

LITERARY CONNECTORS AND A HAGGAI/ZECHARIAH/ MALACHI CORPUS

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The last three books of the canon of the twelve minor prophets have often been grouped together in OT studies.¹ No doubt this has been because of the common historical era (postexilic Judaism) that they address. Despite this tendency, however, scholars have at the same time emphasized the division of the twenty chapters² that make up Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi into two or more independent literary units for the purpose of analysis.

Feinberg is representative of the theologically conservative school that follows the traditional canonical divisions, treating the books as three bodies of literature, each unique in its theme, style, authorship and function.³ From a higher-critical perspective the so-called "proto-" and "deutero-Zechariah" distinction is made. This has sometimes resulted in a twofold division of the corpus (Haggai/Zechariah 1-8 and Zechariah 9-14/Malachi),⁴ but more often in a division of the three books into four⁵ or more⁶ originally separate literary units. In most cases (regardless of the author's theological persuasion) the Malachi material is

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¹For example J. G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1972); R. Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977).

²The tendency is illustrated by J. A. Soggin in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) 346. There he maintains that Zechariah 9-14 has "nothing at all to do with chaps. 1-8 of the book." Further, it should be noted that the English chapter divisions are used in the present study for Malachi. The Hebrew text combines chaps. 3 and 4 together as chap. 3.

³C. L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1976) 237-344. Essential to his approach is a strong emphasis on the single authorship of Zechariah 1-14 as having been written by the prophet himself. For instance, in his monograph *God Remembers* (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1965) 11, he asserts that "the untenableness of the critical view and the definite testimony for the unity of the book bring us to the inexorable conclusion that the prophecy is post-exilic, and by Zechariah and none other."

⁴See D. A. Smith, "Haggai," in *Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1972), 7. 291, where he suggests that the first body of material was written early in the return and the second at a later date, addressing a new and different situation.

⁵Although he deals with the three books in a single work, W. Rudolph lists four distinct literary units (*Haggai, Sacharja 1-8, Sacharja 9-14, Maleachi* [Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976]).

⁶F. S. North, "Critical Analysis of the Book of Haggai," *ZA W* 68 (1956) 25-46, is just one example of this methodology. He concludes that only about one-fifth to one-sixth of the book was "basic narrative." The rest is secondary material that came to be attached to the core through a process of accretion over a period of time.

viewed as considerably later than Haggai and Zechariah and as addressing an essentially different set of circumstances.⁷

Unfortunately these approaches have resulted in the lack of any serious attempt to treat this postexilic element within the minor prophets in a unified fashion with respect to its literary and thematic characteristics. To this end the present writer has chosen to depart from the more traditional methodologies for the purpose of considering the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi in their extant form in the canon of the twelve, yet with careful regard to their literary and thematic interrelationships.

Although questions concerning authorship, original intent and canonical compilation may immediately come to the reader's mind, these matters have deliberately been avoided. Almost nothing is known regarding the manner in which the book of the twelve came into its present form, the individuals who may have taken part in that editorial process, or precisely how soon after the writing of the last portion of the Hebrew Bible this important activity took place. This is not to cast doubt on the genuineness and uniqueness of the sources of the sermons, visions and prophecies contained herein (i.e. their primary relationship to the prophets whose names they bear). Such matters are clearly indicated at several points in the Biblical text itself and are not called into question here.⁸ Rather, the intent is to understand how the books function in their extant form and canonical arrangement. Thus the focus is on the more tangible literary and thematic elements relating to this corpus, Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi (HZM), rather than on speculation in other areas.⁹

In the course of study five literary connectors have been discovered that suggest that these chapters (Haggai 1-Malachi 4), when read together, form a useful literary corpus not only for the study of early postexilic Judaism (sixth-fifth centuries B.C.) but more importantly for a clear understanding of the messages of the books themselves.

⁷For example, Feinberg dates the book over a century later than the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah (*Minor Prophets* 249-250) and D. Winton Thomas connects the message of Malachi to that of Ezra and Nehemiah, suggesting a date around the middle of the fifth century ("The Book of Haggai" in *IB* 6 [Nashville: Abingdon, 1956] 1118).

However, as has been demonstrated by J. D. W. Watts, *Obadiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 11-19, there is no clear reason to date Malachi later than early in the fifth century B.C., thus suggesting the possibility of its being contemporary with the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah, which are so clearly dated at the close of the sixth century B.C. The objective factors involved in determining the *terminus a quo* for the ministry of Malachi include the rebuilding of the temple (Adar 515 B.C.) and the desolation of Edom (Mal 1:3). The argument that a longer period of time would be necessary to account for the spiritual deterioration of the people is not consistent with the significant change that took place in the attitude of the community in less than one month in Hag 1:15-2:3. On the contrary, forty to fifty years is sufficient time for a change in both religious fervor and lifestyle.

⁸Cf. Hag 1:1, 3, 12, 13 (in 1:13 the prophet himself is called "messenger of YHWH"); 2:1, 10, 13, 14, 20; Zech 1:1, 7 (notice also the repeated first-person singular pronouns throughout this section); 7:1, 8, 18 (again the first person); Mal 1:1; 3:1 (it is not entirely clear to whom the title *ml'ky* in 3:1 refers).

⁹Such as the traditional literary-critical approaches like the redaction-critical study by R. Mason, "The Purpose of the 'Editorial Framework' of the Book of Haggai," *VT* 27 (1977) 413-421.

I. THE HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK OF HAGGAI/ZECHARIAH 1-8

520 B.C.

(The people felt it was not time to rebuild; Hag 1:1-2)

1st day of 6th month (Elul/August):

Haggai's first sermon: The remnant is guilty of misplaced priorities (1:3-11)

(Rebuilding of the temple is resumed; 1:12-15)

23rd of 7th month (Tishri/October):

Haggai's second sermon: Discouragement sets in quickly in the work (2:1-9)

8th month (Marheshvan/November):

Zechariah calls the people to repentance (Zech 1:1-6)

24th of 9th month (Kislev/December):

Haggai's third sermon: The remnant is unclean (Hag 2:10-19)

24th of 9th month (Kislev/December):

An oracle to Zerubbabel: A Davidic heir is a symbol of the Lord's favor (2:20-23)

519 B.C.

24th of 11th month (Shebat/February):

Zechariah begins his night visions (Zechariah 1-6)

The temple will be built if the people obey (6:9-16)

518 B.C.

4th of 9th month (Kislev/November):

Zechariah chides the remnant for their lack of sincerity in worship, then promises success if obedience is forthcoming (7-8)

The first item of notice when reading Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 is the manner of precise dating with which each begins.¹⁰ This similarity between the books, coupled with the diversity found in the latter half of Zechariah (9-14), has been a primary reason for the division that is now so commonly accepted in critical circles between so-called "proto-" and "deutero-Zechariah." Here, in contrast, it

¹⁰Portions of the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah are chronicled to the year, month and day (Hag 1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 20; Zech 1:1, 7; 7:1). This degree of precision is rare in Biblical literature, although not totally unique (cf. Ezek 32:1, for instance).

is highlighted for the purpose of showing the inherent literary unity between Haggai and Zechariah 1-8.¹¹

In their preservation, the brief messages of the prophets of the return have been set in an historical framework that links them together inseparably. One notices that even the date of Haggai's last oracle (December 520 B.C.) overlaps slightly with that of Zechariah's first message (November 520 B.C.).¹² It is indeed difficult to stop reading at the end of Haggai's second chapter as though having finished the book. The story is incomplete without (at least) Zechariah 1-8.¹³

II. THE LITERARY AND THEMATIC UNITY OF ZECHARIAH 1-14

Introductory Challenge: The remnant is called to repentance (Zech 1:1-6)

Night visions (1:7-6:8)

1. Night patrol (1:7-17):

The Lord shows compassion toward Jerusalem

2. Horns and smiths (1:18-21):

The Lord avenges his people

3. Measuring line (2:1-13):

The Lord restores Jerusalem

4. Joshua the priest (3:1-10):

The Lord cleanses and challenges his people

5. Lampstand (4:1-14):

The Lord assures the completion of the temple

6. Flying scroll (5:1-4):

The Lord cleanses the land from wickedness

7. Women and basket (5:5-11):

The Lord cleanses the land from wickedness

8. Chariots (6:1-8):

The Lord's wrath is appeased in the north country

Sermon 1. The temple will be built if the people obey (6:9-16)

Sermon 2. Insincerity in fasting reveals a lack of true religion and broken fellowship with God (7:1-14)

¹¹It is interesting that O. Eissfeldt stands apart from the consensus of the more critical scholarship by contending that Haggai and Zechariah wrote their own material. He suggests that Zechariah followed the example of Haggai in using the precise method of dating, along with a third-person style to give the impression of greater objectivity. See *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harper, 1965) 431. Compare, though, the criticism of R. Smend, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Köln Mainz, 1978) 183, who follows Rudolph (*Haggai, Sacharja* 22-23) in arguing for the more literal sense of the third person and thus a common editor.

¹²Cf. Hag 2:10, 20 with Zech 1:1. It is not suggested that the dates have been altered to create this effect, but rather that some freedom may have been exercised in the selection of materials for the purpose of drawing the reader's attention to the literary relationship of the larger corpus of materials.

¹³It should be noted that it is equally incomplete without reading on through Zechariah 9-14 and into the Malachi oracle.

Sermon 3. An offer of salvation is seasoned with an exhortation to obedience to the end that the temple might be rebuilt (8:1-23)

Oracle 1. The Lord promises to avenge Israel against the nations (9:1-11:13)

The worthless shepherds are rebuked; the remnant is viewed as a flock of pitiful sheep doomed for slaughter (11:4-17)

Oracle 2. The Lord promises blessing for Zion and Jerusalem (12:1-14:21)

The authorship of Zechariah 9-14 has long been a subject of debate between theologically liberal and conservative scholars. Certainly it is outside the scope of this brief study to attempt a resolution of the issue or even address it in detail.¹⁴ However, the question of the literary relationship of chaps. 9-14 to the first half of the book is of concern and must be considered. Consequently attention has been directed to several elements that link the two oracles (9-11; 12-14) in a literary and thematic fashion to chaps. 1-8 and the rest of HZM.

The first noticeable characteristic in the Zechariah material, clearly evident in 1:4, is the mutual literary dependency on the pre-exilic prophets that both sections reveal. There the word of the Lord that he commanded his servants (the "former prophets") is shown to have overtaken the previous generations, as well as to be confronting the then-present generation of the return at the end of the sixth century. A second instance is found in the seventy-year period referred to in 1:12, which can only mean that the prophet knew of the promise to Jeremiah (Jer 25:11; 29:10), to which reference is also made in Dan 9:2. Yet another example occurs in Zech 11:13 where a familiarity is found on the part of the Biblical writer with passages in Jer 18:1-3; 19:1; 32:6-15.¹⁵

Second, there is a unity in the message of the visions, sermons and oracles in Zechariah. Watts touches on this element when he observes that chaps. 1-14 demonstrate a unity that justifies their being grouped together in one book. "The unifying theme of the book is the proclamation of salvation."¹⁶ This is announced to the people at the outset of the night visions (1:12-17) and progresses to an eschatological climax in the final oracle of Zechariah (chaps. 12-14).

Third, however, it is important to notice that joined with the "proclamation of salvation" is a sobering charge to covenant fidelity. Thus there is seen not only a single message in the book but also a unifying "literary tone" (i.e., the manner in which the message is presented). The challenge, stated in the opening paragraph of the book (1:2-6), is carried throughout the visions, sermons and oracles. In the night visions one notices the conditional element (3:7) regarding Joshua, as well as the threat to the people in 5:3-4. In the sermons of Zechariah 7-8 the exhorta-

¹⁴For a thorough discussion of the question of authorship see R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 951-957, where he traces the history of the debate from the writings of J. Mede (1653) to the present.

¹⁵In his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 482, B. S. Childs maintains that all three of the major pre-exilic prophets exerted this kind of influence on Zechariah 1-14.

¹⁶J. D. W. Watts, "Zechariah," in *Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1972), 7. 309.

tion follows a similar theme (cf. 7:5-7), as does the sermon at the end of the visions (6:15). Finally, in what this study considers to be the pivotal chapter in the oracular section of Zechariah (chap. 11), the Lord himself is set against the pseudo-shepherds among his people. Regardless of the identification of these shepherds, a charge to religious fidelity is plain.

Thus a literary and thematic unity exists within the material traditionally associated with the prophet Zechariah (the night visions and sermons of chaps. 1-8 and the two oracles of chaps. 9-11; 12-14). The oracles (chaps. 9-14) form an important sequel to the first half of the Zechariah material (chaps 1-8).

III. THE ORACLE TITLES OF ZECHARIAH 9-11; 12-14; MALACHI 1-4

Oracle 1 (Zechariah 9-11): The Lord avenges Israel against the nations

"An oracle of the word of YHWH against the land of Hadrach"

Oracle 2 (Zechariah 12-14): The Lord promises blessing for Zion and Jerusalem

"An oracle of the word of YHWH concerning Israel"

Oracle 3 (Malachi 1-4): Six sermons preached to the remnant community

"An oracle of the word of YHWH to Israel through my messenger"

The third of the connecting links joins the three oracles that conclude the book of the twelve (Zechariah 9-11; 12-14; Malachi 1-4). The exact phrase "an oracle of the word of YHWH" appears only in these three instances in the Hebrew OT, thus serving to associate three bodies of literature that otherwise might not be viewed together. In Zech 9:1 the phrase is directed "against the land of Hadrach"; in 12:1 it "concerns Israel" and the additional element "an utterance of YHWH" is appended; and in Mal 1:1 it is "unto Israel by the hand of *mal'ākī*." Although the extended phrases differ slightly in each case,¹⁷ the common element is sufficiently unique so as to serve its purpose.¹⁸ It is not of concern whether the three oracles circulated separately prior to their being appended to the Haggai/Zechariah 1-8 corpus,¹⁹ nor does it matter greatly whether *ml'ky* is interpreted as a personal name or prophetic title.²⁰ Again, the question concerns

¹⁷The RSV translates the occurrences in Zechariah as titles in an absolute sense ("An Oracle"), while rendering the occurrence in Malachi as a construct ("An oracle of the word of the LORD"). The JB and the NIV are consistent in rendering all three alike.

¹⁸Childs argues strongly that the different structures among the three titles show sufficient dissimilarity to preclude any intended literary connection. Grammatically, however, this argument is untenable and in fact only proves that Malachi's separate status in the canon is "deeply rooted in its own tradition" (Introduction 492).

¹⁹J. M. Powis argues for this position, suggesting that the status of Malachi as an independent book came after its association with the rest of the twelve (*Malachi* [ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1912] 4); also G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968) 465, 469.

²⁰This is beyond the scope of the present study; see n. 17 *supra*.

the literary relationship of the materials within HZM (specifically of Malachi 1-4 to Zechariah 9-11; 12-14). From this perspective, considering the uniqueness of the titles and their close proximity, their function is sufficiently clear.

IV. THE INTERROGATIVE ELEMENT IN THE HZM CORPUS

Haggai's Sermons and Oracle:

Sermons:

1. *Whose house should get priority?* (1:3-11)
(Twofold response: vv 5-6; 7-11)
2. *How does this house compare with the previous?* (2:1-9)
(Twofold response: vv 4-5; 6-9)
3. *What is the condition of this people?* (2:10-19)
(Twofold response: vv 15-17; 18-19)

Oracle to Zerubbabel: No interrogative employed, although the element of prophetic dispute is present in veiled fashion (2:20-23)

Zechariah's Night Visions, Sermons and Oracles:

Introductory Challenge (1:1-6): *Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But did not my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your fathers?*

Night visions:

1. *What are these, my lord?*
Night patrol (1:7-17)
2. *What are these? What have these come to do?*
Horns and smiths (1:18-21)
3. *Where are you going?*
Measuring line (2:1-13)
4. *Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?*
Joshua the priest (3:1-10)
5. *What do you see? What are these, my lord? Do you not know what these are? What are you, O great mountain? What are these two olive trees? What are these two branches? Do you not know what these are?*
Lampstand (4:1-14)
6. *What do you see?*
Flying scroll (5:1-4)
7. *What is it? Where are they taking the ephah?*
Women and basket (5:5-11)
8. *What are these, my lord?*
Chariots (6:1-8)

Sermons:

1. No interrogative employed, although the element of prophetic dispute is clear (6:9-16)
2. *Was it for me that you fasted? Did you not eat and drink for yourselves?* (7:1-14)
3. *If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant, should it also be marvelous in my sight?* (8:1-23)

Oracles:

1. No interrogative employed, although the element of prophetic dispute is clear (chaps. 9-11)
2. No interrogative employed (chaps. 12-14)

Malachi's Oracle, Consisting of Six Sermons:

3. Third oracle in this series within HZM (chaps. 1-3):
 1. *How have you loved us?*
(The Lord loves and defends Israel; 1:2-5)
 2. *How have we despised your name? How have we polluted altar food?*
(Israel dishonors the Lord; 1:6-2:9)
 3. *Why does the Lord not accept them?*
(Israel's offerings are not accepted; 2:10-16)
 4. *How have we wearied him? Where is the God of justice?*
(Israel wears the Lord by failing to discern justice; 2:17-3:5)
 5. *How shall we return? How are we robbing you?*
(Israel robs the Lord; 3:6-12)
 6. *How have we spoken against you?*
(Israel speaks against the Lord; 3:13-15)

Frequent usage is made of a question/answer schema in the sermons, visions and oracles of HZM. For the most part this has been associated in previous studies with Haggai and Malachi.²¹ Keil, for instance, in evaluating the genre of Haggai points out a simplicity of style in the prophet's delivery "to which is given vivacity by the frequent use of interrogatives."²² In similar manner Mitchell compares this feature with Jeremiah's preaching, suggesting a debt owed by Haggai to the seventh-century prophet.²³

²¹In this manner Mason points out resemblances between Haggai and Malachi in both style and substance (*Haggai* 136-137). Cf. also the manner in which these two books are treated together by H. Wolf, *Haggai and Malachi: Rededication and Renewal* (Chicago: Moody, 1976) 5-6.

²²C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 2. 173.

²³H. G. Mitchell, *Haggai and Zechariah* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1912) 37, 100-101. Actually the method is quite rare in Biblical literature except for the book of Jeremiah, which uses it more often than Haggai. Again a dependency is seen, but this time on the part of Haggai.

To a greater extent the style is evident in Malachi. Powis refers to it as a "catechetical method, in accordance with which general statements are met by questions calling for nearer definition or for citations of fact."²⁴ Similarly, Mason entitles the phenomenon "prophetic dispute,"²⁵ Bennett dubs the prophet "the Hebrew Socrates,"²⁶ and Feinberg associates this dialectic form of instruction with the rabbinical discourse of later Judaism.²⁷

Unfortunately, that which has been highlighted in Haggai and Malachi has been overlooked almost entirely in Zechariah, the center member of this Socratic trilogy. Yet here also the element is present.

The clearest examples are found in the introductory challenge to the book (Zech 1:5-6) and in the sermons that follow the night visions (6:9-8:23). But this is not its full extent. Indeed a question/answer style plays an important role in the dialogue between the prophet and the interpreting angel of the night visions (chaps. 1-6), although the element of prophetic dispute is absent. Conversely, prophetic dispute can be seen in the shepherd/flock motif in Zechariah 11, whereas the interrogative element does not appear, a phenomenon also found in the oracle to Zerubbabel (Hag 2:20-23) that follows the sermons of Haggai.

Thus a consistent interrogative element is found throughout HZM, with a significant variant noted at Zechariah 9-14 (a change so abrupt that the careless reader might wish to dissociate these oracles from the earlier material if they were not so strongly tied by the literary connectors noted herein). Although the interrogatives employed are varied, the common element is strong enough to associate in the mind of the reader the entirety of HZM. As a result, one cannot but ask whether the sudden break in the flow of the book was not meant to draw the reader's attention to this vivid picture of a flock doomed for slaughter (Zechariah 11), which this study believes to be the focal point of the HZM corpus.

V. THE NARRATIVE GENRE OF THE HZM CORPUS

Haggai's Sermons and Oracles:

Introductory commentary: *The people felt it was not time to rebuild the temple*
(1:1-2)

Sermons:

1. Whose house should get priority? (1:3-11)

Response 1: Consider your plight (1:5-6)

Response 2: Consider your plight (1:7-11)

²⁴Powis notes further that this method was carried to extremes in the later rabbinical dialectics (*Malachi* 4).

²⁵Mason, *Haggai* 136.

²⁶T. M. Bennett also understands Malachi's rigid yet well-balanced use of the question/answer formula as "rare if not unique among the Old Testament prophets" ("Malachi" in *Broadman Bible Commentary* [Nashville: Broadman, 1972], 7. 369).

²⁷Feinberg, *Minor Prophets* 250.

Intermediate commentary: *The remnant begins to rebuild the temple* (1:12-15)

2. How does this house compare with the previous? (2:1-9)

Response 1: Take courage; the Lord is with you (2:4-5)

Response 2: In a little while he will act (2:6-9)

3. What is the condition of this people? (2:10-19)

Response 1: Consider from this day (2:15-17)

Response 2: Consider from this day (2:18-19)

Oracle to Zerubbabel: *A Davidic heir is made a symbol of the Lord's favor* (2:20-23)

Zechariah's Night Visions, Sermons and Oracles:

Introductory challenge: *The remnant is called to repentance* (1:1-6)

Night visions:

1. Night patrol (1:7-17)

2. Horns and smiths (1:18-21)

3. Measuring line (2:1-13)

4. Joshua the priest (3:1-10)

5. Lampstand (4:1-14)

6. Flying scroll (5:1-4)

7. Women and basket (5:5-11)

8. Chariots (6:1-8)

Sermons:

1. *The temple will be rebuilt if the people obey* (6:9-16)

2. Was it for me that you fasted? Do you not eat and drink for yourselves? (chap. 7)

3. If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant, should it also be marvelous in my sight? (chap. 8)

Oracles:

1. The Lord avenges Israel against the nations (9:1-11:3)

The worthless shepherds are rebuked (11:4-17)

2. The Lord promises blessing for Zion and Jerusalem (chaps. 12-14)

Malachi's Oracle, Consisting of Six Sermons:

3. Third oracle in this series within HZM (chaps. 1-3); *a parallel portrait to the encounter of the community with the sermons of Haggai*
 1. The Lord loves and defends Israel (1:2-5)
 2. Israel dishonors the Lord (1:6-2:9)
 3. Israel's offerings are not accepted (2:10-16)
 4. Israel wearies the Lord by failing to discern justice (2:17-3:5)
 5. Israel robs the Lord (3:6-12)
 6. Israel speaks against the Lord (3:13-15)

A final call to repentance based on Torah (3:16-4:6)

This section of the study differs from the first in that it is not concerned so much with the precise dating, nor even with the general era in which and to which the prophets spoke, but rather with the kind of literature that the HZM corpus comprises. To state it differently, if HZM contains literary elements of narrative, sermon, vision and prophetic oracle (at least), wherein does the heart of its message lie? It is the proposal of this study that the message of HZM is to be found (in its essence) in the "profile," painted in a literary fashion via the collection of the encounters of the prophets of the return with the postexilic community. The kind of literature, therefore, may rightly be termed "narrative" in much the same way the diverse collection of speech forms gathered together in the great prophetic history of Joshua through Kings is viewed as such.

In similar fashion Klostermann argued that the Haggai/Zechariah 1-8 section "originally belonged to an account of the rebuilding of the temple in the reign of Darius, chronologically arranged and probably edited by Zechariah."²⁸ In the same vein is the observation of Lowe who suggested that the oracles of Zechariah 9-11; 12-14; Malachi 1-4 were connected to Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 primarily for the purpose of preserving small anonymous works by means of attaching them to a larger corpus written by a famous person.²⁹ Although Klostermann and Lowe never developed their respective theses along the lines of the present study, and although their presuppositional bases may have differed from this writer's, together they have touched on some of the same literary connectors relating to HZM.

Further, it is instructive to notice that these books (especially Haggai/Zechariah 1-8) show some evidence of a third-party objectivity. This is especially evi-

²⁸A. Klostermann, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* 212 (cited by Mitchell, *Haggai* 27).

²⁹H. Lowe, *Hebrew Student's Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1882) xvi, cites rabbinical sources *B. Bat.* 14b; *Lev. Rab.* 15:2; *b. Mak.* 24b to support this proposition. The principle is hinted at also in R. H. Pfeiffer, *The Books of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1957) 603, where it is pointed out that Haggai is "historically interesting" primarily for the information that it provides; otherwise, little to nothing would be known of Judaism during this period in Persian history. Likewise Bewer sees the primary value of Haggai related to the history of the era. We would strongly disagree, though, with his indictment against the Haggai material. To say that any material that deals so directly with the rebuilding of the center of the nation's religious existence "has little or no religious value" is to totally misunderstand the importance of that institution for the remnant. Further, it has been our purpose in this study to show that Haggai (as well as Zechariah and Malachi) has significant literary importance that has been overlooked. Cf. J. A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament in Its Historical Development* (New York: Columbia, 1924) 236.

dent in Hag 1:12-15, where the results of the prophet's preaching are recorded, and may even be discernible in Mal 3:1 if one understands there a veiled glimpse at the ministry of the prophet himself. This is supported, in part, by the reference in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to "the messenger, who is also called Ezra the scribe." Although the tradition connecting the work with Ezra may be merely legendary, none the less it demonstrates an early witness to a prophet-scribe associated with the *mal'ākī* portion of the material under discussion.

More recently the studies of Beuken and Mason have both touched on this particular literary connector as it relates to the earlier portion of HZM,³⁰ although their approaches differ considerably in that they are concerned with the alleged earlier stages of redaction of the corpus. Specifically, Beuken suggests that the material was edited in a "Chronistic milieu" whereas Mason argues for an association with the so-called "Deuteronomistic tradition."

As in Haggai, so this narrative element is readily discernible in the oracle of Malachi as Mason notes elsewhere: "[T]he book of Malachi opens a window on the little-known conditions of Judaism after the exile."³¹ This study would concur that in the "I-you" dialogue of "the messenger of YHWH" with his people the character of the community at this crucial juncture in its history is laid bare.

Similarly the prophecies of Zechariah open with a strong emphasis on the generation to whom Haggai preached (Zech 1:2-6). These same returnees are included in the night visions (3:6-10), are challenged in the sermon that follows the night visions (6:15), appear as the subject of the sermons in chaps. 7-8, and are ultimately the subject of the shepherd/flock motif in Zechariah 11.³²

It is not possible in the present study to develop at any length the theme of HZM, which appears to be both single in its focus and negative in its tone. A future study in this area has been set aside for that purpose.³³ However, a brief summary of the intended direction of that study should prove helpful here.

If the HZM corpus is read as a literary unit, it would be found to be focused sharply on the generation that returned with Zerubbabel in the spring of 521 B.C.³⁴ to rebuild the desolated temple at Jerusalem. Its first section (Haggai)

³⁰W. A. M. Beuken, *Haggai-Sacharja 1-8: Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der frühmexilischen Prophetie*, Studia Semitica Neerlandica 10 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967) 35. In his study he observes a direct relationship between the editor of Haggai/Zechariah 1-8 and the Chronicler. In contrast, Mason points out several elements that would also support an association with the Deuteronomist. Both understand the editor's purpose as that of relating the predictions of Haggai to the actual situation that emerged at a later date ("Purpose" 420-421).

³¹Mason, *Haggai* 135.

³²It is not relevant to this study whether the material had a pre-exilic or postexilic *Vorlage* as Baldwin suggests (*Haggai* 63-64). In its present position it is clearly intended to be applied to the subjects of the dialogues in Zechariah 1-8.

³³A forthcoming article, "Stylistic Criticism and Exegesis in Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi," will attempt to put this theory into practice, developing the single message of HZM in detail. Attention will there be given to the deeper literary strata present in the corpus, which this preliminary study was not able to address.

³⁴The precise dating for the return of Zerubbabel is defended in an unpublished study by this writer entitled "The Return of Zerubbabel in the Spring of 521 B.C.: Reconsidered."

shows the initial contact of the prophets with the people, yielding a reluctant and temporary response. This is followed by a solemn warning (Zech 1:2-6) for the remnant not to behave like their fathers to whom the former prophets spoke. Generous offers for an age of salvation are seen in the night visions of Zechariah, as had been heard in the sermons of Haggai; yet the response continues to be questionable at best (cf. the interrogative element in Zechariah 7-8). Finally, the climax is reached in the more traditional oracles of Zechariah 9-14 (in their form somewhat reminiscent of the pre-exilic prophets), in which the remnant is portrayed as a miserable flock of sheep doomed to slaughter (Zechariah 11). The concluding oracle of the corpus (Malachi) is then quite anticlimactic, depicting in much the same fashion in which the corpus began a community in disharmony with the word of YHWH that came by the hand of his messenger.

VI. CONCLUSION

It has been proposed herein that the last three books of the canon of the twelve, the Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi corpus, form a meaningful literary unity not only for an understanding of early postexilic Judaism (c. 520-480 B.C.) but also for the exegesis of the text itself. Furthermore this corpus reveals several literary connectors that tie it together into a coherent whole in a literary as well as a thematic sense. After examining these connecting links, it is concluded that the theme woven into the fiber of the collections of the prophets' sermons, visions and oracles (perhaps by no more than the "prophetic spirit of their age"³⁵) is essentially negative in its tone, painting a sober portrait of the remnant community to whom the prophets spoke. In this important work the reader is provided with a counterpart to such pre-exilic prophet-historians as the writer of the Joshua-through-Kings history. There one finds a confession before YHWH of the people's failure with regard to covenant fidelity prior to the captivity. Here it is discovered that the postexilic community (indeed, even the remnant) found the need to make a similar confession.

³⁵The idea was contributed by Edward Curtis at the 1983 spring meeting of the Old Testament Colloquium of Biola University.