

ECSTASY AND ISRAEL'S EARLY PROPHETS

LEON J. WOOD, PH.D.

Men have sought communication from their god by various means. One is by ecstatic frenzy. In ecstatic frenzy the subject seeks to withdraw his mind from conscious participation in the world so that it may be open to the reception of the divine word. To achieve this ecstatic state, poisonous gas may be employed,¹ a rhythmic dance, or even narcotics. The desire is to lose all rational contact with the world and so make possible a rapport with the spirit realm.

This manner of seeking divine communication was prevalent in Asia Minor in the second millennium, B.C., and, during the last half of that time, moved from there into Greece on the west and Syria on the east and South.² It is believed that the Canaanites thus came to know and adopt the practice and make it a part to their religious service. Many scholars believe further that Israel in turn learned it from the Canaanites and made it a part to their service also. Those who do, believe accordingly that Israel's early prophets (*nebhi'im*) were typical ecstasies of the day, seeking revelational contact with their God quite as those of Canaan and Asia Minor.³ These persons are pictured as moving through the land in rather wild bands, chanting in loud voices, and making ecstatic inquiry for people upon request. The people are thought to have accepted them as holy because they did conduct themselves in this manner, considering their ability to achieve the ecstatic state a badge of their authority.⁴

Conservative scholars have trouble with this presentation, however. Already before Israel's conquest of Palestine, Moses calls himself a prophet (*nabhi'*) and states that a prophet like himself would arise after him (Deut. 18:15-22). He uses the singular, *nabhi'*, in reference to this one, and so is correctly taken to mean Christ as the supreme Prophet thus to arise, but the context shows that he has reference in a secondary sense also to prophets generally who should appear in later history. Moses himself clearly was not an ecstatic. Hence, if prophets to follow him were to be like him, neither would they be ecstasies. Further, in this same passage, Moses warns the people specifically against following revelational practices of surrounding nations (vss. 9-14), stating that in contrast, God's Word through these prophets would be the approved way for revelation

1. As at the famous oracle of Delphi; cf. E. O. James, *The Nature and Function of Priesthood* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1959), p. 40.
2. T. J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 155.
3. H. Knight, *The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), pp. 80-81; C. T. Francisco, *Introducing the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1950), pp. 85-86; John Bright, *History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 166; H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1956), pp. 37-39; A. C. Welch, *Kings and Prophets of Israel* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), p. 70.
4. N. W. Porteous, "Prophecy," *Record and Revelation*, ed. H. Wheeler Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 229.

in Israel. This means that ecstatic frenzy, which was practiced by surrounding nations, was officially disallowed.

Looking now at prophets who did follow Moses, the Biblical picture of them is in keeping with Moses' words. Joshua, though not called a *nabhi'*, still does the work of a *nabhi'* in that he receives and gives forth the Divine communication, and Joshua was in no way an ecstatic. Deborah is called a prophetess (*nebhi'ah*, Jud. 4:4) and she displays similar behavior as, along with Barak, she leads against the Canaanite foe, Sisera. Samuel is repeatedly portrayed, and never shows ecstatic traits. Indeed, scholars who hold to the ecstatic idea for other prophets, readily assert that Samuel was of another type, the "seer" (*ro'eh*). Seers, in contrast to prophets, are said to have been quiet persons, waiting for inquirers to come to them. But moving through history further, we find the same, non-ecstatic manner of prophecy with Nathan (II Sam. 7:2; 12:25), Gad (II Sam. 24:11), Ahijah (I Kgs. 11:29; 14:2-18), and others. Though not much is stated regarding any one of them, never are they depicted in a way to suggest any kind of irrational, ecstatic behavior to their prophetic activities.

Scholars who hold to the ecstatic idea, seek evidence in the Old Testament especially from three passages. Reason exists, therefore, for the conservative to examine these passages with some care. The purpose of this paper is to make a study of them, along with certain other passages, and determine their contribution to the over-all, Biblical picture of early prophetism.

I. Three passages considered.

A. Identified.

It is well first to identify these three passages. The first is Num. 11:25-29. The occasion is the prophesying of seventy men at the time of being made administrative assistants to Moses shortly after leaving Mt. Sinai in the second year of the wilderness sojourn. God had taken "of the Spirit that was upon" Moses and placed it upon these seventy for the purpose of enabling them for their new responsibility. Then, "when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied (*yithnabbe'u*)." Two of their number, Eldad and Medad, continued this prophesying longer than the others, which brought complaint to Moses, but Moses rebuked the complainer, rather than the two who were prophesying, saying that he wished all the people were prophets.

The second is I Sam. 10:1-13. This instance concerns similar prophesying activity by Saul following Samuel's indication to him that he would be Israel's new king. Samuel also told him of several events in which he would be involved on his homeward journey after leaving Samuel. Among others, Saul would

meet a "band of prophets" coming down from "the high place with" a number of musical instruments, and they would "prophesy" (*mithnabbe'im*); also that "the Spirit of Jehovah" would then "come mightily upon" him so that he too would prophesy (*hithnabbitha*) and be "turned into another man." These events occurred as predicted.

The third is I Sam. 19:18-24. This instance also concerns prophesying by Saul who was now king. He had recently sent three different groups of messengers to apprehend David who had fled from Saul and gone to Samuel at Ramah.⁵ All three groups met Samuel standing head over a band of prophets who were prophesying, and the result was that the messengers, each time, joined with these in this activity. Finally Saul himself went. But while yet on the way, he experienced the "Spirit of God" coming upon him and he "prophesied" (*yithnabbe'*) also. Later, after coming to where the others were, he further removed some of his clothing and lay in an apparent stupor the rest of that day and the following night.

B. Arguments for Ecstasism.

That the idea of prophesying is used in these passages in a way different from the normal in the Old Testament is easily seen. In none of them is a message of revelation given. Adherents of the ecstatic idea say that each case is an instance of ecstatic frenzy. Arguments cited may be listed under five heads.

The first we notice is an argument *a priori*: namely, that in view of the probability of Canaanite influence in all such matters, it should be expected that early prophecy in Israel, merely illustrated in these passages, was ecstatic in nature.

The second concerns the fact that in one of the instances, the prophesying group was coming down from a "high place" (*bamah*) (I Sam. 10:1-13). High places were themselves Canaanite in origin, and so the type of person who would be coming from one of them, and so likely associated with them, should be expected to have been a product of canaanite influence as well.

The third relates to the fact that persons in this same group were playing musical instruments. Since music was a common device in other countries by which the ecstatic state was induced, it likely was being used for that purpose here.

The fourth concerns the statement that Saul was "turned

5. The text says that David came to Samuel at "naioth in Ramah." Naioth means "dwelling." Since Samuel's group of prophets also was there, this "dwelling" may have been the building in which the school of these prophets met.

into another man." This suggests loss of self-control which normally accompanied ecstaticism. The surprise of spectators at this change in Saul, as they said, "What is this that is come unto the son of Kish?" is asserted also to imply ecstatic frenzy on his part.

And the fifth relates to Saul's lying in a disrobed condition for an extended period of time following the second instance of his prophesying (I Sam. 19:18-24). This action suggests stupor on his part which again fits the idea of lost self-control in ecstasy.

C. Arguments of Ecstaticism Refuted.

The observations that now follow are designed either to show fallacy in these arguments or to account for the factors upon which they are based in a more plausible manner and one not in keeping with the idea of ecstasy. Each argument is treated separately and in the same order as above.

1. The argument *a priori*.

The force of the first argument rests on the premise that Israel borrowed heavily from Canaanites. However, real question exists as to the degree and kind of this borrowing. There is considerable difference of opinion between liberal and conservative scholars. If one believes with W. C. Graham, for instance, that "little by little, in the long process of settlement," the Hebrew people "became in all but name Canaanites,"⁶ then one can rightfully expect prophetism also to have been significantly influenced. But if the degree and kind of borrowing was quite different, then this conclusion does not follow.

The Old Testament gives evidence that it was quite different. It is true that the people themselves were influenced to follow Canaanite practices, particularly in worshipping Baal and Ashtaroth, but the official, Biblically-accepted religion was not. This is evident in the uniqueness of Israel's concept of God, of sin, of sacrifice, of priests in their duties and places of residence, and other basic matters. It is evident even more in the fact that Israel's normative law, which stated or implied all these fundamental concepts, had been given supernaturally by Jehovah already prior to Israel's entrance to Canaan and so could

6. Graham, "The Religion of the Hebrews," *JR*, XI (1931), 244. G. E. Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1950), p. 74 finds less borrowing than Graham, saying, "What Israel borrowed was the least significant." W. F. Albright, "Recent Progress in North Canaanite Research," *BASOR*, LXX (1938), 24, speaks similarly to Wright, "Every fresh publication of Canaanite mythological texts makes the gulf between the religion of Canaan and of Israel increasingly clear."

not have been a product resulting from Canaanite influence in any part. It follows that if other basic matters in Israel's religious life were not borrowed from Canaan, neither was prophetism nor any of its constituent ingredients.

It is significant to point out further that the Biblical writers regularly show approval or disapproval of any religious matter in accordance with its relation to the normative law. If approval is shown, it was thought to be in keeping with the law. Never is approval given to any religious matter coming from the Canaanites. This gives a criterion as to whether any matter was considered Canaanite or not. When this criterion is applied to the three instances of prophesying with which we are concerned, all three are shown to be non-Canaanite. Approval is manifested toward the first in that Moses wishes that all the people would prophesy like Eldad and Medad. In the second, Samuel himself is presented as sending Saul to meet the music-playing prophets. And in the third, Samuel again is depicted as approving the prophesying, not only of his own prophets, but the three messenger bands and even Saul himself. This means that the Biblical writer did not consider this prophesying as Canaanite in origin.

2. The argument from "high places."

Regarding the argument from "high places," it is true that high places came into Israel as a result of Canaanite influence, and, accordingly, are always disapproved by the Biblical writers; that is, always except for one period of time which is an exception to the rule just noted. That was the period following the loss of the sanctuary at Shiloh when Eli was high priest until the building of the temple in Jerusalem by Solomon.⁷ The reason for this exception seems to be that, so long as the people had no other official place to worship, God approved them using the high places. Of course they were expected to worship there as nearly as possible according to the regulations of the law. Saul and his servant found Samuel leading in worship at the high place at Ramah during this time (I Sam. 9:10-25). It is very significant that the incident concerned in this argument occurred during this period. For in that it did, the fact that the prophets met by Saul were coming down

7. They are disapproved in the Mosaic law, for instance, Num. 33:52; Deut. 33:29; and also after the temple is built, for instance, I Kgs. 11:7; 14:23. But never is this true during this in-between time. For instance, prior to the temple building, Solomon is clearly approved when he sacrifices at "the great high place" in Gibeon, I Kgs. 3:4.

from a high place does not imply that they were Canaanite sympathizers or products of Canaanite influence. As Samuel could worship at these places during this period, so could they.

3. The argument from music.

In respect to the argument from music, it is true that music was employed in other countries to induce ecstasy, but, as Martin Buber points out, speaking of this very instance in I Sam. 10, ecstasy

is not stirred up in a people of early culture by such acts as these, but by an enthusiastic singing of monotonous songs. Truly such singing is ecstatic, but it is also bound up with a strict rhythm and is accompanied by rhythmical movements of all its members.⁸

Moreover, this requires proper mental attitude on the part of sympathetic participants, and the persons involved must actively seek this state and give studied and diligent effort to attain it. There is nothing in the story to suggest that this was true of the music-playing prophets met by Saul. Even more, it certainly was not true of Saul himself, either in the instance of I Sam. 10 or I Sam. 19.

4. The argument that Saul was "turned into another man."

In regard to the argument from the fact that Saul was turned into another man, two matters deserve notice. First, Samuel himself predicted this change for Saul, (I Sam. 10:6) and, in doing so, implied approval which would be out of character if he meant thereby loss of self-control as in Canaanite ecstaticism. Second, it is logical to relate this indicated change for Saul to a similar notice in vs. 9 that "God gave him another heart." But this notice does not suggest any loss of self-control. Rather, a new heart speaks of a new attitude, a new intellectual and emotional outlook. The story gives reason for Saul needing such a new outlook. Saul had been hesitant about visiting Samuel when first suggested by his servant, only going after repeated urging. This indicates lack in self-confidence.⁹ But a king—to which office he had just been anointed by Samuel—needs great confidence. Saul needed a change in his hesitant personality and here apparently experienced

8. Buber, *The Prophetic Faith*, trans. Carlyle Witton-Davies (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 63. Buber here argues that "*nebiism* came from the movement of faith, . . . which demanded a militant devotion to YHWH God of Israel," and so not as a product of Canaanite influence.

9. That Saul hid himself among the "baggage" a short time later when officially revealed to the people as God's choice for king indicates this same lack in self-confidence (I Sam. 10:22).

at least a start in this direction. Natural excitement at the prospect of being king would have contributed; also the fact that all Samuel's predictions for this day were coming true; but especially that the "Spirit of God came upon him" to prompt this change so that he would have confidence enough to join in prophesying with the prophets as he did.¹⁰

5. The argument from stupor.

As to the last argument, involving Saul's lying in an apparent stupor all night, it must be said that this does suggest a lack of self-control on his part. No normal person, in control of his faculties, would act in this way. However, two matters argue that, even so, this was not the result of self-induced ecstasy. The first is that he alone, of all who prophesied at this time, experienced this condition. None of Samuel's group did, nor any of the messengers sent earlier by Saul. Yet these did all prophesy and strip off garments (I Sam. 19:20-24).¹¹ The question rises that, if this prophesying was self-induced ecstasy for all, why did all not lie down in the same stupor as Saul? The second matter is that Saul, as noted earlier, had no opportunity for preparation for this kind of induced ecstasy. Indeed, it is stated that he began to prophesy even before he came to where the others were (vs. 23), and certainly he was a most unsympathetic subject when he was coming in anger and disgust, having previously sent three fruitless groups of messengers.

There is another and better way of explaining Saul's action. This stupor was the result of melancholy and despair. The Biblical picture of Saul presents him as given to extreme emotional moods. At this time in his reign, he had been highly disturbed for weeks relative to David and his rising popularity with the people. He had even tried to kill David directly with a spear three times (I Sam. 18:11; 19:10) and indirectly by other means at least twice. The last time had been as Michal, Saul's own daughter and David's wife, had helped him escape by letting him down from a window. Jonathan too, Saul's son, favored David which perturbed Saul greatly. David at this time had fled to Samuel and Saul had been ineffective in procuring efficient service from subordinates to apprehend him. And

10. The continuing story indicates that this change was not permanent at this time yet. It shows permanency only after the Spirit of God comes on Saul prior to the Jabesh-gilead battle, I Sam. 11:6. The Spirit of God then seems to remain with him for enablement in ruling until I Sam. 16:14.

11. That all similarly disrobed is made rather clear in vs. 24 by the words, *gam hu'*, "also he."

now, most disturbing of all, Saul had just found David in the approving company of Samuel himself which spelled anew his own rejection in the clearest terms.¹² Everyone seemed against him. His hardest efforts had proven of no avail. David was winning. David would be king in spite of all he could do. There was no use to try further. This oppressive line of thinking descended upon him like a shroud and he sank in this state of despair.

The fact that he and the others stripped off garments in this prophesying activity is understandable in the light of the kind of activity that was involved. Of this we shall see more later. It may be noted here, however, that probably not all garments were removed. Very likely Saul was not nude as he lay in this stupor through the night. The word often translated "naked" in the text is *'arom*. But this may mean only a partially disrobed condition. It is used with this meaning in Job 22:6; 24:7, 10; Isa. 58:7 and probably Isa. 20:2-3 where Isaiah is said to have walked "naked and barefoot three years." It should be taken in this meaning regarding Saul here.

6. Two positive arguments

Besides these answers to arguments for ecstaticism, two positive arguments contrary to the ecstatic idea can be brought. One is that it is incongruous that Samuel should have been associated with a group of prophets practicing Canaanite ecstaticism. Yet he is said to have been "head" (niph'al participle, *nitsabh*, from *natsabh*, "to set or place") over the young prophets who were prophesying when the messengers and later Saul arrived (I Sam. 19:20). This means not only that he was sympathetic with them but was superintendent over them in this activity, something unthinkable if this was Canaanite ecstaticism.

The other concerns early prophetism generally, apart from any particular instance. It is voiced by Walther Eichrodt.¹³ He says that there must have been a strong anti-Canaanite force in Israel to have withstood complete engulfment of Israel by Canaanite culture, so advanced as it was over her own. The most likely source of that force, he says, was the early prophets, who then must have preached strongly against it. If Eichrodt is right,¹⁴ these prophets could not have been products of the influence they opposed.

12. Saul had been told twice by Samuel before this that God had rejected him from ruling (I Sam. 13:14; 15:23, 28).
13. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 328-29.
14. Eichrodt is correct that the prophets constituted a restraining force against Canaanite influence, but probably a still greater force was the teaching of priests scattered out among the people in their Levitical cities and in far greater number.

D. Nature of this prophesying.

We now make inquiry as to the nature of the prophesying in these three instances. If it was not ecstatic raving, what was it? It is obvious that it was not the giving forth of a message from God which is the meaning usually indicated in the Old Testament.

The answer here suggested is that it was a "praising" activity. This answer finds support in I Chr. 25:1-3 where the meaning, "praising," is definitely ascribed to the idea of prophesying. David then selects the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun that they might "prophesy (*nibbe'im*) with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals." The implication is strong that these persons were to render *praise* with these instruments. In vs. 2 the word is employed in a similar way. Then in vs. 3 it is directly stated that these singers "prophesied in giving thanks and praising Jehovah."

This means that one possible meaning for "to prophesy" was "to praise." A consideration further of the three instances here concerned shows that this meaning fits well into the circumstances of each.

In the instance of the seventy prospective administrators in the wilderness, the thought is that they together began to render praise to God when the Spirit came upon them, perhaps in the form of some chanted song. God's Spirit was given to them to enable them for their new work. As a by-product, they were prompted to give forth praise. With such praise, Moses would, of course, have been pleased and so understandably would have refused to rebuke Eldad and Medad as the story indicates.

In the first of the two instances regarding Saul, the thought is that the young prophets coming down from the high place were similarly rendering praise to Jehovah, again in song, to the accompaniment of their musical instruments. Saul, now changed in mental and emotional outlook with the Spirit having come upon him, joined with them. This extroverted type of action was so out of keeping with Saul's normal, introverted character that people looking on were quite amazed. The Spirit came upon him at this time for the purpose of giving him the new outlook and also prompting him to praise in this manner as a first development in the more aggressive, confident personality he needed.

In the second instance involving Saul, the thought is that all participants—Samuel's prophets, the three messenger bands of Saul, and Saul himself—gave forth in praise to God in similar fashion. The removal of outer garments was to give

greater freedom of movement in doing so. They may have removed only the outer, flowing robe which was particularly confining to physical activity.

That Saul's messengers and then Saul himself joined with Samuel's prophets in this chant of praise can be understood in the light of God's Spirit coming upon them, first on the three bands and then on Saul separately (I Sam. 19:20-23). The reason for this Divine endowment was precisely to prompt them thus to praise. There was good reason. David needed to be protected. Saul had been thwarted in too many prior attempts to take David's life for him not to be very serious about doing so at this time. This means that there was good reason first for the three messenger groups to be diverted from apprehending David. He should not be brought to Saul. Thus the Spirit of God came on them. But there was even greater reason for diverting Saul when he came. Finding David in Samuel's approving company, being extremely angry as he was, had Saul not been supernaturally affected at this point he may easily have ordered David killed immediately and possibly even Samuel. It was not long after this that he ordered nothing less for the high priest of the day, Abimelech, and all the other priests, besides "women, children and sucklings, and oxen and asses and sheep" at Nob (I Sam. 22:16-19). When angry, Saul was capable of severe action. However, David was not killed here, nor even apprehended. Instead, Saul was prompted to take up a chant of praise. This led him to accept the situation as of God, and then to experience great despair at his own failure and sink in the stupor described.

II. Israel's Early Prophets

When interpreted in the manner now set forth, the three passages under consideration give no evidence of ecstaticism among Israel's early prophets. These prophets were not products of Canaanite influence. At the same time that we have established this, however, we have raised another question regarding the precise meaning of "to prophesy" (*hithnabbe'*).¹⁵ For, though we have shown that it does not mean "to act ecstaticly," still the meaning, "to praise", is not in what is thought of as the main line of prophetic activity either. What contribution does this meaning have for the whole idea of prophesying?

Before answering, we should observe, that there is still another variant meaning assigned to *hithnabbe'* in the Old Testament. At least two passages indicate it as meaning "to rave"

15. The root form, *nabha'*, does not appear in the Old Testament. It is always either *niphal* or *hithpael*.

or "act violently". One of these concerns the instance in which Saul became angry at David the first time, casting his spear at him (I Sam. 18:10). It is stated that, in this display of anger, Saul "prophesied (*yithnabbe'*) in the midst of the house." No message from God was involved, and so the meaning must be in reference to Saul's angry raving at the young attendant before him. The other instance is the one when Baal prophets displayed violent actions on Mt. Carmel in contest with Elijah (I Kgs. 18:29). In this activity which involved leaping, loud crying, and even cutting themselves with knives, they are said to have "prophesied" (*yithnabbe'u*). Again no message was given and so the reference must be to this violent activity.

There is still a third variant meaning which some scholars believe is evidenced for the word; namely, "to be mad". They refer to the following three passages for this evidence: first, II Kgs. 9:1-2 where a young prophet sent by Elisha to anoint Jehu as king of Israel is called a "mad fellow" (*meshugga'*) by attendants of Jehu; second, Jer. 29:26 where Jeremiah quotes a certain Shemaiah, then captive in Babylon, as having used the following parallel phrases in a letter to Jerusalem: "Every man that is mad (*meshugga'*), and maketh himself a prophet," thus equating such a mad man with a prophet; and third, Hosea 9:7 where Hosea characterizes a point in Israel's thinking with the words, "The prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad (*meshugga'*)." However, each of these passages really evidences only that certain persons, opposed to prophets, were given to characterizing them derogatorily as mentally unbalanced. They do not demonstrate that the Hebrew word, *hithnabbe* itself carried this connotation. We do not need to bring this suggested meaning into the discussion, therefore.

But we have verified the two variant meanings, "to praise" and "to rave," and so these must be related to the over-all idea of what it meant to prophesy. Before noting what their respective contributions may be, however, we must make more serious inquiry as to the *basic* meaning of *hithnabbe'*.

Certain key passages, as well as less specific implications of numerous passages generally, show this basic meaning to be "to speak forth a message." One key passage is Ex. 7:1, the background to which comes in Ex. 4:1-16. In the latter passage Moses objects to God's call for him to return to Egypt, claiming, among other things, incapability in speech. To this God answers that He would provide Aaron to speak in Moses' place, even being a mouth to Moses. Then in 7:1 God speaks of Aaron in this capacity as Moses' *nabi'*. This indicates the

meaning of *nabi'*, the noun corresponding to the verb, *hithnabbe'*, as one who speaks for another.

Another passage is Deut. 18:15-22, mentioned in the first part of this paper. In vs. 18, referring to the prophet who would arise after Moses, God says that He would put words in this prophet's mouth so that he would "speak...all that" He, Jehovah, would command him.

Still a third passage is Amos 7:12-16. Here Amos is at Bethel, speaking against the false worship there and against the king, Jeroboam II. Amaziah, the Bethel priest, rebukes the prophet, saying,

O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again and more at Bethel: for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.

To this Amos replies,

I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees: And Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

The way in which the word, prophesy, is used here is significant. Amaziah urges Amos not to *prophesy* any more at Bethel, but to do so in Judah; and Amos in turn says that Jehovah had sent him to Israel to *prophesy*. Thus, what he had been doing in Israel, and what motivated Amaziah's rebuke, was *prophesying*. What this had been, of course, was simply speaking God's message.

Other significant passages are those in which God calls a prophet to service. Invariably the instruction given is to go to some person or people and speak a message. Isaiah is told to "Go, and tell this people" (Isa. 6:9). Jeremiah is told to "Go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jer. 1:7). Ezekiel is told, "I send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them" (Ezek. 2:3-4). There is no question, then, as to the basic meaning of the word. It meant "to speak a message." To this basic meaning, now, we must relate the two minor, variant meanings discovered above of "to praise" and "to rave." What do these add to this basic meaning so as to give the full-orbed thought of the word?

The answer is that these contribute the idea, common to both, of fervency or emotional involvement. When the various persons rendered praise in the three instances studied, they were emotionally involved in this activity. They were fervent in

it. Similarly when Saul raved at David in the palace he was emotionally involved. When the Baal prophets engaged in their violent activity they again were emotionally involved. All these instances were not basically intellectual experiences, but emotional. From this we may conclude that "to prophesy" meant in its full sense "to speak fervently." The prophet, if he spoke in character as a true prophet, spoke with emotion. He put his heart into his message. He proclaimed with strength. He did not recite words but preached a message.

This fervency connotation apparently was sufficiently impressed in the minds of the people that they could, as in the instances we have noticed, even use the word to refer directly to emotional outbursts alone, without any spoken message being involved. This emotional factor of itself regarding the concept was this strong in their minds. Hence, an instance of simply rendering praise, if characterized especially by exuberance, could be called a prophesying activity; as could also a case of emotional raving. But the main use of the word, exemplified in both its noun and verb form more than 300 times, was in connection with speaking a message, though then with the fervency connotation very much in mind.

Baptist Seminary
Grand Rapids, Michigan