

p. 57 In the Old Testament narratives, however, ru^ah is never regarded as a being independent of Yahweh.¹⁸ The spirit is always Yahweh's spirit, a more or less substantial dynamis, a force emanating from Yahweh; the spirit is always sent by Yahweh and runs Yahweh's errands. For this reason it is wrong to suggest that ru^ah was regarded as a spirit analogous to the spirits of the shamans or the jinn of the pre-Islamic Arabs; nor is there any question of possession in the proper sense of the word, as in the narratives of the demons in the gospels. The ru^ah affects the prophet, but it is always thought of as a means by which Yahweh Himself works in human life, and can never be isolated or separated from Yahweh.

p. 66 Many scholars are of the opinion that this clothing in its various forms originated in cultic customs. Holscher in his work on the Israelite prophets points to the fact that in ancient cults the priests often wore skins of animals that were used for sacrifices. He believes that the clothing of the prophets was originally the bullskins in which the priests of the Phoenician-Canaanite Baal, the bull god, wrapped themselves.

This theory is connected with the view that primitive Israelite prophecy was derived solely from Canaanite religion and was an essentially alien phenomenon amongst the Hebrews. If this theory means that ecstatic prophecy in Israel was in itself a loan from the Canaanites, there is no ground for such a hypothesis. As has been demonstrated in the first chapter of this book, ecstasy and ecstatic prophecy are not restricted to specific peoples; they appear everywhere in the world, irrespective of race and culture. It can never be proved that prophetic ecstasy was not indigenous in Israel as well as in other peoples throughout the world. But might not a genuine Hebrew movement have borrowed forms and customs from the pagan world? This possibility must be admitted; but it is scarcely likely that the Yahweh prophets in Israel, zealous as they were for the genuine Yahwistic faith and cult, adopted from a foreign religion features so markedly pagan as the bull skins of the Baal priests. In the opinion of the present writer another explanation is more plausible, namely that the skin and the hairy mantle derive their origin from a nomadic usage, well known among the inhabitants of the desert.