

WHOSE PROPHET? WHOSE HISTORY?
WHOSE SOCIAL REALITY?
TROUBLING THE INTERPRETATIVE COMMUNITY AGAIN
NOTES TOWARDS A RESPONSE
TO T.W. OVERHOLT'S CRITIQUE

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Not a poet, not a prophet—
a woodcutter am I.

לא מפארר, לא נביא—
חומר עצים אמי.
(Hayim Nahman Bialik)¹

... for the sake of those who either could not or would not give themselves to this labour and toil by which they might deserve to be instructed in or to recognise things of such value and importance, to wrap up and conceal, as we said before, in ordinary language, *under the covering of some history and narrative of visible things*, hidden mysteries.

... so for that reason divine wisdom took care that certain stumbling-blocks, or interruptions, to the historical meaning should take place, *by the introduction into the midst of the narrative of certain impossibilities and incongruities*; that in this way the very interruption of the narrative might, as by the interposition of a bolt, present *an obstacle to the reader*, whereby he might refuse to acknowledge *the way which conducts to the ordinary meaning*; and being thus excluded and debarred from it, *we might be recalled to the beginning of another way*, in order that, by entering upon a narrow path, and passing to a loftier and more sublime road, he might lay open the immense breadth of divine wisdom (Origen).²

For one more accustomed to accusations of 'dogmatic scepticism'³ or to being almost set aside as an extremist⁴ for my

work on Jeremiah, it is salutary to be informed by Thomas Overholt that there is at least one area of the Hebrew Bible where radical scepticism is definitely unwarranted. Overholt and I have long been in correspondence on the subject of prophecy and before commenting on his article, 'Prophecy in History: The Social Reality of Intermediation', I would like to acknowledge that correspondence as a gracious contribution to my thinking about biblical prophecy.⁵ His work, especially in terms of the social reality of prophecy,⁶ has kept me constantly aware that there are other fields and different ways of ploughing them than the ones I work. I should, however, make it clear at the outset of this response that there is no Auld–Carroll line on prophecy north of Hadrian's Wall. Graeme Auld is a good friend and a colleague who works in the East of Scotland and I work in the West. I admire his work as a scholar and have learned much from him. Also, of course, it was his invitation to me to comment on his original SOTS paper of 1983 that got me into this debate in the first place. But I am an adult and cannot therefore blame him for my saying 'yes' to his invitation. We may share some views in common but we are really working on different issues and coming from very different directions in our approaches to the prophets.⁷ So in this response I shall be answering only for myself. Auld is old and clever enough to speak for himself.

I prefer to think of myself as a struggling agnostic when it comes to reading the prophets rather than a dogmatic sceptic. I would admit to using a certain degree of epistemological scepticism in my essay on 'prophecy and society',⁸ but even that approach had to do with the secondary literature and the models used by scholars to interpret biblical prophecy. The fact of the matter is that I really do not know how to read the prophets and so I am trying with every piece I write to make sense of *all* the data contained in the Bible on prophets. The traditional and conventional views on the prophets, both religious and scholarly, do not help me to make sense of the data. Therefore I am engaged in the task of trying to construct a model or a theory which will do the most work given the nature of the biblical text and the data contained therein. But because my approaches and conclusions are somewhat different from those operated by other members of the Guild

(interpretative community of biblical scholars) I seem to attract the epithet 'sceptic' or even 'iconoclast'.⁹ I know from lecturing to students of a conservatively religious bent that the charge of scepticism among scholars easily becomes one of cynicism at lower levels of the intellectual totem pole. So in my defence I must protest that the biblical data are such that they demand an approach which is sceptical of received wisdom. The central problems are in the text long before they appear in scholarly approaches. That prophecy in the Bible is problematic is so obvious and self-evident to the reader of the Bible that I wonder why its problematic status needs to be restated and argued for so often. Read 1 Samuel and try to answer the questions, 'Was Samuel a prophet?', 'Was Samuel a ruler?', 'Was Saul a ruler?', 'Was Saul a prophet?', 'If a *nabi*' was a *rō'eh*, what then was a *rō'eh*? The problematical status of these terms is enshrined in the narratives of Samuel.¹⁰ So my statement 'ancient Israelite writers had no clear image of what a prophet is or should be'¹¹ is not to be read as 'hyperbolic', as Overholt calls it, but as a shorthand way of summarizing what I think the book of 1 Samuel is saying in its narratives.

Now I must not try to reinvent the wheel nor should I simply restate the arguments of what I have written elsewhere in the articles which are the target of Overholt's critique. Overholt's main contention is that ethnographical data provide a paradigm of social reality which can be used to identify quite clearly in the Bible the status, character and activities of prophets. My initial response to Overholt's claim is less than enthusiastic because such an approach sacrifices the particular for the general and avoids close reading of the text in favour of loose readings of culture. I feel about it as many before me have felt about J.G. Frazer's monumental work, *The Golden Bough*. That multi-volume enterprise lumped everything together from all over the world without chronological distinctions and paid little attention to the particularity of cultures or to how customs and rituals which superficially looked the 'same' functioned very differently in distinctive settings. To some extent Frazer may be defended on the grounds that he was just collecting raw data which merely illustrated certain patterns of thought and feeling.¹² But the

tone and tenor of Overholt's article go beyond that illustrative function and assert that it is the case that Hebrew prophecy can be 'precisely described' by his model. In my opinion his model will function as a Procrustes' Bed in the analysis of biblical prophecy and will reduce or expand the text accordingly.

The extent to which models derived from the Seneca tribe of the Iroquois League (the Handsome Lake material) and the Ghost Dance of 1890 in conjunction with models drawn from prophecy at Mari (c. 1800 BCE) will assist in the task of a close reading of the Hebrew Bible constitutes a complex analytical enterprise which space here does not allow me to investigate.¹³ Like all models, the work this model will do is at best an approximation. It will provide a patterned background against which to read the biblical text, but it will not provide a sophisticated reading of that text. Furthermore, and this is important for Overholt's claims in his article, it will not even begin to address the central point of much of what Auld and I have been writing about. To avoid a long-drawn-out niggling set of arguments (in the context of this paper only!) let me accept for the sake of the argument that a pattern of prophetic behaviour can be established from all the wide-ranging ethnographic data and that it can also be applied to the prophets in the Bible. So what? Both Auld and myself allow that there were prophets in biblical times. Our claim is not that there were no prophets in the Bible, but that the named *individuals* represented by the fully and finally redacted Bible as 'prophets' were not prophets at all. How does the model cope with that claim? It copes by using a blanket patterning process which insists that the redactional ploy of making these individuals prophets must be correct because the redaction reflects the pattern of the model. I find that a question-begging response.

Of course the redactional presentation of these characters reflects the pattern derived from the model. It would, wouldn't it! Any writer even half-competent could write a character *in character*. Literature is filled with realistic representations of characters who conform to whatever social model is appropriate. Sidney Carton is a lawyer, Thomas Gradgrind a teacher; they are modelled on social realities, no doubt, by Charles Dickens, but they are characters in fiction all the

same. If a figure in a text conforms to a social reality model, what can be said about that figure? Well, it depends on what you wish to do by way of exposition. Describing or evaluating the poetics of Dickens's novels or the book of Jeremiah is one thing. Making assertions about the historical existence of the characters in these writings is quite a different thing. And I do not see this different thing being seriously addressed by Overholt's model of social reality for the prophets. What the model tells us is this: the representation of a character as a prophet is an accurate representation. It cannot tell us anything about whether the character is historical or not. Nor can it help us to differentiate between the character and the character's author.

Both Overholt and Robert Wilson, together with various other biblical scholars, like to redefine prophecy as 'intermediation' and then make use of ethnographic models of intermediation. But the redefinition is not unproblematic. Of course there are intermediaries in the Bible. They are called priests. These priests worked in the two spheres of the sacred and the profane, the holy and the unholy or this world and the other world. The combination of the roles of priest and prophet in the representation of various figures in the Bible (e.g. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) complicates the matter considerably and raises tricky questions about intermediation in ancient Israel as represented by the Bible. The use of models drawn from shamanistic cultures which were oral rather than literate raises further problems for analysing the biblical data. I know Overholt (like many other biblical scholars) does not think that spoken oracles can be transformed by being turned into written forms, but it is that transformative process which lies behind the biblical presentation of prophecy rather than any original oral communication.¹⁴ In my opinion it is a further complication of the topic. There is therefore a cluster of problems here which, in my opinion, will not be resolved by recourse to a social reality model. Mind you, I should point out in defence of both Overholt and myself that the pieces of mine criticized by Overholt in his article are all minor, occasional or inchoate pieces. Where they appear to be more substantial (the JSOT Guide and the SOTS volume article) they only touch on the problems of anal-

ysis mentioned in this paragraph. It is of course my own fault that lengthier and more comprehensive treatments of the problems have not yet seen the light of day and using Overholt's critique as a spur I shall in due course produce a much more detailed account of what I see as the central problems of interpreting biblical prophecy.¹⁵

Overholt defines a prophet as 'someone to whom Yahweh has spoken and who freely communicates the contents of this revelation to an audience'. *Quite so.* But many of the prophets represented in the Bible might be better defined as 'someone to whom Yahweh has *not* spoken but who freely communicate their own thoughts to an audience' (see Mic. 3.5-8; Jer. 14.13-15; 23.9-40; 27-28; Ezek. 13.1-19). The larger questions of whether there are gods and persons who might be regarded as speaking to and for them ought to be on the academic agenda for otherwise all our deliberations are simply question-begging activities which assume what ought to be demonstrated. It would, however, take up too much time and space to debate this foundational approach to the subject, so I shall accept for the sake of convenience biblical assertions about the existence of gods and prophets. That is, in this response I shall take an emic view of biblical statements rather than an etic view.¹⁶ To return to Overholt's definition: prophets are speakers, but are they also intermediaries? They speak but do they speak *for* anything or anybody? In other words, do they intermediate? The naive response to that is, undoubtedly, 'of course there are always good and bad prophets'. As I understand the biblical material on this question it seems to be more a case of 'they may be prophets but they do not speak for YHWH'. It is not that they are *bad* prophets, they are just prophets. In opposition to them are the speakers represented in the text. These are the people who speak *for* YHWH: e.g. note how Mic. 3.5-8 is constructed ('...concerning the prophets... but as for me'), where a sharp distinction is drawn between the prophets and the (unknown) speaker (now identified by incorporation into a collection bearing the name Micah in 1.1). The defining of that speaker *as a prophet* is not part of the text but part of its *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. That then is the crux of the dispute between Overholt and me and it cannot be resolved by models

of social reality. We shall just have to continue to differ in our *reading of texts*.

I have no quarrel with models or theories, be they anthropological, sociological, literary or whatever. I sometimes worry that theory may be prematurely applied to ancient texts or that the theory used may be inappropriate. Theories and models solve no real problems because they themselves become part of the problem of interpretation. Reading texts with the aid of theories and models just provides another set of problematized readings. The readings are still disputed, only on different grounds now. No real problem here if the readers recognize what they are doing—one of the major contributions of feminism to biblical scholarship has been its reminder to us that our interpretations are just readings (Mieke Bal makes the point regularly in her writings). A proliferation of readings, no doubt, but no longer can the Guild imagine that it is promulgating *the reading of the text* or even *the way to read texts*. Overholt speculates about my ‘ideology’ at one point. Well he might speculate. I often speculate myself about that, but never can find a coherent enough viewpoint which lasts long enough to be scrutinized for ideological holdings. I do possess shards of theory and fragments of values which I use to do my readings of texts, but they are changing and expanding all the time and so frustrate the construction of a thoroughgoing ideology. To construct a coherent account of the matter would take me years and many books to accomplish it and even then I would have doubts about the intensity and depth of my self-perception to have done it accurately. But let me address myself to the lengthy theorizing section of Overholt’s paper as a way of expressing my current thinking here and as a means of providing a few clues about alternative approaches to reading biblical texts.

Much of the quarrel between Overholt and myself must centre on the book of Jeremiah because we have both written extensively on it. The more often I read that text and the more I read the secondary literature on it the more dissatisfied I become with how we read biblical texts in the Guild. That is why I have prefaced this response with a couple of fragments from Origen’s celebrated writings on the divine inspiration of the scriptures (my added emphases are intended to focus on

phrases which indicate the importance of knowing *how* to read biblical texts). In many ways Origen saved the scriptures for the churches by showing how the text could be read other than historically and literally and how in so doing its fictions and impossibilities could be handled. As I read Jeremiah I am struck by its ahistoricity and its intertextuality. Poem after poem has little reference outside the book itself and much of the prose is commentary on the Deuteronomistic History. There are parts of Jeremiah which read like commentary on, where they are not replications of, that History. Some of the laments are so much in the style of Psalms and there are so many citations from other parts of the Hebrew Bible that any reading of the book as history or the reportage of actual events in the period set by 1.1-3 strikes me as a complete misreading of the text. Social reality models are irrelevant here. The text is too convention-bound, too stereotypical for them to do sufficient work. The book is a supplementation of other books (a kind of *Ergänzungstext*)¹⁷ and the social dynamics of its production will have to be found in terms other than historical reportage of the sixth century. That is how I read the text. While I do not know how the text came into existence, I find the models of Jeremiah offered by other commentators utterly unconvincing (I exclude from this judgment McKane's helpful notion of a 'rolling corpus'). I think the figure of Jeremiah *as a prophet* has been generated by certain levels of the book's production and Overholt's social reality models do not seem to me to have much to say at this point.

My reading of Jeremiah and my reconstruction of its dynamics may be rather different from what many scholars in the Guild regard as responsible exegesis and interpretation. But interpretative communities can be part of the problem too.¹⁸ They can restrict vision and range as well as generate self-serving mechanisms of conformistic study. I would not claim for myself any great innovative approach to texts because I am aware of building on the work of others (e.g. Duhm and Torrey especially). Also I am deeply conscious that the Guild has many fine independent scholars within it, whose work is a constant inspiration and example to me. If a model outside the field of biblical studies is sought for what I see myself as doing in Jeremiah studies, let it be Georges

Dumézil's study of Marcus Furius Camillus, the putative second founder of Rome.¹⁹ Dumézil's euhemeristic approach to reading Indo-European religion has the advantage of paying close attention to the conventions of language used so that the transformation of myth into the epic mode is 'perceived hermeneutically'.²⁰ Dumézil does not deny the probable existence of a Roman supreme commander in the past (sometime between 445 and 365 BCE), but he strips the epic of its status as a historical chronicle and recognizes its poetic qualities. Much of his analysis consists of reading the texts of Livy and Plutarch and reinterpreting their linguistic conventions so as to arrive at his transformed account of the saga of Camillus. Now, I am not claiming that the same can be done for the biblical book of Jeremiah, though if it could it might meet Auld's demand for 'a sounder approach'.

My purpose here in introducing Dumézil's work into the discussion is to broaden the debate in cross-disciplinary terms (like Overholt's use of social dynamics models but in a different direction). But it is equally to enlarge it in relation to the ancient literary historians who wrote about their past in ways which cannot just be read as ancient history *simpliciter*, whether the comparative historians are Herodotus or Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Plutarch or Homer, the so-called Yahwist or the Deuteronomistic Historian. If it is a commonplace in classical and ancient historical studies that such writers are a mixture of history, myth and inventive writing, why should biblical scholars imagine that the Bible escapes such classifications? Here I have to disagree with Overholt's assumption that the biblical writers 'intend to construct accounts of the past' and his inclination 'to look for historical information in them, *and rightly so*' (my emphases). I would like to see some argument here about the historiographic intentions of the biblical writers as well as some evidence against alternative suggestions that they might have been writing for ideological or propagandist purposes (not to mention inventive literary or epigonic commentary reasons). In other words, 'Who killed Goliath?' remains a question to be addressed by any reader of the Bible interested in treating the book as if it were a modern history book.

Overholt makes much of genre as an important consideration in reading the Bible. I agree with him. Generic analysis is an important element in reading texts. But it is hardly a problem-free notion. If we could all agree on the genres contained in biblical texts we might make some progress, but try determining the genre of Isa. 5.1-7! As for the genre of a prophetic book as a whole, who will agree on deciding what that might be? Is the book of Jeremiah an anthology, as Overholt seems to believe? Well, it contains an anthological section in chs. 2–20, 30–33, and 46–51, but it cannot be said to be an anthology *per se*. What genre shall we assign to chs. 26–29, 32–36, 37–44? Biographical narratives, the passion of Jeremiah, legends of the prophets? All these genres suggest themselves but none of them does enough work to warrant its acceptance. Even if we agree on the genres, how far does that get us? For example, is the anthology one of anonymous poems, hymns, psalms and laments or should it be regarded as an anthology of the utterances of the speaker described in 1.1-3? Perhaps the (final) writer of 1.1-3 intends (writer's intention forsooth!) us to read the anthology as a selection of Jeremiah's best work. Fine! We may read it as such. Just as we would read the poems included at the end of Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* as the poems of Zhivago. But it is a long jump from that mode of reading to arguing that Zhivago and Jeremiah were historical persons who actually did write poetry. How does genre help here? Of course genres produce meaning but we have no access to what genres the writers of Jeremiah imagined they were using, so the discussion must remain open to the decisions of individual readers of Jeremiah.

Overholt discusses the theories of a number of well-known literary critics on genre and meaning. While I am familiar with all these critics and might wish to add a few more of my own (e.g. Fredric Jameson, Harold Bloom, Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Roland Barthes, Edmond Jabès, Hans Robert Jauss to mention but a few) I really do not see what they contribute to the point over which Overholt and I disagree. The theoretical underpinnings of these various writers would serve my position as well as his. For it really is not the case that the interpretation of the Bible is unproblematic, with its genres all agreed on and its historicity universally accepted. The

groundwork has still all to be done and the issues which divide Overholt and me also divide many scholars in the Guild. They cannot be resolved by appealing to a set of critics who are discussing something else. To be told then that there is no good reason for rejecting the 'broad characterization' of the opening colophon 'out of hand' and that the genre of the book is that of 'anthology' strikes me as involving some question-begging moves. Obviously here Overholt and I must agree to differ, but I am not convinced that his theoretical witnesses have added anything of substance to his viewpoint.

As I read Overholt's article and pondered whether I should or should not respond to it it occurred to me that I should reply to him by instancing Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*. Now there's a text which many a modern reader has completely misread because irony and satire are not always easy to detect and generic recognition is often a tricky business. However, Overholt had forestalled me by referring to the celebrated work in his footnote. I just wish he was not always so sanguine about what 'most readers' (a phrase which reminds me of e.e. cummings's wonderful word 'mostpeople') would agree on. Give a modern class of students *A Modest Proposal* to read and the responses will be quite mixed. Why shouldn't they be? Cannibalism is a standard myth in our world: peasant cultures will talk about people from other areas in terms of 'sure they eat their dead there' (I know, I come from Ireland; my Scottish students assure me that they know similar sayings for their part of the world). Good grief, I know biblical scholars who write monographs proving that the Israelites practised human sacrifice because they have read about it in classical authors. So why should people not read Swift's satire as if it had been intended (oh dear, writer's intention again) as a serious solution to England's Irish problem? Generic recognition really is not as easy as some scholars may think it is.

Again I must have recourse to cross-disciplinary matters. Whatever may be said about *A Modest Proposal* and the problem of reading Swift's irony, I would like to draw Overholt's attention to the reception of Daniel Defoe's pamphlet *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702 I think is the date of it; but dating Defoe's writings is far from easy). When the

anonymous author of the pamphlet was discovered to be Defoe he was sent to Newgate Gaol and to the pillory. His advocacy of the suppression of dissenters using the very language of the Anglican sermons preached against them outraged the politicians, though at least one High Churchman wrote to a London bookseller to say that next to the Holy Bible and Sacred Com- ments the pamphlet was the most valuable thing he had.²¹ Now, this is not just a case of some fool misreading irony or satire—when he wished to indicate that he was writing a satire Defoe usually made it obvious (e.g. his poem 'The True-Born Englishman: A Satire')—it is much more a case of a writing that defies easy generic recognition. Defoe had to write another pamphlet to explain what he had meant by his late pamphlet! Even today scholars debate the genre of the pamphlet and wonder about 'an irony that neither friend nor foe could recognise'.²² Whether the prophetic books come into the same category as Defoe's pamphlets I do not know, but to be honest I must admit that I do not regard Overholt's remarks about genre analysis as solving any of the problems constituted by our different readings of the prophets. Discerning the genre of prophetic books is the problem of reading them—in another form.²³

My article on the colophons to the prophetic books could be read as making a sharp distinction between historical and ideological facts.²⁴ On the other hand, I would wish to point out that I am not arguing at any stage of my work for the proposition that 'there is absolutely no historical material in the Bible'. What I do hold to be the case is the difficulty (extreme at times) of determining which elements in a given text of the Bible have a claim to be regarded as historical and which as literary, ideological or fictional. It is not nearly so easy to make such a determination as so many members of the Guild seem to believe it to be (and so practise). The fact that the colophons never register a 'prophet' as coming from Jerusalem just might be a historically accurate piece of information or there again it might be ideological control of the material. But I do not know how to show which it is. This failure is due to agnosticism (i.e. lack of concrete knowledge) rather than to scepticism. In my opinion we simply do not know in any historical sense of the word 'know'. We lack external, reliable data to use

as controls on the biblical sources. Even Overholt's patterns of social intermediation have no bearing on this point. We must read the colophons according to our own hermeneutic principles for reading texts. Every judgment we make about the text vis-à-vis history will always remain open to serious questioning and is hedged about with many problems. But this is not something peculiar to biblical studies; it is the nature of all textual interpretation, especially of texts from the alien past.²⁵

Historians have been described as 'merely prophets in reverse'²⁶ and I guess that description nicely conjoins the historians who study the biblical prophets with the subject of their study. Overholt and I share a common discipline but I think we probably are divided, to some extent, by a Berlin Wall of hermeneutic differences. He has marshalled an impressive array of social reality models to explain the biblical texts *as if* they were the productions of prophets. I, on the other hand, think that we are seeing a paradigm switch in the understanding of the so-called 'writing prophets' and am therefore busily trying to find my feet in such a vertiginous period.²⁷ If my reading of the situation is right (a large 'if', I will grant) then we are all about to be plunged into the hermeneutic maelstrom. I wonder if Overholt and I just have different reading strategies for trying to get out of it or is there more to this dispute than meets either of our eyes?

NOTES

1. From Bialik's poem 'My Soul Has Sunk Down'; see *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (ed. T. Carmi; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), pp. 515-16. The lines hardly need translating, but I have nudged them into English. The obvious echo of Amos 7.14 and Zech. 13.5 (1 Kgs 13.18 negates the negative) is its point as one of my epithets.

2. *De Principiis*, 4.1.14-15. From the Latin of Rufinus translated by F. Crombie in *The Writings of Origen*, vol. 1 (Ante-Nicene Christian Library, 10; ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869), pp. 311-13 (emphases added).

3. 'Carroll adopts a rather dogmatic scepticism over many aspects of the Jeremiah tradition in his study entitled *From Chaos to Covenant*' (R.E. Clements, 'The Prophet and his Editors', in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in*

the University of Sheffield [ed. D.J.A. Clines, S.E. Fowl and S.E. Porter; JSOTS, 87; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], p. 213).

4. Cf. J.M. Ward, 'The Eclipse of the Prophet in Contemporary Prophetic Studies', *USQR* 42 (1988), p. 101; in fairness to Ward it should be said that he does not set McKane and myself aside as extremists because our methodological assumptions are supported by the textual history of Jeremiah (LXX and MT).

5. Apart from acknowledging his correspondence I must express gratitude to him for sending me an early copy of his *Channels of Prophecy* book.

6. See *Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Sourcebook for Biblical Researchers* (SBL Sources for Biblical Study, 17; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

7. This difference can be seen in footnote 3 to his article, 'Word of God and Word of Man: Prophets and Canon', in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical & Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie* (JSOTS, 67; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), p. 240, where he expresses hope for a 'sounder approach' to Jeremiah than appears to emanate from my 1986 commentary.

8. R.P. Carroll, 'Prophecy and Society', in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives. Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (ed. R.E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 203-25.

9. In his review of the Clements volume ('Talking Points from Books', *ExpT* 101 [1990], p. 194) C.S. Rodd writes, 'In a magnificently iconoclastic essay on prophecy Robert P. Carroll demolishes any easy sociological interpretation of the Old Testament'. All I had wanted to do in that essay was to make a clearing in the forest so that some serious work could be done on another occasion. Perhaps that is a good working definition of 'iconoclasm'.

10. On Samuel see P.D. Mischall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); and the more recent R. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History. Part II: 1 Samuel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).

11. Carroll, 'Prophecy and Society', p. 209; relevant discussion on pp. 209-15.

12. Cf. T.H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament: A Comparative Study with Chapters from Sir James G. Frazer's Folklore in the Old Testament* (New York & Evanston: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. xxii-xxiii; 'But there is some molten gold in Frazer's volcanic overflow', so S.J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, and the Scope of Rationality* (The 1984 Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 53.

13. Cf. Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy*, pp. 27-68; *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, pp. 309-31. My brief comments on Overholt's use of the Handsome Lake material in my essay 'Prophecy and Society'

(pp. 219-20) express my disagreement with him but are too brief to be a serious commentary on the matter.

14. The qualitative differences between the spoken and written word are part of my domain assumptions in studying prophecy and writing my Jeremiah commentary. Contributing to such assumptions are the work of Walter Ong (e.g. his *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*) and Jacques Derrida (e.g. his *Of Grammatology*); see also my 'Prophecy and Society', pp. 207-209.

15. Apart from my SOTS volume essay, I really need to rewrite for publication my 1985 SOTS paper, 'Central and Peripheral Prophets: An Anthropological Model for Biblical Prophecy', which was a critique of R.R. Wilson's *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

16. For this distinction see M. Harris, *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 32-45; there is a useful summary account of the distinctions in J.W. Rogerson, 'Anthropology and the Old Testament', in *The World of Ancient Israel*, pp. 31-35.

17. This notion arises out of Bernhard Duhm's treatment of Jeremiah in his classic commentary *Das Buch Jeremia* (Tübingen, 1901); cf. C.C. Torrey's arguments in his 'The Background of Jeremiah 1-10', *JBL* 56 (1937), pp. 193-216. My IOSOT paper, 'Arguing about Jeremiah: Recent Studies and the Nature of a Prophetic Book', given to the Congress at Leuven in August 1989 will be published in the Congress Volume of the Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* (appearing probably in 1991). The raw data for an *Ergänzungstext* approach to reading Jeremiah are usefully gathered together in W.L. Holladay's *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26-52* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), pp. 35-70, 80-91. This approach to Jeremiah will also appear in my next book on Jeremiah (provisional title: *Jeremiah the Prophet: On Reading and Writing Jeremiah*).

18. The notion of 'interpretative communities' is of course Stanley Fish's; see his *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), especially pp. 167-73, 303-71.

19. G. Dumézil, *Camillus: A Study of Indo-European Religion as Roman History* (ed. with an Introduction by U. Strutynski; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). The book is an amalgam of a number of Dumézil's writings.

20. This phrase is from Strutynski's 'Introduction' to *Camillus*, p. 17.

21. See F. Bastian, *Defoe's Early Life* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 270-301 for a general treatment of the controversy.

22. Bastin, *ibid.*, p. 280. See M.E. Novak, 'Defoe's Shortest Way with the Dissenters: Hoax, Parody, Paradox, Fiction, Irony, and Satire', *Modern Language Quarterly* 27 (1966), pp. 402-17 for a discussion of the subtleties of generic analysis. On Swift and Defoe see M.E. Novak & H.J. Davis, *The Uses of Irony: Papers on Defoe and Swift Read at a*

Clark Library Seminar, April 2, 1966 (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1966). A thought-provoking treatment of irony is Stanley Fish's essay, 'Short People Got No Reason to Live: Reading Irony', in his collection *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 180-96, 568.

23. I will forego the pleasure of citing Derrida on genre, but see J. Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), pp. 55-81.

24. R.P. Carroll, 'Inventing the Prophets', *Irish Biblical Studies* 10 (1988), pp. 24-36. The distinction between historical and ideological facts may be stated simply in terms of objective and subjective information: e.g. who invented the telephone system is a historical fact, whereas the claim that Soviet communism invented all the major technological advances of the twentieth century belongs to ideological facts. If some biblical 'prophets' did actually come from Jerusalem then the silence of the Bible on that fact must have an ideological explanation.

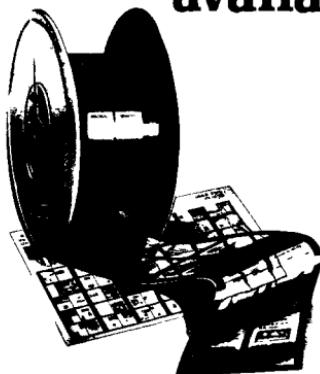
25. A vast bibliography exists on this subject, but the following are worth using as an introduction to a complex topic: *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History* (ed. A. Cameron; London: Duckworth, 1989); M.I. Finley, *Ancient History: Evidence and Models* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985); J.H. Hexter, *Doing History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971); J.R. de J. Jackson, *Historical Criticism and the Meaning of Texts* (London: Routledge, 1989); P. Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (ET of *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes?* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983]) (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1988); T.P. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics: Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature* (Leicester: Leicester University Press/Rowman & Littlefield, 1979). Also I would like to remind biblical scholars of Mario Liverani's important article 'Memorandum on the Approach to Historiographic Texts', *Orientalia* 42 (1973), pp. 178-94. Further on generic analysis see T. Kent, *Interpretation and Genre: The Role of Generic Perception in the Study of Narrative Texts* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1986).

26. The phrase is Paul Veyne's: 'Historians are merely prophets in reverse, and they flesh out and animate their *post eventum* predictions with imaginative flourishes. This is called "historical retrodiction" or "synthesis", and this imaginative faculty furnishes three-fourths of any page of history, with documents providing the rest. There is more. History is also a novel containing deeds and proper names, and we have seen that, while reading, we believe that what we read is true. Only afterward do we call it fiction, and even then we must belong to a society in which the idea of fiction obtains (*Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?*, p. 103).

27. See F.E. Deist, 'The Prophets: Are We Heading for a Paradigm Switch?', in *Prophet und Prophetenbuch: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser*

zum 65. Geburtstag (ed. V. Fritz, K.-F. Pohlmann, H.-C. Schmitt; BZAW, 185; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), pp. 1-18.

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