der Antike bis zum 19. Jahrhundert (SBS 228), Stuttgart 2013, 225-252; here: 226; German original: „Man kann viel aus einem Text herauslesen – das ist das Geschäft der Interpretation aber man kann nicht das Gegenteil von dem, was der Text sagt, in ihn hineinlesen (Umberto Eco). Der Text selbst setzt durch die Art, wie er gestaltet ist und wie er in Kontexte eingebettet ist, bestimmte Strategien und Standards, die zu einer erfolgreichen Lektüre führen. Der Text stellt Anforderungen an seine Leser, leitet sie und gibt ihnen Freiräume.“

² Cf. Hieke, Jedem Ende (2013) 229 FN 17: The only exception is 4Q76 (4QXIIa), for only there is Malachi in the penultimate position before Jonah concludes the corpus propheticum (cf. *ibidem*).

³ Cf. Chapman, Stephen, A Canonical Approach to Old Testament Theology? Deut 34:10-12 and Mal 3:22-24 as Programmatic Conclusions: HBT 25 (2003) 121-145; here: 140; Kessler, Rainer, Maleachi (HThKAT), Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2011 72-73.

⁴ Cf. Hieke, Jedem Ende (2013) 232.

⁵ Cf. Hieke, Jedem Ende (2013) 233.

the Codex Vaticanus.⁶ Or—which applies to the Vulgate—the Book of Malachi is followed by the two Books of Maccabees.

Thomas Hieke starts from today's Catholic canon and asks: "What is the magic of this «end», to what does this ending open one's eyes when the reading continues with the Gospel of Matthew?"⁷ I would like to take up his question and also ask about the "magic of the end"—but also taking into account the canon of the Vulgate.

Therefore, the following steps will be gone: At first there will be some considerations about the final verses of the Book of Malachi in general; as second step Mal 3:19-24 MT, Mal 4:1-6 LXX and Mal 4:1-6 VUL will be read and some textual differences will be identified. The last step will be to outline how Jerome is commenting and interpreting Mal 4:1-6 VUL.

First step: Some considerations about the final verses of the Book of Malachi

The Setuma in Mal 3:18 marks a break between two sections: one section ending with Mal 3:18, another section beginning with Mal 3:19. The question is how far this second section extends. To answer this question, we have to consider which textual version we use: There are differences between MT, LXX and VUL.

The most striking difference is that the chapter or verse count in the LXX and VUL runs parallel to the Masoretic text only up to Mal 3:18. LXX and VUL let the 3rd chapter end with v 18; then chapter 4 begins, which then only comprises 6 verses. Following the Masoretic text, Mal 3:21 MT ends with a Petucha, so that Mal 3:19-21 MT would form an own section followed by Mal 3:22-24 MT as the concluding section.

Whereas in the LXX and VUL after Mal 3:18 begins a new section and a new denotation of the verses: After Mal 3:18 LXX/VUL follows Mal 4:1 LXX/VUL.

⁶ The decision of the Council of Florence (DH 1335) also makes it clear that even if the corpus propheticum consists of the two areas of the Major and Minor Prophets and ends with Malachi, other books can still follow, e.g. the Books of Maccabees. In this respect, until well into the 20th century, the Catholic tradition existed that the Book of Malachi was in the penultimate place of the Old Testament and that the two Books of Maccabees then concluded the Old Testament, before the New Testament began with the Gospel of Matthew. It was not until *La Bible de Jérusalem* (1956) that the order was changed, so that there was now a transition from Malachi to Matthew.

⁷ Cf. Hieke, *Jedem Ende* (2013) 246. On the one hand, within today's Catholic canon, the gaze is directed back to the Torah, to the νόμος Μωυσῆ, which is then alluded to again in Mt 5,17-18 in the Sermon on the Mount. On the other hand, the view is directed forward in that the motif of the return of Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-8) is presented as being fulfilled with the appearance of John the Baptist (Mt 17:10-13 par.) or in connection with Ex 23:20 then as being fulfilled in connection with Mk 1:2 / Mt 11:10.

Furthermore, there is a change in the verse order in LXX only: The Greek translation of Mal 3:22 MT is placed as the very last verse at the end of the book of Malachi; so in the LXX Mal 3:22 MT becomes Mal 4,6 LXX:

How do contemporary commentaries⁸ divide these verses, heading towards the end of the Book of Malachi? And which subdivision does Jerome make for these final verses?⁹

Kessler	Meinhold	Hill Reventlow Schart	Snyman Willi-Plein	Smith	Jerome
Mal 3:13-21	Mal 3:13-21	Mal 3:13-21		Mal 3:13-21	Mal 3:13-15
Mal 3:13-15	Mal 3:13				
	Mal 3:14-15				
Mal 3:16	Mal 3:16-21				Mal 3:16
Mal 3:17-21					Mal 3:17-18
					Mal 4:1-3
Mal 3:22-24	Mal 3:22-24	Mal 3:22-24		Mal 3:22	Mal 4:4

However, it is also important to see: Although Jerome makes the commentary in the grouping or subdivision just mentioned, he actually always has the whole of the Book of Malachi in mind. For Jerome does not mention in any way why, wherefore or for what purpose he subdivides at this or that point. Not to mention a differentiation in the sense of words of disputation.

In what, therefore, does Jerome's approach differ from that of contemporary commentators? And is there an added value of Jerome's approach and how can this added value be described? Therefore, it is important to consider the differences that exist between Mal 3:19-24 MT, Mal 4:1-6 LXX and Mal 4:1-6 VUL.

The question of division and subdivision is not only an academic question, since it has an effect on the proclamation of Holy Scripture, too. This can be shown by a short contribution of Kurt Elliger, a Protestant exegete: He refers to the text intended to be read during the Protestant liturgy of the 2nd Sunday of Advent, Mal 3:1-3b.19f.23f. This pericope had been trimmed down in this form, where some parts and verses are missing. Therefore, Kurt Elliger expresses doubts whether the prophet is still convincing with the message he wants to proclaim on behalf of God

⁸ As contemporary commentaries the following ones were used: Hill, Andrew E., *Malachi* (AnchBib 25D), New Haven – London, 1998; Ina Willi-Plein, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi (ZBK 24,4), Zürich 2007; Kessler, Reiner, *Maleachi* (HThKAT), Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2011; Meinhold, Arndt, *Maleachi* (BK AT XIV/8), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2006; Reventlow, Henning Graf, *Die Propheten Haggai, Sacharja und Maleachi* (ATD 25,2), Göttingen 1993; Schart, Aaron, *Maleachi* (IEKAT), Stuttgart 2020; Smith, Ralph L., *Micah-Malachi* (Word Biblical Commentary 32) Waco 1984; Snyman, S.D. (Fanie), *Malachi* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament), Leuven 2015.

⁹ Cf. Jerome, comm. ad Malachiam 4,1-3, in: Jerome, *Obras completas: edición bilingüe promovida por la Orden de San Jerónimo. 3a: Comentarios a los profetas menores* (Biblioteca autores cristianos), Madrid 2000.

when the message is cut down so much.¹⁰ He asks about the reasons that might have led to these demarcations and pleads for the complete passage Mal 3:19-24 to be chosen as the liturgical text. For him, the question arises: "What are these reasons at all that have led to the delimitations one way or the other?"¹¹ For Kurt Elliger would have welcomed 3:19-24 in its entirety as an appropriate liturgical text. He cannot understand why the promise that Elijah will reunite the fathers and their children is included, but the first section with the exhortation not to forget the Torah of Moses is missing. Elliger understands even less that v 21 is missing, but it forms a unit with v 19 and concludes the disputation.¹²

Second step: Reading Mal 3:19-24 MT, Mal 4:1-6 LXX and Mal 4:1-6 VUL and identifying textual differences

Neither the contemporary exegetes nor Jerome suppress any of the Malachi verses in the sense of excluding them, but differences are evident in the way the subdivision is handled. These differences in content between Mal 3:19-24 (MT) and Mal 4:1-6 (LXX) have been clearly worked out by Ina Willi-Plein.¹³

In the following overview, which includes Mal 3:19-24 MT and Mal 4:1-6 LXX/VUL and corresponding English translations, the textual observations and difference are graphically highlighted.

¹⁰ Cf. Elliger, Maleachi und die kirchliche Tradition, in: Würthwein, Ernst / Kaiser, Otto (Hg.) 1963 – Tradition und Situation (Festschrift Artur Weiser zum 70. Geburtstag), Göttingen 1963, 43-48; hier: 43. Literally he writes: "[ob] der Prophet so »ringsum behackt«, wie der Perikopentext ihn reden läßt, noch sagen kann, was er will und in Gottes Auftrag doch auch soll."

¹¹ Elliger, Maleachi (1963) 44.

¹² Elliger, Maleachi (1963) 45. Literally he writes: "Warum ist der zweite Anhang, der die Wiederkehr des Elia verheißt, der Väter und Kinder wieder zueinander führen wird, aufgenommen, der erste dagegen nicht, der zum Halten des Gesetzes Moses mahnt? Noch fataler ist die Unterdrückung des V. 21, der den echten Schluss der gleichen Rede bildet, zu der V. 19 f. gehören."

¹³ Cf. Willi-Plein, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi (2007) 283f.

MT	English Standard Version	LXX	LXX-English (NETS)	VUL	VUL English
<p>18 וּשְׂבָתֵם וּרְאִיתֶם בֵּין צְדִיק לְרָשָׁע לֹא עֲבָדוֹ: בֵּין עַבְדְּ אֱלֹהִים לְאִשָּׁר</p>		<p>καὶ ἐπιστραφήσεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε ἀνὰ μέσον δικαίου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον ἀνόμου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ δουλεύοντος θεῷ καὶ τοῦ μὴ δουλεύοντος</p>		<p>et convertemini et videbitis quid sit inter iustum et impium et inter servientem Deo et non servientem ei</p>	
<p>19 כִּי־הִנֵּה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה בֹּעֵר כַּתְּנֹור וְהָיוּ כָּל־זָרִים וְכָל־עֹשֵׂה רָשָׁע קָשׁ וְלֹהֵט אֲתָם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת *אִשָּׁר לֹא־יֵעָזֵב לְהֵם שָׂרֵשׁ וְעַנְף:</p> <p>*3. m. sg. PK qal</p>	<p>For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. (Mal 4:1)</p>	<p>4:1 διότι ἰδοὺ ἡμέρα κυρίου ἔρχεται καιομένη ὡς κλίβανος καὶ φλέξει αὐτούς καὶ ἔσονται πάντες οἱ ἀλλογενεῖς καὶ πάντες οἱ ποιοῦντες ἄνομα καλάμη καὶ ἀνάψει αὐτούς ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ ἐρχομένη λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ καὶ οὐ μὴ ὑπολειφθῆ [3. sg. Konj. Aorist Pass.] ἐξ αὐτῶν ῥίζα οὐδὲ κλῆμα</p>	<p>For behold, a day is coming, burning like an oven, and it will set them ablaze, and all the aliens and all those who do lawless things will be stubble, and the day that comes shall kindle them, says the Lord Almighty, and there shall be left of them neither root nor branch.</p>	<p>4:1 ecce enim dies veniet succensa quasi caminus et erunt omnes superbi et omnes facientes impietatem stipula et inflammabit eos dies veniens dicit Dominus exercituum quae non relinquet eis radicem et germen</p>	<p>For, behold, the day will arrive, kindled like a furnace, and all the arrogant and all those who act impiously will be stubble. And the approaching day will inflame them, says the Lord of hosts; it will leave behind for them neither root, nor sprout.</p>
<p>20 וְזָרְחָה לְכֶם יְרֵאִי שֶׁמֶי שֶׁמֶשׁ צְדָקָה וּמְרַפָּא בְּכַנְפֵיהָ וַיֵּצְאתֶם וּפְשַׁתֶּם כְּעֹגְלֵי מְרֻבָּק:</p>	<p>But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.</p>	<p>4:2 καὶ ἀνατελεῖ ὑμῖν τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά μου ἥλιος δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἰάσις ἐν ταῖς πτέρυξιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξελεύσεσθε καὶ σκιρτήσετε ὡς μοσχάρια ἐκ δεσμῶν ἀνειμένα</p>	<p>And for you who fear my name a sun of justice shall rise, and healing is in its wings. And you shall go out and leap like calves let loose from tethers.</p>	<p>2 et orietur vobis timentibus nomen meum sol iustitiae et sanitas in pinnis eius et egrediemini et salietis sicut vituli de armento</p>	<p>But unto you, who fear my name, the Sun of justice will arise, and health will be in his wings. And you will go forth and leap like the calves of the herd.</p>
<p>21 וְעִסְוֹתֵם רְשָׁעִים כִּי־יִהְיוּ אֶפְרַח תַּחַת כַּפּוֹת רַגְלֵיכֶם בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: פ</p>	<p>And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.</p>	<p>4:3 καὶ καταπατήσετε ἀνόμους διότι ἔσονται σποδὸς ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἣ ἐγὼ ποιῶ λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ</p>	<p>And you shall tread down the lawless, for they will be ashes under your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord Almighty.</p>	<p>3 et calcabitis impios cum fuerint cinis sub planta pedum vestrorum in die qua ego facio dicit Dominus exercituum.</p>	<p>And you will trample the impious, while they will be ashes under the sole of your foot, on the day that I act, says the Lord of hosts.</p>

<p>22 זָכְרוּ תוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עֲבַדֵי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּחֹרֵב עַל-כָּל- יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקָּיִים וּמִשְׁפָּטֵימ:</p>	<p>Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.</p>			<p>⁴ mementote legis Mosi servi mei quam mandavi ei in Choreb ad omnem Israhel praecepta et iudicia</p>	<p>Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him on Horeb for all Israel, the precepts and the judgments.</p>
<p>23 הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ לְכֶם אֶת אֵלֵיָהּ הַנִּבִּיאַ לְפָנָי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא:</p>	<p>Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome <u>day of the LORD</u> comes.</p>	<p>4⁴ καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω ὑμῖν Ἡλιαν τὸν Θεσβίτην πρὶν ἔλθεῖν ἡμέραν κυρίου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ</p>	<p>And behold I am sending to you Elias the Thesbite before the great and notable <u>day of the Lord</u> comes,</p>	<p>⁵ ecce ego mittam vobis Heliam prophetam antequam veniat <u>dies Domini</u> magnus et horribilis</p>	<p>Behold, I will send to you Elijah the prophet, before the arrival of the great and terrible <u>day of the Lord</u>.</p>
<p>24 וְהָשִׁיב לְבָ-אָבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים וְלֵב בָּנִים עַל-אָבוֹתָם פֶּן-אָבֹא וְהִפִּיתִי אֶת-הָאָרֶץ תָּרֵם:</p>	<p>And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a <u>decree of utter destruction</u>.</p>	<p>4⁵ ὃς ἀποκαταστήσει καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱὸν καὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ μὴ ἔλθω καὶ πατάξω τὴν γῆν ἄρδην</p>	<p>who will restore the heart of the father to the son and the heart of a person to his neighbor so that I will not come and utterly strike the land</p>	<p>⁶ et convertet cor patrum ad filios et cor filiorum ad patres eorum ne forte veniam et percutiam terram <u>anathemate</u></p>	<p>And he will turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with <u>anathema</u>.</p>
		<p>4⁶ μνήσθητε νόμου Μωυση τοῦ δούλου μου καθότι ἐνετείλάμην αὐτῷ ἐν Χωρηβ πρὸς πάντα τὸν Ἰσραηλ προστάγματα καὶ δικαιώματα</p>	<p>Remember the law of Moyses my slave, as I commanded him at Choreb with ordinances and statutes for all Israel.</p>		

The individual textual observations and differences will now be named very briefly one by one:

MT	LXX	VUL
3:19 וְלַהֲטוֹת אֵת הַיּוֹם הַבָּא	4:1 ἀνάψει αὐτούς ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ ἐρχομένη	4:1 et inflammabit eos dies veniens
[...] The day that is coming shall <u>set</u> them <u>ablaze</u> [...]	[...] the day that comes shall <u>kindle</u> them [...]	[...] And the approaching day <u>will inflame</u> them [...]

The “coming day” has different effects in the Masoretic text and in LXX or VUL: While the Hebrew text already speaks of burning (וְלַהֲטוֹת —the New English Standard Version seems to use LXX), LXX and VUL use an expression that the burning process is just beginning (ἀνάπτειν / *inflammare*). This gives the “coming day” in MT a thoroughly destructive character, whereas in the case of kindling or ignition there is still a chance of saving something from the flames.

MT	LXX	VUL
3:19 וְלַהֲטוֹת אֵת הַיּוֹם הַבָּא	4:1 ἀνάψει αὐτούς ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ ἐρχομένη	4:1 et inflammabit eos dies veniens
[...] The day that is coming shall <u>set</u> them <u>ablaze</u> [...]	[...] the day that comes shall <u>kindle</u> them [...]	[...] And the approaching day <u>will inflame</u> them [...]

The reaction to the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, which is thematised in Mal 3:20 MT / 4:2 LXX / VUL, is visible in apparently very different calves: In the Hebrew text they are calves of the flock, from the stall, whereas in the LXX the calves are freed from their ropes; in the VUL they are even more generally calves from a herd.

3:19 אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִעָזַב לָהֶם שָׂרֵשׁ וְעֵנָף	4:1 καὶ οὐ μὴ ὑπολειφθῆ ἕξ αὐτῶν ῥίζα οὐδὲ κλήμα	4:1 quae non relinquet eis radicem et germen
The day that is coming [...] will leave them neither root nor branch.	[...] and there shall be left of them neither root nor branch.	And the approaching day will [...] leave behind for them neither root, nor sprout.

The root עָזַב in Mal 3:19 MT, which has the active root *qal*, is translated by LXX as being passive or *nifal*. The consequence is that in Mal 4:1 LXX the root and the branch—being objects in MT—become the subjects of the clause. The VUL, on the other hand, follows the MT much more closely.

3:19 וְהָיוּ כָל־דֹּיִם וְכָל־עֹשֵׂי רָשָׁעַ	4:1 καὶ ἔσονται πάντες οἱ ἀλλογενεῖς καὶ πάντες οἱ ποιοῦντες ἄνομα LXX las hier ד'ר'י statt ד'י'י	4:1 et erunt omnes superbi
all the arrogant and all evildoers	and all the aliens and all those who do lawless things	and all the arrogant and all those who act impiously

The fact that the LXX reads ד'ר'י and uses οἱ ἀλλογενεῖς instead of ד'י'י opens the horizon beyond Israel: The coming day will also affect people outside Israel, so that all non-Israelites will be excluded from the described end-time event,¹⁴ in which the sun of righteousness will rise.

3:24 לְבָבֹת עַל־בְּנֵי וְלֵב בְּנֵי עַל־בָּבוֹתָם	4:5 καρδίαν πατρός πρὸς υἱὸν καὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ	4:5 cor patrum ad filios et cor filiorum ad patres eorum
[...] the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers [...]	[...] who will restore the heart of the father to the son and the heart of a person to his neighbor [...]	[...] the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers [...]
synonymous parallelism	synthetic parallelism	synonymous parallelism

In all three versions the motif of the turning of the heart presupposes a separation: In MT and VUL, this separation is implicitly described as existing within Israel, thus describing a generational conflict between fathers and children. In LXX, the separation is implicitly described as existing both inside Israel and outside it; thus, LXX not only describes a generational conflict, but with “the neighbour” can also be meant a conflict between members of the same generation. Thus, there is a greater, broader potential for conflict.

The literary construction supports this assumption: the synonymous parallelism of MT and VUL indicates that the reconciliation is preceded by a separation within a family or people, while the synthetic parallelism of LXX logically extends or continues the separation or reconciliation—with the aim that the reconciliation goes beyond Israel.

These observations on the text largely serve to answer diachronic questions in the contemporary commentaries. Therefore Ina Willi-Plein argues for Mal 3:22 MT being the older conclusion of Malachi Scriptures, which were then expanded by Mal 3:23f MT. Willi-Plein thinks, that both the Hebrew version in Mal 3:19 MT and the Greek version in Mal 4:1 LXX are rooted in the same spiritual-historical context: After an “over-alienation” has come to an end, the way to the

¹⁴ Cf. Willi-Plein, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi (2007) 284.

eschatological turning point, at which the remembering of the Mose-Tora will be realized, will be paved.¹⁵

On this basis Ina Willi-Plein opens up the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as books that reflect the history of post-exilic prophecy from the historical hour of the new beginning with the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple in the early years of the reign of Darius to the end of scriptural prophecy in the time of Hellenism.¹⁶

Thereby the Malachi Scriptures offer a glimpse into the Persian province of Jehud or Judah: They are presented "as a political sub-area of the multicultural Persian world empire and as the living space of the people whose spiritual and probably also cultural center is the Temple in Jerusalem."¹⁷

The most obvious difference between the final verses according to MT and LXX is the fact that in the course of translation of Mal 3:22 MT into Greek this verse was placed at the very end of the book of Malachi and it became Mal 4:6 LXX. Comprehensibly there are repeated attempts to explain this change in terms of content.¹⁸ In MT and VUL the last word is אָרָם or the ablative singular of *anathema*, which means 'curse' or also 'ban'.¹⁹

The content of Mal 3:22 is the decisive moment: According to MT v. 22 follows on from the last great unit of Mal 3:13-21 and is characterised by Deuteronomistic language; the threat of thought continues until v. 24: Mal 3:24 MT ends with the threat of a ban: With this not only Malachi's writing but the entire *corpus propheticum* comes to a gloomy end, although according to Zech 14:11 there will be no more ban. The ban mentioned in Mal 3:24 will only be averted by the return of Elijah.

What might be the reason that LXX changes the verses' order and places Mal 3:22 as Mal 4:6 and the end of the whole Book of Malachi? Rainer Kessler and Arndt Meinhold assume that the LXX rearranged the verses to avoid the keyword "ban" as the last word of the *corpus propheticum* or the canon in general.²⁰ But so that the Book of Malachi or the *dodecapropheton* would not remain occupied with such a negative closing word, the LXX would have placed verse 22 at the end. The

¹⁵ Cf. Willi-Plein, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi (2007) 287.

¹⁶ Cf. Willi-Plein, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi (2007) 289. Originally she writes: "die Geschichte der nachexilische Prophezie von der historischen Stunde des Neuanfangs mit dem Wiederaufbau des Jerusalemer Tempels in den Anfangsjahren der Herrschaft des Darius bis zum Ende der Schriftprophezie in der Zeit des Hellenismus."

¹⁷ Cf. Willi-Plein, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi (2007) 291. Originally she understands these prophetic scriptures "als politischer Teilbereich des multikulturellen persischen Weltreiches und als Lebensraum der Menschen, deren geistiges und wohl auch kulturelles Zentrum der Tempel in Jerusalem ist."

¹⁸ The LXX places Mal 3:22 MT at the end of the entire scripture; in contrast, fragments of the Qumran scriptures, the Vulgate, the Peshitta and the Targum have the same order as the MT. In addition, as shown, the MT and LXX differ textually.

¹⁹ For אָרָם vgl.: Lohfink, Norbert, Art. אָרָם I, in: ThWAT III 192-213; Brekelmans, Chris, Art. אָרָם, in: THAT I 635-639.

²⁰ Cf. Kessler, Maleachi 302.

LXX ends instead with the reminiscence of the Torah of Moses, the νόμος Μωυσή and with the double expression “commandments and statutes”, προστάγματα καὶ δικαιώματα.

The rearrangement of the verses, as well as the other textual observations (textual differences), also suggest that vv. 22-24 should be seen as a secondary appendix: Both the author, who knows and uses these texts, and the implicit readers, whose knowledge of the text can be assumed, implicitly presuppose Torah as well as Prophecy for the whole Malachi’s scriptures; whereas the appendix makes explicit reference to Torah and prophecy as textual corpora. A form of intertextuality whose reference texts belong to a collective cultural knowledge is extended to an intertextuality whose reference texts are made explicit.²¹

<p>²⁴ וְהִשִּׁיב לְבָבֹתָי עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִשִּׁיב עַל־בָּבוֹתָם פֶּן־יִאָּמְרוּ אֵין־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: אֲתֵּי־הִיאֲרָה־נֶרְדָּ:</p>	<p>⁴⁵ ὃς ἀποκαταστήσει καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱὸν καὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ μὴ ἔλθω καὶ πατάξω τὴν γῆν ἄρδην</p>	<p>⁶ et convertet cor patrum ad filios et cor filiorum ad patres eorum ne forte veniam et percutiam terram anathemata</p>
	<p>⁴⁶ μνήσθητε νόμου Μωυσή τοῦ δούλου μου καθότι ἐνετειλάμην αὐτῷ ἐν Χωρηβ πρὸς πάντα τὸν Ἰσραὴλ προστάγματα καὶ δικαιώματα</p>	

In this respect, the LXX accentuates the *Torah of Moses* in its theological meaning and in its canonical contexts. The term *Torah of Moses* occurs a total of 14 times in the OT: Jos 8:31, 32; 23:6; 1Kings 2:3; 2Kings 14:6; 23:5; Dan 9:11, 13; Es 3:2; 7:6; Neh 8:1; 10:30; 2Chr 23:18; 30:16. These literary contexts are all post-exilic, since the *Torah of Moses* is always used as a fixed literary quantity. The only exception is 2Kings 23:25.

For the Book of Malachi, however, this does not mean a completely new insight, but it is rather a confirmation of the already probable assumption that the prophecy of “Malachi” is addressed to priestly circles in Jerusalem that are Levitically determined.²² Furthermore the Malachian prophecy represents a kind of Levitical prophecy and that the book ends with the admonition to remember—not read!—the preservation of the “Torah of Moses”.²³

The contemporary commentaries, then, if one attempts a summary, try to explain the differing final verses in terms of their origin or editorial history. The only attempt at a theological explanation is actually that the word for “ban” should not be at the end of the Book of Malachi or the *corpus propheticum*.

²¹ Cf. Kessler, Maleachi 303. Kessler originally writes: “Eine Form von Intertextualität, deren Bezugstexte einem kollektiven kulturellen Wissen angehören, wird zu einer Intertextualität ausgeweitet, deren Bezugstexte expliziert werden.” (ibidem).

²² Cf. Willi-Plein (2013) 285.

²³ Cf. Willi-Plein (2013) 285.

Third step: How does Jerome comment and interpret Mal 4:1-6 VUL?

Jerome comments on the text of Mal 4:1-6 VUL or Mal 3:19-24 MT in his usual manner. This means: First Jerome presents his Latin translation both of the Hebrew and of the Greek text—and then he let follow his commentary.

In addition, the following observations can be made:

- Even in his own time Jerome had not addressed a single one of the observations made by contemporary commentators. Not even the significant shift of Mal 3:22 MT to the end as Mal 4:6 LXX.
- Jerome was not yet familiar with a form-critical analysis of the text, in which he could, for example, emphasize certain turns of phrase and which precisely led to the division of the entire book into *disputational words* as it is common sense throughout contemporary biblical exegesis.
- In his commentary, Jerome obviously emphasizes the eschatological character and bases his thoughts primarily on the figures of Moses and Elijah as well as on the concept of the Law. This makes his interpretation a theological culmination, which is ultimately canonically based and from which I would like to highlight some elements: The final verses of the Book of Malachi are intertextually interwoven with Mal 2:17-3:5 and Mal 3:13-21. This opens up a significant horizon towards eschatology in several respects: statements about the Day of YHWH and about the messenger are taken up and continued. Thus, the Day of YHWH has two moments: the moment of reconciliation and the moment of divorce or separation. In these two moments, "a basic problem of Jewish-Christian eschatology emerges: the irrevocable tension between the idea of a final judgement that restores justice and the idea of a finite all-reconciliation that corresponds to God's love."²⁴ In this respect, the final verses of the Book of Malachi contain both the idea of judgment and the hope of reconciliation. Jerome refers to the dies several times in his commentary and connects the dies with the word family *veniere* or with the expression of the future: *et ipsa dies erit succensa*. And: *dies iudicii, quae sanctis lux erit, et peccatoribus tenebrae*. Through Elijah the moment of reconciliation is approaching: *antequam veniat dies iudicii*. Before the moment of judgement, the multitude of prophets will bring reconciliation: *omnem prophetarum chorum, qui convertat cor patrum ad filios [...] sive cor patris ad filium*.²⁵ Rainer Kessler notes: "It is the [horizon, author's note] of prophecy as a whole, although it must remain open whether literary thought was already given to a common canon of prophets in front and behind." Finally, a third horizon opens up with the Torah of Moses, so that Rainer Kessler draws the following

²⁴ Kessler, Maleachi 313.

²⁵ Jerome, comm. ad Malachiam 4,1-3; 5-6.

overall conclusion: "Thus this passage and with it the Malachi conclusion in its present form presupposes the canon of Torah and prophecy. For him, "the turning to the Torah is the concrete practice of the prophet's expectation"²⁶.

- Regarding Jerome's canonical claim, which for him is a matter of course, let us quote Brevard Childs, who writes decidedly:

"However, in my opinion, in spite of some impressive gains, the application of historical-critical methodology has resulted in serious weaknesses in the handling of the biblical literature. First of all, the legacy of the literary-critical method in distinguishing between 'genuine' and 'non-genuine' oracles has continued to interject a pejorative category into the discussion. Secondly, the form-critical analysis has increasingly atomized the literature and continued to rest much of its analysis upon fragile and often highly speculative theories of original settings. Thirdly, the redactional and sociological methods have tended to politicize the biblical material and render it into a type of political propaganda. As a result, little success has been achieved in interpreting the prophetic books as Scripture of the church which accords to the Bible an authoritative role in the formation of the Christian life."²⁷

- It seems as if Jerome—even if he does not explicitly formulate it this way—rather aims at an eschatological character, which results from the concentration on the keyword »day«. This would possibly also explain why Jerome follows the LXX and does start a new chapter not only because of the setuma after Mal 3:18, but also because of the motif of the mentioned "day". For the statements about "the day that is coming" which is connected with YHWH – these statements condense with Mal 3:19-23 MT and Mal 4:1-5 LXX/VUL respectively. The subject in Mal 3:24 / 4:6 LXX/VUL could be both the noun *Di'* as well as the prophet Elijah; in the former case the passage that condenses on the »day« in question would be even a little larger.

Mal 3:2	וְקִי קִכְלְכָל אֶת-יְוֹם בּוֹאֹוֹ	It is about the coming of the day of YHWH's messenger.
Mal 3:17	לְיְוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶגִּי עֲשֶׂה	It is about <u>the day made by YHWH</u> .
Mal 3:19 Mal 4:1 LXX/VUL	הַיְוֹם הַזֶּה and הַיְוֹם הַבָּא	It is about <u>the coming day</u> .
Mal 3:21 Mal 4:3 LXX/VUL	בְּיְוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶגִּי עֲשֶׂה	It is about <u>the day made by YHWH</u> .
Mal 3:23 Mal 4:5 LXX/VUL	בּוֹא יְוֹם הַהוֹרָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא:	It is about the coming of the great and terrible day of YHWH.

It seems that in commenting on Mal 4:1-6 VUL, Jerome was ultimately already imitating what Umberto Eco had expressed in the 20th century in the text quoted at the beginning: Jerome read

²⁶ Kessler, Maleachi 314.

²⁷ Childs, Canonical Shape (1978) 47.

out of Mal 4:1-6 VUL elements that he saw embedded in the larger context of Holy Scripture and for which he saw corresponding scope.

Jerome's commentary on Mal 4:1-3 VUL is primarily aimed at »the coming day«, »the day of the Lord«, the Day of Judgement: Just as a man spares his son, so God will spare men according to what is written in the "Book of Remembrance". In his commentary Jerome writes about the *liber monumenti* (Mal 4:1-3), which was written for those who fear the Lord and think about his name: *et scriptus est liber monumenti his qui tement dominum, et cogitant nomen eius.*²⁸ According to Jerome the Day of Judgement will lead to light for the saints and to darkness for sinners: *ecce dies ueniet, id est dies iudicii, quae sanctis lux erit, et peccatoribus tenebrae; et ipsa dies erit succensa quasi caminus, siue clibanus, ut omnes impii uertantur in stipulam et camini crementur ardoribus.*²⁹ Insofar Jerome remains attached to the image of fire, kindling and burning: the wicked will turn into straws and as such will be burnt in the furnace of fire.

On the other hand, the godly come out of this Day of Judgement like calves that were shut in: The Day of Judgement becomes a "going into freedom", whereby Jerome refers decisively to Phil 1:23 ("I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better."). Ultimately, this day will lead to a reversal of circumstances.

Jerome completely ignores the differences between MT and LXX. In commenting on Mal 4:4 VUL, Jerome writes to the LXX text: "LXX similiter". This is interesting because the LXX places this verse at the very end of Malachi. Jerome does not mention this in any way! In this respect, the textual history and thus also the theological considerations that led to the change in the LXX are left out. But Jerome's commentary opens up a perspective beyond biblical contemporary history and textual genesis, which for its part is in the foreground of contemporary commentaries, by focusing on theological statements in terms of content and concentrating on the Day of Judgement. However, and this is something Jerome ultimately also fails to do, one wishes that he would set out even more clearly how he understands the Day of Judgement. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to consider Jerome's commentary in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the magic inherent in the end of the Malachi Scripture itself, of the Book of the Twelve and also of the *corpus propheticum* as a whole and of the Old Testament canon.

²⁸ Jerome, comm. ad Malachiam 4,1-3.

²⁹ Jerome, comm. ad Malachiam 4,1-3.