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The Major Literary Prophecy of the Old Testament

What Christians call the Old Testament is to Jewish tradition the Tanak, divided into three parts with names corresponding to the consonants in the word TaNaK: Torah, Nabi'im, and Ketubim, or the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Prophets include the former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and the latter prophets (Isaiah through Malachi as listed in the Protestant canon, except for Daniel, which is the last book of the Writings). This essay deals with the latter prophets and with only those usually designated major prophets—major because of the greater length of the books, not with any intent to give them priority over the prophets who wrote shorter books and are, therefore, called minor prophets. I include Daniel with the major prophets according to Protestant and Catholic practice; in spite of some other rabbinical reservations had Daniel not been added to the Jewish canon quite late, after the prophetic section had been closed, this book too would doubtless have taken a more appropriate place with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Because of their peculiar function of reinterpreting Israel's past and present as well as foretelling her future, there is no other part of the Old Testament that is quite as crucial to understanding the whole as the literary prophets. Their scorn for empty ritual and insincere sacrifices, their unrelenting demands for moral rulers and a just society, their fearless warnings of divinely sent calamities upon God's own chosen people, their visions of future glory in a Messianic age—once truly heard and heeded, these forever alter one's perception of the laws of the Pentateuch, the covenant with the Davidic dynasty, the sanctity of the holy city and temple, even the revealed nature of God prior to the radical visions of the literary prophets. For the prophets are revisionists, recoverers of truth's original intention, implacable enemies of easy convention and religious custom that would obscure or pervert the holy uniqueness of Yahweh, of his worship, of his people. From first to last they see any form of syncretism with Baalism or Babylonian

astralism or Canaanite fertility rites as destructive of Mosaic Yahwism and they condemn accommodations to Israel's neighbors and imitations of the great world powers as spiritual adultery of the wife, Israel, against her husband, Yahweh. That the nation survived the loss of her sovereignty under Davidic kings and finally the loss of the holy temple itself is largely attributable to the prophets, those fierce iconoclasts who by stressing the heart, faith, and worship in spirit and truth gave their countrymen and their descendants the courage and the reverence for the writings of former ages that were absolutely necessary to the community's integrity and perpetuity. Ezekiel saw the wheel within the wheel; it is in reading the prophets that one becomes aware of the hub within the wheel within the wheel, the central body of Scripture without which the center would not have held: the literary prophets.

The word *nabi*, "prophet," appears sparingly in the Pentateuch; only Abraham (Gen. 20:7), Aaron (Ex. 7:1), and Moses (Deut. 34:10) are called prophets, and tests for distinguishing false prophets from true (a perennial problem) are prescribed in Deuteronomy (13: 1-5, 18: 20-22).¹ Moses is an exceptional prophetic figure, says the Lord, one with whom he will "speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches" (Num. 12:8, cf. Ex. 33:11), though later Samuel comes close to being honored with the same divine intimacy (I Sam. 3). Moses and Samuel are the true forerunners of the literary prophets, men who speak with the authority of "thus saith the LORD," though the prophetic literature, especially the books of Ezekiel and Daniel, includes passages which can only be called "dark speeches." The stature of Moses and Samuel in prophecy and in intercession is shown by the Lord's rejecting Jeremiah's prayer for Judah with the words: "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, *yet* my mind *could* not *be* toward this people" (Jer. 15:1a). Samuel is unique in having filled simultaneously the offices of prophet, priest, and judge (I Sam. 3:20, 7:15-17, 10:8, 13:9-14). Although the character and function of Samuel are ambiguous in some passages, I Samuel in its final form clearly portrays him as a prophet who is also head of a school of prophets (I Sam. 10:5-6, 19:20), and from the descriptions of these prophets one may reconstruct the origins of the kind of prophecy that is at first oral and eventually literary. In short, Samuel's importance is so great that William F. Albright argues that "the [literary] prophets are . . . unthinkable without Samuel."² Samuel's emphasis upon the heart rather than upon ritual sacrifice in such exhortations as "return unto the LORD with all your hearts" (I Sam. 7:3) and "to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Sam. 15:22), spoken to the people and to the king, anticipate the Lord's disgust, so powerfully expressed by Isaiah and Amos, with "the blood of bullocks" (Isa.

1:11) and “burnt offerings” (Amos 5:22) when offered as substitutes for social justice.

The ecstatic state entered by most prophets in the act of prophesying, with its accompanying visions later developing into apocalyptic literature, also has its roots in the time of Samuel, though the roots are fed by streams from the days of Moses when portions of his spirit “rested upon [the seventy elders and] they prophesied [raved], and did not cease” (Num. 11:24-28). Joshua’s concern on that occasion, because two of the seventy prophesied in the open camp and not in the tabernacle of worship, and Moses’ rebuke to him, foreshadow the focus of the literary prophets upon communion with and obedience to God regardless of one’s credentials or location.

Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his Spirit upon them. (Num. 11:29)

That the ecstatic state was enhanced, even brought on, by accompanying music and dance is clear for the first time in the story of Samuel’s anointing of Saul as king. As a sure sign to Saul of the validity of the anointing, Samuel predicts that Saul will “meet a company of prophets coming down from high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and harp before them; and they shall prophesy [rave, fall into religious ecstasy]” (I Sam. 10:5b). Sure enough when Saul comes to the hill Samuel mentioned,

Behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied [raved] among them. (I Sam. 10:10)

Thus the proverb is born, “*Is Saul also among the prophets?*” (I Sam. 10:12, 19:23-24), a rhetorical question expressing unbelief that one so big and tough and practical minded could possibly become involved in what was popularly regarded as a lunatic-fringe group (see II Kings 9:11; Jer. 29:26; Hos. 9:7). On another occasion when Saul pursues David to Samuel’s “prophet seminary” at Naioth, he is himself overtaken by ecstasy and is driven to such a frenzy that he disrobes and lies naked for a day and a night in Ramah (I Sam. 19:18-24). Bizarre behavior is established as normal for prophesying prophets by Samuel’s time, then, and the continued importance of music and musicians is shown by Elisha’s requesting a minstrel to play that the hand of the Lord might come upon him and enable him to advise the kings of Israel and Judah on a strategy to defeat the Moabites in the wilderness of Edom (II Kings 3:14-16). There is evidence that at least some of the literary prophets used music. Habbakuk’s prophetic prayer in the third chapter of his prophecy is designed to be sung or

chanted as "a dithyrambic poem in wild ecstatic wandering rhythms,"³ and Ezekiel's message of doom for Jerusalem is not taken seriously by his hearers because they are charmed by the sound of his song and the accompanying instruments and do not heed the words (Ezek. 33:30-33).

It is hardly possible to over-emphasize the importance of prophets and prophecy in Israel from the time of Samuel forward especially. Though it must have been difficult at times for those caught up in the rush of events to distinguish false prophets from true, the power of prophets to make and break kings caused those kings to seek out prophets for advice even when they were predisposed to reject those prophets whose messages were pessimistic and judgmental. The "true" prophets are so often negative in their attitudes and oracles that Jeremiah even seems to imply to King Zedekiah that the prophet whose message is "of war, and of evil, and of pestilence" is more likely to be Yahweh's true prophet than he who "prophesieth of peace" (Jer. 28:8-9). Jeremiah prophesied up to and beyond the last tragic days of the kingdom of Judah; and a century and half before him, when Amos had appeared at Bethel during the reign of Jereboam II to condemn hypocritical ritual and to demand the practice of such virtues as honesty, compassion, and justice, Jeremiah's way had been prepared by numerous prophets, some known, some still nameless—but whether heeded or rejected, none were ignored.

For each of the four major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—I shall focus on one problem which literary analysis can help solve. My analysis has been greatly influenced by two books and several articles. The books are Hans Frei's *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* and John Ellis's *The Theory of Literary Criticism*: the articles are primarily those by Samuel Sandmel. Frei shows the deleterious effects that have resulted from Biblical critics' "understanding of meaning as ostensive reference," that is, from their interest having been "not in the text as such but in some reconstructive context to which the text 'really' refers and which renders it intelligible."⁴ Ellis speaks of the misapprehension of what constitutes literature among critics who have unquestioningly accepted a "reference theory of meaning" which demands that a literary text always be "taken as specifically relevant to the immediate context of its origin."⁵ Neither critic intends to negate the very real value of historical criticism; rather they wish to point out that a concern with the author, his contemporaries, and the *milieu* out of which the work grew (if these facts are discoverable) is only a small part of the total context in which the work, as shaped and transmitted to us, has been and continues to be confirmed as a literary text by the responses to it of the community in which it functions. "That literature is language that no longer func-

tions in a particular context does not mean that it does not have a general social function; on the contrary, it indicates precisely that its function has become a more general one in the life of the community."⁶ As for the Bible in particular, Sandmel says that "to deal speculatively with what supposedly lies behind the scriptural text, rather than encountering in all its majesty the text as it ultimately shaped itself" is a trespass against Scripture.⁷ My effort, then, is to deal with the content and form of the King James Version as a *donnée*, albeit with an eye constantly on the original languages and on other English versions, and with as much aid as can be helpful from commentaries, dictionaries, and critical scholarship.

Isaiah

A dual problem with the Book of Isaiah concerns its authorship and literary unity, and the consensus of modern scholarship is that there are at least two Isaiahs, possibly three, known as Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and Trito-Isaiah. The latter names refer not to persons but to groups of scribal prophets who are supposed to have produced Chapters 40-55 (Second Isaiah) and Chapters 56-66 (Third Isaiah) long after, even centuries after, the death of Isaiah of Jerusalem. But in recent years some scholars have questioned that these divisions are so clear-cut. Peter Ackroyd, for instance, refers to "interconnections of thought and style" found between Second and Third Isaiah that belie any hard and fast separation of "the so-called [three Isaiahs]" from each other.⁸ Looking at poems whose "interconnection in fact cuts right across all the dividing lines," Ackroyd says, "it is difficult to avoid the impression that here we are dealing with poems from the same school if not actually from the same prophet" (p. 331). Leaving aside for purposes of this paper, the question of authorship, I should like to consider at least one evidence of literary unity in a book considered by most scholars to lack such unity.

The major watershed in the book is identified by almost all commentators as occurring at the end of Chapter 39; there is no autobiographical or historical material about Isaiah after that point, and a striking difference of tone marks the opening of Chapter 40: stern denunciations and predicted judgments are replaced by a message of comfort and hope. The first thirty-nine chapters include words of comfort and hope, however, and the last twenty-six chapters include stern warnings of judgment; the difference should not be exaggerated because of the sharp demarcation between Chapters 39 and 40. There are, nonetheless, clear breaks in content and tone between Chapters 39 and 40 and between Chapters 55 and 56; less obvious breaks occur between Chapters 4 and 5 and Chapters 35 and 36. Thus the book as a

whole can be seen as consisting of five major divisions, two preceding and two following an illustrative historical section (Chs. 36-39) which repeats II Kings 18:13-20:12. Each section, except the central historical one, involves a cyclical movement from judgment through redemption to restoration, each vision of future glory growing in intensity. The first three sections concern primarily the pre-exilic period (ca. 760-597? B.C.), the fourth section the exilic period (ca. 587-539 B.C.), and the fifth section the post-exilic time (ca. 520-495 B.C.). Each section includes glimpses of the distant future beyond even present-day history. Since the total text, as we now have it, covers a historical span of about 240 years, one can see why those who are reluctant to accept prophetic foretelling wish to assign the exilic and post-exilic periods to authors other than the original Isaiah, who probably lived to be about ninety years of age when he was executed, tradition has it, by Hezekiah's successor to the throne, the evil Manasseh.⁹

Of the many characteristic words, phrases, and figures which connect the major sections of the Book of Isaiah (God as the "Holy [Mighty] One of Israel," "Israel" to designate both northern and southern kingdoms, the vineyard-garden metaphor for the nation, Jerusalem as God's "holy mountain") one that is particularly effective is the recurring personification of Jerusalem and its citizens as "daughter of Zion." Through this figure the city of David as "the daughter of Zion" is always at or near center stage in all the varied scenes and historical epochs of the prophecies; she symbolizes the city, the dynasty, the people, the temple: everything held dear by the Lord's chosen people. And the over arching movement of the whole of Isaiah, seen on a smaller scale in the cycles of each section, from the moral corruption of Jerusalem, through its desolation in judgment, to its restoration and zenith can be traced by noting the appearances of the "daughter of Zion." Like buoys marking the channel through the dangerous shallows to the open sea, the figure in its contexts charts the course from the causes of God's wrath against his people, through his judgments upon them, to his redemption of them to a glory seen as ultimately far to exceed that of the reigns of David and Solomon.

The opening picture of the "daughter of Zion" (Isa. 1:8) seen from Yahweh's point of view as a frail, temporary shelter for the watchman guarding the fruit of a vineyard against animals or thieves, now unoccupied in dreariness and loneliness, is soon followed by a glimpse of her own delusions of grandeur, "with stretched forth [neck] and wanton eyes, walking and mincing *as* [she goes], and making a tinkling with [her] feet" (Isa. 3:16). Her confrontation with reality will come when the Lord smites her head with "a scab" (literally, baldness) and lays bare her "secret parts" (Isa. 3:17); but in the concluding vision of

the prologue, Isaiah sees the moral degradation of the daughter of Zion purged by fire and God's presence once again assured in the cloud by day and the fire by night, as in the days of Moses.

In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious
 And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and comely for them that are
 escaped of Israel.
 And it shall come to pass *that he that* is left in Zion, and *he that*
 remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, . . .
 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of
 Zion,
 And shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by
 the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.
 And the LORD will create upon the dwelling place of mount Zion, and
 upon her assemblies,
 A cloud and smoke by day,
 And the shining of a flaming fire by night:
 For upon all the glory *shall be* a defense.
 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the
 heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from
 rain. (Isa. 4:2-6)

In Isaiah's vision of the Assyrian invasion she is seen again, this time viewing the approaching wave of invaders as they overrun Michmash, Gibeah, and other cities ever nearer the north wall of Jerusalem; suddenly the Lord miraculously destroys the invaders as lightning might level a forest, and a new Davidic king ushers in her day of glory (Isa. 10:28-11:10). The daughter of Zion is once again fully in harmony with the "Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 12:6); she receives tribute from Moab, whose daughters are now as miserable as she has been and she is now as blessed as they are miserable (Isa. 16:1-2). The daughter of Zion, forgiven of sin and brought back from captivity, can now arise from the stupor brought on by the Lord's cup of fury (Isa. 51:17), shake off the dust and ashes of repentance, cast off the alien yoke, and be seated on her throne as queen of cities (Isa. 52:1-2). She stands in the sharpest contrast with the "daughter of Babylon" who is now forced to descend from her throne, sit in the dust, and undergo the shameful judgments earlier visited upon the "daughter of Zion" (Isa. 47:1)—thus the fall and rising again of Jerusalem is strikingly graphed against the imagined exaltation and fall of Babylon.

Finally the climactic vision of glory for the "daughter of Zion" is her betrothal and marriage to Yahweh himself:

Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken:
 Neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate:
 But thou shall be called Hephzibah [my delight is in her],
 And thy land Beulah [married]:
 For the LORD delighteth in thee,

And thy land shall be married.
 For as a young man marieth a virgin,
 So shall thy sons marry thee:
 And *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,
 So shall thy God rejoice over thee.

.....
 Say ye to the daughter of Zion,
 Behold, thy salvation cometh;
 Behold, his reward *is* with him,
 And his work before him.

.....
 And thou shalt be called, Sought out, a city not
 forsaken. (Isa. 62:4-5, 11, 12b; Cf. Isa. 40:10)

As the entire book moves forward by repeated cycles within one all-encompassing cycle, the figure of the daughter of Zion moves from desolation to glory in a succession of appearances throughout the major sections of the book which constantly anticipate the greater glory to come.

Isaiah's particular vision of the Lord and of his own identification with the people he must warn is most clearly seen in his call to prophesy. He relates his call, not at the beginning of his prophecy, but by a "flashback" narration as part of the Woes and Burdens which constitute the second division of his book (Chapters 5-35). He pronounces woes on the greedy purchasers of land, the playboy sybarites, the religious skeptics, the sophists, the know-it-alls, and the drunkards. Upon such an unclean people, says Isaiah, the Holy One of Israel will stretch forth his hand and release pagan armies who will sweep down like a consuming fire, like ravaging lions, like a roaring tidal wave in a day of total eclipse (Isa. 5:24-30). But suddenly Isaiah is telling of his call to prophesy and the cries of "Woe" to others become a cry of "Woe is me!" (Isa. 6:5)

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said,

Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts:
 The whole earth *is* full of his glory.
 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried,
 and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I,
 Woe *is* me! for I am undone;
 Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,
 And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips:
 For mine eyes have seen the King,
 The LORD of hosts. (Isa. 6:1-5)

Henceforth, God is so real in all his majesty to Isaiah that he knows no fear before kings, though they have power of life and death over him; even his relations with his wife and his fathering of children are completely devoted to his prophetic ministry, the sons bearing names¹⁰ that will remind rulers and people all their lives (and through his book all posterity forever) of the fulfilled prophecies of their father, prophecies that in his own time were not believed. The God of universal majesty is the only reality:

Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts:
The whole earth is full of his glory, ... (Isa. 6:3b)

"If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Isa. 7:9b). Nothing is that is not properly related to the eternal King. As E. W. Heaton comments: "Modern radicalism asserts that God is dead; prophetic radicalism asserts that everybody is dead except God."¹¹ One truly lives only in Him. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). God is majesty.

Jeremiah

Paradox and ambivalence is at the heart of Jeremiah's prophetic message and of his own personal agony as a prophet. Overlooking this essentially literary fact about the Book of Jeremiah leads to overemphasis on his antagonism towards the ritual sacrifices and even the temple itself and to exaggeration of his melancholy negativism. Coming to Jeremiah immediately after reading Isaiah, though there are many similarities (the Davidic Messiah as a Branch of Righteousness, the comforting glimpses of future glory, the emphasis on Yahweh as Creator in opposition to pagan idols, themselves created by men) one sees that the prophecies are very different in the specific counsel offered to Israel's rulers in their differing historical circumstances. For instance, Isaiah had assured Hezekiah that the holy city and the temple were immune to Sennacherib's assaults because the Lord would glorify himself and his name by protecting them (Isa. 36:33-35), but Jeremiah now as confidently tells Hezekiah's Davidic descendants that both the city and the temple will fall to Babylon because of Israel's disobedience and because King Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah after him, will not obey the Lord's command to surrender peacefully to Babylon (Jer. 34:2-3). Yet for one who remembers the Lord's allowing the Philistines to capture the holy ark itself in the days of Samuel, Jeremiah's message—that only a false assurance can be based on merely external reforms and on the sanctity of the city of David, with its holy temple—is not so new and different after all (I Sam. 4:10-11; Jer. 26:4-6). The temple is no

more sacrosanct than the tabernacle at Shiloh had been; circumcision of the heart (Jer. 4:4) and amendment of life from the least to the greatest of God's people will bring security, not empty cultic ritual and dependence upon a building's physical presence.

Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD,
The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, *are* these.

(Jer. 7:4)

Although Jeremiah's vision of the restored city under a new covenant, written in the hearts of the people, does not explicitly include a temple (as Isaiah's and Ezekiel's visions do), the inference should not be drawn that he absolutely rejects temple worship and sacrifices. Jeremiah is pointing at the perennial error of kings and people, the same error decried by the anonymous prophet of Judges (Jud. 6:7-10) and by Samuel to Saul (I Sam. 15:22): the mistake of believing that sacrifices can substitute for obedience to the voice of God in weightier matters of the law.

Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.
For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. (Jer. 7:21b-23)

One need not infer from such a passage that "Jeremiah seems to reflect a tradition at direct variance with much of the Pentateuch."¹² Jeremiah is using the Hebrew device of overstatement to cause a rearrangement of priorities in the minds of his hearers, as Amos and Isaiah had done before him in condemning sacrifices as a substitute for ethical and moral behavior. As Peter Ackroyd puts it, "Hebrew idiom allows the denial of one thing in order to assert another, and the intention here is not wholly to deny but only to relegate to [second] place."¹³ The fact that Jeremiah, speaking for the Lord, is upset that the temple has become a "den of robbers" (Jer. 7:11) shows his reverence for it. His concern that those who "steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal" hypocritically come as well to offer sacrifices in the house of Yahweh shows his regard for the proper and sincere offering of sacrifices (Jer. 7:9-10). Jeremiah wishes he had never been born, especially since he was born for the express purpose of issuing divine warnings to a people who refuse to be warned (Jer. 20:14-18, 1:4-5); at times it seems to him that God himself is a cruel deceiver (Jer. 20:7), that the Lord whom he has portrayed to Israel as a fountain of living water (Jer. 2:13, 17:13) is in reality only a dried-up brook (Jer. 15:18b). The paradox of a love-hate relationship is

endemic to such a burden as Jeremiah is called upon to bear; it is not simply his love for the temple or the sacrifices which can be measured by the vehemence of his condemnation of abuses. Even the word of the Lord is on the one hand like food to be eaten, "the joy and rejoicing of [his] heart" (Jer. 15:16) and on the other hand it is "a reproach unto [him], and a derision, daily" (Jer. 20:8b), "a burning fire shut up in [his] bones" (Jer. 20:9b). Finally after suffering beatings and imprisonment and narrowly escaping execution by Jehoiakim for daring to counsel surrender to Babylon as the will of God, when Babylon is victorious and Jeremiah has his choice of staying in Jerusalem or going with the kind captain, Nebuzaradan, to Babylon, Jeremiah chooses to stay with the remnant in Judah.

The paradox involved in the symbol Yahweh uses in Jeremiah's call is evident all through his ministry and in his personal life: the rod of an almond tree [shaked] is an early harbinger of spring after winter, but as used by Yahweh it becomes a harbinger of the watchful haste [shoked] with which retribution will be brought upon the nation for their apostasy and sin (Jer. 1:11-12). At the same time, the Lord put his words in Jeremiah's mouth that he might not only "root out, and . . . pull down, and . . . destroy, and . . . throw down," but also "build, and . . . plant" (Jer. 1:10). According to John Bright the long-range effect of his ministry upon his people was also a paradox:

Precisely in that Jeremiah's was a message of judgment, it was a saving message. By ruthlessly demolishing false hope, by ceaselessly asserting that the tragedy was Yahweh's doing, . . . Jeremiah as it were drew the national disaster within the framework of faith.¹⁴

Jeremiah's distinctive vision of God is as a potter, patiently making and remaking individual pots until they are satisfactory vessels for his use.

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my word. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*.

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are ye* in mine hand, O house of Israel. *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*: if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant *it*; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jer. 18:1-10)

God is not simply a God of the Jews: any nation can avoid judgment by obedience, just as his own nation will bring judgment upon itself by disobedience. The recognition of sin and repentance on the part of the individual sinner or nation will bring forgiveness; no longer can the children claim to have their teeth set on edge because their fathers ate sour grapes (Jer. 31:29). The most encouraging feature of Jeremiah's message is also a paradox; the breaking of the old external covenant will result in a new covenant motivating obedience to God from within.

After those days [of judgment leading to repentance], saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD. (Jer. 31:33b-34a)

God is the mighty Maker who also remakes.

Ezekiel

Problems abound even more in Ezekiel than in other prophetic books. As a man Ezekiel's visions and actions set him off so sharply from even the most eccentric of the other prophets that some scholars have developed theories that he was an epileptic or a psychopathic personality.¹⁵ The awesome and even frightening visions range from the inaugural throne-chariot scene to the peephole view of obscene rites in Yahweh's temple; the strange actions include lying on one side for three hundred and ninety days while eating only food cooked with cow's dung, showing no emotion at the death of the wife he loves dearly, and shuttling between Babylon and Jerusalem by air, held aloft by the hair of his head by the Spirit (or the wind) of the Lord! His book, too, is unique. It is a remarkably unified literary work, every major oracle is dated, and the structure is an organic outgrowth of the content. The book neatly divides in equal halves of twenty-four chapters each, Chapters 1-24 containing prophecies of the sure fall of Jerusalem and the temple and Chapters 25-48 including prophecies of doom upon Judah's neighbors and prophecies of restoration for the entire nation of Israel. The center of the book tells of the death of Ezekiel's wife, made a divine sign of the destruction of the temple (Ezek. 24:15-24). One of the problems on which a great deal has been written is whether or not Ezekiel actually visited Jerusalem in Chapters 8-11. The literary devices which create a sense of movement throughout the book, indicate that the only aesthetically appropriate answer on the book's own terms is that Ezekiel indeed visited Jerusalem and that his mode of transportation was exactly that which he

reports. His vision of the restored temple of the future in the last half of the book demands a previous visit to the old temple, destroyed because of the desecration he witnessed as he moved through it in the first half of the book; and his surrealistic flight joins with the eyewitness detail of the sudden death of Pelatiah to provide exactly the right mixture of the miraculous and the ordinary that characterizes the whole book.

To begin at the future temple, one may say that Chapters 34 through 48 contain the most vividly realized portrait of national revival in the Bible (the valley of dry bones, Ch. 37) followed by a description of the temple-to-be so exhaustively and realistically detailed as to surpass in specificity the most tedious *longueurs* of Exodus, Numbers, and Leviticus combined. The passage illustrates what Martin Price calls the crucial "double aspect of the concrete detail—at once a condition of revelation and a threat of irrelevancy."¹⁶ It is the accumulation and the interlinking which reveals, "as fully as the most eloquent narrator, the control of the author and the bold use of pattern"¹⁷—and of movement, I would add for Ezekiel. Isaiah's vision of the Lord's "holy mountain," of a beautiful and universally magnetic "daughter of Zion," is magnificent and majestic but both protean and vague; Ezekiel's vision of the restored temple is concrete to the point of tedium: for 214 verses one reads of exact measurements in cubits, chambers within chambers, precise points of the compass, specific directions for offering sacrifices until the mind reels; but somehow out of a myriad of details a vision as magnificent as Isaiah's emerges with the addition of concrete particularity—and motion. The heavenly messenger is constantly measuring, guiding Ezekiel from point to point, and as they move Ezekiel sees, hears, smells, feels until the climactic sight, verbally connected with his inaugural vision at the beginning of the book.

Afterward, he brought me to the gate, *even* the gate that looketh toward the east: and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice *was* like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And *it was* according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, *even* according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions *were* like the visions that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. (Ezek. 43:1-5)

The same glory of Yahweh beheld by Ezekiel in Chapter 1, the same glory he beheld deserting the old temple marked for destruction in Chapter 10, that same glory he now sees returning to the new temple. Transported by the spirit he is commanded to "write . . . in their sight . . . the law of the house" (Ezek. 43:11-12).

Related to the effect achieved through concrete detail and motion is that gained by Ezekiel's writing in prose rather than poetry. Attempts have been made to recover the original poetry Ezekiel is presumed to have written and to separate it from the prose added by later writers (e.g., W. A. Irwin, *The Problem of Ezekiel* [New York, 1943]), but such attempts have failed (one theory would leave Ezekiel only about one-seventh of the book with rest having been written a century later). My own view is that Ezekiel is a prophet in prose and that the prose constantly acts in tension with the poetic content to create in the reader something of what Ezekiel himself feels upon seeing his visions. The opening vision of the book is a stunning example of concrete and evocative poetic symbols communicated in straightforward, logical, descriptive prose. The total impression is of a deliberate, rational analysis of a vision whose impact is finally seen to be unassimilable by the striving intellect of the viewer. When all the bizarre details, each so calmly described, suddenly coalesce into "the appearance of [the likeness of] the glory of the LORD" (Ezek. 1:28b), Ezekiel falls on his face and can only be raised to his feet by a miraculous infusion of the spirit (Ezek. 2:1-2). There is brightness, there is incredibly swift and straight-line motion of strange creatures with outstretched wingtips touching like jets in formation, there are concentric wheels and eyes that move as they move, and above all there is an enthroned being whose glory is rainbow-like and who speaks matter-of-factly to Ezekiel as "Son of man." The suddenness with which the totality of what he sees overwhelms Ezekiel is indicated by the shift from objective description to extreme reticence just before he collapses—from "appearance of" and "likeness of" his phrasing abruptly puts the vision at a second and then a third remove: "the appearance of [the likeness of] the glory of the LORD" (Ezek. 1:28b). In contrast with the once-removed description up to this point, it is as though Ezekiel now sees only a reflection of a reflection of a reflection of the Lord.

The Book of Ezekiel is a book of movement, incessant, purposeful, transforming movement. Sometimes it is God's throne and its equipage, the glorious *Merkabah*,¹⁸ which moves while the prophet beholds from a stationary vantage point, usually a place of wide horizons and a large expanse of sky—the banks of the river Chebar or the open plain outside Babylon—from which the divine chariot's unveering speed, its lightning flashes of living color, its mosaic of wings and hands and faces and eyes may be seen and where its low, multitudinous sounds may be heard. Sometimes both the vision and the prophet move as in the temple scenes. The prophet is seldom still, moving or, more often, being moved from the river to Tel-abib, from the city to the plain, from Babylon to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Babylon, from his house

through a hole in the wall of the city and back, from his house to the city streets to be a living sign from the Lord to his people, to the valley of dry bones, to a high mountain top, through a river of blessing for the world that deepens from his ankles to his knees to his loins until he is swimming in a wide torrent. His prophecies are filled with motion: men fall over a stumbling-block; he burns, cuts, and scatters his own hair; he smites his hands together and stamps his feet; the false prophets daub the city's protective wall with weak plaster; the whorish nation sports wantonly with her many lovers; the Lord's sharp sword glitters as it is brandished threateningly; small twigs grow into great trees and huge trees are cut down; armed invaders fall in such numbers that there is no ground to bury them in. Above all these scenes moves the God of Israel, "straight forward," turning not; underneath flows the never-failing double stream of God's future blessing for the world through Israel, ever widening to become a river of reviving power.

And it shall come to pass, *that* everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

(Ezek. 47:9-12)

For Ezekiel the Lord is motion. *He* moves and he *moves*.

Daniel

The late date for the promulgation of the Book of Daniel (as distinct from its original composition) is the primary reason for its exclusion from the prophetic books in the Jewish canon, where it appears in the Writings between the books of Esther and Ezra. By the time the book came into circulation (ca. the second century B.C.) the time of prophecy was believed to have ceased. Despite my general tendency to follow traditional Jewish guidance in such matters, I include Daniel among the prophets.¹⁹ The book certainly has more affinity with the literary prophets than with apocryphal and intertestamental apocalypses and is very unlike the other books designated "writings"; while no immediate national crisis appears to have been the occasion of Daniel's prophecies, as is usually the case in the other prophets, there is the same concern with the long-range destiny of God's people and the stress on the response appropriate to the individual Jew in times of oppression and persecution.

The handling of chronology and of the succession of kingdoms and monarchs in the book is an interesting problem that can hardly be ignored. Beginning as though a straightforward chronological sequence will be followed with events keyed to the reigns of certain kings, the book raises serious questions about its own chronology from its opening verses, questions the writer could hardly have been blind to. Events as traumatic and with such extensive ramifications for a nation as the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the first exile of Jehoiachin and the cream of Israel's youth, especially since these events became harbingers of the complete destruction of the city and temple in 586 B.C., could hardly be inaccurately reported without both author and reader recognizing the discrepancy. To place Nebuchadnezzar's (Nebuchadnezzar's) capture of Jehoiachin in the "third year of the reign of Jehoiakim" (Dan. 1:1) when the events had actually taken place following the death of Jehoiakim after his eleven-year reign (II Kings 24:1-17) is though a modern writer opened a book about Americans in a prisoner-of-war camp with a reference to the attack on Pearl Harbor having occurred during the presidency of Herbert Hoover. And if the writer went on to predict in substantially accurate detail the war in Korea and the political atmosphere surrounding it, including such matters as Truman's recall of General MacArthur, even if the Korean war were veiled in apocalyptic imagery, one would assume the book to be an example of *prophetia ex eventu*, especially if the book did not come to light until, say, A.D. 2300. The puzzle would be, why, even though the accurate history is veiled in apocalyptic, correctly portray events presented as though they were yet to occur and seriously garble past events and persons which with ease could have been portrayed accurately? Would not the author be inviting charges of carelessness or anachronism? At exactly those points where he transcends history and wishes to be taken seriously as a seer of the future, is he not, by inaccurately reporting past events, achieving the opposite effect? My analogy with American history is not, perhaps, a very apt one, but the usual explanation of the alleged historical inaccuracies in Daniel as put forth, for example, by Louis F. Hartman, is unsatisfactory to me, and as I read between the lines, to him as well. To demand factual accuracy of an ancient writer according to the "canons of nineteenth- and twentieth-century critical history in a book whose intent is essentially religious and not historical," Hartman says, is "unfair, not to say impious."²⁰ But he then goes on to insist that his exposure of chronological and factual "errors" does not "impugn or call into question the sacredness, authority, and inerrancy of the Book Daniel which are accepted here without question as truths of the Christian faith."²¹ I fear

that one cannot remain intellectually honest and have the matter both ways; at least I cannot.

Although it is not the purpose of this paper to consider questions best dealt with by those whose life-long study is Biblical criticism, the problem of Daniel is one which seems to me to require attention before any serious comment about its form and message is attempted. This is not to say that other books of the Bible are not also in need of some such discussion, but life is so short that one must draw the line somewhere, and I have drawn it so as to exclude detailed and sustained examination of such questions as "Did the events recorded really happen?" and "Are the dates of events and the historicity of personages absolutely reliable?" But for several reasons, a Christian interpreter cannot as easily sidestep such issues with regard to Daniel as he can with regard to other books; to give but a few of the reasons: Revelation and the epistles of Paul draw heavily upon Daniel's imagery and prophecies of the end time (cf., Rev. 13:1-10 with Dan.; II Thess. 2:1-12 with Dan. 11:31-39); Jesus appears to have read Daniel in his day as largely prophecy yet to be fulfilled (cf., Mark 13:14-27 with Dan. 7-12); and the doctrine of the resurrection, so central to the Christian gospel, is most clearly stated in the Jewish Scriptures in Daniel (Dan. 12:2), a statement that is of value only if the book is genuinely dependable as Scripture.

Arthur Jeffrey lists at length the "historical blunders" of Daniel²² and yet praises him for having "caught the conception that history is a whole . . . in which God's eternal purpose is developing."²³ But that one be accurate and judicious in his marshalling of fact behind an account is not a uniquely modern view as such statements about Daniel imply it is. Other prophets strive to date their prophecies accurately in relation to historical events;²⁴ why not Daniel? It is, of course, true that the degree of accuracy and objectivity critical historians strive for—claim, at least, to strive for—in modern times would not have been attempted or even desired by an ancient historian, whether Hebrew, Greek, or Roman. But to assume that a writer can be as grossly and unwittingly inaccurate as Daniel is alleged to have been, especially when this assumption is coupled, as it usually is, with the conviction that Daniel is a production of the first or second century B.C. (i.e., contemporaneous with an essentially accurate account like I Maccabees) is to assume a writer, or writers, who is himself an anachronism—one who not only has a careless attitude towards matters of fact but wrongly assumes that his readers share it.

Suppose that the writer of Daniel is deliberately confusing times and people in the first half of the book, where his explanations of dreams and visions are prompt, perfectly accurate, and speedily fulfilled; and

that, on the other hand, he thinly veils historical persons and events which are nevertheless presented with substantial accuracy in the second half of the book, where he is troubled and perplexed about the meaning of the visions he sees, where his angelic explicators never completely satisfy his curiosity (indeed, he faints, falls ill, and in general is a very different person from the poised young wise man who in the first half of the book understands immediately the explanations Yahweh gives him of Nebuchadnezzar's visions), and where the prophecies are said to be sealed until some indeterminate time in the future. To put it another way, the features of Chapters 1-6 which clash most sharply are still at odds in Chapters 7-12 except that the factors that make up the clash have been interchanged: clear visions and clear history. (Of course, the latter is presented as prophecy, not history, and if a sixth century B.C. date of composition for the book is accepted, two levels of prophecy may be present: one predicting the depredations of Antiochus IV of Syria, the other predicting the Antichrist in the last days). From a literary point of view what could explain the state of the Hebrew/Aramaic text of Daniel?

I suggest assuming a careful craftsman who has an artistic, as well as a theological, purpose that is usefully served by apparent disregard of chronological order and royal succession. The reader may learn, as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar did, that "the most high God [rules] in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will (Dan. 5:21b), i.e., that the true sovereign is God, and human rulers pale into insignificance and even disappear as though they had never existed, in the great panorama of Yahweh's universal rule. Again, the reader may learn that time, whether represented by divisions of "years" or "weeks" or "times," is under the control of him whose kingdom "shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44b), and that "what shall come to pass hereafter" (Dan. 2:45b) can be shown by the eternal Lord as though it had already happened. Time, both in the blessings and the sorrows it brings, and human kingdoms, whether comparatively gold, silver, or metals of lesser worth, seem to be supremely important from the human point of view, but from the divine overview both time and principalities are like "the chaff of the summer threshingfloors" (Dan. 2:35), carried away by the wind even before they come into being.

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, brightness *was* excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof *was* terrible. This image's head *was* of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff

of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. (Dan. 2:31-35)

Thus in a book so filled with significant periods of time and powerful forces that affect human life—past, present, and future—the only abiding reality is God and his mysterious kingdom, the only proper concern of man is to be loyal and obedient to him. Regardless of whether or not loyalty and obedience bring temporal deliverance, one may through them triumph over time and worldly pomp (Dan. 3:17-18; 12:1-3).

The six narratives of Chapters 1-6 are virtually self-contained: the same Hebrew characters figure throughout (Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in Chapters 1 and 2; the three without Daniel in Chapter 3; and Daniel without the three in Chapters 4, 5, and 6) and in each narrative the pagan monarch is important (Nebuchadnezzar in Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4; Belshazzar in Chapter 5; and Darius Chapter 6), but despite the continuity of characters from story to story and the chronological order followed, one narrative does not cross-reference with another. (The mention of Nebuchadnezzar's bringing vessels from the temple to Babylon in Chapter 1 [v. 2; cf. II Kings 24:13] prepares for Belshazzar's feast in Chapter 5 [vv. 2-4, 23] but the parallel reference does not appear to be a deliberate link between the stories.) Indeed, the lack of explanatory cross-referencing between stories raises some of the questions that have intrigued modern critics as they had earlier stimulated the imaginations of rabbinical and Christian commentators. Why is Daniel not involved or even mentioned in the episode of the fiery furnace? What happens to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego after their deliverance from the furnace? Why is it that Nebuchadnezzar never seems to learn permanently the superiority of the Hebrews' God but acts in each story as though he has just for the first time seen proof of Yahweh's greatness? Many answers have been provided for these questions but not from the text. The visions of the second half of Daniel are linked by prose narrative (e.g., 7:1, 28; 8:1-2, 15-18, 27; 9:1-27; 10:1-4) even though they are not in chronological sequence as the narratives are. The absence of such links to bind the six narratives together and the abrupt beginning of each one contribute to one's impression that they constitute a collection of originally independent anecdotes about the intellectual and moral elite among the exiles. The apocryphal stories included in the Greek text are similarly related only by their all having to do with Daniel. One can understand these stories having been taken as parables of midrashic tales intended to illustrate general truths or abstract principles rather than to relate historical occurrences.

What we probably have here, however, are narratives of historical events involving actual persons and places and deliberately arranged in a sequence that reflects Daniel's and his three friends' growth in the knowledge of the Lord, the effectiveness of worshipping him even in a pagan land, and an awareness of Yahweh's world-wide influence and involvement; by extension, any faithful believer is encouraged to grow, through loyalty and obedience, in such areas of thought and devotion. Seen in this light, the six narratives constitute six oppositions of the human and the divine with the divine always triumphing and the human beings either recognizing and rejoicing in that triumph or being destroyed by their failure to acknowledge it. Each story builds on the effect of the preceding one. The young Hebrews learn (or test their prior knowledge of) the superiority of divine over human nurture (Chapter 1) which leads to the gift of wisdom (Dan. 1:17); this divine wisdom, exemplified in a single Jew (Chapter 2), soon triumphs over the combined wisdom of Babylon's sages of whatever school (Dan. 2:27-28); such wisdom, now exemplified in the three friends (Chapter 3), dictates their willingness to die for the worship of the true God rather than participate in idolatrous worship, no matter how grandly staged (Dan. 3:14, 16-18). Divine nurture, having resulted in divine wisdom and divine worship, now shows itself developed into recognition of the dependence of human rule upon divine sovereignty, of the divine judgment which follows failure to recognize that dependence, and of the divine deliverance for the faithful and the destruction of the malicious enemies of the faithful (Chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively). These last divine manifestations of rule, judgment, and deliverance are then illustrated in the visions of the four kingdoms in Chapter 7 and in the fresh view of the fourth kingdom in Chapter 8; that divine nurture, as from the Scriptures, leads in Chapter 9 to wisdom enabling Daniel to understand the past (Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy weeks) and to prophecy the future (the seventy weeks projected beyond history's horizon), though without understanding.

Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, How long *shall it be* to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (Dan. 12:5-9)

Although God is a revealer of secrets (Dan. 2:28) when he so chooses, he also conceals the full meaning of what he has revealed (Dan. 12:4, 9). He is mystery.

In considering the literary prophets I have omitted emphasis on their foretelling of the Messiah. As Milton's Michael says to Adam in Book 12 of *Paradise Lost*, "all the Prophets in their Age the times / Of great Messiah sing" (243-44) and of Messiah's everlasting "Regal Throne . . . shall sing / All Prophecy" (324-35). That peculiar, Christian, New Testament hindsight provides for the Old Testament prophets an illumination of power, beauty, and truth. But in this essay my effort is to appreciate the major prophetic books as Hebrew literature translated into English, as enduring works of art valuable in and for themselves for any community that reveres excellence.

Yahweh is universal majesty to Isaiah, a maker of new things from old to Jeremiah, the moving Mover to Ezekiel, and ultimately the mysterious Spinner of the Years to Daniel. Reading the four together provides an impression of a rich literature that expands the mind and humbles the heart, of a whole vision to be welded from these complementary visions: a whole vision that helps one understand better himself, his relationship to others, to the world (past, present, future), and to God.

NOTES

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1. References to and quotations from Scripture conform to the Kings James Version. In all passages quoted, verse numberings for the English and Hebrew Versions are identical.
 2. *Archaeology, Historical Analogy, and Early Biblical Tradition* (Baton Rouge, 1966), pp. 60-61.
 3. Comment on *Shigionoth* by A. Cohen, ed., "Habbakuk" in *The Twelve Prophets from The Soncino Books of the Bible* (London, 1948), p. 224.
 4. Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, 1974), p. 135.
 5. John M. Ellis, *The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis* (Berkeley, Calif., 1974), p. 44.
 6. Ellis, p. 52.
 7. Samuel Sandmel, "The Bible as Literature," *Journal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* (Spring, 1973), p. 69. See also "The Higher Illiteracy," *Antioch Review*, 28 (Spring, 1968), 91-107; "The Ancient Hebrew Mind and Ours," in John Reumann, ed., *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 29-43; and "The Enjoyment of Scripture: An Esthetic Approach," *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, 22 (Fall, 1973), 455-467.

8. Peter Ackroyd, "Introduction" to Isaiah in *The International One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* [Nashville, 1971], ed. Charles M. Laymon, pp. 330-31. Further references to this source, and to those cited in following notes, are included in parentheses in the text.
9. The combined reigns of the four kings under whom Isaiah prophesied total 113 years; one may assume that he was considerably younger than Uzziah and lived only a short while after the death of Hezekiah.
10. *Shearjashub*: "the remnant shall return"; *Mahershalahhashbaz*: "speedy spoiling, prompt plundering."
11. *The Hebrew Kingdoms* (London, 1968), p. 274, re. Amos 5:16-17.
12. *New English Bible*, Oxford Study Edition, p. 816 on Jer. 7:22.
13. Ackroyd, p. 380.
14. "Introduction," *The Anchor Bible: Jeremiah* (Garden City, N.Y., 1965), p. cxiv.
15. Sandmel (*The Hebrew Scriptures* [New York, 1963], p. 153) dismisses the view that Ezekiel was an epileptic as "nonsense."
16. "The Irrelevant Detail and the Emergence of Form," in *Aspects of Narrative: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. J. Hillis Miller (New York and London, 1971), p. 77.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
18. *Merkabah*, the "Divine Presence," from I Chron. 28:18 "The chariot of the cherubim." Even though Ezekiel is careful to distance himself from the vision once the full significance of it breaks upon him, his description is so much more bold than any others (e.g., Micaiah, Isaiah) that the Jewish Mishnah "enacts that the account of the creation (*Ma'aseh Bereshith*) is not to be expounded in the presence of more than one person and the story of the *Merkabah* not even to one unless he be wise and of independent insight." At the close of Maimonides' chapter on the *Merkabah* in his *Guide* (written primarily for one disciple) he "reminded his pupil of the Talmudic restriction and requested him not to ask for a more detailed instruction." Rabbi Eliezer, commenting on Ex. 15:2, said that "even a handmaid saw more of the Divine Glory [at the crossing of the Red Sea] than did Ezekiel and the other prophets"; yet great care must be exercised in dealing with Ezekiel's written record since it is "exceptionally vivid and terrifying." (S. Fisch, "Introduction" to Ezekiel in *Soncino Books of the Bible* [London, 1950], pp. x, xi.)
19. Following the lead of Sandmel, *The Hebrew Scriptures*, pp. 226ff.
20. *The Anchor Bible: The Book of Daniel* (Garden City, N. York, 1978), p. 53.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
22. "Introduction" to Daniel in *Interpreters Bible*, 6 (Nashville, 1956), 345: "The capture of Jerusalem was not in the third year of Jehoiakim, i.e., in 606 B.C., but in 597 under Jehoiachin; . . . Nebuchadnezzar should be spelled Nebuchadrezzar, . . . Belshazzar was not his son, but the son of Nabonidus, and was never king [though he was co-regent with his father who mysteriously absented himself from the capital for ten years]; . . . there is confusion in its order of Persian kings and a foreshortening of their history; . . . 'satrap' was not a Babylonian title."
23. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
24. E.g., Amos 1:1; Jer. 25:1, Ezek. 24:1-2.