My Messenger, the LORD, and the Messenger of the Covenant: Malachi 3:1 Revisited

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Debate continues concerning the meaning and implications of Malachi 3:1. In this contested verse, YHWH responds to the complaints and accusations of his people by saying, "Behold, I am sending my messenger, and he will clear a way before me. And suddenly, he will come to his temple; the Lord whom you are seeking and the messenger of the covenant in whom you are delighting; behold, he is coming, says YHWH of hosts."[1] No scholarly consensus exists as to (1) the presence and significance of redactions in the text,[2] (2) the passage/s to which the author alludes, and (3) the number and nature of the person/s described in the verse. Each of these individual problems has elicited a variety of proposed solutions, resulting in a plethora of interpretations. In light of the current exegetical gridlock, I will argue that Malachi 3:1 (as it stands) refers to the sending of a priestly, prophetic messenger and the arrival of YHWH himself, depicted as a royal priest. I will make my case in three stages. First, I will provide a review of recent scholarship in the English-speaking world on Malachi 3:1. Next, I will "clear a way" by tackling the issues of redactions and allusions in relation to the text in question. Lastly, I will examine the verse in its context and build

on the preparatory work already accomplished in order to suggest a fresh interpretation of Malachi's prophecy.[3]

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Redactions and Malachi 3:1

Scholars disagree regarding the presence of editorial activity within Malachi 3:1.[4] Broadly speaking, three approaches are current in the literature: (1) taking 3:1b-4 as an editorial insertion, (2) taking 3:1a as an editorial insertion, and (3) denying signs of growth in 3:1.

Taking 3:1b-4 as an Editorial Insertion

Some scholars believe that 3:5 originally followed 3:1a as the answer to the accusation posed against YHWH in 2:17.[5] Those who make this argument typically point to the shift from the first person forms in 3:1a to the third persons forms in 3:1b-4 back to the first person forms in 3:5 in order to support their assertion that 3:1b-4 is unoriginal.[6] Despite agreeing that 3:1b-3:4 represents a later insertion, these scholars voice different explanations for the presence of this supposedly additional material. Bruce Malchow claims that the insertion reflects an early form of the expectation of a priestly messiah.[7] Paul Redditt on the other hand believes that 3:1b-4 was written by a dissident Levitical editor[8] as an encouragement to a group of disenfranchised Levites.[9] A third opinion comes from David Petersen, who argues that 3:1b-4 represents an eschatological commentary meant to expand on the identity of the messenger in 3:1a.[10] Thus, agreement regarding the redactional character of 3:1b-4 has not resulted in a unified perspective on the redactor or his intentions.

Taking 3:1a as an Editorial Insertion

Not all scholars who detect redactional activity in 3:1 agree that it is the latter half which represents the addition. S. D. Snyman argues in fact that 3:1b-4 is original, while 3:1a was inserted at a later time.[11] While he also uses the shift in persons to make his case, Snyman says that it is actually the first person form present in 3:1a that needs to be explained.[12] He also states that 3:1b-4 could easily function as the answer to the question of 2:17. Snyman theorizes that originally, the text promised the immediate arrival of YHWH

(who was described as "the Lord" and "the messenger of the covenant") to purify the priesthood and to judge the wicked. When the promise tarried, a redactor responded by inserting a second figure into the text in order to account for the delay.[13] When YHWH still failed to come after a significant amount of time, a second redaction (3:22-24 MT) was added in order to push this expectation into the eschaton.[14]

No Signs of Growth in 3:1
Others are not convinced that 3:1 shows the marks of any editorial work. Glazier-McDonald, for example, argues forcefully that 2:17-3:5 be understood as original.[15] She notes that there are lexical and thematic links which forge the section together. She points out that shifts in person are not uncommon in poetic or prophetic language.[16] Finally, she claims that the 3:1-4 are "integral to the sense of the oracle unit."[17] Verhoef concludes that the evidence adduced for redactions in 3:1 are "so slight and so dependent on subjective factors that it is best to accept the text as it stands."[18] Hill likewise sees 2:17-3:5 as being authentic due to the chiastic structures, the rhetorical style, and the eschatological emphasis present in the section.[19] K.W. Weyde also dismisses the notion of editorial activity in Malachi 3:1 by arguing that the shift in person can be explained as "conventional language," and by observing that Malachi often elaborates on previous statements with clarifying phrases.[20] O'Brien critiques those scholars who detect editorial work in several verses in Malachi (including 3:1). She says that "the ascription of each of these verses to an editor is based solely upon a given scholar's opinion that its ideas do not comport well with the structure and theme of the work."[21] Watts believes that Malachi as a whole shows little signs of growth, stating that "The literary structure of the book is reasonably clear with little reason to think of earlier sources or much later redaction."[22] Thus a good number of scholars have not been persuaded of the presence of any editorial activity in Malachi 3:1.

Allusions and Malachi 3:1
Scholars also disagree regarding the presence and significance of allusions in Malachi 3:1. Many argue that a proper understanding of 3:1 depends upon recognizing an allusion to Exodus 23:20.[23] Petersen, for instance, argues on the basis of this connection that "my messenger" (מלאכי) must be a "covenant enforcer:"[24] a figure given the task of enabling the people to

obey the stipulations of the covenant, thereby allowing YHWH to come and visit his people.[25] Though she disputes Petersen's view, Glazier-McDonald also asserts that Malachi's pairing of "the Lord" (האדון) with "the messenger of the covenant" (מלאך הברית) "corresponds well with the Exodus passage where the roles of Yahweh and his messenger seem to merge."[26] Douglas Stuart remarks that Malachi borrows the language of Exodus at this point because both messengers precede a mighty act of victory which YHWH will accomplish for his people.[27] Pamela J. Scalise understands Malachi to be likening the first messenger to YHWH's angel in Exodus 23 because both "usher in a new age in the life of Israel in which divine blessings are offered to those who will abandon false worship and obey God."[28] Mark Boda contends that the connection to Exodus 23:20 means that "the earthly roles of prophet, king, and priest are possibly being likened to (or even assuming) the ancient role of the מלאך who led Israel into the conquest of the land, now with the purpose of cleansing the people."[29] Despite the popularity of this proposed intertextual relationship, others nevertheless downplay the significance of an allusion to Exodus 23:20. Weyde expresses uncertainty regarding the importance of this connection.[30] Andrew Malone questions the influence of Exodus 23:20 on Malachi 3:1 because he views the two texts as having significant differences.[31] Snyman also casts doubt on the alleged inter-biblical relationship because he believes Malachi's "messenger" is human while the figure in Exodus is angelic.[32]

Isaiah 40:3 is also often posited as the inspiration behind 3:1.[33] Those who make this connection typically claim that the background behind the Isaiah text is the ANE practice of sending messengers ahead of a visiting king in order to alert the people and to clear the path before him.[34] Thus, Glazier-McDonald understands Malachi to be depicting "the day when he (YHWH) was to appear" and when He would "become enthroned as king."[35] Hill goes further when he states, "Malachi employs the processional motif of Second Isaiah as a metaphor assuring the restoration community of Yahweh's eventual covenant presence in Jerusalem."[36] Some however are less enthused about the possible interpretative gains to be found by making this connection. Verhoef believes that the connection is present, but he warns that Isaiah 40 presents a "somewhat different context" from Malachi 3:1.[37] Malone expresses his thoughts on the matter by saying, "Mal 3:1 may also contain an allusion to Isa 40:3-5, *but this makes no additional impact on*

interpretation."[38]

The Number and Nature of the Figure/s

Perhaps the most notorious problem in the book of Malachi relates to the three figures depicted in 3:1. What did Malachi (or the later redactor) intend to communicate by the three titles "my messenger" (מלאכי), "the Lord" (האדון), and "the messenger of the covenant" (מלאך הברית)? Interpretations can be grouped into three major divisions (each with respective subdivisions): the one-person approach, the two-person approach, and the three-person approach.[39]

One-person Approach[40]

Though by no means the most popular treatment, some scholars believe that Malachi should be understood as referring to a single person assigned three different titles. C. D. Isbell defends this view, while arguing that this solitary messenger should be understood as a human noble.[41] William Dumbrell likewise posits a single individual when he says,

> the two nouns, 'my messenger' and 'messenger of the covenant' are to be identified. On any view, since the speaker of 3:1 is Yahweh, the 'Lord whom you seek' would appear to be distinguished from him, and may thus refer to the presence of the messenger whose presence will be fully representative.[42]

Two-person Approach

One popular approach involves distinguishing two persons in the text. Those who adopt this view divide as to which of the three titles refer to the same person. For instance, several scholars understand Malachi to be referring to two persons: "the Lord" (האדון) and a forerunner, identified as "my messenger" (מלאכי) and "the messenger of the covenant" (מ לאך הברית).[43] Malchow argues that "it is doubtful that the original author . . . means to identify 'the messenger of the covenant' with 'the Lord.'"[44] Weyde claims that the author refers to the "messenger of the covenant" in order to clarify the identity of "my messenger."[45] Scalise believes the two "messengers" should be identified based on a pattern of repetition which she detects in the text.[46] Nogalski also suggests that these two titles are referring to the same person, though without further comment.[47]

Others agree that Malachi refers to two persons, but they believe that it is better to identify "the Lord" with "the messenger of the covenant."[48] These argue that Malachi speaks of the sending of a messenger (מלאכי) and the coming of YHWH, who is called both "the Lord" (האדון) and "the messenger of the covenant" (מלאך הברית).[49] Some base their claims partly on a chiastic structure in the text that may suggest this identification.[50] Glazier-McDonald asserts that through this interpretation "the verse assumes unprecedented power."[51] Some of those who identify "the Lord" with the "messenger of the covenant" believe this figure to be messianic,[52] while others deny any reference to the Messiah.[53]

Three-person approach

Others understand Malachi to be referring to three separate individuals. This is the position taken by Hill.[54] He states, "it seems likely that both the original writer and the original audience most naturally would have understood 'my angel,' 'The Lord,' and 'the angel of the covenant' as titles for three separate divine beings." He then seeks to distinguish the three beings from one another. Hill identifies "my messenger" as the angel of YHWH, who is "the essence of Yahweh" manifest visibly in human form. He states that "the Lord" is clearly Yahweh himself. The third figure is then attributed to the influence of ANE processional mythology, in which "the deity enters his abode accompanied by angelic attendants." Thus, Hill suggests that the "messenger of the covenant" is another member of the divine assembly of YHWH accompanying "the Lord" as he proceeds to the temple.[55] Rashi also understands Malachi to be referring to three divine beings, though he would see "my messenger" as the angel of death, "the Lord" as YHWH, and "the messenger of the covenant" as the angel of the Lord.[56]

Clearing the Way: Redactions and Allusions in Malachi 3:1

The preceding review of literature demonstrates that no agreement currently exists with respect to the interpretation of Malachi 3:1. This in turn is due in large part to differing opinions regarding the presence (or absence) of redactions and allusions in the verse. Thus, before analyzing the text, it will be necessary to address these two issues.

Redactions in Malachi 3:1?

Many scholars today acknowledge the presence of redactions in the OT.[57] However, the field of redaction criticism (as well as source criticism and form criticism) remains problematic. No clear, objective, agreed upon method exists for recognizing an editor's fingerprints.[58] This is why Collins wrote over ten years ago (and his statement remains true today), "Unfortunately, the criteria for establishing authentic words are not very clear, which means there is very little agreement and even less certainty as to which words are authentic and which are not."[59] This problem is compounded by three features that are unfortunately common in the practice of redaction criticism: (1) a readiness to detect an editor's work on the basis of minor pieces of evidence, (2) a propensity for ingenious, yet unfounded, speculations regarding the motivations, social standing, and political agenda of alleged redactors, and (3) a deeper interest in solving puzzles behind the text rather than in examining the text as it stands.[60] Thus, the results of redaction criticism often fail to convince and often detract from the goal of understanding the final form of the text. The treatment of Malachi 3:1 in biblical scholarship serves as a case in point.

In my judgment, an examination of Malachi 3:1 reveals no persuasive reasons for positing an insertion.[61] First of all, there is no textual evidence for the existence of a different version of Mal 3:1. The few discrepancies that exist between the Hebrew textual witnesses of 3:1 can be explained without positing a separate Hebrew *Vorlage*.[62] The same can be said of the witness from the LXX.[63] This conclusion is supported by the fact that none of the scholars who posit a redaction in 3:1 do so on the basis of manuscript evidence. Second, the book of Malachi as a whole does not claim to use previously existing, written sources. This should at least caution scholars as they study the text. Third, the shift in person within 3:1-5 need not suggest editorial activity. As Glazier-McDonald has shown, this construction is attested elsewhere.[64] Furthermore, this literary technique could have been intentionally employed by the original author. So for instance, if Verhoef's interpretation of 2:17-3:5 is right,[65] then the shift in persons could be a structural marker indicating that 3:2-4 addresses the accusation of 2:17 while 3:5 addresses the question of 2:17. Another plausible explanation (which I prefer) is that 3:1b-5 describes a single event twice.[66] The shift in person functions to increase the dramatic tension of the section.[67] Lastly,

though Malachi 3:1 is difficult, the text is quite intelligible[68] without having to presuppose the existence of a redactor.[69] Thus, students of Malachi should focus their energies on understanding 3:1 as it stands instead of insisting on the presence of a mythical redactor.[70]

Allusions in Malachi 3:1?

Scholars note the difficulty of detecting a genuine allusion.[71] Various criteria have been proposed in order to guard interpreters against the ever-present dangers of eisegesis.[72] Benjamin Sommer, for example, warns against alleging an allusion solely on the basis of repeated vocabulary. He states,

> If two texts share vocabulary items that are commonplace in Biblical Hebrew, the parallel between them is most likely coincidental. If they share terms that often appear together in biblical or ancient Near Eastern texts, then there is a strong likelihood that they independently draw on traditional vocabulary clusters.[73]

According to Sommer, a cumulative case is required to demonstrate the presence of an allusion. This case must consist of evidence like the use of rare vocabulary clusters or the frequent repetition of particular ideas or themes which are clearly rooted in an older text.[74] Weyde agrees in large part with Sommer's assessment. He states, "Use of common terminology in two texts – catchwords – does not always seem to be a tenable criterion for claiming intertextuality."[75] He adds to that by saying, "A common motif is not necessarily a tenable criterion for suggesting a case of allusion."[76] According to Weyde, the occurrence of vocabulary repetition and common motifs are a necessary, yet not always sufficient, criteria for positing an allusion.[77] This in turn is similar to Derek Bass's criteria for allusions, though for him, "contextual awareness is *the critical criterion* for identifying, confirming, and analyzing quotation and allusion since two passages may share verbal parallels or other lexical links, yet contain no formal connection."[78] Taking these criteria together, in order to demonstrate the presence of a genuine allusion in Malachi 3:1, it must be shown both that (1) there are significant lexical links (rare words or uncommon word clusters) and (2) the two passages share a common context. Do either Exodus 23:20 or Isaiah 40:3 meet these criteria in relation to Malachi 3:1?

Exodus 23:20

Weyde rightly notes that the terminological similarities between Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20 are indisputable.[79] Five roots are repeated between these two texts: הנה ("behold"), שלח ("to send") פנה ("face/before"), מלאך ("messenger") and דרך ("way"). Furthermore, these words occur together only in these texts, which indicates a rare vocabulary cluster. Though there are minor lexical and syntactical differences between the two texts, these cannot discount the possibility of an allusion; at most, they demonstrate that Malachi was not quoting the Exodus material. Thus, the lexical links should be viewed as evidence for an allusion to Exodus 23:20 in Malachi 3:1.

While the lexical evidence favors the presence of an allusion, a few commentators suggest that contextual differences between Malachi 3:1 to Exodus 23:20 weigh heavily against that conclusion.[80] An initial reading reveals noticeable differences. Malachi 3:1 is part of the fourth disputation between the prophet and the people.[81] The people were back in the land after exile and had been accusing God of delighting in evildoers and of being unjust.[82] YHWH responds with an eschatological depiction of His coming, which would be preceded by the coming of "my messenger."[83] The messenger's task was simply to "clear a way before" YHWH, after which YHWH Himself would come to purify and judge his people.[84] Exodus 23:20 on the other hand occurs towards the end of the Book of the Covenant, within which YHWH provides authoritative stipulations so that he might establish Israel as a "kingdom of priests" and as a "holy nation." Part of that covenant involves God bringing his people into Canaan and dispossessing its inhabitants. God therefore sends a messenger figure before Israel as their guardian on the way to the land of promise. The messenger's role would be "to guard" (לשמרך) God's people and "to bring" (להביאך) them to the place established by YHWH. There are no hints in the context that any of this is to be fulfilled in the eschaton.[85] Thus, a cursory examination of the verses in their context may lead readers to conclude that Malachi was not alluding to Exodus.

However, beneath these surface-level differences lies a deeper common contextual similarity: both Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1 belong in sections that focus on YHWH's purpose to establish a holy priesthood and a holy nation. Thus, in predicting God's work of restoring the priesthood and sanctifying his people (3:2–5), Malachi may have been drawn to Exodus 23:20 because of the presence of a similar theme.[86] Furthermore, the differences

between texts could be explained as expressions of the same divine purpose manifesting itself in different redemptive-historical situations. So on the one hand, Exodus 19:1–24:11 describes a situation where the establishment of the priestly nation is still prospective: Israel may or may not fulfill God's intention of transforming them into a kingdom of priests. The messenger of Exodus 23:20 is then sent as a means of encouraging the nation's obedience so that YHWH's purpose might come to fruition. Malachi on the other hand must address a situation wherein the people and the priesthood have become completely corrupt.[87] The prophet is aware that God's original intent (Exod 19:4–6) has not come to fruition.[88] Since he is convinced of God's commitment to establishing a holy priesthood (Mal 1:6–14; 2:1–9) and a holy nation (Mal 2:10–16; 3:5–6), Malachi predicts that a second messenger will be dispatched. This messenger would not be instructed to guard Israel on the way to the promised land; instead, he would be sent to make preparations so that God himself might come to purify the sons of Levi and to destroy the wicked elements within Israel. Malachi 3:1 should then be understood as predicting the eschatological accomplishment of God's long-disclosed purpose of establishing a holy priesthood and a holy nation.[89] Thus, a similar contextual theme undergirds both Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1.[90] If Bass is right to claim that shared context is decisive in determining the presence of an allusion (and I think he is), then Malachi 3:1 probably does allude to Exodus 23:20.[91]

Isaiah 40:3
Isaiah 40:3 says, "A voice is crying out: In the wilderness, prepare (פנו) the way (דרך) of YHWH! Smoothen a highway in the desert-plain for our God!" Lexically speaking, the only similarities between the Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 are the two words פנה and דרך. In the *piel* stem, the root פנה is relatively infrequent,[92] while דרך is quite common.[93] However, the combination of the piel verb פנה with דרך as its direct object only occurs in four places: Isaiah 40:3, 57:14, 62:10, and Malachi 3:1. This should count as a rare verbal cluster and it therefore tilts the evidence in favor of a genuine allusion.

Contextually speaking, Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 have several things in common.[94] Both texts find themselves in eschatological sections of their respective works.[95] Both texts depict a figure given the role of clearing a path.[96] Both texts speak of a way being prepared so that YHWH Himself may tread

upon it in order to come to his people.[97] However, there are also important differences between the two passages.[98] Isaiah 40:3 depicts YHWH's arrival in a setting of consolation for the people; Malachi 3:1 depicts YHWH coming in order to purify and judge. Isaiah sees YHWH coming in order to accomplish a second exodus for his exiled people;[99] Malachi on the other hand does not depict the day of YHWH's coming as a second exodus. Does this decisively rule out an allusion to Isaiah 40:3? Not necessarily. Malachi may have been alluding to Isaiah 40:3 with a hint of irony.[100] The blaspheming community clamors for God to come and judge those they see as evil (2:17). Malachi responds with language reminiscent of Isaiah 40:3, assuring them that the King is in fact coming (Mal 3:1). The positive connotation of Isaiah 40:3 would seem initially encouraging, as would the refinement of "the sons of Levi" (Mal 3:2-4). But in the end, Malachi delivers the punchline: "Then I will draw near *to you* for judgment" (Mal 3:5). The allusion to Isaiah 40:3 then heightens the rhetorical impact of Malachi 3:1 and adds to the royal imagery. Furthermore, Malachi may be leading readers to understand "the voice" in Isaiah 40:3 in light of the messenger's voice in Exodus 23:20.[101] This may suggest that YHWH's messenger would prepare the way for God's coming (Mal 3:1) through a kind of proclamation (Isa 40:3) which could only be ignored at the cost of divine judgment (Exod 23:20). Thus, given the rare vocabulary cluster and the contextual similarities, readers should probably see an allusion to Isaiah 40:3 in Malachi 3:1.

ANALYZING THE TEXT: A FRESH INTERPRETATION OF MALACHI 3:1

The Context

Having hopefully cleared the way, I now turn to the most difficult problem in Malachi 3:1, which is deciphering Malachi's intention.[102] What did Malachi mean when he said, "Behold, I am sending my messenger, and he will clear a way before me. And suddenly, he will come to his temple; the Lord whom you are seeking and the messenger of the covenant in whom you are delighting; Behold, he is coming, says YHWH of hosts"? As has already been mentioned, Mal 3:1 occurs in the fourth major section (2:17-3:6) of the book.[103] The section begins with a jarring accusation from the prophet: "You have worn YHWH out with your words." The prophet then anticipates the people's defensive response: "But you will say: How have we wearied

[Him]?"[104] Malachi then depicts the people's attitudes by putting words in their mouths that mirror the dispositions of their hearts: "When you say, 'All who do evil are good in the eyes of YHWH! And in them He delights!' or 'Where is the God of justice?'" The people harbored bitter thoughts towards YHWH, believing him to be perverse, unjust, and slow to act. YHWH however is none of these things, and in 3:1, Malachi begins to unpack just how YHWH will demonstrate his holy character once again.

My Messenger

The demonstration of God's character would begin with the sending of a messenger. But who or what is he? First, it must be repeated that Mal 3:1 shows no signs of redaction.[105] Thus, in pursuing an interpretation of this text, one should avoid distracting oneself with theories dependent on redaction criticism.[106] Second, though the allusions to Exodus and Isaiah should inform our understanding of "my messenger," they should not be seen as providing a one-to-one identification of the figure in Malachi 3:1.[107] Malachi's allusion to these texts may provide insight into the messenger's role and function without necessarily determining his nature. With these guidelines in mind, should the first messenger be understood as human or angelic?[108] While 3:1 by itself is not decisive, the book of Malachi hints towards a human messenger.[109] First, in Malachi 2:7, the prophet states, "For the lips of a priest guard knowledge and they will seek *torah* from his mouth; for *he is the messenger of YHWH of hosts*." The messenger (מלאך) of 2:7 is clearly human, and this would suggest that the messenger in 3:1 is human as well. Second, Malachi 3:23-24 (MT; 4:5-6 ET) probably alludes back to 3:1 and identifies the messenger with a human being: Elijah.[110] Third, the superscription which begins the book (1:1) indicates that it was delivered by the hand of "Malachi" (מלאכי), who was most likely a human being. Lastly, the phrase "and suddenly" (ופתאם) should be understood as marking a sharp distinction between the messenger and the figure/s that follow.[111] Thus, "my messenger" cannot be identified with "the Lord" (האדון) or "the messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית), who perhaps may be non-human/s.[112]

The evidence then seems to suggest that the first messenger was a human being. But is that all we are meant to learn about him? I surmise that Malachi intends to portray the sent messenger as both prophet and priest.[113] A number of scholars have recognized a prophetic backdrop for "my messenger."[114]

These typically argue as follows: (1) the connection between Malachi 3:1 and 3:22-24 demonstrates that this figure is prophetic, (2) the OT refers to prophets as "messengers" (מ לאכים),[115] and (3) in the post-exilic era, prophets had replaced the role of the kings of the past, and thus, a prophet could take the eschatological role assigned to the Davidic monarch.[116] While I agree that Malachi's depiction of the messenger has prophetic overtones, I also believe that many scholars overlook the significance of the obvious: Malachi explicitly identifies the priest as the messenger of YHWH in 2:7.[117] It is worth repeating that in Malachi 2:7, the prophet states: "For the lips of a priest guard knowledge, and they will seek instruction from his mouth; *for he is the messenger of YHWH of hosts* ( ) (כי מלאך יהוה-צבאות הוא)." Given such a clear statement, it seems strange that some do not believe it possible for "my messenger" (מלאכי)in 3:1 to be a priest.[118] Though there are connections to Malachi 3:22-24, the repetition of "messenger" (מלאך)forms a more apparent connection to 2:7. Thus, if it is appropriate to identify the first messenger on the basis of the Elijah prophesy, it should be even more apt to view this figure in light Malachi 2:7. While it is suggestive that the designation "messenger" is elsewhere used of prophets, the fact that Malachi practically defines his use of the term in 2:7 should shed considerable light on the occurrence of the same word in 3:1.

Three other hints corroborate this interpretation of the identity of "my messenger." First, there are multiple connections between 2:17-3:6 and 1:6-2:9.[119] Among the examples noted by Snyman are the following:[120] (1) the offerings mentioned in 1:10, 11, and 13 are brought up again in 3:3-4, (2) *pure* offerings" (מנחה טהורה) are mentioned in 1:11 while in 3:3, YHWH sits to *purify* (מטהר and טהר) the sons of Levi,[121] (3) the רע root ("evil") is repeated in 1:8 and 2:17, (4) as I have noted, מלאך ("messenger") is common to 2:7 and 3:1, (5) priests turned from YHWH's *ways* (דרכי) in 2:9 while the messenger of 3:1 prepares a *way* (דרך) for YHWH,[122] and (6) Mal 2:5 says Levi *feared* (וייראני) YHWH while 3:5 says God's people did not *fear him* (ולא יראוני). Furthermore, the context between the two sections is related because both deal with judgment upon the priests. This would suggest a cultic backdrop for 3:1, which would increase the likelihood that Malachi intends his readers to view the messenger as a priest. Second, Malachi 3:22-24 (MT), which connects Elijah to the messenger of 3:1, is linked to the description of Levi in 2:6.[123] Both Levi and Elijah "turned"

(השיב) individuals: Levi turned many from iniquity and Elijah would turn the hearts of fathers towards sons and sons towards fathers.[124] Furthermore, the call to remember the *torah* (תורה) given in 3:22 would bring to mind 2:6-9, the only other place in the book where the word occurs. This would suggest that Elijah (who is identified with the messenger of 3:1) also fulfills a priestly role. Lastly, there are good reasons to think that Malachi (מלאכי) himself may have been a priest.[125] This could account for both his concern for and knowledge of priestly abuses (1:6-2:9, 3:1-4). This could also explain why he used the root מלאך ("messenger") to denote priests in 2:7. If Malachi the prophet was also a priest,[126] then 2:7 would function as a powerful play on words, reminding a corrupt priesthood that they too were called to be messengers of YHWH, just as Malachi had been.[127] If it is legitimate to view Malachi (מלאכי ; 1:1) as a priest, then the designation "my messenger" (מלאכי ; 3:1), which is identical in form to the name, would suggest that the sent messenger would be a priest.

The Lord and Messenger of the Covenant

So far, we have determined that YHWH would come to his people by sending a human prophet/priest to prepare his way. This then leaves us with two figures: "the Lord" (האדון) and "the messenger of the covenant" (מלאך הברית). How should we understand them? I believe an examination of the text leads to four conclusions.

First, the two should not be identified with "my messenger" (מלאכי) of 3:1. As mentioned earlier, the ופתאם construction ("and suddenly") serves to separate the person and activity of the first messenger (מלאכי) from the two figures that follow.[128] Furthermore, the nature of the first messenger's task in light of the ANE background leads to this interpretation. Messengers were not sent to prepare paths for themselves. They were sent ahead of their kings in order to clear the roads for their coming.[129] Therefore, it seems more likely that the sent messenger prepares the way for the coming of the Lord and the messenger of the covenant.

Second, "the Lord" should be understood to be YHWH.[130] I come to this conclusion for the following reasons: (1) the singular word אדון ("Lord") with the definite article always refers to YHWH in the OT,[131] (2) the context, which includes the complaints of the people in 2:17 and the preparatory work of the messenger in 3:1, prepares readers to expect the coming of YHWH,

(3) the temple, which belongs to YHWH, is said to belong to "the Lord", and (4) the allusion to Isaiah 40:3 points in this direction because the path is being prepared for YHWH.

Third, the two titles ("the Lord" and "the messenger of the covenant") refer to the same person.[132] Several observations lend credence to this claim. For starters, the author employed a chiastic structure in 3:1b, which suggests that he identified "the Lord" and "the messenger of the covenant" with one another.[133] Also noteworthy, the relative clauses which state that the people were "seeking" the Lord and "desiring" the messenger of the covenant supports this interpretation. This is because the people in 2:17 were clamoring for the coming of "the God of justice," and there is no evidence in the text that they desired a second figure.[134] Most decisively perhaps, verses 2-4 do not depict the actions of a duo, but of a single figure. Malachi 3:2, for instance, states, "But who is going to endure the day of *his* coming, and who is going to stand when *he* appears? For *he* is like a refining fire and like a washing soap." The singular pronouns would be problematic if Malachi envisioned two distinct figures coming to refine the sons of Levi.

Fourth, Malachi 3:1 depicts YHWH as a coming king.[135] Several factors in Malachi 3:1 point to royal imagery. To start with, the preparatory work of the messenger and the allusion to Isa 40:3 imply that YHWH is coming to his people as a king. The use of the word היכל for temple also connotes YHWH's kingship,[136] as does the title האדון ("the Lord").[137] Additionally, YHWH's kingship is a theme emphasized forcefully elsewhere in the book.[138] These clues help readers to discern that Malachi intended to depict YHWH as a royal figure.

Lastly, there are a number of good reasons to believe that Malachi intended to portray YHWH's coming with priestly connotations.[139] These reasons would include: (1) the section (2:17-3:6) is filled with cultic terminology, which would make the presence of a priestly figure appropriate,[140] (2) the fact that the temple is YHWH's destination suggests this interpretation,[141] (3) YHWH's mission suits this interpretation, for he comes to refine and purify "the sons of Levi,"[142] (4) the title "messenger of the covenant" (מלאך הברית) given to YHWH strongly suggests this interpretation. This last point deserves to be unpacked.

I have already pointed out that Malachi practically defines the "messenger" (מלאך) as a priest in 2:7. It would be surprising if Malachi used the word just a few verses later without intending to draw readers back to his previous

usage. But what is even more significant is the use of "covenant" (ברית) in conjunction with "messenger" (מלאך). This combination almost undoubtedly alludes back to 2:4-7.[143] The lexical links Malachi created would immediately draw readers' attention back to the priest as the messenger of YHWH and to the covenant with Levi.[144] This becomes even more apparent when one considers the congruence between the two sections: in 2:4, YHWH expresses His desire to preserve the covenant with Levi and in 3:2-4, He comes to refine and purify of the "sons of Levi."[145] The accumulated evidence then provides good grounds for understanding, not only the forerunner, but also the coming Lord in priestly terms.[146]

Conclusion

After "preparing the way" and laboring in the text, I have come to three conclusions. First, Malachi 3:1 ought to be read as a whole and in light of the original author's intent, rather than that of a posited redactor. I have tried to demonstrate that there are no persuasive reasons for claiming the presence of editorial activity in the verse. Second, a study of vocabulary links and contextual similarity reveals that Malachi 3:1 alludes to Isaiah 40:3 and to Exodus 23:20. Lastly, Malachi 3:1 predicts the coming of a human prophetic priest who will prepare the way for the divine royal priest.

If this interpretation is correct, then Malachi 3:1 becomes quite significant in light of its use in the NT. First of all, the synoptic interpretation of Malachi 3:1 would seem to accord with the prophet's intentions.[147] When Mark (Mark 1:2), Matthew (Matt 11:10), and Luke (Luke 1:76, 7:27) claim that John the Baptist is the sent messenger of Malachi 3:1, the fact that John is both a prophet and a priest would add legitimacy to their interpretation.[148] Second, this reading of Malachi 3:1 may inform our reading of John's ministry. John's proclamation of repentance should be seen as the preparatory work prophesied in Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Furthermore, John is revealed to be the typological fulfillment of the messenger spoken of in Exodus 23:20, who now preaches repentance in order to guard God's people from eschatological judgment.[149] Lastly, this understanding of Malachi 3:1 sheds light on the identity of Christ as portrayed in the gospels. By depicting John the Baptist as the messenger of Malachi 3:1, the gospel writers present Jesus as "the Lord" and "the messenger of the covenant." This means in turn that

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all identify Jesus with YHWH; they understand God's promise to visit his people as being fulfilled in Christ.[150] It would also suggest that they understood Jesus to be a royal priest, which would be consistent with the Messianic expectations of the OT.[151] Furthermore, these inner-biblical connections provide readers with hints that Jesus is the true Israel. God's desire to establish Israel as an obedient kingdom of priests is fulfilled in the Jesus, the perfect priest-king.[152] Altogether, Malachi 3:1 proves to be a marvelous passage which may prepare the way for a clearer vision of the glory of Christ.

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1   All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. While this translation is slightly wooden, it preserves a chiastic structure which will be important for the interpretation presented later in the paper.

2   Terence Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetical Books* (vol. 20; The Biblical Seminar; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 15 defines Redaction Criticism when he says it is the discipline which "seeks to establish the way in which a body of literary material has been arranged, adapted, and shaped into a book." For various introductions to redaction criticism, see W. Rudolph Tate, *Handbook for Biblical Interpretation: An Essential Guide to Methods, Terms, and Concepts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 380–81; Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 116–19; Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (2nd ed; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 310; Reinhard Müller, Juha Pakkala, and Bas ter Haar Romeny, *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible* (Resources for Biblical Study 75; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 1–17; John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 45–60. For discussions of redaction criticism in relation to the prophetic writings, see Walther Zimmerli, "From Prophetic Word to Prophetic Book," in *The Place Is Too Small for Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (ed. Robert P. Gordon; vol. 5, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 419–42; Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Recent Currents in Research on the Prophetic Literature," *The Expository Times* 119, no. 4 (2007): 161–69.

3   Scholars are divided as to whether "Malachi" (מלאכי) should be understood as a title or a name. On the one hand, many believe that the term could refer to a title which was derived from the reference in Mal 3:1 to "my messenger" (See Julia M. O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* [Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004], 287; Bruce V. Malchow, "The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 [1984]: 252; David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: A Commentary* [London: SCM, 1995], 165–66; J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 19; Terry W. Eddinger, *Malachi: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 8). These typically argue that (1) the LXX translation points in this direction, (2) no one would have named their son "my messenger," (3) there are no other individuals in the OT who have that name, and (4) some Jewish and early Christian traditions believed that Ezra was the מלאכי. On the other hand, several scholars maintain that the word refers to the name of the prophet (See Walter C. Kaiser, *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984], 13; Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (vol. 25D, The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 15–18; Pamela J. Scalise, "Malachi," in *Minor Prophets II* (New International Biblical Commentary 18; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 320; Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1977), 249; Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 28; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 226; Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* (SBL Dissertation Series 98; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 28-29; Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and*

    Malachi (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 156. For evidence, they point out that (1) no other prophetic book has come to us anonymously, (2) there are Jewish traditions that take מלאכי as a name, (3) the name has analogies in other names in the OT, (4) מלאכי could be a name which means "messenger of YHWH" or "YHWH is my angel," and (5) none of the arguments against taking מלאכי as a personal name are decisive. Rex Mason, *Preaching the Tradition: Homily and Hermeneutics After the Exile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 236) on the other hand thinks the issue cannot be resolved, while Ralph Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (vol. 32, Word Biblical Commentary; Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 298 believes the discussion to be unimportant. While certainty is impossible, I tend towards understanding "Malachi" to be the prophet's name.

4   In 1987, J.D.W. Watts claimed that "the unity of the book [i.e. Malachi] has been rarely challenged except for the last three verses." If Watts was correct, then Malachi scholarship has changed in the past two decades. See Watts, "Introduction to the Book of Malachi," *Review & Expositor* 84, no. 3 (1987): 375.

5   Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 206–12; Malchow, "Messenger," 253; Paul L Redditt, "The Book of Malachi in Its Social Setting," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1994): 240–55; Mason, *Preaching and Tradition*, 249–50.

6   Other arguments are also used to make the case that 3:1b-4 was the work of a later redactor. Though Redditt ("Malachi in Its Social Setting," 247) also notes the shift in person, he says, "The real key is that a new audience was being addressed, one that had been seeking the Lord and that delighted in his messenger and his covenant." In addition to the shift in person, Mason (Mason, *Preaching and Tradition*, 249–50) also points to the "hopeless confusion" over the identity of the messenger and the "quite different emphasis on the purification of the priesthood rather than judgment of sinners" as signs of growth in the text.

7   He sees the redaction of Malachi 3:1b-4 as part of a trajectory which began with the prophecy regarding Zerubbabel and Joshua in Zech 4:11-14 and which ended with the expectation of a messiah from Levi represented in the Pseudepigrapha and the Qumran literature. See Malchow, "Messenger," 253–55.

8   Collins (*The Mantle of Elijah*, 20:32) suggests that the terms "redactor," "writer," and "editor" all be distinguished from one another. He designates the individual/s who collected literary material during "pre-book phase" the redactor/s. Writers on the other hand were those individual/s responsible for using the redacted materials to produce books. Finally, editors were those individual/s who produced revisions of those books, resulting in the final forms that remain today. Despite his proposal, I will be using editor and redactor synonymously for three reasons. First of all, few scholars have followed Collins' schema. Second, the attempt to delineate between the work of a "redactor" and an "editor" (using Collin's definitions) is too speculative to be helpful. Lastly, it is not altogether clear why a single individual could not be responsible for collecting the prophetic material, arranging it meaningfully into a book, and inserting editorial comments for theological and canonical purposes.

9   Redditt suspects that the original author was a Levitical reformer responsible for two collections of material. The first corrected the moral failures of the people while the second addressed the abuses of the Zadokite priests. Underlying this second critique was a desire to downplay the prevailing distinction between Zadokites and Levites. Redditt then argues that the redactor followed in the original author's footsteps, but broadened his critique to include the mainline Levitical party. Redditt believes the redactor represented a group of disenfranchised Levites who were ostracized for aligning themselves with the original reformer. This redactor then arranged the original material and added to it in order to assure his fellow dissidents that they would be elevated on the day of YHWH while the rest of the Levites would be judged. See "Malachi in Its Social Setting," 251-54.

10 Commenting on the character of the redactor, Petersen says, "This commentator is, therefore, not a utopian but a realist, one who could imagine a proper prior moment and one who could imagine Levites acting properly in the ritual ambit." See Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 211.

11 S. D. Snyman, "Once Again: Investigating the Identity of the Three Figures Mentioned in Malachi 3:1," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 27, no. 3 (2006): 1032–33.

12 Since 3:4 contains no third person forms, Snyman argues that this verse is problematic for those who rely on the shift in person to claim 3:1b-4 as an editorial addition. See "Once Again," 1032–33.

13 See S. D. Snyman, *Malachi* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 130–31. Though Snyman does not cite him as a source, his theory seems like an extension of Michael Fishbane's explanation for the inner biblical exegesis of the post-exilic period. Fishbane posits that the tension between the trust in the authority of past prophetic words and the failure of those words to materialize led to the re-appropriation and reinterpretation of those prior texts to fit the current historical situation. As he states regarding the use of earlier prophetic material by later redactors, "Reinterpretation is necessary precisely

because the original oracle-revelation was not yet – or not conclusively – actualized." And again, "As these … were believed to be God's words, and so testified to divine involvement in history, failed expectations were not abandoned but rather reinterpreted." See the discussion in Michael Fishbane, "Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 3 (1980): 354–59.

14 Snyman, "Once Again," 1041–43; In fact, Snyman believes 3:22 and 3:23–24 should be attributed to two separate redactors. See *Malachi*, 184.

15 Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Mal'ak Habberit: The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," *Hebrew Annual Review* 11 (1987): 95–96.

16 She cites Isa 42:20, 54:14, 61:6, Deut 32:15, Job 16:7, and Lam 3:1.

17 Glazier-McDonald, "Mal'ak," 96.

18 Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 164. For a similar sentiment, see Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 230.

19 Hill, *Malachi*, 25D: 260.

20 Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic Authority, Form Prophets, and the Use of Traditions in the Book of Malachi* (vol. 288, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 290–91.

21 Julia M. O'Brien, *Priest and Levite in Malachi* (SBL Dissertation Series 121; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 56. While O'Brien states this as a critique, it turns out that this is precisely the kind of "evidence" some Biblical scholars look for in order to identify redactions. See for instance Müller, Pakkala, and Romeny, *Evidence of Editing*, 221.

22 Watts, "Introduction," 375; he cites only Mal 3:22-24 (MT) as being potentially late.

23 Some of those who propose a connection with Exod 23:20 also suggest allusions to other passages. See for instance Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger,* 136-41; Scalise, "Malachi," 348–52; Hill, *Malachi*, 25D:266–67; Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 209.

24 David L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles* (vol. 23, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 43.

25 Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 210.

26 Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 131. Hill also seems to suggest that the connection allows us to identify "my messenger" (מלאכי) as the angel of the Lord. See Hill, *Malachi*, 25D: 265.

27 Douglas Stuart, "Malachi," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 1350–52.

28 Pamela J. Scalise, "To Fear or Not to Fear: Questions of Reward and Punishment in Malachi 2:17-4:3," *Review & Expositor* 84, no. 3 (1987): 412. Interestingly however, Scalise does not cite Exod 23:20 in her later commentary, though she mentions a connection to Isa 40:3. See Scalise, "Malachi," 348–52.

29 Mark J. Boda, "Messengers of Hope in Haggai-Malachi," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 1 (2007): 129.

30 While Weyde says that lexical links between the two verses are undeniable, he seems to voice uncertainty regarding the presence of an actual allusion because of the differing circumstances behind both passages. See Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:288.

31 Andrew S. Malone, "Is the Messiah Announced in Malachi 3:1?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 57, no. 2 (2006): 221.

32 Snyman, "Once Again," 1042.

33 See for instance Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 287; Scalise, "Malachi," 349; Kaiser, *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love*, 80; Hill, *Malachi*, 25D: 266–67; Smith, *Malachi*, 62.

34 As Kaiser (*Malachi: God's Unchanging Love*, 80) states, "The situation was a familiar one in the ancient Orient, for whenever a king was about to arrive at a town or village, messengers were sent ahead in order to allow the town and villages to make the necessary preparations to receive their royal guest. Likewise, God would be announced by a promised forerunner." See also Snyman, *Malachi*, 132.

35 Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 138. She also claims that Ps 24 is important for interpreting Mal 3:1. She builds her case on the use of בוא ("to come") and מבקש ("seeking") in both texts. See *Malachi: The Divine Messenger,* 136-41.

36 Hill, *Malachi*, 25D:266.

37 Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 287.

38 Malone, "Messiah Announced," 221, fn 21; emphasis mine.

39 Hill (*Malachi,* 25D:286) categorizes the various viewpoints similarly. A few commentators sidestep the issue by claiming the verse is too confusing or that the problem is unimportant. See for instance Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 32:327–28; Smith, *Malachi*, 63; O'Brien, *Nahum-Malachi*, 305; Mason, *Preaching and Tradition*,

250.

[40] For a brief overview of German scholars who hold this view, see Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:286–87. David M. Miller ("The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgment in the Reception History of Malachi 3," *New Testament Studies* 53, no. 1 [2007]: 4) depicts Petersen as a proponent of this view. While Miller may be right, Petersen's position is muddled. The difficulty stems from his insistence on a later redactor's work. See Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 211.

[41] Charles D. Isbell, *Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 59.

[42] William J. Dumbrell, "Malachi and the Ezra-Nehemiah Reforms," *Reformed Theological Review* 35 (1976): 48. It is unclear however whether Dumbrell views this figure as human or divine, especially since he later claims that this messenger "functions as the alter ego of the sovereign." See his comments in *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 239.

[43] Malchow, "Messenger," 253; Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:289–90; Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi*, 1049; Scalise, "Malachi," 350.

[44] Malchow, "Messenger," 253.

[45] See Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:289–90.

[46] She believes that, in Mal 3:1-5, the author emphasizes the same scenario through repetition. Thus, the activity of "my messenger" corresponds with that of the "messenger of the covenant" (purifying the sons of Levi), while the activity of "the Lord" corresponds to the activity of YHWH (executing the judgment of the people).See Scalise, "Malachi," 350.

[47] Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi*, 1049.

[48] Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 128–34; Eddinger, *Malachi*, 78; Malone, "Messiah Announced," 220–25; Snyman, "Once Again," 1038–41. Verhoef (*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 288–89) tries to nuance his view by seeing both an identification and a distinction being made between "the Lord" and "the messenger of the covenant." Though it is not clear whether Petersen holds to the one-person approach or the two-person approach, he also identifies "the Lord" with "the messenger of the covenant." See Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 211.

[49] Snyman nuances his view when he says, "Yahweh as the Lord and the angel/messenger of the covenant are then almost identical figures, but at the same time they must be distinguished from one another. The angel/messenger of the covenant is not the Lord, but in the angel/messenger of the covenant, the Lord himself is met." See *Malachi*, 134.

[50] See Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 289; Snyman, "Once Again," 1040.

[51] Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 131. However, she also makes the untenable assertion that the prophetic author intentionally used a deceptive double entendre when he referenced מלאכי. Glazier-McDonald believes that he used this particular title because the people would assume he was speaking about himself, when he was actually referring to the future Elijah. See *Malachi: The Divine Messenger,* 135.

[52] See Stuart, "Minor Prophets," 1350–52; Kaiser, *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love*, 81–84; Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 259–60.

[53] Malone, "Messiah Announced"; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 289; Snyman, "Once Again," 1043.

[54] The description of his position is taken from Hill, *Malachi*, 25D:288–89.

[55] Hill however does state that it is possible for "my messenger" and "the messenger of the covenant" to be two titles for one divine person. See *Malachi*, 25D:289.

[56] As cited in Hill, *Malachi*, 25D:287. Paul Redditt also seems holds to the three-person approach. He identifies "my messenger" as the original prophetical source of the bulk of the material and "the Lord" as YHWH. He then states that the identity of the third figure "is lost to us," though another redactor identified him as Elijah in Mal 3:23-24 (MT). See Redditt, "Malachi in Its Social Setting," 250.

[57] This includes scholars from an evangelical standpoint. See for instance John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 200–6; Duane A. Garrett, "The Undead Hypothesis: Why the Documentary Hypothesis Is the Frankenstein of Biblical Studies," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 3 (2001): 39-40; Paul R. House, "The God Who Gives Rest in the Land: Joshua," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2, no. 3 (1998): 13–17.

[58] Many who have written on the issue suggest that edited material can be detected by noticing (1) inconsistencies, (2) incoherent syntax, (3) changes in perspective, style, or topic, and (4) redundancy. (See for example Müller, Pakkala, and Romeny, *Evidence of Editing*, 221; Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 24; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Formation and Form in Prophetic Literature," in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future* (ed. James Luther Mays, David L. Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995),

116; Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 118). These categories are unsatisfactory for several reasons. First of all, none of them necessitate the presence of a redactor's work because each allows for alternative explanations. Second, the first three categories are quite subjective, allowing someone to claim redactions almost anywhere in the text. Third, if a redactor's aim was to smoothen out a text and to make it cohere (as Barton claims; see *Reading the Old Testament*, 56-58), then the four criteria can only detect when an alleged redactor has done his job poorly. More work needs to be done therefore in order to provide satisfactory criteria for detecting redactions.

59 Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, 20:14.

60 This may seem like a strange description of redaction criticism, since the field originally arose as a means of treating the final forms of the texts and of going beyond the diachronic interests of source critics and form critics. However, redaction criticism still rests firmly on source critical and form critical conclusions, and many redaction critics focus most of their energies to differentiating between the ideology behind the original sources and that of the subsequent editors.

61 So also Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 164; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 230; Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288: 290–91; O'Brien, *Priest and Levite*, 82; Glazier-McDonald, "Mal'ak," 96; Hill, *Malachi*, 25D: 260.

62 The witnesses to the MT (Aleppo codex and Leningrad codex) are identical. Four discrepancies exist between the MT and 4QXIIa. First, the MT spells the participle "sending" defectively (שלח) while the DSS scroll does not (שולח). The second is that 4QXIIa ends the verse with a הנה + pronominal suffix + participle construction (הנו בא) while the MT uses a הנה + participle construction (הנה בא) to communicate the same idea. The third is that 3:1 in 4QXIIa begins with "therefore" (לכן) which is absent in the MT. The fourth difference, and the only one that may impact the meaning, is that the DSS reads "they are coming" (יבאו) while the MT reads "he is coming" (יבוא). These differences can all be accounted for without positing the existence of different *Vorlagen*. The first difference is accounted for by the fact that the DSS often uses *waw* as a vowel letter (see Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* [Harvard Semitic Studies 29; Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1986], 17). The second difference is an example of a synonymous reading (see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* [3rd ed.; Fortress: Minneapolis, 2012], 257-58) while the third is likely a contextual changes due to "the copyists' wish to adapt the text to their own understanding or to an exegetical tradition known to them" (Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 263). The last difference may also be an example of a contextual change, or it may be a case of metathesis, which is the unintentional "transposition of two adjacent letters" (Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 232): in this case, switching the letters (יבוא אandיבואו).

63 The LXX uses the word ἐπιβλέψεται ("he will look intently at") to translate the *piel weqatal* form ופנה ("he will prepare"). This seems to be a translation error rather than evidence of a different Hebrew *Vorlage*. The LXX translator renders several Hebrew words incorrectly (see Lars Kruse-Blinkenberg, "The Book of Malachi according to Codex Syro-Hexaplaris Ambrosianus," *Studia Theologica* 21 [1967], 72). Furthermore, if one translator was responsible for the Greek version of the Minor Prophets (as argued by H. J. Thackeray, "The Greek Translators of the Prophetical Books," *Journal of Theological Studies* 4 [1903]: 585; for a more recent treatment, see Takamitsu Muraoka, "In Defense of the Unity of the Septuagint Minor Prophets," *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute* 15 [1989]: 34), one will notice that he struggled with the verb פנה (see for instance LXX Zeph 3:15, Hos 3:1, Nah 2:9 and Zech 10:4). Thus, the difference between the MT and the LXX as this point is probably due to translation error. See also Hill, *Malachi*, 260.

64 Glazier-McDonald, "Mal'ak," 96; In fact, this shift from third to first person is a common feature in YHWH's speech. See for example, 2 Sam 7:5-16, 1 Chr 17:7-14, Isa 14:22-27, 22:15-25, Jer 23:16-22, etc.

65 Verhoef argues that 3:2-3:4 address the accusation against YHWH in 2:17 ("Everyone who does evil is good in the eyes of YHWH and in them He is pleased!") while 3:5 answers the question asked in 2:17 ("Where is the God of justice?"). See Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 283–87.

66 This is similar to Scalise's position ("Malachi," 350), though I disagree with her interpretation of the identities of the figures in 3:1. This is also an application of Weyde's observation that "elsewhere in Malachi we have found more than once that statements, of whatever form, are elaborated in the following context, in which the references of terms and phrases have been more closely defined. This appears to be a characteristic feature of the discourses in this book, and the previous analysis gave no reason to regard such elaborations as later insertions." See Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:290.

67 The people's complaints in 2:17 should probably be understood as being directed primarily (not exclusively) towards the abuses of the priests. The numerous lexical connections between 2:17-3:6 and 1:6-2:9 would support this interpretation (see Snyman, "Once Again," 1037–38). This reading also provides the basis for YHWH's response in 3:1-4, where He speaks of refining the "sons of Levi" (3:1-4). However, the end of the

section reveals that the people clamoring for God's justice failed to recognize their own culpability. Thus, the Lord's coming would bring judgment not only upon sinful priests, but upon those who were questioning YHWH while disregarding His covenant (3:5). The shift from the third person forms in 3:1b-4 to the first person form of 3:5 would then be functioning rhetorically to heighten the text's impact on initial readers, highlighting the fact that those who questioned God's justice would themselves experience that justice on the day of the Lord.

[68] Contra Mason, *Preaching and Tradition*, 249–50. Redditt ("Malachi in Its Social Setting," 247) is also mistaken when he suggests that 3:1-5 is unintelligible as it stands. He makes this claim because he sees 3:1b as addressing a new audience. I will argue that 3:1-5 addresses the same audience: those who were blaspheming God by doubting His justice. The fact that they are "seeking" the Lord and "delighting" in His coming only highlights the irony of the situation. For similar interpretations, see Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 289–90; Scalise, "Malachi," 349; Scalise, "To Fear or Not to Fear," 413; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 265; Kaiser, *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love*, 79.

[69] I would argue that it is more fruitful to assume the work of a single author unless there is decisive evidence to posit the work of a redactor. Evidence would include (1) clearly anachronistic statements in non-prophetic material, (2) statements in the text that acknowledge the use of other sources, (3) manuscript evidence which strongly suggests the existence of different *Vorlagen*, and (4) the survival of parallel texts whose

similarity strongly suggests that one borrowed from the other or that both borrowed from the same sources.

[70] In many ways, finding evidence for a redactor is like trying to find evidence for the existence of Bigfoot: once one is convinced that he exists, evidence for his existence begins to abound.

[71] Vanhoozer defines allusions when he says, "To allude is to refer to something— a person, place, event, or other text— indirectly." See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 256.

[72] Perhaps most famously, Hays proposed seven criteria for detecting the presence of an allusion. See Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 29–32; Beale builds on Hays, while also critiquing his work. See G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 31–35.

[73] Benjamin D. Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger," *Vetus Testamentum* 46 (1996): 484.

[74] Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion, and Intertextuality," 484–85.

[75] Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:51.

[76] Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:52.

[77] Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:52.

[78] Derek Bass, "Hosea's Use of Scripture: An Analysis of His Hermeneutics" (Ph.D. diss, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 100; emphasis original.

[79] Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:288. Even those who argue against an allusion do not do so on the basis of lexical differences between the texts.

[80] Snyman, "Once Again," 1042; Malone, "Messiah Announced," 221; Steven L. McKenzie and Howard N. Wallace, "Covenant Themes in Malachi," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1983): 553-54.

[81] Most commentators agree on the divisions of the book, though there is still much discussion on form criticism in relation to the book of Malachi. For a thorough discussion of the forms (*Gattungen*) found in Malachi, see Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:14–48.

[82] With respect to the reported words of the people, I agree with Weyde when he says, "The words of the addressees, though they might be real citations in some cases, are probably fictitious; the prophet interprets their opinion and incorporates it in his message." See Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:12.

[83] For commentators who take Mal 3:1-5 to be eschatological, see Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 169; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 32:326; Mason, *Preaching and Tradition*, 250; Scalise, "Malachi," 349; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 294; James N. Pohlig, *An Exegetical Summary of Malachi* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1998), 126.

[84] If Mal 3:23-24 (MT) describes the same messenger, then his preparatory work would consist of turning the hearts of fathers to their sons and sons to their fathers. This too is dissimilar from the role of the messenger in Exod 23:20. See Exod 23:20-33

[85] See Exod 23:20-33.

[86] Exodus 19:4-6 reveals the importance of the priesthood and the nation for understanding Exod 19:1–24:11. There are at least two reasons that this is so. First, Exod 19:4–6 disclose the Lord's purpose for the

establishment of the covenant unpacked in Exod 20–24 (in fact, Gentry refers to the verses as a climax of the section; see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2012], 309–15). It only makes sense that Moses intended for readers to keep this purpose in mind as they read the entire section. Second, Exod 19:4–6 reveals that the nation and the priesthood were meant to be coterminous. Thus, when Moses addresses the nation of Israel throughout Exod 19–24, he is speaking to those who were also called to be priests.

[87] Other differing circumstances would include the facts that (1) a priestly class *within* the nation of Israel had been previously established, (2) the people were not on the way to the promised land but were currently inhabiting it, and (3) the covenant established at Sinai had already been broken (Mal 3:5).

[88] Given the strong lexical links between Mal 3:1 and Exod 23:20, it may also be significant that "treasured possession" (סגלה) is found in both Mal 3:17 and Exod 19:5. The root is rare, only occurring eight times. And it is only used of God's people six times (Exod 19:5, Deut 7:6, 14:2, 26:18, Ps 135:4, and Mal 3:17). Given that (1) Malachi already alludes to the book of the covenant and (2) Exod 19:5 probably provides the impetus for the later descriptions of Israel as God's "treasured possession," there is a strong likelihood that Mal 3:17 displays an awareness of Exod 19:5. This in turn provides more reason to see its influence in Mal 3:1.

[89] While it is true that Exod 23:20 does not occur in an eschatological section, this by itself does not weaken the case for an inner-biblical relationship between it and Mal 3:1. This is because Mal 3:1 may be predicting a figure who will share a typological relationship with the messenger of Exodus. For a similar interpretation, see Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 40. For discussions on the nature of typology, see Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenoir" in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986), 196; Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical τύπος Structures* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 2; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981); Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 94; Davidson, *Typology*, 420–21; Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Naselli, "The Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament" in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 725–30; Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 365.

[90] Other contextual features have been put forth in order to argue for an allusion from Mal 3:1 to Exod 23:20. Stuart ("Minor Prophets," 1350–52) claims that both texts describe a mighty act of victory won by YHWH for Israel. Petersen (Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 210) believes that the messenger figure in both texts enables the people of Israel to keep the covenant stipulations. O'Brien (*Priest and Levite*, 74) states that the two messenger figures are linked because "both in covenant making and covenant lawsuit, the figure of the messenger is central." Rikk E. Watts posits that Malachi's use of Exod 23:20 is "an ironic recapitulation of the first [Exodus]" (see "Mark" in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 118).

[91] This represents a change in my views since the initial presentation of this paper at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. My thanks go to Dr. Jim Hamilton and to those who took part in his seminar entitled "Methods in Biblical Theology," which met in the Spring of 2015. Their feedback was instrumental in leading me to rethink my conclusions.

[92] An Accordance search reveals eight occurrences: Gen 24:31, Lev 14:36, Isa 40:3, 57:14, 60:12, Zeph 3:15, Mal 3:1, and Ps 80:10.

[93] An Accordance search reveals that דרך occurs 706 times.

[94] The reason that an allusion to Isa 57 or 62 should not be posited is because the contexts differ significantly. In both Isa 57:14 and 62:10, the way which is being prepared is for the people, not for YHWH.

[95] On the nature of OT eschatology, see Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 272–73.

[96] In Isaiah, the figure is simply described as a voice crying in the wilderness (קול קורא במדבר). This figure seems to be working to prepare a way for YHWH by calling for that path to be made clear.

[97] For this interpretation of Isa 40:3, see John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (rev. ed., vol. 25; Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 609; J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (vol. 20; Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 276; James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 202.

[98] Verhoef notes this as well. See Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 287.

99 So Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 338; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 176; William J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 116. Contra Motyer, *Isaiah*, 20:276.

100 Irony explains why Malachi refers to the blasphemers of 2:17 as those who are "seeking the Lord" and "desiring the messenger of the covenant" in 3:1. The prophet also answers the people's demand in an ironic manner. For a similar interpretation, see McKenzie and Wallace, "Covenant Themes in Malachi," 553; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 289–90; Scalise, "Malachi," 349; Scalise, "To Fear or Not to Fear," 413; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 265; Kaiser, *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love*, 79.

101 While there are not enough lexical similarities to make a strong case for an allusion between Isa 40:3 and Exod 23:20, there are some intriguing contextual similarities. Exodus 23:20 states that the people must pay attention to the messenger and "obey his voice"; Isa 40:3 informs us of a "voice" instructing God's people. Furthermore, the messenger of Exodus will lead God's people through the wilderness into the promised land; the voice in Isaiah demands that a highway be built in the wilderness so God may return to his people.

102 I am in wholehearted agreement with Vanhoozer when he says, "The reality to which interpreters are accountable and to which their descriptions must correspond if they seek to be true is grounded in the authors embodied and enacted intention." See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 253.

103 There is some debate as to whether this section ends with 3:5 or with 3:6. Most commentators suggest that it ends with 3:5. I however tend to see 3:6 as the proper close of the section (see also Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:317–18). The כי ("for") connects 3:6 to 3:5 and functions in a causal sense, depicting YHWH's unchangeableness as the reason for the judgment. This reading is also is appropriate in light of the charges leveled against YHWH in 2:17 which began the section; Mal 3:6 serves to identify those who are responsible for the blasphemy of 2:17.

104 The MT lacks a direct object (ואמרתם במה הוגענו) while the LXX makes the direct object explicit (καὶ εἴπατε ᾿Εν τίνι παρωξύναμεν αὐτόν;). In both cases, the context makes clear that YHWH is the direct object. The *weqatal* form is functioning to indicate a consequent situation in future time. See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §32.2.3a.

105 So also Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 164; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 230; Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:290–91; O'Brien, *Priest and Levite*, 82; Glazier-McDonald, "Mal'ak," 96; Hill, *Malachi*, 25D:260.

106 This is not to say that redaction criticism is always unhelpful. However, I believe it should be practiced only when there is strong evidence of editorial activity. For types of evidence, see footnote 70.

107 Thus, it is at least not necessary to conclude that "my messenger" is the angel of the Lord of Exod 23:20. So also Snyman, "Once Again," 1042; Malone, "Messiah Announced," 221; Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:288.

108 As is commonly acknowledged, the word מלאך can be used for both humans and angels. See entry for מלאך in Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (13th ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010).

109 Snyman, "Once Again," 1041-43; Malone, "Messiah Announced," 223; Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:288; Malchow, "Messenger," 253–54; Stuart, "Minor Prophets," 1350–52; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 288; Redditt, "Malachi in Its Social Setting," 250; Kaiser, *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love*, 80. Contra Hill, *Malachi*, 25D: 288; Dumbrell, "Malachi," 48.

110 Elie Assis ("Moses, Elijah, and the Messianic Hope: A New Reading of Malachi 3,22-24," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 123, no. 2 [2011]: 214–15) makes the following points of connection between 3:1 and 3:22-24: (1) there is a similarity in presentation, (2) there is a similarity in key words, (3) in both cases God is speaking and sending His emissary, (4) both the "messenger" and Elijah are coming before God, and (5) both figures are tied to covenant renewal. See also Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi*, 1069; Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 210; Malchow, "Messenger," 252; Miller, "Messenger," 3; Hill, *Malachi*, 25D:383; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 340; Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 263–64.

111 See Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 139; Hill, *Malachi*, 25D:267.

112 This would also eliminate the one-person approach to Mal 3:1 as an exegetical option.

113 Scalise also blends both the prophetic and the priestly in her description of the messenger. See Scalise, "Malachi," 350.

114 Assis, "Moses, Elijah, Messianic Hope," 214–15; Snyman, "Once Again," 1041–43; Malone, "Messiah

Announced," 223; Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 210; Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi*, 1049; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 288; Redditt, "Malachi in Its Social Setting," 250.

115 Isa 42:19, 44:26, Hag 1:13, 2 Chr 36:15-16; However, Weyde claims that Eccl 5:5 uses מלאך to refer to a priest. See Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:197.

116 Assis, "Moses, Elijah, Messianic Hope," 218–19.

117 Though in my opinion, Malchow wrongly sees 3:1b-4 as a later interpolation and he errs in his explanation for the origin of the priestly terminology in Mal 3, he is right to give due respect to the influence that Malachi 2:7 should have on interpretations of 3:1. See Malchow, "Messenger." See also Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:289.

118 Verhoef (*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 288) argues against a priestly identification by saying, "The fact that the messenger of 3:1 is sent indicates that he may not be identified with the priests who are also called 'messengers of the Lord' in 2:7." It is difficult to understand how the sending in 3:1 militates against a priestly identification. Snyman ("Once Again," 1041) claims that the messenger cannot be a priest because 2:1-9 utters a scathing critique and a curse against the priesthood. However, he fails to recognize that YHWH's desire is to preserve the covenant with Levi (2:4), that God's plan is to refine (not destroy) the priesthood, and that YHWH's critique and curse fall on unfaithful priests and not the priesthood in and of itself.

119 Snyman ("Once Again," 1037) rightly says, "When Malachi 1:6-2:9 and 2:17-3:7a are examined a surprisingly close connection between these two units is found."

120 Snyman, "Once Again," 1037-38.

121 In Malachi, roots related to טהר occur only in 1:11 and 3:3.

122 In Malachi, דרך only occurs in 2:8 and 3:1.

123 The use of השיב ("he turned back") and תורה ("torah") connect Mal 2:6 to Mal 3:22-24. The former word occurs in Malachi only in 2:6 and 3:24, while the second occurs only in 2:6-9 and 3:22.

124 So also Assis, "Moses, Elijah, Messianic Hope," 209.

125 So also Daniel I. Block, "Reviving God's Covenant: Reflections on Malachi 2:1-9," *Reformation and Revival* 4, no. 3 (1995): 128; Hill, *Malachi*, 25D: 213; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 256; Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:47, 64–68.

126 This was not unheard of in Israel's history, for both Jeremiah (Jer 1:1) and Ezekiel (Ezek 1:3) were of priestly descent.

127 See Hill, *Malachi*, 25D: 213; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 256.

128 The *waw* would be functioning as a disjunctive indicating a shift in scene and in participants. See Waltke and O'Connor, *IBHS*, §39.2.3a.

129 John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 810.

130 Snyman, "Once Again," 1038–39; Greg Goswell, "The Eschatology of Malachi After Zechariah 14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 3 (2013): 635; Malone, "Messiah Announced," 219; Malchow, "Messenger," 253; Glazier-McDonald, "Mal'ak," 98; Stuart, "Minor Prophets," 1350–52; Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi*, 1049; Smith, *Malachi*, 63; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 288; Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:290; Hill, *Malachi*, 25D:268; Redditt, "Malachi in Its Social Setting," 250.

131 An Accordance search reveals nine occurrences: Exod 23:17, 34:23, Deut 10:17, Isa 1:24, 3:1, 10:16, 33, 19:4, and Mal 3:1.

132 Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 128–34; Eddinger, *Malachi*, 78; Malone, "Messiah Announced," 220–25; Snyman, "Once Again," 1038–41. Verhoef (*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 288–89) tries to nuance his view by seeing both an identification and a distinction being made between "the Lord" and "the messenger of the covenant." Though it is not clear whether Petersen holds to the one-person approach or the two-person approach, he also identifies "the Lord" with "the messenger of the covenant." See Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 211.

133 The chiastic structure works as follows: (A) "And suddenly He will come to His temple, (B) the Lord whom you are seeking, (B') and the messenger of the covenant in whom you are delighting, (A') Behold, He is coming." For similar arguments based on the structure, see Snyman, "Once Again," 1040; Malone, "Messiah Announced," 219; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 288–89.

134 Commentators who do not see the Lord and the messenger of the covenant as one person often flounder in attempting to account for the people's desire for the messenger. Malchow ("Messenger," 254–55) posits that their desire is to be explained by a growing expectation for a priestly Messiah. But his hypothesis is based on his presupposition of editorial activity in 3:1. Weyde (*Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:289–90) agrees with Malchow regarding the desire for a priestly messenger (although he disputes Malchow's claims of

redactions and a late date). But in order to do this, he must take the unlikely position that those addressed in 3:1 are presented positively. Hill (*Malachi*, 25D: 270–71) fails to comment on the issue at all.

135 See also Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 139–42.

136 BDB for instance claims that this root is used "of (the) palace of God considered as king."

137 So Glazier-McDonald (*Malachi: The Divine Messenger,* 142) states, "The use of אדון in Mal 3:1 aptly continues the יהוה יום imagery. On his day Yahweh becomes king, 'the world-ruler who uses all nations and kingdoms as his instruments.'"

138 See especially Mal 1:14.

139 Though perhaps not a common occurrence, God is in fact described in priestly terminology elsewhere in the OT. So for instance, in a similarly eschatological setting, Isaiah describes YHWH's day of judgment in cultic terms. Isaiah 34:6 (ESV) says, "The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood; it is gorged with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom."

140 These terms include "temple" (היכל), "purifying" (מטהר), "purify" (טהר), "sons of Levi" (בני לוי), "offering" (מגישי), "pleasing" (ערב), and "gift" (מנחה), which occurs twice.

141 By referring to God's house as a "temple" (היכל), Malachi nicely ties both the priestly theme and the kingly theme together. This in turn hearkens back to 1:14, which speaks to a coming day when God will be recognized as king over the nations.

142 Malchow ("Messenger", 254) makes the same point when he says, "It is consistent that the purifier of the Levites should Himself arise from the same group."

143 So also Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 288:289; Snyman, "Once Again," 1041; Malchow, "Messenger," 253–54.

144 For this reason, I believe that the covenant referred to in the phrase "messenger of the covenant" is the covenant with Levi. However, if Williamson is correct when he states, "Thus the Priestly and Mosaic covenants, while remaining distinct, run in parallel with one another, and are closely related in purpose; namely, maintaining the relationship between God and Israel," then perhaps one can assume that the Sinai covenant is in view as well. See Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (vol. 23, New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 105–6.

145 The purification of the "sons of Levi" presents difficulties for Christian interpreters. Does Malachi envision actual descendants of Levi being restored to the priesthood in the eschatological age? And if he does, was he mistaken? Though more work needs to be done on this issue, there are at least three possible ways forward in my estimation. First, it is possible that Malachi was not using the phrase "sons of Levi" in a strict manner. O'Brien (*Priest and Levite*, 143–44) has demonstrated quite convincingly that Malachi used the designation "sons of Levi" synonymously with the term "priest." Garrett (*Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* [Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2000], 233) has also made the case that the OT can use the term "Levite" as a "loose synonym" for priest. This seems to be the case in Isa 66:21 when YHWH says of non-Israelites, "And I will even take some among them as priests and as Levites." Thus, it may be possible that Malachi was simply saying that YHWH would work in the coming age to produce a pure priesthood. This would then be consistent with the NT perspective and with Malachi's own vision in 1:11. Second, it is possible that the prophet used the expression "sons of Levi" to refer specifically to the ethnic group, though the NT fulfilled this prediction through the establishment of a universal priesthood. Third, it is possible that Malachi refers specifically to the descendants of Levi, and the fulfillment of this promise is still future. If Rom 11:25 refers to a future ingathering of ethnic Israel, it is plausible that the refinement of the sons of Levi will be included in that act of God.

146 These considerations also conflict with the view that Malachi is predicting the coming of the Messiah. Instead, the prophet is envisioning the arrival of God Himself. The NT fulfillment is consistent with Malachi's expectations however, because God did come to His people in the person of Jesus, the Christ. See also Malone, "Messiah Announced," 228.

147 Discussions on the NT use of the OT continue to abound. For a brief introduction to the issues, see Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction* (2nd ed., London: T&T Clark, 2015).

148 Perhaps then it is no coincidence that Luke points out John's priestly ancestry; see Luke 1:8-25.

149 Thus Rikk E. Watts says, "Because John clearly functions as Malachi's Elijah, Israel must listen to him if they are to avoid the curse that Yahweh s coming might occasion" (see "Mark" in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 119). The severe warning provided by John the Baptist in Matt 3:7–12 is in fact reminiscent of the tone of Exod 23:20–21. For an argument in favor of seeing John the Baptist as the antitype of Exod 23:20, see

Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," 40.

[150] See also Simon J. Gathercole, *The Pre-existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 244.

[151] The OT speaks repeatedly of a coming king in the line of David (see for instance Isa 9:6 [ET 9:7], 16:5, 22:22, Jer 23:5, 30:9, Ezek 34:23). God also promises to raise up a "faithful priest," for whom YHWH would build a "sure house" (1 Sam 2:35). Furthermore, there are hints in the OT that these two offices would come together in a single person (see Ps 110:2-4; Zech 6:13).

[152] Matthew especially presents Jesus as the true Israel (see Matt 2:13–15, 4:1–11, 11:10, 12:15–21). As Hamilton (*God's Glory,* 364) notes, the evangelist "presents Jesus as recapitulating the history of Israel." See also Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 439; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 105–6; Blomberg, "Matthew," 8 & 18.