This is the fifth volume published in the Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible series. The previous volumes are *Jonah* (2006), *Amos* and *Genesis 1–11* (2008), and *Ruth* (2010). The description of the series, as stated by Baylor University Press is: “Rather than devote space to the type of theological and exegetical comments found in most commentaries, this series instead focuses on the Hebrew text and its related issues, syntactic and otherwise. The volumes in the series serve as prequels to commentary proper, providing guides to understanding the linguistic characteristics of the texts from which the messages of the texts may then be derived.” Thus, this series aims for a particular niche that is narrow yet well in need of such a resource, and I would judge the series to have met, thus far, its stated aim.

The Malachi volume is very much in step with the earlier books within the series, as the distinctive focus upon the grammatical and linguistic characteristics of the text is truly the main feature of the book. It is, indeed, a handbook in its conciseness and design. That is, I perceive it to be a useful tool for students who, having completed a first-year Hebrew course, are ready to commence reading some biblical texts. For that particular audience, this is surely a very attractive and welcome type of resource. It conveniently bundles a lot of grammatical and linguistic information about a given passage that one normally would need to garner from a wide variety of sources. For that reason alone it may be especially useful for novice readers who are not yet wholly familiar with the many resources that
may potentially be consulted in running down such information about the Hebrew text. In that way, this handbook can function as a one-stop location for grammatical help as one commences to translate from the text of Malachi. While there are picky faults one can find in nearly any book of this nature (I will enumerate a few later), my general impression is that this particular volume and the series, in general, is a success given the design, scope, and goal of the project.

The book consists of a list of abbreviations (xi–xiii), an introduction (1–5), an analysis of the text of Malachi (7–120), two appendices (121–37), a glossary (139–42), a bibliography (143–50), and an index in three parts: Scripture and other ancient sources, author, and subject (151–60). The general appearance of the book is pleasing, and its compact size is appealing. The Hebrew font is a nice size in comparison to the English text within which it is oftentimes embedded. This makes reading the Hebrew text on the page very easy.

The general organization of the content is clear and intuitive. Eddinger divides the complete text of Malachi into six oracles preceded by the superscription (1:1). The first oracle is 1:2–5. The second oracle is 1:6–2:9, and he divides that into four parts (1:6–8, 9–13, 14, and 2:1–9). The third oracle encompasses 2:10–16. The fourth oracle is 2:17–3:5. The fifth oracle includes 3:6–12, and the sixth oracle is made up of 3:13–21 (English = 3:13–4:3). The pattern of presentation for each pericope is: (1) English translation, (2) brief summary statement of the character of the pericope, (3) a chart of key words within the section, (4) verse-by-verse presentation of the Hebrew text that is further broken down by clauses, phrases, and sometimes individual words, (5) complete parsing of the clauses and phrases followed by a statement of grammatical/linguistic insights, information, and comment. In this way, the author packages much content in a concisely presented way.

One should address the usefulness of this volume for those among the stated audience: students who are relative beginners. Therefore, I actually used a portion of this book in an undergraduate reading class that joins second- and third-year Hebrew students together. Six students in the course had the task of reading and preparing a translation of Mal 3 by using Eddinger’s text. I solicited their comments and opinions concerning the book, and I have included a few of their remarks and sentiments along with my observations below.

In places Eddinger’s translation seems quite wooden to the point of yielding somewhat awkward-sounding English sentences. For example, “And this is the second thing you do, covering with tears the altar of Yahweh, weeping and groaning, because there is no one anymore looking to the offering and taking pleasure from your hand (32:13).” Not that this needs to detract from the usefulness of this book, but it just does not always present an eloquent translation.
In his discussion on “Using this Handbook” (5), Eddinger states, “The key word charts list words that have significant meaning for the text.” Yet some might well argue that his selections of these key words seem somewhat arbitrary, as no rationale beyond that single sentence addresses why he sees those particular words as “significant” compared to others. That being said, the key-words charts actually are a nice feature of the presentation that students found interesting and useful. Difficulty arose for students when unfamiliar nomenclature was used without adequate definition or explanation. For example, Eddinger states (111), “The waw relative indicating sequence with the perfect form of הָיָה usually has a deictic temporal function.” He is alluding to Waltke and O’Connor (§32.2.6), but this is not helpful to students at all. Deictic is not in Eddinger’s glossary. Waltke and O’Connor does have a glossary entry for deixis but does not have the form deictic. Most students would not be able to make the leap between the forms deictic and deixis back to δείκνυμι in order to glean anything useful here. This is a consistent problem in that many times technical terms used by Eddinger are not given in his glossary. For example, nun paragogicum (23) is in the index but is absent from the glossary. Also, Eddinger cites “desiderative clause” (23), drawn from Gesenius’s grammar (GKC), but the term does not appear in this glossary. These are just a few samples from a considerable list of terms that are employed within the book but nowhere defined. For instructors and, perhaps, graduate students of some experience, this may not be a substantial hurdle. However, for the intended audience, this considerable gap between use and explanation of technical terms is a weakness.

Thus, there would seem to be a tradeoff in using this book for students who are truly relative novices. First, there is the rather daunting level of linguistic and grammatical jargon consistently employed within its pages without adequate explanation. The good news is this handbook presents a good opportunity for beginning students to get their feet wet in some of the technical nomenclature that is part of the study of the Hebrew text. The bad news is that most first-year courses and textbooks do not deal with the terminology on anywhere near the level of what is presented in this book. Therefore, as a teaching resource, the instructor needs to sell the students on its usefulness and the necessity for building a vocabulary of the technical terms used in the craft of translation.

A somewhat detracting aspect of this book is the number of miscellaneous technical errors it contains. These are found predominately within the English translation sections. There are many grammatical errors, especially in the form of run-on sentences. Other types of errors occur with some regularity right from the start to the very end. For example, the first paragraph of the introduction contains the following sentence. “The purpose of this handbook is aid [sic] the student or translator in the translation process, especially to assist with grammar and syntax” (1). The English translation of 2:10–16 (54) commences, “Does [sic] not all of us have one father?” While the technical glitches occur
most frequently in English, there are a few errors in the Hebrew text. For example, chart I (121), in listing all the Hebrew words occurring in Malachi, אֲדוֹם is listed instead of אֱדוֹם, as the form of Edom. Also, φλἐξει should be φλέξει (111). While the √ symbol is usually employed to specify a true root (e.g., √כשף), Eddinger cites roots throughout by always giving them in qal, even if it is an unattested form (e.g., √כשף). Yet, this may be a bit nitpicky in the scope of what the book does accomplish.

In conclusion, while the text is in need of some technical revisions, it certainly had some appeal to students who used it class. They found it to be handy and beneficial. The verdict from the student perspective was positive, although they found the level of technical jargon to be daunting. Overall, this book is a handy resource that serves its stated purpose quite well.