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Jutta Noetzel

Maleachi, ein Hermeneut

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Interestingly enough, this book starts with a picture. Jutta Noetzel introduces her work with a full-color reproduction of Paul Klee's painting *Angelus novus* (1920/32; now in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; see Wikipedia). Although Malachi is not Klee's *Angelus novus*, the elusive drawing with watercolor and oil pastel illustrates the hermeneutical function of "Malachi." Malachi appears as a historical prophet and is received as such in Sir 49:10 and the passage related to him in the pseudepigraphic *Vitae prophetarum*. However, although "Malachi" transmits the "word of the LORD" (Mal 1:1), the figure is *not* a prophet in the historical or conventional sense. The "messenger" reestablishes the connection between the "sender" Yahweh and the "sons of Levi" and thus introduces a completely new kind of prophecy. The historical "prophet" or author of the prophetic writing entirely vanishes and no longer has an identifiable shape—the *new messenger* (Latin: *angelus novus*!) no longer communicates a new piece of divine revelation that he originally received from God in an individual vision. The *new messenger* has a hermeneutical function and becomes the mediator, interpreter, or exegete of the new medium of revelation: the written Torah. In the words of Jutta Noetzel: "Der Bote ist nicht mehr Offenbarungsmittler, sondern Hermeneut der am Sinai ergangenen, schriftlich fixierten und anerkannten Offenbarung" (see 5).

Here lies the basic hypothesis of Jutta Noetzel's dissertation. She wrote this fine book under the supervision of Arndt Meinhold, Uwe Becker, and Ernst-Joachim Waschke. Its German title, "Maleachi, ein Hermeneut," is difficult to grasp even for a German-speaking audience. The very unusual term *Hermeneut* provokes a longer process of reflection and is thus consistent with the disturbing otherness of the book of Malachi. As several scholars have already stated before, the kind of prophecy articulated in this last writing of the Twelve Prophets follows a new understanding. *Prophecy* becomes application and interpretation of the Torah. According to Noetzel, this idea is the basic core of the writing and the organizing principle in the formation of the book. After reading the first five pages of the book (ch. 1.1), one understands what the term *Hermeneut* stands for and in which way the writing (!) of Malachi represents an *angelus novus*.

After that very helpful introduction, Noetzel proceeds rather conventionally by unfolding the outline and method of her study. The basic approach follows a synchronic line, using text-critical, linguistic, and intertextual tools in order to interpret the final form of the text. Many intertextual indicators point to an intensive relationship of the Malachi text to the Jacob tradition in the book of Genesis and to passages in Deuteronomy. From the intertextual viewpoint, one necessarily turns to questions of the canon, hence Noetzel dedicates a shorter chapter (ch. 5) to the issues of the epilogue (Mal 3:22–24 [Eng. 4:4–6]), the embedding of the epilogue and the entire writing within the *corpus propheticum*, the Tanak, and the Septuagint. According to Noetzel, one can clearly see that "Malachi" is not an original unity but rather an edited text. Thus, she also applies diachronic methods and in chapter 6 adds a redaction-critical proposal for the origin of the writing of Malachi. By the way, following a recent convention that this reviewer adopts as well, Noetzel does not call Malachi a "book" (*Buch*) but reserves this term for the Book of the Twelve, while the twelve single parts of this book are labeled "writings" (hence: *Maleachischrift*). The last part of the introduction (ch. 1.3) summarizes the results of the research on Malachi within the last thirty years (thirteen pages).

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the broader picture. In chapter 2 Noetzel tries to draw an outline of the understanding of prophecy within the Book of the Twelve. She uses the occurrences of the Hebrew term נְבִיא as a point of departure. In the struggle of competences between priests and prophets, it becomes clear that in the end Moses appears as the prototype of the נְבִיא: all types of prophecy must in some way or other relate back to Moses. Noetzel convincingly demonstrates that in the final form of the Book of the Twelve all prophets who are called נְבִיא (Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, and, implicitly, Amos) stand in the *successio mosaica* and proffer the heritage of Moses. However, this kind of prophecy comes to an end in Zech 13; hence, the following Malachi is no longer a נְבִיא. Thus, chapter 3 considers the writing as a whole and identifies the

overall concept by discussing the heading (Mal 1:1), the question of genre, and the inner structure of the entire composition.

The bulk of Noetzel's study is dedicated to a detailed analysis of the six discussion speeches (ch. 4: 81–239). This part more or less resembles a normal commentary. Noetzel presents her own German translation with text-critical notes (especially referring to the Septuagint version). She structures each unit according to formal criteria and identifies the usual patterns such as *inclusio*. Then she turns to the question of meaning and offers suggestions for the interpretation of the content of each unit. Depending on the length of the discussion speech, at times Noetzel introduces subsections for the interpretation of single verses and motifs. For each discussion speech the concluding paragraph analyzes the position of the unit within the entire writing; that is, the function of the section for the whole and its relationship to the other discussion speeches are clarified.

As already noted, the epilogue is treated in a separate chapter (ch. 5) that nevertheless applies the same steps: text, structure, meaning, position. The subsection "position" discusses the function of the final three verses for the entire *corpus propheticum*. Noetzel carefully differentiates between the Tanak and the Septuagint. The Septuagint changes the sequence and places Mal 3:22 (Eng. 4:4; LXX 3:24) last: "Remember the law of Moyses my slave, as I commanded him at Choreb with ordinances and statutes for all Israel" (NETS). According to Noetzel, it is not necessary to apply a diachronic explanation for this transition; rather, the change is required by the differing canonical sequence of the Septuagint. As the book of Isaiah (Esaias) follows the Dodekapropheton, the transition from Malachias to Esaias needs to be adapted: the announcement of eschatological return of Elias the Thesbite cannot be followed by the appearance of Esaias; hence Elias becomes the herald of the day of the Lord, and the admonition to remember and obey the law of Moyses becomes the final criterion for curse and blessing at the day of the Lord and thus the final verse of the Dodekapropheton in the Septuagint.

Chapter 6 presents a suggestion for the diachronic formation of the writing of Malachi. Noetzel expressly states that she understands her redaction-critical hypothesis as a "glass bead game" (*Glasperlenspiel*) with no claim of historical truth. It is only the search for the idea that might have led the authors to pin down (and pen) their "active reading," that is, how they received texts and developed them further. After presenting the *status quaestionis* on the literary growth of Malachi within the formation of the Book of the Twelve, she summarizes the source-critical evidence for different layers or stages of origin of various verses. Noetzel's own model consists of a *Grundschrift* that was enhanced by two layers of active readings. In order to illustrate her hypothesis about the formation of Malachi, she presents a chart on pages 287–93: the *Grundschrift* and the two enhancing layers are subsequently indented. For example: The first discussion speech (Mal 1:2–5)

belongs to the second active reading, hence it is indented by about two centimeters. The first verses of the second discussion speech are the beginning of the *Grundschicht* (hence 1:6, 7b, 8 start on the left margin), while 1:7a, 9a are first additions (active reading I) and thus indented by about one centimeter. Although one gets a fine impression about the wording and contents of the *Grundschicht* and the subsequent additions and thus about Noetzel's idea about the growth of the writing, the layered display of the German translation has a different effect on the reviewer: for me, the diachronic model is not convincing. The attempt to read the *Grundschicht* as a text of its own without the additions does not provide a coherent whole. Especially Mal 1:6 does not work as an appropriate beginning (according to my view). Maybe the diachronic suggestion is the weakest part in Noetzel's study, and she was well advised not to base her interpretation on it. On the contrary, it was wise to put the redaction-critical model as a mere suggestion at the end, marking carefully the hypothetical character of the endeavor, and to start the overall interpretation of Malachi from the final form of the text. However, one should not overlook a very helpful feature of the chart with the layered translation: in the column on the right-hand side, for each verse many verse references to other texts of the Tanak are listed. These references are used in the redaction-critical argumentation; however, they also provide a fine resource for further intertextual studies.

The final chapter (ch. 7) summarizes the convincing hypothesis of Noetzel's work: prophecy as exegesis (*Prophetie als Schriftauslegung*). Malachi, the "messenger," is an *angelus novus*, not a conventional prophetic figure. The messenger has no shape (if he were to take on a certain shape or appearance, he would be fallible and contingent). Thus, the messenger is a hermeneutical function, the interpretation of the revelation—revealed in the past, fixed in writing, and authorized by the divine, a revelation for the present according to the divine will. After the end of conventional prophecy (Zech 13), legitimate prophecy consists of Torah exegesis. Deuteronomy 17–18 and Mal 2:4–8 share the same basic idea of "prophecy as interpretation of scripture" (Torah). Thus Malachi becomes a programmatic manifesto regarding revelation and the transmission of revelation: the exegete of scripture takes over the task of the former prophet. The messenger becomes the interpreter (*Hermeneut*) of the written Torah, which itself becomes the new medium of revelation. Several figures can slip into the role of the messenger: Moses (the prototype), Elijah (Mal 3:23 [Eng. 4:5]), the priest (Mal 2:7). The new understanding of prophecy is accompanied by a new understanding of religion: the writing of Malachi shows a tendency to the phenomenon of a secondary religion (Theo Sundermeier) or universal religion. The cult at the temple of Jerusalem becomes less important for a universally conceived Judaism, while "Yahweh Sabaoth" becomes the universal king of the entire world. Becoming a follower of this unique God is the decision of the individual; getting closer to the salvific presence of this deity is no longer limited to the participation in the

centralized cult in Jerusalem; the criterion for salvation is the normativity of the written revelation in the Torah (see 303). Thus, in the end everything becomes Torah, even the Psalms and the Prophets.

Noetzel's diachronic view of Malachi will remain a controversial point, but this discussion should not detract from the valuable insights gained by her synchronic analysis of the final form of Malachi. Her understanding of Malachi as a cipher or code for a new understanding of prophecy (prophecy as exegesis, the messenger as interpreter, *Hermeneut*, of the written Torah) is a convincing approach. It explains in a plausible way the characteristics of the last unit in the Book of the Twelve and pays full attention to the canon-hermeneutical function of this part of the Hebrew Bible. Hence, Noetzel's contribution is not only essential for those scholars interested in the Book of the Twelve and its single parts but also important for the religio-historical development of the idea of canon and the understanding of the concept of scripture.