

**POETS, PROPHETS, CRITICS, AND EXEGETES  
IN CLASSICAL AND BIBLICAL ANTIQUITY  
AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY**

Josef Lössl, Cardiff University (LossIJ@cardiff.ac.uk)

Seer (μάντις),<sup>1</sup> healer, carpenter, poet (θέσπις ἀοιδός): These, according to *Odyssey* XVII 382-85, are the most important public service professions (δημοιοεργοί) in the new polis.<sup>2</sup> They should be called in, if necessary, from the ends of the world. The decadent members of the old warrior aristocracy, in contrast, whose aim in life is to waste and marry kingdoms (in this order), like Penelope's suitors, have become obsolete. It is a new society that is envisaged here in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Soon the vision would also be expressed in legal terms, e. g. in Solon's legislation ca. 600 B.C., which contains a similar list (13.43-62 *IEG*).

It is striking how important, and closely related, the offices of μάντις, 'seer', or 'prophet', and θέσπις ἀοιδός, divinely inspired 'singer', or 'poet', seem to be in the new polis. And yet they seem to be two separate offices, besides 'healer', another office with a religious connotation. Why is this apparently so? Were they always separated or had they developed from a common source? Their further fate might provide a clue; for what emerges now, in that new society, is a new type of office, or counter-office, as one might call it; for it begins as a non-office, a non-official role, closely related to both, seer and singer, μάντις and ἀοιδός, one which I would tentatively call that of (poetic and prophetic) 'critic'.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'unattached' seer (*mantis* or *chresmologos*) as opposed to the προφήτης, who officiated as divine 'mouthpiece' at an oracular shrine; see R. C. T. Parker, 'Prophētēs,' in: <sup>3</sup>*OCD* (1996) 1259. For the links between μάντις, προφήτης, and θέσπις ἀοιδός in the early Greek and Hellenistic context see also G. Nagy, 'Ancient Greek Poetry, Prophecy, and Concepts of Theory,' in: J. L. Kugel, ed., *Poetry and Prophecy. The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1990) 56-64. This volume also contains essays on Biblical, Islamic, Medieval, and Modern examples of links between poetry and prophecy. J. L. Kugel, 'Poets and Prophets,' in: Id., *Poetry and Prophecy* 1-25 offers some methodological reflections, particularly on relating Classical and Biblical poetry and prophecy.

<sup>2</sup> See *Odyssey* 17.383-385: τίς γάρ δῃ ξείνον καλεῖ ἄλλοθεν αὐτὸς ἐπελθὼν / ἄλλον γ', εἰ μὴ τῶν, οἱ δημοιοεργοὶ ἔασι; / μάντιν ἢ ἰητῆρα κακῶν ἢ τέκτονα δούρων, / ἢ καὶ θέσπιν ἀοιδόν...

Xenophanes, who flourished after 540 B.C., was neither *μάντις* nor *αοιδός*. None the less he expressed strong views on religion, as a performer of non-lyric poetry. He has been called a ‘rhapsode’ (*DL* 9.18), which is not incorrect.<sup>3</sup> But rhapsode was not a profession. ‘His best hope,’ so Andrew Ford in a recent study,<sup>4</sup> ‘was to be taken for a wandering *sophos*, a man of insight and intellect, worth entertaining and perhaps retaining for a time.’ *Sophoi*, or *philosophoi*, as they became known, too, eventually professionalized. But they began as dissenters. The target of their dissidence, moreover, their frame of reference, was the corpus of literature fixed in writing only recently. In other words, philosophy began as exegesis, criticism as literary criticism, as criticism, however, of a sacred literature, and the religion and culture which it represented. Theagenes of Rhegium, who flourished around 525 B.C., read the strife of the gods in *Iliad* 20 as an allegory about the ‘strife’ of the natural elements.<sup>5</sup> After him and Xenophanes allegory and criticism were the chief methods used to reinterpret traditional religion. Though (in most cases) the aim was not to ‘remove (*ἀναίρειν*) the gods’ philosophers and exegetes were from now on suspected, and occasionally also accused, of atheism, like Anaxagoras in early, and Diagoras of Melos in late, 4<sup>th</sup> century Athens.<sup>6</sup> The professionalisation of the critic as sophist proved problematic, but it could not undermine the critical approach as such with its inherent self-regulatory mechanism. Criticism, inspired by its sources, remained alive in various forms well into Late Antiquity.

Biblical prophecy developed in many ways similar to Greek poetry, prophecy, and criticism. There existed also two basic types of prophets, analogous to *μάντις* and *προφήτης*, namely *הַרְבֵּי רָחֵם* and *נְבִיאִים* (cf. 1 Samuel 9-10), the first characterised by clairvoyance, the second by divine ecstasis usually acquired in connection with a local shrine. In Greek religion, too, *μάντις* was a seer, *προφήτης* a prophet based at a local shrine. Now ecstasis meant that the prophet spoke God’s words rather than his own (1 Samuel 10:10-11; 19:23-24), but it could also create the impression of madness (2 Kings 9:11; Jeremiah 29:26). And this tended to bring prophecy, as a

<sup>3</sup> See also K. Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (Bonn: Cohen, 1916) 133. A. Ford, *The Origins of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) 50 n. 24 points out that ‘the testimony is often dismissed (see e. g. W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947) 41-43), but Diogenes is using “rhapsode” in its classical sense of “performer of non-lyric poetry” (cf. also A. Ford, “The Classical Definition of *PHAΨΩΔΙΑ*,” in: *CPh* 83 (1988) 300-307).’ Generally for the topic treated by Ford see also Yun Lee Too, *The Idea of Ancient Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Ford, *Origins* 50.

<sup>5</sup> See Ford, *Origins* 68; and, more fully, A. Ford, ‘Epic and the Earliest Greek Allegorists,’ in: M. Beissinger, J. Tylus, S. Wofford, eds., *Epics and the Contemporary World* (Berkeley-London: University of California Press, 1999) 33-53. ‘That Theagenes wrote about Homer is specified in Porphyry (8.2 DK: ...ἀπὸ Θεαγένους τοῦ Ῥηγίνου, ὃς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὀμήρου) and the *Suda* (8.4 DK),’ according to Ford, *Origins* 68 n. 1, even though whether the elaborate allegory in Scholion B Y 67 (519-20 von Thiel) goes back to Theagenes is another matter. See for this still R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship I: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 9-11 and F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d’Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris: Société d’édition Les Belles Lettres, 1956) 103-104.

<sup>6</sup> For further examples see R. C. T. Parker, ‘Atheism,’ in: <sup>3</sup>*OCD* (1996) 201; for Diagoras see now M. Broggiato, ‘Giovanni Lido, *Sui mesi*, 4. 71: un nuovo frammento di Diagora di Melo?’ in: *Seminari Romani di Cultura Greca* 5 (2002) 231-237.

profession, into disrepute. The image of the prophet as a professional with vested interests, and of professional prophets as a bunch of often debauched and corrupt madmen, contrasts with what came to be the Biblical prophets, and authors, or, in some cases, perceived authors, of the prophet books. Amos, the earliest of them – according to Amos 1:1 his mission dates between 760 and 750 B.C. (also the date of the *Iliad*) – famously denied any link to professional prophecy. ‘I am neither a prophet, nor the son (i. e. the pupil or student) of a prophet, but a herdsman and a “dresser of sycamore figs”’ (Amos 7:14),<sup>7</sup> he tries to reassure Amaziah, the priest at Bethel. Amaziah suspects, perhaps from experience with professional prophets, that Amos’ action is politically motivated. He orders him to leave Israel, since he has no licence to prophesy there, and, significantly, addresses him as ‘seer’, ὄρων, rather than נָבִיא, προφήτης. In Amaziah’s world, a נָבִיא, i. e. a προφήτης attached to an official shrine, would not prophesy against the king and the establishment, nor would he be a foreigner. But a foreigner might be accepted as a ‘seer’, and in this capacity, as a δημιοσεργός, a public servant, his prophecy might at least be heard, if not listened to. The motif reminds of the above cited passage from *Odyssey* XVII. Another Biblical story, that of Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40) illustrates that the competition between official and in-official, critical, prophecy, had a history in Israel. In fact, as it turned out, the critical type became increasingly identified with the core of the Biblical message, i. e. Moses was seen as the prophet, and the Pentateuch as the prophecy, *katexochen*,<sup>8</sup> while the part of the Bible which became known as ‘the prophets’ (נְבִיאִים), the history and prophet books, were seen as interpreting and thereby reiterating the original message. And the message was that God acted independently of earthly powers on the side of the oppressed and marginalised, choosing his own prophets, and now also, increasingly making the criteria which revealed them as genuine universally recognisable. That latter effect was achieved by the process by which the Bible turned into literature. The utterings of the prophets, their messages as expressed in beautiful, albeit often obscure, poetic language, were set in writing, disseminated and made available for study, interpretation, critique, and imitation.

What this meant in the long term can be seen, for example, in Luke’s account of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 4:16-22). This story relates a prophetic event. This event has several layers, and it unfolds in several steps: 1. Jesus reads from a prophetic book (Isaiah 61:1-2; 29:18; 58:6), 2. he interprets the text which

<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew does not specify the tense (לֹא נָבִיא אֲנִי וְלֹא בֶן־נָבִיא) ‘I- neither a prophet nor the “son” of a prophet’) and Jerome translates using the present tense, *non sum...* However, the Greek (LXX) has οὐκ ἤμην προφήτης, which Jerome, in *Amos* 3.7.14 (CCL 76, 323.365), translates: *non eram propheta ego*. Thus the LXX text suggests that Amos changed professions. The Hebrew, as understood by Jerome, emphasizes the contrast between the professional prophets at Bethel and Amos, who was a mere ‘amateur’, called by God temporarily to desert his accustomed professions to be his herald; for this and other issues in this context see J. Lössl, ‘A Shift in Patristic Exegesis. Hebrew Clarity and Historical Verity in Augustine, Jerome, Julian of Aelclanum and Theodore of Mopsuestia,’ in: *AugStud* 32 (2001) 157-75, 161-62 nn. 21 and 22.

<sup>8</sup> See R. M. Berchman, ‘*Arcana Mundi*: Prophecy and Divination in the *Vita Mosis* of Philo of Alexandria,’ in: D. J. Lull, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature, 1988, Seminar Papers 27* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1988), 385-423; R. M. Berchman, ‘*Arcana Mundi*: Prophecy and Divination in the *Vita Mosis* of Philo of Alexandria,’ in: *The Ancient World* 26 (1995) 150-79.

he has just read, and 3. he does so by applying the text to himself declaring that at the very moment he read the prophecy, it was fulfilled in him (Luke 4:21: *σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφή αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὠσὶν ὑμῶν*, ‘this very text is being fulfilled today, as you listen’). New Testament writings use a range of motifs to depict Jesus as a prophet, his consciousness of having a divine commission, formulae like ‘Amen, I say to you’ reminding of phrases like ‘Thus says the Lord’, his prophetic foresight and knowledge of the minds of those around him, his use of symbolic actions and his visions and ecstatic experiences.<sup>9</sup> But all these elements are drawn together in his use of poetic language and, consequently, in the (critical) interpretation of that language, critical in the sense that it engages with conventional religious language and perceptions. In terms of content, the message which Jesus is said to have read in Nazareth on that Sabbath is no different from that proclaimed already by Amos: God will right social wrong. That which is really prophetic, or revolutionary, here is Jesus’ exegesis.

Significantly, this kind of revolutionary activity aroused conflict, as the further development also of Luke’s story shows (cf. Luke 4:28-29). Prophets often turned martyrs, paying with their lives for their sense of duty to their divine commission. Again, this phenomenon is not unknown in ancient Greek poetry either. Aigisthos, to get Klytaimnestra, had to kill the *ἄοιδός ἀνὴρ* whom Agamemnon had appointed as a guard to his wife (*Odyssey* 3.267-72). Vice versa, in *Iliad* 2.594-97 the singer Thamyris was blinded and lost his skills after boasting that he could sing without help from the muses.<sup>10</sup>

The style of the book that was the literary outcome of Amos’ prophecy further suggests that Amos may have been more of a *ῥέσις ἀοιδός* than a *μάντις*. His style and poetry is increasingly appreciated by modern exegetes,<sup>11</sup> and it was famously praised and imitated already in antiquity, for example by Jerome, whose congenial translation even tempted Augustine to cite it extensively and discuss it,<sup>12</sup> although he was generally sceptical about Jerome’s project of translating the Bible from the Hebrew on the ground that it rendered the text too comprehensible. One important aspect of prophetic poetry was its notorious obscurity and, consequently, its need for interpretation, which could be exploited for allegoresis and spiritual exegesis.

Here lie, as already pointed out, the common roots of ancient prophecy, poetry, and exegesis. Now Julian of Aeclanum wrote in the preface to his commentary on Hosea, Joel, and Amos that the excellent new translation from the Hebrew, which

<sup>9</sup> For a brief summary of these motifs see D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983) 11.

<sup>10</sup> These links are thoroughly analysed by J. Svenbro, *La parola e il marmo: Alle origini delle poetica greca* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> On poetry in Amos see e. g. F. I. Andersen, D. N. Freedman, *Amos. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible Commentary vol. 24A; New York et al.: Doubleday, 1989) 144-49, 214-16 and passim (index); for the historical background D. N. Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy. Studies in early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980); for the literary dimension W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A Guide to its techniques* (JSOT.S 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> See Aug. *doctr.* 4.7.15-21 (CCL 32, 127-31); A. Moreau, ‘Sur un commentaire d’Amos. De doctrina christiana 4.7.15-21 sur Amos 6.1-6,’ in: A.-M. La Bonnardière, ed., *Saint Augustin et la Bible* (Bible de tous le temps 3; Paris: Beauchesne, 1986) 313-22.

he used – it was Jerome’s, though Julian consistently avoids mentioning his name – made allegoresis henceforth superfluous.<sup>13</sup> That Julian should have been free to choose his lemma on such grounds is interesting enough. It may indicate how far things had moved on since Jerome himself had first begun commenting upon his new translation, when he felt obliged to write parallel commentaries on the Greek as well as on the Hebrew version.<sup>14</sup> Only gradually his emphasis shifted in favour of the latter, on similar grounds as those put forward by Julian,<sup>15</sup> better historical understanding and better understanding of the literal meaning of the text. But now that was precisely what Augustine did not like.<sup>16</sup> Less obscurity in the text meant fewer opportunities for allegoresis. Less allegoresis however meant a gradual loss of spiritual meaning, an increased secularization of the language and the message of the Bible. Nonetheless however, Augustine did appreciate the linguistic quality of Jerome’s translation, its language and style; he therefore moved himself in that direction, for example with his work *On Christian Doctrine*. Julian of Aelclanum, on the other hand, in spite of his announcement, continued, like the late Jerome, to allegorize and typologize.<sup>17</sup> The choice was therefore not an exclusive one. What we have here is merely a change (albeit controversial) in emphasis.

Poetic (epic!) by nature, prophecy was constantly in need of interpretation. To some extent it was first created with precisely that in mind. Just as the first critics of Greek epic were the poets and rhapsodes themselves,<sup>18</sup> so the earliest Biblical exegetes were prophets, or the prophets were exegetes, of the historical (political, social and economic) situation with which they were confronted, of visions which they experienced and described, of symbolic acts which they performed. And that remained so throughout antiquity.

Now some modern scholars seem to see prophecy as an archaic and, above all, irrational phenomenon which was gradually marginalised and eventually eclipsed by more sophisticated, structured, hierarchical, scholarly, and, that seems to be the implication, less inspired, literary forms, including exegetical ones.<sup>19</sup> From such a

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<sup>13</sup> Though the actual word ‘allegory’ (*allegoria*) is not used in this context, it is alluded to by *diuinatio* (cf. Berchman, *Arcana Mundi*): Iul. Aecl. *tr. proph. praef.* (CCL 88, 115.28-116.39): *dehinc nostri operis ut lector agnoscat, et quam sim editionem secutus, et quo praecipue consideratu munus hoc difficillimae explanationis assumpserim, ut si et ipse de eorum numero est, quos cura lectionis exercet, haud de nihilo me fecisse cognoscat, ut istam postremam editionem, quae ‘secundum Hebraeum’ appellatur, eligerem: quandoquidem in prioribus editionibus elocutionum uitata frequenter sensum uel doctrinae uel narrationis dirumpant, ut diuinatione magis quam conditione opus esse uideatur, posterior autem translatio, etsi non multum ipsi contextui splendoris adiecit, tamen elocutionum integritate, illa quae diximus interceptorum sensuum damna frequenter euitat.*

<sup>14</sup> See for this P. Jay, *L’exégèse de S. Jérôme d’après son comm. in Is* (Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité 108; Paris: Études Augustininiennes, 1985) 42-104.

<sup>15</sup> See for this below in this article on the preface of Jerome’s commentary on Jeremiah.

<sup>16</sup> For Augustine’s use of Jerome’s translation compared to Julian’s see Lössl, ‘A Shift’ 159-163; see also above n. 7.

<sup>17</sup> See for this J. Lössl, ‘When is a Locust Just a Locust? Patristic Exegesis of Joel 1:4 in the Light of Ancient Literary Theory,’ in: *The Journal of Theological Studies* 55 (2004) 575-599.

<sup>18</sup> See for this already Pfeiffer, *History* 3-15, and more recently Ford, *Origins* 1-89.

<sup>19</sup> See more recently A. Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching. A Search for the Origins of the Christian Homily* (VCS 58; Leiden: Brill, 2001); for some earlier examples (e. g. Käsemann and von Campenhausen) see the survey in Aune, *Prophecy* 14.

point of view the rise of the commentary from prophecy coincides with the rise of orthodoxy from the charismatic communities of the first and second centuries, the expulsion and extinction of Montanism being a case in point. But was there really such a clear cut development, or did contemporaries experience that development, in so far as it took place, really as an eclipse of prophecy, or not rather as a kind of transformation? Can ancient prophecy really be narrowed down to a wild, archaic, unstructured and irrational form of religious expression or was it not perceived, in the relevant period itself, from the earliest time to late antiquity, as a phenomenon that was also inherently rational?

For the ancients, as we have seen, rational, if sometimes rationalising, exegesis of poetic and prophetic texts was an integral part of prophecy. Philo and Clement of Alexandria e. g. linked classical as well as Biblical prophecy to (preferably pre-socratic) philosophy,<sup>20</sup> but also to archaic poetry. Clement, towards the end of his *Protrepticus*, presents the Homeric seer Tiresias<sup>21</sup> (*Odyssey* 10.490-95 and 11.90-99) as a prophetic figure, Mosaic style, his staff (ξύλος) symbolising the Christian cross.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, a few paragraphs earlier<sup>23</sup> ξύλος denotes the ship's mast on which Odysseus lets himself be tied to resist the temptation aroused by the alluring song of the Sirens (*Odyssey* 12.178), thus saving himself and his crew. Salvation is the central motif in that passage, and Clement, quite unashamedly, draws a strikingly close parallel between Odysseus and Christ, perhaps uncomfortably close for our modern taste. But not for Clement, because the medium of his theology is poetry, i. e. prophetic poetry which includes its own interpretation. The Sirens' song may indeed be beautiful, but it is false. Their praise for Odysseus as renowned in song (πολυύμνητος) is true in that Odysseus indeed is πολυύμνητος, but it is also false, for it is not aimed at praising Odysseus, but at luring him to his destruction. Thus the proper response to 'divine song' (cf. *Odyssey* 12.185: *θειοτέρην ὄπ'*) on the earthly level is resistance.<sup>24</sup> Fulfilment will only be found with the hidden joys in heaven.

<sup>20</sup> See Phil. Alex. *Mut.* 223; *Q. Div. Her.* 291; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 6.67.1, and above note 6; for a double concept of ecstasy in Philo (trance-like and intellectual) in this context see J. R. Levison, 'Two Types of Ecstatic Prophecy According to Philo,' in: *The Studia Philonica Annual* 6 (1994) 83-89.

<sup>21</sup> See G. Ugolini, *Untersuchungen zur Figur des Sehers Teiresias* (Tübingen: Narr, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 119.2-3 (172.15-20 Marcovich): ὁ χορὸς οἱ δίκαιοι, τὸ ἄσμα ἕμνος ἐστὶ τοῦ πάντων βασιλείως· ψάλλουσιν αἱ κόραι, δοξάζουσιν ἄγγελοι, προφήται λαλοῦσιν, ἦχος στέλλεται μουσικῆς, δρόμῳ τὸν δίασον διώκουσιν, σπεύδουσιν οἱ κεκλημένοι πατέρα ποθοῦντες ἀπολαβεῖν. ἦκέ μοι, ὦ πρέσβυ, καὶ σύ, τὰς Θήβας λιπῶν καὶ τὴν μαντικὴν τὴν Βακχικὴν ἀπορρίψας πρὸς ἀλήθειαν χειραγωγῶ· ἰδοὺ σοι τὸ ξύλον ἐπερείδουσαι δίδωμι. Σπεῦσον, Τειρεσία, πίστευσον· ὄψει Χριστὸς ἐπιλάμπει φαιδρότερον ἡλίου, δι' ὃν ὀφθαλμοὶ τυφλῶν ἀναβλέπουσιν. Νύξ σε φευξεται, πῦρ φοβηθήσεται, θάνατος οἰχήσεται· ὄψει τοὺς οὐρανούς, ὦ γέρον, ὁ Θήβας μὴ βλέπων.

<sup>23</sup> Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 118.4 (171.18 Marcovich, with plenty of secondary literature listed in the apparatus); cf. Hippol. *haer.* 7.13.2; Justin. *1 apol.* 55.3; Tert. *adv. Marc.* 3.18.4 (CCL 1, 532.24-27); Min. Fel. *Oct.* 29.8 (51.15-20 Beaujeu); Method. Olymp. *Porphy.* 1.8 (ed. Bonwetsch, GCS 27, 504.29); further references in Speyer, 'Holz,' in: *RAC* 16 (1994) 87-116, especially 109-113.

<sup>24</sup> Clement may here also have thought of the temptations faced by Christ (Matthew 4:1-11), in particular the 'last temptation' that the cross might be avoided (Matthew 16:21-23). In many ways Satan was of course right and the demons spoke the truth, or prophesied (Mark 1:24), but that was precisely why they had to be resisted.

Now in *Protr.* 119.2-3 Clement relates the false prophetic song of the Homeric Sirens to that of the Euripidean *Bacchantes* and draws a parallel between Odysseus and Tiresias. Ξύλος is the common metaphor, the mast on Odysseus' ship, and the staff in Teiresias' hand. Euripides uses βάλκτρον for 'staff' (*Bacchae* 363f.), but, as Callimachus, *In Lavacrum Palladis* 5.127 (ed. Pfeiffer), points out, ξύλος can also be used for μέγα βάλκτρον. The staff, but even more so, the one who holds it, gives guidance in a confusing situation. Significantly, he is an old man, πρέσβυς, γέρον, and blind, τυφλός. And this precisely makes him also a seer.<sup>25</sup> In the centre piece of his passage Clement develops these motifs: 'Hurry, Teiresias, believe, and you shall see. Christ by whom the eyes of the blind regain their sight shines upon you more brightly than the sun ... You shall see heaven, old man, you who cannot see Thebes.'<sup>26</sup>

Metaphors of song and prophecy support this message. The 'chorus is formed by the righteous' (ὁ χορὸς οἱ δίκαιοι), it sets out,<sup>27</sup> a phrase which the late 3<sup>rd</sup>, early 4<sup>th</sup> century theologian Methodius of Olympus, in the preface to his work *On Free Will*, where he generally draws heavily on Clement's *Protrepticus*, modifies to 'a divine chorus of prophets' (θεῖός τις χορὸς προφητῶν).<sup>28</sup> Clement lists the prophets and their activity (προφήται λαλοῦσιν) as one of several effects caused by the song (ᾠσμα) sung by the chorus, a hymn (ὕμνος) to the universal emperor: τὸ ᾠσμα ἐστὶ τοῦ πάντων βασιλέως· ψάλλουσιν αἱ κόραι, δοξάζουσιν ἄγγελοι, προφήται λαλοῦσιν. Τὸ ᾠσμα is a central phrase in Clement's *Protrepticus*. It recurs as τὸ ᾠσμα τὸ καινόν<sup>29</sup> and καινὴ ἀρμονία<sup>30</sup> and echoes Apocalypse 14:3: καὶ ᾄδουσιν ᾠδὴν καινὴν.

Thus, for Clement, prophecy is poetry holding the key to its own meaning. In 1 Corinthians 14:27 Saint Paul famously compared the interpretation of speaking in tongues to prophecy, and in the middle of the fourth century Diodore of Tarsus is still alluding to that passage in view of his own interpretation of Saint Paul's letter

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 119.3 (172.15 Marcovich): ᾧ πρέσβυ and Eurip. *Bacch.* 175f. πρέσβυς; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 119.3 (172.20 Marcovich): ᾧ γέρον, ὁ Θήβας μὴ βλέπων and Eurip. *Bacch.* 185f. ἐξηγοῦ σύ μοι γέρον γέροντι, *Τειρεσία*; for the motif of guidance cf. Eurip. *Bacch.* 193 γέρον γέροντα παιδαγωγῆσω σ' ἐγώ and Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 119.3 (172.16 Marcovich): ...πρὸς ἀλήθειαν χειραγωγοῦ. For Tiresias' age and blindness see J. Roux, *Euripide. Les Bacchantes* II (Paris: Société des belles lettres, 1972) 301-304 and 623; V. Leinieks, *The City of Dionysos. A Study of Euripides' Bakchai* (BzA 88; Stuttgart-Leipzig: Teubner, 1996) 124.

<sup>26</sup> Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 119.3 (172.17-20 Marcovich). The Biblical references are numerous. For σπεῦσον cf. Luke 2:16; 19:5 (*Ζακχαῖε, σπεύσας*); for πιστεῦσον, ὄψει cf. John 11:40 (ἐὰν πιστεύσης ὄψει τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ), for Χριστὸς ἐπιλάμπει cf. Isaiah 35:5 (τότε ἀνοιχθήσονται ὀφθαλμοὶ τυφλῶν), 42:7 (ἀνοίξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς τυφλῶν), 42:18 (καὶ οἱ τυφλοὶ, ἀναβλέψατε ἰδεῖν) and, besides many others, 29:18 (καὶ οἱ ... ὀφθαλμοὶ τυφλῶν βλέψονται). The last passage is cited in Luke 4:18, where it supports the view that Jesus' ministry is prophetic from its outset. See also Matthew 11:5 (τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν). The motif repeatedly recurs in healing narratives. Cf. also the motif of the blind leading the blind, e. g. Matthew 15:14 (τυφλοὶ εἰσὶν ὄδηγοὶ τυφλῶν); 23:16 (οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, ὄδηγοὶ τυφλοῖ), which is alluded to (at least indirectly) in Eurip. *Bacch.* 185f. and picked up by Clement.

<sup>27</sup> Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 119.2 (172.10 Marcovich).

<sup>28</sup> Method. Olymp. *lib. arb.* 1.1 (ed. Bonwetsch, GCS 27, 146.7); cf. also *ibid.* (146.11-12) the use of χειραγωγεῖν (*Protr.* 119.3 (172.16 Marcovich)) for ἐξεγεῖν (Eurip. *Bacch.* 185) or παιδαγωγεῖν (Eurip. *Bacch.* 193).

<sup>29</sup> Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 4.27; 6.1f.; 7.11 (7.27; 10; 12 Marcovich).

<sup>30</sup> Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.26 (4.25 Marcovich); see also 6.14 and 27 (10 and 11 Marcovich).

to the Romans: ‘If someone interprets the words of the prophet, that is also called “prophecy”.’<sup>31</sup> He discusses Romans 12:6: ‘Our gifts differ according to the grace given to us. If your gift is prophecy, use it as your faith suggests.’ There can be no doubt that Diodore understood his own exegetical work as a prophetic activity, as did his pupil, Theodore of Mopsuestia, who wrote his famous commentary on the *Dodekapropheton*, his second work altogether (his first being significantly on the Psalms), ‘against the arguments of those who uncritically apply themselves to the prophetic voices.’<sup>32</sup> Generally, ἔλεγχος can be a (boring) treatise as well as a work polemical in nature. Similarly, ἀβασανίστως can mean ‘critical’ in a rational sense, as well as ‘scrutinising’ in an ascetic context. Characteristically, Theodore speaks of προφητικαὶ φωναί rather than, perhaps, γράφαι. In his view therefore the diligent exegete must also be an ascetic prophet, an artistic poet, and an acerbic critic. All these elements are required to keep the biblical message alive.

Theodore’s rationalism is often praised, and even more often condemned, but rarely explained. Why should critical scrutiny be so important for an exegesis of the prophets? Why a historical exegesis? Is it for an antiquarian purpose, or does Theodore believe, if we assume, as we may, that he understands himself as called in a prophetic capacity, that an historical interpretation is in a special way capable of releasing to the present the full potential of the prophetic message contained in the relevant prophetic books? Theodore’s approach was philological and literary. He wanted to do justice to the texts as texts, to their genre. He also aimed hard at understanding them within their own historical frame. He had already tried to do that for the Psalms, who were even more similar to epic poetry than the prophetic books. But what was the theological dimension of that approach?

The Hellenistic and early Post-Hellenistic period, or, roughly, the time between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D., had seen, to some extent, the separation of philological and philosophical exegesis, or poetry, criticism, philology, philosophy, and science.<sup>33</sup> But this was still a far cry from the process that led to the development of modern academic disciplines. True, there was specialisation, but there was also a lot more overlap than in modern times. Philosophers were able to engage in philology and wrote scientific treatises in verse. Porphyry’s famous recording of Plotinus’s that ‘Longinus was a philologue, not a philosopher’ (*Vita Plotini* 14.19) confirms that. Longinus could do both, philosophy and philology, as the recent study by Irmgard Männlein-Robert reiterates: He was both, philosopher and philologue.<sup>34</sup> His time, the period in which he lived, allowed him, and indeed made him, to be just that.

<sup>31</sup> Diod. Tars. in *Rom* 12.6-8 (106.9-10 Staab): λέγεται δὲ προφητεία καὶ ὅταν τις τὰ τοῦ προφήτου ἐρμηνεύῃ.

<sup>32</sup> Theod. Mops. in *XII proph.* praef. (1.8-9 Sprenger): εἰς ἔλεγχον τῶν ἀβασανίστως ἐπιβάλλειν ταῖς προφητικαῖς ἐπιχειρούντων φωναῖς...

<sup>33</sup> For the history of philology in this context see Pfeiffer, *History*, for philosophy and science H. Flashar, ed., *Die Philosophie der Antike 4/1-2: Die hellenistische Philosophie* (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1994); D. Furley, ed., *Routledge History of Philosophy vol. 2: From Aristotle to Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1997); G. Sarton, *Hellenistic Science and Culture in the Last Three Centuries BC* (New York: Dover, 1993); G. L. Irby-Massie & P. T. Keyser, *Greek Science of the Hellenistic Era. A Source Book* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> See I. Männlein-Robert, *Longin. Philologe und Philosoph* (BzA 143; Munich: Saur, 2001).

In the case of Early Christianity one could argue that philology and philosophy, or exegesis and systematic (doctrinal) theology, separated with Origen. But again, that sounds like a contradiction in terms. Origen precisely united the two elements in his person, and he remained a model for later theologians,<sup>35</sup> in whose works the two aspects continued to be closely connected.

A sore issue here is allegory. We heard that it was first applied as a rationalist technique, to depersonalise mythical gods and reduce them to natural forces. The problem was obvious. This could not possibly be done with the Biblical message. Tatian in his address to the Greeks emphatically distinguishes the historical force of the Biblical faith from the feeble and contradictory message of Greek myth: It is precisely the non-rationalist belief in bodily resurrection, he argues, that makes sense in the light of creation and incarnation. Any rationalisation of myth simply cannot overcome its contradictions. If Minos and Rhadamanthys are the judges of the underworld, what happened before they lived?<sup>36</sup> Rather oddly, Tatian seems to be concerned about pagan religion. He warns pagans not to allegorise their myths, as this might further undermine their religion.<sup>37</sup> But his concern is only rhetorical. He assumes that pagan religion is rationalised by way of allegory and that there is no need for this in Biblical religion.

Following Philo, Clement and Origen did allegorise Biblical themes in a pagan manner, i. e. as if they were dealing with poetic, epic, mythical texts; however not as excessively as Valentinian is supposed to have done, by and large denying faith and history a part in the salvation process.<sup>38</sup> Clement and Origen rejected Gnostic allegoresis, but were themselves attacked for their allegoresis by those who sided with Tatian's position, like Theodore of Mopsuestia. Three centuries after Tatian, but only inches away from his position, Theodore wrote in his *Treatise against the Allegorists*, in fact the preface to his commentary on Psalms, also known to Julian of Aclanum, that Philo 'had adopted allegory from the pagans, who themselves had used it as a way to disprove their myths,' and that Origen had followed him. In Theodore's view 'using this method implies that the Scriptures are essentially false myths needing explanation.' Consequently, Origen's methods, adopted as they are from Philo, 'are flawed on three fronts: they are pagan, they are Jewish, and they make the scriptural record a lie.'<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Note, for example, the similarity in this respect of such different theologians like Athanasius, Eusebius of Caesarea, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, and Theodoret of Cyrus.

<sup>36</sup> See Tatian. *Or. Graec.* 6 (15.6-8 Marcovich; 6.20-22 Schwartz; 10 Whittaker): *δικάζουσιν δὲ ἡμῖν οὐ Μίνως οὐδὲ Ραδάμανθους (ὡν πρὸ τῆς τελευτῆς οὐδεμία τῶν ψυχῶν, ὡς μυθολογοῦσιν, ἐκρίνετο), δοκιμαστῆς δ' αὐτὸς ὁ ποιητῆς θεὸς γίνεται.*

<sup>37</sup> See Tatian. *Or. Graec.* 21 (43.5-7 Marcovich; 23.5-25 Schwartz; 42 Whittaker): *ᾧ ἄνδρες Ἕλληνας, μηδὲ τοὺς μύθους μηδὲ τοὺς θεοὺς ὑμῶν ἀλληγορήσητε· κἂν γὰρ τοῦτο πράττειν ἐπιχειρήσητε, θεότης ἢ καὶ ἡμῶν ἀνήρηται καὶ ὑφ' ἡμῶν καὶ ὑφ' ὑμῶν.*

<sup>38</sup> For Valentinus' exegetical approach see now D. Dawson, *Allegorical readers and cultural revision in ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992) 125-80. Dawson calls it 'apocalypse of the mind' and concedes, in the wake of Aune, *Prophecy* 8, that, as such, it also contains a certain element of prophecy.

<sup>39</sup> J. J. O'Keefe, "'A Letter that Killeth": Toward a Reassessment of Antiochene Exegesis, or Diodore, Theodore, and Theodoret on the Psalms,' in: *JECS* 8 (2000) 83-104, 91 paraphrasing Theodore; for the original see L. van Rompay, *Théodore de Mopsueste: Fragments syriaques du*

Of course, Theodore, like Tatian, too, allegorised, but, or so he claimed, not in order to rationalise his religion, like the pagans, or to adduce additional meaning, like some Christian allegorists,<sup>40</sup> but merely for a simple philological and literary understanding of the text. This is where his rationalism comes in. Rationalism, in Theodore's view, is required for the interpretation of the Bible, precisely because the Bible is no myth, but history and prophecy, prophetic history. Allegory in the theological sense is only permitted in connection with the latter, i. e. as *theoria*,<sup>41</sup> the fuller, or deeper, understanding of a (none the less simple, 'historical') reality. Where allegory is employed without being grounded in history, it tends to lose its argumentative force and become arbitrary, like etymology. An example of such a use of allegory is Julian of Aeclanum's variation on Jerome's exegesis of Joel 1:4, where the four types of locust are cast as the four generic emotions.<sup>42</sup> Such a kind of reflection may be interesting, and even in the tradition of ancient philosophical exegesis, but its theological, and prophetic, relevance, by Antiochene standards, is clearly limited.

The idea of prophetic exegesis, in connection with poetic expression in speech, song and writing, was to repeat, re-live, or re-enact, the experience of the original in as powerful a way as possible, but not without understanding. Ecstasis, but not obscurity. Erudition, but not getting lost in trivia, like, in Julian's view, Jerome,<sup>43</sup> who had ended up veering between Origen's allegories and Rabbinic etymologies. But Julian here criticises the Jerome of 406, the author of the commentaries on the Minor Prophets.<sup>44</sup> In his commentary on Jeremiah, after 414, Jerome subscribes to an approach very similar to that of Julian: He discusses almost exclusively the text

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*Commentaire des Psaumes* (CSCO 190; Leuven: Peeters, 1982) 1-14. For the wider background of anti-allegorism in the 4<sup>th</sup> century see F. Young, 'The Fourth Century Reaction Against Allegory,' in: *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997) 120-28, 124.

<sup>40</sup> See Theod. Mops. *comm. in Ps* 35.10b (202.34 Devreesse): ἄτοπον γὰρ σοφίσμασι κεκρημένους τὰ οἰκεῖα κατασκευάζειν δόγματα, κἄν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῖς δόγμασι προσεῖναι συμβαίνει· δυνατὸν γὰρ μετὰ ἀληθείας τῆς προσηκούσης ποιεῖσθαι μάλιστα τῶν τῆς ἀληθείας δογμάτων τὴν σύστασιν, discussed by Ch. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Herkunft und Methode der antiochenischen Exegese* (Theoph. 23; Bonn: Hanstein, 1974) 26. See also Iul. Aecl. *transl. Theod. Mops. comm. in Ps* 1 praef. (CCL 88A, 7.81-87): *strictim quicquid dicendum est explicemus ... illis relinquentes occasiones maioris intelligentiae si uoluerint aliqua addere, quae tamen a praemissa interpretatione non discrepent.*

<sup>41</sup> See Iul. Aecl. *tr. Osee* 1.1.10-11 (CCL 88, 130.526-28): *theoria est ... in breuibus plerumque aut formis aut causis earum rerum quae potiores sunt considerata perceptio*, and the discussion in Lössl, *Julian* 174-77; also above, n. 40, Iul. Aecl. *transl. Theod. Mops. comm. in Ps* 1 praef. (CCL 88A, 7.81-87), with the concluding sentence (lines 87-90): *ista enim ueri est intellectus perceptio, ut secundum historiae fidem tenorem expositionis aptemus et concinenter ea, quae dicenda sunt, proferamus.* For Theodore's concern for history see also his commentary on Galatians, *Comm. in Gal* 4.24 (74f. Swete), where he complains that 'those who expound Divine Scripture spiritually ... claim that Adam is not Adam, paradise not paradise, serpent not serpent. To these people I should say,' he writes, 'that if they distort *historia*, they will have no *historia* left;' for the edition see H. B. Swete, ed., *Theodori Mopsuesteni in epistolas B. Pauli commentarii* 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1880); for a discussion also Lössl, 'A Shift in Patristic Exegesis' 173 n. 51.

<sup>42</sup> See Lössl, *Julian* 184-87, and 'When is a Locust Just a Locust?'

<sup>43</sup> See Iul. Aecl. *tr. proph.* praef. (CCL 88, 116.52-53): *ita uel per allegorias Origenis, uel per fabulosas Iudaeorum traditiones tota eius defluxit oratio.*

<sup>44</sup> For a chronological overview see now A. Fürst, *Hieronymus. Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003) 118-19.

translated from the Hebrew, distances himself from Origen the allegorist,<sup>45</sup> tries to get to the point more quickly, focuses on history and uses typology only when it is required on grounds of traditional church theology (e. g. a particular verse applied to Christ, like Jeremiah 11:19-21, the motif of the lamb led to the slaughter).<sup>46</sup>

This change of attitude may have had various reasons. It may have been due in part to the dedicatee of the commentary, Eusebius of Cremona,<sup>47</sup> who supposedly preferred literary exegesis. For the time after 416 it may in addition be influenced by the fact that in that year Jerome probably lost much of his library during a raid on his monastery.<sup>48</sup> But the explanation Jerome himself gives in the preface to the commentary dating long before that time is that he did not want to discuss again at length things which had already been discussed in earlier prophetic commentaries, or topics that were self-explanatory.<sup>49</sup> Now why would Jerome have to emphasize this? Probably precisely because he had acted differently in the past and may have been criticised for it. In the preface to the commentary on Jeremiah Jerome reacts against a *calumniator*, probably Pelagius, who had criticised his Pauline exegesis, in particular his commentaries on Ephesians. This critic, so Jerome, simply failed to understand the principle of a commentary, namely to put many different views side by side and give the reader the chance to make up his own mind.<sup>50</sup>

Though Jerome here once more defends his former practice, he does not resort to it, but abandons it in favour of an approach very similar to Julian's. One could even say in this context that Julian's commentaries are almost revised versions of Jerome's commentaries, which Jerome himself could have produced in the mood in which he was when he embarked on *On Jeremiah*. This is all the more striking as Jerome resorts to the new approach from an anti-Pelagian perspective. His aim was to associate Pelagius with Origenism. His invectives against the Alexandrian allegorist are also aimed at Pelagius. His own exegesis must show no trace of that kind of exegesis. Ironically, *On Jeremiah* is that commentary of Jerome which is most similar to the commentaries of Pelagius' and Julian of Aclanum's.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See e. g. in *Ier.* 5.2-3.16 on Jeremiah 24.1-10 (CCL 74, 236 = V299.17 = PL 1012): *delirat in hoc loco allegoricus semper interpres; in Ier.* 5.27.6 on Jeremiah 25.26 (CCL 74 246 = V313 = PL 1020): *allegorici interpretes; in Ier.* 5.52.2 on Jeremiah 27:9-11 (CCL 74, 265 = V336.20 = PL 1033); in *Ier.* 5.61.5 on Jeremiah 28:12-14 (CCL 74, 273 = V346.21 = PL 1039): *delirat et in hoc loco allegoricus interpres.*

<sup>46</sup> See e. g. in *Ier.* 2.110.2 on Jeremiah 11.19ff. (CCL 74, 117.5-7): *omnium ecclesiarum iste consensus est, ut sub persona Hieremiae a Christo haec dici intellegant.*

<sup>47</sup> For him see Fürst, *Hieronymus* 172-73.

<sup>48</sup> For this episode see now J. Lössl, 'Who Attacked the Monasteries of Jerome and Paula in 416?' In: *Augustinianum* 44 (2004) 91-112.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Ier.* in *Ier.* prolog. 1 (CCL 74, 1 = 3.8-10 Vallarsi): *illud prudentiam tuam ammono, ne quaeras in hoc latam explanationem, super his maxime quae iam et in prophetis aliis dicta sunt et per se patent intelligentiae.*

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Ier.* in *Ier.* prolog. 3 (CCL 74, 1 = 4.6-8 Vallarsi): *ut nuper indoctus calumniator erupit, qui commentarios meos in epistolam Pauli ad Ephesios reprehendendos putat nec intellegit nimia stertens uacordia leges commentariorum, in quibus multae diuersorum ponuntur opiniones uel tacitis uel expressis auctorum nominibus, ut lectoris arbitrium sit, quid potissimum eligere debeat, decernere.*

<sup>51</sup> And even more ironically, Julian's *Tractatus in Osee, Iohel, et Amos* were traditionally held to be works of Rufinus of Aquileia, against whom Jerome (with the help of Eusebius of Cremona,

Exegesis, for Julian, to return to Julian, is a renewal of the original experience of formulating the text in the first place. Interpretation is therefore a creative and artistic, or, in ancient terms, inspired, poetic, prophetic activity. The link between poetry, prophecy, and exegesis is strongly emphasized in Julian's commentaries. It starts with the role of David, the perceived author of the Psalms.

*Fidicen ille sacerrimus*, Julian calls him, 'that holiest of bards', or 'minstrels'. This is the very beginning of his *Tractatus prophetarum*. *Fidicen* is *δέσπις αἰοιδός*, the divinely inspired, prophetic poet. 'David, our Simonides, Pindar and Alcaeus, also Flaccus, Catullus and Serenus. He makes Christ sound on his lyre,'<sup>52</sup> Jerome writes. In Romans 4:6 and 11:9 and Acts 1:16 and 2:25 David is called a prophet, and not just by way of Christian propaganda. Philo calls the Psalmist 'a prophetic man,'<sup>53</sup> and so does Josephus (*Antiquit.* 8.109-10), and even a Qumran scroll (11 Q Ps<sup>a</sup>).<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, Early Christian writings do of course go further than that. In Matthew 15:22 and 20:30 Jesus is called 'son of David' in quite a similar way in which Amos denied being a 'son of a prophet', i. e. in the sense of belonging to a (professional) prophetic tradition (Amos 7:14). His prophetic acts reveal Jesus as the new David.<sup>55</sup> Later on the motif is further elaborated, not only by writers like Clement and Origen, and those in their wake,<sup>56</sup> but also by an Antiochene exegete like Theodoret.<sup>57</sup> Julian links up with that tradition.<sup>58</sup> Tellingly, he also mentions

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his agent in Italy, so to speak) agitated in particular with a work like the commentary on Jeremiah, in which he denounces Origenian allegoresis. For the *Tractatus* as a work by Rufinus see J. Lössl, 'Julian of Aeclanum's *Tractatus in Osee, Iohel, et Amos*,' in: *Aug. (L)* 51 (2001) 5-36.

<sup>52</sup> Hier. *ep.* 53.8.17 (CSEL 54, 461.6-7): *David, Simonides noster, Pindarus et Alceus, Flaccus quoque, Catullus et Serenus, Christum lyra personat.*

<sup>53</sup> *Quis rerum diuinarum heres sit* 290.4 on the author of Ps 84: *τις προφητικός ἀνὴρ.*

<sup>54</sup> For this and further references see J. Kugel, 'David the Prophet,' in: Id., *Poets and Prophets* 45-55, who himself refers to E. Schuller, *Non-Canonical Psalms from Qumran* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

<sup>55</sup> For example, when, as told in Mark 2:23-28, his disciples pick ears of corn one Sabbath, this is explained (by Jesus) as a re-enactment of David's and his followers' intrusion into the Temple at a time of hunger to eat the loaves on display reserved for the priests.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Greg. Naz. *or.* 5.30 (SC 309, 354-55) speaks of David singing a victory song at defeating Goliath as a prefiguration of Christ, with an allusion to Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.22.7 (31-32 Marcovich). Hilar. *tr. Ps* 51.4 (CCL 61, 94-95): *hinc ergo titulus psalmi 'in fine intellectus', quia in Christo, qui David oriens, iustus, rex et aeternus et pastor est, totius spei nostrae consummatio et legis finis esse intellegitur.* Ambros. *expl. in Ps* 118.14.4 (PL 15, 1463CD) on David's humility when saying, in 1 Samuel 17.34, *pascebam oues patris mei: in pascuis talibus uerus David, uerus humilis, et manu fortis, qui non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem deo etc.* Greg. Nyss. *exp. in Ps* 13.62 (SC 466, 410.7-9): *ὁ μέγας Δαυὶδ, δι' ὧν τε προτυποῖ συμβαλτικῶς τὴν σωτηρίαν ἡμῶν, καὶ δι' ὧν ὑποδείκνυσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τῆς μετανοίας τὸν τρόπον οἶόν τινα τέχνην ἐπιβάλλων τούτῳ τῷ κατορθώματι διὰ τῆς πεντηκόστης ψαλμωδίας δι' ἧς ἄλλη νίκη κατὰ τοῦ ἀντιπάλου ἡμῶν ἐτοιμάζεται.* Aug. *en. in Ps* 96.2 (CCL 34, 1355.12-16): *nam quomodo David intellegatur Christus, facile est agnoscere. Christus enim ex Maria et ex semine David; et quia ex semine eius futurus erat, propterea nomine eius in figura prophetabatur. ergo David Christus, quia et interpretatio David Manu fortis est.*

<sup>57</sup> For example, Theodoret sees in the situation described above, note 27, a prefiguration of the Eucharist; cf. Theodoret. *Comm. in 1 Reg* 52 (PG 80, 576B): *προδηλοῖ μέντοι τῶν μόνοις τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν ἀπονευμημένων μεταλαβῶν, τὴν πᾶσι προτεθεισομένην τοῖς εὐσεβέσι τράπεζαν μυστικὴν.* Jesus' entry in Jerusalem, too, as told in Mark 11:1-11, has this kind of function. For further links see J. Danielou, 'David,' in: *RAC* 3 (1957) 594-603, especially 596-600.

<sup>58</sup> See Iul. Aecl. *tr. Osee* 1.1.1-2 (CCL 88, 118.51-53): *...beatum David et sapientissimum Salomonem, Euangelio et Apostolis testibus legitimos prophetas...*; for a fuller account of what follows

in this context that before he embarked on the present project of a commentary on the (or some of the<sup>59</sup>) Minor Prophets, he had written a commentary on *uolumina Salomonis*.<sup>60</sup> And we know, at least in part, which writings he meant by this, since the Venerable Bede has preserved a few quotations of a commentary by Julian on the Song of Songs, entitled *De amore*.<sup>61</sup> Again, Jerome rated the Song of Songs as highly as the Psalms and its assumed author, Solomon, as highly as David.<sup>62</sup> And Julian, too, lumps them together and calls them ‘prophets’, knowing himself to be in line with Biblical and ecclesiastical tradition.<sup>63</sup>

Bede, of course, warns of Julian’s exegesis, though he frequently refers to it. It drags, he writes, the mystic meaning of Solomon’s song down to the sordid level of physical love.<sup>64</sup> But now that is precisely what Julian considered the prophetic dimension of his poetic exegesis. Physical love (*amor*), he is said to have written, draws vigour and passion from the body, sublimity and continuity from the soul.<sup>65</sup> Physical reality is important because of Christ’s incarnation. This is also why no principle of evil must be assumed, neither in the body, nor anywhere else. Christ incarnate is the prove that all sin originates from habit, not from genetics: *Dei et hominum mediator* (1 Timothy 2:5) ... *ostendit omnia crimina morum fuisse, non seminum*.<sup>66</sup> The intention of this passage is, of course, not only anti-Manichean, but also anti-Augustinian, and Bede resents that, as he also resents the naturalist explanations like Julian’s meditations on *Cant.* 1:1, *meliora sunt ubera tua uino*, on which Bede comments: *de natura lactis foedissime philosophatus est*,<sup>67</sup> or on *Cant.* 5:11, ‘his locks are like palm fronds’, which, as Julian points out, means of course that their appearance is curly, or frizzy, and reddish golden, while Bede is exasperated: ‘The pious reader may very easily detect innumerable trivia like this in Julian’s pamphlets,’ *innumera huiusmodi, quae in ipsis eius opusculis pius lector facillime deprehendet*.<sup>68</sup>

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below see now J. Lössl, ‘Julian of Aeclanum’s Prophetic Exegesis,’ in: *Studia Patristica* 43 (2006) 409-421; for the wider intellectual- and reception-historical background see J. Lössl, ‘Augustine, “Pelagianism”, Julian of Aeclanum, and Modern Scholarship,’ in: *Journal of Ancient Christianity* 11 (2007) 129-150.

<sup>59</sup> It is not quite clear (especially from the prefaces), if the extant *Tractatus in Osee, Iohel, et Amos* are fragmentary, or if Julian (from the beginning or eventually) settled for these three. The relative good care taken of the first one and the rather longwinded and repetitive character of the third might suggest the latter.

<sup>60</sup> Iul. Aecl. *tr. proph.* praef. (CCL 88, 115.13): *Salomonis quippe uoluminibus disserendis...*

<sup>61</sup> The excerpts and fragments are collected in Iul. Aecl. *comm. in Cant.* (CCL 88, 398-401).

<sup>62</sup> Hier. *ep.* 53.8.17 (CSEL 54, 461.8-11): *Salomon, pacificus et amabilis domini, mores corrigi, naturam docet, ecclesiam iungit et Christum sanctarumque nuptiarum dulce canit ἐπιδαλάμιον.*

<sup>63</sup> Iul. Aecl. *tr. Osee* 1.1.1-2 (CCL 88, 118.51-53); see above n. 58.

<sup>64</sup> Beda apud Iul. Aecl. *comm. in Cant.* 1 (CCL 88, 398.17-399.19): *cuius causa duelli primum De Amore libellum composuit, sub obtentu, quasi hunc a foedissima foret uoluptate secreturus, re autem uera suam confirmaturus haeresim; 7 (399.55): ...de natura lactis foedissime philosophatus est; 11 (401.105-106): post innumera huiusmodi, quae in ipsis eius opusculis pius lector facillime deprehendet...*

<sup>65</sup> Iul. Aecl. *comm. in Cant.* 4 (CCL 88, 399.32-34): *(dicit) amorem nostrum sicut de corpore trahere, quod est perturbatus et rapidus, ita de animo, quod sit sublimis atque continuus.*

<sup>66</sup> Iul. Aecl. *comm. in Cant.* 7 (CCL 88, 400.72,74-75).

<sup>67</sup> Iul. Aecl. *comm. in Cant.* 7 (CCL 88, 399.54-55).

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Iul. Aecl. *comm. in Cant.* 11 (CCL 88, 401.105).

We are left wondering why Bede, as a historian, should have so disliked literal exegesis of this kind,<sup>69</sup> though we do know, that as an exegete he by far preferred the spiritual approach. In any case, for Julian it was important to take seriously the poetry in the Song of Songs *qua* poetry, i. e. as naturalistic and, as such, prophetic poetry in a Biblical context with a historical dimension. At one point he lists three lessons which can be drawn from a literal understanding of the poetry of the Song of Songs. On *Cant.* 8:2, *apprehendam te et inducam in domum matris meae, ibi me docebis*, he writes, and this is one of the passages which Bede particularly loathes: ‘Even in his very infancy already he showed us many things which we must learn: First, that he, the maker of all who are born of a conjunction between a man and a woman, built for himself a body from the virgin without assistance of a man; then second, that no sin is congenital to man, since *he* is on the one hand enveloped in flesh, fully, in truth, and on the other hand he stands out as free from any blemish; and finally, that only godlessness can attribute our being to the works of the devil, as the true God himself pleases to be not only its founder, but also its inhabitant.’<sup>70</sup>

It is therefore precisely for salvation-historical reasons, for the emphasis on the incarnation, that Julian perseveres with a literal reading of the *Canticum*. And it is that which makes the *Canticum*, as a poem, prophetic for him. Otherwise it might just be another allegory on the spiritual life. Even if it could be demonstrated that, as such an allegory, it also had a christological dimension, this would not be truly rooted in the historical Christ event. And it is the latter which is vital for Julian.

It is because the historical dimension of the Christ event is so central for Julian that he also wants to take all history seriously. And in the case of the prophets this means the history of their lifetime. Thus he begins his commentary on Hosea (it is in fact his comment on Hosea 1:2, *principium loquendi Dominum in Osee*) with a historical survey on prophecy and prophets in the Bible: Historically speaking, he writes, Hosea was, of course, not the first Biblical prophet. Elijah and Elisha went

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<sup>69</sup> As M.L.W. Laistner, ‘Antiochene Exegesis in Western Europe During the Middle Ages,’ in: *Harvard Theological Review* 40 (1947) 19-31, 29 pointed out long ago, Bede never mentioned the exegetical handbook of Junilius Africanus, which Cassiodorus had so warmly recommended as an introduction to the study of the Bible (Cass. *Inst.* 1.10.1), which is odd considering how important on the one hand Bede was as an exegetical authority, and on the other hand how popular Junilius’ Institutes were in the west, in particular after Cassiodorus’ endorsement. Laistner’s suspicion that Bede may not have liked the work seems not unfounded in view of Bede’s remarks about Julian’s exegetical approach. For Cassiodorus, and Junilius’ Institutes in the west see also J. J. O’Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1979) 131-36; B. M. Manino, ‘Gli Instituta di Giunilio: alcuni aspetti esegetici,’ in: *Annali di Storia della Esegesi* 8 (1991) 405-419, 406f.; M. Maas, ‘Junilius Africanus’ Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis in its Justinianic Context,’ in: P. Allen & E. Jeffreys, eds., *The Sixth Century – End or Beginning?* (Byzantina Australiensia 10; Brisbane: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1996) 131-44, 133. For Junilius now also P. Bruns, ‘Biblische Isagogik,’ in: *Augustinianum* 68 (2000) 391-408; M. Maas, *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>70</sup> Iul. Aegl. *comm. in Cant.* 11 (CCL 88, 401.110.20): *iam in ipsa infantia multa, quae discere debeamus, ostendit: primo ipsum esse opificem uniuersorum ex masculi et feminae coniunctione nascentium, qui sibi sine ministerio uiri corpus ex uirgine fabricasset; deinde nullum peccatum esse homini congenitum, quandoquidem ille et carnis ueritate circumdatus et maculae immunis exstiterit; postremo originem nostram non posse nisi impie diaboli operibus ascribi, quae deo uero non solum conditore, sed etiam habitatore congauderet.*

before him, and many others whose words and deeds are recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings (*Reges*).<sup>71</sup> Nor can David and Solomon be dismissed; for they, too, are legitimate prophets in the eyes of the Gospels and the Apostles, and they, too, handed down their prophecies in written form.<sup>72</sup> But the difference, glaringly obvious to every experienced reader (*peritus lector*), between those older types of prophecy and these more recent ones, beginning with Hosea, is that the older ones lack that sense of urgency arising from the imminence of disaster.

Even though they may well have spoken of the captivity of the people, they did so with a quiet mind, free from fear of the proximity of evil. Their song was about something which they only saw from afar.<sup>73</sup> The more recent prophets, in contrast, find themselves actually exposed to the full blast of a roaring revenge. They report about it as eye witnesses. They are emotionally involved, full of fear, and pleading with God. They also express God's feelings, God, who hardly needs to be coerced into taking revenge in this situation. So while they implore the help of divine pity, they also record, pitiless, in quasi tragic style, the course which disaster takes.<sup>74</sup>

Julian thus seems to subscribe to an idea similar to the one which we developed earlier in this paper by looking at the ancient Greek situation. At a very early stage there were poets and epic historians. They were prophetic singers (*prae-cinebant*). Their songs and prose epics contain prophecy, but only in a wider sense, in so far as they represent epics and poetry, i. e. in so far as they are handed down through a literary tradition (*litteris tradidisse*). Their authors did not personally experience any existential urge or immediate pressure with regard to their prophecy. As far as we are concerned, their minds were quiet. They wrote *quasi quietis mentibus*. The more recent prophets, however, beginning with Hosea, had a more personal sense of urgency in view of the period in history which has assumed prophetic meaning for us, from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity to the (first as well as second!) coming of Christ (as redeemer and judge).<sup>75</sup> Their literary style is therefore more immediate, existential, emotional, and tragic. As a consequence their prophecy is more directly focused on the outcome. It is more easily recognisable as prophecy. These prophets have therefore become known as *The Prophets*, or prophets in the narrower sense. Their line begins with Hosea.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Iul. Aecl. tr. Osee 1.1.1-2 (CCL 88, 118.46-48): *non quo prophetae ante non fuerint, cum et beatorum Heliae et Helisei et aliorum plurium eadem Regum historia gesta dictaque commemoret.*

<sup>72</sup> See Iul. Aecl. tr. Osee 1.1.1-2 (CCL 88, 118.51-53): *...nec sane diffitemur, beatum David et sapientissimum Salomonem, Euangelio et Apostolis testibus legitimos prophetas, dicta sua litteris tradidisse.*

<sup>73</sup> Iul. Aecl. tr. Osee 1.1.1-2 (CCL 88, 118.55-58): *illi enim, licet aliqua de populi captiuitate dixerint, tamen quasi quietis mentibus, id est, nulla mali uicinitate trepidantibus, ea quae olim fore conspexerant, praecinebant.*

<sup>74</sup> Iul. Aecl. tr. Osee 1.1.1-2 (CCL 88, 118.58-65): *hi autem inter ipsos positi ultionum fragores, attonitis omnino pectoribus, quippe qui calamitatum etiam participes redderentur, quasi lacrimosis totum questibus exsequuntur, et affectum dei nostri qui ad uindicandum nimis aegre cogatur effingunt implorantes quidem interdum diuinae miserationis auxilium, ceterum quasi stilo tragico calamitatum ordinem persequentes.*

<sup>75</sup> See Iul. Aecl. tr. Osee 1.1.1-2 (CCL 88, 118.56/69): *... de populi captiuitate ... personam et redemptoris et iudicis.*

<sup>76</sup> See Iul. Aecl. tr. Osee 1.1.1-2 (CCL 88, 118.65-70): *principium igitur istorum uatum, qui hac praecipue appellatione signati sunt ut 'prophetae' nominarentur, a beato Osee susceptum esse*

The phenomenon is similar to that of the rhapsodes and early Homeric critics, though there are clear differences as well. There certainly seems to be more sense of political and especially religious urgency in the Biblical prophets, and none of them ever seems to have been charged (whether justly or unjustly) with atheism. As far as Julian of Aeclanum is concerned, I do find it interesting that he should have been conscious on the one hand of the link between poetry and prophecy in the case, for instance, of the Psalms and the Canticum, but on the other hand also of the difference between these ‘calmer’ (i. e. historically less involved) forms of poetry, and the dramatic poetry of the later prophets, and that he should have seen this in a salvation-historical perspective, but again, without reducing it to that; for he is interested in both, christological typology and dramatic style, the immediate historical context in which the texts originated (the ‘exile’, *captiuitas*, and its pre-history and aftermath), and the more universal theological use to which they were eventually put (in Christianity). None of this can be taken for granted, despite the relatively important role which this kind of prophetic exegesis had to play within Early Christian Biblical exegesis.<sup>77</sup>

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*noscamus, qui morum et generis sanctitate conspicuus, talem operam contionatoris assumpsit, ut sustineret personam et redemptoris et iudicis: quod per totum opus clarius apparebit.*

<sup>77</sup> See for this the article by E. Dassmann, ‘Umfang, Kriterien und Methoden frühchristlicher Prophetenexegese,’ in: *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 14 (1999) 117-43.

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