

not to live without us. The worst form of atheism is to find God in creation, but not in history. The worst infidelity is to look upon God as a manufacturer of worlds and forget that He is a maker of souls. No people lives apart from God, because He lives apart from no people. He is a Deliverer and a Saviour, and if we do not see Him in His greatness as a deliverer, we are made to see Him in His greatness as a destroyer. Many of us have to go into captivity in order to be brought forth again.

Such is God, and if God be such, what a demand is made of man! "Thou shalt serve no other gods before Me. Thou shalt obey nothing that robs you of Me, nothing which takes you from Me, nothing which makes you endeavour to live apart from Me. That is the way to your freedom."

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THE SECRET EXPERIENCES OF THE PROPHETS.¹

12. So far, we have been dealing with the external manifestations of prophetic ecstasy. Now let us turn to their inner life. Our first observation here must be the same as that which we have already made, viz., the prophets were animated by a religious *passion* of very great intensity. "*I have been zealous for the Lord of hosts,*" says Elijah, describing his own life and work. And they are all the same, from the first to the last of them, all filled only by the one thought of the cause of their God. And what they conceive their God to be, overwhelming in His anger and in His love, they themselves are—all temperamental, at full tension. It is this passion which, at the lower stage, is worked up by music and dance, by violent crying and singing. It was religious passion also that filled the prophets

¹ By Professor Hermann Gunkel, being the second of three introductory essays in Prof. Hans Schmidt's *Die Grossen Propheten*, Göttingen, 1923.

of the higher order, although they disdained these outward aids. But when the excitation has reached its climax, then the ecstasy appears (1 Kings xviii. 29).

The science of Psychology does not see in religious ecstasy any inexplicable mystery. It is aware there have been many religious ecstasies in the world besides the prophets, and that every human emotion is capable of being raised to the pitch of ecstasy. When such an ecstasy seizes him, the prophet has all the experiences and does all the things we have described. He loses command of his limbs: he staggers and stutters like a drunken man; his sensitiveness to pain is diminished or suspended: his ordinary sense of what is decent deserts him; he feels an impulse to do all kinds of strange actions and seems to have become insane: a feeling of infinite strength possesses him—he can run and leap more than an ordinary person can do: strange emotions and ideas come over him and mingle with what was already in his mind or what his surroundings present to his senses: he is seized by that peculiar sensation of hovering which we know from our own dreams: he feels as if the "spirit" had grasped him by the hair and were carrying him between heaven and earth: or he has a strange taste in his mouth (Ezek. iii. 2): or he feels a heavy pressure on his head—Jahveh's hand has seized him (1 Kings xviii. 46) and lies heavy upon him (2 Kings iii. 15; Ezek. iii. 22): he feels as if his lips were being touched by Jahveh's hand, or seared with a glowing coal (Jer. i. 9; Isa. vi. 7): he believes he has been awakened from sleep by the divine hand (1 Kings xix. 5, 7; Zech. iv. 1) or shaken up (Dan. x. 10) and set on his feet (Ezek. ii. 2). It must have been very usual for the prophet's eye to *see visions*. The "Seers," i.e., visionaries, familiar in ancient Israel, and whose chief representative was Samuel (1 Sam. ix. 9), had at an early stage coalesced with the prophets. With special frequency

the prophet feels himself brought into Jahveh's council and sees there the beings who surround the divine throne and discuss with Jahveh the affairs of his kingdom (1 Kings xxii. 19; Isa. vi.). Besides the visions, there are *sounds* which the prophet hears and which he interprets according to the faith of his time. He hears a tremendous crashing noise and is convinced that he has heard the noise of the chariot of God (Ezek. iii. 12). In the sound of a trumpet he believes he hears the noise of the war that is to be (Jer. iv. 19); or he hears the voice of the spirits speaking to him in the air (Isa. xl. 3) or the words spoken in the council of heaven. This last must have been quite common. He only is a prophet, who has stood in God's council (Jer. xxiii. 18, 22). Most frequently, of course, it is the words of Jahveh Himself that the ecstatic hears. He feels himself to be Jahveh's messenger with the duty of announcing to whom it may concern the divine will which he has thus learned. How normal sensation is mixed with what is visionary in such revelations, may be learned from the vision of Amos. Standing beside the altar at Bethel, he suddenly sees God Himself on the altar (viii. 1). Frequently it is very loud sounds and very dazzling lights that the prophet hears and sees (Isa. vi. 3; Ezek. i. 24; iii. 12; x. 5); a noise like the surge of mighty waters, or the tumultuous noise of a whole people (Isa. xvii. 12), or the light of God outshining a thousand times all earthly light (Ezek. i. ; Dan. x. 5). Sometimes, too, in his ecstasy the prophet must speak either without or even against his will (1 Kings xxiii. 20). Under such circumstances he is utterly unable to speak in other words than those which are given him (Num. xxii. 18; xxiii. 12; 1 Kings xxii. 14).

13. In all these manifestations of ecstasy both prophets and people believed they recognised the act of God. The investigator is in no way surprised at this, for he knows

that wherever such phenomena are found all over the world, there also is the conviction that they are due to the deity. How should men in these ancient days think differently? Whoever experiences such states feels clearly that something alien has entered into him—something higher that masters him. He himself has not produced these things, they have overmastered him (Jer. xx. 7). Even the onlooker sees something mysterious in these states. Whoever watched the prophets staggering about, plunging and rushing and falling in helplessness and exhaustion, could not doubt they had been “*changed into other men*” (1 Sam. x. 6), and that a power not themselves had taken hold of them. These phenomena must be the manifestations of another Being, similar to the human soul, but not the soul, more than the soul. They were manifestations of the divinity that works so marvellously in man. This inference is so easy and natural, that it was universal throughout antiquity, and it reappears from time to time amongst ourselves. The ancient Israelite believed so too. He referred the ecstasy of the prophets to Jahveh’s spirit. By “spirit” was meant in Hebrew antiquity that divine power which found expression in these and similar phenomena. When Samson meets a lion in the way, Jahveh’s spirit comes upon him, and although he has no weapon, he seizes the beast and tears it to pieces (Judges xiv. 6). When Saul hears of the degrading conditions imposed by a foreign king on an Israelite city, Jahveh’s spirit comes upon him, and in overmastering rage he hews his oxen in pieces and sends these as a summons for a gathering of all Israel (1 Sam. xi. 6). To such a spirit were attributed things both good and evil. Men spoke of a spirit of wisdom, of courage, but also of a spirit of uncleanness and drunkenness. Even insanity was looked upon as the effect of an *evil spirit from Jahveh*, and the

madman was considered sacred (1 Sam. xxi. 14). According to the belief current in Israel, God's spirit was the cause of all that found expression in any superhuman mysterious power in man—all that was awful and terrible in human life, and the most characteristic result of the spirit is, in the Old Testament, the hithnabbe'—the prophetic state. The prophet is "the man of the spirit" (Hosea ix. 7).

14. It must of course be said emphatically, that modern science meets this interpretation of the prophetic state with an unqualified denial. Whilst the modern investigator must inevitably try to understand such phenomena psychologically, the ancient mind sees in them simply a divine marvel. But just because the ancient mind read them thus, it attributed to these things and persons the highest possible value. With awe and wonder the pious Israelite sees and hears the prophets, in the full conviction that the deity is drawing near to him in these persons with a message meant for him. However strange the conduct of the prophet, however mysterious his words, they must contain a profound meaning which he must seek to understand. In the early Christian communities, there stood alongside the speaker in tongues, who in his ecstasy uttered all kinds of unintelligible sounds, the interpreter who was able to give to these strange tongues an intelligible meaning, worthy of God (1 Cor. xii. 10). And what of the *self-consciousness* of the prophets, who like the people were certain that Jahveh Himself was working in them? What a consciousness such a man must have had! Under the thrill of this conviction, the personality of the ecstatic could entirely disappear and the deity take complete possession of him, so that he could now act and speak as God! The "I" that speaks through him is God Himself! He knows what God knows (Num. xxiv. 16). The thoughts that come to him are God's thoughts, and the surging sea

of emotions that flood his soul is the emotion of God! "*I am full of the fury of the Lord*" (Jer. vi. 11). And it is natural that the prophet should unconsciously interpret what he experiences in his ecstasy in accordance with what others and himself expect. This mingling of experience and interpretation is specially clear in the dream visions (Gen. xx. 3; xxxvii. 5; Dan. ii.; Num. xii. 6; Deut. xiii. 2; Joel iii. 1; Enoch xiii. 7. Jeremiah expresses contempt for dreams xxiii. 25). Zechariah sees in a night vision four horns and four smiths: the added explanation interprets the horns as the four world empires and the smiths are called to sharpen the scythes (reading l^ehahed 'ittim) in order to cut off the horns (Zech. ii. 1). In most cases, however, experience and interpretation are so completely intertwined, that it is hardly possible to separate them.

15. Seeing that this was the current estimate of the prophets in ancient Israel, we can understand that they were frequently consulted on all manner of questions. The prophets became the givers of oracles. This oracular element is of great importance for the understanding of both religion and prophecy among the Hebrews. In antiquity, men felt often and deeply how little they knew. The limits of the knowledge that was possible to man were not so firmly drawn as they are to-day. But when he was at a loss, he ran to his deity like a child to his parents, and the "oracles" were to the people of antiquity and to the Hebrews an integral part of religion. At first it was, of course, quite definite questions arising out of daily life that were asked. What was the meaning of that strange dream? (Gen. xli.). Shall I recover from my illness? (2 Kings i.). Will the city be able to withstand the siege? (2 Kings vii. 1). Will the enterprise succeed? (Judges xviii. 5). At the beginning of the battle the question is,

Shall we win ? (1 Sam. xiv. 18), at the close, Shall we pursue ? (1 Sam. xiv. 37). In all such cases it was customary to inquire of the deity, and there were a great variety of ways to obtain information from Jahveh. The method commonly taken was to ask the "man of God," the confidant of the deity. Among these "men of God," who were numerous and of many types in Israel, were the prophets. As most of the questions which troubled men concerned the future, the prophets were accustomed to speak of the future. To this extent the traditional meaning of the word "prophet" as synonymous with "foreteller" is after all accurate. There is none among the literary prophets whose first word was not an announcement of a future event. The divine commission of a prophet is recognised by the fact that his word comes true (Deut. xviii. 22 ; Zech. ii. 13) and the man of God might add a *counsel*. He must have often been asked what was to be done in a definite case. He was also credited with knowledge of things far distant : he was able in the spirit to go far afield (2 Kings v. 26). Ezekiel claimed to be able to announce in distant Babylon things he had seen in his ecstasy happening in Jerusalem (chap. viii.), and Elisha knew the very words the King of Syria spoke in his bed-chamber (2 Kings vi. 12). And the prophet could even see into the heart of man (1 Sam. ix. 19 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 24).

16. But the prophet can not only foretell events and give counsel and intercede (2 Kings xix. 4), he can also bring the future events to pass. For it is God's word that he speaks, and that is no empty sound—it is active and creative. As the rain returns not till it has refreshed the ground, so God's word returns not to Him void (Isa. lv. 10). But he into whose lips this word has been put is able in God's name to lay commands on the powers of the world. He has power over death and life (2 Kings i. ; Jer. xxviii.

16). He can issue commands to peoples and empires and tell them what they must do. Jeremiah (i. 10) feels himself to be Jahveh's viceroy in the world. He has seen himself in vision holding out Jahveh's cup to the nations that they might drink to themselves destruction (xxv. 15). And that great prophet who tells his life and sufferings in Deutero-Isaiah calls himself the servant, the minister of Jahveh. The word of God that the prophet speaks is "like fire, like a hammer that breaks rocks" (Jer. xxiii. 29).

17. In like manner, it was believed that the prophets, as the favourites of God, had at command many mysterious powers. Numerous tales were current regarding Elijah, Elisha and even Isaiah. There was believed to be something like magic even about their persons. Contact with a dead boy restored the latter to life (1 Kings xvii. 21). Magical power could pass from the prophet's person into the mantle which he usually wore. He could strike with it the water of a river, and the water parted asunder (2 Kings ii. 8). He cast it upon another person, and that person had to follow whether he would or no (1 Kings xix. 19). It is clear that many of these narratives are popular tales, for it is significant that the biography of Jeremiah, included in his book, which is extraordinarily faithful, contains no such magical deeds concerning him.¹ But it would be a mistake to suppose that the belief in the miraculous power of the prophet is a product of later time. As a matter of fact the prophets themselves did things, by which they professed not only to indicate the future, but also to bring it to pass, and which therefore are closely allied to magic. Elisha bequeaths to his people victories over the Syrians, by grasping the king's hands and making him shoot an arrow towards the east, uttering the conjuring

¹ Two miracles are recorded in Jer. xxviii. ; but neither is magical. Hananiah dies at the word of Jeremiah.

words: "An arrow of victory from Jahveh: an arrow of victory over Syria" (2 Kings xiii. 17). Then the king is told to strike the ground with the arrows, and as often as he strikes the ground, so many victories he will gain (v. 19). And even Jeremiah makes one of his disciples read aloud a curse upon Babylon and then throw the roll into the Euphrates (Jer. li. 59); Ezekiel tells us that there were, in the lower grades of prophecy, prophetesses able by their magic to "catch souls," i.e., to bring back into the body the departing souls of the sick, and it is significant that Ezekiel himself, while he condemns these sorceresses, has no doubt as to their magical powers (xiii. 17).

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(To be continued.)

WRONG CHAPTER AND VERSE DIVISIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

It is curious what slaves most of us are to custom. We quickly enslave ourselves to our accustomed routine. The Revised Version of the New Testament stirred one pious brother to remark that the King James Version was good enough for the Apostle Paul and it was good enough for him. And yet for nearly fifty years it was not certain whether the King James Version or the Geneva would win the day. When Erasmus published in 1516 his first Greek New Testament, he printed side by side with the Greek text a Latin translation and some notes. In his edition of 1527 he put in also the Latin Vulgate which had for centuries held the field in the West. But this Latin Vulgate of Jerome for many years met a storm of abuse from those who preferred the Old Latin versions. The King James Version which the Revised Version challenged in 1881 had the verses printed separately as if each verse was a separate