

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A STRATEGIC SPIRITUAL FORMATION STUDY BASED ON THE BOOK OF MALACHI

A Thesis Proposal Submitted to
Dr. Dennis McDonald and Dr. Chet Roden
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGIC SPIRITUAL FORMATION STUDY BASED ON THE BOOK OF MALACHI

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018

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A review of current literature on spiritual disciplines demonstrates the need for a pastor to successfully implement an exegetical preaching methodology toward spiritual formation. The goal of this project is to answer: “What impact would a strategic spiritual formation study based upon the Book of Malachi implemented by a pastor have on a local church that is below 200 in attendance?” Incorporating the results of surveys sent to pastors within The Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia having below 200 in attendance, this project will review theological, historical, and exegetical, perspectives and principles for a biblical methodology for spiritual formation.

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It is with great joy to be able to thank those who have been both patient and supportive of my thesis project, as I sought to work out my own strategy for discovering biblical formation principles by expository preaching through whole books of the Bible for the benefit of my own spiritual maturity and the congregation and community in which I pastor.

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Most of all, may God and His word continue to teach me and draw me into a much closer and deeper personal relationship with my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ till His work of sanctification is complete: “. . . until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19, KJV).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Malachi is the final spiritual test of divine expectation of faithfulness of God's people in the Old Testament and they failed (e.g., Mal 4:4–6 [Mal 3:22–24 Heb. Text]). Malachi's spiritual formation principles are still relevant to the local church today (e.g., Luke 18:8, KJV): "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"). The question that this project will seek to answer is "What impact would a strategic spiritual formation study based upon the Book of Malachi implemented by a pastor have on a local church that is below 200 in attendance?" This strategy will be determined by deriving theological principles through the study of Scripture, literature invested in the current movement known as *spiritual formation*, and survey results from pastors aligned with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV). One should rightfully inquire: Why is this topic needed? The answer is rooted in three aspects of life concerning spiritual formation—the life of the believer, the local church, and the global community; that is, an awareness, interest, and desire, to help and others conform to the likeness of Christ through a systematic study and life application of the Word of God.

Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard J. Foster has proved to be the groundbreaking work on Christian spirituality today. It has awakened the need to address how to maintain a consistent and disciplined spiritual walk in Christ. It has been over twenty-five years since Foster made the modern church consider what is commonly understood

today as spiritual formation; and, after all these years Foster's warning concerning the practice of Disciplines discussed in his book has proved applicable to the individual Christian's life and the local church today. He cautioned: "In our enthusiasm to practice the Disciplines, we may fail to practice discipline. The life that is pleasing to God is not a series of religious duties. We have only one thing to do, namely, to experience a life of relationship and intimacy with God."¹ This distinctive between pursuing and practicing spiritual formation has weighed heavily upon ministers; especially in light of the role of a pastor to individual Christians, the local church, and the global community.

In addition, related to a personal ministry, one's continued pursuit toward spiritual formation is further enhanced through studying within academic circles. Ministerial training can broaden an individual's understanding and scope of the importance of prayer, fasting, Bible study, memorization, service, as well as a long list of other spiritual disciplines which augments the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life.

For this author, the Spiritual Formation class at Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute in Hendersonville N.C. (in 1991) was foundational for a development of a personal plan for spiritual growth. Second, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. (in 1998) emphasized that *evangelism* was an important Christian discipline to fulfill the Great Commission which is illustrated through Donald Whitney's work *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Currently, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, VA., introduced, indirectly, writings of Dallas Willard and his overview of the spiritual disciplines concerning a believer's body, soul, and spirit, within the Christian life in a core Doctor of Ministry class – The Growth and Development of the Contemporary Minister. Under the guidance of these authors

¹ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1983), 4.

and others, a pastor can discover valuable tools to focus his ministry toward the spiritual transformation of the local church in the preaching and teaching of Scripture, exemplifying the many aspects of spiritual formation in the life of the believer, and instilling from theological and biblical arguments a pursuit of the Christian disciplines toward spiritual maturity and personal holiness and godliness.

As a SBCV pastor of a church under 100 in attendance, there is a commitment and passion for the exposition of Scripture toward the spiritual formation of those within the community of faith. According to the scriptures, the role of a pastor has a divine expectation to impact the people of God. There should be a resource to help pastors strategically impact their churches toward spiritual formation through a biblically coherent exposition of a biblical book. Many pastors are neither seeing their personal efforts as an exemplar nor as an expositor yielding significant progress in the spiritual formation of the local church as a whole; yet, they do sense that God desires to use them and will hold them accountable for implementing a successful strategy for their congregation and community. This goal goes beyond merely focusing upon the three important areas of church growth generally emphasized:

1. Baptisms
2. Budgets
3. Buildings

Rather, it focuses upon leading others into a deeper revelation of knowing Christ in a real, personal, vibrant, and intimate relationship, based upon the framework of the Canon of Scripture, so that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, will transform their lives into His likeness.

Therefore, a current need exists today for a strategy that models an entire biblical corpus to instill

the need for spiritual formation first for the spiritual leadership of the church and then to the people of God. Consequently, the Book of Malachi is the perfect template for this project.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose

A logical question should be asked by the reader: What will this project do? The importance of this project is twofold. First, this thesis will seek to apply a compositional approach toward developing a new model for implementing spiritual formation, based upon the theological context of an entire biblical book. Proposing a strategy based upon, the Book of Malachi, is a response to the surplus of volumes concerning spiritual formation that lack a thoroughgoing exegesis of the larger context of Scripture. This observation of current literature reveals a danger in speaking of specific spiritual disciplines as theologically sound in the absence of correct hermeneutics of a biblical book, in imitating pragmatic methodology illustrated in history rather than a consistent exegesis of Scripture. Hans William Frei illustrates this mounting trend of a shifting away from doing compositional exegesis when he observed that modern approaches to the biblical text tend to be more spiritual than theological instead of literal and historical (i.e., grammatical). Frei states that reading the biblical text “in the days before the rise of historical criticism in the eighteenth century was usually strongly realistic, i.e., at once literal and historical, and not only doctrinal or edifying.”² It is the hope of this author to encourage a new model of spiritual formation that reflects the literal and interpretive meaning of the text, rather than a figurative or topological one.

Second, this thesis will seek to show that spiritual formation is primarily a responsibility of those called to put into precept and practice a strategy that affects the total life of the

² Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1974), 1.

community of faith—the individual Christian (e.g., education and discipline), the corporate church (e.g., preaching and discipleship), and the global community (e.g., evangelism and missions). This thesis will argue this is the role of a pastor (esp. in small churches). This principle aspect of spiritual formation will be demonstrated through a compositional analysis of the Book of Malachi, which narrates a significant message of God’s expectation toward the role of spiritual leaders in light of God’s people. Hence, the Book of Malachi illustrates this important message to the local church today (and to all pastors). Because, the Book of Malachi concludes the prophetic corpus of the Old Testament Canon, it provides the reader with an excellent foundation of divine expectation for the spiritual growth and evidential sanctification of God’s people through the role of the spiritual leaders accountable for God’s people. This is illustrated through a literal and historical (i.e., grammatical) analysis of the composition of Malachi’s text.

Statement of Scope and Limitations of Research

Another question to consider by the reader is “Are there any disclaimers to this research?” In response, there are two major disclaimers that need to be addressed. First, the data and projections of this thesis will be of value throughout the Southern Baptist Convention and any local church or group that has a high view of Scripture as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible, Word of God; nevertheless, the scope of this research will be limited to Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia—a conservative constituency of Southern Baptist churches within the Commonwealth of Virginia, that runs less than 200 in attendance.

Second, the specific strategy of illustrating a new model toward spiritual formation is based upon this author’s own compositional analysis of the Book of Malachi (i.e., Appendix A).

It is the intention of this thesis to apply a macro-syntactical outline as a foundation and boundary in a textual study of Malachi that is literal and historical (i.e., grammatical) in its principles toward a successful spiritual formation strategy rather than simply spiritualizing portions of the text. So the use of genre specific literature for the idea of spiritual formation, ministries,³ and Academia,⁴ which specifically communicates how to structure a framework toward spiritual formation, will be utilized to give an illustrative flavor to the textual study of Malachi.

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Basis

A question of theory still needs to be asked: On what basis does this thesis rest? In response there are three broad disciplines intrinsic to this project. They are in order of importance: biblical in foundation, theological in principle, and historical in relevance.

First, the biblical foundation is limited to the canon of Scripture concentrating on the Book of Malachi; including a systematic investigation through a text-centered analysis of the composition of the Hebrew text (see Appendix A). Using a textlinguistic methodology for doing exegesis, the divine message of Malachi is revealed. This outline will serve as the basis for a strategic study to ensure its frame is consistent with the context of Scripture

Second, the theological principles (i.e., biblical theology)⁵ portrayed will be consistent in portraying doctrinal principles concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's

³ See Richard Foster's online ministry <http://www.renovare.us/>; Dallas Willard's online ministry <http://www.dwillard.org/default.asp>; and other ministries that are (1) monastic: <http://www.benetvision.org/>; and (2) liturgical: <http://www.liturgica.com/index.jsp>.

⁴ See Donald Whitney's online ministry: <http://biblicalspirituality.org/>

⁵ Alistair E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 103–105; Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove/Leicester: InterVarsity/Apollos, 2002).

sanctification (life of the Christian),⁶ ecclesiology (life of the Church),⁷ and missiology (life of the community).⁸ In regards to the overall goal of spiritual formation, this study, and its application will be Trinitarian because it “flows from who God is” both in His person and His work in behalf of His people transforming their lives.⁹

Third, the historical relevance of this thesis has two meanings. On the one hand, the term “historical” refers to a grammatical approach to the Scripture. Hence, the position of this thesis will view the Scripture as literal and historical (i.e., grammatical); rather than spiritual or symbolic.¹⁰ On the other hand, the term “historical” is also understood as chronological.¹¹ Hence, a survey of prominent works and authors throughout church history will be examined and reviewed as to their impact upon the contemporary movement of “spiritual formation:” specifically through the distinctive lenses of selected works that focus upon of these recent Christian authors—Richard J. Foster who approaches spiritual formation as a Christian Spiritualist; Dallas Willard who approaches spiritual formation as a Christian Philosopher; Donald Whitney who approaches spiritual formation as a Christian Theologian; and David G. Benner who approaches spiritual formation as a Christian Psychologist. Each of them relates the

⁶ Ronald J. Sider, “The Whole Gospel for the Whole Person,” in *A Place for Truth: Highlights from The Veritas Forum*, ed. Dallas Willard (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010): 300-317.

⁷ Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), see especially 23–26.

⁸ Ravi Zacharias, ed. *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith we Defend*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

⁹ Bruce Demarest, “The Trinity as Foundational for Spiritual Formation,” in *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*, ed. Alan Andrews (Colorado Springs: NavePress, 2010), 223-248.

¹⁰ Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1974), 1–3; Scott J. Hafemann, “Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove/Leicester: InterVarsity/Apollos, 2002), 18.

¹¹ E.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958).

experiences of historical persons and movements of historical events related to Christendom to formulate their own unique definition of spiritual formation. These works will be considered extra-biblical and non-prescriptive toward the life of the Christian (i.e., individual), the life of the Church (i.e., local), and the life of the community (i.e., global).

In addition, the purpose of this new model toward spiritual formation will intentionally integrate all three of these foundational aspects so that the strategic study of Malachi is Christ-honoring in a biblical, theological, and historical (i.e., grammatical and chronological) manner in its implementation to the local church.

Statement of Methodology

Another question on methodology to be considered: How will the solution be reached? In response, addressing the twofold issues set forth in the Statement of the Problem and Purpose (see above) in this thesis will be resolved in five main chapter divisions. Here the need for a new strategy toward spiritual formation will be illustrated.

Chapter 2 will review instrumental literately works toward spiritual formation. The goal of this section will be to determine how definitive periods of church history inspired contemporary authors in the field of spiritual formation: in particular, Richard J. Foster, a spiritualist,¹² Dallas Willard, a philosopher,¹³ Donald Whitney, a theologian,¹⁴ and David

¹² Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983); *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998); Richard J. Foster, and Gayle D. Beebe, *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

¹³ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperOne, 1988, 1991); *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (New York: HarperOne, 1997); *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002).

¹⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991); *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001).

Benner, a psychologist.¹⁵ This section will explain the concept of “spiritual formation” by presenting its terminology,¹⁶ theories that border spiritual formation,¹⁷ principles that cause spiritual formation,¹⁸ and objections,¹⁹ as portrayed throughout church history. So far the best definition that supports the objective of this thesis is presented by Richard E. Averbeck, professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages and director of the PhD program in Theological Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, saying:

The ministry through which we seek to stimulate and support the ongoing spiritually transforming work of the Holy Spirit in and through the personal lives, relationships, and ministries of genuine believers so that we all progressively become more conformed to the image of Christ according to the will of God the Father (Romans 8:26-30).²⁰

Accordingly, it is the purpose of Chapter 2 to fully explain what is meant in the thesis question “spiritual formation.”

Chapter 3 will present exegetical principles from Malachi toward spiritual formation. This will be accomplished through summarizing the importance of using the Book of Malachi as

¹⁵ David G. Benner, *Desiring God's Will: Aligning Our Hearts with the Heart of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005); *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

¹⁶ There is extensive use of synonyms for *spiritual formation* in authors writing in this genre: for example, “formation” can be illustrated as Theology and Transformation (Coe); Health (Whitney); Renewal (Foster); Piety (Calvin); Life (Willard), Sanctification ((Averbeck), et al.; whereas, “spiritual” can imply mystical principles (extra-biblical) as opposed to biblical precepts (i.e., exclusively); and, it can mean, simply religious as opposed to specifically Christian (Porter and DeWaay).

¹⁷ Dallas Willard, and Dieter Zander, interview by Greg Schneider, “The Apprentices,” *Leadership* 26 (2005): 20–25.

¹⁸ Richard E. Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1 (2008): 27–53.

¹⁹ Steve L. Porter, “Sanctification in a New Key: Reliving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1 (2008): 129–148; Bob DeWaay, “Donald Whitney and Spiritual Disciplines: Spirituality without Boundaries,” *Critical Issues Commentary* 111 (2009): 1–8; “Richard Foster—Celebration of Deception: Evangelical Mysticism,” *Critical Issues Commentary* 112 (2009): 1–5; “The Dangers of Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Disciplines,” *Critical Issues Commentary* 91 (2005): 1–7.

²⁰ Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” 27, 53; italic is original by Averbeck.

a strategy toward developing a new model toward spiritual formation based upon a compositional analysis of the literal and historical (i.e., grammatical) structure of Malachi as a whole. This approach outlines nine dialogues between the Levitical priests and the word of the LORD. The comparative outline below between English text and Hebrew text of Malachi will outline a compositional approach to illustrate the biblical text, biblical theology, and ultimately the intended biblical formation composed within the message of the Book of Malachi.

Macro-syntactical outline based upon the verbal level of Malachi

Exegetical outline based upon macro-syntactical outline of Malachi BASED UPON THE ENGLISH TEXT	Macro-syntactical outline abbreviations for a textlinguistic composition of clauses in Malachi (see Appendix A) BASED UPON THE HEBREW TEXT
Introduction Malachi 1:1	Introduction (mal01:1a1–mal01:01b1): Three main characters introduced; namely, Malachi (lit., my messenger; i.e., 1:1; 2:7; 3:1 (2x)); Israel (specifically addressed to the priests (i.e., 1:7; 2:1, 7)); the word of the LORD.
Main body—Nine Discourses : Malachi 1:2–4:6	Main body—Nine Discourses: (mal01:2a1–mal03:21b2)
<i>First Discourse:</i> Malachi 1:2–5	<i>First Discourse:</i> (mal01:02a1–mal05:b2)
Principle verb—to love	Chiasm based on אהב (to love)
(1) Divine Message	(1) The LORD (אֱמַר יְהוָה) (אֶתְבַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (בְּמִתָּה אֶהְבְּתֶנּוּ) (וְאֶמְרֶתֶם)
Background	Background Scenarios
(1) Malachi 1:2–4	(1) mal01:02b1–ma01:04a5
(2) Malachi 1:4–5	(2) mal01:04a6–mal01:05b2

<i>Second Discourse:</i> Malachi 1:6	<i>Second Discourse:</i> (mal01:06a1–mal01:6b5)
Principle verb—to despise	Chiasm based on בִּזָּה (to despise)
(1) Divine Message	(1) The LORD of Hosts (אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לָכֶם הִפְחִינִים בְּיָדַי שָׁמַי)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (וְאִמְרָתָם)(בְּמַה בְּיָנִי אֶת־שִׁמְךָ)
No Background	No Background
<i>Third Discourse:</i> Malachi 1:7–11	<i>Third Discourse:</i> (mal01:07a1–mal01:11b2)
Principle verb—to defile	Chiasm based on גָּאֵל (to defile)
(1) Divine Message	(1) The Messenger (מַגִּישִׁים עַל־מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם מְגָאֵל)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (בְּמַה גָּאֵל־נִוֶּדָה) (וְאִמְרָתָם)
Background Scenarios	Background Scenarios
(1) Malachi 1:7–8	(1) mal01:07b1–mal01:08b4
(2) Malachi 1:9	(2) mal01:09a1–mal01:09b2
(3) Malachi 1:10	(3) mal01:10a1–mal01:10b2
(4) Malachi 1:10–11	(4) mal01:10b3–mal01:11b2
<i>Fourth Discourse:</i> Malachi 1:12–2:8	<i>Fourth Discourse:</i> (mal01:12a1–mal02:08b2)
Principle verb—to be wearied	Chiasm implied by לָאָה (to be wearied)
(1) Divine Message	(1) The Messenger (mal01:12a1)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (וְהִנֵּה מִתְלַאֲזִים) (וְאִמְרָתָם)
Background Scenarios	Background Scenarios
(1) Malachi 1:13	(1) mal01:13a3–mal01:13a4
(2) Malachi 1:13	(2) mal01:13a5–mal01:13b2
(3) Malachi 1:14	(3) mal01:14a1–mal01:14b2
(4) Malachi 1:14–2:2	(4) mal01:14b3–mal02:02a3
(5) Malachi 2:2–4	(5) mal02:02a4–mal02:04b2
(6) Malachi 2:5–8	(6) mal02:05a1–mal02:08b2
<i>Fifth Discourse:</i> Malachi 2:9–16	<i>Fifth Discourse:</i> (mal02:09a1–mal02:16b2)
Principle verb—to act treacherous	Chiasm (AA') implied by בָּגַד (to act treacherous)

(1) Divine Message	(1) The Messenger (mal02:09a1–mal02:13b2)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (על־מִזְבֵּחַ) (ואמרתם)
Background Scenarios	Background Scenarios
(1) Malachi 2:14–16	(1) mal02:14b1–mal02:16a2
(2) Malachi 2:16	(2) mal02:16b1–mal02:16b2
<i>Sixth Discourse:</i> Malachi 2:16–3:5	<i>Sixth Discourse:</i> (mal02:16b3–mal03:05b3)
Principle verb—to grow weary	Chiasm (AA') based upon יגע (to grow weary)
(1) Divine Message	(1) The Messenger (וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֵכֶם) (ולא תבגדו)
	(הוֹנֵעֵתֶם יְהוָה בְּדַבְרֵיכֶם)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (בְּמִדָּה הוֹנֵעֵנִי) (ואמרתם)
Background Scenarios	Background Scenarios
(1) Malachi 2:17–3:1	(1) mal02:17b1–mal03:01b4
(2) Malachi 3:2–5	(2) mal03:02a1–mal03:05b3
<i>Seventh Discourse:</i> Malachi 3:6–7	<i>Seventh Discourse:</i> (mal03:06a1–mal03:07b2)
Principle verb—to return	Chiasm (AA') based on שׁוּב (to return)
(1) Divine Message	(1) The LORD of Hosts (mal03:06a1–mal03:07a6)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (בְּמִדָּה נָשׁוּב) (ואמרתם)
No Background	No Background
<i>Eighth Discourse:</i> Malachi 3:8–12	<i>Eighth Discourse:</i> (mal03:08a1–mal03:12b1)
Principle verb—to rob	Chiasm (AA') based upon קָבַע (to rob)
(1) Divine Message	(1) The Messenger (הִי־קָבַע אָדָם אֱלֹהִים) (כִּי אַתֶּם קָבַעִים אֹתִי)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (בְּמִדָּה קָבַעְנוּדָּךְ) (ואמרתם)
Background Scenarios	Background Scenarios
(1) Malachi 3:8–10	(1) mal03:08b1–mal03:10a4
(2) Malachi 3:10–11	(2) mal03:10b1–mal03:11b2
(3) Malachi 3:12	(3) mal03:12a1–mal03:12b2
<i>Ninth Discourse:</i> Malachi 3:13–4:3	<i>Ninth Discourse:</i> (mal03:13a1–mal03:21b2)

Principle verb—to speak	Chiasm (AA') based upon דבר (to speak)
(1) Divine Message	(1) The LORD (חֹזֶקוֹ עָלַי דְּבָרֵיכֶם) (אָמַר יְהוָה)
(2) Priests' Response	(2) The Priests (וְאָמְרָתֶם) (בְּמַה מְהַדְּבִירֵנוּ עַלֶּיךָ)
Background Scenarios	Background Scenarios
(1) Malachi 3:14–17	(1) mal03:14a1–mal03:17a2
(2) Malachi 3:17–4:1	(2) mal03:17b1–mal03:19b3
(3) Malachi 4:1–3	(3) mal03:19b4–mal03:21b2
Conclusion: Malachi 4:4–6	Conclusion: (mal03:22a1–mal24:03:24b2)

This outline will portray the important role of the spiritual leaders (cf., pastor) in the nine distinctive dialogues within Malachi's text before the LORD and His people as the primary human agents for implementing a strategy toward spiritual formation within the community of faith.²¹ The conclusion will show that the Levitical priests (cf., pastor) were principally responsible before the LORD for the spiritual decline and lack of sanctification of their people. This section explains the phrase “study based upon the Book of Malachi” in the thesis question.

Chapter 4 will consist of a comparison of the data discovered in the literary review (i.e., Chapter 2) and Malachi (i.e., Chapter 3). This section will major on three specific areas: similarities, differences, and expectations. The first area will seek to find common ground in formulating the boundaries for doing spiritual formation in the local church today. The second area will list dangers to avoid in putting together this new model to assure its strategy for spiritual formation is based upon sound biblical principles. The final area will seek to list several expectations in presenting a new model of spiritual formation within the local church. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to develop the idea of “strategic” noted in the thesis question.

²¹ Daniel I. Block, “Reviving God's Covenant with Levi: Reflections on Malachi 2:1–9,” *Reformation and Revival Journal* 4 (1995): 121–136.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Survey Questionnaire surrounding these five questions:

- (1) What are the factors in studying spiritual formation?²²
- (2) How is spiritual formation communicated in the local church?²³
- (3) Who is implementing spiritual formation in the local church?²⁴
- (4) Where is spiritual formation directed?²⁵
- (5) What are the challenges in facilitating spiritual formation?²⁶

It is the purpose of this section to illustrate the thesis question phrase “local church that is below 200 in attendance.”²⁷

Chapter 6 discusses the strategic role of pastors in spiritual formation. This section will seek to show that spiritual formation is primarily the responsibility of pastors to personally integrate and successfully implement this new model toward spiritual formation as a strategic

²² Richard J. Foster, “Spiritual Formation Agenda: Richard Foster shares his three priorities for the next 30 years,” *Christianity Today* January (2009): 29–33; John Ortberg, “What Makes Spirituality Christian? Dallas Willard thinks it is an important to live the truth as it is to believe it,” *Christianity Today* 39 (1995): 16–17; Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation in Christ: A Perspective on What it is and How it might be Done,” Published in *The Great Omission*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2006. <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=81> (accessed May 27, 2010).

²³ David Brisben, “Telling the Old, Old Story: How the Contemporary Church Practices Reading the Old Testament for Faith and Life,” *Common Ground Journal* 7 (2009): 97–112; The Barna Group, “Many Churchgoers and Faith Leaders Struggle to Define Spiritual Maturity,” May 11, 2009. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/264-many-churchgoers-and-faith-leaders-struggle-to-define-spiritual-maturity?q=formation> (accessed July 28, 2011).

²⁴ Block, “Reviving God’s Covenant with Levi: Reflections on Malachi 2:1–9,” 121–136.

²⁵ Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” 27–53; Sylvia W. Collinson, “Making Disciples and the Christian Faith,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29 (2005): 240–250; Richard Foster, “Spiritual Formation Agenda: Richard J. Foster shares his three priorities for the next 30 years,” *Christianity Today* January (2009): 29–33; Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation, and the Restoration of the Soul,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 26 (1998): 101–109.

²⁶ Steve L. Porter, “Sanctification in a New Key: Reliving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1 (2008): 129–148.

²⁷ As of August 19, 2010, the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV) reported 438 churches out of 553 churches listed in the five regions running less than 200 in attendance. This measures a total of 79% churches that have the projected criteria for this project in the SBCV. Note: SBCV Regions are Central East (CE), Central West (CW); North (N); Southeast (SE); Southwest (SW).

study of the Book of Malachi in three specific areas of the local church:²⁸ (1) Christians individually (e.g., education and discipline), (2) the congregation corporally (e.g., preaching and discipleship), and (3) the community globally (e.g., evangelism and missions). It is the purpose of this section to explain in the thesis statement regarding the word “impact” and the phrase “implemented by a pastor.”

Summary of Literature Review

The next area of consideration involves the specific approach to the corpus of contemporary materials needed to understanding the expressions and assumptions surrounding the ideas of spiritual formation in its present day usage: namely, what are the major literary works to be reviewed? In response, the answer is found within a historical investigation that accounts those whom contemporary writers have been shaped by concerning spiritual formation; specifically in the area of spirituality²⁹ and thought.³⁰ For example, the Patristic Fathers, the Ante-Nicene and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (from the early church fathers through the first seven Church councils; 1st–8th centuries); the Middle Ages (5th–15th centuries); Protestant Reformation (16th century; e.g., Martin Luther and John Calvin); and the Modern Age (includes 17th century–present). Many of the figures who lived in these historical periods have had significant influence upon contemporary literature in the field of spiritual formation. This is clear through reviewing the distinctive disciplines of four major authors in the field of spiritual formation: namely, Richard J. Foster, Dallas Willard, Donald Whitney, and David G. Benner.

²⁸ L. T. Jeyachandran, “The Trinity as a Paradigm for Spiritual Transformation,” in *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith That We Defend*, ed. Ravi Zacharias (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 231–252.

²⁹ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

³⁰ Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christian Thought: The fascinating story of the great Christian thinkers and how they helped shape the world as we know it* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

Research Instruments

There is one final question which needs to be addressed: What research tool will this proposal use? There are several steps in concluding this aspect of this study.

Step 1: There will be a Survey Questionnaire (see Appendix C) sent to 438 SBCV churches that run less than 200 in attendance, to the attention of a pastor (i.e., 10 Statements to be answered as either Multiple Choice; or, Strongly Agree – SA, Agree – A, Disagree – D, and Strongly Disagree – SD). The mailings (i.e., e-mail and/or post-mail) will include: (1) a formal letter of invitation and explanation of the need and purpose for a pastor to participate in this study with the hand written or digital Survey (see Appendix B); (2) A copy of the Questionnaire will be provided; (3) a return self addressed envelope to my PO Box with correct postage; (4) If a pastor has internet capability, a survey through Survey Monkey will be sent simultaneously (e.g., 345 pastors have e-mail address).

Step 2: Pastor(s) will be contacted within a week of the mailings either by e-mail (if applicable) or by phone to encourage participants to either fill out either the written or Website Survey (e.g., there are 93 SBCV pastors that have no available e-mail address).

Step 3: Fill out returned surveys by hand into Survey Monkey (or have a third party do this).

Step 4: Tally results.

Step 5: Present results with summary.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON SPIRITUAL FORMATION

It is the overall goal of this chapter to review the current literature of spiritual formation in the attempt to define what is meant by the literary genre illustrating the idea of “Spiritual Formation.” To accomplish this, the contemporary research of spiritual formation related to history, terminology, theories, principles, and opposition, in light of today’s spiritual formation movement will be explored; for example: first, a synopsis of definitive periods of church history will demonstrate how prominent personalities and epoch events of the past have inspired contemporary authors in the field of spiritual formation: in particular the aforementioned works of, Richard J. Foster, Dallas Willard, Donald Whitney, and David G. Benner, will be reviewed in light of significant historical influence on the spiritual formation movement today; second, an investigation of specific terminology which has advanced the language of this growing movement today will be studied; third, several key theories that are shaping the importance of spiritual formation in the life of the believer, church, and global community, will be considered; fourth, certain principles that cause spiritual formation will be presented alongside a “comprehensive biblical theology foundation;”³¹ and finally, a list of common objections toward trendy ideas of how spiritual formation should be implemented within the local church will be examined.

³¹ Richard E. Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1 (2008): 27.

Historical Synopsis of Major Works on Spiritual Formation

It is well attested that church history has influenced many that are presently shaping our world based upon theological principles discovered from the past. Today we are in debt and even defined by those whose shoulders we are standing on in doing theology.³² Similarly, in the Book of Malachi the priests were made to remember their own exemplary examples of salvific history that were to be emulated: namely, Jacob, Levi, Moses, and Elijah (e.g., Mal 1:3; 2:4; 4:4, 5). Here is an overview of the affects of church history on the modern Christian:³³

Even if you are not religious, the history for Christian thought is well worth knowing about, just like any other important historical subject. People like Augustine, Aquinas and Luther have shaped the very fabric of modern society . . . we are still, most of us, the heirs of the church fathers and the medievals.

On the one hand, modern authors in the field of spiritual formation have unanimously articulated their indebtedness to events and figures throughout church history in their works. The significant historical eras in question have influenced current authors in spiritual formation are the Patristic Fathers, the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformation, and the Modern Age. On the other hand, these same authors have had a great deal of influence on the growth of spiritual formation today in their distinctive ministries: for example, Richard J. Foster as a Christian Spiritualist; Dallas Willard as a Christian Philosopher; Donald Whitney as a Christian Theologian; and David G. Benner as a Christian Psychologist. Each of them stands on the shoulders of historical figures and draws from historical movements and practices in developing and communicating their understanding of spiritual formation. In the Book of Malachi, the role

³² For an excellent application of this phenomenon in various theological disciplines including Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic traditions, see John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey, *Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

³³ Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christian Thought: The fascinating story of the great Christian thinkers and how they helped shape the world as we know it* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 9.

of the priests were to continue the process toward spiritual formation for and before the people of God, but they were far from being the archetype priesthood (e.g., Levi), so God would send another like Elijah the prophet to preach the messages of deliverance or destruction (Mal 4:5–6).

Therefore, it is important for us to discover key historical movements and moments of history that have proved to be influential for these modern spiritual formation authors, so the following analysis of history will be briefly discussed by these three questions:

1. How did these movements create practices of spiritual formation?
2. How are these principles related to the biblical text of Malachi?
3. How might they be integrated by a pastor to the ministries of the local church?

Patristic Fathers

The Patristic Fathers spanned from the first to the eighth century; and included the first seven church councils.³⁴ The evaluation of this time period illustrates several applications of spiritual formation within the life of the church. By reviewing major literary works of Foster, Willard, Whitney, and Benner, a pastor (esp. of a small church) can recognize similar issues within their present ministry and the Patristic Era that can be profitable to his own.

Patristic Fathers and Richard J. Foster

Foster seeks to encourage his reader that the primary requirement for spiritual growth is not to be advanced in matters of theology but in a simple longing for God.³⁵ Foster's idea of

³⁴ For a 37 volume set incorporating the Patristic Fathers see, *Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene, First and Second Series* (1994), Hendrickson Publishers.

³⁵ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 2.

liberation toward spiritual growth is rooted in several monastic practices of the early Church Fathers. Here Foster observes principles for spiritual formation.

The first principle is *Otium Sanctum*; a prequel to the place of meditation which is properly understood as “holy leisure.”³⁶ This principle is based upon the monastic tradition of voluntary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a response to the issues of money, sex, and power.³⁷ Malachi’s message called the priests to be faithful in “tithes and offerings” (Mal 3:8).

The second principle is the desire for the unity of faith. The establishment of early church councils was to preserve the unity of the Church from being ultimately divided over theological diversity for eight centuries.³⁸ The early church Fathers strove to preserve the unity of the Christian faith.³⁹ The priests in Malachi were to return to the covenant of Levi promising “life and peace” (Mal 3:4).

The third principle is the idea of the spiritual life as journey. Here one is drawn from a life of vice and is drawn toward a life of virtue. Foster draws from the life of Evagrius of Ponticus (A.D. 345–399) saying: “Evagrius defines our ultimate goal as *apatheia*, the state in which every thought, desire, and action is properly ordered.”⁴⁰ Motivating is the knowledge that the LORD keeps “a book of remembrance” which notes both deeds and thoughts (Mal 3:16).

³⁶ Ibid., 27. Augustine, the bishop of Hippo (A.D. 354), addressed this monastic discipline in his *Confessions* for a time of reflective study without the burden of normal responsibilities.

³⁷ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 220.

³⁸ Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 278. The seven church councils: Nicea (A.D. 325)—Christ is fully divine; Constantinople (A.D. 381)—Christ is fully human; Ephesus (A.D. 431)—Christ is a unified person and that Mary is *Theotokos*; Chalcedon (A.D. 451)—Christ is two natures (divine and human) in one person; Constantinople (A.D. 553); Constantinople (A.D. 680)—Christ possesses a human will and a divine will that function together in perfect moral harmony; and, Nicea (A.D. 787)—icons are acceptable aids to worship and devotion; Ibid., 280.

³⁹ Cf. Hill, *The History of Christian Thought*, 114–115. This unity was maintained until the dividing of the Church into Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism due to a schism between the Greek and Latin Fathers in the eleventh century. The final break with Roman Catholicism came during the Protestant Reformation; Ibid., 178.

⁴⁰ Foster and Beebe, *Longing for God*, 61.

The fourth principle is the emulation of biblical action and prayerful contemplation as the spiritual lifestyle of the believer. Foster observes “[f]irst there is practical, that is active knowledge, which is perfected in correcting moral actions, and purging vices; and second the theoretical knowledge, which consists in the contemplation of divine things and the grasp of the most sacred meanings of Scripture.”⁴¹ Malachi also warns the priests need to “Remember!” the law of Moses, so that they might teach the people of God His word and His will (Mal 4:5).

The fifth principle is the perfecting of the believer through transformation. Pseudo-Dionysius (ca. 500) saw the need of “a deep, inward transformation that comes about as a result of the purifying of the heart (purgation), the enlightening of the mind (illumination) and the perfecting of the soul (union).”⁴² Similarly, Malachi reveals that greatest need for the people of God is to transform their hearts in both repentance and restoration (cf. “turn,” Mal 4:6).

Patristic Fathers and Dallas Willard

First of all, Dallas Willard’s work entitled, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, claims that “we can become like Christ by doing one thing—following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself.”⁴³ His use of early church fathers illustrates a great need for spiritual formation within the community of faith. One, Willard discusses the condition of humanity outside of

⁴¹ Foster and Beebe, *Longing for God*, 206 (cf. 205). See the influence of this practice by John Cassin’s *Conferences* (A.D. 360–435) on balancing the active and contemplative life of the believer. In addition, Foster is influenced greatly by the practice of careful and reflective (i.e., spiritual) reading of Scripture for all its worth called *lectio divina*—“how to understand the external environment around us . . . and develop an integrated understanding of our life with God.” Foster and Beebe, *Longing for God*, 218. See also the influence of this practice by Benedict of Nursia’s *The Rule of St. Benedict* (A.D. 480–547).

⁴² Foster and Beebe, *Longing for God*, 237. Pseudo-Dionysius works include: *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* argues the lowest form of spiritual insight is sensual experience as ways to understand God (e.g. liturgies and Church); *The Divine Names* claims the next level of spiritual insight being able to know God through illumination of thinking about how God communicates Himself to humanity through the creation; *Mystical Theology* claims the highest level of spiritual insight is to acknowledge the limits of human intellect and insight; see 241.

⁴³ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, ix.

Christ and finds that fallen man has lost the *imago Dei* (i.e., “image of God”; cf. Gen 1:26), concluding that man was “not designed just to live in mystic communion with our maker, as so often stated.”⁴⁴ Two, Willard also sees fallen humanity as simply “dead” and builds on the church Father Augustine’s views, who opens the door for demonstrating the need for humanity to somehow be connected to life or else fallen humanity remains dead—that is, dead in trespasses and sins (cf. Eph 2:1).⁴⁵ Last, Willard investigates the history and role of spiritual discipline over the first three centuries of the church and which later developed the need for monasteries seeking to separate themselves from being corrupted by the world (i.e., worldliness) and from the persecution of Christianity.⁴⁶

Examples to imitate God’s word toward a spiritual formation is also given to the priests in Malachi to whom they were expected to have imitated and instructed the people of faith toward righteousness (as opposed to wickedness): for example, Jacob who embraced the divine promises given to the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac (cf. Mal 1:2–3), Levi who is presented as the model priest—the faithful messenger of God’s covenant (Mal 2:7), and Moses who gave “the law” and “the statutes and judgments” to God’s own people being the LORD’s faithful servant (Ma 4:4). The priests’ failure to emulate God’s expectation proves a lesson for the church today.

Second, Dallas Willard’s work entitled, *The Divine Conspiracy*, demonstrates the need to rediscover through history, philosophy, and theology, a spiritual life in Jesus—whose words

⁴⁴ Ibid., 48. In Willard’s explanation he turns to the church Father Ignatius quoting: “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for the man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created, 55 (see note 2); quote taken from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Image Books, 1964), 47.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 63, saying: “As St. Augustine so clearly saw, the deranged condition of humanity is not, at bottom, a positive fact, but a deprivation. It is one that results in vast positive evils, of course, yet depravity is no less a horror because it stems from a deficiency, and people are no less responsible for it and its consequences.”

⁴⁶ Ibid., 140. This monastic lifestyle was revisited after what Willard calls “a synthesis of Hellenistic, Jewish, and Christian thought in the teachings of the Alexandrian church father Origen (died 254) began to exercise widespread influence. He emphatically called disciples of Christ to perfection and a mystical union with God far above and apart from ordinary worldly existence.”

bring “spirit and life” (cf. Jn 6:63), which promises truth and reality above dogma and law to be our “real life” now.⁴⁷ On the one hand, Willard addresses a renowned saying:

Tertullian, a famous Christian leader of the second and third century, asked rhetorically, “What has Jerusalem to do with Athens, the Church with the Academy, the Christian with the heretic?” The correct answer, he supposed, was, “Nothing whatsoever.” Devotion to God is independent of human knowledge. Of course, the modern secular outlook rigorously opposes sanctity to intelligence. And today any attempt to combine spirituality or moral purity with a great intelligence causes widespread pangs of “cognitive dissonance.”⁴⁸

Hence, Willard building on Tertullian that a genuine spiritual devotion is simply this: truly knowing God; it is neither derived by knowing the principalities of this world, nor its philosophies (believers can trust in God’s attributes, for example: “I change not” Mal 3:6).

On the other hand, Willard also focuses on the fifth century church Father Augustine at several levels: (1) showing that loving one’s neighbor (i.e., helping them) is illustrated best by helping them fall in love with God⁴⁹ (cf. “I have loved you,” Mal 1:2); (2) drawing from Augustine’s view of God’s redemptive purpose (i.e., objective) to incorporate those of every nation and every tribe and every tongue and every people⁵⁰ (cf. Rev 5:9; 14:6 and “my name shall be great among the Gentiles . . . the heathen,” Mal 1:11); (3), incorporating Augustine’s

⁴⁷ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, iv.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 135; cf. 409, n. 4. Tertullian’s famous rhetorical question is quoted from: Tertullian, “The Prescriptions Against The Heretics,” subsection 7, in *Early Latin Theology*, edited by S. L. Greenslade, volume 5 in The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 36.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 230. Augustine is quoted from: Augustine, *The City of God*, book 19, chapter 14, saying: “This Saint Augustine understood love of our neighbor, as requiring that ‘we must endeavor to get our neighbor to love God.’ He understood this to apply to our family, our household, and ‘all within our reach.’ And he is right. To a great extent, what matters in our approach to people is not just what we do, but how we do it, and when.”

⁵⁰ Ibid., 382. Augustine is quoted from: Augustine, *The City of God*, book 19, paragraph 17, saying “This Heavenly city, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace.”

language of “peace” and “vision” in regards to the believer’s employment in Heaven in a “perpetual Sabbath”⁵¹ (cf. leaping like calves just being released from their stalls, Mal 4:12).

Last, Willard’s book *Renovation of the Heart* seeks to illustrate that real life is from the heart.⁵² It is the heart “[t]hat spiritual place within us from which outlook, choices, and actions come” that needs to be thoroughly renovated through transformation.⁵³ Willard’s use of the early church father Origen adds to this dimension of the renovation of the heart⁵⁴ is comparable to Malachi’s coming messenger preaching a real renovation of the heart—“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Mal 4:6). Willard also introduces social transformation as a self-discovery saying: “our relationships to others must be like if we are to be spiritually formed in Christlikeness”⁵⁵ (e.g., a son to a father and a servant to a master, Mal 1:6).

Patristic Fathers and Donald S. Whitney

Donald Whitney, in his *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, remarks on one church Father—Augustine who starts his list of heroes throughout church history who were remarkable in their spiritual discipline whose purpose is godliness (cf. Levi—“[t]he law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips,” Mal 2:6). Reflectively, Whitney adds;

⁵¹ Ibid., 399, 400. Augustine is quoted from: Augustine, *The City of God*, book 22, paragraph 29, saying: “There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?”

⁵² Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 13.

⁵³ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 179. Quote from Origen, *Against Celsus*, III, 29 quoted in John Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1975), 215, saying: “The communities of God, to which Christ has become teacher and guide are, in comparison with communities of the pagan people among whom they live as strangers, like heavenly lights in the world.”

⁵⁵ Ibid., 179.

“In my own pastoral and personal Christian experience, I can say that I’ve never known a man or woman who came to spiritual maturity except through discipline. Godliness comes through discipline.”⁵⁶

Patristic Fathers and David G. Benner

First of all, although David G. Benner rarely quotes the church Fathers; their impact is of great historical value to his arguments toward spiritual formation. One, Tertullian is quoted in Benner’s work *Surrender to Love* which seeks to impact the reader on three main issues— “[s]urrender, love, and spirituality;” each thriving not in autonomy, but an interconnectivity between the individual and God: “a connection that then is the welcome that tells us that this is where we truly belong, the assurance that we have at last found our place.”⁵⁷ Tertullian’s imagery of the person and work Christ to the Christian illustrates this spiritual connection of the Christian life within a spiritual stream with Christ as the center (cf. imagery of Holy Spirit in Jn 4:10–14; and imagery of the river of life out of God’s throne in Rev 22:1–2); whereas, Christ is the “Heavenly Fish” and the believer is the “little fish” which in Greek is translated *ichthus*.⁵⁸ A further analogy of Tertullian and the early church shows that “Christians . . . are born and live within the divine waters of the Spirit. The Christian life is learning to be supportive by these waters.”⁵⁹ Surrendering to this imagery of being connected to Christ reveals that Benner sees the

⁵⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 17.

⁵⁷ Benner, *Surrender to Love*, 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 62. Tertullian quoted from Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1978). 88. Note: The early church commonly used the term *Ichthus* (i.e., ΙΧΘΥΣ) within a body of a fish as an acrostic of five Greek words symbolizing the person and work of Christ to the believer: that is, Jesus (Ιησοῦς), the Christ (Χριστός), of God (Θεοῦ), the Son (Υἱός), the Savior (Σωτήρ); translated: Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 62.

Christian as simply floating in a stream empowered by the Holy Spirit who guides and directs the believer life totally in God's love. Imagery is also utilized in Malachi, especially in light of eschatological blessing (e.g., Mal 3:2, 17, 4:2); as well as cursing (e.g., Mal 2:3, 4:1).

Two, in his work *Desiring God's Will*, Benner authoritatively uses Origen to show what it looks like in real life to be surrendered to God's will, quoting: "we become one spirit with him and thereby accomplish his will, in such wise that it will be perfect on earth as in heaven"⁶⁰ (cf. "my covenant was with him of life and peace," Mal 2:5). In application of this principle, Benner implies that not only is God motivated toward this based upon His own nature to "transform all people and all things by love," but it is also the primary work of the Kingdom⁶¹ (cf. "turn," Mal 4:5–6).

Three, Benner's work *Opening to God* seeks to implement the *lectio divina* as "spiritual reading" which projects an expectant subjective approach to the Scripture that was common in the early Patristic era (cf. Judaism) as "a way of prayerfully engaging with Scriptures in order to hear God's personal word to you."⁶² This is opposed to a literal or analytical objective reading of Scripture. Benner adds that his understanding of reading Scripture in the essence of spiritually is to understand that the biblical text is not "to be studied or a set of rules to be grasped, but as the living Word—always alive and active always fresh and new."⁶³ *Contra*, Malachi points to this historical event for his covenant and blessings (cf. "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments" Mal 4:4).

⁶⁰ Benner, *Desiring God's Will*, 39. Quote taken from Origen, *De Oratione*, quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992), 572.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Benner, *Opening to God*, 47. This kind of spiritual reading was advocated; for example, by Origen (i.e., *thea anagnosis*; trans. "divine reading") and Benedict (i.e., *lectio divina*; trans.: "divine reading"), for personal or individual messages from God and eventually became identified as "monastic spirituality," 48.

⁶³ Ibid.

In addition, Benner examples two church fathers views of spiritual transformational (i.e., contemplative).⁶⁴ Ideally then, prayer for the monastic (and Benner), is not simply talking to God in a formal traditional understanding of praying with words and intercession and supplication, but it is an effortless state of being altogether present before Him. It is attaining an advanced level of unconscious praying without consciously thinking about praying (cf. they that feared the LORD spake often one to another” and “thought upon his name,” Mal 3:16).

Four, Benner’s most recent work *Soulful Spirituality* deals with life as a spiritual journey, and addresses two aspects of the monastic life in light of being fully human in principle and being mindfully spiritual in practice. Benner’s uses a well known statement (i.e., *the glory of God is a living human*) by Irenaeus of Lyons, an early second century bishop, to show that God desires human beings to become fully human proclaiming “that the glory of God is men and women who are fully alive, fully human,” namely: “*Gloria Dei vivens homo.*”⁶⁵ For Benner the acknowledgement that being fully human is akin to the beginning of a spiritual journey has to have built in reminders.⁶⁶ Consequently, the issue of being attentive in the priests’ serving the LORD in principle and practice is illustrated by rhetorical compositional reminders in the Book of Malachi (albeit in the negative sense: Mal 1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13).

⁶⁴ Anthony of the Desert (ca. 251-356 A.D.) is quoted in Thomas Keating, *Open Heart, Open Mind: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), 91, saying: “Perfect prayer is not to know that you are praying,” *ibid.*, 165; cf. p. 180, note 3, chapter 9. Whereas, Evagrius Ponticus (ca. 345-399 A.D.) is quoted in Kallistos Ware, *The Philokalia*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Phillip Sherrand, and Kallistos Ware) London: Faber & Faber, 1984), 3:96, saying: “Prayer is the laying aside of thoughts,” *ibid.*; cf. p. 179-180, note 2, chapter 9;

⁶⁵ Benner, *Soulful Spirituality*, 11. Benner remarks that this prominent early church teaching of the idea of Man being human is “so removed from the center of contemporary Christianity that it is it might also sound heretical.”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 101; To illustrate this Benner uses the format of Saint Benedict for spiritual precepts that add to the overall mindset of being attentive to God throughout the day. For example, Benner quotes Benedict issuing the idea of maintaining the discipline of having portions of each day for “Divine Hours” to be awaked and attentive to being with God. Quoted from Saint Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, ed. Timothy Fry (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 1, saying: “Let us arise . . . Let us open our eyes to the deifying light, let us hear with awakening and being attentive ears.”

Medieval Age

After the time of the Patristic Fathers came the Medieval Age or Middle Age (the Latin word *medieval* is translated in English as “middle age”). It is during this time that historians have noted as being the age of the growth and power of the papacy; whereas, Europe enjoyed the unity produced by “Christendom” (i.e., Catholic Church) till its peak in the 13 century.⁶⁷ It was within this period that the church began to systematize its doctrines; while, “[f]aith and religion, reason and science and philosophy were all united into a seamless body of learning.”⁶⁸ During Malachi’s time both ministry and marriage was slowly eroding toward a syncretistic reshaping (cf. “Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god,” Mal 2:11). In reviewing major literature of major spiritual formation authors: Foster, Willard, and Benner (note: Donald S. Whitney does not utilize this specific period in his major works); it is noticeable that the thoughts presented in the Medieval Age have influenced their approach to spiritual formation. Below will be a selection of historical figures and movements that existed after the time of the Patristic Fathers through the Renaissance. Today’s pastors (esp. of smaller churches) can relate to similar issues tackled by the Medievalism and Malachi alike.

Medieval Age and Richard J. Foster

Richard J. Foster illustrates seven significant historical contributions that have influenced his works from the Medieval Age. First of all, Foster utilizes Aristotle’s (and other Greek thinkers) habitual practice of fasting to show the importance of evaluating present day

⁶⁷ Hill, *The History of Christian Thought*, 124.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

assumptions concerning this discipline on spiritual growth in the Medieval Age⁶⁹ (cf. with the spiritual discipline of giving “tithes and offerings,” Mal 3:8).

Second, Bernard of Clairvaux introduces the concept of the discipline of submission and service;⁷⁰ whereas, for a believer, true service toward others, which may include being served by another, is notably one of “Charity” (rather than authority; cf. Mal 3:10 which promises blessings while trusting in God’s benevolence) which is explained by Foster as “guarding the reputation of others”⁷¹ (cf. the people of God being a blessing to other nations, Mal 3:11). One’s love, specifically toward God and others, is further illustrated through various kinds of spiritual experiences that is central in the person of Jesus Christ and is evidenced through the fruit of the spirit; which has “love” as its primary quality⁷² (*contra* the priests’ do not recognized God’s love for them, Mal 1:2; and they do not love him anymore—not as “Judah” once did, based upon their submission in social and sacred duties towards the LORD, Mal 2:11).

Third, the growth of biblical literacy and spiritual theology in the Medieval Age opened doors for women to both educate and promote Christian spirituality: for example, Foster highlights these two women—Hildegard of Bingen (12th century) and Mechthild of Magdeburg

⁶⁹ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 48. Also, Augustine (3rd century A.D. church father) is quoted as saying: “[Aristotle]’s role in elevating habit and the necessity of developing moral virtue in order to cultivate intellectual virtue laid the groundwork for his enduring contribution to Christian spirituality,” in Foster, *Longing for God*, 293.

⁷⁰ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 126; quoted by Foster as saying: “Learn the lesson that, if you are to do the work of a prophet, what you need is not a scepter but a hoe.”

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 136. To support Foster’s idea of benevolent service and gracious submission, Bernard of Clairvaux (12th century A.D.) is quoted from his own work entitled *St. Bernard on the Song of Songs* (London: Mowbray, 1952), 34, saying “It is not elevation of the spirit to feel contempt for small things. It is, on the contrary, because of too narrow points of view that we consider as little what has such far reaching consequences.”

⁷² Foster, *Longing for God*, 162.. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*, trans. G. R. Evans, Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1987), 15–19. In addition, Foster credits Bernard of Clairvaux to have forged “a love-mysticism theology unparalleled in Christian history” and a “commitment to the right ordering of our love of God,” Foster, *Longing for God*, 35.

(13th century).⁷³ On the one hand, Hildegard is noted by Foster as the leader of the German mysticism and used personal visions to interpret the Scripture.⁷⁴ On the other hand, Mechthild was considered a mystic, a prophet (i.e., she had visions), and a probable precursor to the Protestant Reformation because she “opposed the church’s function as the necessary link between God and humanity.”⁷⁵ While women in the Book of Malachi are illustrated as to their treatment by their husbands, but more importantly as to their fidelity to the covenant—“daughters of a strange god” over against “the wife of thy covenant;” whereas, men are unilaterally rejected by the LORD being “treacherous” in their relationships (cf. Mal 3:10 and 11, 14, 15, 16): against the fathers of their faith, the holiness of the LORD, and the wife of their youth).

Fourth, Francis of Assisi (12th century monk who founded the Franciscan Order) is quoted by Foster to support his view of true Christian service as opposed to self-righteous behavior⁷⁶ (cf. various negative illustrations of wrong service in Malachi: e.g., “table of the LORD,” Mal 1:7, 12; “covering the altar of the LORD with tears,” Mal 2:13; “causing many to stumble at the law,” Mal 2:8; and , “ye have robbed me, even this whole nation,” Mal 3:8). Further, Francis defines the attitude of Christian service, which is beyond simple duty, is to be

⁷³ Ibid., 88, 89. Foster notes five key developmental shifts with the Church: (1) biblical literacy; (2) spiritual theology; (3) women as church teachers and advocates for life of God; (4) modification of the goals of spiritual formation from cultivation eternal contemplation of God to personal communion with God (e.g., Thomas à Kempis); and (5) the growing interests in the education and training of the general public.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 299, 300. Foster explains that these visions were not for her benefit, but for others (i.e., a gift). They were also in line with the fourfold sense of Scripture: literal, moral, allegorical, and anagogical.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 302. Foster also points out that she was critical of the immorality of clergy and saw the decline of the Church through her visions.

⁷⁶ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 129; quoted from St. Francis of Assisi, *Selections from the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi* (Nashville: Upper Room Press, 1952), 25, saying: “Being the servant of all, I am bound to serve all and to administer the balm-bearing words of my lord.”

experienced in perfect joy; especially in the midst of life's difficulties⁷⁷ (cf. "My covenant was with [Levi] of life and peace," Mal 2:5).

In addition, Foster alludes to Francis' understanding of seeking the discipline of guidance is more than discovering wisdom, but opening "the windows of heaven to reveal the mind of Christ"⁷⁸ (cf. "open you the windows for heaven," Mal 3:10). Foster also claims this method of understanding divine guidance began a movement which combined both "mystical contemplation and evangelical fervor,"⁷⁹ defining the use of "evangelical" by Francis as pursuing a perfect imitation of the person and work of Christ, explaining it as a lifestyle in "recovery of the life, teachings and spirit of Jesus as contained in and communicated by the Four Gospels"⁸⁰ (cf. "return unto me," Mal 3:7; "Remember ye the law of Moses," Mal 4:4).

Fifth, Bonaventure (12th century) said of Francis of Assisi: "By the range of virtues which shone forth in his life, he stood head and shoulders above all others"⁸¹ (the priests' in Malachi needed to be more like their examples also: e.g., Jacob, Levi, Moses; even the one like Elijah (Mal 4:5), who shall be sent by the LORD). In fact, Bonaventure's great investment toward the spiritual life includes an allegorical (i.e., figurative and symbolic, as opposed to

⁷⁷ Ibid., 133; quoted from Brother Ugolino di Monte Santa Maria, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 58–60, saying: "Above all the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ gives to His friends is that of conquering oneself and willingly enduring sufferings, insults, humiliations, and hardships for the love of Christ."

⁷⁸ Ibid., 180.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Cf. Brother Ugolino di Monte Santa Maria, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, 74–78.

⁸⁰ Foster, *Longing for God*, 125. Foster adds that three texts captivated Francis who sought to successfully model his lifestyle after the imitation Christ (and inspired individuals for centuries to come): (1) "Go sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor" (Mt 9:21); (2) "Take nothing for your journey" (Lk 9:3); and (3) "If you want to become my followers, let them deny themselves" (Mt 16:24); cf. 124.

⁸¹ Ibid., 103; see St. Francis of Assisi, *Selections from the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi*, 807.

literal) interpretation of the spiritual life that articulates the nature of the believer's life with God.⁸²

Sixth, Thomas Aquinas reintroduced the teachings of Aristotle of wisdom and habit in his day and connected them towards the spirituality of the early Christianity.⁸³ Foster explains the importance of these two virtues: wisdom and habit, toward their role toward the life that is both spiritual and moral. For example, Aquinas makes a strong distinction between the human will and the human intellect. This gives rise to the belief that “sin diverts will, not intellect, from its proper end.”⁸⁴ Truly even the faithless priests are able to deduce the logic between outward actions and inward attitudes in Malachi, especially when the LORD invites the priests' to “offer the blind . . . the lame and sick” scarifies to the Governor to see if he would be pleased (Mal 1:8).

Last, Thomas à Kempis illustrates several of Foster's spiritual disciplines. One, the discipline of meditation⁸⁵ (cf. close relationship with the LORD—“[Levi] walked with me,” Mal 2:6 and Ps 1:2, esp. “meditate”). Two, the temptation toward a radical silence while pursuing the discipline of solitude⁸⁶ (*contra* Malachi reveal that the priests' words are raving and rebellious: “have been stout against me,” Mal 3:13). Three, the difficulty of self-denial while pursuing what

⁸² Foster, *Longing for God*, 133. There are seven stages toward the Spiritual Growth of the believer: (1) the senses; (2) the imagination; (3) the intelligence; (4) the understanding; (5) seeing the essential attributes of God; (6) understanding of the relationship within the trinity; (7) experiencing union with God; cf. 135–137. Moreover, Foster concludes, based upon Bonaventure, that the Christian message is concerned with transforming one's desire, rather than seeking its ultimate destruction; for example, Foster states: “The overcoming of destructive desire and developing the inward reality of right desire is what we are after and what we can experience as our life is soaked in Jesus and his way,” *ibid.*, 140.

⁸³ Foster, *Longing for God*, 291.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 98. Foster concludes from Aquinas (13th century Dominican priest, who is best known for his famous works: *Summa Theologica* and *Summa Contra Gentiles*) that right reason equals spiritual and moral life, because Aquinas “could see human reason remaining operative despite the Fall.”

⁸⁵ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 19. Quote from Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1955), 85, described as “a familiar friendship with Jesus.”

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 99. Quoted from Thomas à Kempis (late 14th century), *The Imitation of Christ*, 18, saying: “It is easier to be silent altogether than to speak with moderation.”

Foster calls the discipline of submission⁸⁷ (*contra* Malachi shows the priests' were neither interested in self-denial nor submission: "but you are departed out of the way," Mal 2:8). Four, Kempis reasons that the fear of undeserved persecution while pursuing the discipline of service is justified; and will inevitably result in the believer being taken advantage of, even abused, by those against the indwelling work of Christ, because the believer has freely chosen injury by the enemies of God⁸⁸ (however, faithful servants will enjoy the hope, and healing, and happiness of YHWH's ultimate blessings, Mal 4:2).

In review, Foster highlights the importance of imitating Christ as a lifestyle (cf. Malachi's' examples to the priests to be imitated toward real blessings and a reversal of His curse upon them, Mal 2:2)—Jacob as patriarch, Levi as priest, Moses as lawgiver, and the coming Elijah as prophet), quoting Kempis: "We must imitate Christ's life and his ways if we are to be truly enlightened and set free from the darkness of our own hearts. Let it be the most important thing we do, then to reflect on the life of Jesus Christ."⁸⁹

Medieval Age and Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard illustrates several historical figures that have shaped his approach to spiritual formation from the Medieval Age. First of all, there are three significant influences from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who was rediscovered in the Medieval Age, concerning humanity expressed. One, the Greek word found within the New Testament

⁸⁷ Ibid., 114–115. Quoted from Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, in an anthology entitled, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1943), 139, saying: "To have no opinion of ourselves, and to think always well and highly of others, is great wisdom and perfection."

⁸⁸ Ibid., 133. Quoted in Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, in an anthology entitled, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 211, saying: "so subject . . . that all men may go over thee and tread upon thee as upon mire of the street."

⁸⁹ Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 1; this quote introduces the first of six of the essential practices from the great traditions of the Christian faith purposed by Foster – *Imitatio*: The Divine Paradigm.

signifying someone who is “being a really good person” (i.e., *dikaiosune*).⁹⁰ Willard claims that Aristotle had already won the historical argument over the meaning of this Greek word and translated it as implying “virtue” as the center of a human being’s rightness and a blending of characteristics within man toward the good⁹¹ (i.e., righteousness; cf. “the righteous” as the opposite of “the wicked,” Mal 3:18). Two, Aristotle set the classical rule of morality concerning adultery in the ancient Greek and early Christian communities and survived until the mid-twentieth century where intellect seeks to overrule morality⁹² (cf. Malachi’s arguments related to intermarriage and divorce in Mal 3:11, 14, 15, 16). Third, Aristotle, illustrates an intriguing aspect of human personality, saying: “Human beings are really together only in God, and all other ways of ‘being with’ fall short of the needs of basic human nature”⁹³ (cf. “And they shall be mine,” Mal 3:17). And his philosophy paralleled the existing teaching of the biblical authors in the Scripture as rooted in his Creator⁹⁴ (cf. Gen 2:18; Rom 14:7 and “Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?” in Mal 2:10).

Second, Bernard of Clairvaux introduces the concept of discipleship in his first verse to the hymn entitled *Jesus, the very thought of Thee*:

Jesus the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 144. Detailed in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5:20–48).

⁹¹ Ibid., 145. This particular meaning has remained the fundamental understanding for the New Testament tradition of virtue as the “emphasis upon the relationship of the soul to God.”

⁹² I.e., “There is no such thing as ‘committing adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right way, for it is . . . simply wrong,’” ibid., 162; quoted in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 2, chapter 6.

⁹³ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 184–185. In Aristotle, *Politics*, book 1, chapter 2, 185.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 185.

⁹⁵ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 271.

From this initial concept toward relational discipleship,⁹⁶ Malachi shows the yawning contrast between His prototype priest—Levi and the priests’ of Malachi’s day (e.g., Mal 2:5–7 and 2:8).

Third, Thomas à Kempis adds to Willard’s understanding of a believer who is habitually dead to self and daily denying the self while still maintaining a proper sensitivity toward personal emotion and actions, in this antidote of how to avoid the wrong display of sensitivity through his love for God and his neighbor (cf. the celebration of YHWH by “the Gentiles . . . the heathen” in Mal 1:11 and the community of “the righteous” illustrated in Mal 4:2):

Choose evermore rather to have less than more.
 Seek ever the lower place and to be under all.
 Desire ever to pray that the will of God be all and wholly done.
 So, such a one enters the land of peace and quiet.⁹⁷

Four, Thomas Aquinas is utilized in several aspects to show the value of maintaining the spiritual life. On the one hand, there is a sad documentary concerning the rise of the Church’s wealth in silver and gold and the decline of its power to save and heal; whereas, Aquinas comments on his contemporary setting that the church could need no longer say to the sick – silver and gold have we none⁹⁸ (cf. giving adds to “the storehouse” and helps social needs locally—even globally, Mal 3:10–12). On the other hand, there is a real help that one can always reveal to his neighbor what is indeed lovely; wherefore, Willard quotes Aquinas observing that “‘love is born of an earnest consideration of the object loved.’ And: ‘Love follows

⁹⁶ Ibid., 282. Willard defines a disciple as “simply someone who has decided to be with another person, under appropriate conditions, in order to become capable of doing what that person does or to become what that person is.”

⁹⁷ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 73. Quoted in Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, book 3, chapter 25.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 36. Hence, the church could nominally forgive, but not boldly heal in Jesus name. E.g., “But neither can we say to the lame man, ‘In the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk.’”

knowledge”⁹⁹ (note: Malachi sends one like “Elijah the prophet” to “turn the heart” of the future generations back towards each other; as well as towards God’s law, Mal 4:4–6).

Medieval Age and David G. Benner

David G. Benner only utilizes one Medieval Age figure—Bernard of Clairvaux. Benner introduces the three classical stages toward the Christian’s spiritual formation: namely, “purgation, illumination, and union,”¹⁰⁰ whereas, purgation, stage one, is akin to falling in love (involves an awakening with the spark of hope; cf. “Wherein have you loved us?,” Mal 1:2); illumination, stage two, is analogous to seeing God as He really is (involves a crisis of belief; cf. “my name shall be great,” Mal 1:11); and union, stage three, is parallel to completed love between the believer and God (involves connection by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; cf. “and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him,” Mal 3:18).

Protestant Reformation

The era subsequent to the Medieval Ages, which enjoyed a time of collective unity within the established Church, is marked by both theological turmoil and political uncertainty during the period commonly referred to as the Protestant Reformation—which included new theological prospects that confronted established church politics not experienced in Christendom since the

⁹⁹ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 323. Willard interprets this idea of introducing the lovely with every means possible as the main goal of discipleship; that is, “turning the mind toward God” so that the disciple is able to truly love with the emotion and with the will that which is lovely through asking questions that lead them toward the cognitive good in any situation; and therefore, towards a better understanding of the presence of God.

¹⁰⁰ Benner, *Surrender to Love*, 96–98. Note: Benner equates the three stages of Christian spiritual formation as a process toward transformation and conversion. It is the second stage Bernard used to clarify the progression of illumination in the maturing of love within the disciple toward God, where preconceived beliefs and opinions are essentially stripped away. Bernard identifies this process as a “movement from loving God for my sake to loving him for His sake,” *ibid.*, 99. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, trans. Robert Walton (Kalamazoo, Mich: Cistercian, 1996).

time of the Patristic Age.¹⁰¹ Due to the expanding explorations during the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries (especially in Muslim countries), Europe was being constantly introduced to the newly discovered cultures and rediscoveries of antiquity, giving a new excitement toward experimental and innovative science and a return toward ancient literature (e.g., Hebrew and Greek); which affected many students of history, philosophy, and theology, to study the original biblical languages and early church fathers.¹⁰² Great challenges were made toward established thought and culture. An examination of the major works of today's spiritual formation authors shows the influence of the Protestant Reformation in Foster, Willard, and Whitley (whereas Benner has no direct references toward the Protestant Reformation in his spiritual formation works). The major reformers reviewed are Martin Luther, John Calvin, with selected Puritans. A pastor today can find a great deal of resources from this era in applying biblical theology to an enlightened society.

Protestant Reformation and Richard J. Foster

Richard J. Foster notes many contributions of prominent theologians and puritans of the reformation. First of all, Martin Luther (1483–1546) who was an Augustinian monk who's 95 *Thesis* speeded the catalyst for the Reformation) illustrates several of the spiritual disciplines proposed in Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*; (1) the discipline of prayer and study¹⁰³ (cf.

¹⁰¹ Hill, *The History of Christian Thought*, 178.

¹⁰² Ibid., 178–216.

¹⁰³ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 34. Luther declares: "I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer . . . He that has prayed well has studied well," quoted in E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), 23.

“Remember ye the law of Moses,” Mal 4:4); (2) the discipline of fasting,¹⁰⁴ (cf. lessons abound when fruit and freedom of the land are taken away for a season by YHWH: “I will corrupt your seed . . . and one shall take you away with it,” Mal 2:3); (3) the discipline of submission¹⁰⁵ (cf. judgment will be between “him that serveth God and him that serveth him not,” Mal 3:18); (4) the discipline of forgiveness and confession¹⁰⁶ (cf. results of a false confession in Mal 2:13 vs. results of a forthright one in Mal 3:2–4); and (5) the discipline of worship¹⁰⁷ (cf. if they “prove” (i.e., trusting in His Word and His law) then He will “pour” (i.e., blessings), Mal 3:10–12).

Second, Martin Luther had a notable influence on the role of the Scripture and vocational calling, as it relates to the Christian life in Foster’s *Streams of Living Water*. On the one hand, Foster holds that one’s doctrinal conviction is to be played out in both life and faith and is to be bound by the Word of God¹⁰⁸ (cf. “ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law,”

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 57; Foster uses Luther’s analogy equating the human stomach as a little child who whines till its immediate wants are met; thus the hungry stomach (like the seemingly deprived child) is in need of spiritual discipline to show who is the true master, saying: “. . . the flesh was wont to grumble dreadfully,” quoted in Arthur Wallis, *God’s Chosen Fast* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1971), 66.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 110; Foster shows how Luther balances the limitations of the believer’s freedom in submission, quoting: “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 146; Luther viewed that every believer has the authority to hear another’s confession and give absolution in Jesus’ name in regards to mutual brotherly confession, saying: “Therefore when I admonish you to confession I am admonishing you to be a Christian,” quoted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), 118. Foster alludes that the model Luther used toward confession is The Ten Commandments, 152.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 164; Luther illustrates the importance of the corporate body of Christ worshipping together (cf. Heb 10:25), testifying that “at home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through,” quoted in Douglas Steere, *Prayer and Worship* (New York: Edward W. Hazen Foundation, 1942), 36. Foster adds that the New Testament sees this type of worship as “a divine interpenetration” that occurs only when the church is gathered, Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 164.

¹⁰⁸ Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 228; this is humbly exemplified in Luther’s faithfulness to the supremacy and sufficiency of the right interpretation of Scripture alone, saying: “It is impossible for me to recant unless I am proved to be wrong by the testimony of Scripture. My conscience is bound to the Word of God.” The context of this quote surrounds the historic confession at the Diet of Worms in 1520, when Johann von Eck, Official General of the Archbishop of Trier, required a recantation of Martin Luther’s works and their alleged errors against established church doctrine.

Mal 2:9). Consequently, Luther's position on the Scripture posed a contrast between the church tradition as the "lantern" and the "light" of Scripture in matters of truth and error.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, Luther is also utilized to illustrate how one's day to day labor (i.e., vocation) is a true spiritual calling; equaling those traditionally associated within the church¹¹⁰ (cf. general calling of the "righteous" as those "that feared the LORD," Mal 3:16, 4:2).

Last, the main thrust of Martin Luther's writings is viewed by Foster in his work *Longing for God* for "believers to throw off the effects of Catholic scholasticism."¹¹¹ This is accomplished by Luther through explaining the Fall as mankind losing the capacity to respond naturally to God in love; thus his spiritual restoration prompted by God himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ is necessary for man to grow in the freedom of God's love¹¹² (cf. "I have loved you, Mal 1:2 and "I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed," Mal 3:6).

Second of all, John Calvin (1509–1563; a French theologian and pastor) also influenced Foster in several areas toward spiritual formation. Calvin's major work on piety *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* is credited by Foster as defining "the nature of our life with God."¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 230. Foster argues that one does not need to break with church history, save when history (i.e., tradition) is contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture, saying: "An authentic evangelical witness is rooted in the heritage of the Church as well as in Scripture," *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 270; although this is a Puritan notion, Foster credits this as Luther's conviction and quotes him as saying (in part): "'the menial house work of a manservant or maidservant is more acceptable to God' than the work of monks or priest," quoted (in part) from Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity" in *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 203. Note: better to be a door keeper in the

¹¹¹ Foster, *Longing for God*, 101.

¹¹² Ibid. Love is necessarily circular and reciprocal (i.e., horizontal and vertical) and is understood as toward both God and Man in this case. Luther further explains this concept of love as transforming the heart as pure, the conscience as good, and one's faith as sincere, saying that the objective of one's redemption "is the transformation of the believer who dies to sin in order to live for righteousness. The old man, the old Adam is replaced by the new man in Jesus Christ," *ibid.*, 103. This transformation is the essence of the Christian life for Luther; as well as Foster.

¹¹³ Ibid., 112.

Whereas, Luther focuses upon growing in our love for God and love for man as necessarily connected¹¹⁴ (cf. negative example of YHWH receiving neither respect nor reverence due His name: “Wherein have we despised thy name?” in Mal 1:7).

Third, significant Puritans also added in shaping Foster’s understanding of spiritual formation in the life of the believer. One, John Bunyan (1628–1688; author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*), who according to Foster, wrote from his own persecutions to inspire his readers to view their life as a spiritual journey toward God through vivid allegory to explain a believer’s spiritual formation as a process beginning with “the importance and significance of conversion”¹¹⁵ (cf. these conversion analogies: “refiner’s fire” and “fullers’ soap,” Mal 3:2). Bunyan’s conclusion of the spiritual life is viewed by Foster as being “never over until it is over”¹¹⁶ (cf. hope that the people of God will repent: “hear,” Mal 2:2; and “return,” Mal 3:7, 18).

Two, George Fox (1624–1691; founder of the Religious Society of Friends; Quakers) also suffered greatly for his faith and utilized his persecutions to encourage believers to penetrate the darkness within the world with the light of the Word of God¹¹⁷ (cf. result of responding to the preaching the Word of YHWH: “you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings,” Mal 4:2).

¹¹⁴ Calvin focuses upon knowing God and ourselves as necessarily connected, saying: “Knowledge of God and knowledge of man are inextricably linked . . . One cannot be had without the other,” *ibid.* Foster lists the three sources for this: (1) knowledge of being made in God’s image; (2) knowledge of considering God’s Creation; and (3) knowledge rooted in God’s Written Word; cf. 112–113.

¹¹⁵ Foster, *Longing for God*, 79. Foster adds that this spiritual journey toward God makes no sense apart from a radical turning away from sin and a “decisive turning” toward God, *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹¹⁷ Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 227. Fox stated: “Let all the nations hear the word by sound or writing. Spare no place, spare not tongue nor pen; but be obedient to the Lord God and go through the work and be valiant for the Truth upon earth,” quoted in *The Journal of George Fox*, rev. edition ed. John L. Nickalls (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), 263.

Protestant Reformation and Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard also notes significant contributions of reformed theologians and puritans of the reformation. First of all, Martin Luther is noted by Willard on his view of faith and works within the life of the believer. Although Luther suggested the book of James be torn out of the New Testament, he did view faith as “a living, busy, active, powerful thing!” and added that it is “impossible to separate works from faith—yea, just as impossible as to separate burning and shining from fire”¹¹⁸ (cf. negative example of faithless works: “But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law . . . and the day that cometh shall burn them up” Mal 2:8, 4:1).

Second, John Calvin is used negatively in regard to the use of the term discipline which became during the reformation “identified with something that the church exerts over its members to keep them in line.”¹¹⁹ Willard also builds on Calvin’s understanding of the propensity in man to think he is better than others¹²⁰ and who also recognized the truth that “[s]o blindly do we all rush in the direction of self-love, that every one thinks he has a good reason for exalting himself and despising all others in comparison”¹²¹ (cf. calling good evil and evil good in Mal 2:17; and, calling the proud happy, the wicked successful, and tempters of God free of judgment, Mal 3:15). However, Willard argues that this is best understood as a picture of the natural man (i.e., Fallen). Only with the indwelling Christ, Willard argues that believers are able to rule rightly within their unique sphere of influence within the Kingdom of God that he

¹¹⁸ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 38, 39.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 145.

¹²⁰ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 21. Here Willard quotes Calvin as observing: “Everyone flatters himself and carries a kingdom in his breast.”

¹²¹ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 57. Quoted in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 9.

illustrates as being “within an appropriate domain of reality”¹²² (cf. “Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked,” Mal 3:18).

Consequently, Calvin is portrayed by Willard as viewing the Christian Life in one word—“self-denial” (i.e., death to self); rather than a more popular and positive approach of self-esteem and self-fulfillment.¹²³ Likewise, Malachi continues to show the right example for the priests’ by reminding them of the past realities of spiritual blessings from the LORD: through keeping YHWH’s covenant (e.g., Mal 2:5, 8), through obeying YHWH’s commandments (e.g., Mal 2:1, 4, 6; 3:7, 14; 4:4), and through imitating YHWH’s chosen (e.g., Jacob, Levi, Moses).

Third, Willard uses several Puritans to shape his approach toward spiritual formation. One, in a critical review, John Bunyan’s literature that seeks to allegorize the Christian’s struggle in following the Lord as well as depicting the overall battle between good and evil “has entered into a fatal combination with the general Protestant overreaction against ascetic or disciplinary practices;” causing the believer have an idea of the reality of spiritual warfare in general due to a lack of biblical realism, but having no idea how to advance their own progress as a pilgrim, according to Willard.¹²⁴ This is a basic foundational truth describing the priests in Malachi—who either are either ignorant or apathetic toward the rhetorical narratives by the current messenger of YHWH (Malachi, Mal 1:1) or the past messenger of YHWH (Levi, Mal 2:7) or the coming messenger of YHWH (cf. Mal 3:3 and 4:5).

¹²² Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 21. Here Willard defines *kingdom* as “the range of our effective will” which is limited. In fact, Calvin equates the Kingdom of God, not to Heaven, but the spiritual life “which is begun by faith in this world and daily increases according to the continual process of faith”; see 405, note 6 (cf. Jn 3:3, 5).

¹²³ Ibid., 371; see also Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 64, where Calvin explains the concept of “self denial” or “death to self” as a process toward restoring the soul and eventually the whole person. Cf. Book III of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which Willard, as a whole work, identifies as a masterwork of spiritual life.

¹²⁴ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 111. He also adds John Milton’s spiritual allegories here.

Two, in a positive review, George Fox is applauded for rightly understanding and communicating that “flesh” is not “fallen nature” (cf. putting away, e.g., Co 2:11—“body of the sins of the flesh” and Eph 4:22—“the old man”).¹²⁵ This is also addressed in part in Malachi in light of a godly marriage and a godly seed: “And did not he make one?” (Mal 2:15; cf. Mal 2:10). In addition, Fox is heralded by Willard as an example of following Jesus’ example of the seriousness and simplicity in prayer (cf. Lk 11:1—“teach us to pray”); whereas Fox is said to have “excelled in prayer” in these areas: “The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his dress and behavior, and the fewness and fullness of his words,”¹²⁶ (cf. positively speaking about YHWH: “and the LORD hearkened, and heard it,” Mal 3:16).

Three, Thomas Watson (1620–1686), paved the way for a believer’s lifestyle of worship for Willard, when he wrote: “The first fruit of love is the musing of the mind upon God. He who is love, his thoughts are ever upon the object. . . A sinner crowds God out of his thoughts. He never thinks of God, unless with horror, as the prisoner thinks of the judge.”¹²⁷ Willard summarizes that “Worship is at once the overall character of the renovated thought life and the only safe place for a human being to stand.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid., 90; for resources concerning *flesh* see 94 n. 16. Fox said: “Then these professors said the outward body was the body of death and sin. I shewed them their mistake in that also; for Adam and Eve had each of them an outward body, before the body of death and sin got into them; and that man and woman will have bodies when the body of sin and death is out off again; when they are renewed up into the image of God again by Jesus Christ, which they were in before they fell,” quoted in George Fox, *Journal of George Fox*, ed. Norman Penny (London: Dent, 1948), 91. Willard adds only by suicide can one put off *flesh*, 91.

¹²⁶ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 254. Quote is by William Penn in James Gilchrist Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1981), 100.

¹²⁷ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 106–107. Quoted in Thomas Watson, *All Things for Good* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust; 1663 reprint, 1986), 74.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 107. For Willard, true worship only comes through the spiritual formation of the thought life; which is the transformation of the mind.

Four, Richard Baxter (1615–1691); author of famous work—*The Reformed Pastor*) and his many writings is held as giving case and point of effective spiritual change.¹²⁹ Of course, Willard’s true foundation for spiritual change is the person and work of Jesus and His teachings found in the Scriptures and in His people¹³⁰ (cf. Behold, I will send you Elijah . . .and he will turn the heart,” i.e. transform their hearts, Mal 4:5).

Protestant Reformation and Donald S. Whitley

Donald Whitley also notes important contributions of reformed theologians and puritans of the reformation. First of all, Martin Luther illustrates the divine expectation upon the believer in prayer.¹³¹ Whitney recognizes the necessity of prayer as a spiritual discipline during The Protestant Reformation. Malachi also addressed the importance of speaking well concerning the LORD (cf. the Gentiles and heathen, Mal 1:11; and those “that fear” His name, Mal 4:2).

Second, John Calvin adds the element of fasting as a measure toward strengthening the Christian’s prayer saying: “Whenever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer”¹³² (cf. a negative example is the priests “covering the altar” with false tears and weeping, and crying out, Mal 2:13; and their poor

¹²⁹ Ibid., 89. For example, in generosity toward people who essentially have legally taken from the believer his property, as the means “for spiritual transformation, for replacing of the inner character of the ‘lost’ with the inner character of Jesus: his vision, understanding, feelings, decisions, and character,” *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Spiritual Life*, 68. saying: “As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray,” quoted in John Blanchard, comp., *Gathered Gold* (Welwyn, Hertfordshire, England: Evangelical Press, 1984), 227.

¹³² Ibid., 165. Quoted from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 1242. Calvin challenges his contemporaries to humble themselves like the biblical examples in Scripture. Whitney argues that today, like in Calvin’s day, fasting is a lost discipline. Whitney agrees that the discipline of fasting accomplishes at least two benefits toward the urgency and humbleness in prayer Godward: (1) fasting sharpens believers’ intercession in behalf of others; and (2) fasting impassions believers’ supplication for themselves. Ibid.; cf. 172.

attitude saying “it is I vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts,” Mal 3:14). In addition, Calvin is also exemplified as perpetuating journaling—a spiritual discipline proposed by Whitney, where Calvin stated: “Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God”¹³³ (cf. “a book of remembrance was written before him,” Mal 3:16).

Third, there are several Puritans that have influenced Whitney’s approach toward spiritual formation. One, in his famous work *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan vividly depicted though one will experience adversity, God’s intimate presence is always there¹³⁴ (e.g., “I have loved you,” Mal 1:2; and “I change not,” Mal 3:6). Two, Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory*, relates to every imaginable aspect of the Christian Life, for example, the cultivation of meditating on the Scripture as a spiritual discipline¹³⁵ (cf. the Scripture as covenant, commandments, law, ordinance, statutes, and judgments, is throughout Malachi). Three, Francis Bacon, has aided in shaping Whitney’s approach toward the spiritual discipline of journaling¹³⁶ (cf. YHWH’s example, Mal 3:16). Four, John Owen wrote extensively on the mortification of sin within the believer’s life, saying: “I do not understand how a man can be a true believer in whom

¹³³ Ibid., 207. The quote is strategically positioned within Calvin’s introduction to his *Institutes*. Here, Whitney suggests that by keeping a journal the believer will be able to see themselves clearly and might be a tool for the Holy Spirit to show “areas of sin or weakness, the emptiness of a path we have chosen, insight into our motives, or other things that can transform the journal page into an altar of seeking God.”

¹³⁴ Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health*, 63; whereas, Whitney concludes: “And though Christian felt completely on his own, he was not. Pressing forward by faith alone he grew in ways he did not comprehend at the time.”

¹³⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Spiritual Life*, 51; cf. 52, 62.

¹³⁶ Bacon states that “[i]f a man write little, he had need have a great memory;” *ibid.*, 211; quoted in Ralph Woods, ed. *A Treasury of the Familiar* (Chicago, IL: Peoples Book Club, 1945), 14. Note: Bacon is also credited with saying: “While reading makes a full man, and dialogue a ready man, according to Bacon, writing makes an exact man,” *ibid.*, 213. Whitney argues that writing down thoughts throughout the day aids in clarifying and articulating how the Lord has impressed him through journaling; without journaling he remembers little.

sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble.”¹³⁷ In addition, Owen adds real flavor to the discipline of prayer, illustrating its manner as coming across naturally, as one might talk to another from the heart, and with real passion concerning all points of life¹³⁸ (cf. the eschatological message to the people of God where their hearts are turned toward one another (and back toward God’s Word), Mal 4:6). Five, Thomas Watson, a Puritan pastor, gives a spirited response to the reality of the believer coming away cold when reading the Scripture and void when applying it to daily living¹³⁹ (e.g., what the priests’ knew to do contra what they actually did, Mal 2:8—God’s expectation through rhetorical examination of spiritual formation was not evident in the Book of Malachi). Last, Matthew Henry (1662–1714), the famous Puritan commentator and pastor, who advocated the relationship between meditation and prayer (like Baxter and Owen), quotes the prayer recounted in Psalm 19:14.¹⁴⁰ Henry also serves as a corner stone for Whitley’s spiritual discipline for a lifestyle of worship where the believer focuses and responds to God (i.e., public and private), saying: “Public worship will not excuse us from secret

¹³⁷ Whitley, *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health*, 109. Quoted from John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 1850–1853; reprint, vol. 7, “The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded” (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 333. Whitley develops this idea of truly “grieving for sin” by suggesting two ways to evaluate the life of a believer: (1) looking unto what the believer is suppose to be; namely, “Christlike;” and (2) looking at how far the believer has come; namely, “hopeful,” *ibid.* 110. Whitley adds that there is time for both evaluations in the various seasons of life.

¹³⁸ Whitley, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Spiritual Life*, 72–73. John Owen as quoted in *The Banner of Truth*, August–September 1986, 38: “Pray as you think. Consciously embrace with your heart every gleam of light and truth that comes to your mind. Thank God for and pray about everything that strikes you powerfully.”

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 49; whereas, Whitley applies Watson’s reply to support the area of spiritual success as being intrinsically connected to the discipline of meditation on God’s Word, saying: “The reason we come away so cold from reading the word is, because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation.” Compare this viewpoint with Joshua 1:8—“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” Watson is quoted in Thomas Watson, “How We May Read the Scriptures with Most Spiritual Profit,” in *Puritan Sermon*, 1674 reprint, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1981), 62.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 73; saying: “David’s prayers were not his words only, but his meditations: as meditation is the best preparation for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer go together,” quoted in Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 3 (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, n.d.), 255.

worship.”¹⁴¹ This is a major insight to the priests’ (and the people) that true worship is from an obedient and transformed heart (e.g., Mal 2:1—“this commandment is for you”; and Mal 4:6—“shall turn your heart”).

Modern Period

The Modern Period presented Christendom and Christians with new “challenges that would shake their very assumptions to the core” due to the rise of a new place for science and a new practice of thought during the philosophical rise and expansion of the Enlightenment which are still ongoing today.¹⁴² For example, the development of natural sciences; for example, advancements in mathematics and astronomy, created a whole new way for people to view the world with “the eyes of reason, not those of faith.”¹⁴³ In addition, the growing discipline of seeing history as a series of subsequent natural events void of the supernatural or revelation of God brought rise to the humanities.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, new philosophies like rationalism and empiricism left no room for the idea of faith. In addition, followers of other philosophies like skepticism, romanticism, existentialism, liberalism, and humanism (to name a few), are still paving the road for marked distinctions and “divisions between reason and revelation, natural and supernatural, science and religion” that are creating an entirely new concept of Christ and Christianity.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 93. See discussion between the relationship of the New Testament believer as an individual and universal whole as *body* (e.g., 1 Cor 12:12), *building* (e.g., Eph 2:21), and *household* (e.g., Eph 2:19), 92.

¹⁴² Hill, *The History of Christian Thought*, 217. Note: beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Foster and Beebe, *Longing for God*, 218.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 238.

In the midst of this era, an examination of selected figures (i.e., philosophers and preachers) associated with the Modern Period and their contributions toward the particular approaches to contemporary spiritual formation authors—Foster, Willard, Whitney, and Benner, yield valuable helps in pursuing spiritual disciplines and transformation during an era that is quickly moving away from considering things spiritual and biblical. Malachi also reminds the priests’: (1) to look back for their historical beliefs (e.g., trusting in the Word of God, Mal 1:1; and in the law of God, Mal 4:4–6); (2) to look around for their present faith (cf., nine rhetorical discourses in Book of Malachi as an examination of their spiritual formation); and, (3) to look ahead toward their future blessings (e.g., promises to those who “return” Mal 3:18 and turn” (Mal 4:6). This is true of today’s pastors—to faithfully engage and apply the scriptures to all.

Modern Period and Richard J. Foster

Richard Foster makes use of many philosophers and preachers who invested themselves into their times. On the one hand, there are many prominent philosophers that are influential in Foster’s work. The first prominent philosopher is Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) who was Catholic and greatly influenced by Augustine and realizing the increasingly growing danger toward compromising the idea of absolutes through modern science and recognizing the restrictions of truly knowing God by only the means of reason, he seeks to establish the foundation of the spiritual life defined as “a life of humility and holiness in the unchanging presence of God”¹⁴⁶ (*contra* Malachi seeks to re-introduce the importance of YHWH to the priests through His promised covenant and His purposed commandments).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 45; i.e., 48, 315. Quote taken from Blaise Pascal, *The Pensées*, frags. 308, trans. Thomas Kraitsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1965).

A second philosopher, John Locke (1632–1704), was a British empiricist philosopher and commonly called the Father of Classical Liberalism. Locke held to the role of religious experiences in knowing God (Foster and Beebe agreeing).¹⁴⁷ Experiences are reduced illustrations in Malachi, but the role of examination and emulation seems to be the key to knowing the word, the will, the ways, and the wishes of the LORD (e.g., Jacob, Levi, Moses, even Elijah).

A third philosopher, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), also a German theologian, is commonly known as The Father of Modern Liberal Theology, but heralded by Foster (based upon his earlier works) as The Father of Modern Protestant Theology; for example, Schleiermacher wrote *One Religion* as a defense for religious experience, stating: “What is religion? Religion’s essence is neither thinking nor acting; but intuition and feeling. Religion is the sensibility and taste for the immediate experience of the infinite. This feeling must accompany everyone who really has religion.”¹⁴⁸ Yet Malachi focuses upon real work and real words (including thoughts) as a bases for determining the reality of faithfulness (cf. Mal 3:16).

The fourth philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), a Danish theologian and Existentialist, supports several of Foster’s spiritual disciplines: (1) discipline of prayer is defined by Kierkegaard with this illustration: “A man prayed, and at first he thought that prayer was talking. But he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer is

¹⁴⁷ Locke “believed that all knowledge arises from experience or reflection on experience,” *ibid.*, 185. This emphasis on experience would greatly influence the theology of John Wesley.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 196. Foster lifts up Schleiermacher as the first prominent theologian to challenge the Enlightenment’s criticisms of Christianity, 200. Note: The difference between his view and Wesley’s is that Schleiermacher centered experience based upon the authenticity of the human condition and Wesley centered his understanding of experience upon the centrality of the Scripture, *ibid.*, 201.

listening”¹⁴⁹ (cf. it is YHWH who is listening in Malachi, Mal 3:16); (2) discipline of simplicity (and silence; *contra* to anxiety and ambiguity) is explained by Foster using Kierkegaard’s explanation on the first requirement toward seeking the Kingdom of God: “learn to keep silent; in this silence is the beginning, which is, *first* to seek God’s Kingdom,”¹⁵⁰ (e.g., Malachi used key words to instill this effect: e.g., “Yet ye say, Wherein?,” Mal 1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13); and, (3) discipline of celebration is illustrated by Foster’s position that celebration gives rise to more celebration as “joy begets joy” and “laughter begets laughter”¹⁵¹ (cf. see the imagery of leaping after being freed from bondage, Mal 4:2).

On the other hand, there are several key Christian preachers in the Modern Age (i.e., missionaries, pastors, and revivalists) who have also made an impression upon Foster’s works. The first preacher, John Wesley (1703–1791), a British theologian, who founded the Methodist Movement and preached in the first Great Awakening, is used positively throughout Foster’s writings. Formally, Foster (and Beebe) use Wesley’s view of the role of religious experiences in knowing God.¹⁵² Malachi exposes the priests’ while having religious experiences, they do not know Him; and suggests those who were pleasing to the LORD (e.g., Jacob, Levi, Moses, Elijah, Mal 1:2; 2:4, 8; 4:4–6). The greatest influence upon Foster (and Beebe) from Wesley’s perspective regarding his own human experience (i.e., in knowing God) is that it did not

¹⁴⁹ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 39. Foster also holds to listening to God as a prelude toward intercession (i.e., the prayer of faith) which is preceded by the prayer of guidance (i.e., listening).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 87; i.e., 88, 94. Foster holds without this inward reflection (i.e., reality of stillness wrought by simplicity and silence) a Christian will have no center; and hence no spiritual discipline of simplicity.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 197. Foster also quoted Kierkegaard as observing that “humor is always a concealed pair,” in D. Elton Trueblood, *The Humor of Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 33.

¹⁵² Foster and Beebe, *Longing for God*, 185; quoting Wesley’s salvation testimony from his *Journal*, saying: “In the evening I went very willingly to a society in Aldersgate Street . . . About a quarter before nine . . . I felt my heart strangely warmed.”

contradict divine Scripture.¹⁵³ There are several illustrations in Malachi against the priests and the people for compromising the scriptures (e.g., “treacherously,” Mal 2:10, 11, 14, 15, 16).

The second preacher, David Brainerd (1718–1747), an American missionary to the Native Indians, is quoted in Foster’s discipline of prayer, saying: “I love to be alone in my cottage, where I can spend much time in prayer” . . . “I set apart this day for secret fasting and prayer to God.”¹⁵⁴ Here Foster illustrates that prayer is more than just a habit. As a spiritual discipline, prayer is to be a lifestyle (cf. Mal 3:16, here the LORD listens and understands).

The third preacher, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), a German Lutheran preacher and theologian, who was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler, wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* which explained how to follow Christ in the ever increasing secularism of the Modern Age. Foster holds that Bonhoeffer defined a true discipleship (*contra* a religious Christianity) and the true cost of following Jesus.¹⁵⁵ (cf. “prove me now,” Mal 3:10). For example, Foster uses Bonhoeffer as an illustration of courage to work toward Christian ideas (e.g., restoring marriage and family)—even within a crumbling society¹⁵⁶ (cf. “he hateth the putting away,” Mal 2:10–16).

The fourth preacher, Billy Graham (1918–2018), an American Evangelist, who is Foster’s great example of The Evangelical Tradition, is quoted saying: “The proclamation of the

¹⁵³ Ibid., 185: “[B]ut served to organize, illuminate and apply the truth of it to our life” which is understood best as a real, personal, and inward experience (i.e., relationship) with God based upon the centrality of the Scripture and illuminated in the individual Christian life, *ibid.*, 188.

¹⁵⁴ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 34. Quoted in Bounds, *Power through Prayer*, 41, 54.

¹⁵⁵ See the six areas that count the cost of discipleship within the daily suffering of Christ in light of today’s secularism, Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 75–81. Foster places Bonhoeffer in The Holiness Tradition.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 271. “Our Marriage shall be a yes to God’s earth; it shall strengthen our courage to act and accomplish something on the earth,” quoted from *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson (San Francisco: HarperSan-Francisco, 1990), 512.

Gospel lies at the very heart of our mission to the world,”¹⁵⁷ (e.g., the whole world will know the great name of the LORD “in every place,” Mal 1:11).

Modern Period and Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard also draws from the ideas of important philosophers and influential preachers of the Modern Age. In fact, Willard uses a plethora of philosophers from both spiritual and secular approaches on spirituality key toward his development of spiritual disciplines. On the one hand, the first key philosopher is Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), a rational German idealist, who believing himself to be a Christian, reacted against the empiricism of his day as well as the cultural attacks upon the language needed to nurture and express both a personal faith in God and a rich relationship with Him in this life.¹⁵⁸ For example, Kant held that one’s moral worth is demonstrated in a life of “good will” which he discusses in the opening of his work – *Foundations of the Metaphysical of Morals*¹⁵⁹ (cf. why did the LORD reject the priests outward appearance of “good will,” Mal 2:13).

The second philosopher is Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), an existentialist who reacted against the idealism of his day, is quoted by Willard to support what he calls “the cost of non-discipleship”¹⁶⁰ For example, Willard, quoting Kierkegaard, concludes that the salvific life illustrates a Christian as being in the Kingdom of God based upon their experiential faith in a

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 206. Quoted from Billy Graham, *Just As I Am* (San Francisco: HarperSan-Francisco, 1997), 695. The calling of an evangelist has several intentional and disciplined qualities, seen in Graham’s ministry: (1) a faithful proclamation of the Gospel; (2) a faithful centrality of the Scripture in the Gospel message; and (3) a faithful witness of the apostolic witness in the interpretation of the Gospel message, *ibid.* 219.

¹⁵⁸ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 65; cf. 131.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 406, n. 19.

¹⁶⁰ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 1: saying: “It costs a man just as much or even more to go to hell than to come to heaven. Narrow, exceedingly narrow is the way to perdition.” Quoted in Søren Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination: Recommended for the Times*, trans. Edna and Howard Hong (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1940), 76–77.

forgiving God which is distinctive from the individual's works that are suitable to the times and their understanding of Scripture.¹⁶¹ This is evident in the priests' for Malachi who addresses the classic examples of the past being non-efficacious toward their spiritual formation, so the LORD promises he will send another like "Elijah the prophet" whose message will prelude YHWH's final blessing and cursing, Mal 4:5–6).

The third philosopher is Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), a famous American author and poet, whom Willard quotes concerning the condition of those who study the theology of spiritual disciplines but lack true discipleship¹⁶² (cf. "And now, O ye priests," Mal 2:1 and v. 8). In addition, Willard sees the reality of being spiritual as dependent upon coming to faith in God, and makes use of Thoreau's observation of a life outside of this spiritual dependency (which characterizes most people in Thoreau's opinion); whereas existence is defined as "lives of quiet desperation," which Willard concludes is consequential of hopelessness and anger¹⁶³ (cf. the priests seem merely religious, without the evidence of true service toward the LORD, esp. the Table, Mal 1:7, 12; the altar, Mal 2:13, the temple, Mal 3:1, even, the ritual, Mal 3:13).

The fourth philosopher is Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), a Russian novelist who wrote *War and Peace*, illustrates that Christians are not perfect.¹⁶⁴ Willard agrees that inwardly, Christians have a continual struggle with these two facts: they are neither what they desire to be, nor are they what they should be. Hence, Willard recognizes that Tolstoy consistently sees man as a

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 38–39; cf. 43, n. 8.

¹⁶² Ibid., 11: saying: "This men will lie on their backs, talking about the fall of man, and never make an effort to get up," quoted in H. D. Thoreau, "Life Without Principle," in *Thoreau: Walden and Other Writings*, Joseph Wood Krutch, ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1962), 359.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 82, 148–149.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 12: saying: "all men of the world exist in a continual and flagrant antagonism between their consciences and their way of life," quoted in Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 136.

walking contradiction between his own conscience and his choices which characterizes humanity in a hopeless and worthless state.¹⁶⁵ Malachi illustrates this by contrasting positive role models' actions from biblical history alongside the priests' actions (e.g., Mal 2:17 and 3:15).

The fifth philosopher, Albert Einstein (1879–1955), a 1912 Nobel prize winner, generally regarded as the Father of Modern Physics, whose formula of relativity (i.e., $E = MC^2$) is used by Willard to demonstrate the physical make-up of our own bodies which is made in the image of God (i.e., *imago dei*) and the potential power that rests within the nature of Man when released by an outside force (like the splitting of an atom).¹⁶⁶ There is still a great distinction between our powerlessness in our own nature and His omnipotence nature (cf. YHWH is “the LORD of hosts,” e.g., Mal 1:6; “a great King,” Mal 1:14; the one God who created all things, Mal 2:10; and “the God of Israel,” Mal 2:16).

The final key philosopher used by Willard is C. S. Lewis (1898–1963), a prolific author and Christian apologist, who illustrates that Christ is not a historical figure who is speaking out of the past; rather He is both present and active in the believer's life.¹⁶⁷ For example, Willard illustrates humanity's limited areas “in knowledge, in power, in love, and in powers of communication” to which Lewis illustrates Man neither knows what to ask for, nor is able to receive things he desires safely, but must act and must continue on in living his life before God.¹⁶⁸ Malachi gives the answer to the priests (and the people of God) to simply “prove” him

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 263; i.e., “Man's whole life is a continual contradiction of what he knows to be his duty.”

¹⁶⁶ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 52–55; Willard asserts humanity is a little less than God due to this power locked within Man's nature waiting to be released in life; if unlocked by God; see also *The Divine Conspiracy*, 196.

¹⁶⁷ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 20; cf. 129: saying: “The real Son of God is at your side. He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of thing as Himself,” quoted in C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1956), 148f.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 239. Prayer for Lewis is not mechanical, but a “personal negotiation” with God, 252.

and see that He is able to unlock “the windows of heaven” and lavish upon them “a blessing” as a result of their trusting in his benevolence nature (esp. Mal 3:10).

On the other hand, (like Foster), Willard focuses greatly on these key preachers of the Modern Age. The first preacher, John Wesley (1703–1791), is credited by Willard as noticing the falling away from any strategic approach toward spiritual growth through intentional Christian discipline. Willard summarizes that since this is still true today, is it any wonder there are so few Christians (which was exactly what Wesley asked in his day)? To solve this problem Wesley devoted his life toward the development of a strategic plan that would result in spiritual maturity through “godly exercises”—which the original Methodists, who were so called, based upon their adherence to his “method,”¹⁶⁹ (cf. Malachi’s message to “return” back to the teachings of the law, Mal 3:7 and to “turn” their hearts back toward one another (and to God), Mal 4:6).

A second preacher, David Brainerd (1718–1747), is notable in Willard’s treatment of the discipline of praying and studying that is both effective and powerful when rooted upon the overall reality of spiritual formation as a lifestyle.¹⁷⁰ Ultimately the resolve for these priests’ and the people was to “Remember” (i.e., return) the law of Moses and to reflect especially upon the past and future promises of YHWH in light of their present spiritual condition, Mal 4:4–6).

A third preacher, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945),¹⁷¹ is quoted by Willard on the importance of reaping a positive end of chastity by means of maintaining a healthy relationship

¹⁶⁹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 146. Willard adds here that John Wesley is another example someone who Christians quote their famous words but will not implement them to grow spiritually.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 186. For example, Willard advises believers today to give serious consideration “at the lives of others who truly have apprenticed themselves” to Jesus; and further cautions that believers are to first give themselves to the Gospels before they seek to emulate the vision and example of exemplary Christ followers like David Brainerd, in Willard, *The Divine Contract*, 297.

¹⁷¹ Willard states concerning Bonhoeffer’s *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937): “It was a masterful attack on ‘easy Christianity’ or ‘cheap grace,’ but it did not set aside—perhaps it even enforced—the view of discipleship as a costly spiritual excess, and only of those especially driven or called to it,” in Willard, *The Divine Contract*, 262–263.

with the opposite sex (*contra* an unhealthy intentional isolation), saying: “the essence of chastity is not the suppression of lust but the total orientation of one’s life toward a goal.”¹⁷² Willard furthers this argument of coveting, quoting: “to be without desire is a mark of poverty.”¹⁷³ Malachi adds a remedy of covetous through worshipful giving of “tithes and offerings” (Mal 3:8, 10). Willard concludes from Bonhoeffer’s perspective on natural desire and spiritual discipline that “freedom from desire—makes possessions safe and fruitful for the glory of God”¹⁷⁴ (cf. Mal 2:2—“to give glory unto my name”).

Modern Period and Donald S. Whitney

There is only one notable philosopher who has illustrated the approach to spiritual formation in the writings of Donald S. Whitney, yet there are several major contributors by these principle preachers. C. S. Lewis’ last novel, *Till We Have Faces*, recounts the ancient Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche and is used to illustrate the presence of the Holy Spirit in the growth of the believer and the coupling of their longing and groaning to see Heaven and to be with Jesus by Whitney (cf. Rom 8:22–23; 2 Cor 5:2).¹⁷⁵ Whitney also adds that no matter the analogy one uses to communicate the message of the Gospel; that, “[i]t is the Gospel that is the power of God

¹⁷² Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 172. Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: Fontana, 1953), 63.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 202; 219, note 6. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 81.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 205.

¹⁷⁵ Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Life*, 123–124. For example, Psyche yearning to her friend, says: “It was when I was happiest that I longed most. . . The sweetest thing in my life has been the longing—to reach the Mountains, to find the place where all the beauty came from,” quote from C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1984), 74–75.

for salvation and not our own eloquent powers or persuasiveness”¹⁷⁶ (cf. “my messenger,” Mal 3:1 and 4:5).

Whitney also utilizes many preachers to illustrate spiritual disciplines of the Christian. First is Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), a First Great Awakening preacher. Whitney asserts that Jesus is the “source” and “standard” of spiritual “life” and “health” and “growth.”¹⁷⁷ And the LORD said of Levi, who was the example Levitical priest in Malachi’s message: “My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him,” Mal 2:5).

In addition, Whitney illustrates his view of spiritual love as wrought within the believer through the Holy Spirit *contra* to the errors of natural affection (cf. Rom 1:31; 2 Tim 3:3) cautioned against in Edwards’ *Religious Affections*: (1) true Christian love;¹⁷⁸ (2) false counterfeit love,¹⁷⁹ and (3), false unbalanced love.¹⁸⁰ Truly the priests depicted in Malachi neither recognized God’s love for them nor reciprocated God’s love in their worship (e.g., Mal 1:2, 6). This would have limited greatly their trusting in God toward any spiritual formation needs.

¹⁷⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 104–105. Cf. Rom 10:17; Eph 2:8–9.

¹⁷⁷ Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Life*, 14. and quotes Edwards saying: “Christians are Christlike: none deserve the name of Christians that are not so, in the their prevailing character. . . it is not they that live, but Christ that lives in them,” quoted in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2. Perry Miller, gen. ed., *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1959), 346–347.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 45; whereas, “the chief of the graces of God’s Spirit, and the life, essence and sum of all true religion; and that by which we are most conformed to heaven, and most contrary to Hell and the devil.” Cf. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 146.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 46. This reciprocal love is pictured by Edwards as “full of dear affections to some, and full of bitterness toward others.” Cf. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 368.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 47. This idea of loving not the soul but only the physical is interpreted by Edwards as “a love to others as to their outward man, they are liberal of their worldly substance, and often give to the poor; but have no love to, or concern for the souls of men.” Cf. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 369. Cf. 1 John 3:18 (KJV) – “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

Hence, Whitney investigates the idea of grieving over personal sin using Edwards as a guide in three aspects of growing in grace thorough grieving one's sin: for example, Edwards equated being brokenness due to personal sin this way: "When I look into my heart, and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell."¹⁸¹ For Edwards, godly mortification (Mal 2:2, 5–7) is much preferred over worldly humility in sorrowful expressions of repentance (Mal 2:13). Malachi's solution is simple: "Return" and "Remember" (cf. Mal 3:7 and 4:4) so that "the son of Levi" (Mal 3:3, i.e., the priests) might be purified and purged by "the Lord whom you seek" (Mal 3:1, i.e., messiah) and serve the LORD "in righteous" (Mal 3:3).

A second, preacher, David Brainerd (1718–1747), who prompts Whitney to illustrate coupling prayer and fasting by quoting Brainerd's journal: "I think I never in my life felt such an entire weanedness from this world and so much resigned to God in everything."¹⁸² Consequently, Whitney warns the practicing both prayer and fasting as a discipline "does not *ensure* the certainty of receiving clear guidance from God" but also claims: "Rightly practiced, however, it does make us more receptive to the one who loves to guide us"¹⁸³ (cf. a negative example, where the LORD neither regarded nor received their faithless offerings of worship, Mal 1:10 and 2:13).

Whitney also uses the life of David Brainerd (who consequently died from tuberculosis at age 29 in the home of Jonathan Edwards) to answer the question—how does a Christian live daily when they are longing for heaven? Specifically, Brainerd develops Whitney's position on spiritual growth in faith in this earthy home while practicing spiritual groaning for faith to

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 102. Cf. Iain Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987) 101–102.

¹⁸² Entry recorded April 19, 1742; Ibid., 165–168. Cf. Jonathan Edwards, ed. *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, revised edition ed. By Philip E. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1949), 80.

¹⁸³ Italic is his; Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 168. Note: KJV shows several passages that include both "prayer" and "fasting" in practice (i.e., Ps 35:13; Dan 9:3; Mt 17:21; Mk 9:29; and 1 Cor 7:5).

become sigh in that heavenly home.¹⁸⁴ Whitney concludes that spiritually maturing Christians will continue to agonizingly desire Heaven above all things that this world affords. Malachi's likeness of "that day" speak of honor, healing, and happiness (Mal 3:17 and 4:2).

A third preacher, John Blanchard (born. 1932), is highly recognized today as an international preacher, teacher, apologist, and author. In his book, *How to Enjoy Your Bible*, Blanchard is quoted by Whitney questioning the need for spiritual discipline of daily Bible reading: "How often do we face problems, temptation, and pressure? *Every day!* Then how often do we need instruction, guidance, and greater encouragement? *Every day!*"¹⁸⁵ Thus, Whitney lays a daily, practical, and deliberate, plan for Bible intake. Like Edwards, Blanchard is used to illustrate Whitney's evaluation toward diagnosing spiritual health and growth over against the concepts of thirsting for God and grieving personal sin; in addition, he also contributes towards a third theory—the forgiving spirit. The Book of Malachi can also be used as an examination to check whether or not God's expectations are being acknowledged and acquiesced faithfully within the people of God's attitudes towards his name, affection towards his presence, and actions towards his Kingdom. Sadly, like their fathers (Mal 3:7) the priest's of Malachi's day failed their spiritual formation test, but there is coming another (e.g., Mal 3:1–5 and 4:5–6).

A fourth preacher, John Piper (born. 1946), is a well know Calvinistic pastor and author. Whitney uses Piper's works *Desiring God* and *A Godward Life* to illustrate themes in prayer,

¹⁸⁴ Whitney utilizes three major quotes from Brainerd to develop his position here: First, "I longed exceedingly to be dissolved and to be with Christ, to behold His glory. Oh, my weak, weary soul longs to arrive at my Father's house, entry recorded June 12, 1742; Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health*, 123. Cf. Edwards, ed. *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, 87. Second, "I longed to be perfectly holy, that I might not grieve a gracious God; who will continue to love, not withstanding his love is abused," entry recorded Oct 26, 1744; Ibid., 126. Cf. John Thornbury, *David Brainerd* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1996), 132. Third, "He knew that I longed for nothing but Himself, nothing but holiness that He had given these desires and he only could give me the thing I desired," entry recorded June 15, 1742; Ibid., 129. Cf. Edwards, ed. *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, 88.

¹⁸⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 33. Cf. John Blanchard, *How to Enjoy Your Bible* (Colchester, England,: Evangelical Press, 1984), 104.

worship, and evaluating overall spiritual health.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, Malachi presents rhetorical narratives pertaining to the words the priests are speaking before the LORD, the way the priests are serving before the LORD, and the witness the priests are setting before the LORD.

Modern Period and David G. Benner

There are several notable individuals from diverse disciplines who have aided in the approach to spiritual formation found in the collective writings of David G. Benner in the Modern Period. First, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), a Danish philosopher and theologian, is regarded as the father of Existentialism; whereas the human individual is the starting place for all philosophical thinking; rather than society or religion. Benner’s goal is to describe what it means to be fully human and illustrates both fear and oneness in humanity through Kierkegaard. Benner summarizes Kierkegaard’s contribution concerning the nature of fear in humanity as threefold: “(1) fear occurs when the human spirit is afraid of itself, (2) fear is often a substitute for guilt, and (3) guilt always results in an inhibition of love.”¹⁸⁷ Benner adds that the real danger of fear is

¹⁸⁶ Piper on prayer: “There is a race to be run and a fight to be fought. If you want renewal in your life of prayer you must *plan* to see it,” *ibid.*, 80; emphasis his. Cf. John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1986), 150. Piper on worship: “Where feelings for God are dead, worship is dead,” *ibid.*, 90. Cf. Piper, *Desiring God*, 70. Piper give three aspects of spiritual growth and maturity. (1) The first is concerned with the needs of a dry soul; in particular, the promise of Jesus saying: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14; KJV). Piper adds “A spring satisfies thirst, not by removing the need you have for water, but by being there to give you water whenever you get thirsty,” Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health*, 18–19. Cf. John Piper, *A Godward Life* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 1997), 84–85. (2) The second is concerned with the approach to the Scripture; whereas Whitney distinguishes between the reading of the Bible and loving it (cf. 2 Thess 2:10). Piper adds: “Loving the truth is a matter of perishing or being saved. Indifference to the truth is a mark of spiritual death,” *ibid.*, 33. Cf. Piper, *A Godward Life*, 107. (3) The third is concerned with reciprocating love to others; whereas God is the source (cf. Rom 5:5). Piper adds: “Love is the overflow of joy in God which gladly meets the needs of others,” *ibid.*, 50. Cf. Piper, *Desiring God*, 96.

¹⁸⁷ Benner, *Surrender to Love*, 40–41. Comp. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concepts of Anxiety*, trans. Reider Thomte (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).

within the self (*contra* external); for the simple reason that the starting place of fear is internal.¹⁸⁸

The Book of Malachi also focuses upon fear—albeit of YHWH: that is, the absence of “fear” in the priests of Malachi’s day (cf. “Where is my fear?,” Mal 1:6) and the attribute of “fear” in true servants of God (Mal 2:5; 3:16; 4:2).

Second, Carl Jung (1875–1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist and noted founder of analytical psychology—an approach to the deep study of the unconscious human mind. Benner suggests that surrender is the most important connection between love and spirituality, quoting Jung saying that love “demands unconditional trust and expects absolute surrender.”¹⁸⁹ Consequently, according to Jung, the new life (i.e., transformed life) only happens “when the ego-will submits to God’s will” (cf. Gal 2:20—“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (KJV)).¹⁹⁰ Love is a primary thought in the message of Malachi (“I have loved you, saith the LORD,” Mal 1:2), however, this divine love is neither acknowledged, appreciated, nor reciprocated by the very ones being loved due to their lack of trust (“Ye ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?,” Mal 2:1).

Third, Thomas Merton (1915–1968), a Catholic mystic and prolific author, is used by Benner to illustrate his position of the impossibility in living in a kingdom that is unseen while

¹⁸⁸ Benner, *Spiritual Practices for the Human Journey*, 170. Therefore, it is important to find oneness; that it, to be one within oneself, which Kierkegaard argues is the “purity of heart and described it as the ability to will one thing,” namely, first peace within (*contra* warring), and then with all other aspects of living, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁹ Benner, *Surrender to Love*, 11. Cf. Carl Jung, *Aspects of the Masculine* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 59.

¹⁹⁰ Benner, *Spiritual Practices for the Human Journey*, 65. Cf. Carl Jung, *Letters* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 2:265.

desiring one that is seen.¹⁹¹ To further Benner's idea of approaching God with an honest and straightforward thought and attitude, Merton exclaims that "there is no greater disaster in the spiritual life than to be immersed in unreality . . . When our life feeds on unreality, it must starve. It must therefore die. . . The death by which we enter into life is not an escape from reality but a complete gift to ourselves which involves a total commitment to reality."¹⁹² Malachi also proposes several real character traits to the priests to define their present reality; ones that ought to have been imitated and committed toward spiritual formation in their day (and still can be); for example, faithful patriarch (e.g., Jacob *contra* to "profaning the covenant of our fathers," Mal 2:10), faithful priest (e.g., Levi *contra* to "ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi," Mal 2:8), faithful prophet (e.g., Moses *contra* to "ye have caused many to stumble at the law).

Fourth, Henri Nouwen (1932–1996), a Catholic priest and prolific author of spirituality, greatly influenced Benner through his famous meditation named after Rembrandt's painting *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, saying: "Henri Nouwen notes that the reason we are invited to return to the love of the Father is to become like the Father."¹⁹³ Benner furthers this understanding of God's love which purposes to remake the individual in the image of divine love (cf. Lk 6:36—"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (KJV).); whereas, reconciliation and restoration to the Father is not the ultimate goal, but one's spiritual journey is specifically about being remade in the Father's love.¹⁹⁴ Malachi not only commands a "return" to the levitical law

¹⁹¹ Benner, *Desiring God's Will*, 120, saying: "To possess Him who cannot be understood is to renounce all that can be understood. To rest in Him who is beyond all created rest, we renounce the desire to rest in created things." Cf. Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 55.

¹⁹² Benner, *Spiritual Practices for the Human Journey*, 136. Cf. Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, 3.

¹⁹³ Benner, *Surrender to Love*, 89. Cf. Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 120–133.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90–91, noting Nouwen: "becoming like the heavenly Father is not just one important aspect of Jesus' teaching, it is the very heart of his message." Cf. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 125.

(Mal 3:7; cf. “Remember,” Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text]) but also illustrates what a “return” implies eschatologically (Mal 3:18; cf. “shall turn the heart,” Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]). However, the priests’ ignorance (or apathy) that the LORD loves them (Mal 1:2) is demonstrated by a slippery slope of rhetorical accusations by Malachi (esp. Mal 1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13).

Terminology Relating To Spiritual Formation

There is wide-ranging use of synonyms for the expression *spiritual formation* by authors writing in this genre. Although there is an apparent need for a clear and simple definition (in light of the Christian believer, local church, and seminary, to name a few areas of application), the vast amount of works and authors from different religious and philosophical backgrounds available today makes a concise explanation that satisfies all parties difficult at best.¹⁹⁵ Hence, in seeking to understand the whole term as it used generally, it is best to define its distinctive components: which are *formation* and *spiritual*.¹⁹⁶ Pastors today need to be aware of the use of these various terms and the history and traditions behind them, as they are utilized today.

Biblically, each has its roots etymologically. For example, the term *formation* is derived from the Greek verb *morphoō* (meaning “to form”) as observed in Galatians 4:19—“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (KJV);¹⁹⁷ and the term

¹⁹⁵ The Barna Group, “Many Churchgoers and Faith Leaders Struggle to Define Spiritual Maturity,” May 11, 2009. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/264-many-churchgoers-and-faith-leaders-struggle-to-define-spiritual-maturity?q=formation> (accessed July 28, 2011).

¹⁹⁶ See these articles that seek to define *spiritual formation* in light of Christian education: J. J. M. Roberts, “Seminaries, ‘Spirituality,’ and ‘Spiritual Formation’: A Quick Fix for the Disciplines Life of a Faith?,” *Christian Studies* 20 (2004): 43–50 (paper presented at the Restoration Quarterly Breakfast during the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Toronto, Canada, November 25, 2002); Graham Cheesman, “A History of Spiritual Formation in Evangelical Theological Education,” June, 4, 2010. <http://theologicaleducation.org/2010/06/04/a-history-of-spiritual-formation-in-evangelical-theological-education/> (accessed August 1, 2011).

¹⁹⁷ Diane Leclerc and Mark A. Maddix, *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2011), 12.

spiritual (or “spirituality”) stem from the Latin cognates *spiritus* and *spiritualis* which are appropriate translations from the Greek nouns *pneuma* and *pneumatikos*, meaning spirit.¹⁹⁸

On the one hand, the idea *formation* can be illustrated in several specific ways. First, the idea of *formation* as both “theology” and “transformation” is proposed by John Coe, the editor of *The Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, who seeks to satisfy both ideas in his opening address of the Journal, stating four mandates:

1. The Journal attempts to get clear theoretically and practically on the nature, dynamic process and directives for spiritual transformation unto the image of Christ in order to assist others in better cooperating with the Spirit we grow in union with God.
2. The time has come for a Journal to help transition the contemporary interest and “movement” in spiritual formation from being fringe to becoming more the “warp and woof,” the very heart and mind of the church and pastoral training.
3. The Journal addresses not only spiritual transformation but also theory and praxis of soul care, that is, how to assist others in the process of spiritual growth.
4. The Journal will be an opportunity to help the body of Christ to discern truth from error, reality from fantasy, in spiritual formation and soul care.¹⁹⁹

Second, the suggestion of *formation* as “health” is proposed by Donald S. Whitney in his work *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*. He asks ten self-diagnostic questions (i.e., tests) that seek to determine whether one is merely spiritually active or whether one has spiritual life through Christ and is growing in Christ-likeness (e.g., Ephesians 4:15—“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (KJV)). Assuming his readers have eternal life through both experiential grace of the Father and

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹⁹ John Coe, “The Call and Task of this Journal,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 1 (2008): 2–4. See also Steve Porter, Sanctification in a New Key: Reliving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation.” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 130.

real faith through His Son Jesus Christ, he cautions: “For health to be present, or course, there must be life.”²⁰⁰

Third, the depiction of *formation* as “renewal” is proposed by Richard J. Foster, who is the founder of Renovaré—a Latin expression that means “to renew.”²⁰¹ One verse illustrating the core value of this ongoing ministry is Colossians 3:10: “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (KJV). Renovaré vision statement seeks out not only the believer and their kingdom work, but any individual desiring personal renewal:

We believe that we can all be active participants in God’s kingdom and we long to help churches, individuals and communities live fuller, more profound lives. We believe that the Kingdom of God is here and now and that the abundant life Jesus promised is available to everyone and anyone. Our passion as a ministry is helping people become more like Jesus. People who desire to become more like Jesus have an impact on the world they live in. This is Renovaré’s vision for spiritual renewal.²⁰²

Fourth, the suggestion of *formation* as “piety” is seen throughout the Reformation (esp., *Sola Scriptura*); specifically the influence of John Calvin toward Protestant spirituality, for example: “For Calvin, piety is grounded in dependence upon the God and his Word and is revealed in worship and service.”²⁰³ Here, “the pious person is the one who has taken his or her place within God’s order and who expresses devotion to God in obedience to his Word.”²⁰⁴ Even though it is argued that the term “piety” is avoided by modern day Protestants for terms like

²⁰⁰ Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, 13.

²⁰¹ See Renovaré, “What is Renovaré Header,” <https://www.renovare.org/about> (accessed March 24, 2013); Renovaré was founded in 1988.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Dennis Morgan and Mark Yarhouse, “Resources from Reformed Spirituality for Christian Spiritualist Formation in Clinical Practice,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 65. Quoted from David G. Benner, *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 92.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

“holiness” and “godliness,” the influence of Calvin’s great work *Institutes of the Christian Religion* include famous and influential puritan writers like John Owen and John Bunyan, preachers like Richard Baxter, and theologians like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Hodge, who all have impacted modern day believers and aspects of piety as *formation* as beneficiaries of the theology and practice of Calvin.²⁰⁵

Fifth, the thought of *formation* as “life” is proposed by Dallas Willard. Life here is presented as “a new type of life” wrought through regeneration and is measured as a natural development based upon the Christian understanding of the progression of one’s salvation; whereas, one passes from death unto life:²⁰⁶ for example, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (Jn 5:24; KJV). Consequently, Willard warns against the popular practice of seeking converts rather than disciples, projecting if this trend continues that this new life in Christ for a believer may “have little prospect other than that of a passing fad, which will certainly disappoint or fade into diverse legalisms and vacuous ‘spiritualities’—things that fall entirely within human abilities, described in the Bible as ‘the flesh.’”²⁰⁷

Sixth, the reflection of *formation* as “sanctification” is proposed by Richard E. Averbeck, a professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, since 1994. “Sanctification” is understood in light of concepts like “growth” and “discipleship” of the inner working of the Holy Spirit within the Christian; whereas, Averbeck states from a

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 64.

²⁰⁶ Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation as a Natural Part of Salvation,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, Jeffery P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2010), 49.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 60.

biblical point of view that “‘spiritual formation’ focuses our attention on the dynamics of how the Holy Spirit works in us, among us, and through us.”²⁰⁸ Hence, the idea of *formation* is the result of the Father “shaping” the believer according to His will for the purpose of “conforming us to the image of Christ” (e.g., Romans 8:29—“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (KJV)).²⁰⁹

Seventh, recent and significant offerings equating *formation* to the aforementioned synonyms stem from the following terms and their proponents: (1) “Trinitarian”—Averbeck says: “A well rounded understanding of ‘spiritual formation’ will be Trinitarian;”²¹⁰ (2) “ethics”—David P. Gushee, Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics at Mercer University, explains: “That there is a relationship between Christian spiritual formation and moral engagement with our suffering world is to me so indisputable as to be beyond discussion;”²¹¹ and (3) “soul reformation”—Willard adds: “Spiritual formation, as commonly referred to now, is a matter of reforming the broken soul of humanity in a recovery from its alienation from God.”²¹²

²⁰⁸ Richard E. Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 28. See also Steve Porter, “Sanctification in a New Key: Reliving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 129.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

²¹¹ David P. Gushee, “Spiritual Formation and the Sanctity of Life,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, 213. Gushee adds that “ethics” here is “an unbending theological-ethical commitment to certain scriptural beliefs about God and God’s relationship to the world,” 219.

²¹² Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation, and the Restoration of the Soul,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 108. Willard presents the soul as “distinct from the person, but the entity that makes the person and life one person and life,” 101.

On the other hand, the idea of “spiritual” can be illustrated in several specific ways. First, this term can imply mystical principles *contra* biblical precepts. Second, this term can be viewed as simply religious *contra* specifically Christian.

The former comparison is best illustrated in studying the spirituality of mystics. Gerald L. Sittser, professor of Theology at Whitworth University and an award winning author, explains mystical spirituality this way: “Mystical spirituality leaves behind the material in order to experience union with God.”²¹³ Here Sittser uses the term mystical (i.e., spiritual) over against sacramental—which focuses upon the material. However, the biblical precept plainly teaches a unity of “body, soul, and spirit” (i.e., 1 Thess 5:23—“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (KJV)) in the measure of the Christian’s sanctification of the whole person till Christ’s return. Hence, the idea of *spiritual* implies “the result of the cooperation of our whole lives with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, which is alive and working within the whole person—body and soul.”²¹⁴ John Coe concurs, explaining that both material and spiritual are involved in one’s sanctification, claiming: “Spiritual Theology and Formation glean from both observation of the Word and observation of the Spirit working in real human lives for the sake of understanding the nature and dynamic process of sanctification.”²¹⁵

The latter comparison is best illustrated in studying extra-biblical ideas put alongside those that are uniquely and historically Christian. For example, Steve L. Porter, managing editor of *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, suggests there is a distinctiveness between “the

²¹³ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 163.

²¹⁴ Leclerc and Maddix, *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm*, 11.

²¹⁵ Coe, “The Call and Task of this Journal,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 3.

importation of ideas and practices (whether Catholic or not) that are biblically questionable” in light of spiritual formation.²¹⁶ This is true between church tradition over-ruling clear biblical theology, church dogma superseding biblical exegesis, even works righteousness taught over and against biblical *spiritual formation*.

. Theories Shaping Spiritual Formation

The survey of the historical periods and terminology of spiritual formation leads one toward a further discussion of major theories that have been significant in shaping this movement throughout Christendom. Therefore, it is needful to examine certain questions that identify important traditions: namely, monastic, reformed, and spiritual, which have shaped spiritual *formation*. Pastors today may find traditions useful in searching for illustrations and applications from the vastness of Christendom, after they have exegeted the biblical text.

First of all is the monastic tradition. In a leadership interview between a pastor (Dieter Zander) and a professor (Dallas Willard) a question “What can we learn from other Christian traditions . . . ?” is answered first by Willard who replies that western Christianity has survived the ages mainly due to the communities of monasticism which “never lost the idea that spiritual formation is serious business” and then by Zander who replies similarly that Christians “value individualism in our tradition, but individualistic Christianity is an oxymoron.”²¹⁷ Gerald Sittser adds that monasticism which has spanned fifteen hundred years and still operates the basically the same, that is: “The routine, the worship, the daily labor, the layout of the grounds, the study,

²¹⁶ Porter, “Sanctification in a New Key: Relieving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 134.

²¹⁷ Dallas Willard, and Dieter Zander, interview by Greg Schneider, “The Apprentices,” *Leadership*, 24–25.

the discipline and the practice of *lecto divina* follow the same pattern that was first established when these institutions were founded in the Roman world.”²¹⁸

Second of all is the reformed tradition. Here the question might be asked: What are the key distinctive, documents, and doctrines, of this theory of spiritual formation? As the monks’ solace and safe lifestyle developed Monasticism, biblical reformers like John Calvin and Martin Luther are foundational leaders in the reformed tradition. Their theological contributions concerning the doctrine of sanctification and justification (respectfully) wedded the ideas of the significance of holistic transformation of the body, soul, and spirit, to that of personal salvation; else, “Protestants would have been left without a theological basis for spirituality.”²¹⁹

In addition, the influential documents of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Faith*, the reaction of the *Remonstrant Articles* by the followers of Jacob Arminius and the development of TULIP at the Synod of Dort (1618), the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* (1648), as well as the rise of Puritanism, heralded the reformed tradition as “heirs of Calvin in both theology and practice” from the early sixteenth century till today.²²⁰

Last of all is the spiritual tradition; which details the actions of the Holy Spirit within and without the Christian “in contrast to classical ‘stage theories,’ as the context of adult spiritual development.”²²¹ Henri Nouwen has labeled the spiritual tradition into seven movements of the Spirit, namely: “from opaqueness to transparency, from illusion to prayer, from sorrow to joy,

²¹⁸ Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries*, 96.

²¹⁹ Morgan and Yarhouse, “Resources from Reformed Spirituality for Christian Spiritualist Formation in Clinical Practice,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 65. C.f. Benner, *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest*, 92.

²²⁰ Ibid., 64. Quote also in H. L. Rice, *Reformed Spirituality: An Introduction for Believers* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 12.

²²¹ Henri J. M. Nouwen with Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca L. Laird, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010), 128.

from resentment to gratitude, from fear to love, from exclusion to inclusion, and from denying to befriending death.”²²² In a unique sense, Nouwen draws from two aspects of the Spirit’s working: (1) “the journey inward . . . the disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer, meditation, contemplation, and attentiveness to the movements in our hearts;” and (2) “the journey outward . . . community and mission calls for the disciplines of care, compassion, witness, outreach, healing, accountability, and attentiveness to the movement of other people’s hearts.”²²³

Principles Causing Spiritual Formation

There are several fundamental principles that cause spiritual formation. Underlying these principles are basic foundational truths rooted in either proper biblical theology or effectual presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian and the Church. These assumptions are related to the Christian becoming like Christ individually, in the community of faith, and in the world at large. Pastors also need to grow spiritually and ought to be able to mentor and example to the church and global community today.

First, Averbeck shares what he calls “the basis for sound Christian spiritual formation” rooted in clear biblical theology (i.e., Old and New Testaments) and especially the inner and outer workings of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.²²⁴ These essential principles of faith and practice causing spiritual formation are presented in a Trinitarian model:²²⁵

²²² Ibid., ix.

²²³ Ibid., 123. Terms “journey inward” and “journey outward” are taken from Elizabeth O’Conner, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968).

²²⁴ Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 27.

²²⁵ Ibid.

1. There is the work of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, occupying, empowering, and reshaping us and our lives from the inside out.
2. The Holy Spirit works to build us into local communities of faith in which he dwells and in which we have fellowship with one another.
3. The Holy Spirit makes us into prophets and prophetic communities that stand out in the world showing forth God's glory and attracting others to him.

Second, Paul Pettit, director of the spiritual formation program at Dallas Theological Seminary, concludes that the main principle causing spiritual formation is modeled in a community—"an authentic, biblically based community group among the members of the body of Christ," rather than withdrawing from the world through isolation or intentionally separating oneself from individual relationships with other believers (e.g., Monasticism).²²⁶ He adds within this community (i.e., the Body of Christ) four key principles of spiritual formation are apparent: a personal identity with Christ; a personal awareness in the Christ community; a personal maturation towards integrity; and last, a personal ministry towards Christ that is fully furnished to glorify God and serve others.²²⁷

Third, an overarching principle discussed within the movement of spiritual formation is the aspect of conforming to the image of Christ (i.e., Rom 8:29); whereas, Robert P. Meye, presently the Dean Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of New Testament Interpretation at Fuller Theological Seminary, introduces this divinely predestined aspect of the will of God and indwelling nature of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer towards the imitation of Christ as "both a fundamental means and the glorious goal of Christian formation."²²⁸ Meye seeks to

²²⁶ Paul Pettit, editor, "Conclusion," in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 269.

²²⁷ Ibid., 269–275.

²²⁸ Robert P. Meye, "The Image of Christ: Means and End of Spiritual Formation," in *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*, eds., Kenneth O. Gangel and James C. Wilhoit (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 199.

demonstrate that the image of Christ (Greek noun *imago*) is the same as the imitation of Christ (Greek verb *imitare*); concluding linguistically and theologically (as well as practically) that each term having a common root and orientation in which “[t]he action (to imitate) corresponds to the goal of the action (the image).”²²⁹ Thus, spiritual formation is a necessary process of Christianity.

Last, the aforementioned principles derived out of scripture and experienced through the inward (and outward) presence of the Holy Spirit also have a devotional quality, according to Richard J. Foster and Gayle D. Beebe, who state:

“Spiritual Formation is concerned with the hidden dimension of every human life . . . [i]t is in this hidden space that we are shaped, that our character is formed, and it is here where God encounters us and we choose to follow him.”²³⁰

In other words, seeking a place of fulfillment in God in every aspect in the life He has given (whether it be good or bad), is caused by this devotional principle: “our longing for God.”²³¹

Objections Concerning Spiritual Formation

There are objections toward the practice of spiritual formation. Many postulated are of genuine concern; while others are based upon either a false conception or futile anxiety surrounding the individual Christian life, the community of faith, and related ministries. First of all, Steve Porter offers eight notable objections. He proposes a twofold methodology to discuss any objection for doing spiritual formation. By which, he hopes to formulate a simple apologetic toward investigating this movement, namely: “(1) recognizing needed correctives/cautions and

²²⁹ Ibid. 200.

²³⁰ Foster and Beebe, *Longing For God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion*, 12.

²³¹ Ibid., 14–15. The phrase “longing for God” is derived from Augustine’s *Confessions* where he states: “Our hearts are restless until the find their rest in thee,” *ibid.*, 11.

(2) at least partially defusing the objection.”²³² Second of all, Porter claims that there are also “numerous other concerns” that can be raised as objections.²³³ This section will seek to illustrate Porter’s initial eight objections and then to adjoin several more that impact the movement of spiritual formation today. This is a good resource for pastors who desire to wrestle with the biblical text as the locus of preaching and teaching, but who are also seeking to add relevant stories and disciplines that are tried and tested in history toward spiritual formation.

First Objection: Spiritual Formation is just another Fad.

Is spiritual formation just another fad? Porter does not view spiritual formation as a passing trend within evangelicalism in the practical sense. Of course he would argue that methods and methodologies always change, but the message that the church has a duty whether in season or out, to offer a practical understanding of a Christian growth in a clear, coherent, and complete manner” is timeless and imbedded in the Christian life.²³⁴ Evidence of this is throughout the history of Christendom.

Second Objection: Spiritual Formation is Catholic.

Is spiritual formation Catholic? Porter reasons that spiritual formation is “catholic” in the sense of the indebtedness of that Protestantism has for its historical roots (e.g., patristic and medieval periods) and theological heritage (e.g., first seven church councils) which were mainly a return to biblical theology over against errors within the Roman Catholic Church during (and

²³² Steve Porter, “Sanctification in a New Key: Reliving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 129–130.

²³³ Ibid., 148.

²³⁴ Ibid., 131–132.

since) the reformation. However, Porter also warns that “the need to be on the look-out for unbiblical theology and practices cuts both ways” in light of errors encroaching evangelicalism’s application and formulation of spiritual formation principles.²³⁵

Third Objection: Spiritual Formation is New Age.

Is spiritual formation New Age? Porter discussion on the claim that spiritual formation is New Age is similar to his answer that it is Catholic. After presenting various criteria showing that it is possible to have overlapping themes, he argues that for spiritual formation to be acceptable the principle or practice needs to satisfy at least one or more these criteria:²³⁶

1. Clearly supported by biblical teaching.
2. Compatible with well grounded biblical teaching.
3. Rational for the practice/principle.
4. Extra-biblical support . . . from the study of general revelation.
5. Widespread historical acceptance and endorsement . . . within the history of the Christian Church.

If at least the number 2 to 5 criteria are met, the principle or practice should be “provisionally” accepted as valuable for the Christian life.²³⁷ In conclusion, Porter adds:²³⁸

[The] ultimate concern is not whether the principle or practice can be found within some non-Christian spirituality, but whether the principle or practice can be affirmed from God’s general and special revelation.

²³⁵ Ibid., 132–134.

²³⁶ Ibid., 134–135.

²³⁷ Ibid., 135.

²³⁸ Ibid., 138.

Fourth Objection: Spiritual Formation is Contrary to the Sufficiency of Scripture.

Is spiritual Formation contrary to the sufficiency of Scripture? Porter answers that although spiritual formation necessarily must stay fixed on the doctrine of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, there are principles and practices that fall outside of the Bible. This opens the door for the issue that the authority of the biblical text is not applied to the idea of spiritual formation. However, there is ample internal evidence within Scripture that the imitation of individual models outside of the biblical text are allowed (e.g., imitation of Paul's life—Phil 3:17 and 1 Cor 4:16, 17; i.e., Heb 13:7). Porter adds that extra-biblical resources can help in our personal application of what Scripture teaches, like imitating the devotions of an exceptional Christian as a model of daily living; but warns “these sources are not superior in authority to Scripture nor do they define what constitutes normative Christian belief and practice.”²³⁹

Fifth Objection: What Ever Happened to Good Old-Fashioned Obedience?

Is good old-fashioned obedience spiritual formation? Porter claims “trusting Christ and obeying His commands should be at the heart of spiritual formation.”²⁴⁰ To illustrate, Porter quotes Dallas Willard who declares obedience and the goal of spiritual formation are the same as imitating Christ: “obedience or conformity to Christ” are synonyms.²⁴¹ Outward obedience is generally measured by one's behavior, but does not guarantee true Christ-likeness within. This dilemma is resolved when one “naturally and regularly obeys Christ from the heart.”²⁴²

²³⁹ Ibid., 138–141.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 141–142. This thought is derived from the famous Hymn: “Trust and Obey.”

²⁴¹ Ibid., 142. Quoted in Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 22.

²⁴² Ibid.

Sixth Obedience: Spiritual Formation Encourages Works Righteousness.

Does spiritual formation encourage works righteousness? Porter agrees that if the believer takes on the responsibility for accomplishing the process of transformation or sanctification in either doing something or doing nothing is problematic, saying: “[a]ny model of sanctification that prescribes some response on the part of the believer to God’s sanctifying grace, however passive that response may be, becomes a target for works righteousness.”²⁴³ Yet, the vast scope of literature on spiritual formation warns of this paradox. Porter cautions that spiritual formation principles do not entail “a spirituality of works righteousness . . . [r]ather, works righteousness is a threat to any discussion of progress in holiness (cf. Gal 2:11–21).”²⁴⁴

Seventh Objection: Spiritual Formation is Overly Experiential.

Is spiritual formation overly experiential? Porter recognizes that the Scripture speaks of the believer having a “personal relationship with God that has an experiential dimension” (e.g., the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—Jn 14:16–17; the spiritual manifestation of the Father and Son—Jn 14:23).²⁴⁵ To illustrate, Porter quotes D. A. Carson’s commentary from John 14 concerning Jesus’ promising to his disciples that he is not going to abandon them (because he is sending the Holy Spirit) even though he will not physically be with them: “This must not be construed as merely creedal position. The Spirit is to be experienced: otherwise the promise . . . of relief from the sense of abandonment is empty.”²⁴⁶ Porter adds that since Scripture plainly teaches that a believer’s relationship is in fact experiential; rather than optional, the objections of

²⁴³ Ibid., 143.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 144.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 144.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. Quoted in D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 500.

being overly experiential “actually further validate the need and value of spiritual formation within the Christian community.”²⁴⁷

Eighth Objection: Spiritual Formation Neglects Missions/Evangelism.

Does spiritual formation neglect missions and evangelism? Porter illustrates that this complaint “reflects and reinforces our narcissistic and self-centered age at the expense of the Great Commission mandate to reach the world for Christ (Mt 28:18–20).”²⁴⁸ In fact, Porter argues the opposite, claiming that it is the lack of spiritual formation within the life of the believer and within the Body of Christ that are “common barriers to the mission endeavors” on the New Testament church: for example, “lack of financing, strained relations amongst ministry patterns, moral and spiritual failure, hypocrisy, and the inadequate discipleship of new believers stem from issues of spiritual immaturity.”²⁴⁹ In conclusion, one should see the obstacle of fulfilling the Great Commission as a lack of spiritual formation within the local church.

Ninth Objection: Spiritual Formation can be Assimilated by Postmodern Spirituality.

Is postmodern spirituality assimilating spiritual formation? Dallas Willard addresses three characteristics of postmodern spirituality at the 2006 Collegiate Conference at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: (1) borrowing from many different religious practices to those that are page sources, it is considered “eclectic” in nature; (2) desiring an real practical “experience” that affects the whole life of the person beyond simple head knowledge, it focuses upon the heart, soul, as well as the body; and (3) emphasizing “relationships” that can be developed within a

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 146–147.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 147.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

community, it seeks meaningful one-on-one and group intimacy not realized in the past but longed for in real time.²⁵⁰ For Willard, postmodern spirituality is not a threat to spiritual formation, it affirms the role of scripture in the church: “Scripture as the authority for developing appropriate spiritual practices . . . the measure of the validity of any spiritual experience . . . both profitable and sufficient in the area of developing one’s spirituality” (e.g., 2 Tim 3:16–17).²⁵¹

Tenth Objection: Spiritual Formation cannot be Defined.

Can spiritual formation be defined? The Barna Group revealed that many pastors, laymen, and local churches, simply do not understand what being spiritually mature means and uncovered five challenges in formulating spiritual maturity within the community of faith as: (1) following a set of biblical rules or works; (2) expectations not clearly identified; (3) defined individually rather than ecclesiastically; (4) lacking proper support for or stated objectives within a congregational strategy; and (5) vague preaching and responses from the pastor on biblical passages and themes addressing spiritual maturity.²⁵²

The Barna Group also discussed pastoral strategies toward spiritual maturity: (1) developing clear communication to remove obstacles of spiritual growth; and, (2) education on implementing spiritual goals, accommodating spiritual evaluations, and developing spiritual growth.²⁵³

²⁵⁰ Garrett E. Wishall, “Church Must be Aware of Dangers of ‘Postmodern Spirituality,’ Whitney Says,” (February 22, 2006) <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=22708> (accessed August 5, 2011).

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² The Barna Group. “Many Churchgoers and Faith Leaders Struggle to Define Spiritual Maturity,” (May 11, 2009) <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/264-many-churchgoers-and-faith-leaders-struggle-to-define-spiritual-maturity?q=formation> (accessed July 28, 2011).

²⁵³ Ibid.

Eleventh Objection: Spiritual Formation is leading Evangelicals toward Mysticism.

Is spiritual formation leading evangelicals toward mysticism? Bob DeWaay, founder of *Critical Issues Commentary*,²⁵⁴ Senior Pastor of the Nondenominational Twin City Fellowship in Minneapolis, and author of *Redefining Christianity: Understanding the Purpose Driven Life Movement*, thinks Dallas Willard, Donald Whitney, and Richard Foster are leading today's church into mysticism through the movement now commonly called spiritual formation.²⁵⁵

DeWaay's main argument suggests that these influential authors (especially Foster's foundational work *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, which DeWaay has labeled the "Celebration of Deception") have rejected *sola scriptura* where the Holy Spirit speaks to the believer and local church through the biblical writers alone and have intentionally replaced the biblical text for "mediators for personal revelation beyond scripture."²⁵⁶

Although, DeWaay is to be applauded in being suspicious of any principle that seems to overrule or bypass the rule of Scripture—"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jn 4; 1, KJV); however, his repeated claims that use of extra-biblical principles concerning meditation, imagination, mediators, self-discipline, and mystic practices like *lectio divina* are "unbiblical,"

²⁵⁴ Web address is <http://cicministry.org/>. Founded in 1992 to present theological essays on important issues related to modern day teaching that are construed as unbiblical.

²⁵⁵ Bob DeWaay, "The Dangers of Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Disciplines," *Critical Issues Commentary* 91 (2005): 1–7; "Donald Whitney and Spiritual Disciplines: Spirituality without Boundaries," *Critical Issues Commentary* 111 (2009): 1–8; "Richard Foster—Celebration of Deception: Evangelical Mysticism," *Critical Issues Commentary* 112 (2009): 1–5.

²⁵⁶ Bob DeWaay, "Richard Foster—Celebration of Deception: Evangelical Mysticism," *Critical Issues Commentary*, 4. See also Cephas Ministry, "Renovare & Christian Mystic Quaker and Fuller Psychologist, Richard Foster – He Teaches all New Age Techniques," http://www.cephasministry.com/new_age_richard_foster.html (accessed February 17, 2012). Arguments that these authors have moved away from *sola scriptura* in Bob DeWaay, "The Dangers of Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Disciplines," *Critical Issues Commentary*, 2; "Donald Whitney and Spiritual Disciplines: Spirituality without Boundaries," *Critical Issues Commentary*, 2; "Richard Foster—Celebration of Deception: Evangelical Mysticism," *Critical Issues Commentary*, 1, 4.

“dangerous,” and promote “spiritual deception”²⁵⁷ to evangelicalism, is without constructive balance that these author’s have abandoned the biblical text and theology of the authority of Scripture in seeking practical and vivid examples of individual applications of spiritual practices (e.g., meditative prayer, bible study, service, evangelism, worship, etc...) by historical persons and traditions that may lead to maturity and growth.

Twelfth Objection: Spiritual Formation is a Path to Syncretism.

Is spiritual formation a path toward syncretism? Bob DeWaay argues that spiritual formation is in fact cloaked mysticism and is a pathway toward the blending of unbiblical beliefs and ideas together with Christianity.²⁵⁸ The use of mystical and pragmatic principles intentionally move the believer away from the biblical text and biblical theology and insert spiritual disciplines that promises personal sanctification for the believer by his own efforts. “Ordinary life does not lend itself to the high level practice of ascetics, pietism, and mysticism” which is another way of describing a spirituality that is best understood for DeWaay as syncretism.²⁵⁹

However, it seems that DeWaay is confusing sanctification and salvation when he states:

Whitney’s spiritual disciplines are a list with no boundaries. Whitney’s “only road” is through spiritual disciplines, most of which are not revealed in the Bible. What a strange and syncretistic “narrow gate” this is! But Romans 8:29 applies to all who are “foreknown, predestined, called, and justified.” That would include the thief on the cross. He got there without spiritual disciplines.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ DeWaay, “Richard Foster—Celebration of Deception: Evangelical Mysticism,” *Critical Issues Commentary*, 1.

²⁵⁸ DeWaay, “Donald Whitney and Spiritual Disciplines: Spirituality without Boundaries,” *Critical Issues Commentary*, 1.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

Consequently, DeWaay is right to challenge any conclusion that promises a biblical theology which is distant from a proper exegesis of the biblical text; especially in the area of sanctification (and salvation). However, DeWaay is not giving proper balance to the weight of Donald Whitney's creedal stance of the authority of scripture as a foundation within his use of extra-biblical resources and terminology to promote spiritual formation. The use of extra-biblical language and practices, does not necessarily promote unbiblical principles, but they can color in for an individual how the biblical text looks in real life (affording real life examples to study and emulate).²⁶¹

SUMMARY

Accordingly, it is the purpose of Chapter 2 to fully explain what is meant in the thesis question "spiritual formation." This purpose was accomplished through five distinct approaches of defining spiritual formation. The first approach surveyed how definitive periods of church history (i.e., patristic, medieval, Protestant reformation, and modern ages) inspired contemporary authors in the field of spiritual formation: in particular, Richard J. Foster, Dallas Willard, Donald Whitney, and David Benner. The second approach explained the concept of spiritual formation through and investigation of the cognates of "formation" and "spiritual" in light of the frequent terminology surrounding spiritual formation. The third approach discussed common theories that border the idea of spiritual formation within the historical movements and traditions. The fourth approach revealed strategic principles that seek to cause spiritual formation within a biblical and historical framework of Christianity. The last approach reviewed major objections toward the implementation of spiritual formation within evangelicalism presented and illustrated throughout

²⁶¹ For example of criteria on how to systematically evaluate extra-biblical sources see, Steve L. Porter "Sanctification in a New Key: Relieving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1 (2008): 129–148.

church history; especially the idea of extra-biblical practices and principles being taught within the local church. In conclusion, the best definition that supports the objective of this thesis is presented by Richard E. Averbeck, professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages and director of the PhD program in Theological Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, who defines spiritual formation from the biblical text as:

the ministry through which we seek to stimulate and support the ongoing spiritually transforming work of the Holy Spirit in and through the personal lives, relationships, and ministries of genuine believers so that we all progressively become more conformed to the image of Christ according to the will of God the Father (Romans 8:26-30).²⁶²

²⁶² Averbeck, "Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation," 27, 53.

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITUAL FORMATION PRINCIPLES FROM MALACHI

It is the purpose of this chapter to present biblical principles derived from a compositional analysis of the Book of Malachi toward formulating principles toward spiritual formation. This will be accomplished through summarizing the importance of using the Book of Malachi as a strategy toward developing a new exegetical model for the goal of integrating spiritual formation to the believer and the local church through explaining the compositional analysis of the literal and historical (i.e., grammatical) structure of Malachi as a whole. Each major section below asks a question that begins with the Old Testament Book of Malachi and ends with a principle toward spiritual formation.

Importance of Malachi as a Strategy for Spiritual Formation

What is the importance of the Book of Malachi as a strategy for spiritual formation? Malachi's importance stems from two main exegetical characteristics of its being a biblical text: (1) Malachi's canonical position—connects the prophetic corpus of the Hebrew canon as its conclusion and connects to Christian theology as an Old Testament biblical text; and (2) Malachi's biblical theology—speaks to the current lifestyle of the faithless and the faithful and to the maturity and mission of the New Testament believer and local church.

On the one hand, there is a general understanding of the Old Testament books and their relationship toward Christian theology. For example, while it is true that the idea of *spiritual*

formation is rooted in principles derived from the Scriptures since the early church to the present, Brevard S. Childs, one of the most influential Old Testament scholars of the 20th century, contends “that the discipline of Old Testament theology is essentially a Christian discipline, not simply because of the Christian custom of referring to the Hebrew Scriptures as the Old Testament, but on a far deeper level.”²⁶³ Thereby, it can be argued that Malachi can be approached, as a biblical text, as having theological principles profitable not just for historical Jews, but also for the believer and the local church today; principles that can be derived for spiritual formation. Childs affirms that “the final form of the book of reflects a profoundly theological understanding of the people of God.”²⁶⁴ This is the focus that this thesis seeks to unveil: Old Testament principles derived through an exegetical model of approaching the theological message concerning God’s people in the book of Malachi and reassigning these same principles for the benefit of spiritual formation in the ongoing lifestyle of God’s people today.

It is a profitable discipline approaching the Old Testament for evidence of spiritual disciplines that leads toward spiritual formation in the believer and the community of faith which is derived first exegetically and then theologically from the biblical text. Childs adds: “Basic to the discipline is a concept of how the Old Testament is interpreted and appropriated which, in spite of the great differences in its execution, shares certain features stemming from Christian theology.”²⁶⁵ These relational features related to the Old Testament (e.g., Malachi) are threefold—theological unity to the New Testament, Christological emphasis, and distinctively Christian in principle. To paraphrase Childs: (1) the biblical text is understood as a complete

²⁶³ Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 7. Childs was the Old Testament professor at Yale Divinity School from 1958 to 1999.

²⁶⁴ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979), 497.

²⁶⁵ Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 7.

unity and profitable for the ongoing life within the community of faith (i.e., OT and NT together as a unity); (2) Christology is a relational feature which bridges the gulf between the history of Israel with that of the Christ (whether intentional or not; see Jesus' commentary on how to approach the Hebrew Scriptures from Luke 24:27, 44); and (3) attempts to focus on the Hebrew Scriptures concerning significant themes stem from a Christian position (even secular attempts of developing philosophies affirm this same practice related to Christian principle).²⁶⁶

On the other hand, the Book of Malachi plays an important role for understanding divine expectation at the end of the prophetic corpus; as well as, the accountability of believers to live within the boundaries of biblical theology derived from the biblical text itself. Consequently, Paul R. House, currently a professor of Old Testament Theology and Hebrew at Beeson Divinity School, illustrates that the message of Malachi addresses real "social, economic, and spiritual depression . . . by fastening the people's minds on theology."²⁶⁷ Within the message of Malachi is "the ultimate paragraph of hope (Mal 4:5–6)"²⁶⁸ and through a strategic and systematic revelation of divine expectation on the role and responsibility of key components toward spiritual vitality Malachi as a whole "expresses the cost of renewal and explains how barriers to restoration may be removed."²⁶⁹

Hence, the Book of Malachi as the conclusion of the prophetic corpus in the OT is the final exclamation of the "theological conviction around YHWH's promise for the future"²⁷⁰ relating to the people of God through the book of the prophets. This future hope and promise

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 7–8.

²⁶⁷ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 393.

²⁶⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 107.

²⁶⁹ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 393.

²⁷⁰ Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 108.

toward an ultimate sanctification is an offer that assures “a new Jerusalem, new Torah, new covenant, new people . . . all things new,”²⁷¹ according to House; and should be celebrated by all believers alike.

In summary, the importance of an investigation of the composition of Malachi as a whole, which concludes that the book of the prophets in the Hebrew Canon as a source of theology is divine revelation for today rather than as merely a witness of the chronology of historical events of Israel,²⁷² presents certain theological principles that have spiritual value for the Christian reader in approaching the Book of Malachi as a biblical text in formulating a stratagem toward spiritual formation. The proposed strategy of this thesis is to approach the biblical text through an exegetical methodology for the purpose of deriving distinct theological principles for the purpose of spiritual formation of believers and the community of faith. In addition, this section is committed to viewing the biblical text as special revelation (i.e., Scripture) having personal and practical value for the individual believer and the local church today; rather than as merely an historical record of the events of the past.

Compositional Analysis of Malachi as a Strategy toward Spiritual Formation

How does a compositional analysis of Malachi formulate a strategy toward spiritual formation? First of all, before the exegete attempts to launch into compositional analysis, John H. Sailhamer, was a Professor of Old Testament Studies at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California and former President of The Evangelical Theological Society in 2000, cautions that when approaching the biblical text there are several components that must be

²⁷¹ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 393.

²⁷² See arguments for the Old Testament as either “Text” or “Event” in John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995); especially pages 36–85.

addressed concerning the shape of the Hebrew Canon: “the final shape of the Hebrew Bible is best described in terms of three intersecting coordinates: composition, canonization and consolidation.”²⁷³ Sailhamer adds:

Because biblical theologians in the past have focused largely on historical events, much of their attention has been devoted to the study of nontextual entities such as historiography, archaeology, and the nature of historical events as such. With renewed interest in the biblical text as the locus of revelation and the focus of theology, there is a growing urgency for a better understanding of texts.²⁷⁴

The result of focusing upon the text in its final form is seeing the Old Testament biblical text as the Tripartite Hebrew Canon (also named for its compositional acronym *TaNak*)—the Law (*Torah*), the Prophets (*Nev'im*), and the Writings (*Ketuvim*), having a theology all of its own based upon its compositional structure, which argues Sailhamer “shows real similarity to and unity with the NT.”²⁷⁵ For example, according to Luke 24:44 (KJV)—“And [Jesus] said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the [writings], concerning me,” Jesus and the disciples used the order and shaping of the *TaNak*. Hence, theological principles derived from the exegesis of a text within the final consolidation of the Old Testament biblical text (i.e., *TaNak*) would be Christologically sound from the perspective of the New Testament writers.

²⁷³ John H. Sailhamer, “Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed., Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove/Leicester: International/Apollos, 2002), 31; the Tripartite Hebrew Canon—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, has a theology all of its own based upon its compositional and coherent structure.

²⁷⁴ Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 200–201.

²⁷⁵ Sailhamer, “Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible,” 34. Note: Sailhamer takes the pre-Christian, that is the Jewish Rabbinical form of the Tanak; not Alexandrian LXX, in which the earlier tradition (2nd century B.C.) is uniquely intertestamental and intentionally linked with the book of Daniel and the Edict of Cyrus in 2 Chronicles 36:22–23 (i.e., *Baba Bathra* 14b); 35, 37.

Second, after the exegete has determined the shaping of the Old Testament biblical text, it is necessary to determine how the biblical text is historically and theologically valuable to the modern reader. Emil Brunner, late Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology at the University of Zurich, emphasized that the Old Testament was foundationally significant for the Christian faith, saying: “the Old Testament is the beginning of the New. The *beginning* of the New. . . Thus the understanding of the Old Testament is the criterion and the basis for understanding the New.”²⁷⁶ For this reason, the exegete needs to understand that the Old Testament as Scripture is the authoritative foundation to derive faith principles concerning the people of God and is compositionally connected to the New Testament both historically and theologically. To summarize, these truths are important in approaching the book of Malachi in light of deriving principles toward spiritual formation in three ways: (1) the exegete needs to approach Malachi as a biblical text (i.e., Scripture); (2) the exegete needs to approach Malachi for biblical theology (i.e., unity within the OT and NT); and (3) the exegete needs to approach Malachi for biblical formation (i.e., principles for spiritual formation). Once these primary attitudes are realized, the exegete is ready to approach the structure of Malachi as a theologically relevant biblical text.

Third, notice that throughout the Book of Malachi there are a series of discourses between God and His people.²⁷⁷ Brunner reminds the exegete that there is a tremendous focus on the “community” of faith which is governed by God’s righteousness, order, and lordship;

²⁷⁶ Emil Brunner, “The Significance of the Old Testament for Our Faith,” in *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*, ed., Bernhard W. Anderson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1963), 263–264; italics are his.

²⁷⁷ It is commonly accepted that the structure of Malachi has six major divisions based upon its oracles (or disputations) “although other divisions are suggested (e.g., P. Verheof breaks Mal 1:6–2:9 into two periscopes [Mal 1:6-14; 2:1–9] and counts seven oracles [Verheof, 162], while W. Kaiser identifies five oracles by combining Mal 2:1–9 with Mal 2:10–16, and Mal 2:17–3:5 with Mal 3:6–12 into single pericopies [Kaiser, 17],” quoted in A. E. Hill, “Malachi, Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, eds., Mark J. Boada and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove, IL/Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Academic/InterVarsity Press, 2012), 527.

whereas, it is “God’s will to have a true People of God on earth.”²⁷⁸ For the purpose of this thesis, the outline of the Book of Malachi will illustrate the nine distinct dialogues between the Levitical priests and the word of the LORD through his prophet Malachi for deriving spiritual formation principles that are theological and practical for God’s people.²⁷⁹

Last, the macro-syntactical outline (illustrated in the sections below; see also Appendix A) of the Book of Malachi divide the Hebrew clauses in regards to their compositional occurrence within Malachi (i.e., referred to syntactically as “mal” below), chapter, verse, and its positional orientation to the *’athnach* (viz.,)—the primary Masoretic disjunctive accent which separates a Hebrew passage into two distinct sections within each distinct Hebrew verse.²⁸⁰ For example, “mal01:01a1–mal01:01b1” is the syntactical designation of Malachi 1:1 in the Hebrew text; whereas “mal01:01a1” refers to the first clause in Malachi chapter one verse one before the *’athnach*; and, “mal01:01b1” refers to the first clause in Malachi chapter one verse one after the *’athnach*. In addition, this macro-syntactical outline portrays two important features pertaining to spiritual formation: (1) the importance of the role of the spiritual leaders (cf., pastors), as illustrated within the nine distinctive dialogues within Malachi’s text before the LORD and His people, the primary human agents for implementing a strategy toward spiritual formation within

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 262.

²⁷⁹ Compositional strategy of Malachi is derived by Rand Michael Muender. See Chapter 3 in “The Canonical Approach to the Old Testament: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation of Malachi 3:22–24 and Psalms 1–2” (ThM thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 49–80; see also “Discovering the Macrostructure of the Book of Malachi: Mal. 1:1–12 as a Test Case,” *Faith and Mission* 18 (2001): 88–105.

²⁸⁰ This literal and grammatical analysis of the narrative within Malachi is largely dependent upon the works of John H. Sailhamer, “A Database Approach to the Analysis of Hebrew Narrative,” in *MAARAV* 5–6 (1990): 319–335; Eep Talstra, “Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew: The Viewpoint of Wolfgang Schneider,” in *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 5 (1992): 269–297; and Christo H.J. van der Merwe, “An Overview of Hebrew Narrative Syntax,” in *Narrative Syntax on the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ellen van Wouds (Boston/Leiden: Brill Academic, 2002): 1–20. See also discussion on this disjunctive accent as indicating a “rest” in Emil Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, A. E. Cowley, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), §15, f.

the community of faith;²⁸¹ and (2) the responsibility of the Levitical priests (cf., pastors) as principally accountable before the LORD for the spiritual decline and lack of sanctification of God's people.

In summary, the understanding of the importance and accountability of spiritual leaders within the community of faith is observed within the larger narrative from the apparent structural exchange of dialogue between the word of the Lord (i.e., through His prophet Malachi) and the spiritual leadership of God's people—Levitical priests (cf. pastors). Malachi has three major compositional distinctions promising theological principles leading toward spiritual formation:

1. Introduction (Mal 1:1)
2. Nine Discourses (Mal 1:2–4:3 [1:2–3:21 Heb. text])
3. Conclusion (Mal 4:4–6 [3:22–24 Heb. text])

Introduction: Spiritual Formation through Trusting in God's Word (Mal 1:1)

The superscription—מִשָּׁא דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מַלְאָכִי (trans. “The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by the hand of Malachi”) in Malachi 1:1, (mal01:01a1–mal01:01b1; see Appendix A), introduces to the reader three main characters in the biblical narrative, namely:

1. Malachi (מַלְאָכִי)
2. Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל).
3. The word of the LORD (דְּבַר־יְהוָה).

First of all, the superscription introduces the term מַלְאָכִי which needs to be investigated as to its intentional function and compositional significance (cf., 2:7 and 3:1). Roland Kenneth

²⁸¹ Daniel I. Block, “Reviving God's Covenant with Levi: Reflections on Malachi 2:1–9,” *Reformation and Revival Journal* 4 (1995): 121–136.

Harrison, a contemporary Old Testament scholar and author, acknowledged that the noun מַלְאָכִי was translated within the Greek Septuagint (LXX) as a common expression (literally translated “my messenger” in Hebrew) rather than as a proper name (“Malachi”) as in the Hebrew text; whereas, “scholars have been influenced by the LXX to the point of regarding this prophesy as an anonymous composition.”²⁸² Childs adds that the LXX, raises a problem of its use of a third person “appellative” or an adjectival expression for מַלְאָכִי (i.e., his messenger) in Mal 1:1, rather than as a first person nominative proper (Malachi) as does the Masoretic text, concluding the Hebrew text satisfies the use of each nominative occurrence with the book (Mal 1:1 and 3:1 as a proper noun; but not to 2:7 which is rightly appellative); whereas the LXX does not.²⁸³ Plainly the Hebrew text views מַלְאָכִי as the name of the prophet, to view this otherwise would be a “contradiction to the final two verses which envisage a future messenger who will effect the restoration” (Mal 4:5–6; [Mal 3:23–24 Heb. text]) and diminishes the overall theme of the book as a theological treatise for the future expectation of God’s people that a future messenger is coming with a message of a hopeful restored relationship with the LORD.²⁸⁴ Like Harrison and Childs, this thesis regards מַלְאָכִי as a proper name of God’s prophet—Malachi, based upon its grammatical syntax and compositional unity; and rightly derived as the author.

Second, the superscription also illustrates the intended recipients of the divine message through the prophet Malachi as God’s people—Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל). Childs adds: “[t]he editors of the final form are consistent in maintaining this perspective throughout the whole composition,” for example: characterizations from the biblical narrative like Jacob and Esau (Mal 1:2–5); the

²⁸² R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 958.

²⁸³ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 492.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 493.

covenant with the fathers (Mal 2:10); the whole nation (Mal 3:9); and, for all Israel (Mal 4:4 [Mal 3:22 Heb. text]).²⁸⁵ In addition, Pieter A. Verhoef, who was professor of Old Testament Studies at the University of Stellenbosch, notes that Israel (Mal 1:1, 5; 2:11, 16; 4:1 [Mal 3:22 Heb. text]) is “called Judah (2:11; 3:4), Jacob (2:12; cf. 1:2), and the descendants of Jacob (3:6). This name was not used to distinguish between the people and the priest . . . [but] a comprehensive term used to denote the covenant nation.”²⁸⁶ Childs also notes that although other groups are also identified within Israel like: the priests (Mal 1:6, 2:1), those that feared the LORD (Mal 3:16), and the proud and the wicked (Mal 4:1 [Mal 3:19 Heb. text]); are all “groups pictured within the nation . . . but there is never a move to politicize groups within the nation . . . which would dissolve the solidarity of the nation.”²⁸⁷ Hence, the term *יִשְׂרָאֵל* would be God’s people as a whole; whereas, its focus on individual (priest or person) or as a collective has profound implications in application – as the NT focuses on the believer and the local Church.

Consequently, the biblical narrative has no mention of any rebuke or refusal concerning anyone outside of God’s own people other than those distinctive of Israel (cf., Mal 1:3 which mentions Edom in the past tense; and, Mal 3:18 which speaks toward Israel as “the righteous” as relationally and covenantally distinct from other nations who are “the wicked”). Although, “the prophetic message of Malachi is addressed solely to Israel,”²⁸⁸ this covenantal relationship can be argued textually as applying toward NT Christians and the local Church today (e.g., Gal

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 494.

²⁸⁶ Pieter A. Verhoef, “The Books of Haggai and Malachi,” *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, eds., R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 190.

²⁸⁷ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 494.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. The issue of Mal 1:3 where Edom (i.e., Edomites; cf. Obadiah 1 and Amos 9:12) is mentioned in the context that indicates the Edomites are the seed of Esau, who received neither the blessing nor the covenant promise; hence, Malachi is not speaking against them (they have already been destroyed), but for Israel to witness the power of the LORD’s election and love for His people—Israel; see a brief discussion of this issue in Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 258.

3:29—“And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (KJV).

Third, the superscription also characterizes “[of] the word of the LORD” (דְּבַר־יְהוָה). This word (דְּבַר) has authority because it is “divine special revelation” says Verhoef,²⁸⁹ who suggests that the close relationship between the alternating terms, namely: (1) oracle (מִשְׁאָה) and (2) word (דְּבַר), and the divine name transliterated “YHWH” (יְהוָה) are “substantially the same.”²⁹⁰ It is by this divine name that the LORD has elected to reveal Himself to His people, and speak to them through His prophets (e.g., in Mal 1:6 He is “Father” and “Master” and in Mal 1:14 He is “Great King”); whereas, Verhoef illustrates the word (דְּבַר) as “[i]t goes out from the mouth of the Lord, and it does not return to him empty; it accomplishes that which he desires and achieves the purpose for which it is sent.”²⁹¹ Clearly the phrase “the word of the LORD” implies several realities to the reader (and hearer), for example, the word (דְּבַר) is: (1) God’s “dynamic” power throughout history; and, (2) God’s “divine special revelation” of Himself.²⁹² Therefore, because the Book of Malachi is the revealed word of God, to the people of God, by the man of God, then it is to be heard and read and obeyed as Scripture. It is to be received in all its intended applications; even as one would trust in the LORD, who has been historically, is presently, and will be eternally trustworthy.

In summary, it is necessary to point out that the spiritual formation principle derived from Malachi 1:1 (i.e., Trusting in God’s Word) is based upon the biblical text and stems from the synonymous rendering that “the word of the LORD” (דְּבַר־יְהוָה) is “[by] the hand of Malachi”

²⁸⁹ Verhoef, “The Books of Haggai and Malachi,” 189.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 189–190.

²⁹² Ibid.

(בִּיָּד מֶלֶאכִי); meaning the book is a written theological treatise for God's people (i.e., then and now). Hence, the book of Malachi is to be read, heard, and received as trustworthy, even though it is from the hand of the prophet Malachi; because it is the LORD's word. The following are some simple truths from the biblical text in trusting God's word that are foundational to understanding the main body of Malachi's message:

1. God speaks His word through His called prophet.
2. God speaks His word to His elected people.
3. God speaks His word by His divine power.

Body: Exegetical Principles for Spiritual Formation (Mal 1:2–4:3; [Mal 1:2–3:21 Hebrew Text])

It is the purpose of this section to project an exegetical methodology toward deriving spiritual principles from the dialogues within the main body of the book of Malachi. The proposed nine dialogues between the LORD and the Levitical priests will be examined concerning their substance toward spiritual formation (Mal 1:2–4:3; [Mal 1:2–3:21 Heb. text]; i.e., mal01:02a1– mal03:21b2; see Appendix A). Developing exegetical principles will involve certain considerations of approaching the nine proposed narrative passages with these divisions:

1. Biblical Text
2. Biblical Theology
3. Biblical Formation

The first consideration is the biblical text. This section will be approached utilizing linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text

itself.²⁹³ Furthermore, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of Old Testament and Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, proposes five areas of exegetical analysis toward a biblical theology; whereas, meaning is found:²⁹⁴

1. Contextually— meaning based upon connections of thoughts
2. Syntactically—meaning based upon connections of grammatical function
3. Verbally—meaning based upon connections of linguistic features
4. Theologically— meaning based upon connections of historical usage
5. Homiletically— meaning based upon connections to present audience

In light of the structuring of the discourses to be analyzed, the proposed outline is based upon the verbal level of each biblical narrative. The nine discourses have four similarities seen throughout the biblical text (see Chart 5: Macro-syntactical outline based upon the verbal level in Appendix A):²⁹⁵

1. The pattern is always marked with the *wāw*-conjunctive plus QATAL form of אָמַר (viz., וַאֲמַרְתֶּם).
2. The pattern is always accompanied with an indirect question by the hearers (i.e., the priests) utilizing some form of the interrogative (viz., מָה + וַאֲמַרְתֶּם).
3. All nine patterns relate to a specific verbal form within its context between the speaker and the hearer (viz., אָהַב (to love) ... בֹּזֵה (to despise) ... גָּאֵל (to defile) ... לָאָה (to weary) ... בָּגַד (to be treacherous) ... יָגַע (to grow weary) ... שָׁבַע (to return) ... קָבַע (to rob) ... דִּבֶּר (to speak)).

²⁹³ Sailhamer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 102.

²⁹⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward and Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching & Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1981), especially, 69–164.

²⁹⁵ Taken in part from Michael H. Floyd, “Malachi,” *Minor Prophets: Part 2*, in *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature*, eds. Rolf P. Knierim, Gene M. Tucker, and Marvin A. Sweeney, Vol. 22 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 562. See also a further explanation in Appendix A.

4. The similarity shared by these AA' chiasms²⁹⁶ is that they have supplement background scenarios generally marked with the concluding phrase אָמַר יְהוָה זָבֵאוֹת (says the LORD of hosts).²⁹⁷

The second consideration is biblical theology. This section will connect the unity of Old Testament and New Testament in its application and formation from biblical principles to the modern day Christian after a thorough exegesis. Sailhamer argues that the Bible is not just an accounting of past history: "it is, in fact, a record of what God is saying today."²⁹⁸ Kaiser adds: "Exegetical theology will remain incomplete and virtually barren in its results, as far as the Church is concerned, without a proper input of 'informing theology,'"²⁹⁹ concluding that to develop a biblical theology out of a passage then exegesis must go hand-in-hand.

The last consideration is biblical formation. This section will ask: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today?³⁰⁰

Childs reflects upon this facet of doing exegesis within the context of the Hebrew Canon:

If the canonical approach is conceived of as a closed system by which to handle biblical revelation, it is also doomed to failure and should rightly be rejected. However, if it can serve as a means for taking seriously the human form of the witness to divine revelation which God continues to bring alive for each new generation through his Spirit, it may serve as a useful tool for grappling with the real issues at stake in the theological enterprise.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Shimon Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," in *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980): 154–173; discusses four main chiasmic patterns which are created by the repetition of linguistic elements of the biblical text: viz., AA' (similar or antithetic parallel); AXA' (ring); ABB'A' (chiastic); ABXB'A' (concentric), 170.

²⁹⁷ Other phrases are אָמַר יְהוָה (denounced the LORD) and אָמַר יְהוָה (says the LORD).

²⁹⁸ Sailhamer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 16.

²⁹⁹ Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 139.

³⁰⁰ The term "biblical formation" is a phrase that is utilized by this author who seeks to distinguish the principles derived from the proposed exegetical model out of Scripture (e.g., Malachi's biblical text) and those that may include extra-biblical sources illustrating how the term "spiritual formation" is understood in mainstream literature.

³⁰¹ Childs, *Old Testament as Theology in a Canonical Context*, 26.

The connection between Christianity's faith and life and the record of the Old Testament is dependent upon approaching it as a Christian book; whereas, "The importance of reading the Scripture for the faith, formation, and life of the church is generally recognized."³⁰²

In summary, seeking spiritual formation through a derived biblical formation through proper biblical theology developed by sound exegesis of the biblical text will also have a powerful impact incorporating biblical principles into the local church today through expository preaching and teaching of the theology of a biblical text towards the goal of formation of the community of faith. The sections below will illustrate nine spiritual formation principles that undergird a foundational truth—Trusting in God's Word (i.e., Mal 1:1). In each discourse below, there is a divine reminder by the word of the LORD, then a probing interrogative by the audience, and finally a divine answer to the inquiry.³⁰³ The modern reader will gain much through personal identification and examination in light of the spiritual problems presented within the various discourses of Malachi's biblical text.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Choice (Mal 1:2–5)

Malachi 1:2–5 portrays the first of the nine discourses in the biblical text (mal01:02a1–mal05:b2; see Appendix A). This textual configuration is based upon the verb "to love" (אהב). The dialogue, between the LORD and the priests, centers upon the idea of God's divine choice.

Biblical Text: The overview of the first discourse is based upon an ABB'A' chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb אהב (to love) in Malachi 1:2:

³⁰² David Brisben, "Telling the Old, Old Story: How the Contemporary Church Practices Reading the Old Testament for Faith and Life," *Common Ground Journal* 7 (2009): 97.

³⁰³ See an example of this approach in E. Ray Clendenen, "Old Testament Prophecy as Hortatory Text: Examples from Malachi," *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 6 (1993): 348.

1. Reminder (mal01:02a1–mal01:02a2): The divine message reminds the audience: I have loved you//says the LORD (אָמַר יְהוָה)/(אֶהְבֶּתִּי אֶתְכֶם).
2. Interrogative (mal01:02a3 –mal01:02a4): The priests’ response is quoted by Malachi: Yet you say//wherein have you loved us? (בְּמַה אֶהְבֶּתֶנּוּ)/(וְאֵמַרְתֶּם).
3. Answer: The two background scenarios answer the priests’ inquiry with examples:
 - (1) Malachi 1:2–4 (mal01:02b1–ma01:04a5)—the LORD has loved Jacob; yet He has hated Esau (Edom); and
 - (2) Malachi 1:4–5 (mal01:04a6–mal01:05b2)—the LORD shows holy anger toward the border of wickedness (e.g., Edom); yet from the border of Israel He is magnified.

The analysis of the biblical text of Malachi 1:2–5 reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself. First of all, the contextual analysis of this passage reveals three aspects of context: immediate, historical, and prophetic. The immediate context of the Hebrew word אָהַב (to love) as a divine love toward the people of God over other nations (e.g., Edom)³⁰⁴ is an initial proposition for why Israel is skeptical of God’s love for them and not fully experiencing the fruits of His love; consequently, these initial verses “really state the theme of the whole book.”³⁰⁵ The historical context between Jacob and Esau illustrate the patriarchs of two nations; whereas, the former (Israel) is chosen and is given “the hope of restoration;” but the latter (Edom) is not chosen because they rejected their covenantal heritage thereby becoming the enemy of both God and the people of God (cf., Gen

³⁰⁴ “Edom has become a symbol for all the enemies of Judah,” Ralph L. Smith, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 32, eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 305.

³⁰⁵ John Merlin Powis Smith, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi,” *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, eds., Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 19.

25:19-34).³⁰⁶ The prophetic context is rooted in the fact that Israel is still in existence as a nation and the promise of restoration is generationally laid before them as evidenced by the LORD continuing to love His people before all the other nations of the world.³⁰⁷

Second, the syntactical analysis reveals that the rhetorical features common throughout the nine syntactically composed disputations are not real but are presented for the benefit of the present reader; but are “nevertheless realistically defined with respect to an actually existing historical situation.”³⁰⁸ The A’A’ chiasm of the whole passage shows this structure as a “reverse or inverted parallelism” model.³⁰⁹ The use of the first person and Qal Perfect implies that God has always actively loved His people;³¹⁰ even though His people are actively skeptical based upon their present post-exilic situation. For example:

A [YHWH said] “I always have and still do love you!”

A’ [But you say] “You still love us?”

Third, the verbal analysis reveals two major uses of the verbal usage of אהב in the main dialogue featuring: contrast and covenant. One, the antithetical use of the antonyms of love (אהב) verses hate (שנא) reflects the divine perspective of the use of these two terms—without implicating that God is showing partiality or favoritism (cf., Acts 10:34-35; Jas 2:9). Douglas Stewart explains that the cultural use of these terms (i.e., love and hate) “was employed not to indicate personal emotion or affection, but routinely to convey the concepts of alliance or enmity

³⁰⁶ Floyd, “Malachi,” *Minor Prophets: Part 2*, 583.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 583.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Douglas Stuart, “Malachi,” *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, vol. 3, ed., Thomas McComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 1283.

³¹⁰ Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, “Haggai, Malachi,” *The New American Commentary*, vol. 21A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 246–247 suggests that the Qal Perfect describes “a past situation or activity in continuity with the present.”

among nations.”³¹¹ Hence, God is showing that he has allied Himself with Israel, but has made Edom, who illustrates those wicked nations who have rejected His covenant and have moved against His people, His enemy. Two, the antithetical use of the antonyms of love (אהבה) verses hate (שנאה) also illustrates covenant or election language; whereas, the love means God has “chosen” and the hate means God has “not chosen.”³¹² This conveys a sharp historical and prophetic distinction between the relationship God has toward His people (i.e., border of Israel) and the one he has toward those outside of His covenantal family (i.e., border of wickedness).

Fourth, the theological analysis demonstrates a national relevancy as well as a spiritual perspective; to which, Ralph L. Smith comments: “The reminder of their election may be to emphasize God’s freedom to choose or reject. He does not reject arbitrarily, but he does reject those who create a dominion for wickedness.”³¹³ This is alluded to by the fact that “[t]he LORD’s domain is not restricted to Israel” (cf., Mal 1:5).³¹⁴ Here, Malachi describes that the LORD is on His messianic throne in “majesty and power and attracting the wonder and reverence of the world at large”—including the wicked; whether of Israel or of another nation.³¹⁵

Last, the homiletical analysis is presented accordingly based upon the significant themes discussed based upon the literary features above which explain why the people of God are to trust that they are chosen by God no matter their circumstances; He loves them:

1. God’s love for His people is historical.

³¹¹ Stuart, “Malachi.” *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 1284.

³¹² Smith, Ralph L., “Micah-Malachi.” *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 32, eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 305.

³¹³ Ibid., 306.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ John Merlin Powis Smith, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi,” *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, 23.

2. God's love for his people is covenantal.
3. God's love for his people is invitational.

Biblical Theology: Based upon the exegetical analysis above of Malachi 1:2–5, the connections between the unity of Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) in its application and formation from biblical principles to the modern day Christian portray two main overlapping theological issues: God's Sovereignty and Divine Election of His people. First, the dispute of the fairness of God's selective love in choosing Jacob over the oldest brother Esau is against traditional cultural practice in ancient times, but is a common practice in the Old Testament of God's Sovereignty.³¹⁶ for example, Able over Cain, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over his brothers, David over his brothers, Solomon over his brothers. This is also argued by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament in Romans 9 where God's Sovereignty is expresses through mercy and compassion based upon His divine choice, not man's (Rom 9:15-16).³¹⁷ In fact, the New Testament equates God's Sovereign love with that of grace (cf. Mal 1:2 and Rom 9:13; else all mankind would be "hated" like Esau.³¹⁸ Similarly, the other theological issue concerns Divine Election, which is a relational idea "demonstrating that covenant relationship (and its attendant blessings/curses) was Yahweh's prerogative—not Israel's."³¹⁹ This understanding leads not to universal salvation for all nations, but speaks to His universal Lordship in subduing the nations "to the praise of his glory, removing the wicked and exalting those who fear him" (Mal 1:4-5).

³¹⁶ David W. Baker, *The NIV Application Commentary: Joel Obadiah, Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 222.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Andrew E. Hill, "Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary," *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 25D, eds., William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 163.

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God’s choice? Malachi 1:2–5 anticipates one recognizing and acknowledging God’s love within in His Sovereign election – not through personal predilection. Jacob and Esau serve as timeless examples of this biblical truth. God has always loved His chosen people. This was true for Israel; and also for the believer and thus the local church, which is commissioned towards a global mission to share this truth.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God’s Name (Mal 1:6)

Malachi 1:6 portrays the second of the nine discourses in the biblical text (mal01:06a1–mal01:06b5; see Appendix A). This textual configuration surrounds the verb “to despise” (בִּזָּה). The dialogue, between the LORD and the priests, centers upon the idea of God’s divine name.

Biblical Text: The overview of the second discourse from Malachi 1:6 has an AA’ chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb בִּזָּה (to despise):

1. Reminder (mal01:06b3): The divine message reminds the audience: Says the LORD of Hosts to you priests the ones despising my name (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לָכֶם הִפְחִינִים בּוֹיֵי שְׁמִי אֲמַר).
 (אָמַר).
2. Interrogative (mal01:06b4–mal01:06b5): The priests’ response is quoted by Malachi: Yet you say//wherein have we despised your name? (בַּמָּה בּוֹיֵנו אֶת־שִׁמְךָ) //(וְאָמְרִיתֶם).
3. Answer: There are no background scenarios that answer the inquiry; however, there is an interconnected relationship expected between the LORD and the priests in the first four Hebrew clauses in Malachi 1:6 (mal01:06a1–mal01:06b2) preceding the divine message (e.g., son to father and servant to master).

The analysis of the biblical text in Malachi 1:6 also reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself. First, the contextual analysis demonstrates two powerful relational constructs either unrecognized or unrequited by the people of God (esp. the priests) toward God's name: father and son as well as master and servant. The larger context centers around the Hebrew verb בָּזָה (to despise) that illustrates the current disdain by the people (esp. the priests) to God as Father (Israel's Creator, e.g., Is 43:1–7) and God as Master (Israel's Lord, e.g., Deut 6:4). Malachi argument rests upon a universal and biblical foundation that acknowledges the cultural duty toward the titles of both father and master.³²⁰ Therefore, the opposite of their contempt would be deserved from a son to a loving father (cf. Mal 2: 2) and would be demanded from a servant to his master: especially, (1) honoring God's name as Father, which would be an continual expression of God's worth and "recognition of that worth with acts of deference or praise;" and (2) fearing God's name as Master which would couple a sort of "wisdom, which should be the guiding principle of one's life."³²¹

Second, the syntactical analysis reveals two statements "in the form of hypotheticals, implying a real condition ('now if I am father/master [and you know that I am], then ...')."³²² The AA' chiasm of this passage focuses upon the Hebrew parallelism of the son/father/honor and servant/master/fear themes. For example:

A	[Son]	“If I am a father, where is the honor due me?”
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³²⁰ Baker, *The NIV Application Commentary: Joel Obadiah, Malachi*, 227.

³²¹ Taylor and Clendenen, "Haggai, Malachi," *The New American Commentary*, 263–264. Note: honor as an imperfect implies a repeated action toward the father (and also toward the master), cf. Smith, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 310.

³²² Baker, *The NIV Application Commentary: Joel Obadiah, Malachi*, 227.

A' [Servant] "If I am a master, where is the fear due me?"

Third, the verbal analysis of the participle form of בִּזֶה (to despise) implies God's righteous indictment upon the people of God (esp. the priests) who having a continual and contemptible attitude for His name and His person. The meaning of the בִּזֶה (to despise) is "to treat wickedly, unrighteously;" whereas, the opposite meaning would be heartfelt honor and holy fear (each resembles the idea and act of worship and obedience due God Himself by Israel).³²³ According to Malachi these priests, instead of glorifying and obeying God as their Father/Creator and Master/Lord, are living a lifestyle of persistent disdain toward the person and work of God (i.e., His name). "The name and personality were so closely associated in Hebrew thought as to be almost identical. To despise the name, therefore, was to despise Yahweh himself—"But you say, How have we despised thy name?"³²⁴ Here the priests appear to be imitating Esau whom the LORD hated because he despised his birthright over his appetite, than their patriarch Jacob (named "Israel") whom the LORD loved (Mal 1:2–5; comp. Gen 25:34).

Fourth, the theological analysis shows a definite irony in Israel (esp. the priests) who are arguably the "sons of God" (cf. textual variants in Deut 32:8)³²⁵ and the servants of God (e.g., Lev 25:55) reveal their present action against God's name *contra* to their historical allegiance towards God's word. On the one hand, their present action was a violation of The Shema (Deut 6:4–9)—God's primary commandment about Israel's object of devotion which mandates in part:

³²³ Smith, "Micah-Malachi." *Word Biblical Commentary*, 312.

³²⁴ Smith, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi," *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, 26.

³²⁵ Cf. Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and The Sons of God." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 52–74, who argues that Moses' Farewell Song (Deut 32:1–43) has a textual variant (verse 8) which been rendered "sons of Israel" by Masoretic Text (MT) and concludes: "In light of the evidence there exists no textual or theological justification for preferring the Masoretic reading of verse 8. That verse should read 'sons of God,' not 'sons of Israel,'" 74.

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut 6:5, KJV). On the other hand, their present action was a violation of the Decalogue (cf. Ex 20 and Deut 5)—God’s the principal commandment about Israel’s object of worship: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:3, KJV; cf. Deut 5:7) is further enhanced by the filial commandment about Israel’s duty to their parents, namely: “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Ex 20:12, KJV; cf. Deut 5:16). However, historical allegiances of both devotion and worship and duty toward God and those titles by which he is named have become forfeited in Malachi’s day (esp. the priests). The relationship that would normally, even culturally, be expressed universally through a cultural and biblical conditioning to give due honor to a father by the son and due respect to a master by a servant is simply not there. The irony is out of all Israel the priests were anticipated to example and illustrate the authority of God as Creator (i.e., father) and sovereignty of God as Lord (i.e., master) to all the people of Israel; and hence to the whole world.

Last, the homiletical analysis presented below is based upon the thematic questions that arise surrounding the verbal usage of בָּזָה (to despise) to illustrate how the people (esp. the priests) were to acknowledge the name of God:

1. How should the son reverence their father’s name?
2. How should the servant reverence their master’s name?
3. How should the priesthood reverence their LORD’s name?
 - a. by honoring Him as our Father (like a son).
 - b. by fearing Him as our Master (like a servant).

Biblical Theology: Based upon the exegetical analysis above of Malachi 1:6, the connections between the OT and NT scriptures in its application and formation from biblical principles to the modern day Christian portray two main overlapping theological issues: What is a relationship that is based upon filial love (sons to fathers) and one that is more out of dutiful affection (servants to masters)? In retrospect, the facts are not an issue in Malachi's second disputation—those will come soon enough (i.e., Mal 1:7–11): for example, What constituted a lack of trusting in God's name?; and, Why has Israel (esp. the priests) consciously or subconsciously centered the object of their hatred (cf. Esau, Mal 1:2-5) toward the name of God in its totality? The idea of "God-haters" is categorized in Romans 1:30 and are further defined in this way: "Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them" (Rom 1:32, ESV). Hence, the expected loving and dutiful relationship due a father and master is absent from one who is both The Father and The Master.

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God's name? Malachi 1:6 demonstrates cultivating a loving relationship between God and His people toward a dutiful respect toward His name as Father and Master. Unlike the priests of Malachi day, today's believers are too example this relationship and respect within the entire body of Christ and to the world both in proclamation and practice of God's ultimate authority over them.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Presence (Mal 1:7–11)

Malachi 1:7–11 portrays the third of the nine discourses in the biblical text (mal01:07a1–mal01:11b2; see Appendix A). This textual configuration is based upon the verb “to defile” (גָּאַל). The dialogue, between the LORD and the priests, centers upon the idea of God’s divine presence.

Biblical Text: The overview of the third discourse is based upon an AA’ chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb גָּאַל (to defile) in Malachi 1:7.

1. Reminder (mal01:07a1): The divine messenger reminds the audience: The ones bringing near upon my altar polluted bread (מְגִישִׁים עַל־מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם מְגָאֵל).
2. Interrogative (mal01:07a2–mal01:07a3): The priests’ response in quoted by Malachi: Yet you say//wherein have we defiled you? (וְאַמְרָתֶם)//(בְּמַה גָּאַלְנִיךָ).
3. Answer: The four background scenarios answer the priests’ inquiry with several examples: (1) Malachi 1:7-8 (mal01:07b1–mal01:08b4); (2) Malachi 1:9 (mal01:09a1–mal01:09b2); (3) Malachi 1:10 (mal01:10a1–mal01:10b2); and (4) Malachi 1:10-11 (mal01:10b3–mal01:11b2).

The analysis of the biblical text in Malachi 1:7–11 also reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself. First of all, the contextual analysis compares a predictive resolution between how the priests expressed their actions and attitudes wrongly toward the LORD’s presence in their local immediate congregation and then how the Gentiles (i.e., the heathen) will respond to His name in a global futuristic congregation who worship rightly before His presence. In addition, more immediate illustration

of toleration of offering polluted or defiled (לִנְאָ) sacrifices (i.e., bread and/or meat) upon the altar (comp. table of the LORD) are threefold: (1) they were improper in their true value (i.e., worthless), (2) insulting in their true incentive (offering the blind, lame, and sick), and (3) ignorant of their true meaning (not representative of the great name of YHWH; comp. Num 6:27 (ESV)—“So shall they [i.e., Aaron and his sons] put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”).

Second, the syntactical analysis reveals that the priests were despising Him while approaching His presence, either unintentionally or intentionally, by generally despising His name (Mal 1:6) and now by specifically defiling His presence (Mal 1:7; also viewing His table as contemptible—Mal 1:7, 12). The exchange shows the priests approaching God with evil sacrifices (e.g., polluted bread and blind, lame, sick offerings) and as a loathsome ritual (i.e., contemptible, meaning “worthless”) but they do not recognize their ritual ceremony as false or evil worship. The LORD addresses this issue but the people pretend to have no clue. Here is the initial exchange:

A [Malachi states] “Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar.”

A’ [Priests reply] “Wherein have we polluted thee?”

Third, the verbal analysis of לִנְאָ reveals two significant issues regarding both the work and words of the priests as they approach God’s presence within their specified duties (e.g., Num 18:1–7; see esp. v. 5: “. . . that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel”). The verb לִנְאָ (to defile) seems to imply an intention to “abhor, loath, feel disgust” and show contempt for and before the LORD in their worship by polluting everything related to their service toward Him.³²⁶ Consequently, the LORD states regarding their behavior: “Is it not evil?” (Mal 1:8 (2x)).

³²⁶ Taylor and Clendenen, “Haggai, Malachi,” *The New American Commentary*, 267.

Fourth, the theological analysis shows a lack of true love for God and a flagrant disregard for the things of God for the present. Reviewing their actions and attitudes again, He compares these same offerings if offered to an earthly ruler (Mal 1:8–9) and rhetorically implies their governor would neither be pleased nor accept them—and neither does the LORD (v. 10). Yet, there is hope (v. 11). However, this eschatological hope is not to be taken as a token of some grand universal conversion of all nations or a syncretistic amalgamation of all beliefs upon the earth, but is in “view of an imminent coming of the kingdom of God.”³²⁷ Here pictures a great role of the messenger of the LORD (see also comp. Mal 3:1, 4:5–6) in preparing the people of God for His imminent judgment and promised salvation, which also includes the Gentiles (i.e., the heathen *contra* Israel) (Mal 1:11, 12, comp. 3:1, 4:5–6).

Last, the homiletical analysis is based upon the major evaluation of the priests’ works and words in their worship. Which begs the question: How can we refine His altar (which arguably is equal toward seeking His presence)?

1. Give a scriptural offering, from His Word. (v. 11)

Ask: Is my action polluted or pure?

2. Give a sincere offering, from your heart. (v. 11)

Ask: Is my attitude contemptible or commendable?

Biblical Theology: The exegetical analysis above of Malachi 1:7–11 illustrates the climatic doctrine of the Greatness of God in this discourse. Two times in the conclusion of this discourse does the LORD refer to Him name as being “great” (vv. 11; comp. Mal 1:14 —“I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts”). “This reprises the emphasis of verse 6, that his name (reputation, honor, authority) was being insulted by the self-serving, improper worship

³²⁷ Smith, “Micah-Malachi.” *Word Biblical Commentary*, 315.

conducted by the priests. The eventual greatness of God's name, universal recognition thereof, is a theme often associated with predictions of the future of Scripture."³²⁸

Consequently, Moses speaks of the greatness of God in context of His judgment (Deut 9:26) and His salvation (Deut 9:26). Accordingly, the New Testament depicts His great love (1 Jn 3:1), great mercy (1 Pt 1:3), and great power (Eph 1:19–20); to name just a few. Because of the greatness of His name (as father and master, Mal 1:6), the priests' actions and attitudes in their daily worshipful service should reciprocate His greatness before their people and their world (which is exactly what the Gentiles will one day do, Mal 1:11). Only then, says the LORD, will He be pleased and will be gracious and will accept their worship.

For example, in the NT, God the Father says of Jesus Christ His Son at His baptism in Matt 3:17, and at His Transfiguration in Matt 17:5: "This is my son . . . with him I am well pleased"); also, John the beloved said to the church: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 Jn 3:22, KJV). If only those under Malachi's voice could hear The Prophets who have already voiced what the LORD required in approaching His presence, in simply being faithful toward the God their Fathers in their words and works to be accepted (e.g., Gen 4:7).

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God's presence? Malachi 1:7–11 adjudicates the approach toward God's presence that is scriptural and sincere. The example of the priests' ritual and base offerings and service in Malachi before the LORD greatly displeased Him. In contrast, today's believer is to reciprocate their offerings and service to correspond to

³²⁸ Stuart, "Malachi." *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, vol. 3, ed., Thomas McComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 1306.

the greatness of God; especially, in corporate worship as an indication to the whole world of how great it is to be in the presence of God.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Calling (Mal 1:12–2:8)

Malachi 1:12–2:8 portrays the fourth of the nine discourses in the biblical text (mal01:12a1–mal02:08b2; see Appendix A). This textual configuration is based upon the verb “to be wearied” (נָאָץ). The dialogue, between the LORD and the priests, centers upon the idea of God's divine calling.

Biblical Text: The overview of the fourth discourse is based upon an implied AA' chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb נָאָץ (to be wearied) in Malachi 1:12–13.

1. Reminder (mal01:12a1–mal01:12b1): The divine message reminds the audience: And you are defiling it//in your saying the table of my Lord is polluted and its fruit and its food is contemptible.
2. Interrogative (mal01:13a1–mal01:13a2): The priests' response is quoted by Malachi: Yet you say//Behold! What weariness. (וַאֲמַרְתֶּם)/(הִנֵּה מִתְלַאֵץ).
3. Answer: The six background scenarios answer the priests' inquiry with several examples: (1) Malachi 1:13 (mal01:13a3–mal01:13a4); (2) Malachi 1:13 (mal01:13a5–mal01:13b2); (3) Malachi 1:14 (mal01:14a1–mal01:14b2); (4) Malachi 1:14–2:2 (mal01:14b3–mal02:02a3); (5) Malachi 2:2–4 (mal02:02a4–mal02:04b2); and (6) Malachi 2:5–8 (mal02:05a1–mal02:08b2).

The analysis of the biblical text in Malachi 1:12–2:8 also reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself.

First of all, the contextual analysis gives further illustration of the consequences of the priests neither recognizing the love of God (Mal 1:2–5), nor reverencing the name of God (Mal 1:6), nor refining the altar of God (Mal 1:7–11). The LORD has already contrasted the quality of their offensive ministration in the Second Temple as being hypothetically rejected by any worldly ruler (governor); and accordingly, wholly rejected by Himself—the LORD of hosts (comp. “I am a great King,” Mal 1:14). Likewise, He is now comparing the quantity of their deceptive management toward sacrificial themes to a faithless swindler (i.e., deceiver, Mal 1:14), who is both liar and schemer before the LORD, over against His faithful servant—Levi, who is their antithesis speaking the truth and walking in equity before Him (2:4–7). Therefore, it is Levi’s ideal example which they should be imitating for he is called “the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (Mal 2:7, see also another in 3:1), but they are also not remembering the covenant of God (Mal 1:12–2:8). And it is Levi’s faithful conduct to the covenant (Mal 2:5, 8) and to the law of truth (Mal 2:6, 7, 8) which the priests should be emulating; rather than their fraudulent conduct which is robbing them of their inheritance promised by God (e.g., “life and peace” Mal 2:5; comp. Deut 10:8–9).

Second, the syntactical analysis makes plain the heart issue of the priests that believe “the table of the LORD is contemptible” (Mal 1:7; comp. 1:12; see also how this is reciprocated in 2:9). Initially their sacrifices and speeches were understood as outwardly insulting to the LORD (comp. the hypothetical governor), but now the priests who are called toward public service before the LORD and Israel—even the whole world, communicate that this calling is inwardly irritating to them (i.e., “to be wearied” (נָאֵל)). The AA’ chiasm of this passage has an implication of Malachi imposing a reminder that the priests are נָאֵל (“to be wearied”).

A [Malachi’s reminder] “The table of the LORD is contemptible . . .”

A' [The Priests reply] "Behold, what a weariness it is!"

Third, the verbal analysis לָאָה ("to be wearied") in Mal 1:13 entails that the priests' professed their sacrificial duties in the Temple as both toilsome and tiresome. The verb לָאָה has various meanings, "hardship," "trouble," "effects of exhaustion," "weariness," but the interrogative הֲ (i.e., "What?") vocalizes the verb toward the idea of experiencing "toil" and "misery:" for example, saying—"How irksome!;" "How tiresome!;" and, "What a nuisance!"³²⁹ This is a hardened and heartbreaking testimony in light of their true calling, as they reply—"Behold. What a weariness it is!" (Mal 1:13), which intensifies their disdain for ministry as they insolently sniff at their sacrificial duties and privileges ("and ye have snuffed at it" ("it" = "me"?), Mal 1:13). It is ironic that in the Garden of Eden God Himself "breathes" into Man making him a living soul (Gen 2:2; comp. "breathed" and receiving the Holy Spirit in Jn 20:22), but here the priests gratuitously blow back at their Creator and Deliverer who gave them physical life, national life, and who is able to give eternal life.

Fourth, the theological analysis reveals a definite contrast between a fraudulent and faithful servant of God. The priests' failure to keep the commandment of the LORD (2:1, 4) to hear Him and to take His words to heart over against the successful priest—Levi, who speaks the truth and also walks in equity before the LORD (Mal 2:4–7). These two transitional phrases within the discourse: "and now" (Mal 2:1) and "but ye" (Mal 2:8), seem to communicate the priests are being intentionally demeaned while being addressed with "and now O ye priests" (Mal 2:1; comp. 1:6) because they are not fulfilling their special calling. The priests (so called priests) are consequently cursed. For example, their spiritual blessings are reversed; their generational seed is diminished (e.g., infertility toward the yielding of crops (even children?));

³²⁹ Hill, "Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary," *The Anchor Bible*, 191.

and their national freedom will be carried away) (review Mal 2:2–3; comp. Ezk 13:3—“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!” (KJV)). Faithlessness and foolishness concerning the sacred and salvific things of God will eventually and ultimately cause one to become a reproach before other nations (i.e., the heathen, Mal 1:11, 14). And it is because they will neither acknowledge with their ears nor trust in their hearts “this commandment unto you”—to glorify the LORD (Mal 2:4).³³⁰ To glorify the LORD characterizes their high calling (Mal 2:2), one in which they must be wooed back to concerning their private and public oblations. Andrew Hill concurs, saying: “The priests are to ‘publicize’ the truth that all glory belongs to Yahweh, in their sacrificial duties, prayers, and songs, The priests must ‘lay to heart’ this ‘popularizing’ of the truth that Yahweh possesses all the glory, not just the truth itself.”³³¹

Last, the homiletical analysis presented below is based upon the larger issues that revolve around the verbal usage of נָאֵל (“to be wearied”). It paints a picture how the priests were to surrender to the calling of God in these three areas focused upon in this discourse: God’s table (i.e., the altar, Mal 1:12–14), God’s commandment (Mal 2:1–4a), and God’s messenger (Mal 2:4b–8). Which implies the question: How does one fulfill their calling?

1. Ask: What is to be my Commitment?

To value the table of the LORD of hosts!

2. Ask: What is to be my Commandment?

To glorify the name of the LORD of hosts!

3. Ask: What is to be my Covenant?

³³⁰ Q. What is the chief end of Man?

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever. Taken in part from *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. Retrieved from http://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/wsc/wsc_001.html

³³¹ Hill, “Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” *The Anchor Bible*, 198.

To imitate the messenger of the LORD of hosts!

Biblical Theology: Based upon the exegetical analysis above of Malachi 1:12–2:8, Malachi 1:12–14 is a simple overview of the indictments brought against the priests for their despising (בִּזְיָה, Mal 1:6) and defiling (לִגְאֻל, Mal 1:7–11) the name and table of the LORD. But now a new charge is added for being disgusted (לִטְאוֹל, Mal 1:13) implying they are simply bored to death with serving the LORD. The response is a reminder of two likely themes in the OT related specifically to the tribe of Levi (i.e., covenant and law): for example, the covenant of Levi to is related to their blessings by Moses (comp. Deut 33:8–11).

Historically, Levi had a special calling above the rest of the tribes of Israel (e.g., physical inheritance and spiritual purpose; comp. Deut 10:9), since “Yahweh promised Levi ‘life and peace,’ and Levi and/or priests were to fear and reverence Yahweh (2:5). Both Yahweh and the early priests kept heir covenant. Levi must be the personification of the early Israelite priesthood. . . But the priests of Malachi’s day no longer walked with God. They had turned aside from the way (2:8).”³³² Consequentially, dark days are once again upon Israel akin to the cycles of sin-judgment-deliverance during the times of the Judges and the assimilation of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Assyria and the captivity of the Southern Kingdom of Judah by Babylon (“one shall take you away,” Mal 2:3).

The doctrine of the effectual calling of God toward a pure and true priesthood referred here in Malachi 2:1–2 is illustrated best by Peter and Paul’s understanding of the church—the called out ones (Gk. *ekklēsia*). Peter adds: “But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pt 2:9, KJV; Gk. ἐκλεκτόν = called/chosen by

³³² Smith, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 317–318.

God); likewise, Paul adds: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose” (Rom 8:28, KJV; Gk. κλητός = called/summoned by God).

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God’s calling? Malachi 1:12–2:8 contrasts the fraudulent priest against faithful messenger of God based upon their effectual calling. Those who fear Him will follow His commandment and covenant of ministry toward true reconciliation; those who are faithless will view His law as contemptible and common thus causing many to stumble. Today’s believer is trusting in God’s calling with their whole heart, representing His law with both words and works as a true messenger of God (e.g., Levi). Hence, locally and globally exemplifying equity within their own community of faith and turning many away from iniquity outside of the community of faith.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God’s Covenant (Mal 2:9–16b)

Malachi 2:9–16b portrays the fifth of the nine discourses in the biblical text (mal02:09a1–mal02:16b2; see Appendix A). The textual configuration is based upon the verb “to act treacherous” (בגד). The dialogue between the LORD and the priests centers upon the idea of God’s divine covenant.

Biblical Text: The overview of the fifth discourse is based upon an implied AA’ chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb בגד (to act treacherous) in Malachi 2:14.

1. Reminder (mal02:09a1–mal02:13b2): The divine message reminds the audience that they are being treacherous (e.g., see examples of בָּגַד in Mal 2:10 (mal02:011a1); Mal 2:11 (mal02:010b1)).
2. Interrogative (mal02:09a1): Yet you say//Wherefore? (עַל־מָהּ)/(וְאֵמַרְתֶּם).
3. Answer: The two background scenarios answer the priests' inquiry: (1) Malachi 2:14-16 (mal02:14b1–mal02:16a2); and (2) Malachi 2:16 (mal02:16b1–mal02:16b)

The analysis of the biblical text in Malachi 2:9–16b also reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself. First of all, the contextual analysis connects the ongoing use by Malachi of the term “contemptible” (Mal 2:9; comp. 1:7 and 1:12). Progressively the LORD has provided evidence that the priests' work and witness (esp. their worship) present His name and person as contemptible, but the LORD reciprocates and now declares the priests contemptible, saying: “Therefore have I also made you contemptible” (Mal 2:9). “Rather than being beacons of truth urgently summoning God's people to remain on the smooth but narrow path of righteousness and rather than being diligent shepherds faithfully retrieving the Lord's sheep from destructive side roads of sin. Malachi's priestly ‘messengers’ had forsaken the path themselves and had treacherously led many to stumble along paths of their own choosing. Rather than faithful shepherds who protect and guard the sheep, they had been ‘shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture’ (Jer 23:1).”³³³ This treachery is further illustrated in their unscriptural relationships with and before the LORD with respect to their brothers (Mal 2:10), idolaters (vv. 11-13), and wives (vv. 4-16b); whereas, Isaiah words must still echo: “Thou hast bought me no

³³³ Taylor and Clendenen, “Haggai, Malachi,” *The New American Commentary*, 315.

sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities” (Is 43:24, KJV).

Second, the syntactical analysis shows an AA’ chiasm with an implication of the LORD implying a reminder that the priests have בָּגַד (“to act treacherous”):

A	[The LORD’s reminder]	You are being treacherous!
A’	[The Priest’s reply]	“Wherefore?”

Third, the verbal analysis of בָּגַד (“to act treacherous”) illustrate that the priests and their congregation (“Judah”, Mal 2:11 (2x)) had broke their covenant with the LORD in at least three areas: (1) they committed corruptions within the ministry of “[Levi] the messenger of the LORD of host” (Mal 2:8–10); (2) they committed abominations through marrying “the daughter of a strange god” (Mal 2:11–13; see God’s example toward idolatrous Israel and Judah in Jeremiah 3:8); (3) they corrupted vows of marriage toward “the wife of thy youth” (Mal 2:14–16; see God’s example through the life of the prophet Hosea). The watchfulness of decay and the keeping these covenants ultimately rests upon the priests (e.g., Ezk 3:17; 33:1–9). This is their responsibility toward God and toward man because both ministry and marriage characterizes our relationship to the LORD. Micah adds: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic 6:8, comp. James 4:17). Hence, these covenants seem to be in place to maintain intergenerational traditions (“covenant of Levi,” v. 8; and “covenant of fathers,” v. 10), intercultural peculiarities (esp. “wife of thy covenant,” v. 14), and most importantly an intimate relationship with the LORD (e.g., “my covenant” vv. 4, 5). And yet, rather than trusting in God’s covenant, the priests have conformed to worldly conventionalities over divine commandments (Mal 2:1, 4). Rather than seeking to become true toward Levi’s way, Malachi

states the basis of their ongoing treachery: “But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law” (Mal 2:8).

Fourth, the theological analysis shows the larger connections with the continued development of the various ways the priests have broken the idea of “covenant” (of Levi, Mal 2:4, 5, 8; of their forefathers, 2:10, and of the wife of their youth 2:14) both through intermarriage with “the daughter of a strange god” (2:11; see exceptions of a foreign woman marrying an Israelite after accepting the true faith – Rahab, Josh 2:11 and Ruth, Ruth 1:16) and successive treacherous divorce of “the wife of thy youth” (2:14, 15; comp. 16). Although, the main force of this text (i.e., Mal 2:10–12, 13–16) is not to give specifics on issues of polygamy verses monogamy (note: the idea of “one” in Mal 2:10 (2x) and 2:15, expresses the unique worship of God and the exclusive companion in marriage, e.g., Adam and Eve, comp. Matt 19:8) in light of intermarriage between Jewish men and non-Jewish women, it is certain that “the covenant of Yahweh is negatively affected when any wife worships another god and when a man divorces any wife.”³³⁴ However, it would seem that these kinds of intermarriages are common place and in direct violation of the words of Moses and Ezra to keep themselves unmingled with idolaters (comp. Deut 7:2–6, e.g., “thou shalt make no covenant with them . . . Neither shalt thou make marriages with them . . . for they will turn away thy son from following me.”; and, Ez 9:1–10:44, e.g., “For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so the holy seed have mingled themselves . . . Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with these people of thy abomination? . . . And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives”).

³³⁴ Floyd, “Malachi,” *Minor Prophets: Part 2*, 603. Note: I would add that the “wife” in this case is one who is faithful to Yahweh (being an Israelite or foreigner) giving reason for Mal 2:16 – “He hateth putting away” (i.e., divorce). Jeremiah and Ezra both have indications that putting away idolatrous wives was approved (*contra* 1 Cor 7:12–15 in the case of a believer married to an unbeliever.).

Consequently, these intermarriages have historically divided loyalties which both weakened and compromised true worship (Mal 2:13, “this ye have done again”); whereas, Malachi labels them as “abomination” (2:11), “profane” (2:11), and “treacherous” (2:10, 14, 15, 16) because defining marriage in this way “threatens the integrity of the covenant community because their common loyalty to the worship of Yahweh alone is now the main force that binds them together.”³³⁵ Hence, priests’ ought to have exemplified to the nation both faithful ministry and marriage in these two ways (comp. Lev 21, see esp. v. 4 – “He shall not make himself unclean as a husband among his people and so profane himself” (ESV); and v. 6 – “They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. For they offer the LORD's food offerings, the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy” (ESV)): (1) by marrying within their own faith; and, (2) being faithful to their first love.

The end result is twofold: (1) either they will follow His commandment (Mal 2:1, 4) or they will be “cut off” (Mal 2:12); and, (2) either their generations will be cursed through non-compliance (Mal 2:3, “I will corrupt your seed”; e.g., Esau’s lineage—Edomites) or their future legacy will be godly through faithful obedience (Mal 2:15, “godly seed”; e.g., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’s lineage—Messiah!).

Last, the homiletical analysis presented below focuses upon the larger issues of בָּגַד (“to act treacherous”) in regards to trusting God’s covenant towards the pattern of Levi (Mal 2:9, comp. v. 8), the expectation of community (Mal 2:10, brothers and fathers), the idolatry of nations (Mal 2:11–13, “the daughter of a strange god”), and the illustration of marriage (Mal 2:14–16, “wife of thy youth”; comp. Hosea). Be a faithful priest, by trusting in God’s covenant:

1. Obey the covenant of Levi – be faithful to God’s law;
2. Follow the covenant of the Fathers – be faithful to God’s people;

³³⁵ Ibid., 604.

3. Avoid the covenant with the idolatrous - be faithful to God's holiness;
4. Keep the covenant with your bride – be faithful to God's example.

Biblical Theology: The exegetical analysis above concerning Malachi 2:9–16b illustrates the LORD as the only Creator and only Father (Mal 2:10; i.e., “one”). Hence, this idea is carried out in faithful worship and service to the LORD within His precepts and before His people. This is reciprocated in the priest's fidelity in both ministry and marriage; which serves as examples to the larger community of faith. The failure to practice these principles results in two ironic results: (1) the “cutting off” from the place of service no matter one's outward zeal and piety to approach the God of their fathers (Mal 2:12, by entering an idolatrous covenant); and, (2) “the putting away” of the purity of marriage no matter one's personal desire and interests to replace the wife of one's youth (Mal 2:16, by dissolving a faithful covenant).

The first instance illustrates the history of wicked King Jeroboam I who welcomed idolatry, populated intermarriage (comp. Solomon's poor example and reward in 1 Kgs 11:1–13), and instituted a corrupt priesthood throughout the Northern Kingdom (1 Kgs 13:33–34, KJV):

³³After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the priests of the high places.

³⁴And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut *it* off, and to destroy *it* from off the face of the earth.

And the second instance promotes the principles that every husband ought to follow (Prov 5:18–23, NLT):

¹⁸Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth.

¹⁹She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love.

²⁰Why be captivated, my son, by an immoral woman, or fondle the breasts of a promiscuous woman?

²¹For the LORD sees clearly what a man does, examining every path he takes.

²²An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him.

²³He will die for lack of self-control; he will be lost because of his great foolishness.

The New Testament also has added commentary on these two areas of God as Creator and Father in light of ministry and marriage. The genealogies in both Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38 connect the OT and NT together by tracing the messianic line (Gk. is translated “Christ”); whereas, Jesus is the “son of David” (Matt 1:1; Lk 3:1), the “son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1; Lk 3:34), the “son of Adam” (Lk 3:38; i.e., made in the image of God), and thus arguably the “son of God” (Lk 3:22, 38; i.e., the eternal and expressed image of God). Just as Levi is honored by the LORD for his faithful ministry (Mal 2:5–7), so Jesus Christ (literally: Jesus the Messiah) is honored by his Father in Luke 3:22 (KJV): “Thou art my beloved son; in thee I am well pleased.” Here the church has two great examples of ministry: the OT Levitical expectations and the NT examples of Christ.

Embedded within these same genealogies are the marriages that are highlighted from generation to generation. They are a testimony to the faithfulness and providence of God that each generation is honored for their part in seeking a “godly seed” (Mal 2:15). Truly, trusting God’s covenant outlines the faithful approach in ministry and marriage.

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God’s Covenant? Malachi 2:9–16b builds on the importance of coupling faithfulness in ministry and marriage. How one worships and who one woos characterizes the depth of trusting in God’s Covenant. Faithfulness in worship and fidelity towards the institution of marriage in the life of the believer reveals the overall holiness

and godliness of their home and subsequently their community of faith, reflecting an accurate mirror of God's covenant to the world at large. Hence, today's believer is setting an example for the purity of ministry along with oneness in marriage within the local church and before the whole world by supporting God's Covenant.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Judgment (Mal 2:16c–3:5)

Malachi 2:16c–3:5 portrays the sixth of nine discourses in the biblical text (mal02:16b3–mal03:05b3; see Appendix A). This configuration is based upon the verb “to grow weary” (יגע). The dialogue, between the LORD and the priests, centers upon the idea of God's divine judgment.

Biblical Text: The overview of the sixth discourse is based upon an AA' chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb יגע (to grow weary) in Malachi 2:16c–17.

1. Reminder (mal02:16b3– mal02:17a1): The divine message reminds the audience:
And take head of your spirit//and do not act treacherously//you have wearied the LORD by your words (וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחְכֶם) //(וְלֹא תִבְגְּדוּ) //(הוֹנֵעֶתֶם יְהוָה בְּדִבְרֵיכֶם).
2. Interrogative (mal02:17a2–mal02:17a3): The priests' response is quoted by Malachi:
And you say//Wherein have we wearied? (בַּמָּה הוֹנֵעֵנוּ) //(וְאִמְרֵתֶם).
3. Answer: The two background scenarios answer the priests' inquiry: (1) Malachi 2:17–3:1 (mal02:17b1–mal03:01b4); and (2) Malachi 3:2–5 (mal03:02a1–mal03:05b3).

The analysis of the biblical text in Malachi 2:16c–3:5 also reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself.

First, the contextual analysis continues to describe the priests' service and "spirit" (Mal 2:15, 16, comp. "spirit" in Ps 51:10, 11, 12) as behaving "treacherously" (Mal 2:16c; comp. 2:10, 11, 14, 15) painting a picture of why the LORD is described with נָא ("to grow weary"). His response is threefold toward Israel's predictive needs: "the need for messianic intervention, the need for a day of judgment, and the need for social justice."³³⁶ These needs are met with the coming of divine messengers (Mal 3:1 (2x), comp. Mal 4:5), the imagery of purification and cleansing of the priesthood (comp. "sons of Levi") in divine judgment by the "refiner's fire" and "fullers' soap" (Mal 3:2), and divine justice "against" many social injustices (sorcerers, cf. Ex 22:8; adulterers, cf. Ex 20:14; false swearers, Ex 20:16; oppressors of innocents, Deut 24:14–7; and those who do not fear the LORD, Mal 3:5, comp. Lev 19:32 and Mal 2:5).

Second, the syntactical analysis shows an AA' chiasm whereas the LORD states that the priests' actions and attitudes have attributed to Him being נָא (to grow weary) in Malachi 2:17:

A [Malachi's reminder] "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words."

A' [Priests' reply] "Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied?"

Third, the verbal analysis surrounding the term נָא ("to grow weary") is connected to the LORD's judgment which has both present (one messenger has already come, Levi) and prophetic implications (two messengers are coming, comp. Mal 4:5). In addition, three counterfeit attitudes ascribed to the LORD further adds to His exasperation concerning the priests words (Mal 2:17): (1) saying that the LORD calls evil doers good (contra Is 5:20); (2) believing that the LORD delights in evil doers (contra Ps 1:6); and, (3) asking where is the judgment of God (*contra* Deut 28:63). These attitudes falsely ascribed to the LORD are immediately contrasted with prophetic announcements of the coming divine messengers of judgment; whereas the first is in retrospect

³³⁶ Stuart, "Malachi." *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 1348.

and the other two are in prospect: (1) the preceding messenger in Malachi 2:10 – “The messenger of the LORD of hosts,” is the priests’ example is rooted in the history and teachings of the law (i.e., Levi, Mal 2:4, 8); (2) the first messenger in Malachi 3:1 – “I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me,” will precede coming of “the LORD” (comp. Is 40:3 and Matt 3:3); and (3) the second messenger in Malachi 3:1 – “whom ye seek . . . The messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in,” is “the Lord” who is also promised to come (comp. Is 58:2 and Matt 11:3). Accordingly, the end result of divine judgment over the priests’ and people’s contempt and treachery before the LORD will bring into being a sanctified priesthood (i.e., “he shall purify the sons of Levi,” Mal 3:3), a righteous offering by the priests and by Judah and Jerusalem (Mal 3:3, 4, *contra* Mal 2:11–13), and pleasant praise and worship toward the LORD as enjoyed in ancient times (“the days of old” and “former years”, Mal 3:4; i.e., better times).

Fourth, the theological analysis revolves around these three messengers of judgment (i.e., blessings and cursing, cf. Deut 11:26–28) which are intertextually derived and messianic in nature: (1) Levi the Messenger of the LORD (representing the OT Levitical law, comp. Gen 14:18–20 and Heb 7:8–11 to the coming messianic priest – not Aaronic but after the order of Melchizedek), (2) John the Baptizer (representing the preparation of the coming Messiah; comp. Mal 4:5 with Matt 11:13–14 and Lk 1:7), and, (3) Jesus the Messiah (representing the fulfillment of all OT expectations of the person and work of the coming Messianic King; Mal 1:14—“I am a great King!”, comp. “the LORD” and “the Lord” as one and the same in Mal 3:1, comp. Lev 24:16 with Jn 10:30, 33). In addition, these divine messengers work together to answer three rhetorical questions.

One: “Where is the God of Judgment?” (Mal 2:17). The present social corruption of the day was so ingrained and apparent in the society that it seemed as if the LORD was approving it.

So, was He not powerful enough to stop it, or did He simply not care enough to end it? In other words, the lack “fear” of divine punishment was non-existence (Mal 3:5 and Mal 1:6, contra Levi in Mal 2:5) which explains the nine repetitious replies of the priests’ to Malachi’s various charges against them (i.e., “Wherein”, Mal 1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 9).

Two: “Who may abide the day of his coming?” (Mal 3:2). The righteous and the wicked are actually distinct in light of God’s judgment. Psalm 15:1–2 (KJV) clearly inquires: “A Psalm of David. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart”. Hence, this is a warning to those “departed out of the way” (Mal 2:8) and a welcome to those that are seeking (and keeping) “the law of truth” (Mal 2:6).

Three: “Who shall stand where he appeareth?” (Mal 3:2). The godly and the ungodly are also contrasted in scripture. Psalm 1:5-6 (KJV) clearly answers: “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” Hence, either one will endure God’s judgment (like the “refiner’s fire” and “fullers’ soap”, Mal 3:2–3) or they will not. They will either be purified as righteous (Mal 3:3) or they will perish (Ps 1:6, comp Mal 3:5 to all those the LORD will witness “against”).

Last, the homiletical analysis presented below gives an overview of messianic intervention (i.e., help) and expectation (i.e., hope) in light of trusting God’s judgment against the backdrop of the LORD being עָנָה (to grow weary) with the ongoing antics of the priests in Malachi 2:16c–17, namely:

1. God’s judgment will usher in a messianic priesthood – Levi the Priest (Melchizedek?)
2. God’s judgment will usher in a messianic preparation – John the Baptizer(?)

3. God's judgment will usher in a messianic purification – Jesus the Messiah(?)

Biblical Theology: Based upon the exegetical analysis above of Malachi 2:16c–3:5 the LORD is perceived as not bringing judgment, but His messengers are coming to deal with both their spiritual ignorance (Mal 2:17) and social injustice (Mal 3:5). The metaphors used to describe the nature of God's Judgment are twofold: "refiner's fire" and "fullers' soap" (Mal 3:2). The former metaphor illustrates a common element toward eschatological judgment – fire (comp. The Flood and 1 Pt 3:10; Mal 4:1 – "burn as an oven"). "Since judgment, especially for God's people, is disciplinary and purgative (cf. 3:3), it is here designated as being through fire that refines . . . where the metal is heated to melting so the impurities within it separate and can be thus removed, leaving the purer metal."³³⁷ The latter metaphor is a discipline of cloth manufacturing (e.g., comp. Ps 51:7 and Rev 7:13). "The fuller (one who cleans and thickens cloth by beating and working it) uses a special lye soap to clean it. . . [t]hough the coming messenger is not eagerly anticipated by the people, his coming is not for the purpose of destruction but rather for restoration."³³⁸ Hence, the messengers' ultimate goal toward the community of faith is to remove the sorted impurities within each individual and society as a whole and to restore spiritual intimacy between the LORD and His people. These are great reasons toward trusting God's judgment.

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God's judgment? Malachi 2:16c–3:5 gives a sober reminder of God's approaching judgment to purify and cleanse those who are able

³³⁷ Baker, *The NIV Application Commentary: Joel Obadiah, Malachi*, 271.

³³⁸ Ibid., 271–272.

to abide it; and, a swift witness against those who do not fear the LORD. Hence, today's believer trusting in God's judgment by communicating His restorative and His redemptive nature and purpose within the ministries of the church with an intentionally appeal toward the world with an urgency of this imminent day of the LORD laced with a message for true repentance.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Sanctification (Mal 3:6–7)

Malachi 3:6–7 portrays the seventh of nine discourses in the biblical text (mal03:06a1–mal03:07b2; see Appendix A). This textual configuration is based upon the verb “to return” (שׁוּב) in Malachi 3:6–7. The dialogue, between the LORD and the priests, centers upon the idea of God's divine sanctification.

Biblical Text: The overview of the seventh discourse is based upon an AA' chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb שׁוּב (to return) in Malachi 3:7 (cf., שִׁבַּח (to change) in Mal 3:6).

1. Reminder (mal03:06a1–mal03:07a6): The divine message reminds the audience that because the LORD has “not changed” (לֹא שִׁבַּח; mal03:06a1) so they are “not destroyed” (לֹא כָלִיתָם; mal03:06b1); therefore, they are to turn (שׁוּב) to the LORD and then He will turn to them (שׁוּב).
2. Interrogative (mal03:08a3–mal03:08a4): The priests' response is quoted by Malachi:
Yet you say//Wherein shall we return? (יֵאמְרוּהֶם)//(בְּמַה נָּשׁוּב)
3. Answer: There are no background scenarios that answer the inquiry.

The analysis of the biblical text in Malachi 3:6–7 also reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself. First, the

contextual analysis suggests that the conjunction **וְ** (Mal 3:6; trans. “For” in KJV and NASB, “Because” in ISV, but not translated in ESV or NLT) connects this discourse to the previous discourse’s summary on the judgment of God; especially “against” social injustice (cf. Mal 3:5) with an unmistakable invitation to **שׁוּבוּ** (“to return,” Mal 3:16). This is a divine invitation for their holistic spiritual assessment toward a historical, individual, and national reconciliation and restoration to the LORD. This involves three distinctive concerns mentioned in Malachi 3:7. One, they must acknowledge their past offenses (“Even from the days of your fathers,” comp. Mal 2:7–8). Two, they must acquiesce their present opportunities (“Return unto me,” comp. Mal 3:18). And three, they must accept their prospective oblations (“and I will return unto you”). In retrospect, the only reason that they have not already been destroyed (“not consumed,” Mal 3:6) is rooted in the immutable nature of the LORD (if verb is in the perfect tense, trans. “I have not changed,” Mal 3:6).³³⁹ Here Malachi demonstrates that God’s sanctification is ongoing: despite past failures, present faults, even future fumbles, by the priests and people. Why? Because the LORD does not change! (Mal 3:6).

Second, the syntactical analysis shows an AA’ chiasm whereas the LORD states that the historical and present status with the LORD requires them to **שׁוּבוּ** (“to return”) to Him:

A [The LORD’s charge] “Return unto me, and I will return unto you.”

A’ [The Priests’ reply] “Wherein shall we return unto you?”

Third, the verbal analysis surrounding the term **שׁוּבוּ** (“to return”) connects the looming promise of God’s coming judgment over against the opportunity for unconditional restoration within the scope of God’s progressive sanctification. Arguably, the Hebrew word **שׁוּבוּ** (“to return”) has several other broad implications within the context of the Hebrew Canon: (1) to

³³⁹ Stuart, “Malachi.” *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 1362–1363.

repent (i.e., a “turnabout”), depending upon who is the subject—whether human or divine;³⁴⁰ (2) to render a restoration back towards an earlier or healthier time is rooted in both an exegetical and eschatological hope (cf. Mal 4:6);³⁴¹ and, (3) to reverse divine judgment (esp. curses), even the “correction of the causes of His judgment.”³⁴² Therefore, the idea of a spiritual and social (re)turning from established historical transgressions and exasperating current indiscretions against God’s law (Mal 2:8) and God’s people (Mal 2:8) and especially God’s name (Mal 1:6 and 2:11) is not new; these same ideas have already been (re)sounded by the prophets who also invited their (re)penitence from sin and their (re)conversion back toward Him.³⁴³ The promise is twofold (if not conditional). If the priests (and the people) שׁוּבוּ (“to return”) by repenting their transgression and reconciling themselves exclusively toward the LORD (note: their list is long—e.g., Mal 1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13), then will the LORD also שׁוּבוּ (“to return”) from His promised retaliatory judgments and curses—historically, locally, and eschatologically (e.g., Mal 2:2–3, 12; comp. Mal 3:18 and Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]).

Fourth, the theological analysis concerns the initial reply by the priests, namely: “Wherein shall we return?” (Mal 3:7). This question can be understood as a question toward “how” they are to return or even “what” should they do to return.³⁴⁴ In the first instance, there are the ideal principles of repentance recognizing God’s holy nature over against one’s fallen nature (e.g., Ps 51, David’s confession, vv. 1–6; David’s cleansing, vv. 7–12; David’s consecration, vv.

³⁴⁰ J. A. Thompson and Elemer A. Martens, “שׁוּבוּ”, in *New International Dictionary of the Bible Theology and Exegesis*, edited by W. A. VanGemeren, volume 4, Grand Rapids, 1997, 57.

³⁴¹ John M. Bracke, “šûb š’bût: A Reappraisal,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97 (1985), 234.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 241.

³⁴³ Stuart, “Malachi.” *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 1366.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

3–9; David who was a man after God’s own heart, comp. 1 Sam 13:14 and Acts 13:22). In the second instance, there is the practical process toward repentance. Thus, they are graciously allowed to come back to the LORD’s covenant by faithfully following His “ordinances” like his “commandment” regarding their ministries and marriages (cf. Mal 2) and faithfully keeping them (note: this process is a reversal of the negative review given in Mal 3:7).

Last, the homiletical analysis shows an urgency for trusting God’s sanctification for a reciprocal relationship by the priests and the people and the LORD (cf. James 4:8 and Mal 3:7, שׁוּב (“to return,” 2x). Why? Because He does not change! And, they have not changed either:

1. Sinners can be reconciled because of God’s immutable nature (cf. past present, future)
2. Sinners need to return because of God’s imminent judgment (cf. past, present, future)

Biblical Theology: Based upon the exegetical analysis above of Malachi 3:6–7 two great doctrinal themes emerge throughout the Hebrew Scriptures that revolve around God’s sanctification of His people: God’s immutable nature to forgive their sins (cf. Ps 103:12 and Is 1:8; even forget sins, cf. Micah 7:19); and, the “sons of [Jacob’s]” depraved nature to forsake the LORD (Mal 3:6–7; cf. 2:9–11). “Repentance is an absolute necessity before sins can be forgiven . . . [b]ut Israel has no sense of guilt or shame. Their conscience was dulled by their long history of disobedience.”³⁴⁵ Amazingly, they respond to the call for repentance saying: “Wherein?” (Mal 3:7). This same issue is also addressed in the New Testament between our Lord and His church. For example, concerning immutable nature of God—James 1:17 adds: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (KJV); and, concerning the depraved nature of the people of God— First John 1:8-10 explains:

³⁴⁵Smith, “Micah-Malachi.” *Word Biblical Commentary*, 332.

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (KJV)

Malachi 3:6–7 does not venture to explore the total or even utter depravity of the “fathers” or “sons of Jacob,” but does indicate their historical, their current, and their potential trend toward a spiritual and social depravity; yet, Malachi reminds them that they are not without hope (“That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed,” Mal 3:7, NLT). Hence, God’s people are not beyond reconciliation, not beyond restoration, and not beyond revival. This hope makes possible having a “pure religion and undefiled before God” (James 1:27, as opposed to a “vain” or “worthless” religion before God, cf. James 1:26 and Mal 1:7) and in having a right relationship within the community of faith and to the LORD (cf. 1 Jn 5:2, KJV – “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”). This reiterated generational appeal to שׁוּבוּ (“to return”) was to “the fathers” and now to the “sons of Jacob” to be right in their service and in their society stemming from the great promises of the Hebrew Scripture—promises that entail the trusting of God’s progressive and ultimate sanctifying His people (cf. promises to Abraham, Gen 12:1–3; Moses, Ex 19:3–6; David, 2 Sam 7:12–13; Jeremiah, Jer 31:31–34; being fulfilled in the people of God through Christ, e.g., 1 Pt 3:9, NLT – “But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”).

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God’s sanctification? Malachi 3:6–7

foundations God's imperative invitation for His people to "Return!" by trusting in His sanctification. Today's believer, since Adam and Eve, not only struggles with their own depravity but has indeed sinned before the LORD, yet an individual, a local church, and global community, can confess and repent and be restored through returning to the LORD through His sanctifying work which purifies and cleanses the repentant and calls them the righteous.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Benevolence (Mal 3:8–12)

Malachi 3:8–12 portrays the eighth of nine discourses in the biblical text (mal03:08a1–mal03:12b1; see Appendix A). This textual configuration is based upon the verb "to rob" (קבע). The dialogue, between the LORD and the priests, centers upon the idea of God's divine benevolence.

Biblical Text: The overview of the eighth discourse is based upon an AA" chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb קבע (to rob) in Malachi 3:8.

1. Reminder (mal03:08a1–mal03:08a2): The divine message reminds the audience: Will man rob God?//Yet you are robbing me (כִּי אַתֶּם קֹבְעִים אֹתִי)//(הֲיִקְבַּע אֲדָם אֱלֹהִים).
2. Interrogative (mal03:08a1): The priests' response is quoted by Malachi: Yet you say//Wherein have we robbed? (בְּמָה קֹבַעַנּוּךָ)//(וְאִמְרָתֶם).
3. Answer: The three background scenarios answer the priests' inquiry: (1) Malachi 3:8–10 (mal03:08b1–mal03:10a4); (2) Malachi 3:10–11 (mal03:10b1–mal03:11b2); and (3) Malachi 3:12 (mal03:12a1–mal03:12b2).

The analysis of the biblical text in Malachi 3:8–12 also reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself. First, the

contextual analysis adds a primary area for how the priests (and the people) are to return to the LORD (i.e., שׁוּב, Mal 3:7). Plainly, they were told to stop robbing the LORD (i.e., קָבַע, Mal 3:8–9). This begs the question: how can a man rob God? (Mal 3:8). And the answer comes straightforward: “in tithes and offerings” (Mal 3:8, 10). The result of this constant and malevolent thievery of what was rightly the LORDs (cf., Achan’s sin in Josh 6:18 and 7:1) is His two-edged promise: presently His punitive promise is based upon them continuing in their present comings and goings—“ye are cursed with a curse” (Mal 3:9, cf. 2:2 and 4:6); but, provisionally His prospective promise is based upon them obediently and faithfully bringing to the LORD “all” His “tithes” and His “offerings” (Mal 3:10). The fundamental act of habitual acquiescent giving to the LORD “all” that He requires is the stipulation where God asks the priests (and the people) to put Him to the test (i.e., “prove me now,” Mal 3:10) and see if He will not:

1. “open [them] the windows of heaven” (Mal 3:10)
2. “pour [them] out a blessing” (Mal 3:10)
3. “rebuke the devourer” (Mal 3:11, cf. 2:3 and esp. 2 Chron 7:13)
4. cause the nations to “call [them] blessed” (Mal 3:12, cf. Gen 12:2)
5. create for them a “delightful land” (Mal 3:12)

Second, the syntactical analysis shows an AA’ chiasm whereas the LORD states that in the area of annual and triennial material tribute toward the LORD, he is being קָבַע (“to rob”):

- | | |
|----|---|
| A | [The LORD’s charge] “Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me.” |
| A’ | [The Priests’ reply] “Wherein have we robbed you?” |

Third, the verbal analysis the Hebrew term קָבַע (“to rob”) is juxtaposed with the phrase “in tithes and offerings” which is understood as “a way of encompassing all gifts to the Lord, so

that the general responsibility of the temple and worship support will be understood as a covenant obligation.”³⁴⁶ On the one hand, disobedience in tithing will yield—negatively, all past, present and future curses from the LORD (cf. examples of the use of “curse” in Mal 3:9 and 2:2, 1:14, 4:6; see also curses for disobedience in Lev 26:14–39). On the other hand, obedience in tithing will yield—positively, both present and eschatological blessings from the LORD (cf. idea of “blessings” in Mal 3:10 and 3:12; see also blessings for obedience in Lev 26:1–13). Hence, by habitually “robbing” the LORD, the nation was ultimately “robbing” itself in at least two ways: one, regarding the ministry of the sanctuary (“storehouse” in Mal 3:10); and, two, concerning its own citizens—even visiting nations. Here is a textual example of “meat in my house” (Mal 3:10) which results from a national obedience in giving: “And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left *is* this great store” (2 Chron 31:10, KJV, cf. Deut 26:12).

Fourth, the theological analysis reveals an individual and corporate element which ought to follow the covenantal obligation to tithe is rooted the Levitical law (e.g., “And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land, *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD’S: *it is* holy unto the LORD” (KJV)). However, the idea of giving unto the LORD was first exemplified by Abraham to Melchizedek (viz., The King of Righteousness, cf. Gen 14:20 and Heb 7). The idea of reciprocating one’s special experience with God’s benevolence through the paying of tithes is seen predominantly when during “periods of reform and revival, the people gave their tithes faithfully and abundantly” (e.g., Hezekiah’s reforms, 2 Chron 31:5–10; Nehemiah’s reforms,

³⁴⁶ Stuart, “Malachi.” *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 1366.

Neh 10:32–33).³⁴⁷ Hence, based upon several historical highlights, when there is a spiritual blessing to the individual (e.g., Abraham; esp. God’s people as a whole) in recognizing God’s benevolence, whether promised or experienced, there is reciprocal act of gratitude through the simple expression of giving to the LORD (i.e., “tithes and offerings” in Mal 3:8, 10).

Unfortunately, the LORD’s offer to the priests (and the people) of Malachi’s day to “prove” Him goes unanswered (cf. “prove me now” in Mal 3:10 and “ask thee a sign” Is 7:10–12). And thus, His present and prophetic blessings will go unknown their generation (Mal 3:10–12).

Last, the homiletical analysis reveals several benefits in trusting God’s benevolence.

Giving faithfully and obediently to the LORD yields three principles toward His blessings:

1. an historical return to Moses’ Levitical law (Mal 3:8, “tithes and offerings”)
2. a national renewal by God’s providential lavishing (Mal 3:10–12, “if I will not . . .”)
3. an eschatological rebirth for Israel’s covenantal Land (Mal 3:12, “delightful”)

Biblical Theology: Based upon the exegetical analysis above in Malachi 3:8–12 a practical theme emerges related to the “tithe” (Mal 3:8, 10) that revolves around trusting God’s benevolence towards His people: whereas, the concept of reciprocating God’s benevolence is rooted in biblical history compelling a present and futuristic reciprocation of God’s blessings on a national scale (cf. Israel and Kingdom of God). It is within the historical requirements to the Aaronic priesthood for a national tithe that also focuses upon the priests’ heartfelt motivation to example obedient tithing before the people that all might receive the LORD’s promised blessings (cf. “cursed with a curse” in Mal 3:9 and Mal 3:10–12).

³⁴⁷ Smith, “Micah-Malachi.” *Word Biblical Commentary*, 333. Smith also points out that contra to the times of Hezekiah, the Northern Kingdom also loved to tithe but the LORD was not pleased with their giving due to their “social injustices” (cf. Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-24), *ibid*.

The word for “tithe” in the Hebrew Scriptures can be understood as more than simply a religious requirement in giving a “tenth” since the various uses of “tithes” illustrate annual tithes (from the people and priests) and an triennial tithe (e.g., used against social injustices in behalf of the Levites, fatherless, widows, even visitors from other nations). Now concerning the phrase—“tithes and offerings” (Mal 3:8), “it is possible that *těrûmâ* (offering) is intended in a more technical sense, that . . . the Levites are told that they are the ones who receive the tithe, and that they themselves must then tithe, that is, give a tithe of the tithe, which is called *těrûmat yhwh* (the Lord’s offering).”³⁴⁸ For example, Numbers 18:26 (ESV) states: “Give these instructions to the Levites: When you receive from the people of Israel the tithes I have assigned as your allotment, give a tenth of the tithes you receive—a tithe of the tithe—to the LORD as a sacred offering.” Hence, if the priests were not tithing, it would follow that this faithless example would affect the nation as whole socially and the foreigners visiting from other nations who were to be blessed by the faithful and fruitful pattern of tithing by God’s own people (cf. Deut 26:12 (ESV): “Every third year you must offer a special tithe of your crops. In this year of the special tithe you must give your tithes to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows, so that they will have enough to eat in your towns.”). This compelling image is also seen in the NT as being weekly (not weakly) and from the heart (not legalistically) (cf. 1 Cor 16:2 were the reciprocal weekly offerings on how God had blessed which were to be available for the needs of the church’s ministry; and, 2 Cor 9:7 where each person is to give from the heart – cheerfully, without coercion).

Another historical theme is related to a pre-Aaronic priesthood, that is, to the time of Melchizedek whom Abraham gave a tenth of all his possessions to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20, cf.

³⁴⁸ Stuart, “Malachi.” *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 1367. Cf. Acts 4:35.

Heb 7:2, 4, 6, 8, 9).³⁴⁹ In addition, the writer of Hebrews argues that this act (which predates the sons of Levi) shows how Levi (cf. Mal 2:4, 8 and Heb 7:9) had given tithes to the order of Melchizedek before the law as given to Israel. Is this significant? Yes, it is! The act of reciprocating God's benevolence in a tithe was practiced before the law and was without divine compulsion (cf. law is compulsory).

Consequently, how to tithe is also taught in two distinctive passages in the Gospels. In the first (Mt 23:23), Jesus calls the religious leaders "Hypocrites!" even though they are tithing. He affirms that they ought give "tithes," but are also to example the more important aspects of the tithing before the people, such as: righteous judgment, love of God, mercy and faith (cf. Mt 23:23 and Lk 11:42). In the second, Jesus illustrates (Lk 18:12) that equating devout tithing as a qualifier of public and social prominence is not at all impressive to God (cf. Amos' similar review of the devout tithing in the Northern Kingdom, Amos 4:4–5; 5:21–24). The point being that tithing has been the means since the time of Abraham to the NT church to show gratitude in trusting God's benevolence. The benefits are spiritual and social blessings to the giver and beyond their times. "Prove me now!" (Mal 3:10).

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God's benevolence? Malachi 3:8–12 directs one to prove the LORD's promise to bless any who obediently gives out of their own sustenance in tithes and offerings. This is a meaningful measure of trusting in His benevolence. Today's believer is experiencing both spiritual and social blessings of God through scriptural

³⁴⁹ Smith, "Micah-Malachi." *Word Biblical Commentary*, 333. Smith illustrates the writer of Hebrew's proof "that Jesus' priesthood is better than that of Aaron, because Jesus' priesthood is like that of Melchizedek to whom Aaron's ancestor, Abraham, paid tithes," *ibid*.

expressions of gratitude toward the LORD through tithes and offerings, benefiting both the local ministry church and is authenticated by the larger global community's testimony.

Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Remembrance (Mal 3:13–4:3)

Malachi 3:13–4:3 [Mal 3:13–21 in Heb. text] portrays the last of nine discourses in the biblical text (mal03:13a1–mal03:21b2; see Appendix A). This textual configuration is based upon the verb “to speak” (דבר). The dialogue, between the LORD and the priests, centers upon the idea of God's divine remembrance.

Biblical Text: The overview of the ninth discourse is based upon an AA' chiasm surrounding the Hebrew verb דבר (to speak) in Malachi 3:13.

1. Reminder (mal03:13a1–mal03:13a2): The divine message reminds the audience:
Strong against me have been your words//says the LORD (חֲזָקוֹנִי עָלַי דְּבָרֵיכֶם) (אָמַר יְהוָה)
2. Interrogative (mal03:13b1–mal03:13b1): The priests' response is quoted by Malachi:
Yet you say//What have we spoken against you? (וְאַמַּרְתֶּם) (בְּמָה מִדְּבָרֵינוּ עָלֶיךָ)
3. Answer: The three background scenarios answer the priests' inquiry (1) Malachi 3:14–17 (mal03:14a1–mal03:17a1); (2) Malachi 3:17–4:1 (mal03:17b1–mal03:19b3); and (3) Malachi 4:1–3 (mal03:19b4–mal03:21b2).

The analysis of the biblical text in Malachi 3:13–4:3 also reveals several linguistic features which contribute to the overall meaning of the passage in light of the book as a whole and lends towards developing a theological statement rooted in the meaning of the text itself.

First, the contextual analysis immediately connects all of the priests' previous responses (i.e., “your words”) over against the inventory of divine messages as being “stout against me, saith the LORD” (cf. Mal 3:13 and Mal 1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8). Their antagonistic words

resemble that season in which the people murmured against the LORD and his prophet Moses (e.g., Ex 16:8 and 12), whereas: “Malachi and his disputants could have had the murmurings of their ancestors in mind in this passage. If so, Malachi was charging his hearers with rebellion, the consequences of which were destruction.”³⁵⁰ Further descriptions in Malachi 3:14 deepen this rising seditious attitude of the priests’ while ceremonially serving the LORD and ritually keeping His divine decrees (“His ordinance”) as worthless (“vain”), profitless (“what profit?”), even joyless (“we have walked mournfully”). The priests’ overall opinion concerning their own society inverts the biblical teachings of Moses and the Prophets concerning the way of the righteous and the wicked (cf. Mal 3:16–4:3 and Mal 4:4–6): for example, they say that the proud are happy, the wicked are prosperous, and those that tempt the LORD escape judgment (cf. Mal 3:15 and Mal 2:17 – “Where is the God of judgment?”). Ironically, they now are behaving in the same way they previously accused the LORD of acting (comp. Mal 2:17).

Second, the syntactical analysis shows an AA’ chiasm whereas the LORD gives a vivid exchange of the verb דבר (“to speak”). Note the Hebrew tense (i.e., Niphal prefix, נ) exposes a negative overtone in the priests’ response (i.e., “to speak” (against)):

1. [The LORD’s reminder] “Strong against me have been your words”
2. [The Priest’s response] “What [how] have we spoken against you?”

Third, the verbal analysis also demonstrates דבר (“to speak”) linked to two distinctive groups of people (cf. Mal 3:13 and 3:16): those who have (i.e., past tense, “that feared”) and those who “fear” the LORD (Mal 3:16 (2x), 4:2; cf. Levi, Mal 2:5); contra, those who are judged during the coming “day” of the LORD (Mal 3:17; 4:1, 3; cf. 4:5 [3:23 Heb. text] – “the great and dreadful day”). On the one hand, the first group enjoys several benefits: (1) they are written in “a book of remembrance” who either spoke or thought upon the LORD’s name (Mal 3:16); (2) they

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 337.

shall be the LORD's (Mal 3:17, "they shall be mine"); (3) they will be shown compassion—as a father to a faithful son (Mal 3:17, cf. Mal 1:6 and Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]); and (4) they will have eschatological activities over the wicked (Mal 3:17, 4:1, 2).

On the other hand, the second group's reward is contrary to those "that feared the LORD" (cf. "I make up my treasured possession" in Mal 3:16–17, ESV and "a people for his own possession" in 1 Pt 2:9, ESV). These who are "wicked" do not serve the LORD (Mal 3:18, 4:1, 2) and are described with wrathful imagery: (1) they will be severely judged against the righteous (Mal 3:18), (2) they will catch on fire and burn completely up (Mal 4:1, "shall be like stubble," *contra* Mal 3:2, "refiner's fire"), and, (3) they will be crushed to ashes (cf. Mal 4:2, "shall be treaded down" and Ps 1:4–6). Yes. The Lord remembers those who are the righteous (that fear His name) and who are the wicked (that do not serve Him as would a son) and He writes what they דבר ("to speak") in "a book of remembrance" (Mal 3:16).

Fourth, the theological analysis surrounds the idea of God's remembrance toward those who will be blessed and those who will be cursed (cf. Deut 28 and Lev 26) as a result of their service toward the LORD as (i.e., Mal 3:17–18) and showing value toward the LORD as opposed to serving Him in "vain" (cf. Mal 3:14 and those "that feared the LORD" in Mal 3:16 and 4:2). A simple overview of Malachi's ninth discourse follows the urgency noted in the textual construct: "Then . . . Then . . . Behold" (i.e., Mal 3:16, 18, 4:1) illustrates that the priests' (and the people) words are recorded, their ways are revealed, and their works are rewarded.

How are their words recorded? The service toward the LORD ("for them that feared and thought upon His name", Mal 3:16) was documented in "a book of remembrance" which seems to be an imagery akin to "[t]he practice of Persian kings recording incidents in their scrolls" for

the purpose of reward faithful service to the king (e.g., Esth 2:23 and 6:1–3).³⁵¹ However, eventual recognition and remuneration of one’s faithful service might be delayed until the future, just as in the time of Esther (e.g., Mordecai). This brings up the second issue.

How are their ways revealed? The test of service is simple. Either their service is “righteous”—those “that serveth God” or their service is “wicked”—those “that serveth Him not” (Mal 3:18). “The pious, God-fearing Israelites, who are here addressed, will receive their just reward; whereas, the godless, who are now triumphant, will then be prostrated in humiliation and branded as wicked in the sight of all.”³⁵² This brings up the last point.

How are their works rewarded? There are several contrasting analogies illustrating celestial reward over against eternal destruction. These blessings and cursing surround the event of the coming “day” of LORD (cf. Mal 3:17; 4:1, 3, 5). For the righteous this “day” will reveal blessings being treated by the LORD as people who are protected (“as a man spareth his own son that serveth him”) precious (“my jewels”) possessions (“they shall be mine”) (cf. Mal 3:17). For the wicked, they shall “burn as an oven;” they shall be “stubble;” and, they shall be “ashes” (cf. Mal 4:3). In addition, the righteous shall be honored by the LORD, even as the sun shines upon the earth (cf. Mal 4:2 – “Sun of righteousness arise” also trans. “son of vindication arise;” and Is 60:1). They shall be healed by the LORD, even as a bird flies over the land (cf. Mal 4:2 – “with healings in his wings;” and Is 30:26). And they shall be happy in the LORD, even as calves being released from their stalls being to leap over the whole world (Mal 4:2).

Last the homiletical analysis sets up a series of questions that are eternal in nature concerning the matter of speaking against God’s name in light of trusting in God’s remembrance:

³⁵¹ Ibid., 338.

³⁵² Smith, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi,” *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, 79.

1. Will your words be documented as righteous or rebellious in His book?
2. Will your ways be discerned in His service or not in His day?
3. Will your works be declared as saved or stubble in His judgment?

Biblical Theology: Based upon the exegetical analysis above of Malachi 3:3–4:3 a future theme of “that day” (cf. Mal 3:17, 4:1, 5 and Mal 3:2–5) as the climax of Malachi’s nine discourses is presented in the coming reward and judgment of Israel (esp. priests). This last discourse in Malachi “employs the language of eschatological divine judgment, in which the wicked are exterminated with nothing left of them (the second death of Rev. 20–21) and the righteous are rewarded forever with the joy of the Lord.”³⁵³ This does not imply the thoughts of the Annihilationist, but so far as the physical earth is concerned the wicked are no more. Hence, the righteous—those “that feared the LORD” (Mal 3:16) and those “that serveth God” (Mal 3:18) are made to be triumphant over the wicked forever. Here lies the expected hope of the faithful servant of God, to receive the rewards of the LORD over the wicked.

On the one hand, those “that feared the LORD” (i.e., Mal 3:16, 4:2) will be adjudicators (i.e., “return and discern”) between the godly and the ungodly in a futuristic judgment (cf. Mal 3:18 and 1 Cor 6:2—“Don't you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can't you decide even these little things among yourselves?” (NLT)). Jesus concurs speaking to His disciples: “I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (NLT).

On the other hand, they will also be avenged because they will “tread down the wicked . . . under the soles of [their] feet” (cf. Mal 4:2); whereas, Isaiah 29:5 had already pledged: “But

³⁵³ Stuart, “Malachi.” *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 1389.

suddenly, your ruthless enemies will be crushed like the finest of dust. Your many attackers will be driven away like chaff before the wind. Suddenly, in an instant” (NLT).

While it is true that those who speak against His name, saying “It is vain to serve God” the day is coming where the righteous and wicked will be separated (cf. Ps 1), the focus of this section is overwhelmingly salvific. “Malachi was here inspired to emphasize the Christological, ‘gospel’ side of the doctrine of the Day of the Lord, with its aspect of the Savior’s coming to his people, as opposed to the judgment side of the doctrine, with its aspect of the elimination of evildoers, a theme he has already dealt with in 3:2-5.”³⁵⁴ Indeed, trusting in God’s remembrance rewards the faithful servant with real hope, even in the midst of troubled times.

Biblical Formation: For the Christian believer, their local church, and their community at large: What is the permanent principle that is cross-cultural and timeless toward spiritual formation for Christianity today concerning trusting in God’s remembrance? Malachi 3:13–4:3 shapes the prophetic idea that the righteous who fear and think upon the LORD are both listen to and understood by Him. Today’s believer is trusting God’s remembrance to give special privilege to His church while He discerns between those who are righteous and those who are wicked. His people have both hope and expectation that they will be spared and healed and prosper; even while the wicked are judged in that day.

Conclusion: Spiritual Formation through Trusting God’s Law

(Mal 4:4–6 [Mal 3:22–24 Hebrew Text])

The conclusion (mal03:22a1–mal24:03:24b2): The QETOL form begins a new dialogue apart from the preceding section. Rolf Rendtorff, the Emeritus Professor of Old Testament at the

³⁵⁴ Stuart, “Malachi.” *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 1387.

University of Heidelberg, comments on Malachi's conclusion: "Doubtless these closing sections are meant to give a final overall interpretation to the book of Malachi."³⁵⁵

In retrospect, the book of Malachi presents nine discourses to the people of God in rhetorical speech patterns, in particular to the priests. The conclusion of the matter is that they have forgotten the law of Moses (cf. Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text]—"Remember"). This is the reason they do not know the LORD loves them (Mal 1:2). Why they have despised His name (Mal 1:6). Why they have polluted His table (Mal 1:7). Why they are wearied with ministry (Mal 1:13). Why they have been treacherous against the covenant of their fathers, against the holiness the LORD, against the covenant of their marriages, and their wives (cf. Mal 2:10–15). Why they have wearied Him (Mal 2:17). Why they need to return to Him (Mal 3:7). Why they need to quit robbing Him in their "tithes and offerings" (Mal 3:8). And why they are speaking against Him (Mal 3:13). They need to be trust in God's law; rather than turning away. Is there a remedy?

In prospect, Malachi also weaves a new name within these exemplar positive characters: Jacob, Levi, and Moses. Jacob was blessed of God to be a patriarch of Israel (and by which he was called) being opposite of his brother Esau (cf. Edom) who sold his own birthright (cf. Mal 1:2–4, having more in common with the priests of Malachi day). Levi kept the covenant being opposite of the priests who had corrupted the covenant of Levi (cf. Mal 2:4, 8). Moses who was the giver of the law to the people being opposite to the priests who have caused many to stumble at the law (cf. Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text] and Mal 2:2, 8–9). Now enters the predictive prophet who will be like Elijah (Mal 4:5 [3:23 Heb. text]) presenting the positive attributes of a messenger of God lacking in the priests (who are far from being the archetype priest of God) to preach the law of Moses, which is the catalyst for walking in the way that pleases the LORD (e.g., Mal 3:6).

³⁵⁵ Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans by John Bowden from the German *Das Alte Testament: Ein Einführung*, 1983 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1991), 242.

Thereby, the people might have another chance to turn their hearts back toward the LORD before the final judgment (Mal 4:4–5 [3:22–23 Heb. text]).

SUMMARY

What are the major practices derived from this chapter? This section portrays the important role of the spiritual leaders (cf., pastors) in nine distinctive dialogues within Malachi's text before the LORD, and His people, as the primary human agents for implementing a strategy toward spiritual formation within the community of faith.³⁵⁶ In addition, the Levitical priests (cf., pastors) were principally responsible before the LORD for the spiritual decline and lack of sanctification of their people. This chapter explained the phrase "study based upon the Book of Malachi" in the thesis question.

³⁵⁶ Daniel I. Block, "Reviving God's Covenant with Levi: Reflections on Malachi 2:1–9," *Reformation and Revival Journal* 4 (1995): 121–136.

CHAPTER 4:

COMPARISON OF LITERARY REVIEW AND MALACHI

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the data revealed in the literary review (i.e., Chapter 2) and Malachi (i.e., Chapter 3) in light of spiritual formation principles. This section will major on these three specific areas: similarities, differences, and expectations. The first area will seek to find common ground in formulating the boundaries for doing spiritual formation. The second area will list dangers to avoid in putting together this new model to assure its strategy for spiritual formation is based upon sound biblical principles. The final area will seek to list several expectations in presenting a new model of spiritual formation.

Similarities: Formulating Boundaries in Spiritual Formation

What are the boundaries between biblical principles discovered through compositional analysis of a canonical book of the Bible and a survey of literature devoted toward spiritual formation in the life of the believer, the local church, and its global community? Below is an appraisal of the approach of four prominent contemporary spiritual formation authors (namely, Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Donald Whitney, and David Benner) in light of the book of Malachi.

First, Richard Foster appeals to Christians of all walks and disciplines of life to recognize the necessity for spiritual formation personally and to “look to saints Catholic, Orthodox, and

Protestant for guidance” in their lifelong spiritual journey into the likeness of Christ.³⁵⁷ Foster’s point of reference toward spiritual formation is through looking at evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit manifested throughout historical characters and events. Foster is unquestionably and intentionally ecumenical. His works borrow from an eclectic pool of traditions and characters in the record of Christianity in which he illustrates the need of spiritual formation in the lives of believers and spiritual renewal in the life of the Church. This is evident in his recent work (i.e., 1998) *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith*, where Foster lists six “streams” or traditions of faith and practice that he argues are the center of Christianity: that is to say, Contemplative (e.g., Anthony of the Desert); Holiness (e.g., Dietrich Bonhoeffer); Charismatic (Francis of Assisi); Social Justice (e.g., John Woolman); Evangelical (e.g., Billy Graham); Incarnational (e.g., Dag Hammarskjöld); and, concludes by recording the last two millennia of prominent figures, church councils, and ecclesiastical movements, to demonstrate the various perspectives of spirituality.

Similarly, the book of Malachi is the final word related to the book of the Prophets and the traditions handed down through the book of Moses, where significant historical figures and events as illustrations to show whether the priests and people of Israel are within the spiritual expectations of the LORD. This is illustrated in several ways. One, the message of Israel’s past and future throughout the book of Malachi to the priests and to the people (and to the reader) is laid alongside other cultures and significant individuals for emphasis: for example, Jacob over against Esau (Mal 1:2–3) as well as Israel over against Edom (Mal 1:4–5); whereas, each

³⁵⁷ Foster, “Spiritual Formation Agenda: Richard Foster shares his three priorities for the next 30 years,” 31. In 1988, Richard J. Foster, who has served as a pastor and professor in the Quaker tradition and is the founder of Renovaré—a Christian ministry dedicated toward spiritual renewal (<http://www.renovare.us/>), wrote the ground breaking work *Celebration of Disciplines: A Path for Spiritual Growth* over 25 years ago (here he illustrated three main levels of Christian disciplines: Inward, Outward, and Corporate). Foster has inspired many future writers to continue to develop a long and fluid list of Christian disciplines commonly noted under the genre—spiritual formation.

comparison and contrast demonstrates the God's love and His expectation to also be loved by His chosen people. In addition, Israel is challenged in their worship and relationship toward the name of the LORD, where He expects to be honored and feared (Mal 1:6) as father (Mal 1:6), as master (Mal 1:6), as great (Mal 1:11, 12; cf., great King, Mal 1:14), and to be given glory unto His name (Mal 2:2). Even if Israel will not acquiesce to these commands with their whole heart (Mal 2:2) then the LORD will see to it that the Gentiles (Mal 1:11), the heathen (Mal 1:11, 14), and all the nations will (Mal 3:12). Here Malachi successfully points to the need of biblical formation notable in their failing to meet the expressed expectations within the Scripture for a desired relationship as well as a desired respect between these priests and the people of Israel (like Jacob and Levi) and of the LORD.

Second, Dallas Willard brings to the study of spiritual formation the great theorists and deep thinkers of the human condition who have pondered and deliberated from the ancients to today about the spiritual condition of humanity (e.g., Socrates, Aristotle, Baruch Spinoza, Leo Tolstoy, Immanuel Kant). He concludes that “the only hope of humanity lies in the fact that, as our spiritual dimension has been *formed*, so it also can be *transformed*.”³⁵⁸ Willard writes from a philosophical point of view standing on the shoulders of various cultures and creeds to rightly define the soul of man, which if it spiritual in nature, it is in need of renewal through the transformation of the whole life—body, soul, and spirit. In his writings toward spiritual formation, or in his terminology—*renovation of the heart*, Willard applies extra-biblical and philosophical resources to argue for the reality of a human nature and personality. Willard seeks

³⁵⁸ Willard, *Renovating the Heart*, 14. Dallas Willard, an ordained minister himself, was an early mentor and lifelong friend of Richard J. Foster, has taught as a Professor in the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles since 1965. He is also a prominent author in several literary genres: for example, his academic discipline is evident in his philosophical interests (including Epistemology, Logic and Mathematics, Logic and the Mind, which are extensive translations of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl—who believed that experience is the source of all knowledge); Willard has written many religious works, two of which have won *Christianity Today* book awards (in 2009 for Christian Living for *The Great Omission*; and in 2002 for Spirituality for *Renovation of the Heart*).

to show that descriptions dealing with the human heart or spirit or will are basically synonymous terms that speak of the “spiritual core” of an individual. Willard insists that one must understand the battle between modern and traditional arguments over the different views of human nature in determining whether humanity is only a physical being as opposed to being spiritual as well. He remarks: “This current state of affairs may prevent otherwise thoughtful people from seeing the value of what has traditionally been regarded as the best of ‘common sense’ about life and of what has been preserved in the wisdom traditions of most cultures—especially in two of the greatest worlds sources of wisdom about the human self, the Judeo-Christian and the Greek, the biblical and the classical.”³⁵⁹

Similarly, the book of Malachi brings into focus the ideals of renewal set forth by the biblical thinkers and authors of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. For example, there is Levi, the ideal priest illustrated by the LORD to example service and worship before these priests and people of Israel; even all the nations (Mal 2:4–7). The solution is to formulate an authentic and spiritual heart change (Mal 2:2; 4:5 [3:24 Heb. text]) over their contemptible (i.e., worthless) and apathetic approach toward the things of God. Here, Malachi implies that their daily ritual and rites, for example, regarding the table of the LORD (Mal 1:7, 12) is wrong; their approach to the *Torah* and the His covenant (Mal 2:8) are wrong; their approach to marriage and family and community of faith (Mal 2:10–16) are all wrong; their lack of obedience in faithfully and sacrificially giving tithes and offerings (Mal 3:7–8, 10) is wrong; and not surprising, their opinion of the judgment of God (Mal 2:17) is wrong—since they have no fear of Him (e.g., Mal 1:6; *contra* Mal 2:5, 3:16, 4:2 [3:20 Heb. text]). The contrast between the commendable words exemplifying Levi (Mal 2:4–7) and the imperative warnings of treachery in Judah (Mal 2:11 (2x)) over against the good old days enjoyed in Judah and Jerusalem (Mal 3:4) is significant.

³⁵⁹ Willard, *Renovating the Heart*, 29.

Thus, authentic renewal comes by responding to His divine invitation toward personal (even national) repentance to “Return unto me” (Mal 3:7, 17; cf. “turn” in Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]), which is reciprocated between Man and God, and by contemplating His divine revelation to “Remember law of Moses” (Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text]); knowing His imminent judgment over the righteous and the wicked, over the body and the soul in “that day” of the LORD (Mal 3:17; 4:1, 3; see also, Mal 4:5–6 [3:23–24 Heb. text]).

Third, Donald Whitney gives honor to the spiritual traditions he seeks to emulate in his teaching and writing; namely, Puritan in practice and Reformed in theology. He states:³⁶⁰

Thanks to the Puritans. Today they are often maligned by Christians and nonChristians alike, who often know little or nothing about them. Our stereotyped perceptions of them reveal a lack of awareness of their profound contributions to spirituality and Godly living. They are spiritual giants on whose shoulders I stand . . . Thanks to Jonathan Edwards, C. H. Spurgeon, and Marty Lloyd-Jones. My life and ministry are immeasurably better because of theirs.

Whitney leans heavily upon the Puritan writers (e.g., Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, Matthew Henry, Cotton Mather, John Owen, Thomas Watson, and many others); and, upon Reformation and Reformed preachers who he introduces throughout his work. Whitney, who is a theologian, brings a rich sense of evangelical and theological substance to the disciplines of spiritual formation as a means of direction. Hence, Whitney continually seeks to challenge the Christian and the local church to pursue both godliness and holiness based upon biblical precepts; which for Whitney is the purposeful direction of spiritual formation.

Similarly, the book of Malachi also seeks for the hearers (and readers) to emulate the positive characters presented and their messages. Aside from the examples of Jacob (Mal 1:2; see also the tabernacles of Jacob, Mal 2:12; and the son’s of Jacob, Mal 3:6) and of Levi (Mal

³⁶⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 11. Donald Whitney is the founder and president of The Center for Biblical Spirituality (i.e., <http://biblicalspirituality.org/>). Since 2005, he has taught at The Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, KY, as Associate Professor of Biblical Spirituality and serves as Senior Associate Dean. Whitney has written several books in the field of spirituality.

2:4–7; see also sons of Levi, Mal 3:3), there are also two futuristic characters; namely, a coming priest and a coming prophet: “My messenger” (Mal 3:1; cf. 2:7) and Elijah the prophet (Mal 4:5 [3:23 Heb. text]).

The role of these individuals is to direct these priests and people of God (and future generations) in several areas of spiritual formation. One, Jacob’s legacy of being chosen and loved of God is foundational in Israel’s reciprocal affection and adoration toward the LORD (Mal 1:2, 5). Two, Levi examples proper teaching and practice of the law of truth and the covenant of given by the LORD so no one stumbles before God or society (cf. Mal 2:4, 5, 8). Three, “my messenger” who is one like the ideological Levitical priest in Malachi 2:5 in both character and courage is coming to prepare the way of the LORD and the Lord (Mal 3:3, cf. John Baptist). Four, Elijah the prophet will return, last seen riding in a fiery chariot, and preach an final call to repentance and restoration before “that day” of imminent judgment (cf. Mal 3:17 and 4:5 [3:23 Heb. text]). These are the larger expectations of the LORD: an acknowledgement of His love (Mal 1:1); honor (Mal 1:6), fear (e.g., Mal 1:6), and glory (Mal 2:2) to His name; obedience and faithfulness to His law and covenant (e.g., Mal 2:4); a godly seed (Mal 2:15); and, renewed connection based upon God’s law within the priests and people of God and God Himself and intergenerational relationships (Mal 3:7, 17; 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]). Hence, Malachi weaves these characters and their messages to reveal the spiritual condition and nature of these priests and the people of God directing them to a point of urgent reflection and ultimate renewal based upon a holistic examination of their own character and behavior against those holy and godly examples set forth by profound contributions of priests and prophets of antiquity and of prophesy.

Fourth, David Benner’s first literary publication (i.e., 1988; not including works where he was editor), he comments of a predisposition of the Protestant tradition to substitute words like

“godliness” and “holiness” over the terminology of “spiritual” to avoid any miscommunication or invitation to reflect on mystical principles for Christian living. Consequently, Benner seeks to reconnect the relationship between spirituality and sanctification similar to that of the Reformed Tradition. He argues “Calvin’s doctrine of sanctification made an important contribution to protestant spirituality. This doctrine complemented Luther’s doctrine of justification. It retained the gratuity of salvation while adding the importance of the transformation of a person’s whole life. This transformation is spiritual growth. Without a doctrine of sanctification Protestants would have been without a theological basis for spirituality.”³⁶¹ Since, his foundational work and understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role in spiritual formation of the whole life of the Christian, he has written several works on the soul and spirituality from a clinical and theological position.

In his latest work (2011), *Soulful Spirituality: Becoming Fully Alive and Deeply Human*, Benner seeks to expose and reverse the damage caused by the Enlightenment and restore a proper understanding of Christian faith as trust; rather than faith as mere belief. This renewal of human perspective toward God is the difference between simply man knowing about Him (i.e., external disciplines which are religious in nature) and man truly knowing Him (i.e., internal devotion which is relational in nature). According to Benner, the practice of religious duties or disciplines neither makes one better nor makes one fully and completely human. In fact, religion has caused great harm to the Divine purpose of being human. Benner argues that true spirituality within a human being only occurs when religious practices are based upon a personal and purposeful connection between the soul of man and of God; only then does one become fully

³⁶¹ David G. Benner, *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 89, 92, as quoted in Dennis, Morgan, and Mark Yarhouse, “Resources from Reformed Spirituality for Christian Spiritualist Formation in Clinical Practice,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 29 (2001): 64, 65. Benner, is a clinical psychologist, author, lecturer, and founding executive editor of the semi-annual journal *Conversations*—a Christian resource toward radical transformation (<http://conversationsjournal.com/>). Benner is currently the Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Spirituality at the Psychological Studies Institute in Atlanta, Georgia. Like, Willard, Benner writes from his own professional discipline (i.e., Psychotherapy and Psychology) concerning the nature of spirituality in the life of the Christian.

human. When this is realized, Benner holds to a Patristic position of the Divine purpose of the human being complete, saying:

Saint Irenaeus, the second-century Bishop of Lyons, understood this well His famous declaration—*Gloria Dei vivens homo*—proclaimed that the glory of God is men and women who are fully alive, fully human. This was the high point in the Christian understanding of the importance of being human, a point so removed from the center of contemporary Christianity that it might also sound heretical.³⁶²

Benner writes definitively out of a Patristic and Reformed perspective concerning the psychological aspects of the human soul, believing Christian spirituality is transformation of the self away from a center of religiosity (i.e., kingdom of self), and toward the kingdom of God which is the “heart and will unified in Christ and oriented toward the loving Father.”³⁶³

Similarly, Malachi appeals to the transformation of the heart (Mal 2:2; 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]) and focuses upon reconnecting the relationship between godliness and sanctification by faithful adherence to the established biblical tradition for a lifestyle that is pleasing to the LORD (cf. Mal 1:8–10 and 3:4). The spiritual assessment if one is pleasing before the LORD is evident by these illustrations in Malachi. One, the LORD is magnified before all the nations (Mal 1:5). Two, the LORD’s name is great among both Gentiles and heathen (Mal 1:11). Three, they walk in the “peace” (i.e., assurance) and “equity” (i.e., fairness) of God (Mal 2:5–6, KJV); and also between fathers and sons (Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]; *contra* 1:6). Four, they seek a “godly seed” (2:15, KJV; *contra* 2:3). Five, their worship and service will be accepted by the LORD (Mal 3:3–4; *contra* 1:8). Six, they are not consumed in judgment (Mal 3:6; *contra* 4:3 [3:20 Heb. text]). Seven, there is a unified testimony that you are blessed of God and by others (Mal 3:10, 12; *contra* 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]). Eight, their home (i.e., land) is a delight (Mal 3:12; *contra* Edom,

³⁶² David G. Benner, *Soulful Spirituality*, 11; see also Preface for summary comments of Benner’s purpose and intention of this work.

³⁶³ Benner, *Desiring God's Will*, 120.

1:3–4). Nine, they will be spared in the coming judgment; and be able to judge the wicked (Mal 3:17; 4:2–3 [3:20–21 Heb. text]). Ten, the law of truth (i.e., Moses) is followed and practiced (esp. Mal 2:6; cf. 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text]; *contra* 3:8). Since some of these illustrations are futuristic, truly, there is a difference between these external services (i.e., secular and sacramental) within the religious community examined in Malachi’s day and the internal devotion desired for this same community to accurately worship the LORD and completely and wholeheartedly seek the law of the LORD so that the present generation and those that follow will experience the lavish promises and blessings (e.g., Mal 3:10–12) in having a personal and intimate relationship with their Creator (Mal 2:15) and Redeemer (Mal 3:17).

Differences: Avoiding Dangers of Spiritual Formation

What are the dangers discovered in formulating biblical principles revealed through compositional analysis of a canonical book of the Bible compared to the warnings of the modern movement of spiritual formation in the life of the believer, the church, and its global community? Below is a review of the objections concerning spiritual formation³⁶⁴ in light of Malachi.

First, while it is tempting to incorporate new methods and traditions toward popular spiritual formation trends, one must avoid any way of life that strays away from the biblical text. The book of Malachi opens with this verse: “The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi” (Mal 1:1, KJV). This canonical text is in fact the very word of God. It is addressed to

³⁶⁴ See larger discussion in Chapter 2 related to these works under this section—Objections Concerning Spiritual Formation: respectively, Steve Porter, “Sanctification in a New Key: Reliving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 129–130; Bob DeWaay, “The Dangers of Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Disciplines,” *Critical Issues Commentary* 91 (2005): 1–7; “Donald Whitney and Spiritual Disciplines: Spirituality without Boundaries,” *Critical Issues Commentary* 111 (2009): 1–8; “Richard Foster—Celebration of Deception: Evangelical Mysticism,” *Critical Issues Commentary* 112 (2009): 1–5. Bob DeWaay, “Richard Foster—Celebration of Deception: Evangelical Mysticism,” *Critical Issues Commentary*, 4; and, Cephas Ministry, “Renovare & Christian Mystic Quaker and Fuller Psychologist, Richard Foster – He Teaches all New Age Techniques,” http://www.cephasministry.com/new_age_richard_foster.html (accessed February 17, 2012).

Israel as a whole but primarily focused upon those priests who have moved the people away from the plain teaching of scripture that does not address the “heart” condition of the individual (or nation) and causes them to “stumble” before God’s law (Mal 2:1, 8). Hence, any teaching ought to be firmly rooted in the Word of God as a means toward rightly comparing and contrasting one’s spiritual life.

Second, since having a wrong understanding of God and His Word (e.g., Mal 2:17) will distort the teaching and application to life of His revealed nature and character, one must avoid any principle that strays from either sound biblical tradition or biblical heritage. A good example in Malachi is the story of Easu and his descendants (i.e., Edom) who applied the term “return” not as a divine invitation toward righteous living before the LORD; but, to create a new culture and new civilization void of the blessings of God (cf. Mal 1:3–4; *contra* Jacob and Israel, Mal 1:2, 5). Hence, proper theology (i.e., acceptable understanding of God and His Word) directs one toward a way of living that is pleasant before the LORD (e.g., Mal 3:4).

Third, while some philosophies toward spiritual formation do not have clear scriptural teaching (e.g., historical movements and characters that experienced renewal), one must avoid philosophies that are not at least affirmed from God’s general and special revelation. A notable example from the book of Malachi is when the current philosophy of life is *contra* to plain scripture saying: “Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them . . .” (Mal 2:17, KJV; cf. 3:15). The immediate text in Malachi is the LORD saying “I will send my messenger” to correct this false teaching by restating the covenant as a foundation toward defining one’s holiness and godliness (Mal 3:1–5; cf. 3:16ff).

Fourth, while imitating historical religious practices and practitioners is helpful in modeling specific beliefs and behaviors, one must avoid practices that deviate from normative

expectations within biblical revelation. Malachi on several occasions contrasts the beliefs and behavior of the typical priest in Malachi's day and the ideal priest (cf. "O ye priests" in Mal 2:1, KJV and Levi). The former modeled a negative reaction to the love of God (Mal 1:2), the name of God (Mal 1:6), the service of God (Mal 1:7), the patience of God (Mal 1:13), the holiness of God (Mal 2:14; cf. 2:11), the justice of God (Mal 2:17), the invitation of God (Mal 3:7), the blessings of God (Mal 3:8), and the promises of God (Mal 3:13). Rather, the example ought to be positive in communicating the nature, character, and promises of God so that all might be renewed by the Word of God: like, the ideal priest Levi who teaches the law of truth (Mal 2:6), the coming priest "my messenger" who prepares the way of the LORD and the Lord (Mal 3:1), and coming prophet Elijah who teaches restoration between God and Man (Mal 4:5 [3:23–24 Heb. text]).

Fifth, when modeling religious or spiritual service merely with an outward conformity without evidence of inward change resulting in a natural and regular process toward holiness and godliness, one must avoid any practices that cannot be measured by a change in behavior. Malachi illustrates that temple service by these priests devolved into a ritual that produced sentiments of God characterized by these phrases: showing their contempt (cf. Mal 1:6), approaching the table of the LORD as worthless (cf. Mal 1:7), viewing the offerings and sacrifices for the LORD as burdensome (Mal 1:13; 2:17), serving God as being profitless (Mal 3:14). Hence, mere outward religious obedience without evident an inward spiritual transformation may be the act of total disobedience, for holy and godly service and spirit filled connectivity within the community of faith is from the heart which needs to be renewed and restored in right fellowship with God to receive His blessings and promises of God (Mal 2:1; cf. 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]).

Sixth, while religious activity seeks to produce a state of assurance and security, one must avoid the idea that works righteousness (e.g., sanctification) is foundational upon personal progress toward holiness. In Malachi the idea of something of someone being righteous involves what one does; in the respect of how one serves the LORD (cf. Mal 3:3,18). This is not merely an outward ritual but a result of divine intervention upon the inward sanctification of the individual; in other words the inward working of the LORD is best understood as “righteousness” only after “[He] shall purify . . . and purge them” (Mal 3:3, KJV) so their offerings and identity as the “righteous” are distinctive between “him that serveth God and him that serveth [H]im not” (Mal 3:18, KJV). This idea of being righteous while serving God with His inward working toward one’s spiritual sanctification (*contra* works righteousness) may well achieve the goal of “seeking a godly seed” within the community of faith (Mal 2:15).

Seventh, while many methods toward formation of the mind and soul through either a rigid moral code of behavior or some religious dogma which seeks to mold and shapes ones character, one must avoid any ethical and religious principles that does not lend itself in the experience of the individual. The idea of experiencing God both personally and relationally is foundational toward having a vibrant spiritual community of faith in Malachi. The example of the governor receiving offerings that were less than expected or required is an intentional comparison, being “blind . . . lame and sick” (Mal 1:8, KJV). This story is a key to understanding that God also can be pleased or not pleased with either a proper or improper attitude or affection toward either His divine name (cf. Mal 1:6, 11, 14 and 2:5) or His commandment concerning His blessing and cursing (Mal 2:1, 4; cf. 3:7, 17; 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]). Hence, seeking to please the LORD in all things (cf. Mal 3:4) is paramount in circumventing around moral codes and theological creeds devoid of having a personal and relational experience with God.

Eighth, knowing that some systems promising formation of the body and spirit may become self-serving and self-edifying, one must avoid the absence of sharing the blessings and promises of God beyond the local community of faith. The concept of missions is a key element to the larger significance of Malachi; not only in regards to the service of God but also concerning His imminent judgment (e.g., Mal 3:18). The themes of a spiritual renewal for the people of God (Mal 2:2; 3:10) and a missionary resurgence by the people of God to those outside of the community of faith (Mal 1:11; 3:12) are important to the overall message of the faithfulness witness of God before all the nations and of the fruitful work of God within His chosen people.

Ninth, seeing that it is possible of the assimilation of contra-biblical practices may be the product weaving extra-biblical models of behavior and practices, one must avoid integrating historical or cultural ideas that are *contra* the literal and historical (i.e., grammatical) approach to the compositional structure of the canonical Scripture. Malachi illustrates that the assimilation of contra-biblical practices is treacherous, abominable, and profane before the LORD (e.g., Mal 2:11). In this story, marriage and family and worship even national identity are all in danger because the community of faith “hath married the daughter of a strange god” (Mal 2:11, KJV) and sought to divorce “the wife of their youth” (Mal 2:14–16, KJV); rather than seeking a “godly seed” (Mal 2:15). The faithfulness to the biblical approach to God in worship and building up of a community of faith demands adherence to principles taught in Scripture for the benefit of one’s spirit (cf. “take heed to your spirit” Mal 2:15 and 2:16, KJV).

Tenth, while there are many “how to” approaches for religious practice and personal formation, one must avoid any obstacles that may limit spiritual growth and maturity. Malachi is structured so that there are nine divisions (in addition to the Intro and Conclusion sections), each

with a clear message to dissolve issues that were obstacles for biblical formation related to these verbal forms: אָהַב (to love), בִּזֶּה (to despise), גָּאַל (to defile), לָאָה (to weary), בָּגַד (to be treacherous), יָנַע (to grow weary), שָׁב (to return), קָבַע (to rob), and, דִּבֶּר (to speak). Hence, Malachi can be understood as a final spiritual formation test at the end of the prophetic section of the Hebrew Canon.

Eleventh, after researching the various models and methods seeking to enlighten spiritual formation principles, one must avoid the substitution of the superiority of God's Revelation with that of a private interpretation or personal revelation by a human mediator or historical movement that seeks to do spiritual formation *contra* the teaching of plain scripture. Malachi illustrates this danger with two clear truths: the immutability of our God regarding His promises (Mal 3:6) and the inconsistency of our fathers regarding their faithfulness (Mal 3:7). Hence, an appeal to persistently "Return!" to the LORD (Mal 3:7, 18; cf. 4:6 [3:24] Heb. text) and "Remember!" the revelation of God (Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text]) is imperative in the process of doing spiritual formation.

Twelfth, although the use of extra-biblical language and practices, does not necessarily promote unbiblical principles or concepts, one must avoid the abandonment of these conceptions altogether because they may illustrate and color the story toward an application or imitation of a larger biblical principle through an example of an extra-biblical character or concept. In Malachi, the character of Levi (Mal 2:4; cf. sons of Levi Mal 3:3) is not a real historical person (since there was no Levitical Priesthood during Levi the son of Jacob lifetime in Genesis), but is presented as an ideal Levitical priest—one that the priests of Malachi's day ought to have imitated and modeled, like the faithful priests "as in the days of old, and as in former years" (Mal 3:4, KJV). Hence, using extra-biblical concepts and ideals is not unbiblical, so long as the larger

message is not distorted or changed in using this added historical or imaginary example for a comparison or contrast.

Expectations: A New Strategy for Spiritual Formation

The Book of Malachi can also be used as an examination to check whether or not God's expectations are being acknowledged and acquiesced faithfully within the people of God's attitudes towards his name, affection towards his presence, and actions towards his Kingdom. In retrospect, like their fathers of old (Mal 3:7) the priest's of Malachi's day failed their spiritual formation test, but there are coming other tests (cf. Mal 3:1–5 and 4:5–6 [3:23–24 Heb. text]). In prospect, a question to consider today is will the people of God recognize His expectations? The expectations toward spiritual formation in the book of Malachi are plainly revealed within the nine discourses which are notable in the analysis of the compositional structure (notice that the Intro and Conclusion also present principles profitable for spiritual formation): that is,

Introduction: Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Word (Mal 1:1)

Body: Exegetical Principles for Spiritual Formation (Mal 1:2–4:3[1:2–4:21])

1. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Choice (1:2–5)
2. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Name (1:6)
3. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Presence (1:7–11)
4. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Calling (1:12–2:8)
5. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Covenant (2:9–16b)
6. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Judgment (2:16c–3:5)
7. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Sanctification (3:6–7)
8. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Benevolence (3:8–12)
9. Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Remembrance (3:13–4:3 [3:13–3:21 Heb. text])

Conclusion: Spiritual Formation through Trusting God's Law (Mal 4:4–6 [3:22–24 Heb. text])

The recipients of these divine discourses answered with an interrogative each time: like, what?, when?, how?) (cf. Mal 1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13), denying any acknowledgement of their

need for spiritual formation. The desire of the LORD for a renewal for these priests and the people of God is initially met with neither repentance nor revival so rather than His blessings, there is word of warning in the very last word in Malachi; the word “curse” (Mal 4:6 [3:24] Heb. text).

The new strategy for spiritual formation proposed in this thesis is based upon an analysis of a canonical Biblical text, connecting the context of the unified Scripture (biblical text) towards a biblical theology yielding sound spiritual formation principles (i.e., biblical formation). It is the opinion of this author that any biblical book has the ability to present sound spiritual formation principles toward God’s desired expectation of responding to His divine revelation within its context; directing one toward a personal and relational connection to God and to their community of faith, and then to the global community of their generation (and beyond).

SUMMARY

What are the key points from this chapter? This section investigated three specific areas. First, similarities between approaching the book of Malachi as a biblical text and a review of prominent spiritual formation authors and their works (namely, Foster, Willard, Whitney, and Benner) revealed common ground in formulating the boundaries for doing spiritual formation. Second, exploring differences between objections of doing spiritual formation and the book of Malachi highlighted dangers to avoid for spiritual formation based upon sound biblical principles. Last, expectations from the book of Malachi as exegetical principles were presented as a new model of spiritual formation. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to develop the idea of “strategic” noted in the thesis question.

CHAPTER 5

SBCV PASTOR SURVEY RESULTS

It is the purpose of this chapter to focus on the Survey Questionnaire surrounding these five questions:

Discussion 1: What are the factors in studying spiritual formation?

Discussion 2: How is spiritual formation communicated in the local church?

Discussion 3: Who is implementing spiritual formation in the local church?

Discussion 4: Where is spiritual formation directed?

Discussion 5: What are the challenges in facilitating spiritual formation?

But first, there are several steps to review prior to discussing questions on the Survey results:

Step 1: There will be a Survey Questionnaire (see Appendix C) sent to 438 SBCV churches that run less than 200 in attendance, to the attention of a pastor (i.e., 10 Statements to be answered as either Multiple Choice; or, Strongly Agree – SA, Agree – A, Disagree – D, and Strongly Disagree – SD).³⁶⁵

³⁶⁵ Here are the 10 Survey Questionnaire statements:

1. What is your SBCV Ministry Region?
2. What is your average worship attendance on Sunday mornings?
3. Pastors are responsible for the spiritual condition of the local church.
4. The Christian is to imitate Christ.
5. Performing religious duties is the mark of spirituality.
6. The goal of discipleship is to learn doctrine.
7. Spiritual growth in a Christian is the result of individual effort.
8. The community should be impacted by the local church.
9. Having a close relationship with Christ is the definition of a Christian.
10. The outward change in a person's conduct is the result of spiritual formation.

The mailings (i.e., e-mail and/or post-mail) will include: (1) a formal letter of invitation and explanation of the need and purpose for a pastor to participate in this study with the hand written or digital Survey (see Appendix B); (2) A copy of the Questionnaire will be provided; (3) a return self addressed envelope to my PO Box with correct postage; (4) If a pastor has internet capability, a survey through Survey Monkey will be sent simultaneously (e.g., 345 pastors have e-mail address).

Step 2: Pastor(s) will be contacted within a week of the mailings either by e-mail (if applicable) or by phone to encourage participants to either fill out either the written or Website Survey (e.g., there are 93 SBCV pastors that have no available e-mail address). Here is the email to 345 SBCV pastors with email addresses:

Dear Pastor,

You are one of 438 SBCV pastors that I am inviting to participate in a Spiritual Formation Survey. I am a Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary student and working on my Doctor of Ministry project. My thesis question states: "What impact would a strategic spiritual formation study based upon the book of Malachi implemented by a pastor have on a local church that is below 200 in attendance?" Your church is one of the 79% of SBCV churches that run less than 200 in attendance.

I understand the constraints of a pastor. I have been a pastor for over 17 years and have been at Maranatha Baptist on the Eastern Shore of Virginia for over 8 years. Like you, I have a real burden to impact my local congregation so that God is truly impacting their whole life. I am inviting you to join me in a study that I believe will give pastors a tool for preaching biblically rich and theological sound messages focused upon spiritual formation in the life of the individual Christian, the life of the local church, and the life of the global community.

I have attached a Survey that includes 10 Statements. Please answer these according to your present SBCV ministry. I look forward to your responses and subsequent resource that will aid in developing a strategic study toward spiritual formation in our church ministries. In addition, the completed thesis will be available through *Digital Commons* in the Library section of Liberty University webpage.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this Study.

PS: Please call my cell at (757) ###-####, if you have questions; or e-mail me at pastormuender@#####

Sincerely,

Rand Michael Muender
Pastor of Maranatha Baptist Church, Exmore VA
SBCV Southeast Region

Step 3: Fill out returned surveys by hand into Survey Monkey (or have a third party do this).³⁶⁶

Step 4: Tally results. Here are the results:

Step 4: Tally Result Chart

Survey Questionnaire	Choices	Responses	Percentage
Q1. What is your SBCV Ministry Region?	North Region (N)	8	16.67%
	Central-East Region (CE)	10	20.83%
	Central-West Region (CW)	6	12.30%
	Southeast Region (SE)	12	25.00%
	Southwest Region (SW)	12	25.00%
Total		48/48	
Q2. What is your average worship attendance on Sunday mornings?	Below 200	38	79.17%
	200 or above	10	20.83%
Total		48/48	

³⁶⁶ Step was not actualized due to initial mentor's advice to maintain anonymity.

Q3. Pastors are responsible for the spiritual condition of the local church.	Strongly Agree	26	54.17%
	Agree	19	39.58%
	Disagree	2	4.17%
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.08%
Total		48/48	
Q4. The Christian is to imitate Christ.	Strongly Agree	45	93.75%
	Agree	2	4.17%
	Disagree	1	2.08%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total		48/48	
Q5. Performing religious duties is the mark of spirituality.	Strongly Agree	7	14.58%
	Agree	8	16.67%
	Disagree	22	45.83%
	Strongly Disagree	11	22.92%
Total		48/48	
Q6. The goal of discipleship is to learn doctrine.	Strongly Agree	2	4.17%
	Agree	15	31.25%
	Disagree	24	50.00%
	Strongly Disagree	7	14.58%
Total		48/48	
Q7. Spiritual growth in a Christian is the result of individual effort.	Strongly Agree	5	10.64%
	Agree	23	48.94%
	Disagree	17	36.17%
	Strongly Disagree	2	4.26%
Total		47/48	
Q8. The community should be impacted by the local church.	Strongly Agree	40	85.11%
	Agree	7	14.89%
	Disagree	0	0.00%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total		47/48	
Q9. Having a close relationship with Christ is the definition of a Christian.	Strongly Agree	23	47.92%
	Agree	19	39.58%
	Disagree	6	12.50%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total		48/48	

Q10. The outward change in a person's conduct is the result of spiritual formation.	Strongly Agree	19	40.43%
	Agree	22	46.81%
	Disagree	6	12.77%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Total		47/48	

Step 5: Present results with summary. Here are the summaries of the Survey

Questionnaire results:

Survey Questionnaire 1: What Is Your SBCV Ministry Region? There five SBCV regions North, Central (East), Central (West), Southeast, and Southwest. There were 48 out of 345 Southern Baptist Conventions of Virginia (SBCV) pastors responded which equals 13.91% of all SBCV churches responded. According the information on the research tool website www.surveymonkey.com, a 10-15% response rate of those surveyed is considered a safe and a conservative overview of an audience that has not been previously surveyed before.

Survey Questionnaire 2: What is your average worship attendance on Sunday mornings? At the time of this survey, 79% of SBCV churches ran less than 200 in attendance. Incidentally, 79.17% of those surveyed responded an average 200 in attendance. The other 21% have recently moved to just over 200 in attendance that year based upon SBCV records. Hence, statistically the following responses might also be indicative (or at least helpful) of other smaller church pastors.

Survey Questionnaire 3: Pastors are responsible for the spiritual condition of the local church. Those that agreed (or strongly agreed) numbered 93.75% of those surveyed. Of the remaining percentage that disagreed (or disagreed strongly), it is likely that the idea of an individual being passive in their own sanctification is key; for it is by divine intervention that one is refined, purified, and purged (Mal 3:3). Yet, Malachi also lays the responsibility upon the priests (arguably the spiritual leaders and under shepherds of the community of faith) to both

example and ensure right behavior of the community for faith toward (Mal 2:7–8). This includes language of the heart (e.g., Mal 2:2) and spirit (Mal 2:15–16), beyond any daily religious duties.

Survey Questionnaire 4: The Christian is to imitate Christ. It is notable that 97.92% of pastors surveyed strongly agreed with this statement. Malachi introduces the ideal priest to Israel, namely: Levi, as an example for the priests to compare and contrast their own walk and words against in light of the inward qualities of fearing the LORD while following the “the law of truth” and the covenant of God (Mal 2:4–7), but the priests had corrupted this law causing many others to stumble proving that an outward ritual (i.e., works) does not change the heart or spirit (Mal 2:8; cf. Matt 23:3). Thomas à Kempis says: “He that seeketh no outward witness for himself, it appeareth openly that he hath committed himself all wholly to God.”³⁶⁷ In addition, Dallas Willard uses Kempis not only in developing the spiritual disciplines within the individual, but also in defining how power might reveal the corruption of a society. Kempis is portrayed as correctly ascertaining that it is situations which define the character of man; and thus society, saying: “Occasions make not a man fail, but they show what the man is.”³⁶⁸ Willard concludes that only with Christ can a society be functional and wield power honorably, without the danger of being corrupt through the spiritual discipleship of being Christ-like in ruling righteously.

Survey Questionnaire 5: Performing religious duties is the mark of spirituality. The idea of religious activity as a measure of one’s spirituality received a negative reaction by two-thirds of pastors surveyed (68.75%); whereas, one-third of those surveyed (31.25%) gave a positive reaction. While it is true that the New Testament teaches that believers are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph 2:10, KJV), the idea of being spiritual is beyond being saved (Eph

³⁶⁷ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 173. Quoted in Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, in *The Consolations of Philosophy*, 177.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 241. Willard adds that only through those disciplined in character by Christ can “the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ,” *ibid.*

2:8–9). Malachi argues that religious duties do not always reveal a mark of spirituality, especially when the duty is deemed worthless (e.g., the Table of the LORD, Mal 1:7; cf. 1 Cor 10:21). The areas that promote a sense of being rather than doing is implied in the phrase: “my covenant was with [Levi] of life and peace” would be a more attractive perception of the term *spiritual* in Malachi’s world (Mal 2:5, KJV).

Survey Questionnaire 6: The goal of discipleship is to learn doctrine. Nearly two-thirds surveyed have a negative response (65.58%); whereas, over one-third agrees (35.42%). While learning biblical doctrine is important, it is not as important as its practical application to one’s behavior and character; and especially one’s approach and affection toward God. In other words, if doctrine stays an academic exercise without the inward change due to a greater awareness of the nature and character of God revealed within His creation and the purpose and plan of God for His creation, discipleship become an self serving exercise; rather than being useful and profitable to be imitated by others (e.g., Levi, Mal 2:6–7). For example, the recurring theme in Malachi concerning imminent judgment teaches both hope for “sons of Jacob” and “the righteous” (cf. Mal 3:6; 4:18 and Mal 4:2 [3:20 Heb. text]) and the desire to live holy and pure lives before the LORD for His blessings rather than cursing (e.g., “lest I come and smite the earth with curse” Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]; cf. Mal 1:14; 2:2–3). Approaching doctrine that changes how we view God and the world we live in would be practical and profitable. Richard Foster gives a good picture of this model of discipleship by modeling Bonhoeffer’s approach to discipleship:³⁶⁹

1. Bonhoeffer took Jesus seriously.
2. Bonhoeffer took Jesus’ call to discipleship seriously.
3. Bonhoeffer took spiritual discipline seriously.

³⁶⁹ See the six areas that count the cost of discipleship within the daily suffering of Christ in light of today’s secularism, Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 75–81. Foster places Bonhoeffer in The Holiness Tradition.

4. Bonhoeffer took free, responsible, obedient action seriously.
5. Bonhoeffer took the purity of the Church seriously.
6. Bonhoeffer took the world seriously.

Survey Questionnaire 7: Spiritual growth in a Christian is the result of individual effort.

The surveyed results are not too far apart yielding 59.58% of pastors in the affirmative and 40.43% pessimistic. Jonathan Edwards illustrates two out of three of what Donald Whitney labels the three types of spiritual thirsting after God (i.e., the empty soul (cf. Luke 16:24); the dry soul (cf. Ps 42:1–2); and the satisfied soul (cf. Ps 34:8)).³⁷⁰ The first type is the thirst of the empty soul, where Edwards defines the desire of the empty soul is satisfied (even as Christians are) in the pursuit of God as “holy desire, exercised on longings, hungering and thirsting after God and holiness.”³⁷¹ The third type is the thirst of the satisfied soul, where Edwards describes the connection between one’s fellowship with Christ and their desire to be more like Christ as “the more he experiences, and the more he knows this excellent, unparallel, exquisite, and satisfying sweetness, the more earnestly he will hunger and thirst for more.”³⁷² Whitney holds that for Edwards this desire and hunger for a Christian to be more and more like God could only “be thoroughly and finally satisfied only in the eternal, undiminished, and face-to-face enjoyment of the Lord Himself on heaven.”³⁷³ Respectfully, discussing our approach toward God from our own perspective can be interpreted as individual effort, yet remembering that our part in sanctification is passive; else sanctification, which is part of His work of salvation, would be

³⁷⁰ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 16–23.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 18. Quoted in Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 104. Cf. Luke 16:24.

³⁷² Ibid., 22. Cf. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 379.

³⁷³ Ibid., 25. Cf. Psalm 36:8(KJV) – “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.”

work's based (cf. Eph 2:9). And it is the LORD who is the "refiner's fire" and "the fuller's soap" enabling His repentant people to be pure and holy so that they can give pleasing and righteous service unto Him (cf. Mal 3:2–4).

Survey Questionnaire 8: The community should be impacted by the local church.

Unanimously, 100% of those surveyed answered agreed (and 85.11% were Strongly Agree). The SBCV pastors and their churches are focused upon church planting and missions. This idea of missions is also a theme in Malachi. When the people of God are worshiping and drawing near to God, the surrounding nations will not just benefit from the message and the messengers of God (cf. Great Commission verses, Matt 28:18–20; Mk 16:15–18; Lk 24:45–49; Jn 20:21–23; and Acts 1:8), but also will benefit from the blessings of God as they spill over into the global community (Mal 3:10–12; i.e., Mal 1:5).

Survey Questionnaire 9: Having a close relationship with Christ is the definition of a Christian. The pastors surveyed affirmed this statement by 86.50%; whereas, 12.50% disagreed (but not Strongly Disagreed). The key work here describing the concept of relationship is "close"; and this could be a deciding factor for the disagreement, especially since salvation is by God's gift of grace through faith (i.e., Eph 2:8). It is motivating that Malachi opens up with a plea for an acknowledgment of the "love" has God for His chosen people (i.e., Jacob, Mal 1:2) and desires that He receives "honor" and "fear" due to any father by his son and master by his servant (Mal 1:6). These words set a tone for the rest of the book; whereas, without a relationship (albeit a "close" one) there is most likely a lack of inward motivation to serve and worship and live rightly where hearts are reconciled and lives are pleasant before Him "as in the days of old, and as in former years" (Mal 3:4, KJV). Clarifying the progressive need for a closer walk with God, David Brainerd during his missionary work to the Indians, reflected: "I withdrew to my

place of retirement in great peace and tranquility . . . God was so precious to my soul that the world with all its enjoyment was infinitely vile. I had no more value for all the favor of men than pebbles. The Lord was my ALL.³⁷⁴ . . . He knew that I longed for nothing but Himself, nothing but holiness that He had given these desires and he only could give me the thing I desired.”³⁷⁵

Survey Questionnaire 10: The outward change in a person’s conduct is the result of spiritual formation. Survey affirms this statement with 87.24%; whereas, 12.77% of pastors disagreed (but not Strongly Disagreed). The final test for evidence of a repented heart and renewed spirit (Mal 2:2; 2:15–16) and inward formation in Malachi is the turning of the hearts of the fathers toward their children and vice-versa (Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]). The same outward expression of devotion and reverence toward God was found neither within the priests nor in the hearts of the peoples (note: Levi is the good example of what an outward expression of an inward reality should look like, Mal 2:4–7). To example, John Chrysostom, a fifth century pastor who was severely persecuted and exiled, whom Whitney uses to portray how maturing Christians should seek, extend, and love, forgiveness, said: “Nothing causes us to so nearly resemble God as the forgiveness of injuries.”³⁷⁶

Discussion 1: What Are The Factors In Studying Spiritual Formation?

Richard Foster gives three priorities toward an agenda for Spiritual Formation: one, creating an individual and fervent longing for both a personal and continual “re-forming” of the

³⁷⁴ Entry recorded April 28, 1742; Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* 188. Cf. Edwards, ed. *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, 83–84. See Isaiah 30:15—“For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.” (KJV).

³⁷⁵ Entry recorded June 15, 1742; Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health*, 129. Cf. Edwards, ed. *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, 88.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 120. Cf. Blanchard, comp., *More Gathered Gold*, 105.

physical, emotional, and spiritual, man into the likeness of the person of Jesus by God; two, maintaining such a strong unity within the local community of faith that nothing can ever separate it, no matter the circumstances; and three, striving to serve and to stand and to suffer together before the world.³⁷⁷ Malachi also has an agenda which desires a total and committed relationship with the LORD in serving Him and in striving before the nations no matter the circumstances (Mal 3:10–12). Likewise, Dallas Willard defines three aspects toward Spiritual Formation:³⁷⁸

1. Spiritual Formation may be thought of as training the human spirit.
2. Spiritual Formation may be thought of as shaping the inner life.
3. Spiritual Formation may be thought of as a shaping by the spirit.

Furthermore, John Ortberg agrees with Willard that his arguments do not necessarily make Spiritual Formation Christian and also suggests three principles to ensure that the “spiritual” is “Christian”:³⁷⁹ to have a clear definition of the Christian faith; to have a clear direction in teaching disciples do what Jesus would do; and, to have a clear determination not to separate the idea of “Christian” from the goal of “disciple” in meaning. In Malachi, giving Levi as an ideal priestly example to imitate for spiritual acceptance and achievement supports this model (Mal 2:4–7). The Survey Questionnaire statements Number 4: The Christian is to imitate Christ; Number 7: Spiritual growth in a Christian is the result of individual effort; and, Number 10: The outward change in a person’s conduct is the result of spiritual formation, all focus upon the goals

³⁷⁷ Foster, “Spiritual Formation Agenda: Richard Foster shares his three priorities for the next 30 years,” *Christianity Today*, 31–32.

³⁷⁸ Willard, “Spiritual Formation in Christ: A Perspective on What it is and How it might be Done,” n.p.

³⁷⁹ Ortberg, “What Makes Spirituality Christian? Dallas Willard thinks it is an important to live the truth as it is to believe it,” 16–17.

of spiritual formation. It is important to have a clear standard of who or what to imitate everyday (i.e., Christ and Christ-likeness, cf. 1 Cor 11:1) and a clear conception of the results of spiritual formation of the heart and spirit (Mal 2:2, 15–16), no matter the difficulties of daily life.

Discussion 2: How Is Spiritual Formation Communicated In The Local Church?

“The importance of reading the Scriptures for the faith, formation, and life of the church is generally recognized.”³⁸⁰ Because there is arguably “little progress” in the local church in understanding the idea of spiritual formation and spiritual growth³⁸¹ as well as recognizing spiritual expectations from the LORD, teaching and preaching through biblical books and noting principles directed at living holy and righteously before God and mankind is an important aspect of communication in the local church (cf. “Remember the law of Moses,” Mal 4:3 [3:22 Heb. text]). The Survey Questionnaire statement Number 9: Having a close relationship with Christ is the definition of a Christian, was supported by 87.50% of pastoral responses. The Gospel of Luke comments on Jesus’ use and approach to the Old Testament: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk 24:27, KJV; cf. 24:44). Hence, understanding the revelation of Christology in the OT is paramount to understanding the New Testament and is significant what it means to be Christlike.

Discussion 3: Who Is Implementing Spiritual Formation In The Local Church?

The Survey Questionnaire statement Number 3: Pastors are responsible for the spiritual condition of the local church, received 94.75% positive support by surveyed pastors; whereas,

³⁸⁰ David Brisben, “Telling the Old, Old Story: How the Contemporary Church Practices Reading the Old Testament for Faith and Life,” *Common Ground Journal* 7 (2009): 97. He also adds “how we understand them—especially the Old Testament—is more contentious,” *ibid*.

³⁸¹ The Barna Group, “Many Churchgoers and Faith Leaders Struggle to Define Spiritual Maturity,” <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/264-many-churchgoers-and-faith-leaders-struggle-to-define-spiritual-maturity?q=formation>, n.p.

Number 6: The goal of discipleship is to learn doctrine, received nearly two-thirds negative support (65.58%). Accordingly, the role of pastor is responsible for implementing spiritual formation in the community of faith, but it appears that the Survey indicates the method needs to be less academic concerning dogma and more practical for holy living. Daniel Block concurs adding: “Malachi appears on the scene when people were more orthodox in their creeds than in their living; when the flame of spiritual vitality was flickering, in grave danger of going out.”³⁸²

Discussion 4: Where Is Spiritual Formation Directed?

The Survey Questionnaire statement Number 5: Performing religious duties is the mark of spirituality, received a negative reaction by two-thirds of pastors surveyed (68.75%); whereas, one-third of those surveyed (31.25%) gave a positive reaction. So where is the balance between the outward service and inward spirit? The term “spiritual” seems to answer the question initially, but then there is the test (or goals) of spirituality. Is it the outward religious disciplines and services or the inward change of attitude and behavior that ought to underpin those on the journey of formation toward the likeness of Christ? Both Malachi and the spiritual formationists researched agree that the principal and continual goal is an inward renewal of the heart then an outward expression of that renewal before God (cf. Mal 3:4). Richard Averbek also concurs that there is a cause and effect from the work of the Holy Spirit reshaping human heart (initial and continual transforming of the believer), then directing that believer into a unity and connectivity within a local community of faith, then as witnesses to the larger global community of the world³⁸³ (cf. Matt 28:18–20 and Mal 1:11; 3:12). Sylvia Wilkey Collinson adds a similar definition of “discipleship,” which ultimately shows the effectiveness of the believer modeling

³⁸² Block, “Reviving God’s Covenant with Levi: Reflections on Malachi 2:1–9,” 121.

³⁸³ Averbek, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” 27.

themselves after Jesus Christ in reshaping the community of faith, which is to “be judged by the spread of Christianity, in spite of extreme opposition, to almost every nation in the world and by the numbers of those who hold to the faith.”³⁸⁴ Consequently, the Survey Questionnaire statement Number 8: The community should be impacted by the local church, was affirmed 100% of SBCV pastors.

Discussion 5: What Are The Challenges In Facilitating Spiritual Formation?

The Survey Questionnaire statement Number 1: What is your SBCV Ministry Region?; and, Number 2: What is your average worship attendance on Sunday mornings?, relate to the idea of doctrinal, geographical, and statistical challenges of a community of faith attempting to reach their local and global ministry objectives. In addition, the specific area and size of any community of faith may produce certain challenges that can be measured based upon the organizational success in doing ministry (e.g., Budget, Baptisms, Buildings), but the principles of formation deal beyond the counting of offerings, people, and structures. Steve Porter notes many “anxieties surrounding spiritual formation” and offers an apologetic for doing spiritual formation related to the doctrine of sanctification – “. . . to be conformed to the image of Christ” (cf. Rom 8:29);³⁸⁵ despite a church’s financial worth or congregational attendance or logistical expansions.

SUMMARY

What results would a survey of SBCV pastors of smaller churches in light of questions related to spiritual formation yield? This section illustrated that returning to the biblical text, for

³⁸⁴ Collinson, “Making Disciples and the Christian Faith,” *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 250.

³⁸⁵ Porter, “Sanctification in a New Key: Reliving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 129. Porter’s definition of “spiritual formation . . . is none other than views regarding the nature and dynamics of growth in Christian holiness,” *ibid.*, 130.

a biblical theology, with the goal of biblical formation (i.e., transformation) as a foundation for spiritual formation would be pleasing to the LORD. Especially in the light of individual believer's continual inward transformation into the likeness of Christ and subsequent witness of God's faithfulness in outward demonstrations of spiritual renewal within and through the local community faith toward a proved testimony and profitable witness before the larger global community (cf. Mal 3:4, 12). No matter the physical limitations of resources or geographical restrictions concerning opportunities, the spiritual formation principles will renew both the heart and spirit of believers seeking to know and follow Christ daily (i.e., "... until Christ be formed in you," Gal 4:19). This reshapes the community of faith having evidence of a growing and deepening relationship with God which furthers the trusting (cf. "prove me now," Mal 3:10) in the promises of God yielding both blessings from God for righteous service and a real witness to the world of His faithfulness (Mal 3:10–12). It is the purpose of this section to illustrate the thesis question phrase "local church that is below 200 in attendance."

CHAPTER 6

STRATEGIC ROLE OF PASTOR IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

This section will seek to show that spiritual formation is primarily the responsibility of pastors³⁸⁶ to personally integrate and successfully implement this new model toward spiritual formation through a strategic study of the Book of Malachi in three specific areas of the local church:³⁸⁷ (1) Christians individually (e.g., education and discipline), (2) the congregation corporally (e.g., preaching and discipleship), and (3) the community globally (e.g., evangelism and missions).

Strategic Implementation of Spiritual Formation in the Life of the Christian

The role of the pastor is rooted in the proclamation to the word of God (cf. Mal 1:1; 2:6–7; 3:1; 4:5 [3:23 Heb. text]). “Spiritual Theology and Formation glean from both the observation of the Word and the observation of the Spirit working in real human lives for the sake of understanding that nature and dynamic process of sanctification.”³⁸⁸ So how does a pastor communicate the Word of God to a believer? Here are two key methods: biblical teaching and spiritual disciplines.

³⁸⁶ The New Testament offers several words for the idea of the role of pastor. Any Greek Lexicon would yield these words and their meaning for the role of pastor: for example, *presbyteros* (an elder; cf. 1 Tim 4:11–16; 3:1–7; 2 Tim 4:1–5); *poimen* (a shepherd (idea of being); cf. Eph 4:11; Heb 13:20; 1 Pt 2:25); *poimaino* (a shepherd (idea function or doing); cf. Jn 21:16); and, *episkopos* (a supervisor, a overseer; cf. Acts 20:28). The title “pastor” is from the Latin of *poimen*—the idea of shepherding (cf. Abel, Jacob, David, Jesus Christ – The Great Shepherd).

³⁸⁷ See discussion in L. T. Jeyachandran, “The Trinity as a Paradigm for Spiritual Transformation,” in *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith That We Defend*, ed. Ravi Zacharias (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 231–252.

³⁸⁸ Coe, John. “The Call and Task of this Journal.” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1 (2008): 2–4.

First, effective biblical teaching is contingent upon the pastor faithfully abiding in the Scriptures in such a manner that his communication of the Word of God into the very lives of those being shaped into the image of Christ is also evident in the pastor's own life (e.g., Levi, Mal 2:6–7). In other words, not only should the message be exactly what God desires, but the messenger should be exactly whom God desires (cf. 1 Jn 1:1–3; 1 Cor 15:1–8; *contra* Balaam). To illustrate, George Fox inspired many to follow seven basic steps that progressively aid in understanding one's own experiences with God and follow the light of Christ within: namely,

- (1) Experiencing Jesus directly;
- (2) Understanding our experiences based upon Scripture;
- (3) Always growing toward Christ-likeness;
- (4) The importance of knowing the light of Jesus in history and indwelling;
- (5) The role of our suffering links us to Christ's suffering;
- (6) The true Church is a community of faith is based on Loving Christ rather than tradition; and
- (7) The pure love of God is the goal of one's total experiences and insights.³⁸⁹

In the book of Malachi, the ideal priest named Levi is the standard to imitate for the receiving of the blessings God and for the renewal of the people of God. Levi not only lived in the covenant of “life and peace” but also exemplified the “law of truth” before the community of faith, thus giving a tangible and credible source of imitation for the spiritual formation of those who could both see his walk and hear his words and know the expectations of God (Mal 2:4–7). Similarly, spiritual formation writers have used the entire history of Christendom to draw from excellent examples of pastors. Those expressing their longing for a deeper and more intimate relationship with Christ while investing their lives in discovering the true nature and purpose of Christ-likeness as visible models for individual believers to imitate; but none so powerful as the Apostle Paul who simply stated: “And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1, NLT).

³⁸⁹ Foster, Richard J., and Gayle D. Beebe. *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian devotion* 177–181. Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* uses Fox as a significantly throughout: e.g., 34, 72, 95, 101, 165, 175, and 188.

Second, developing the spiritual disciplines within the context of biblical formation clarifies strategic spiritual assessments (or goals) to ensure a continual drawing of the individual believer's connection and experience to Jesus Christ. The pastor through personal devotion, passionate prayer, and public proclamation has the responsibility to actually share "the burden of the word of the LORD" to His children (Mal 1:1; cf. 2 Tim 4:1–5). To illustrate, Rev. Jimmy Joe Thompson shared with this author a formula to communicate the word of God to the people of God: he said "Study full! Pray hot! Preach empty!" Furthermore, Richard Foster celebrates key spiritual disciplines that direct the individual believer who is living on the surface of their faith to ever newer depths in the person of Christ, the partaking of Christ-likeness, and the purpose of Christianity: namely, The Inward Disciplines, The Outward Disciplines, and The Corporal Disciplines.³⁹⁰ Again, exemplifying these spiritual disciplines by the pastor gives real context toward the teaching and preaching and testifying of living and experiencing the deeper things of God gives renewed purpose and meaning in the day-to-day life of the individual believer's struggle and suffering due to the inner battle of the flesh and Spirit (Gal 6:16ff; cf. Mal 2:6–8).

Here are two illustrations of exemplifying spiritual disciplines from famous pastors of history. One, Martin Luther also adds a clear illustration toward the believer's freedom from sin by explaining Paul's use of the word *reckon*; namely, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11, KJV), where Luther was reported to explain that "you cannot stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."³⁹¹ Luther also is used as an example of the reformation's reaction against asceticism; especially that is forced upon the individual,

³⁹⁰ I.e., Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth, Revised and Expanded*, who outlines these three Spiritual Disciplines accordingly: (1) Inward as Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study; (2) Outward as Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, Service; and, (3) Corporal as Worship, Guidance, and Celebration, v.

³⁹¹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 115, 117.

concluding that “had he kept such activities up any longer, he would have killed himself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other works.”³⁹² Two, Richard Baxter is another example of the benefits of developing the spiritual discipline of meditation on the Word of God. Baxter’s classic work *The Reformed Pastor* focuses upon a different aspect of meditation; that is, the merging of the study of the Scripture and meditation toward developing the spiritual discipline of prayer:³⁹³

Nor should we imagine it will be as well to take up with prayer alone, and lay aside meditation; for they are distinct duties, and must both of them be performed. We need the one as well as the other, and therefore we shall wrong ourselves by neglecting either one.

Baxter is also used as a tool for redeeming the time; that is, developing a spiritual discipline of good stewardship, so there will be no regrets at the end of time (e.g., Lk 16:25—“But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”). Baxter asks this question of the rich man to prompt a biblical response to the time God has given those in the present: “Doth it not tear their very hearts for ever, to think how madly they consumed their lives, and wasted the only time that was given them to prepare for their salvation?”³⁹⁴ Whitney adds this solution for the present to learn from the mistakes of those who have squandered their chances: “They have learned the value of time by experience. Let us learn it by encountering the truth, and discipline our time for the purpose of Godliness.”³⁹⁵ Malachi urges this, saying: “Even from the days of your fathers are ye gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me and I will return unto you saith the LORD of Hosts . . .” (Mal 3:7, KJV).

³⁹²Ibid., 145. Willard equates this model of monastic asceticism as a false understanding of Christ’s life; and therefore, will end in either abuse or failure in the pursuit of spiritual formation; cf. 144.

³⁹³Ibid., 72. Quoted from Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter: Select Treatises* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baler Book House, 1981), 103.

³⁹⁴Ibid., 139. Quote from Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter in Four volumes, a Christian Directory*, 1673; reprint, vol. 1 (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1990), 237.

³⁹⁵Ibid.

Hence, the role of the pastor in the life of the individual Christian stems from a pastor's private soul care toward the believer, where their body and spirit are constantly cultivated with the sowing of the word of God and a deepening relationship within the God of the Word ("and they shall be mine, Mal 3:17a). This also stems from the pastor's public ministry which is tempered by an outpouring of a personal and passionate connection with God before the people of God and the world (cf. Levi). By exemplifying and by enabling a believer, the pastor illustrates what one looks like who loves God's word and meditates upon it day and night (Ps 1:1–3, 6; cf. "Remember the law of Moses," Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text]). To illustrate, Donald Whitley foundations the believer's perseverance in the spiritual disciplines, not through individual effort alone, but through an active connection with the body of Christ for accountability toward personal Christlikeness (cf. 1 Jn 1:3 – "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.")). To this viewpoint, the Puritan Thomas Watson advocates the importance of Christian fellowship, saying: "Associate with sanctified persons . . . they may, by their counsel, prayers, and holy example, be a means to make you holy."³⁹⁶

Strategic Implementation of Spiritual Formation in the Life of the Church

The role of the pastor is rooted in the worship of the God of the Word. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24, KJV). The book of Malachi focuses upon the catalyst for a true worship with a repentant and obedient heart (Mal 2:2) and a faithful and humbled spirit (Mal 2:14–16) by acknowledging God's love (Mal 1:2) and approaching Him with reverence and fear (Mal 1:6) and honor (Mal 1:6) and glory (Mal

³⁹⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Quoted in Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, (1692; reprint, Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 249.

2:2) by venerating His name before the people, before the Gentiles and heathen (e.g., Mal 1:6, 11, 14). So how does a pastor implement the worship of God within the life of local the church? Here are a few key questions that must be answered from the scriptures: What is worship? Why should we worship? What if it seems like God withdraws?

First of all, God is to be worshipped, but not only outwardly in ritual and religious activity. The priests in Malachi's day were devout in their religiosity, but lacked real affection and a attention the theh LORD and gave neither their hearts not their spirits in obeying and following the acceptable and pleasant worship of God. For example: one, these priests treated the name of the LORD with carelessness and distain ("O priests, that have despised my name," Mal 1:6; cf. Lk 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"). Two, these priests approached the Table of the LORD as "contemptible" (Mal 1:7, 12; cf. partaking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner," 1 Cor 11:27, 29). Three, these priests offered up corrupt sacrifices and worthless offerings being "blind . . . lame . . . sick", that are acknowledged as "evil" by the LORD (Mal 1:8, 13; *contra* Cain in Gen 4:5–8 and Lk 3:8, "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance"). Four, these priests had deceived the people of God (Mal 1:14) and departed away and corrupted the law and covenant of their fathers (Mal 2:8; cf. Acts 1:21: "they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful"). Five, these priests had compromised the two great institutions of their community of faith which according to Malachi are weaved together tightly within their "covenant" (cf. Mal 2:8 and Mal 2:14): namely, ministry and marriage. Because they had forsaken the purpose of His Temple and the purpose of His altar to promote holiness in their congregation (e.g., Mal 2:11: "[you] hath married the daughter of a strange god") and promote "a godly seed" throughout the generations (Mal 2:15; cf. messianic promise, Gen 3:14) their hypocrisy at the altar (Mal 2:13) and treachery to the "wife other youth"

could not go unanswered (cf. possible restoration verses imminent judgment, Mal 3:1: “I will send my messenger” and “I will send you Elijah the prophet,” Mal 4:5 [3:23 Heb. text]). Six, these prophets have redefined right and wrong calling evil good (Mal 2:17) and the proud happy (Mal 3:15) and mocked the God of judgment (Mal 2:17; 3:13–15; cf. Gal 6:7: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.”). Consequently, when there is no repentance, no contrition, not acknowledgement of personal wickedness, from the pulpit to the pew, of personal and presumptuous sins which cause the people of God to stumble (Mal 2:8; cf. Rom 1:18), the LORD asks the question to these priests: Why not just close the doors? (Mal 1:10; cf. *Ichobod*: “the glory has departed,” 1 Sam 4:13). Why not indeed!

So what is the remedy? The role of the pastor is to promote and preserve corporate worship by personal example and public expectation of what worship looks like before the LORD (i.e., “acceptable: and “pleasant” in Mal 3:14; *contra* Mal 1:10, 2:13), with constant attention to restoration of the heart (Mal 2:2) and renewal of the spirit (Mal 2:15–16), so that the doing of worship stems from the right affection and right attention to the LORD (Mal 3:4, 10). Arguably, it is through Christ and the spiritual formation that comes through His working in the life of the Christian and in the life of the Church, that the power and presence of God provides the necessary connectivity between Himself and the body of Christ; where C. S. Lewis vividly pictures: “The Church as we see her spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners.”³⁹⁷ On the one hand, Donald Whitney adds that the closer one becomes like Christ, the more one grieves over personal sin; Jonathan Edwards validates this viewpoint in *Religious Affections*, saying: “One great difference between saints and hypocrites is this, that the joy and comfort of the former is attended with godly sorrow and mourning for

³⁹⁷ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 186. Quoted in C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter II (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 12.

sin.”³⁹⁸ On the other hand, Whitney cautions between grieving over personal sin “in a godly manner” over against the “sorrow of the world” whereas one works toward repentance and the other death (cf. 2 Cor 7:8–11) and illustrates his point with Edwards, who illustrates a false repentance: “Such expressions are often used, not with a heart that is broken . . . There are many that are full of expressions of their own vileness, who yet expect to be looked upon as eminent and bright saints by others.”³⁹⁹

The remedy here, according to Malachi is found in this indispensable imperative for the life of the Church as a whole which highlights both trusting in God’s word (Mal 1:1, “The burden of the word of the LORD”) and in God’s law toward spiritual formation: to Return! (Mal 3:7, 18, 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]; and, to Remember! (Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text])). The former speaks (i.e., Return!) not just to a public demonstration of outward obedience in approaching the LORD, but as an outward expression of an inward heart change for the deeper and proven relationship that promotes a corporate lifestyle of daily trusting in the LORD within the community of faith (e.g., Levi, Mal 2:5, “My covenant was with him of life and peace”). The latter speaks (i.e., Remember!) neither to a merely monastic or ascetic lifestyle, nor to a merely pharisaical or legalist adherence of the LORD’s burden (Mal 1:1), commandments (Mal 2:1, 3), covenants (Mal 2:4, 5, 8, 10, 14, 16; 3:1), ordinances (Mal 3:7, 14) and law (Mal 2:6, 7, 8, 9, 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text]), and statutes and judgments (Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. text])). But “Remember!” speaks to returning back to a literal and historical (i.e., grammatical) interpretation of the scriptures as they were taught and applied “in the days of old, and as in former years” (Mal 3:4, KJV) when God’s law was showing one’s need for a closer and continual relationship with the LORD expressed

³⁹⁸ Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health*, 104. Cf. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 366.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 106–107. Cf. Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 316–317.

with all of one's whole heart, mind, soul, and strength (cf. Matt 22:36–40, in which Jesus hangs all the Law and Prophets to the simple mandate of loving God, Deut 6:5; and loving Neighbor, Lev 19:18). Hence, from the sacred office of the priest to the the secular life of the global community the law of love is to be lavished upon God (and all Mankind, cf. Mal 1:5, 3:12) both in the words and walk (Mal 2:6) as an expression of genuine devotion and obedient dedication toward a longing for knowing and experiencing God through worship (*contra* Mal 2:13).

Second of all, God is worthy to be worshipped. Yet, this worship is based upon our right approach toward trusting in Him in all things (esp., His “ways”, Mal 2:9), and not merely approaching with religious activity and action as those priests of Malachi's day were exemplifying (cf. Cain, Gen 4:5 and Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, Lev 10:1–2). Malachi gives several reasons why the LORD is worthy of worship; whereas each are grounding in trusting in the revelation of who He is and what His has done (past), is doing (present), and will do (promised): namely, God's love, God's name, God's presence, God's calling, God's covenant, God's judgment, God's sanctification, God's benevolence, and God's remembrance.

One, He loves His righteous (e.g., Mal 1:2, “I loved Jacob”; and, Mal 3:6, “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”). Consequently, His love is very distinct from His affections and actions toward the wicked (Mal 1:3, “I hated Esau”); Malachi illustrates well this distinctiveness between the righteous and the wicked which is “between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Mal 3:18, KJV). Part of worship is trusting in God's redemptive love.

Two, His name is feared and honored and glorified (cf. Mal 1:6, 14; 2:2). The right kind of fear shows His value and veneration toward Him name during one's dutiful service; and potentially drawing all men unto Him (e.g., Levi, Mal 2:5; and The Righteous, Mal 3:16), even

as a servant is drawn to his master or a son to his father (Mal 1:6), and when His name is received as “dreadful” (rather than as delight by His own children, cf. Mal 12), to the heathen who’s fear provoke a deep reverence toward Him as a “great King” even those who outside of the community of faith (Mal 1:14). Part of worship is trusting in God’s glorious name.

Third, He is present in worship. Malachi assures that God is very much present and participating in worship, unlike the strange and false gods of the heathen who cannot see, cannot hear, and cannot speak (cf. 2:11 and Ps 115:5–7). Those priests are presenting gifts upon the altar that are considered polluted, worthless, displeasing, and unacceptable even to “thy governor” (Mal 1:8), especially, to the LORD of Hosts; saying: “I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (Mal 1:10). Part of worship is having a conscious awareness and devoted attention toward Him through trusting in His manifest presence.

Fourth, His calling is to enjoy both life and peace with Him. Malachi pictures this calling within a covenant lifestyle “of life and peace” (Mal 2:5). Like, the ideal priest Levi who enjoyed and exemplified and equipped others toward this blessing, it comes to all worshippers who are faithful and fearless in their faith toward God’s calling (Mal 2:6–7; cf. sons of Levi, 3:3; *contra* Mal 2:8: but you are departed out of my way”). Part of worship is a celebration of a holy life and perfect peace possible with Him through trusting in His calling.

Fifth, His covenant is protecting a godly heritage of ministry and family. Malachi pictures the “abomination” (Mal 2:11; *contra* holiness, Mal 2:11) of those priests of his day due to dealing “treacherously” against, in breaking their relationship, with the covenant of their fathers and against the covenant of the wife of their youth (cf. Mal 2:10, 11, 14, 15, 16) for two reasons: they have broken their faithfulness to worship as their fathers; and, they have broken their vows of their wedding to their wives. Consequentially, those priests had forsaken the God

of Creation (Mal 2:10, 15) who is also the God of Redemption (cf. “seek a godly seed,” Mal 2:15). Arguably, Malachi had desired a revival within the covenant of Levi (Mal 1:8), but found instead a rebellion (“partial in the law,” Mal 2:9). Part of worship is reviving holiness and seeking godliness while trusting in God’s covenant.

Sixth, His imminent judgment will not consume His people. There is coming a day, literally: “that day,” when imminent judgment shall fall upon the wicked and the earth (3:17; i.e., “the day”: 3:2; 4:1, 3, 5 [3:19, 21, 23 Heb. text]). While some doubt a God of judgment (cf. Mal 2:17, asking “Where is [He]?”), there is hope for redemption and restoration for the repentant; for example, Elijah the prophet is coming to “turn” the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the sons to the fathers, a truth that may well have indirect connotations with the Heavenly Father (Mal 4:5–6 [3:23–24 Heb. text]); and, God has promised a future priest “my messenger” (Mal 3:1: cf. John Baptist ministry, esp. Lk 2:76) who is coming to prepare the way for the LORD, and the Lord (cf. Messiah) who will bring a needed purification like a “refiner’s fire” and a needed cleansing like a “fuller soap” (Mal 3: 2; cf. Is 4:4; 6:7; James 4:7–8). Part of worship is abiding in the purifying and cleansing truth of trusting in God’s judgment.

Seventh, His sanctification promises grace and blessing. Hallelujah, for the immutability of God on behalf of His children (cf. sons of Jacob, Mal 3: 6); and, for the gracious invitation of God to “Return!” to Him (Mal 3:7). Simply, if you return to Him; then, He will return to you (Mal 3:7). The idea of an “if . . . then” construction in the Scriptures (cf. Deut 28:1), is always condition upon the individual or community of faith being obedient to God’s will (e.g., keeping His ordinances, Mal 3:7, 14) only then will God meet His condition. In this case, the LORD will also “return,” that is with immediate blessings for those trusting in Him (e.g., Mal 3:10), rather than eventual judgment for those refusing to trust Him (Mal 3:18). Malachi has already defined

that obedience should be from the heart toward the things of God (Mal 2:2; cf. Ps 51:17) and has illustrated that this ongoing process of being sanctified (i.e., holiness, Mal 2:11) as a lifestyle is evident in one's words, walk, and witness (cf. Mal 2:6–7). Part of worship is to respond to His invitation to be holy by trusting in God's sanctification.

Eighth, His benevolence is evident to the whole world. Malachi shows that by putting the LORD to the test and trusting in the faithfulness of His word (cf. Mal 3:10: “prove me now!”), that the people of God will find Him being benevolent desiring to lavish His blessings upon them (Mal 2:10-11); rather than being malevolent in spirit (e.g., Ps 106:37). Consequentially, the witness of the faithfulness of God and the faithfulness of the people of God become a tool for witnessing to the global community (Mal 3:12). These blessings can be tangible, but the potential blessings of the renewed heart (Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text]), restored spirit (Mal 2:15, 16), and reconciled life (Mal 3:7), and rewarded soul (Mal 4:2 [3:20 Heb. text]) are not be ignored, but longed for in our worship. Part of worship is testifying of the benefits of trusting God's benevolence.

Ninth, He thinks of His children as righteous who revered and reflected upon His name. Malachi contrasts those who speak of serving God as a worthless enterprise (Mal 3:13: “It is vain to serve God.”) and those who serve Him as a son (Mal 3:17). To the former, there is a horrible day of judgment who will “burn” as if in an oven (Mal 4:1 [3:19 Heb. text]) and be reduced to ashes (Mal 4:3 [3:21 Heb. text]), for they are the wicked who do not serve Him (Mal 3:18). To the latter, he has written all their words and thoughts in “a book of remembrance” (Mal 3:16; cf. Ps 19:14) and he shall spare them as a father would spare His own son (Mal 3:17), for they are the righteous who serve Him and they shall be blessed in name (Mal 3:17, He called them “jewels”) and blessed in with privilege (Mal 4:3 [3:21 Heb. text]), they will “tread down the

wicked”). Part of worship is focusing the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart in trusting on God’s remembrance.

Third of all, what if it seems like God withdraws? David Brainerd has a good word to invest in the life of the Church at this point. First, he describes the sweetness in groaning for Heaven, journaling: “I longed exceedingly to be dissolved and to be with Christ, to behold His glory. Oh, my weak, weary soul longs to arrive at my Father’s house.”⁴⁰⁰ Then, Brainerd describes the holiness in groaning for Heaven, journaling: “I longed to be perfectly holy, that I might not grieve a gracious God; who will continue to love, notwithstanding his love is abused.”⁴⁰¹ Last, Brainerd described the earnestness in groaning for holiness in Heaven, journaling: “He knew that I longed for nothing but Himself, nothing but holiness that He had given these desires and he only could give me the thing I desired.”⁴⁰²

But has God actually withdrawn? The longing and the yearning for the experience and presence of God is appealed to by Malachi not from a human perspective, but from a divine perspective. God is waiting to be honored and revered (Mal 1:6: “Where is my honor . . . my fear?”). He is waiting to be heard (cf. obeyed, Mal 2:2; “If ye will not hear...”). He is waiting to be glorified (Mal 2:2: “to give glory to my name”). He is waiting to have a restored relationship with His children (Mal 3:7: “Return! . . . and I will return unto you”). He is waiting to be proved faithful (Mal 3:10: “prove me now!”). He is waiting to pour out blessings (Mal 3:10). He is waiting for His word to be remembered (Mal 4:4 [3:22 Heb. Text]).

⁴⁰⁰ Entry recorded June 12, 1742; Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health*, 123. Cf. Edwards, ed. *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, 87.

⁴⁰¹ Entry recorded Oct 26, 1744; Ibid., 126. Cf. John Thornbury, *David Brainerd* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1996), 132.

⁴⁰² Entry recorded June 15, 1742; Ibid., 129. Cf. Edwards, ed. *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, 88.

Here are some follow-up questions for the pastor to implement in the life of the congregation for a relevant message in their witness. A pastor may ask while teaching through Malachi: Who has actually withdrawn: is it really God? (cf. Mal 2:17). John Blanchard quotes William Gurnall, a seventeenth century English clergyman, whom Whitney uses to illustrate the idea of recognizing times when God draws back His presence: “The Christian must trust in a withdrawing God.”⁴⁰³ Yet, this may be an issue of perspective.

A pastor may ask while teaching through Malachi: Is God distant because of unrepentant sin (cf. Mal 3:2)? Blanchard quotes A. W. Pink, a nineteenth century English scholar, whom Donald Whitney uses to explain why continually grieving over personal sin is a good practice for maturing Christians said: “It is not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors [of faith].”⁴⁰⁴ In addition, Blanchard quotes Thomas D. Bernard, a nineteenth century Bible scholar, whom Whitney uses to illustrate the affect of drawing nearer to God’s holiness the more personal sins are revealed, said: “Our sense of sin is in proportion to our nearness to God.”⁴⁰⁵

A pastor may ask while teaching through Malachi: Is God distant due an unforgiving in your heart (cf. Mal 4:6 [3:24 Heb. text])? Blanchard quotes several scholars by which Whitney demonstrates various aspects on forgiveness as a mark of spiritual maturity, turning the hearts of the fathers and sons, and sons to the fathers). Here are three examples: one, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a Welsh reformed preacher, whom Whitney uses to highlight his proposal that maturing Christian forgive others even as Christ has forgiven them (cf. Mk 11:25, 26), said: “I say to the

⁴⁰³ Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health*, 20. Cf. John Blanchard, comp., *Gathered Gold* (Welwyn, England: Evangelical Press, 1984), 100.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 103. Cf. John Blanchard, comp., *More Gathered Gold* (Welwyn, England: Evangelical Press, 1986), 297.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 103. Cf. Blanchard, comp., *Gathered Gold*, 289.

glory of God and in utter humility that whenever I see myself before God and realize even something of what my blessed Lord has done for me, I am ready to forgive anybody anything;”⁴⁰⁶ two, C. S. Lewis, a twentieth century Oxford scholar, whom Whitney uses to investigate the prospect of granting forgiveness to another, said: “Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea . . . until he has something to forgive;”⁴⁰⁷ and three, John Chrysostom, a fifth century pastor who was severely persecuted and exiled, whom Whitney uses to portray how maturing Christians should seek, extend, and love, forgiveness, said: “Nothing causes us to so nearly resemble God as the forgiveness of injuries.”⁴⁰⁸

Strategic Implementation of Spiritual Formation in the Life of the Community

The role of the pastor is rooted in the witness of God to the World. A New Testament church is a Great Commission church, being obedient to the call to be a witness: “Go ye therefore, and [make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”⁴⁰⁹ Hence, the main relationship in the life of the church toward the global community is to evangelize. But how is the local church to express its life and longing for God to those outside of a personal and spiritual relationship enjoyed by the community of faith?

Richard Averbeck demonstrates that “we become truly ‘spiritual’ only through the work of the Holy Spirit himself, who orchestrates our lives, our relationships, and our circumstances to

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 114, 115. Cf. Blanchard, comp., *Sifted Silver* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1995), 104.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 118. Cf. Blanchard, comp., *Gathered Gold*, 108.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 120. Cf. Blanchard, comp., *More Gathered Gold*, 105.

⁴⁰⁹ Scripture is from Matt 28:19, 20 (KJV); The main verb is μαθητεύω, meaning “to make disciples.”

accomplish this in, among, and through us.”⁴¹⁰ Hence, even our witness stems solely from the work of God within (and without) the life of the believer as well as the life of the local church. In Malachi, as well as in all of Scripture, God’s blessing, even His cursing, has a powerful affect upon the witness of the people of God to the world. Those who hear and see how the LORD moves and what the LORD does in laying the foundation for His people’s testimony and witness to the rest of the world, is a powerful truth toward sharing the name and nature of God.

For example, God’s cursing of Esau (i.e., Edom) promised to decimate their lands; and it was called “the border of wickedness” (Mal 1:4); yet, the LORD prophesied that His name will be “magnified” from the border of Israel. Could this be a messianic prophecy? If so, then God’s reaction is rooted in His sovereign choice to love Jacob, and hate Esau (Mal 1:2–3; cf. Num 24:17–19). Another example, stems from God’s rejection of the false and faithless the priests of Malachi’s day for their despising of God’s name (Mal 1:6) and desecrating God’s altar (Mal 1:7–10, 12), prophesying that His name will be “great” among the Gentiles and “great” among the heathen, who will offer a “pure offering” (Mal 1:11). Could this be a messianic prophecy? If so, then could it be that one does not have to be a literal Israelite for their sacrifices to be accepted and pleasing to the LORD, but simply worship Him in spirit and truth (cf. Jn 4:23). A final example, involves trusting in the faithfulness of God’s provision (Mal 3:10, “prove me now”). The result of their trusting in God’s benevolence reaps heavenly blessings; literally, God promises (to “open . . . the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be enough to receive it,” Mal 3:10, KJV). Could this be a messianic prophecy? If so, then this blessing reaches beyond a merely temporal blessing and speaks to an eschatological meaning of the “land,” where nations testify calling you “blessed” (i.e., “you” are those who have trusted in the LORD and proved that His word is true by faith, Mal 3:16–17, 18, 4:2 [3:20 Heb. text]).

⁴¹⁰ Averbek, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” 53.

Hence, the role of the pastor is to evangelize (“literally, to share the good news) as revealed the scripture, and experience in the life); and encourage this spiritual discipline within the life of the Christian and through the life of the Church in to the life of the larger and global community. There is hope in the book of Malachi. Despite the failure of their spiritual formation test (cf. Rom 3:1–3), God’s prophetic promises related to the people and land of Israel (cf. Jn 4:22), affects the Gentile, the heathen, and all nations (cf. Acts 17:23). They will participate in the works of God, as the righteous or the wicked (Mal 3:18), and may well become a part of the family of God (Mal 1:11).

SUMMARY

What is the role (i.e., responsibility) of a pastor? This section sought to show how a pastor could strategically and progressively put together and put into practice a biblical model of spiritual formation from the book of Malachi in three specific areas of the ministry of the local church: one, to personally example and encourage a lifestyle based upon the Word of God to the individual believer to pursue God and to live spiritually disciplined lives through biblical teaching and spiritual disciplines; two, by publicly expecting and equipping the worship of God within the corporate community of faith with biblical preaching and biblical teaching addressing the inward transformation of the human heart; three, toward a witness of God as the outpouring of heartfelt devotion and holy living within being commissioned to illustrate and fulfill God’s work of sanctification, by the evangelization of the global community at large through a faithful and biblical witness of the person and nature of God. It is the purpose of this section to explain in the thesis statement regarding the word “impact” and the phrase “implemented by a pastor.”

APPENDIX A

MACROSTRUCTURE OF MALACHI

The intention of Appendix A is to analyze the syntactical structure of Malachi to discuss its compositional unity. The focus of this appendix will be to discuss the inner-textual relationship of Mal 3:22–24 within its literary corpus. This will be based upon syntactic and semantic observations of the narrative speech situation in Malachi.

Masoretic Divisions of Malachi

The Masoretic paragraph notations¹ in the *BHS*² divides Malachi into seven major divisions: 1:1–13 closed; 1:14–2:12 open; 2:13–16 closed; 2:17–3:12 closed; 3:13–18 closed; 3:19–21 open; 3:22–24 ends book. The Masoretic notation for a closed paragraph is designated in the center margin within the Hebrew text by the letter *sāmek* (viz., ס). Likewise, the notation for an open paragraph is designated by the letter *pe* (viz., פ). In the former, the portion of the line following the last word of the text is left blank; in the latter, the termination of the paragraph is indicated by leaving only part of the line blank. However, the proposed syntactical structure of

¹ “The term Masorah is ordinarily used in modern biblical studies to refer to the body of marginal notes (i.e. Masoretic notes) which are transmitted with the text, either in manuscript or in a printed edition. However, this is the narrow sense of the word. In its broadest sense, Masorah refers to traditions and rules, passed down in Judaism for generations, which regulate all aspects of the copying and use of Bible manuscripts. The Masorah in this broad sense could be oral or written. Written Masorah is the collected body of information transmitted with the text of the Hebrew Bible. It includes everything transmitted with the consonantal text except the consonants themselves (even vowel and accent signs).” Quoted in Page H. Kelly, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998): 1.

² *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990).

Malachi offers nine grammatical structured divisions prominent in Malachi. *Contra* to the supplementary paragraph notations by the Masorets, the proposed chart does not imply how the text is to be read, but how the text is composed.

Syntactical Overview of Malachi 1:1—3:24

Chart 1: Syntactical Chart of Malachi

###	W	Clause Category	Reference	Type	VIN	Hebrew Text
1	0	NC	mal01:01a1	N	NAR	מִשָּׂא דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל
2	0	NC	mal01:01b1	N	NAR	בְּיַד מְלָאכִי
3	0	QATAL + X	mal01:02a1	V	DIS	אָהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם
4	0	QATAL + X	mal01:02a2	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה
5	W	QATAL	mal01:02a3	V	DIS	וְאִמְרָתָם
6	0	X + QATAL	mal01:02a4	V	DIS	בְּמִן אֶהְבֶּנּוּ
7	0	NC	mal01:02b1	N	DIS	הָלֹא־אֵחָשׂוּ עָשׂוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹב
8	0	NC	mal01:02b2	N	DIS	נֹאסֵי־יְהוָה
9	W	WAYYIQTOL	mal01:02b3	V	NAR	וְאָהַב אֶת־עֲשׂוֹב
10	W	X + QATAL	mal01:03a1	V	NAR	וְאֶת־עָשׂוֹ שְׂנֵאתִי
11	W	WAYYIQTOL	mal01:03b1	V	NAR	וְאֲשִׁים אֶת־הָרִיו שְׂמִמָּה וְאֶת־נֶעֱחֻלָּתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת מִדְּבָר כִּי־תֹאמַר אֲדֹם
12	0	X + YIQTOL	mal01:04a1	I	DIS	רִשְׁשָׁנוּ
13	0	QATAL	mal01:04a2	V	DIS	וְנָשׁוּב
14	W	YIQTOL	mal01:04a3	V	DIS	וְנִבְנֶה חֲרֻבוֹת
15	W	YIQTOL + X	mal01:04a4	V	DIS	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
16	0	X + QATAL	mal01:04a5	I	DIS	הָמָּה יִבְנוּ
17	0	X + YIQTOL	mal01:04a6	I	DIS	וְאֲנִי אֶהְרֹס
18	W	X + YIQTOL	mal01:04a7	I	DIS	וְקִרְאִי לָהֶם גְּבוּל רִשְׁעָה וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר־נָעַם יְהוָה עַד־עוֹלָם
19	W	QATAL	mal01:04b1	V	DIS	וְעֵינֵיכֶם תִּרְאֶינָה
20	W	X + YIQTOL	mal01:05a1	I	DIS	וְאֵתָם תֹּאמְרוּ
21	W	X + YIQTOL	mal01:05b1	I	DIS	יִגְדֵּל יְהוָה מַעַל לְגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל
22	0	YIQTOL + X	mal01:05b2	V	DIS	בֶּן יִכְבֵּד אָב
23	0	X + YIQTOL	mal01:06a1	I	DIS	וְעַבְדֵּד אֲלֹנִי
24	W	NC	mal01:06a2	N	DIS	וְאִם־אֵב אֲנִי אֵינִי כְבוֹדִי
25	W	NC	mal01:06b1	N	DIS	וְאִם־אֲדֹנִים אֲנִי אֵינִי מוֹרָאִי
26	W	NC	mal01:06b2	N	DIS	

27	0	QATAL + X	mal01:06b3	V	DIS	אמר יהנה צבאות לכם תכהנים בוני שמי ואמרתם
28	W	QATAL	mal01:06b4	V	DIS	במה בוינו את־שמיך
29	0	X + QATAL	mal01:06b5	I	DIS	מוגשים על־מזבחי לחם מגאל
30	0	NC	mal01:07a1	N	DIS	ואמרתם
31	W	QATAL	mal01:07a2	V	DIS	במה גאלנוך
32	0	X + QATAL	mal01:07a3	I	DIS	באמרכם שלחן יהנה נבנה הוא וכי־תגשון עור לזבח אין קע
33	0	NC	mal01:07b1	N	DIS	וכי תגישו פסח וחלה אין קע
34	W	X + YIQTOL	mal01:08a1	I	DIS	תקריבהו נא לפחתך
35	W	X + YIQTOL	mal01:08a2	I	DIS	הירצך
36	0	YAQOM + X	mal01:08b1	V	DIS	או הישא פניך
37	0	YIQTOL	mal01:08b2	V	DIS	אמר יהנה צבאות
38	0	X + YIQTOL	mal01:08b3	I	DIS	ועתה חלונא פניאל
39	0	QATAL + X	mal01:08b4	V	DIS	ויחננו
40	W	NC	mal01:09a1	N	DIS	מידכם היתה זאת הישא מכם פנים
41	W	YIQTOL	mal01:09a2	V	DIS	אמר יהנה צבאות
42	0	X + QATAL	mal01:09b1	I	DIS	מי גס־בכם
43	0	QATAL + X	mal01:09b2	V	DIS	ויסגר דלתים
44	0	NC	mal01:10a1	N	DIS	ולא־תאירו מזבחי חנם
45	W	YIQTOL + X	mal01:10a2	V	DIS	אינלי חפץ בכם
46	W	X + YIQTOL	mal01:10a3	I	DIS	אמר יהנה צבאות
47	0	NC	mal01:10b1	N	DIS	ומנחה לא־אֶרצה מידכם
48	0	QATAL + X	mal01:10b2	V	DIS	כי ממזרח־שמש
49	W	X + YIQTOL	mal01:10b3	I	DIS	ועד־מבוא גדול שמי בגוים
50	0	NC	mal01:11a1	N	DIS	ובכל־מקום מקטר מנש לשמי ומנחה
51	W	NC	mal01:11a2	N	DIS	טהורה
52	W	NC	mal01:11a3	N	DIS	כי־גדול שמי בגוים
53	0	NC	mal01:11b1	N	DIS	אמר יהנה צבאות
54	0	QATAL + X	mal01:11b2	V	DIS	ואתם מחללים אותו
55	W	NC	mal01:12a1	N	DIS	באמרכם שלחו אדני מגאל הוא וניבו נבנה אכלו
56	0	NC	mal01:12b1	N	DIS	ואמרתם
57	W	QATAL	mal01:13a1	V	DIS	הנה מתלאה
58	0	NC	mal01:13a2	N	DIS	והפחתם אותו
59	W	QATAL + X	mal01:13a3	V	DIS	אמר יהנה צבאות
60	0	QATAL + X	mal01:13a4	V	DIS	והבאתם גזול ואת־תפסח ואת־החולה
61	W	QATAL + X	mal01:13a5	V	DIS	והבאתם את־המנחה
62	W	QATAL + X	mal01:13a6	V	DIS	האֶרצה אותה מידכם
63	0	YIQTOL + X	mal01:13b1	V	DIS	אמר יהנה
64	0	QATAL + X	mal01:13b2	V	DIS	וארור נוכל
65	W	NC	mal01:14a1	N	DIS	ויש בעדרו נקר
66	W	NC	mal01:14a2	N	DIS	

67	W	NC	mal01:14a3	N	DIS	ונָהָר וְזָבִחַ מִשְׁחַת לֹאֲדָנִי
68	0	NC	mal01:14b1	N	DIS	כִּי מִלֶּךְ גָּדוֹל אָנִי
69	0	QATAL + X	mal01:14b2	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
70	W	NC	mal01:14b3	N	DIS	וְשְׁמִי נִזְרָא בְּגוֹיִם
71	W	NC	mal02:01a1	N	DIS	וְעַתָּה אֲלִיכֶם הַמִּצְנָה הַזֹּאת הַכֹּהֲנִים
72	0	X + YIQTOL	mal02:02a1	I	DIS	אֲסִילָא תִשְׁמְעוּ
73	W	X + YIQTOL	mal02:02a2	I	DIS	וְאֲסִילָא תִשְׁמְעוּ עַל־לֵב לְהַת כְּבוֹד לְשְׁמִי
74	0	QATAL + X	mal02:02a3	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
75	W	YIQTOL + X	mal02:02a4	V	DIS	וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי בְכֶם אֶת־הַמֶּאֱרָה
76	W	QATAL + X	mal02:02a5	V	DIS	וְאֶרְוִתִּי אֶת־בְּרוּכוֹתֵיכֶם
77	W	X + QATAL	mal02:02b1	I	DIS	וְגַם אֶרְוִתֶּיךָ
78	0	NC	mal02:02b2	N	DIS	כִּי אֲנִיכֶם שָׁמַיִם עַל־לֵב
79	0	NC	mal02:03a1	N	DIS	הַנְּנִי גַעַר לָכֶם אֶת־הַנֶּזֶרַע
80	W	QATAL + X	mal02:03a2	V	DIS	וְנִרְוִתִי פָרַשׁ עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם
81	0	NC	mal02:03a3	N	DIS	פָּרַשׁ חֲגִיכֶם
82	W	QATAL + X	mal02:03b1	V	DIS	וְנִשָּׂא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו
83	W	QATAL	mal02:04a1	V	DIS	וְיִדְעֻתְכֶם
84	0	X + QATAL	mal02:04a2	I	DIS	כִּי שִׁלַּחְתִּי אֲלִיכֶם אֶת הַמִּצְנָה הַזֹּאת
85	0	NC	mal02:04b1	N	DIS	לְהַיּוֹת בְּרִיתִי אֶת־לִוִּי
86	0	QATAL	mal02:04b2	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
87	0	X + QATAL	mal02:05a1	I	DIS	בְּרִיתִי הָיְתָה אִתּוֹ
88	0	NC	mal02:05a2	N	DIS	הַחַיִּים וְהַשְּׁלוֹם
89	W	WAYYIQTOL	mal02:05a3	V	NAR	וְאֶתְנַסְּלוּ מוֹרָא
90	W	WAYYIQTOL	mal02:05a4	V	NAR	נִיִּירָאִי
91	W	X + QATAL	mal02:05b1	I	NAR	וּמִפְנֵי שְׁמִי נִחַת הוּא
92	0	X + QATAL	mal02:06a1	I	DIS	הַזֹּכֶר אֶמֶת הָיְתָה בְּפִיהוּ
93	W	X + QATAL	mal02:06a2	I	NAR	וְעוֹלָה לֹא־נִמְצָא בְּשִׁפְתָיו
94	0	X + QATAL	mal02:06b1	I	DIS	בְּשִׁלוֹם וּבְמִישׁוֹר הָלַךְ אִתִּי
95	W	X + QATAL	mal02:06b2	I	NAR	וְרַבִּים הָשִׁיב מַעֲוֹן
96	0	X + YIQTOL	mal02:07a1	I	NAR	כִּי־שִׁפְתִי כָהֵן וְשִׁמְרוּ־דַעַת
97	W	X + YIQTOL	mal02:07a2	I	NAR	וְהַזֹּכֶר יִבְקֶשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ
98	0	NC	mal02:07b1	N	NAR	כִּי מִלֶּאֲךָ יִהְיֶה־צְבָאוֹת הוּא
99	W	X + QATAL	mal02:08a1	I	NAR	וְאַתֶּם סִתְּתֶם מִן־הַדָּרֶךְ
100	0	QATAL + X	mal02:08a2	V	NAR	הַכְּשִׁלְתֶּם רַבִּים בַּהֲזָרָה
101	0	QATAL + X	mal02:08b1	V	NAR	שִׁתְּתֶם בְּרִית הַלֵּוִי
102	0	QATAL + X	mal02:08b2	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
103	W	X + QATAL	mal02:09a1	I	DIS	וְגַם־אֲנִי נִתַּחֲתִי אֶתְכֶם גְּבוּיִם
104	W	NC	mal02:09a2	N	DIS	וּשְׁפִלִים לְכַל־הָעָם
105	0	NC	mal02:09b1	N	DIS	כִּפִּי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִיכֶם שֹׁמְרִים אֶת־דָּרְכִי
106	W	NC	mal02:09b2	N	DIS	וְנִשְׂאִים פָּנִים בַּהֲזָרָה
107	0	NC	mal02:10a1	N	DIS	הַלּוֹא אָב אֶחָד לְכֻלִּי
108	0	NC	mal02:10a2	N	DIS	הַלּוֹא אֵל אֶחָד בְּרָאֲנִי
109	0	NC	mal02:10b1	N	DIS	מִדּוּעַ נִבְגַּד אִישׁ בְּאֶחָיו לְחַלֵּל בְּרִית אֲבֹתֵינוּ
110	0	QATAL + X	mal02:11a1	V	DIS	בְּגִדָה יִהְיֶה
111	W	X + QATAL	mal02:11a2	I	DIS	וְתוֹעֵבָה נַעֲשֶׂתָה בִּישְׂרָאֵל וּבִירוּשָׁלַם

112	0	X + QATAL	mal02:11b1	I	DIS	כִּי חָלַל יְהוּדָה קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה
113	0	X + QATAL	mal02:11b2	I	DIS	אֲשֶׁר אָהָב
114	W	QATAL + X	mal02:11b3	V	DIS	וּבָעַל בַּת־אֵל גֹּכֵר
115	0	YIQTOL + X	mal02:12a1	V	DIS	יָכַרְתָּ יְהוָה לְאִישׁ
116	0	X + YIQTOL	mal02:12a2	I	DIS	אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה עִיר
117	W	NC	mal02:12b1	N	DIS	וְעָנָה מֵאֲחֵלֵי יַעֲקֹב
118	W	NC	mal02:12b2	N	DIS	וּמְגִישׁ מִנְחָה לַיהוָה צִבְאוֹת
119	W	NC	mal02:13a1	N	DIS	וְזֹאת שְׁנִית
120	0	X + YIQTOL	mal02:13a2	I	DIS	תַּעֲשׂוּ כִסּוֹת הַמֶּעָה אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה בְּכִי וְאִנָּקָה
121	0	NC	mal02:13b1	N	DIS	מֵאִין עוֹד פְּנוֹת אֶל־הַמִּנְחָה
122	W	NC	mal02:13b2	N	DIS	וְלִקְחַתָּ רָצוֹן מִיָּדָם
123	W	QATAL	mal02:14a1	V	DIS	וְאִמְרָתָם
124	0	NC	mal02:14a2	N	DIS	עַל־מָה
125	0	X + QATAL	mal02:14b1	I	DIS	עַל כִּי־יִהְיֶה הַעִיד בִּינְךָ וּבֵין אִשְׁתִּי נְעוּרֶיךָ
126	0	NC	mal02:14b2	N	DIS	אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה בְּגִדְתָּהּ בָּהּ
127	W	NC	mal02:14b3	N	DIS	וְהָיָא חֲבֵרְתֶּךָ
128	W	NC	mal02:14b4	N	DIS	וְאִשְׁתִּי בְרִיתֶךָ
129	W	X + QATAL	mal02:15a1	I	DIS	וְלֹא־אֶחָד
130	0	NC	mal02:15a2	N	DIS	עָשָׂה וּשְׂאֵר רוּחַ לֹ
131	W	NC	mal02:15a3	N	DIS	וּמָה הָאֶחָד מִבְּקֵשׁ נֹרַע אֱלֹהִים
132	W	QATAL + X	mal02:15b1	V	DIS	וּנְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּרוּחָם
133	W	NC	mal02:15b2	N	DIS	וּבִאֲשֶׁת נְעוּרֶיךָ
134	0	X + YIQTOL	mal02:15b3	I	DIS	אֶל־יָבֹגֵד
135	0	X + QATAL	mal02:16a1	I	DIS	כִּי־שָׁנָא שְׁלַח
136	0	QATAL + X	mal02:16a2	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
137	W	QATAL + X	mal02:16b1	V	DIS	וְכִסָּה חֶמֶס עַל־לְבוּשׁוֹ
138	0	QATAL + X	mal02:16b2	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צִבְאוֹת
139	W	QATAL + X	mal02:16b3	V	DIS	וּנְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּרוּחָם
140	W	X + YIQTOL	mal02:16b4	I	DIS	וְלֹא תִבְגְּדוּ
141	0	QATAL + X	mal02:17a1	V	DIS	הוֹנֵעֲתָם יְהוָה בְּדַבְרֵיכֶם
142	W	QATAL	mal02:17a2	V	DIS	וְאִמְרָתָם
143	0	X + QATAL	mal02:17a3	I	DIS	בְּמָה הוֹנֵעֲנוּ
144	0	NC	mal02:17b1	N	DIS	בְּאִמְרָתָם כִּלְעֵשָׂה רָע
145	0	QATAL + X	mal02:17b2	V	DIS	טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
146	W	X + QATAL	mal02:17b3	I	DIS	וּבָהֶם הוּא חֶפֶץ
147	0	NC	mal02:17b4	N	DIS	אוֹ אֵיהֶם אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּט
148	0	NC	mal03:01a1	N	DIS	הִנְנִי שְׁלַח מַלְאָכִי
149	W	QATAL + X	mal03:01a2	V	DIS	וּפְנֹח־דֶּרֶךְ לִפְנֵי
150	W	X + QATAL	mal03:01a3	I	DIS	וּפְתָאֵם יְבוֹא אֶל־חֵיקְלוֹ
151	0	NC	mal03:01b1	N	DIS	הָאָדוֹן אֲשֶׁר־אֲתָם מִבְּקָשִׁים
152	W	NC	mal03:01b2	N	DIS	וּמִלְאָד תִּבְרִית אֲשֶׁר־אֲתָם תַּפְצִים
153	0	X + QATAL	mal03:01b3	I	DIS	הַנְּהַבָּא
154	0	QATAL + X	mal03:01b4	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צִבְאוֹת
155	W	NC	mal03:02a1	N	DIS	וּמִי מְכַלְכֵּל אֶת־יוֹם בּוֹאוֹ
156	W	NC	mal03:02a2	N	DIS	וּמִי הַעֲמִיד בְּהִרְאוֹתָיו

157	0	NC	mal03:02b1	N	DIS	כִּי־הוּא כָאֵשׁ מִצֶּרֶף
158	W	NC	mal03:02b2	N	DIS	וּכְבֵּרִית מִכִּבְּסִים
159	W	QATAL + X	mal03:03a1	V	DIS	וַיָּשֶׁב מִצֶּרֶף וּמִטָּהֶר כֶּסֶף
160	W	QATAL + X	mal03:03a2	V	DIS	וְטָהַר אֶת־בְּנֵי־לֵוִי
161	W	QATAL + X	mal03:03a3	V	DIS	וְזָקַק אֹתָם בְּנֹהֵב וּכְכֹסֶף
162	W	QATAL + X	mal03:03b1	V	DIS	וְהָיוּ לַיהוָה מִגִּישֵׁי מִנְחָה בַּצִּדְקָה
163	W	QATAL + X	mal03:04a1	V	DIS	וְעָרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם
164	0	NC	mal03:04b1	N	DIS	כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים קִדְמָנוּת
165	W	QATAL + X	mal03:05a1	V	DIS	וְקִרְבָּתִי אֵלֵיכֶם לְמִשְׁפָּט
166	W	QATAL + X	mal03:05a2	V	DIS	וְהָיִיתִי עִד מִמֶּהֶר
167	0	NC	mal03:05a3	N	DIS	בְּמִכְשָׁפִים וּבְמִנְאָפִים וּבְנִשְׁבָּעִים לְשִׁקֵּר
168	W	NC	mal03:05b1	N	DIS	וּבַעֲשָׂקִי שְׂכָר־שְׂכִיר אֶלְמָנָה וְיָתוֹם וּמִטִּיגֵר
169	W	X + QATAL	mal03:05b2	I	DIS	וְלֹא יִרְאוּנִי
170	0	QATAL + X	mal03:05b3	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
171	0	X + QATAL	mal03:06a1	I	DIS	כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שֵׁנִיתִי
172	W	X + QATAL	mal03:06b1	I	DIS	וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי־עֵלֶב לֹא כָלִיתֶם
173	0	NC	mal03:07a1	N	DIS	לְמִימֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם
174	0	QATAL + X	mal03:07a2	V	DIS	סָרְתֶם מִחֶקְךָ
175	W	X + QATAL	mal03:07a3	I	DIS	וְלֹא שָׁמַרְתֶּם
176	0	QETOL + X	mal03:07a4	V	DIS	שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי
177	W	YIQTOL + X	mal03:07a5	V	DIS	וְאֲשׁוּבָה אֵלֵיכֶם
178	0	QATAL + X	mal03:07a6	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
179	W	QATAL	mal03:07b1	V	DIS	וְאַמְרָתֶם
180	0	X + YIQTOL	mal03:07b2	I	DIS	בְּמִלָּה נָשׁוּבָה
181	0	YIQTOL + X	mal03:08a1	V	DIS	חִיקְבַּע אֶדָם אֱלֹהִים
182	0	NC	mal03:08a2	N	DIS	כִּי אַתֶּם קֹבְעִים אֹתִי
183	W	QATAL	mal03:08a3	V	DIS	וְאַמְרָתֶם
184	0	X + QATAL	mal03:08a4	I	DIS	בְּמִלָּה קִבְּעִנוּךְ
185	0	NC	mal03:08b1	N	DIS	הַמַּעֲשֶׂה וְהַתְרוּמָה
186	0	NC	mal03:09a1	N	DIS	בְּמִאֲרָה אַתֶּם נֹאֲרִים
187	W	NC	mal03:09a2	N	DIS	וְאֹתִי אַתֶּם קֹבְעִים
188	0	NC	mal03:09b1	N	DIS	הַגּוֹי כָּלֹו
189	0	QETOL + X	mal03:10a1	V	DIS	הָבִיאוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשֶׂה אֶל־בֵּית הָאוֹצֵר
190	W	YIQTOL + X	mal03:10a2	V	DIS	וַיְהִי טָרֶף בְּבֵיתִי
191	W	QETOL + X	mal03:10a3	V	DIS	וּבְחִנוּנֵי נָא בָּזֹאת
192	0	QATAL + X	mal03:10a4	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
193	0	X + YIQTOL	mal03:10b1	I	DIS	אִם־לֹא אֶפְתַּח לָכֶם אֶת־אֲרָבוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם
194	W	QATAL + X	mal03:10b2	V	DIS	וְהִרִיקְתִּי לָכֶם בִּרְקָה עַד־בְּלִי־דִי
195	W	QATAL + X	mal03:11a1	V	DIS	וְנִעַרְתִּי לָכֶם בְּאֶכֶל
196	W	X + YIQTOL	mal03:11a2	I	DIS	וְלֹא־יִשְׁחַת לָכֶם אֶת־פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה
197	W	X + YIQTOL	mal03:11b1	I	DIS	וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּח לָכֶם הַגֶּפֶן בַּשָּׂדֶה
198	0	QATAL + X	mal03:11b2	V	DIS	אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
199	W	QATAL + X	mal03:12a1	V	DIS	וְאֲשֶׁרוּ אֹתְכֶם כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם
200	0	X + YIQTOL	mal03:12b1	I	DIS	כִּי־תִהְיוּ אַתֶּם אֶרֶץ חֶפְץ

201	0	QATAL + X	mal03:12b2	V	DIS	אמר יהוה צבאות
202	0	QATAL + X	mal03:13a1	V	DIS	חזקו עלי דבריכם
203	0	QATAL + X	mal03:13a2	V	DIS	אמר יהוה
204	W	QATAL	mal03:13b1	V	DIS	ואמרתם
205	0	X + QATAL	mal03:13b2	I	DIS	מהנדברנו עליך
206	0	QATAL	mal03:14a1	V	DIS	אמרתם
207	0	NC	mal03:14a2	N	DIS	שוא עבד אלהים ומהבצע
208	0	X + QATAL	mal03:14b1	I	DIS	כי שמרנו משמרתו
209	W	X + QATAL	mal03:14b2	I	DIS	וכי הלכנו קדונית מפני יהוה צבאות
210	W	NC	mal03:15a1	N	DIS	ועתה אנחנו מאשרים נדים
211	0	X + QATAL	mal03:15b1	I	DIS	גסנבנו עשי רשעה
212	0	X + QATAL	mal03:15b2	I	DIS	גם בקנו אלהים
213	W	WAYYIQTOL	mal03:15b3	V	NAR	ויקלטו
214	0	X + QATAL	mal03:16a1	I	DIS	אז נדברו יראי יהוה איש אתדעהו
215	W	WAYYIQTOL	mal03:16b1	V	NAR	ויקשב יהוה
216	W	WAYYIQTOL	mal03:16b2	V	NAR	וישמע
217	W	WAYYIQTOL	mal03:16b3	V	NAR	ויכתב ספר זכרון לפניו ליראי יהוה וילחשבי שמו
218	W	QATAL + X	mal03:17a1	V	NAR	והיו לי
219	0	QATAL + X	mal03:17a2	V	DIS	אמר יהוה צבאות ליום אשר אני עשה סגלה
220	W	QATAL + X	mal03:17b1	V	DIS	וחמלתי עליהם
221	0	X + YIQTOL	mal03:17b2	I	DIS	כאשר יחמל איש עלבנו העבד את
222	W	QATAL	mal03:18a1	V	DIS	ושבתם
223	W	QATAL + X	mal03:18a2	V	DIS	וראתם בין צדיק לרשע
224	0	NC	mal03:18b1	N	DIS	בין עבד אלהים לאשר לא עבדו
225	0	NC	mal03:19a1	N	DIS	כידונה היום בא בער פתגור
226	W	QATAL + X	mal03:19b1	V	DIS	והיו כל־נדים וכל־עשה רשעה קש
227	W	QATAL + X	mal03:19b2	V	DIS	ולקט אתם היום הבא
228	0	QATAL + X	mal03:19b3	V	DIS	אמר יהוה צבאות
229	0	X + YIQTOL	mal03:19b4	I	DIS	אשר לא־עזב להם שרש וענף
230	W	QATAL + X	mal03:20a1	V	DIS	ונרחק לכם יראי שמי שמוש צדקה ומרפא בכנפיה
231	W	QATAL	mal03:20b1	V	DIS	ויצאתם
232	W	QATAL + X	mal03:20b2	V	DIS	ופשתם כעגלי מרבק
233	W	QATAL + X	mal03:21a1	V	DIS	ועסותם רשעים
234	0	X + YIQTOL	mal03:21a2	I	DIS	כידויו אפר תחת כפות רגליכם
235	0	NC	mal03:21b1	N	DIS	ביום אשר אני עשה
236	0	QATAL + X	mal03:21b2	V	DIS	אמר יהוה צבאות
237	0	QETOL + X	mal03:22a1	V	DIS	זכרו תורת משה עבדי
238	0	X + QATAL	mal03:22b1	I	DIS	אשר צויתי אותו בחרב על־כל־ישראל חקים ומשפטים
239	0	NC	mal03:23a1	N	DIS	הנה אנכי שלח לכם את אליה הנביא
240	0	NC	mal03:23b1	N	DIS	לפני בוא יום יהוה הגדול והנורא
241	W	QATAL + X	mal03:24a1	V	DIS	והשיב לב־אבות על־בנים ולב בנים על־אבותם
242	0	X + YIQTOL	mal03:24b1	I	DIS	פן־אבוא
243	W	QATAL + X	mal03:24b2	V	DIS	והפיתי את־הארץ חרם

Syntactical Analysis Explained

The proposed syntactical chart of Malachi has seven vertical columns with two-hundred and forty-three horizontal rows containing linguistic and grammatical observations concerning the narrative of Malachi.³ This section primarily seeks to explain the fundamental categories listed in the syntactical chart. In addition, the relationship between form and function of the syntax will be a thoroughgoing theme.

The first column, itemizes the sequential clause number identified in the text (i.e., 1...243). Therefore, the syntactical information about a clause⁴ can be easily viewed systematically according to its sequential enumeration. However, all clauses will be identified by their reference in the syntactical analysis.

The second column observes the initial presence or absence of a clause marked by the prefixed *wāw* (viz., ו) at the beginning of a clause. This section is marked “W” to indicate whether the *wāw* is present at the initial position of a clause. In contrast, this section is marked “0” to indicate that the *wāw* is not at the initial position of a clause. Kautzsch elucidates the importance of the function of the *wāw copulativum* (viz., ו); which serves as a connector, between sentences, clauses, and words, “to express emphasis.”⁵ In addition, Sailhamer summarizes, “It has long been recognized that the presence or absence of a WAW with a clause

³ This analysis of the narrative within Malachi is largely dependent upon the works of Christo H.J. van der Merwe, “An Overview of Hebrew Narrative Syntax,” in *Narrative Syntax on the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ellen van Wouds (Boston/Leiden: Brill Academic, 2002): 1–20; Eep Talstra, “Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew: The Viewpoint of Wolfgang Schneider,” in *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 5 (1992): 269–297; John H. Sailhamer, “A Database Approach to the Analysis of Hebrew Narrative,” in *MAARAV* 5–6 (1990): 319–335.

⁴ See discussion in note 14 (below).

⁵ E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910): §154.

plays an important role in the function of a clause at higher levels.”⁶ Although the proposed syntactical chart primarily seeks to identify the form of a clause, its functionality within a text is dependent upon the sum of its linguistic characteristics in relation to other clauses. Hence, every clause in Malachi is marked by the feature “W + ...” or “0 + ...” to track the initial presence or absence of the *wāw* plus (viz., +) any linguistic category that follows (e.g., W + QATAL, 0 + QATAL). However, there is one exception to this categorization—the case of WAYYIQTOL; which by definition already has the *wāw* assigned and presupposes any linguistic element that might follow it. Chart 2 shows clauses marked with or without the prefixed *wāw*.

Chart 2: Occurrences and Frequency of the presence or absence of the WAW

W/0	Occurrences	Frequency
W	116	47.74%
0	127	52.26%
sum	243	100.00%

The third column identifies the linguistic features of a clause. This section is mainly concerned with the linguistic form standing at the head of a clause. There are three conditions to consider in categorizing the form of a clause. One, if the linguistic form standing at the head of a clause is the verbal predicate, then it is marked by one of the following verbal predicate

⁶ Sailhamer, “A Database Approach to the Analysis of Hebrew Narrative,” in *MAARAV*, 321.

categories: namely, WAYYIQTOL,⁷ YIQTOL,⁸ QATAL,⁹ YAQOM,¹⁰ or QETOL.¹¹ Two, if the initial position is not a verbal predicate, then it is either marked “X + ...” (e.g., X + QATAL) indicating the predicate follows after the initial linguistic element, or it is marked “NC” indicating that it is a nominal clause.¹² Last, if any linguistic element follows the predicate standing at the head of a clause, then it is marked “... + X” (e.g., QATAL + X). Chart 3 (below) each clause category indicating the presence or absence of the prefix *wāw*.

Chart 3: Clause Categories: Occurrences and Frequency and the WAW Prefix

Clause Category	Occurrences	Frequency	W	0
NC	74	30.45%	29	45
QATAL	16	6.58%	13	3
QATAL + X	62	25.51%	31	31
QETOL + X	4	1.65%	1	3
WAYYIQTOL	8	3.29%	8	0
X + QATAL	38	15.64%	15	23
X + YIQTOL	28	11.52%	12	16
YAQOM + X	1	0.41%	0	1

⁷ Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammatik des Biblischen Hebräisch: ein Lehrbuch* (München: Claudius, 2001): 48.2, says *Haupttempus in erzählenden Texten ist das Imperfectum consecutivum*. Trans., “the chief tense in a narrative text is the [WAYYIQTOL].” I.e., *GKC*, §§111–112.

⁸ The YIQTOL is the imperfect tense noted by its prefixed verbal form denoting discourse within the narrative text. Schneider says, *Das Imperfekt hat die Funktion, die Rede als besprechend zu charakterisieren, als die Sprechsituation bezogen, den Hörer unmittelbar betreffend*; trans., “The Imperfect has the function, to characterize speech as discourse, when in relation to the speech situation, the hearer is immediately affected.” *Grammatik*, 48.3. I.e., *GKC*, §107.

⁹ The QATAL is the perfect tense noted by its suffixed verbal form denoting a background action in discourse within the narrative text. Schneider says, *Das Perfect hat in besprechenden Texten (rück-)perspektivische Funktion: Der Sprecher bezieht sich zurück auf Fakten der Vergangenheit, um sie in die Sprechsituation einzubeziehen*; trans., “The Perfect has a back-perspective function in discourse texts: the speaker himself refers back to factual knowledge of the past, in order to include it into the speech situation. *Grammatik*, 48.3. I.e., *GKC*, §106.

¹⁰ The YAQOM includes the volitional moods, i.e., Jussive (third person) and Cohortative (first person). Ibid. §§48, 108–9.

¹¹ The QETOL is second person volitional mood, i.e., Imperative. Ibid. §§46, 110.

¹² *Contra* to *GKC*, §140, which assumes that every clause that begins with a subject is a noun clause and every clause that begins with a finite verb is a verbal clause. See also (below) note 16.

YIQTOL	3	1.23%	2	1
YIQTOL + X	9	3.70%	5	4
Sum	243	100.00%		

The fourth column identifies the reference of a clause in regards to its placement in book, chapter, verse, and orientation to the ‘*athnach* (viz.,)—the primary Masoretic disjunctive accent which separates a verse into two sections; but not always (i.e., Mal 2:1). Ellis R. Brotzman further explains the role of Masoretic accents in the *BHS* as “a system of written symbols to record the accentual character of the Hebrew Text. These accent marks serve two purposes in Hebrew: they usually mark the accented (stressed) syllable in the words of the text, and they also assist in the reading and understanding of the text.”¹³ Conversely, the function of the ‘*athnach* in this syntactical analysis is primarily its juxtaposition within the verse for a consistent cataloging stratagem of the text. For example, the syntactical reference mal01:01a1 identifies the first clause in Malachi 1:1 before the ‘*athnach*; whereas, mal01:01b1 identifies the first clause in Malachi 1:1 after the ‘*athnach*. Identifying the ‘*athnach* in this way aids in a closer look at the compositional strategy by observing how one clause is relating to clauses that are either preceding or subsequent in the text. This level of analysis should illustrate functionality based upon the written text alone; that is, the relationship of one clause to another.

The fifth column represents three clause types: namely, Verbal, Inverted Verbal, and Nominal. Schneider comments on the importance of clause analysis saying, “For purpose of grammatical analysis we break up texts into classes of smaller units, which we name ‘the clause.’ In this grammar we do not seek to define, what a clause is. We know intuitively what a clause is,

¹³ Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Michigan: Baker Books, 1996): 51. I.e., *GKC*, §15h.

and this suffices, on making practical grammatical statements.”¹⁴ Hence, this section is mainly concerned with the linguistic function of a clause as verbal or nominal. There are three conditions considered in categorizing the clause type.¹⁵ One, if a verbal predicate (viz., WAYYIQTOL, YIQTOL, QATAL, YAQOM, or QETOL) is at the head of a clause, then it is marked “V” indicating it is a verbal clause. Two, if the head of the clause has a linguistic element and a verbal predicate immediately follows, then it is marked “I” indicating it is an inverted verbal clause (e.g., X + verbal predicate). Last, if there is not a verbal predicate within the clause, then it is marked “N” indicating it is a nominal clause. This level of analysis functionality between clause types in two aspects: if verbal, then there is movement in the speech situation because there is verbal activity; if nominal, then there is non-movement because there is no verbal activity. Chart 4 (below) illustrates the percentage of the occurrences and frequency of the clause types in Malachi.

Chart 4: Occurrences and Frequency of Clause Types in Malachi

Clause Type (VIN)	Occurrences	Frequency
Verbal	105	43.21%
Inverted Verbal	64	26.34%

¹⁴ Translated from *Zur grammatischen Analyse pflegen wir Texte in kleinere Einheiten aufzugliedern, die wir „Sätze“ nennen. In dieser Grammatik wird nicht zu definieren versucht, was ein Satz ist. Wir wissen intuitive, was ein Satz ist, und dies genügt, um grammatisch praktikable Aussagen zu machen. Grammatik, 44.1.*

¹⁵ Schneider only holds two classifications; viz., *Veralsätze* (verbal clause) and *Nominalsätze* (nominal clause). *Ebenfalls zum Hintergrund des Erzählens gehören Verbalsätze die vor dem Verb nur eine Konjunktion (אם, אֲשֶׁר, כִּי) order לא haben. Sie sind „Nebensätze“ und haben mit den nominalen Sätzen gemeinsam, dass sie nicht mit der finiten Verbform beginnen. Zum Tempus solchen Sätzen; trans., “Likewise, concerning the background of the narrative belonging to the verbal clause, that has only one conjunction (אם, אֲשֶׁר, כִּי) or לא in front of the verb. They are ‘subordinate clauses’ and have with the nominal clause commonality, because they do not begin with the finite verb form.” Ibid. 44.2. In addition, He does not view the inverted clause as a verbal clause. Andere Grammatiken nennen solche Sätze auch invertierte Verbalsätze. Es ist aber praktisch, Satzformen mit einem gemeinsamen Terminus zu benennen, wenn sie in den Texten im Wesentlichen gleiche Funktionen haben; trans., “Other Grammars name such clauses as ‘inverted verbal clauses.’ However, it is practical, to call clause forms by one common term, if they have essentially the same function in the text.” Ibid., 44.2, note 1. Schneider is *contra* to other grammarians at this point. “There is a consensus enough among grammarians that a third type of Hebrew clause does exist.” Sailhamer, “Database,” 323, note 24.*

Nominal	74	30.45%
sum	243	100.00%

The sixth column characterizes the speech situation within a narrative text as either narrative or discursive according to the form of the clause. “In narrative the verbal clause is formed with the emphasis of the events in the foreground of the narrative. They are the primary clauses within the narrative at the head, which tends towards the development of chains,” says Schneider.¹⁶ He also adds that in narrative “[t]he nominal clauses ([a nominal clause] and [a compound nominal clause]) contain prerequisites, descriptions, conditions, and gives off notices over acting persons like the background of the narrative. They interrupt the narrative chain and provide for context and structure.”¹⁷ Hence, in this section the chain of conversation within the narrative describes a clause, based upon its syntactical form and functionality within the speech situation as “NAR” indicating narration; else “DIS” indicating discourse. There are five considerations in classifying a clause as either narrative or discourse.

One, WAYYIQTOL is the primary tense of narrative speech (e.g., a speaker narrates to a listener about past events). There are only eight occurrences of WAYYIQTOL in Malachi: mal01:02b3 (וַאֲזַהַב); mal01:03b1 (וַאֲשִׁים); mal02:05a3 (וַאֲזַהַב); mal02:05a4; (וַיִּרְאֶי); mal03:15b3 (וַיִּמְלֹט); mal03:16b1 (וַיִּקְשֹׁב); mal03:16b2 (וַיִּשְׁמַע); mal03:16b3 (וַיִּכְתֹּב).¹⁸ Even though WAYYIQTOL is the main tense in narration, it only occurs 3.29% of the time compared to other

¹⁶ Translated from *In Erzählungen bilden die Verbalsätze mit der Betonung des Vorgangs den Vordergrund des Erzählens. Es sind hauptsächlich Sätze mit einer Narrativform an der Spitze, die zur Bildung von Ketten tendieren. Grammatik, 44.2.*

¹⁷ Translated from *Die Nominalsätze (NS und ZNS) enthalten Voraussetzungen, Beschreibungen, Zustände, Notizen über handelnde Personen und geben so den Hintergrund des Erzählens ab. Sie unterbrechen die Narrativ-Kettin und sorgen für Rahmen und Gliederung. Ibid.*

¹⁸ And I love... And I set... And I gave them... And he feared me... And they escaped... And he gave attention... And he heard... And it was written.

clause forms.¹⁹ One might expect the speech situation to be primarily direct speech throughout the text.

Two, YIQTOL is the primary tense of dialogue (e.g., a speaker directly converses with a listener who responds); likewise, volitional moods are discursive by definition. Collectively, these tenses make up 17.28% of the discourse in the text.²⁰ Since the two primary tenses have such a small showing in the text, the subordinate clauses must play an important part within the composition of the text.

Three, QATAL and nominal clauses are subordinate to the main flow of the primary tenses, because they interrupt the flow of conversation between a narrator or a speaker to reference events that may or may not have been already noted in the text. For example, QATAL looks to the past in retrospect,²¹ the nominal clause points to background, and the *w³qatal* (viz., *wāw consecutive* + QATAL) looks to the future in prospect.²² Hence, the subordinate clauses may be marked either “NAR” or “DIS” based upon their placement within the speech situation.

Four, all conversations are in the present, but not always in the present tense. Reason dictates having, in the present, a conversation yesterday or tomorrow is impossible. For example, although the text engages the reader in his present, verb tense allows the reader to know whether the speech situation is referencing past, present, or future circumstances. Hence, the location of

¹⁹ I.e., Chart 4 (above).

²⁰ Ibid. I.e., YIQTOL (1.23%), YIQTOL + X (3.70%), X + YIQTAL (11.52%), YAQOM + X (3.70%), and QETOL (1.65%). Also a volitional mood, imperatives (eight of them) were tagged as nominal clauses because linguistically they are defined as “independent nouns” that can emphasize a verbal idea, *GKC*, 45a. They occur in Malachi at mal01:07b1; mal01:12b1; mal02:02a2; mal02:04b1; mal02:10b1; mal02:13b1; mal02:13b2.

²¹ Sailhamer describes the functionality of the QATAL in the narrative strategy as “back-reference” in both narrative and discourse. As well giving “background” information to the listener, QATAL is used to “backtrack” previously states events, and also gives the listener “flashbacks” not previously noted in the text. This was first brought to my attention by Dr. Sailhamer in Seminar in Continuing Old Testament Research Class at SEBTS Fall 2002.

²² *GKC*, §49h.

the verb form in a clause (viz., its “position in the sentence”) and function of the verb form (viz., its “position in the text”) determines at what point in time the primary and subordinate tenses are being used within the speech situation.²³ Alviero Niccacci states “that the verb forms in a narrative constitute the main clue to the author’s perspective in presenting his information.”²⁴ Nevertheless, this category does not make any judgments about the text, but is a tool in observing the syntax driving the speech situation within the main narrative chain. Niccacci adds “[b]y itself, syntax can only signal a break; it cannot signal the textual significance of that break.”²⁵ Hence, syntactical observations must be descriptive in nature, rather than prescriptive. In this way the written text can be described compositionally to its intended meaning, without any prescribed agenda imposed upon it. Eep Talstra comments that the importance of Schneider’s grammatical approach in analyzing the Hebrew Biblical Text as “from ‘form’ to ‘function’ rather than from ‘function’ to ‘form’ will better help one to understand text syntax.”²⁶ Last, transitions occur back and forth between narration and discourse within the speech situation. On the one hand, it is true that Schneider’s syntactical analysis based upon the grammar of a text is better applied to “narrative prose” compositions, because when applied to “oratory compositions” (e.g., Malachi) there are very few narrative sections to analyze a narrative to discourse and vice-versa phenomena due to the prominence of discursive texts and lack of narrative sections. On the other hand, there are several examples of *Tempus-Übergänge*

²³ Alviero Niccacci, “Analysis of Biblical Narrative,” in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed., Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994): 176. In reference to “position in sentence” he confesses that he is unable to define simply the meaning of a Hebrew sentence, but this seems consistent with the debate among grammarians, 180. For example, *GKC* describes a sentence as a “noun-clause,” §140a; a “verbal clause,” §140b, a compound sentence or a “full clause,” §140d; in addition, in the remarks in section §140e, the above definitions of a Hebrew sentence are first “rejected” (viz., §140a, b, d) and then said to be “relatively correct”.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁶ Talstra, “Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew,” 284.

or “shift of tenses”²⁷ observed in the syntax in Malachi: namely, from narrative to dialogue,²⁸ unusual tenses in narration,²⁹ and narrative in discourse context. Concerning the first, the shift from narrative to dialogue requires a change in the *Sprechhaltung* or “speaker’s orientation.”³⁰ From narrative to dialogue, this can occur by a simple change in tenses WAYYIQTOL to YIQTOL, or a change in person, number, or gender, in the verbal form which also signals a disruption in narrative to dialogue, or a use of a quotation verb (viz., אָמַר). Malachi has one syntactical example that satisfies all the aforementioned conditions. In mal01:04a1 the tense changes from a narrative chain to discourse,³¹ the person change is The LORD, The LORD, The

²⁷ Ibid., 282. Translation of Schneider’s term *Tempus-Übergänge* by Talstra. Ibid., 280. Schneider gives five categories: narrative dialogue, unusual tenses in narration, discourse narration, narrative in discourse context, and the imperative as tense. *Grammatik*, 48.4–8

²⁸ Schneider’s discussion of narrative dialogue involves two significant issues:

(1) The transition from narrative to dialogue: *Ein Wechsel zwischen den Haupttempora Imperfectum consecutivum und Imperfectum hat innerhalb eines und desselben Textes besondere Bedeutung: Er signalisiert den Wechsel der Sprechhaltung und damit in der Regel den Übergang zwischen der Erzählung des Erzählers und der Rede der erzählten Figuren.* Trans., “A change between the main tense [WAYYIQTOL] and [YIQTOL] has within the one and the same text a special meaning: It signals the change of the speaker’s style and with it as the rule the transition between the narration and the narrator and the speech of the narrated figures.” *Grammatik*, 48.4;

(2) Tense or person change: *Der Übergang von der Erzählung zum Dialog ist markiert durch Tempuswechsel, durch Personwechsel (1. und 2. statt 3. Person) und durch ein Verb für „sagen“ (meist eine Form von אָמַר), das auch in schnell wechselnder Rede und Gegenrede fast nie fehlt und die Erzählhaltung des Erzählers auch in längeren Dialogen gegenwärtig hält.* Trans., “The transition of the narration to the dialogue is marked through tense change, through person change (1. person 2. number 3. gender) and through a verb in favor of ‘to say’ (usually a form of אָמַר), that also is never missing in quickly changing speech and fast reply and currently halts the narration of the narrator also in longer dialogues.” Ibid.

²⁹ For example, *Imperfekte und Konsekutiveperfect können vereinzelt mitten im erzählenden Kontext auftreten.* Trans., “[YIQTOL] and [w^qqatal] are able to occur occasionally in the midst in a narrative context.” Ibid., 48.5.

³⁰ Translation of Schneider’s term *Sprechhaltung* in Talstra, “Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew, 280.

³¹ The subordinate syntactical construction W + X + QATAL “does not actually break the narrative chain because it communicates a piece of information that serves as a background to the proceeding information occupying the foreground.” Niccacci, “Analysis of Biblical Hebrew,” 179.

LORD, Edom (viz., Edomites), indicating a shift in the speaker, and the verb “to say” is also signaling a discursive speech situation (see example below):³²

- mal01:02b3 WAYYIQTOL (NAR) וָאֶהֱבֵה אֶת־יַעֲקֹב
And I loved Jacob.
- mal01:03a1 W+ X + QATAL (NAR) וָאֶת־עֵשָׂו שָׂנְאֵתִי
And Esau I hated.
- mal01:03b1 WAYYIQTOL (NAR) וָאֲשִׁים אֶת־הָרָיו שְׂמָמָה וָאֶת־נַעֲחֻלָּתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת מַדְבָּר
And I set his mountain a devastation and his
possessions to the jackals of the wilderness.
- mal01:04a1 0 + X + YIQTOL (DIS) כִּי־תֹאמַר אֶדוֹם
Because Edom shall say...

Concerning the second, Malachi yields three significant observations in the text involving unusual tenses in narration. One, Schneider shows that “after some conjunctions, [YIQTOL] can appear as a prospective tense” properly called “relative future” or *relativ zukünftig*.³³ In Malachi the X + YIQTOL (viz., conjunction + YIQTOL) form has nineteen occurrences. Conjunctions used in this construction are כִּי (because), אוֹ (or), לֹא (not), אִם (if), אֲשֶׁר (which), אַל (not), כִּאֲשֶׁר (or), עַד (lest). There is a high frequency of this prospective structure with the mainline communication of direct speech chains composed by *w^qqatal* (viz., mal03:10b1–mal03:12b2; mal03:17a1–mal03:21b2; mal03:24a1–mal03:24b2). In addition, the construction W + X + YIQTOL (which includes eight of the aforementioned X + YIQTOL) give “antecedent information” to the speech situation.³⁴

³² Malachi has a large percentage of the use of the quotation verb (viz., אָמַר) signifying the abundance of discursive speech situations. There are thirty-seven occurrences throughout the text, excluding the introduction and conclusion paragraphs (viz., Mal 1:1 and Mal 3:22–24).

³³ Translated from *Nach einigen Konjunktionen kann Imperfect als perspektivisches Tempus erscheinen*. Schneider, *Grammatik*, 48.5.

³⁴ Niccacci, “Analysis of Biblical Narrative,” 178.

Two, another unusual tense in narration is “[i]solated in the narrative context, [suffixed-conjugation] forms with *wāw* can appear, that are not *w^oqatal*,”³⁵ says Schneider. The perfect tense with the *wāw copulative* are nineteen in occurrence (whereas *w^oqatal* number twenty-five). Each of these nine *wāw* prefix + QATAL constructions open major dialogues throughout Malachi. Each of these section begins with the rhetorical pattern וְאַתָּה קָדַם (And you have said).³⁶

The last unique observation about tenses in Malachi to be discussed is narrative in discourse. “Alas the narrative [WAYYIQTOL] is not restricted on narration contexts.”³⁷ There is only one example of WAYYIQTOL in a discursive context. “In the context of discourse, the [QATAL] (back-perspective) is able to continue a verbal clause with subsequent narrative (the sequence-event). So that it seems to develop on a secondary narrative,”³⁸ says Schneider. The illustration of this discourse in Malachi involves the four WAYYIQTOL. The syntax shows a chain of direct speech scenarios from mal02:08b2–mal03:15a1 leading up to out text (below):

mal03:15b1	0 + X + QATAL (DIS)	גַּם־נִבְנוּ עֲשֵׂי רָשָׁעָה	Also the doers of wickedness have been built up.
mal03:15b2	0 + X + QATAL (DIS)	גַּם בָּחֲנוּ אֱלֹהִים	Also they have tested God.
mal03:15b3	WAYYIQTOL (NAR)	וַיִּפְלְטוּ	And they have escaped (judgment).
mal03:16a1	0 + X + QATAL (DIS)	אִם־יִדְבְּרוּ יִרְאֵי יְהוָה אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ	Then the fearers of The LORD spoke each man

³⁵ Translated from *Isoliert im erzählenden Kontext können AK-Formen mit Waw auftreten, die kein Konsekutivperfect sind*. Schneider, *Grammatik*, 48.5. AK-Formen are *wāw* prefixed perfects, 24.2; GKC, calls them “affirmatives,” §40c.

³⁶ mal01:02a1...mal01:06b4...mal01:07a3...mal01:13a1...mal02:14a1...mal02:17a2...mal03:07b2...mal03:08a3...mal3:13b1. These patterns occur in neither the introduction nor the conclusion.

³⁷ Translated from *Ach der Narrative (Imperfectum consecutivum) ist nicht auf erzählende Kontexte beschränkt*. Schneider, *Grammatik*, 48.7.

³⁸ Translated from *Im besprechenden Kontext können sich as das perfekt (Rück-Perspektive) weitere Verbsätze mit Narrativ (als Folge-Ereignisse) anschließen. Damit scheint sekundär eine Erzählung zu entwickeln*. Ibid.

- with his friend.
 mal03:16b1 WAYYIQTOL (NAR) וַיִּקְשֹׁב יְהוָה
 And The LORD gave attention.
 mal03:16b2 WAYYIQTOL (NAR) וַיִּשְׁמַע
 And He heard.
 mal03:16b3 WAYYIQTOL (NAR) וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹן לְפָנָיו לִירְאֵי יְהוָה וּלְחֹשְׁבֵי שְׁמוֹ
 And a book of remembrance was written before him
 for the fearers of The LORD and those thinking on
 His name
 mal03:17a1 W + QATAL + X (NAR) וְהָיוּ לִי
 And they shall be mine...
 mal03:17a2 0 + QATAL + X (DIS) אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה סִגְלָה
 ...says The LORD of hosts till the day which I
 make(them) a prized possession.

The open clause structure (viz., 0 + X + QATAL) forms an independent grammatical inclusio before and after the WAYYIQTOL forms marking a shift in what Schneider calls a *Sprosserzählung* or “beginning narrative.”³⁹ This chain of narration in direct speech shares information not previously present in the discourse. The last column illustrates the *BHS* text of Malachi with consonants and vowel pointing. Each segment systematically represents sequential clauses in their juxtaposition one to another. This syntactic dividing of clause by clause throughout the text aids in the immediate identification of the lexical head of each clause.

Syntactical Outline of Malachi

It is the primary purpose of this section to analyze the syntactic structure of the composition of Malachi 3:19–24 in light of the macrostructure of the whole. Shimon Bar-Efrat gives a textually based characterization of the structure proposed in this section; namely, “Structure can be defined as the network of relations among the parts of an object or unit.”⁴⁰ In approaching the book of Malachi as a composition, one does not have to read far to observe a

³⁹ Translation of Schneider’s term *Sprosserzählung* in Talstra, “Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew, 281.

⁴⁰ Shimon Bar-Efrat, “Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative,” in *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980), 155.

chiasm in similar parallel pattern structure (viz., AA') centered around the rhetorical pattern **וַאֲמַרְתֶּם** (And you have said).⁴¹ Although Bar-Efrat warns against using “analysis based upon verbal and thematic elements,” he explains what should be avoided “is the mixing of miscellaneous elements...partly on verbal elements, partly on elements of technique and partly on characters, on events, on themes or on other varieties of narrative or conceptual content.”⁴² It is not within the scope of this appendix to argue the methodology of outlines submitted by others. It is within the scope of this appendix to present a probable outline that reflects the original intent of its composer by focusing upon the syntactical data presented in the composition as a whole. “It should be borne in mind, however, that the interpretation of structure is much more prone to subjectivity than its mere description. In order to endow the proposed interpretation with a high degree of probability and convincing power it is recommendable to look for data in the text, apart from the structure, that confirm or support it.”⁴³ The proposed structure of Malachi illustrated with its syntactic and semantic components outlines the nine occurrences of a chiasm in similar parallel pattern structure (viz., AA') below:

Chart 5: Macro-syntactical outline based upon the verbal level

- A. Introduction (mal01:1a1–mal01:01b1): Three main characters introduced; namely, Malachi (lit., my messenger; i.e., 1:1; 2:7; 3:1 (2x)); Israel (specifically addressed to the priests (i.e., 1:7; 2:1, 7); the word of the Lord.
- B. Body: Nine Discourses (mal01:2a1–mal03:21b2)
 - 1. First Discourse (mal01:02a1–mal05:b2)

⁴¹ Bar-Efrat shows four main chiastic patterns of created by repetition of linguistic elements of the text: viz., AA' (similar or antithetic parallel); AXA' (ring); ABB'A' (Chiastic); ABXB'A' (concentric), *ibid.*, 170.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 172.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 173–173. Clauses are separated by parenthesis.

- a) Chiasm based on אהב (to love)
 - (1) The LORD (אמר יהוה) (אתכם) (אֶתְכֶם)
 - (2) The Priests (במה אהבתנו) (ואמרתם)
 - b) Background Scenarios
 - (1) mal01:02b1–ma01:04a5
 - (2) mal01:04a6–mal01:05b2
2. Second Discourse (mal01:06a1–mal01:6b5)
- a) Chiasm based on בזה (to despise)
 - (1) The LORD of hosts (אמר יהוה צבאות לָכֶם הַפְדִּנִים בּוֹנֵי שָׁמַיִם)
 - (2) The Priests (במה בוינו את־שָׁמַיִם) (ואמרתם)
 - b) No Background
3. Third Discourse (mal01:07a1–mal01:11b2)
- a) Chiasm based on גאל (to defile)
 - (1) The Messenger (מגישים על־מזבחי לָחֶם מְגָאֵל)
 - (2) The Priests (במה גאלנו) (ואמרתם)
 - b) Background Scenarios
 - (1) mal01:07b1–mal01:08b4
 - (2) mal01:09a1–mal01:09b2
 - (3) mal01:10a1–mal01:10b2
 - (4) mal01:10b3–mal01:11b2
4. Fourth Discourse (mal01:12a1–mal02:08b2)
- a) Chiasm implied by לאה (to be wearied)
 - (1) The Messenger (mal01:12a1): summary
 - (2) The Priests (חנה מתלאה) (ואמרתם)
 - b) Background Scenarios
 - (1) mal01:13a3–mal01:13a4
 - (2) mal01:13a5–mal01:13b2
 - (3) mal01:14a1–mal01:14b2
 - (4) mal01:14b3–mal02:02a3
 - (5) mal02:02a4–mal02:04b2
 - (6) mal02:05a1–mal02:08b2
5. Fifth Discourse (mal02:09a1–mal02:16b2)
- a) Chiasm (AA') implied by בגד (to act treacherous)
 - (1) The Messenger (mal02:09a1–mal02:13b2)
 - (2) The Priests (על־מָה) (ואמרתם)
 - b) Background Scenarios
 - (1) mal02:14b1–mal02:16a2

(2) mal02:16b1–mal02:16b2

6. Sixth Discourse (mal02:16b3–mal03:05b3)

- a) Chiasm (AA') based upon יגע (to grow weary)
 - (1) The Messenger (וְלֹא תִבְגְּדוּ) (וְנִשְׁמְרֵתֶם בְּרוּחֵכֶם)
 - (2) The Priests (וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה בְּדַבְּרֵיכֶם)
- b) Background Scenarios
 - (1) mal02:17b1–mal03:01b4
 - (2) mal03:02a1–mal03:05b3

7. Seventh Discourse (mal03:06a1–mal03:07b2)

- a) Chiasm (AA') based on שׁוּב (to return)
 - (1) The LORD of Hosts (mal03:06a1–mal03:07a6)
 - (2) The Priests (וְאִמְרֵתֶם) (בְּמִדָּה נָשׁוּב)
- b) No Background

8. Eighth Discourse (mal03:08a1–mal03:12b1)

- a) Chiasm (AA') based upon קָבַע (to rob)
 - (1) The Messenger (וְהִיקָבַע אָדָם אֱלֹהִים) (כִּי אַתֶּם קָבַעִים אֹתִי)
 - (2) The Priests (וְאִמְרֵתֶם) (בְּמִדָּה קָבַעֲנוּךְ)
- b) Background Scenarios
 - (1) mal03:08b1–mal03:10a4
 - (2) mal03:10b1–mal03:11b2
 - (3) mal03:12a1–mal03:12b2

9. Ninth Discourse (mal03:13a1–mal03:21b2)

- a) Chiasm (AA') based upon דָּבַר (to speak)
 - (1) The LORD (חֹזֶקוּ עָלַי דְּבַרְיֶכֶם) (אָמַר יְהוָה)
 - (2) The Priests (וְאִמְרֵתֶם) (בְּמִדָּה מִהֲנִדְּבַרְנוּ עָלֶיךָ)
- b) Background Scenarios
 - (1) mal03:14a1–mal03:17a2
 - (2) mal03:17b1–mal03:19b3
 - (3) mal03:19b4–mal03:21b2

C. Conclusion (mal03:22a1–mal24:03:24b2): The QETOL form begins a new dialogue apart from the preceding section.

Talstra suggests that in Biblical Hebrew the study of “syntax should be based upon the

description of linguistic units beyond the level of phrases and clauses.”⁴⁴ In other words, the exegete must study the text at the point of narrative communication. Bar-Efrat offers several levels to approach a structured analysis of a biblical text:⁴⁵

1. The verbal level. This analysis focuses upon words and phrases that are linked together, recurrent phrases, and stylistic features, unusual grammatical and syntactical constructions identifies at the verbal level.
2. The narrative technique level. This analysis is based upon changes in narration to dialogue, description within content and summary, and commentary.
3. The narrative world level. This analysis is primarily concerned with the characters and events which make up the plot.
4. The conceptual content level. This analysis is thematic. It is based upon the narrative units and ideas which define the point of the narrative.

The proposed outline is based upon the verbal level of analysis on a biblical narrative. The nine aforementioned chiasmic structures have four similarities seen throughout the text. One, this pattern is always marked with the *wāw*-conjunctive plus QATAL form of **אמר** (viz., **וַאֲמַרְתֶּם**). Two, this pattern is always accompanied with an indirect question by the hearers (i.e., the priests) utilizing some form of the interrogative (viz., **מָה** + **וַאֲמַרְתֶּם**). Three, all nine patterns relate to a specific verbal form within its context between the speaker and the hearer (viz., **דבר... קבע... שוב... יגע... בגד... לאה... גאל... בזה... אהב**). However, the fourth and fifth discourses have an assumed parallel structure based upon the verbal context. The speaker and hearer do not share an explicit use of a verbal form in their immediate discourse, but the verbal form is implicitly revealed as a fixed state of being on the part of the hearer. For example, in the fourth discourse the hearer questions the speaker **הֲנָה מְתִלָּא** (“Behold, what weariness?”; i.e., mal01:13a2), and in the fifth discourse the hearer asks **עַל־מָה** (“Wherefore?”; mal02:14a2).

⁴⁴ Talstra, “Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew,” 271.

⁴⁵ See discussion of these levels in Bar-Efrat, “Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative,” 157–168.

Although, neither discourse has an immediate verbal AA' parallel, nevertheless, the AA' pattern is clearly seen in the verbal context. For example, in the fourth discourse the speaker just described the state of “weariness” prior to the hearer replying “what weariness?” Also, in the fifth discourse the hearer does not use the a form of בָּגַד (to act treacherous) in replying “wherefore?,” but the context reveals four occurrences of בָּגַד illustrating the state the hearer has acted treacherously before the LORD (בָּגַד is used a fifth time in the sixth discourse). Last, the similarity shared by these AA' chiasms is that they have supplement background scenarios generally marked with the concluding phrase אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת (says the LORD of hosts).⁴⁶ There are twenty-two major scenarios in the text. However, the two exceptions are the second and seventh discourses which have no supplement background but do have the LORD as the speaker.

Mal 3:22–24 in light of Malachi as a whole

Michael H. Floyd comments that a significant issue which needs to be dealt with before analyzing the literary structure of Malachi is the claim that the last three verses (Mal 3:22–24) are considered appendices, “added either as an afterthought to Malachi itself...or as a conclusion to the Book of the Twelve...or as a conclusion to the entire prophetic section of the canon,” which assumes they are either a separate genre within Malachi’s compositional work or antecedents of a later time.⁴⁷ Although it is not within the primary scope of this appendix to deal with juxtaposition in relation the Book of the Twelve or the Tanak as a whole, the ending of Malachi can be examined syntactically and semantically in light of Malachi as a whole.

⁴⁶ Other phrases are אָמַר יְהוָה (denounced the LORD) and אָמַר יְהוָה (says the LORD).

⁴⁷ Michael H. Floyd, “Malachi,” *Minor Prophets: Part 2*, in *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature*, eds. Rolf P. Knierim, Gene M. Tucker, and Marvin A. Sweeney, Vol. 22 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 562.

First, the syntax overview shows that 3:22–24 is separated from the preceding section of direct speech ending the last background scenario with the typical concluding phrase *יְהוָה זָכַרְתָּ אֶת אֲמָרָאֵךְ*. There are several observations to notice that can be deduced from our previous grammatical overview of the text. One, the reference mal03:22a1 in the 0 + Qetol + X construction functions as a direct speech marker of a new discourse. In addition, the absence of a *wāw* indicates this is an independent clause from the preceding context. Two, the X + Qatal form continues the direct speech and functions as a non-breaker of the new discourse giving antecedent information to the listener. Three, the two nominal clauses continue to give pretext background in the present discourse. Fourth, the W + QATAL + X construction (mal03:24a1 and mal03:24a1) are *w^qqatal* forms which function to continue the mainline communication as indicated by the presence of the *wāw* in light of the prospective future. Last, in the midst of the two *w^qqatal* forms is the 0 + X + YIQTOL form which functions in a future time capacity due to its prefixed conjunction pattern. Therefore, these last seven clauses (viz., Mal 3:22–24) formulate a new direct speech to the listener, independent from the preceding line of communication. In summary, the style of this discourse is abrupt (QETOL) and speaks to the past (X + QATAL), the present (NC), and the future (*w^qqatal* and X + YIQTOL).

Second, the semantic overview of Mal 3:22–24 shows several lexical connections to rest of the book of Malachi. One, mal03:22a1 says *זָכְרוּ תוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי* (remember the law of Moses my servant). The imperative *זָכְרוּ* (remember!) has no verbal connection to the text. However, there are two other instances where the verb root *זָכַר* (to make a memorial) is illustrated. For example, the nominal clause in mal01:14a2 connects the accepted levitical sacrificial offering *זָכָר* (a male) in contrast to the torn and sick and lame offerings the priest have been offering to the LORD. Again this root occurs in the last WAYYIQTOL clause mal03:16b3 in reference to the

סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹן (book of remembrance). Because this WAYYIQTOL is within a direct speech narration, it functions as background information to connect past events in the present conversation. Both Exodus 17:14 and Esther 6:1 speak of “books of remembrance.” In the latter, king Ahasuerus of Persia and Media, used books of remembrance to record past events of his kingdom. In the former, the LORD told Moses to write in a book the victory over the Amalekites for a remembrance and to rehearse it in the ears of Joshua. Since the intent in using the imperative “remember!” in Mal 3:22 is an admonition “to recall so that one is affected in the present.”⁴⁸ In what way were they to be affected? It is possible that the connection to the מִשְׁחָה תּוֹרַת (the law of Moses) may give the answer. There are four other mentions of תּוֹרַת (law) clustered in Mal 2:6, 7, 8, 9, giving a poor painting of the present priests in their relationship to the law. For example, a priest was to have the law of truth and knowledge in his mouth and on his lips, but these priests not only have turned from the way and have caused others to stumble and corrupted the covenant of Levi, which was to keep the law before the faces of the people (according to mal02:01a1 and mal02:02a2 they broke this commandment). It is a further indictment that the title given Moses by the LORD of “my servant” (עֶבְדִּי) is absent in respect to these priests who seem to be serving themselves; not the people of Israel, not the God of Israel.

Two, mal03:22b1 gives antecedent information about Moses: עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים (which I commanded him in Horeb unto all Israel statutes and judgments). In addition, יִשְׂרָאֵל (Israel) is repeated four other times in the text in relation to the LORD: for example, the word of the LORD is for Israel (mal01:01a1); the LORD will be magnified above the “border of Israel” (mal01:05b2); the abomination in Israel affected the nation as a whole, Judah as a state, Jerusalem the city, including the sanctuary, due to their worship of a false god(s)

⁴⁸ F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, eds. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendricks, 1906, reprint, 1996), 269.

(mal02:11a2); Israel is reminded that the LORD is “the God of Israel” (mal02:16a2); and it was not Moses who gave the law to Israel, but it was the LORD through Moses (mal03:22b1). In addition to the law is the mention of statues and judgments (חֲקִים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים) (i.e., 3:7), alluding to the laws encompassed within the whole of the Pentateuch which are to be rehearsed in the ears of every generation by faithful priests.⁴⁹

Three, since there are no faithful priests in the present (i.e., mal02:09a1), the LORD announces in mal03:23a1 הִנֵּה אֶנְכִּי שֹׁלֵחַ לְכֶם אֶת אֵלִיָּה הַנָּבִיא (Behold! I am sending to you Elijah the prophet), and mal03:23b1 לְפָנַי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא (before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD). Does the juxtaposition of the great historical characters of Moses in relation to the law and of Elijah as a representative of the prophets impact the hearer (as well as the reader)? Bar-Efrat explains that characters “transmit the significance and values of the narrative to the reader, since they usually constitute the focal point of interest. Their personalities and histories attract the reader’s attention to a greater extent than do other components of the narrative (explanations, settings, etc.).”⁵⁰ It is possible that the initial imperative (remember!) implies neither remembering the men themselves nor the traditions in which they are represented, but rather the written memorial of the acts of The LORD through them as a testimony to the past, to the present, and to the future generations of Israel; namely, the book of the Law (Pentateuch) and the book of the Prophets. Interestingly, there are two references in Malachi which specifically emphasize the written message; in Mal 1:1 the word of the LORD is בְּיַד מַלְאָכִי (by the hand of my messenger); in Mal 3:16 the book of remembrance—it was written

⁴⁹ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, in Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 481. Sailhamer writes, “In the twelfth century A.D. the Jewish philosopher and exegete Maimonides published a definitive list of the laws in the Pentateuch, the *Sepher Mitzvot* (Book of the Commandments). In this list Maimonides enumerated 613 distinct laws in the Pentateuch.”

⁵⁰ Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 2nd ed., Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 70 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1979, reprint 2000), 47.

down (וַיִּכְתֹּב). Hence, it is plausible that the conclusion of Malachi intentionally forces the hearers (as well as the reader) to back-reference the written law of Moses of the LORD (function of X + QATAL) and illustrates their present state of affairs due to the fact that because Israel has not keep the law The LORD is sending his prophet (function of nominal clause). This state of affairs is two fold: (1) a prophet is coming; and (2) the Lord's great and terrible day is also coming. The noun יום (day) has several appearances in Malachi, for example: the day of his coming (mal03:02a1); the days of antiquity (mal03:04b1); days of your fathers (mal03:07a1); day of making valuables (mal03:17a2); and the coming day of the LORD (mal03:21b1 and mal03:23b1). The LORD has already mentioned the character of his name as being "great" (1:11 (2x), 14; 3:23) and "terrible" from ירא (to fear) (1:14; 2:5; 3:5, 16, 20, 23) among the nations. Although the nominal clause (mal03:23b1) reveals judgment is fixed, the future purpose of the initial imperative (remember!) follows in Mal 3:24.

Last, the syntax reveals three prospective clauses to conclude Malachi:

1. (mal03:24a1) וְהָשִׁיב לִבְאֲבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים וְלִבְבָּנִים עַל־אֲבוֹתָם (and he will turn the heart of fathers unto sons and heart of sons unto their fathers);
2. (mal03:24b1) פֶּן־אָבִיָּא (lest I shall come);
3. (mal03:24b2) וְהִכֵּיתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ חֲרָם (and I shall smite the land ["utterly destroying it"]⁵¹);

The three clauses work together to show a condition to avoid judgment. The conjunction פֶּן (lest) is "implying always that some precaution has been taken to avert the dreaded contingency."⁵² In addition, the 0 + X + YIQTOL functions as a buffer between the two *w^aqatal* forms. Meaning, if the precaution of mal03:24a1 is not taken, then the LORD will utterly destroy the land. What is this precaution? The verb שׁוּב (to turn back, return) generally implies to "return

⁵¹ BDB, 356.

⁵² Ibid., 814.

(in recompense) of a crime, evil, ect.”⁵³ Because **יָשׁוּב** is in the Hiphil stem, it adds an element of causation and condition to its meaning.⁵⁴ Is this understanding of **שׁוּב** expressed elsewhere in Malachi? There are six other uses in the text of **שׁוּב**, but only one in the Hiphil stem. An evaluation of these verses show: (1) Edom did not return and was judged (i.e., 1:4); (2) the law of truth was in [Levi’s mouth] and he caused many to turn from iniquity (**הִשִּׁיב**; Hiphil) (i.e., 2:6); (3) those that have not kept the statutes are commanded to turn back (imperative) unto the LORD, (4) so that the LORD might return to them, (5) but the priests denying their need to return, said: “Wherein, shall we return?” (**בִּמָּה נָשׁוּב**) (i.e., 3:6); and (6) the LORD promises that those that fear him will return and discern between righteousness and wickedness (i.e., 3:16–18). To summarize, the impact of **שׁוּב** (to return) in the text implies having both the right understanding and relationship to the law impacting both a personal walk with the LORD and instilling one in others (e.g., 2:6). It seems that the role of the prophet (Elijah) is to teach this truth so that Israel might escape judgment. The ramifications of ignoring both the word of the law and the word of the prophet are that the LORD will come and utterly destroy the land. However, if the precaution is met; namely, to allow the words of the coming prophet to bring remembrance of the law of Moses effectively causing Israel (esp. the priests) to return unto the LORD (i.e., mal02:06a1), then its results will be seen in the heart of fathers unto sons and sons unto fathers. The word heart (**לֵב**) appears in Mal 2:2 illustrating the heart of the priest who neither gives nor places the name of the LORD in a place of honor (**כְּבוֹד**). However, the only other reference in Malachi placing the terms, father and son, in the same context is Mal 1:6; whereas, The LORD relates a son honoring (**יְכַבֵּד**) a father, and asks in mal01:06b1 **אֲנִי אֵיךָ כְּבוֹדִי**

⁵³ Ibid., 998.

⁵⁴ *GKC*, §153d, e.

וְאִם־אֲנִי־אֵלֹהִים (And if I am a father, where is my honor?) Hence, the fruit that comes from returning yields a heart relationship with the LORD so that we can give honor to his name. Thus, the people of God should have no fear of The LORD's name being great and terrible among the nations.

In conclusion, the syntactic and semantic analysis of Mal 3:22–24 shows many verbal and thematic connections to Malachi as a whole. These links based upon the grammar and linguistic data within the text lead to a plausible certainty that the Mal 3:22–24 has compositional unity within the major corpus of Malachi. These verses not only summarize major issues within the message of Malachi, but position the Pentateuch and the book of the Prophets in a redemptive role for those who fear the LORD and turn to him to escape the coming judgment. Although its conclusion looks grim for those who miss its invitation for a renewed heart relationship with the LORD of hosts as father, Malachi's message of deliverance is contingent upon remembering the law of God as preached through the prophet of God.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Appendix A is taken in part from Rand Michael Muender, "The Canonical Approach to the Old Testament: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation of Malachi 3:22–24 and Psalms 1–2." ThM thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INVITATION TO SBCV PASTORS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Dear Pastor,

You are one of 438 SBCV pastors that I am inviting to participate in a Spiritual Formation Survey. I am a Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary student and working on my Doctor of Ministry project. My thesis question states: “What impact would a strategic spiritual formation study based upon the book of Malachi implemented by a pastor have on a local church that is below 200 in attendance?” Your church is one of the 79% of SBCV churches that run less than 200 in attendance.

I understand the constraints of a pastor. I have been a pastor for over 17 years and have been at Maranatha Baptist on the Eastern Shore of Virginia for over 8 years. Like you, I have a real burden to impact my local congregation so that God is truly impacting their whole life. I am inviting you to join me in a study that I believe will give pastors a tool for preaching biblically rich and theological sound messages focused upon spiritual formation in the life of the individual Christian, the life of the local church, and the life of the global community.

I have attached a Survey that includes 10 Statements. Please answer these according to your present SBCV ministry. I look forward to your responses and subsequent resource that will aid in developing a strategic study toward spiritual formation in our church ministries. In addition, the completed thesis will be available through *Digital Commons* in the Library section of Liberty University webpage.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this Study.

PS: Please call my cell at (757) ###-####, if you have questions; or e-mail me at pastormuender@#####

Sincerely,

Rand Michael Muender
Pastor of Maranatha Baptist Church, Exmore VA
SBCV Southeast Region

APPENDIX C

SURVEY TO SBCV PASTORS WITH ATTENDANCE BELOW 200

Directions: Please check the box that communicates your best answer below.

1. What is your SBCV Ministry Region?
 - ☐ North Region (N)
 - ☐ Central-East Region (CE)
 - ☐ Central-West Region (CW)
 - ☐ Southeast Region (SE)
 - ☐ Southwest Region (SW)
2. What is your average worship attendance on Sunday mornings?
 - ☐ Below 200
 - ☐ 200 or above
3. Pastors are responsible for the spiritual condition of the local church.
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
4. The Christian is to imitate Christ.
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
5. Performing religious duties is the mark of spirituality.
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
6. The goal of discipleship is to learn doctrine.
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. Spiritual growth in a Christian is the result of individual effort.
- ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
8. The community should be impacted by the local church.
- ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
9. Having a close relationship with Christ is the definition of a Christian.
- ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
10. The outward change in a person's conduct is the result of spiritual formation.
- ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree

Thank you for your time and honest reflection. Please note that your personal answers will be held in the strictest confidence (except that your church participated in the study).

Ps: If you have any questions or comments, please call my cell at (757) ###-####; or e-mail me at pastormuender@#####

May God continue to bless your ministry and your church family!

Sincerely,

Rand Michael Muender

Romans 12:1–2

APPENDIX D
IRB WAIVER PAGE¹

Fri 3/31/2017 2:22
Hi All,

Dr. Davidson and Michele, thank you for your phone meeting on March 31, 2017 concerning my DMin Survey questions.

I am confirming that since my past mentor Dr Frank Schmitt (d. 6.24.2016) had already edited and approved my survey and this data has already been collected that all parties are in agreement for me to move ahead with completing this phase of my Thesis.

Consequently, since the DMin office wants what is best for me to finish my thesis chapters by an acceptable date for oral defense by Summer 2017, and the IRB office cannot review a survey already sent and data already collected, both parties are OK with me continuing ahead without starting this process over.

Thank you Dr McDonald for your mentorship in these last stages of my Thesis and for encouraging me to reach out to both the DMin office and the IRB office at Liberty and abiding by their counsel concerning this issue. I am confirming that prior to this email being sent that you were made aware of the conversation between myself and Dr. Davidson and the IRB (i.e., Michele) and had no reservations to this resolution.

Blessing to all.

Rand Michael Muender

Fri 3/31/2017 3:53pm
Hi Mike,

Agreed. The purpose of the IRB is to protect study participants, and although your study should have been reviewed and approved before you collected your data, a misunderstanding and various circumstances that occurred as you were going through the program resulted in your study not being submitted to the IRB. In this instance, the IRB cannot require you to discard your collected data or repeat your data collection.

Best,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

¹Note: only corrections from original emails include: spacing, color, pica, font, spelling and punctuation.

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Born: May 17, 1966

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EDUCATIONAL

Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Leadership, Liberty University, 2018.

Master of Theology in Old Testament, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007.

Master of Divinity in Advanced Biblical Studies and Languages, SEBTS, 2002.

Bachelor General Studies (in Philosophy and Religion), Wingate University, 1997.

Associate in Religion/Church Ministries, Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute, 1993.

MINISTERIAL

Pastor, Maranatha Baptist Church, Exmore, VA., 2003–present.

Youth Pastor, Raleigh Chinese Christian Church, Raleigh, N.C., 1999–2003.

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PROFESSIONAL

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ACADEMIC AWARDS

The Baxter C. Phillips and Wanda L. Phillips Greek Exposition Award, 2002.

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Excellence in Religious Studies & Excellence in New Testament Greek, 1997.

PUBLICATION

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