

Prophet und Prophetenbuch



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Festschrift für
Otto Kaiser
zum 65. Geburtstag

herausgegeben von
Volkmar Fritz
Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann
Hans-Christoph Schmitt



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Vorwort

Mit der hier vorgelegten Sammlung von Aufsätzen grüßen Mitarbeiter, Herausgeber und Verleger den Lehrer, Kollegen und Freund Otto Kaiser zur Vollendung seines 65. Lebensjahres am 30. November 1989.

Die alttestamentliche Prophetenforschung verdankt Otto Kaiser eine Fülle neuer Einsichten und Anstöße. Als eine Antwort darauf sind die im vorliegenden Band unter dem Titel »Prophet und Prophetenbuch« zusammengefaßten Beiträge gedacht. Befruchtend hat vor allem die in Otto Kaisers Jesajaauslegungen konsequent gegen den herrschenden Trend festgehaltene Einsicht gewirkt, daß die exegetischen Bemühungen um das Verständnis der Prophetenbücher nicht darauf fixiert sein dürfen, die historische Person des Propheten im Zentrum zu sehen. Das Phänomen der Schriftprophetie ist nur dann sachgerecht zu erschließen, wenn die Prophetenbücher als Produkte komplexer Redaktionsprozesse durchsichtig und entsprechend verstanden werden. Dabei geht es Otto Kaiser nicht nur um historische und literarische Probleme der prophetischen Überlieferung, vielmehr auch darum – wie er im Vorwort der 5. Auflage seines inzwischen international verbreiteten Einleitungsbuches noch einmal betont – daß sich in diesem »Prozeß der fast permanenten Fortschreibungen« die »lebendige Bewegung des Glaubensdenkens« spiegelt und »daß es ein geheimes Grundthema von Gesetz und Evangelium, Evangelium und Gesetz in ständig wechselseitiger Dialektik zu entdecken gibt«.

Der begrenzte Raum nötigte Herausgeber und Verlag, die Anzahl der Beiträge zu beschränken. Daher konnten lediglich die Kollegen um ihre Mitarbeit gebeten werden, mit denen der Jubilar an seinen universitären Wirkungsstätten in Tübingen und Marburg und im Herausgeberkreis der »Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft« verbunden war und ist. Bedauerlicherweise konnte eine Reihe von ihnen wegen Krankheit oder anderweitiger Belastungen ihre Zusagen nicht einhalten.

Zu verdanken ist das Erscheinen dieser Festschrift neben der Bereitwilligkeit des Verlages namhaften Druckkostenzuschüssen seitens der Evangelischen Kirchen von Kurhessen und Waldeck, in Hessen und Nassau und in Württemberg sowie seitens des Marburger Universitätsbundes. Herzlichen Dank auch dem Assistenten an der Gießener Professur für Altes Testament und Biblische Archäologie, Herrn Michael Wal-

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Mit ihrem Dank an den Jubilar verbinden alle Beteiligten den Wunsch für ein weiteres segensreiches Wirken in Forschung und Lehre.

Volkmar Fritz
Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann
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The prophets: are we heading for a paradigm switch?

Von Ferdinand E. Deist

(Pretoria)

Kuhn, in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970²), pictures the history of the natural sciences as going through periods of »normal science« and »revolution«. One of the basic concepts in Kuhn's thought is that of »paradigm«, i. e. the complex of convictions, values, and world view shared by a scientific community which provides its philosophical framework for valid academic inquiry, or any element of such a complex that has to do with the strategy, technique, or method for solving scientific puzzles and that is accepted as effective and valid within that community. Normal science, then, in Kuhn's terminology, is that stage in the history of academic inquiry at which scholars in a particular field generally accept the validity of a particular paradigm of thought and apply it unquestioningly. The outcome of normal science is not so much the discovery of something new as a gradual refinement and articulation of elements of the paradigm of thought and/or more precise description of previous findings obtained through the application of that model.

This stage ends with the advent of a scientific revolution. A scientific revolution occurs when a dominant paradigm of thought (or an element of such a paradigm) is found to be inadequate and is eventually abandoned in favour of a new paradigm from which proceeds a new view on the problems involved in the field of study. Scholars convinced of the superior relevancy of the new set of questions and of the superior explanatory power of the new paradigm then experience a paradigm switch. A paradigm switch can thus be defined as the process of acknowledging the inadequacy and, therefore, the failure of a given academic approach to ask relevant questions and/or suggest valid solutions to problems in an academic field and that leads to the replacement of the old paradigm of thought by a more relevant/valid and/or promising approach. Since such a replacement does not simply imply the application of new techniques, but a complete change in outlook, it is also called a *conversion* – which may be an ironically relevant term when speaking about the prophets.

To my mind we are at present (at least in my part of the world) in the midst of such a paradigm switch with regard to the scholarly appreciation of the Old Testament prophets in general and the so-called »writing prophets« in particular.

1. *The dominant paradigm*

Prior to the rise of historical criticism it was believed that the thoughts and times of the Old Testament prophets could be »read« from the texts they produced and that these words had to be understood against the historical background in which they had been spoken. On the basis of these premisses, historical critics during the 19th and early 20th century initiated the quest for the very words of the individual prophets.

Historical critical procedures, especially literary criticism, provided the method for reconstructing the *ipsissima verba* of the prophets, while the histories of Israel and of (Israelite) religion provided the background for understanding these words as utterances of specific individuals in specific circumstances. The introduction of form criticism assisted researchers in refining their tools considerably, since this procedure allowed them to understand the unique speech forms employed by the prophets in specific *Sitze im Leben*. In a similar manner tradition and redaction criticism enabled them to appreciate more fully the exact »twist« a prophet gave to a received tradition, e. g. the covenant tradition,¹ so as to assess each prophet's individual contribution to the formation of Israel's ethical monotheism. All along the prophets have been viewed as *the* makers of Israelite (ethical and monotheistic) religion.² The idea of *lex post prophetas* helped picture the prophets as historical giants in the history of (Israelite) religion. They were thought of as bearers of a divinely instituted office and viewed as individuals conscious of a unique divine calling causing them to be opponents of the kings, the rich, the priests and false prophets. Their books provided the basis for many an Old Testament theology of the day.

¹ Cf. W. L. Holladay, The background of Jeremiah's selfunderstanding, JBL 83 (1964), 153–164; D. R. Hillers, Covenant: The history of a biblical idea, 1969, 120–142.

² Cf. B. Duhm, Die Theologie der Propheten, 1875, 1–34; J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the history of Ancient Israel, 1885, 414–419; 467–477; 484–491. Both picture the »writing prophets« as proponents of the purest form of monotheism and ethics. G. von Rad, The message of the Prophets, 1968, 9, referred to Israelite prophecy as »the most astonishing phenomenon in the whole of Israel's history« and of their contribution as »a volcanic reemergence of Yahwism«. Cf. also H. W. Wolff's question (Prophecy from the eighth through the fifth century, Int 32 (1978), 17) how prophecy came to be a unique phenomenon within the history of Israel and within biblical proclamation, and F. J. Stendenbach, (Was macht den Propheten aus? Zum Erscheinungsbild des Prophetischen, BiKi 31 (1976), 5) who speaks of the writing prophets as people »in denen die Prophetie ihren höchsten Gipfel erklommen hat«. The picture thus drawn of the prophets may even become »romantic« in the non-technical sense of the word. See, for instance, E. Hernando's remark in this otherwise sober article (The sin of the »false« prophets, TD 27 (1979), 37–40) that a »true prophet« was someone »loving his people more than himself«, and a person with »selfless love«.

The high regard for the prophets is typically Christian. A mere comparison of the relative frequency of quotations from the Latter Prophets in the Mishna with that in the New Testament³ will illustrate the point:

Quotations in: from:	→	The Mishna	The New Testament
The Torah		67%	32%
The Former Prophets		5%	11%
The Latter Prophets		11%	34%
The Writings		17%	28%

Stated in different terms: for every six times the Mishna quotes from the Torah it quotes from the Latter Prophets once, while the relation in the New Testament is 1 : 1.

In Jewish Tradition the Prophets presented readers with a kind of *h'alākâ* (compare the Haphtarah), with a key to understand the time the readers were living in (as in Qumran),⁴ or to understand God's mysteries.⁵ The »canonicity« of the Prophets did not put these writings on a »higher level« than, say, official *h'alākâ*.⁶ For instance, although the Samaritans totally rejected the Prophets, their idea of »canon« played no part in the Jewish-Samaritan dispute. In Christian circles, however, references to the Prophets provided the basis of the argument for the legitimacy of Christianity over against Judaism. This preoccupation with the Prophets formed part and parcel of 18th- and 19th-century Christian scholarship. But it explains neither the typical *questions* asked at the time nor the *method* employed in answering these questions.⁷

³ These calculations are based on the textual indexes of Danby's English translation of the Mishna and the Nestlé-Aland New Testament text.

⁴ Although this is not an exclusive Jewish hermeneutic. See R. T. France, Old Testament prophecy and the future of Israel, TB 26 (1975), 53–78, according to whom many Christians still »search its (i. e. a prophetic book's) pages for predictions of events in twentieth century politics, with a view to plotting the future course and, often, calculate the nearness of the final denouement« in a Qumran-like fashion, a practice very popular in millenarian groups.

⁵ See C. S. Rodd, Talking points from books, ExT 98 (1986), 66–68.

⁶ Cf. A. G. Auld, Prophets through the looking glass: Between Writings and Moses, JSOT 27 (1978), 20: »... the argument between Sadducee (Jewish or Samaritan) and Pharisee was not whether to *add* Prophets as new Scripture beside Torah, but whether to *retain* Prophets once it had been ensured that Moses had said enough« (my emphasis).

⁷ For a brief review of different methodologies and the typical questions raised by a particular paradigm, see F. E. Deist, Currents in the History of Historiography, in F. E. Deist & J. H. le Roux, Revolution and Reinterpretation. Chapters from the history of Israel, 1987, 1–31.

The search for the *ipsissima verba* of the Old Testament prophets and the emphasis on their uniqueness⁸ were the direct result of romantic historicism. Romantic historiography, in its opposition to naturalism and rationalism, emphasized the importance of *original sources* and the understanding of every age, person and phenomenon in its *uniqueness*. One only has to think of Ranke's historiographic approach⁹ and of the subsequent *Methodenstreit* to appreciate that it was their scholarly environment that suggested to 19th-century Old Testament scholars what the relevant questions were and that supplied them with a methodology that could answer those questions. That frame of mind (and hermeneutic) must obviously have remained (culturally and historically) relevant ever since, because historical-critical methods have constantly been refined and are still applied widely today, even though their relevance has since the 1960's from time to time been questioned.

The reasons for the continued relevance of these questions are to be found in a number of assumptions of classical historical criticism coinciding with those of the »final text« approach, of which I mention only three. Firstly, the Christian theological community continued to proceed from the premiss of the uniqueness of either ancient Israelite or Christian religion, or of both, so that the search for the »unique« (revelation) in the Old Testament tradition remained a relevant undertaking.¹⁰ Secondly, the idealistic philosophy underlying historical-critical hermeneutics remained the philosophical basis of even the critics of historical criticism: the (divinely inspired, and hence a priori and unique) intellectual world¹¹ remained to be viewed as the force that steered history: »text production« was and still is explained with reference to a priori thought categories (e.g. »tradition« in historical criticism, or »deep structure« in structuralism), or with reference to inherent textual

⁸ Cf. G. Fohrer, *History of Israelite religion*, 1973, 223, 237; W. H. Schmidt, *Alttestamentlicher Glaube in seiner Geschichte*, 1975², 226.

⁹ See W. P. Fuchs, *Was heißt das: ›Bloß zeigen wie es eigentlich gewesen?‹ Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 30 (1979), 665–667.

¹⁰ Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, *Redemption and Revelation*, 1942, 143 f.: »... a prophet of the classical period would not have dared to prophesy without an inaugural vision such as Isaiah's ... or an audition such as Jeremiah's, or such a characteristically peculiar experience as that of Ezekiel.«

¹¹ I am not quite sure whether Carroll's term »intellectual« for »prophet« should be understood in its idealistic meaning, or in the »Leninist« sense of »conscientizer« (R. Carroll, *Poets not prophets. A response to ›Prophets through the looking glass‹*, JSOT 27 (1983), 26), although his concurring remarks regarding Weber's designation of the prophets as »pamphleteers« and »demagogues« seem to suggest the latter rather than the former sense. Perhaps Auld's suggestion that »prophets« should not be contrasted too sharply with the traditional »wise men« defines the term »intellectual« better: A. G. Auld, *Poetry, prophecy, hermeneutic: Recent studies in Isaiah*, SJT 33 (1980), 581.

structures (e.g. in discourse analysis). Therefore, the type of question prompted by the underlying philosophy remained relevant, e.g. the quest for the intellectual/spiritual force of prophetic theology that shaped human destiny and that provided the driving force in religious evolution. Thirdly, the essentialistic view of texts inherent in historical-critical methodology, and according to which texts are *reflections* of reality, thought processes and/or deposits of meaning, remained the basis of biblical research.¹² The »controversy« over historical-critical methods therefore has more to do with the search for other (and more appropriate) *procedures* (structuralism, close reading) for uncovering the *inherent meaning* of a text, than with asking different questions prompted by a different *paradigm*.

2. *The undermining of the dominant paradigm*

No respected model suddenly and inexplicably disappears from the scene. It is first »undermined« by a number of factors, among which the following are relevant to us here. Firstly, *new evidence* may come to light which cannot be adequately explained in terms of the assumptions of the dominant model. Secondly, the *assumptions of the scholarly world may change* to such an extent that the premisses of the dominant model are seriously called in question. Thirdly, certain *new questions* may arise which cannot be adequately researched and answered by the procedures of the dominant model. Fourthly, the *proponents of the dominant model may disappear* from the scene and a new generation of scholars (that grew up under different circumstances) may take over.

Once such factors come into play the reigning model is steadily eroded and becomes more and more questionable until such time as it is experienced as irrelevant – at least by a section of the scholarly community. In the meantime other models start competing for acceptance until one of them succeeds in becoming the dominant model within (at least) a respected section of the scholarly community.

2.1 New evidence that undermined the dominant model

Two sorts of »evidence« began calling in question the dominant romantic-idealistic model of interpreting the Old Testament prophets. First, there was the evidence from archaeology, and second, the results of continued historical critical research.

The discovery that the phenomenon of »prophecy« was wide-spread in the ancient Near East called in question the assumption that Old

¹² Cf., for instance, G. F. Hasel, Major recent trends in Old Testament theology, JSOT 31 (1985), 53.

Testament prophecy was »unique« in its environment.¹³ While some scholars hailed the discovery as the »missing link« in our knowledge¹⁴ and some virtually identified the Old Testament prophets with ecstasies and mantics,¹⁵ others spent much energy in demonstrating the real uniqueness of the individual Old Testament prophets in comparison with their Mesopotamian, Syrian and Canaanite »counterparts«.¹⁶

The role assigned to archaeology in these debates tallies with and highlights the methodological assumptions of the model of rationality concerned. Archaeology, defined as »biblical archaeology«, merely served to elucidate the (inherent meaning of the) biblical text, or to explain some or other phenomenon mentioned in the text,¹⁷ while the text itself remained the main source of (historical) information.¹⁸ So, for instance, the Mesopotamian prophets, having been professional or »cult prophets«, explained the phenomenon of »false prophets« mentioned in the Old Testament. Debates therefore tended to focus on the »prophetic consciousness« of the »true« prophets, and on their calling to the *office* of prophet, an office which scholars took great pains to sever from any known traditional (social) institution.¹⁹ The prophets were now pictured as God's ambassadors²⁰ and as »lonely figures« without followers and friends.²¹ In this way (the notion of) the »uniqueness« of the Old

¹³ The debate was opened with G. Dossin's *Une révélation du dieu Dagan à Terqa*, *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 42 (1948), 125–134. See, for instance, H. B. Huffmon, *Prophecy in the Mari letters*, *BA* 31 (1968), 101–124; W. L. Moran, *New evidence from Mari on the history of prophecy*, *Biblica* 50 (1969), 15–56.

¹⁴ Cf. M. Noth, *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, 1966³, 24: »Jetzt tritt uns in den Texten von Mari die ganz eindeutige Gestalt eines Gottesboten entgegen ...«.

¹⁵ The »road« to this equation was already paved by G. Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, 1914. But see H. H. Rowley's sceptical remarks in this regard in his *Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets in: From Moses to Qumran: Studies in the Old Testament*, 1963, 114–115.

¹⁶ Cf. Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 1960, 212–216.

¹⁷ Typical of this approach is the question: »Who borrowed from whom?« and the consequent definition of »culture« as a list of »traits« that can easily be compared to cultural »traits« of other cultures. See, for instance, A. Haldar, *Associations of cult prophets among the ancient Semites*, 1945; V. W. Rabi, *Origins of prophecy*, *BASOR* 221 (1976), 125–128, who still works with the old »cultural parallels concept«. See already the warning of H. Frankfort, *The problem of similarity in ancient Near Eastern religions*, 1951 against the drawing of »parallels« between religious institutions.

¹⁸ Cf. K. V. Flannery, *Culture history vs. culture process: a debate in American Archaeology*, *Scientific American* 217 (1967), 119–122.

¹⁹ Cf. Th. C. Vriezen, *Hoofdlijnen der theologie van het Oude Testament*, 1966², 250 ff.; W. H. Schmidt, *Alttestamentlicher Glaube*, 224.

²⁰ Cf. F. Ellermeier's critique of the notion of the prophets as »messengers« in his *Prophetie in Mari und Israel*, 1968, 190–193.

²¹ So H. W. Wolff, *op. cit.*, 21 f.

Testament writing prophets could be retained – even if by way of a »conventional twist« or »No-true-Scotsman argument«.

But the picture of the prophets thus drawn seemed to be without sociological foundation, since no idea can survive without the aid of support groups.²² To counter this problem the idea of »prophetic disciple circles« was advanced – a rather *ad hoc* invention for which there is neither firm (contemporary) textual nor sociological evidence²³ – and which once more threatened the notion of the uniqueness of the prophets.²⁴ Moreover, this use of archaeological data and (*ad hoc*) assumptions about the workings of Israelite society came in for some serious criticism since the late 1960's.²⁵

In the meantime continued historical critical research eroded the *textual* basis on which the classical picture of Old Testament prophets had been based. Firstly, although its extremism and somewhat »wild« assumptions prevented it from becoming a serious contender of literary criticism, the »Scandinavian« emphasis on the role of oral transmission and the consequent idea of the exilic (even post-exilic) *Verschriftlichung* of pre-exilic traditions did cause scholars to have second thoughts about

²² Cf. R. R. Wilson, *Early Israelite prophecy*, Int 32 (1978), 8: »Without support from the society, or at least from a group within it, prophets can find no permanent place within the social order and are likely to be regarded simply as sick individuals who must be cured or expelled.«

²³ The same applies to quite a number of assumptions with regard to the social role of prophets. So, for instance, F. J. Stendenbach, *op. cit.*, 3 explains the relationship of the *nābi'* to the *hozæh* with reference to social institutions of sedentary and nomadic cultures respectively. But it is a wide open question whether the »nomadic origin theory« with regard to Israel is legitimate. (For further theories on the relationship between these two concepts, see G. Fohrer, *Neue Literatur zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie* (1961–1970), ThR 40 (1975), 365–369). The common notion of the »nomadic« society as »egalitarian« has been challenged by G. Palumbo, »Egalitarian« or »Stratified« Society? Some Notes on Mortuary Practices and Social Structure at Jericho in EB IV, BASOR 267 (1987), 43–59.

²⁴ In like manner different cultural »parallels« of the prophetic »office« have been suggested, e.g. the prophet as »messenger« or »herald« (J. S. Holladay, *Assyrian statecraft and prophets in Israel*, HTR 63 (1970), 29–51) of the »heavenly council« (F. M. Cross jr., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 1973, 189 n.187). Without a specific model of the relevant society to guide the hypotheses it was fairly easy to »invent« the role of the prophet. Cf., for instance, the way in which Huffmon (*The origins of prophecy in F. M. Cross jr., Magnalia Dei*, 1976, 171–186) simply assumed that the role of *šopeṭ* had been »redistributed« into the roles of the *nābi'* (the charismatic messenger) and the *mælæk* (the permanent war leader).

²⁵ Cf. C. L. v. W. Scheepers, *Archeologie en die Abrahamtradiesies: 'n Wetenskapsfilosofiese beoordeling van die metodologie van John van Seters*, D.Th. thesis (University of South Africa), 1988, 46–86.

the »originality« of the *written* prophetic words.²⁶ Yet, in some sense the idea of oral transmission came as a relief. It now seemed possible to reconstruct the *ipsissima verba* of the prophets in cases where literary criticism failed to do so. The prophets were, after all, speakers, not writers. But the relief was shortlived, since a serious debate on »oral literature«, which has up to this day not rebated, questioned this solution.²⁷ The anthropological fact that each instance of oral transmission of (part of) a tradition, rather than producing a faithful copy of that tradition, constitutes a new *performance*, seriously queried the reliability of such reconstructions.²⁸

Secondly, research into the speech forms employed by the prophets showed that they, for nearly three centuries, must have been employing stereotyped expressions and forms,²⁹ and that many of these forms were borrowings from or modelled upon speech forms employed in other spheres of life, e. g. juridical and wisdom spheres.³⁰ Thirdly, it became apparent that the typical linguistic shape of many of the prophetic books and thought forms occurring in them show strong affinity with typically Deuteronomistic forms,³¹ while other (non-prophetic) texts show signs of a post-exilic »prophetic« redaction.³² It became clear that

²⁶ Cf. the fairly »harsh« clash between I. Engnell and S. Mowinckel on this issue in S. Mowinckel, *Prophecy and Tradition. The prophetic books in the light of the story of the history and growth of the tradition*, 1946, 88, and Eissfeldt's concurrence with Mowinckel's views in O. Eissfeldt, *Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Prophetenbücher des Alten Testaments*, ThLZ 73 (1948), 532. Yet, Mowinckel (op. cit., 87, 112) regarded Eissfeldt's efforts to disentangle the original words of Jeremiah from the »Urrolle« as »without prospects«.

²⁷ Cf. A. H. J. Gunneweg, *Mündliche und schriftliche Tradition der vorexilischen Prophetenbücher als Problem der neueren Prophetenforschung*, 1959, and the debate on oral forms published in *Semeia* 5 (1976).

²⁸ See R. Finegan, *Oral poetry. Its nature, significance and social context*, 1977, who discusses the complex interrelations between performance, composition, transmission and publication.

²⁹ Which is peculiarly »uncreative« for men who are supposed to have been driven by the Spirit and to have been »unique« figures.

³⁰ See R. R. Wilson, op. cit., 7 f.15; G. M. Tucker, *Prophetic speech*, *Int* 32 (1978), 33. Many »parallels« of prophetic speech have been suggested, the most popular of which was the so-called »messenger speech« (cf. C. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 1967, 64–70).

³¹ See J. Muilenburg, *The »office« of the prophet in Ancient Israel* in: J. Philip Hyatt (ed.), *The Bible and modern scholarship*, Nashville 1965, 74–97; A. G. Auld, op. cit., 15. Cf. also L. Brodie, *Creative writing: Missing link in biblical Research*, *BTB* 8 (1978), 34–39.

³² Cf. H.-C. Schmitt, *Redaktion des Pentateuchs im Geiste der Prophetie*, *VT* 32 (1982), 170–189. Cf. also O. Eissfeldt, *Kleine Schriften*. Bd. IV, 1968, 137–142, according to

the prophetic texts provide us neither with a mirror of genuine prophetic thought nor with a picture of their times.³³ Even the *Denkschrift* of Isaiah, which had been a *locus classicus* for »unique prophetic consciousness«,³⁴ for »prophetic calling«, and for the existence of »circles of disciples« was shown to be a Deuteronomistic creation of exilic times.³⁵ Moreover, even the *term* »prophet«, which formed the corner stone of the whole quest, was shown to have been a late, even *ex post factum* (exilic-post-exilic) interpretation of figures of pre-exilic times. And then this interpretation varies between, for instance, Deuteronomistic and Chronicist circles.³⁶

2.2 Changing assumptions

Although the terms of reference keep on changing, the medieval debate of nominalism versus realism remains an issue at the basis of many a scholarly controversy. It also presented itself in the opposition Hegel – Marx: is »spirit« the basic driving force of human evolution or is it »matter«? Do we have to think in terms of human freedom or in terms of determinism? Since 19th- and early 20th-century historical-critical scholarship had (as an outcome of the *Methodenstreit*?) mainly been based on idealistic philosophy it was inevitable that its basic assumptions (idealism-freedom) would be taken to task by the rival model of materialism-determinism.

whom the prophets gained in »stature« the further history moved away from the actual time of the prophets.

³³ More and more studies tended to find »reinterpretation« of prophetic words within the book published under the name of the relevant prophet. See, for instance, H. Barth, *Die Jesajaworte in der Josiazeit: Israel und Assur als Thema einer produktiven Neuinterpretation der Jesajauüberlieferung*, 1977; J. Vermeylen, *Du Prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique: Isaïe I–XXXV, miroir d'un demi-millénaire d'expérience religieuse en Israël*, Vol. II, 1978 (who finds seven layers of text in Proto-Isaiah); J. Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A contribution to the study of Jewish origins*, 1977 (who finds that 75% of »Isaiah's« book is editorial in nature). See also A. Rofé, *The Classification of the prophetic stories*, *JBL* 89 (1970), 432–440.

³⁴ So still J. Asurmendi, *Isaïe dans son temps: Isaïe et la politique*, *MDB* 49 (Mai – Juin – Jul. 1987), 32–34, 36–37.

³⁵ See A. G. Auld, *Poetry, prophecy, hermeneutic: Recent studies in Isaiah*, *SJT* 33 (1980), 575, who refers to Isaiah 6–8 as »an elaborate portrait, not a lightly touched-up personal memoir«. O. Kaiser, *Das Buch des Propheten Jesaja, Kapitel 1–12*, *ATD* 17, 1981⁵, 117–209 goes much further. According to him the complete »Memoir« is a Deuteronomistic creation.

³⁶ See B. Vawter, *Were the prophets nabi's?*, *Biblica* 66 (1985), 206–220, and especially A. G. Auld, *JSOT* 27 (1978), 3–23.

The rise of the social sciences contributed a great deal to the questioning of the dominant model of rationality. Sociology, with its empirico-positivist slant, and (ethno-)anthropology in particular, sped up the »controversy«. The work of the *Annales* school of historiography, materialist critique of religion, Marx's concept of »ideology«, Weber's treatise on Israelite religion, and Mannheim's sociology of knowledge epitomized the formation of an alternative model of rationality.

Another movement which questioned the dominant model, although it was not that directly opposed to (romantic) idealism as was materialism, was the rise of the (phenomenological) concept of *Gestalt* or holism-functionalism, according to which it is not the parts that contribute to the meaning(fulness) of the whole, but the whole that imparts meaning to its constituent members. Within this frame of mind it is not evolution but function that constitutes meaning. This approach gave rise to the so-called »systems theories« in the social sciences and to the so-called »immanent« reading of texts in the literary sciences.

As long as the proponents of the idealistic model of rationality remained the (only) leaders of the Old Testament scholarly community that model remained the dominant one. But once the basis of Old Testament scholarship was broadened and internationalized, »rival« models started presenting themselves, and notably so since the 1960's. It is since those years that historical criticism as an *exegetical procedure* was coming under fire and has been criticized for »asking the wrong questions«. Since much of the earlier criticism could be countered by pointing out its fundamentalist assumptions its impact has not been that strong. When criticism of a more sound theoretical nature was later launched, its impact was »absorbed« by the (perhaps somewhat uncritical) acceptance of the distinction diachronic-synchronic³⁷ and by viewing this duality in approach as a »necessary supplementation« of traditional historical critical methods.

Perhaps the most unacknowledged, yet most serious, challenge to the dominant model of rationality emanated from the political process of decolonialization, which started in the 1960's and »produced« the so-called »Third World« with its peculiar socio-economic problems. These problems necessitated an emphasis on society-oriented academic work and gave birth to liberation theology.³⁸ The dominant model of rationality in this part of the world is of a Marxist-materialist orientation,

³⁷ Cf. F. E. Deist, *Relativisme en absolutisme: Kan dit oorkom word? Oor 'Bybelse' en 'dogmatiese' teologie* in W. S. Prinsloo & W. Vosloo (eds.), *Ou Testament Teologie: Gister, Vandag en Môre*, 1987, 4, 7 f.

³⁸ To be mentioned here as well is the rise of feminist theology. See, for instance, C. Landman, *A profile of feminist theology* in W. S. Vorster (ed.), *Sexism and Feminism in Theological Perspective*, 1984, 1 – 30.

according to which it is not ideas that shape a people's socio-political destiny, but socio-political realities that shape ideas (ideologies). This emphasis on the creative role of everyday social realities was a major factor in the emergence of a *real* alternative to the dominant model of rationality.

Linked to the influence of the emerging »Third World« are three other (series of) events that helped shape an alternative model of rationality. Firstly, mention has to be made of the demand of European student movements during the late 1960's and early 1970's for »democratization« of (at least) educational institutions. These socially engaged movements shared in the basic philosophy which has since become dominant in the Third World. Secondly, there was a gradual realization in the First as well as in the Third World of the effects of colonialization and decolonization on the lives of millions of people around the world, and linked to that, the experience in the Third World of neo-colonialism's economic hegemony which led to the rejection of liberal Western values. Thirdly, there was the (First World) disillusionment with the effects of (capitalist) »civilization« on the environment and on the world's natural resources.³⁹ It is argued that idealistically conceived policies caused most of the environmental problems we are confronted with. Whether criticism launched against the »First World« from these angles is legitimate, is not important here. What is important, is that this *conception* of the effects of First World policies contributed to the serious questioning of the dominant model of rationality.

2.3 New questions that caused uneasiness

The results of ongoing textual research within the framework of the dominant model posed questions that could hardly be satisfactorily answered within that framework. For instance, if the texts published under the prophets' names contain very few real »prophetic words«, if the reconstruction of »oral tradition« from literary texts is not really reliable, if the picture of a »prophet« in Deuteronomistic texts differs fairly substantially from that in Chronistic texts, if »prophet« really is an *ex post factum* title, if the distinction between »true« and »false« prophets was only possible *ex eventu* and if the designation of the »classical prophets« as »true prophets« is to be ascribed to Deuteronomistic editors and not to prophetic consciousness as such, what then was a *prophet*? Did the »prophets« occupy any office in society? How are the »prophetic words« regarding social, economic and political issues

³⁹ T. A. Matias, *The Bible, ecology, and the environment*, ITS 22 (1985), 5–27; K. Nürnberger, *Ecology and christian ethics in a semi-industrialised and polarized society* in W. S. Vorster (ed.), *Are we killing God's Earth?* 1987, 45–67.

to be evaluated? What was the real role of those figures in the shaping of Israelite religion? In what sense are they to be regarded as »unique«? And can we really speak of »prophetic circles« and of a prophet's »disciples« if the *locus classicus* for these assumptions is not »genuine«? Why would the Deuteronomists, whose theology so extensively »called in« corroborating prophetic words, keep silent about prophets like Amos, Hosea and Micah?⁴⁰

These *historical* questions cannot be answered effectively unless one has a clear idea of the societies in which the »prophets« lived and in which the prophetic texts had been produced. But the dominant model cannot really supply the answers to such questions, because it does not look at a phenomenon (such as prophecy) or at a text from the side of social realities.⁴¹ Even the concept of *Sitz im Leben* has far too narrow a scope to answer these questions.

It is perhaps for this reason that lateral, rather than vertical thought has been applied to the problem, that is, scholars tended to »side-step« the (socio-anthropological) problem by focussing more and more on the finished product, the »final/canonical text«. ⁴² The clearer it became that *these questions* threatened to invalidate the model of rationality the more *that kind of question* was made suspicious or labeled »unanswerable«. Perhaps these questions cannot be answered adequately by merely (or even primarily) focussing on the *texts*. Research in, for instance, the growth of the text of the Septuagint showed that the concept »final/canonical text« is a very problematic one,⁴³ and that one needs to have some idea of the religious communities in which texts were being edited to get a clearer picture of the processes involved in textual production.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Cf. C. Begg, The non-mention of Amos, Hosea, and Micah in the Deuteronomistic History, BN 32 (1986), 41–53. If the Deuteronomists could ignore some prophets because their message did not fit in with their theology – as Begg argues convincingly – they could as well have »blown up« others beyond all proportion, so that their picture of »prophets« cannot be historically reliable.

⁴¹ See, for instance W. McKane, Prophecy and the prophetic literature in G. W. Andersen, Tradition and Interpretation. Essays by members of the Society for Old Testament Study, Oxford 1979, 163–188, whose review of scholarly study on the prophets reflects the typically idealistic interest of the dominant model in the »intellectual« side of prophecy.

⁴² Cf. R. P. Carroll, Poets not prophets, 28.

⁴³ See, for instance, E. Tov, Recensional differences between the MT and LXX of Ezekiel, ETL 62 (1986), 89–101; H.-D. Neef, Der Septuaginta-Text und der Masoreten-Text des Hoseabuches im Vergleich, Biblica 67 (1986), 195–220; E. Tov, Some differences between the MT and LXX and their ramifications for the literary criticism of the Bible, JNSL 13 (1987), 151–160.

⁴⁴ See F. E. Deist, Witnesses to the Old Testament. Introducing Old Testament Textual Criticism, 1988, where the question regarding the »identity« of the concepts »Old

An »escape« into the »final« or »canonical text« thus neither enables us to answer the questions thrown up by the dominant model itself, nor to answer the question of prophetic authority.⁴⁵

Another pressing question is this: Given the fact that the prophets and their message have over decades been reinterpreted within, and therefore familiarized with, the framework of the typically Western thought categories of the dominant model, can their words and actions really still *challenge* the Western World?⁴⁶

2.4 The disappearance of proponents of the dominant model

In the context of Old Testament studies there are two factors to be mentioned in this regard. Firstly, whereas the scene had pretty well been dominated by German scholarship until the 1960's,⁴⁷ Old Testament scholarship has become a much more international affair since. American scholars entered the debate on a much larger scale, especially so after the dominance of the »Albright school« has to a large extent been overcome in that part of the world. It was chiefly the English writing world (with its less philosophical and more pragmatic slant) that stimulated interest in the application of anthropological and sociological insights to Old Testament studies, including prophecy.

Secondly, the old masters, such as Alt, Noth, von Rad, Eissfeldt and other prominent exponents of the dominant model of rationality, passed away the one after the other. It is perhaps significant that no really comprehensive and fundamentally *new* history of Israel or Old

Testament« and »Hebrew Bible« and its implications for the concept of »canon« are discussed extensively.

⁴⁵ For instance, B. S. Childs, *The canonical shape of prophetic literature*, Int 32 (1978), 47 speaks about an (anonymous) »force« that shaped prophetic literature, a force that was exerted in especially the post-exilic period and that »allowed« the material to function as authoritative Scripture and to serve as a normative expression of God's will to later generations. Earlier generations linked that »force« to the inspiration of the prophets themselves. What do we have to understand under this »canonical force«? The problem with this approach seems to be little different from the problem F. Hesse (*Kerygma oder geschichtliche Wirklichkeit? Kritische Fragen zu Gerhard von Rads »Theologie des Alten Testaments, I. Teil«*, ZThK 57 (1960), 17–20) had with Von Rad's concentration on the »vom Glauben Israels erstelltes Bild« (*Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1969, Bd. I, 112).

⁴⁶ See, especially, L. Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks. The Gospel and Western Culture*, 1986.

⁴⁷ See J. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century*, 1984, for an elaborate argument to this effect.

Testament theology has appeared after the death of the masters.⁴⁸ Even on the front of exegetical methods and introductions to the Old Testament the scene remained relatively unchanged, except for more precision in the description of the various exegetical procedures involved⁴⁹ and for difference of opinion regarding the redactional history of the different books of the Bible – although the later dating of most of the Old Testament in the newer introductions tended to undermine the foundations of the dominant model, especially with regard to prophetic texts.

3. *An alternative paradigm?*⁵⁰

If we have traced the history of Old Testament research correctly it shows all the signs of a fundamental questioning of a dominant paradigm. This does not mean that the dominant paradigm has lost its credibility altogether, nor that it is on its way out, or that a new paradigm will (in the near future) be substituted for it. Even in liberation theological circles the classical writing prophets are sometimes still being interpreted in terms of a romantic-historicist paradigm. What it does mean, is that, because of its philosophical basis and consequent ideological bias, the dominant model is (at least in certain parts of the world) experienced as incapable of asking meaningful questions and of suggesting credible solutions to pressing existential problems.⁵¹ It is for this reason that an alternative paradigm, based on different assumptions, is in the making.

Given a different experience of reality, world view and model of rationality it is inevitable that new questions will arise, for instance, questions such as the following: What did the Israelite society of the 8th, 7th and 6th century look like?⁵² What societal model would best

⁴⁸ What N. P. Lemche said about the classical paradigm of critical historiography (Rachel and Lea. Or: On the survival of outdated paradigms in the study of the origin of Israel, SJOT 2 (1987), 28), namely that people like Alt and Noth, while producing the classical »histories«, also undermined the paradigm they had been utilizing, also applies here.

⁴⁹ The classical example here is W. Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft*, 1971.

⁵⁰ See, in this regard, J. K. Hadden & A. Shupe (eds.), *Prophetic Religions and Politics. Religion and the political order*, Vol. 1, 1984, and especially the contribution to the volume by T. E. Long, *Prophecy, charisma, and politics: Reinterpreting the Weberian thesis*, 3–17.

⁵¹ See R. Robertson, *Liberation Theology in Latin America: Sociological problems of interpretation and explanation* in J. K. Hadden & A. Shupe, *op. cit.*, 73–102.

⁵² Cf. G. Ravasi, *Old Testament political theology*, TD 31 (1984), 3–7, who emphasizes the complicated nature of Israelite politics and the plurality of methods used in that society to seize power. Also E. Haag, *The Prophet: Yahweh's ›opposition‹*, TD 31

describe those societies?⁵³ What were the material conditions under which people had to live?⁵⁴ What exactly prompted prophets to speak out?⁵⁵ Who made up their audiences? From which »layer« of society did they come? Was there a social institution such as »prophet«? If so, where did this office fit into the structure of society? If not, who were these prophets? What was the prophet's position with regard to socio-economic and political hegemony/oppression/ideology, i. e. what made up their ideology? If they really were people from the »middle classes« who could read and write, can they then be viewed as »liberators« and »champions of the poor«?⁵⁶ Or is such a view merely suggested to us by the liberal values of modern readers? Who were the readers/makers of the »prophetic books«? Why were these figures pictured so differently by the Deuteronomists and the Chronist? Is there any ideological reason for this difference? Who were »the Deuteronomists« and who was »the Chronist« and what were their respective positions in society?⁵⁷ These questions have to do with the societal forces that »produced« the people who later became known as »prophets« and with the ideological nature of their pronouncements.

These questions also prompt other, critical, questions regarding the accepted view of Old Testament prophets. For instance: Was »prophecy« really a »unique« phenomenon? Was the prophets' main concern really

(1984), 33–36, who speaks of quite a number of »pockets of opposition« that resisted kingship and its adherents. It would thus be naive to work with a simple classical Marxist model of »class conflict« to explain the workings of Israelite society. Cf. Deist's criticism of Hanson's »binary« classification of exilic Israel into just two groups in F. E. Deist, *Prior to the Dawn of Apocalyptic*, OTWSA 26 (1983), 13–38.

⁵³ Cf. S. H. Lindar & B. G. Peters, *From social theory to policy design*, *Journal of Public Policy* 4 (1984), 251, where they warn against what they call »nominal functional titles« used to label problems. The complexities of any society call for models that reflect such complexities and nuances and that allow for more precise description.

⁵⁴ Cf. C. C. Smith, *The birth of bureaucracy*, BA 40 (1977), 24–28 for the impact of bureaucratization on the Assyrian society. See also N. E. Andersen, *Town and Country in the Old Testament*, Enc 42 (1981), 259–275 – although one has to be careful not to overemphasize this social distinction.

⁵⁵ Cf. R. R. Deutsch, *Why did the Hebrew prophets speak?*, SEAsiaJT 18 (1977), 26–36, who comes to the conclusion that the »driving force« behind prophetic speech has to be sought in the individual's *conscious reflection* on the people's total (historical, economic, social, spiritual) situation, and that a particular *understanding* of this situation forms the basis of the »prophetic consciousness«.

⁵⁶ See I. J. Mosala, *The use of the Bible in Black Theology* in I. J. Mosala & B. Tlhaqale, *The unquestionable right to be free*, 1985, 194 ff.

⁵⁷ See R. P. Carroll, *Poets not prophets*, 27: »... the role of the redactor's ideology will ... be seen as having a much more creative and constructive part to play in the emergence of the traditions than has often been allowed in the past«.

with theoretical religious issues such as monotheism,⁵⁸ and concepts such as the covenant? What are the social referents of words like justice, righteousness, sin, iniquity, etc.⁵⁹ in the mouth of a prophet like Amos, or Isaiah, or Jeremiah?

Since the concern of these questions is with the relevant *societies* and (changing) *societal structures* of Old Testament times and with the everyday *socio-economic life* of those days, another strategy is called for to answer them. And the necessary strategies are being supplied by sociological and anthropological models.⁶⁰

This does *not* imply that historical critical *exegetical procedures* are being rejected.⁶¹ On the contrary, literary criticism and redaction criticism are still necessary procedures for reconstructing the growth of the prophetic books. But the results of the application of these procedures to the texts may differ from »classical« results, because the model of rationality of the exegete now differs from that of exegetes operating within the classical model.⁶² Moreover, the results are now also being interpreted within the framework of a different hermeneutical model and employed to answer a different set of questions.

The rise of an alternative paradigm is not only indicated by new questions put and alternative heuristic strategies employed in respect of the biblical text. It is also epitomized by a radical change in direction from »old archaeology« to »new archaeology«. ⁶³ »Biblical archaeology« has emancipated itself from the position of adding footnotes to the biblical text to a position of a fairly independent

⁵⁸ See, for instance, E. Haag (Hrsg), *Gott der Einzige. Zur Entstehung des Monotheismus*, 1985 where the debate is continued.

⁵⁹ See J. T. Bunn, Sin, iniquity, transgression: what is the difference? *BibIll* 12 (1986), 77–79.

⁶⁰ Cf. R. R. Wilson, *Sociological approaches to the Old Testament*, 1984; F. S. Frick, Social science methods and theories of significance for the study of the Israelite monarchy, *Semeia* 37 (1986), 9–52; J. H. le Roux, Some remarks on sociology and Ancient Israel, *Old Testament Essays* 3 (1985), 12–16; G. A. Herion, Sociological and anthropological methods in Old Testament study, *Old Testament Essays* 5 (1987), 43–64. Given the fact that the Israelite society was in a process of constant change it is evident that the application of one model will not provide »the answer« with regard to that society. See C. Hauer (jr.), From Alt to Anthropology: The Rise of the Israelite monarchy, *JSOT* 36 (1986), 3–15.

⁶¹ Cf. W. H. Schmidt, Grenzen und Vorzüge historisch-kritischer Exegese. Eine kleine Verteidigungsrede, *EvTh* 45 (1985), 469–481.

⁶² Cf. F. E. Deist, Idealistic *Theologiegeschichte*, ideology critique and the dating of oracles of salvation. Posing a question regarding an accepted methodology, *OTWSA* 23 (1980), 53–78.

⁶³ Cf. K. M. Whitelam, Recreating the history of Israel, *JSOT* 35 (1986), 45–70.

discipline.⁶⁴ New archaeology equally asks questions about the (changing) social, economic and political *systems* in which *ordinary* people lived in ancient days, and about the forces that changed those systems. And it is in the results of new Syro-Palestinian archaeology that the alternative paradigm is interested in the first place. The application of this or that anthropological and sociological model to relevant archaeological findings provide the answers to the question as to what sort of society functioned in a particular period.

The rise of an alternative paradigm is also witnessed to by a steadily increasing body of literature over the past decade or so on the sociological interpretation of Old Testament texts, also prophetic texts.⁶⁵ Much depends, of course, on what kind of sociological or anthropological theory is employed in answering the new questions – just as much depends on what kind of literary theory is employed in order to reconstruct the supposed (inherent) meaning of the (final/canonical) biblical text. Much of the criticism launched against the application (or even applicability) of sociological and anthropological models in Old Testament studies come from academics working within the dominant model of rationality.⁶⁶ Such criticisms may be to the point, but may also miss the point completely, because the mere questions asked within the alternative model may seem irrelevant from the viewpoint of the dominant model. Moreover, within the Kuhnian view, there is something like the incommensurability of models, i. e. the questions, procedures and answers of one model cannot simply be compared with those of another, transferred from the one to the other, or evaluated in terms of one another.

⁶⁴ Cf. W. G. Dever, Syro-Palestinian and biblical archaeology ca. 1945–1980 in D. A. Knight & G. M. Tucker, *The Hebrew Bible and its modern interpreters*, 1982; R. B. Coote & K. W. Whitelam, *The Emergence of early Israel in historical perspective*, 1987, especially the first and last chapters.

⁶⁵ Cf. J. S. Kselman, *The social world of the Israelite prophets*. A review article, *RelSRev* 11 (1985), 120–129; M. L. Chaney, *Systemic study of the Israelite monarchy*, *Semeia* 37 (1986), 53–76; N. K. Gottwald, *The participation of free agrarians in the introduction of monarchy to Ancient Israel: An application of H. A. Landsberger's framework for the analysis of peasant movements*, *Semeia* 37 (1986), 77–106. Also W. Brueggemann, *Theodicy in a social dimension*, *JSOT* 33 (1985), 3–25.

⁶⁶ This remark does, of course, not refer to all such criticism. See, for instance, R. P. Carroll, *Prophecy and society*, in R. E. Clements, *The World of Ancient Israel: Social, anthropological and political perspectives*, to be published 1989, who is very sceptical about the reconstruction of Israelite society from the biblical *texts* – and perhaps rightly so, but who devotes little attention to the possible contribution of new and regional archaeology in this regard. See also P. Laslett, *The wrong way through the telescope: a note on literary evidence in sociology and in historical sociology*, *British Journal of Sociology* 27 (1976), 319–342.

Although this »new look« at Israelite society is still in the making and although much work still has to be done, the prophets, if studied within this framework, may undergo a sort of »personality change«. ⁶⁷ For instance, the prophet Elijah has traditionally been pictured fairly »deuteronomistically« as *the* bold giant among the prophets, ⁶⁸ and as *the* proponent of ethical mono-Yahwism/monotheism. But a reconstruction of his life along the lines of the alternative paradigm pictures him as an honest, but naive, spokesman for an alienated section of Israelite society, and as a person who, without any insight into the sociological forces he was unleashing by his activities, caused the downfall of exactly those people (and ideals) he sought to serve. ⁶⁹

This picture of Elijah, if valid, may suggest that the sharp distinction between prophet and priest ⁷⁰, and between »true« and »false« prophets ⁷¹ as well as the traditional picturing of the priests and the »professional prophets« as the villains may be in need of serious rethinking. It may also be calling for a serious rethinking not only of the nature of (early) prophecy, but also of the so-called »prophetic task« of the church in modern society – an accepted role which is fairly exclusively modelled on the romantic picture of the prophets created by the dominant model.

⁶⁷ See already J. Negenman, *Het interpreteren van de profetische literatuur*, *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 15 (1975), 117–140, who defined »a prophet« as »een perzoon die zich geroepen voelt om te zeggen wat *volgens hem* authentieke religie inhoud« (p. 124 – emphasis added), and who already drew the lines between »true« and »false« prophets much less boldly as had been the case in Old Testament scholarship in general. See also T. R. Hobbs, *The search for prophetic consciousness*, *BTB* 15 (1985), 136–140, who thinks it fit to seek along social lines for the »origin« of prophetic consciousness.

⁶⁸ Cf. R. Rendtorff, *Erwägungen zur Frühgeschichte des Prophetentums in Israel*, *ZThK* 59 (1962), 145–167.

⁶⁹ F. E. Deist, *Israel in a period of change*, in F. E. Deist & J. H. le Roux, *op. cit.*, 47–103.

⁷⁰ Cf. P. Volz's very sharp distinction between priest and prophet in his *Prophetengestalten des Alten Testaments*, 1938, 56.

⁷¹ Although H. H. Rowley, *op. cit.*, 130, already warned against an all too neat distinction between these two »groups«.

The meaning of the verb *ḥāmas* in Jeremiah 13,22¹

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b^erob ^awonek niglû šûlayik nəḥm^esû ^aqebāyik

The purpose of the present article is to discuss the meaning of the verb *ḥāmas* as it is used in the niph'al in Jer 13,22, with special reference to the renderings in two recent English translations of the Hebrew Bible.

I

It is convenient to begin with the rendering of these two clauses in the Revised Version, which represents a common understanding of them: »for the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels suffer violence«.

This part of the verse describes the punishment of Jerusalem under the figure of speech of a woman being stripped bare. That, at least, is clear from the first clause, and it is unimportant for the present purpose whether the M. T.'s *šûlayik* is retained or whether the emendation *šôqayik* (cf. Isa 47,2) is favoured (so Cornill, Rudolph; Holladay, who strangely vocalizes the word *šûqayik*, notes its advantages, but believes it »safer to stay with« the M. T.).

We must set the question of the meaning of *nəḥm^esû* in the context of the meaning of the passage as a whole. There is general agreement that Jer 13 contains several originally unrelated passages. Some, like Weiser and Holladay, believe that verses 20–27 are one of the passages and that they constitute a unity (Condamin thinks that the unit is verses 21–27). Others (e. g. Rudolph, Carroll, McKane) question the unity of these verses and regard verses 20–22.25–27 as originally independent of verses 23–24. Whether or not verses 23–24 are an original part of the passage, it describes the attack on Judah by the foe from the north under the figure of speech of a woman attacked by her former lovers, who strip off her clothing. Some believe that this involves her being raped, but that is far from certain. There are a number of passages in

¹ A list of the principal publications cited in abbreviated form will be found at the end of the article.

the Old Testament that speak of stripping and revealing nakedness (e. g. Isa 3,17; 20,3–4; 47,2–3; Ez 16,35–41; 23,9–10; Hos 2,5.12; Nah 3,5–7; Thr 1,8), and in none of them is there an unambiguous reference to rape, but in some the situation is clearly different. The idea of a woman being enslaved and led off into exile may be present (cf. Isa 20,3–4; probably 47,2–3). Or the woman may be stripped before being killed (Ez 16,41; 23,10; cf. Jer 4,30–31). In Hos 2,5.12 Yahweh is a husband whose wife has committed adultery, and he strips her naked as part of her punishment; but he does not rape her. Further, in Jer 13,26 Yahweh says that he himself will strip off the woman's skirts, and her shame will be seen (cf. Hos 2,5.12), and it is scarcely likely that the Lord is portrayed as raping Jerusalem. The figure of speech in which Jerusalem is stripped thus carries no necessary implication of rape. Indeed, the fact that rape is certainly not present in verse 26 tells against the view that it is described in verse 22. Although it is the northern foes who strip Jerusalem in verse 22, the significance of stripping is unlikely to be different in verses so close to each other, and the act of stripping by human enemies in verse 22 is probably to be understood as at the same time an action by Yahweh. Even if it were argued that verse 26 is a later addition, it would at least show how verse 22 was understood at an early date. The context of verse 22 is thus far from supporting the view that there is a reference to rape, and verse 26 is evidence against such an interpretation.

The verb *hāmas*, which is found in the niph'al only here, is elsewhere thought to have in the qal the general meaning »to treat violently, to wrong«. It is used, for example, of oppressing the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow (Jer 22,3), of harming oneself (Prov 8,36), and of harming the Torah (Ez 22,26; Zeph 3,4). I ignore for the moment the problematical verses, which will be considered below. The cognate noun *hāmās* also has a range of meanings, from killing (Jud 9,24 and, by implication, Gen 49,5), to the injustice done to Sarai (Gen 16,5). Is it possible to find an appropriate meaning for this verb when applied to a woman's heels in Jer 13,22?

Several suggestions have been made. Volz thinks that, when the woman was disgraced by having her clothes stripped from her, she was also bastinadoed. Although the possibility of such further punishment cannot be excluded, there is no hint of it in the other passages that speak of stripping the clothes from a woman. Moreover, in contrast to the verses that speak of death, and even to those that speak of the public shaming of a woman, it seems almost an anticlimax to speak of beating the soles of her feet after the great disgrace to which she has been exposed. Condamin mentions three suggestions. The first is that there is a reference to chaining the feet (cf. Isa 45,14), but he questions whether

heels would be an appropriate part of the feet to mention. The second is the theory that the heels would suffer from a long march to the land of exile. This is more plausible, and yet one wonders why precisely the heels are mentioned instead of the feet. The third suggestion, which is the one favoured by Condamin, is that there is a euphemism. I do not know who first advanced this interpretation, but in 1793 Schleusner suggested the meaning *ipsa pudenda mulebria* (p. 119). In both editions of his commentary, Giesebrecht claims that ^a*qebāyik* is a euphemism like *raglayim* in Isa 7,20. This view has been favoured by a number of more recent commentators, although the euphemistic use of *raglayim* apparently refers to the male organ (cf. Isa 6,2). On such a view, the woman's »heels« suffer violence when she is raped. There is no evidence outside Jer 13,22 that *āqeb* had such a meaning in Biblical Hebrew, but van Selms draws attention to a euphemistic usage in Mishnaic Hebrew. The word is certainly used of a part of the body other than the heels in the Babylonian Talmud, although Ned. 20A and Naz. 51A make it plain that the reference is (as van Selms recognizes) to the buttocks rather than to the genitals. In any case, we have seen that it is questionable whether a reference to rape fits the context of Jer 13,22.

II

It is because of the difficulty of finding a satisfactory interpretation of »thy heels suffer violence« that other solutions to the problem have been proposed. Ehrlich regards *nāḥm^esû* as impossible and suggests reading *nāḥs^epû* to correspond to *niglû* earlier in verse 22, and he compares verse 26. The meaning he obtains — »are stripped bare« — is excellent, but the suggested emendation involves a difference of two letters from the M. T., and it is better to seek another solution if possible.

E. Ben Yehuda, *Thesaurus Totius Hebraicitatis*, 1626, seeks to explain the verb with the help of Mishnaic Hebrew, in which the pi^el of *hāmas* can mean »to scratch with the nails«. It must, indeed, be agreed that Post-Biblical Hebrew sometimes preserves meanings that were current in biblical times although not well attested in the Hebrew Bible. Yet he suggests no analogy for scratching the heels as a punishment (one would have thought that there are parts of the body where scratching would cause more pain), and there would be an anticlimax.

Let us now consider the renderings in two modern English versions of the Hebrew Bible that differ from those considered above. The New English Bible (1970) has:

For your many sins your skirts are torn off you,
your limbs [margin: *Lit.* heels] uncovered.

The new Jewish version, *The Prophets: Nevi'im*, published in 1978 by the Jewish Publication Society of America, has:

It is because of your great iniquity
That your skirts are lifted up,
Your limbs exposed.

These versions thus give to *næhm^esû* the meaning »[are] uncovered« or »exposed«. This understanding is derived from an article by H. Torczyner (later N. H. Tur-Sinai) in 1918, 156, in which he discusses Prov 26,6 and compares Jer 13,22. Tur-Sinai finds a similar meaning in Job 15,33 and Thr 2,6, as he makes clear in his commentary on Job in 1967 and 1972. He suggests that »the primary meaning of« *hāmas* is »to uncover, to denude« (*hāsap, gillā*). His suggestion is favoured by G. R. Driver in his comments on Prov 26,6 (1963, 113), and by E. Ullendorff, BSOAS 42 (1979), 426–427. It is mentioned by McKane in his comments on Jer 13,22, who regards it as a possible alternative to »is violated« (pp. 306, 310–311).

Tur-Sinai simply asserts that this meaning exists for *hāmas*, and he refers to no earlier support for it. The proposed meaning has, however, a long history. Ibn Janah quotes the relevant parts of Thr 2,6, Job 15,33 and Jer 13,22, and defines the meaning of the verb as *natr(un) wahatk(un)*, »scattering and exposure« (p. 234). The first definition seems appropriate for the first two passages quoted, and the second for the third. Similarly, Qimhi's comments on Jer 13,22 say that *næhm^esû* here means *niglû*, and he compares Thr 2,6. Behind the medieval Jewish scholars lies the Targum's rendering *'thzy* in Jer 13,22, and a similar understanding appears in the LXX's ἀνεκαλύφθη and the Peshitta's *w'tgly*. Indeed, of the major ancient versions of Jer 13,22 only the Vulgate offers a different interpretation: *pollutae sunt plantae tuae*.

What claim has this understanding of *næhm^esû* to be considered the correct interpretation of this part of Jer 13,22? First, the suggested meaning fits the context well. When the woman's skirts are removed, her heels are revealed to sight. The words *næhm^esu* ^a*qebāyik* do not describe a further stage of punishment like bastinadoing or scratching, but we have here an example of synonymous parallelism. Secondly, it has the support of three of the ancient versions. While it is possible that their renderings depend on no more than a guess based on the context, it is also possible that they are based on a reliable tradition. Thirdly, Tur-Sinai claims that the same meaning is probable in three other passages: Prov 26,6; Thr 2,6; and Job 15,33. It seems best not to base any argument on Prov 26,6, since the explanation demands a change in pointing. Whether or not Tur-Sinai's explanation of Prov 26,6 is correct, it depends on the theory that *hāmas* has the desired meaning and cannot