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PRIESTHOOD AND PROPHECY IN JUDEO-CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Introduction

Priests and prophets are prominent religious functionaries in many religions of the world. Based on their functions, the religious functionaries can be classified into two broad categories, namely, mediators and mediums. Priests are mediators while prophets are mediums. A mediator is a go-between, a person who mediates between the object of worship and the worshipper. Because of his personal qualities, office, skill and training, the mediator acts as a link in the relationship between man and the spiritual world.¹ E.B. Idowu describes a priest as "a person 'in touch' both ways between the deity worshipped and man: He 'knows' both of them, 'hears' both of them and speaks on behalf of one to the other."² A priest can therefore be described as an intermediary, an intercessor, between man and the spiritual being or beings whom he worships.

The word "prophet" is derived from Greek "prophētēs" meaning "one who speaks before others." The Greek word is used to denote "one who communicates divine revelation." In the Greek Bible, "prophetes," translates into Hebrew "nabi," prophet. There is uncertainty about the meaning of the etymology of the word. Some scholars derive it from the Akkadian root meaning "to call," "speak aloud" and interpret it as "speaker." Others relate it to the Arabian root which means "to bubble," showing the frenetic character of prophetic utterances. But W.F. Albright derives it from the Akkadian root used as "one called" (by God to speak for him).³ E.M. Zuesse refers to a prophet, a medium, as one possessed by a demigod or spirit who voluntarily

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1. E. Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions* (Onitsha: Imico Publishers, 1987) p. 213.
 2. E.B. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, 1962) p. 130.
 3. John L. Mckenzie, S.J. quoting W.F. Albright in *Dictionary of the Bible* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966) p. 694.

acts as the agent of a divine will.⁴ Ikenga Metuh sees a medium as a person (or object) through whom a deity communicates his message or bestows his blessing on his people.⁵ Evans Pritchard highlights the difference between priests and prophets when he said:

But the most outstanding conceptual difference is that whereas in the priest man speaks to God, in the prophet God, in one or other of his hypostases, speaks to man. The priest stands on the earth and looks to the sky. Heavenly beings descend from the sky and fill the prophets. The prophet is the mouth-piece of a spirit, its interpreter; it is he who speaks but under its control.⁶

Evans-Pritchard succinctly indicates the difference between a priest as a mediator and a prophet as a medium. This paper seeks to examine phenomenologically priesthood and prophethood in Judeo-Christian Religion.

PRIESTHOOD IN JUDEO-CHRISTIAN RELIGION

The institution of priesthood in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, no doubt, influenced the Israelite priesthood, a reflection of which is seen in the Old Testament. To appreciate and understand fully the meaning and significance of priesthood in Ancient Israel, we shall therefore preface this section with a brief account of priesthood in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Priesthood in Ancient Mesopotamia

Priesthood was a feature of Mesopotamian religion. It was hereditary; it was divided into different classes with specialized functions. At the head of the institution were chief priests. The Mesopotamian priesthood included diviners, magicians and temple personnel some of whom were women. The priests acted as scribes and teachers. The Assyrian priests were exempt from taxes and military services. They owned large portions of land and slaves which belonged to the temples.

4. E.M. Zuesses *Ritual Cosmos, the Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1979).

5. E. Ikenga Metuh, *Op. cit.*, p. 213.

6. Evans - Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1956) p. 304.

They engaged in exorcism; offered sacrifices to the deities, and they performed ritual sacred marriages. A peculiar feature of Sumerian priesthood is that they were required to be naked during their cultic functions.⁷

Priesthood in Egypt

The number of priests in Ancient Egypt was large. From the records of Ramases III, J.A. Wilson estimated 450,000 persons and 1100 square miles as belonging to the temples, that is, 1/10 of the population and 1/8 of the arable land.⁸ Like their counterparts in Mesopotamia, the priests in Egypt were divided into groups with specific functions assigned to them. Occasionally, they also functioned as judges and magistrates. Priesthood in the new kingdom of Egypt, under the 18th – 20th dynasties, enjoyed much political power. The priesthood of Amon at Thebes even challenged the Pharaoh. The priesthood was very active politically under the successors of Ikhnoton who had challenged the supremacy of Amon. The priesthood reached its Zenith of political power when under the 20th dynasty, it seized the kingship itself.⁹

Priesthood in the Old Testament

The origins of priesthood in the Old Testament are shrouded in obscurity. The Pentateuch is clear that all priesthood belongs to the clan of Aaron. But behind this apparently clear picture of priesthood, there are other records of claimants to the priesthood under the geneology of Levi. It is not even known whether all these hereditary dynasties of priests belonged to the tribe of Levi in a racial sense. Priesthood in Ancient Israel was largely, artificially restricted to the tribe of Levi; many non-Levite families were "adopted" into this tribe.

The claimants may not be seen as the expression of rivalry between Levi and Aaron or between Levi and Zadok. It should be noted that prior to the building of the temple (and in some cases long after this also) Israelites worshipped at local shrines or sanctuaries throughout the land. Each local sanctuary had its own hereditary priesthood. It cannot be stated precisely when rivalry between the groups began. But during the

7. John L. Mckenzie, S.J. *Op. cit.*, p. 689.

8. *Ibid.* p. 689.

9. *Ibid.* p. 690.

reigns of David and Solomon, with the centralization of the organization of the cultic personnel they introduced, much rivalry must have continued between the various priestly families. The rivalry between the houses of Zadok and Abiathar became acute. David accepted the priesthood of Abiathar, but added the priestly line of Zadok (2 Sam. 18:17; 20:25). It has been suggested that the house of Zadok was of Canaanite or Jebusite origin and that priests from this house ministered at Jerusalem before David captured the city. This theory postulates that David retained Zadok and his family in their priestly office, but merely rededicated them to the worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel. This may account for the artificial or doubtful genealogies which connected Zadok with Levi and with Aaron (1 Chr. 5:34). No attempt was made to connect Eli with the priestly genealogy because his priestly line was rejected. Under Solomon, the house of Abiathar was replaced with that of Zadok (1 Kings 2:26f.). Jeroboam of Israel is said to have established a new priesthood at his sanctuary of Dan and Bethel. It is not stated whether they came from old priestly families, as they most probably did (1 Kings 12:31).

The connection of Aaron with the period of Moses is clearer than what we have for any other group; these are related to Aaron by genealogy.¹⁰

The office of the high priest was a feature of the post-exilic period. By hereditary succession, the house of Zadok held the office down to Onias II, 175-B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes replaced Onias with Jason (175-172 B.C.), the last Zadokite high priest. The Seleucid kings appointed high priests until Jonathan assumed office in 153 B.C. The Hasmoneans held the office until Aristobulus 37 B.C. From this date onwards, under the Herods and Roman rule, the office acquired a political role in the hands of the secular government. It was monopolized by the priestly families of Annas and Caiphas.

In the post-exilic period, the high priest was the most important person in the Jewish community. He was the head of the cult as well as the president of the Sanhedrin and the chief representative of the Jews to the ruling officers of the foreign rulers who ruled Palestine.

Apart from the act of the priest Jehoiada in dethroning Athaliah (2 Kings II), the political activities of the priests were insignificant in both

10. *Ibid.* p. 690.

pre-monarchic and monarchic periods of Israelite history. Even a reference to him is rare. He is mentioned as the great priest (LV. 21 :10; Nm. 35:25; Jos. 20:6; 2 King 22:4, 8); the head priest (2 King 25:18; Ch. 19:11; Ezz. 7:5) and occasionally as the anointed priest (LV. 4:5). It is argued that since most of the texts in which these phrases appear were not written before the exile, the words "great" and "head" are mere interpolations and retrojections of the high priest into the past.¹¹

The number of priestly families or clans is large. In the post-exilic period, twenty-one families or classes are recorded in Ne. 10:3-9 (cf. Ne. 12:1-7, 12-21). In I Chr. 24:1-19, the number has increased to twenty-four, one of which is mentioned in Lk. 1:5. In the New Testament times, the twenty-four classes served in the temple in weekly turns and the families within the classes served in daily turns. Zachariah, who had a specialized office, offered incense in the temple.

Functions of Priesthood

The priest in the Old Testament performed three functions. Firstly, he delivered oracles (Dt. 33:7-10; Jgs. 18:5; 1 S. 33:10). Secondly, he gave instruction in the law (Dt. 33:10). And thirdly, he offered sacrifice (Dt. 33:10). Some scholars have argued that the major function of the priest was the delivering of oracles because in Ancient Israel, the head of the family offered sacrifices (Gen. 22; Jgs. 6:26; 13:19; 1 K. 18:30ff). Furthermore, the giving of instruction in the law developed from the oracular function; "the oracle is a communication of the revealed will of Yahweh as a guide of action, and instruction in the law is a more systematic communication of the same thing."¹² In the post-exilic period, the function of instruction in the law gradually passed into the hands of specialists, the scribes. The priests of Israel were also the custodians of their historical traditions. They played a leading role in the recording of the historical traditions. The "P" source of the Pentateuch is one great single monument of priestly tradition and theology. Thus, priests occupied a very unique position in the relationship between Ancient Israel and Yahweh. W. Eichrodt summarizes the position of priests in Israel as "the indispensable mediators for entrance into the sphere of the divine."¹³

11. *Ibid.*, p. 691.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 691.

13. John L. Mckenzie J.S. quoting W. Eichrodt in *Dictionary of the Bible*, *Ibid.*, p. 691.

Criticism of the Priesthood

Some priests were occasionally rebuked for their failure to give proper instruction (Je. 2:8; Ezk. 22:26; Hos. 4:4-6; Mal. 2:6ff). Some others, especially after the exile, were accused of revelry (Is. 28:7). Jeremiah associated some of them with false prophets, as deceivers of the people (Je. 5:30-31; 6:13-14; 8:10-11; 23:11).

Priesthood in the New Testament

The Gospels make only a few references to priesthood. Jesus leaves with the priesthood the decision to choose between clean and unclean (Mt. 8:14; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14; 17:14). He justified freedom of action on the Sabbath by demonstrating that priestly privileges must give way to need (Mt. 12:4; Mk. 2:26; Lk. 6:4). Matthew adds that priestly service at the sanctuary does not violate the Sabbath (Matt. 12:5). Luke's parable of the Good Samaritan implies criticism of priests and Levites (Lk. 10:31f.). It is in the Passion narrative that the priestly aristocracy (the chief priests) are presented as being the most hostile of all to Jesus, and most active in securing his condemnation and death.

Jesus did not apply the title priest (Gk. *hiereus*) to himself nor to his disciples, but the idea of Christian priesthood is implied in the New Testament. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers receives considerable attention in 1 Peter 2:9. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." This passage, though part of it originally applied to Israel, "a kingdom of priests," is now addressed to the Christian Church, who mediate the wondrous deeds of God to others, a genuinely priestly function. The priesthood of the Church is further enhanced by its election and consecration. Also, by virtue of their union with Christ, the High Priest, all Christians, through their baptism which is seen as the "ordination" to the universal brotherhood of all believers, participate in his priestly mediation to other believers and the world.

The Epistle to the Hebrews deals almost exclusively with the uniqueness and transcendence of Christ's priesthood (Heb. 4:14). In the eyes of a Jew, Jesus could not be a "priest" because he did not belong to the tribe of Levi. The priesthood of Jesus was vindicated by the application to Jesus of the priesthood of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20). This priesthood was said to be superior to that of Aaron because

Abraham, the ancestor of Levi and Aaron, acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek by paying him tithes (Heb. 7:1-17). The Epistle to the Hebrews calls Jesus Christ priest (*hiereus*) and high priest (*archiereus*). The priesthood of Christ does not only transcend the Levite priesthood, but also abolishes it (7:11). The priesthood of Christ is not earthly, but heavenly. His sonship is a manifestation of his dignified priesthood, which is a high claim to mediation and union with God. The ancient sacrificial cult was imperfect, but in the sacrifice of Jesus, the imperfect cult has been fulfilled (9-10). Christ identified himself with men (2:17); having being tested in every way (4:15), he is sinless (4:15) and undefiled (2:26). Hence, unlike the priests of old who offered sacrifices for their own sins and the sins of other people, Christ only offered them for others. His offering does not need any repetition and cannot be repeated because of the totality of its effectiveness (7:27; 9:24-28; 10:10, 12, 14). He abolishes the ancient sacrificial cult (10:9; 7:18:13). The sacrifice of Christ engendered redemption (9:12), salvation (10:18), forgiveness (19:15), purification (10:18) and sanctification (10:10). And it is the basis of a new cult (9:14; 13:15f).

Priestcraft

This denotes the skill in exercising priestly functions. The word is now used in a pejorative sense to show the craftiness of priests in imposing themselves on the people with a view to furthering their own interests.

PROPHECY IN JUDEO-CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Prophecy in Ancient Israel

Prophetism played a significant role in the socio-religious life of the people of the Ancient Near East, Ancient Israel included. Although some superficial parallels have been drawn between Hebrew and Ancient Near East prophetism,¹⁴ Hebrew prophetism is a uniquely distinctive Hebrew phenomenon. The content of Hebrew or Israelite prophecy in terms of ethics and religion has no parallel anywhere in the ancient world.

14. It has been identified that the introductory formula form and style are identical in the two prophetic systems. *Ibid.* p. 694.

Some Ancient Israelites and the Prophetic title: A Retrojection

Some persons in early Israel were given the prophetic title by retrojection.¹⁵ The earliest biblical records of prophecy centre around these people: Abraham is described as a prophet (Gen. 20:7), Aaron (Ex. 7:1), Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Moses (Nm. 12:6-8; Dt. 34:10; 18:15-19) and the elders (Nm. 11:16-26). Although some scholars have argued that these persons acquired their prophetic titles by retrojection, their functions in the socio-religious life of the Hebrews validate their prophethood. For instance, Abraham pleaded with Yahweh on behalf of Abimeleck, the king of Gerar. Yahweh "spoke" directly to Moses, who is really the head of all prophets and a "proto-type of Hebrew prophets." The retrojection portrays Hebrew conception of prophecy: direct conversation with Yahweh or through inspiration speak in his name.

Sons of the Prophet(s)

Shortly before the institution of monarchy, a group of prophets often referred to as "Sons of the Prophet(s)" emerged in Israel. They were trained and organized for worship through cultic song and dance (1 Sam. 10:5-12; 19:20-24). Their ecstatic experience was often induced by mutual excitation through dance and music. They prophesied in their ecstatic mood which earned them the name, ecstatic prophets. They predicted that Ahab would defeat the Aramaeans. There is no clear distinction between "the sons of the prophets" and the prophets. The "sons of the prophets" are associated with Elijah and Elisha who were portrayed as true Yahwehists fighting against baalism whose pervasive influence had plagued the true worship of Yahweh in the Northern Kingdom. They lived as a group outside of towns and cities and functioned as aids and messengers (2 Kg. 9:1ff). That the "sons of the prophets" identified themselves with Samuel, Elijah and Elisha suggests that they were independent groups of worshippers and not regular cult personnel. They had a leader who was called "the prophet," a religious leader whose mode of worship was not ecstatic.

15. F.M. Cross is of the view that prophecy did not appear in Israel until the institution of the Monarchy. See Udobata Onunwa, "The Nature and Development of Early Israelite Prophecy: an Historical Prolegomenon" in *Bible Bhashyam, An Indian Biblical Quarterly*, June 1987, p. 80. See also J. Lindholm, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1963) p. 183ff.

One of the most outstanding of these prophets was Samuel, who was also a judge. At the instance of the word of Yahweh, he installed Saul as a king (1 Sam. 7-10). It was he also who gave oracle deposing Saul as king (1 Sam. 13 and 1 Sam. 15). He is also portrayed as a seer (r o'eh). It has been suggested that a seer (ro'eh) was the older title of prophet (1 Sam. 9:9, 11, 18ff). The question is, if Samuel was a seer, why did he approach a Mesopotamian diviner for the sake of a lost animal?

Some prophets were closely associated with a king. Gad and Nathan associated closely with David as an outlaw, and as a king. David was warned through an oracle delivered by Gad (1 Sam. 22:5). He (Gad) also threatened David with punishment for taking the population census (2 Sam. 24:11-13). Nathan rebuked David for adultery and murder (2 Sam. 12:1-14). Nevertheless, he played a prominent role in the approval of both the political and religious programmes of the king (2 Sam. 7:24). For instance, it was Nathan who installed Solomon as king in compliance with David's promise to Bathsheba: This action forestalled Adonijah's plan to enthrone himself (1 Kg. 1:8-53). These court prophets proved that they were not sycophants who were mere tools in the hands of the monarch, by criticizing, warning and even threatening him with divine punishment when his actions or policies were contrary to divine will. Micaiah was also a court prophet who was noted for his habitual opposition to Ahab (1 King 22:8).

Some prophets were actively involved in the internal and external politics of ancient Israel. Samuel attempted to depose Saul, but he failed. Later prophets were guided in their political activities by the expediency of their religious beliefs. For instance, Solomon's rebellion received the blessings of prophet Ahijah who was strongly opposed to the policies of David and Solomon because he believed that the purity of Israel would be most securely preserved if Northern Israel was allowed to secede from Judah. Ahijah also threatened the dynasty of Jeroboam with destruction for her infidelity to Yahweh (1 Kg. 14:1-19). Jehu foretold the total destruction of the house of Baasha (1 Kg. 16:1-5, 7, 12). Micaiah predicted the defeat and death of Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead contrary to the prediction of victory made by other prophets (1 Kg. 22). Elijah and Elisha were in perpetual opposition to the House of Omri in Israel. This handful of

examples of prophetic opposition illustrate the conflict between prophecy and monarchy in ancient Israel. The prophets opposed monarchy because they believed that the institution was irreligious and therefore deserved to be destroyed. This belief gave rise to prophetic opposition which ultimately led to in conspiracies and assassinations master-minded by the prophets (1 Kg. 19:16ff; 2 Kg. 8:7-15; 9:1-10).

Classical Prophecy

By "classical prophecy" is meant "the prophecy of those whom the OT regards as exemplifying what is distinctive about the Israelite prophets, that is, the prophecies of Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah and Ezekiel."¹⁶ The accounts of the call of the classical prophets (Is. 6:1-13; Jer. 1:3-19; Ezek. 1:1-3; Am. 3:7-8) and the biblical records of their activities reveal that:

- (a) the prophet must be inspired by God. His prophetic form of utterance emanates from this inspiration and is prefaced by a set formula: "Thus speaks Yahweh" etc.
- (b) the prophet is delegated to speak on behalf of God. Hence also the set formula "Thus speaks Yahweh."
- (c) his prophetic vocation is compelling even though he may be unwilling or may not even have the talent for prophecy (Am. 3:7-8; Jer. 1:7-8).
- (d) the words he speaks are not his own personal words, but words communicated to him by God. This means that God communicates His words to the prophet.
- (e) this communication involves visual and auditory experience.

Pre-exilic and exilic prophecy, especially those of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Second Isaiah, provided a new vision of divine plan to inspire the people. But prophecy in the post-exilic period lacked the vision and vigour of the pre-exilic prophecy. Prophecy, therefore, gradually lapsed after the exile.

16. T.J. Ryan, "Prophet and Prophecy," in Paul Kevin Meagher et al (eds) *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion* (Washington D.C.: Corpus Publications, 1978) Vol. O-Z, p. 2903.

Prophetic Theology

J.T. Ryan has identified prophetic theology which according to him centred

in one God who had chosen the people of Israel and had communicated His will to this people in the Law. It was in the light of this election that the prophets foretold judgment and salvation for the people, criticized empty forms of worship, and called the people to their social responsibilities.¹⁷

Prophecy in the New Testament

The New Testament uses the Greek word "prophētēs" to designate the Old Testament prophets although the term was applied to two non-Old Testament prophets; Baalam (2 Pt. 2:16) and Hannah (Lk. 2:36). The term "False Prophet" (pseudoprophētēs) is widely used in the New Testament, for example, in Mt. 7:15, 24:11; Mk. 13:22; Acts. 13:6; 2 Pt. 2:1; 1 Jn. 4:1 etc. Except in Mt. 7:15, and Acts 13:6, in all the other references the term is eschatologically used.

Many Old Testament prophets are cited frequently in the New Testament. These include Samuel, Elisha, Enoch, Jeremiah, Jonah, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah and Haggai. The concept of the Old Testament prophecy is also repeated in the New Testament, that is, God spoke through the prophets (Mt. 1:22; Lk. 1:70; Acts. 3:18, 21; Rm. 1:2). The prophets are seen as canonical authorities carrying the same weight as the law (Mt. 21:13; Mk. 11:17; Lk. 19:46; Acts. 10:43).

The New Testament is replete with references to the persecution and martyrdom of the prophets. Such references include Mt. 23:29-37; 21:35; 22:6; Lk. 13:33ff. These accounts are based on Jewish traditions.

John the Baptist was one of the prominent prophetic figures in the New Testament. Jesus neither applied the title to himself nor rejected it. But others applied the title to him (Mt. 16:24; 21:11, 46; Mk. 6:15; 8:28 etc.)

While it is difficult to categorize Jesus as one of the prophets, the New Testament bears witness to the fact that there were prophets in the early Church (Acts. 11:27; 21:10-11; 13:1-3; 1 Cor. 13:2; 14:3-5;

17. *Ibid.* p. 2903.

Eph. 3:5 etc). Prophets look on leadership roles in the organization of the early Church. Prophecy was a charismatic office and Paul regarded it as the best of the charisms (1 Cor. 14:1).

Priesthood and Prophecy in Modern Christianity

The priesthood of Christ and the common priesthood of all believers are recognized by Christian denominations. Many Christian Churches accept the ordained or ministerial priesthood. Vatican Council II in the constitution on the Church and Liturgy and in the Decree on the priestly ministry and life recognizes fully Christ's high priesthood, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood which is exercised by the ordained priest.¹⁸ The main function of the ordained priest is the offering of Eucharist sacrifice. By its doctrine of Eucharist as a sacrifice, Vatican Council II organically unites the priesthood of Christ, that of the Church and that of the ordained priest.¹⁹

The Anglicans, apart from recognizing the priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of all believers, also accept ordained priesthood who presides at the Liturgy of Eucharist on behalf of all and also acts in the name of Jesus Christ especially in repeating the words and acts of the Last Supper. He also absolves, blesses and consecrate the Eucharist.²⁰ His other priestly duties include preaching, administering baptism, visiting the sick, counselling and conducting of Church worship.

Conclusion

We have examined priesthood and prophecy in Judeo-Christian religion and discovered that the religion can rightly be described as a priestly and prophetic religion. Priests and prophets are important functionaries in the socio-religious activities of the Judeo-Christian religion. The priest is the "way" through which the worshippers approach the sphere of the divine with hope and dedication. As mediator, the priest functions as a go-between in the relationship between man and God. In the Old Testament, the priest offered sacrifices, delivered oracles, and taught the laws of Yahweh. The office of the

18. P. Deletter, "Priest and Priesthood," Paul Kevin Meagher et al (eds.) *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion* (Washington D.C." Corpus publications, 1978) Vol. O-Z p. 2879.

19. *Ibid.* p. 2879.

20. *Ibid.* p. 2879.

high priest which was assigned a prominent role in religio-political activities of Ancient Israel was a development of the post-exilic period. Although Jesus did not apply the title *hiereus*, priest, to himself and his disciples, the idea of his unique priesthood is echoed in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews while the priesthood of all Christians is implied in 1 Peter 2:9.

Prophecy played a significant role in the social, religious and political activities of Ancient Israel. A prophet is called by God to speak on His behalf. In other words, a prophet is the "mouthpiece" of God who provides him with inspiration for the work which He has called him. The prophet introduces his utterances with the formula: "Thus speaks Yahweh" because they emanate directly from His inspiration. Some Old Testament prophets were involved in the internal and external politics of Ancient Israel to bring sanity into the worship of Yahweh in Israel. Priesthood and prophecy thus have played vital roles in the integral development of the Judeo-Christian Religions.