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TYPES OF PROPHECIES: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

*DOI: 10.24234/journalforarmenianstudies.v2i65.116***ABSTRACT**

While prophecy constitutes the most important part of the Bible, it has been, in our opinion, its least analyzed subject. The interpretation of the prophecies has produced the most extensive works in the Christian tradition. While the messages of the prophets have been analyzed in detail, the phenomenon of “prophecy” itself has received little attention. This study presents a brief but innovative approach to the subject of prophecy and its types. An approach from the Jewish tradition handed down from the Middle Ages to the present day is taken and only a summary is presented, while a new diversification is proposed with a different approach.

In the first part of this study some studies from the Jewish and Armenian traditions about the types of prophesy are given with examples and examples of diversification are presented.

In the second part, the subject of Practical Types of Prophecy, which is our proposition, is discussed and it is explained which types of prophecies should be examined. In conclusion we summarized our purpose and the main parts of the study.

Key words and expressions: *Prophecy, Types of Prophecy, Practical Types of Prophecy, Prophet, New Testament, Old Testament, Armenian tradition, Jewish tradition.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to study the types of prophecy as a proposition, which have been little analyzed.

In this study, we thought it appropriate to deal with a subject that we think is very little studied. In fact, we thought it was necessary to approach the phenomenon of prophesy, which is an extremely broad subject, from the perspective of the types of

prophecies and to offer a new perspective and propositions.

Recognizing from pastoral experience that the wrong approach to the structure of prophecies creates a false spirituality in Bible readers, we suggest that this study is of vital importance.

This study is essentially a proposition. It is a preliminary call for the future work, and especially a preliminary study for the proper understanding and handling of the prophecies of the New Testament later on.

METHODOLOGY

When drafting the article, we are guided by historical research and comparative analysis methods, by researching and analyzing existing material, published sources and studies.

TYPES OF PROPHECY ¹

In the Bible we see various prophecies and ways of divine revelation. Before we make our suggestions about the types of prophecy, we would like to show a few classification approaches.

In his vast work *Dalalat al-Hairin*, Moshe Bin Meimon (Meymonides) classifies prophecies into twelve levels. We present a summary based on his work to convey an idea of the Jewish mindset. Giving broad explanations, he classifies the levels of prophecy from the smallest to the greatest.

- i. A divine help. This is the experience of Israeli judges or others (Judges 2:18, 1 Chronicles 12:18)².
- ii. To have wisdom and the ability to speak with divine help. The person feels that a new power has come to him and starts speaking through the Holy Spirit. This is how David wrote the psalms, and Solomon authored his books. This is how the books of Daniel, Job, and Kings were written. Also, the seventy judges chosen by Moses received wisdom from that same power.

¹ We do not mean the types of interpretation here. An extensive study of schools and approaches of interpretation can be found in Buzand Yeghiayan's book (Yeghiayan B., 1976).

² The original examples found in the article are taken from the Bible.

Moshe Bin Meimon considers these two levels to be degrees leading to prophecy, but a person of this level cannot yet be officially called a prophet.

- iii. The lowest level of prophecy is observed in this category. This is the experience of the prophets when, *“the word of the LORD came to...”* An example of this prophecy is the experience of the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 1: 1).
- iv. This level is hearing a word in a dream. This is the experience that Samuel had when he first heard the experience of his first revelation. (I. Samuel 3rd, 4th, 6th & 8th chapters).
- v. In a dream, talking to a prophet is the fifth level. Here we see the experience of Ezekiel (Ezek. 40: 4).
- vi. Talking to an angel in a dream is the sixth level. The experience of many prophets corresponds to this level. This is the dream of Jacob (Genesis 31.11).
- vii. Speaking to a prophet of God in a dream is the seventh level. This is the experience of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6: 1 & 7) and the experience of the prophet Micah (1 Kings 2:19).
- viii. The eighth level is when the prophet sees "something" in a vision, just as Abraham saw a firebox being passed through the "smoke of the furnace and the radiance of fire" (Genesis 17:17).
- ix. At the next level, the prophet hears a word in a vision. This is another experience of Abraham (Gen. 17: 4).
- x. In a vision, speaking to a prophet is the tenth level. This is the experience of Joshua (Josh. 5:13).
- xi. In a vision, speaking to an angel is considered the highest level of prophecy. This is the experience of Abraham when he would sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 12:15).
- xii. And above all other levels there is only one person. This is seen in the privilege or special level reserved for Moses when God appears in a vision to the prophet and speaks to him personally (Exodus 17:22).

It should be noted that Moshe Bin Meimon did not limit any prophet to just one level, but as we see in experiences 8th, 9th, and 11th, a prophet may have various levels of experience

(Maimonides M., 1904).

About communicating with God, based on the teachings of St. Gregory of Tatev, Hagop Kyoseian defines three levels of knowledge of God. *“First to the hearers, second to the wise, third to the visible”* based on Isaiah 21: 26. He concludes as follows: *“Each of these points to a particular way and level of knowing God. Such a sequence of sensory and cognitive abilities to some extent presupposes the upward development of cognition (audible, knowledge, visible). ... Knowledge of God, therefore, requires the harmonious cooperation of the senses and the mind.”* The author discusses about the levels of knowing God St. (Gregory of Tatev, 2008).

PRACTICAL TYPES OF PROPHECY

We now present another approach to Old Testament prophecy and its classification according to its purposes. In other words, what did God want to do through that prophecy or revelation, what was his purpose? In our opinion, making these distinctions in the study of prophecies is crucial for a direct approach to the interpretation of Scriptures and for the accurate explanation. It is also more important to clarify the purpose of Messianic prophecies, since many of the prophecies interpreted in the New Testament about the person of Christ have an entirely different purpose in the context of the Old Testament. In our explanations, we will use scriptures that are some examples and are not a comprehensive study.

○ Legislation

Through these prophecies, God establishes the Law (most of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and 2 Deuteronomy), the Ten Commandments (Exodus 1: 1-17), the moral laws (Exodus chapters 1st, 2nd, 3rd), and the ritual (Exodus chapters 17th - 30th.) rules, etc. Most of the messages of Moses must be contained in this section, and no other prophet can be included in this section.

○ Self-revelation

This is the prophecy where God reveals His inaccessible nature, in the measure and in the form that He finds convenient. He reveals Himself in the form of a man to Abraham (Gen. 17: 1-15), to Jacob (Gen. 25: 25-30); speaking face to face with Moses (Exodus 10:10) and

showing his back to him (Exodus 33:23); in the form of an angel to others (Judges 2: 1-2); to Isaiah and Ezekiel in the form of a man on the throne in great glory and power (Isa. 6: 1, Ezekiel 1:26); to Daniel on the throne as a judge (Dan. 5: 9-10) and many others. In this way, God manifests His glory and identity within the bounds of human capacity (the greatest example of this self-revelation is the humanity of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, and the revelation of the Most Holy Trinity at the time of Baptism).

- Warning or rebuke

Through such prophecies, God rebukes, corrects peoples, cities, countries, nations, kings, prophets, priests, and individuals calling them to repentance. The most famous example is the book of the Prophet Jonah, especially verse 3: 4, where punishment is announced. In Isaiah chapter 24th the whole nation is rebuked. Isaiah chapters 16th - 21st is sent to various cities to rebuke them. A person is warned in Isaiah 2: 15-25 and in Amos 5: 13-17 the lifestyle of the priests is condemned in chapter 28:7-10. The book of Jeremiah especially chapters 2nd -11th are full of prophecies of punishment, reprimand, and warning. The first six chapters of the book of Amos are a complete rebuke. This form of prophecy was the most dangerous and the most painful form for the prophet. It was dangerous because prophets were in danger of being killed, being imprisoned, deported, and were faced with all kinds of hardships. For this very reason God prepared the prophets to be courageous in the face of their adversaries. He warns them: Isaiah (chapter 6th), Jeremiah (Jer. 1: 4-10), Ezekiel (Ezek. chapter 3rd), rebukes and even punishes Jonah (chapters 1: 1, 2), and Balaam (Numbers chapter 2nd). It was also painful as the prophet saw the coming punishment. Or, just like Jonah, they would become enraged when punishment was lifted from Israel's enemies. One of the most painful events is the experience of Elisha (2 Kings 11: 13-13).

- Message

This is the form of prophecy through which God conveys a message to the people to encourage, to give hope, to convey a new vision, and to show them the right way. These prophecies also contained promises. When a person obeyed the message, was blessed, and found good. Otherwise, would suffer great damage. Through these prophecies the people were educated, guided, and invited to change their behavior. One of the best examples is

Deut.27 where God shows the "way" of blessing and curse. The word of Joshua (Josh. 24: 2-13), most of the chapters 40th - 62nd of book of Isaiah, the visions and the messages recorded in the first six chapters of the book of the Zechariah, should be considered in this category. We see more of such prophecies in the prophets and in the historical books.

○ Leadership

This is the prophecy where God leads a people, a group, and an individual. Leaders often sought divine guidance before making decisions. Sometimes God himself intervened and showed a direction. We find particularly good examples in the following: in each case, Moses was guided by God in specific ways and revelations. During the Ten Plagues and the Exodus, God guided Moses and the people of Israel step by step (Exodus 17-14). He also led them on a journey through the desert with a pillar of cloud and fire. Joshua was guided during battles and the conquest of the Promised Land (Josh. 3: 7-8, 4: 1-3; chapter 6th, 8: 1-26).

In the same way, God also led the judges through prophecy: He led Barak through Deborah, (Jud. 4.6-7); Gideon through an angel (Jud.6.12-19); Samuel for the anointing of David (1 Sam. 16: 1-13), David on various occasions (through Ephod, 1 Sam.30. 8-9, directly 2 Sam. 2: 1, 5.19, through prophets 2. Sam.7:4, 12:25) etc.

○ Foretelling

This is the form of prophecy where God foretold would happen in the future. This could be a plague, or the interpretation of a dream, or accidents that would happen in the future. This kind of prophecy is found in the Bible everywhere. The most prominent prophecies are the book of Daniel (Dan. chapters 7th and 8th), the commentaries of Joseph and Daniel (Gen. 10: 1-36; Dan. 2.24-49), the statement of Elijah (1 Kings 17: 1) and many others.

○ Messianic Revelation

This is the form of prophecy that has been interpreted in connection with Christ. These prophecies should be divided into two groups:

- Explicit prophecies, such as the prophecy concerning the birthplace of Christ. This prophecy was so well known that it made clear the hometown during the visit of the magi. The priests, and teachers of the Law knew exactly the place through prophesy.

• Prophecies that become known when they were fulfilled and only then it became clear that this was also spoken of Christ. Such prophecies are especially some of the prophecies quoted in the Gospels, which are interpreted by the four Evangelists.

So, we have suggested types of prophecy here. When there is a need for interpretation and the ability to interpret it rightly, we need to know what kind of prophecy it is. This becomes especially important when the prophecy is interpreted in the New Testament. If a prophecy legislates, it requires a different interpretation and approach, and if it is a message given in time, it requires a different approach. The rebuke and the foretelling, the message and the legislation must be differentiated and acquired in separate ways. Confusion leads to inappropriate practices.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we touched upon the types of prophecies and summarized an example from the Jewish tradition and a short example from the Armenian tradition. We summarized the categorization of prophecy in a famous work, the work of Maimonides (1138-1204). In this work, Maimonides made a huge study of the Jewish belief system and published it in this work. He received a great deal of criticism in his own time, but at the same time his work was translated into many languages. We have used his translation *“The Guide For The Perplexed, Translated from The Original Arabic Text”* in this study. The work, which consists of an introduction and three main chapters, contains a large corpus. The first part is divided into 76 chapters, the second part into 48 chapters and the third part into 54 chapters. In the work, which deals with many topics in the style of an Aristotelian philosopher, the second part, which we have quoted from, has 45 chapters, and the following chapters deal with the subject of prophecy from different perspectives.

We have also included the only example we could find in the Armenian language, from the foreword by Hagop Kyoseyan in the book *“St. Gregory of Tatev, Commentary on Prophecies of Isaiah”*.

In the last section, Practical Types of Prophecy, we again present a completely original work. In this chapter, we have taken the prophecy as 7 Types and made propositions and divided them into types of prophecies and gathered them under seven main headings:

Legislation, Self-revelation, Warning or rebuke, Message, Leadership, Foretelling, Messianic Revelation. We would like to emphasize that this section is entirely a proposition. Naturally, we are presenting a work that is open to all criticism, changes, and improvements. Our greatest hope is that this chapter will be taken up and developed by scholars interested in this subject and, if possible, become the subject of thesis studies.

We hope that this study will pave the way for an innovative approach to prophecies. We aim to encourage the new generation of theologians to work on this subject and to develop this study as to make more comprehensive researches and arrangements.

ԳՐԱԿԱՆՈՒԹԻՒՆ

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Տրդատ Աւ. Քահանայ Ուզունեան

Մարգարէութիւններու տեսակները. Նորարարական մօտեցում մը

Ամփոփում

Բանալի բառեր և արտայայտութիւններ. մարգարէութիւն, մարգարէութեան տեսակներ, մարգարէութեան գործնական տեսակներ, մարգարէ, Նոր Կտակարան, Հին Կտակարան:

Թէեւ մարգարէութիւնը Աստուածաշունչի ամենակարեւոր մասն է, սակայն, մեր կարծիքով, եղած է ամենաքիչ վերլուծուած թեմաներէն մէկը: Մարգարէութիւններու մեկնութիւնը տուած է քրիստոնէական աւանդութեան ամենաընդարձակ աշխատութիւնները: Մինչ մարգարէներու պատգամները մանրամասնօրէն վերլուծուած են, «մարգարէութիւն» գաղափարը ինքնին քիչ ուշադրութեան արժանացած է: Այս ուսումնասիրութիւնը կը ներկայացնէ կարճ, բայց նորարարական մօտեցում՝ մարգարէութիւն թեմային եւ անոր տեսակներուն: Միջնադարէն մինչեւ մեր օրերը փոխանցուած հրեական աւանդութիւնէն մօտեցում մը կը ներկայացուի ամփոփ կերպով: Ապա կ'առաջարկուի նոր տեսակաւորում՝ այլ մօտեցմամբ:

Այս ուսումնասիրութեան առաջին բաժնին մէջ տրուած են որոշ ուսումնասիրութիւններ հրեական և հայկական աւանդութիւններէն մարգարէութեան տեսակներու վերաբերեալ՝ օրինակներով և ներկայացուած են տեսակներու օրինակներ:

Երկրորդ բաժնին մէջ կը քննարկուի մարգարէութեան գործնական տեսակները, որ մեր առաջարկութիւնն է եւ կը բացատրի, թէ մարգարէութիւններու ինչ տեսակներու բաժնելով պէտք է քննուին:

Եզրափակութեան մէջ մենք ամփոփեցինք մեր նպատակը և ուսումնասիրութեան հիմնական մասերը:

Протоиерей Трдат Узунян

Виды Пророчеств: Инновационный подход

Заключение

Ключевые слова и выражения: Пророчество, виды пророчеств, практические виды пророчеств, пророк, Новый Завет, Ветхий Завет, еврейская традиция.

Несмотря на то, что пророчества составляют важнейшую часть Библии, они, на наш взгляд, являются ее наименее изученной темой. Толкованию пророчеств посвящены наиболее обширные работы в христианской традиции. В то время как послания пророков подробно анализировались, самому феномену "пророчества" уделялось мало внимания. В данном исследовании представлен краткий, но новаторский подход к теме пророчества и его типов. Взят подход из иудейской традиции, передаваемой от средневековья до наших дней, и представлено лишь краткое изложение, в то время как предложена новая диверсификация с иным подходом.

В первой части исследования приводятся некоторые исследования из еврейской и армянской традиций о типах пророчества с примерами, а также примеры диверсификации.

Во второй части обсуждается тема практических типов пророчества, которая является нашим предложением, и объясняется, какие типы пророчеств должны быть рассмотрены.

В заключение мы подвели итог нашей цели и основных частей исследования.

Տրդատ Աւ. Քահանայ Ուզունեան – ԵՊՀ Աստվածաբանության ֆակուլտետի, աստվածաբանության և Հայ Եկեղեցու պատմության ամբիոնի ասպիրանտ: Գիտական հետաքրքրությունները՝ Աստվածաշունչ, աստվածաբանություն, Սուրբ Գրային մեկնություն: Հեղինակ է շուրջ 15 հոդվածի եւ երկու գրքի: duzunyan@gmail.com

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