

volved a revolution. But all the while they were necessarily religious teachers, simply because their politics were based upon religious principles, and not up in economics or ordinary statecraft. It followed, too, that as political issues were constantly changing, they should more and more come to be regarded as religious teachers first, and politicians afterwards.

It would be to misunderstand the position in another way, however, to suppose that they became in any sense the recognized and established clergy of the nation. That they never became, at least not until long after the captivity, when the synagogue system arose, and the prophet was transformed into the rabbi. In the meantime that position was occupied by the priests. In the original institution of the priesthood evidently expected of them that in addition to their sacerdotal functions they should be the regular expounders of the law to the people. To enable them to be so they were largely set free from other duties, their maintenance being provided from the offerings of the people; their homes were scattered at different points throughout the land where they might be easily accessible; and the people were brought regularly to them on the great feasts. They were the ones, therefore, held responsible for the instruction of the nation in religious matters, and to them belonged all the emoluments. But it is doubtful if they ever at any time realized the expectations of their office in this respect. The priesthood being hereditary and therefore apt to degenerate as time passed on, it is likely that they were more and more inclined to exalt the ritual part of their functions and to neglect the intellectual. Had they been active and earnest in the discharge of their duties, the prophetic order, which, after the establishment of the monarchy, had neither legal recognition nor legal provision for its support, might probably have disappeared, seeing the only ground left to it was already occupied. But as it was there was room and work enough for both, and the prophetic order continued to flourish alongside of the priesthood as a sort of irregular clergy, corresponding somewhat to the itinerant preaching friars of the middle ages. They had neither church, pulpit, nor salary, but taught wherever and whenever they had opportunity and relied upon the generosity of their hearers for such support as they needed.

A body constituted as this was, and engaged in such an irregular kind of a work, with so little to offer to its members, might seem at first sight to be in constant danger of extinction through lack of new recruits. And there can be little doubt that their numbers did vary greatly at different times according to the fluctuations in the moral and spiritual life of the people. But, on the other hand, the possibilities which it opened up to exert an influence over men and its freedom from conventionality would make it attractive to the most active-minded and intelligent. In fact, the order seems to have embraced within itself the main intellectual life of the nation, and also its culture. The prophets are the national historians and scribes. Music was one of their ordinary accomplishments, and the sublime poetry known in Hebrew literature is to be found in their writings. We can understand, too, how they would attract the most earnest minded to their ranks. Every one whose soul burned within him for the sins of his time and who longed to testify for God, would naturally ally himself with them as affording him the readiest hearing and the easiest access to the people. So long as there was need for them men would not be wanting to fill the office.

It arose equally from the nature of this work and the character of the men whom it attracted, that the teaching of the prophets proceeded along different lines and was characterized by a different spirit from that of the priests. The latter were responsible for the conduct of public worship and so would naturally concern themselves about its details. The particular precepts of the law as things to be observed, would fall within the line of their vision and form the subject of their instruction. Nice questions as to things clean and unclean, would be continually brought to them for decision, and so would be suggested to them as matters on which the public should be enlightened. Ritualism and Casuistry have always gone hand in hand in religious teaching. And these subjects would be apt to be discussed in a somewhat narrow and legal spirit. While, on the other hand, the prophets would more naturally turn their attention to the broad questions of morality and to the spiritual side of religion, as being matters that lay very much nearer the hearts of the people. Moving about from place to place they would have a better opportunity to know what was passing in the community, what corruptions were growing up, what evils were finding countenance, and they would seek to correct these. Ever addressing fresh audiences their aim would be not so much to instruct in details, as to move and arouse to action. As their aim was thus to produce immediate results, they cultivated popular methods of address, and used every form of appeal that was likely to gain their end. They appealed to the intellects of their hearers, endeavoring to show the reasonableness of the course they urged, and the folly of any other. They appealed to their imaginations, freely using figures of every kind to give vividness to their representations. They appealed to their fears, warning them of the ruin which they would surely bring upon themselves and the nation, by continuance in sin. They appealed to their patriotism, reminding them of the glories of their past history, and holding up to them the glorious destiny yet in store for them if they should be faithful. Above all, they appealed to their consciences, seeking to make them hear the voice of God within their own hearts. And when words failed them they would make use of other means,

such as strange actions and fantastic dress, methods bordering on the sensational to arouse attention and awaken serious thought. When the priest gave instruction men might hear or forbear; he had done his duty, as he thought, and his living was sure. When the prophet spoke he must make men listen or his work was necessarily a failure.

Of course it is not to be supposed that all the prophets were equally earnest and faithful in doing this work. There must have been many kinds of men among them. Selfish men will find their way into any order, however high its ideal or severe its discipline; and here, then, was the prospect of power, if not of wealth. The use of popular methods is always beset with the temptation to seek popularity, and it is ever easier to gain the popular ear by flattering them, than by telling them the honest truth and by rebuking them for their sins. As the nation degenerated, the people would more and more encourage those who prophesied smooth things to them and were disposed to deal tenderly with their indulgences. "A wonderful and horrible thing," complains Jeremiah, "is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will be the end thereof?" But there were always some who rose superior to these temptations and were faithful to their mission, who boldly denounced the wrong they saw, and refused to be silent even in the presence of the kings. And though their contemporaries might treat them with scorn, posterity would not fail to do them justice.

Thus far, no account has been taken of what may be called the supernatural element in prophecy. It has been purposely omitted, just because it was necessary to get a true idea of the ordinary prophetic work, and the great mass of the prophets received no divine revelations whatever. It is true they spoke in God's name as filling a sacred office, and gave authority to their preaching by quoting the revealed word of God as already known to the people. But in most cases there was no need of special revelations, and none were given. If they were men of pure mind and single aim, the Spirit of the Lord would be upon them to give them clearness of discernment and insight into divine truth. This, however, is a different thing from the revelation of new truth and may exist independently of it.

But if new revelations were to be made, it is obvious that men who were already engaged in the work of religious instruction, and who were already authorized to speak in God's name, would form the natural channels of communication. It was indeed the fact that God had already spoken unmistakably through some of their number as in the case of Moses, and might do so again at any time, that gave them a large share of their influence with the people. Everybody understood that a prophet might be a deceiver, but then there was the possibility that his message might be one truly from God. And such messages, direct revelations from the Most High, undoubtedly were given from time to time as occasions demanding them arose, and the need for them was felt.

The frequency with which they were given is not very easily determined. Some of them seem to have been of a private or semi-private nature, and so have not been preserved. But so far as we can judge they mostly related to public affairs, and were given when great crises arose, and ordinary measures proved insufficient to meet the case. When, for example, there was gross defection from the worship of Jehovah, or rank moral corruption that bade defiance to the ordinary warnings that were given, then God himself intervened, armed one of His prophets with a special revelation, and sent him forth to prophecy.

In one respect these special messages were marked off by a very sharp line from the ordinary work of the prophet. He himself would know the difference; for, though they came in a variety of ways, there was always something to authenticate them to him, and distinguish them from the workings of his own mind. The people, too, who heard them, would have no difficulty in recognizing them if they really cared to know whether they were of divine authority or not. For if a prophet of known character for honesty and integrity claimed to be making a divine revelation, that was *prima facie* evidence of its genuineness, while in most cases a further authentication was afforded by the fulfillment of some well defined prediction.

But in another respect these revelations were precisely in the line of the prophet's ordinary work. As we have seen, that work was imparting religious instruction with a view to immediate practical results. Now everything in the works left by these prophets tends to the same great end. A large portion of these writings is actually made up of denunciations of sin and exhortation to renewed obedience. The predictions which bulk so largely in our ordinary ideas of them, are entirely subsidiary to moral ends.

Nor is it difficult for us to see how they become so. Take for example the predilections regarding the captivity. These were very frequent, and they gradually became more definite as the time drew near. They were not given certainly to satisfy any vain curiosity with regard to the future, but to lead the people to repent of their sins while yet they had time, and avert the coming ruin. Or, take again the predictions as to the destruction of surrounding nations. These were not outbursts of national resentment, but were intended to call the attention of Israel to the judgments of God upon others, that they might take warning by their fate. Or, still further, take that large and important class of predictions known as Messianic. These were not