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### CULT AND PRIESTS IN MALACHI 1:6–2:9

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Within the Book of the Twelve, the writing of Malachi contains the longest unit dealing with cultic matters and the priests: Mal 1:6–2:9. Malachi represents the last writing of the Twelve and as such a reader expects at this place of the composition of the whole book the final and decisive word on a topic that has been dealt with several times by different prophets before. The end of a composition is a fitting place, where an author can emphasize or clarify things, before the author comes to an end and must leave it to the decision of the reader to draw the intended conclusions. Judging on the basis of the importance of the topic of the cult, and the priests specifically, in the eleven writings before, it is not surprising that especially the priests and the way in which they perform their duties seem to be so important that already the second disputation speech deals with this topic extensively. The reader gets the impression that the behavior of the priests, who are addressed explicitly (Mal 1:6; 2:1), is crucial for the question whether God's love and honor is revered adequately in Israel. This paper tries to explore the redaction history that led to the final text.

#### 1. FORM-CRITICAL ANALYSIS

A sound foundation from which to start the form-critical analysis is the consensus that the writing of Malachi comprises six disputation speeches that share the same structure: a speaker who represents the divine voice refutes arguments of a specific group against God. In order to convince the opponents that their arguments are not only invalid but represent an attack on God's faithful character, the speaker formulates a logical basis which is undisputed between the parties.

In the second step the author quotes the opinion of the opponents. The quotation, however, does not give an accurate representation of what the opponents have actually said, but rather formulates what the speaker perceives as the intention of what the opponents actually do. In the third step the prophet tries to refute the arguments of the opponents. A prominent feature of this part consists of rhetorical questions that appeal to the ability of the audience to recognize and appreciate good arguments.<sup>1</sup>

The second disputation speech (Mal 1:6–2:9) is the lengthiest and most complicated one. It basically follows the structure of the *Gattung* but also displays some significant deviations. One has to distinguish between three speech acts which at the same time make use of different genres: the first one is a disputation speech (Mal 1:6–14), the second, starting with the phrase *ועתה אליכם*, is a threat (2:1–4a, 9), and a third part is embedded in this threat: a historical retrospective (2:4b–8) that starts with the phrase *להיות*, “in order that there will be.”

## 2. SOURCE-CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Many of the studies that deal with the priests in Malachi take this passage to be a coherent unit written by one author.<sup>2</sup> However, there are many tensions, some of which can best be interpreted as a result of redactional activity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of the *Gattung* “disputation speech,” see Aaron Schart, “Disputationswort,” *Das Wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet* (www.wiblex.de), 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* (SBLDS 98; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 42–80; Julia M. O'Brien: *Priest and Levite in Malachi* (SBLDS 121; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 81–82, and Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage: Post-exilic Prophetic Critique of the Priesthood* (FAT 2/19; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 18. Joachim L. Schaper, “The Priests in the Book of Malachi and their Opponents,” in *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Alice O. Bellis; JSOTS 408; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 177–88 (179), admits that the text is a redactional unit, but discusses only the final text, not its earlier layers.

<sup>3</sup> Arndt Meinhold, *Dodekapropheten 8: Maleachi* (BKAT 14.8; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2006), 77, so far presents the most radical source-critical theory. According to him, the oldest layer only comprises Mal 1:6–8a; 2:1, 9a, which was expanded by a very complicated redactional process.

## 2.1. THE FORMULA אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

I would like to start with the formula אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, “the Lord of Hosts has said,” which is attested eleven times within the passage Mal 1:6–2:9.<sup>4</sup> The formula often appears to be overly emphatic, superfluous, or disruptive to the flow of the poetic line and its rhythm.

Especially telling is the case of Mal 1:13 where the formula is completely displaced and even inserted into the midst of a verbatim quotation of the opponents! In this case it is obvious that the formula was inserted at the wrong place secondarily, but in many other cases the formula was probably inserted by a redactor or a scribe.<sup>5</sup> Only in Mal 1:6ba the formula is essential for the context and cannot be deleted, because the speaker’s voice is identified with that of YHWH and the opposition between YHWH and the addressees is introduced, which is fundamental for the whole passage.

Scholars who wish to find a consistent pattern as to how this formula purposefully separates God’s own words from those of the prophet finally must surrender. Rather, the formula seems to stress the fact that every word of the speech is exactly identical with the word of God.<sup>6</sup>

Why this formula was considered by someone or by several scribes as being so significant that it was spread across the writing in an irregular and arbitrary way is difficult to assess.<sup>7</sup> My assessment is that the opponents, against whom the disputation speeches are directed, did not give up their view. Rather, they questioned whether the author of the speeches was inspired by God. Those scribes who transmitted the writing of Malachi, in turn, insisted on their position and gave it greater authority by adding the formulas. Likewise, I would surmise that the opponents not only held their opinions, thereby insisting that they were fully in line with God’s will, but also felt that the prophet did not represent their intentions in an accurate way. Many modern scholars would agree, because it is highly unlikely that the priests, for example, would deliberately and explicitly despise the name of YHWH (Mal 1:7, 12). In order to counter the resistance on the side of the opponents, the redactors who collected and published the disputation speeches added these formulas in order to underline that the prophet repre-

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<sup>4</sup> The formula is attested in Mal 1:6ba, 8b, 9b, 10b, 11b, 13aa, 13b (without אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת which is a scribal error), 14b; 2:2aa, 4b, 8b.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Karl Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton* (KHC 13; Tübingen: Mohr, 1904), 463.

<sup>6</sup> Rainer Kessler, *Maleachi* (HTHKAT; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2011), 131–32.

<sup>7</sup> Helmut Utzschneider, *Künder oder Schreiber Eine These zum Problem der “Schriftprophetie” auf Grund von Maleachi 1,6–2,9* (BEATAJ 19; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1989), 38.

sented the thoughts of the opponents in a way that truly reflects God's perspective.

## 2.2. MALACHI 1:6–7

Jakob Wöhrle has developed source-critical analysis of the second speech significantly.<sup>8</sup> Especially relevant is his idea that the basic layer in Mal 1 was not directed against the priests but against some group of lay people instead.<sup>9</sup> This hypothesis can satisfactorily explain why we have in the passage which is explicitly directed against the priests (Mal 1:6; 2:1) several statements that are clearly aimed at lay people. That this is the case was universally acknowledged, but was not seen as a significant tension. The explanation usually was that the priests are responsible even for the misconduct of the lay people. This explanation certainly has some appeal, as it is indeed the task of the priests to control the temple cult: especially, they had the last word when it came to decide whether an animal could be sacrificed. If they made the wrong decision, the lay people who depended on the cultic system were misled and unintentionally offered sacrifices, which were not acceptable from the perspective of God. However, it would not have been appropriate for the prophet to attack the innocent lay people. Therefore, it was more satisfying to find a solution in which the lay-

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<sup>8</sup> Jakob Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuches: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 222–33. Kessler, *Maleachi*, 234, has criticized Wöhrle's hypothesis, because his criteria for reconstructing an older layer were unwarranted. Kessler's critique, however, is much too radical and therefore not helpful. Kessler's ideas that an ancient author could arbitrarily shape a text against all standards of the *Gattung* better match postmodern literature than the world of old Israelite scribes. His example of the letter of Mesad Hashavyahu (TUAT I, 249–50), where the author begins with speaking of himself in the third person and then changes unnecessarily to first person speech and back to third person, is not a convincing example against source criticism. First of all, one has to differentiate between an archival text and a literary text, as both follow different standards. Secondly, it is very probable that the text stems from two authors: the primary author is the worker, who appeared before the scribe, who actually wrote the letter, and who described his matter of concern orally, presumably in a state of anger. Then the professional scribe created the text according to the standards of the *Gattung* and used the oral report of the worker as a source for his text. In this way the tensions in the final text can easily be explained as a result of redactional activity. In the end, one has to evaluate every argument of Wöhrle's hypothesis and appraise its merits.

<sup>9</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 225.

people were accused of what they did and the priests were accused of those things for which they were truly responsible.

Wöhrle has reconstructed a basic layer that is exclusively interested in the lay people and does not mention the priests. This layer comprises the following verses: Mal 1:6 (without הַכֹּהֲנִים), 7b, 8a, 9b, 10b, 11b, 12\*(without הוּא), 13–14.<sup>10</sup> This layer was reworked by a redactor who added the following verses: Mal 1:6\*(הַכֹּהֲנִים), 7a, 10a, 12\*(הוּא); 2:1–9.<sup>11</sup> This redactor redirected the speech towards the priests (in Mal 1:6 the word הַכֹּהֲנִים was inserted into the older material; in Mal 2:1 it was used in a passage formulated by the redactor him- or herself).

Wöhrle's source-critical analysis of Mal 1:6–7 is convincing, but needs to be further refined. The earlier layer which was aimed at a certain group of lay people will be referred to as, for the sake of convenience, the "lay people-layer." This layer can be distinguished from the second layer which will be referred to as the "priests-layer" because of its use of the vocative "priests" and by its distinct terminology:

- The lay people-layer uses the word שֻׁלְחָן, "table" (Mal 1:7b), the other layer the term מִזְבֵּחַ, "altar" (Mal 1:7a), to denote the place where the offerings are brought to God. The term שֻׁלְחָן, "table" is primarily used to refer to the place where food offerings are laid down, whereas מִזְבֵּחַ, "altar," refers to the place for animal sacrifice.
- The lay people-layer accuses the opponents of despising (root בָּזָה, Mal 1:6b) YHWH's name (שֵׁם, Mal 1:6b), whereas the priests-layer accuses the opponents of defiling the "bread" (לֶחֶם) or, even more dramatically, God directly (root גָּאֵל, Mal 1:7a).<sup>12</sup>
- Turning to the offerings, the lay people-layer speaks of people who bring מִנְחָה, "an offering," to God (Mal 1:10b, 13), the offerings are also called לֶחֶם, "food," in Mal 1:12b. This terminology is used to refer to food offerings.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the priests-layer presupposes animal sacrifice and is con-

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 259. According to him, Mal 1:8b, 9a, 11a are even later insertions.

<sup>12</sup> In Mal 1:7a it is disputed whether the statement that God is defiled directly is original or an error by a later scribe. I would follow those who retain the 2m.sg. suffix גָּאֵלְנִי as the *lectio difficilior*, e.g., Wilhelm Rudolph, *Haggai, Sacharja 1–8, Sacharja 9–14, Maleachi* (KAT 13.4; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1976), 257, against Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 223, n. 16.

<sup>13</sup> The term מִנְחָה "offering" never unambiguously refers to animal sacrifices; as a technical term it solely refers to food offerings. Likewise, it is only in Lev 22:25 and in Num 28:2, both verses belonging to very late additions to the Pentateuch, where it is

cerned with the quality of the animals (Mal 1:8: no blind, crippled or diseased animal should be sacrificed to YHWH).<sup>14</sup>

### 2.3. MALACHI 1:8

The status of Mal 1:8 is complicated. Malachi 1:8a and 8b are clearly two separate units. The use of the verb נגש and the root זבח in Mal 1:8a pick up terminology from Mal 1:7a. In addition, Mal 1:8a smoothly connects to Mal 1:7a and represents a fitting answer to the question of the opponents, who wanted to know how they specifically defiled YHWH. As a consequence, Mal 1:8a should belong to the priests-layer.<sup>15</sup>

Malachi 1:8b suddenly brings in a new theme. The opponents are asked ironically whether the Persian governor would accept the offerings which they bring to YHWH. One is supposed to conclude that the governor would of course not be pleased, and even more so YHWH.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the first word of the verse presents several problems: (1) the root that denotes the bringing of the offerings changes from נגש to קרב, (2) the priests are now addressed in the singular (it is possible that the speaker singles out a specific opponent and asks him), and (3) the suffix הו is singular but should be in the plural if referring to the sacrifices mentioned in the sentences before. These are difficulties that allow one to suspect that Mal 1:8b is secondarily inserted. On the other hand, this break may also be explained by the vivid style of this disputation speech.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, both halves of Mal 1:8 should belong to the priests-layer.

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unambiguously clear that לחם “food” refers to animal sacrifices. In the other cases, which Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 224, enumerates, it is ambiguous at best whether לחם refers to animals.

<sup>14</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 224.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 226, tries to argue that Mal 1:8 is directed against lay people. However, Schaper, “Priests,” 181, has shown that the usage of the verb נגש in this context denotes the priestly service. In addition, the final decision, whether an animal is allowed to be sacrificed, belongs to the priests. As a consequence, they are responsible if blemished animals are sacrificed.

<sup>16</sup> Kessler, *Maleachi*, 144.

<sup>17</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 231, is convinced that Mal 1:8b is “sicherlich sekundär” (certainly secondary), however Kessler, *Maleachi*, 142–43, has good arguments to explain why the tensions are completely in line with the context.

## 2.4. MALACHI 1:9A

Malachi 1:9a is rather isolated within its context. It is neither the regular office of the priests to appease (root חלה) God's face nor is it the goal of the sacrifices to achieve this.<sup>18</sup> The request represents an interjection in which the speaker unites himself with the people around him ("mercy on us," first person plural). In addition, God is referred to as אֱל, not as YHWH.<sup>19</sup> The vocabulary alludes to the famous *Gnadenformel*, as attested for example in Exod 34:6.<sup>20</sup> Within the flow of the argument, it would be most fitting if the sentence had an ironical meaning, because the speaker knows in advance that the priests will not be able to heed this imperative.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.5. MALACHI 1:9B–10

Malachi 1:9b, without the superfluous formula אמר יהוה צבאות, seems to belong to the lay-people layer. It uses the expression מידכם, "from your hands" (Mal 1:9b, 10b, 13), which, as Wöhrle has rightly observed, in the context of sacrifice refers to the hands of lay people.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, Mal 1:10a seems again to be an interjection without cohesion within its context comparable to Mal 1:9a. Since it uses the word מזבה, it should belong to the priests-layer.

Malachi 1:10b, without the displaced formula אמר יהוה צבאות, belongs to the basic layer, because it uses the word מנחה and refers to the hands of the opponents. The declaration whether a sacrifice pleases YHWH (root רצה in Mal 1:10b, 13) is the genuine task of the priest, yet the addressees of the declaration are the lay-people who brought the sacrifice to YHWH.

## 2.6. MALACHI 1:11

Again, all of a sudden, the general statement in Mal 1:11 interrupts the series of sentences in direct address and a new topic is introduced: the cult of the nations. In addition, the framing sentence גדול שמי בגוים, "great is my name among the nations," singles out this verse. Also, the acceptance of non-Israelite cultic offer-

<sup>18</sup> Kessler, *Maleachi*, 146.

<sup>19</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 231.

<sup>20</sup> Kessler, *Maleachi*, 146, and Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 120.

<sup>21</sup> The vast majority of commentators see irony at work here. Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 231, and Kessler, *Maleachi*, 146, deny an ironical meaning.

<sup>22</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 227.

ings that were celebrated at distant, presumably unclean places does not integrate smoothly with the mindset of the other disputation speeches.<sup>23</sup> As the verse Mal 1:11 belongs to neither the lay people-layer nor the priests-layer, one has to postulate a third layer. Because of the importance of the nations, it may be designated as “nations-layer.”

## 2.7. MALACHI 1:12–13

Malachi 1:12a is closely tied to Mal 1:11b because *אוֹתוֹ* refers back to YHWH’s name in Mal 1:11. At the same time, the sentence serves as a transition to the following statement in Mal 1:12b. Mal 1:12b represents an unmotivated repetition of Mal 1:7b. It seems reasonable to conclude that the whole verse Mal 1:12 was inserted by the same redactor who inserted Mal 1:11 in order to build a smooth transition to Mal 1:13.<sup>24</sup>

Further, in Mal 1:12 the words *מִגָּאֵל הוּא* are secondary.<sup>25</sup> The same is true for the phrase *וְאֵת־הַפֶּסֶחַ וְאֵת־הַחֹלֶה* in Mal 1:13.<sup>26</sup> Both additions disturb the syntax of the sentences and were likely inserted by the redactor of the priests-layer in order to adjust the meaning of the older layer to that of the priests-layer. In Mal 1:12, the redactor picks up the word *מִגָּאֵל* from Mal 1:7a $\alpha$  and thereby makes clear that the accusation of the older layer, namely to despise (root *בָּזָה*) YHWH’s name, and that of the priests-layer, namely to offer defiled sacrifices on the altar, are two sides of the same coin. Likewise, the phrase *וְאֵת־הַפֶּסֶחַ וְאֵת־הַחֹלֶה* repeats words from Mal 1:8a $\beta$  in order to explain to the reader what the metaphorically used *גִּזּוּל* should mean: namely, nothing more than what was stated in Mal 1:8a. Thus the redactor wants the reader to identify the “robbed things” with the blemished animals. The simplest hypothesis would be to attribute these later additions to the same redactor who added the priests-layer.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 232.

<sup>24</sup> Curt Kuhl, “Die ‘Wiederaufnahme’—ein literarkritisches Prinzip?” *ZAW* 64 (1952): 1–11 (2), has found that redactors, who insert a text passage into a given text, sometimes repeat words, phrases or sentences at the end of their interpolations that stem from the place, where they started to insert their own interpolation, in order to resume the flow of the original text (“Wiederaufnahme”).

<sup>25</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 231. The word *וַיִּבְרוּ* probably is a scribal error and should be deleted.

<sup>26</sup> The sentence is clearly overloaded, but which words came in later? Most commentators consider *גִּזּוּל* to be secondary (e.g., Meinhold, *Malachi*, 70), but it is much easier to explain why someone inserted the citation from Mal 1:8a $\beta$  than the word *גִּזּוּל*.

<sup>27</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 230.



As Wöhrle has shown, there are significant hints that Mal 1:13 was originally directed against lay people: the word תִּלְאָה, “burden” (Mal 1:13a), much more likely refers to the difficult economic situation of the lay-people than to something from which specifically the priests have to suffer.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, the accusation that the addressees bring “robbed things” to the altar (גִּזּוּל, Mal 1:13) most naturally refers to lay people, because priests would have difficulties to detect this moral fault by examining the animal for possible blemishes.<sup>29</sup>

## 2.8. MALACHI 1:14

The verse Mal 1:14 comprises two propositions, which are difficult to relate to one another. The first half (Mal 1:14a) lays a curse on a person who is cheating YHWH by withholding a good male animal, which was promised with a vow, and offering a bad animal instead. The curse brings in a new *Gattung* into the context that creates a tension. Yet, the tension may not be significant enough to postulate a source-critical break. Since the curse is clearly aimed at lay people it should belong to the lay-people layer, although clear terminological overlap cannot be shown.<sup>30</sup>

With Mal 1:14b the topic of the nations resumes. In addition, the sentence “my name is revered among the nations” is found twice in almost identical form within Mal 1:11. As a consequence, it is highly probable that Mal 1:14b belongs to the same redactor who inserted Mal 1:11b–12a.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.9. MALACHI 2:1–8

According to Wöhrle, all of Mal 2:1–9 belongs to the second so-called priests-layer.<sup>32</sup> However, within Mal 2:1–9 verses 4b–8 clearly stand out as a retrospective historical passage.<sup>33</sup> The phrase לְהִיּוֹת that connects this passage with the

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 229. Rudolph, *Haggai*, 264, admits this difficulty, and concludes that גִּזּוּל must refer to animals “die von wilden Tieren angefallen und verletzt worden sind.” Cf. also Pamela J. Scalise, “Malachi,” in *Minor Prophets II* (John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise; NIBCOT 18; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers; Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009), 317–69 (335) (“torn by predators”). However, this inference is unwarranted. See Utzschneider, *Künder*, 27, and Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 229.

<sup>31</sup> As in other cases, the formula אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת was inserted later.

<sup>32</sup> Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 232.

<sup>33</sup> Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 85–86.

preceding context is used awkwardly. Normally it introduces the goal of the action, but in this case it introduces a retrospective perspective. In addition, the verses bring in a new concept, namely “the covenant with Levi” (Mal 2:4), also termed “the covenant with the Levite” (Mal 2:8b), even though the flow of the argument would require a covenant with the “priests” instead. It is clear that the final text identifies the priests and “the Levite,” but the terminological difference is better explained, if the passage stems from a different hand. Together with “Levi,” a new task comes into play: the teaching of torah. How this task is related to the offerings, which are in the focus of Mal 1:6–14, is left unexplained. Finally, the passage is framed by two almost identical lines (Mal 2:4b//8b).

The verse Mal 2:7 seems to be secondary within its context. The verse represents a tricolon within a series of bicola. Also, the verse interrupts the series of tempus *qatal* verbs which look back in the past, and makes a general statement instead (tempus *yiqtol* two times, followed by a nominal sentence). Especially verse 8 is designed as a sharp contrast to verse 6, which is softened by Mal 2:7. In addition, Mal 2:7 speaks of YHWH in the third person in the midst of a speech by YHWH. Finally, the ideal office of “a priest” (the singular form in Mal 2:7 stands in contrast to the plural used in the rest of the text) is described as providing דעת, “knowledge,” and תורה, “torah,” an unmotivated doublet to Mal 2:6a.<sup>34</sup>

The interpolation wants, on the one hand, to make clear that the task of the Levite to interpret and apply the torah (Mal 2:6a) belongs to the priest. On the other hand, the competence of the priest exceeds that of the Levite, because the priest is the “messenger of YHWH” which is a unique title for a priest.

## 2.10. MALACHI 2:9

Malachi 2:9 comprises two elements that need to be treated separately. In the first half, it is envisioned how YHWH will respond to those who despise YHWH’s name. Ironically, YHWH will despise those people just as they despised YHWH, (the root בזה is picked up from Mal 1:6b, 7b, 12b).<sup>35</sup> This would be a fitting end to the whole section. As a consequence, the second half (Mal 2:9b), which unexpectedly returns to the speech act of accusation, appears superfluous; however, it follows yet another accusation. This time, the terminology, the phonology, the grammatical structure, and the metaphors are reminiscent of Mal 2:8a (דרך,

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<sup>34</sup> Rolland Emerson Wolfe, “The Editing of the Book of the Twelve: A Study of Secondary Material in the Minor Prophets” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1933), 235; Marti, *Dodekapropheton*, 467–68. and Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 86–87.

<sup>35</sup> Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 75.

(בתורה), and the phrase פנים נשא is used in Mal 1:8b, 9b.<sup>36</sup> Whereas the first half seamlessly fits into the basic lay people-layer, the intention of the second half transcends the cultic realm and reminds the reader that the whole torah, not only the cultic laws, needs to be fulfilled.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, it may stem from an even later hand than the one responsible for the priests-layer.

## 2.11. SUMMARY

Although the source-critical analysis is difficult, because the indicators for source-critical breaks are not always strong and some may be better explained by oral development or as stylistic variations, the combined evidence makes it plausible that there was a layer directed against lay people. To this basic layer a second layer was added which expanded the basic layer in such a way that the resulting speech strives to convince the priests, despite their opinion to the contrary, that they neglected their duties. This second layer may therefore be called the “priests-layer.” A third layer contrasts the present activities of the priests, which offend YHWH’s name and honor, with the ideal phase in history when God made a covenant with Levi and when Levi acted faithfully according to this covenant. A fourth layer with a significant profile included the statements which deal with YHWH’s relation to the nations. Later, some isolated interpolations were inserted, which do not readily fit with any of these four layers. Summing up, the following hypothesis seems probable:

- the lay people-layer: Mal 1:6\*, 7b, 9b, 10b, 13\*, (14a); 2:9a
- the priests-layer: Mal 1:6 (only הכהנים “priests”), 7a, 8, 10a; 2:1–4a
- the Levi-layer: Mal 2:4b–6, 8
- the nations-layer: Mal 1:11, 12\*, 14b
- further interpolations: Mal 1:9a; 2:7, 9b.

Each layer contains its own view on the cult of the criticized people.

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<sup>36</sup> The word פנים in Mal 1:9b does not fit well into its context. On the one hand, the sense of the sentence “they lift up a face with the help of the torah” is difficult to determine. If it does mean “to show partiality” here (cf. 2 Chr 19:7; Deut 16:19), it would bring in a completely new aspect, which is unlikely at the closing of the section (Marti, *Dodekapropheton*, 468). Therefore, a simpler solution may be to assume a scribal error, e.g., one could restore פנים to פני, “my (= YHWH’s) face,” and let אינכם govern the second half, thus yielding a sense like “you do not care about me, when you apply the torah” (Marti, *Dodekapropheton*, 468).

<sup>37</sup> Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 75.

### 3. THE CRITIQUE OF THE LAY PEOPLE-LAYER: BRINGING “ROBBED THINGS” TO YHWH

The basic layer represents a vivid disputation speech, which seems to be coherent, at least in a broad sense.<sup>38</sup>

ועבד אדניו	בן יכבד אב	1:6a
איה כבודי	ואס־אב אני	6ba1
איה מוראי	ואס־אדונים אני	6ba2
לכם [...] בוזי שמי	אמר יהוה צבאות	6ba3
במה בוינו את־שמך	ואמרתם	6bβ
שלחן יהוה נבזה הוא	באמרכם	7b
הישא מכם פנים [...]	מידכם היתה זאת	9b
ומנחה לא־ארצה מידכם	אי־לי חפץ בכם [...]	10b
והפחתם { אותי } [...]	ואמרתם הנה מתלאה	13aα
והבאתם את־המנחה	והבאתם גזול [...]	13aβ
	הארצה אותה מידכם [...]	13b
וגדר וזבח משחת לאדני	וארור נוכל ויש בעדרו זכר	(14a)
ושפלים לכל־העם	וגס־אני נתתי אתכם נבזים	2:9a

The speech is aimed at a specific group who is addressed directly by the speaker of the disputation speech. The main fault of this group seems to be that it brings מנחה, “food offerings,” to the table of the Lord in a way which the prophet perceives as despising YHWH’s name. This, of course, is a grave insult against

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<sup>38</sup> The status of Mal 1:14a was already discussed. The transition from one line to the other is not always smooth. For example, it is difficult to ascertain to what זאת in Mal 1:9b specifically refers, but this is difficult on the basis of the final text, too. In Mal 1:13aβ a scribal error needs to be corrected (אותי instead of אותו).

God's person. The personal, inner-family relation to the father is the model against which the cultic service is measured. And, as a consequence, the prophet announces in the name of God that the offerings of this group will not be accepted by YHWH. The decisive point seems to be that the opponents offer גזול, "robbed things," to God (v.13). The underlying accusation that the opponents are robbers probably is meant metaphorically: as in Mic 2:2, the accused persons commit no crimes against formal law, but use legal stipulations in order to violate the intention of these. They increase their own riches by taking advantage of the weakness of their neighbours, who lose the material basis of their life.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4. THE PRIESTS-LAYER: ACCEPTING BLEMISHED ANIMALS

The priests-layer changes the opponents of the disputation speech: the כהנים, "priests," are brought in as the officials, who are primarily responsible for the cult. The decisive accusation seems to be that they accept animals for sacrifice that are not acceptable for this purpose. As Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer has phrased it: "the prophetic criticism in Mal 1:8, 13aβ–14a targets anew the priests' negligence, this time accusing them of insufficient care for God's cult to ensure that the sacrificial animals fitted the prescribed regulations."<sup>40</sup> The final judgment, whether the quality of an animal matches the obligatory rules, was indeed the genuine task of the priests. As a consequence, the priests are rightly being held responsible.

A reason why blemished animals should be excluded is not given. One has the impression that the speaker does not need to give a reason, because this norm is a stipulation included in the torah and therefore needs no further explanation or motivation. And indeed, two passages are usually identified to which the prophet seems to allude: Deut 15:19–23 and Lev 22:17–25.<sup>41</sup> Because Lev 22:22 enumerates more criteria than Deut 15, it is quite obvious that it presupposes Deut 15 and expands its shorter list. Malachi 1:8 also expands the list with the word חלה, "weak, ill." In addition, as Malachi does need a stipulation upon which to build its argument, it must at least presuppose Deut 15.<sup>42</sup> Since Lev

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Rainer Kessler, *Sozialgeschichte des alten Israel: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), 114–26.

<sup>40</sup> Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites*, 214.

<sup>41</sup> For example Scalise, "Malachi," 332; Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic Authority, Form Problems, and the Use of Traditions in the Book of Malachi* (BZAW 288; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 131.

<sup>42</sup> As Utzschneider, *Künder*, 49, points out, Mal 1:8 could also rely on a textual variant of Deut 15:21, be it an oral or written version.

22:22 and Mal 1:8a have nothing in common, besides what is also found in Deut 15:21, both probably drew independently from Deut 15:21.<sup>43</sup> In any case, the priests-layer threatens the priests by announcing that God will curse their blessings and will throw the excrement of the slaughtered animals in their faces, thereby making them unclean for any office in the sanctuary (Mal 2:2–3a).

#### 5. THE LEVI-LAYER: FAILING TO TEACH TORAH

The Levi-layer brings a different function of the priests into the foreground: their office of teaching the torah. The word תורה can be understood in a very narrow sense, as if the torah only consists of making decisions in cultic matters, for example, whether an animal can be accepted or whether a sacrifice pleases God. This narrow sense is suggested because the accusations in the context concentrate on cultic matters.<sup>44</sup> However, reading Mal 2:4b–6, 8 isolated from its context, a wider understanding of torah that includes moral norms becomes more appropriate.<sup>45</sup>

The Levi-layer appeals to an ideal state of the priesthood in the foundational time of Israel, including a covenant with Levi. Although we do not know for sure to what the phrase “covenant with Levi” refers, it nevertheless can be inferred that teaching of torah also includes remembering God’s glorious acts in the past. The descendants of Levi fail to be faithful to their history with God.

#### 6. THE NATIONS-LAYER: GOD’S NAME IS REVERED ALL OVER THE WORLD

Through the addition of Mal 1:11–12, 14, the topic of “the nations” enters the discourse. The cultic critique that was directed against the priests in Jerusalem is contrasted by the redactor with the ideal model of the cult of the nations. Their cultic acts serve as a norm against which Israel’s conduct is measured. The questions of where exactly, what precisely, when actually, and especially who “among the nations” can bring offerings to YHWH, are left open.<sup>46</sup> But it is clear that the people among the nations who bring offerings do so, without coming to the temple in Jerusalem and without any guidance or teaching of *torah* by the

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<sup>43</sup> Weyde, *Prophecy*, 133, proposes that Mal 1:8 drew on Deut 15:21 and also on Lev 22:22.

<sup>44</sup> Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 153.

<sup>45</sup> Henning Graf Reventlow, *Die Propheten Haggai, Sacharja, und Maleachi* (ATD / Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk 25.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 144.

<sup>46</sup> Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 128.

priests there.<sup>47</sup> It seems to be enough that they acknowledge YHWH as “mighty king,” which presumably implies more than only bringing offerings.<sup>48</sup> Offerings would not be pure and acceptable if the nations would not live up to the norms of God’s reign.

## 7. THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The source-critical analysis is important for the reconstruction of the groups that stand behind the text. It is no longer necessary to find a coherent view on the priests that includes every line. One has to imagine that different groups rewrote the text in different times. Because they held different views on the cult and the priests, the final text is not coherent in these matters.

Since the lay people-layer does not even mention priests, the redactor of this layer presumably saw no need to attack them explicitly. From the perspective of the author, the priests probably had their share of responsibility, but those who were really responsible were the lay people.

The priests-layer redirected the critique against the priests. In this layer the priests are those who are responsible for misconduct in cultic matters. This could mean that in the meantime the situation had shifted and the priests indeed played a much more active role in promoting cultic life that was considered to be wrong by the author of the layer. Alternatively, the shift in emphasis could be explained by the assumption that this author, in contrast to the author of the lay people-layer, applied new norms and held different views on how the cult should work.

The priests-layer mentions only priests and no Levites. This could imply that the author of this layer did not know of Levites at the temple. This is unlikely, however, because Levites were already active at the temple in preexilic times and continued to be part of the temple cult in postexilic times. It seems to be more probable that the Levites do not appear in the text because the author of this layer concentrated the critique on the animal sacrifices of which the Levites were not in charge. Likewise, the blessing of Israel with the text from Num 6:24–27, to which this layer alludes, is also an exclusive task of the priests.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Utzschneider, *Künder*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> Ina Willi-Plein, *Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi* (ZBK 24.4; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2007), 243.

<sup>49</sup> Especially Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), has shown how many concepts from the priestly blessing are used in Mal 1:6–2:9, mostly in an ironical mode. The priests fail to achieve the goal of their office: to bless Israel, and will therefore be cursed.

The next layer, the Levi-layer, brought in “Levi” and the “Levite.” In addition, a new task is mentioned, namely to teach torah (Mal 2:6). Although the *terminus technicus* “Levites” is not used in the text, it is reasonable to assume that the reader identified the descendants of Levi with the Levites who served as a *clerus minor* at the temple. Although it is not stated explicitly that the Levites belong to a lower level of the hierarchy of the temple staff, nothing in the text contradicts such an understanding. In any case, the redactor who inserted the Levi-passage (Mal 2:4b–6, 8) into the priests-layer must have held the opinion that the priests belong to the descendants of Levi, otherwise the insertion would make no sense within the flow of the argument. The same is true for the redactor who inserted Mal 2:7, who uses the term כהן within a context that deals with the covenant with Levi and declares that the “priest”—like the Levite—has the function to teach torah.

The nations-layer again does not mention any priests. It is only implicit that the priests in Jerusalem should respect and accept the offerings of people from other nations and should, by implication, try to integrate god-fearers from all over the world into the cultic service in Jerusalem.

Whoever inserted Mal 1:9a presupposed that it was the priest’s task to appease YHWH, if the people have sinned against YHWH in the first place. Interestingly, the verse does not mention explicitly the expiation that can be done with sacrifices according to the Priestly source nor the feast of Yom Kippur. Instead, like Moses at Sinai (Exod 32:11), the priests must talk to God directly in order to urge him to be merciful.

## 8. THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

### 8.1. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

How and when the writing of Malachi became a part, presumably the last part, of a corpus that comprised several prophetic writings is difficult to tell. One has to evaluate different sets of arguments.<sup>50</sup>

The first set of arguments concerns the form of the involved writings. If different writings display significant similarities beyond those that are characteristic of the shared *Gattung*, these similarities could derive from an author intend-

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<sup>50</sup> For methodological thoughts on how it can be determined that a writing belongs in the context of a larger corpus, see Aaron Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriftenübergreifender Redaktionsprozesse* (BZAW 260; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 133–40.



ing to include them within one collection. Verbal, together with grammatical and syntactical, repetitions are common indicators in this respect.

The second set of arguments concerns the content of the involved writings. If one writing cannot be understood by the reader without him/her having read a different writing beforehand, it is likely that this writing was included in a corpus and was positioned before the other.

The third set of arguments concerns redactional activities across the involved writings. A famous example is the stitching technique that some words or phrases, or even sentences, from the end of one piece of writing were inserted deliberately at the beginning of the following one.<sup>51</sup> To this set also belong compositional strategies to build structures that stretch over different writings. A famous example are the superscriptions of the D-corpus (Hos 1:1; Amos 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1) that construe a chain of prophets, in which Hosea was for a certain period accompanied by Amos and later by Micah.<sup>52</sup>

## 8.2. THE LAY PEOPLE-LAYER

If one examines the earliest written source, the lay people-layer, it is obvious that it alludes to different passages within the Book of the Twelve. One example is the use of the root גל, “to rip off, rob” (Mal 1:13aβ), which alludes to Mic 2:1–2. The use of the root גל, “to rip off, rob,” is telling for the reader of the Book of the Twelve. This root was used by Micah to describe the sins of the people of Jerusalem:

<sup>1</sup>Woe to those who devise wickedness ...

<sup>2</sup>They covet fields and seize them (root גל), // and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, // a man and his inheritance. (Mic 2:1–2)

The same root is used in Mic 3:2:

<sup>1</sup>Hear, you heads of Jacob // and rulers of the house of Israel!

Is it not for you to know justice?

<sup>2</sup>you who hate the good and love the evil,  
who tear the skin from off my people (root גל)  
and their flesh from off their bones. (Mic 3:1–2)

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<sup>51</sup> James Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 217; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 21–57, has studied this technique extensively.

<sup>52</sup> Schart, *Entstehung*, 39–46.

The transgressions that Micah brought to light resulted in the prediction that the first temple on Mount Zion would be destroyed (Mic 3:12). The reader of the Book of the Twelve can thus conclude that, when the crimes resume, the second temple will be in danger of being destroyed again. The rebuilding of the temple seems not to have changed the relation of the people to God fundamentally.

Another example is the statement *לֹא־אֲרִצֶה מִנַּחָה* in Mal 1:10b, which alludes to Amos 5:22. Amos rejected the cult of his contemporaries using priestly terminology ironically. Again, it is a very sad experience of the reader of the Book of the Twelve that a significant group of the people—even after having heard cultic critique by several prophets, after the exile, and even after God granted a new temple—still does not communicate with God in an adequate way. At the end of the chain of prophets, this experience comes as a climactic insight: there will always be people who do use the name of God and perform rites on God’s behalf but do not revere God rightly or show due respect.

Allusions like this suggest that the author of the lay people-layer wanted to display continuity to famous passages of his great forerunners, but they are not sufficient to postulate that this layer already was part of a multi-prophets corpus.

### 8.3. THE PRIESTS-LAYER

The priests-layer includes some more significant indicators. Ruth Scoralick has collected some observations which may suggest that the critique of priests in Hosea (Hos 4) and that in Mal 1:6–2:9 form a frame around the Book of the Twelve.<sup>53</sup> These observations are:

- Hos 4 follows chapters 1–3, which deal with the love of God. Likewise, the first disputation speech deals with the love of God to Israel.
- The passage Hos 1:2–9 culminates in the removal of YHWH’s name “I am not ‘I will be’ for you!” (Hos 1:9). Likewise, YHWH’s name is of central importance for Mal 1:6–2:9. Because YHWH’s name is despised, the cult is not effective and the blessing of the people is interrupted.

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<sup>53</sup> Ruth Scoralick, “Priester als ‘Boten’ Gottes (Mal 2,7)? Zum Priester- und Prophetenbild des Zwölfprophetenbuches,” in *Die unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie. Festschrift für Arndt Meinhold*. (ed. Rüdiger Lux and Ernst-Joachim Waschke; ABGe 23; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 415–30, 427–28.

- The priests are responsible for the knowledge of God in Hos 4:1, 6 and in Mal 2:7. The combination of the terms דעת and תורה is only attested in Hos 4:6 and Mal 2:7 within the Twelve.<sup>54</sup>
- Of less importance is that the offspring of the priests is included in the punishment of the priests (Mal 2:3, however, the text is uncertain) and that the root כשל (Hos 4:5; Mal 2:8) and the word עון (Hos 4:8; Mal 2:6) are used in both passages.

These observations are of different weight. With the exception of Mal 2:7, they are not specific enough to conclude securely that a compositional frame was intended from the outset. They are certainly meaningful for the reader if it can be established on other grounds (e.g., the sequence on one scroll) that Hos 4 and Mal 1:6–2:9 form such a frame. Malachi 2:7, however, makes perfect sense if a redactor wanted to refer back to the first passage within the Twelve, where priests had been criticized. By doing so, the redactor may have sought to demonstrate that YHWH, even after the long history of apostasy, had not neglected the initial covenant with the priests. Malachi 2:7, however, represents a later interpolation. As a result, it cannot be postulated that the priests-layer was part of a multi prophets-corpus.

#### 8.4. THE LEVI-LAYER

The Levi-layer displays no signs that allow us to conclude that it is part of a larger composition. The root כשל, “stumble” (Mal 2:8a), may allude to Hos 4:5 where it is proclaimed that an unnamed priest and a prophet will “stumble.” However, in Malachi the *Hiphil* is used and a deliberate framing is not detectable. More interesting is the “covenant of Levi” (Mal 2:4b, 8b). The concept of a covenant with God can be found within the Twelve prominently in Hosea (Hos 2:20; 6:7; 8:1) and one time in Zechariah (Zech 11:10). Although it is remarkable that the concept of a covenant with God is with one exception attested only in Hosea and Malachi, i.e. what constitutes a frame around the Book of the Twelve, the differences within this concept are so significant that one cannot postulate a multi prophets-corpus on this basis.

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<sup>54</sup> Meinhold, *Malachi*, 159.

## 8.5. THE NATIONS-LAYER

The nations-layer, however, shows several indicators that suggest that this layer conceived Malachi as part of a multi prophets-corpus.

The first argument is that the nations-layer cannot be understood adequately without Jonah. If the reader had not read Jonah before, Mal 1:11 is unintelligible. Nowhere else in the Old Testament is it stated as a given fact that foreign nations, who do not even know the name of YHWH, bring food offerings to the God of Israel from the distant places where they live. That the portrayal of the nations as faithful admirers of YHWH is indeed in effect and is not only a hope for the end of history is demonstrated by the sailors in the Jonah-narrative (Jonah 1). They and especially the king of Nineveh are presented exactly as the type of persons among the nations who fear God. The sailors learn the name of YHWH and pray to him (Jonah 1:14) and even offer a sacrifice to him (Jonah 1:16). Because Jonah did not mention the name YHWH in his message to the city, the king does not use the name YHWH, but האלהים, “the god,” instead. Nevertheless he perceives God’s character as compassionate in the same way as it was revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai: the king alludes to Moses plea in Exod 32:12 and Jonah himself confirms that the king instinctively appealed to YHWH’s compassionate character (Jonah 3:10, cf. Exod 34:6).

The second argument is the redactional technique of stitching together writings which follow after the other. The statement that “YHWH’s name is great among the nations” and the title “king” (Mal 1:11, 14b) allude to Zech 14:9, 16. The collection of Malachi serves to illustrate that the eschatological picture of Zech 14 is already operative in the present time.<sup>55</sup> If Israel understands fully what will happen at the end of history, it should not wait for the time to come, but instead act accordingly in the present time.

To my mind, these arguments confirm the hypothesis that it was the redactor of the nations-layer who attached the formerly independent writing of Malachi to a preexistent multi-prophets book.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See also Aaron Schart, “Putting the Eschatological Visions of Zechariah in their Place: Malachi as a Hermeneutical Guide for the Last Section of the Book of the Twelve,” in *Bringing out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion in Zechariah 9–14* (ed. Mark J. Boda and Michael H. Floyd; JSOTS 370; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 333–43.

<sup>56</sup> In my model, Malachi was attached to the Joel-Obadiah-corpus which comprised ten writings. See Schart, *Entstehung*, 291–303.

## 8.6. THE LATER INTERPOLATIONS

The later interpolations Mal 2:7 and Mal 1:9a confirm this judgment. Concerning Mal 2:7 it was already mentioned that the interpolation alludes to Hos 4:6. In addition, the title מלאך יהוה can also be found in Hag 1:13 and may stem from the same redactor, although it is left unclear how the status of Haggai relates to that of a priest who is otherwise routinely called a נביא “prophet” (Hag 1:1, 3, 12; 2:1, 10).<sup>57</sup>

The short interpolation Mal 1:9a alludes to the self-disclosure of YHWH at Mount Sinai (Exod 34:6). The allusion to Exod 34:6 belongs to a network of similar allusions and citations at several places within the Twelve (Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:10; 4:2; Mic 7:18–20; Nah 1:2b–3a). Taken together, they describe God’s essence as a just and compassionate God who will of course punish apostasy and wickedness, but ultimately is determined to forgive, despite the fact that Israel and the nations (see Jonah) have provoked God’s anger.<sup>58</sup> In Mal 1:9a, this serves as a reminder to the reader that at the inner heart of the cult lays the necessity to reconcile God with God’s people—and God will respond.

## CONCLUSION

The disputation speech Mal 1:6–2:9 functions as a conclusion to the different passages that contain cultic critique in the Book of the Twelve. The importance of the cult as the field where Israel has to prove its reverence for God is definitely highlighted. There is no idea that Israel could exist without temple or without priests. On the contrary, the redaction history of the passage shows that the importance of the priests increased over time. On the level of the final text, the

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<sup>57</sup> Marti, *Dodekapropheten*, 468.

<sup>58</sup> The network was discovered by Raymond C. van Leeuwen, “Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy,” in *In Search of Wisdom* (ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard B. Scott and William J. Wiseman; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox: 1993), 31–49, and studied intensively by Ruth Scoralick, *Gottes Güte und Gottes Zorn: Die Gottesprädikationen in Exodus 34,6f und ihre intertextuellen Beziehungen zum Zwölfprophetenbuch* (HBS 33; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2002). Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 363–419, postulates a redactional layer, the “Gnadenkorpus” to which all the allusions and citations belong. This hypothesis needs further evaluation. For a first step, see Aaron Schart, “The Jonah-Narrative within the Book of the Twelve,” in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations, Redactional Processes, Historical Insights* (ed. Rainer Albertz, James D. Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 109–28.

cult, the office of the priest, and the obedience of the torah are intertwined (Mal 2:7, 9b). Even if misconduct and defilement lead to the shutting down of the temple in the present time, in the future the incriminated cult and the priesthood will be cleansed (Mal 3:3–4) but not abolished.

The second disputation speech is not a literary unity but comprises at least four different layers. The basic layer contained statements directed against one specific group of lay people. The basic norm that is violated is that the people who bring offerings to God have to be in a status of moral integrity. They cannot, for example, offer robbed things to God. This critique is more or less in line with the critique of cultic acts contained in the former prophets in the Book of the Twelve.

Within the second so-called priests-layer, stipulations from the torah that deal with the quality of sacrificial animals are not only cited, but also taken to be the authoritative basis for the accusations of the prophet. As a consequence, the prophet appears as a person who applies the norms of the torah to the behavior of his or her contemporaries.

The Levi-layer highlights the teaching function of the priests. It is presupposed by the redactor that all priests belong to the offspring of Levi.

The inclusion of Malachi within the Book of the Twelve, whenever this was done exactly, brought along the concept that it is appropriate for the cultic service of God that the cult of the nations is perceived as a positive example and, by implication, as enriching the cult in Jerusalem.

In Mal 2:7 the priest, being a teacher of torah, is understood to be the “messenger of YHWH” and, by implication, to have equal status with a prophet whose most important function is to act as a messenger of YHWH. Nevertheless, the harsh critique of the priests contained in the disputation speech makes it clear that the task of the Levitical priests to serve as a communicator between YHWH and the people needs to be controlled by a prophet. In the end, only priests that accept prophetic control are eligible to serve as God’s representatives.