

authoritative heralding is, "Thus saith the Lord." It is to this class, with especial pertinency, applies the appellation, *a prophet*.

The susceptibility to the prophetic afflatus did not belong exclusively to any one age, sex, or social condition. Hence you have Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Huldah, as well as Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and Amos. Indeed, if you accept the broader definition, that everyone was a prophet to whom God revealed His mind, then the most conspicuous of the patriarchs virtually reached this rank. But the prophets, proper, form a class to which we find nothing truly correspondent in any other ancient system of religion.

In approaching the particular study of one of the prophets, it is highly essential that we form a correct and definite conception of the *functions* of prophecy, in general, among the ancient Hebrews. In modern *popular* usage, we employ the phrase, "prophet," predominantly to one who predicts *future* events, especially the rich legacy of the Messianic hope. This claim is specially forcible in view of the great saying of the apostle, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." In the certain advent of the Divine Redeemer they saw a vision of the perfect Man, the Teacher of the people, the Priest by the altar, the King upon His throne. But this is far from the only, if indeed it be the principal, part of His mission. Prophets were *statesmen, moral teachers, spiritual guides*, inasmuch as the Mosaic theocracy was built upon two fundamental principles—the political and the religious—for the political maxims were naturally interwoven with the moral and religious. As statesmen they sometimes acted as tribunes of the people; and being intensely practical, they admitted no distinction between the laws of national and individual morality. They did not withhold rebukes, even from their sovereigns. The prophets were the most conspicuous and correct teachers of spiritual religion, in the doctrine of ethical Monotheism, and in their abhorrence of ritual formalism, into which the priests so readily fell. They were well termed "the *embodied conscience* of the State." This was emphatically true in the degenerate days following the division of the nation under Jeroboam I. The prophets were the guardians, the mainstay of religion in the land.