

DID THE PROPHETS HAVE RARE INSIGHT OR MERELY STUMBLE UPON A FEW THINGS OF VALUE?

To sum up, numbers of the so-called 'auditions' in the prophetic revelations are exalted poetry, or even fictitious literary productions and nothing else. In other cases they are expressions of an inner awareness that the prophet stands under Yahweh's command and is an object of divine impulses. A small minority are real auditions, i.e., auditions received in an ecstatic experience. (Lindblom, p. 137)

Indeed, the nature of the Bible is precisely something which is not consistent with everything else we know about the historical circumstances under which it evolved. It would have been more consistent with out general understanding had the great religious insights been given to the sages of Egypt or Athens rather than to a homeless people roaming and starving in the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula. The wonder of the Bible is against all human expectations, and if it had not been for the book's apparent spiritual glory and for the inexplicable power of human faith, it would have been rejected as absurd and unlikely. (Heschel, p. 414)

Is it possible to speak of eschatology in the pre-exilic prophets? This problem has been much discussed, but no consensus has been reached. The answer seems to depend on two things: how one defines eschatology and what parts of the prophetic books one considers genuine. If eschatology is taken in the sense it has in dogmatic theology, as a doctrine of last things, the end of the world and the end of history, the coming into being of a completely new and different world, then naturally no eschatology is found in the prophets. Their message, however, does contain a novel element, something that can be called eschatological in a wider sense. (Ringgren, p. 259)

It is a significant fact to note that as foretellers the prophets were failures. Their predictions went wild again and again. Jeremiah especially seemed to have been inept at the art. Prediction was not their special gift nor interest. (Cobban, 5)

Recent study of the phenomenon of prophecy in Israel has tended to discard the category of religious genius, which seemed appropriate to an earlier generation of interpreters, and has concentrated rather upon the prophetic tradition by which the prophet received and handed on the insights of Israel's great past when, through the work of Moses and his successors in the pre-monarchic period, the community began to take shape, and upon his obedience to the living word of God even when it took the form of an inexorable warning of judgment. (Porteous, in Peake's, 153)