

THE SOURCE AND AUTHORITY OF PROPHECY IN THE  
OLD TESTAMENT PERIOD

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of Arts in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the  
Department of Religious Studies

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

1979

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank many people for their ministry of encouragement, without which this thesis would never have been completed: notable amongst these are my family and the staff of the Parish of St. John the Evangelist, Wynberg.

I am also much indebted to Mrs. Dorps Murcott for her patience and skill in typing the manuscripts.

Above all my gratitude goes to Professor Cumpsty for sowing many seed thoughts and allowing them to germinate slowly, and also for his ready availability on so many occasions.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Our thesis is that the prophet in the Old Testament period was an ordinary man with a specific ministry. His ministry was both to communicate the word of God to man and also to be consulted by man about the hidden things of life.

We consider some of the many factors which went to constitute the prophet the man he was and thus enable him to have that assurance of being God's spokesman. These factors are both the religious experiences to which he laid claim, and the many human influences that derived from his family life, the accumulating tradition which he inherited and upon which he was nurtured, and the varied experiences that came his way in his personal life.

The prophet shared the same traditions as his contemporaries. From the richness of these traditions arose a bifurcated assessment of the contemporary scene. We thus consider the prophetic confrontation of true versus false prophets and endeavour to empathize with the agony of dilemma as to where the truth lay. This agony was experienced by prophet and people alike, but ultimately each man had to make his own decision as to what was truth and how to act accordingly.

Since the Old Testament canon is closed we are presented only with the canonical judgment of this bifurcation, and adequate evidence is not available to make a second opinion. However, although the contents of the canon cannot be judged in its detail, it is open to the judgment of history in its totality. There is, we suggest, an intangible factor about the prophetic traditions as a whole which is incompatible with other views of God and the cosmos. This is an enriching quality which finds its origins in the Old Testament but has been developing ever since in Judaism, Christianity and technological exploration and is yet open to the judgment of history for its evaluation.

## 2. THE NATURE OF PROPHECY

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section we take an essentially phenomenological approach and consider prophecy in its nature as communication. The cornerstone of prophetic declaration is "Thus saith the Lord"; the Biblical understanding is that God has a message for his people and the prophets are his messengers.

Our central concern is the prophet's reception and delivery of his message. This is related to his self assurance, for he never seemed conscious of doubt that it was indeed a word from the Lord. The fact of his confidence is clearer to us than the source of his confidence. On occasions the source is mentioned but most frequently not. When it is mentioned it seems to derive from some personal or religious experience, a call, a dream or vision, or the claim to stand in the heavenly council, but when it is not mentioned we have no evidence from which to assume any particular source or experience.

It is this paucity of material that cautions us against various conclusions which it would otherwise be tempting to draw. Our evidence comes from a handful of very prominent men covering some eight centuries of history recorded by people with varying theological concerns. Attempts to fill in the gaps or to let the imagination jump to logical conclusions may in fact conceal more than they reveal. We must therefore question certain assumptions too easily made, particularly those that concern the creativity of the prophetic word and evolutionary ideas in Israelite prophetism.

We will then consider the relationship between the ordinary man and the prophet. There are two elements in this. One is the intelligent response asked of him in discerning and obeying the authentic message of the Lord; the other is very different and concerns his personal life and his use of the prophet as a means of enquiring of God about those matters which cause him anxiety.

Finally we consider the questions of fulfilment and canonicity as validating the authenticity of prophecy.

## 2.2 THE PROPHET'S RECEPTION OF THE WORD

Living in an age of tolerance, doubt and committees we find it hard to appreciate the extreme self-assurance with which the prophets of Israel spoke. Professor S.H. Blank entitled his Goldensen lecture in 1955 "Of a truth the Lord hath sent me", being an enquiry into the source of the prophet's authority. He states that the strongest argument that the prophet has is simply his affirmation "The Lord has sent me" (Jer 26.12-15). Jeremiah claims as the source for his authority an experience of God and an intimacy with God (6.11; 15.17) stemming from his call (1.7,9). Blank says

Jeremiah rests his case with the prima facie evidence of the message itself as the final test of its authenticity and his own veracity (Goldensen Lectures, 1969, p.17)

The prophets were more concerned with the fact that they spoke at the behest of the Lord than with the means by which they received their message. "Thus saith the Lord", "The word of the Lord came to me", "Hear the word of the Lord", these affirmations are adequate for the prophet, he relies more on the content to authenticate his message than either the means of its revelation or the manner of its delivery. It is thus for the hearer to discern whether the message comes indeed from God or not, and to decide what response to make to the words of the prophet.

However, the prophets and the Biblical editors and historians do indicate from time to time the source of the prophetic word. We now consider this under the headings (1) the prophet's call, (2) the prophet's claim to stand in the Council of the Lord and (3) the prophet's experiences.

### 2.2.1 THE PROPHET'S CALL

The Biblical narratives show considerable interest in the fact that many prophets had a specific call to their ministry. Yet, for many others we have a minimum of biographical detail; this is true both amongst the "Writing Prophets" as well as amongst those mentioned in the historical narratives. But in those instances where we have more biographical detail a call is almost invariably mentioned. Elijah is perhaps the major

exception. E.Jacob goes so far as to say that the prophet's call differentiates him from other men and also from "false prophets" (E.Jacob, 1967, p. 239).

Similarly Lindblom:

The legitimacy of the true prophet and the authority of his message are established by his call. He knew that he was properly called by Yahweh to carry out his task. The false prophet is declared to be such, and his visions and messages are rejected as valueless, not because he did not have visions and ecstatic experiences, but because he had not been called. (J.Lindblom, 1973, p.182)

It is, however, rash to draw such conclusions, as they are based on silence. There is no evidence that all "true" prophets received a call, nor that "false" prophets could not claim to be called. Indeed we do not know how prophets were recruited either in Israel or amongst her neighbours. All we know of the "false" prophets is what the canonical prophets said of them. To acquiesce too readily in the subsequent canonical judgment of the situation overlooks the real agony of dilemma that must have been experienced by many thinking people amongst the prophets' contemporaries.

#### Significance of the Call

In most instances we know little of a prophet's life before his call, so we do not know whether his call experience was a discontinuous event or whether it was related to or a continuation of previous experiences, loyalties and attitudes.

If the former is true, that the call is unrelated to previous experience, it could be suggested that subsequent prophetic messages were also discontinuous events arising from ecstatic experience with minimum allowance being made for the prophet's personality.

If the latter is true, it should be possible to trace a spiritual pilgrimage along which the prophet proceeded. The call would then be a significant point, or even a turning point, but nevertheless a logical step in that pilgrimage.

E.Jacob says "before being called, the majority of the prophets led a life of obedience and even intimacy with God", (*op.cit.* p.242) and John Skinner sees the call of the young Jeremiah as a continuation of his own piety. (J. Skinner, 1961, p.26).

There is evidence to support this view, albeit slender. We must first note that the call is not into a new relationship with God but to a new ministry; it is not a question of status, which might imply authority, but a question of mission. "I will send you" (Ex 3.10), "I tell him" (1 Sam 3.13), "Whom shall I send?" (Is 6.8), "Go, take a wife" (Hos 1.2; 3.1), "I appointed you" (Jer 1.5), "I send you" (Ezk 2.3), "Go, prophesy" (Am 7.15). We can also trace a continuity of outlook or concern sometimes in the call experience and what we knew of the prophet's earlier life and attitude.

Moses, despite his upbringing in the court of Pharaoh with all its privileges, still yearns for his kinsmen who were being oppressed (Ex 2.11) as well as for other social underdogs (Ex 2.17). It is accordingly with the spirit of compassion that the Lord persuades Moses to return to Egypt (Ex 3.7).

Samuel was prepared for his initial ministry to Eli by the advent of the man of God who castigated Eli for his failure as a parent (1 Sam 2.27-36).

Isaiah was in the Temple at the time of his call, very clearly a call to ministry rather than status. Isaiah 1.1 suggests that he had already been active as a prophet in the reign of Uzziah. Chapters 1-5 could include some of his preaching at that time. Isaiah 6 may then be either a renewal call or a call to perseverance. Just as Jeremiah had a second call (Jer 15.19-21) in terms similar to his first (cf. 1.8), so also may Isaiah have had.

There are other elements in Isaiah's call which show a note of continuity. There is the contrast between the dead king Uzziah and the everliving King, the Lord of Hosts; there is also the contrast between the holiness of the Lord of Hosts, and the sense of sin in Isaiah and the people. The use of the name Uzziah rather than Azariah may be a reminder too of the sanctity of the temple which the king had violated, according to the Chronicler's tradition (2 Chr 26.16-21). Isaiah's call is in keeping with his prior reflections and his subsequent preaching with its stress on the Lord as King, and the Holy One of Israel.

### Summary

We therefore incline to the view that a prophet's call was a natural development of his spiritual pilgrimage, crystallizing his prior convictions that something needs to be said and done, and discovering to his surprise that it is he who is to say it and do it. By way of example we can hypothesize that Jeremiah had already analysed the situation of his people - much needed to be broken down and destroyed before a new beginning could be made (Jer 1.10). When God broke in on his meditations it was the timing rather than the calling that surprised him, and also that he should be the one chosen rather than someone else.

### Types of Call

We have noted an interest in the Bible in the call of certain prophets and we have suggested that the significance of the call is that it is to a specific ministry. The number of call narratives in the Bible is very few. Of over 40 named prophets calls are described in detail only for Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, although references are also made to the call of Elisha and Amos. For the study of call narratives those of Gideon and Saul might be added for their call was also to ministry, though not to prophetic ministry.

There are points of similarity in these narratives but each is distinct in itself. R.E.Clements quotes Zimmerli as categorizing call narratives into two basic types:

- (a) The divine overcoming of a sense of inadequacy and consequent reluctance on the part of the person called, e.g. Moses, Gideon, Saul and Jeremiah.
- (b) A vision of God and summons to the deliberations of the heavenly council e.g. Micaiah ben Imlah, Isaiah and Ezekiel. (R.E.Clements, 1975, p.34).

Even this apparently simple codification has its problems. Jeremiah should perhaps appear in both categories since he more than any other speaks of standing in the council of the Lord. It needs also to be pointed out that we know nothing in fact of Micaiah's call. The episode in 1 Kings 22 covers only one day in his ministry while bearing witness to considerable previous activity (v.8).

We would not want to use these two basic types for purposes of classification; they may well be different elements in the same call experience, underlining on the one hand the divine initiative and on the other the human response, rather than different types of call. It may be observed that those calls revealing the human response are generally recorded in the historical sections of the Bible and those revealing the divine initiative in the prophetic sections. They may thus reflect different interests of the authors or editors.

R.E.Clements notes that a warning of rejection and hostility is common to all the prophetic call narratives. He questions whether this was a genuine part of the prophetic call or whether it reflects back their subsequent experience. Alternatively he suggests that it could be a genuine part of the call and "simply reflects earlier prophetic experience". (*op.cit.* p.36).

Neither of these explanations seems necessary. It must have been abundantly clear to Jeremiah, for instance, at the time of his call that his message would be unwelcome and he would be rejected; this would explain his reluctance and sense of inadequacy. One does not need to suggest either that this was a writing back of later experience or that it was a reflection of the experience of previous prophets.

### Conclusion

Each call experience was unique and involved both a call from God and the response of the individual. The prophet would have known of the calls and responses of earlier prophets, but we do not believe that this knowledge would have structured his own call or the narrating of it.

The most noticeable aspect is the complete assurance that the Lord had spoken and commissioned him and that he was to bring the word of God to his people. He did not validate his message by reference to his call (with the possible exception of Amos), nor to any particular status or authority accorded by it, but relied solely on his conviction that he spoke the word of God.

### 2.2.2 THE PROPHET'S CLAIM TO STAND IN THE COUNCIL OF THE LORD

As with the Call Narratives, so also either too much or too little significance can be attached to the references to a Heavenly Council.

The Heavenly Council with its Ugaritic background is seen as one way of expressing the prophet's relationship to the Lord and the source of his message, and also by implication its authority.

It will be helpful to explore the information at our disposal first by considering the word used for Council [תִּיָּא] and then by considering other references to the same idea couched in other terminology.

### The Word תִּיָּא (Council)

תִּיָּא occurs 21 times in the Old Testament (see Appendix 3) and covers several facets of the same idea. It may refer either to the gathering itself (council) or to its deliberations (counsel); it may be used in a good sense or a bad sense and may concern a purely human gathering (13 times) or a gathering which includes the Lord and/or his angels (8 times). תִּיָּא also concerns the fellowship and confidence engendered by the council and may thus be used on an individual rather than collective basis.

Of the 8 references which involve divine participation four refer to the friendship of the Lord (Job 29.4; Ps 25.14; Pr 3.22; Am 3.7) and only four to what is more technically understood as the Heavenly Council (Job 15.8; Ps 89.8; Jer 23.18, 22).

If we had only these last four verses to rely on, our understanding of the Heavenly Council would be very sketchy. However, there are other references to the same idea.

### Other References

Psalm 89 which refers to the Council (תִּיָּא) in v.8 speaks of it also in v.5 as "the assembly of the Holy Ones" (אִשְׁתֵּי שָׁמַיִם). The difficult phrase in v.38 (פִּי שָׁמַיִם וְיָי) may also refer to the Council and need not be emended, viz: "the faithful witness in the sky" i.e. the Council has determined it; together with v.6 it is the only use of פִּי שָׁמַיִם in the singular referring to the skies. The whole section of this Psalm (vv. 5-37) describes the faithfulness of the Lord surrounding him in his Council and extended by covenant to David on earth. It recalls Nathan's prophecy of 2 Sam 7 promising an enduring dynasty (2 Sam 7.13; Ps 89.35f). If the covenant issued from the Heavenly Council the question at the end of the Psalm (49-51) is all the more poignant.

Psalm 82.1 speaks of the divine council (שָׁמַיִם יְיָ). James Ross quotes this as further support for the Heavenly Council (B.W.Anderson and W. Harrelson, 1962, p.102), but Derek Kidner observes that the company here is present to be judged, not consulted, and so cannot refer to the Heavenly Council (D. Kidner, 1975, p.298). However, the picture is not clear in the Psalm. The "gods" of v.1 may have been summoned to appear before the Council rather than being part of the Council. Whether or not this is a reference to the Heavenly Council must therefore remain in doubt.

Job (1.6; 2.1) refers to occasions when "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord". However this may be understood, it is interesting to note that it is unique in being the only reference in which the sovereignty of the Lord is challenged by an adversary. The Heavenly Council (תִּיָּו) is referred to in 15.8 by Eliphaz but as being unattainable by mortal man. This is of a piece with the whole book, for Job's dilemma would never have existed had he known of its deliberations and the esteem in which he was held by the Lord.

I Kings 22.19-23 records a vision in which Micaiah saw "the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven (צְבָאוֹת שָׁמַיִם) standing beside him on his right hand and on his left." This is the only reference to the Heavenly Council in which any individual makes a contribution viz "to be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets". This is the clearest example of what Jeremiah means by "standing in the council of the Lord" (23.18, 22) for this is where the prophet "perceives and hears his word" (v.18) so as to proclaim it to his people that they may "turn from their evil way" (v.22). This picture of the Heavenly Council probably derives from the earthly Royal Court, to which, for example, Micaiah was summoned: the kings seated on their thrones with the prophets gathered before them (1 K 22.10).

The next extension of this theme is in Isaiah, who would also have been well acquainted with the Court in Jerusalem. In his call vision he sees the Heavenly King seated on his throne with his Royal Cortège about him (Is 6.1). Here too a duty needs to be performed and an eager response made. "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" (v.8). This idea of commission is also noted by Jeremiah when speaking of the Heavenly Council, except that the Lord speaks there of messengers that have gone unbidden and delivered messages not given them (Jer 23.21).

It may further be considered that the Heavenly Council is part of the Isaianic tradition. Thus Judah is summoned to it in 1.18-20. Deutero-Isaiah listens daily to the Lord's deliberations 50.4f; indeed 40.1-11 may be quite a full picture of the way in which he received his instructions.

### Conclusion

The evidence we have for the Heavenly Council is at once slight yet clear but wide in scope, and also patent of considerable expansion. The problem is to determine which parts of Scripture clearly indicate such a Council rather than fit with the theory.

Given the theory of the Heavenly Council much can be made to fit it. Ross sees its deliberations as being carried out in the phrase "let us" in Gen 1.26; 3.22 and 11.7 (*op.cit.* p.102). This is surmise; others interpret these verses as a reference to the Trinity or simply to the plural of sovereignty. Other theologians, such as Lindblom, use the theory of the Heavenly Council as a means of determining which prophets are true (those admitted to it) and which false (those not so admitted) (J.Lindblom, 1973, p.182). There is again little evidence to support this assertion, for Jeremiah and Micaiah are the only prophets to lay claim to being involved in it.

The word  $\text{רָיָה}$  is not a technical term; it appears almost entirely in the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Jeremiah and with a wide connotation. For instance the three references in Job refer to his intimate friends (19.19) to his earlier friendship with God (29.4) as well as to the council of God (15.8); and the gatherings in chapters 1 and 2 are not referred to by that name.

The clearest picture is presented by Jeremiah and Micaiah patterned on the human Royal Court but it cannot be assumed that every prophet knew this consciously as the source of his prophetic insight and message. It is a natural image to use and may have also been drawn from the Ugaritic. The terms  $\text{רָיָה}$  and  $\text{לְבַיִת}$  are found also in Ugaritic texts as also are  $\text{מַלְאֲכֵי$  (angels, messengers)  $\text{קְדָשִׁים}$  (holy ones) and  $\text{בְּנֵי-אֱלֹהִים}$  (sons of God). Because of this Ugaritic background to the Heavenly Council, Horsfeld and Meyer deny the authenticity of Jer 23.18-22 (1973, p.83), yet this does not invalidate the concept in Israelite religion. Hebrew poetry also drew on the earlier concepts of its Ugaritic predecessors, but showed discernment in rejecting what was not compatible with Israelite faith.

We conclude therefore that although the Heavenly Council is a Scriptural concept, its membership, functioning and purpose are uncertain and it is referred to in a variety of terminology. No clear link can be made between a prophet's call and his summons to the Council, and apart from Micaiah and Jeremiah no prophet makes a clear claim to participate therein, although Jeremiah infers that all prophets would be able to stand in the Council of the Lord (23.22). To those who were conscious of standing in it, however, there belonged a strong sense of assurance that they spoke as messengers of God.

### 2.2.3 THE PROPHETS' EXPERIENCES

We must now consider experiences other than a call and standing in the Heavenly Council which enabled the prophet to say "Thus saith the Lord", namely dreams and visions.

The acceptance of dreams and visions as a means of divine communication has a long history. From the days of Abraham to the prophecy of Joel they are well attested with the presumption that these were neither the first nor the last to be recorded.

The relationship of dreams to visions is not clear; it may be that visions were received in the daytime and dreams at night, but this may be too simple a distinction.

God, the Bible records, came to Abimelech in a dream by night (Gen 20.3) to reveal to him that the woman he had taken was Abraham's wife. He appeared likewise at night to Isaac in Gerar (26.24) to Jacob in Bethel (28.11) and in Haran (31.10-13) and to Laban (31.24); it was at night time that a man wrestled with Jacob (32.24) and that God spoke to him in his old age telling him to go down to Egypt (46.2).

Joseph's experience of dreams was also considerable but his dreams were of a different nature. Whereas the others mentioned contained a clear message in verbal form Joseph's were entirely visual and needed interpreting. This is true both of his own at the age of 17 (37.5-10) as well as those of the Baker, Butler and Pharaoh (40,41).

In the remainder of the Pentateuch the only nocturnal communication mentioned is of that to Balaam (Num 22). The verbal content is stressed and

it is not called a dream, although on both occasions the conversation is at night and the same phrase (וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֵלָיו) "and God came to" is used as in Gen 20.3 and 31.24.

By contrast God speaks to Moses in the daytime at the Bush and in the Tent of Meeting. Nm 12.6-8 both clarifies and confuses the issue. God says that to a prophet he makes himself known in a vision, he speaks with him in a dream. Moses is distinguished by his faithfulness (אֱמֻנָה) and God speaks to him mouth to mouth, clearly and not in dark speech. The implication is that God speaks with his prophets in riddles and obscure utterances, in a way that needs interpreting (so also Hos 12.10). Miriam and Aaron claimed also to have been used as God's messengers (v.2) but we lack evidence of the nature of their sayings.

Nm 12.8 does however elucidate the claims of several of the classical prophets, who condemned their contemporaries of prophesying lies substantiated by the claim: "I have dreamed" (Jer 23.5). The dream because of its dramatic appeal was again given precedence over other forms of revelation (Dt 13.1-5; Jer 23.27). The dream is contrasted with a clear word of God like straw to wheat; one cannot nourish, the other can (Jer 23.28). The dream which is a vehicle for the wrong message is deceptive and will lead men astray (Jer 29.8; Zc 10.2; Ezk 13.16; Mic 3.5).

Because the prophets had been discredited with their dreams of peace that were not fulfilled Zechariah says they will be ashamed of their visions and removed by the Lord (13.2-5). Joel however sees a renewal of their ministry (2.28).

The dream is part of the form of a message and does not necessarily validate its content. Sometimes the visual element predominates and sometimes the verbal.

To those outside the covenant, with the exception of Abimelech (Gen 20.3), the visual predominates. In this way the man of God is able to move fully into the situation, so Joseph with the Butler, the Baker and Pharaoh.

In most cases the verbal element is reported (whether or not there was much or any visual content) as it is the message that is supreme. In 1 Chr 1.7 we read "In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him 'Ask what I shall give you'". At 7.12 we read "The Lord appeared to Solomon in the

night and said to him 'I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice.'". The question comes to mind: was Solomon conscious or asleep at these moments? In the latter one would say he was conscious and possibly also in the former. Yet the former event (but not the latter, so it remains an enigma) is recorded in 1 Kings 3. "The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night. And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream" (vv. 5.15).

The only other people spoken to by God at night as recorded in the books of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles are Nathan and Samuel.

To Nathan (2 S 7.4 = 1 Ch 17.3) the word of the Lord came by night. At the end of the pericope in each place it is called a vision.

In 1 S 15.10 the word of the Lord came to Samuel as a result of which he spends the night in prayer and takes the message to Saul the next day (v.16). Samuel had received his call when clearly conscious at night time (1 S 3). The message he then received for Eli is also called a vision (v.15).

Saul seeks guidance in all ways open to him - by dream, by vision and by prophets but receives no answer so goes to a medium (1 S 28.6-15). The mention of prophets and dreams as separate methods would suggest that Saul desired a dream of his own.

It thus remains a matter of conjecture whether the word of God came during sleep or in a conscious state.

Dreams were accepted as a normative means of communication from God both to Israelites and non-Israelites. Gideon even received encouragement from a Midianite dream interpreted by another Midianite (Jg 7.13-15). It was apparently in the 7th century and later that dreams were somehow manipulated and doubt cast upon them both by the classical prophets as well as by their inaccuracy as evidenced by the fall of Jerusalem.

This is not to say that all dreams and visions were invalid. Isaiah had visions (6.1; 21.2; 22.1-5) yet rejected those who err in vision (28.7). Ezekiel saw visions of God (1.1; 8.3; 40.2; 43.3) a vision of events in Jerusalem (11.2<sup>4</sup>) and of a valley of bones (37.1) yet said that others saw delusive visions (13.7) and that false visions will end and true visions

be speedily fulfilled (12.21-25). Qoheleth has a word of wisdom here "When dreams increase, empty words grow many: but do you fear God" (Ec 5.7).

There seems to be a close affinity between dreams and visions. There is no specific evidence to prevent us concluding that dreams refer always to nocturnal events. Visions however could be received either by day or night. The phrase "visions of the night" is specific in Gen 46.2; Jb 4.13; 20.8, 33.15; Is 29.7; Dan 2.19, 7,2 and apart from the first two are specifically paralleled with dreams. Elsewhere there is often no clarity as to the time of receiving visions. Abraham received a vision at night (Gen 15.1) for the stars were visible (v.5), so also Balaam (Nm 24.4, 16 cf 22.8,20), Samuel (1 S 3.15), Nathan (2 S 7; 4,17) but within the prophetic books no time is given (e.g. Is 6; Am 7.1, 4.7; 8.1).

There is likewise no specific conclusion that can be drawn about the state of consciousness. Dreams imply a state of sleep and thus of unconsciousness. Abraham, Samuel and Nathan just mentioned were presumably awake. The receiving of a vision, however the verbal and visual elements may be balanced, is an ultraconscious rather than an unconscious event.

The God of the Bible is a God of variety and it would be wrong to force experiences into a repetitive mould lest one approach the position of suggesting that the formula "Thus saith the Lord" always introduces a communication received the previous night in a manner as numinous as that related in Job 4.12-16. Nevertheless when a message was received by means of a vision or a dream this added conviction to the person who thus received it that he had received a message from God.

### Conclusion

Dreams, visions, and the Council of the Lord lent authority to only a small portion of the messages which the prophets uttered with divine assurance. It may be that these were the substantiating experiences that stood behind other utterances but evidence is lacking.

Too often we have little more than a formula such as "The Word of the Lord came to me". This formula introduces 27 of the first 38 chapters of Ezekiel; and this or a similar formula introduces 20 of the chapters in Jeremiah. Frequently a date is also given which may suggest that a

certain event evoked a word from the Lord (Jer 25, 26, 27, 32, 34, 35, 36; Ezk 20, 24, 26, 29, 31, 32); sometimes men come to enquire for a word from the Lord ( Jer 21; Ezk 14, 20). In Ezekiel 8.1 we are told "the hand of the Lord God fell upon me", but what form this seizure took we are not told. Jeremiah on one occasion receives a word apparently by divinely guided meditation (18.2).

However the word was received, what stands out so clearly is that it was received as a word from the Lord. It is considered just as authentic whether it was received by way of a dream or vision or whether it came in some other way. It was the Author of the word rather than the means of its communication that was preeminent.

## 2.3 THE PROPHETS' DELIVERY OF THE WORD

### INTRODUCTION

What we know of the prophetic ministry in Israel is in fact a very small part of their total activity; it is limited to that which the Biblical authors considered important to their purposes. The chief information available to us covers only ten strategic personalities in six critical episodes during a period of 750 years:

1. The Exodus. Moses is prophet, lawgiver and leader at a time of opportunity afforded by the redemption from Egypt for Israel to become a nation with its own land.
2. The challenge of Kingship. 1100-1020. Samuel combines the rôles of prophet, leader, priest and judiciary until he is relieved of the rôle of leader by Saul. With the full institution of the monarchy the prophet is further relieved of the rôles of priest and judiciary.
3. The challenge of Baal Melkart. 870-840. Elijah and Elisha contend against a takeover by the Tyrean Baal with its threat to Israel's understanding of Kingship, the state and God. A third of the I and II Kings corpus, which covers 400 years, is devoted to this 30 year period.
4. The challenge of Assyria. (a) In Israel 760-720. Amos and Hosea warn of destruction and exile; five dynasties fall in 30 years. (b) In Judah 750-700. Isaiah proclaims judgment, a remnant and hope.
5. The challenge of Babylon. 630-580. Jeremiah and Ezekiel proclaim the fall of Jerusalem, yet see beyond it the need of a new covenant and a new heart.
6. The opportunity to Return. 539. DeuteroIsaiah sees Cyrus as the servant of God to restore the exiles to their own land again.

The significance of these episodes is sketched as a reminder that we shall not find anything like a full treatise on prophetism in the Old Testament. We can learn a lot from these ten men despite the long intervals between them and also despite the fact that we learn about them from different

standpoints. Of Moses, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha we know chiefly what they did, of the others chiefly what they said.

Apart from these men we see only glimpses of a prophetism which apparently flourished throughout these eight centuries. Accordingly we are warned not to presume that we know more than we in fact do.

Scripture presents to us a history centred largely around those six critical episodes and the men prominent in leadership at those times. These men included the prophets we have mentioned, but they are only a few of the many alluded to throughout the period.

The most pertinent question concerning the prophet's delivery of the word is: "What is the relationship between the word received from God and the word delivered to men?" We shall see under "The Human Influences on Prophecy" many natural causes of a prophet's assurance of having the mind of God and being able accordingly to say "Thus saith the Lord". But such phrases as "The Word of the Lord came to me" suggest specific experiences of receiving a word. The question is: "To what extent was this word embellished?"

Georg Fohrer very helpfully delineated a four-stage process of development and interpretation.

1. Ein Augenblick persönlicher Gottergriffheit (a moment of being individually grasped by God).
2. Consideration of the meaning and significance of this experience.
3. Clothing the message in words. "Das Lallen des Zungenredens erreicht die Zuhörer nicht". (The tone of the actual speech does not reach the hearers). The prophet may add his own words.
4. The oracle is put into artistic form, usually metric. (G.Fohrer, 1974, p.12).

A prophet's integrity requires as close an affinity between steps 1 and 4 as possible. Balaam despite much inducement and vacillation was unable to declare a message alien to that which he received (Num 22-24).

Step 2 may cover a prolonged period especially if the word from God is foreign to his understanding of the tradition. Habakkuk exemplifies this. God's word "I am rousing the Chaldeans" (1.6) does not agree with Habakkuk's understanding of God's character (1.12f), so he must take his

stand and meditate and wait for further intelligence (2.1). Only then is he ready, by his own personal commitment to it, to proclaim the message.

We see the prophet as receiving, understanding, becoming committed to and delivering substantially the same message to his people.

We wish in this section to question three frequent assumptions made in the realm of Israelite prophetism:

1. that prophets are forthtellers rather than foretellers,
2. that the prophetic word is creative,
3. that there was an evolutionary process in prophetism.

### 2.3.1 THAT PROPHETS ARE FORTHTELLERS RATHER THAN FORETELLERS

A prophet is presented to us in the Biblical record as communicating God's word to his people. He is a man of the word; the word is his stock in trade. This we understand to be the ministry of forthtelling.

דבר as a noun (a word, thing) occurs 1439 times and as a verb (to speak) 1142 times in the O.T. Of these occurrences the noun is used 394 times of divine communication in the form of commandments, prophecy and words of help to the people. It is unique to Israelite religion that God is self-revealing, and the means of revealing the divine mind to the human mind is the word. The formulae introducing prophetic utterances are "Thus says the Lord", "Hear the word of the Lord", "Yahweh's word comes", etc.

Von Rad points out that of the 241 instances of the phrase "דבר יהוה" (the word of the Lord) 221 concern prophetic oracles of which 123 occur in the phrase "דבר יהוה הגיע אלי" (the word of the Lord came to...), including the definite article; it was the word for man in his situation. "There can therefore be no doubt but that this collocation was used as a technical term for an oral prophetic revelation."

Many writers so stress the content and proclamation of a prophet's words that his role of foreteller is overlooked. Robert H. Pfeiffer (1961, pp.117f) says:

The chief and almost only function of the reforming prophets, beginning with Amos, was to proclaim to their people the nature and the will of Jehovah - a God of justice and love, of unspotted moral character, a God demanding right living rather than sacrifice and offerings.

Pfeiffer says a prophet was not concerned with predicting the future; he was a preacher rather than a fortune teller.

Important as this stress is, it is only half the story. God is not only a moral God but also an active God; there are sanctions to his demands, and the prophet must proclaim both the sanctions and the demands; this involves foretelling as well as forthtelling. From Amos to DeuteroIsaiah foretelling is a self-confessed part of prophetic ministry. All the acts of God are revealed in order to be proclaimed (Am 2.7f). Von Rad (1965, p. 93) comments: "There is absolutely no saving event not foretold (Is 42.9; 46.10; 48.5)" and observes that the Deuteronomic historian:

Pictures Israel's history as a history of Jehovah's effective word; it postulated a number of predictions as the real causes of events, and at the appropriate places drew special attention to the way in which each particular one was fulfilled (ibid. p.94).

"Coming true" is one of the tests of a prophet's authenticity (Dt 18.22; Jer 28.9). Contrariwise failure to "come true" revealed the falsity of the prophets of peace in 586 B.C. The prophet of Israel was lifted out of the rôle of mere prognosticator as he was lifted out of the rôle of impassioned moralist by the nature of the God who had called him to his ministry. There are two factors in this. First, since God is just, forthtelling and foretelling are linked by the prophetic  $\text{לִּיבֹא}$  (therefore): e.g. "they said 'We will not give heed.' Therefore hear...and know... what will happen." (Jer 6.17f). Second, since God is gracious there is no mechanical or magical link between warning and fulfilment. The calamity foretold will happen, but only if the warning is unheeded. This conditional element to prophecy is well presented in the book of Jonah. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3.4) sounds final. The King of Nineveh, with considerable insight, says: "Who knows, God may repent." (3.9) and his insight proves correct.

We thus conclude that both foretelling and forthtelling are inseparably linked in true prophetic ministry.

### 2.3.2 THAT THE PROPHETIC WORD IS CREATIVE

The prophet believed himself to be in touch with Yahweh, the God of Israel, and thus to speak on his behalf. It is frequently suggested that the Word of the Lord is creative and thus has its own independent power. This conclusion is reached by linking the Biblical doctrine of creation to an understanding of the power of a curse. Important though these factors are they overlook the doctrine of man's free will and the influence of other factors such as conflicting prophetic words e.g. Micaiah and Ahab's 400 prophets.

Lindblom for instance speaks of the objectivity of the Word but overstresses the case:

It is impossible to understand the rôle played by the prophets in Israelite society without realizing that the divine word pronounced by them in exhortation, warning and judgment was not only descriptive but also effective and creative (1973, p.114).

That the words of the prophets of Yahweh, the mouthpieces and messengers of the omnipotent God, were filled with creative power was self-evident to them (*op.cit.* p.117).

The words of the prophets were divine words and thus they shared the active power of Yahweh (*op.cit.* p.117).

Jeremiah's fateful oracle (28.16f):

is certainly not thought of only as a prediction, but as a word of power which really killed Hananiah (*op.cit.* p.118).

About Zechariah's flying roll (5.1-4):

This description reflects old ideas of the magic writing which acts *ex opere operato* (*op.cit.* p.119).

Because the prophets not only foretold calamities but also created calamities, it was logical enough that they were both hated and feared (*op.cit.* p.123).

We do not accept this understanding of the word and would point to four important distinctions which need to be borne in mind.

1. The first distinction that needs to be made is Yahweh's use of His word in nature and in revelation. The basis of Lindblom's argument for the independent effectiveness of the Word is drawn from O.T., Sumerian and Arcadian texts all concerning creation and nature viz. Gen 1.3; Ps 33.6,9; 148.5 which concern creation, and Ps 147.15f, 29; 46.7; Am 1.2 which concern his control of nature. (In these verses Yahweh's voice may mean no

more than thunder). Lindblom then says "There is no essential difference between the word as an expression of the active power of Yahweh and the divine word pronounced by the prophets" (*op.cit.*, p.117) and in his argument turns from the above passages concerning creation and nature to those concerning revelation to mankind. We agree that God has sovereign control over nature, but he has created man with free will and this free will he respects. In the realm of revelation Am 3.7f is instructive: "Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The Lord has spoken who can but prophesy." In the affairs of mankind the word of the Lord is no fiat but an announcement of God's plans, or a warning of what the future holds.

The prophetic word is thus not executive but admonitory and always conditional. If it were not conditional, there would be little purpose to so much of the classical prophecy. It is usually man who signs his own death warrant - "why will you die?" (Jer 27.13; Ezk 18.30; 33.11). Jonah's nationalistic heart could have wished that his prophetic word were absolute; he would have delighted in the power to destroy Nineveh. His very unwillingness to set out on his task was his understanding of Yahweh's nature. "I knew that thou art a gracious God...abounding in steadfast love, and repentest of evil" (Jon 4.3). Whatever attitude one takes to the historicity of Jonah it gives a clear insight into its author's theological understanding of the word of God - that its purpose is to achieve shalom by means of prophetic proclamation and man's repentance. The book of Jonah also illustrates the sovereignty of God in the realms both of his inanimate and his animate creation. Man has free will (both Jonah and the Ninevites) but God has complete sovereignty over nature (the storm, the fish, the gourd and the worm). The later the book of Jonah is placed the more mature theological reflection it contains.

2. A second distinction to be made is between the word as the word of Yahweh and as the word of the prophet. We are now concerned with the prophetic word in the realm of revelation; only occasionally is the prophet involved with the word of the Lord in its efficacious power in the realm of nature (e.g. Moses addressing the rock and the miracles of Elijah and Elisha). Even when the word of the prophet is the word of Yahweh it is the prophet who is feared and not Yahweh - this indeed is understandable because it is the prophet who is seen and heard. If a fateful oracle is seen as a death sentence it must be seen clearly that it is a death sentence that

originates from God and not from the prophet. Lindblom is not entirely clear on this point and it can lead to confusion. He calls the oracle against Hananiah Jeremiah's oracle (*op.cit.*p.118); later he parallels this with the episode of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 and says "the two liars were killed by the divine power of the word of the Apostle" (*op.cit.*p.200). Since those who heard the prophet were not to know whether the word spoken originated with him or with Yahweh they would understandably err on the side of caution and stand in awe of the prophet. For the word had power only if it came from Yahweh and not simply from the mind of the prophet.

Lindblom says "the effective power of prophetic words was increased by peculiar actions by which they were frequently accompanied" (*op.cit.*p. 52). He instances Zedekiah and the horns of iron in 1 K 22. "With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed". He omits to remind us that despite the symbolic actions his words were powerless, the Syrians were not destroyed. These words originated in Zedekiah's mind not the mind of Yahweh. Jeremiah says of his contemporaries "they speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord" (Jer 23.16). This underlines the truth of Dt 18.22...."the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him".

To say that prophetic words have power is true only if those words originate with Yahweh. The words of Micaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel etc., because they came from Yahweh were fulfilled despite the fact that those prophets were in a minority. The words of the majority had no power.

3. The third distinction to be drawn is between the power and the fulfillment of prophetic words. Here we wish to deny any magical potency attached to a prophet's words, although we appreciate there may have been such an understanding amongst his hearers. To say that words have power is to claim that they are executive, as if they were arrows shot from bows; this allows no place for repentance by those addressed or for error on the prophet's part.

The prophetic word claims to reveal what lies in the future and by no means creates the event prognosticated. Micaiah did not cause the King's death any more than Zedekiah enabled the army to conquer the Syrians. Micaiah foresaw an event that would happen if the Kings went to war,

Zedekiah and his prophets were powerless to alter it. The prophet's words were fulfilled not because they had power but because they were true.

4. The final distinction to be made is between the emotive force and the content of the words. It is in this area alone that words have objective power. Words are weapons for good or for evil in themselves. They can bring peace or anger: "a soft answer turneth away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov 15.1). Ill words from a prophet may instil fear (hence the corrective of Dt 18.22); words of doom will sap the morale of a nation - this is why Jeremiah was such a burden to Judah; stirring words may lead to victory, Deborah was a great inspiration to Barak (Jdg 4.14). It is in this sense that words of a curse or a blessing have great power; parents who constantly denigrate or else encourage their children have a creative power over their development. "Angry public make rates staff ill" was a London Daily Telegraph headline (23 May, 1975).

Office workers in the rates department at Stratford-on-Avon are being taken ill because of 'a persistent stream of vilification' from angry ratepayers. Last month 9 of the 22 staff members in the rates department became ill, in some cases for three weeks.

Words in every society do have peculiar power and this power is enhanced in its impact by emotive or dramatic expression. Because of the credence given to prophets their words have yet further power. They are creative and effective only in as far as they act upon the emotions and intellects of their hearers - this is a force not to be underestimated and may have cumulative effect, yet they cannot affect future events independently.

### Symbolic Actions

Symbolic action is a means used to enhance the delivery of a message making it more memorable. The comments made above as to the prophetic word apply also to symbolism. It concerns the form of presentation rather than the content of a message. The word can be portrayed dramatically but whether or not it is a word from the Lord depends on its content which, in turn, depends on the prophet's receptiveness to the truth.

Both true and false prophets make use of symbolic actions. Zedekiah with his horns of iron (1 Ki 22) and Hananiah breaking the yoke bars round Jeremiah's neck (Jer 28) are examples of false prophets using symbolic

actions. Jeremiah had made the yoke bars (27.2); he also remained a bachelor (16.2) bought a field at Anathoth (32.5) hid large stones in the pavement at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace (43.8). Ezekiel shaved his beard (5.1) sketched a siege on a brick (4.1) lay on his side (4.4) refrained from mourning when his wife died (24). Isaiah went naked for three years (20.3) and both he and Hosea gave symbolic names to their children. All these were as much at the direction of the Lord and were as public demonstrations as the words spoken, and many were of an ongoing nature.

Of the earlier prophets Ahijah the Shilonite tore a mantle into 12 pieces (1 Ki 11.30). Lindblom makes a note on the newness of the mantle "as being better fitted for an extraordinary magical-religious use" (*op.cit.* p.52). This is allied to his understanding of the effectiveness of prophetic words but it could also be argued that the newness was either a mere eyewitness fact or else symbolic of either the newness or the value of the nation of Israel in God's eyes. Jeremiah's new loincloth is also cited (Jer 13.1) and given a magical connotation whereas the emphasis in the text is on the contrast between it being new and being spoiled: it was good for nothing (v.7).

Symbolic rather than verbal communication while having certain advantages and disadvantages compared to the others being for example less precise but more gripping and continuous, has nothing to add to our understanding of the prophets' own view of prophecy although we can admit that symbolic action may have further led some of their hearers into a more magical view of prophecy.

### 2.3.3 THAT THERE WAS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS IN PROPHETISM

#### The Literature

Our understanding of prophecy in Old Testament times is gleaned principally from two sources, the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is all too rarely observed how different these two sources are, so that conclusions as to the nature of prophecy have been drawn on inadequate evidence.

Reference to Appendix 2 will show that our literature is both extensive and limited. The Samuel-Kings corpus devotes 38% of its space to the 10th

and 9th Centuries and only 12% to the 8th and 7th Centuries when the "classical prophets" flourished, and less than 1% to the 50 years of Manasseh's reign that divided these two prophetic eras. Of the classical prophets only Isaiah is mentioned in the historical narrative; whereas the book of Jeremiah is longer than I and II Kings, which does not even mention his name.

A different appreciation of prophecy is naturally given by the Former Prophets with a chiefly historical interest than by the Latter Prophets with a largely biographical concern. A fuller understanding of the nature of prophecy is thus gained by amalgamating these insights rather than dividing them and setting one against the other, as has so often been done.

Typical of the attitude of dividing these insights is C.H.Dodd. He begins chapter 3 of The Authority of the Bible thus:

The great prophets of the 8th and 7th Centuries are a different breed from their predecessors.

and two pages later:

They feel themselves to be an altogether new kind of prophet, channels of a new religious impulse and a revolutionary message.

He later unwittingly gives a clue to how the picture is presented out of focus, but does not follow it up:

It is indeed with the great prophets that we first come into direct touch with personal religion. Behind the stories of such ancient leaders as Moses and Elijah we can divine authentic religious experience, but it is a different thing to meet the prophet in his own writings and follow the movings of his spirit in communion with God (*op.cit.* p.120). Thus the great prophets are presumed great because we know more about them.

Bruce Vawter comments:

The prophetic energy concentrated in ecstaticism that swept through the Tenth and Ninth Centuries had burnt itself out by the time that the great moral prophets of the Eighth Century made their appearance. (B.Vawter, 1961, p.23).

This picture may appeal to those who compare Saul's prophetic experiences with Amos but does not make room either for Nathan or Ahab's protégés.

We do not intend to enter the discussion of ecstasy, chiefly because we are more concerned with the content than the form of prophecy, but also

because the phenomenon is understood so widely by commentators and the evidence hinges on the different literary presentation of the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets, and this has rendered the debate sterile.

### Early Prophetic Leaders

If we had as much information on the personal lives of the great figures of the Former Prophets as we have of the Latter Prophets, our appreciation of them would be very different.

Of Elijah we would learn of his agonising over his conflict with Ahab about Naboth's vineyard which earned him the title of Ahab's enemy (1 Ki 21.20) and over Ahab and the drought which earned him the title of "troubler of Israel" (1 Ki 18.17); we would also perhaps discover more of his depression after Jezebel's threat on his life when he fled to Beersheba and to Horeb and said "take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers" (1 Ki 19.4). Elijah could well appear a spiritual giant as great as Jeremiah.

Samuel is another prophet to whom the historian devoted much space. All Israel knew that he was established as a prophet (1 Sam 3.20), he had an intimate relationship with God (9.15), at the end of his life he could claim to have lived blamelessly (12.3) and have prayed ceaselessly (12.23) and was still able to preach powerfully (12.1-25).

Many other men are mentioned but briefly, yet what we know of them argues for a much deeper appreciation of their stature.

Micaiah shared Elijah's privilege of being despised by Ahab, and a longer ministry is mentioned than the single occasion of which we know (1 Ki 22.8).

The unnamed prophet of 1 Ki 13, who cried against the altar of Bethel and prayed to the Lord that Jeroboam's suddenly paralysed arm might be restored (v.6), may have had a powerful and continuing ministry among a people led into sectarian apostasy by a rebel leader who began his leadership with the favour of the Lord (1 Ki 11.37).

One may wonder too what more the courageous Jehu ben Hanani did who withstood Baasha, a regicidal conspirator who had usurped Nadab's throne (1 Ki 15.27f; 16.2-4).

When these are seen as men rather than incidents they cannot be lightly dismissed, and when it is realised that we know of them only what the historians reveal, we can well understand that there is much more that has not been related.

It cannot thus be so easily maintained that "the great prophets of the 8th and 7th Centuries are a different breed from their predecessors". That they had great predecessors is not in doubt; Samuel's influence on the monarchy was formative and Elijah's determinations. As H.H.Rowley put it "Few crises have been more significant for history than that in which Elijah figured....without Moses the religion of Yahweh would never have been born. Without Elijah it would have died" (H.H.Rowley, 1963-2, pp.64f). The difference is in our understanding of them, and this is caused by the different type of literature.

It is instructive to compare in the New Testament period the different standpoints of Luke as a historian narrating something of the ministries of Peter and Paul and of those men themselves as they appear in their own writings. The parallels between Luke's narrative in Acts and the history of the 10th and 9th Centuries also militate against the idea of evolution in the ministry of prophets (see Appendix 5).

For Peter and Paul one builds a more comprehensive picture by amalgamating these two sources. Likewise a fuller understanding of the nature of prophecy in the Old Testament is gained by uniting the insights of the historians and the biographers.

### The Prophet's Followers

We have so far looked at the outstanding figures on the prophetic scene in the 11th to 7th Centuries and realised that the difference between them is not necessarily as great as has often been suggested. We now turn to their followers.

Dodd assumes that the prophetic bands of Elijah's day became the false prophets at the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah and appear as a degrading rather than an elevating influence (p.60 *op.cit.*). The link between the two groups is seen as ecstatic behaviour, a concentration on the form as opposed to the content of prophecy.

In the Samuel-Kings corpus we see prophetic bands in the time of Elijah who were loyal to Yahweh and others who were loyal to Baal. Obadiah rescued some of the former when Jezebel tried to destroy them (1 Ki 18, 3.4). There were thus groups with differing loyalties in Ahab's reign. A line of development is not clear between the 9th and 7th Centuries, partly because of the different standpoint of the historical narratives which give us the above information and the biographical which tell of the false prophets. It cannot be asserted that the one led to the other. There were, moreover, in Jeremiah's days several groups of religious leaders who had varying loyalties: there were Jeremiah and those loyal to him, including Baruch and Uriah; there were his opponents who also claimed loyalty to Yahweh and there were the Rechabites who likewise claimed to be on Yahweh's side (Jer 35); there were also devotees to the queen of heaven and other gods (7.18; 44.15-25).

There may have been certain similarities between the bands of Yahwistic prophets and the opponents of Jeremiah because both had a conservative and nationalistic flavour, but beyond this the point is not proved.

A further source of unconvincing conclusions is a comparison between the earlier prophetic bands and the later prophetic leaders. This is a failure to compare like with like. Lindblom (1973, p.216) compares and contrasts the classical prophets with what he calls the early or "primitive" prophets. He shows a clear historical connection and many similarities between the two groups, but when he contrasts them it is in fact the earlier groups that are contrasted with the later individual leaders.

In the former, orgiastic ecstasy was more prominent....ecstasy was in some measure an end in itself... Other extraordinary gifts such as clairvoyance, wonder working and magical actions are practically alien to the great prophets. Dreams do not supply divine revelations. Most of the great prophets lived their own private lives....they did not live in coenobia or belong to prophetic guilds like the majority of the early prophets (J.Lindblom, 1973, pp.216f).

These statements provoke many comments: we know of no orgiastic experiences in men as early as Nathan and Gad; we are not told that the prophetic leaders amongst the early prophets did live in coenobia or belong to guilds, they seem very much freelance, like their later brethren; apart from Elijah and Elisha we meet little wonder working in either earlier or later

prophets. This is not to deny that either the early or late prophets were in fact wonderworkers. We are not informed on the point and contrasts cannot be asserted from silence. If we only had the epistles of Paul and Peter we should be unaware of the outstanding ministry both had as wonderworkers. With Isaiah is connected the retracing of the sun's shadow on the dial (2 Ki 20.11; Isa 38.8). Ps 74.9 links the cessation of signs with the cessation of prophecy.

Lindblom is at his most helpful when he says "the essential difference consists in the content of their message. To Amos and his successors the existence of Yahweh's people was at stake." They had a "compelling call to work as messengers from God to make the people conscious of the danger to which they were exposed" (*op.cit.* p.216f).

This is the crux of the matter; the nature of prophecy concerns not so much the form of prophecy as its content. There is not so much a development or evolution in prophecy as a different message to different situations. Prophecy is proclaiming the right message at the right time.

#### The Canonical Presentation

We do not deny that the prophets of the 11th to 9th Centuries are presented to us in a very different light from those of the 8th to 6th Centuries. We do, however, take issue with those who would overstress the influence of ecstasy, disregard the genuine stature of the earlier prophets or on the other hand overexalt the later prophets.

The facts are that, assuming that the so-called prophets wrote little themselves, those who reported the former prophets concentrated on their deeds in a context, whereas those who reported the latter prophets concentrated on their words less clearly contextualised. As the editors of both types of literature may have been contemporaries and since they also had theological interests, some difference in the prophets may be indicated.

What this difference may be is a matter for conjecture. We would suggest that in the second half of the period of the monarchy urbanisation, pessimism and cynicism were on the increase contributing to a loss of confidence in God's goodness by most of Judah's leadership. The "writing prophets" addressed an ongoing spiritual disease that deteriorated into critical condition when the life of the nation was threatened. There was

thus a consistent theology warning of impending doom ( 2 Ki 17.13; 24.2; Jer 7.25) which was given sharper definition in the times of the "classical prophets". This explains why the words of the "writing prophets" were retained rather than the precise content, although the general content for most of the "writing prophets" was the demise of the nation.

The days of Samuel to Elijah (the period of the "former prophets") and earlier were considered in the exile to have been the heroic age, in which episodes rather than words were recorded. The splendours of the past are evoked in the phrase "as in the days of old" (Is 51.9; 63.9,11; Jer 46.26; Lam 1.7; 5.21; Am 9.11; Mic 7.14,20; Mal 3.4).

Finally we suggest that the difference in presentation of the Latter Prophets as opposed to the Former was caused simply by historical perspective. In the days of the exile the words and agonies of the "classical prophets" were remembered and recorded in detail, whereas the comparable details in respect of the former prophets had long been forgotten.

### Conclusion

The idea of an evolutionary process in prophetism arises from a lack of awareness of the distinctive presentation of the prophets by different editors in the exilic period. This is aggravated unconsciously by according greatness to those about whom we know the most, and thus slighting those about whom we know less. Great prophets arose when the situation called them forth and should be judged by their faithfulness rather than by the amount of information we have about them.

## 2.4 MAN'S RESPONSE

We have noted a firm conviction in the prophet that the source of his message was with God. The word arose in his mind both from a personal relationship with God and from his understanding of the accumulated traditions of his people. He was thus able to speak and act with self-assurance.

It was then the lot of his hearers first to discern the authenticity of the prophet's message, and then, if satisfied that it was authentic, their responsibility to obey it.

### Discernment

Bruce Vawter calls the prophet "The Conscience of Israel", implying that he was a traditionalist touching men's hearts reminding them of what they already knew (B. Vawter, 1961, p.16). "We now hear less and less of "ethical monotheism" as the creation or discovery of the prophets of Israel." (*op.cit.*p.18).

This understanding of the prophet's ministry puts the onus equally on the hearer as on the prophet to test the authenticity of the message. The onus is to obey the genuine word and to ignore the false; and thus to distinguish between the two. To enable him to do this there are two deuteronomic guidelines as to authenticity, one negative and one positive.

1. Dt 13.1-5. A prophet who encourages idolatry must not be heeded. By analogy, based on v.4, this can be extended to cover a prophet who encourages any contravention of the Sinai covenant. The IIIrd Commandment may be understood to include false prophecy in its prohibition, for that is one form of taking the name of the Lord in vain. It is noticeable that Jeremiah in his indictment of false prophets pays as much attention to their moral behaviour, especially their transgression of the VIIth and IXth Commandments (Jer 23.14) as to the content of their message. If a prophet contravenes Dt 13.4 then he is not to be listened to, for he is teaching rebellion (v.5).

The onus is thus placed on the people since false prophecy is a test of their loyalty (v.3).

We shall be considering at greater length the question of true and false prophecy in the next section. Towards the end of the monarchy the situation was aggravated by stress on conflicting elements within the tradition. Dt 13 concerns the basic principle when false prophecy involved a denial of the tradition altogether.

2. Dt 18.15-22. A prophet like Moses is to be heeded. He is typified as a man of whom God says: "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

Two contrasting examples are given in v.20 of prophets who are not to be heeded:

- (i) the prophet who speaks in the name of other gods; he is then similar to a prophet in Dt 13.1-5 who encourages idolatry.
- (ii) "the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak". The word for presumes [קָזַן] is a very strong word and cannot refer simply to one who is misguided. The root קָזַן means boil up, seethe, act proudly, presumptuously, rebelliously. The verb also occurs at Dt 1.43 with reference to the deliberate rebellion of Hormah after the Israelites' faithlessness at Kadesh Barnea (Num 14).

The word for rebellion at Dt 13.5 [קָזַן] implies turning aside from the way of the Lord, or apostasy.

Thus the prophets who are to be disregarded are those who deliberately induce others to deny their loyalty to the Lord. The onus is upon the people to be sensitive to the spirit of prophecy.

If, however, there is still doubt in the mind of the people whether the prophet is true to the Lord or not, a practical test is offered as well (v.22). If a word is from the Lord it will come to pass, if it does not come to pass it is not from the Lord. Micaiah may have been conscious of this test when he said to Ahab: "If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me" (1 Ki 22.28). This guide also gives significance to

the use of signs. A sign is given to validate a subsequent prophecy, if the sign is fulfilled it is an earnest that the prophecy is of the Lord and must be heeded.

There is an inseparable relationship between the prophecy and the prophet. There is, of course, no claim made of infallibility for the prophet, a genuine prophet could utter an erring prophecy, (this however would be a misreading of the situation rather than deliberate deception e.g. 2 Sam 7.3). Yet the character of a prophet would soon be made manifest. At the end of a period of dearth of prophecy Samuel arose and there was no doubt throughout Israel that he was a prophet of the Lord (1 Sam 3.19-21). The same test of verification is referred to: "none of his words fell to the ground."

These guidelines in Dt 13 and 18 are complementary. They speak of purging Israel of prophets and other charismatic leaders who are false (13.5,18.20). This falseness is an attitude of heart that issues in apostasy and rebellion, rather than a question of incidental inaccuracy. Since the death penalty is advocated the onus of discernment is both on the prophet who stands to be judged and the people who are to judge him.

### Obedience

Having discovered the origin of what is proclaimed as prophecy one must give heed to it if it is of the Lord, otherwise "I myself will require it of him" (Dt 18.19); if it is spoken presumptuously or in the name of another god there is no need to fear the prophet or the outcome of his prophecy (18.22).

The Deuteronomic historian moulds his history according to the response of the people and their leaders to God's covenant with them. Blessing attends obedience and cursing disobedience.

It is at times of national crisis that the ministry of the prophet becomes most prominent. Their ministry is to aver that the crisis is not simply political but moral and spiritual, so that the outcome of the crisis is not a matter of armaments but of faith and obedience (Ps 20.7, 147.10f).

Georg Fohrer, quoting Ezk 18.23, points out that God wants repentance rather than death for his people; the possibility of salvation is related

to the renewal of mankind. Concerning the 8th Century prophets he says:

Von da aus ist das zentrale Thema der prophetischen Botschaft die mögliche Rettung des schuldigen und eigentlich dem Tode verfallenen Menschen (G. Fohrer, 1974, p.16).

(Henceforth the central theme of the prophetic message is the possible salvation of culpable mankind over whom hangs the death sentence.)

The big question of Amos' ministry is "Ist Rettung möglich?" - is salvation possible? (7.1-9, 8.1-3). Israel's end (<sup>sp</sup>) is near whilst it thinks itself at the height of its power. There are two possibilities (Möglichkeiten): (1) Repentance "Umkehr", so that God will be gracious or (2) redemption "Erlösung" through a new exodus - either way there will ultimately be a new community.

Schliesslich finden sich die einzelnen Glaubenden, die durch Umkehr oder Erlösung in ein neues Dasein geführt worden sind, zu einer Gemeinschaft zusammen, die das neue Gottesvolk darstellt (*op.cit.* p.17).

(Ultimately we are left with this single hope, that the people of God will be led into a new existence either through repentance or redemption, and thus be established as a new community.)

Thus much of the message of the prophet concerns obedience. This goes to the root of the difference between the conception of divinity held by Israelites as opposed to that held by their neighbours. To Israelites Yahweh was a God to be obeyed - He had led them out of bondage in Egypt: they must be loyal to Him (Ex 20.1-2). To their neighbours however, the divinity was virtually the servant of the people to fulfil their wishes, worship being the means of obtaining those desires. "O Baal, answer us" is the incessant clamour on Carmel (1 Ki 18.26). "He never prophesies good concerning me", is Ahab's lament of the lone voice of Micaiah (1 Ki 22.8); Jehoshaphat could discern insincerity in the voice of the 400 prophets who said and sought to bring about what the king wanted to hear (v.7); when Johanan comes to Jeremiah he is ready to obey God only if the guidance is to his taste (Jer 42.2, 43.2).

The prophet makes uncomfortable demands on his hearers. When Elijah came into confrontation with Ahab, it was not the former but the latter who was the real "troubler of Israel" on account of his disobedience to the moral demands of the law of God (1 Ki 18.18). "You have sold yourself

to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord," (1 Ki 21.20) is Elijah's judgment of the character of the king.

When God speaks, however he may communicate his words, he commands. "Go," he says to Abram (Gen 21.1). "I will send you to Pharaoh", he tells Moses (Ex 3.10) and when Moses says, "send, I pray, some other person," (4.13) God is angry; objections he will answer but refusal is not permitted. "Arise, go over Jordan," he says to Joshua (Josh 1.2). "To obey is better than sacrifice," Samuel says to Saul (1 Sam 15.22). In the 10th and 9th Centuries the unnamed prophets of 1 Kings stress the reward of disobedience, "Your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers" (13.22), "a lion shall kill you" (20.36).

Deuteronomy and Jeremiah each link obedience with blessing and disobedience with harm. The extensive section Dt 27-30 portrays the history of the nation. "If you obey...blessed shall you be" (28.1,3); this blessing covers city, farm and family, battle and national life. "If you will not obey...cursed shall you be" (28.15f); this curse covers the same areas, promising "confusion and frustration in all you undertake" (v.20), pestilence, fever, drought, defeat; madness, blindness and confusion of mind; oppression and robbery; and exile (28.21,22,25,28,29,36).

Jeremiah has a similar message, "Amend your ways," (7.3) - turn away from oppression, murder and idolatry (v.8) and your national security will be assured (v.7). Their disobedience also covered a refusal to listen or to respond to the voice of God (v.13). A religious veneer persisted (vv.4,8) but this would not avert their justly deserved punishment - the Temple could be destroyed (v.14) and the people go into exile (v.15). This was no new message but the same that Israel had received at the Exodus, "Obey my voice and I will be your God, you shall be my people; walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you" (v.23). God had honoured his side of the covenant making his voice audible, but there had been inadequate response "from the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day; yet they did not listen to me, or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers." (vv.25,26).

Jeremiah preached this message for forty years but despite the events of 597 and 587 the survivors would still not listen. In 606 he complains

that he has spoken unheeded for 23 years already (25.3) - not to listen to Jeremiah was tantamount to refusing to listen to God (v.7), and that brings harm upon themselves. The punishment for disobedience was outlined more clearly - Nebuchadnessar is God's servant now to cause Israel's ruin and sorrow (vv.8-11). Ten years later Jeremiah, despite opposition, is still saying that Babylon will conquer unless they yield in humiliation to their enemy (27.8-11). Ten years later still the message is unchanged (32.3,5).

It is not only the people but the prophet himself who is called to obey. Jeremiah proved himself obedient by his constant preaching of the same message over 40 years; despite the suffering involved he could not keep silent, "whenever I speak, I cry out. I shout 'Violence and destruction' - the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long... 'Denounce him! Let us denounce him!' say all my familiar friends. Why did I come forth from the womb to spend my days in shame" (20.7-18). Yet when he tries to hold back God's message he cannot.

## 2.5 MAN'S ENQUIRIES

We have so far considered that prophetic activity in which the prophet took the initiative as far as his contemporaries were concerned by bringing a message to them.

To his contemporaries the recognised prophet had also a very different significance. It was through the prophet that men could enquire of God.

If we were limited to the "Latter Prophets" of the Hebrew Scriptures our knowledge of their prophetic activity would concern solely their ministry of proclamation. The "Former Prophets" are written more from the historian's standpoint and reveal a complementary activity in which the people seek advice and wisdom. The prophet stands between the people and God and is concerned both with what God had to say to his people and with what the people have to ask of God.

This ministry of availability to the people may have consumed the larger part of the prophet's time. Until his father-in-law intervened, Moses was in danger of wearing himself out thereby (Ex 18.13-23). "The people come to me to enquire of God" (15). This judicial capacity was also typical of Deborah's ministry (Jdg 4.5) and Samuel's (1 Sam 7.15ff). People came to the prophet not only to have their disputes settled, but also to discover God's guidance at times of perplexity over other concerns. Saul seeking his father's asses, Jeroboam's wife concerned about her child's health, Rebekah in her pregnancy, Jehoshaphat before entering battle, Ben-Hadad in his sickness, Hezekiah when surrounded by the Chaldeans, all came to the prophet of their day to enquire of God about their predicament.

When people desired to enquire of God they could go either to the prophet or to the priest. The latter's means of enquiry were mechanical, involving the use of the sacred lot Urim and Thummim. Although the purpose was the same, the method was very different; one was a personal approach to God the other impersonal. The method of enquiry used perhaps depended in part on the availability of the prophet or the priest, evidence is insufficient to determine the point.

To distinguish these two methods, separate words are used for consulting God. The ordinary verb  $\text{שָׁאַל}$  is used of priestly enquiry, whereas  $\text{שָׁאַל לַיהוָה}$  involved prophetic enquiry (see Appendix 4).

The Use of SA'W: The Priestly Method.

The movements of the congregation in the wilderness were regulated by consultation of Urim and Thummim (Nm 27.21). These stones were placed in the breastplate of the High Priest (Ex 28.30; Lev 8.8) but were lacking in the Second Temple (Ezra 2.63; Neh 7.65). The simplest understanding of these is that they were two stones which were thrown to fall (a) face upwards, (b) face downwards, or (c) one either way indicating no answer from Yahweh (1 Sam 14.37; 28.6). (a) and (b) would give an answer yes or no. A double throw with the same result would give an insistent positive or negative answer (1 Sam 23.2, 4, 30.8). The priest apparently had the liberty to add a prophetic word of encouragement (1 Sam 23.4; Jdg 18.6, 20.28) or direction (1 Sam 10.22-3; 2 Sam 5.23).

The priests by whom such enquiry of the Lord is recorded were Eleazar (Nm 27.21), Phinehas his son (Jdg 20.28), Saul's priest (1 Sam 14.37), Ahimelech (1 Sam 22.10, 15) and Abiathar his son (1 Sam 23.2-4, 30.7f - note the use of the ephod).

J.A.Motyer sees Abiathar's use of the ephod (1 Sam 30.7) as being the High Priest's garment (Urim and Thummim - New Bible Dictionary). If this were so there would be only one ephod in Israel, yet Saul claims specifically to have enquired of the Lord by Urim (1 Sam 28.6) and this is during the same episode in which David enquired of the Lord by Abiathar. It may be that the priestly garment consecrated the stones and more than one set was used; however, it is clear that similar means of consultation were available to both Saul and David by means of a priest at the same time.

Use of Urim and Thummim is not mentioned between the early monarchy and post exilic times. Motyer claims: "The existence of prophecy seems to make the Urim and Thummim superfluous." But this statement requires closer examination. The fact that Urim and Thummim are not mentioned does not necessarily imply that they were not used. The word Thummim only occurs six times in Scripture, always linked with Urim, and Urim alone occurs on two further occasions. Of the eight times that Urim occurs, four are in the Pentateuch, two during Saul's life and the other two are in Ezra and Nehemiah. It would seem more natural that Urim and

and Thummim were in use throughout this period than that they were re-suscitated after an interval of 500 years. The statement is particularly strange in the light of 1 Sam 28.6 in which Saul is stated to have consulted with prophets and Urim at the same time. If the use of  $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$  in its technical sense implies enquiry by a priest using the Urim and Thummim Is 30.2 may well indicate that this means of consultation was still used in the middle of the prophetic era. The fact that Urim and Thummim are so rarely mentioned may well be due to the scope and interests of the Biblical writings and their authors rather than because they fell into disuse.

#### The use of $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$ : The Prophetic Method.

Whereas  $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$  is the simple verb for ask or enquire,  $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$  involves a greater degree of thoroughness and determination, thus "to seek, to care for, to study, to frequent" (B.D.B. *in loc.*). A deeper involvement is envisaged which is satisfied more readily by the prophet and a personal approach to God (Ezek 14.73, 20.1,3) than by the priest with his more mechanical use of the sacred lot.

Jehoshaphat enquires for the word of the Lord through the prophets (1 Ki 22.5, 7, 8; 2 Ki 3.11). A fuller prophecy was received from Micaiah and Elisha than the "yes/no" answer from a priest. When Ben-Hadad was sick he sent Hazael to Elisha to enquire of the Lord "Shall I recover from this sickness?" This question like that of Jehoshaphat (1 Ki 22.5) could have been asked ( $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$ ) of a priest but was in fact asked ( $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$ ) of the prophet.

When the book of the law is found, Josiah sends a priest and others to enquire ( $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$ ) of the Lord about its significance and they go to Huldah the prophetess (2 Ki 22.13).

$\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$  is again used of Zedekiah enquiring of the Lord by Jeremiah concerning the outcome of battle (Jer 21.2; 37.7). Like Josiah, Zedekiah sent a priest to make this enquiry on both occasions.

There is no need to suppose that the prophet became the sole means through which men believed they could consult ( $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$ ) God for they also consulted ( $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$ ) necromancers (Dt 18.11), mediums (1 Sam 28.7), Baalzebub (2 Ki 1.2), socerers and wizards (Is 8.19; 19.3). All of these involve the personal rather than mechanical element.

The use of  $\psi\text{r}\text{t}$  occurs only three times before the divided monarchy, but the paucity of references does not necessarily imply a lack of resort to this means of consultation. Though 1 Sam 9.9 is an isolated reference in the life of Samuel this states a general principle and a normative pattern of life when a prophet was available. Likewise Ex 18.15 gives the impression that Moses was readily available for enquiring of God although the reference is particularly to legal matters.

For completeness Gen 25.22 must also be mentioned. John Calvin mentions both views of this verse in his days "it is commonly received opinion that she enquired of some prophet". That conjecture he says has no probability "for at that time what prophets, except her husband and father-in-law could she have found in the world, still less in that neighbourhood." His view is that Rabekah "having sought retirement, prayed more earnestly that she might receive a revelation from heaven" (J. Calvin 1965, Vol.II, p.43). If Calvin is right at this point it is a unique meaning of the word  $\psi\text{r}\text{t}$ . It is more logical to suggest that she enquired of someone, and why not her husband or father-in-law, if no one else was available to mediate a word from the Lord.

### Summary

$\text{S}\text{a}'\text{p}$  is never used of enquiring of God by a prophet;  $\psi\text{r}\text{t}$  is never used of enquiring of God by a priest. Either methods of enquiry may be used in certain situations. On two occasions Ahab asks Jehoshaphat "Will you go with me to battle?" (1 Ki 22.4; 2 Ki 3.7) and on each occasion Jehoshaphat insists on enquiring of the Lord ( $\psi\text{r}\text{t}$ ) by a prophet; in Jdg 20.33; 1 Sam 14.37, 23.2; 2 Sam 5.9 similar questions were asked ( $\text{S}\text{a}'\text{p}$ ) of the Lord by the priest.

The type of question that could be determined by the priest's use of the sacred lot was limited as the answers were confined to a yes/no answer; the priest was, however, at liberty to embellish this basic answer at his own discretion.

On occasion the priest would go to the prophet to enquire of the Lord (2 Ki 22.13; Jer 21.2, 37.7) but the prophet never to the priest.

The literature we have is not sufficient to enable us to know whether the use of the sacred lot fell into abeyance. The literature we have concerns

chiefly those men and women who loomed large in the political arena, and not the ordinary man or woman with questions of equally burning importance to themselves but of little significance to the writers of the Scriptures. Whether or not the option was open to them to go either to the prophet or to the priest and what the comparative costs were we do not know.

As a bi-product of the fact that the Deuteronomic history was written from a prophetic standpoint the day to day activity of the priests in the era of the monarchy is not evident to us.

2.6 THE QUESTION OF FULFILMENT

It seems that in the prophet's experience of God he is led, frequently at a specific moment of call, into a new ministry as God's spokesman to his people. He has a self-assurance, be it by reference to the heavenly council, dreams, visions or something else, that what he proclaimed is the word of God.

The onus is then on the people to discern the nature of this message, and consequently the messenger (or vice versa). If it is authentic then their response to the word is equivalent to their response to God.

Dt 18 gives as one test of authenticity "coming true" so we turn now to the matter of fulfilment, which will in its turn lead to the question of canonicity.

There is no simple criterion by which to distinguish true from false prophecy, and it is this that creates the dilemma for the prophet's contemporaries. The dilemma is heightened at a time of national crisis because two prophetic parties can claim tradition and the covenantal character of God in support of their message and thus preach it with confidence. If these voices are contradictory the truth may only be revealed by subsequent events.

In some instances a sign (אִיָּא) is given by way of pledge for some more distant prophecy, so that its fulfilment is assumed to guarantee the truth of the whole. The sign may be a natural sign (1 Sam 2.34, 10.1; 2 Ki 19.29; Is 7.14; Jer 44.20; Ex 3.12) or a miraculous sign (Ex 4.1-18; Jdg 6.17-22; 2 Ki 20.8-11). Samuel's reputation was "all that he says comes true" (1 Sam 9.6). Fulfilment is of decisive importance (Is 41.23) and non-fulfilment proves presumption (Dt 18.22). But non-fulfilment raises the problem of how long one need legitimately wait before a prophet can be said to fail. Ezekiel's opponents did not wish to call him false, they suggested he spoke well but his words were for a later time (Ezek 12.27). Jeremiah's prophetic ministry lasted 40 years before he was finally vindicated in the fall of Jerusalem, whereas Micaiah's word proved true the same day.

Fulfilment of predictions is only one part of the canvas. The fuller picture reveals "history as a history with God, a road on which she travelled under God's guidance" (G.von Rad, 1966, p.107). This lifts our eyes from the moment in history at which a prophet speaks to the whole sweep of history and the Prime Mover behind it. This does not remove the dilemma from his contemporaries but rather puts it in perspective. Qohelah enunciated this tension between seeing that there is a direction in history and being unable to discern the details; "He has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." (Eccl 3.11).

History is then seen as God's activity, and prophecy the vehicle of his revelation to his covenant people (Am 3.7f). The Old Testament presents all the events of Israel's national life as "the reference of everything to a divine will which applies to a whole people and creates for it an inward coherent history" (W. Eichrodt, 1961, p.322). History is the locus of Yahweh's revelation in grace and power - now in judgment, now in renewed blessing.

We can lift our eyes yet further; we then see prophecy not just as a message at a point of time nor yet as simply part of Israel's history but as part of the total revelation of God's will and character to the whole people of God as envisaged in Gen 12.2f. John Milton describes this insight in "Prophecy Interpreted". He takes the basic premise of the New Testament as being the total fulfilment of the Old Testament and applies the principles of Old Testament prophecy to specific questions that confront the thoughtful 20th Century reader of the Old Testament. He considers such questions as "What is the message of Old Testament prophets for us in an age of fear?" "What are the time-dimensions of prophecy?"

In the former essay Milton points out that the fulfilment is greater than the prediction, so one should not look just for literal correspondence between fulfilment and prediction. A prophecy has a central idea and it is this that is fulfilled, not necessarily all the details. Where there is literal correspondence between prediction and event, this prophecy may be a sign - then the thing signified is the central religious idea: "The chief aim of prophecy is not to prove that God can predict events with meticulous exactness before they happen" (J.P.Milton, 1974, p.20). This

is not to ignore the letter of a prophecy, but to look beyond and beneath for its essential truth. There is a predictive prophecy in the Old Testament but we need the commentary of redemptive history to declare all that was really essential in the prophecy.

For instance in Is 7.14 there are two significant words (עַלְמָא) (a young woman of marriageable age) and  $\text{שֵׁם יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ}$  (Immanuel - God with us). The former is the sign and the latter the central idea of the prophecy. A child will be a sign of God's presence with his people. This relates to the heart of the covenant blessing "I will be your God".

In Is 40-45 the vocation of Israel is seen as serving Yahweh in a unique way by being a blessing to all nations of the earth. The fulfillment includes the call of the Christian Church to a servant vocation.

Prophecy is seen as having its first significance for the Prophet's own day, but also an enduring significance of the essence rather than the details of each prophecy.

First the prophet is a preacher and teacher of the will of God. Prediction is not ruled out; the primary emphasis, however, is placed on the message of repentance, faith and obedience.

Next the message reflects and reveals something of the contemporary historical situation. It speaks to that situation yet has a significance beyond the immediate into the future. The prime task in its interpretation is to ask: "What did it mean then concerning faith, hope and the religious life?"

As to predictive elements, we have no right to project these beyond the situation visualized by the prophet himself unless a clear continuity of theological principle is involved. We are not permitted to treat Old Testament prophecies as disjointed parts of an eschatological picture puzzle to be assembled later without regard to their historical origins.

There is a double emphasis in prophecy - judgment and redemption. Prophecy concerns the goal of God's covenant and the way to that goal. God acting in history has a goal, the consummation of his covenant. The introduction of a new age by the advent of Jesus Christ is the primary goal of prophecy fulfilling the promise to Abraham (Gen 12.3) and the yearning of Jeremiah

for a spiritually responsive people (Jer 31.31-34). The ultimate goal is of a new world freed from Vergänglichkeit (that which is transitory) (65.17). This goal is always a goal of hope, but God moves towards it via judgments, because of Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant. Faithlessness is seen by the prophets as the root cause of sin (Is 53.6; Hos 2.13; Mic 3.8). Therefore the preaching of judgment has as its prime purpose the repentance of the hearers. God is not only a God who speaks but also a God who acts; thus the events of history speak his will and lend a concrete predictive element to the preaching if the people despise his word and refuse to hear.

God acts in judgment (i) when the situation calls for it, (ii) because he is holy, (iii) as a means to an end, and (iv) because without it there would be no holy nation. Each judgment leads towards the final judgment on the Day of Yahweh.

Accordingly Milton concludes that in an age of fear Old Testament prophecy is relevant for it may lead to repentance both personally and nationally, it may lead to the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, and it may lead to a firm faith in the living God who says "fear not" (Is 41.10) and whose ultimate goal is shalom (Mic 4.3f).

In the essay on "The Time Dimension of Prophecy" Milton considers that the past, present and future dimensions of prophecy are interrelated because they are based on a covenant announced in the past, proclaimed in the present and pointing towards its consummation in the future. The final consummation is always just beyond the horizon of the present experience of judgment. The prophets use the "times-coloring" of their own age to portray ultimate spiritual realities. He spells out the implications:

1. There is a time of covenant consummation coming.
2. God is active in history which is moving towards a divinely appointed goal.
3. The fundamentals of the covenant are seen in an ever increasingly spiritual light.
4. The double motif of judgment and redemption runs through history.

5. The finale of history is salvation rather than judgment  
(Ob 21; Hos 2.14-20; Is 65,66) (*op.cit.* p.103).

We find Milton's approach refreshing as it affirms an overall plan to salvation history and accords an authority to prophecy that does not need to be bolstered by minute archeological support (e.g. in prophecies against foreign nations). Also his idea of a horizon marries relevance to the contemporary situation to the prophetic goal in the eschaton.

### Conclusion

There are different levels of fulfilment in genuine prophecy. There is the sign and the more distant prophecy which it validates, there is the historical canvas in which each prophecy finds its place and there is the overarching revelation of God's total plan of salvation to mankind. True prophecy fits in with this scheme of things whereas false prophecy is alien to it.

## 2.7 THE QUESTION OF CANONICITY

Authoritative prophecy can be considered as that "authorised" by God. This "authorisation" can be seen at the time of its utterance by its rational content and by reference to tradition and to God's character, but more than this is necessary since two prophetic voices may claim validity on these grounds. The manner of proclamation and confidence in delivery is likewise equivocal. What is more relevant in substantiating the authenticity of prophecy are the demands of justice and repentance and the moral character of the messenger.

But ultimately the authority of prophecy is established only in the aftermath. This is particularly true in reference to the fall of Jerusalem. False prophets were seen to be false and the warnings of Jeremiah were substantiated beyond doubt. We rely for our evidence of all this on the sifting and editing of the relevant prophecies after the death of these prophets. Accordingly, since we have only the received Scriptures for our information, we must tacitly accept the judgment of those scholars, largely in the exilic age, for our picture of truth and falsehood. It is thus hard to divorce truth from what became orthodox truth as canonically accepted.

Much of the process between proclamation and canonization is a subject of debate. Whether the editors recorded prophetic sayings faithfully, or whether they embellished or created the sayings to conform to their own theological traditions will remain a matter of speculation. It is noted that biblical scholars even today are not beyond being swayed by theological vogue. Whatever the process was by which prophecy was canonized, it is the canonical writings which we have received and these include the canonical judgment on the subject of truth and falsehood in prophecy.

Horsfeld and Meyer conclude that "Einziges Prüfstein bleibt der orthodoxe Glaube" - orthodoxy remains the single proof stone (1973, p.152). Five of their fourteen Closing Reflections concern canonicity. "The genuine prophet was the one whose word succeeded and was received canonically." "Whoever accepts the results of prophetic confrontation in the canon finds models to survey true and false prophecy", etc. (*op.cit.* pp. 160ff).

R.E.Clements reaches a similar conclusion in Prophecy and Tradition which he underscores in Chapter 4 "The Rôle of the Prophet according to Israelite Tradition". He sees exilic scholars as creators of the deuteronomic covenant, the deuteronomic history and the editors of the prophetic writings to date. True prophets were "men like Moses" (Dt 18.15) who must be listened to - e.g. Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea. The silence about the great prophets in the deuteronomic history suggests to Clements that the prophets' preaching was separately available. He sees a slowly emerging conception from the 8th Century on of true prophecy which was in principle canonical.

Among certain circles in Israel, those with deuteronomic views, there grew up a regard for certain prophets and their message which vested in them a kind of canonical authority. The truth of prophecy was related to the unique authority of the torah of Moses as presented by the book of Deuteronomy. Early in the exilic period there was a proto-canonical authority of "the law and the prophets" both of which subsequently were expanded by further editorial development until the days of Ezra. Those who preserved traditions and the preaching of the prophets viewed them against a background of covenant ideas, which set their preaching in a markedly new light. The preaching of the prophets was given a deeper dimension, along lines of deuteronomic covenant theology. The prophet himself became a figure of tradition. The canon of prophecy was set alongside the canon of torah. "Both 'the Law and the Prophets' came to acquire an authority related to the belief in the existence of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel" (*op.cit.* p.57).

We are thus limited to the judgments of the canon: true prophets are those so presented to us and as edited for reception into the canon; false prophets are likewise those judged by the canonical writers to be false. Their conclusions are based on historical evidence, but modern man could perhaps wish for a more impartial presentation of both sides of the evidence for the purposes of making a second opinion. However, as it is, the Canon of the Old Testament is closed although the traditions contained in it have developed dramatically and, as we shall see in the final section, are still open for the judgment of history but in their totality and not piecemeal.

### 3. THE HUMAN FACTOR IN PROPHECY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous section we considered some of the religious experiences to which the prophet laid claim when asserting that he spoke on behalf of the Lord.

We now identify some of the threads which constituted the very warp and woof of his national heritage and personal life and which delineated his outlook perhaps more closely than he would have admitted.

When the prophet announced "Thus saith the Lord" what led him to believe that he had the mind of God? How influential was his background in making this claim? Then, as now, the question of authority revolved around the interrelation of Scripture, Tradition and Reason.

Prophets did not always agree with one another yet all claimed the backing of Torah, tradition and reason and thus believed that they had the mind of God. So rich and diverse were the traditions they inherited, and so different were their personal characters and opinions, that one can anticipate a bifurcation of assessments of the current situation, especially at times of crisis. This led to conflicting diagnoses and remedies which in turn led to prophetic confrontation.

First we shall consider the Human Influences on Prophecy; these relate to all prophets on whichever side of the confrontation they stood and include history and its prophetic interpretation, past prophetic activity, the accumulating traditions and the priests' role in conserving them. They also include the personal elements of family upbringing and the many experiences of life. These combine to make the totality of the person who is the prophet. It is finally the contemporary event which acts as a spark to ignite the flame of prophecy.

Then we shall consider the bifurcation of prophetic loyalties. With the same traditions formulating their background prophets nevertheless made at times mutually exclusive assessments of the situation. This gave rise to what have been termed true and false prophets. Doubtless in the situation each designated the other false but the canonical writings

present only one side of the case, although with the hindsight of history. Nevertheless the following chain of questions can be asked:

- (a) What picture does the Biblical narrative present to us of the false prophets?
- (b) To what extent did a prophetic confrontation occur?
- (c) What facts emerge concerning the group which included the false prophets?
- (d) When is the  $\eta\iota\varsigma\psi$  (peace) message in fact a  $\gamma\pi\psi$  (deceitful) message?
- (e) How is the prophet to be assessed by his contemporaries?

Ultimately it was for the individual to decide where the truth lay and how to act.

## 3.2 THE HUMAN INFLUENCES ON PROPHECY

### 3.2.1 THE CONTRIBUTION OF TRADITION TO PROPHECY

#### INTRODUCTION

The prophet of Israel received his understanding of God from his father and his family life on the one hand and from the teaching he received at the cultic centre on the other. The content of what was thus handed on to him was formulated throughout the generations of his forefathers as an ever accumulating tradition.

It is at this accumulating tradition that we now look. Its cohesive motif was a sovereign saviour God who had guided his people throughout history.

Wheeler Robinson in Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament describes the Prophetic Interpretation of History under three all-embracing headings:

- (1) It is theocentric - God controls history.
- (2) It is constitutive - the prophets see God as in the midst of each situation, so use the past to warn or encourage in the present. God is the supreme fact with which men must reckon.
- (3) It is unifying - history is the sphere of God's redemptive activity.

Other commentators use such phrases as "History is the field of divine action" (J. Lindblom, 1973, p.323); history is "a history with God, a road on which she (Israel) travelled under God's guidance" (von Rad, 1966, p.107), "the word content of the acts of God" (K.H.Miskotte, 1967, p.465). Alan Richardson (1946, p.199) looks to the future as well as to the past, for underlying the Old Testament "there is an atmosphere of expectation, a looking-forward to a climax of history or a fulfilment of God's sovereign purpose."

The very principle of sovereignty brings a dilemma when considering the

relationship that existed between God and his prophet. How far was the prophet himself controlled by God and to what extent was he free to speak his own mind?

This dilemma is enunciated by A.J.Heschel in his introduction to The Prophets. To stress the supernatural is to disregard the prophet's part in the prophetic act; to stress revelation is to ignore the response; to stress inspiration is to lose sight of the human situation; to stress subjective phenomena is to disregard the prophet's awareness of his confrontation with facts not derived from his own mind (1962, Intro.xiii). His pithy conclusion with which we concur is "the prophet is a person not a microphone" (*ibid* xiv).

#### How Free was the Prophet?

Inspiration can be stressed at the expense of freedom and individuality. It can lead to misunderstanding to describe a prophet as being overwhelmed by God and compelled to proclaim publicly what he has seen or heard (Lindblom, 1973, p.323). Eichrodt comments "Thus saith the Lord" represents the prophet as nothing more than the speaking tube of a higher power" (1967, p.340). This is, however, one side to the coin of the prophet's relationship with God. He was aware of an irresistible constraint, he was under compulsion. "His hand was heavy upon me" said Ezekiel, "the word of the Lord came to me" said Jeremiah. And yet the individuality of these two men is patently recorded in Scripture.

The prophet was both bound and free. He was under God's control and yet free to use his own insight. To return to Heschel: the prophet is not only a prophet but also a poet, preacher, patriot, statesman, social critic and moralist, (Heschel, 1962, Intro.xiv); he has a sensitivity to evil (*op.cit.* p.3), he is an assayer, messenger and witness (*op.cit.* p.20).

It was his very freedom that made his submission realistic. The God whom he met in the tradition was one that claimed his complete devotion; he was willingly overwhelmed and thus received a word that accorded with his own insight into his contemporary situation.

### The Accumulative Tradition

We have seen that the prophet inherited a tradition which spoke of a sovereign, saviour God. It was to this God that he willingly submitted himself, yet he retained his own individuality and freedom of insight and accordingly was able to speak from his tradition to his fellow men nurtured in the same tradition, understanding the same constraints. The prophet could apply elements of the tradition to the conscience of his contemporaries in their new situation and thus develop the tradition one step further.

John Skinner in Prophecy and Religion speaks helpfully of prophets thus:

Being men imbued with the spirit of revealed religion, and seeing all things in the light of its principles they were able to develop those principles in their application to new situations as they arose, and bring forth new truth from the depths of their inspired insight into the mind and character of God. (J. Skinner, 1961, p.3).

There were three elements in this accumulating tradition:

- a. History and its prophetic interpretation.
- b. The influence of past prophetic activity.
- c. The priest's conserving rôle.

To these we now turn.

#### a. History and its Prophetic Interpretation

It was not only the teaching at his father's side, the family and community worship and the Torah which the prophet shared with his fellow men; he also was heir to the same history. History was intimately entwined with worship and traditions. In this Israel differed from her neighbours; it is this that separates the revealed religion of Israel from the natural religion of other ancient near eastern nations. Natural religion is circular being based on the cycle of birth, growth and death seen both in human and animal life and also in the seasons of nature and the quarters of the moon. Being circular such a religion lacks origin and finality.

Israel's history added to all that she learnt from her neighbours an overriding emphasis. She had her new moons and sabbaths, her annual agricultural feasts and new year celebrations. But even with many of these was mingled the consciousness of a God who acted, of a history that had a beginning and an end, of a journey with a destination, of a rest and a shalom that lay in the future, that was built on deep conviction rather than wishful thinking.

J.N.Schofield (1964, pp. 26f) illustrates the Hebrew's understanding of time as a man 'riding with his back to the engine'. "The past lay in front of him, clearly set out for him to see, to trace its patterns, and watch the lines of its consequences running on into the present.... the future all unseen lay behind him as he travelled backwards into its unknown regions; it was 'afterwards', 'behind'....because God was constant....the Hebrew believed that the lines of the patterns he traced in the past and saw running into the present continued into the future, so he could foretell the future and glance over his shoulder into the 'afterwards'".

History revealed to the prophet as to the people the nature of Yahweh as a God who acts. This activity was interpreted before, during and after the specific events (Moses, Shemiah). Each prophetic interpretation that proved to be correct, validated by fulfilment, deepened the nation's confidence in Yahweh's consistency and enhanced her understanding of Him as a living God (Is 64.4).

Israel as a nation, on the evidence we have, is first referred to on Merenptah's stele (c. 1220 B.C.) and first seen by outsiders to have a separate identity. But from within, her emergence from Egypt and settlement in Canaan is seen as the fulfilment of promise by a God who cares (Gen 50.24; Ex 3.7-10). Moses is chosen to act as God's agent of deliverance; his obedience depends on the authority of God's self-disclosure, as had Abraham's (Gen 12.1), but it was also based on God's promise. God had revealed Himself as the God of Abraham (Ex 3.6). He had fulfilled some of his promises to Abraham (Gen 12.7; 17.16) in his lifetime and others after his death (15.5; 16.10). The fulfilment of the former gave ground for confidence that the latter too would be fulfilled. So it was with Moses, the promise that the people would return

where Moses stood (Ex 3.12) was supported by the promise of dramatic powers (4.2-9).

In the book of Exodus we are presented with Yahweh's concern to demonstrate the continuity between the revelation in the time of Moses with those in the times of the Patriarchs (Ex 3.6, 15f, 4.5, 6.2f). He was the same God, but also with the same character, a covenant keeping God (Ex 2.24, 6.4-8). Thus the new promise in Moses' day, of deliverance from bondage, was the fulfilment of the earlier promise to Abraham, of inheritance.

Israel's concept of history was unique - that God should control history from beginning to end on the basis of a promise and its fulfilment. To this was added the dimension of Israel's response. Not only Yahweh but Israel herself had responsibility in shaping history. Yahweh is a moral God, and the privilege bestowed on Israel of a unique relationship required a unique responsibility. They were His people (Ex 3.10, 33.13). He was a father to Israel (Dt 32.6; Ps 89.26; Is 63.16, 64.8) and when Israel was in exile Yahweh became her next-of-kin Redeemer (שׂוֹמֵר אֶת-בְּרִיתוֹ) (Is 41.14 etc.).

This twin concept some would say has been over schematized by the Deuteronomistic historian. It would not be possible to write a history on such a theory if it were not founded on a firm conviction based in fact. This was certainly the attitude of the prophets who warned of God's punishment: "You only have I know of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3.2).

Not only is the nature of Israelite prophecy unique but also the prophets' grasp of the interaction between Israel's behaviour and Yahweh. The Rabshakeh described this perfectly (Is 36.13-20). That there is a difference between Yahweh and the gods of the nations was demonstrated in that Jerusalem was delivered out of his hand (v. 20). It was Yahweh who made a distinction between Israel and Egypt on Passover night (Ex 11.7); thereafter when Israel was true to her heritage she made a distinction between Yahweh and other gods (Ps 135.15-18; Is 44.9-20; Jer 10.1-5). Other gods were impotent, less than man, because created by him; Yahweh is almighty, Israel's master and not her servant.

Jeremiah, in his reflection at the potter's home (18.1-11) sees Yahweh as the Lord of history (7,9) but a moral Lord (8,10). When Isaiah speaks of the potter's vessel (30.14) it is noteworthy that this is in confrontation with false prophets who want peace without repentance, who do not wish to hear of the Holy One of Israel (11).

The difference between natural religion and revealed religion is seen in the stature of the God they proclaim. A God who can reveal Himself is master of his people's destiny; a God who is deduced from the cyclical nature of birth and death and of the seasons is the servant of the nations who use religion to manipulate him. But such a god is less demanding and this helped to bring about the syncretistic nature of Israel's worship.

The prophet learned from history that the God who called him into his service was the God who had revealed himself many times before; his revelation was consistent both in promise and demand to every generation; Israel was God's people, the privilege of being in a covenant relationship included the responsibility to obey Yahweh's moral precepts; the Ten Commandments required exclusive loyalty to Yahweh and respect for the rights of others within the community. The idea of blessing and curse was a deserved reward and not an arbitrary convention. Punishment was finite and did not abrogate the covenant relationship. Just as punishment could be proclaimed so was it right to proclaim restoration (Amos 3.2, 9.11, 14).

#### b. The Influence of Past Prophetic Activity

The warp and woof of life which made the prophet into the man he was threaded the backcloth of his world not only with the inherited traditions of history and Torah imbibed from his infancy at home, but also with past prophetic activity.

There was a succession of prophets, named and unnamed, addressing the people of many generations, interpreting past teaching to present situations. Thus a prophetic tradition accumulated.

The scribe commended by Jesus is he "who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Mt 13.52). So the prophet has a new message based on the old traditions. The word 'new' may imply either what is fresh

or what is novel. It is relevance that portrays the true prophet, not necessarily novelty. Those prophecies that have been given canonical recognition may well measure up to R.E.Clements' maxim "it is of the very essence of prophetic revelation, as usually understood, that its messages are unique and are not merely inherited ideas and assertions" (R.E.Clements, 1975, p.25), but there is no necessity for all prophecy to be so judged, nor is there evidence that other prophecy is false. True prophecy is the correct interpretation of the state of the nation and the application thereto of the correct message, a judgment made by posterity.

The point that Clements wishes to stress is that prophets took earlier religious traditions and added something fresh and important to them - they neither abandoned nor accepted tradition wholeheartedly. The something fresh was the renewed interpretation of the Yahwistic traditions to the contemporary scene. Levi Olan calls them "guardians of guiding principles" (Goldensen Lectures, 1969, p.126).

The prophet was the conscience of Israel bringing a modern thrust from the traditions that were woven into the fabric of her society. Only on the basis of these traditions would the demands of the prophet produce a challenge. They were moral challenges directed at a morally educated nation. Even if the Commandments were honoured more in the breach than in their observance they were still part of the child's upbringing.

What was unique to Israel was an open denial of the right of man to own man. This led to the prophetic protest against injustice. God transformed holiness from the non-moral to the moral, from fickle power to redemptive energy. Thus prophets could reiterate demands upon the informed moral structure of Israelite society, a society based on covenant, privilege and responsibility.

R.E.Clements in Prophecy and Tradition discusses the question of prophetic traditions. He notes the distinction between Überlieferungsgeschichte and Traditionsgeschichte. Although they inevitably pass into one another the former is "the activity of transmission by which the words of a folk-tale, a legend, a psalm or a prophecy were handed on to subsequent generations" (1975, p.4), i.e. a process of transmission, whereas the latter refers to the content of what is handed on, e.g. a

whole range of customs, ideas and conventions. He then asks the question:

What relative weight should be ascribed to the prophet's own claim to have experienced God in a direct encounter, and to the evident fact that the prophet's words are related to themes and motifs already current in the tradition? (*op.cit.* p.28).

There are dangers in each extreme whether the prophet's dependence on tradition is so stressed to make this the decisive factor or whether appeal is made too directly to the prophet's experience as a means of clarifying his message. These two, experience and tradition, are inter-related; his experience of God illuminates the tradition he has inherited to produce the word relevant to his own generation.

Clements points out that various features are common to several prophets from which the inference can be made that a prophetic tradition grew.

Oracles concerning foreign nations. Clements suggests (*op.cit.* p.60) that this may be the earliest form of Hebrew prophecy. The threat of foreign power has direct bearing on a nation (cf. Nahum, Obadiah). There is a Mari text concerning the coming downfall of Hammurabi of Babylon. Balazm is hired hopefully to curse Israel and does declare threats against Amalek, the Kenites and Kittim (Nm 24.20-24). Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel each have a section of oracles against foreign nations. Zedekiah threatens the Syrians with horns of iron (1 Ki 22.11).

Call narratives. These comprise another element common to many prophets. Zimmerli, as mentioned above (p.5) sees two basic types: (i) with Moses, Gideon, Saul, Jeremiah there is "the divine overcoming of the inadequacy and consequent reluctance on the part of the person called", (ii) to Micaiah ben Imlah, Isaiah, Ezekiel came a vision of God and a summons to the deliberations of the Heavenly Council. In both types there is a warning of rejection and hostility. This raises the question "Is this part of the call or does it reflect back from his subsequent experience?" "To this we should perhaps add that it raises the question how far it has become a traditional element of the call-narrative as a distinctive type of prophetic account" (R.E.Clements, 1975, p.35). "The prophetic call-narrative shows a complex interplay of traditional and new elements which makes the question of the relationship between the prophets and tradition a real one" (*ibid.* p.39).

Against this view it must be stated that an initial call experience is quite different from the content of later preaching. The content of preaching must be meaningful to those who are addressed and traditional forms will emerge, but any similarity of experience with God will be based on the fact that all men share a common human nature. A man who becomes aware that he is being called to preach to his own erring nation will be only too aware that he must face rejection and hostility. He will be aware of this from his own observation of the character of man, and also of the ostracism of others he has respected both in his own time as well as in previous ages. There is no need to appeal to a prophetic tradition to explain what is self-evident.

Clements discerns the two elements in a prophet's teaching - what is new or original and what is traditional or inherited. He then appears to make the equation: what is new equals what comes to him from direct personal experience with God, and what is traditional is what he learns from history and from his contemporaries. This equation does not allow for that area of preaching which applies traditional teaching to a new situation with an authority derived from a personal experience of God. A prophet may, but he need not be, an innovator or reformer. His ministry is to say what is relevant and true in his situation, if his message contains nothing unique that does not invalidate his ministry.

Wisdom elements. Clements takes a *via media* stance concerning the prophet's relationship to wisdom tradition. Wise men and prophets were not separately identifiable groups of men as is the case with priests. Some view the pursuit of wisdom as primarily a court activity and some a domestic interest going back to the tribal society of early Israel. But this pursuit was shared with her Ancient Near-Eastern neighbours and no one's particular prerogative.

Wisdom forms of speech, the proverb, the riddle, the skilful saying, are all common oral heritage in a nation. Amos is sometimes linked to a Tekoa school of wisdom (cf. Joab's wise woman 2 Sam 14.2) because of his number says (Am 1.3-2.6) and logical reasoning of effect to prior cause (3.2-9) but the evidence is inconclusive that there was any precise wisdom influence upon him. It is hard to mark boundaries between wisdom and prophecy. Any public speaker will use stylistic forms that he finds appropriate.

## Conclusion

Although we believe that Clements overstresses the prophets' dependence on their predecessors we accept that earlier prophetic activity had a profound effect on moulding a prophet's outlook.

### c. The Priest's Conserving Rôle

Continuity depends on consolidation. The Jews loved their history for it was so intertwined with God's mercy and God's wisdom. To the priest fell the rôle of celebrating and instructing each generation in the glories of the past. Torah, from the root  $\text{נרן}$  includes law, instruction and direction in the ways of life. The inspiration of Abraham's nomadic faith, of Joseph's varied fortunes with the refrain "the Lord was with him" (Gen 39.3,23), of Moses' and Joshua's leadership were no less a part of Torah than the decalogue, the detailed casuistical laws, or the levitical offerings. As prophetic activity increased, however radical it may have seemed in its days, it was retained and passed on to succeeding generations as part of the accumulating tradition. The elders of Jehoiakim's reign (609-597), for instance, could relate the prophecy of Micah in days of Hezekiah a century earlier (716-687) (Jer 26.18). And indeed it is thanks largely to the Priestly influence during the exile that the work of the prophets was recorded and retained in the canon, (Rowley, 1945, Chap. 7 The Rise of Judaism).

Asher Ginzberg in his essay "Priest and Prophet" contrasts their rôles as pragmatist and idealist. The prophet is the giant, "The prophet is a one sided man. A certain moral idea fills his whole being. His whole life is spent fighting for this ideal with all his strength" (1912,p.130).

This contrast is helpful though overdone. The outstanding prophet is contrasted by Ginzberg with the average priest. There were also rank and file prophets who were not giants, and there were priests who were also prophets (Ezekiel, Jahaziel, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada).

The rôles of priest and prophet are different, so comparisons are not valuable. The eye cannot say to the hand "I have no need of you" (1 Cor 12.21) both are part of the body; they have their own ministry to perform and yet are interdependent. If it were not for the prophet the priest

would have less to teach, and if it were not for the priest the prophet's message would not find roots in his hearers. Both the priest and the prophet facilitate a significant part of the other's ministry.

One of the problems in understanding the respective rôles of priest and prophet is that Scripture presupposes a normative rôle without describing it in detail. It is accordingly the occasional prophetic or priestly outburst that claims our attention which by definition is not normative. Reference is made to priests and prophets in almost every generation of Israel particularly during the monarchy, but their conserving and teaching rôle is not mentioned. It is evident that such a task was assumed, otherwise there would have been no point of contact for the prophet's message.

It is instructive to note several elements in, for example, Isaiah Ch. 1 that presuppose considerable teaching if they were to be understood by those addressed. Reference is made to three aspects of past history (9f, 21, 26), to moral values of justice and injustice (4, 16f, 21ff, 27), to reality in worship and not mere ritual (11-17); against this background the idea of rebellion is relevant (2, 5, 20, 23, 28); and then from the whole context the theme of reasoning, retribution and restoration is intelligible (3, 18f, 24, 26).

This richness of prophetic themes is all the more instructive when it is remembered that Isaiah is the earliest of the writing prophets in Judah. Isaiah had inherited a very full tradition and the priestly rôle in his instruction is to be given due credit in this.

In his essay "Prophets and the problem of continuity" Norman Porteous widens this theme. He observes that the amphictyonic traditions were preserved despite cultic corruption in Israel. Amos and Hosea bear witness to a continuing awareness of the Sinai covenant and its moral obligations. Although Hosea could say that there was no knowledge of the Lord in the land (Hos 4.1-6) nevertheless he himself knew and cherished the traditions. He knew of the Lord's gracious acts towards Israel in the past (11.1ff) and details of the law (4.2) and he himself used covenant language (1.9f; 2.19, 23). His answer to the question "How were these traditions remembered?" lies not only with the priest but with the whole texture of Israelite life. Covenant traditions were preserved not only in a cultic continuity but more in the "humble folk who received the

traditions and responded in obedience of heart and life". This, he suggests, "represented the true Israel of the Spirit". It was both the prophet and the priest who inspired the ordinary man so that in days of darkness the light of the honoured traditions never died out entirely. These were "the humble and quiet in the land who had no memorial but who were the salt of the earth" (Anderson & Harrelson, 1962, pp.24f).

Priest and prophet must share in our gratitude that the whole canvas of Israel's tradition was faithfully passed on to each generation and embellished by new insights in its preservation.

### 3.2.2 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE PERSONAL ELEMENTS TO PROPHECY

We have seen that the outlook of a prophet is moulded by many things that happened before he was born: the history of his people, the way in which that history was understood, and the whole accumulating tradition to which he was heir.

We consider now the additional influence of the personal factors which informed his ministry as a prophet. A man's understanding of God and his attitude to others are shaped *inter alia* by the family in which he is nurtured and other experiences in his own life.

From the earliest days the education of the home played its part. The child is brought into a life interwoven by the Torah in being born into a family whose very ethos is moulded by it. The "words of Moses" are to be upon the heart, upon the hand, between the eyes and on the doorpost - they are to be taught diligently to the children at any and every hour of the day (Dt 6.4-9). It is difficult to overemphasize the impact of such family life. Twentieth century western man compartmentalizes his life and is inclined to refer only a small portion of his outlook and behaviour to religion or to God; for the rest he operates within a closed system of cause and effect. But to the Hebrew, God permeated the totality of his world view; from childhood he would understand that God was involved with every aspect of life; the weather, food laws, social relationships, as well as worship and sacrifice.

The influence of family life would also affect his attitude to other people and to the society in which he lived. A village life would orientate a

child's mind very differently from city life, a peasant's home differently from a prince's. Nationalism, strict morality, radical or conservative approaches to politics or religion - all these are frequently imbibed from parental outlook.

Apart from the family, friends also have impact in forming a man's attitude to life and to God. Thus the friends of a prophet contribute to the formation of his prophetic ministry, be they friends from the neighbourhood or from a prophetic or priestly milieu. This element may be presumed from the nature of things although there is no direct Biblical evidence for or against it.

There is however Biblical evidence to show that not only personal background but a multitude of experiences to which the prophet is subjected contribute in shaping his prophetic message. A few examples will clarify these aspects.

Moses. Why should God have chosen him of all people? A Jewish child reared in the court of Pharaoh, yet his innate humility and lack of oratorical powers allied to an intensity of feeling and compassion for the helpless prepare him for a peculiar responsibility. These qualities reveal themselves:

- as he champions the oppressed, both in Egypt (Ex 2.11f) when he went out to his people and looked on their burdens and saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people (note the identification despite the alien upbringing), and in the wilderness (2.17) when he stood up and helped the shepherdesses,
- as he spends his life in the service of the people and is wise enough to accept his father-in-law's advice (Ex 18.13-23),
- as he both pleads with God for his "stiffnecked people" (Ex 32.9f) and pleads with the people to be "on the Lord's side" (v.26), declining the offer to be father of a new nation (v.10),
- as he refuses to justify himself when opposed (Num 12.1-8;16.1-7),
- as he sees Israel as himself, unworthy, insignificant yet elect by the mercy of God (Dt 7.6ff).

Amos. The rugged farmer in his country surroundings was shocked by the affluence and permissiveness which he saw on the occasions of his visits to market in the society and people of Samaria - their ivory couches, lamb, pop songs, guitars, cosmetics (6.1-7). The countryman who knows where the sleekest cattle graze has the forthrightness of country people in denouncing the well fed, well-upholstered women of Samaria - cows of Bashan (4.1). The villager more in touch with agricultural matters reminds his hearers of drought, mildew and locust which decimated the crops (4.6-9). His logic is gained from the study of nature (3.4, 5, 8, 12; 5.19).

But all this tends to enhance the traditional message of privilege and responsibility (3.2) and a God who will punish (3.14).

Living a simpler lifestyle of the country he observes the inequity of the city - its rejection of truth and honesty, trampling the poor, its unfair taxes and its bribery (5.10-13); religion without justice and compassion is a mockery (5.21-24).

His visions come too from his normal surroundings and what would strike terror to his own heart - locusts, fire (7.1,4) the sun sinking at noon (8.9) a famine of hearing the word of the Lord (8.11).

Hosea. We know few details of the life of Hosea, but what we know is significant to his ministry. He still finds a tender love for his wife despite her desertion. (H.H.Rowley in Men of God inclines back to this traditional understanding). Thus he grasps a facet of God's character and of his attitude towards Israel that other prophets failed to appreciate. "Plead with your Mother" (2.2). "How can I give you up, O Ephraim - my heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender." (11.8).

Married to an adulteress, he sees Israel's involvement with alien religions (2.2) and foreign alliances (2.5; 8.9f) as adultery. It was religious apostasy he chiefly noted (4.12ff, 13.2) although violence and corruption are also mentioned (4.1ff, 7.1), yet not nearly as extensively as by Amos.

Because of his traditional understanding of the character of God he pulls no punches in describing the fearful reward for iniquity: it will be God's initiative (1.4; 7.12; 13,7f); the keynote will be destruction (5.9; 7.13;

10.14; 13.9); the horrors of war are listed (1.5; 7.6; 10.10,14; 13.16); religion will be extinguished (2.11; 3.4; 10.2,8) and exile is decreed (8.8,13; 9.3,17; 11.5).

Hosea sees the monarchy as the greatest apostasy. The King is the leader of his people yet is made glad by their wickedness and treachery (7.3,4). Samuel was hesitant to allow the people a King and Hosea reminds the people of the sins of Gibeah (9.9; 10.9). Gibeah was the home of Saul and the centre of his effort to destroy David (1 Sam 23.19; 26.1); it was a place famed for violence from the days of the Judges (Jdg 19,20).

Hosea names his children as a sign of God's judgment on wickedness of the monarchy. Jezreel is a reminder of the bloodshed of Jehu. He put an end to the dynasty of Omri at Elijah's behest (1 Ki 21.21f) for Ahab had usurped the authority of God at Jezebel's instigation; she had introduced the worship of Baal Melkart with its understanding that the King was divine and therefore owned the land, hence the controversy of Elijah over Naboth's vineyard. Such foreign theology needed to be eradicated; however, Hosea's condemnation would suggest that Jehu's zeal overstepped the mark. Not only did he destroy Ahab's family but he also murdered Ahaziah the King of Judah (2 Ki 9.27) and 42 of his kinsmen (10.13f), as well as Ahab's friends (10.11) and all the adherents of Baal (10.18-27). However much of the carnage was seen to be necessary, Hosea clearly deems it excessive, for violence breeds violence. The author of Kings comments that Jehu's loyalty to the Lord was still only partial (2 Ki 10.31).

If the name of Gomer's first child, Jezreel, specifies the sins of the dynasty in which it is born the names of the next two children reveal God's abrogation of his covenant with Israel, and this is experienced in their lifetime in the rapid and violent succession of five dynasties culminating in the fall of Samaria itself.

And yet to Hosea with his inextinguishable love for Gomer he perhaps never truly envisaged all this happening. This insight into the compassion of God made him feel that such love could not go unrequited (1.10; 2.14; 11.8); and the remedy on man's side was so simple - repent (14.1) and they would again be accepted and their faithlessness healed (14.4). He delineated so clearly what was their due but seemed to believe that God's love would somehow reach them without the need to

destroy (11.8) because they would listen to Hosea and repent. This thinking is clear in Chapter 2. "Plead with your mother, plead lest I strip her (vv. 2,3) then she shall say 'I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better with me than'" (v.7).

Hosea is of the same mind at the end of his prophecy (14.1-3,8); the need to return to Yahweh is so obvious and the way back so simple. In his optimism Hosea even indulges in a pun: "Assyria cannot save you, but I can be your Assyria" (14.3,8) (  $\text{אֲנִי אֶשְׁמְרֶךָ}$  - I will look after you with watchful care), cf. 13.7 too when  $\text{אֲנִי אֶשְׁמְרֶךָ}$  is used in its opposite sense ("I will lurk" beside the way).

It would seem that Hosea's personal experience guided the shaping of his prophecy, yet perhaps through it he assessed the character of God better than the nature of his own people. He understood God's yearning to forgive his people better than the insidious nature of rebellion that prevented them seeking that very forgiveness which would save them. [Note also the frequent use of  $\text{יָדָע}$  (to know) used of marital faithfulness - 2.20; 4.1,6; 5.3; 6.3; 8.2; 13.4,5].

Ezekiel. Ezekiel's priestly background is noticeable in much of his prophetic activity. The opening reference to "the thirtieth year (1.1) may well speak of his age, the age at which, had he been in Jerusalem, he would have begun his priestly ministry. 4.14 refers to his strict observance of all the food laws. In his visions he is carried to the Temple in Jerusalem, and sees the sanctuary (8.6); yet God is a sanctuary to the exiles (11.10).

At the age of 50 (cf. 40.1 with 1.2) his due age for retirement from the priesthood he receives a vision of a renewed Temple (40-42) and the glory of the Lord filling it (43.5 cf. 1 Ki 8.11) as it filled the Temple of Solomon. The priests shall not defile themselves (44.15-27) and the passover shall be restored (45.21). The river of life will issue forth from the Temple (47.1), the land will be reapportioned to the 12 Tribes and the name of the city be called "The Lord is there" (48.35).

Two personal experiences are related to his prophetic ministry and linked

to the occasion of the destruction of the Temple. Ezekiel is dumb except when God opens his mouth (3.26f) but his dumbness will be removed when a fugitive comes to report the news of the fall of Jerusalem (24.25ff). In fact his mouth was opened the night before he arrived (33.22).

The other personal experience interwoven with his ministry in connection with the fall of Jerusalem was the death of his wife (24.15-18). Ezekiel was not to mourn for his wife as a sign to the exiles that they were not to mourn for the Temple, because this was the hand of God at work. Their mourning was to be inward and not outward.

### 3.2.3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF CONTEMPORARY EVENTS TO PROPHECY

We have seen that the source of prophecy stems not only from the prophet's personal experience of God but also from everything that made the prophet the man he was, including the traditions he inherited, the family in which he was nurtured and the multitude of experiences that happened to him in his own lifetime.

To these we now add the contemporary events which he addresses. We assumed that, to be worthy of mention and also in being faithful to God, the prophet is ever relevant; he has something to say, and he says it. All this is presupposed in our modern day concern to date oracles, to discover their Sitz im Leben, and to judge what is authentically of the prophet himself and what comes from his disciples or the editors of his works.

The work of a prophet is to answer the question "What has God to say to us in all this?" The activity of surrounding nations, the incidence of natural disasters, national and international policies, the state of religion, social injustice, all these are grist for the prophet's mill. Indeed, one of the severest judgments is not a famine of food but a dearth of hearing the words of the Lord (Am 8.11). An explanation of the spiritual chaos in the days of Eli is given as "the word of the Lord was rare in those days" (1 Sam 3.1).

The prophet is thus of necessity a politician and a man of prayer. A politician because he is involved in the affairs of his nation, and a

man of prayer because he is a man of God and what he says is not just his own ideas, but what have become his ideas as a result of reflection on both the state of the nation in which he is involved and also the character of God who is the God of Israel.

(a) THE PROPHET AS POLITICIAN

Leadership Rôles in Israel - King, Priest and Prophet

Most of our information of prophetic activity stems from the period of the monarchy, for the founding of the monarchy divided the rôles of leadership in the community.

Moses unites the rôles of national leader, lawgiver and prophet. Deborah is judge and prophetess. Samuel is prophet, priest and judge. When the people ask for a King Samuel not only sees this as a rejection of theocracy (1 Sam 8.7) but also appreciates the attendant problems of monarchy due to the inevitable division of leadership rôles. The wisdom of the Israelite monarchy is seen in the necessity to keep these three rôles separate so that a balance is maintained - King, prophet and priest each have their own function. When the King attempts to usurp the function of the priest, the first step to claiming divine authority, he is reminded of his limitations (e.g. Uzziah in 2 Chron 26.18). Monarchy is at its best when there is harmony between these three rôles. 2 Chron 24-26 is enlightening on this aspect. The King is educated by the priest. Joash is instructed by Jehoiada (24.2) and all is well as long as he listens to him, but after Jehoiada's death Joash hearkens to some princes who lead him into idolatry (24.17,18); prophets then enter the scene "to bring them back to the Lord", although in fact they fail. Joash's son Amaziah treads a similar path; he begins in submission to the law as taught by the priest (25.2-4); when he makes a foolish alliance he heeds the counsel of the prophet (vv.7-10) but later in his reign he closes his mind to prophetic counsel (v.16). Amaziah's son Uzziah again follows a similar course; he is instructed by Zechariah (26.5) and prospers. Success leads to pride and an attempt to usurp the rôle of the priest in offering incense in the Temple. The priests attempt to withstand him, he becomes angry and is struck down with leprosy (vv.18.19).

From the days of Joshua every leader in Israel was expected to pattern his leadership upon the Torah (Josh 1.8) and its subsequent traditions (Josh 24.26). The darkness of the Judges period stemmed from everyone doing what was right in his own eyes (Jdg 17.6; 21.25) for there was no King (who would have known the Torah). When Saul was made King Samuel wrote the rights and duties of Kingship in a book to be kept at the cultic centre (1 Sam 10.25). The priests were to instruct the King in the principles of the Torah. It was thus the rôle of the prophet to intervene either when these principles were being violated or when some event occurred which needed specific instruction.

The prophets thus had a clear political rôle to play. Those whose activities are most prominently recorded are those involved with particularly significant moments in the history of Israel. Tension occurred between King and prophet because the King tended towards pragmatism and the prophet towards idealism. The pragmatist seeks strength in political alliances, the idealist says "Trust in the Lord". In this way Isaiah both withstood Ahaz (Is 7) and encouraged Hezekiah (Is 37). In times of prosperity the leadership of the state is satisfied with the status quo and it is for the prophet to remind them of the suffering and injustice endured by the poorer people.

This can be seen throughout the history of Israel.

#### The Prophet's Rôle during the Monarchy

We turn now to see how the canonical prophets were repeatedly caught up in the political arena as a result of their ministry.

Nathan advised David about his plans to build a Temple (2 Sam 7), upbraided him for his behaviour toward Uriah (2 Sam 12) and was involved in the debate concerning a successor to the throne (1 Ki 1). The episode of Uriah and Bathsheba is of special importance not simply on the moral level but more positively because with it was involved the continuation of the dynasty, as Solomon was the son of Bathsheba.

Ahijah made manifest the rift that had never been closed between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and those to the north. David's sovereignty had been accepted later in Jerusalem than in Hebron (1 Ki 2.11). Absalom

had exploited the rift that remained, and Solomon had not healed the rivalry. So Ahijah dramatically sides with Jeroboam (1 Ki 11.31-39) hoping to see two kingdoms both loyal to Yahweh. Civil war is averted only by the intervention of another prophet, Shemaiah, this time on the side of Judah (1 Ki 12.23).

But apostasy was not averted in the north and the struggle there of Yahwism against Baalism brings to our attention the prophetic activity in Samaria of men who stood courageously for Yahweh and became political figures. An unknown man travelled from Judah to cry against Jeroboam's divisive altar. Jehu ben Hanani confronted the regicidal Baasha. Further into the 9th Century Elijah withstood Ahab and Jezebel's Baalite entourage. Elijah's political career included a call to anoint the man who would overthrow Omri's dynasty, and also Hazael to be King over Syria (1 Ki 19.16). Micaiah too seems a constant opposer of the Northern monarch (1 Ki 22.8).

Not all prophecy in Samaria is directed against Samaria; however faithless she may have been, her enemies were also Yahweh's enemies. When the powerful Ben Hadad claimed his personal wealth and harem, Ahab meekly succumbed (1 Ki 29.3f); but when the demands were extended, firmer resolve was called for (vv. 7-9). An unnamed prophet encouraged righteous retaliation (13-21) and Ahab was reprimanded for dealing too leniently with the defeated foe (v.42). Although Naaman's health is restored to him (2 Ki 5) Elisha is used by God to outwit his army more than once (2 Ki 6). When Ben Hadad besieged Samaria, Elisha predicted a reprieve (2 Ki 7.1). That Elisha was not only a force to be reckoned with but also a powerful man of God Ben Hadad admitted when from his sickbed he sent Hazael to learn the outcome of his illness (2 Ki 8.7,8). With characteristic candour Elisha deals with the fortunes of both Ben Hadad and Hazael, and also Israel at the latter's hand (vv.12-14).

Our attention continues to be engaged in the Biblical narrative by further prophetic activity in the Northern Kingdom during the 8th Century; the voice of the Lord seemed consistently to be heard throughout the nine dynasties of that Kingdom's stormy history. On the nationalistic front Jonah, though his notice is confined to one verse (2 Ki 14.25) seems to have encouraged Jeroboam II in successful territorial aggression. But

secretism and idolatry continued abundantly (2 Ki 17.7-18); many voices were raised in warning (2 Ki 17.13; Hos 6.5). Of these Amos and Hosea alone are known to us.

Theirs are voices speaking not of military supremacy like that of Jonah in 2 Ki 14.25, but of spiritual and moral decay. The nation's adherence to the covenant was always tenuous though a residue of spiritual and moral capital is observable - Ben Hadad could presume (successfully) on mercy in Israel (1 Ki 20.31). Amos could speak in the same breath both of the privilege of election as well as of the moral responsibility attaching thereto (3.2). Condemnation of surrounding nations was on moral grounds (chs 1,2) and when he turns his attention to Israel it is to injustice (4.7), false security (6.1), luxury (6.4-6) and oppression (4.1) as well as to insincere religious devotion (4.4f; 5.21ff) that he addresses himself.

Amos, like the unnamed prophet in the earlier Jeroboam's reign (1 Ki 13.1) was a foreigner from Southern Judah. But the native Hosea sees both the apostasy of his people and the deep compassion of a covenant making God. Lack of faithfulness to Yahweh results in disobedience to the Decalogue (4.1,2) and that in turn causes Yahweh to withhold blessing (4.3). He speaks, the true national figure, alike to priest, people and king (5.1). Punishment through war lies around the corner (5.8-11) and as Israel is destroyed the foundations of Judah creak ominously (5.12). International alliances will be of no avail (7.11) for there is no genuine repentance (7.14), no תְּדַבֵּר (no covenant-mercy), no אֵלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (no knowledge of God) (6.6).

If other 8th Century prophets have sunk into oblivion whilst Hosea and Amos are bequeathed to posterity, it may well be because of the total proclamation made by the latter, their message was what later generations would categorize as both spiritual, social and political.

As Samaria topples, the tide of danger encroaches upon the territory of the Southern Kingdom, in fact it is almost swamped by the same wave.

"The Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the King of Assyria and all his glory; and it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks: and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and press on, reaching even to the neck" (Is 8.7,8). So in 701 B.C. the armies of Assyria swept through Judah, and Mount Zion alone kept its head above water. All the fortified cities

fell to Sennacherib (2 Ki 18.13) and a similar fate for Jerusalem was just averted (2 Ki 19.36). Sennacherib claims to have besieged and taken 46 strong walled cities, as well as the smaller cities in their neighbourhood (R.K.Harrison, 1971, p.237).

That the compilers of the Old Testament honour Isaiah as a political figure of high calibre is seen from the fact that this narrow escape is recorded three times (1 Ki 18,19; 2 Chron 32 and Is 36,37). Isaiah, like his contemporary Hosea, could also point to national corruption, spiritual disloyalty and religious superficiality (1.4, 11-15). Perhaps 1.7-9 describes the calamity of 715 B.C. Through war or exile Judah will be deprived of leadership (3.2,3) a just reward for a misplaced loyalty.

When the immediate danger of national disaster had passed little of the voice of prophecy has been preserved - perhaps it was suppressed by Hezekiah's untimely son Manasseh or perhaps it was not of sufficient historical interest to be preserved. However, that it did not cease is certain (2 Chr 23.18; 2 Ki 21.10-16). But his death seemed to release dynamic spiritual fervour in several young men. Josiah the King instituted a religious reform at the age of 25; his dramatic young cousin Zephaniah preached the total overthrow of the kingdom, its religious institutions together with their idolatrous or syncretistic adherents (Zp. 1.2-6). (Zephaniah must have been a young man as he was the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah who had died only 60 years earlier; Josiah was a great-grandson). Jeremiah was a young man when he received his call as a prophet in 629 B.C., a task that would bring him into political conflict for 40 years, and it could well be that Nahum was of a similar age as he rejoiced in hope at the overthrow of evil Nineveh.

By comparison the prophets of the Return seem shadowy figures yet their political contribution is clearly marked, especially Haggai and Zechariah who inspired the rebuilding of the Temple, rallying morale that had flagged for 15 years.

#### (b) PROPHET AS MAN OF PRAYER

A prophet's political insight is drawn from his spiritual perceptiveness. What sets apart the true prophet from his fellow man, and at times from his fellow prophet, is to be found in the inner recess of his spirit, in the attunement of his personality with that of God. He is so conscious

of the presence of God that he becomes sensitive to the message of God, and himself mediates the divine word through his own human personality.

There is a strange blend of human free will with divine sovereignty. A man yielded to the Spirit of God becomes both human and yet more than human, both free and yet constrained. And in this counteraction God Himself seems also to become free and yet constrained. On the one hand Jeremiah cannot remain silent, fire is shut up in his bones and he cannot hold it in (20.9); on the other God's anger against His rebellious people in the wilderness is stopped by the intercessory Moses "let them alone that my wrath may burn hot against them" (Ex 32.9).

God is the God of history yet he so often reveals his plans to those capable of receiving them and even requires their intercession before they can be enacted. This is so on a personal level as well as on a national level - to Abimelech God spoke in a dream concerning Sarah, "restore the man's wife for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you shall live." Then Abraham prayed to God and God healed Abimelech (Gen.20.7,17). On the national level Moses' prayers halted the plague of frogs, flies, thunder and locusts (Ex 8-10). Note the collaboration of Moses with his God. "Ask the Lord to take these frogs away," says Paraoth: "Certainly", comes the reply, "when would you like me to ask the Lord." "Tomorrow." "Be it as you say that you may know there is no one like the Lord our God." Moses cried to the Lord and the Lord did according to the word of Moses (Ex 8.8-12).

Moses is also recorded as interceding for the nation of Israel (Ex 32 above), an occasion he remembers to the end of his life, "I lay prostrate before the Lord for these forty days and forty nights, because the Lord had said He would destroy you. And I prayed to the Lord, 'O Lord God, destroy not thy people and thy heritage, whom thou has redeemed through thy greatness. Remember thy servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin.'" (Dt 9.25-29).

A similar situation arose at Kadesh Barnea (Num 13,14). Moses again pleads for forgiveness for the people and relies on an earlier promise of God (14.18) and even reminds God of His need to honour his own name (14.13-16).

Samuel is another man of prayer. At Mizpah after a time of national penitence he prays for victory over the Philistines (1 Sam 7.5-11). He prayed concerning the inception of monarchy (1 Sam 8.6); his later reproof of them included prayer for the destruction of crops at harvest time (1 Sam 12.17). Samuel saw his personal rôle as that of intercessor (*inter alia*) and considered it sin on his part against Israel if he were to cease to pray for them (1 Sam 12.23). Specifically he prayed for their leader, crying all night to the Lord when Saul was rejected (1 Sam 15.11).

Elijah's renown as a man of prayer is mentioned by James (5.17) to remind his readers of the efficacy of prayer by righteous men. Apart from his prayers for drought and rain referred to by James he also prayed for the widow of Zarepath's son who had died "and the Lord harkened to the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived" (1 Ki 17.22). On Carmel in contrast to the fruitlessness of the long and frenzied pleas of many Baal worshippers, the simple prayer of Elijah acknowledging God's initiative in this contest is rewarded by immediate results (1 Ki 18.38).

Micaiah is also conscious of direct communication between himself and God and confesses himself willing to be obedient in relaying the message verbatim whatever the cost (1 Ki 22.14). The message comes by way of vision (v.17) but is clear enough. Opposition and suffering cannot deflect his assurance. "If you return in peace the Lord has not spoken by me" (v.28). His prophecy is vindicated despite the efforts of subterfuge by Ahab (v.34). Whether or not Micaiah perished for his faithfulness is not recorded.

Elisha is a man of unusual psychic experience and prayer. It is recorded that he too raised a widow's son through prayer (2 Ki 4.33ff). Certainly his fame as a healing prophet was known to Naaman's maid (2 Ki 5.4); Naaman expected him to heal not by magic or charms but by prayer (v.11). Elisha apparently accompanied Gehazi in spirit to his meeting with Naaman (2 Ki 5.26) and joined the Syrian Commander's private councils of war (2 Ki 6.12). He prayed for his servants' eyes to be opened to see the invisible hosts of God (v.17), for the Syrians' eyes to be closed in blindness (v.18) and subsequently for them to be reopened (v.20).

Isaiah was so naturally the man to whom Hezekiah turns when looking for someone to intercede for Israel (2 Ki 19.4; Is 37.4). He also prayed for the sign that should indicate Hezekiah's recovery from sickness (2 Ki 20.11).

Amos interceded effectively for Israel against a plague of locusts and an outbreak of fire, "How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" (7.2,5).

Hosea considered prayerlessness a form of rebellion (7.14). He prayed for Ephraim for a miscarrying womb and dry breasts (9.14); it is better, thought Hosea, to have no children than that children should suffer the destiny of vv.12,13.

In the 7th Century we see Jeremiah in his autobiography as a man of prayer. Zedekiah twice sent Zephaniah the priest to ask Jeremiah to pray for Jerusalem (21.2; 37.3). After the fall of Jerusalem the survivors and their commanders ask intercession (42.2), which Jeremiah proceeds to make (vv.4,20). On three occasions the Lord tells Jeremiah to cease from prayer (7.16; 11.14; 14.11). "Do not pray for this people, and do not intercede with me, for I do not hear you." The queen of heaven and other gods are worshipped (7.18) and incense is burnt to Baal (11.17). Even ritual offered to the Lord is of no avail without repentance and obedience (7.21-23; 11.15).

Ezekiel too is seen in intercession with the Lord (9.8; 11.13) and again it is neutralised by sycrretism and violence (8.16-18).

And Habakkuk opens his book, "O Lord, how long shall I cry..."

It is the deep concern of prophets of the Lord for the people of the Lord that contrasts so vastly with the prayerlessness of the false prophets. "If they are prophets," says the Lord through Jeremiah (27.18) "then let them intercede with the Lord of hosts." And through Ezekiel, "Your prophets have been like foxes among ruins, O Israel. You have not gone into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord." (13.4,5). "I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none." (22.30).

Failure to pray to the Lord is as effective as fervent prayer to false gods, "They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save." (Is 45.20). In Jeremiah's day the gods were multiplied, one for each city, and an altar for every street in Jerusalem "but they cannot save them in the time of trouble." (11.12f).

### Conclusion

These two activities of political involvement and prayer speak of the manward and Godward aspects of the same ministry. They are contained together in the designation of watchman. The watchman stands in his tower and warns his people, according to the sight of his eyes, what is about to happen (Is 21.6; 2 Sam 18.24-27; 2 Ki 9.17-20). The prophet has another tower, his place of prayer, and is a seer of further events, but his task is just as responsible, to warn of coming doom, that men may be ready and prepared to avert disaster. Hosea describes the prophet as a watchman (9.8) though a hated watchman. Well over a century later Ezekiel sees his ministry in the same light (3.17; 33.7) - a ministry of watching and of warning, an onerous responsibility.

### 3.3 BIFURCATION OF PROPHETIC LOYALTIES

#### 3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

We have so far pointed to many influences that formed a major part, from a human point of view, of the complex array of sources from which the prophet drew his inspiration and message.

We now ask the question: "What led him to believe that his message was of divine origin?" The answer is that the elements of Torah, tradition and reason are intertwined with a personal experience of God. The prophet being instructed from a child in the Torah and the traditions of his people both at home and in his local cultic centre, considers the vital questions of his day. These perspectives combine to give a coherent understanding of the mind and will of God. From this it is no great step to proclaim "Thus saith the Lord". His deep conviction as he faced contemporary events was that the Lord had something to say about them, and his background was largely responsible for formulating what that "something" was. This deep conviction could convincingly be introduced "Thus saith the Lord."

Although our illustrations have been drawn from the canonical prophets the principles are of wider significance. Once the richness and variety of the ever-accumulating traditions is appreciated, and when it is borne in mind that every contemporary situation is fraught with deep complexities, and that different men see these from different perspectives, then it is easy to understand that varying diagnoses will lead to conflicting remedies. A bifurcation of attitudes is thus manifested.

This is all the more apparent at a time of natural crises, and indeed it would be surprising if conflict did not arise among the many prophetic voices. As long as prophets are champions of the status quo and speak with the voice of nationalism, harmony will prevail; but if a radical voice speaks of painful change and even of destruction of a nation's very existence, as Jeremiah did, a sharp confrontation is bound to arise. Each was equally convinced that he was right, each believed that he spoke with God's authority, each drew on Torah, tradition and reason; but one spoke of an hour of judgment, whilst the other spoke of weathering another storm by the grace of God.

The canon of Scripture has determined which prophets were adjudged true and which false, and it is not often that the viewpoint of the so-called "false prophet" is considered sympathetically. He was not necessarily a wilful charlatan; he too was equally involved in the future wellbeing of his nation. He was, it seems, in the majority but yet stands roundly condemned in the Bible narrative. It is easy to look back with the compilers of the record and see how wrong he turned out to be. The agony comes, not in testing prophecy with the hindsight of history, but in discerning truth and error at the time the prophecy is spoken.

What is needed is to imagine a soliloquy in, say, the last quarter of the 7th Century B.C.

How do I know whether to believe Jeremiah or his opponents? His opponents say "All will be well....I have dreamed of peace.... thus saith the Lord 'Is it not my Temple in Jerusalem and I will defend it' etc!" Jeremiah says "If you wish to save your life desert to the Babylonians." This is no mere academic exercise, it is a matter of life and death. Almost everything is weighted in the favour of the prophet of peace. The Davidic dynasty has weathered many storms in 400 years of history. If God feels it right to punish us why not in the 50 years of Manasseh's reign rather than now after Josiah's religious revival? Last century the Northern Kingdom had been swept away and much of Judah overcome but Isaiah and Micah had strengthened our morale and we had been saved. They had reminded us of God's promise to David through Nathan - are not the Temple of the Lord and the line of David inviolate? It certainly seems so and history proves it. And if God is the same, is not his word ever the same, all our logic says these prophets of peace must be right. And yet here is Jeremiah saying the last thing we want to hear: "Desert to Babylon and live", and he passionately believes it. No one has ever spoken like this before, not about David's line anyway - Samaria was different, they were never genuine, they didn't come up to Jerusalem, they worshipped the bull at Bethel, they even kept the feast of booths a month late, they were just Baalites thinly disguised. And yet something in our conscience makes us wonder. He certainly has courage and his life matches up to his preaching which is not true of many.

How does one know the truth? The prophets of peace have three of the strongest arguments possible; spiritual tradition, spiritual experience ("I have dreamed") and a message that people want to believe. "Out of the abundance of the heart...." This is true, and it seems so right. Jeremiah speaks of deceitful dreams - the essence of deceit is that you do not know you are deceived; suppose Jeremiah is deceived, he is morbid, he fears the worst, after 20 - 30 years his fears have so far proved groundless. It is only his word against theirs. And he is in danger of ruining our morale, then maybe his prophecies will come true; but if we treat him the way we treated Uriah maybe our troubles will be over....and then, maybe not.

Jeremiah called into question the two avenues of spiritual certitude in matters of faith - tradition and experience. He also had spiritual experiences and his he claimed were superior; actually being admitted to the council of the Lord. He also argued from tradition but reminded his hearers of traditions they knew in their minds but had neglected in their behaviour. Yes, God had said to David "I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more" (2 Sam 7.10) but he had also said on the same occasion "when he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men" (v.14). Nathan had said to David on that occasion "I will give you rest from all your enemies", but after his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah he had to proclaim "the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me" (2 Sam 12.10). Jeremiah reminds the people that there is an ethical as well as a religious tradition and that the latter is dependent on the former. It is recorded that Solomon perceived this in his memory of God's covenant with his father David: "There shall never fail you a man before me to sit upon the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way" (1 Ki 8.25). The people and prophets of Jeremiah's day had forgotten the condition upon which their traditions were based. If these were not the original words they were based on some tradition, and it would be a very late tradition if it were not already in existence to be drawn upon by Jeremiah.

If the prophets of peace of Jeremiah's day were calling upon the tradition of Jerusalem's inviolability proclaimed by their 8th Century forbears, so too was Jeremiah reminding the people of Isaiah's and Micah's ethical tradition (Is 1.12-20; Mic 6.6-8). The traditions of Israel were long and wide and individual prophets could draw on different elements of those traditions.

### 3.3.2 THE BIRFURCATION EXPLORED

We have concluded that variety was to be expected in interpreting the inherited traditions at certain times, particularly in times of national crisis. We have noted too that an impartial assessment of the resulting factions is rendered difficult by the theological views of the Biblical editors.

However, there is sufficient material to consider the following chain of questions:

- (a) What picture does the Biblical narrative present to us of the false prophets?
- (b) To what extent did a prophetic confrontation occur?
- (c) What facts emerge concerning the group which included the false prophets?
- (d) When is the  $\alpha\iota\varsigma\psi\acute{\iota}$  (peace) message in fact a  $\gamma\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}$  (deceitful) message?
- (e) How is the prophet to be assessed by his contemporaries?

- (a) What Picture does the Biblical Narrative Present to us of the False Prophets?

#### The Term False Prophet:

For convenience we distinguish between prophets by use of the titles 'true prophet' and 'false prophet'. The term 'true prophet' never in fact occurs in the Bible, such a man is called simply 'prophet'; yet the term 'prophet' includes all parties in the prophetic conflict.

The term 'false prophet' is a New Testament one ( $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\sigma\pi\rho\omicron\phi\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ ). It is used by Jesus only in the plural. In one text he refers to Old Testament times (Lk 6.26), in one text he refers to his contemporaries (Mt 7.15) and in three he refers to the future (Mt 24.11,24; Mk 13.22). Elsewhere in the New Testament the word is used in the singular of the apocalyptic false prophet (Rev 16.13; 19.20; 20.10) and of the Jewish false prophet Bar-Jesus (Ac 13.6). The word  $\pi\rho\omicron\phi\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$  always in the New Testament describes the true prophet.

Jesus, therefore, under the title false prophets, describes a class of people ever present in society. They were those spoken well of in the past (Lk 6.26). They were destructive whilst appearing innocuous (wolves in sheeps clothing - Mt 7.15) and could be discerned by their fruits (Mt 7.16-20); they were those who would lead many astray by a shown of signs and wonders and might even deceive the elect (Mt 24.11,24).

The title "false prophet" does not occur in the Old Testament; indeed the noun נָבִיא (prophet) is qualified in the singular in only one situation - an "old prophet" thrice referred to in 1 Ki 13 (vv.11, 25, 29); and in the plural in only one place in Ezek 13.3, foolish prophets. Elsewhere the noun describes true and false prophet and its significance can be discerned only by the context.

Turning from nouns to verbs we discover more about a prophet's activity and thus about his character. According to Jeremiah: some prophesy falsely (5.31; 29.9), prophesy a false vision (14.14), prophesy false dreams (23.32) or prophesy lies (8 times). Ezekiel says further: some prophesy out of their own minds (13.2) and see visions of peace when there is no peace (13.16). In Isaiah's day too the people had wanted the prophets to prophesy illusions (30.10).

#### Summary

In the New Testament "prophet" refers to a "true prophet" unless clearly designated otherwise as a "false prophet".

In the Old Testament "prophet" refers to any who claims to be or is accepted as a prophet. The noun is qualified in a derogatory sense on only one occasion - the foolish prophets of Ezek 13.3. The verb "to prophesy" is, however, frequently qualified and shows the bifurcation of prophetic understanding of the traditions; when the verb is qualified in a derogatory sense it always occurs in the mouth of a "true prophet" describing the activity of a "false prophet". Doubtless the "false prophet" also derided the "true prophet" as being false.

It seems inevitable to use these designations "true prophet" and "false prophet" although in doing so we must remember that there are more judgmental overtones to the word "false" than there are to the word "true", and that we are presupposing the canonical judgment in the light of historical vindication.

#### The "true prophets' picture of the "false prophets"

The bifurcation of prophetic analysis of the contemporary scene and thus of their selection of traditions became most prominent in the period preceding the fall of Jerusalem. Or rather we should say that the records

we have, which reveal such a clash, come chiefly from this period. Micaiah and Isaiah both reveal a division of loyalties, but neither describes it in detail. Jeremiah and Ezekiel have most to say about their opponents, and are trenchant in saying it.

JEREMIAH. It is in Chapter 23 that we come to the most trenchant denunciation by Jeremiah of his opponents. His claims can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Their character. They are ungodly (11), adulterers, liars, accomplices to evildoers (14); an inspiration to ungodliness on a national scale (15). Jeremiah links their behaviour to their character and would thus dissuade his hearers from listening to their message.
- (ii) They are deceptive. They prophesy by Baal and lead people astray (13); they fill the people with vain hopes, they speak visions from their own minds, they say "it will be well with you", "no evil will come upon you" (16f); they prophesy lies supported by spurious claims from spiritual experiences "I have dreamed" -- all this comes from the deceit of their own heart (25f).
- (iii) They have failed. They have failed in their pastoral responsibilities (2); they have scattered rather than protected their flock (cf. 50.6). Jeremiah makes a pun on the verb TPQ (to attend to). The word means to pay attention to, to visit but also imports the action required. It is thus rendered "punish" more than 20 times in Jeremiah. Here God says "because you have not paid attention to your flock, I will pay attention (and act accordingly) to you." The Lord is by nature the shepherd of his people. TPQ is frequently used in Exodus of God's pastoral care in observing their sufferings in Egypt (3.16) and visiting them (4.31) to set them free. Jeremiah claims that the false prophets are the very antithesis of this, they have failed to attend to the welfare of the people.
- (iv) They are ineffective. No one turns from his wickedness (14); genuine preaching will have a good effect (22) but theirs had

none. They encourage people to forget rather than to remember the name of the Lord (27) and to act accordingly.

They were ineffective because their message came from the wrong source. Their words came from their own minds, not from the Lord (16) because they had not stood in the Lord's council (18,22).

- (v) Therefore judgment faces them. Their ministry will receive its due reward (1,2); the pathway they have chosen will lead to their downfall (12); the basic necessities of life, food and drink, will be withheld and replaced by evil (15); the Lord will wreak havoc and injury in their affairs (19) and they will be broken and humiliated (v.29).

EZEKIEL. In Chapter 34 Ezekiel stresses the pastoral failure of all the leaders of Judah including the prophets, and imputes the exile to their failure to proclaim the truth.

Elsewhere Ezekiel's explanation for the falseness of his opponents' message is similar to Jeremiah's in many respects. Whereas Jeremiah speaks of "not standing in the council of the Lord" Ezekiel refers to "not standing in the breach". Jeremiah refers to the ministry of intercession as approaching the Lord to discover his message for his people. For Ezekiel the ministry of intercession is more a means to protect Israel and avert calamity.

"You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord" (Ezek 13.5). "I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none" (22.30). These verses speak of a protective ministry for the prophet, and include both his private ministry of intercession as well as his public activity in proclamation and teaching. The private side of such ministry may be exemplified in Amos 7.2-6 and the public side in Mal 2.6, Jer 23.22. Another reference to standing in the breach occurs in Ps 106.23 where it speaks of Moses turning away God's wrath, referring presumably to his intercession mentioned in Ex 32.10-14.

Thus Ezekiel's chief addition to Jeremiah's list of denunciations against false prophets is prayerlessness.

(b) To What Extent did a Prophetic Confrontation Occur?

Since we read largely of only one side of the prophetic confrontation in the Biblical narrative some writers wonder if the picture has been over-drawn. Notable among these are F.L.Horsfeld and Iva Meyer in Prophet gegen Prophet (Prophet versus Prophet). They do not deny that such a confrontation occurred but minimise it. This they do on literary grounds, claiming that confrontation is a literary device by the exilic redactors to give a theological explanation of the catastrophe in 586 B.C., and thus expose Israel's guilt, and lay the responsibility for the Fall of Jerusalem at the feet of the false prophets.

It is important to ask this question since it implies that the superficial picture is very different from reality; it also raises the issue whether the exilic editors were creative or merely selective in their material, whether their theological presuppositions led them to put into their heroes' mouths words and ideas which were not in fact theirs. Horsfeld and Meyer in fact say with reference to Ezekiel's disciples, who redacted his work, importing and building up the theme of false prophecy, that if they had discovered the idea their Master must also have discovered it (*op.cit.* p.126).

Horsfeld and Meyer examine every reference to prophetic confrontation in the Old Testament. Much is eliminated on textual grounds; some episodes are eliminated because they bring into view criticism rather than outright conflict (e.g. Is 3.2; 28.7-13); others are eliminated because they deal with conflict, but not conflict with other prophets (thus Amos 7 concerns a priest, Jer 29 concerns an exilic leader, and Hosea's conflict and Deutero-isaiah's with the people).

Having considerably reduced the field to be reviewed the picture remains essentially unaltered.

The Micaiah episode of 1 Ki 22 is acknowledged, confrontation with the priests and people is accepted, and criticism of professional colleagues is admitted. Jeremiah's is granted to be a lone voice amongst the prophets at Jerusalem. Yet it is maintained that the conflict with false prophets was the creation of the school of exilic redactors to hold them responsible for the calamity of the Fall of Jerusalem.

Against this view we say that if there were criticism as powerful as that spoken by Jeremiah (5.30,31 - which is accepted as genuine) and a century earlier by Isaiah (3.2; 28.7-13) and when it is borne in mind that the outlook of most prophets was in accord with the majority of the national leaders, it is more likely that there was indeed forceful conflict in the ranks of the prophets than otherwise. Jeremiah's confessions and imprisonment point also to opposition.

We would therefore incline to the view that the prophetic conflict did occur substantially as recorded in the Biblical narrative, despite the fact that only one side of the dialogue is normally recorded. To be left with prophetic criticism without prophetic conflict and with condemnation without confrontation is unrealistic, and no explanation is given for this. This is particularly relevant when considering the critical times at which most of the classical prophets lived and the irreconcilable nature of the contrasting prophetic messages being proclaimed.

(c) What Facts Emerge Concerning the Group which included the False Prophets?

That there was a deep cleavage of opinion in the critical stages of Israel's history is not disputed. In times of crisis passions rise and beliefs are translated from theory to practice.

The cleavage centres on opinion rather than earlier loyalties, lesser differences are forgotten and each man must decide for himself where he stands.

Throughout his 40 years of ministry Jeremiah has an unswerving conviction that evil is determined against Jerusalem because of their wickedness (Jer 1.15,16) and a social and spiritual revolution is called for of dramatic proportions (1.10). He is warned too that there will be a united opposition against him including the King, the princes, the priests and the people (1.18). It is this group that many of the prophets soon joined (2.26).

The main facts that emerge concerning this group are:

- (1) They form the majority.
- (2) Their unifying force is nationalism.

(3) They inflict suffering on the minority.

(1) They form the Majority

This group is observed in Jeremiah's call as containing the princes, the priests and the people rather than some of them. Also it is understood from the fact that Jeremiah is in a defensive position but God promises that he will not be overwhelmed (1.19).

During Jehoiakim's reign greater sympathy was shown by the princes to Jeremiah. In 26.16 he is acquitted when indicted by the priests and prophets who ask for the death sentence (26.11). In 606 B.C. Jeremiah is excluded from the Temple (36.5) by the priests but the princes again show their sympathy toward Jeremiah and Baruch (36.19) despite the King's attitude. After the exile of 597 the attitude of Zedekiah's princes is much more severe (37.15; 38.4) although the King himself vacillated.

We see then that there was consistent opposition by the priests and prophets against Jeremiah and frequently the princes and people also sided with them.

(2) Their Unifying Force is Nationalism

Nationalism is concern for the welfare of a state and implies that its survival is essential. National policy is directed by the state's leaders which in Old Testament times consisted of the King, princes, prophets and priests. When a voice is raised threatening the status quo passionate opposition is released, particularly since the status quo implies conservatism on the part of those in leadership, who are unwilling voluntarily to accept change.

We see the resultant confrontation in the lives of Micaiah, Amos and Jeremiah.

It was a nationalism stemming from untimely optimism that Micaiah withstood to his cost. Ahab's recommendation was aggressive and not defensive (1 Ki 22.3) and the words of the prophets "were favourable to the King" (v.13); but Micaiah's was an independent voice speaking what the Lord said and not what aggressive nationalism dictated.

Amos too was dismissed because his message was a threat to the security of the state (Am 7.10). Israel's faithfulness failed in a sudden period of affluence and this destroyed the egalitarian nature of her state. Amos reminded Israel of the demands of the Sinai Covenant, whilst she was basking in the comfort of blind optimism - but his voice was unwelcome.

Jeremiah, true to his conviction that Jerusalem would fall, advocated desertion to the enemy (38.2). Some of the people in fact followed his advice (38.19) but the princes countered this with a charge that he was weakening the morale of the resistance, and this *ipso facto* amounted to "not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm" (38.4). Jeremiah later tells Zedekiah that if he wants his life spared he must surrender (38.17), but in his case it was fear that restrained him (38.19).

### (3) They Inflict Suffering on the Minority

It is hoped that by suppression of the voice of opposition the troubles will vanish. We are told that "the land is not able to bear all his (Amos') words" (Am 7.10). The trouble maker is seen as he who criticises rather than those who create conditions deserving criticism. Ahab calls Elijah the troubler of Israel, but Elijah replies that it is Ahab and those with him who have troubled Israel (1 Ki 18.17f).

So Amos is banished, Elijah is threatened by Jezebel, Micaiah is sent to prison, Jeremiah is put in the pit, in prison and banished from the Temple by the various authorities, Uriah is murdered and according to a later tradition others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb 11.36f).

(d) When is the <sup>נִשְׁוֵי</sup>(peace) Message in fact a <sup>תְּפִלָּה</sup>(deceitful) Message?

We reiterate that however opposed prophets may be to one another each is deeply convinced that he is right. We have seen that this is not altogether an unexpected state of affairs in view of the variety and richness of the inherited traditions and thus of the plausible assessments of the current situation that could be made.

Prophets often believed themselves to be prophets of peace, although they proved to be false. The question is raised "where is peace to be found?" Some desire it in worship, some in morality; some believe it is a privilege, some the bi-product of responsibility; some seek it in the short term, some in the long term.

וְשָׁלוֹם (Peace). The word embraces in the fullest sense the welfare of a community. This involves weighing the immediate comfort against the ultimate good of the people. It was here that prophetic conflict arises, one man says "all is well" another says "all is not well unless you repent". Jeremiah says to the inhabitants of Jerusalem "desert to the Chaldeans if you want to save your life" to which the princes reply "this man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm" (Jer 38.4f). This was the conclusion of 40 years of preaching; all along Jeremiah's thrust was that in order to build and to plant changes were required, change was of the essence if וְשָׁלוֹם were to be obtained. Israel was travelling a course that led to destruction, a destruction that could be averted only by repentance. Repentance involves swallowing one's national pride; it was this that the princes of Jerusalem resisted with such talk as "ruining the morale". Jeremiah applies the logic of this same reasoning even to King Zedekiah: "If you wish to save your life, your family and this city, surrender" (Jer 38.17).

Likewise Amos' message was of ultimate וְשָׁלוֹם by way of repentance. By means of intercession (Am 7.2,5) and the clearest of warnings (7.11). He trusted that the leaders of Samaria would change their ways (5.6)

Micaiah too seeks the welfare of the King by trying to prevent him setting off on his foolish retaliatory raid on Ramoth Gilead. It was his own nationalistic pride that led to his downfall.

Shemaiah was one of the few prophets able to dissuade his people from pursuing the road to tragedy and thus see וְשָׁלוֹם achieved in a small way (1 Ki 12.23f).

The genius of the Old Testament understanding of their God was that was part of his nature and his desire for Israel. The covenant relationship should procure peace both between man and God and between man and man - this is the thrust of the Sinai decalogue. The Exodus revealed

God's desire for the welfare of his people, providing them with a land of milk and honey, but reminding them that their welfare depended on their heartfelt response of gratitude to him and justice in their community.

The prophets spoke to people's conscience when they began to go astray reminding them "this is the way walk in it."

Persistent rebellion, however, led to their captivity. One of the unique facets of Old Testament history is that this was not the end, either of Israel, or of prophetism, or of God's existence and ability to act.

Thus in exile a new side to the message of *וְיִשְׁעוּ* is revealed. The prophets proclaim that the covenant relationship is not dead. Deutero Isaiah indeed crystallizes it in the kinship metaphor of the family redeemer (*וְיִשְׁעוּ*). Whereas *וְיִשְׁעוּ* had been seen in terms of repentance and justice it is now seen in terms of hope replacing despair (Is 40.1, 27). Jeremiah speaks of the same God, but a new covenant; the same Law, but a new ability to keep it and a restoration based on forgiveness (Jer 31.31-34).

Another element in the *וְיִשְׁעוּ* message after the Fall of Jerusalem is that the restoration will be to something far better. Ezekiel's message in Ezk 37 speaks of restoration after despair but also of real unity between Judah and Israel. The Temple and the Twelve Tribes will be perfected when God restores the fortunes of Jacob, vindicates his holiness in the sight of many nations, pours his spirit on the house of Israel (Ezek 39.25-29) and dwells himself in Jerusalem (48.35).

Peace and security are amongst the deepest desires in the heart of man, so it is no surprise that this constitutes the ultimate aim of prophetic preaching. This desire for peace is witnessed by the many names of people and places that contain the root *וְיִשְׁעוּ*. One of the earliest strands of tradition links the king of righteousness (Melchizedek) with the king of peace (Salem) (Gen 14.18). This Salem was, of course, later known by the name Jerusalem. Two of David's sons speak of peace Absalom and Solomon. There are fifteen people named Shallum in the Old Testament, including two kings, one of Israel and one of Judah. That men do not always live up to their name is borne out by the fact that these two kings reigned only one month and three months respectively, yet the desire for peace remains.

The prime meaning of  $\sqrt{\text{אשׁו}}$  is completeness, soundness, hence safety, welfare and peace. There is thus a close link with the Biblical idea of rest. God completed his creation with a day of rest, and throughout her history Israel was ever looking forward to its fulfilment.

Thus the message of  $\text{אִשׁוּ}$  is that which tends towards the wholeness of the people of God in time to come.

$\sqrt{\text{אשׁו}}$  (Deceit) speaks of deception, disappointment and falsehood. In the prophetic realm it involves both deception and self-deception. Since the prophet is himself deceived, he deceives others.

The content of the  $\sqrt{\text{אשׁו}}$  message is frequently  $\text{אִשׁוּ}$ , but the claim of the canonical prophets as vindicated by history is that it is a proclamation of "Peace where there is no peace" (Ezk 13.10) which misleads the people into a false security.

It is not the words but the relevance and the historical context of the message that make it  $\sqrt{\text{אשׁו}}$  or  $\text{אִשׁוּ}$ . What is true for one generation may be false for another. Isaiah's message to Hezekiah and Jerusalem was a message of  $\text{אִשׁוּ}$ ; but the same message reiterated by Hananiah a century later was  $\sqrt{\text{אשׁו}}$ . It was Martin Buber who called Hananiah "Papagei des Jesaja" (a parrot of Isaiah). Later there were to be 'Papageien eines Jeremia' (Parrots of Jeremiah) as Horsfeld and Meyer put it (1973, p.155). Shemaiah is one such in Nehemiah's day (Neh 6.10-14).

T.W.Overholt in his excellent study in the theology of the Book of Jeremiah entitled The Threat of Falsehood, asks the question "What gives security?" To the leaders and the people it was the temple, the sacrifices and the promises to David. To Jeremiah it was a moral life. "You must protect the temple, it is not able to protect you" (*in loc.* p.6). The people's confidence was in an easy attitude to Sinai and in an easy attitude about the certainty of Yahweh's protection. Yet, says Jeremiah, Shiloh was destroyed because they had relied solely on the presence of the ark (1 Sam 4.3).

The remarkable claim of the prophetic tradition is this: that the greatest tragedy of the  $\sqrt{\text{אשׁו}}$  message is not simply that it is ineffective, since it is unable to alter the course of events determined by Yahweh, but rather

that it is destructive, for it prevents repentance which could alter that very course of events determined by Yahweh. Jeremiah says on God's behalf "Amend your ways and I will let you dwell in this place." Here is the essence of his *qisq* message. The reverse side of the coin is "do not trust in these deceptive (*ṭpū*) words 'This is the Temple of the Lord'. If you truly amend your ways....if you truly execute justice.... I will let you dwell in this place....forever" (Jer 7.3-7).

The responsibility of the whole leadership of Israel was to frame their life according to the ways of God and thus ensure the security of the whole community. Kings were the ultimate administrators of justice, the elders "sat in the gate", the priests were to teach the law and "turn many from iniquity" like their forefather Levi, for they are the "messengers of the Lord of hosts" (Mal 2.6f); and the prophets were there to keep people up to the mark when others failed.

(e) How is the Prophet to be Assessed by his Contemporaries?

The message of falsehood was both deceptive and destructive as we have just observed. Nevertheless the false prophet believed in it himself; he believed he had the word of God behind him; he had the authority of tradition to support him; he was saying nothing heretical. Nevertheless two further points must be made about the false prophets. Their understanding of truth was too narrow and their message was superficial.

Their understanding of the truth was too narrow

What made the message false, as we have seen, was not its content but its context. Jeremiah did not disclaim the orthodoxy of his opponents but their relevance. "God is saying something different now", was the burden of his message. The something different, however, was equally orthodox. Both prophets inherited the same traditions, but the false prophets were so conscious of one area in the tradition that they were blind to others.

The continuance of the Kingdom of David was a foregone conclusion, based on a prophetic word from Nathan 2 Sam 7.16; moreover the David dynasty had continued for over 400 years, and it is doubtful if there has been a dynasty in world history to last longer. What, however, was forgotten was the conditional nature of the prophecy (2 Sam 7.14; 1 Ki 8.25) upon which the dynasty was founded.

Likewise the Temple was built by Solomon at God's direction to David (1 Ki 8.17-19) and was thus invested with the same inviolability as his dynasty. This inviolability was bolstered by Isaiah's ministry. Again the fact was overlooked that Solomon's blessing on the people ended on a note of exhortation to obedience (1 Ki 8.61).

Witness to this conditionality of God's protection is also found not only in Micah's preaching but in the fact that his preaching was remembered for more than 100 years, and that not simply by the cultic authorities but by the elders of Jerusalem. The cultic leaders threaten Jeremiah with the death sentence on the ground that he has prophesied harm to the city of Jerusalem (Jer 26.11). Jeremiah replies that he is fulfilling a commission from the Lord based on the conditions under which God had offered his protection to the city and the Temple; he also states that destruction is no more than a threat, for the threat will be withdrawn if the people repent and change their ways (26.4-6,13). It is at this point that some of the elders mention the prophetic tradition stemming from Micah, in which Jeremiah stands. Hezekiah did not seek to put Micah to death, but sought the Lord's favour instead, and the threat was averted. On this ground Jeremiah was acquitted. As a rider to this acquittal those princes say "We are about to bring great evil upon ourselves"(26.19). They thus accept Jeremiah's message as involving the correct interpretation of current events, and also acknowledge the destructive power of the  $\eta\pi\omega$  message of the false prophets.

#### Their message was superficial

Having considered the theological inadequacy of the false prophets message, we now consider their moral inadequacy.

The canonical prophets withstand their opponents primarily on moral, social and religious grounds. Immorality, social injustice and idolatry are all rife and prosper together because encouraged by the leaders (Jer 23.13,14; Ezk 13.17ff). Thus the people find no protection or security within the covenant community (Ezk 34.3ff). The problems that are fragmenting society are ignored and the situation is allowed to flourish unhindered.

The message of the false prophets inspired confidence that God would

continue to protect his people despite their unresponsive attitude to their covenant responsibilities. Their judgment of the society in which they lived was superficial for they did not perceive that the people were abrogating the very covenant whose privileges they depended upon, and if the covenant were abrogated the privileges would cease.

T.W.Overholt comments: "The lopsided confidence in Yahweh's relationship to the nation and the spurious utterances which strengthened these convictions formed a pervasive web of falsehood which encouraged muddled thinking and superficial observations" (1970, p.103).

So the false prophets by word and action encouraged the status quo to continue and shut their ears to the indictment of others on the moral, social and religious attitudes of that status quo. They thus promoted the destruction that they should have prevented by proper exercise of their calling.

It is easy with hindsight to say this of the false prophets. Most people brought up in Jerusalem within the David-Zion tradition must have found it wellnigh impossible to accept Jeremiah's preaching. Nevertheless the days were critical, and however hard it was to receive unpalatable truth they renounced it at their peril. Some of Jehoiakim's princes apparently accepted the truth of what Jeremiah was saying (Jer 26.19) even before the deportation of 597 B.C., and during Zedekiah's reign certain individuals did in fact heed Jeremiah's advice to desert to the Chaldeans (Jer 38.19).

Each man had to decide for himself whom to believe and how to act.

## 4. THE INTANGIBLE FACTOR

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

We have considered Old Testament prophecy from two standpoints. Firstly we took a phenomenological approach and saw the prophets and their religious experiences as they are presented to us in the Bible. Then we looked at the human factors which made the prophet the man he was and thus contributed to his ministry. If this were the total picture we should be left with a purely naturalistic view of prophecy.

We are therefore led to the questions "Is there something more? Is there some intangible factor which sets the prophetic tradition of Israel apart from other forms of prophetism?" To answer these questions we must look not so much within the traditions but outside them to see how and why they have survived so long.

There are two areas of exploration that could help us - the areas of discontinuity and of enrichment.

- (i) Discontinuity is a look within the traditions and suggests that at certain stages in their development there is divine intervention (i.e. the miraculous element). We shall see that there seems to be such intervention, most notably in the days of Moses.
- (ii) Enrichment is a look outside the traditions to see what value they have as a whole, which goes beyond what we should expect on naturalistic grounds alone.

Neither of these is a logical argument but both, and especially when taken together, are the surest attest, perhaps the only true attest, of religious belief.

## 4.2 DISCONTINUITY

Where there is smooth progression from simple beginnings to a fully developed religion such development may be credited either to the flourishing of natural insight over the ages or to the guidance and gradual revelation of a merciful God.

Where, on the other hand, the traditions disclose a discontinuous leap, one must argue either that a spiritual genius has appeared or that there has been dramatic divine intervention, or that both have occurred together and that these are the two sides of the same coin, namely that God has stepped into human history and has chosen to speak and act through human agency. This well described the situation in the days of Moses. Scholarship is divided about how much of the Torah can be ascribed to Mosaic origins. R.E.Clements in Prophecy and Tradition (p.27) says of Moses "it is notoriously difficult to be at all clear about his actual historical rôle in Israel's origins, though a vast wealth of national and religious tradition from various ages has been ascribed to him....even though it is difficult to know what we can say positively about Moses, it is even more difficult to dispense with him altogether."

The traditions present us with a remarkable change when we move from Genesis to Exodus which argues strongly for divine initiative and revelation. "The exodus from Egypt, like the Cross on Calvary to Christians, was essential to the Jewish understanding of the character of God. It was the act by which supremely he revealed his graciousness, stooping to men's need, breaking in to rescue him before there was any binding obligation" (J.N.Schofield, 1964, p.46).

There is a natural transition between Genesis and Exodus, as the story records. The family of Abraham, the God who revealed himself to each generation, the growth from family to nation during the hidden years in Egypt, the slavery, the longing for freedom, the upbringing of Moses. But there is also a marked discontinuity exemplified in the revelation of a new name for God. "I AM has sent me to you...YAHWEH, the God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent me to you: this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations." (Ex 3.14f).

This Yahweh was not only a God who spoke, but a God who acted. In order to deliver the people from Egypt, the plagues, the Passover event, the crossing of the Red Sea, the sustenance in the Wilderness were all involved.

Some find the miraculous, or the extraordinary, a stumbling block to their appreciation of Scripture. Alan Richardson in Christian Apologetics helpfully points out that both acceptance and denial of miracle are based on philosophical rather than historical considerations. The problem for modern man may be embedded in unquestioned presuppositions. "The view that physical science can solve the problem of the miracles can be justified only by the assumption that the only forces in the universe are those which physical science can measure and describe, but that is a philosophical and not a scientific assumption" (1946, p.174). This is not to say that many miracles have not a natural explanation- the miracle may be in the timing rather than the method. Richardson's apology helps to remove modern man's embarrassment when confronted by the subject of miracle. Faith is, after all, faith and not proof, it is a different form of reasoning; it is not blind, but able to see events in a new light, and acknowledge a Prime Mover behind unusual movements.

The discontinuous element in the Moses story is not restricted to the miraculous events of the Exodus or the new revelation of Yahweh, although these together form the basic understanding of a unique relationship "I will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Dt 7.23); it also embraces the spiritual genius that was Moses himself.

There is uncertainty as to how much of the Pentateuch can be credited to Moses, and we refer to the original content rather than the finalised written form. We accept that a substantial amount is of Mosaic origin. The Temple was built in the golden era of Solomon and would have required ceremony and ritual on a large scale consonant with his reign. The traditions do not accord spiritual originality to Solomon, but speak of an ark and tabernacle and ritual predating the Temple. Accepting the Dark Ages of the Judges period it is likely that much of the Levitical code must have come from Moses. The genius of Moses was that he was able to draw on the ritual of surrounding nations but fit it into a new context of faith.

What is true ritually is also true ethically. An ethical understanding of God's demands on Israel is presupposed by the Eighth Century Prophets, and acknowledged by David and Nathan. An ethical decalogue must surely therefore have come from Moses.

There is a kinship between the religion of the Patriarchs and of their contemporaries in the Ancient Near-Eastern world, but after Moses there is a sharp division between the religion of Israel and that of her neighbours. Israel has an absolute, transcendent God of whom no images may be made, a God who has chosen, created and guided his people; their neighbours have a religion dominated by no more than the rhythm of nature.

With Moses we have a discontinuous leap which has no adequate explanation which does not involve a God who cares and who acts in the affairs of men. Everything else in the Old Testament flows from this and little in Genesis has prepared us for Exodus.

### 4.3 ENRICHMENT

The enriching quality of a tradition can but be submitted to the test "by its fruit it shall be known."

The Christian claim is that the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ, who himself as a Jew was thoroughly conversant with it. G. Adam Smith said "What was indispensable to the Redeemer must also be indispensable to the redeemed." Accordingly Christians stand in the same tradition as the prophets of old. The wisdom, worship and witness of the Church is to the same Lord. The Christian ethic is based upon the same intolerant ethical monotheism as declared by the prophets.

Although much harm and evil has been perpetrated in the name of Christianity, it is also true that the history, literature, education, scientific research, legal reform, hospitals and other caring institutions have been bequeathed to the world by Jew and Christian alike.

The Old Testament, including the prophetic traditions, hangs together as a whole. The discontinuous element included in it, beginning with Moses, has led to a world view which proclaims that God is separate from the cosmos, since he created it and it is dependent for its existence upon him. From this world view flow the following assertions:

1. The cosmos is meaningful - one must therefore reject atheistic existentialism.
2. The cosmos is real and originally good - one must therefore reject religions of withdrawal and philosophies that seek the ground of being only within.
3. The cosmos is secular - one must therefore reject pantheism and any belief that the cosmos is either divine or an extension of the divine.
4. God is transcendent. There is a radical gulf between God and the cosmos - one must therefore reject all forms of nature religion.
5. God, being transcendent, chooses to relate to his cosmos; he therefore reveals himself as a personal God - one must therefore reject mechanistic views of an impersonal force which

can be manipulated by man, as in nature religion.

6. The cosmos, not having divine status, is not self existent. It therefore has a beginning and presumably a purpose or destiny. Time is thus linear - one must therefore reject cyclical understandings of time. God, not being primarily a part of man's natural environment nor to be found within it but essentially transcendent relates himself to man in covenant.
7. Man has free will to enter into covenant relationship with the transcendent God and to co-operate in bringing about his purpose for the cosmos. It is by this that he finds meaning to life and not by entering into the rhythms of the cosmos nor by withdrawing from it to find the spark of ultimate reality in himself. Meaning lies in bringing in the future Kingdom not in maintaining the status quo i.e. in future goals rather than present texture.
8. God has acted in history and is free to continue so to act. One cannot foreclose on revelation or treat it as a completed event in the past. Nevertheless God's character is consistent and one cannot claim as revelation something that is inconsistent with past revelation.
9. This personal God is sovereign, righteous and loving. To ignore any of these elements in his personality will deny something that is essential to his nature - viz. to make God impotent, arbitrary or aggressive respectively. On the other hand to overstress one aspect will lead to fatalism, legalism or licence.
10. Man can respond to such a God not only in gratitude but in love; in doing so man finds freedom rather than determinism, and freedom leads to the responsibility of sonship rather than the slavery of fear. Being thus assured of his end he can launch out, explore and take risks in the present.
11. Since God's love is not dependent on man's initial worthiness (Dt 7.6-11) nor on his subsequent response (Hos 11) it sets a standard of righteousness which he restlessly demands, but has ultimately no sanctions to enforce. Jeremiah (31.31-34) thus foresaw the inadequacy of the Sinai covenant and the need for

a new covenant which would lead to a Saviour dying on the Cross and on to Pentecost.

12. God relates to man both individually and corporately. Accordingly, man finds his security both in a direct relationship with God and also in being one of the chosen people through descent and circumcision.
13. Man who relates to God seeks justice both on account of the corporate nature of the covenant community and also because material possessions are of grace and thus to be shared.

(Drawn from a paper by J.S.Cumpsty to the Independent Schools Head Teachers Conference, Cape Town, September 1978)

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

Whether the world view, present in embryo with Moses, drawn out by the prophets of the Old Testament and further explored by Judaism and Christianity, represents such a discontinuity or is so enriching as to constitute the evidence for the presence of our intangible factor is in the end a personal judgment. Moreover it necessarily remains, even for the committed individual, an open question, for the judgment of history has not been finally declared.

Within the grandeur of this world view the great Western technological exploration has come to birth, but the moral values remain unaltered; and while each is challenging the other, they stand or fall together. If they fall then a philosophy of withdrawal is to be preferred to the Biblical view of a transcendent God. But if such a God exists he will have his vindication in the enrichment of the human condition against the time when all will be revealed.

APPENDIX 1.A LIST OF PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Gen	20.7	Abraham
	25.22	Unnamed to Rebekah
	49.1	Jacob
Ex	7.1	Aaron
	15.20	Miriam
Nm	11.25,27	70, including Eldad and Medad
	22.5	Balaam
Dt	18.15	Moses
Jdg	4.4	Deborah
	6.8-10	Unnamed re Midianites
	10.11-16	Unnamed re Ammonites
1 Sam	2.27	Unnamed to Eli

UNITED MONARCHY

11th Cent	1 Sam	3.20	Samuel
		10.5	Band of prophets at Gibeah
		19.20	Band of prophets at Ramah
10th Cent		22.5	Gad
	2 Sam	7.12	Nathan

DIVIDED MONARCHY

				<u>Judah</u>	<u>Israel</u>
1 Ki	11.29	Abijah the Shilonite			Jeroboam
	12.22	Shemaiah		Rehoboam	
	13.1	Unnamed to Jeroboam from Judah			Jeroboam
	13.11	Unnamed from Bethel			Jeroboam
	16.1	Jehu ben Hanani			Baasha
2 Chr	13.22	Iddo		Abijah	
	15.1	Azariah		Asa	
	16.7	Hanani		Asa	
9th Cent	1 Ki	18.22	Elijah		Ahab
		18.4	100 prophets of the Lord		Ahab
		18.19	450 prophets of Baal		Ahab
		18.19	400 prophets of Asherah		Ahab

A LIST OF PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

			<u>Judah</u>	<u>Israel</u>
	20	5 Unnamed prophets		Ahab
	22.7	Micaiah ben Imlah	Jehoshaphat	Ahab
	22.6	400 prophets of Yahweh		Ahab
	22.11	Zedekiah ben Chenaanah		Ahab
9th Cent	2 Ki 1.3	Elijah		Ahaziah
	2.1	Elisha		Joram
	2.3,5	Bands of prophets, Bethel & Jericho		Joram
	4.38	Bands of prophets, Gilgal		Joram
	9.1,4	Unnamed annointed Jehu		Jehu
	2 Chr 20.14	Jahaziel	Jehoshaphat	
	20.37	Eliezer	Jehoshaphat	
	20.20	Many unnamed	Jehoshaphat	
	2 Ki 10.30	Unnamed to Jehu		Jehu
	10.19	All the prophets of Baal		Jehu
	2 Chr 24.20	Zechariah	Joash	
	24.19	Many unnamed	Joash	
	2 Ki 13.14	Elisha		Jehoash
8th Cent	2 Chr 25.7	Unnamed to Amaziah	Amaziah	
	25.15	Unnamed to Amaziah	Amaziah	
	2 Ki 14.25	Jonah		Jeroboam
	Am 1.1	Amos	Uzziah	Jeroboam
	Hos 1.1	Hosea	Uzziah-Hezekiah	Jeroboam
	2 Chr 28.9	Oded		Pekah
	2 Ki 17.13,23	Many unnamed		Hoshea
	Is 1.1	Isaiah	Uzziah-Hezekiah	
	Is 6.3	Isaiah's wife		
	Mic 1.1	Micah	Jotham-Hezekiah	
7th Cent	2 Chr 33.10,18	Many unnamed	Manasseh	
	2 Ki 21.10	Many unnamed	Manasseh	
	22.14	Huldah	Josiah	
	23.2	Many unnamed	Josiah	
	Zp 1.1	Zephaniah	Josiah	
	Hab 1.1	Habakkuk	Josiah	
	Nah 1.1	Nahum	Josiah	

A LIST OF PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

			<u>Judah</u>	<u>Israel</u>
7th Cent	Jer	1.1	Jeremiah	Josiah-Zedekiah
		26.20	Uriah	Jehoiakim
		28.1	Hananiah	Zedekiah
		29.8,15	Unnamed prophets	Exile
		29.21	Ahab	Exile
		29.21	Zedekiah	Exile
		29.31	Shemaiah	Exile
2 Ki	24.2	Many unnamed	Jehoiakim	
2 Chr	36.16	Many unnamed till end of dynasty		
Jer	7.25	Many unnamed ever since Exodus		

EXILE AND RETURN

6th Cent	Ezk	1.1	Ezekiel	
		13.1,17	Unnamed opponents (including women)	
	Hg	1.1	Haggai	
	Zch	1.1	Zechariah	
5th Cent	Obad	1.1	Obadiah	
	Mal	1.1	Malachi	
	Neh	6.14	Noadiah and others	
		6.10,12	Shemaiah	
	Joel	1.1	Joel	

APPENDIX 2. (see p.23)A TABLE OF THE LITERATURE COVERING THE PERIOD OF THE MONARCHY

This Table reveals both the paucity and balance of the historical narrative and the prophetic writings which form the source of our information concerning prophecy during the days of the monarchy.

Page numbers have been taken from B.F.B.S. Hebrew Old Testament reprinted in 1962.

	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Pages</u>
<u>History</u>				
	1 Sam 8 - 1 Ki 11	1020 - 921	100	120
	1 Ki 12 - 16	921 - 871	50	11
	1 Ki 17 - 2 Ki 9	871 - 841	30	33
	2 Ki 10.1 - 14.22	841 - 781	60	9
	2 Ki 14.23 - 17	781 - 721	60	7
	2 Ki 18 - 25	721 - 586	135	17
			<u>435</u>	<u>197</u>
<u>Prophetic Writings</u>				
<u>Eighth Century: [2 Ki 15-17]</u>				
	Amos			9
	Hosea			11
	Isaiah 1-39			42
	Micah			6
			50	<u>68</u>
<u>Seventh Century: [2 Ki 22-25]</u>				
	Jeremiah			92
	Zephaniah			3
	Nahum			3
	Ezekiel			80
			50	<u>178</u>
			<u>100</u>	<u>246</u>

Note: The history covering these two classical prophetic eras is recorded in 9 pages each.

APPENDIX 3.    COUNCIL    תיג (see p.7)

References per Brown, Driver and Briggs with RSV texts

References relating to the Lord are set first in each section

1. COUNCIL (a) Circle of familiar friends. 7 references.

Job 15.8; Jer 23.18,22 - Council of the Lord.

Job 19.19 (intimate friends); Ps 64.3 (secret plots of the wicked).

Jer 6.11 (gatherings of young men); Jer 15.17 (company of merrymakers).

(b) Assembly, company. 4 references.

Ps 89.8 - the council of the holy ones.

Ps 111.1 (the company of the upright); Ezk 13.9 (the council of my people).

Gen 49.6 (their council - Simeon and Levi).

2. COUNSEL, taken by those in familiar conversation.

(a) Counsel itself. 3 references

Ps 55.15 (sweet converse with familiar friend); Ps 83.4 (crafty plans).

Pr 15.22 (without counsel things go wrong).

(b) Secret which is revealed    תסוד    4 references.

Am 3.7 The Lord...reveals his secret.

Pr 11.13; 20.19; 25.9 reveal secrets.

(c) Familiar converse. 3 references.

Job 29.4 (friendship of God); Ps 25.14 (friendship of the Lord).

Pr 3.32 (in the Lord's confidence).

References relating to the Lord: Council 4, Counsel 4.

References relating to human affairs: Council 7, Counsel 6.

<u>References</u> in Biblical order:	Gen	49.6	1
	Job	15.8; 19.19; 29.4	3
	Psalm	25.14; 55.15; 64.3; 83.4; 89.8; 111.1	6
	Prov	3.32; 11.13; 15.22; 20.19; 25.9	5
	Jer	6.11; 15.17; 23.18,22	4
	Ezk	13.9	1
	Am	3.7	1
			<hr/>
			21
			<hr/>

## APPENDIX 4. (see p.36)

ENQUIRING OF GOD

The incidence of the terms  $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$  and  $\text{שׂוֹאֵלֵי}$  as referring to priestly and prophetic inquiry of God.

- A.  $\text{שׂוֹאֵל}$  - used in a technical sense of enquiry by means of the priest.
- Num 27.21 Eleazar the priest is to enquire for Joshua by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord.
- Josh 9.14 The Gibeonites were accepted at face value, the Israelites did not ask direction from the Lord.
- Jdg 1.1f The people enquired of the Lord "Who shall go up first?" The Lord said, "Judah shall go up; behold I have given the land into his hand."
- " 18.5 "Enquire of God to know whether the journey will succeed." The priest said, "Go in peace; your journey is under the eye of the Lord."
- " 20.18 "Which of us shall go up first to battle?" "Judah". (Enquiry made at Bethel)
- " 20.23 "Shall we again draw near to battle?" "Go up against them." (vv.26ff concern Bethel, sacrifices, the Ark and Phinehas)
- 1 Sam 10.21ff Saul was taken by lot. They enquired again of the Lord. "Did he come here?" "Yes, he is among the baggage."
- " 14.37 Saul enquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines?" Wilt thou give them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day. (N.B. v.36 the priest is the enquiry agent).
- " 22.10,15 Ahimelech the priest enquired of the Lord for David frequently.
- " 23.2 David enquired of the Lord "Shall I go and attack?" The Lord said, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah."

- 1 Sam 23.3,4 David's men were afraid, so David repeated his request and received the same answer. Presumably Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, was the priestly enquiry agent, bringing his ephod with him (22.23; 23.6).
- " 28.6 Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.
- " 30.7,8 David enquired of the Lord, "Shall I pursue....shall I overtake them?" He answered him, "Pursue; for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue." Abiathar was using his ephod.
- 2 Sam 2.1 David enquired of the Lord. "Shall I go up?" "Go up." "To which city shall I go up?" "To Hebron."
- " 5.9 David enquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Wilt thou give them into my hand?" The Lord said to David, "Go up; I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand."
- " 6.23 When David enquired of the Lord, he said, "You shall not go up; go around to their rear....balsam trees."
- " 16.23 The counsel which Ahithopel gave was as if one consulted the oracle of God.

This method seemed normal in days before the monarch was settled in Jerusalem though Isaiah 30.2 and 65.1 may suggest that the priest continued this function.  $\text{S}^{\text{X}}\Psi$  is the normal word for "to ask" yet it does seem to have this technical connotation so frequently and B.D.B. includes these two Isaianic verses in the same section as the others listed above (Qal 2.b).

$\text{S}^{\text{X}}\Psi$  is also used of consulting the teraphim in Babylonian divination (Ezk 21.21), enquiring of a thing of wood (Hosea 4.12) and consulting a medium (1 Chr 10.13 and Dt 18.11).

B. **שָׁאַל** - used generally of enquiry by a prophet, involves greater thoroughness or involvement.

(i)

Gen 25.22 Rebekah receives an oracle at the birth of her children.

Ex 18.15 People all come to Moses, to enquire of God.

1 Sam 9.9 When a man went to enquire of God he said "Come let us go to the seer." Saul was seeking his father's asses.

1 Ki 14.5 Wife of Jeroboam coming to enquire of Ahijah about her sick son.

" 22.5,7,8 (= 2 Chr 18.4,5,7). Jehoshaphat and Micaiah.

2 Ki 3.11 Jehoshaphat and Elisha. "Is there no prophet through whom we may inquire of the Lord?"

" 8.8 Ben-hadad, Hazael and Elisha. "Take a present, go to meet the man of God, inquire of the Lord through him: "Shall I recover from this sickness?"

" 22.13,18 (= 2 Chr 34.21,26). Josiah and Huldah about the book of the Law.

Jer 21.2 Zedekiah: "Inquire of the Lord for us concerning Nebuchadnezzar."

" 37.7 Zedekiah concerning Pharaoh's army.

Ezk 14.7 "Coming to a prophet to inquire for himself of me."

" 20.1,3 The elders came to inquire of the Lord and sat before me.

(ii) **שָׁאַל** - is also used of consulting false gods, stress is still laid on the person rather than on the method involved.

Dt 18.11 refers to the necromancer, one who consults the dead.

1 Sam 28.7; 1 Chr 10.13 Saul enquires of a medium seeking guidance.

2 Ki 1.2,3,6,16 Ahaziah enquires of Baal-zebub.

Is 8.19;19.3 Speaks of consulting mediums, idols, sorcerers and wizards.

Ezk 14.10 Inquirer of a false prophet.

(iii) On three occasions in 1 Chr the verb is used in the negative in connection with the Ark. 13.3 "we neglected it"; 15.13 "we did not care for it"; 21.30 "David did not go before it to inquire of God". The Ark represented God's presence; the concern here is inability or unconcern in seeking God.

APPENDIX 5. (see p. 26)PARALLELS BETWEEN ACTS AND OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

1. Acts 1.26 - casting lots cf. 1 Sam 10.21; 2 Sam 2.1; Jon 1.7.
2. " 8.39 - the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip....found at Azotus cf. 1 Ki 18.12 the Spirit of the Lord will carry you whither I know not (Obadiah to Elijah).
3. " 10.3 - an angel of God told Cornelius to send for Peter.  
" 10.13,20 - a voice to Peter "Rise, kill and eat"...."Go down and accompany them" cf. 1 Ki 13.18; 19.5; 2 Ki 1.3 - although the contexts are different the ideas are similar. Although the prophet lied he could plausibly invent an angel saying "Bring him....into your house." An angel told Elijah "Rise and eat" and "Go up to meet the messengers."
4. " 11.27f - prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch; Agabus foretold a great famine.  
" 21.9ff - Philip's 4 unmarried daughters prophesied and Agabus in symbolic fashion takes Paul's girdle and speaks of his captivity. This is redolent of the prophetic bands with a spokesman, e.g. 2 Ki 2.3 speaking of Elijah's being taken away. Symbolic imagery was also common in Old Testament times (1 Ki 22.11).
5. " 5.15; 19.11 To Peter's shadow and Paul's clothing are accorded miracles of healing. Likewise Elisha expects his staff to be used miraculously 2 Ki 4.29 as had Elijah's mantle (2 Ki 2.8,14).
6. " 5.9 The sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira at the words of Peter may be likened to Hananiah's death at the word of Jeremiah (Jer 28.16).

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