

The decline of prophecy in the second temple period

by

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Abstract

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(Under the direction of JOHN VAN SETERS.)

This study examines the position frequently encountered in scholarship that Jewish prophetic activity ceased shortly after the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple,

Standard evidence cited in favor of this is generally insufficient or even contrary. Apocalyptic literature cannot be simply rejected as non-prophetic. Rather than disappearing, the scope of prophecy in the Chronicler and later wisdom literature was being expanded to include wisdom, psalmody, and even historiography. Evidence for a lapse is also lacking in the literature of the Hasmonean period, and examples of charismatic activity can be found both here and in the Rabbinic literature.

Second Temple prophets cannot be distinguished from canonical prophets by suggesting that they did not consider their works authoritative. Charismatic activity declined in the second century, AD as a result of disappointed political expectations and the closing of the Hebrew canon in the same period.

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the disappearance of prophecy in Judaism which traditionally is said to have occurred early in the Second Temple period. I will seek to determine whether, in fact, people did stop prophesying during this period, or whether prophecy ever disappeared at all. This will involve an examination of the pertinent primary literature with an eye to determining whether or not it was viewed as something of the past before the second or third century, AD. It is reasonable to suppose, given the importance of the prophetic canon in the later Second Temple period, that if prophecy did disappear in this period, the contemporary literature might contain some reference bemoaning the fact, or at least alluding to it. In addition, where contemporary claimants to inspiration are referred to, or where activities that might resemble the prophetic are recalled, one should reasonably expect the authors to comment in one of two ways. Either they will reject or downplay it on the grounds that prophecy is no longer present in Israel, or, in upholding the prophecy or claim, they will comment on the reappearance of the Holy Spirit or make some similar theological statement, perhaps even drawing eschatological conclusions from it. The evidence, as it turns out, leans in both directions and will require some discussion.

In order to attempt this, however, it will be necessary to examine our understanding of what exactly prophecy is. To a great extent how one defines “prophecy” determines how one will view the data. This will involve not only the much disputed question of whether or not apocalyptic should be considered prophecy, but also force a consideration of the possibility that prophecy is being transformed throughout this period, rather than

simply disappearing. This question is made more difficult by the fact that the terminology our sources use is not always consistent. Josephus, for example uses the term *προφητης* in connection with only two individuals after the close of the canonical period, and one of these he clearly regards as spurious. In spite of this, a number of his characters function in ways reminiscent of biblical prophets, and there is good reason to think that not only does he regard them as genuine prophets, but that he regards himself in the same way.¹

Finally, in as much as it relates to our discussion, it will be necessary to address the problem of the development of canon. It has often been suggested that prophetic activity declined in direct response to the rise of canon, and in particular, to that of the Prophets. In conjunction with this other suggestions and possible reasons for the decline of prophecy will be discussed. In light of the apparent crossovers among religious oral and literary genres which are recognizable in this period, it is also possible that prophetic activity was not disappearing as completely as has been supposed, but that it was shifting in response to its religious and presuppositional environment. This will also need to be studied, and, if such a rearrangement has occurred, some attempt to identify where it has gone will be necessary.

Much of the same material has been discussed, with varying degrees of success, in three fairly recent books on the subject of New Testament prophecy by David Aune, David Hill, and Wayne Grudem.² While each of these has been useful in this research,

¹ See below, pp. 47-54.

² David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Hellenistic Mediterranean World*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983). David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott,

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since in each of these cases “intertestamental” Jewish prophetic activity is viewed with an eye towards the light it might shed on the Christian phenomenon of the same name, specific treatment of the question of the decline or disappearance of prophetic activity is not attempted except in passing. Of these the best is Aune’s, particularly in his treatment of prophetic forms.

1979). Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1982).

Transliteration

For the transliteration of Hebrew I have sought to follow the system in which there is a direct one-to-one correspondence between each Latin character and its underlying Hebrew character. This contrasts with the current practice in libraries of phonetically approximating the modern Israeli Hebrew pronunciation of each word. In doing so, I have followed the character map in general use among scholars. So, א = ' , ב = *b*, etc. In that vein, ה = *h*, ו = *t*, ז = *z*, ש = *s*, and ך = *š*.

The Decline of Prophecy

Rabbinic tradition

It has been the traditional position of both Jewish and Christian literature since about the second or third century, AD, to assume that prophecy in Israel came to an end with the passing of the first generation of the return from Babylonian captivity. Rabbinic literature, where it is self-conscious at any rate³, is united in the assertion that the prophetic Spirit was taken out of the world when Malachi penned his final *mem.*

When the last prophets — Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit⁴ ceased from Israel.... (*Tosefta Sotah* 13.2)

Until then, the prophets were prophesying by means of [or in accordance with] the Holy Spirit. From then on, turn your attention to, and obey the sages. (*Seder Olam Rabbah* 30)⁵

Since the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to the wise. (*Baba Bathra* 12a)

Moses received Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets delivered it to the men of the Great Assembly. (*Abot* 1.1)

It has been argued that the Rabbinic denial of contemporary ecstatic activity, rather than being a testimony to their experience or observation, is a reaction against Christian

³ See below, pp. 57f.

⁴ The capitalization or non-capitalization of “Holy Spirit” is always tricky outside of Christian literature (and sometimes even within it) since the relationship of the *רוח הקודש* God is not entirely clear in this period. The choice to capitalize in this study does not reflect an assumption that the authors viewed the Holy Spirit as the later Trinitarians came to.

⁵ Note the close connection between prophecy and the Holy Spirit here.

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claims to possession of the Holy Spirit and accompanying manifestation in prophecy (renewed or otherwise).⁶ It is true that Justin Martyr argues from the presence of *προφητικά χαρίσματα* in the church of the second century that the things of God that had been with the Jews were now with the Christians and that this indicated that Christianity was the true religion *vis-à-vis* Judaism.⁷ This explanation cannot be dismissed out of hand, but it should be obvious, if such activities were visible in the Jewish communities, that to simply point to them would make a much more effective refutation of Justin's argument than to deny the existence of all prophecy. Josephus, also, who has no apparent quarrel with Christians, suggests that reliable prophecy has ceased, or is in serious decline:

From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. (*Against Apion* 1.41)⁸

The topic of discussion in this passage is, of course, the limits of the canon and not prophecy, *per se*. That such understandings, however, underlie the criteria used in the limitation of the canon, not only in Josephus, but in Rabbinic discussion as well,⁹ is strongly suggested.

⁶ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 33. Hill mentions, but does not emphasize this possibility.

⁷ *Dialogue with Tryphon* 82:1.

⁸ All quotations from Josephus taken from Josephus, *Works*, trs. H. St. J. Thackeray, Ralph Marcus, Alien Wikgren and Louis H. Feldman, *The Loeb Classical Library*, 9 vols., ed. E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926). For Josephus, as for the Chronicler, the writing of history was one of the roles of the prophet. In spite of this passage, Josephus does not believe that prophecy has disappeared, but he may believe that there was a special authority in the canonical period which is either absent in his day, or less easily discerned.

⁹ Rudolf Meyer, "Προφητης: C. Prophecy and Prophets in the Judaism of the Hellenistic-Roman Period," G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. G. Bromiley, 9 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1974) [henceforth *TDNT*], pp. 816ff. Samuel Sandmel, *Judaism*

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A revival of prophecy was expected in orthodox circles with the advent, and as a sign, of the messianic age. References to this, however, are rare enough to suggest that it was not a very important aspect of Jewish scholarly thought (*Num. Rabbah* 15.25; *Ta'an* 8a).¹⁰ More importantly, as can be seen from the above passages, the rabbis saw themselves as standing in the prophetic tradition, as indeed being the inheritors of the prophetic mantle. This was possible because they saw the mission of the prophets as essentially being one of the exposition and interpretation of the Torah — the very activity in which they so diligently labored.¹¹

Contemporary scholarship

For the most part, this traditional assessment is taken up by modern authors. It is, of course, firmly entrenched in all popular literature from either tradition which touches on the subject.¹² But it is characteristic of the vast majority of serious scholarship as well, and is often taken for granted by reputable authors without apparently considering the reasons for their assumptions.¹³

and Christian Beginnings, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 174. See also Sid Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scriptures The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence (Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 47) (Hamden, CT.: Archon Books, 1976).

¹⁰ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 35.

¹¹ Meyer, *op. cit.* p. 816. See below pp. 32ff on prophecy in the wisdom movement.

¹² For Christian writers it is, of course, renewed with John the Baptist.

¹³ So, for example Herbert G. May, ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible. Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962). Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, tr. D.M.S. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962 [Germ. 1957]), p. 100. George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 240ff. Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*, tr. Chaya Galai (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), p. 16, writes that it died out “in the era of the Great Assembly,” which, perhaps, is not surprising, given the subject of the book. Less justifiably, Donald E. Gowan, *Bridge Between the Testaments: A Reappraisal of Judaism from the Exile to the Birth of Christianity*, Second Ed. (Pittsburg, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1980) p. 62, dismisses the subject with the comment that prophecy comes to an end after the fourth century, B.C., “as a recognized institution in Israel”. There are also important exceptions: Sandmel, *op.cit.*, p. 174 comments that “outside

The expiations that are given vary considerably from scholar to scholar. Prominent among these is that of Wellhausen:

With the appearance of the law came to an end the old freedom, not only in the sphere of worship, now restricted to Jerusalem, but in the sphere of the religious spirit as well. There was now in existence an authority as objective as could be: and this was the death of prophecy.¹⁴

For Wellhausen, when, under Ezra and Nehemiah, the priestly theocracy filled the gap left by the monarchy in the period of the restoration, it imposed on Israel a form of religion in which variables were kept to a minimum, and all of religious life was fixed from above. Prophecy, regarded by Wellhausen as the aspect of fluidity and continuing revelation in Israel's religion, was not able to continue. Joseph Blenkinsopp notes that for Wellhausen, this theocracy, and its prime spokesman, P, was the essence and origin of post biblical Judaism (which he viewed as petrified and useless).¹⁵

With some variation, and perhaps without the polemical overtones, this position is followed by a number of authors. With the substitution of 'canon' for 'law', Blenkinsopp comes to much the same conclusion about the reason for prophecy's demise.¹⁶ Torah, he

the circle of the Rabbinic Sages the view that prophecy had ended simply did not exist." Meyer, op. cit., cites numerous examples of charismatic behavior in Second Temple Judaism.

¹⁴ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, tr. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1885), p. 402. Von Rad, op.cit., p. 102 comes very close to this: "...when [the charismatic factor] finally disappeared, the end of ancient Jahwism had been sealed, the day of scribal religion had dawned."

¹⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: a Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 19. Blenkinsopp also notes that Wellhausen was actually more of a Romantic, in the tradition of Herder, than a Hegelian. Were he a pure Hegelian this would represent a triumph of the antithesis (the prophetic religion of Israel being the thesis), and no synthesis was forth coming (p.21). The charge of anti-Semitism, so prevalent in the German church of his day, is not really applicable since "he held identical views about the Christian church which inherited the Jewish ecclesiastical model and was therefore subject to the same strictures" (p.20).

¹⁶ The suggestion that prophecy was squeezed out by canon is not new, as is noted in Leiman, op. cit., pp. 198f, n. 610. He points out that a medieval work, *Sefer Hasidim* §544, advocates this suggestion.

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suggests represented a *fixing* of pre-existent tradition in response to the unpredictability of prophecy. With the emergence of canon/law, charismatic activity became unnecessary and disappeared while law triumphed. The much-needed input of the prophets was then reinjected into Judaism with the emergence of the prophetic canon, but ongoing prophetic activity disappeared entirely or was absorbed/replaced by the wisdom movement.¹⁷ Other Scholars would suggest that it was diverted or transformed into apocalyptic,¹⁸ which transformation is often regarded as a fate worse than death, but the question of the relationship between prophecy and apocalyptic will have to be discussed later.

Evidence from the Hebrew Bible

Several passages can be adduced from later classical prophets to support the view that prophecy was in decline and that authors expected it to disappear even in their own day. *Zechariah* 13.2-6 states, as if it were a good thing, that “on that day” people will be ashamed of prophecy and visions:

“And on that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more: and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit. And if any one again appears as a prophet, his father and mother who bore him shall pierce him through when he prophesies. On that day every prophet will be

Leiman argues that it was the other way around, i.e., that the disappearance of prophecy stimulated the emergence of canon, or at least that it worked both ways.

¹⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy*, pp. 2-9. Also idem, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983). It should not go unnoticed that Blenkinsopp provides the synthesis which he found missing in Wellhausen in the “unstable equilibrium” (*Prophecy*, p. 151) of coexisting traditional and prophetic canons. He agrees that Judaism emerges from this period (although he shifts it a little later to include the canonized Prophets). But he views the result as positive rather than negative, and finds distasteful the suggestion which he finds in e.g., Adolphe Lads, *The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism*. Tr. S. H. Hooke (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1937) that the replacement of prophecy with exegesis represents a “drying up” of Judaism in this period (*History*, pp. 256f).

¹⁸ So, for example, Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 295. Van Rad sees apocalyptic as growing out of wisdom. See below pp. 21ff.

ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; he will not put on a hairy mantle in order to deceive, but he will say ‘I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil; for the land has been my possession since my youth.’ And if one asks him ‘What are these wounds on your back?’ he will say, ‘The wounds I received in the house of my friends.’”

A number of writers understand this to be referring to the removal of the prophetic spirit from Israel,¹⁹ which, it is claimed, the author sees occurring in his own time.

Besides the fact that this creates something of an *ipso facto* difficulty, since the author obviously considers himself to be a prophet, the fact that he places this event “on that day” fares poorly with the suggestion that this passage indicates a present or immediate future fulfillment in the prophet’s own time. Furthermore, the lumping together of the prophets with unclean spirits and idolatry indicates that what is being referred to are not what Deutero-Zechariah regards to be true Yahwistic Oracles.²⁰ This is further bolstered by the reference to wounds on the prophet’s back, presumably acquired in ecstatic or pre-ecstatic self mortification (vs. 6)²¹ and by the reference to putting on a “hairy mantle in order to deceive” (vs. 4). The former would suggest a form of cult-induced ecstasy, not characteristic of biblical prophecy,²² and the latter implies that the message of the prophet is not from Yahweh. The intention of this passage appears to be much the same as that of *Micah 3.5-8*:

Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets
who lead my people astray....

¹⁹ See for example Blenkinsopp, *History*, p. 263; Hill, *Prophecy*, pp. 21f; Gowan, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

²⁰ Meyer, *op.cit.*, pp. 812f.

²¹ This is the implication of the question, at least. The prophet’s response may, or may not suggest parental discipline for prophesying. Hinckley G. Mitchell, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai and Zechariah, The International Critical Commentary*, vol. 25 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), p. 339.

²² *1 Kings 18:27-29* ridicules similar behavior on the part of the priests of Ba'al.

Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,
and darkness to you, without divination.
The sun shall go down upon the prophets,
and the day shall be black over them;
the seers shall be disgraced,
and the diviners put to shame;
they shall all cover their lips,
for there is no answer from God.
But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the Spirit of the LORD,
and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin.

The message, then, is not that true prophecy is on its way out, but that in the “day of salvation”²³ false prophets will, along with other things of which Yahweh disapproves, be ashamed.

This passage has been assigned at least four different dates. Traditionally, of course, it is connected with the first eight chapters of *Zechariah* and would, therefore, come from the early post-exilic period (about 520 BC. We can determine that prophecy was not on the decline at that time, evidenced not only by references to prophets in *Ezra-Nehemiah*, but also, of course, by the prophetic activity of *Zechariah* and *Haggai*. There are a number of good reasons to believe that chapters 9-12 form a separate unit by a different prophet or prophets and may only have been attached to *Zechariah* at a fairly late date.²⁴

Nineteenth century scholars tended to locate *Deutero-Zechariah* (and possibly, *Trito-*

²³ Meyer, op.cit. p. 813.

²⁴ The section does not claim any authorship by name, including *Zechariah*'s, and *Zech. 11:12f* is attributed to *Jeremiah* in *Matt. 27:9*. If the oracles originally circulated separately and anonymously, it is possible to envision their being attached to different prophets in different collections. The final arrangement may be influenced by a desire to have the number of minor prophets end up at twelve (on this last point, see *Blenkinsopp, History*, p. 259).

Zechariah — chs. 12-14) in the pre-exilic period.²⁵ This dating, of course, would make ridiculous the suggestion that 13.2-6 contains the reference to the disappearance of prophecy, although an invective against false prophets accords well with what we know of prophetic tension in that period.²⁶ In this century scholars have tended to date this section later in the post-exilic period based to some extent, but not exclusively, on the presence of apocalyptic elements.²⁷ Blenkinsopp²⁸ regards it as a sort of prophetic link between the classical period and apocalyptic (which he regards as quite distinct from prophecy). In his view, the author of the passage does not, in fact, regard himself as a prophet, and the suggestion that prophets and prophecy are on the way out in his own day would, therefore, not be directed toward himself.

Even if we accept the later dating the intention of the passage remains the same. The reference is not to the contemporary disappearance of charismatic activity but to something which will happen “on that day”, on the edge of the messianic era, and specifically to false prophets. In addition, even if given the late date, both chs. 9 and 12 are identified as “oracles” and the self-understanding of the author or authors is clearly prophetic. Contrary to Blenkinsopp’s understanding that their lateness justifies the

²⁵ J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, tr. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976 [Italian 1974]) pp. 374ff.

²⁶ For example, Jeremiah’s conflicts with official prophets in *Jer.* 4:13ff, 27:14ff, 28:5ff, etc.

²⁷ So Mitchell, *op.cit.*, pp. 258f. Mitchell dates different sections variously to 333 BC, 247-222 BC and 217 BC. He views ch. 13 as coming from the latest of these. Blenkinsopp, *History*, p. 261, assigns the first section to 333 BC, but is undecided on chs. 12-14 except that they probably come from the period of the fourth to second centuries, BC.

²⁸ Blenkinsopp, *History*, p. 23ff.

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interpretation of ch. 13 such that prophecy is in decline, it rather provides us with firm evidence of prophetic activity in the late Persian or early Hellenistic periods.²⁹

Evidence is also frequently seen for the end of biblical prophecy in *Malachi* 4.5f where we find the famous prophecy about Elijah turning the hearts of Israel before the day of the LORD.³⁰

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.

But this is hardly convincing proof. It says nothing of a lapse of prophecy or restoration after a lapse. Only if we postulate that Malachi lived in a period when prophecy had disappeared and could assume such a lapse without needing to state it can we take the passage to refer to a renewal of prophecy. This cannot be supported though, for, if nothing else, the same *ipso facto* problem noted above is present here. In addition, we should remember that this prophecy is usually dated to the early post-exilic period, during which time we know of at least two other prophets who were active (Zechariah and Haggai, to which might be added the numerous [false] prophets we met above). One could argue that Malachi came from a “dry” period, or at the tail end of the prophetic period when prophecy was becoming less common, but it would be very difficult to make the case that he or his audience assumes the absence of prophecy without any prompting at all.

²⁹ It also indicates, however, that “prophet” is not always a complimentary term. David Halperin, private communication. Moore, op. cit., p. 240.

³⁰ Hill *Prophecy*, pp. 21f.

The expectation of an eschatological prophet (deriving, perhaps, from *Deut.* 18.15-19) should not be confused with the restoration of prophecy. It is true that both of these concepts are present in rabbinic literature and that of the eschatological prophet can be found in a wide variety of Jewish literature of the Second Temple period and later. It should be obvious though, that the expectation of an Elijah figure preceding the messianic age is quite possible, even within the context of widely received and recognized contemporary charismatic activity.

Further evidence for prophetic disappearance is sometimes found in *Joel* 2.28f (*Heb.* 3.1f):³¹

It shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

We are once again faced with the now familiar problem of Joel prophesying during a period of prophetic silence, and once again, there is nothing in the text to suggest that prophecy has or is expected to cease. The intention of the prophecy is clearly that in the eschatological age, prophetic activity will not just be limited to a small group of pneumatic individuals, but will belong to all. It is not suggested that in the present time there are no prophets. Seen this way, the new eschatological dispensation of the Spirit differs from the old in that previously the Spirit of prophecy was only given to a few at God's discretion, and then not necessarily permanently, while in the messianic age it will

³¹ *ibid.*

be available to all.³² At any rate, as Joel probably understood it, this passage has much the same meaning as *Jeremiah* 31.33f:

This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD....³³

That this view was also current in rabbinic thought is clear from the following passage:

God said, "In this world individuals have prophesied, but in the world to come all Israelites will be prophets." (*Num. Rabbah* 15.25)

The strongest case for the failure of prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures is found in *Psalms* 74.9 since it appears to refer to a time when prophecy was in fact in decline.³⁴

We do not see our signs;
there is no longer any prophet,
and there is none among us who knows how long.

Commentators are divided over the dating of this psalm. The passage just quoted suggests the post-exilic period to most. The context of the psalm, however, points to the destruction of the temple. Such statements as

Direct thy steps to the perpetual ruins;
the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary! (vs. 3)

and

They set thy sanctuary on fire;
to the ground they desecrated the dwelling place of thy name. (vs. 7)

³² So also Julius A. Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Obadiah and Joel*, *The International Critical Commentary*, vol. 24, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), pp 122f. Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 97ff. Allen, however, limits the outpouring to Judah and Israel.

³³ See also *Eze.* 39:29; *Num.* 11:29.

³⁴ May, *op.cit.*, p. 712. Hill, *Prophecy*, pp. 21f.

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are hard to reconcile with anything in the Second Temple period before 70, AD.³⁵ Herbert May,³⁶ noting the difficulty, feels that references to the temple in ruins must refer to “some otherwise unknown event of the post-exilic period” since both Jeremiah and Ezekiel indicate by their presence that “the prophetic movement was at its height” during the Exile. But an “unknown” post-exilic event that left Mount Zion in “perpetual ruins” (vs. 3) is problematic at least. Even the events under Antiochus IV, which could possibly be described by vs. 4, cannot easily be the referent of vss. 5-8.³⁷ Although admittedly, they elicited a similar notice that prophets were not available (*1 Mac.* 4.46), too many of the details of *Psalms* 74 conflict with the description in *Maccabees* to justify identification.³⁸

More importantly, the temporary failure of prophecy does not rule out the Exile. Jeremiah’s own testimony suggests that there are not a large number of characters like him around. He makes reference to plenty of other prophets, but they all seem to be opposing him (23.9-40; 27.9)! When it turned out that Jeremiah was right, it is likely that most of them became very silent. In fact, it would appear from 18.18 that he predicted

³⁵ Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel’s Psalmody* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), pp. 217, 236 opts for the Babylonian destruction. Mitchell Dahood, *The Psalms II: 51-100, The Anchor Bible*, vol. 17 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), also prefers 586, BC, but allows for the possibility of a catastrophe in 485. Charles Augustus Briggs and Emile Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the book of Psalms, The International Critical Commentary*, vol. 15. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), pp. 151-154, assign most of the psalm to the period following the destruction of the First Temple, but consider vs. 9 to be a Maccabean gloss. Moses Bittenwieser, *The Psalms Chronologically Treated with a New Translation* (New York; KTAV, 1969 [orig. 1938]), rejects both the Babylonian and Maccabean periods in favor of a catastrophe in the neighborhood of 344, BC.

³⁶ May, *op.cit.*, p. 712, comments that one would expect it to refer to the Babylonian period if not for vs. 9, Therefore, he assigns it to some “unknown” post-exilic catastrophe.

³⁷ Most writers agree with this point, hence the “unknown event”. Bittenwieser, *op.cit.*, p. 344, says the disaster was around the time of Alexander. Dahood, *op.cit.*, allows the possibility of an Edomite invasion around 485, BC.

this very silence at some point (cf. *Micah* 3.5-8, quoted above). We can see, then, that the argument from prophetic silence that the psalm must be post-exilic cannot be sustained. Once this is accepted, the weight of the remaining evidence clearly points to an exilic date for this psalm, and, of course, the argument that it can be used as evidence for the failure of prophecy in the post-exilic period dissolves.³⁹

Finally, *Daniel* 9.2 & 24 are cited to the effect that in the post-exilic apocalyptic communities prophecy was regarded as having come to an end and that their own activities were not considered true prophecy:

I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years which, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. (vs. 2)

Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. (vs. 24)

Vielhauer interprets this as follows:

The apocalyptic writer's understanding of himself is clear: he is not himself a prophet, but rather the authentic interpreter of prophecy and as such is the legitimate successor to prophecy.⁴⁰

It is true that this illustrates the tendency for prophecy to include the interpretation of scripture, and especially earlier prophecy (here, presumably, *Jer.* 25.11 and/or 29.10).

This tendency is taken up and extended, as we will see later on, at Qumran, in Josephus and possibly in the New Testament. But this does not indicate that the author's self-

³⁸ Meyer, *op.cit.*, pp. 813f.

³⁹ It is, perhaps, not coincidental that *Ps.* 75, which follows immediately, is a prophetic response to the situation which *Ps.* 74 laments.

⁴⁰ P. Vielhauer, "Prophecy", in E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, Ger. ed W. Schmeemelcher, Trans. A. J. B. Higgins et al, Eng. ed. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: 1963-65), p. 37.

understanding involves his not being a prophet. The nature of the vision suggests that it is not a simple interpretation; it is interpretation mediated by an angel (which is also characteristic of prophecy).⁴¹ In fact, it is prophetic interpretation, and the writer is the prophet (as, indeed, all tradition makes Daniel out to be, even though the book is included in the *Kethuhim* — perhaps due to its late acceptance as scripture). To this we might compare Zechariah's quoting and use of *Jeremiah* (*Zech.* 3.8; 6.12 dependent on *Jer.* 23.5; 33.15 and *Zech.* 1.12; 7.5 dependent on *Jer.* 25.11, 29.10).⁴²

The suggestion that vs. 24 refers to the end of prophecy cannot be sustained either. This is the opinion of Lacocque, who comments, "Daniel has consciously put a final end to prophecy in Israel."⁴³ Clearly, however, "to seal both vision and prophet" refers rather to the eschatological fulfillment of prophecy, much of which at this point had disappointed most expectations, a fact which may have given rise to the eschatology of

⁴¹ Angels are seen as involved in prophecy primarily as mediators, although the nature of that mediation may change from situation to situation throughout biblical and post-biblical literature. In *1 Kings* 13:18 the prophet says, "An angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD." God and his angel are used interchangeably in *Hosea* 12:3f and *Judges* 13:21f. מלאך comes to be a synonym for נביא in the exilic and post-exilic periods (*Isa.* 42:19; 44:26; *Hag.* 1:13; *Mal.* 3:1; *2 Chr.* 36:15f). It is difficult to tell in *Judges* 2:1-5 whether the "angel of the LORD" should be considered a heavenly being or a prophetic messenger. Angels are interpreters of prophecy in *Zechariah* 1:12ff and, of course, in the Hebrew apocalyptic sections of *Daniel* (chs. 7-12). They are also mediators of apocalyptic visions, as for example, in *4 Ezra* and the *Revelation of John*. Edward Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics in Early Christianity: New Testament Essays* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1978), pp. 39ff. Blenkinsopp, *History*, p. 239.

⁴² Blenkinsopp, *Canon*, p. 102. It is interesting that *Zechariah* and *Daniel* do not interpret *Jeremiah* 25:11 & 29:10 in the same way.

⁴³ A. Lacocque, *Le Livre de Daniel*, (Paris: Neuchatel, 1976), quoted without approval by Aune, op.cit., p. 375, n. 25. James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, The International Critical Commentary*, vol. 22 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927), p. 375. Montgomery notes but rejects the opinion that "seal" refers to canonization.

apocalyptic. This is not, at any rate, an historical observation about the disappearance of charismatic activity.⁴⁴

Maccabees

The book of *I Maccabees* contains several references which, taken together, suggests that prophecy had come to an end or was at least scarce in the Maccabean period.

They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, lest it bring reproach upon them, for the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them. (*I Mac.* 4.44-46)

Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them. (*I Mac.* 9.27)

And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise....
(*I Mac.* 14.41)

And in light of these passages the following also becomes relevant.

They fasted that day, put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads, and rent their clothes. And they opened the book of the law to inquire into those matters about which the Gentiles were consulting the images of their idols. (*I Mac.* 3.47-48)

In this last passage it appears that the Judeans are using the Torah scroll for a type of divination to determine the will of God in the situation. This course of action would seem to suggest that prophetic oracles were not available at the time, although this is not beyond doubt. Taken together, these excerpts clearly indicate that the author of

⁴⁴ So, Aune, *Prophecy*, p. 105; Montgomery, *op.cit.*, p. 375; Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 23 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978) pp. 239, 244; May, *op.cit.*, p. 1082. Another possibility is that in the eschaton (and only then) prophecy will, in fact, *cease*. This is, of course, contrary to much that we have seen so far, but appears to be the intention of Paul in *I Cor.* 13:8-12.

Maccabees views prophecy as being in a state of lapse. He expected renewal, but it is impossible to tell whether he was looking for an eschatological or immanent restoration.

Meyer, however, discounts the suggestion that Maccabees reflects a supposition that prophecy was a thing of the past and future but not present. He thinks the whole situation in which prophecy has declined and a prophet is awaited is a set up for the arrival on the scene of John Hyrcanus, who holds the threefold office of prophet, priest and king. The fact that prophets are in short supply before this is a result of the great calamity surrounding the desecration of the temple⁴⁵ (for which compare our observations on *Psalm 74* above). The main problem with this theory is that John Hyrcanus is never actually called *προφήτης* in the book of Maccabees. It is true that Josephus says that John had the gift of prophecy (*Ant.* 13.299f, *War* 1.68, and c.f. *Tosefta Sotah* 13.5), although it could be argued that this is not the same as being a prophet. There is also a reference in the *Testament of Levi* (8.14) to a “prophet of the most high”, who is both priest and king,⁴⁶ and whom R. H. Charles and O. Eissfeldt assert to be John Hyrcanus⁴⁷ (although this could just as easily be messianic and eschatological). It is not satisfactory, however,

⁴⁵ Meyer, op.cit., pp. 815f.

⁴⁶ “And they said to me, ‘Levi, your posterity shall be divided into three offices....The third shall be granted a new name, because from Judah a king will arise and shall found a new priesthood in accord with the gentile model and for all nations. His presence is beloved, as a prophet of the Most High....’” (*Test. Levi* 8.11-15a, see also *Test. Benj.* 9.2). Quoted from James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983), p. 791.

⁴⁷ R. H. Charles, *The Greek Version of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, (Oxford, 1908), p. 45. Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, (ET: Blackwell, Oxford), p. 635. Noted in Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 24.

to argue from later or even contemporary opinions regarding John that this is the view and intention of *Maccabees*.⁴⁸

Even if the author of *1 Maccabees* does want us to understand that prophecy has disappeared completely,⁴⁹ its existence cannot be ruled out. The qualifier, “trustworthy” (πιστον), in 14.1 may provide us with a clue to understanding what he really means. It is entirely possible that there were claimants to the role but that they were not considered “true” prophets by the Hasmonians or the author of this book. It is not difficult to find references in the Bible to instances where kings and members of the ruling class (would have) preferred to reject unfavorable prophecies as false. Certainly an abundance of examples could be culled from the experiences of numerous Old Testament prophets, but once again Jeremiah comes to mind as a prime example (see for example *Jer.* 36.20-26), and Amos is similarly rejected (*Amos* 7.10-13). It is not without interest that the non-Zadokite priesthood was condemned by Ezekiel (*Eze.* 40.46; 43.19; 44.15; 48.11). If the existing prophetic community, particularly the cultic prophets, held similar views, it is entirely probable that the Hasmonean priesthood would reject them as not ‘trustworthy’. In fact, this appears to have been one of the bones of contention between the Qumran sectarians and the ruling priesthood. The passages in *Maccabees* may, therefore, represent the author’s discrimination rather than observation, but of this we cannot be certain. In any case, it is certain that *Maccabees* is only one witness in a widely diversified

⁴⁸ Josephus may be basing John Hyrcanus’ “gift of prophecy” on the experience he recounts in *Ant.* 13:282 where John hears a prophetic voice. Technically, however, this is a *bat qol*, and would not be regarded as true prophecy in rabbinic circles, but see below, p. 54.

⁴⁹ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 23, suggests that this passage may “simply be a formulaic expression of pious reserve in making decisions (cf. our ‘God willing...’)”.

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community.⁵⁰ Although we must take his testimony seriously, we cannot assume, simply because the author does not recognize contemporary charismatic activity, that it does not exist.

Three points regarding the view of the author himself should be noted. First, there is no indication of when the lapse referred to began. It is likely that prophecy may have gone into serious decline as a result of the political/religious turmoil of the period (as noted above). In any case, we cannot be assured that the lapse referred to dates to the exilic period, although it cannot be excluded either, and the rest of the evidence we are examining seems to point away from such a long-term decline. Second, in none of these passages is the expected renewal necessarily eschatological in any sense. In fact, it is far more likely that the lapse is viewed as something temporary, which is likely to have come to an end at any time. Although, this is not conclusive, it does tend to downplay the notion that prophecy in Israel had *ceased*. Third, there is an obvious similarity of *1 Mac.* 4.46 and 14.41 to *Ezra* 2.63 and *Nehemiah* 7.65 where they are faced with the problem of priests with unverifiable ancestry,

...the governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim. Since prophets are occasionally consulted in *Ezra/Nehemiah*, it is clear that those books do not assume that prophecy had disappeared in that period. Apparently, something *more*

⁵⁰ David Halperin has pointed out to me that 14:41 should probably be regarded as a separate source from the author of *1 Maccabees*. It is, according to the author, part of an official document copied onto a bronze memorial tablet and placed in Mt. Zion. Since the tablet assigns perpetual priesthood only to Simon, and the author of *1 Maccabees* extends it also to his sons (vs. 25 & 49), it is unlikely that he composed that section himself. Such an arrangement, of course, adds another witness for the absence of trustworthy prophets in the period (although the parallel in *1 Maccabees* is probably dependant on this). But the authors of the memorial are clearly also pro-(or at least proto-)Hasmonean, and many of the same criticisms apply here as well.

trustworthy than prophecy is looked for in this context — a specific variety of cultic prophecy that is associated with the high priest. It is possible that we should see analogous intentions in *Maccabees*. The situations referred to here are both of a similar cultic nature and are both regarded as extremely important (i.e., the service of priests in *Ezra/Nehemiah* and the fate of a defiled altar and the acceptance of a non-Zadokite high priest in *Maccabees*).⁵¹

Obviously, this does not solve the problem presented by 9.27 where “the time that the prophets ceased to appear” points to a time in the remoter past. David Aune comments that it was generally believed that the great classical prophets had “appeared in critical times”⁵² and that their message carried authority. The author of *Maccabees* would then be recognizing that such authoritative prophets do not seem to be present. To the question of contemporary prophetic authority, however, we will have to return.⁵³ It is also possible that this represents a bitter response on the part of the author to the expectations aroused by the apocalypse of *Daniel*, and it has even been suggested that 9.27 could be an “ironic paraphrase” of *Daniel* 12.1.⁵⁴ If this is the case, then the author’s rejection of prophecy must be regarded as theological rather than experiential. Indeed, it suggests that prophetic activity was commonly valued, at least in some circles, in that eschatological

⁵¹ Aune, *Prophecy*, p. 105. Aune comes to a similar conclusion, although from a different direction. It is possible, although unlikely, that the Hebrew or Aramaic underlying these two passages in *Maccabees* is “priest (or prophet) with Urim and Thummim” which has been interpreted in translation. Although this would be without exact precedent, the *LXX* stumbles over Urim and Thummim elsewhere as well (e.g. *1 Sa* 14:41), suggesting that Alexandrian Judaism was not generally familiar with the concept.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 105.

⁵³ See below, pp. 71ff.

⁵⁴ Jonathan A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees, The Anchor Bible*, vol. 41 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 48, 376. Although, to be obvious this requires Theodotian’s Greek translation. The actual similarity of the underlying Hebrew/Aramaic cannot be determined.

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expectations had risen during this period as a result of it. This, however, involves us in some assumptions about apocalyptic's relationship to prophecy which must now be addressed.

The Transformation of Prophecy

Apocalyptic

It is well beyond the scope of this study to attempt a survey of apocalyptic or a reconstruction of its origins. Nevertheless, the existence of a wide body of literature which can potentially be interpreted as representing prophetic activity in the Second Temple period cannot go unnoticed in an investigation such as this. The key question appears to be whether or not apocalyptic can be regarded as prophecy. It is quite common in the literature to find such comments as that of Robert R. Wilson, who in discussing the changes that followed the restoration, comments, “gradually, prophecy seems to have disappeared and to have been replaced by apocalyptic.”⁵⁵

Other authors, such as van Rad, do not even believe that apocalyptic had its origins in the prophetic movement.⁵⁶ Von Rad’s argument is based primarily on the content of apocalyptic *vis-à-vis* classical prophecy. He suggests that the predictive aspects of prophecy were never the primary ones, so the fact that this literature contains predictions (or pseudo-predictions) does not make it prophetic. The real content of prophetic speech was the proclamation of Yahweh’s expectations and continued interaction in history. In apocalyptic, however, events in time have all been predetermined from the beginning, and although there is some sense of personal responsibility evidenced in the rewards and punishments of the eschaton, even this is predetermined by God. Van Rad sees the true

⁵⁵ Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 295.

source of this understanding of history which views time in terms of epochs in the wisdom movement (*Eccl.* 3.1ff, for example). It is the wise who are able to interpret this literature (*Dan.* 1.3ff; 2.30; 5.11; 12.3), and it is into the realm of wisdom that such passages as *Enoch* 72ff and 60.17ff must be classed.⁵⁷

In contrast to this, a number of scholars see this literature as having its roots in the prophetic tradition transformed by alienating events in the post-exilic period.⁵⁸ According to this view, apocalyptic groups arose from prophetic minorities which found themselves in a losing conflict with a ruling non-eschatological priestly theocracy. Their view of history grows out of an abandonment of the prophetic eschatology due to a loss of political power on the part of these groups and the emergence of a Troeltschean church/sect tension (priesthood=church, apocalyptic group=sect).⁵⁹ When the prophetic groups found their expectations disappointed by the restoration, and themselves something of an oppressed minority, the hope of prophetic fulfillment was increasingly located in the eschaton,⁶⁰ and their view of those who differed increasingly polarized into a good-evil dualism. Robert Wilson comments,

In terms of sociological structure, peripheral prophetic support groups and apocalyptic groups are closely related to each other, so it is not difficult to understand how one might have developed into the other. However, the

⁵⁶ von Rad, *op.cit.*, pp. 303ff.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); Wilson, *op.cit.*; Vielhauer, *op.cit.*; O. Ploger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie*, 1959.

⁵⁹ So especially, Hanson, *op.cit.*, pp. 215ff.

⁶⁰ Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 205.

metamorphosis of prophetic support groups into apocalyptic groups marks the demise of genuine prophetic activity in Israel.⁶¹

The activity of the intervening period is represented by such works as *Zechariah*, *Trito-Isaiah* and *Malachi*. This period is marked by anonymity, lack of historical setting and an increasing movement toward apocalyptic.⁶² These tendencies, it is argued, were the result of the fact that contemporary prophecy was being accorded less and less authority due to the failure of earlier prophetic oracles, which had pointed to political/eschatological bliss, to be adequately fulfilled in spite of the return from exile. *Zechariah*'s obscure visions, the meanings of which require interpretation, safeguard the authenticity of the message since both the vision and the explanation come from God (or an angel, *Zech.* 1.9, 19; 2.2; 4.4). Since the oracle is the result of a vision in the more spectacular sense and not simply the prophet's transmission of spiritual urges or interpretation of outwardly normal events (e.g. *Amos* 8.11-3), the possibility of the prophet misunderstanding or misinterpreting is at least apparently reduced, resulting in increased authority for the oracle. This tendency is obviously carried to its fullest extent in the apocalyptic literature of the Hellenistic period.⁶³

Von Rad's argument that apocalyptic should not be considered prophecy is -fairly straightforward. It has neither historical nor ideological connections and, although it may draw from prophetic traditions, the only thing they have in common is prediction. From

⁶¹ Wilson, op.cit., p. 308.

⁶² Vielhauer, op.cit., p. 595.

⁶³ Wilson, op.cit., p. 308.

the point of view of the second group of scholars,⁶⁴ the distinction is more subtle. Some would dismiss this literature with suggestion that the sects that produced these works were not part of mainstream Judaism, while to others the extensive use of prediction after the fact is offensive. But for all, the primary arguments are theological. Vielhauer asserts, “the dualism, determinism, and pessimism of apocalyptic form the gulf which separates it from prophecy.”⁶⁵ The questions of where this literature came from and why it differs from classical prophecy are only issues after the fact of its disenfranchisement from the prophetic world.

The prophetic belief in the End is in all essentials autochthonous, whereas the apocalyptic is really built up from elements of Iranian dualism. Accordingly, the former predicts a termination of creation, the latter its dissolution, its replacement by another and completely good world; the former allows the now aimless powers, “evil”, to find their way to God and change to good, the latter sees good and evil finally separated at the end of days, the one redeemed, the other unredeemed for ever; the former believes in the sanctification of the earth, the latter despairs of it as hopelessly ruined; the former allows the original creative will of God to be fulfilled without remainder, the latter makes the faithless creation powerful over the Creator, in that it compels him to surrender Nature....⁶⁶

The implications are subtle but clear. The picture is painted here of prophecy *vis-à-vis* apocalyptic which makes the former look for all the world like everything which is attractive to modern teleistic humanism. That this is an unlikely assessment of classical prophecy hardly needs to be defended here. But even if we accept this assessment, the assumption that theological/philosophical grounds are acceptable criteria for determining

⁶⁴ Not all scholars, notably Hanson, *op.cit.*, who would accept the basic outline of this viewpoint as I have presented it, would necessarily reject the identification of apocalyptic as a form of Second Temple prophecy.

⁶⁵ Vielhauer, *op.cit.*, p. 596.

⁶⁶ Martin Buber, *Kampf um Israel* (1933), p. 50, quoted from Vielhauer, *op.cit.*, 596.

the incapability of prophecy and apocalyptic reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of prophecy and prophetic inspiration, which is related to, but not defined by, theology. The question of the historical origin of apocalyptic is useful in determining whether or not we should consider it genuine visionary experience, but the real issue is how it was viewed by the visionaries and their readers, and not whether modern theology prefers it to classical prophecy. There is enough theological diversity in the body of canonical prophecy⁶⁷ that the fact that apocalyptic represents a new world view in response to a new world situation should not offend the scholar.

The proposition that apocalyptic arises in small sectarian groups is important, but it is in need of some qualification. Problematic are the assumptions that Wilson's "peripheral prophetic support groups"⁶⁸ could make drastic additions to an already existing prophetic canon or could produce works that were well enough received to be absorbed into that developing canon. If these are products of the "oppressed and powerless",⁶⁹ it is hard to imagine their receiving such wide acceptance. Whatever the social status of these groups or individuals, their works received a great deal of support. Hanson's view of the Hellenistic Jewish world as divided into radically contrasted groups of the powerful versus the weak is too arbitrary, and requires a good deal of qualification to be useful.⁷⁰ Nor can Plöger's claim that the foreign influences identifiable in this work

⁶⁷ *Jeremiah* vs. *2 Isaiah*, for example.

⁶⁸ Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 308, and see quote, above. If, as Wilson suggests, prophetic support groups and apocalyptic groups are so close, it is hard to see why he makes such a distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic.

⁶⁹ Aune, *Prophecy*, p. 110.

⁷⁰ So also Carroll, *op.cit.*, pp. 209ff.

(most notably, its dualism, and to some extent, its picture of the eschaton) demonstrate that it must have come from an oppressed minority⁷¹ be sustained. That the foreign influence is present is clear. That the persecuted nature of the community makes it more vulnerable to this is more difficult and the reverse has often been the case in similar situations (in America, for example, the Mormons and the Mennonites). It is much more likely that these influences come in from the wisdom community whose eclectic nature is well known.⁷²

This, of course, brings us back to van Rad's view. The same criticisms regarding the use of theology as a divining tool to identify prophecy applies here, but the main problem with his reconstruction is that it is not sufficient. His criticisms do, however, shed a great deal of light on the influence wisdom literature and the wisdom community must have had on the prophetic community in the exilic period. The contrast between prophecy and wisdom sometimes made in discussing the period of the first temple cannot be sustained here. In fact, in light of the blurring of distinctions between prophetic and sophistic activity which we will see below, we may even be able to speak of a merging of the two communities.

The most obvious question at this point is whether the apocalyptic writers regarded their own work as prophecy. By most authors, this is simply allowed,⁷³ but some would contend even this point. We have already noted above Vielhauer's suggestion that the

⁷¹ Vielhauer, *op.cit.*, p. 595.

⁷² Soggin, *op.cit.*, p. 381.

⁷³ H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 13f. Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 55. Charlesworth, *op.cit.*, p. xxiv.

author/editor of *Daniel* did not regard himself as a prophet. Following von Rad he also cites 2 *Baruch* 85.3 where we read, “but now, the righteous have been assembled and the prophets are sleeping.”⁷⁴ He comments that in context Baruch is portrayed as doing the same things as Jeremiah had done and concludes that the author intends that “the prophets have disappeared: the apocalypticists have taken their place and continue their work in other but better ways.” In this, Vielhauer approaches, yet misses the point. It is not that the visionaries continue or take over the work of the now defunct prophets which is the implication of this passage, but that they *are* prophets. When Baruch acts like a prophet and prophesies, he is, therefore, a prophet. That his prophecies look more like what we would call apocalyptic simply indicates that in his mind no such distinction exists. It would not have occurred to the writer that the literary form of the work would cause it to be considered non-prophetic.⁷⁵ The canonical Revelation of John is another example of apocalyptic which is clearly regarded both by the author and, we are given every reason to understand, by its audience as a prophecy in the fullest sense. Of the eighteen occurrences of *προφητης* and its cognates in this book, at least six and possibly seven, refer to the book itself or the activity of its author.⁷⁶ Finally, Ezra is referred to as a prophet in 4 *Ezra* 1.1 and 12.42, which, although it does not help us in regard to the self-understanding of the author(s), it certainly indicates how the book was viewed.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Vielhauer, *op.cit.*, p. 595; von Rad, *op.cit.*, p. 303; Trans. from Charlesworth, *op.cit.*, p. 651.

⁷⁵ Although as A. F. J. Klijn points out in the introduction to this work in Charlesworth, *op.cit.*, pp. 615, the book comes from the early second century AD and cannot be construed to tell us very much about late Persian and Hellenistic views of prophecy anyway. The “prophets” referred to here are the “righteous prophets and holy men” (vs. 1) of old and do not reflect on the presence or absence of charismatic activity in the writer’s own day.

⁷⁶ 1.3-5 10.11; 22.7, 10, 18, 19 and probably 22.9.

⁷⁷ Aune, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

Prophecy in Chronicles

At the other end of the spectrum from apocalyptic, the book of *Chronicles* provides evidence of the possibility that prophetic activity was viewed as existing in a very different form in the context of the Second Temple period. The historical period which the Chronicler writes about, even if we include *Ezra/Nehemiah*, does not extend into the time during which prophecy is traditionally said to have disappeared. We must be careful, therefore, when we try to glean from such a document, information about the writer's own day.⁷⁸ But there are a number of interesting ways in which his view of prophetic activity diverges from that of his primary source, *Samuel-Kings* that might suggest to us that it either mirrors the tendencies of his own time or is an attempt to influence them.

1 Chr. 25.1a reads,

David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service certain of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals.

This passage contains a textual variant. The *RSV* quoted here follows the *Qere* and the versions. The *Ketib* reads, "Heman and Jeduthun, the prophets, with harps...", etc. The difference is significant, but for our purposes the implications are essentially the same. It appears that for the Chronicler, the leading of temple music, or perhaps more likely, the writing of psalmody was an aspect of prophecy. This is further strengthened by *1 Chr. 15.22, 27* where the *RSV* gives.

Chenaniah, leader of the Levites in music, should direct the music, for he understood it. (vs. 22)

⁷⁸ Although the time of the Chronicler's writing cannot be determined with any degree of precision, it is generally assumed that he falls in the late Persian or early Hellenistic periods.

...all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers.... (vs. 27)
Here the word translated “music” in each case is *mašša’*, which normally means ‘oracle’.⁷⁹ Once this relationship is noticed, a whole series of passages in *Chronicles* become visible in a new light. In *1 Chr.* 25.2-5, we find that Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman are all regarded as prophets (cf. *2 Chr.* 29.30; 35.15). In *2 Chr.* 5.12, we find that these three are also Levites, and from *1 Chr.* 16.4 that their commission was to “invoke, thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel” which is apparently one of the primary roles of the Levites throughout *Chronicles* (*1 Chr.* 23.5, 30; *2 Chr.* 7.6; 8.14).⁸⁰ Furthermore, this arrangement, according to the Chronicler, was established under prophetic authority (*2 Chr.* 29.25).⁸¹ In *2 Chr.* 20.13ff, one of the Levites delivers a prophetic oracle “in the midst of the assembly” to the effect that God was going to save them from the Moabites and the Ammonites who were attacking them. This prophecy is then fulfilled when, under the leadership of the Levitical singers, the army goes forth from the city praising God only to find that the enemy had been destroyed already. It is interesting that in vs. 14 the Chronicler is careful to establish that the prophet responsible was a “Levite of the sons of Asaph.” Prophecy is also associated with the high priest in *2 Chr.* 24.20ff. One significant detail can be found by examining *2 Chr.* 34.30 where the Chronicler quotes his source,

⁷⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Canon*, p. 185, n. 37, refers the idea originally to S. Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1967), p. 56, who translates *הַשֵּׁר הַמַּשָּׂא*, “master of the oracle”. Although, the sense of “worship” is not out of place in light of its use by P for the bearing of the ark (*Num.* 4.15, 19, 27, 49). Francis Brown, et al., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p.

⁸⁰ Blenkinsopp, *History*, pp. 255, 279, n. 73.

⁸¹ Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 293.

2 Kings 23.2, verbatim, except that he substitutes “Levites” for the Deuteronomist’s “prophets”.

Taken together, these passages seem to indicate that for the Chronicler there is very close association between the ministry of the Levites and charismatic office. It is not impossible that the pre-exilic cultic prophets were closely connected with the guild of musicians, but it is quite apparent that the author of this work viewed them thus in his own day.⁸² This, in connection with the tradition (which probably comes from this general period) that a number of the canonical psalms were penned by Asaph, may suggest that the writing of psalms in the ministry of cultic worship was regarded as a form of prophecy. The tradition that psalmody is (or can be) prophetic is not unknown. David’s identification as a prophet in much of this literature is at least to some extent based on his association with the Psalms. The following passage is also instructive:

R. Levi said in the name of R. Hanina, “The eleven psalms which Moses spoke were spoken in the genre of prophets.⁸³ But why were they not written in the *Torah*? Because these are words of *Torah*, but those are words of prophecy.” (*Midrash Tehillim* 90.4)

It is also noteworthy that in the prophecy of Zechariah in *Luke* 1.68-79, the greater part falls into the categories of “invoke, thank, and praise” referred to above as the commission of the Levites, and the entire utterance clearly resembles a psalm.

It would be inaccurate to characterize the Chronicler as simply equating prophecy with psalmody or priesthood, and that is not the intention here. The two Levitical/priestly

⁸² In light of this, it is not surprising that he takes such a dim view of “the Levites and the singers” being forced out of financial necessity, to leave the work of the temple and return to their fields (*Neh.* 13.10*f*). Is it possible that this reflected a tendency which he saw in his own day?

⁸³ בטכסים של נביאים.

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prophecies specifically quoted in his work (20.14ff and 24.20ff noted above) are oracles in the old fashioned sense and do not resemble psalmody at all. Nor are all the prophets original to Chronicles identifiable as Levites. Azariah (2 *Chr.* 15.1-7), Hanani (16.7-10), both unknown outside of this work do not appear to be connected with the cult in any way.⁸⁴

There is, in fact, another area, not generally associated with charismatic activity, which this writer regards as an aspect of the function of the prophet. In addition to psalmody and the more classically recognized prophetic functions, the prophet can also be an historiographer. Beginning with David, and then numerous times through 2 *Chr.* the author sums up his account of each king's reign with a reverence to the sources he (presumably) used. His primary source is, of course, *Samuel-Kings*, and, in fact, the Deuteronomist uses the same technique. True to his source, whenever *Samuel-Kings* uses this formula (*1 Kings* 11.41; 14.49; 15.7; etc.) the Chronicler does also (*1 Chr.* 29.29 is an improvisation on the pattern). A certain percentage of the time he simply transmits some form of the reference cited by *Samuel-Kings* (e.g., 2 *Chr.* 16.11= *1 Kings* 15.24), but frequently he takes the opportunity to produce sources of his own. Among these

⁸⁴ Although, note the reference to the "teaching priest" in 2 *Chr.* 15.3. The presence of non-cultic or Levitical prophets in *Samuel-Kings*, which then reappear in *Chronicles* only shows us how the Chronicler uses his source material and reveals little to us about his view of prophecy in their regard. He does portray Nathan and Gad as more active in relation to the cult in their offices as prophets than we would be able to glean from *Samuel-Kings* (for example, 2 *Chr.* 29.25 where they aid in the establishment of the Levitical functions in the temple). It is also, of course, possible that the prophets mentioned here come from one of the Chronicler's other sources (if such sources exist).

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original sources he produces no less than nine references to historical writings by prophets he has (usually) referred to earlier.⁸⁵ *2 Chr.* 9.29 is a characteristic example.

Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?

This would seem to suggest that he views historiography as one of the characteristic activities of past prophets. It is not unreasonable to suppose, in light of this, that he regards himself as entering into this sacred tradition, and may well see himself as a prophet. It is not possible to determine whether he drew from a theological context in which certain historical books were already acquiring the aura that would lead to their eventual classification as “Former Prophets”, but it is certain that he contributed to its growth.⁸⁶

Sapient prophecy

Since the temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to the wise. (*Baba Bathra* 12a)

We noted above that the rabbis saw themselves standing in the tradition of the prophets in their exposition of scripture and in retrospect viewed the prophets as expounders and interpreters of Torah. The targum to *Judges* 5.9 says that Deborah, being a prophetess,

⁸⁵ *1 Chr.* 29.29; *2 Chr.* 9.29; 12.15; 13.22; 20.34 (see 19.2); 26.22; 32.32; 33.19. The prophetic chronicles he mentions are Nathan, Gad, Samuel, Ahijah, Iddo, Shemiah, Jehu, Isaiah and a mysterious “Chronicles of the Seers (Hozai)”. The issue of whether or not these sources ever existed, or whether the Chronicler used them if they did, does not effect the conclusions of this study. Only the degree to which the theology of historiography as prophecy originates with him is affected by such a discussion, and not the existence of this theology.

⁸⁶ It is, perhaps, ironic that when the books were tallied, *Chronicles-Nehemiah* was not included in that group.

“did not cease to give exposition of the Torah”.⁸⁷ From the other direction, the canonical wisdom literature came to be viewed in rabbinic circles as prophecy.

Similarly it is written, “The words of Qohelet, the son of David, king of Jerusalem”. Is this all that Solomon prophesied? Did he not compose three books, half of his wisdom in parables? (*Sifré on Deut.* 1.1)
This reflects the same tendency that we saw earlier in the Chronicler and in *Midrash Tehillim* on the psalms of Moses to expand the definition of prophecy such that it begins to absorb genres which were previously distinguished from it. Prophecy in the classical period was certainly somewhat eclectic in its own right, but in the Second Temple period we find the term being used inclusive of more and more genres and media. Eventually, any activity viewed as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit is regarded as prophetic; hence, all scripture by definition becomes prophecy.⁸⁸

In our discussion of apocalyptic we noted that this literature had come under the influence of the wisdom movement and suggested the possibility that prophecy and wisdom were beginning to merge and that apocalyptic was one of the products. In the wisdom community itself we see the same process. In *Prov.* 1-9, ‘wisdom’ begins to be identified with revelation. In the later wisdom literature this tendency becomes more pronounced. In *ben Sirach* 24.3 it is portrayed as issuing “from the mouth of the Most High.” ‘Wisdom’ is described as the source of prophecy in several passages in the *Wisdom of Solomon*:

⁸⁷ Edward Earle Ellis, “The Role of the Christian Prophet in Acts”, in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, W. Ward Basque and Ralph P. Martin, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 58.

⁸⁸ Leiman, *op.cit.*, p. 65. See, for example *2 Tim.* 3.16.

In every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them friends of God, and prophets;
for God loves nothing so much as the man who lives with wisdom.
(7.27b-28)

And if any one longs for wide experience,
she knows the things of old,
and infers the things to come;
she understands turns of speech
and the solutions of riddles;
she has foreknowledge of signs and wonders
and of the outcome of seasons and times. (8.8)

Wisdom prospered their works by the hand of a holy prophet. (11.1)
Here, ‘wisdom’, personified as a divine emanation, is characterized as the mediator of prophetic revelation, much as we see angels used in some contexts (see above, p. 14, n. 41, and *Hermas, Mand.* 11), and the Holy Spirit in others (e.g. *Isa.* 61.1; *Mic.* 3.8; etc., and throughout most of the New Testament⁸⁹).

The definition of prophecy is clearly shifting. While, etymologically, both *nabi*’ and *προφήτης* are probably best translated, ‘proclaimer’,⁹⁰ they are used primarily of characters functioning in the context of ecstatic or semi-ecstatic states or whose

⁸⁹ Leiman, *op.cit.*, p. 66, notes that *נבואה* and *רוח הקודש* are used interchangeably in rabbinic literature with regard to books in either the *Kethubim* or the *Nebi'im*.

⁹⁰ *נביא* is generally compared to the Akkadian *nabû* meaning “to name, call” and some attempt is made to associate this with the prophetic call as being essential to the Israelite concept of prophet. It is worth noting, however, that *nabû* can mean “to declare”, which comes much closer to the actual observable activities of the classical prophets. The translation, “proclaimer” has the advantage that it also reflects the etymology and usage of *προφήτης*. According to Plato, the girl who receives the oracle at Delphi (the Pythia) is called *μαντις*, and is said to be *ενθους*, but the men who interpret and/or present the oracle in its final form to the inquirer are called the *προφηται μαντευσομενων* (*Tim.* 72b). Here the *προφήτης* is the proclaimer/interpreter of the ecstatic message rather than the messenger himself, but it should be noted that it is the fact that the message derives from the god (be it second hand) that allows the man to be a “prophet” here. This is not true elsewhere where the word can be used without any religious connotations at all. For example, it can refer to poets, good (i.e. divinely ordained) astrological configurations, Egyptian priests, office bearers, able philosophers (Plato), scientific specialists, and medical quacks, among others. Rene Labat, *Manuel d'Epigraphie Akkadienne*, ed. Florence Malbran-Labat (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1976), p. 315. Helmut Kramer, “*προφήτης*: A. The Word Group in Profane Greek”, *TDNT* VI, 787f, 792f.

proclamation is based on such revelation.⁹¹ In the Second Temple period, the concept of prophecy expands to include activities and revelation, which, on the one hand, are not connected to ecstatic inspiration at all (as far as we can tell), and on the other, are not necessarily intended for public proclamation. Putting a definition on ‘prophecy’ in this later period becomes more difficult and is destined to become harder as the word itself begins to be restricted in reference to the canonical collection of the same name. Part of our delineation of prophecy must, therefore, be phenomenological. With this understanding anything can be prophetic which resembles the activity of one of the historical prophets, but this very quickly becomes problematic since prophetic activity is able to inhabit a wider sphere than we can conservatively define as prophecy. By this, I mean, that while history writing, for example, may be regarded by the Chronicler as a potential medium of the prophet, this does not mean that he regards all historiography to be prophetic. The same distinction can certainly be made for psalmody or even the interpretation of enigmas. So, for example, Nebuchadnezzar’s court contained a number of characters so skilled, but only Daniel is regarded as a prophet. The key to the distinction can be found in *Dan. 2.27f*:

Daniel answered the king, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery which the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.”

In fact, the dream was revealed to Daniel in a “vision of the night” (2.19), but the real secret is revealed in 4.18 where the king tells Daniel, “but you are able, for the spirit

⁹¹ I recognize that this is an oversimplification of classical prophecy in particular, which actually stands between the ecstatic prophecy of the *ro'im* and the sophisticated prophecy of the Second Temple wisdom movement.

of the holy gods is in you” (see 4.9, 5.12, 14). The key, then, is the active revelation of God, whether it be through the Holy Spirit, “Wisdom”, or an angel. The prophet, whatever his medium, is an *intermediary*⁹² between God and the human, and as such his message is not perceived as originating in himself, even though he may have cognitively participated in its reception (through research, for example). Lindblom defines the prophetic consciousness as the “revelatory state of mind”,⁹³ and this probably comes closest of the various definitions that have been offered⁹⁴ to expressing the understanding of the literature we are studying. It is possible, then to interpret scripture, to be wise, write hymns or history, even to predict the future without being prophetic. The prophet, however, can also be found in each of these activities in his role as intermediary.⁹⁵

There are, however, important differences within this literature. On the one hand, while it is not likely that the distinction between wisdom and charismatic inspiration was as clearly distinguished as it is today; on the other, the view of what constitutes prophecy may have differed substantially in apocalyptic and sapient “schools” respectively. In the apocalyptic literature the emphasis is clearly on the visionary. There continues, if anything, a distancing of the message from its human mediator. As we saw earlier (p. 23),

⁹² This word comes from Wilson, *op.cit.*, discussed on pp. 21-28.

⁹³ Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), pp. 173ff.

⁹⁴ Various definitions are collected and discussed in Jannes Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy: a Study of the Eleventh Mandate, Supplements to Novum Testamentum*, vol. XXXVII (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), p. 18, and Hill, *Prophecy*, pp. 1-11. See also above, p. 34, n. 90 and below, p.37, n.98.

⁹⁵ There is no Hebrew term that corresponds directly with ψευδοπροφητης. ריב is used for both approved and disapproved oracles in the Hebrew Scriptures. The *LXX* imposes its interpretation on the majority of spurious or non-Yahwistic charismatics by translating by either ψευδοπροφητης or μαντις (Jannes Reiling, “The Use of ΨΕΥΔΟΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ in the Septuagint, Philo and Josephus”, in *Novum Testamentum* 13 (1971), pp. 147-156, *idem.*, *Hermas*, pp. 35, 47f). It may be possible to conclude that ‘false prophecy’ did not emerge as a defined genre (as opposed to charismata which are regarded as

the tendency is for the central vision to be extremely enigmatic, requiring divine interpretation (so for example *Dan.* chs. 7-12), thus protecting the vision even further from human error. It may, in fact, be this aspect of apocalyptic which explains the almost universal use of pseudonymity characteristic of this genre.⁹⁶ In sapient circles, on the other hand, the tendency is to draw prophecy more and more into the natural sphere. It is less and less the result of immediate inspiration, and is looked for increasingly in the realm of spiritual awareness or insight. It is also noteworthy that the concept of prediction is de-emphasized in wisdom prophecy *vis-à-vis* apocalyptic, although it clearly has not disappeared (see *Wisd.* 8.8*b*, above).⁹⁷ The Chronicler, from his cultic outlook, probably stands somewhere in between these two extremes, but, to the extent that he tends to naturalize prophecy, he stands closer to the view of the wisdom schools. The data does not allow us to speculate about how these literary communities viewed each other as regards their respective concepts of inspiration, although the author of *I Maccabees*' opinion, noted above (pp. 15*ff*), probably provides us with a third, and more sharply critical opinion.⁹⁸

'prophecy' whether they are inspired by Yahweh or not) until the post-exilic period, perhaps in response to the "cognitive dissonance" of failed prophecy.

⁹⁶ On pseudonymity, see below, pp. 68*ff*.

⁹⁷ This brief contrast between apocalyptic and sapient prophecy needs to be tempered with the observation that most of the apocalyptic heroes are wisdom figures (e.g., Daniel, Baruch, Ezra, etc.) David Halperin, private communication.

⁹⁸ The question of the psychological nature of prophecy has been a particular concern to scholars of the New Testament phenomenon. The issue is whether prophecy is, or can be, a product of reflection or cognition, or if it originates, or at least is perceived as originating, purely from outside the subject as revelation. Writers such as Reiling, *Hermeneutics*, based on the eleventh mandate of *Hermas*, asserts that Christian prophecy is to be distinguished from other Christian ministries by its immediate inspiration. So also, Gerhard Friedrich, "προφητης: D. Prophets and Prophecies in the New Testament. E. Prophets in the Early Church", *TDNT*, VI, p. 853. Against this, a number of scholars argue that much of what the early church regarded as prophetic was actually the result of conscious thought, often drawing on received traditions, prophetic or otherwise. The main argument for such a position lies in the apparent content of

much identifiable prophetic speech, particularly in Paul, but also to some extent in *Acts*, which is often hard to satisfactorily distinguish from teaching. This view is championed by, most notably, Ellis, *Hermeneutics* [and see bibliography for other studies by Ellis], followed by Hill, *op.cit.*, and Wayne A. Grudem, *op.cit.* A critique of Ellis can be found in Aune, *Prophecy*, pp. 339-346. The evidence probably warns against extremes in either direction.

Prophecy in the Maccabean and Roman Periods

Prophecy at Qumran

The word “prophet” is never used in the Dead Sea scrolls of any of the people in the Qumran community, or of anyone regarded as coming after the fifth century, BC. Yet there are a number of reasons to think that some of the activity there would fall within the area that we have been calling prophetic, and even that the sect regarded some of their activities or members as fulfilling that function in the community. Within the Qumran literature, there is a certain amount of material which probably belongs in this category. The *War Rule*⁹⁹ may have been regarded as prophetic, whether or not we should classify it as apocalyptic. It is strongly influenced by apocalyptic thought, particularly *Daniel*,¹⁰⁰ and its time frame is future, but it does not look like any other prophetic literature, and we cannot know how the community viewed it, or even used it. 1 QH 3.27b-36 is a more obvious example of prophetic utterance in the Qumran literature.

And the earth cries out because of the disasters that are come upon the world.

And all its inhabitants cry aloud,

And all upon the earth rush madly to and fro:

They stagger in great disaster;

For God thunders with the noise of his strength,

And His holy abode resounds with his true glory;

⁹⁹ I have accepted the title assigned to this work by Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 122-148.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 122f.

The host of heaven utters its voice;
The foundations of the world tremble and reel;
The battle of the warriors of heaven sweeps across the world,
And returns not until it is finished and ended for ever and ever.¹⁰¹
If the author did not regard this apocalyptic passage as prophetic, then he is certainly writing in a style intended to imitate prophetic poetry.¹⁰² We have already seen in this period that psalmody was regarded as a potential medium for prophetic utterance.

But very little prophecy of this nature is found in the Qumran material which has become available to date.¹⁰³ We do know that the Essenes were very eschatologically minded and we have in the fragments of commentaries found near the Dead Sea a number of examples of how they interpreted scripture eschatologically. For example, the following exposition of *Habakkuk 2.7-8a*:

[Interpreted, this concerns] the Priest who rebelled [and violated] the precepts [of God... to command] his chastisement by means of the judgments of wickedness. And they inflicted horrors of evil diseases and took vengeance upon his body of flesh. And as for that which He said, *Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you*, interpreted this concerns the last Priests of Jerusalem, who shall amass money and wealth by plundering the peoples. But in the last days, their riches and booty shall be delivered into the hands of the army of the Kittim, for it is they who shall be the *remnant of the peoples*. (1 QpHab 8.16-9.7)¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Quoted from Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 136f.

¹⁰² So also Matthew Black, "The Scrolls and Christianity", in *The Scrolls and Christianity*, ed., Matthew Black, (London: S.P.C.K., 1969), p. 105.

¹⁰³ Not all scholars have accepted the view that prophecy was active at Qumran. M. Burrows, "Prophecy and the Prophets at Qumran" in *Israel's Prophetic Heritages Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1962) pp. 223f, believes that prophecy was "regarded as belonging to the past and the future". He sees 1 QS 9.10 which he translates "until the coming of a prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel" as supporting this. More likely, however, the passage should be translated "the Prophet" with Vermes, *DSSE*, p.87, 185, who regards this as a reference to the eschatological prophet, on which see above, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted from Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 240.

This type of exposition is generally referred to as *pešer* style interpretation because it is used constantly in the Qumran literature where exposition characteristically begins *pšr hdbbr* or *pšrw 'l*. The root meaning of *pešer* is “loose”, but it comes to mean “disclose a secret, diagnose, solve a riddle, interpret a mystery”.¹⁰⁵ In biblical Hebrew the word is used variously!

Who is the wise man, and who knows the *interpretation*¹⁰⁶ of a thing?
(*Qoh.* 8.1)

for they too will pray to the Lord that he should grant them success in
diagnosis
and in healing for the sake of preserving life. (*Sirach* 38.14)

The word is used frequently in *Daniel* chs. 2-4, and in ch. 5 of the interpretation of dreams and the mysterious writing on the wall. It is the use in *Daniel* which undoubtedly comes closest to the use at Qumran, where scriptural prophecy was apparently regarded as a complex eschatological riddle/mystery (*raz*) which required unlocking.

This was the special role of the *maškilim*, a term which probably also comes from *Daniel* (note also *Dan.* 9.22).¹⁰⁷

And those among the people who are *maškilim*¹⁰⁸ shall make many understand.... (11.33)

...and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are *maškilim* shall understand. (12.10)

¹⁰⁵ The following discussion of פֶּשֶׁר is based on that of Maurya P. Horgan, *Pesharia: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monographs Series #8* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1979), pp. 230-237.

¹⁰⁶ The *LXX* reads λυσιν here.

¹⁰⁷ Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), pp. 227ff.

¹⁰⁸ Actually, מַשְׁכִּילֵי עַם.

Besides the fact that *nabi'* is in this period being used almost exclusively of canonical figures, one other reason that it is never used of Qumran members may be that those filling that role are, under the influence of *Daniel*, referred to as *maškilim*. We have already seen that interpretation of earlier received oracles was becoming part of prophetic activity in the later period, and this is especially noticeable in *Daniel*. It is possible, then, and even probable, that they regarded the inspired disclosure¹⁰⁹ of scripture as prophecy.¹¹⁰ This is strengthened by the fact that the *maškilim* were at least sometimes regarded as possessing the Holy Spirit, which (as we noted above, p. 42, n. 111), is closely connected with prophecy.¹¹¹

As for me as a *maškil* have I come to know thee, my God, through the spirit that thou hast given me, and by thy Holy Spirit I have faithfully listened to thy marvelous secret counsel. (1 QH 12.11f)¹¹²
Note especially that the *maškil* hears “secret counsel” by means of the Holy Spirit.¹¹³

What is implied here then is not a wisdom that comes from learning, however that may

¹⁰⁹ “Disclosure” is probably the best word for bringing out the various nuances of פֶּשֶׁר.

¹¹⁰ So also Ellis, *Role*, pp. 58f, who, however, then goes on to equate prophecy and teaching in *Acts*, which is problematic. Ellis points out that Jesus and Daniel also interpret scripture with prophetic authority, and concludes that prophecy and scripture interpretation are merging. But this must be viewed very cautiously; there is a key distinction here which he seems to be missing. Jesus, Daniel, (and the Teacher of Righteousness, as we will see presently) are *noteworthy* because their interpretations are prophetic and authoritative while other’s are not. Most scripture interpretation is *not* prophetic. Once there is a “scripture” to interpret, the prophet can include such exposition in his proclamation, but it is by no means limited to such interpretation (note the main body of Jesus’ ministry), and certainly not all biblical exposition was ever regarded as prophecy.

¹¹¹ The assumption that the רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ had been removed from Israel usually accompanied the belief that prophecy had ceased. See Meyer, *op.cit.*, p. 816.

¹¹² Quoted from Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 229.

¹¹³ It should be mentioned that at Qumran, the Holy Spirit is one of many spirits, and may be an angel. 1 QH 17.17, “because of the *spirits* which you have given me”, is also interesting. See Ellis, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 33ff.

play a part, but of the inspiration of the spirit, which we might presume finds its main outlet in the “disclosure” of prophecy.

Prophetic revelation may also be evidenced at Qumran by 1 QM 10.7f where the “ordering of the battles” is said to have been made known by “your anointed ones, seers of testimonies”, although this passage could refer to the canonical prophets (note the parallel use of “anointed ones” and “prophets” in *Ps.* 105.15).¹¹⁴

Regardless of whether some or all of the various *maškilim* were regarded as prophetically interpreting the Prophets, it is certain that the Teacher of Righteousness was viewed this way. The frequently quoted *pešer* of *Hab.* 2.1-2 in 1 QpHab 7.1-5 clearly illustrates his prophetic-eschatological role:

...and God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but He did not make known to him when time would come to an end. And as for that which is said, *That he who reads may read it speedily*, interpreted this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets.¹¹⁵

Also pertinent in this context:

God took note of their deeds, for they sought him with a perfect heart, and he raised up for them a Teacher of Righteousness to lead them in the way of his heart, that he might make known to the last generation what he was about to do to the last generation — the congregation of deceivers. (*Damascus Rule* 1.10-12)¹¹⁶

[The interpretation of the passage concerns] the traitors together with the Man of the Lie, for [they did] not [believe the words of] the Teacher of Righteousness (which were) from the mouth of God....Likewise,... [concerns the trai]tors at the end of days. They...will not believe when they

¹¹⁴ Burrows, *op.cit.*, p. 224.

¹¹⁵ Quoted from Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 239.

¹¹⁶ Quoted from Bruce, *op.cit.*, p. 226.

hear all that is going to co[me up]on the last generation from the mouth of the priest into [whose heart] God put [understand]ing to interpret all the words of his servants the prophets, by [whose] hand God enumerated all that is going to come upon his people and up[on his congregation.]. (1 QpHab 2.1-10 [on Hab. 1.5])¹¹⁷

These passages reveal that the Teacher of Righteousness can interpret prophecy in a way that other people, no matter how learned, cannot attain to. It in fact suggests that he has prophetic revelation himself (note that his words are “from the mouth of God”) in order to interpret prophecies of the past,¹¹⁸ or at least that the community viewed him in that way. It has been proposed, based on the suggestion that 1 QH 18.14ff reflects *Isa.* 61, that the Teacher of Righteousness regarded himself as the eschatological prophet.¹¹⁹ But, although it is certain that the author of this passage believes he has received a special dispensation of understanding from God, there are no eschatological implications, and it is far from clear that the Teacher of Righteousness is the writer. There may, however, be some reason to believe that the community believed him to have filled this role.¹²⁰ If this is true, then if they ever regarded prophecy as having ceased, they must have seen themselves as already living in the period when it had been renewed and our observations regarding the *maskilim* are further strengthened. The fact that he is never directly referred to in that way, however, should caution us in this regard.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Quoted from Horgan, op.cit., p. 13.

¹¹⁸ So also Edward Earle Ellis, “Prophecy in the New Testament Church and Today”, in *Prophetic Vocation in the New Testament and Today*, supplement to *Novum Testamentum* vol. XLV, ed. Johannes Panagopoulos (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), p. 47; Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 37.

¹¹⁹ Burrows, op.cit., mentions and rejects this suggestion.

¹²⁰ So Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 50; idem., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (Cleveland, Ohio: William Collins and World Publishing Co., 1978), p. 195. He bases this on the equation of “the prophet” in 1 QS 9.10f with *geber* in 4.20-22, who is in turn identified with the Teacher of Righteousness in 4 QpPs^A 3.14-17.

¹²¹ Although it should also be noted that “the prophet” is only referred to in this one passage, which Vermes regards as having been written before the community’s equation of the Teacher of Righteousness

The Qumran community is generally assumed to have been part of the Jewish sect which Josephus refers to as Essenes. In light of the community's eschatological interpretation of scripture there may be a parallel here to Josephus' comment concerning the Essenes:

There are some among them who profess to foretell the future, being versed from their early years in holy books, various forms of purification, and the sayings of the prophets (*War* 2.159).¹²²

In his description of his own prophetic abilities (see below) interpreting dreams and being able to decipher “ambiguous utterances of the Deity” (*War* 3.352) was part of what made Josephus a prophet. So it is entirely likely that the *pešer* type interpretation we find at Qumran was at least part of what Josephus considered “prophetic” about the Essenes.¹²³

Most, however, of that which Josephus reports about prophecy among the Essenes, does not involve interpreting scripture. He tells us about a certain Essene, Manaemus, who prophetically addresses Herod as “King of the Jews” while Herod was still a little boy, and also predicts that he will “forget piety and justice” once in power (*Ant.* 15.373ff). Elsewhere he tells us about a dream that Archelaus had. Skilled dream interpreters were unable to understand it, but another Essene, named Simon, interpreted the dream as portending “a change in the situation of Archelaus and one that was not for the better.” Within five days the prediction was fulfilled by his being summoned to Rome, and

and the Prophet was solidified, implying, perhaps, that he was no longer looked for after a certain point. idem., *DSSE*, p. 50.

¹²² Here I have taken the liberty of substituting “sayings” for the archaic “apophthegms”. The Greek reads *αποφθεγμασιν*.

subsequently exiled (*Ant.* 17.342-348). One extremely interesting story tells how a certain Judas

who had never been known to speak falsely in his prophecies...when he saw Antigonus passing by the temple, cried out to his companions and disciples, who were together with him for the purpose of receiving instruction in foretelling the future.... (*Ant.* 13.315f) to the effect that one of his prophecies was not likely to be fulfilled because Antigonus was in the wrong place. It turned out, however, that his prophecy was fulfilled in a different place that had the same name. How exactly he was teaching his disciples to foretell the future is unclear.

The most noticeable aspect of these stories, however, is that they do not seem to recall the characteristics of Qumran activity as clearly as might have been hoped. It should be noted, though, that Josephus does mention that the Essenes were not a completely homogeneous group. He tells us, for example, that some felt that marriage was commanded, while others believed that all contact with women should be avoided as much as possible (*War* 2.120f, 160f). It is possible that other Essene groups had different characteristics. Besides being reminiscent of Daniel and Joseph, the story of Simeon also resembles Josephus' own prophetic call, which involved the interpretation of dreams, and the first story, which, although it is closest in story line to Johanan b. Zakkai's greeting of Vespasian (see below) is also reminiscent of Josephus' similar oracle to him. The most natural conclusion, then, would seem to be that among certain Essene groups, prophecy functioned very much in the same way that it did in Josephus and among some of the

¹²³ Although he does not use *προφητεία* or its cognates of the Essenes, he does use *μαντεία* on several occasions.

more charismatic members of the Pharisees, although it is equally possible that Josephus is blurring the evidence to fit his own expectations.

Josephus

Josephus tells us in a number of ways, if never quite directly, that he sees himself as a prophet. The first criterion by which he makes the claim is that God reveals the future to him. In a narrative that may be intended to function as a type of prophetic call (*War* 3.351-4) he tells us that while he was being urged to surrender himself to Vespasian,

...suddenly there came back into his mind those nightly dreams, in which God had foretold to him the impending fate of the Jews and the destinies of the Roman sovereigns. He was an interpreter of dreams and skilled in divining the meaning of ambiguous utterances of the Deity; a priest himself and of priestly descent, he was not ignorant of the prophecies in the sacred books. At that hour he was inspired (*ενθους γενομενος*) to read their meaning, and, recalling the dreadful images of his recent dreams, he offered up a silent prayer to God. "Since it pleases thee," so it ran, "who didst create the Jewish nation, to break thy work, since fortune has wholly passed to the Romans, and since thou hast made choice of my spirit to announce the things that are to come, I willingly surrender to the Romans and consent to live; but I take thee to witness that I go, not as a traitor, but as thy minister."

The phrase, *ενθους γενομενος*, reveals that his dream interpretation, in spite of his own natural abilities, concerning which he informs us, comes directly from the immediate revelation of God. The fact that Josephus does not use the terminology of the *LXX* should not keep us from noticing that his experience is prophetic. This, at least, is probably how Josephus understands it himself.

After he was taken to Vespasian, he predicted to him that he would become emperor, and that Titus would succeed him, and then he requested to be held in custody against the fulfillment of his prophecy:

For I myself ask to be punished by stricter custody, if I have dared to trifle with the words of God. (*War* 3.402)

When Vespasian did become Emperor, he remembered Josephus and liberated him:

Thus Josephus won his enfranchisement as the reward of his divination, and his power of insight into the future was no longer discredited. (*War* 4.628)

Josephus seems to see his reference to his priestly descent in *War* 3.352 (above) as further strengthening his claim to prophetic activity. Elsewhere, Josephus connects both the priesthood and the temple with the divine spirit (*Ant.* 7.90ff, 8.114, 13.299ff).¹²⁴ The connection between priesthood and prophecy is not exclusive to Josephus. We have already noted the emphasis on Levitical prophecy in *Chronicles*, and *John* 11.51 contains an interesting reference to the High Priest, Caiaphas, speaking prophetically in spite of himself, clearly because of his office.¹²⁵ In Josephus' own writings this is supported, besides in the passages referred to above, by *Ant.* 11.327f where the High Priest receives an oracular dream, in *Ant.* 13.282f, 299f (cf. *War* 1.68f), where John Hyrcanus, to whom he attributes the threefold office of priest, king, and prophet, is said to have been able "to foresee and foretell the future", and in 3.13 where the High Priest's *hošen* ('breastplate') is said to signify "oracle".¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 30.

¹²⁵ Another possible example could be in the *Didache* 13.3, where the prophets receive tithes "for they are your high priests."

¹²⁶ The word he uses for חושן is εσσην. Solomon Zeitlin, "The Essenes and Messianic Expectation", in *Solomon Zeitlin's Studies in the Early History of Judaism*, vol. II (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1974), p. 89, thinks that this etymology also reflects on Josephus' view of the Essenes.

He also recommends himself, it should be recalled, by calling on the fact that “he was not ignorant of the prophecies in the sacred books.” Even more than simply knowing their contents, he was “skilled in divining the meaning of ambiguous utterances of the Deity.” When this is seen in light of *War* 2.159 (quoted above, p. 45) where the prophecy of the Essenes is connected to their knowledge of prophetic canon, it suggests strongly that the *pešer* style interpretation we saw at Qumran was also viewed by Josephus as an aspect of his prophetic ability.¹²⁷ This is further strengthened by *War* 6.312ff where he refers to an “oracle, likewise found in their sacred scriptures, to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world.” It was interpreted messianically by his Jewish contemporaries. “The oracle, however,” he informs us, “in reality signified the sovereignty of Vespasian.” It is interesting that the verb here, δηλοω (“signify”), is frequently used in much the same way as *pešer* (e.g., *Heb.* 12.27; *I Pet.* 1.11). If this is how Josephus is using it here, and it does seem to be, then apparently he views his interpretation of the oracle as prophetic “disclosure”.

The real purpose behind all this, though, and the way he sees his sacred διακονος (*War* 3.354) functioning, is in the writing of history. That he would view this as a prophetic function may also seem a little strange at first, but the Chronicler has set the stage for this, as we saw earlier, and the classification of *Joshua* through *2 Kings* in the Hebrew canon as the “former prophets” was probably in wide usage by this time. At any rate, Josephus makes the relationship quite clear:

¹²⁷ So Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 28; Aune, *Prophecy*, pp. 138ff.

From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life.

From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. (*Apion* 1.40f)

The importance of history being written by prophets lies in their ability, through revelation, to ascertain facts that would otherwise be unknown to them:

...seeing that, on the contrary, the prophets alone had this privilege, obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their own time just as they occurred. (*Apion* 1.37)

[Keeping records was] assigned to their chief priests and prophets — and that down to our own times these records have been, and if I may venture to say so, will continue to be, preserved.... (*Apion* 1.29)

By taking up his history where the “prophets” left off he makes it clear that he sees himself to be continuing the work of those prophets. For this task Josephus was doubly suited, being both prophet and priest! In context with what we have already seen of his claim to prophetic anointing one would be hard pressed to argue that Josephus would recognize a difference in quality between the “prophetic” histories of the Bible and his own.¹²⁸

Josephus does not use the term *προφητης* of himself, nor, generally, of any of his contemporaries, since he reserves this word for prophets of the classical period.¹²⁹ He

¹²⁸ But see above, p. 2, n. 6.

¹²⁹ It is not without significance that he only uses *προφητης* and its cognates three times of anyone after the canonical period. He uses *προφητεια* of John Hyrcanus twice (*Ant.* 13.299 and parallel in *War* 1.68), and *προφητης* in *Ant.* 1.240f of an historian. The other instance of *προφητης* (*War* 6.286) refers to hired charlatans, and is either sarcastic or a mistake. David E. Aune, “The use of ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ in Josephus” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 101 (1982), p. 419.

does, however, use the terms διακονος and ενθους γενομενος of himself and μαντις of Essene seers and political foretellers. Hill¹³⁰ concludes from this that Josephus knew that the age of “immediately inspired and unquestionably authoritative prophecy was past and gone”. Therefore, says Hill, he could not use the term προφητης of contemporary phenomena even though the function continued.¹³¹ But, to conclude, from the fact that he does not use προφητης of himself, that he did not believe that his own prophetic activity was comparatively accurate is hardly defensible. We should be careful to distinguish between vocabulary which Josephus is able to select from among options (like μαντις, and vocabulary which he simply receives from standard usage. From what we have seen so far the reservation of the term προφητης for biblical prophets was probably a standard practice by the time Josephus wrote his histories. Consequently, the fact that he does not apply the term to himself, should certainly not lead us to think that he does not see himself in that tradition.¹³² In a similar fashion Josephus’ contemporary, Hanina b. Dosa, when asked if he was a prophet, replied in language reminiscent of *Amos*:

I am no prophet, nor am I a prophet’s son, but this is how I am favored. If my prayer is fluent in my mouth, I know that he (the sick man) is favored; if not, I know that it (the disease) is fatal.¹³³

¹³⁰ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 31.

¹³¹ *ibid.* pp. 30f. This, however, erroneously assumes that the *Old Testament* prophets were regarded as “unquestionably authoritative” in their own day.

¹³² The fact that the term is used in the *New Testament* in reference to a contemporary revelatory proclamation does not alter this situation. The *New Testament* community seems to have resurrected the word group as part of the theological framework in which the Spirit of prophecy is universally dispensed, and the general absorption of *Old Testament* prophetic pattern, as they understood it, into the workings of Christian prophecy.

¹³³ *bBer. 34b*. Quoted from Vermes, *Jesus*, p. 75.

Hanina certainly thought that Amos was a prophet, and the fact that he quotes him in this context, would seem to suggest that he thinks he is one too (in function, at least, if not in name). The same can probably be said of Josephus.

Josephus disliked people he considered to be pretenders to prophecy because they stirred up messianic expectations (of which he disapproved). He frequently uses *ψευδοπροφητης* of those who predict incorrectly. Into this category fall the “sign prophets”,¹³⁴ Theudas and the Egyptian (both of whom are probably known to us from *Acts*) who, independent of each other, gathered followers by claiming to repeat the military exploits of the biblical Joshua (*Ant.* 20.97f, 169ff, *War* 2.261-4; and see *Acts* 5.36f; 21.38). He also bestows this title on a prophet who promised divine intervention for Jerusalem during the siege (*War* 6.283ff), but this is far from surprising since such intervention would specifically contradict the message of Josephus’ own prophetic dream regarding Vespasian (*War* 3.351ff). In spite of Josephus’ disparaging view of these characters, they are noteworthy from the point of view of this study in that their presence and apparent wide acceptance (however short lived) demonstrates that the populous was not convinced that prophecy had come to an end either.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ This is the label assigned to this group of messianic type figures who are referred to in Josephus by P.M. Barnett, “The Jewish Sign Prophets — A.D. 40-70 — Their Intentions and Origin”, *New Testament Studies*, 27 (1981), pp. 679-697. Barnett lists the following passages in Josephus (and elsewhere) as representing this group: *Ant.* 18.85ff; 20.97ff (*Acts* 5.36?); 20.188; *War* 2.258ff, *Ant.* 20.167f, 172; *Ant.* 20.169ff, *War* 2.261-3 (*Acts* 21.38, *bSahn* 67a?).

¹³⁵ Although it must be cautioned that messianic expectation brings with it the hope of the outpouring of the Spirit, so it cannot be told with any degree of certainty whether the popularity of these characters evidences a viewpoint in which prophecy is potentially still active or simply highlights eschatological fervor.

He speaks favorably on the other hand of a certain Jesus b. Chananiah who prophesied the doom of the temple beginning about 62, AD in a manner resembling an Old Testament woe oracle (although he does not use either προφητης or ψευδοπροφητης in referring to him):¹³⁶

A voice from the East,
A voice from the West,
A voice from the four winds;
A voice against Jerusalem and the sanctuary,
A voice against the bridegroom and the bride,
A voice against all the people. (*War* 6.301)

B. Chananiah continued to proclaim such oracles in Jerusalem until, during the siege, he was shouting “Woe once more to the city and to the people and to the temple” and then added “and woe to me also”, whereupon he was promptly killed by a stone hurled from the bastilla. Josephus also reports a great deal of other oracular activity in Jerusalem at this time, and particularly at the temple, but generally does not approve.

At this point it should be clear that Josephus did not regard prophecy as having come to an end in Israel, although he certainly thought there was an abundance of false prophecy as well. It is instructive when, in *Ant.* 13.5, following *Maccabees*, he substitutes “since their return from Babylon” for “since the time that the prophets ceased to appear among them” in *1 Mac.* 9.27.¹³⁷ It should not be ignored, however, that most of what he gives as prophecy is essentially prediction.¹³⁸ This may be because of his audience. Or it may be because prediction/fulfillment is the most outwardly verifiable aspect of prophecy. This is, of course, the criteria established in Deuteronomy for testing true and

¹³⁶ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 29.

¹³⁷ Goldstein, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

false prophecy, a particular concern to Josephus. His own view of prophecy is by no means so limited — it involves not only foreknowledge, but also priesthood, interpretation of scripture, and, most importantly, the writing of history. One of the key roles of prophecy in Josephus is to show that God had not abandoned Israel, but had warned them of immanent disaster. They, on the other hand, had refused to listen, preferring rather their own eschatological hopes and expectations. Another purpose of prophecy here is to prove that Israel's military failure did not indicate that God did not exist, or was not capable of preventing it. His own prophecies also fall into this category, to some extent, and serve to justify his own actions, which might otherwise be construed as cowardice or lack of faith.

Bat Qol

We have already noted that rabbinic theology closes the prophetic period at the same time that it regards the canon as having been completed. After that the role of Yahweh's representative is taken over by "the men of the great synagogue" meaning, presumably, the forerunners of the rabbis themselves. But once the direction of the Spirit through prophetic utterance was no longer available, on the occasions when direct revelation was needed the role of the prophet could be taken in rabbinic literature by the *bat qol*, or "celestial voice".

When the last prophets — Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit ceased from Israel, but they received messages by means of a bat qol, (*Tosefta Sotah* 13.2)

¹³⁸ Burrows, op.cit., p. 224.

It was not a new phenomenon in Israel. There are a number of instances where it is recounted that the bat qol was heard in the biblical period. So, for example, it proclaimed Tamar's innocence, vindicated Samuel from the charge of misuse of office, and confirmed Solomon in the famous true mother decision.¹³⁹ But after prophecy was rejected, the bat qol was viewed as the only remaining means of communication between God and man.¹⁴⁰ It was mainly valuable on those occasions when reasonable argument and interpretation of scripture had been taken as far as it could go without hope of resolve. This was apparently the situation when, in a legal dispute between the schools of Shammai and Hillel, an agreement could not be reached. The opinion of the Hillel school was declared valid by the *bat qol*.¹⁴¹ But most of the time the function of the celestial voice seems to have been to bear witness to the particular holiness of one character or another. For example, we find Hillel as the object of divine praise:

When the elders came to the house of Gadia in Jericho, a heavenly voice proclaimed to them: There is a man among you worthy of the holy spirit, but this generation is unfit for it. They fixed their eyes on Hillel the Elder.¹⁴²

The *bat qol*, however, apparently had only limited authority in areas of halakhah. A rather amusing story is told about Rabbi Eliezer b. Hyrcanus who after a lengthy legal polemic had still not convinced his opponents. So in order to bolster his arguments he performed several miracles. These, however, being declared irrelevant, he called out, in

¹³⁹ *Mak.* 23b. cf. *DeutR.* 11.10; *Sot.* 13.6; *Shab.* 56b; *RH* 21b. A. Rothkoff, "Bat Kol", *Encyclopaedia Judaica* IV (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971). p. 324.

¹⁴⁰ *Yoma* 9b. Rothkoff, op.cit. p. 132.

¹⁴¹ *yBer.* 1,7; 3b.73f. Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 243 n. 116.

frustration, “If my teaching is correct, may it be proved by Heaven”. The *bat qol* answered, “Why do you dispute with rabbi Eliezer? The halakhah always agrees with him!” In spite of this, though, he was not able to convince enough people that his arguments were correct, since decisions of that sort were to be arrived at by majority vote,¹⁴³

Although the celestial voice was sometimes heard in dreams, it was usually external and very frequently associated with the death of martyrs.¹⁴⁴ So, for example, when Eleazar of Modiim was killed by Bar Kosiba the latter was rebuked by a *bat qol* which said,

Woe to the shepherd of idolatry who abandons the flock! A sword upon his arm and upon his right eye! His arm will wither and his right eye become dim! You have killed Rabbi Eleazar of Modiim, the arm and the right eye of all Israel. (*Ta’anit 69b*)
Presently, Bar Kosiba’s citadel fell.¹⁴⁵

Interestingly enough, heavenly voices like this are quite common in the New Testament, and often serve the same purposes. Geza Vermes considers the voice at Jesus’ baptism to be a *bat qol*, and in addition to this, at least four other incidences of *bat qol* in

¹⁴² *Tosefta Sotah* 13.3. Vermes, *Jesus*, p. 24, n. 30. The *bat qol* also has good things to say about R. Hanina and others.

¹⁴³ Vermes, *op.cit.*, pp. 81f; Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 291f. At which God is said to have laughed and said, “My children have defeated me, My children have defeated me.” It should be mentioned here however, that it is very likely that the *bat qol*, along with the miraculous, may well come into this account spuriously as a way of subtly countering an accepted conclusion in favor of R. Eliezer’s alternative.

¹⁴⁴ E.g., at the death of the mother and seven sons (*Git. 57b*), at the executions of Hanina b. Teradyon (*AuZar 18a*), and R. Akiba (*Ber. 61b*), and for a Roman officer who sacrificed his life that R. Gamaliel II might be spared. Rothkoff, *op.cit.*, p. 324.

¹⁴⁵ Edwyn Bevan, *Sibyls and Seers: A Survey of Some Ancient Theories of Revelation and Inspiration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 108.

the *New Testament* can be identified: the transfiguration, (*Matt.* 7.5 and parallels), the “voice from heaven” in *John* 12.28 (which is heard differently by different people), Paul on the Damascus road (*Acts* 9.4ff, 27.7ff, and 26.14—here with some interesting variations which may, or may not, shed some light on the nature of the *bat qol* as regards who hears what), and Peter’s rooftop vision (*Acts* 10.13ff and 11.7ff). It is noteworthy that the first three, those referring to Jesus, all fit into the most prominent category in the rabbinic literature — public declaration of a person’s holiness, etc. The last two represent occasions where natural reason or inclination had failed and supernatural intervention was appropriate.¹⁴⁶

One other instance is of interest. The prophecy upon which Josephus presumably bases his designation of John Hyrcanus as a prophet, narrated in *Ant.* 13.282f, was also a *bat qol*:

...for they say that on the very day on which his sons fought with Cyzicenus, Hyrcanus, who was alone in the temple, burning incense as high priest, heard a voice saying that his sons had just defeated Antiochus....and so it actually happened.¹⁴⁷

This is of particular interest since it indicates that Josephus, unlike his rabbinic successors, regarded the *bat qol* as prophecy.

Rabbinic Prophecy

In spite of the theological assertion that prophecy was a thing of the past, there is a certain amount of activity, even within Pharisaic/Rabbinic circles, which appears to

¹⁴⁶ Grudem, op.cit., p. 132. The command to write down the vision, in *Rev.* 1.10, may, as Grudem notes, represent a sixth *New Testament bat qol*, to which should be added *Rev.* 10.4. Both of these, however, being in the context of apocalyptic, may function a little differently.

conform to the working definition which we arrived at above (p. 34f). Meyer makes reference to a small but significant group of people who might fit into this category.¹⁴⁸ In one way or another prophetic activity is ascribed to Gamaliel II (*T. Pesahim* 1.27), R. Meir (*ySotah* 1.4) and R. Simon b. Jochai (*yShebi* 9.1), while R. Samuel is said to have seen the future at the hour of his death (*T. Sotah* 13.4 & par. Meyer thinks the *bat qol* has been inserted here to replace a “genuine prophetic experience” for dogmatic reasons).¹⁴⁹ Johanan b. Zakkai received a similar death bed vision (*ySotah* 9.17) and he was also adept at “the contemplation of scripture which leads to ecstasy” (*yChag* 2.1), but the most impressive story about him tells how during the siege of Jerusalem his nephew smuggled him out of the city hidden in a coffin. After he got out he met Vespasian and greeted him as the emperor. Soon after that, news came from Rome confirming Johanan’s prediction.¹⁵⁰

In addition to this Josephus mentions a group of Pharisaic prophets in the court of Herod (*Ant.* 17.43ff),¹⁵¹ and Hanina b. Dosa, who, as we have already seen (above, p. 51f), may have acted prophetically (*bBer.* 34b; *bYeb.* 121b).

¹⁴⁷ I am dependant on David Halperin for bringing to my attention a parallel version of this story in *Tosefta Sotah* 3.5.

¹⁴⁸ Meyer, op. cit., pp. 823f.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 824.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* J. W. Doeve, “The Flight of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai from Jerusalem — When and Why”, in *Übersetzung and Deutung: Studien zu dem Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt* (Nijkerk, Holland: Uitgeverij G. F. Callenbach b. v., 1977), pp. 50-61, argues convincingly that b. Zakkai escaped and “prophesied” just before Vespasian was proclaimed emperor and the latter’s imminent ascension was, as it were, in the air anyway (about May, 69, AD). Under these circumstances, b. Zakkai’s prediction would be natural rather than pneumatic, and would not therefore fall into the category which we are calling “prophecy”. But ultimately, the issue is not whether b. Zakkai was a prophet, but whether he was perceived as such by his biographers (and perhaps contemporaries) writing about him at a time when prophecy supposedly had ceased.

¹⁵¹ Meyer, op.cit., p. 823.

But by far the most important oracular activity within rabbinic circles is that attributed to R. Akiba, who provided oracular support for Simeon bar Kosiba. In one passage, in a combination of (apparently misdirected) prophetic insight and a creative word play on the Aramaic word *kokba* (“star”) in *Num.* 24.17, he declared concerning Bar Kosiba, on the eve of the disastrous second Jewish war, that he was the messiah.

Rabbi Akiba interpreted, “A star has come forth out of Jacob” as “[Kosiba] has come forth out of Jacob”. When Rabbi Akiba saw bar [Kosiba], he said: This is the King Messiah. Rabbi Yohanan ben Torta replied: Akiba, grass will grow out of your cheek-bones before the son of David comes. (*yTa’an 68d*)¹⁵²

Akiba’s ecstatically influenced proclamation and subsequent support of the ill-fated Bar Kosiba rebellion was almost certainly partially responsible for the subsequent rabbinic distrust for inspired utterance¹⁵³ (in concert, perhaps, with reaction to Christian claims to the prophetic Spirit, as we saw earlier). It is worth noting here that the style of exposition which R. Akiba uses on *Num.* 24.17 is reminiscent of the *pešer* style interpretation used at Qumran and perhaps in Josephus.

Philo

In Philo, we encounter a somewhat different view. The first thing we notice is that Philo is perfectly content to use the terms *προφητης*, and *προφητεια* in reference to a contemporary phenomenon. More than that, in his discussion of Abraham, he says that “the holy word (*ιερος λογος*) assures prophecy to every worthy man” (*Heres* 259). We have already encountered the concept of widely available *προφητεια* in *Wisd.* 7.27

¹⁵² *yTa’an.* 68d. Quoted from Vermes, *Jesus*, p. 134.

¹⁵³ so also, Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 828.

(quoted above, p. 34f). But, while this passage has a tendency to naturalize prophecy and equate it with wisdom, which should not be surprising to us since it comes out of the post-exilic wisdom school, Philo goes much farther; for him, προφητεια is εκστασις and ενθεος κατακωχη τε και μανια (*Heres* 313-15). Philo puts himself in the category of prophet and says he experiences ecstatic frenzy “even as the prophets are inspired” (*Heres* 69f). When a person prophesies he

...has no utterance of his own, but all his utterance comes from elsewhere, echoes another’s voice. The wicked may never be an interpreter of God so that no worthless person is God-inspired in the proper sense. The name only befits the wise since he alone is the vocal instrument of God, smitten and played by his invisible hand. Thus all whom Moses describes as just are pictured as possessed and prophesying. (*Heres* 259-260)

Obviously, for Philo the concept of prophecy is not moving in the same direction as it is at Qumran and the wisdom circles. Philo is very emphatic that the prophet’s mind does not participate in the utterance when God speaks through him.¹⁵⁴ This is, perhaps, why the “wicked” cannot be prophets. It may seem strange then that he asserts that prophecy is available “to every worthy man” given its obviously ecstatic nature as Philo understands it. But, to this might be compared Paul’s statement in *I Cor.* 14.5 that “I want you to all speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy” where the “prophecy” referred to is probably of the ecstatic variety.¹⁵⁵

It is possible that the intelligentsia in Alexandrian Judaism, represented by Philo, were more open to ecstatic activity and its accompanying attitude of ongoing revelation

¹⁵⁴ Sandmel, *op.cit.*, p. 299.

¹⁵⁵ Although this depends on how “ecstasy” is defined. Paul probably does not refer to the more dramatic varieties where the prophet, for example, is not aware of the utterance or loses control. In any case, however, it is likely that prophecy for Paul is fairly close to what it is for Philo, although not all would agree. See below on Hill’s response.

than their Palestinian counterparts. But it is necessary to be careful in interpreting Philo's view on prophecy since the neo-Platonists also had mantic experiences, and Philo is certainly influenced by Greek philosophy. It has been suggested that he simply "substitutes the term 'prophecy' for the platonic term 'recollection'",¹⁵⁶ It may be in this context that he describes his "prophetic" experience.

On other occasions, I have approached my work empty and suddenly become full, the ideas falling in a shower from above and being sown invisibly, so that under the influence of the divine possession I have been filled with corybantic frenzy and been unconscious of anything, place, persons present, myself, words spoken, lines written. For I obtained language, ideas, an enjoyment of light, keenest vision, pellucid distinctness of objects, such as might be received through the eyes as the result of clearest showing. (*De Migr. Abr.* 35)

In addition to this, the close connection between "the wise", noteworthy in several of the passages above, may actually be more closely related to the emerging opinion among the Platonists that philosophy equals prophecy than to the Palestinian concept of "sapient prophecy" which we looked at earlier (pp. 32ff).

Hill is highly critical of Philo's concept of prophecy as current and calls it "...either an acute Hellenization of the Jewish concept of prophecy, or a Hellenistic view of prophecy justified on a biblical basis...", and accuses it of being a "significant departure" from contemporary Jewish literature.¹⁵⁷ To accuse Philo of being over-influenced by Greek thought is fairly justifiable, but we should not dismiss him completely out of hand. In any case, he provides us with yet another testimony to the fact that prophecy was not universally regarded as having passed away in the fourth century, BC. If he stood alone in

¹⁵⁶ Aune, *Prophecy*, p. 147.

¹⁵⁷ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 33.

this opinion, then Hill's criticism would be valid, but it should be obvious at this point that he did not.

The Pharisees/Rabbis looked down on enthusiastic experience since it threatened the stability of biblical interpretation and normativity. But on a popular level, and in some cases, apparently, among the more educated as well, the belief in the continuing and manifest operation of the prophetic spirit, exhibited in a wide variety of manifestations, ecstatic or otherwise, must have continued throughout the Second Temple and early rabbinic periods.

New Testament and Second Temple Prophecy

The *New Testament*¹⁵⁸ itself, not only contains no hint of the failure of prophecy at some time after the restoration or to a renewal of prophecy under the New Covenant, but actually makes references, without comment, to prophetic activity that would supposedly fall into that period. In the *Gospel of Luke*, the story of the nativity is speckled with prophetic activity on the part of ordinary people. In 1.67ff we are told that "Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied..." Just prior to that, as Mary greets Elisabeth, we read that "Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'blessed are you among women...[etc.]'" (1.42ff). This passage is not specifically called prophecy, but is reminiscent of prophecy and is introduced with the same formula used in vs. 67, which, taken together, probably indicates that it is also prophetic. The magnificat, vss. 47-55, being portrayed as spontaneous poetry, may also be intended by Luke in this

¹⁵⁸ It is well beyond the scope of this study to survey the extent and nature of Christian prophecy, the existence of which was never doubted anyway. We will however examine the *New Testament* for evidence that prophecy was regarded as having lapsed or as being renewed.

way.¹⁵⁹ This suggestion is strengthened in light of the, by now traditional, connection between psalmody and prophecy. Chapter 2 gives us two more examples. In the story of Simeon (vss. 25-35) we are told that from sometime before the story begins “the Holy Spirit was upon him” (vs. 25). He has earlier received a prophetic word that he would see the Messiah (vs. 26), he shows up at the temple by revelation (εν τῷ πνεύματι) (vs. 27), and he prophesies to Mary (vss. 34f).¹⁶⁰ Immediately after this story we hear about Anna who is specifically called προφητις, and who, presumably, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah (vss. 36ff). All this, of course, occurs before John’s appearance as Elijah *redivivus*, and so also before any possibility of the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit (which actually occurs after the Resurrection). If this is a reawakening of prophetic activity which foreshadows or indicates the “dawning of the messianic era”¹⁶¹ then Luke is doing an extremely poor job of bringing this out, since there is no reference anywhere to that effect. Nor, even, is the argument that prophecy has ceased ever used by Jesus’ opponents in any of the Gospels. For such a supposition to be sustained, one would have to accept that Luke’s audience knew and took this lapse and expected renewal so completely for granted, that his reference to contemporary prophecy would immediately raise eyebrows. But his audience was at least mostly Gentile among whom the notion of

¹⁵⁹ So also Edward Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke, New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 74f. This passage is particularly reminiscent of Hannah’s prayer, which in turn is not called prophecy in its context. It is interesting, though, that Hannah is regarded as one of the seven prophetesses in Israel according to *Meg.* 14a. It is likely that the unborn John’s “leap” is also viewed as prophetic.

¹⁶⁰ Could Simon’s request for dismissal here be read as the ancient prophet who has been holding the prophetic lamp for la these many years being allowed to pass it on now that the great Prophet has come who will take up the torch in his place (almost in the manner of *Abot* 1.1, except that here the prophet delivers to the messiah rather than to the Great Assembly)?

¹⁶¹ So Ellis, *ibid.*, pp. 72f.

lapsed prophecy was unknown.¹⁶² In fact, Delphic activity, as well as Roman oracular activity was on the upswing at this time.

A great deal is made out of John the Baptist in the Gospels as the fulfillment of *Malachi* 4.5*f* (e.g., *Matt.* 11.7-15, 17.10-13). But, as we saw when we discussed *Malachi*, there is nothing here to suggest a lapse in prophecy in that context, and neither is there anything to suggest a restoration in this. There is no doubt that the Gospels portray John as a major figure in the history of salvation, but he is viewed as the last great prophet before the Messiah and the eschatological kingdom of God.¹⁶³

We have already noticed that the intention of *Joel* 2.28*f* is not a restoration of prophecy but a generalization of the availability of the prophetic Spirit. Nor is there any evidence in the way Peter interprets it in *Acts* 2 that it should be understood any other way. The eschatological expectation here does not seem to be for a renewal of prophecy per se, after a silence, but rather for a universalization of prophecy, which, for Luke in *Acts*, is seen fulfilled (or beginning to be fulfilled) in the universally available baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is in fact one important aspect of the Spirit found in the *New Testament* (*Rom.* 8.9; *Acts* 8.17), but not in the Hebrew Scriptures. Prophecy, as far as Paul is concerned, is available to any Christian who is willing to ζῆλουν (*I Cor.* 14.1). In

¹⁶² Aune, *Prophecy*, pp. 23, 47.

¹⁶³ On John the Baptist as prophet, it is interesting, in light of Josephus' views on the subject of prophecy, that although he is discussed, and his theology as regards repentance and baptism is reviewed in *Ant.* 18.117*f*, no mention is made of John as prophet in Josephus.

Acts, it is one of the manifestations that regularly accompanies the reception of the Holy Spirit by believers, somewhat less frequently than tongues (*Acts* 19.6).¹⁶⁴

Although quotations of earlier prophecies by *New Testament* writers is, for the most part, limited to the *Old Testament*, there are a number of famous quotations from intertestamental literature in the *Letter of Jude*. Besides numerous quotes from the *Old Testament* we find references, some clear, some less so, to the *Assumption of Moses* (vs. 9), *I Enoch* 1.9 (vs. 15) and *I Enoch* 10.4-6 (vs. 6). Ellis has tried to show that the structure of *Jude* is characteristic of a *pešer* type commentary on scripture similar to what we have already seen in the eschatological interpretation at Qumran. If this is so, then the use of *Enoch* here, and perhaps the *Assumption of Moses*, suggests access to and reception of portions of intertestamental literature as inspired. Indeed, if Ellis is correct, *Enoch* is seen as being inspired in such a way that it requires prophetic interpretation, which *Jude* is providing (Ellis suggests that *Jude* is the same as the prophet Judas of *Acts* 15.27, 32).¹⁶⁵ It is possible to interpret this such that it shows that at least some members of the *New Testament* community never envisioned the kind of closed canon which emerged out of the rabbinic tradition. In fact, it is likely that a doctrine of canon, by which I mean a list of scriptures which is regarded as in some sense final or closed, is not

¹⁶⁴ It is worth noticing, however, that Peter quotes the passage from *Joel* in reference to the Pentecostal tongue speaking in *Acts* 2, which may indicate that tongues was considered a type of prophecy (see *I Cor.* 12.10; 14.1-25). Aune, *Prophecy*, pp. 105-201, rejects the proposition that all Christians could prophesy.

¹⁶⁵ Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics*, pp. 221-238.

present in the early church at all,¹⁶⁶ and even the extent to which it is present in Judaism of this period is hotly debated.¹⁶⁷

In view of this, there is evidence of sorts for *New Testament* acceptance of the authority of some of the intertestamental literature. However, Jude certainly believes that at least the portions of *Enoch* which he is quoting come from Enoch himself. Under these circumstances this can hardly be taken as evidence that he would consider the products of charismatic or visionary activity from the period in question to be truly prophetic/inspired and therefore potentially scripture. It does, however suggest that his view of what can be regarded as scripture, and therefore very likely his view of continuing revelation is closer to Qumran than it is to Yavne.

All of this taken together points fairly uniformly away from the assumption that the *New Testament* community believed that God had not been on speaking terms with Israel during the so-called “400 silent years”. It would have probably been a significant aspect of *New Testament* pneumatology if they had held this opinion, and yet it is completely missing. An argument from silence is always problematic, but when the literature is as diverse as the early Christian literature is, and the apologetic value of a restoration theology so useful, were it believable, it cannot be ignored. This, in concert with what we

¹⁶⁶ James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), pp. 19-29, suggests that the concept of a canon at all in the *New Testament* period is entirely anachronistic. Albert C. Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church, Harvard Theological Studies*, vol. XX (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), argues convincingly that the doctrine of a closed *Old Testament* canon was not finalized in the church before the third or fourth century, and was not agreed upon by all even then.

¹⁶⁷ Sundberg, op.cit., and Barr, op.cit., argue for a Jewish canonization process which only begins after the destruction of the Temple, Leiman, op.cit., and Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy*, see the process as complete, except among sectarian groups like Qumran, before the beginning of the Roman Period.

have already seen in other Second Temple communities and literatures makes the supposition that the Christians believed that prophecy had ceased and been subsequently restored very difficult to defend.

The Fate of Prophecy

Authority and Pseudepigraphy

A number of writers, while accepting the presence of prophetic activity in the Second Temple period seek to find a qualitative distinction between this material and canonical prophecy.¹⁶⁸ While Hill, for example, concedes that apocalyptic literature “presumably reflect[s] genuine revelations” on the part of the authors, the fact that almost all apocalyptic is pseudepigraphic creates difficulties. That someone should see their work as prophetic and yet be willing to intentionally hide and even falsify the authorship of his prophecies has often been explained, but remains difficult to harmonize with what would normally be expected of prophetic character. Hill seeks to explain this difficulty by suggesting that the *authors* saw their work as inspired but inferior to that of their predecessors. He notes, especially, the absence of claims to inspiration by the Holy Spirit in the formulated expression “Thus says the LORD” (except for in the *Similitudes of Enoch* and *1 Enoch* 37-71), so characteristic of their canonical counterparts. In order, therefore, to give their work popular credence in spite of their own uncertainty they ascribed their visions to earlier and more reliable prophets.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ This in various forms is the opinion of Grudem, Hill, and Vielhauer (see the Bibliography for the various respective works).

¹⁶⁹ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 25.

There are some serious problems, however, with such an analysis of the situation. First, the absence of “Thus says the LORD” probably reflects a change in prophetic style, which is obvious throughout apocalyptic anyway.¹⁷⁰ It is hard to imagine how the prophet would fit this formula within the context of a vision (except, perhaps, as part of a sub-prophecy like the oracles of Jesus inside *Revelation*).¹⁷¹ If a man claims to have been shown something by an angel how much more of a claim to authority do we need? We can, of course, question his honesty, his sanity, or even the angel’s allegiance, but we can do the same when a prophet prefaces his oracle with “Thus says the LORD”! The fact that prophetic style has changed is hardly enough to justify the assertion that the authors did not believe that they were receiving messages (true messages — how else does one define spiritual authority in prophecy?) from God.

The most likely explanation for the phenomenon of pseudepigraphy is that, although the authors saw their activity as on the same plane as that of their biblical counterparts, they realized that their works would be more widely accepted if people thought they came from an earlier period and more famous prophets (although it is noteworthy that many of the worthies to whom the apocalypses were ascribed were not traditionally associated with prophetic activity). Since the process which we have already

¹⁷⁰ Aune, *Prophecy*, 106, notes that the forms of *Old Testament* prophecy are mostly lacking from “early Jewish” prophecy, but are replaced by new ones. Call narratives are occasionally found in early Jewish and *New Testament* prophetic works: *1 En.* 14-16, 71; *4 Ezra* 14; *Acts* 9.22ff; *Rev.* 1.9-20; 10.8-11 (p. 98). The “Oracle of Assurance” can be found: *1 En.* 95.1-3; 96.3; 104.1; *4 Ezra* 12.46f; *Luke* 1.30; 12.32; *Acts* 27.24; *Rev.* 1.17 (pp. 94f). The Messenger formula is “functionally replaced” by the “oath formula”: *1 En.* 98.1, 4, 6; 96.6; 103.1; 104.1; *2 En.* 49.1; *AscIsa.* 1.8; 3.18; *ApcMos.* 18; *3 Bar.* 1.7; *TestSol.* 1.13; *Rev.* 10.6; *1 Clem.* 58.2, by the “integrity formula”: *1 En.* 104.11; *Rev.* 22.18f; *Prv.* 30.5f; *Qoh.* 4.14; *Sir.* 18.6; 42.21; *ApcPaul.* 51, and by the “legitimation formula”: *Dan.* 2.15, 45; 8.26; *1 En.* 90.41; *2 Bar.* 40.4; 71.2; *4 Ezra* 12.35 (pp. 115f with n. 100).

¹⁷¹ In any case, the formula כה אמר יהוה, common as it is in the prophetic corpus is an oracular formula, not a statement of authenticity. Note its absence, among the classical prophets, from *Hosea*.

noticed in *Maccabees*, of a developing theology of closed prophecy within official circles, at least, was well under way, they were probably right. Herein lies a crucial distinction. That the prophets viewed their oracles as authoritative does not mean that others did. It may be that the apocalypticists viewed their work as so important to their own time that they regarded the deception of pseudonymity to be a necessary evil.¹⁷² Palestine was not the only place where pseudonymity was used in this manner. *Herodotus* 7.6 refers disapprovingly to a certain Onomakritos who forged oracles in the names of past μανταί, but Plato is much more sympathetic in *Rep.* 415 where he does not disparage the forging of oracles for good purposes.¹⁷³

¹⁷² With variations, this is the conclusion most often arrived at by scholars. So Aune *Prophecy*, p. 109; Wilson, *op.cit.*, pp. 30f, 291, see it also as an attempt to protect the visionary himself from rejection after popular support for prophecy has diminished (a social factor which he identifies as essential for prophetic activity), as a result of unfulfilled prophecies; R.H.Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. vii-xi, 1-10, reminiscent of Wellhausen, believed that prophecy was forced underground by the emergence of law which made further revelation impossible.

¹⁷³ In addition to the explanation of pseudepigraphy which we have noted, it might also be worth suggesting that not all examples of falsely ascribed authorship necessarily derived from the authors themselves. (1) Some prophecies may have been written anonymously with false authorship later added (in order to bolster the authority of the work) by an editor or someone other than the author. (This is analogous to what happened to the book of *Hebrews* in the *Textus Receptus*). (2) In other cases the author's name may have been replaced by a scribe. (3) In a very few cases it's even possible that confusion arises from the fact that the author had the same name as some earlier and more famous ecstatic. So, potentially, the book of *Revelation* which is obviously closely connected to apocalyptic tradition but is not pseudepigraphic. The traditional equation, however, of the author of this work with John the Apostle is an example of the sort of thing that could lead a book into pseudepigraphy, even if it was not so originally. (4) Independent works could have been added to earlier or separate pseudepigraphs (or even authentic works) and are only apparently by the author of the first part (compare *2 Isaiah* which very likely was originally separate, as evidenced by prophetic call, but was appended to the work of Isaiah at an early date, probably because taken together they neatly fill one scroll). Also, in the introduction to the Greek version of *Esther* there is a little apocalyptic vision which does not seem to fit at all in the context. It is likely that it was originally independent or in a different context, and has been superficially imposed on the story of Mordecai. Any combination of these, however, probably represents only a small segment of the literature. Aune, *Prophecy*, p. 111, notes that pseudepigraphy is not always needed. So, Hermas, John the Revelator, John the Baptist and the Teacher of Righteousness did not require it since the groups these addressed "completely accepted the eschatological status of their respective founders and leaders".

Hill and Grudem¹⁷⁴ find in this failure to obtain public acceptance for authentically ascribed prophetic works during this period the evidence for their supposition that after the fifth century, BC “the authority derived from the action of the prophetic Spirit had been withdrawn [by God] along with that Spirit”.¹⁷⁵ The real problem with this is that it assumes that *independent* prophets¹⁷⁶ were *ever* seen as having real authority by their contemporaries. With the possible exception of the occasional post-exilic figure, it is very difficult to find any of the biblical prophets whose prophecies were recognized as carrying the full weight of divine authority in their own day. It is only in retrospect that such judgment has ever been given to any prophecy or any prophet. If the opinions of a prophet’s contemporaries were the final judges of prophetic authority the Bible would be much shorter than it is.

Canon and Decline

Sooner or later the idea that prophecy had disappeared had prevailed both in Judaism and in the Church. Although prophetic activity of some variety continues in the later Roman period manifesting itself in apocalyptic and related mystical literature, the type of activity which Josephus describes and which was so active in the early church comes to be seen less and less. This study would be incomplete if we did not ask a few

¹⁷⁴ Grudem, op.cit.

¹⁷⁵ Hill, *Prophecy*, p. 22, with Grudem, op.cit., and Vielhauer, op.cit., p. 583. Grudem applies this lack of prophetic authority to the *New Testament* prophets as well. Reminiscent of Leiman’s distinction between inspired and uninspired canon, he contrasts “divine authority of actual words” with “divine authority of general content”, the former of which is no longer present after the classical prophets (pp. 21ff). Criticizing problems of detail in Agabus’ prophecy of *Acts* 21.10f, he comments that “accuracy of detail was traditionally an essential mark of authenticity” (p. 80). Needless to say, the same net could be used to catch many of the canonical prophets.

¹⁷⁶ By this I mean prophets who were not in the direct employ of the person they addressed, or whose prophecies were characteristically contrary to the desires of their audience.

questions about what happened even though we have concluded that it did not happen as early as is generally supposed.

The most commonly cited culprit is the development of canon. Blenkinsopp proposes that the Deuteronomist wrote partly in response to the unpredictability of prophecy. He argues that Torah was a fixing of preexistent tradition in an attempt to stabilize Yahwistic religion. In this Blenkinsopp feels it was successful. With the emergence of the “canonical” law prophecy was unable to compete and disappeared. Its charismatic function was later filled by the general acceptance as scripture of a collection of the prophets.¹⁷⁷ He may be correct in his assessment of the motives of the Deuteronomist, although his assumption that prophetic material only began to attain the status of scripture in the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods may have to be modified in light of *Jeremiah*'s use of *Micah* and the Deuteronomist's reference to “his servants the prophets” (2 *Kings* 17.23) in a way that suggests that this is externally verifiable and recognized.

Sid Leiman also sees a connection between the decline of prophecy and the rise of canon but, approaching it from the other direction, suggests that the disappearance of charismatic presence may have stimulated the development of canon. While prophecy was active there was no need to codify because God's continued revelation could be expected. Prophecy, however, according to Leiman, was linked to *eretz Yisrael*, and consequently disappeared with the exile. As a result of this, the prophets were collected,

¹⁷⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy*, pp. 2-9, 84f, 102; *History*, pp. 256f. His interpretation of the situation is essentially an attempt to apply the sociological theories of Max Weber to Jewish religion of the late pre-exilic through early post-exilic periods.

edited, published and canonized. With the return from exile prophecy reflowered but could not compete with canonized prophecy and consequently permanently disappeared.¹⁷⁸ The most glaring problem here is that prophetic activity, while it may have set on hard times early in the exile,¹⁷⁹ “reflowered” before the restoration in the person of 2 *Isaiah*, at least.

But both of these assessments suffer from some other problems. First, both use the term ‘canonization’ in a way that suggests that a committee or executive decision is at work here following which the entire orthodox community recognizes some collection as inspired and normative. There is, however little evidence for such activity before Yavne, if even then.¹⁸⁰ Rather works attained this status through a process of being read and increasingly honored by the religious and educated community at large (although one should not underestimate the influence that might be exercised in such a process by a charismatic leader like Ezra). While it is likely that collections of legal, historical, and prophetic tradition were circulating, or at least began to do so, in the exilic and post exilic periods, and it is certain that some of these eventually began to take on normative, or scriptural status, there is little reason to believe that this process hindered continuing revelatory activity any more than it did the production of wisdom or worship literature.

¹⁷⁸ Leiman, *op.cit.*, p. 198.

¹⁷⁹ Perhaps evidenced by *Ps.* 74 (see above, p. 11f). In any case the activity of Ezekiel spans this early period and is only connected to *ha'aretz* by letter and ecstatic vision!

¹⁸⁰ ‘Canonization’ is in fact probably an inappropriate term for even what Blenkinsopp and Leiman intend, and should be reserved for the process of list making for the purpose of exclusion of disapproved works rather than for the general approval of new ones. So John Van Seters, “Canon Criticism or Historical Criticism: Must We Decide?”, (Presidential address delivered at the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Southeast Region, March 1984), and see Barr, *op.cit.* pp. 75ff on the various and diverse uses of the word ‘canon’.

Second, both Blenkinsopp and Leiman assume that normative scripture and prophetic activity are incompatible and this is problematic. The question of scripture is in many ways closely connected to that of the end of prophecy. But they are not the same. From the outset it must be noted that the existence of a recognized body of scripture and that of a closed canon are two very different situations. While it is obvious that a closed canon can have detrimental effects on ongoing prophetic activity there is little reason to believe that the communal recognition of a certain body of material as θεοπνευματος by its nature anathematizes the belief that God can and does continue to communicate to the community. The coexistence of these two notions is evident in the early church (2 *Tim.* 3.16; 2 *Pet.* 1.20f while also 1 *Thes.* 5.19-21; 1 *Cor.* 14.1, 5). Even the presence of a closed canon, though, does not seem to preclude the existence of, and reverence for, the process of ongoing revelation through prophetic and similar activities as can easily be witnessed in the modern Pentecostal movements where the protestant Bible certainly represents an inexorably closed canon. It would appear then that while the word of God embodied in the γραφη, can compete with pneumatic expression, it does not automatically replace it.

The third problem should be the most obvious at this point. Prophetic activity simply did not disappear in the fifth century. It must however be admitted that it underwent a process of transformation, as has been noted, and some of this may be related to its competing, or at least coexisting with a body of scripture.

Nevertheless, the tendency for people to engage in these sorts of activities less and less as Judaism entered the rabbinic period may be connected to canonization. If

canonization, in the proper sense, did not occur until after the destruction of the Second Temple, then there is indeed a positive chronological correlation between these two processes. In spite of my assertion that ongoing revelation and normative canon can, and sometimes do coexist, the fact remains that they are uneasy bedfellows. Even in modern Pentecostal groups the tendency is to submit one or the other to its counterpart. In most groups prophetic utterance is subjected to the scrutiny of biblical doctrine (as it is understood by the community), and is rejected if it fails the test. Alternatively, although less frequently, in some groups the scripture is regarded (or disregarded) in light of the revelation, normally calling on *2 Cor. 3.6* for justification. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to suppose that as the concept of a closed and normative canon attained wider acceptance in the early centuries, AD, the charismatic activities were in some ways discouraged. Since the very concept of a canon grows out of the desire to put a cap on the influx and popular use of unorthodox religious literature as scripture, the assertion by religious leaders that the Holy Spirit and its accompanying prophetic inspiration were taken away after Ezra could, on a pragmatic level, prove a quite useful tool, shedding an unfavorable light on subsequent literature. This is not to suggest that the theology of the passing of the Holy Spirit was an historical invention intended to support the canon, but rather that the two concepts were mutually supportive and may have evolved together. In studies of early Christianity, the disappearance of prophecy is usually seen as a result of the tension between charisma and ordained office with the latter eventually winning out.¹⁸¹ This has its parallel in the period of Jewish history at which we have been looking.

¹⁸¹ E. g., Friedrich, *op.cit.*, p. 861.

It is very likely that the Hasmonians attempted in some ways to suppress charismatic activity and this tendency may be visible in *I Mac*. However, they were not successful. Although no evidence exists in this regard it is also likely that such conflict was present in early rabbinic Judaism. This is, of course, another variation on the sociological explanation which we saw in Blenkinsopp's view mentioned above, except that the institution in this analysis is the leadership of the church and synagogue rather than the canonized tradition. These should not be viewed as mutually exclusive paradigms. Since canon is essentially a product of the religious leadership, and that same leadership is the authorized interpreter of canon, they can stand together against extra-canonical and pneumatic influences.

A number of scholars have suggested that prophecy disappeared at the end of the biblical period primarily as a result of its being discredited by unfulfilled expectations in the post-exilic period.¹⁸² Once again, though, this seems to have brought about the emergence of apocalyptic eschatology rather than the disappearance of prophetic activity. The connection between the failure of charismatic prediction to find fulfillment and its eventual apparent disappearance, however, like the canon explanation, should not be dismissed so quickly. The problem may, as with canon, be in the location of that disappointment and its consequence in the early post-exilic period. The disastrous outcome of the Jewish revolts of AD 68 and 132, on the other hand, conforms much more closely to the actual historical disappearance of Jewish prophecy. Much of the evidence we have looked at for pneumatic activity in the first century, AD has, in fact, been closely

¹⁸² See above, p. 70, n. 172.

connected with these revolts and most of the oracles viewed these attempts at political/religious liberation positively (Josephus, ben Hanina and Jesus are exceptions). It is very likely that it was in fact these unfulfilled hopes which brought about the end of popular support for prophecy and for the most part, prophecy itself.

In the church, expectation was apocalyptic rather than political, but they may have experienced the same kind of problems. Instead of prophecy being discredited through unfulfillment, it may have become a seed bed for gnosticizing tendencies. In *Rom.* 12.6 Paul exhorts that prophecy should be “in accordance with the faith”¹⁸³ suggesting that much prophecy, even at this early time, was not. In the *Didache* there is reason to believe that in the later first century “false” prophets were fairly commonplace and often hard to judge. This can also be gleaned from Hermas’ *Mandate* 11. *Did.* 11.10f suggests that prophets often did or commanded things “in the spirit” which would, if they were not regarded as prophetic, be unacceptable to the community.¹⁸⁴ It is likely that such prophetic activity eventually became unacceptable to the Church, and prophecy, both genuine and spurious, went into semi-forced retirement. This, in fact, appears to be the situation in Irenaeus (*AdvHer.* 3.9.9) where he warns that the battle against Montanism is driving true prophecy out of the church.

¹⁸³ This translation is far preferable to the standard “in proportion to our faith” (*RSV*) which makes little sense in the context.

¹⁸⁴ Eduard Schweizer, *Church order in the New Testament, Studies in Biblical Theology*, #32 (Naperville, 111.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1961), p. 143, n. 522, suggests that the permissible but unacceptable behavior of the prophets here is “spiritual marriages” representing Christ’s relation to the Church. Although this fits the context, it is not suggested by, or essential to it.

In light of the connection between charismatic exegesis and prophecy, which has been emerging, however, it is likely that prophecy did not disappear into a void. Wilson comments that in millenarian groups

The intermediary is a crucial figure in the group, for he is the means by which the group gains access to the spirits, who are directing the group's journey toward salvation.¹⁸⁵

I suggest that this *becomes* Bible exegesis after prophecy disappears, that, in fact it contributes to that disappearance. If the spirit fails to give accurate information or requires too much discernment because of conflicting prophetic pronouncements, then there is a source of pure and (thought to be) verifiable revelation, once there is a canon. The intermediary is still needed, but he is now the interpreter of Scripture, though he may be a prophetic interpreter. Now, rather than “Thus says the LORD...”, the prophetic formula is “The Scripture says...” or “God says...(followed by a verse of Scripture — e.g., 2 Cor. 6.16)”. The key here is not that the prophet has been replaced by the teacher, but that the spirit has been replaced by the γραφή as the source of prophetic knowledge (although the Spirit may be the illuminator of the Word, as at Qumran). For the audience, this has the advantage that if prophecy fails, access to the Spirit is lost, while if *interpretation* fails, scripture is still available as a verifiable source of truth.

¹⁸⁵ Wilson, op.cit., p. 79.

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