

THE  
FALSE PROPHETS  
OF THE  
OLD TESTAMENT

SUMMARY OF A DISSERTATION

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## PREFACE

The present work is a summary of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the School of Sacred Sciences of the Catholic University of America. Two manuscript copies of the complete dissertation may be found in the Catholic University Library, to which, as well as to the authors cited, the reader is referred for fuller details and for justification of the conclusions here presented. Chapter II, however, is given in the present work in full, since it treats several questions upon which little has been written in English by Catholic scholars.

The problem of the false prophets of the Old Testament is not exclusively biblical. It furnishes apologetics — a science that is definitely outcast in non-Catholic circles today — a strong argument for the supernatural mission of the true prophets. Apart from any apologetic preoccupations, however, the student finds it intriguing to trace far back into Israel's history the beginnings of the conflict of prophet against prophet that reached its climax in the life of Jeremias. This historical question receives fuller attention here than the apologetic.

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CHAPTER I

TEXTS AND INTERPRETATION

Students of religion are agreed that the greatest religious genius known to the world before the time of Christ were the Hebrew prophets. For ten centuries, from Moses to Malachias, Divine Providence gave the Chosen People a line of teachers whose nobility of life and sublimity of doctrine are unparalleled in the history of religion of their time. But truth is never accepted without opposition. Just as the life of Christ was a continual conflict with the Pharisees, so also the O T prophets found themselves consistently at odds with the people, the priests, and the prophets. It is the conflict of the O T prophets with the latter class, those whom history calls false prophets,<sup>1</sup> that this essay is concerned.

1. The O T had no technical term to express the concept "false prophet." It simply uses the term "prophet," *nabi*. According to the great majority of scholars, *nabi* is from a root connected with the root found in Arabic, *nabā'a*, to announce. Cf. Laur, *Die Prophetenamen des A T*, pp. 10-42; Koenig, art. "Prophecy," *E R E*, X, 384. Whatever be its etymology, the term had at the time of the writing prophets the meaning of "speaker," "announcer," presumably in the name of God (cf. Ex. vii, 1; iv, 14 ff.). The term *nabi*, therefore, had a neutral significance; it was given to a wider class of individuals than merely our canonical prophets. Cf. Vanden Oudenrijn, "De Falsis in T. V. Prophetis," *Angelicum*, III (1926), p. 50. This fact will become clearer in chapter II of this work, where the distinction between professional prophets and the prophets of special vocation is explained.

The activity of the prophets is described by the denominative verb, i. e., the verb derived from the noun *nabi*, used in only two forms, the niph'al (*hinnabe'*) and the hitpa'el (*hitmabbe'*). Despite attempts to differentiate between the niph'al and the hitpa'el of the verb, they are equivalent and mean "to conduct oneself as a prophet," "to speak or act like a prophet" (translated "to prophesy" in our English Bibles). Jepsen (*Nabi*, pp. 5-10) has recently tried to make a distinction: about the ninth century both the hitpa'el and the niph'al meant "to rave"; between 750 and 550, the hitpa'el retained this meaning, while the niph'al took on the meaning "to an-

ABBREVIATIONS

- A T Ab H Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen
- Bb Biblica
- B S Biblische Studien
- B Z Biblische Zeitschrift
- B Z F Biblische Zeitfragen
- B Z S F Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen
- D A Dictionnaire Apologetique de la Foi Catholique
- D T C Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique
- E R E Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
- Exp Expositor
- Exp T Expository Times
- H D B Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible
- J B L Journal of Biblical Literature
- R G G Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
- Th GI Theologie und Glaube
- V D Verbum Domini
- V D B Vigouroux's Dictionnaire de la Bible
- Z A W Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

Whenever the name of an author is mentioned without further specification, the reference is to his commentary on the pertinent book of the Bible, chapter and verse in question.

Scripture quotations are printed in italics. Regular type indicates a textual correction. ( ) indicates an omission.

## THE TEXTS

The first notice of conflict between prophets is found in I Kgs. xxii. Ahab of Israel (873-854) invites Josaphat of Juda (870-849) to join him in an expedition against Aram. Josaphat suggests that they first inquire the will of Yahweh, whereupon Ahab summons the prophets, the *nebiim*, four hundred in number, who promise the king success in Yahweh's name (I Kgs. xxii, 1-6). Josaphat, however, is suspicious and asks if there is not another prophet who might be consulted. Hesitatingly Ahab admits that there is, *nuance*; and after 550, both have the meaning "to announce." But the theory falls before texts such as Jer. xxiii, 13; xiv, 14; xxvi, 20; I Kgs. xxii, 10, 12; Am. vii, 12.

In a number of places which refer to false prophets, the LXX has *pseudoprophetes* where M T has *nabi*: Zach. xiii, 2; Jer. vi, 13; xxxiii (M T and Vulg. xxxvi) 7, 8, 11, 16; xxxiv (M T and Vulg. xxxv) 9; xxxv (xxviii), 1; xxxvi (xxix), 1, 8. While the Hebrew to express the concept "false prophet," as the Greek *pseudoprophetes*, lacked the *idea* "false prophet," it cannot be said that the O T not make the distinction between true and false prophets. We do not find applied to false prophets the expressions so frequently used of the true prophets: "prophet(s) of Yahweh" (except in I Kgs. xxii, 7), or, if the biblical author is addressing Yahweh or speaking of Him or in His name, "Your prophets," or "His prophets," or "My prophets," or again, "My (or your) servants, the prophets." Nor are the false prophets ever called "servants of Yahweh," as are Moses, Elias, and Isaias; or "messengers of God," "messengers of Yahweh," "men of God" — titles reserved exclusively to the true prophets.

Instead of a special connection with Yahweh, the false prophets are described as having a special connection with the people, which implies that they served the people rather than Yahweh. Thus, they are called "prophets of Jerusalem" (Jer. xxiii, 14, 15), "... of Israel" (Ezech. xiii, 2, 16), "... of Samaria" (Jer. xxiii, 13). Sometimes the name "prophets" is used with a possessive pronoun referring to the people: Mich. iii, 11; Soph. iii, 4; Jer. xxiii, 16; xxix, 8; xxxvii, 18; Lam. ii, 14; iv, 13; Ezech. xiii, 4; xxii, 25, 28.

The activity of the false prophets is variously described: "they prophesy deception" (Jer. xiv, 14; xxiii, 25; xxvii, 10, 14, 16; xxix, 21; cf. also xxiii, 26); "they prophesy by (with) deception" (Jer. v, 31; xx, 6; xxix, 9; xxvii, 15); "they prophesy lying dreams" (Jer. xxiii, 32); they "prophesy out of their own hearts" (Ezech. xiii, 17); or they "follow their own spirit" (Ezech. xiii, 3); "they teach de-

Micheas, the son of Jemla, but he has incurred the king's hatred by prophesying nothing but evil concerning Ahab (vv. 7-8). Upon Josaphat's insistence, Micheas is summoned. Meanwhile a religious festival is prepared. Sedecias, the leader of the prophets, performs a prophetic symbolic action, showing how Ahab will overcome his enemies. The other prophets take up his prediction in chorus (vv. 9-12). The messenger sent to Micheas urges him to agree with the other prophets and promise the king success, but the prophet replies: "As Yahweh lives, what Yahweh tells me, that I will speak" (vv. 13-14). In the king's presence, Micheas in bitter sarcasm first repeats the favorable answer of the four hundred, but when adjured by Ahab, he replies: "I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. Then Yahweh said: These have no masters. Let them return, each man to his house in peace" (vv. 16-17). Micheas goes on to explain in an imaginative picture that recalls the opening chapter of Job why the four hundred have deceived the king (vv. 19-22), concluding with the words: "And now, behold, Yahweh has put a lying spirit into the mouth of all these your prophets, for Yahweh has decreed evil for you" (v. 23). Sedecias strikes Micheas on the cheek, whereupon Micheas threatens him with disaster, and is imprisoned by king Ahab (vv. 24-27). As he is being led away, Micheas appeals to the fulfillment of his prediction to prove that he, not the four hundred, is the true prophet: "If you really return in peace, Yahweh has not spoken by me" (v. 28).<sup>2</sup>

"ception" (Is. ix, 15); they "prophesy a lying vision" (Jer. xiv, 14); they prophesy "a vision of their own hearts" (Jer. xxiii, 16); or "an idle vision" (Ezech. xii, 24; xiii, 7). "They see vanity" (Ezech. xiii, 6, 9, 23; xxii, 28; Lam. ii, 14).

Finally, the activity of the false prophets is sometimes designated by the verb *gasam*, "to divine," a word that everywhere in the O T has an illicit connotation. Thus, Jer. xiv, 14; xxix, 8; Ezech. xii, 24; xiii, 6, 7, 9, 23; xxii, 28; Mich. iii, 6, 7, 11. Cf. Aalders, *De Valsche Profete in Israel*, pp. 12-50.

2. There is no reason to question the historicity of this narrative, as do Matthes ("The False Prophets of Israel," *The Modern Reviewer*, V (1884), p. 420) and Jepsen (*Op. cit.*, p. 89). The author is interested in the narrative mainly from the viewpoint of the prophets, but it is precisely this fact that makes it valuable. But the narrative is not tendential. If it were, we should expect an explicit statement that the

This narrative touches the following points:

- 1) The prophets here spoken of, although worshipping Yahweh and prophesying in His name, were willing to abet and flatter the king at all costs. Hence they are to be sharply distinguished by their laxity from the strict Yahweh-prophets persecuted by Achab (I Kgs. xviii, 4; xix, 14) among whom were Eliseus, and the Micheas mentioned in this narrative. The author of the narrative, as well as Micheas, Josaphat, and even the common people (cf. v. 13), mistrust the nebiim and consider them deceivers. It is possible that some of them were in good faith. They knew that Achab was a great and successful warrior, and hence they may have been convinced that the king would triumph.
- 2) Micheas, on the other hand, is a noble character, who will not deceive even to win the king's favor. He will speak only what Yahweh tells him. He is convinced of his own *personal* inspiration rather than betray his mission. So certain is he of his inspiration that he unhesitatingly accuses his opponents of deception, and declines to them the right to speak in Yahweh's name.<sup>3</sup>

prediction of Micheas regarding Sedecias' punishment was fulfilled. If the narrative originated in Juda, as Jepsen supposes, we should not expect Josaphat to be described as friendly to Achab. It is quite true that the historical data are scarce, but the narrative is too artless, too simple, to be anything but the faithful recording of an historical event. Cf. Kautzsch, art. "Religion of Israel," *H D B* extra volume, p. 657, who surmises that the narrative belongs to a very ancient "Ahab-source."

3. In vv. 20-23 Yahweh is the cause of Achab's deception and death. This is the naive conception of primitive times, which did not distinguish between direct and merely permissive divine causality. Cf. Sanda and Landersdorfer, *in loco*; Junker, *Prophet und Seher*, p. 67; Vanden Oudenrijn, *loc. cit.*, p. 57; Condamin, *Le Livre d'Isaie*, pp. 45-46.

The same explanation holds for Ezech. xiv, 9: "When a prophet is enticed and speaks a word (falsely), I Yahweh have deceived that prophet and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people." Some scholars have maintained that Ezechiel did not distinguish between true and false prophecy since he attributes both to Yahweh in the same manner. But this interpretation is untenable, since the prophet clearly states that the false prophets prophesied "out of their own hearts" (xiii, 2, 17),

- 3) Micheas appeals to the outcome of his prediction, soon to be fulfilled, to vindicate his claim to a special divine mission, and to prove the absence of such a mission in his opponents. The outcome of Achab's campaign proved that Micheas was right and justified his claim (cf. I Kgs. xxii, 29-38).

After the incident of Micheas, the son of Jemla, which took place in the year 854, our records are silent regarding false prophets until the time of Osee (about 750). In a passing reference, Osee predicts that "the prophet will likewise stumble" with the priest (Os. iv, 5) and thus includes the prophets in a general denunciation of priests and people.<sup>4</sup>

#### MICHEAS

A few decades later we find the first mention of false prophets in the southern kingdom. Micheas the Morasthite (a younger contemporary of Isaias; he exercised his ministry about the time of the fall of Samaria, 722-721) pronounces a woe against them in the third chapter of his book:

*Thus says Yahweh:*

*Woe to the prophets who lead my people astray:*

*Who, when they have something to eat announce peace,*

*But proclaim war, if no one gives them to eat.*

*Therefore, for you night without vision,*

*Darkness without divination.*

*The sun will set upon the prophets,*

*And the day will darken upon them.*

*And the seers shall be put to shame,*

*And the diviners confounded.*

and hence holds them responsible. Cobern (on Ezech. xiv, 9) explains it thus: "The Hebrews, who took no interest in 'second causes' and knew nothing of psychological laws, naturally and properly referred to God directly that which is now seen to be the inevitable result of willful falsehood according to the eternal laws of mind established by the Creator from the beginning."

4. Some scholars interpret Os. ix, 7-9, as referring to false prophets. The text is uncertain and disputed, and hence cannot be used in this study. The same holds for Is. xxix, 10; Jer. ii, 30; v, 13.

*They will all cover their beard  
Because there will be no answer for them.  
I, however, am truly filled with power  
(with the spirit of Yahweh)<sup>5</sup>  
And authority and strength  
To denounce to Jacob his transgression,  
And to Israel his sin. (Mich. iii, 5-8)*

Micheas then scores the leaders of the state for their crimes (vv. 9-11b) and continues against the prophets of Jerusalem:

*Her prophets divine for money.  
Upon Yahweh they rely, saying:  
Is not Yahweh in our midst?  
No evil will come upon us. (v. 11c-f)*

Verse 12 concludes with the prediction of the utter destruction of Jerusalem in opposition to the assurance of safety given by the false prophets.

This pericope is of capital importance for the study of false prophetism. It brings out the following truths:

1) Micheas is passionately convinced of his own *personal* inspiration, in contrast with the absence of inspiration and the immoral deception of the false prophets (v. 8). The prophet by no means admits the reality of his opponents' revelations, as Sellin supposes, for in v. 5 he accuses them of rank deception. Moreover, he calls their prophesying "divination," a word never used in the O T of legitimate prophetic activity (cf. Deut. xviii, 10, 14; Jer. xxvii, 9). Because of their false prophesying, the prophets will be put to utter confusion. Micheas, on the contrary, is filled with power, authority, and strength to speak in God's name.<sup>6</sup>

5. Jepsen, *op. cit.*, p. 28, and Mowinckel, "The Spirit' and the 'Word' in the Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets," *J B L*, LIII (1934), p. 201, strike the words "with the spirit of Yahweh" as a later addition, for the attribution of prophetic oracles to the "spirit," they say, is a later conception. Procksch would strike either "power" or "the spirit of Yahweh" for metrical reasons. Neither argument is cogent. The words are found in all MSS, and reproduced in all versions.

6. Many scholars take occasion from Mich. iii, 5-12, to substantiate

2) Micheas dwells upon the moral failings of the false prophets. They are venal and make a business of their prophesying. From this follows their utter insincerity.

3) The false prophets are imbued with the false pagan notion of the relation of a god to his people: Yahweh is Israel's God and hence cannot forsake His people. Micheas and the other true prophets, on the contrary, teach that God's protection is conditioned upon moral righteousness.

4) Micheas implicitly appeals to the fulfillment of his prediction to justify his claim against the false prophets (v. 12).

The writings of Isaiah (died 701 or later) do not give the impression that false prophets were a serious problem to him, although there are a few condemnatory references to them. Thus in iii, 2-3, he mentions prophets and diviners together and predicts a like end to both. In ix, 15, he ridicules "the prophet who teaches falsehood" as "the tail" of the body politic, likening such prophets, as most commentators explain, to fawning puppies. They pretend to be leaders, but actually follow the wishes of the people. In xxviii, 7-8, he includes them in a graphic condemnation of drunkenness. So guilty are they that they are drunk even while exercising their prophetic office. Finally, the people are blamed for urging prophets to prophesy falsely (xxx, 10).

Almost a century later, Sophonias accuses the prophets of being "wanton" and "men of deceit" (Soph. iii, 4).

#### JEREMIAS

It is from Jeremias, however, that we learn most of the false prophets. It is significant that the activities of false prophets were

their view that the essential difference between true and false prophecy is ethical: the sanctity of the prophet and the moral earnestness of his message. Cf. pp. 20, 22. That these are criteria of prophetic inspiration no one will deny. But they are only effects of something more fundamental. It is "the power, the spirit of Yahweh, authority and strength" that differentiates Micheas from his opponents. Hence Yahweh exercises a very special influence upon him, which is lacking in the false prophets. The difference between himself and the false prophets is precisely in their lack of this inspiration, as the emphatic transition at the beginning of v. 8 indicates.

most marked in the years preceding the exile. The prophet Jeremiah was their life-long foe. He began his prophetic career in the thirteenth year of Josias (627) (cf. Jer. i, 2) when still a young man. His career extended to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587. His earliest sermons inveigh against the prophets. In his later years, the biographical portions of his work record his open conflict with them. In no uncertain terms Jeremiah blames in large measure the false prophets for the fatal religious and political policies that brought on the Babylonian exile.

Jeremiah accuses the prophets of prophesying by Baal (ii, 8), by which he means that their activities hindered the progress of the true religion. Their prophesying is deception, they "prophesy in the service of falsehood" (v. 31; cf. also xxvii, 10, 15 ff.). "The prophets prophesy lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I commission them or speak to them. A lying vision and vain divination and the deceit of their own hearts they prophesy to you" (xiv, 14; cf. also iv, 9-10; Lam. ii, 14). The real difference between Jeremiah and his opponents, therefore, lies in the absence of a divine mission in them, while he stoutly maintains his own personal inspiration (xxiii, 16, 21, 32; xxix, 9, 23, 31).

Like Micaiah of Morasthe, Jeremiah accuses them of grave moral failings: they are "greedy for gain" and "practice fraud" (vi, 13); they are "ungodly" (xxiii, 11, 15). Some of them are guilty of the great sin of adultery (xxiii, 14; xxix, 23).

Again, like the false prophets of Micaiah's time, the opponents of Jeremiah flatter the people. They have the pagan notion that Yahweh is indissolubly allied to His people, and hence will never forsake them:

*The wound of my people they heal lightly,  
Saying, all is well (shalom),<sup>7</sup> all is well, whereas all is not well  
(vi, 14). Then said I: Ah, Lord, Yahweh! Behold the prophets  
say to them: You shall not see the sword nor shall  
ine come upon you, because I will give you firm security in  
this place (xiv, 13; cf. also xxiii, 14-15).*

7. As Condamin points out, the word *shalom*, rendered by "peace" (Vulg. "pax"), is more comprehensive than our term "peace." It suggests integrity, the well-being of the whole body, and by way of consequence, "peace."

Hence they are responsible for the people's guilt (xiv, 11-18), and prevent their conversion (xxiii, 14). As a result, the prophets will share the disasters that are soon to overtake the nation: ii, 26; iv, 9-10; xiii, 12-14; xiv, 15, 18; xxiii, 12; xxvii, 10, 15 ff. And these disasters will vindicate Jeremiah against his false opponents: iv, 10; xxvii, 10, 15.

One criterion of true prophecy is its tendency to promote and better the morality of the people. But the false prophets lack this moral earnestness (xxiii, 21-22, 29; xxviii, 8). Jeremiah also appeals to the fulfillment of his predictions to establish his claim: xxiii, 12; xxviii, 15 ff.

All these reflections on and denunciations of the false prophets, scattered throughout the sermons of Jeremiah, are taken up and made into one great sermon:

*Concerning the prophets:*

*My heart within me is broken,*

*All my bones tremble;*

*I am like a drunken man,*

*And like a man whom wine has overcome,*

*Because of Yahweh,*

*And because of His holy words...*

*For both the prophet and the priest are ungodly —*

*Even in my house I have found their wickedness. ( )*

*Hence their way shall be for them as slippery ground.*

*In the darkness they shall be thrust out and fall therein.*

*For I will bring evil upon them —*

*The year of their visitation. Oracle of Yahweh. (xxiii, 9,*

*11-12)*

The prophet Jeremiah continues with an account of the evil wrought by the false prophets:

*In the prophets of Samaria I have seen unseemliness:*

*They prophesied by Baal,*

*They caused my people Israel to err.*

*But in the prophets of Jerusalem I saw an abomination:*

*Adultery and the practice of deception.*

*They strengthen the hands of evildoers,*



So that none converts from his evil-doing.

To me they are all like Sodom,

And their inhabitants like Gomorrah.

Therefore thus says Yahweh ( ) concerning the prophets: ( )

Indeed, from the prophets of Jerusalem

Has gone forth ungodliness over all the land. (vv. 13-15)

Yahweh continues with an exposition of the nature of false prophecy — absence of a mission from Him; and its consequent erroneous teaching, that the nation is secure, even if it does not obey His commands:

Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

Do not listen to the words of the prophets. ( )

They lead you to vanity:

A vision of their own heart they speak,

Not out of the mouth of Yahweh.

They say to those who despise my word:

Peace shall be your lot.

To everyone who walks in the obstinacy of his heart (they say):  
No evil shall come upon you....

I have not sent the prophets, yet they go forth,

If they had spoken to them, yet they prophesy.

They should announce my words to my people,

And convert them from their evil ways,

And from their evil doings.

Am I a God near at hand, says Yahweh,

And not a God afar off?

Can anyone hide himself so securely

That I cannot see him? says Yahweh.

Do I not fill heaven and earth? Oracle of Yahweh. (vv. 16-17;

21-24)

The sermon concludes with a denunciation of the dreams whereby the prophets tried to deceive (vv. 25-28), and a three-fold threat against the prophets, whom Yahweh neither sent nor commanded, and who do nothing but harm the people (vv. 30-32).

In chapter xxviii of the book of Jeremiah is told the story of

Jeremias' conflict with the false prophet Hananias. Hananias prophesied publicly in the temple that within two years Yahweh would bring back to Jerusalem the captives taken to Babylon, together with the temple vessels (xxviii, 1-4). Jeremias expresses the wish that Hananias' prophecy were true (vv. 5-6), but continues: "The prophets of old before me and before you prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many lands and great kingdoms. (Hence) if a prophet prophesies peace, (only) when the prophet's word is fulfilled, will it be known that Yahweh truly sent him (vv. 8-9).<sup>8</sup> In anger Hananias takes the yoke that Jeremias had been wearing to symbolize Juda's subjection to Babylon and breaks it with the repeated assurance that thus would Yahweh break the yoke of Babylon. Jeremias goes his way in silence (vv. 10-11). But he returns shortly, and announces that Yahweh would place a yoke of iron upon the nations that they should serve Babylon. To Hananias he predicts that because of his false prophecy, Yahweh would require his life within a year (vv. 12-16). The narrative concludes with the somber remark that Hananias died the same year (v. 17).

This narrative illustrates by a concrete example what Jeremias had been saying about the false prophets throughout his work. Jeremias strikingly vindicates and proves beyond all doubt that he, not Hananias, is the heaven-sent messenger. He does this by working an intellectual miracle: giving a prediction, which could

8. Jeremias is here not giving a general norm, as Deut. xviii, 21-22. All that he wishes to say is this: the presumption will be in favor of the prophet, who like the prophets of the past, preaches conversion and threatens punishment to a degenerate nation. The presumption is against the prophet who says that all is well and thus encourages the people in their wickedness. Jeremias cannot be understood to mean that if the prediction of Hananias were to take place, he would believe that Hananias was sent by God. He discards the very possibility of the prediction's being realized. Cf. Aalders, *in loco*.

Again, it would be unwarranted to conclude from Jeremias' words regarding the woe-prophets that he did not know of the Messianic prophecies of his predecessors and that therefore these prophecies were post-exilic. Jeremias himself addressed a prophecy of hope to the exiles in Babylon. Cf. Jer. xxxiii, 2 ff.; xxix, 11 ff.; xvi, 15; xxv, 12-14; xxvii, 22; and Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, pp. 192-193.

not be known by natural means and which is literally fulfilled shortly after.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter xxix reproduces a letter sent to the captives at Babylon in which Jeremias denounces the false prophets who were stirring up trouble among the exiles. He mentions two by name: Achab,

9. Jer. xxviii, 15-17, causes real difficulty to those critics who do not admit the possibility of a miraculous foreknowledge. Thus Hitzig and Ewald thought that Jeremias predicted the death of Hananias, but not the exact time. *Post factum*, he somehow thought that he had also predicted the time and thus it came into our text. Schmidt makes the surprising observation that since the prediction states "in a year" and the fulfillment took place "in the seventh month," the coincidence was accidental. Kuenen anxiously marshals together several evasions: "No one will certainly ascribe decisive weight to the narrative of Jeremias's encounter with Hananiah the Gibeonite there, has been ratified by the issue of the deity, such as we find because it produced a deep impression on the imagination of him whom it concerned, or by accident, as it is called. Such announcements are preserved in memory, just in those cases when they are confirmed by the facts, while if the event is different, they speedily pass into oblivion. Who would then, from this one account, venture to deduce consequences which would lead him, elsewhere, into great perplexity? Besides we have no certainty that the agreement between Jeremias's prediction and the result was so striking as it now appears to us. The narrative which lies before us was composed not immediately after the encounter, but after Hananiah's death which is mentioned in the last verse. Even if it were written by Jeremias himself, still it has not been preserved to us in its original form, as the manner of writing the proper names, and other deviations prove. We therefore do not know whether the death of Hananiah in that year was in fact foretold in terms so unambiguous" (*The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, pp. 304-305). Duhm admits the facts, but alleges that since we have not yet learned the last word in psychology, we cannot explain them. Gesebrecht defends the historical character of the prediction and its fulfillment, without admitting their miraculous character. Similarly, Rosenmueller, Reuss, Kent, Skinner, Volz, Cornill, Peake. If, however, we admit the facts, but deny their miraculous character, we preserve the skeleton, but deny the very heart and soul of the narrative. In this pericope, we are faced with the old dilemma: we have a narrative from which the supernatural element cannot be discarded. If we reject the narrative, we are unscientific and sceptical; if we accept the narrative as historical, we must accept the supernatural element. *Tertium non datur!*

the son of Colias (v. 21) and Semeias, the Nehelamite (v. 24). This letter repeats and illustrates what the prophet already said regarding the false prophets.

To summarize the teaching of Jeremias regarding false prophets:

1) The real, the essential distinction between Jeremias and his opponents is the fact that he has a divine mission, while they have not. Hence their prophesying is vain and deceitful (xiv, 14; xxiii, 16, 21, 32; xxix, 9, 23, 31; ii, 8; v, 30; iv, 10; xxvii, 15 ff.).

2) The criteria used by Jeremias to prove that the prophets are false are both intrinsic and extrinsic:

a) Intrinsic: their preaching is unmoral and hence cannot be from Yahweh, since it hinders the conversion of the nation: xiv, 11-18; xxiii, 14-15, 21-24; vi, 14; viii, 10c-12; xxviii, 8.

b) Extrinsic: their unmoral lives show them not to be messengers of Yahweh: vi, 13 ff.; xxiii, 11, 14-15; xxix, 23. Finally, Jeremias positively proves his own claim by intellectual miracles: his appeals to the future to confirm his predictions: xxiii, 12; xxviii, 15 ff.; cf. also ii, 26; iv, 9-10; xiii, 12-14; xiv, 14, 18; xxvii, 10, 15 ff., which are implicit appeals to the fulfillment of his predictions.

3) Since the false prophets had no divine illumination, they shared the pagan notion of Yahweh's necessary protection over His people: vi, 14; xiv, 13; xxiii, 23-24. Cf. also I Kgs. xxii, 6, 11-12; Mich. iii, 11.

#### EZECHIEL

Ezechiel was a younger contemporary of Jeremias and was undoubtedly strongly influenced by the teaching and life of Jeremias. His sermon on false prophets (Ezech. xii, 21 - xiv, 11) dates from the year 592, as we know from viii, 1. All scholars admit that the oral prophecies may have undergone considerable modification when written down by the prophet.

Ezech. xii, 21-28, might be looked upon as an introduction to the prophet's judgment on false prophets. In this pericope he directly answers those who taunted him with the non-fulfillment of prophecies or with the fact that prophecies referred only to the far

distant future. A byword was ironically passed from mouth to mouth: "The days are prolonged, and every vision fails" (v. 22). Yahweh answers by promising immediate fulfillment and thereby He would put an end to the proverb (v. 23). At the same time He would put an end to "vain visions and deceitful divination" (v. 24), i.e., false prophecy. (Cf. Jer. xxvii, 9; Mich. iii, 6, 11-12). Then to the objection that prophecies, even if true, refer only to the distant future (vv. 26-27), Yahweh replies that the delay is ended and His words will soon be fulfilled (v. 28).

In his sermon directly against the false prophets, Ezechiel follows the same trend of thought as Jeremias:

1) He defines false prophets as those who "prophecy out of their own minds" (xiii, 2, 17) "things which they have not seen" (v. 3). They "pretend to have visions and divine lies" (v. 9). Although they say, "The Lord says," yet Yahweh "did not send them" (vv. 6-7). Ezechiel, therefore, draws the same sharp line of distinction between himself and his opponents that Jeremias draws: he has been sent by Yahweh, he speaks Yahweh's words, he is personally inspired. But the false prophets have no such mission, they have no right to speak in Yahweh's name, and when they do, their oracles are nothing but lies, vain divination, the product of their own minds.

2) The absence of a divine mission causes the false prophets to lead the people astray. They preach the false doctrine of security taught by all the false prophets, which is based upon the heathen notion that a god cannot do without his people (xiii, 10 ff.). Like the false prophets of Micheas' time (cf. Mich. iii, 5) they use their oracles also for purposes of revenge (Ezech. xiii, 19, 22).

3) Punishment will be meted out to the false prophets, and herein Ezechiel implicitly appeals to the future to justify his claim (xiii, 9; xiv, 9-11).

#### POST-EXILIC NOTICES

Neh. vi, 10-14, tells of the intrigue of the prophet Samaias. Nehemias recognizes him as a false prophet. In v. 14 Nehemias calls down God's vengeance upon Tobias, Sanaballat, and Noadias

(MT makes Noadias a prophetess) and the rest of the prophets who would have intimidated him.

Zach. xiii, 1-6, is the final word of the O T on false prophets. It shows that finally they were utterly discredited. Before the exile these prophets succeeded in deceiving the people. Only a few solitary voices were raised against them. But now the people have learned their lesson:

*In that day it shall happen — oracle of Yahweh of hosts — ...*

*That I will extirpate the names of the idols from the land*

*So that they shall no more be remembered:*

*The prophets also and the unclean spirit I will remove from the land.*

*And it shall come to pass, if a man still prophesies, his father and mother who begot him, will say: "You shall not live, because you have spoken falsehood in the name of Yahweh." And his father and mother, who begot him, will thrust him through when he prophesies.*

*In that day the prophets will blush*

*Each man because of his vision (and prophesying).*

*And they will not wear the skin-mantle,*

*For the purpose of deceiving. (Zach. xiii, 2-4)<sup>10</sup>*

10. These verses are interpreted to include all prophecy by a number of scholars: Stade, followed by Haller, Nowack, Sellin, G. A. Smith. The latter's view, however, amounts practically to restricting the pericope to false prophets: "... it is not merely false prophets, as distinguished from true, who shall be removed; but prophecy in general. It is singular that in almost its latest passage the prophecy of Israel should return to the line of its earliest representative, Amos, who refused to call himself prophet. As in his day, the prophets had become mere professional and mercenary oracle-mongers, abjured the point of death by their own ashamed and wearied relatives." Jepsen, *op. cit.*, p. 238, note 1, also claims to hold Stade's view, but actually restricts the pericope to professional nebiim: "... Stade, *Z. A. W.*, I, 83, betont aber mit Recht dass hier die Prophetie, besser das Nabitum ueberhaupt, gemeint ist. Der Nabi wird dadurch dem Goetzendiener v. 2 gleichgestellt." But according to Jepsen's peculiar theory, Amos, Osee, Micheas, Sophonias, Jeremias, and Ezechiel are not nebiim (*op. cit.*, pp. 134-142). Cf. p. 37 of this work. The author of Zach. xiii, 1-6, uses the term *nabi* just as his predecessors did when inveighing against false prophets. From the context it is

Verses 5-6 indicate graphically what subterfuges the prophet will use to prevent discovery.

The foregoing is a brief summary of the O T passages that deal with false prophets. Regarding these passages there are two lines of interpretation. The one, which is the traditional interpretation, takes the words of the prophets at their face value and holds that the canonical prophets are vindicating for themselves a *supernatural* (in its strict theological sense) vocation. They claim to be not merely *providential* characters in Israel's history, but men to whom God has revealed His designs in a strictly extraordinary, miraculous manner. And this supernatural vocation the canonical prophets bring out most clearly, precisely when they deny to their opponents the right to speak in Yahweh's name. This is the interpretation of all who admit a supernatural order, Catholics and orthodox Protestants.<sup>11</sup>

The other line of interpretation is followed by those who do not admit the existence of a supernatural order and reject the miraculous entirely. They are forced to regard all the prophets, the canonical as well as their opponents, as endowed with merely natural knowledge. The difference between the two, therefore, can be only a difference of degree.

We shall now investigate this line of interpretation. For brevity's sake, we will give the propositions of Abraham Kuenen more or less in detail, and merely cite other scholars who embrace the same view. Kuenen deserves this specific treatment, because the modern rationalistic interpretation of the Hebrew prophets begins with him, and from him subsequent critics have drawn freely.<sup>12</sup>

11. Cf. Vanden Oudenrijn, "De Falsis in Testamento Vetere Prophetis," *Angelicum*, III (1926), pp. 46-73; Skrinjar, "De Falsis Prophetis," apud Jeremiam et Ezechielem," *V D*, XI (1931), pp. 99-105; Aalders, *E R E*, X, p. 386; *Der Offenbarungsbegriff des A T*, I, pp. 31 ff.; *Geschichte der A T Religion*, pp. 350 ff.; v. Orelli, art. "Prophecy," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, IV, p. 2460. In citing scholars who agree on various points with Kuenen's views of false prophecy, we are not judging whether the scholars in question admit the supernatural or not. Very often it is difficult, if not

#### VIEWS OF MODERN CRITICS ON THE FALSE PROPHETS

The thesis of Kuenen's famous work on Hebrew prophecy<sup>13</sup> is that supernaturalism in any of its forms is inadmissible as a critical and historical explanation of the phenomenon. In several places he touches on the false prophets. Thus on Am. vii, 14, where Amos repudiates membership in the prophetic guilds, Kuenen says:

He is, therefore, a prophet opposed to the prophets. If this were a solitary instance of such a fact, it would even then be most remarkable. But it is not a solitary instance. Such an antagonism appears clearly, on investigation, to have been very common. It frequently happened that *the prophets of Jahveh were divided among themselves*. When consulted about one and the same thing, they sometimes give diametrically opposite counsels; each one giving his own as "Jahveh's word."<sup>14</sup>

Kuenen goes on to discuss the traditional distinction of personal supernatural inspiration over against a mere pretension to such inspiration. He maintains that this distinction is unsupported by the facts, and was invented "to limit and sharply define the domain of the supernatural." According to the conviction of the Israelites, he holds, "all prophecy is a supernatural phenomenon resulting from and explained by the working of Jahveh's spirit." He continues:

It is we who . . . distinguish so rigorously the word of particular prophets, specifically the written prophecies, from the utterances of their contemporaries, and especially from those of their opponents. In the O T itself that boundary line is not thus drawn. . . No, if we are to abide faithfully by the testimony of the records, then we must acknowledge that the distinctions, so simple in appearance, by the help of which the phe-

impossible, to make this judgment, in view of the fact that these scholars frequently depart from the traditional terminology.

13. *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, translated from the Dutch by Milroy (London, 1877).

14. *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49. Cf. Davidson (art. "The False Prophets," *H D B*, IV, p. 116): "A hard-and-fast line of demarcation between true and false prophecy can hardly be drawn." Volz: "Side by side with the greater prophets there was a class of prophets of inferior rank . . ." (art. "False Prophets," *Cheyne's Encyclopaedia Biblica*, III, col. 3874).

nomena are arranged and explained, are the creations of tradition, and are maintained in its interests.<sup>15</sup> Even if the Israelite had wanted to make a distinction, Kuenen maintains, he would have been embarrassed. The norms of Deut. xiii, 1-5; xviii, 9-22, could not be used, because Deuteronomy was not known until the reign of Josias. No trace of the practical influence of the legal enactments of the Pentateuch is found in the prophetic books. The norm of the fulfillment of prediction was inapplicable, because the perplexed would have to wait until the prediction was fulfilled. Again, the laws mention no tribunal that was to enforce the enactments, and there is no record of any trial in which these laws were appealed to.<sup>16</sup> Having disposed of the possibility of

15. *op. cit.*, pp. 49-53.

16. For a similar criticism of the traditional criteria, cf. Matthes, "The False Prophets of Israel," *The Modern Review*, V (1884), pp. 438-444; Davidson, "The False Prophets," *Exp.*, fifth series, II, pp. 3-8; Valeton, *Prophet contra Prophet*, pp. 32-34; Sachse, *Die Propheten des A T und ihre Gegner*, BZ S F, XIII, 4, p. 5. The latter two scholars do not go into the problem of criteria explicitly, but implicitly reject the traditional criteria when they state that ultimately the people had to feel whether the true prophets were true: "Wenn ihr's nich fuehlt, ihr werdet's nicht erjaegen." — The criticism of the traditional criteria given by v. Rad ("Die falschen Propheten," *Z A W*, LI (1933), pp. 112-115) is even more radical. Deut. xviii, 15 ff., according to v. Rad, refers to an institutional prophetism, different from that of the writing-prophets. This institutional prophetism was to preserve the relation of Yahweh to His people described in Deut. vii, 7 ff.; xii, 9 ff.; xx, 4 ff., namely, that Yahweh and His people are indissolubly allied. Hence, Deuteronomy legitimizes the weal-prophet, not the woe-prophet. The norm of Jer. xviii, 9, is therefore, according to v. Rad, directly contrary to that of Deut. xviii, 20-22: in the latter, the woe-prophet must justify his prophecy by the fulfillment of his prediction; in Jer. xviii, 9, the weal-prophet must thus justify himself. Cf. also Buttenwieser, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 30-31. The opposition between Jeremias and Deuteronomy is not a new theory, as we might be inclined to believe from the manner in which v. Rad presents it. Duhm, *Die Theologie der Propheten*, pp. 231-233, had pointed out instances which he thought might be so construed. Of Duhm's theory, cf. the criticism of Maybam (*Die Entwicklung des israelitischen Prophetentums*, pp. 126-127): "Duhm... stellt Jeremias Religionsauffassung in einem Gegensatz zu der des Deuteronomiums, wech letztere diejenige der fal-

distinguishing between prophet and prophet, Kuenen concludes:

They stand before us now with tolerable distinctness — the prophets of Jahveh: the most of them closely connected with one another, and forming a kind of guild, some few assuming a more isolated position; all recognized in theory as organs of Jahveh, as inspired by Jahveh's spirit, as proclaiming Jahveh's word; but, in practice, applauded and obeyed only by those with whom they agreed in tendency, while they were rejected or even persecuted by the rest. Such is the actual position according to the historical documents themselves.<sup>17</sup>

It is reasonable to suppose that the "false" prophets, generally speaking, were in good faith and, as to sincerity, on a level with the canonical prophets.<sup>18</sup> The only real difference between them lies in their religious development:

... The canonical prophets have struggled forward in advance of their nation and of their fellow-prophets. ... Thus the canonical prophets form the flower, or the spiritual aristocracy of Israel. ... In Jahvism there were from the beginning, and there always continued to be, two elements intimately connected: the religious-ethical and the national element. ... From this combination there results the possibility of a development in two directions. The Israelite could either make his religion subordinate to his national feeling, his patriotism, or let that religion rule over the latter. Now the first way was followed by the "false prophets"; on the second we find the canonical

schen Propheten gewesen sein soll. Dieser colossale Irrthum hat viele Quellen. Zunaechst ist er darauf zurueckzufuehren, dass Duhm das Wesen der sogenannten falschen Propheten gar nicht erkannt hat." *op. cit.*, p. 60. Cf. also Davidson: "... if a prophet spoke what they (the people) could not accept and believed false, they did not draw a general conclusion that he was a false prophet, they merely assumed that the Lord had not spoken by him in that particular instance" (*loc. cit.*, p. 1).

18. The good faith of the false prophets is insisted upon by a great number of scholars. Matthes (*loc. cit.*, pp. 434-444) regards Hananias, the opponent of Jeremias (Jer. xxviii) as a genuine patriot. Sachse (*loc. cit.*, pp. 6-10) interprets Jer. xxix, 21, to mean that the false prophet was ready to die for the truth of his preaching and hence was subjectively a martyr. v. Rad (*loc. cit.*, pp. 109 ff.) thinks that strict neutrality should be observed in studying the false prophets. The judgments of the canonical prophets are hostile and hence our knowledge of the theological position of the false prophets is defective.

prophets. With the former the idea stood in the foreground that Jahveh was the deliverer and protector of Israel, that he would not abandon his people in the time of trouble, and would make every conflict turn to their advantage.<sup>19</sup> With the canonical prophets, on the other hand, the foremost truth was:

... the God of Israel is the Holy One. That was the source of the divergent and much more unfavourable judgment of the moral and religious state of the people; the source also of the dark anticipations of the people's immediate future, of the cry "danger, danger, and no peace," which forms the key-note of deep piety... It is the moral earnestness combined with ideal, as distinguished from the other prophets.<sup>20</sup> ... But the old contrasts must be altogether set aside. So long as we

19. Cf. Davidson: "The fact that prophecy was the embodiment of a religious-national spirit accounts for what is called false prophecy. When the spirit that animated the prophet pursued predominantly national ends, he was a false prophet; when the ends pursued were religious and ethical the prophet was true, because in the religion of Jehovah the national was transient, and the ethical abiding" (*H D B*, IV, p. 116). Davidson (*Exp*, Fifth series, II, pp. 13-15) and Sachse (*loc. cit.*, pp. 13-19) trace the erroneous view of the false prophets concerning the relation of Yahweh to His people to Canaanitish influences.

20. The test of morality is given as the only real test between true and false prophets by most of the critics. Cf. Matthes, *loc. cit.*, pp. 438-444; Davidson, *loc. cit.*, pp. 14-17; Sachse, *loc. cit.*, pp. 18-19; Marti, *The Religion of the O T*, p. 183: "The test of the prophet is... the contents of his message: the close organic connection between religion and ethics." Kittel, *The Religion of the People of Israel*, pp. 131-132: "... the decisive difference lay in a profound ethical cleavage." Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, pp. 195-196: "The real test which Jeremiah applies to his opponents is the test of morality. It is not so much in the form of their prophetic experience as in the substance of their prophetic teaching that he discovers the proof that they are no true spokesmen of Yahwe. In their indifference to the sin of the people, ... they proclaim their entire ignorance of Yahwe's truth. It is the men themselves who are false;..." Mowinkel, *loc. cit.*, p. 217: "... the reforming prophets quite consciously adopt as their criterion... the clear purport, the moral and religious content of the word." Cf. also Hempel, *Gott und Mensch im A T*, p. 203: Staerk, "Das Wahrheitskriterium der A T Prophetie," *Zeitschrift fuer systematische Theologie*, V (1927), pp. 76-101.

derive a separate part of Israel's religious life directly from God, and allow the supernatural or immediate revelation to intervene in even one single point, so long also our view of the whole continues to be incorrect, and we see ourselves here and there necessitated to do violence to the well authenticated contents of the historical documents. It is the supposition of a natural development alone which accounts for all the phenomena.<sup>21</sup>

21. *op. cit.*, pp. 582-583, 584-585. A number of scholars distinguish simply between weal-prophets and woe-prophets (Heils- und Unheilspropheten), instead of true and false prophets. For example, Duhm (*op. cit.*, pp. 228-230) considers the teaching of Hananias (Jer. xxviii) essentially the same as that of Isaiahs and Habacuc, namely, that the Temple could not be destroyed and that its presence safeguarded the existence of the people. This belief became a dogma and received an external legal value from the book of Deuteronomy. So also Stade (*Z A W*, I, p. 8; *Biblische Theologie des A T*, I, p. 171) says that the so-called false prophets, "represent varying prophetic viewpoints, and preach ideas that belong to the circle of the ideas of Isaiahs;..." W. R. Smith thinks that the "organized prophetic party of Isaiah degenerated into an empty formalism which took for its watchword the Temple of Jehovah, against which Jeremiah preached as Isaiahs had preached against the formalism of his day" (*The Prophets of Israel*, p. 370). Cornill calls the false prophets "those biassed and discriminating disciples of Isaiah" (*The Prophets of Israel*, p. 103). Cf. also Wellhausen, *Israelitische und juedische Geschichte*, p. 133; Cheyne, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, III, cols. 3875-3877; J. M. P. Smith, *The Prophet and His Problems*, pp. 59-86; Gunkel, art. "Prophetismus (Schriftpropheten)," *R G G*, IV, cols. 1543-1544.

Special mention must be made of Hoelscher, because of the great following he has enjoyed. According to Hoelscher, the fundamental experience of all prophecy is ecstasy. Ecstatic states of self proved to the prophet and to his hearers that he had a divine message. But ecstasy could be induced by all prophets. Beneath the prophet's oracles, given under the access of ecstasy, lay his own ideas and views. Hence the background of the prophet, his natural gifts, and his moral qualifications account for the opposition between prophets. It was only at the time of Jeremiah that mere ecstatic phenomena began to be mistrusted as a criterion of divine possession. This mistrust was due precisely to the contradictory oracles of the different prophets and led to a search for other criteria. This attempt of prophetism to prove its own truth led to its gradual dying-out among the Hebrews. Cf. Hoelscher, *Die Profeten*, pp. 22-26, 178-179, 294-295.

- The following propositions summarize Kuenen's views:
- 1) There is no essential distinction between those whom history calls "true" and "false" prophets. All are simply prophets, but from purely natural causes.
  - 2) The canonical prophets represent a higher form of religion, whereas the so-called "false" prophets represent a lower stage of development. The false prophets thought that Yahweh's protection was unconditional, and hence their confident "Peace," "All is well," in opposition to the warnings and threats of the true prophets, who saw Yahweh's judgments against the immorality of the people.
  - 3) The only real criterion of true prophecy is its ethical or moral aspect: the sanctity of the prophet's life and the ability of his message to promote true sanctity in the people.

#### CRITICISM

There is no doubt that students of religion owe the critics a great debt of gratitude for the light that they have thrown on the problem of false prophetism in the O T. But unfortunately the philosophical prejudice that "supernaturalism in any of its forms is inadmissible as a critical and historical explanation of the phenomenon" prevents the critics from considering objectively the claims of the true prophets themselves. According to their philosophical view that the supernatural order is impossible, the critics must *a priori* reject the explanation which the true prophets give of the opposition between themselves and their opponents. And if we reject this explanation, we must be content simply to confess ignorance. As a result of this *a priori* rejection of the claims of the true prophets, the critics give as the real difference between true and false prophets that which is only an effect or an accompanying phenomenon of the real difference.

The pertinent texts bring out forcefully one salient fact: that the true prophets were absolutely convinced of the *supernatural* character of their own mission. This conviction is so strong that they do not hesitate to label their opponents as false prophets, prophets out of their own hearts, prophets whom Yahweh has not

sent. They were so firmly convinced of their claim that they do not waver; they do not reckon with the possibility that their opponents may also have had a divine mission. If they admitted any possibility of error, they could not denounce in such unequivocal terms those who prophesied in opposition to them, unless they themselves were not sincere. And only by way of very rare exception has any serious student of the Bible in these twenty centuries questioned the absolute sincerity and sanctity of the canonical prophets.

It is important to remember that the supernatural character of the prophetic mission is not proved only by such locutions as "God has spoken to me," or "God has sent me," or "Hear the word of Yahweh." Such formulae, by themselves, do not necessarily imply a revelation in the strict sense.<sup>22</sup> They might be used of good thought or enlightenment. But when the canonical prophets vindicate the right to speak in this wise so exclusively as to refuse absolutely the same right to their opponents, then it becomes evident that they mean thereby to claim for themselves a supernatural mission strictly so called.

The true prophets always sharply distinguished their own thoughts, their own feelings, and spontaneous impulses from divine inspiration. This is especially clear in the writings of Jeremias. For this reason the prophets could dare condemn anyone who opposed them. If they did not distinguish so carefully, would they not have had reason to fear that their condemnations could be turned upon themselves?<sup>23</sup>

22. Cf. Condamin, "La Mission Supernaturelle des Prophetes d'Israel," *Etudes*, CXVIII (1909), pp. 23-35; id., *D A*, IV, cols. 401-402.

23. Cf. Riehm, *Messianic Prophecy*, pp. 14-17: "Any person who regards the prophets simply as men of remarkable wisdom and piety, . . . (and) who, in maintaining such a view, deliberately ignores the idea of an extraordinary operation of the Spirit of God upon the mind of the prophets, must be content to forego an understanding of the inmost essence of the entire historical phenomenon of O T prophecy. For it is an undeniable fact — a fact attested once and again on every page of the prophetic writings — that the prophets themselves were most clearly and certainly conscious of announcing, not their own thoughts, but the thoughts of God revealed to them, — not their own words, but the word of God laid upon their hearts and put into their mouths. It is precisely this point that they emphasize when they distinguish themselves from false prophets. They claim that they are

The student of religion, therefore, is faced with the alternative of accepting the prophet's word or of rejecting it. In the latter case, he must either brand the true prophets as impostors — which very few have dared to do — or as pathological cases. The modern psychological interpretation of Hebrew prophetism practically accepts the latter alternative. In this case we are bound to explain by abnormal psychology the loftiest religious conceptions ever attained by man before the coming of Christ.

It is quite true that the false prophets represent an inferior religious viewpoint, that they shared the heathen view of a god's indissoluble union with his people, that consequently they preached Yahweh's assured protection, and did not insist upon the people's conversion. This is evident from the texts. But the facts are not the cause. Why did the true prophets have the loftier religious concepts, why did they teach that Yahweh's protection was conditioned upon the morality of the people? Their answer — and it is the only satisfactory answer — Yahweh has sent us; He did not send the false prophets, and hence they speak a vision of their own hearts.

The canonical prophets were, therefore, conscious of a formal, an essential difference between themselves and their opponents. This difference lay in their having a supernatural inspiration while their opponents lacked this inspiration, although claiming it. How could the true prophets convince their hearers of the truth of their

sent by God, and have received a definite commission to discover some secret of His counsel; while the false prophets appear without Divine commission, and speak, not what Jehovah has spoken to them, rather only the vision of their own heart... This distinction between the true and false prophet rests undoubtedly, further, on the clear consciousness of the former, that as the faithful servant of his God he keeps ever in view — in all that he utters and prophesies — the one object of giving effect to the will of God in the State and among the people, while the false prophets deliberately renounce any such task, and pander selfishly to the likings and passions of the people... But even this method of marking the difference between false and true prophets is possible only when the latter are most clearly conscious that their prophetic testimony as a whole does not proceed 'from their own heart,' and, so far from being the product of their own reflection, wishes, hopes or fears, is in reality something given them by God...

claim? What criterion had they? We have seen that the only criterion admitted by critics is the moral criterion. They further state that in the last analysis it depended upon the good will of the hearers, whether they would accept the prophet's claim.<sup>24</sup> The last chapter of this work will discuss the question whether there were any objective criteria that validated the claim of the true prophet.

24. Cf. Skinner, *op. cit.*, p. 196: "Jeremiah is conscious of standing in a personal relation to God, which we may call confidential, and of which the false prophets can have no experience... This immediate consciousness of having the mind of God is the ultimate secret of true prophetic inspiration, which, being incommunicable, can neither be analyzed nor applied as an objective criterion of an alleged revelation."



## CHAPTER II

## THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF FALSE PROPHECY

The preceding chapter has shown that the canonical prophets were conscious of a formal, an essential difference between themselves and their opponents. They claimed to have a special divine mission — supernatural inspiration in theological terminology — and they denied this divine mission to their opponents. It was the opposition of a supernatural inspiration against merely preaching "out of one's own heart." The prophets were able to prove by external criteria the validity of their claim, as will be seen in the final chapter. An historical question now concerns us: what factors contributed to the rise of false prophecy? There must have been some soil in the history of Israel that proved fertile ground for the growth of false prophecy. There must have been some institution which more or less legitimized false prophets. Otherwise they could never have gained a hearing, at least not to the extent that they did. To trace back into history the phenomenon of false prophecy, we must naturally trace the history of true prophecy. For the former, being the counterfeit of the latter, had its origin somewhere along the line of the development of the latter.

God raised up prophets among the Chosen People to be His mouthpiece, His interpreters. They were the answer to the prayer of every pious Israelite: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears." The Israelite was certainly a believer and as such tried to regulate his life according to the will of higher powers. This attitude was not peculiar to the Israelite. The nations about him shared this urge to know the purposes of the gods, and this anxiety manifested itself in an undue desire to know future and hidden things, a desire that accounts for the great popularity of divination among all nations of practically all times.<sup>1</sup> In one form or another, divination

1. Cf. the lengthy article on divination in *E R E*, IV, pp. 775-830. For the Catholic view on divination, cf. Ortolan in *D T C*, IV, cols. 1441-1455. For divination in the Bible, cf. Lesetre in *V D B*, II, cols. 1443-1447; Jevons in *H D B*, I, pp. 611-613; Doeller, *Die Wahrheit* in *A T*, *B Z F*, X, 11-12.

is, like religion, universal and indigenous. It is found also among the Israelites. Cf. I Sam. xxviii, 3; II Kgs. xxiii, 24; Is. viii, 19; Os. iv, 12. If we compare the history of Israel with that of other ancient nations, we find that in Israel divination is surprisingly scarce. Relatively speaking, it forms an almost insignificant part of the life of the people. While the records of contemporary nations take the phenomenon of divination for granted, the references to it in the OT are always condemnatory. Num. xxiii, 23, formulates the ideal: "There is no soothsaying in Jacob, nor divination in Israel."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere the Mosaic code strictly forbids all forms of divination, as practiced by Israel's neighbors. Cf. Ex. xxii, 18; Lev. xix, 26, 31; the complete enumeration is found in Deut. xviii, 9-14. Because the Canaanites practiced these abominations, they were to be dispossessed of their land and Yahweh's people would be settled thereon in their stead. But Israel should not be forced simply to stifle the urge which it had in common with the other nations to probe into the hidden and the future. Yahweh promised that instead of diviners and soothsayers, Israel should have something incomparably superior — a continued succession of prophets who would declare Yahweh's will and instruct them in all things that He wished them to know. After warning the Israelites never to have recourse to heathen sorcerers and diviners (Deut. xviii, 9-14), Moses promises that God will continually send His prophets whose presence among the Chosen People would render all divination inexcusable:

*A prophet from your midst, from your brethren, like me, Yahweh your God will raise up for you. Him you shall hear. In accordance with all that you demanded of Yahweh your God in Horeb, on the day of the assembly, saying: No longer let me hear the voice of Yahweh my God, neither let me any longer see this great fire, lest I die. And Yahweh said to me: They have spoken well. A prophet will I raise up for them from the midst of their brethren like you and I will put my*

2. There is no reason, as Dennefeld points out (art. "Messianism," *D T C*, X, col. 1420), to deny either the historicity or the authenticity of the oracles of Balaam, of which this verse forms part. Cf. also Sanda, *Moses und der Pentateuch*, pp. 324-327. Gray, *in loco*, regards this verse as an exclamation that has found its way from the margin into the text, but he admits that the sentiment against divination is old.

words into his mouth, and he shall speak to you all that I command him. (Deut. xviii, 15-18).<sup>3</sup>

All scholars admit this collective interpretation of "prophet," "nabi," in this pericope. It refers to the entire line of Israel's prophets from Moses to Christ, the prophet *par excellence*.<sup>4</sup> It certainly in-

3. On recent criticism of Deuteronomy, cf. J. Coppens, *Novelle Revue Lovanenses*, LXV (1938), pp. 545-546; id., *Ephemerides Theologice mium*, XI (1934), pp. 603-608; Junker, *Das Buch Deuteronomium*, pp. 2-17. The critics are by no means agreed on the date fixed by Wellhausen (*Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, p. 9) for the composition of Deuteronomy, i. e., shortly before 621, the time of its discovery. Whatever be the final solution of the problem of Deuteronomy, there is no reason to deny the substantial Mosaic authorship of the present pericope, for Moses certainly legislated against divination. Cf. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, pp. lvi, lix: "All Hebrew legislation, both civil and ceremonial, ... was (as a fact) derived ultimately from Moses, ... Now, if there is one thing which (even upon the most strictly critical premises) is certain about Moses, it is that he laid the greatest stress upon Jehovah's being Israel's only God, who tolerated no other god besides Him, and who claimed to be the sole object of the Israelite's allegiance." Accordingly we should see in the present pericope the all-giver Moses. For if there was any danger to Yahweh-worship among the Hebrews, it certainly lay in the divinatory practices of the pagan nations contemporary with them. Hence Moses would have to interdict these practices severely, but on the other hand, like a far-sighted lawgiver, he would have to supply a substitute. Cf. Dennefeld, *loc. cit.*, col. 1418.

4. Cf. the excellent and complete treatment of this verse given by Reimelauer, in *loc. cit.* Driver gives a splendid summary, but leaves the impression that this interpretation is new and an exclusive product of Protestant exegesis. In reality it was held by St. Jerome (*In Is.* viii, 19; *P. L.* XXIV, 122) and by a number of scholars of the golden age of Catholic exegesis: Nicholas of Lyra, Bonfrere, a Lapide, Tirinius, Gordon, Cornelius Jansenius; more recently, to mention only a few names, by: Calmet, Meignan, Reinke, v. Hummelauer, Junker, Schoepfer, *Geschichte des A. T.*, pp. 424-425; Simon-Prado, *Praelectiones Biblicae, Vetus Testamentum*, I, pp. 273-274.

The reasons that compel this interpretation are as follows:  
(a) The singular *nabi* can designate prophets collectively, cf. *Is.* iii, 2; xxviii, 7; *Jer.* xviii, 18; *Ezech.* vii, 26; *Os.* iv, 5. While verses 15 and 18 speak of prophet in the singular, verses 19 ff. refer to true and false prophets, despite the consistent use of the singular.

cludes the prophets of special vocation<sup>5</sup>: Josue, Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Elias, Eliseus, Micheas, son of Jemla, Amos and the writing prophets. These prophets were pre-eminently the mouthpiece of Yahweh, the interpreter of His will to the Israelites. But it may be asked whether the promise of a continued succession of prophets must be restricted to the prophets of special vocation. Considering their small number and the long spaces of time that often elapsed between the death of one prophet and the call of another, we may question whether the prophets of special vocation adequately supplied the need which is had in view in Deut. xviii, 9-18. May this pericope be interpreted to include also the professional prophets mentioned in I Sam. x, 5-6; 10-12; xix, 19-24; I Kgs. xx, 36-43; II Kgs. ii, 1 ff.; iv, 1, 38 ff.; v, 22; vi, 1-6; ix, 1 ff? If we can trace professional prophetism back to the time of Moses and recognize it as an institution legitimized by Israel's lawgiver; if, moreover, it

Evidently the same person cannot be meant. Probably the singular of *nabi* is used in opposition to the diviners mentioned previously (Deut. xviii, 9-11), the various species of which are given in the singular.

(b) The immediate context compels us to regard *nabi* collectively. A prophet is promised to satisfy the desire of the Hebrews for oracles. This desire could be satisfied only by a continued succession of prophets.

(c) The general context, xvi, 18 - xviii, 22, requires the collective interpretation: xvi, 18 - xvii, 13, treats of judges; xvii, 14-20, of kings; xviii, 1-8, of priests — all permanent institutions. We are therefore here dealing with the public law covering permanent offices in the theocratic state.

The collective interpretation in no wise militates against the application of the text to Christ, Acts iii, 22 f.; John i, 21, 45; it includes Christ as "... the ideal prophet, Who should be 'like' Moses in a pre-eminent degree, in Whom the line of individual prophets would culminate, and Who should exhibit the characteristics of the prophet in their fullest perfection. ..." (Driver)

5. The terms "prophet of special vocation" and "professional prophets" (*prophetes par consecration volontaire*) to distinguish those *nehim* who were personally called in a supernatural manner to speak in the name of God from those who voluntarily exercised some of the functions of the prophet, but without a supernatural mission, are suggested by Tobac, *Les Prophetes d'Israel*, pp. 12-13, following Van Hoonacker, *Les Douze Petits Prophetes*, p. 269.

can be shown that the giving of oracles was one of the functions of the professional prophets, we shall be able readily to explain historically the existence of "false" prophets, in opposition to the "true" prophets of special vocation. It must be admitted at the very outset that the pertinent biblical notices are few and incidental. They do not leave one's curiosity satisfied on all points, and hence have given a wide range to speculation that has too frequently soared into the realms of pure imagination, and was determined by *a priori* conceptions. In the survey here given, the splendid study of Junker, *Prophet und Seher in Israel*, will be the guide. We shall investigate the origin of Hebrew prophethood, specifically the critical hypothesis of the Canaanitish origin of Hebrew prophethood. If this is disproved and prophethood can be traced back beyond the entrance of Israel into Canaan, a second question will be taken up: do the professional prophets explain the origin of false prophethood?

#### NABI AND ROEH

To form an idea of the modern critical view of the origin and development of prophethood among the Chosen People, we must be-  
gin with an archeological note found in I Sam. ix, 9. Saul had searched in vain for the asses of Cis, his father, and was on the point of giving up the search, when his servant suggested that they should consult a famous man of God in the city, whose every prediction came to pass (I Sam. ix, 1-6). After a discussion on what they should give the man of God as a present (vv. 7-8), the text continues: "Formerly in Israel, a man spoke thus when he went to consult God: Come, let us go to the seer. For he who today is called prophet, formerly (was called) the seer." (v. 9) That this verse is a gloss, probably a marginal note that found its way into the text, was recognized by Venerable Bede and is unquestioned by modern scholars, except by Jepsen<sup>6</sup> who maintains that it is part of the text, but should appear after verse 11, which is in reality its proper place, since its purpose is to explain the term *ro'eh* found in verse 11.<sup>7</sup>

6. Jepsen, *Nabi*, p. 100, footnote.

7. The Hebrew construction of this gloss is somewhat peculiar. We cannot consider *lanabi* as a construct governing *hayom* and trans-

Taking this gloss as a lead, a large number of critics construct the following hypothesis or theory regarding the origin of prophethood among the Chosen People. Before the time of Samuel, the man of God was called *seer, ro'eh*. He probably combined the offices of priest and seer in his person, as did Samuel. This seer was thought to have superhuman knowledge, so that he could be consulted about all sorts of affairs, even trifles. This superhuman knowledge he obtained by watching external signs (divination) or through dreams. He was sharply distinguished from the *nabi*, a religious enthusiast or ecstatic like the howling dervish of the East today, who formed part of the religious life of the Canaanites. The *nabi* was not a native Israelitic phenomenon, but became a part of the religious life of Israel only after the latter's settlement in Canaan. If the *nabi* claimed to have revelations, he received these not by external means, but in his ecstatic transports. I Sam. x, 5 ff., mentions these *nebiim* for the first time. In the course of time the two were confused: the *ro'eh* ceased to be a diviner, he gave up the external means used to discern the will of the divinity. The *nabi* tempered his ecstasy, and the result of the evolution is the *nabi* as known from the writing prophets, the man of God who receives divine revelation without ecstasy and without the use of external means. The term *nabi* prevailed, while *ro'eh* fell into des-

late "the prophet of today." Junker, *Prophet und Seher*, p. 9, takes the article as a relative particle and considers the sentence as an abbreviated relative sentence, the predicate of which is understood. Cf. also Jouon, *Grammaire de l'Hebreu Biblique*, 127c.

Since the construction of the sentence is peculiar, a few scholars have suggested that MT should be corrected according to LXX, which reads: "Formerly, the people called the prophet seer." The LXX, therefore, read *ha'am* instead of *hayom*. Koenig (*Der aeitere Prophetismus*, *BZ S F*, 1, 9, p. 10; *Geschichte der A T Religion*, pp. 133-134, etc.) especially argues for the correction. He points out the syntactical difficulty of the verse as read in MT. The clause is inserted to explain the word *ro'eh*, which occurs for the first time and is used by ordinary folks. Hence LXX seems to have preserved the original reading, i. e., that *ro'eh* was the term used by the people, although the term *nabi* was also known and used, but not so popularly. Koenig's arguments are solid. It is surprising that so few have adopted the correction. Laur, *Prophetenamen des A T*, p. 88, is one of the few who follow Koenig.

uetude. Thus, Kittel says of the nebiim mentioned in I Sam. x, 5 ff.: manifestation of orgiastic frenzy, resembled rather a band of East today, than that preconceived notion which we moderns have of the prophets. If we compare with our picture that which we can derive from many of the words of such men as Isaiah or Jeremiah or even Second Isaiah, there is undoubtedly a very great difference existing between them; and yet there certainly must be a bridge leading from one to the other. Samuel, according to Kittel, made use of the bands of nebiim for religious and patriotic purposes:

It was the time of the Philistine oppression; the foreign invaders were flooding the country... Just as in the East today the Dervishes, unfurling the standard of the Prophet, proclaim the holy war throughout the land, in their frenzy carrying all before them and preaching the holy war to free their native land from the Philistines... Samuel was aware of the situation and laid hold of it. Thenceforth the *nebi'im* became the most enthusiastic supporters and promoters of the worship of Yahweh and those through whom, in the course of time, it was raised to its highest point of development. Of the seer, Kittel says:

A Hebrew tradition, the accuracy of which can scarcely be doubted, (I Sam. ix, 9) tells us that the native name for the men of God of ancient time was not *nabi*, but 'seer'. Samuel was still known by that name. The differentia must have been just that state of ecstasy. The influence of the Deity made itself felt not in involuntary frenzy but in this that the seer or oracular priest, called *kahin* by the Arabs, received the divine message in the sacred lot or by various tokens such as the sougling of the wind in the trees or by dreams and visions. This was the form of inspiration in which Moses is supposed to have communicated with Yahweh. But when the seer Samuel introduced Saul into the circle of the *nebi'im*, we may interpret this incident, without detracting from its significance, as indicating that he brought about the coalescence of the ancient office of seer with the new calling of the *nabi*.<sup>8</sup>

8. Kittel, *The Religion of the People of Israel*, pp. 124, 127, 125-126. Similarly Hoelscher, *Die Profeten*, pp. 125-126: "Diese Stelle gibt den Schluessel zum Verstaendnis; sie lehrt, dass die beiden in aelterer Zeit getrennten Begriffe des Sehers und Profeten spaeter zusammengefallen sind. In I Sam. ix, 1-x, 16 finden wir noch als zwei unter-

The interpretation of the gloss of I Sam. ix, 9, therefore, involves another question: the origin of Hebrew prophetism. The writers quoted assume that the nebiim were not a native Hebrew phenomenon, but were taken over from the inhabitants of Canaan. This theory has been the vogue in the critical school since Abraham Kuenen, who, if he did not originate it, devoted much energy in trying to prove it. In Kuenen's work are found the main ideas taken up by most of the critics since his time. Very little, if anything, has been added. Of the gloss in I Sam., Kuenen says:

On an earlier and lower standpoint of development, prophecy is found to approximate very closely to phenomena from which, at a later period, it is separated by a wide chasm. There are two lines by which we can ascend, and by both we arrive at one and the same result. The name *nabi*, in the first place, was not always in use among the Israelites, and, in the second place, was adopted by them from the Canaanites.

I Sam. ix, 9, shows that the name *nabi* was not always in use. Kuenen continues:

We therefore assume that the Israelites who lived during the period of the Judges called the men, whom they went to consult about the will or plans of the divinity, "seers", and that this name was as common among them at that time, as the title of "prophet" became in later ages.

The roch was originally a soothsayer, the predecessor of the later prophet. The *nabi* was the ecstatic, of Canaanitish origin. He gradually divested himself of this Canaanitish peculiarity:

The ecstatic excitement in his case gradually retires more into the background, and finally disappears almost altogether; a schiedene Grossen den Seher (ix, 11, 18 ff.) und die Profeten (x, 5, 10-12) und, wenn I Sam. ix, 1-x, 16 als jahrwissisch angesehen werden darf, so wuerde noch im 9. Jahrhundert so unterschieden worden sein. In den Schriften der grossen Profeten des 8. Jahrhunderts dagegen ist die Unterscheidung mehr oder weniger verschwunden. Die Spaeteren gebrauchen die Begriffe fast ganz unterschiedslos (II Sam. xxiv, 11; II Kgs. xvii, 13; Is. xxix, 10). Anders fuer die alte Zeit; fuer sie ist *nabi* der erregte Ekstatiker, der, wo er als Vermittler uebernaturlicher Offenbarungen auftritt, diese unmittelbar von sich gibt, dagegen *ro'eh* oder *hoseh* der Seher jeder Art, der ohne Ekstase aus mannigfachen acusseren Beobachtungen und Waermuengungen, unter denen die Illusionen des nachtlichen Dunkels des Halbschlafes und des Traumes besonders bevorzugt sind, uebernaturliches Wissen gewinnt."

most natural result, if the nabi has originally grown up on the soil of other religious ideas and practices; for then, necessarily gradually change in character, he would of come — what many find, but incorrectly, indicated in the name which he bears — the *speaker* in Jahveh's name and of Jahveh's words.

Kuenen was honest enough to point out that his theory was only a conjecture:

It would of course be very desirable that we should be able to speak with certainty upon such an important question as this. But from the want of historical accounts we must rest content with probable conjectures, which have this recommendation besides, that they give us a satisfactory explanation of the first appearance of prophecy in Israel. For in the representation which we have to form of it, the roeh, the predecessor of the prophet, finds a place, as well as the Canaanitish origin of the phenomena to which the name *nabi* refers.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the theory was taken up, one borrowing from the other, until gradually it has become something more or less taken for granted: one of the results of O T criticism that no longer needs proof.<sup>10</sup>

To summarize the propositions of the critical school derived from I Sam. ix, 9:

- 1) Originally in Israel men went to the seer, a kind of soothsayer, to inquire the will of God.
- 2) About the time of Samuel the Israelites borrowed from their Canaanitish neighbors the institution of religious enthusiasts known as the *nebiim*. They were enlisted in the service of Yahweh and of the nation.
- 3) In later times, the word *seer* fell into disuse, while the

9. Kuenen, *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, pp. 552 ff., 555. In its general outlines: Reville, *Le Prophétisme Hébreu*, p. 17; Smend, *Lehrbuch der A T Religionsgeschichte*, p. 80; E. Kautzsch, art. "Religion of Israel," *HD B*, extra volume, p. 653 a; Kayser, *Die Theologie des A T*, p. 54; Otley, *Aspects of the O T*, pp. 270 ff.; p. iv; Robinson, *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel*, pp. 28 ff.; Oesterley-Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, p. 178; Jepsen, *Nabi*, pp. 143 ff.

word *nabi* became the general term. The professions were gradually purged of lower forms of religion and fused, the one with the other. As a result, we have the prophet, as we are wont to understand him.

Not all scholars, however, admit the Canaanitish origin of Hebrew prophetism. Of these, some interpret the gloss to mean that the word *nabi* was not used at all before the time of Samuel; others that it was used from ancient times, but not so commonly as the name *ro'eh*.

The Catholic scholar, Sanda, may be cited as an example of the first class. His view is as follows: in ancient times a careful distinction was made between the *nabi* and the *ro'eh*. The *nabi* was the raving ecstatic (I Sam. x, 10), while the *ro'eh* was the non-ecstatic oracle (I Sam. ix, 9), so called because he perceived the oracle by interior illumination. Samuel was a *ro'eh*. The peculiar vocation of the *nebiim* was ecstatic cult, while the function of the *ro'im* was concerned with visions, totally different from the raving of the *nebiim*. Gradually the latter also began to pronounce oracles, and in the course of time the distinction of name was lost, all being called *nebiim*.<sup>11</sup>

11. Sanda, *Die Buecher der Koenige*, I, pp. 434-436. Cf. Batten, *The Hebrew Prophet*, p. 334; G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, I, pp. 18 ff., gives substantially the same view, but he leaves the question of the Canaanitish origin of the *nebiim* in abeyance.

It will be in place here to point out how conservative scholars explain the occurrence of the term *nabi* in O T literature prior to the time of Samuel (Gn. xx, 7; Deut. xviii, 15; I Sam. iii, 20; Ex. vii, 1; Judges vi, 8; Num. xi, 24 ff.; Ex. xv, 20; Judges iv, 4). The occurrence of the term offers no difficulty, of course, to those who reject the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The passages referred to occur in books which were, according to the Wellhausen theory, redacted after the term *nabi* had superseded *ro'eh*.

Even conservative scholars, however, may avoid this difficulty without relegating the entire Pentateuch to a late date. Sanda himself has written a masterful work defending the substantial Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (*Moses und der Pentateuch, A T Ab H*, IX, 4-5). It happens that Catholic scholars, for reasons other than the question considered here, have found that the particular passages where the so-called "late" use of *nabi* occurs, are late insertions or occur in passages that have been worked over. Thus, acc. to Hemisch (*Das Buch Genesis*, pp. 28, 68, 257), Gn. xx does not fit into the con-

According to this view ancient Israel had terminology which distinguished great individual prophets, like Samuel, from the bands of nebiim who functioned in groups. All confusion would have been avoided, but it happened that the terminology changed, and at the time of Amos we find individual prophets, like the writing prophets, also called nebiim.

The second group of scholars who reject the theory of the Canaanitish origin of Hebrew prophetism maintain — and correctly so — that I Sam. ix, 9, does not, even if the reading of MT be taken literally, say that the term *nabi* was unknown prior to the time of Samuel or was not applied to men of his ilk. The gloss simply tells us that the common appellation was seer, but does not say that this was the exclusive appellation. That this is evident can be shown from the immediate context. That this is evident can be called, not seer, but "man of God." All that the gloss tells us is that in the time of the glossator the term *ro'eh* was no longer in use. It does not say that the term *nabi* was not in use at the time of Samuel. Besides the expressions "let us go to the seer" or "let us go to the man of God" we frequently have the expressions "let us inquire of God," "let us inquire the word of God," and, we may suppose, "let us go to the *nabi*."<sup>12</sup>

text, and is a later insertion. Ex. vi, 2-vii, 13, according to Heinisch (*Das Buch Exodus*, p. 76) is a later tradition concerning the call of Moses, which arose in priestly circles, which agrees in most points with that given by Moses himself. Ex. iii-v, but differs in a few points. It is, therefore, an implicit citation. Miriam is called *nebi'a* (Ex. xv, 20) as is also Debora (Jud. iv, 4), but the word is evidently used in a different meaning, since it is given on the occasion of an enthusiastic transport (*ibid.*, p. 127). On Deut. xviii, 15, cf. footnote 3, p. 28. The use of *nabi* in the books of Samuel and Kings does not, of course, cause any difficulty since they were certainly written after the supposed change in terminology. The late use of *nabi* in these early sections would be "honorific titles reflecting the use of the word in later times." (Coppeters, "Hebrew Prophetism Before the Eighth Century," *The New York Review* (1907-08), pp. 617 ff., 619, footnote).

12. Cf. Sellin, *Der A T Prophetismus*, p. 8; Vanden Oudenrijn, "L'Expression 'Fils des Prophetes' et Ses Analogies," *Bb*, VI (1925), pp. 165 ff., 204 ff. Cf. also Koenig, *loc. cit.* He comes practically to the same conclusions, preferring, for solid reasons, the LXX reading as does Laur.

Since, therefore, the gloss does not argue in the least against the antiquity of the word "nabi," we may proceed to prove from positive indications that the nebiim go back beyond the time of Samuel. Since these indications also show the falseness of the supposition of the Canaanitish origin of the nebiim, it is no more than fair first to indicate the arguments for this theory. It will be sufficient to indicate these arguments as given by Jepsen,<sup>13</sup> since his work contains the latest exposition of the subject available to the writer. A comparison between his arguments and those of Kuenen, however, shows that nothing has been added to the conjectural data of the Dutch critic. It is surprising that the view is still maintained after seventy years' futile attempt to bolster the shaky hypothesis.

13. *Nabi*, pp. 143 ff. It must be noted that the reader of Jepsen's work finds great difficulty in determining what exactly Jepsen means by *nabi*. His theory is peculiar and ill-defined. Cf. Wendel's review of the work, *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (1935), col. 231: "Welche Unklarheit und Inkonsistenz bezeugt das Wesen des Nabi! Einmal ist der Begriff weit: Sie sind Empfaenger goettlicher Botschaft fuer andere, beruffene Verkuendiger des Gotteswillens; ... Ein anderes Mal ist er eng: Sie sind Seher; das heisst Visionaere, Ekstater, Geistbesessene, Nacht-Inspirierte; sie sind rationaler Haltung, kannaeischen Ursprungs. ... Wenn fuer die Nabis nach Seite 150 charakteristisch ist, 'die Unmittelbarkeit des Gotteswortes, das zu ihnen kommt'; dass 'Gott selbst zu ihnen redet', dann versteht man wohl kaum, warum ein Amos oder Jesaja keine Nabis sind! 'War es wirklich nur das 'Standesbewusstsein' dieser Nabis im engeren Sinne 'von Jahwe gesandt zu sein' (Seite 152)? ... Wenn erst Kanaan solche Verkuendiger des Gotteswillens hervorrief, dann verdankte die alttestamentliche Religion ihm ihr Bestes, ihre Hoehe!' Despite this inconsistency, Jepsen generally understands by the term *nabi* what we call professional prophets, and for the Canaanitish origin of this theory. He prefers the plural "Nabis" and the abstract "Nabitum," for which this essay will consistently use "nebiim" and "professional or collective prophetism." Jepsen holds that the "nabis" formed a professional institution in the religious life of the Israelites. Practically none of the writing prophets, according to Jepsen, were nabis. The nabis came to regard themselves as the God-appointed leaders of the people, and created the idea of a nebiistic succession, theoretically set down in Deut. xviii.

## THE CANAANITISH ORIGIN OF HEBREW PROPHETISM

Jepsen first shows that a professional prophetism (Nabutum) existed in Canaan, adducing the well-known example of Wenamon<sup>14</sup> and the data of the Bible: I Kgs. xviii, 18-29; xix, 1; II Kgs. iii, 13; I Kgs. xviii especially gives a good picture of the Canaanitish nebiim: their loud cries, the dance around the altar, the vulnerability, ecstasy, expectation of a revelation from Baal, the biblical data, moreover, coincide with what we know of the self-man Byblos in Wenamon's account. All will admit with Jepsen that these facts prove the existence of a prophetism among the Canaanites. Jepsen further points out that we should not ascribe to the Hebrew nebiim the traits mentioned as peculiar to the Baal-etism in Phoenicia and Canaan does not prove that Israel took the phenomena from them. It could be a common Semitic phenomenon, or at least known to the Hebrews previously. Jepsen gives the argument of Junker and Koenig, who appeal to the biblical tradition and to the related phenomena among other Semitic peoples. Neither argument proves the point, according to Jepsen. The parallels from other Semitic peoples, according to Jepsen, not prove an ecstatic prophetism for Israel in Mosaic or pre-Mosaic times. Phenomena in pre-Islamic Arabia prove nothing, of themselves, for Mosaic Israel. It is possible that in the centuries between Moses and the incidents mentioned in these "parallels" the

14. This may be found in Jepsen, *op. cit.*, p. 144; Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder*, pp. 71 ff.; Junker, *op. cit.*, pp. 47, 53. The English text may be found in Breasted, *Ancient Records*, Egypt IV, pp. 278 ff.; Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 449-452, reprints the text from Breasted. The papyrus report of Wenamon is credited as historical and dates from 1100 B. C. Wenamon tells how he reached Byblos (Gebal, north of Beyruth) from Egypt, but is forbidden by the king, Zakar-Baal, to land. In spite of repeated orders to leave, Wenamon remains nineteen days in the harbor. Then on the occasion of a sacrifice, the god seized one of the pages of the king, who, in a frenzy, demanded that Wenamon be summoned with his image of the god and both be treated with honor. Thereupon the youth is described as continuing in frenzy all night. Thereupon den, frenzied inspiration of a bystander at a sacrifice recalls I Sam. xix, 24.

phenomenon could have been taken over by the Arabs from the Hebrews or from other Semitic peoples. As for Babylonia and Assyria, how can we tell what is Semitic heritage, what is Sumerian, what is derived from the cultures of Asia Minor? Such analogies are only illustrative, but cannot be used to prove the historical evolution of the phenomenon. It would appear that Jepsen makes a good point here. Our extra-biblical parallels from the Arabs are late and hence what may seem to be a genuine Semitic heritage may in fact be borrowed from the Israelites or elsewhere. At least this is a possibility. In his review of Jepsen's work, Junker attempts no refutation of this point of Jepsen and hence seems to concede it, although he does show the fallacy of Jepsen's attack on the biblical evidence.<sup>15</sup>

This narrows the discussion, therefore, to the question: Is there any evidence in the Bible itself for the existence of the nebiim, or a professional prophetism, in Israel before the time of Samuel, or in Mosaic or pre-Mosaic times? Jepsen says no emphatically — what seems to be such evidence is not a genuine tradition, but the "construction" or invention of a later age. The passages in question owe their origin to "nebiistic circles" and bespeak their ideology, the ideology of much later centuries. The heart of the question, then, is biblical. Having rejected the biblical data, Jepsen gives the following propositions:

- 1) A professional prophetism (Nabutum) was known in Israel before the Canaanitish period.
- 2) The O T tradition knows nothing of a prophetic institution before the Canaanitish period.
- 3) Since Samuel's time the nebiim come forward in the history of Israel in an uninterrupted succession. Therefore, Jepsen concludes, the nebiim can be explained only as of Canaanitish origin.

We shall now examine the biblical data to determine whether Jepsen's premises are justified. Since he claims to draw from the Bible exclusively, his theory falls if it can be shown that the O T

15. Cf. Junker's review of Jepsen's work, *Theologische Revue*, XXIV (1935), cols. 96-98. The parallels in question are not reproduced here, because of their at least doubtful probative value. They may be seen, with commentary, in Junker, *Prophet und Seher*, pp. 94-104. For evidences of an ecstatic prophetism in Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Assyria, and Babylonia, cf. Hoelscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-140.

contains a well-founded tradition on the Mosaic or pre-Mosaic origin of the nebiim.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF NEBIIM IN ISRAEL  
BEFORE SAMUEL

We may begin with the account of I Sam. x, 5 ff., since Jepsen and his predecessors insist that this is the first reliable mention of the nebiim in the O T. The very way in which they are introduced into this narrative, however, indicates that they are introduced well known. The narrative takes them for granted; they are mentioned incidentally, not for their own sake. No explanation or apology is given for them. We should expect something of the sort, if the nebiim had been taken over recently from Canaan. Most scholars including Jepsen, moreover, see in the work of the nebiim a strong reaction and opposition to the Canaanitish Baal-cult. This is especially surprising, if the nebiim are a Canaanitish phenomenon.

Jepsen<sup>16</sup> says that the incidental mention of the nebiim in I Samuel would prove only that the nebiim were nothing new at the time of the writer (ninth or eighth century); or, at most, that they did not appear for the first time in the era of Samuel. We have no proof whatever, Jepsen insists, from this narrative that they were known as early as the Mosaic era. As noted above, Jepsen does not consider I Sam. ix, 9, a gloss. He points out<sup>17</sup> that the author of the section has a predilection for such explanations, I Sam. x, 12b, being another example. If the nebiim were a recent innovation, we should expect this author to give an explanation. Many critics<sup>18</sup> take occasion from the proverb of I Sam. x, 12,

16. *op. cit.*, p. 148, note 1.

17. *ibid.*, p. 100, footnote.

18. e. g., Wellhausen, *Text der Buecher Samuels*, p. 75; Budde, Nowack, *in loco*, think that the proverb means: How does it happen that Saul, the son of Cis, so notable a man, should be found among these people of doubtful origin, whose father we do not know? The nebiim were therefore held in contempt because of their Canaanitish origin. v. Hummelauer, on the other hand, thinks that the surprise was caused by finding Saul in such religious company. Tobac, *op. cit.*, I, p. 16, footnote 1, corrects MT according to LXX and Syriac and

to counterbalance the impression given by I Sam. x, 5 ff., that the nebiim were an ancient institution. Jepsen<sup>19</sup> has substantially the view of Wellhausen: the proverb implies that the nebiim belonged to an undestorable stratum of society, and hence the bystanders deprecatingly ask: "Who is their father?" The nebiim did not belong, according to this view, to the tribes whose genealogies were known and proudly handed down. How, then, is it possible that a son of one of the notable landed families mixes in such company?

Apparently we should admit that no definite conclusion can be drawn from the proverb. Its implication escapes us, because we no longer know how the proverb was popularly used. As it stands, it might be interpreted to the discredit either of Saul or of the prophets, depending on what view we take of the prophets themselves.

AMOS

According to Jepsen<sup>20</sup> there was no real tradition in ancient times concerning the nebiim within the O T. Neither is there proof that seers were known in ancient times. But the prophet Amos, in the eighth century B. C., was aware of such a tradition. Speaking in Yahweh's name, Amos recounts some of the benefits bestowed by Yahweh upon His people: how He led them out of Egypt, and guided them during the forty years' wandering (Am. ii, 9-10). The prophet continues:

*And I raised up some of your sons for nebiim,  
and some of your young men for Nazirites.  
Was not this so, children of Israel? Oracle of Yahweh.  
But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink,  
and charged the prophets, saying: Do not prophesy. (vv. 11-12)*

reads, "Who is his father?" interpreting in the sense of "teacher" as in I Kgs. xiii, 11 ff. The astonished bystanders then would ask who had instructed Saul, the son of a peasant, in the exercises of the nebiim. Leimbach rejects Tobac's correction. For the varying view of Goettsberger, cf. *Th Gl*, IV (1912), pp. 368-374, the objections raised by Schulz, pp. 734-740, and Goettsberger's reply, V (1913), pp. 396-398.

19. *op. cit.*, p. 162.

20. *ibid.*, p. 147.



In chapter iii Amos has the well-known passage showing that just as effect necessarily follows cause in nature (vv. 2-6), so also, since God has revealed His counsel to the prophets, they must prophesy:

*For the Lord Yahweh does nothing  
unless He reveal His secret to His servants the nebiim.  
The lion roars —  
who will not fear?*

*The Lord Yahweh has spoken —  
who will not prophesy?* (vv. 7-8)

These two passages show that Amos knew of a tradition that dated the prophets (nebiim) back to the time of Israel's sojourn in the desert. He, moreover, regards the nebiim highly: they are a signal manifestation of Yahweh's benevolence; to them Yahweh reveals Himself and by them He speaks to His people. Am. ii, 11-12, recalls Deut. xviii, 15.

These passages are a real stumblingblock to Jepsen, who consequently applies the Procrustean method of rejecting what does not fit in with his theory. He tells us that Am. ii, 12, and iii, 7, are usually struck as unauthentic by critics. Am. ii, 11, remains — the most telling of the three verses. Jepsen finds only one critic — Weiser — who questions the verse. Nevertheless, he throws out this verse with the others as unauthentic.<sup>21</sup> They are relegated to a "nebiistic working-over" of the book, whither all sections of the

21. *ibid.*, pp. 133-134. Jepsen (*op. cit.*, 50, 133 ff.) shares the misinterpretation of Am. vii, 14, of a number of critics, and hence begins with the erroneous idea that Amos rejects the title *nabi*. The opening words of Amos' reply to the priest Amasias require the past in translation: "I was no prophet (*nabi*) nor was I the son of a prophet (*ben-nabi*), . . . when Yahweh took me from following the flock, and Yahweh said to me: Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Am. vii, 14-15). Amos here merely denies that he was a prophet until he received a supernatural call from God, but he admits that now he is a *nabi*. The opening sentence is a nominal sentence and hence not determined as to time, but the waw-consecutive of the following verse demands that the preceding be translated in the past tense. Cf. Koenig, *Geschichte der A T Religion*, p. 345; Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 87. The LXX correctly translates with the past tense, as do the American, the Revised, and the American Jewish Versions, and among commentators, Theis.

Bible are consigned that do not fit in with Jepsen's theory. There is evidently no room for argument in such arbitrary and *a priori* procedure. We have the old vicious circle that has been protested against so often by sound critics: to excogitate a theory, reject whatever disproves the theory, and then prove the theory by the selected sources.<sup>22</sup> Since Jepsen adduces no argument against the authenticity of Am. ii, 11 (or against the authenticity of the other verses, for that matter), we are justified in appealing to the prophet Amos as witness of the tradition that dates the nebiim from the time of Moses.

## OSEE

Os. xii, 14 (Vulg. 13), which calls Moses a *nabi*, is likewise relegated to a late date by Jepsen,<sup>23</sup> and by a majority of critics, although defended as authentic by Van Hoonacker and Theis. Verse 11 of the same chapter, however, indicates that the tradition which Osee knew dated the nebiim back to the wandering in the desert:

*But I am the Lord thy God*

*From the land of Egypt;*

*I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents,*

*And I have spoken unto the prophets,*

*I have also spoken visions . . .* (Os. xii, 10-11. Vulg. 9-10)

The authenticity of these verses is admitted. Jepsen says that they give valuable indications of the reputation of prophetism at the time of Osee.<sup>24</sup> He does not, therefore, advert to the implication of xii, 11, in its context, when he confidently maintains that we have no real tradition regarding the nebiim in the time of Moses. And even should Jepsen not admit this implication, it would hardly be consistent for Osee, who lauds the nebiim on the one hand, to take this view of them if they were a phenomenon taken over from Canaan, since Osee protests forcefully against everything Canaanish. He looks upon the wandering in the desert as the ideal state of the people, and with this ideal state he associates the nebiim, whom Yahweh gave as a proof of His goodness to the people.

22. Cf. Junker, *Theologische Revue*, XXXIV (1935), col. 97.

23. *op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

24. *ibid.*, p. 136.

## JEREMIAS

Jer. vii, 25, is another important witness to the tradition that the nebiim date back to the time of Moses. Jeremias is repeating the dictum of the prophets, that obedience is preferable to sacrifice, and points out that throughout their history the Chosen People have been recalcitrant (vii, 21-25), "even from the day on which your fathers went out from the land of Egypt until this day I sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them daily *betimes and often*." Since this verse does not fit in with Jepsen's theory, it sent by Yahweh (besides vii, 25; xxv, 4; xxvi, 5; xxix, 19; xxxv, 15; xlv, 4) is considered suspicious and struck as unauthentic.<sup>25</sup>

And so on, wherever there is a difficulty, Jepsen finds a "nebiistic spirit" working over the narrative and intruding "nabi." Thus<sup>26</sup> we find this literary "nebiistic" spirit working over Gn. xx, 7, and making Abraham a nabi. Gn. xx, 7, belongs to the Elohist, and therefore the Elohist as a whole is ascribed to the nebiim.<sup>27</sup> Deut. xviii is typically nebiistic. It makes Moses himself a nabi. The nebiim, in fact, had, according to Jepsen, a great share in the composition of Deuteronomy. They developed a new view of history: all events follow upon a far-reaching plan of Yahweh, which He reveals through the nebiim. In this plan, judgment, but not complete destruction, awaits Israel, if the people are disobedient. Here in they differed from and combated the writing-prophets, who threatened total destruction of the theocratic state, if the people failed to convert. By the exile and the destruction of Jerusalem, the preaching of the nebiim was shown to be erroneous, and so they saved themselves by a right-about-face. They adopted the stand of the writing-prophets, reckoned the latter among their own number, and worked over their writings so as to make them their own.

Thus Jepsen attempts to prove the Canaanitish origin of the nebiim by first gratuitously relegating the sources to a late date, which, he assumes, were later distorted. Jepsen admits that the

25. *ibid.*, p. 140.

26. *ibid.*, p. 115.

27. *ibid.*, p. 117.

28. *ibid.*, pp. 207, 224.

problem is biblical. He fails to overthrow the biblical evidence for the ancient, Mosaic character of the nebiim, and hence sound criticism justifies our accepting the biblical evidence.

A *priori*, the Canaanitish origin of the nebiim is improbable. According to critics themselves, the nebiim were a strong force reacting against the intrusion of Canaanitish practices in the Yahweh-religion. We should hardly expect this very reaction from an institution that had been taken over from the Canaanitish cult. In whatever sense we wish to define those whom the O T calls nebiim, we must regard them as a native Israelitic phenomenon, that dates, fundamentally at least, from the time of Moses. New traits may have been acquired; the institution as such may have disintegrated and fallen from its pristine purpose — as history proves it did — but we have no proof that, as an institution, it was taken over from Canaan; all the indications point to it as an ancient phenomenon, dating back to the desert or even earlier.

We have seen that even conservative scholars consider several of the passages in which the word nabi occurs as late (cf. footnote 11). This does not mean, however, that they consider late the phenomenon as such. For them it existed already in Mosaic times, but was known under a different name. We have seen, however, that there is no reason to date either the name or the phenomenon from the time of Samuel. Both go back much further. It is strange that the critics give credence to the gloss of I Sam. ix, 9, as they understand it, and yet refuse to accept as trustworthy a number of other passages that do not agree with their interpretation of I Sam. ix, 9. Some date the gloss very late, even after the exile, while they date the other passages before the exile. Historically, therefore, the latter passages are more worthy of credence.<sup>29</sup>

We may now proceed with the positive side of the discussion: what were the prophets mentioned in I Sam. x, 5 ff.? How did

29. Cf. Koenig, *op. cit.*, p. 134: "Und es ist doch auch keine Kleinigkeit, wenn man die Behauptung wagt, dass alle Nachrichten ueber das Auftreten von israelitischen Nebiim 'Propheten' vor Samuels Zeit auf einer Taesuechung des geschichtlichen Bewusstseins von Israel beruhen..." He then cites the passages used in this discussion, and also Gn. xx, 7; Ex. vii, 1; xv, 20; Num. xi, 25 ff.; xii, 6; Deut. xviii, 15, 18; xxxiv, 10; Judges iv, 4; cf. also pp. 135-137.

they differ from the great individual prophets, Samuel, Elias, and the writing-prophets? Are these professional or collective prophets also included in the promise of Deut. xviii, 15, 18?

#### COLLECTIVE OR PROFESSIONAL PROPHETISM

Scholars are agreed that the nebiim formed a permanent, stable profession in the religious life of the people. That this is the case for the period of the writing-prophets is evident from the many passages in which the nebiim are referred to along with the priests, whose institutional character no one will deny: Os. iv, 4, 5; Mich. iii, 11; Is. xxviii, 7; Soph. iii, 4; II Kgs. xxiii, 2; Jer. ii, 8, 26; iv, 9; v, 31; viii, 1, 10; xiii, 13; xiv, 18; xviii, 18; xxiii, 11, 34; xxvi, 7, 11, 16; xxix, 1; xxxii, 32; Ezech. xxii, 26-28; Lam. ii, 20; iv, 13; Zach. vii, 3; Neh. ix, 32. These passages leave no doubt that from the time of Osee, certainly in the time of Jeremias, the prophets were an institution, a profession, like the priesthood.

Further, we have evidence for the time of Amos of the institutional character of the nebiim in the well-known passage (Am. vii, 14) in which Amos denies that he was a "nabj" or a "ben-nabi." We shall see directly that the latter expression designates a prophet as a member of a prophetic organization. This notice refers to the northern kingdom; those mentioned in the previous paragraph refer to the southern kingdom, except that of Osee. This institutional character of the nebiim is evident for the northern kingdom in the ninth century, especially the middle of that century. In the documents dealing with this period we have frequent references to "the sons of the prophets" (beney hanebiim). That this expression is equivalent to "prophets" was pointed out as early as the fifth century by Theodoret of Cyrus,<sup>30</sup> by the exegetes of the golden age of Catholic exegesis, e. g., Malvenda in the seventeenth century, and is held by all scholars today.<sup>31</sup> In

30. P. G., LXXX, 747.

31. Except Jouon, art "Qu'étaient les 'Fils des Prophetes,'" *Recherches de Science Religieuse* (1926), pp. 307-311. He holds that the "sons of the prophets" were not prophets simply, nor members of the corporations of prophets. They were, according to Jouon, the spiritual sons, the disciples, of the prophets, or more precisely, prophets in formation, "prophet-pupils." Jouon's stand has been adopted by no one, as far as I could ascertain.

I Kgs. xx, 35, 38, 41; II Kgs. ix, 1, 4, we find the term "nabi" and "ben-nabi" used interchangeably of the same persons. According to Vanden Oudenrijn<sup>32</sup> the term designates prophets in as far as they are members of a distinct body of society. It proves, therefore, that the nebiim were a professional class in the northern kingdom in the ninth century. An examination of the references to these nebiim confirms this deduction.

The first mention of the sons of the prophets occurs in I Kgs. xx, 35-43.<sup>33</sup> In the first part of this chapter, xx, 13, 14, 22, we find a prophet encouraging Achab to fight Benadad, and promising victory in Yahweh's name. Although not called so expressly, he doubtless belonged to the "sons of the prophets," because of the similarity of his attitude with that of the prophet mentioned in verses 35-43, and because in the latter verses we find the names interchanged. Perhaps the "man of God," verse 28, who also promises victory to Achab, likewise belonged to the sons of the prophets. The victory foretold is realized, but Achab too generously concludes a hasty peace with Benadad. This occasions the narrative that follows, xx, 35-43.

One of the sons of the prophets asks a fellow-prophet to wound him. The latter refuses, and is told that because of his disobedience to Yahweh, a lion would slay him, as soon as he departed. And so it happened. The prophet asks another to wound him, and the request is complied with. The prophet then waits for king Achab, but disguises himself by putting a headband over his eyes. When the king arrives, the prophet upbraids him for leaving Benadad alive. He takes the headband from his eyes, whereupon the king recognizes him as one of the prophets. Then the prophet foretells that because Achab let escape the man doomed by Yahweh for destruction, his own life would be required.

This brief and unique narrative raises several interesting problems. Since the term is found only in the period between 850-750 B. C., and in the northern kingdom, Vanden Oudenrijn traces the expression to Aramaic influence. This view is confirmed by the presence of other Aramaisms in the pertinent passages, e. g., II Kgs. ii, 22; iv, 2, 3, 7, 16, 23; viii, 1. Cf. also Sanda, *Die Baecher der Koenige*, on these passages, and II, pp. 78-79.

33. Chapter xx of I Kgs. should follow xxi. Cf. Sanda and Landersdorfer.

lems. The great majority of scholars see in it proof that the prophets practiced self-vulneration, of which the scars resulting were a distinctive mark of their profession. I Kgs. xviii, 28, however, explicitly states that the prophets of Baal wounded themselves "after their manner," and hence shows that the practice was Canaanitish and not adopted by the prophets of Yahweh. I Kgs. xx, 35-43, likewise argues against the practice, and hence it is doubly surprising that so many scholars appeal to it to prove that the prophets shared the practice with the nebiim of Canaan. If scars were a mark identifying the prophets, why did not the prophet already have them? Why did he have to be wounded again? If this was a practice, why did his fellow-prophet refuse to wound him? Evidently the fellow-prophet considered it something wrong.<sup>34</sup> The obvious reason for his wishing to be wounded was to give the impression that he had been in battle. When he removed the band from his eyes, the king recognized him because he knew him by sight. The passage cannot be appealed to, therefore, to prove that the prophets had scars, caused by self-vulneration, as a distinctive mark of their profession.

It may be asked why the fellow-prophet was so severely punished for not wounding the prophet as requested. Junker<sup>35</sup> points out the similarity between this incident and that of I Kgs. xiii, 15 ff.

34. Junker, *Prophet und Seher*, p. 61, says that the prophet's refusal indicates that the idea was unusual and exorbitant. Cf. also Laur, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-59. Zach. xiii, 6, is also cited as proof that the prophets practiced self-vulneration. The prophet is speaking of a time when prophetism will be utterly discredited (due to the harm inflicted on the nation by false prophets). Prophets will be ashamed of their calling and attempt to hide it (Zach. xiii, 1-5). And if someone should try to prove that another is a prophet by pointing out the wounds between his hands, the prophet will defame himself rather than admit his calling (verse 6). But the expression "between your hands" is certainly unusual and no satisfactory explanation thereof has been given by commentators. It leaves the line in doubt, and hence not to be cited as proof for the practice of self-vulneration among the prophets. If the line is nevertheless insisted upon, it must be remembered that Zachary (or Deutero-Zachary) is speaking of a time when prophetism is in bad repute, and hence to bring out this idea, attributes to it Canaanitish practices.

35. *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

In both cases the offender seemed to be in good faith. To our way of thinking the punishment was unreasonable. In both cases the motive is merely material disobedience against a "word of God." Cf. also II Kgs. i, 10, 12; ii, 23. The purpose of these narratives is evidently to inculcate respect for the prophets and obedience to their commands. Probably we have to explain these instances as we do the many other examples of the O T, where less advanced views do not distinguish between material and formal guilt. The mere external violation of a law carries punishment with it.

The prophets mentioned in this chapter are evidently strict adherents of Yahweh. We may infer that they had commanded Achab to slay Benadad. They were, therefore, absolutely opposed to foreign alliances, which were a serious menace to the purity of the true religion and to national independence. Hence Achab's hasty treaty of peace and offer of friendship to Benadad severely disappointed the prophets and occasioned the threat announced in xx, 42. We may infer, too, that the prophet's rebuke and prediction of disaster turned Achab against the prophets (v. 43) and determined him to give Jezabel a free hand in persecuting the strict Yahweh-prophets. That Achab remained a worshipper of Yahweh and enjoyed the favor of some Yahweh-prophets is evident from I Kgs. xxii. Hence the incidents of I Kgs. xx may have occurred before those of chapter xviii. In I Kgs. xviii, 4, 13, we learn that Achab, the governor of Achab's house, had saved one hundred Yahweh-prophets during Jezabel's persecution. Many more must have been slain, which fact indicates that the prophets were many.

I Kgs. xx gives several instances of the sons' of the prophets uttering oracles. Need we think of them as inspired? It would seem that they were, for their predictions are fulfilled in every case.

In I Kgs. xx we have individuals of the "sons of the prophets." In II Kgs. ii, 1 ff., we have the first mention of the sons of the prophets as a college or association, i. e., they are presented collectively. On the day appointed for his assumption, Elias wished to take leave of the several bands of prophets. This is the only time that Elias is mentioned in connection with the sons of the prophets. Both Elias and Eliseus are at Galgala, where a group of the sons of the prophets lived, as we know from II Kgs. iv, 38. Elias wants no one to be with him when he disappears. The place

of his assumption should remain unknown, probably for the same reason that Moses' grave was to be unknown, to forestall any undue veneration. But Eliseus insists on accompanying him. II Kgs. ii, 3, 5, shows that the fact of Elias' impending assumption on this particular day is known to the prophets. We have no indication whether this knowledge was derived from an inner supernatural illumination or not, but we should not have to postulate such an illumination. Elias knew the fact in this way, no doubt. He himself probably mentioned that he would see them no more.

Fifty of the sons of the prophets followed Eliseus and Elias to the Jordan and witnessed the miracle of the parting of the waters (ii, 7-8), but they did not see Elias carried away.

Before being taken up, Elias asked what he could do for Eliseus as a parting favor (ii, 9). Eliseus asks that a double portion of Elias' spirit come upon him. Landersdorfer sees here an allusion to the law of Deut. xxi, 17, that a double share of the inheritance go to the first-born. He thinks that on the basis of this reference, we may perhaps suppose that the rest of Elias' spirit is intended for the remaining prophets. This is possible, but it is no more than a conjecture. The real meaning, Landersdorfer thinks, is that Eliseus, as befits the first-born, should become the head of Elias' spiritual sons. This view is incorrect, since it is nowhere indicated that Elias was the spiritual head of the prophets. Eliseus simply asks to be the successor of Elias and endowed with a like power. The context seems to favor this view, for as proof that Eliseus has received Elias' spirit, a number of miracles at once take place. The prophets interpret the miracles as proof that Elias' power has been given to Eliseus (ii, 13-15).

In II Kgs. iv, 1, there is merely a passing reference to the wife of one of the prophets. This indicates that the prophets could marry, despite the fact that elsewhere they seem to live a common life to some extent at least. Landersdorfer ventures the suggestion that celibacy was practiced only in the larger colleges, e. g., at Bethel and Galgala. This is pure conjecture.

In iv, 38 ff., is the account of the miracle that Eliseus wrought for the prophets in rendering poisonous pottage fit to eat. This notice does not indicate that he lived in common with them. In fact, the event is narrated as extraordinary: they use the "large"

vessel. Elsewhere Eliseus is shown living alone with his own servant (II Kgs. iv, 12 ff.).

In II Kgs. vi, 1-6, the sons of the prophets ask Eliseus' permission to build a new dwelling, and invited him to come along — another indication that he did not live with them as a general practice. On this occasion he recovers the axe that had fallen into the Jordan. Some have concluded from this that the prophets were poor, since the axe was borrowed.

The last mention of the sons of the prophets occurs in II Kgs. ix, 1 ff. Eliseus commissions one of them — who is called *nabi* simply in verse 4 — to anoint Jehu king of Israel (cf. I Kgs. xix, 16). Eliseus gives careful instructions which are carried out exactly. The prophet, after anointing Jehu, utters a prophetic word: Jehu is to avenge the prophets, whose blood Jezabel had shed, by destroying the whole house of Achab. The prophets were fervent promoters of Yahweh-worship, and so Yahweh Himself would avenge them.

After the prophet has departed, one of the soldiers asks what the "madman" (*meshugga'*) wanted. The same term is applied to prophets in Os. ix, 7, and Jer. xxix, 26, whence some critics conclude that it was a name applied to the *nebiim*, because their ecstatic transports reminded one of a madman. Thus Jepsen thinks that since this term is applied to them, the reason must be that their mode of acting must frequently have resembled the actions of a madman, but in how far, is no longer clear. He notes, further, that the term *meshugga'* is not restricted to the *nebiim*, and probably not all *nebiim* deserved this predicate.<sup>36</sup> A brief investigation of the three texts shows that they offer no ground whatever to conclude that the *nebiim* acted like madmen, or that we have an indication in this verse how to interpret and understand the verb *hithnabbé'* ("to prophesy," "to conduct oneself like a nabi"). In

36. *op. cit.*, p. 11: "Wenn nun die Nabis als *meshuga'* bezeichnet werden, Os. ix, 7; II Kgs. ix, 11; (Jer. xxix, 26), kann das seinen Grund nur darin haben, dass ihr Gebaren haeufig dem der Verrueckten gleich. Inwiefern, ist im einzelnen nicht mehr deutlich... Zu beachten ist aber, dass der Zustand des *meshuga'* nicht auf diese (die Nabis) beschränkt ist; umgekehrt waere es moeglich, was freilich zu belegen ist, dass nicht alle Nabis dieses Praedikats verdienten."

Jer. xxix, 26, an enemy of the prophet uses the term sneeringly. Os. ix, 7, is beset with textual difficulties. Some<sup>37</sup> interpret it of the false prophets: they will be proved fools when their deceptions are unmasked. Van Hoonacker corrects the text, mainly according to LXX, and sees in it the cry of the people, who call the true prophet a fool, because of his prediction of impending disaster. Others, e. g., Laur,<sup>38</sup> find in the verse the prophet hyperbolically expressing his distress at the sight of Israel's wickedness.

In the passage we are considering here (II Kgs. ix, 11), the speech of a rough soldier is quoted. But this is hardly a criterion for the usual method of speech. Besides, if we remember the hurried arrival and equally hurried exit of the prophet, we can understand that he gave the impression of being mad. We see, therefore, that the word *meshugga'* was not a usual designation of the prophet, nor can it be used to substantiate the view that the actions of the prophets reminded one of raving or other exaggerated manifestations.

#### CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE BANDS OF PROPHETS IN THE NINTH CENTURY

It is hardly necessary to remark that most of the texts cited regarding the sons of the prophets occur in the so-called "Eliaseus-legends," the historicity of which is denied by all critics who deny the possibility of miracles. Yet, surprising though it may be, these critics affirm that, if we discount the miracles, the accounts in general give a true picture of the characteristics of the prophetic guilds at that time and were written shortly after (according to some at least) the events narrated.<sup>39</sup>

We may, therefore, without contradiction use these data to determine the condition of the *nebiim* in the ninth century in the

37. e. g., Aalders, *De Valseche Profetie in Israel*, pp. 99-100, and the authors cited by him.

38. *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41, and the authors cited by him.

39. cf. Hoelscher, *op. cit.*, p. 154: "... so geben sie im allgemeinen ein richtiges Bild von dem, was in ihren Kreisen (i. e., the *nebiim*) besen, *op. cit.*, pp. 83, 126; Duhm, *Israels Propheten*, p. 84; more conservatively, Sellin, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

northern kingdom. At first sight, the data seem plentiful, but on closer scrutiny, if care is taken not to generalize and not to read too much into the text, we are disappointed to find how little we know for certain. Some of the critics, even though they discount anything supernatural, go on by a process of wide generalization and free use of the imagination to describe these organizations most carefully and minutely. If we limit ourselves strictly to the data, we may draw the following conclusions:

- 1) The accounts evidently depict the prophets as an institution and rather widely spread. We find them, to the number of four hundred, at Achab's court; at Bethel, Galgala, and Jericho. There are at least fifty at the latter place.
- 2) Their presence at famous sanctuaries is due probably to their connection with the official Yahweh-cult.
- 3) They led a community life, at least to some extent, although there is nothing that would permit us to conclude that their life was monastic. We have an indication to the very contrary, the fact that at least one of their number was married.
- 4) We find two clear cases where a member of the guilds gives a genuine Yahweh oracle: I Kgs. xx, 35 ff., and II Kgs. ix, 1 ff. Whether we must regard these oracles as due to a supernatural inspiration is not certain. The latter is given by command of Eliseus, a prophet of personal vocation. In the case of the former, the threat against Achab may have been based on general assumptions, i. e., that dangers to Yahweh-worship must be destroyed, else Yahweh will destroy the one responsible for their existing.
- 5) Unless we except I Kgs. xxii, 10-11, and I Kgs. xviii, 46, we have no evidence in the texts of ecstatic manifestations of the *nebiim* at this period.<sup>40</sup> We cannot, therefore, distinguish between the bands of prophets and individual prophets of personal vocation by calling the former "ecstatic prophetism."
- 6) All the prophets were not rigid Yahweh-adherents to the same degree. Elias, Eliseus, and the sons of the prophets represent the genuine, strict Yahweh-force. The four hundred mentioned in I Kgs. xxii represent a degenerate prophetism, though we need not

40. II Kgs. iii, 15, does not mean that Eliseus used music to excite ecstasy, as is often claimed. Probably he had music played on this occasion to quiet his excited nerves. Cf. Laur, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

judge them so severely as we must the later false prophets. They give oracles. This indication, together with those above, may indicate that this was part of their profession. Their assurance of success for Achab may have been based on conjecture.

- 7) We have no indication that Eliseus, or much less, Elias, was the permanent superior of the prophetic bands.
- 8) The name, "sons of the prophets," persisted until the time of Amos. Most probably the phenomenon did also in the northern kingdom. For the southern kingdom, we have no documentary evidence, but we may conjecture that they existed there also.

#### THE NEBIM IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY I SAMUEL x, 5 ff.; xix, 19 ff.

I Sam. gives an account of the nebiim in the eleventh century. This account is considered of the greatest importance by all scholars. I Sam. ix, 1 ff., narrates that Cis sent his son, Saul, to bring back the asses that had strayed. After a fruitless search, Saul sought the aid of Samuel. The latter had previously been commanded by God to anoint Saul king of the Chosen People. When Saul presented himself to the prophet Samuel, he was received kindly, given the desired information, and before being dismissed, was anointed king. As proof that Samuel anointed him by divine command, he foretold to Saul three signs that would take place on the newly-chosen king's homeward journey. The third of these signs was Saul's meeting the nebiim:

... you will meet a band of nebiim coming down from the high-place (bamah). Before them (will be playing) psaltery, timbrel, pipe, and harp, and they will be in prophetic transport. And the spirit of Yahweh will come mightily upon you and you will join their transport and you will be changed into another man. (I Sam. x, 5-6)

The fulfillment of the first two signs is merely mentioned (v. 9), while the third is described in detail:

And he (Saul) came thence to Gabaa and behold, a band of nebiim (came) to meet him and the spirit of God came mightily upon him and he joined their prophetic transport. When all those who had known him previously saw him with the nebiim

in transport, the people said, each to the other, "What has happened to the son of Cis? Is Saul also among the prophets?" Then one of them answered and said: "And who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb: Is Saul among the prophets? Now, when Saul had come out of his transport, he went to his home. (I Sam. x, 10-13)

Again in I Sam. xix, 19 ff., we find Saul among the nebiim after his rejection by God and the selection of David. He had made two futile attempts upon the life of David, I Sam. xix, 9-10; xix, 11-17. Then David fled to Samuel at Ramatha, whereupon he and Samuel went down to dwell in Naloth, xix, 18. When apprised of David's flight and whereabouts (v. 19),

Saul sent messengers to seize David. But when they saw the gathering of nebiim in prophetic transport and Samuel presiding over them, the spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul and they joined in the transport. When this was told to Saul, he sent other messengers, but they also joined in the prophetic transport. A third time Saul sent messengers, but they also joined in the transport. Then (Saul) himself came to Ramatha, and when he came to the great well in Socho, he asked: "Where are Samuel and David?" They answered: "Behold, in Naloth in Ramatha." So he went there to Naloth in Ramatha and the spirit of God came upon him also and as he went, he fell into prophetic transport as he came to Naloth in Ramatha. And he took off his clothes and continued in transport before Samuel and he lay naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they said: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (I Sam. xix, 20-24)

Like the Eliseus-legends, these accounts are found in narratives which many critics consider legendary. Thus Jepsen<sup>41</sup> says that I Sam. ix-x, is a nabi-legend like the Elias and Eliseus-legends. The second account (xix, 20-24) is even more vehemently attacked.<sup>42</sup>

41. *op. cit.*, p. 101.

42. Cf. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*... pp. 250 ff.; Thénis-Loehr, Smith, Budde, and Gressmann (*Die Schriften des AT*, Part II, Vol. I, p. 82). Dhorme and Schulz simply state the arguments of the critics without expressly approving or refuting them. A refutation is given by Leimbach, *Die Buecher Samuels*, p. 12.

But again like the Eliseus-legends, these two notices are used by all as indicative of the conditions existing among the nebiim in the eleventh century. Critics, perhaps, generalize even more broadly from them.

The nebiim mentioned here probably formed an association. They are not thrown together accidentally, but seem to have lived together, or at least acted in concert. They are coming from the high-place, the *bamah*, where, it may be supposed, they had taken part in a liturgical function. Their activity is described as "conducting themselves as prophets." The musical instruments they were using were used to accompany religious songs (cf. II Sam. vi, 5; I Chron. xxv, 1; Is. xxx, 29). Hence vocal and instrumental music seems to be part of the activity described as "conducting oneself as a prophet." In the second account the emissaries of Saul are so affected by the manifestations of the nebiim that they join the nebiim and forget the purpose for which they had come. Even Saul is seized with the excitement and forgets his murderous design. His transport reaches such heights that he divests himself and remains in this state all night. Is. xx, 2, shows that this action was not considered indecent by Saul's contemporaries. The *proph-ecy* mentioned, therefore, entailed some kind of religious transport, of such a character as to prompt bystanders to join in.

Jepsen<sup>43</sup> objects to the term "ecstasy" to describe the transports of the nebiim, if the term is understood as the Greeks understood it: a going-out of oneself, a becoming-one with the divinity. Jepsen, therefore, would not indorse the description given by Kittel: "... the merging of self in the Godhead and a mysterious absorption therein"<sup>44</sup> nor the similar explanation of Hoelscher.<sup>45</sup> Jepsen is right in rejecting such a conception of the Hebrew nabi's exaltation. Nowhere in the Bible do we have any indication of such pantheistic mysticism. Even with the prophets who speak in the name of God and use the first person, the clear distinction between the prophet and God is never lost sight of: the prophet is only the mouthpiece of the divinity.<sup>46</sup> Everywhere the Israelites main-

43. *op. cit.*, p. 22, note 1.

44. *op. cit.*, p. 125.

45. *op. cit.*, p. 23.

46. Cf. Heschel, A., *Die Prophetie* (Krakau, 1936), pp. 8-39. I know this

tained this absolute distinction. On the other hand, it is hardly correct to look upon prophetic exaltation as mere raving, as do Jepsen and many other critics. The transport of the nebiim is ascribed to the spirit of God; its effect is to change Saul into another man. It hardly does justice to the biblical author, therefore, to render this concept by the term "raving."

Junker's explanation, on the other hand, does adequate justice to the facts as presented in the sources. He finds that in ancient Israel there was no specific nabi-cult. The nebiim took an active part in the regular worship of the people. We have seen an indication of this fact in the circumstance that the associations of the nebiim are found near ancient sanctuaries. In the first of the accounts under consideration the nebiim are coming from the *bamah*, hence from a religious ceremony. Part of this religious ceremony probably was the sacred dance, which played an important part in ancient worship everywhere.<sup>47</sup> These various elements, then, help to form the picture of "prophesying" outlined by Junker.

The nabi as a religious poet received his song from God in a state of exaltation that was mysterious even to himself. In a similar state of exaltation the song was afterwards sung by the chorus of participants in the service and accompanied by external rhythmic forms of expression. These rhythmic movements, as well as the music, were the means to enable the singers to express the song in all its original force and fervor. The exaltation of the emotions thus produced, which raised one out of his ordinary state of self, was *hitlanabbe*, *himabbe* — to prophesy, to conduct oneself like a nabi. In this heightened state of the soul, which affected the emotions and will, the subject seemed to be carried away by a higher, mysterious force, so that he came forth a different, a new man. This state of exaltation was considered the work of God

work only from Junker's review in *Theologische Revue*, XXXV (1936), cols. 439-442.

47. Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 35; Oesterley, *The Sacred Dance*, p. 33, quoted by Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 55, footnote 5. The sacred dance is not directly mentioned in the O T, but it is implied in texts that are best explained as referring to this ancient part of worship. Cf. Ps. xxvi (xxv), 6-7; Ps. cxviii (cxvii), 27; I Sam. xvi, 11 (this verse should be translated, in view of the context, "for we shall not compass 'the altar' till he come"), and the explanations of Junker, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-25.



Himself. This view was entirely in keeping with the mental outlook of the ancient Israelite, who saw God working everywhere and in everything. How much more readily, therefore, would not the Israelite see God working in the important and significant utterances or deeds of men. This point is illustrated by I Chron. xii, 16-18: a group of Benjaminites and Judeans had come to assist David, when the latter fled from Saul. David doubts whether he should trust them. While they were in this uncertainty as how to convince David of their fidelity, the spirit, we are told, came upon Amasai, the chief, so that he said fervidly the words that convinced David of their sincerity. The fact that he chose just the correct expressions is ascribed to the spirit. There is no question of an ecstatic seizure. The chronicler, according to his religious philosophy of history, saw in the sudden impulse given to the leader of the band, to speak the deciding word, the providential working of God.

If this be true, we can easily see that the extraordinary emotional states of the nebiim and their external manifestations would be ascribed to the spirit of God, all the more so because these states of self seemed strange to the subject himself.

We need not, therefore, consider this a strictly supernatural or miraculous phenomenon. That the expression, "the spirit of Yahweh came upon us," or its analogies, is sometimes used of a strictly supernatural inspiration cannot be denied, but in itself it would not necessitate this interpretation. The idea covers such a variety of phenomena that it is impossible to suppose that in every case we are dealing with a miraculous intervention. The Semitic peoples did not distinguish sharply between what we should call the natural and the supernatural, no more than they clearly distinguished between the causative and the permissive workings of divine Providence. Thus Saul's evil spirit is of God (I Sam. xviii, 10) as well as the lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets (I Kgs. xxii, 21 ff.). Anything extraordinary is spoken of as due to the action of the spirit of God, e. g., deeds of heroic bravery, cf. Jud. iii, 10; xi, 29; xiv, 6, 19; xv, 14-15; I Sam. xi, 6.

There is much dispute as to the relation of Samuel to the nebiim. While some consider Samuel as the founder or superior

of the nebiim,<sup>48</sup> others are so certain that he had nothing to do with them, that they find the mention of his standing over them in I Sam. xix, 19-24, an argument against the historicity of this section.<sup>49</sup> That Samuel is friendly to the nebiim is implied in both texts (I Sam. x, 5-6; xix, 20), but that he was their regular superior finds no basis in either text. In the second we are told that Samuel was "standing over them," which doubtless means that he was presiding over the services of the nebiim.<sup>50</sup> To infer, however, that he was the regular superior of these nebiim goes far beyond the text — and it must be emphasized that this is the only passage in the O T that even remotely would give such an idea. We have merely a description of a single event at which Samuel was present, and as a great man, the seer of his time, he was given the place of honor, just as he had given Saul the place of honor when the two first met (I Sam. ix, 19). Samuel presided on this occasion as he would on similar occasions when the prophets held religious exercises.

Commentators dispute as to whether Samuel took part in the ecstatic transport of the nebiim. We cannot give a definite answer to the question, because the texts say nothing about it. But there is certainly nothing incongruous in supposing that he did. As remarked above, it is not correct to trace the line of distinction between the nebiim and the individual prophets to the phenomenon of ecstasy, i. e., the nebiim were ecstatics, the individual prophets were not.<sup>51</sup> Junker<sup>52</sup> pictures the scene of I Sam. xix, 19-24, as

48. Sanctius, a Lapide, and Calmet give it either as their own view or quote others as holding it; Reuss, *Les Prophetes*, I, p. 8 ff.; Kell-Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, p. 99.

49. Thus Thenius-Loehr, Smith, Budde, Wellhausen, *Die Composition* . . . pp. 250 ff.; Gressmann, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

50. It is hardly sufficient to translate merely "to assist at," "to be present with." Cf. Brown-Driver-Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the O T*, p. 662. A construction in Hebrew wherein two particles are joined together with no intervening conjunction is peculiarly rare, and hence open to suspicion. Budde and Schulz conjecture that *misab* may be a variant or addition to *amad*, since the Syriac and Vulgate do not translate it. Driver says that the construction is peculiar and suspicious, although both are represented in LXX.

51. Cf. Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 88; Duerr, *Die Stellung des Propheten Ezechiel*, pp. 15-16.

52. *op. cit.*, p. 33.

a religious festival, in which Samuel participated in the capacity of leader. Since Samuel regularly had a part in the public worship, as we read again and again in I Sam., his capacity as leader is justly presupposed here. Samuel was honored among the people as a man of God, and hence it is easily understood that he should enjoy the place of honor in the public worship.

We have seen from this brief review of the texts that the nebiim mentioned in I Sam. formed permanent associations: they are pictured as conjointly active; they probably had a regular part in the official cult; their activity consisted in singing and playing religious music, with which went the religious exaltation that is characterized as "to conduct oneself as a prophet"; we have seen, too, that they enjoyed the friendship of Samuel and most probably the esteem of the people; they are a native Hebrew phenomenon, not a Canaanitish intrusion. We may now ask, were these nebiim also givers of oracles? Could the people go to them to learn the will of Yahweh in a particular matter? It would seem at first sight that they were not, for, when Saul was in difficulty about the lost asses of Cis, the servant suggested that they go to the *ro'eh*, to Samuel. If the nebiim were givers of oracles, we should expect Saul to go to them. They would undoubtedly be more easily accessible. On the other hand, we have an indication that they were consulted. In I Sam. xxviii, 6, we learn that Saul, greatly distressed, "consulted Yahweh, but Yahweh answered not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by the nebiim." It would seem, then, from this text that it was one of the functions of the nebiim to declare the will of Yahweh in certain cases. Just what their duties were in this regard, we shall see later.

#### NUMBERS xi, 16-17a, 24-30

Much earlier than the accounts of I Sam. is a pericope that reminds us of the latter. Yahweh commands Moses to gather seventy of the elders and bring them to the tent of meeting (Num. xi, 16). Yahweh then tells Moses: "And I will come down and speak with you there and I will withdraw (some) of the spirit which is upon you. . . ." (xi, 17a). The narrative continues with verse 24: "And Moses went out and spoke to the people the words of

Yahweh. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. Then Yahweh came down in the cloud and spoke to him and withdrew (some) of the spirit which was upon him and gave it to the seventy elders, and it came to pass that when the spirit had rested upon them, they were carried away in prophetic exaltation, and ceased not.<sup>53</sup>

Now there remained two men in the camp. The name of the one was Eldad and the name of the other was Medad. And the spirit rested upon them. Although they were of them that were recorded, they did not go out of the tent, but were seized with prophetic exaltation in the camp. Then a young man ran and told Moses, saying: "Eldad and Medad are in prophetic transport in the camp." And Josue, the son of Nun, the minister of Moses from his youth, answered saying: "My lord Moses, restrain them." But Moses said to him: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all Yahweh's people were nebiim, that Yahweh might send down His spirit upon them." Then Moses returned, with the elders of Israel, into the camp. (xi, 24-30)

53. Instead of *welo yasafu*, "but they did so no more," read with Samaritan Pentateuch, Targum of Onkelos, Vulg., followed by Holzinger, *welo yasafu*, "and they ceased not." The text as corrected would not mean (as Junker, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47, note 7, who keeps MT, supposes) that the elders were continually in transport, but merely that on this occasion their transport was so intense that they could hardly cease. V. 30, which relates simply that Moses and the elders returned to the camp, also shows clearly that a single transport is meant.

This narrative has evidently been broken up and inserted into this chapter. It does not join to the previous section (vv. 18-23), which continues the thought of vv. 4-15. Our narrative should read in this order: vv. 16, 17a, 24-30. Because this narrative is not in its right context, we cannot ascertain what was the occasion for the appointment of the elders. Gray suggests that it should follow Ex. xxxiii, 7-11, which would surely be a better place than the present. It was most probably intruded here as an answer to Moses' plea to Yahweh after the people murmured for food (Num. xi, 4-15). A later editor, noticing that no direct answer had been given to Moses, and thinking that the present pericope of the appointment of the elders was the answer, inserted it here.

The narrative describes the rite whereby the elders were initiated. Junker<sup>54</sup> surmises that the occasion was celebrated with sacrifices and other religious services. The elders were placed around the tent. Probably this is an indication that a ritual dance took place.<sup>55</sup> During the ceremonies the elders were filled with the spirit — taken from Moses — and they fell into prophetic transport. They conducted themselves like nebiim, and so vehement was the transport that they could hardly cease.

To what were the elders initiated? Junker says they were being made, not professional nebiim, but judges. It is evident that they were to assist Moses, but we do not do full justice to the narrative, if we restrict the functions of the elders merely to governing or judging. Moses was the great judge of Israel, but he was also the prophet *par excellence*, the mediator between Yahweh and His people. To Moses the people came "*to consult God*" (Ex. xviii, 15, 16). It is more likely, therefore, that the elders here were initiated not into mere judgeship, but rather into the judgeship as found in Moses, in whom the offices were not distinct. This is likewise implied in the reference to the spirit and in the use of the expression *hithnabbe*. This conclusion appears to be confirmed, if we compare this section with Ex. xxiv, 1, 2, 9-11. There the elders are associated with Moses. They are to accompany Moses when he goes to God. They approach closer than the people, but not so close as the great mediator, Moses, who sees God face to face. In the narrative under consideration they receive part of Moses' spirit: they are associated with Moses' prophetic office, but to a lesser degree.

Junker is, therefore, correct in seeing here the initiation of the elders to the judgeship, but just as the judgeship was not separated from the prophetic office in Moses, so the two were united in the elders. Probably the word *hithnabbe* is intentionally used here to bring out this idea. If this interpretation be correct, this narrative mentions the first manifestations of collective prophethood

54. *op. cit.*, p. 46.

55. Cf. Oesterley, *The Sacred Dance*, p. 41: "... at initiation ceremonies all the world over the sacred dance was essential." Quoted by Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 46, footnote 6.

among the Chosen People. They would be the first "band" of nebiim mentioned in the O. T.

In what did their prophethood consist? Certainly in aiding Moses, the prophet. As Duerr<sup>56</sup> points out, the prophets were not only the bearers of God's message to His people, but also the bearers of the people's messages, their requests, to God as we see, e. g., in the case of Isaiah (II Kgs. xix, 4). The intercessory work of Jeremiah is also well indicated. Duerr thinks that we are to understand in this same way the appellation "nabi" applied to Abraham, Gn. xx, 7; to Samuel, I Sam. iii, 20; Miriam, Ex. xv, 20; and Deborah, Jud. iv, 4. Moreover, he thinks, the prophets before the period of the kings were the charismatic leaders of the people. They preserved the religious bequest of Moses. In this sense he understands Deut. xviii, 15; Am. ii, 11; Os. xii, 10; Jer. vii, 25; xxxv, 15. Num. xi, 24-30, can be understood in a similar light. Probably this would explain, too, why the section was intruded into the present context, which deals with the people's bringing their complaints to Moses and the latter's complaint to Yahweh that he alone cannot bear the burdens of the entire people.

Is the pericope, Num. xi, 24-30, old? The critics generally ascribe the narrative to E. Thus Gray<sup>57</sup> says that the pericope is among the sections that most clearly appear to derive from E, a collection which he thinks was made in the northern kingdom in the eighth century. Wellhausen<sup>58</sup> had considered the section very late, because in it is first found the idea popularized by Joel iii, 1 (Vulg. ii, 28), that all Israel are prophets. Jepsen<sup>59</sup> follows the same line of argumentation: the idea that the whole people are nebiim bespeaks a time when the order of nebiim was approaching dissolution. He therefore ascribes the narrative to a time after 550 B. C.

But this judgment of the age of the section is incorrect. If the section were late, we should expect a more "canonical" form of prophethood ascribed to the elders. The critics generally see in the prophethood an ecstatic transport or frenzy. Holzinger points

56. art. "Propheten," *Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche*, VIII, col. 496.

57. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, p. xxxi.

58. cited by Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

59. *op. cit.*, pp. 119-122.

out that their prophetism is more closely related to the "noisy, enthusiastic Nabissimus."<sup>60</sup> This very fact forbids our ascribing it to a late date which had a restricted "canonical view of prophesy."<sup>61</sup>

The wish that Moses expresses that all the people might be nebiim is not a new, but a very old idea. The narrative of Wendenamon illustrates how bystanders at a religious service were often seized by the spirit. The same fact is illustrated by Saul's "prophesying" (I Sam. xix, 19-24).

But the most telling argument, as Junker points out,<sup>62</sup> for the antiquity of the narrative is the emphasis placed on the charismatic character of judgeship. In ancient times judging was regarded as an attribute of God. Man exercised it rightly only as vicegerent of God and with His power. In Deut. i, 17, is found an ancient viewpoint expressed in the words, "Judgment belongs to God." In Ex. xviii, 15-16, Moses says: "The people come to me to consult God. For when they have a cause, I have to judge between a man and his neighbor, and teach them the precepts of God and of His Law." In the Code of Hammurabi the expression "before God," is used in the sense of bringing to judgment. This shows that we have here an ancient Semitic mode of expression, found frequently in the Bible. Cf. Ex. xxi, 6; xxii, 7, 8 (Vulg. 8, 9). Whether this expression implies that the judges were the representatives of God or that the divinity was invisibly present at the hearings of the judges is not certain, but at any rate, this ancient viewpoint in Num. xi, 24-30, renders it certain that we have here, not a pericope composed in later times, as Wellhausen and Jepsen and other critics have thought, but rather an ancient and faithfully transmitted incident from Mosaic times.

Hence from this narrative, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- 1) Collective prophetism was known in the time of Moses.
- 2) It was associated with the judgeship. The intercessory

<sup>60</sup> cited by Junker, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-68.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Kautzsch, art. "Religion of Israel," *H D B*, extra volume, p. 657: "... the seizure of the whole groups by the spirit of Jahveh finds its only analogy in the old nebiim, so that we could not deal with this case except by way of appendix to our account of the latter."

<sup>62</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49.

idea is implied. The nabi was not only the bearer of God's word to the people, but also the bearer of the people's word to God.

3) There are clear indications that ecstasy in the sense explained characterized the worship of the Hebrews even in primitive times and therefore the Canaanitish origin of the nebiim cannot be maintained.

#### THE NABI AS AN ORACLE

We are interested in the origins and early history of the nebiim only in so far as they explain historically the rise of false prophecy in Israel. The critics, we have seen, think that originally the nebiim were merely ecstatics, the dervishes of Israel, whereas the oracle-giver was the *ro'eh*, the seer, who was originally a common diviner. The nebiim in the course of time usurped the office of oracle-giver, and hence were castigated by the great individual prophets like Micheas, Isaia, Jeremias, and Ezechiel. That the false prophets of later times were the descendants of the nebiim of earlier times seems to be a justifiable conclusion, and is taken for granted by practically all scholars. Our sources do not say this explicitly, but they imply that the institution, in the main at least, descended from the bands of nebiim of the times of Samuel and Elias, the nebiim whose prototypes and ideals we find in the prophesying elders of Num. xi, 24-30. Some scholars have questioned, for example, whether the "sons of the prophets" are a continuation of the bands of nebiim mentioned in I Sam.<sup>63</sup> The doubt expressed by these scholars is far from unreasonable, but on the other hand, the similarities are sufficient to warrant the probability, and perhaps strong probability, that the ones are the lineal descendants of the others. It is true, we have no explicit mention of the bands of nebiim in the southern kingdom after the time of Samuel until the era of Isaia and Micheas, a gap of about three centuries. The gap is bridged, to some extent, by their frequent mention in the northern kingdom during the ninth century. If we cannot trace the false prophets to the early nebiim, however, we have no historical

<sup>63</sup> Duerr, *loc. cit.*, col. 497, says that the relation between the nebiim of I Sam. and the other prophetic guilds mentioned in the O T is not clear.

cal explanation of their presence in Israel. We shall be unable to explain how these false prophets had gained their strange-hold on the Israelitish theocracy, how they could gain the credence of standing religious heroes as Isaiahs, Micheas, Jeremias, and Ezechiel. This is perhaps the strongest argument for attempting to trace them back to the early history of the Chosen People, to see whether there was any group in society that could have been the forerunners of the false nebiim: a profession that was in its pristine state a good moral influence and hence rooted in the lives of the people, but degenerated in the course of time and became an influence for evil. The only class of men in the history of the Chosen People who could thus explain the presence of false prophecy are the nebiim of Num., I Sam., and Kgs. We wonder, then, whether the critics are right in saying that originally oracle-giving was not a function of the nabi, but that it was gradually usurped by him. Somewhere along the line of history, in this hypothesis, we shall have to admit that a large part of the nation were willing dupes to usurpation. Is it reasonable to suppose this? We could admit the deception of a part of the people. Contemporary history shows the possibility of this in the thousands who frequent fortune-tellers. But can we explain the deception of practically an entire nation on this score? Would it not be a more rational explanation, if we could show that there was a legitimate form of oracle-giving in the profession of the nebiim from the earliest times, and that this form degenerated into what we call false prophecy? We have seen that Num. xi, 24-30, can reasonably be explained as implying some form of oracle-giving: the elders were to carry the people's complaints to God and we can readily see that the people would then expect an answer from God. I Sam. x, 5 ff., if taken with xxviii, 6, gives reason to suppose something similar for that period. In the nebiim of the ninth century individuals are found of the legitimate form of the movement giving oracles, and the illegitimate band giving an oracle as a group.

Junker has made a careful study of this point and his conclusions may be adopted, although it must be admitted that not every step is proved absolutely. The paucity of our documents leaves many a point unmentioned or unexplained about which we should

like to have more information. Junker gives as a probable conclusion that originally there was a twofold sense connected with the term "nabi," "speaker": speaker to God in the name of the people and speaker to the people in the name of God. First, the nabi was to announce divine praises in the name of the congregation, to give expression to the petitions or penitential sentiments of the people. Incessary meditation was from ancient times an essential duty of the nabi (cf. Gn. xx, 7; I Sam. xii, 19, 23; Am. vii, 2, 5). Whether biblical writers were still aware of this double meaning of nabi can hardly be proved.<sup>64</sup> This side of the prophet's activity was probably pushed to the background by the other phase of his work, i. e., that of speaking or announcing to the people in the name of God. We generally associate with the nabi, prophet, as "speaker of God" the idea of an extraordinary and personal vocation, as is the case with the writing-prophets. In ancient times, however, there was in the official worship an institutional or professional duty for the nabi. After he had spoken to God in the name of the people, he then spoke to the people in the name of God, announcing blessings, forgiveness of guilt, and the granting of petitions.<sup>65</sup>

Junker finds proof for this thesis in the psalms, which were not creations of individual piety, but religious hymns, composed for the temple worship and sung there by the singers and choruses of Levites.<sup>66</sup> In instituting these choirs of singers and musicians (I Chron. xxv) David had as his prototype the ancient guilds of nebiim and their liturgical activity. Undoubtedly many of the original characteristics of the nebiim were lost, but many others were retained, which give an indication that in ancient times the nabi acted as speaker in the name of God. For example, in Ps. cx (Vulg. cix), the opening words clearly indicate the prophetic word: "Oracle (neum) of Yahweh to my lord." A very clear example of the liturgical role of the nabi as speaker of Yahweh in the cult is

64. *op. cit.*, p. 36. Junker thinks that a reminiscence of the two-sided capacity of the nabi may probably be found in Is. xliii, 27, where *metis*, interpreter, may possibly refer to the prophets. But the interpretation of this verse is far from certain.

65. Cf. Nikel, *Grundriss der Einleitung in das A T*, p. 168; Mowinkel, *Psalmstudien*, III, p. 6, cited by Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

66. *Ibid.*

given in Ps. xx (xix). This psalm is a liturgical prayer, accompanying the sacrifice offered for the successful outcome of a battle.<sup>67</sup> Verses 1-6 contain the prayer for success and victory, sung in alternating chorus (v. 6 shows that a chorus is singing). In verses 7-9 a single voice breaks in, not in supplication, but with a definite promise: "Now I know that Yahweh will save His anointed. He will hear him from His holy heaven." Kittel<sup>68</sup> remarks that the appearance of an individual with a sudden, unexpected oracle, arising from the sudden excitement during the celebration, was indeed a typical form in the official worship, as Psalms lxxxv (lxxx), 8 ff., and lxxxv (lxxxiv), 9, demonstrate. Ps. xxi (xx), a song of thanks after battle, shows a like construction: verses 8-13 are best interpreted as spoken by an individual prophetic voice.<sup>69</sup> A further indication of a prophetic promise of salvation during a liturgical celebration is found in Ps. lxxxv (lxxxiv), 9 ff.: "I will hear what Yahweh will speak. Indeed, he speaks of salvation for His people and for His pious ones, and for all who turn their heart to Him. Indeed, His salvation is near to those who fear Him..."<sup>70</sup>

A very vivid and clear example of Junker's view is found in II Chron. xx. The Ammonites, Moabites, and Syrians had formed a strong coalition against Josaphat. The latter began to "seek" ("consult") Yahweh (v. 3). He gathered the people together in the temple and uttered a long prayer to God in the midst of the assembly (vv. 6-12). Thereupon, the text continues: "Then upon Jahaziel... the spirit of Yahweh came in the midst of the congregation, and he said: 'Hear you, all Judah... thus says Yahweh unto you: Fear not... for the battle is not yours, but God's'" (vv. 14-15). This incident gives a clue to the correct interpretation of the psalms cited.

The Psalms also embody Yahweh's exhortations to the people in matters of morality. Here again they are best interpreted as spoken by the nabi in the name of Yahweh during the course of

67. Cf. Wutz, *Die Psalmen*, p. 42.

68. *Die Psalmen*, p. 81, cited by Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

69. Cf. Wutz, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

70. Cf. Cales, *Le Livre des Psaumes*, II, pp. 100-103.

a liturgical service. Cf. Ps. 1 (xliv), 7 ff.; xxxii (xxx), 8-9; Pss. lxxv (lxxiv), 3-6; lxxxii (lxxx), 2-7.<sup>71</sup>

The use of the psalms here employed does not postulate an early date for each of the psalms quoted. It must be remembered, as Schmidt point out,<sup>72</sup> that even if the psalter is regarded as the hymnbook of the Restoration, if anywhere in the literature of a nation we find vestiges of ancient practices and customs, it surely will be in its songs. And so we are justified in concluding from these and the other examples cited by Junker that the nebiim as "speakers of God" did not act merely as individuals and under extraordinary occasions in the ancient cult of Israel, but that they were an ordinary and regular phenomenon. Hence we may consider the bands of nebiim as a kind of liturgical profession, one of whose duties was to declare the will and purposes of Yahweh, to speak in His name. The giving of oracles was *originally* in all probability part of the duties of the nebiim. Starting from this point, it can readily be seen how this part of their profession could readily degenerate. First, however, a theological question confronts us: was the giving of oracles as mentioned in the Psalms and implied in the activity of the nebiim as depicted in Num., I Sam., and Kgs., a supernatural phenomenon, or may it be explained by natural causes, i. e., by the ordinary workings of Divine Providence? This question is distinct, of course, from that of the inspiration of the Psalter.

THE ORACLES OF THE NEBIIM MAY BE EXPLAINED BY  
NATURAL CAUSES

Collective propheticism must not be regarded as an isolated phenomenon in the spiritual life of Israel, as something distinct and apart from all else. Rather it is based upon a religious viewpoint that manifests itself in other spiritual phenomena of the Chosen People, namely, the viewpoint so intimately bound up with Israelitic thought that the spirit of God fills and rules all life. We have seen, in Num. xi, 24 ff., I Sam. x, 5 ff., that the prophetic transport is ascribed to the spirit of Yahweh. The nabi finds himself in a

71. For further examples and explanation, cf. Junker, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.

72. Schmidt, H., *Die Psalmen*, p. v.

psychic condition so different from his usual and normal state of self that he is "changed into another man." His activity in that state seems not to have been self-determined, but subject to an external force that impelled him to do things which in his usual state of self he could not do. The characteristic state of the nabi — that described by *hithnabe* or *hinnabe* — was "to be seized by the spirit of Yahweh" and subject to the influence and impulse of God in a very particular manner. What the nabi did or said in this state he did as an instrument of God.

If the transports of the nebiim were the only psychic conditions that were ascribed to the spirit of God, we should, perhaps, upon first consideration, be inclined to regard them as a natural manifestation. But it has been seen above that unusual states of self, exceptional deeds of bravery, and the like were often ascribed to self, in the spirit of Yahweh, and the like were often working in everything that happened. The judgeship saw God as a charismatic gift of God, and this view was not peculiar to the Israelites, but was an ancient viewpoint, the common possession of the Semitic races. The kingship in Israel was also charismatic: the earthly king was the representative of Yahweh, and hence he was filled with and led by the spirit of Yahweh, and in I Sam. xvi, 13, 14, the sacred author tells us that when Samuel anointed David king in Saul's stead, the spirit of Yahweh came mightily upon David from that day on, whereas it left Saul and an evil spirit from Yahweh took possession of him. We see, therefore, that not only the office of the nebiim, but also that of other leaders in the theocratic state was regarded as charismatic. They possessed in a special way the spirit of Yahweh, because they were intermediaries between Yahweh and the people, and hence they were to Him than the ordinary run of citizens.

The religious outlook of the ancient Israelite made him see in all things the will and purpose of Yahweh. Even in matters which we should consider trivial, he saw the working of Yahweh, and hence in matters that he considered important — whether or not they objectively were so — he first sought to know the will of Yahweh. "To seek Yahweh" or "to consult Yahweh" was the concrete expression of piety in ancient times, just as the phrase "perfect conformity to the will of God" describes the acme of

Christian perfection for us. Thus, Yahweh says through the prophet Amos: "Consult me, that you may live... Ask after the good, and not the evil, in order that you may live, for thus Yahweh God of hosts will be with you, according as you have asked." (Am. v, 4, 14)

It was perfectly natural, therefore, granted this religious urge to know the will of Yahweh, that the Israelite would seek the counsel and advice of those whom he considered to be in special communion with Yahweh. Foremost of these would be the nebiim. He had often seen them in prophetic transport, under the influence of Yahweh's spirit. If anyone were close to Yahweh, surely it was the nabi, to the Israelite's way of thinking. We should expect, therefore, that the Israelite would go to the nabi, as one under the special influence of Yahweh, to "seek" God, to ask what course to take in a particular situation. Hence we may accept the indication in I Sam. xxviii, 6, as strictly historical, attesting the ancient practice of consulting the nebiim to know the will of God.

In judging the theological character of the practice of giving oracles on the part of the nebiim, two extremes must be avoided. On the one hand, there is the danger that in our desire to be orthodox — more orthodox than the Bible itself — we may insist on regarding every instance where the O T speaks of a nabi's giving an oracle as due to a personal, supernatural revelation, strictly so-called. We may do this, if we forget that the Hebrew language lacks the exact nuances that our western languages have developed — after hundreds of years of theological study — to express and distinguish between what is natural and what is supernatural. The O T authors may use expressions to describe a phenomenon, which, if taken strictly according to our mode of expression, would imply or postulate a supernatural intervention, whereas the author may be describing something that is merely in the course of God's ordinary Providence. The Israelite did not distinguish between the natural and supernatural as we do, and hence he had no exact terminology to express the distinction. He saw God working everywhere. To him it made no difference whether it was the God of nature or the God of supernature. This absence of exact, scientific terminology by no means prevents our judging a manifestation strictly supernatural, when it occurs. We have many examples in the O T that



are clearly such and can be explained in no other way. We have seen, for example, how clearly the true prophets bring out the fact of their own personal supernatural inspiration, as contrasted with the false claims of their opponents. All we mean here is, that we must not hastily judge a phenomenon as supernatural, simply because it is described in terms which, if used by us, would denote a supernatural phenomenon. We see to what excesses this process of "occidentalism" may lead, when we consider the unwarranted conclusions that some of the extreme critics have arrived at, by transferring to a Semitic people western mentality and judging their works accordingly. We, on the other hand, may go to the opposite extreme.

We must, moreover, avoid another extreme, i. e., seeing in the transports something not only merely natural, but even not strictly providential, as Sanda has done.<sup>73</sup> With Junker<sup>74</sup> we may rightly judge Sanda's estimation as unjust both to Samuel and to the sacred author, as well as to the work of the nebiim itself. To our way of thinking, the manifestations of the nebiim must seem strange. But we must judge them by the people and by the times for whom they were providentially intended. We must remember that God accommodates Himself to the instrument upon which He works. Grace does not destroy, but elevates nature, theologians tell us. Here also God used primitive urges and forms of expression in legitimate worship. If He found the Semitic peoples in possession of an ecstatic cult, in the course of which the ecstasies gave oracles, there is nothing repugnant in supposing that He would use this cult, purged of elements incompatible with monotheism, for His own purposes. This is what we should expect, in view of what we know from history of the providential dispositions of God in matters of religion. At one time certain critics thought they had an unanswerable argument against the supernatural character of the Mosaic religion by pointing out the many points of similarity in law and worship which the Mosaic code had in common with the codes of other Semitic nations. But their researches, often most diligent and revealing, only defeated the very purpose for which they were made. They only brought out in more striking relief the

73. *op. cit.*, I, p. 435.

74. *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

transcendent character of the Mosaic religion. Under divine inspiration Moses did not force the people to abandon the old customs and traditions that were so dear to them. He simply adopted these customs, purged them of their polytheistic excesses, and thus rendered them fit means for the nation to serve the one true God. In a like manner the ecstatic cult was raised to a higher level and adapted to the worship of Yahweh and to the needs of the people.<sup>75</sup> Hence we have in the expressions used not a mere stereotyped phrase whose real content the sacred author would not subscribe to, but rather phrases that express a phenomenon in the providential dealings of Yahweh with His people. The expression "to be seized with the spirit" and similar expressions may be considered stereotyped in so far as they denote the transport and its relation to divine influence, without its containing an explicit judgment as to whether the transport is the result of natural or supernatural causes. For example, Saul's going into ecstasy on approaching the nebiim was most probably not miraculous. It can be explained by natural causes. The sacred writer uses the same phrase to describe Saul's state as to describe the nebiim, because the outward appearance was the same. But we may go further and interpret the incident as the means used by Divine Providence to save David without resorting to a miraculous intervention.

Sanda was doubtless led to make the judgment cited by the later apparent degeneration of the bands of nebiim. But this is not fair. We do not appraise the beauty of the human body by studying the corpse: no more should we judge a movement by what

75. Cf. Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 139, quoted by Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 56: "Reviewing the subject as a whole, there is no shadow of doubt that Hebrew and Greek practice here, though it is but a small item of religious ritual with which we have been concerned, illustrates their religious superiority over all the other races. But of these two the Hebrews stand on distinctly higher ground; there is not the remotest reason for believing that the ecstatic dance among them was ever contaminated by the license which often obtained among the Greeks. Among the Hebrews, moreover, the object of it was purely devotional; and when an oracle was put forth it was only to declare the will of God. So that it is true to say, that even in the lower planes of religions thought and practice the Hebrews showed that they were in the vanguard of religious evolution."



it is in a period of decay. The fact that Samuel, Elias, and Eliseus were friendly to the nebiim is sufficient proof that they were a providential manifestation in the official and legitimate worship of the Chosen People.

In other words, we must avoid both extremes, an overemphasis of the supernatural, and an underrating of the nebiim by denying their providential mission. How shall we then conceive of their function as oracles? This may best be illustrated by a parallel. The Christian striving for perfection is urged to place himself frequently in the presence of God. Particularly in difficult situations he prays for divine light and guidance, and often almost palpably feels that the correct judgment he subsequently makes is the answer to his prayer. We hear it said, at times, when the workings of divine grace are particularly striking, that special help is given. Again, in difficult situations we often consult others; we go to one who is not only prudent, but deeply spiritual; one who is near to God. The nabi of old would have told us: "Thus says Yahweh." The modern director of souls, after he has prayed for light, will say: "I believe that God wishes you to do this." In all such instances we do not regard the light received as due to an extraordinary supernatural intervention.<sup>76</sup>

So also the pious Israelite, when in doubt as to the will of Yahweh, would go to consult Him by means of the nabi, whom he rightly believed to be close to Yahweh. The nabi might or might not give the answer while in prophetic transport. He would prefix the answer with a "thus says Yahweh." A clear instance substantiating this conjecture is found in I Chron. xvii, 1 ff. When David was contemplating building a temple, he, like any pious Israelite, went to consult Yahweh. He proposed his plan to the nabi Nathan, who heartily approved his plan. Here Nathan was using the ordinary means at the disposal of the nabi. Doubtless he asked Yahweh's illumination, as he would ordinarily do. But that night he received a special revelation from Yahweh, directly contrary to the decision he had announced to David that day. In the first instance we have the ordinary manner in which the nebiim were consulted and answered those that sought their counsel. It cannot

76. Cf. Condamin, *Etudes*, CXVIII (1909), pp. 23-25; *D A*, IV, cols. 401-402.

be denied that Nathan's answer was that of a prudent and spiritual man. But in so important a matter, if a mistake should be made, Divine Providence could be trusted to rectify it. In this particular instance, a special revelation to Nathan was the means. So also we may judge the oracles given by the nebiim in I Kgs. xviii. The ordinary exercise of the function of oracle-giving on the part of the nebiim, therefore, would be this natural way of answering questions, interpreting the divine will by means of the ordinary aids that God gives, such as prayer and study.<sup>77</sup> In this judgment, be it repeated, the fact of Divine Providence is not overlooked. We see in this a providential disposition, a means whereby the legitimate cravings of the nation to know the will of Yahweh might be satisfied and thus the natural propensity toward divination in its illicit forms would be checked and supplied by lawful means. Hence we may see in the nebiim a partial fulfillment of the prophecy of Deut. xviii, 15.

If we explain the bands of nebiim in this way, we can readily understand how they might degenerate into false prophets. There was a strong, natural basis to the movement.<sup>78</sup> Junker thinks that perhaps elements from the Canaanitish nebiim were absorbed, although we have no clear indications of this in the Bible. The process of degeneration can more readily be explained without the postulate of Canaanitish influences. The nebiim enjoyed the esteem of the people, who looked upon them as close to God. They enjoyed

77. A similar judgment on the "Urim and Tummim" is given by Junker, *op. cit.*, pp. 75 ff. He regards it as an "officially sanctioned usage in Israel," in which it is not necessary in each instance to look for a certain and infallible revelation of God. The instances given in the O T are selected precisely because the event corroborated the decision given by "Urim and Tummim." It was, then, a usage conditioned on the religious development of the people, permitted and tolerated by divine Providence. v. Hummelauer, *Commentarius in Genesis*, pp. 561-562, says: "Reapse si in vetere testamento pontifex potuit Urim et Tummim oracula edere, quod nunc non sine superstitione posset quis imitari, non video equidem, cur non potuerint esse in religione primitiva ritus aliqui futurorum praescientiorum, a certis quibusdam viris legitime adhibendi Deoque tum probati, qui non nunc solum, sed vel lege mosaica abrogati sint, neque inde a Moysse sine inanis superstitionis nota potuerint adhiberi."

78. Junker, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

the favor likewise of the court. There was the custom of giving a donation when consulting them. They naturally would strive to maintain their position. A Micheas, a Jeremias, or an Ezechiel, who had supernatural revelations, if they gained the credence of the people, would supplant and deprive the nebiim of their means of livelihood. Hence the opposition between the canonical prophets and the nebiim. The genuine "thus says Yahweh" of the true prophet would not be accepted by the nabi, whose duty it was, like that of the people, to submit to the higher voice, once the prophet had established his credentials. But human weakness, the passion of greed, pride and vanity, would prompt him to hurl a contrary "thus says Yahweh" against the true prophets. We have thus the conflict of nabi against nabi, of true prophet against false prophet. How the people were to judge between them is discussed in the chapter on the criteria of true prophecy.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE CRITERIA OF PROPHECY

It has been seen that the true prophets claimed with unhesitating and unshakable conviction that they possessed a strictly supernatural, personal, divine inspiration. We have seen likewise that they were opposed in this claim by the institutional prophets of Israel. The latter had every right, as had also the people, to ask for proof that God had intervened in a special manner to instruct the true prophets, so that they might forbid others to speak in His name. If He did thus intervene, He must guarantee those who speak in His name. This chapter will consider these divine guarantees — the criteria of prophecy.<sup>1</sup>

"Two means of proof — miracles and the accomplishment of prophecies — could alone, in the opinion of the contemporaries of Jesus, establish a supernatural mission."<sup>2</sup> What the French critic

1. This chapter is limited exclusively to the biblical data and merely summarizes what the biblical authors considered criteria of prophecy. For a thorough discussion of the many questions connected with miracles, cf. the articles on miracles by Tonquedec in *D. A.*, III, cols. 517-578; and Michel, in *D. T. C.*, X, cols. 1798-1859, and the splendid summary by Grandmaison, *Jesus Christ*, III, pp. 3-32.

2. Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, p. 229. Cf. also Batten, *The Hebrew Prophet*, pp. 111-112: "... the sign... or as it is less accurately called, the miracle, was regarded the most convincing evidence of the power of God in man, and that verdict held true for all ages of Hebrew history." Jepsen (*op. cit.*, pp. 208-210) attempts to trace an evolution in the use of criteria by the nebiim. At first the word of the nabi needed no guarantee. When doubts were first expressed the nabi tried to create a stronger impression by symbolic actions (I Kgs. xiii, 2-5; II Kgs. xxviii, 10). Then signs became popular: I Kgs. xiii, 2-5; II Kgs. xxviii, 8; II Kgs. xx, 8, 9, etc. But the scepticism continued, and fulfillment of the word was next thought to settle all disputes (I Kgs. xxii, 28; Jer. xxviii, 9; Deut. xviii, 22). Since this put the decision to the future, it was finally thought that one had to recognize in the word itself whether or not it was from Yahweh. Belief in Yahweh became the norm. But this use of the law led to the downfall of the "Nabium": if one already knew what Yahweh wanted by

has said of Christ is equally true of all prophets. To these extrinsic criteria may also be added intrinsic criteria, i. e., indications in the prophetic preaching itself that point to its divine origin.<sup>3</sup>

#### MIRACLES

Nowhere in the O T is the test of miracles applied as a criterion by a true prophet in conflict with a false prophet. We have, in fact, few records of miracles in the prophetic books, since these books are primarily a record of the preaching of the prophets. In Is. vii, 10 ff., Isaiah offers a sign of Yahweh from heaven above or from sheol below to overcome the incredulity of Achaz. The latter refuses, not, as some have supposed, because he did not want to tempt Yahweh, but because his infidelity and scepticism were such that he refused to believe, even if a sign were given. The important point in this narrative is the consciousness that Isaiah attests of his miraculous power: to speak as he does implies absolute confidence in his supernatural mission.<sup>4</sup> Is. xxxviii, 7-8 (II Kgs. xx, 9-11), records the miracle Isaiah wrought in turning back the sun-dial of Achaz ten degrees. He wrought this miracle in confirmation of his prediction that Ezechias would live fifteen years more.<sup>5</sup> These miracles guaranteed beyond doubt the super-

<sup>3</sup> His law, and if the word of the nabi had to be measured in this way, then the word of the nabi became useless. To work out this theory Jepsen is forced to disregard entirely the dates of the documents. Belief in wonders as proof of a divine mission is certainly one of the oldest beliefs in religion. Again, symbolic actions are found in every period of Hebrew propheticism. Similarly, fulfillment of prediction is not the last stage: we find it as early as I Sam. ix, 6, which everyone admits to be among the earliest documents.

<sup>4</sup> The criteria of prophecy may be divided into *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*: the *intrinsic* criteria are those found in the prophetic preaching itself, such as the truth, sublimity, and moral worth of the prophet's message; the *extrinsic* are facts accompanying the prophetic preaching, such as miracles, predictions, and the sanctity of the prophet.

<sup>5</sup> We cannot without injustice to the character of Isaiah suppose, as does Hitzig, that Isaiah was trying to impress the king with an idle boast. Hoelscher (*op. cit.*, p. 154) calls the wonder-working in the prophetic narratives a remnant of older magical practices.

<sup>6</sup> If these narratives are dismissed as legends, as is done by a number

natural mission of Isaiah, because they were wrought in express confirmation of that mission.

The historical books of the O T record a number of miracles wrought in confirmation of the supernatural mission of the prophets: Ex. iv, 1-19; vii, 3-5; I Sam. xii, 16 ff.; I Kgs. xiii, 1-6; xvii-xix; II Kgs. i-vi, 23; xiii, 20-21. The miracle of I Kgs. xviii, 19-40, is of especial interest because it was worked expressly to prove Elias' claim against that of the prophets of Baal.<sup>6</sup>

Deut. xiii, 1-3, is often quoted to prove that the O T did not recognize the probative value of miracles:

*If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams — and he give you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass wherewith he spoke to you — saying: Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them; you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams, for Yahweh your God is tempting you to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

This norm of Deuteronomy does not, as some critics state, presuppose that false prophets might work genuine miracles. It must be interpreted like the hypothetical case of Gal. i, 8: "But though we or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." As Driver comments on the passage of Deuteronomy:

No invitation to go and serve other gods, even though it proceed from a prophet, possessing, as it seems, irrefragable credentials, is to overrule the fundamental article of Israel's creed, that Jehovah is the sole object of the Israelite's reverence: the prophet, who comes forward with such a doctrine, is to be put to death.

Just as St. Paul's words could not be used to prove that he mistrusted himself or the angels, neither can Deut. xiii, 1-3, be used as an argument against the value of miracles as a criterion.

<sup>6</sup> Of critics, we have the difficulty of explaining how this legendary material was intruded into the rest of the book, most of which the critics are anxious to attribute to Isaiah.

The miracles of Elias and Eliseus are ascribed to legendary sources by many critics, although they admit that these sources date from a period shortly after the events narrated. Cf. p. 52.

## FULFILLMENT OF PREDICTIONS

This criterion is without doubt given most emphasis in the O T, both theoretically and practically: Deut. xviii, 19-22; I Sam. ii, 34; iii, 19-20; ix, 6; x, 2, 7-9; I Kgs. xiii, 3 ff.; xiv, 12; xxii, 25, 28; II Kgs. xix, 29; Is. viii, 1 ff.; xli, 22 ff.; xlv, 7; xlv, 21; xlv, 10; Jer. xx, 4-6; xxviii, 15-17; xxix, 32; xlv, 29; Ezech. ii, 5; xii, 21-28; xxxiii, 33; Am. vii, 17; ix, 10. The force of the criterion lies in the fact that the prophet shows by his prediction that he has knowledge from God in a miraculous manner and hence is divinely accredited. That the O T writers recognized the force of this criterion is evident from the texts cited. Critics who discard the criterion of prediction try to discount the texts by contesting their authenticity, historicity, or interpretation. It would be impossible to discuss each of them here, and so merely one — Deut. xviii, 19-22 — will be treated by way of example, since it is perhaps the most important.

## DEUTERONOMY xviii, 19-22

The context of this law has been studied in the previous chapter (pp. 27-29). After the promise of a succession of prophets to safeguard the people from frequenting heathen diviners, the text continues:

*And it shall come to pass that whoever does not hearken to my words which he (the prophet) shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet that will presume to speak in my name a word which I have not commanded him to speak, or that will speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. Now if you say in your heart: How shall we know the word which Yahweh has not spoken? When the prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the thing happen not nor come to pass, it is that word which Yahweh has not spoken. Presumptuously has the prophet spoken. Do not fear him.*

The law distinguishes two classes of false prophets: those who speak in the name of other gods, and those who speak falsely in Yahweh's name. The former are *ipso facto* condemned; the latter may be discovered by the non-fulfillment of their predictions. Obviously the predictions in question are such as will be fulfilled in the near

future. Otherwise the criterion would have no value for the contemporaries of the prophet. A prophet who is thus unmasked need not be feared. The Hebrew word used here (*gur*) has the connotation of reverence (cf. I Sam. xviii, 15). Hence the prophet who is found to be false need not be shown that reverence which is shown to a true prophet. This is the traditional interpretation of the pericope given by Driver, Bertholet, Steuernagel, and Junker.

Aalders, who rejects the fulfillment of prediction as a criterion and admits as practically the only criterion agreement with the Mosaic law, would interpret this passage as he does Deut. xiii, 2 ff., i. e., negatively: a false prophet is not accredited even if he works miracles or predicts the future.<sup>7</sup> This is true, if it is evident from some other source that he is false. But Aalders rejects the positive aspect of the law. He overlooks the fact that v. 21 expressly asks for a criterion, and v. 22 gives the answer.

Buttenwieser likewise rejects the traditional interpretation of the pericope.<sup>8</sup> The law is written from the viewpoint of the opponents of the canonical prophets, according to Buttenwieser. To see this in v. 22, he must depart from the traditional translation. He translates: "If it happen that a prophet pronounceth in the name of Yahweh that which shall not be or occur, that is the word which Yahweh hath not spoken; presumptuously hath the prophet pronounced it: you shall not be afraid of him."<sup>9</sup> On the basis of this translation Buttenwieser interprets the law to mean: if the prophet speaks against the law (a thing that dare never be!), then he is a false prophet. The translation given by Buttenwieser departs from the traditional translation. Nowhere does he justify this departure. Even if his translation were correct, the obvious meaning of the verse would be that if a prophet predicts something that does not happen, he is not God's messenger. The interpretation of Buttenwieser is strained and unnatural, and has been accepted by no other scholar.

7. Aalders, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-178.

8. *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 29-34.

9. Italics are mine. The traditional interpretation takes the clause "welo yihyeh haddabar welo yabo," as a conditional clause with the conditional particle omitted. Cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, no. 159 b-k; Jounon, no. 167 a-b. Buttenwieser considers these as relative clauses.

V. Rad also attempts to avoid the implication of Deut. xviii, 22. He claims that it is written from the viewpoint of the woe-prophets against the true prophets, who were woe-prophets. He interprets thus: "If the prophecy does not come to pass, the prophet has spoken in presumption, and Israel need not fear it."<sup>10</sup> Because of the use of the word "fear," V. Rad argues that the prophecy in question must be terrifying, and hence given by a woe-prophet. This interpretation rests on a misunderstanding of the Hebrew word translated by "fear" and a wrong reference of the Hebrew noun to "prophecy" rather than to "prophet."

The attempts to evade the implication of Deut. xviii, 22, are simply futile. The text is perfectly clear. Even if it were not, the many instances given in the O T of the use of this criterion would amply justify the traditional interpretation. The law of Deut. xviii, 22, is simply the legal crystallization of a norm correctly understood to distinguish the true messengers of God from false.

#### THE SANCTITY OF THE PROPHETS

We need not dwell at length on this criterion. The holiness of life, the singleness of purpose, the absence of selfish motives on the part of the canonical prophets are facts admitted by all. That their lives should stand out in striking contrast to the lives of the false prophets can hardly be disputed. Some modern critics condone the false prophets and take for granted that they were sincere and lacked ulterior motives. We may, of course, admit cases of delusion fostered by a reluctance to give way, even when the supernatural inspiration of the true prophet was evident to the false prophet. But we must take into consideration also the definite and unequivocal denunciations hurled against the false prophets by the true prophets. Even if we make allowance for oratorical exaggeration,

10. "Trifft eine Weissagung nicht ein, ... Israel braucht sich nicht davor zu fuerchten" (V. Rad. *loc. cit.*, p. 113). He makes the object of the fear a thing, "davor," and hence must refer *mimmennu* to *haddabar* of the previous line, whereas everyone else refers *mimmennu* to *hannabi* which is almost immediately preceding. This is certainly the only defensible construction of the text. Hebrew style did not know complicated and far-reaching concatenation of pronouns and nouns.

we cannot — unless we deny the veracity of the true prophets altogether — escape the conclusion that the false prophets in general were unworthy and often led sinful lives.

#### INTRINSIC CRITERIA

Intrinsic criteria are those found in the prophetic preaching itself. Negatively, they are the absence of error or contradiction of the legitimate religion of Israel; positively, they are the beauty and truth of this preaching, its lofty view of God, its insistence upon holiness of life, and its correct estimate of what favored the progress of the theocratic state.

We have seen that most modern critics hold that the moral worth of the prophet's message was the only criterion to distinguish the true prophet from the false. That it is not the sole criterion is evident from what has been said above regarding miracles and predictions. It demands, moreover, certain dispositions on the part of the hearer of the prophetic message (cf. John vii, 17). This criterion is appealed to, implicitly at least, when the prophets contrast their teaching with that of the false prophets.

Agreement with the legitimate religion of Israel is a negative intrinsic criterion. This criterion is very important, because it *ipso facto* detects the false prophet. True prophecy, since it is from God, must agree with previously revealed truth. But false prophecy, being the counterfeit and contradiction of true prophecy, will contradict previously revealed truth. The criterion may in practice be often difficult to apply. The false prophets of the Mosaic revelation of Yahweh and prophesied in His name. Hence at first sight they were in accord with the fundamental principle of the Mosaic religion that Yahweh is the sole God of Israel. They did err, however, in transferring to Yahweh the heathen notion of a god's unconditional protection over his people. They overlooked the holiness and justice, perhaps also the personality of God.

It is evident that the critics who date the written law after the prophets discard this criterion. The criterion would still hold, even in the hypothesis that the prophets preceded the Pentateuch. We must certainly recognize the monumental work of Moses in the religion of Israel. Critics today are more willing to admit Moses'

work in the religion of Israel than they were formerly. The criterion, however, is merely negative. Agreement with the law will not necessarily establish the claim of a prophet, but contradiction of the Mosaic religion and previous prophetic teaching will show the prophet to be false.<sup>11</sup>

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that no criterion was sufficient of itself. *De facto* we find them combined. Holiness of life was perhaps the first to be noticed. Agreement with the legitimate religion eventually was shown to be lacking in the false prophets. When crises arose, miracles and predictions were appealed to. That the true prophets did not succeed better in convincing the people may be surprising. But in any case this was not the fault of the objective efficacy of the criteria. Christ also found that "... men loved darkness rather than the light" (John iii, 19).

11. Cf. Vanden Oudenrijn, *Angelicum*, III, p. 70: "Nihilominus omnium prophetarum eloquia erant diiudicanda, utrum revera essent a Jahve necne. Quidnam ergo fuerit criterium, ceteris forte longe communius in hac re applicandum? S. Thomas Aquinas, in Rom. x, 2, loquens de criterio 'veritatis' (scilicet praedictionis eventu completae) et 'miraculi' statim subdit: 'Nec tamen ista duo ultima sufficienter demonstrant Dei missionem, praesertim cum aliquis enuntiat aliquid contra fidem. Analogia igitur fidei est criterium e mente Aquinatis ceteris omnibus praefendum, unde et l. c. tamquam primum criterium ipse ponit *Sacrae Scripturae auctoritatem*, utpote quae argumentum divinae missionis omnium fortissimum praebet. Ad idem analogiae fidei criterium pro diiudicandis prophetis iam remittitur I John iv, 1-3 (cf. etiam Rom. xii, 6; I Cor. xii, 3; Gal. i, 8-9)." But Vanden Oudenrijn is forced to admit, p. 72: "Verum est, etiam criterium analogiae cum praecedenti revelatione suas habuisse difficultates. Quod scilicet simpliciter nullo modo conciliari potest cum aliquo verbo Jahve antea revelato, id certe Jahve non est locutus. Sed haud necessario sequitur e converso: omne propheticum eloquium, quod revelationi praecedenti non contradicebat, vel ei etiam plene concordabat, eloquium inde Jahve satis plene probari."

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