Consistent with other Anchor Bible volumes, the strengths of Hill's commentary on Malachi lie in his excellent discussion of linguistic issues and the combination of historical, literary, and theological approaches to the text. In addition to the standard AB format, Hill provides his readers with some helpful appendices: "Appendix A: von Bulmerincq's Categories for Dating Malachi," "Appendix B: Typological Analysis of the Postexilic Prophets," "Appendix C: Intertextuality in the Book of Malachi," and "Appendix D: Vocabulary Richness in the Book of Malachi."

Hill argues that the prophet Malachi was active around 500 BCE during a period of increasing skepticism due to the failure of earlier prophetic promises (e.g., Haggai, Zechariah 1-8; p. 83). Malachi's response to this skepticism included the proclamation of Yahweh's continuing love for Israel and a call to repentance. Hill understands the book of Malachi to include the prophet's oracles (1:2-3:21) with a redactional superscription (1:1) and two redactional appendices, one concerning Moses (3:22) and the other Elijah (3:23-24; p. 12). Hill suggests that the redactional appendices are associated with the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah, which brings the Latter Prophets to its final canonical form and ties the Latter Prophets to both sections of the already completed Primary History: Torah and Former Prophets (p. 365).

From this reviewer's perspective, there are two areas where Hill depends too heavily upon the work of his mentor and the series' editor, David Noel Freedman, and does not adequately engage with the recent writings of other scholars. These two areas concern:
Hill contends that the redactional additions of the two appendices to the book of Malachi bring to completion not only the book of Malachi, but also the Book of the Twelve and the Latter Prophets. His suggestion that Ezra and Nehemiah are responsible for these appendices as well as for the final shape of the Primary History and Latter Prophets follows closely the arguments made by Freedman in 1963 (p. 14). Hill's dependence on Freedman leads to several conclusions now contradicted by recent text-critical evidence. One example will suffice. He writes, "Both Jewish and Christian traditions have always positioned Malachi last among the Twelve Prophets" (p.12; emphasis mine); 4QXII⁶, however, contradicts this statement in that it has Malachi followed by Jonah. In fact, text-critical evidence suggests that Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah were the last books added to the Book of the Twelve based on the different ordering found in extant textual witnesses (see B. A. Jones, The Formation of the Book of the Twelve [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995]). Therefore, even if Ezra and Nehemiah were responsible for the appendices in the book of Malachi, they did not produce the final shape of the Book of the Twelve, much less the Latter Prophets.

If Ezra and Nehemiah added the appendices to Malachi's oracles, then Malachi's prophetic career must have been earlier. Although this logic is not explicit in Hill's commentary, I think that it may have had a significant influence on his early dating of the prophet Malachi. After reviewing various arguments, Hill notes that there is a "certain consensus, namely, Malachi is a prophet of the postexilic era best associated with the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah" (pp. 80-81). Hill's argument coincided with this consensus in his 1981 dissertation, when he dated Malachi to 515-458 BCE by use of Polzin's linguistic, typological analysis (p. 82). In this commentary, Hill now dates Malachi more precisely to about 500 BCE based primarily upon his refinement of this same method. Although Polzin's method certainly has value, I am extremely skeptical about its ability to pinpoint so accurately an author's date, especially when the result of this approach appears to contradict other methods. In addition, three themes that Hill discusses in relationship to the period following the rededication of the Temple under Zerubbabel (i.e., about 500 BCE ) fit equally well, if not better, during or immediately before the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah--that is, the population's skepticism due to failed prophetic promises, Malachi's call to close the Temple, and Malachi's indictment against intermarriage. Therefore, Hill's dating of Malachi to 500 BCE is unconvincing.

These two problematic areas primarily concern Hill's introductory comments placing the prophet in his historical context and the interpretation of the two redactional appendices and their canonical implications. His translation, notes, and comments on the text of the book itself (especially 1:1-3:21) will still prove helpful to many readers.