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relating to his environment, but as a group’s organized response to its peculiar disadvantage, the features of radicalism appear as calculated and efficient mechanisms. That they must be compatible with or even feed on the emotional life of the persons who implement them is almost a foregone conclusion. It was Karl Mannheim who remarked about the revolutionary proletariat: “Here then we are confronted with the combination of the most extreme rationalism with some of the most extreme irrational elements; this shows that the ‘irrational’ proves on closer observation more complex than we are at first inclined to imagine.”


CHARISMA AND RELIGIOUS INNOVATION: THE SOCIAL LOCATION OF ISRAELITE PROPHECY *

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One of the building blocks of Weber’s theory of charisma was his understanding of Israelite prophecy. This understanding was based on the Old Testament scholarship of Weber’s time and has to be considerably modified in terms of new insights gained since then. Of special importance in this connection is the new view of the relation of the prophets to the cultic institutions of Israel. It is no longer possible to understand the prophets as isolated individuals opposed to the established religion of the priesthood. Rather it is likely that they were themselves closely related to certain cultic offices. This suggests a modification of the theory of charisma that would de-emphasize the latter’s non-institutional character.

While there may be a certain solidarity-generating feeling to the not-impossible prospect that sociologists will end up talking to nobody except themselves (or, at most, to other social scientists), it is well to recollect that the most fruitful developments in classical sociological theory occurred in close association with historical data. This is true not only of the work of Weber but, in varying degrees, of the Marxian, Durkheimian and Pareitian traditions. Such an association with historical data is readily evident in Weber’s theory of charisma. It is hardly necessary to elaborate on the decisive importance of this theory, not only for the sociology of religion but for political sociology and the sociology of institutions in general. One of the building blocks of this theory is Weber’s work on the sociology of ancient Israel, especially his understanding of the role of the prophetic movement in the period preceding the Babylonian exile. It may, then, be of some significance to sociological theory to see how historical scholarship since then affects Weber’s interpretation of these Israelite developments.

Our concern is particularly with Weber’s understanding of the social location of pre-exilic prophecy. After briefly sketching Weber’s position, we shall look at some relevant developments in Old Testament scholarship since the time of Weber’s work and then ask whether these developments have a bearing on the theory of charisma in general. And we shall argue that, like Molière’s character who spoke prose without knowing it, a number of Old Testament scholars writing in recent decades have made an interesting contribution to sociological theory.

Weber’s interpretation of Israelite prophecy is a penetrating sociological exposition based on the latest historical scholarship of that time. Weber recognized that canonical or classical prophecy (that is, the material that now constitutes the prophetic books of the Old Testament) is based on earlier phe-
nomina commonly called Nabism (from nabi, the Hebrew word first translated as “prophet” in the Septuagint). He also recognized that Nabism, as denoting a specific form of ecstatic religious practice, was not an Israelite peculiarity, but belongs to a much broader cross-cultural category. In Israel we first encounter it in the character of war prophecy (for example, in the Song of Deborah, Judges 5, probably one of the oldest passages in the Old Testament.) Here the Israelite prophets appear as bands of military dervishes proclaiming the holy wars of Yahweh against the Canaanites. Their social location at this time is in the loosely organized peasant (or even semi-nomadic) armies of the Israelite tribal confederacy. Their activity bore witness to the Yahwist faith that was at the center of the confederacy and constituted the often precarious base for its joint military operations.

The establishment of the monarchy, especially its consolidation under Solomon, resulted in the militarization of the peasantry. In the place of the old confederate armies was put a permanent military organization under the authority of the king, taking on very quickly the character of other royal armies of the ancient Near East. With this development the old war prophecy became obsolete. As the peasantry was militarized, so was prophecy as an institution in Israel. In the main, it became professionalized as a “simple trade of the magicians.” The ecstatic gifts of the prophets became available, so to speak, to a private clientele. Also, the new royal courts, first in Jerusalem but then also in the northern kingdom, established an institutionalized court prophecy to proclaim good fortune to the king and also perhaps to render private services of a quasi-magical character to the royal entourage.

In the ninth century, however, a new kind of prophecy emerges. It is characterized by a de-emphasis of ecstasy as a source of divine inspiration, and, more important, its activity now consists in proclaiming not good fortune but rather judgment and doom. This new type of prophet is seen as a spokesman of traditional Yahwism as against the religious and social innovations of the monarchy. Its prototype, according to Weber, is Elijah, as seen in the latter’s conflict with the court of Ahab (1. Kings 17–21). As one would expect, the social character and location of these new prophets has greatly changed. Now they are “no longer military dervishes and ecstatic therapeutics and lawmakers, but a stratum of literati and political ideologists.”

Weber’s image of this type (which, of course, is understood as including the canonical prophets) is that of socially detached individuals, engaged in a “gratuitous practice characteristic of a stratum of genteel intellectuals,” essentially in opposition to the official institutional structure of Israel as represented by monarchy and priesthood. Weber explicitly rejects the notion that these prophets are to be understood as spokesmen of a social protest movement of underprivileged strata. Their concern is religious, though there are ethical and social implications to this concern. Their backing lay in groups of “pious laity,” such as the Jerusalite families that stood behind Jeremiah. In terms of this new type of what Weber calls the “emissary prophet” it is especially important to stress the element of social detachment that is relevant to the theory of charisma in general: “No prophet belonged to an esoteric ‘association’ like the later apocalyptic, No prophet thought of founding a ‘congregation’ . . . The prophets stood in the midst of their people and were interested in ethics, not in cult.”

In this capacity the prophets provided that rationalizing (in Weber’s sense) “theodicy” that served to interpret religiously the political history of Israel. They thus prepared ideologically the survival of Israel through the catastrophe of the exile and furnished part of the foundation for Israel’s future existence as a “pariah community” in the world of nations. They also, of course, provided a model of religious discourse that found its continuation in the Christian and Muslim developments of the Biblical tradition.

This conception of the role of prophecy in the survival of Israel has, if anything, been strengthened by more recent historical scholarship, though the latter has drawn attention

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4 Ibid., p. 112.
5 Ibid., p. 279.
6 Ibid., p. 299.

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2 Ibid., p. 102.
to other relevant features of the Israelite religious traditions, especially the legal and ritual ones. What interests us here, however, is the accuracy of Weber's portrayal of the prophets' social location before the exile. In this connection it is instructive to look at the principal sources Weber used for his construction. These are the most prominent German scholars in the field right up to the time Weber was writing—Wellhausen, Meyer, Selin, Gunzel, Hoelscher, to name the most important ones. But this very list places Weber's work at an important dividing line in the history of Old Testament scholarship—or rather just on the far side of the dividing line.

Weber's interpretation is still marked by Hoelscher's work on the prophets, which appeared in 1914 and to which Weber refers in his footnotes. Significantly, Grossmann's work on the general oriental background of the Old Testament was not available to Weber when he revised the text of his manuscript on ancient Israel, as he tells us in another footnote. For this is precisely the turning point marked by Hoelscher's work—the re-interpretation of Israelite prophecy in the light of the increasingly rich material available to scholars concerning the culture and religion of the societies surrounding Palestine. And it is the steady and impressive expansion of this general knowledge of the ancient Near East, aided by massive new data unearthed by the archaeologists, that furnishes the background of the re-interpretation.

Obviously this re-interpretation has many aspects that cannot be entered into here. But the sociological problem that concerns us comes into focus particularly in one aspect of it—the relation of the canonical prophets to the cult. There are two broad questions implied in this problem. One is that of the attitudes of the prophets to the cult. The other is that of their social location with respect to the cult, that is whether the canonical prophets were themselves members of the cultic personnel. The former question will only interest us marginally, but the latter question is the sociological one par excellence. For few scholars would deny that in 8th-century prophecy there appeared a certain novum in Israelite religion, despite the fact, increasingly clear to scholarship in the area, that the prophets were heavily indebted to earlier traditions concerning the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The sociologically interesting question is the way in which this novum related to the institutional structures of Israelite religion. We shall now try to trace briefly the development of the controversy that has occupied Old Testament scholarship on this question since the 1920's.

Developed by 19th-century Protestant scholarship, an image of the Old Testament prophets has so successfully filtered down to the religiously interested laity that it is quite difficult for anyone ever subjected to a Protestant Sunday school to think in other terms. One of the stereotypes connected with this image is the notion of the prophets as opponents of the priests, brave individualists defying the religious authorities of their time. It does not require great sophistication in the sociology of knowledge to guess why this image was developed by Protestant scholars (though perhaps psychological gifts too may be needed to interpret the rather strange affinity of German university professors, mostly teaching in theological faculties of established churches, for prophets as against priests!). In any case, during the period that the Wellhausen school dominated Old Testament scholarship, the notion that priests and prophets were fundamentally opposed attained almost axiomatic status.

Wellhausen himself understood the prophets as the spokesmen for a protest movement against the "paganization" of Israel's religion. And it was clear that this "paganization" had its center in the cult. But Wellhausen devoted most of his work to the Pentateuch rather than the prophetic literature. Among Wellhausen's generation of scholars it was especially Duhm who developed this interpretation of the prophets. Duhm saw the prophets as the climax of the evolution of Israel's religion. Before them

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8 Weber, Ancient Judaism, pp. 444; 456.
9 Ibid., p. 429.
lies a period of preparation, after them one of decline. The prophets are understood as independent writers and pamphleteers, also engaged at times in public oratory. Their principal contribution in this evolutionary scheme is the moralization and de-ritualization of religion. Especially in the latter they obviously came into conflict with the priesthood.\(^{11}\)

In the Anglo-Saxon world it was especially George Adam Smith whose numerous works on the Old Testament, including the prophetic literature, propagated the same image of the prophets.\(^{12}\) The personal character of the prophets is here understood in terms of "religious genius," with perhaps an additional Anglo-Saxon emphasis on stubborn individualism. The message of the prophets is summed up in the idea of "ethical monotheism," understood as constantly battling with the ethically indifferent and theistically dubious tendencies of the official religious guardians, the priests. In this way, the prophets are made to appear as proto-Protestants of an earlier dispensation.

It would, of course, be a mistake to assume that this view came to an abrupt end at a certain date. Like most scholarly positions it persisted beyond the time at which it was seriously challenged and, at least in a modified form, it still finds its protagonists today. In more recent scholarship its most articulate (and also most extreme) formulation is found in Jepsen's work on the prophets, published in 1934.\(^{13}\) Jepsen's work is especially interesting for us because he explicitly concentrated on the sociological problem of prophecy, that is, the problem of its social location. Essentially Jepsen was concerned with writing a social history of Nabiism, which he understands as extra-Israelite in origin, alien to Israel's nomadic past and acquired from Canaanite culture after the settlement of the tribes in Palestine.\(^{14}\) The Nabis first engaged in competition with the older Israelite priesthood by offering an alternate oracular service. While the priests used "technical" means in the giving of oracles (such as the urim and thummim), the Nabis pronounced oracles in ecstasy.

Jepsen believed that in the south, beginning with David's selection of Canaanite Jerusalem as his capital, there occurred an early mutual accommodation of the two oracle-giving religious professions. Nabiism continued in the north independently of court and priesthood, at least until the time of Hosea, when "Canaanization" occurred there also. In the northern kingdom Nabiism was especially popular among the poor and underprivileged strata of society, while southern Nabiism had its social base in the upper strata of Jerusalem. In both north and south Nabiism is sharply differentiated from the canonical prophets. Indeed, the very notion of religious professionalism is seen as the antithesis of canonical prophecy. Speaking of the canonical prophets, Jepsen states: "Everything professional, everything which would make of God a certain possession and would want to dispose of Him, is alien to them . . . They cannot dispose of God, but He disposes of them. Their preaching can therefore never become a profession."\(^{15}\) The word "therefore" in this statement should be emphasized because it expresses rather clearly the logic of Jepsen's argument—the social location of these prophets is deduced from the content of their religious message. While few scholars would question this understanding of Yahweh's sovereignty in the prophetic literature, Jepsen's sociological deduction from it is very questionable indeed.

To summarize this classic Protestant interpretation of the canonical prophets as dis-

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tinct from both priests and Nabis we quote from an even more recent work, the rather homiletically inclined book on the prophets by Volz (first published in 1938, re-published in 1949):

Old Testament religion, the religion of the prophets, is a religion of the Word. Because of this, the religion of the Old Testament prophets stands in sharpest contrast to the religion of the priests, to cult religion. The religion of the priests is a religion of sacrifice. The priest carries the gifts of men up towards God. The religion of the prophets is a religion of the Word. It brings the voice of God down to men, the voice that creates life and that one must obey. While the cultic ritual is rigid, often remains the same for centuries and sometimes smothers new seeds of faith like a firm blanket, the Word is alive, acting, creating.\(^{16}\)

And Volz explicitly refers to prophetic religion as “the Protestantism of antiquity.”\(^{17}\) We have here in sum the classic scheme of opposition between priests and prophets—ritual against free proclamation, rigidity against free-flowing spirituality, professionalism against independence. And insofar as it is recognized that ecstatic Nabiism was tied in with the cult and itself professionalized, it is sharply set off against the prophets whose message is now canonized in the Old Testament.

Every aspect of this scheme has been severely shaken by the development of critical scholarship since the 1920’s. Some of the new interpretations concern the attitude of the canonical prophets toward the cult more than their social relation to it. Thus form-critical and comparative religion approaches have demonstrated the strong dependence of the prophetic literature on materials derived from the cult.\(^{18}\) Studies of Old Testament worship have shown that the cult itself left far more room for “free-flowing spirituality” than the earlier interpreters thought,\(^{19}\) indicating that the latter may have had far too strict a “liturgical” conception of this worship. More basically, the study of the ancient Near East in general has given us a new understanding of the centrality of the cult for all aspects of life in these societies.\(^{20}\) But the challenge to the “non-professional” character of the canonical prophets dates rather clearly from the work of a Norwegian scholar, Sigmund Mowinckel, published in the third volume of his studies in the Psalms in 1923.\(^{21}\)

Mowinckel took up some comments made previously by Gunkel regarding the relation between Nabiism and the regular employment of “prophets” within the institutional cult. Through a careful analysis of certain Psalms in the Old Testament, Mowinckel showed that prophetic inspiration, that is, the utterance of divinely inspired words by officials of the cult, was part and parcel of Israelite worship. In terms of the cult, Mowinckel distinguishes between “sacrificial” and “sacramental” elements—the former being actions on behalf of the community directed towards the divinity, the latter actions on behalf of the divinity addressed to the community. The prophetic activities are, of course, part of the latter element. Mowinckel emphasized that this division of cultic functions does not necessarily imply a corresponding differentiation of the cultic personnel. But in some cases, he argues, special cultic officials are assigned to the prophetic function.

Various degrees of “domestication” of the prophetic element within the cult occurred. At first, only the time of prophetic utterance was liturgically fixed. Later, the content of such utterance was fixed too, so that it retained nothing but the prophetic style. The so-called prophetic Psalms were believed by


\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 30.


Mowinckel to reflect this latter phase. This does not mean, however, that such Psalms may not go back to originally inspired (i.e., ecstatic) prophetic utterances. Mowinckel also believed that Nabiism, unlike the profession of priests and seers, was adopted by Israel after its settlement in Palestine. Originally, the ecstatic Nabis were not affiliated with the priesthood. Mowinckel thought that they came from the laity, being charismatic individuals legitimating themselves by ecstatic virtuosity. For just this reason, however, they were closely attached to the sanctuaries and were institutionalized there under the supervision of the priesthood. It is clear that such a relation to the priesthood would lead to the liturgical "domestication" of the ecstatic charisma.22

In the 1920's and 1930's Mowinckel's work, especially its identification of Nabiism with cult prophecy, was developed by a number of scholars, and with few exceptions this identification became part of the scholarly consensus. The clearest (and perhaps also most convincing) study of the matter was published during World War II by a British scholar, A. R. Johnson.23 As against Mowinckel, Johnson showed that the Nabi, like the priest, had both "sacramental" and "sacrificial" functions. He spoke for Yahweh, by means of ecstatic oracles given to the people. He also represented the people before Yahweh, by means of intercessory prayer. In both these functions the Nabi is concerned with the welfare (shalom) of the people. Indeed, one may say that shalom was the Nabi's business par excellence. It is clear that the Nabis were closely connected with the sanctuaries, and especially in Jerusalem they must have been an essential part of the cultic personnel. Johnson maintains that, in this capacity, they were not necessarily inferior in position to the priests. Only the exile, for obvious reasons, constituted a grave loss of prestige for the Nabis. In the post-exilic historical tradition of Chronicles the Nabis are degraded to the rank of Temple singers, thus subordinating them to the priesthood.

This is how Johnson summarizes the results of his investigation:

To sum up, there is considerable evidence in the more definitely historical records of the Old Testament to show that during the monarchy (and, in a measure, for some two centuries later) the prophet was an important figure in the personnel of the cultus—particularly that of the Jerusalem Temple. As such, his function was to promote the shalom or 'welfare' of the people, whether an individual or 'corporate personality.' To this end his role was a dual one. He was not only the spokesman of Yahweh; he was also the representative of the people. He was not only a giver of oracles; he was also a specialist in prayer. The disaster of the Babylonian Exile, however, finally proved him to be unreliable; and, as a result of his loss of prestige, the P school was ultimately able to reduce him to the rank of a Temple singer. In this way, being merged with the other Levitical orders, he was brought into definite subjection to the priesthood—and so disappeared.24

Having thus defined the cultic location of Nabiism, however, Johnson remained silent on the now obviously crucial question—the bearing of all this on our understanding of the canonical prophets. Around this question postwar controversy has raged,25 beginning in earnest in 1945, with the publication of a work on prophecy by Alfred Haldar, a young Swedish scholar.26 Haldar was one of a group of scholars commonly referred to as the Uppsala school, whose approach relied heavily on crosscultural comparisons and strongly emphasized the importance of oral as against written transmission of religious traditions.

Haldar introduced broad evidence from other Semitic cultures around Palestine (both Mesopotamian and west-Semitic) showing a cross-cultural pattern of two principal priestly functions—those of the harru priests, who used "technical" methods for the giving of oracles, and those of the mahkaw priests, who delivered oracles in ecstatic seizures. Although one priest might fulfill both tasks on

22 Ibid., p. 63.
24 Alfred Haldar, Associations of Cult Prophets among the Ancient Semites, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1945.

25 A similar liturgical exaltation of ecstatic phenomena may be observed in certain contemporary Pentecostal churches that are on the way to social and religious "respectability."
different occasions, the two types of priest were organized in distinct "corporations" at the sanctuaries. The ritual leadership of both groups was frequently taken by the king. 27 The same cultic phenomena are now understood to have existed in Israel. The Israelite priest (kohen) and Levite is identified with the baru type, the prophet (nabi) with the mahlu type. Israelite Nabianism too was organized in "corporations" around the sanctuaries, forming part and parcel of the official cult.

Haldar rejects in an almost a priori manner the older distinction between Nabianism and canonical prophecy: "If the nabi is attached to the sanctuary, it is clear that one must not put too much emphasis on the pronouncements in the prophetical 'books' which seem to be directed against the cult." 28 This is an interesting reversal of the classic Protestant interpretation. While the latter argued to the sociological form of prophecy from its religious contents, Haldar begins with the sociological form and then deduces certain propositions concerning the religious contents. 29 In this rather cavalier dismissal of certain materials now found in the prophetical literature of the Old Testament, Haldar is assisted by his insistence on the priority of oral tradition:

The prophetical literature consists of collections of traditions which arose and were transmitted down in various cult circles. It is perhaps sufficient to point to the fact that for instance in the book of Amos we have 'alleviating' adaptations of older Canaanite cult lyrics. The book of Hosea is analogous. . . . Under these circumstances it is extremely difficult to arrive at any really definite conclusions about an Amos, an Hosea, etc. The customary idea of these figures is of course—at least in part—the result of regarding them as the 'authors' of the 'books' that bear their names, whereas in fact these 'books' are the outcome of a long process of tradition preservation in the different prophetic circles. In determining the type of prophet, therefore, which one of these represents, we cannot at once know whether the prophet himself or another in the same circle is intended. But at all events we can say that there is no conclusive evidence to show that this literature presents a type of prophet different from the earlier one. On the contrary, many indications suggest an unbroken line. 33

This extreme identification of canonical prophecy with Nabianism, and hence with the cult, was not accepted by many scholars outside Scandinavia. The extreme emphasis on oral tradition has been sharply criticized and Haldar's conclusions, based on this emphasis, have been consequently weakened. 31 Yet an increasing number of scholars came to the conclusion that the differences between the canonical prophets and their nabi colleagues had been greatly exaggerated by earlier scholarship. The development of the study of the Book of Amos, as summarized in an important article by Wuerthwein several years after the appearance of Haldar's book, well illustrates this change in the scholarly climate. 32

In the case of Amos the scholarly position had seemed simple, since it was believed that the prophet himself had disclaimed the status of nabi, in the famous passage in Amos 7:14 where, in answer to Amaziah, the priest of the royal sanctuary at Bethel, Amos said what the standard versions have translated as "I am no prophet (nabi), nor a prophet's son" (RSV). But Rowley showed that not only could this Hebrew sentence be translated in the past tense, but that the context of the passage makes such a translation very probable. 33 In other words, Rowley suggests that Amos said "I was not a nabi"—and then proceeded to legitimate his present claim to


28 H. Haldar, op. cit., p. 111.

29 A possible sociology-of-knowledge question would concern the effect of "high-church" Swedish Lutheranism on the positions taken by the Upsala school.

30 Haldar, op. cit., p. 122.


that status by his recital of how Yahweh called him to the office.

Wuethwein agrees with Rowley and argues that this interpretation clears up many hitherto obscure matters in the Book of Amos. He believes that at first, Amos functioned at the Bethel sanctuary as a conventional Nabi, from which time the oracles against other nations may date. The famous visions show Amos' growing conviction of Yahweh's coming judgment over Israel, until at the last visions he stops to pray for the people (which, of course, would have been his duty as Nabi). Thus Wuethwein posits an inner development of Amos from prophet of shalom (Heilsnabi) to prophet of doom (Unheilsprophet).

Amos was at first a Nabi, who carried out the functions of his office (Amt), among which, as we have seen, intercessory prayer was an important one. Only gradually was he led to the personal conviction of the coming doom. The significance of his five visions is essentially that they allow us to follow his development from Nabi to prophet of doom. Chronologically they lie after his vocation to be a Nabi, for only as Nabi could he engage in intercessory prayer. But they lie before his appearance as a prophet of doom, for which appearance they serve as preparation.

Wuethwein then strongly emphasizes that the basis of Amos' proclamation of doom is not some new conception of ethics, as the Wellhausen school thought, but the legal and moral heritage of Israel as found in the Pentateuch. Yahweh turns from the people because they have broken the covenant, the demands of which were known to all from the cult.

Similar modifications of the old view of the canonical prophets as unattached individuals are to be found in monographs on other prophetic figures. Even as cautious a scholar as Norman Porteous, while sharply criticizing Haldar's position, comes to the conclusion that strong affinities existed between priests and prophets, though he shies away from the full identification of the canonical prophets with professional Nabiism. But the older view still found its apologists, the most recent one being Richard Hentschke, a German scholar. Hentschke accuses his scholarly opponents, especially the Uppsala school, of having superimposed upon the Old Testament materials derived from extra-Palestinian sources, a procedure he regards as untenable. He argues, in the conservative tradition of Protestant interpretation, that the canonical prophets attacked the cult as such, not just segments of it, and that they can in no way be identified as cultic personnel.

Nevertheless we are justified in saying that at least a measure of consensus has been emerging on this question in recent years, a consensus of which Hentschke is not representative. The implications of this consensus have been brought out very clearly in a recent work on the prophetic literature by Antonius Gunneweg. Gunneweg criticizes Hentschke and the conservative Protestant position for the antiquated view that the cult excluded all charismatic elements. He also criticizes them for the fallacious assumption that, because the canonical prophets attacked the cult, they could not have had a position within it: "Especially when one feels that a Jeremia can be compared with Luther, as Volz does, one should not forget that it was a monk who nailed up the Theses!" He also argues that the distinction between cultic and ethical elements in religion is a modern conception retrojected into the Old Testament. Gunneweg then states the consequence of this line of thinking for our sociological problem (which he rather misleadingly calls a "phenomenological" one): The attempt to find external criteria to differen-
tiate between canonical prophets and Nabis has failed. A differentiation made in terms of the prophetic message cannot be equated with a sociological difference between two groups. Indeed, sociologically speaking, the identification between canonical prophets and Nabis must be allowed to stand.

This is a position very similar to Waerthwein's: The canonical prophets began their careers as Nabis, socially located within the cultic institutions, but their message drove them beyond the cultic definitions of their function. Thus Gunneweg calls them "Nabis no-longer Nabis." He expatiates this description as follows:

With their addresses of judgment (Gerichtsreden) and invective (Schelldreden) the prophets still move within the confines of their office (Amot) as Nabis, at least in principle. But when they take this accusation against their own people with full seriousness, unlike the Nabis of which we hear in Jeremiah, when they radicalize this accusation, have they then not already passed the line between Nabi and 'no-longer-Nabi'? Purely phenomenologically not, but factually yes, insofar as the other Nabis no longer make this accusation seriously. Here the Scriptural prophets do not abandon their office, but radicalize it—radicalize it to such an extent that de facto the office changes into something new.

It may be noted here that Gunneweg rather carefully avoids making the proclamation of doom as such the criterion of difference. The radicalization rather lies in the staggering idea that Yahweh might abandon Israel as such, and radicalization of the proclamation pushes these prophets beyond the functions properly belonging to their cultic office.

The position that Gunneweg represents very well thus gives up the traditional attempt to set the canonical prophets off in a special sociological category, making their distinctiveness a strictly theological one. They stand out against their common background of Nabism in terms of the astounding novum of their message. This message, while largely based on the older traditions of Israel as transmitted in the cult, radicalized the latter—and thus also transformed the office held by the prophets. And, indeed, "radicalization" is also a good term to describe the place of the canonical prophets in the general development of Israelite religion. In this way, a critical awareness of the theological distinctiveness of the canonical prophets enables one to avoid the leveling tendency of the Uppsal school, while accepting their criticism of the conservative Protestant interpretation. While it is always dangerous to speak of scholarly consensus, especially in a field as complex as Old Testament scholarship, we would maintain that the position just outlined represents at least a strong tendency toward consensus on this question.

Having sketched this development in Old Testament interpretation, we can now return to Weber's picture of prophecy and ask what modifications may be necessary here. The principal modification, of course, would be the realization that Nabism was professionalized within the cultic institutions, and that canonical prophets too were closely associated with the cult. Their characterization as "literati," "political ideologists," let alone as "a stratum of genteel intellectuals," cannot be maintained, nor can the contention that they de-emphasized ecstasy as a source of divine inspiration. And, of course, Weber's belief concerning the prophets' non-associational, non-institutional character can also no longer be held. This does not in any way invalidate Weber's view of the prophet's role in the "rationalizing" re-interpretation of Israel's history or in the survival of Israel through the exile. But the modifications enumerated above have implications for the theory of charisma in general.

This is not the place to provide a synopsis of Weber's theory of charisma. We would

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40 Ibid., p. 114.
41 Ibid., p. 115. My translation
only emphasize once more the non-institutional, even anti-institutional, character of charisma as understood by Weber, in which the aforementioned conception of Israelite prophecy plays a significant part. The prophet as a socio-religious figure, be it of the "emissary," "ethical" (as in Israel or in Islam) or of the "exemplary" (as in Hinduism or Buddhism) variety, is seen as the ideal type of opponent to hierocratic institutions. That is, the contra-position of prophet and priest, which Weber knew from the scholars of the Wellhausen school, vibrates through the entire theory of charisma:

We shall understand 'prophet' to mean a purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment. . . . The personal call is the decisive element distinguishing the prophet from the priest. The latter lays claim to authority by virtue of his service in a sacred tradition, while the prophet's claim is based on personal revelation and charisma. It is no accident that almost no prophets have emerged from the priestly class. As a rule, the Indian teachers of salvation were not Brahmins, nor were the Israelite prophets priests. . . . The priest, in clear contrast, dispenses salvation by virtue of his office. 46

In other words, the office (Ami) is what distinguishes the priest from the prophet above all. The notion of charismatic office, in the sense we have discussed it in connection with the Israelite cult (and which must be clearly distinguished from Weber's own notion of "charisma of office," referring to what happens after charisma has been routinized), is alien to Weber's understanding. Again, the activity of the prophet is non-professional, hence economically gratuitous. This is laid down once more with specific reference to the Israelite case:

Prophets very often practiced divination as well as magical healing and counseling. This was true, for example, of the prophets (nabi, nebim) so frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. . . . But what distinguishes the prophet, in the sense that we are employing the term, from the types just described is an economic factor, i.e., that his prophecy is unremunerated. Thus, Amos indignantly rejected the appellation of nabi. This criterion of gratuitous service also distinguishes the prophet from the priest. 46

Once more, this conception of prophecy is no longer tenable, at least in the Israelite case. Putting the prophet on an institutional payroll does not seem to have offered effective protection against his coming out with unheard-of radicalisms.

We would not exaggerate the bearing of these modifications on the theory of charisma. They do not invalidate the ideal-typical construction of charismatic authority as against traditional and legal-rational authority. More importantly, these modifications in no way weaken Weber's sociologically crucial elaboration of the process of the routinization of charisma. In other words, there is no question here of the recurring scholarly pastime of "refuting Weber." But we contend that our argument has implications beyond the interpretation of Israelite history. A few more general comments on Weber's notion of charisma will make this clearer.

This notion ought to be seen in the context of Weber's larger concern with the place of ideas, religious and otherwise, in history, a concern that may be called Weber's anti-Marxian theme. Throughout his work in the sociology of religion, Weber was concerned to demonstrate that religious ideas have a historical efficacy of their own and cannot simply be understood as a "reflection" or even "function" of some underlying social processes. 47 For this reason, he sought to show the religious factors in the genesis of what he considered to be the two great innovating forces in history—charisma and rationalization. The latter (most clearly analyzed in Weber's work, of course, in connection with the role of Protestantism in modern economic history) does not interest us here. In the case of charisma, its relation to Weber's larger concern is evident. Charisma represents the sudden eruption into history of quite new forces, often linked to quite new ideas. Far from being "reflections" 47


47 Ibid., p. 47f.

or "functions" of already existing social processes, the charismatic forces powerfully act back upon the pre-existing processes and, indeed, initiate new processes of their own.

This does not mean that Weber conceives of such religious innovations as originating in some realm of pure spirit that is completely independent of the social structure. Such "idealism" is quite foreign to Weber's thinking. Weber's understanding of the relation of ideas to history can be seen most clearly in his concept of "elective affinity" (Wahlverswandtschaft), that is, of the way in which certain ideas and certain social processes "seek each other out" in history.48 Thus, while Weber is anxious to show the autonomy of thought as against any specific social structure, he is fully aware that thought always occurs in a social context and, even more important, that thought must find a social group to become its "carrier" if it is to be historically efficacious.

If, therefore, one searches for the social location of a charismatic phenomenon in the context of Weber's sociology of religion, one is not implying that the charismatic phenomenon can be understood as a direct ideological consequence of that location. Rather, one is trying to clarify the social context that favored, in the sense of "elective affinity," the emergence of innovating forces. This may seem a pedantic distinction; but it is important theoretically if one is to avoid the highly misleading counter-position of an alleged Weberian "idealism" as against various "positivistic" theories.49

To return once more to the problem of Israelite prophecy, Weber was emphatic in rejecting the idea that the canonical prophets "reflected" some particular vested interest, such as that of the countryside against the city, or of the lower classes against their rulers. Their message and the motives for proclaiming it are religious. Evidently, the individualistic understanding of prophetic charisma underlined this point of view. Here the prophet is perceived as the solitary individual, representing nobody except Yahweh, pitting himself against the traditional socio-religious order. Now, as we have tried to show, this individualistic understanding is difficult to maintain in view of more recent Old Testament scholarship. Instead, we come to see that the prophet emerges from a traditionally defined office, exercising his charismatic activity in terms of this office, but carried far beyond its traditional definition by his religious message.

While, as we have indicated, this modification of Weber's picture of prophecy does not change the theory of charisma as a whole, it nevertheless adds an interesting insight. It supports Weber's insistence on the autonomy of religious ideas even more than the previous individualistic conception. Charismatic innovation need not necessarily originate in social marginality. It may also originate within the traditionally established institutions—and, even there, be sufficiently powerful to effectively change these institutions. In other words, the new interpretation of prophecy, as located socially not on some solitary margin but within the religious institutions of ancient Israel, does not weaken the Weberian notion of the innovating power of charisma. On the contrary, it strengthens it. Charisma may, indeed, be characteristic of socially marginal individuals, coming into a society in the role of strangers, perhaps even legitimating their authority by virtue of this strangeness. But charisma may also be a trait of individuals located at the center of the institutional fabric in question, a power of "radicalization" from within rather than of challenge from without.

The present article has given evidence from an important field of historical scholarship for a re-interpretation, suggesting that sociological theory can profit considerably from closer attention to historical lines of inquiry with which sociologists usually have little contact.