

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 19

Volume 19 • Number 2 • April 1995

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews original and selected from
publications worldwide for an international
readership for the purpose of discerning the
obedience of faith*

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Editorial

The WEF Theological Commission Study Unit on Ecumenical Issues under the convenorship of Dr. Paul Schrotenboer is to be congratulated for producing this significant work on Scripture and Tradition. The project was commissioned by the Theological Commission's General Assembly in Manila 1992. The Study Unit commissioned eight scholars to write chapters and they were reviewed by a smaller editorial team. They will welcome readers' responses to their work.

Evangelical responses to the relationship of tradition and scripture vary considerably from one ecclesiastical family to another. In a world of theological flux and confusion it is imperative that evangelicals begin to address this issue which hitherto has received little attention. We are a fragmented household holding fast to the plurality of our own traditions which all too often shape our biblical hermeneutics at the levels of both the local church and the global community. For some time evangelical groups have been in dialogue with the Roman Catholic church on this issue and more recently dialogue has begun with the Eastern Orthodox Churches, especially since the WEF Assembly at Canberra 1992 where evangelicals and orthodox felt common concerns. Therefore, this special issue of ERT deserves careful study and evaluation. Perhaps Paul's admonition to 'Be on your guard. Stand firm in the faith ... do everything in love' ([1 Cor. 16:13f](#)) points the way forward. p. 100

I

The Old Testament as Tradition

Harry F. van Rooy

INTRODUCTION

For evangelicals the term tradition has negative connotations. Part of our Reformation heritage is a negative view of the Roman Catholic emphasis on ecclesiastical tradition. This view can, for example, be seen in Calvin's *Institutes* (4.10.18): 'For this reason we freely inveigh against the tyranny of human traditions which is haughtily obtruded upon us in the name of the Church.' The negative connotations are a result also of the emphasis on the history of tradition in modern critical study of the Old Testament because of its rejection of the inspiration of the Bible. This negative view needs reevaluation. The Old

Testament is built on many traditions. God even commanded his people to instruct the next generations—and this instruction entailed handling traditions down to posterity. An example of this command can be found in [Deuteronomy 6:6–7](#) (GNB): ‘Never forget these commandments that I am giving you today. Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working’. [Deuteronomy 31](#) stipulates that the law must be read publicly every seventh year and that everybody—men, women, children and foreigners—must be present to listen to the law in order to learn how to honour the Lord. These references demonstrate that tradition played a role in Old Testament times. It also played a role in the formation of the Old Testament. In this paper tradition and its function in the Old Testament will be discussed, followed by a discussion of two representative examples (from Hosea and Chronicles) and concluding remarks.

TRADITION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

All cultures have traditions that express their self-understanding, sense of the past, system of beliefs and codes of conduct. The history of traditions (*Traditionsgeschichte*) as practised in Old Testament studies investigates the nature of the traditions in the Old Testament, as well as the way in which they were used and modified during the course of Israel’s history. Tradition in this [P. 101](#) Lutheran and Reformed is evidence of this.

There are other reasons too for such a study. There is some evidence that evangelicals from non liturgical churches are joining more tradition conscious churches, especially those with strong liturgical worship patterns. This suggests a growing fascination with tradition. Furthermore, the traditional forms of worship which were exported by western missionaries during the modern missionary era are still being adhered to by many churches in the two-thirds world. What is significant is that often the traditional nature of these forms is not recognized. They are regarded as having a divine mandate rather than as being human constructs. (Ironically, in some cases, such tradition is no longer the norm in the ‘mother’ church but the ‘daughter’ church considers the forms sacrosanct. For example, there are congregations in India that use the 1662 Anglican liturgy for the Holy Communion, whereas that liturgy is rarely used in England today.) Moreover, most of these churches can ill afford the division that such adherence to tradition produces in their context.

On the other hand, tradition is being challenged by those who would like to redefine the Christian faith in ways that are considered more acceptable to modern society and to adherents of other religions. In several denominations voices calling for a fresh assessment of the value of creedal and confessional statements that have been long regarded as normative are becoming louder and more strident. These confessions, rooted and formed in tradition, have provided their respective churches with the doctrinal standards that have helped preserve the faith; but today they are regarded increasingly as fossils that are historically interesting but irrelevant.

From the above, it is apparent that there is a need to review the relationship between Scripture and tradition. It is also necessary to assess the role Tradition has played in preserving and/or changing the faith of the Church.

The outline of this study is simple. It begins with a study of the OT as tradition and then proceeds to an evaluation of the NT as tradition. Then follow essays on tradition in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Historic Reformation Churches. An essay on the impact of the Enlightenment on views of tradition is followed by one on tradition in the Ecumenical movement. The concluding essay is an attempt to formulate an evangelical

view of the relationship between Scripture and tradition. In the Epilogue questions are posed for further discussion.

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Introduction

Paul G. Schrotenboer

The Bible is part of the Christian tradition and at the same time the Bible stands in a unique role in the whole history of tradition. The Bible tells a history of salvation which became a tradition, which in turn took on normative form in the canonical writings. Tradition both preceded and follows Scripture. Prior to the biblical writings were the mighty acts of God, the revelation of God's way with creation and its inhabitants, and the oral transmission, the story of these redemptive acts and revealing words. Following the tradition contained in the canonical books came the tradition of the church. Behind church tradition are the life and work of the church through the ages. Tradition is in the making still today.

Much has been made in ecumenical circles of tradition. It is widely recognized to be one of the most important topics on which there should be more agreement, though, in fact, it is itself the source of disagreements. This appears from the different views among the various confessional communions and ecclesial organizations. However it is clear from the ecumenical discussion that there is a close relationship between tradition and Scripture.

Among evangelicals there appears to be no generally accepted view of tradition. Some, as in the Anglican communion and in the Reformed Churches, would take the view that the post-apostolic tradition provides normative church standards. Others would draw a straight line between the NT church and the church today, thus bypassing history.

So, then, how are Scripture and tradition related? Are they both part of a continuum in which the one flows into the other? Or is there a qualitative discontinuity between the one and the other? The subject of this study is the precise relationship between the Bible and tradition.

The plan to engage in such a study was formed at the meeting of the WEF Theological Commission in Manila in June, 1992. There it was recognized that this is a largely unexplored field among evangelicals. Although evangelicals are often not aware of it, tradition does affect them and the very variety of evangelical traditions such as Baptist, Pentecostal, p. 103 sense refers simply to that which is handed over and can be either oral or written.

An important distinction should be made between *traditio* and *traditum*. *Traditio* is the process of handing material down. *Traditum* refers to the traditional material that is handed down. The process is changeable, with a more rigid and faithful transmission on one occasion and with intentional or unintentional changes, additions or deletions on another occasion. In the process of handing down, different forces may be at work. Interpretation and actualization are examples of such forces. Traditions often receive new

actualizations in new circumstances and this requires reinterpretation of old traditions. This can cause agglomeration and fusion, causing traditions to grow with the passing of time. The *traditum* gave expression to the faith community life. The content of traditions increased during the course of time and sometimes changed in meaning.

Tradition can thus simply refer to that which somebody received from someone else and handed down to somebody else at a later stage. This process proceeds from generation to generation. Such a tradition has content and form and is the property of a specific community. It has a direct function for the people who transmit it. A tradition is therefore living, developing, malleable, and only relatively stable. Tradition tends to be cumulative and agglomerative.

When Israel started to collect and preserve material of lasting importance, the memories of history were embodied in her traditions. She understood herself on the basis of her knowledge of events such as the promise to the patriarchs, the exodus, the salvation at the Red Sea, the covenant at Sinai, the wilderness, the occupation of the land, the covenant with David and the building of the temple. These traditions were frequently reformulated in new contexts.

One such widespread tradition was the deliverance from Egypt. This tradition occurs in the narratives, psalms and in the works of the prophets. It is used in diverse ways. Hosea pictures God's judgements as a return to Egypt, while Deutero-Isaiah sees the return from the exile as a new exodus.

In the times of the Old Testament the different units of tradition originally existed separately. Later on they were linked in larger blocks of tradition, such as the exodus, the patriarchs, and the wilderness. The study of traditions is important for reconstructing the early history of Israel. Three important issues must be taken into consideration thus in reconstructing history, viz., the intent, the locus and the thematic sequence. The intent of the traditions was not to present historical information, but to recount sacral-oral origins. It was meant for instruction and celebration. The locus of the traditions testifies to a united intertribal Israel. The thematic sequence of the traditions had as starting-point the exodus and conquest of the land. This was expanded with the result that the final form of the tradition represents the growth of the traditions and does not constitute a direct representation of events as reported by eyewitnesses. The oral tradition was written down at some point in time. In some [p. 104](#) instances the oral stage was longer and in others—such as the prophetic material—probably shorter.

The history of traditions looks at the forces and influences behind the formation of the Old Testament. Four important issues must be taken into consideration, the group that shaped and transmitted the tradition, the location, the social, political and religious dynamics, and the themes and motifs.

It is, however, important to remember that the Old Testament is not just the end result of the formation of tradition. It is also the written record of the proclamation of God's acts. In the history of Israel tradition was sometimes the springboard for error and sometimes for revelation. In the times of Jeremiah, for instance, a false use of the traditions regarding Zion resulted in the people being caught unawares by the catastrophe of the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, while Jeremiah pronounced the judgement of God on the people by referring to the Sinai tradition. The biblical authors were not enslaved by their traditions. There are, however, clear indications in the Old Testament of how people struggled with God and their traditions and they reinterpreted the traditions for their own time. In the next two sections two examples of the use of traditions in the Old Testament will be discussed.

HOSEA'S USE OF OLD TRADITIONS¹

It is well-known that the history of his people played an important part in the preaching of Hosea. Hosea's preaching was firmly rooted in salvation history and he felt safe only when building his arguments on history. No other prophet from the Eighth Century referred more to history than Hosea. Some scholars regard it as probable that Hosea's knowledge of the traditions came from Levitical circles and that the traditions were thus typical northern traditions and others think that the traditions were rather Deuteronomic. The origins of these traditions are not really important for the purposes of this article. It is clear that extensive use is made of traditions in the preaching of Hosea. The following historical traditions are important:

- The promise to the patriarchs: [1:10](#); [9:10-12](#).
- The sojourn in the desert: [2:14](#); [9:10-12](#); [12:9](#); [13:4-5](#).
- The election in the desert: [9:10-17](#); [10:1-2](#); [11-13a](#); [13:4-8](#); [2:16-17](#); [12:10](#).
- The exodus from Egypt: [2:15](#); [8:13](#); [9:3](#); [6](#); [11:1](#); [11:5](#); [12:9](#); [12:13](#); [13:4](#).
- A covenant tradition; in [2:20](#); [6:7](#); [8:1](#); [10:4](#); [12:2](#) in the context of [2:18-25](#); [6:7-11a](#); [8:1-3](#); [10:34](#); [12:1-2](#).
- Baal Peor: [9:10-17](#).
- The destruction of Admah and Zeboiim: [11:8](#).
- Jacob's birth: [12:3](#).
- Jacob's struggle with a divine being: [12:3-4](#).
- Jacob's experience at Bethel: [12:3-4](#).
- Jacob's flight to Aram: [12:12](#).
- Jacob's servitude in Aram: [12:12](#).
- Jacob's striving for divine blessing: [12:4](#). p. 105
- The leadership of the prophet (Moses): [12:13](#).
- The election: [1:9](#); [11:1-7](#); [13:5-8](#).
- The Valley of Agor: in connection with the conquest of the promised land. [2:15](#).
- A Decalogue tradition: [Hosea 12:9](#); [13:4](#); [8:4-6](#); [13:1-3](#); [4:1-3](#).

Hosea's use of tradition may be divided into three groups. The first group consists of a number of traditions related to the exodus from Egypt, the sojourn in the desert and the conquest of the promised land. The second group contains traditions related to Jacob. In the third group other traditions are related to the Pentateuch.

EXODUS, DESERT AND CONQUEST

The exodus from Egypt

The exodus from Egypt is for Hosea the start of Israel's relationship with God. In [12:9](#) and [13:4](#) the prophet refers to the exodus and the salvation thus brought about by God. By references to Ephraim in the immediate context the contemporary Ephraim and the people of the exodus are linked.

[Hosea 8:13](#) refers to a return to Egypt in an oracle of doom. [8:11](#) refers to Ephraim and verses [11-13](#) form a unit. Verse [11](#) refers to Ephraim, with the implication that it is Ephraim who would return to Egypt, again linking the contemporary Ephraim to the people of the exodus. In [Hosea 9:3](#) it is explicitly stated that Ephraim would return to Egypt (cf. also [9:6](#)). In [Hosea 11:1](#) and [5](#) reference is made to Egypt. In verse [1](#) the election

¹ The following section is largely based on Van Rooy (1993).

of Israel is mentioned as well as the exodus. Verse [2](#) treats the sin of the contemporary people and in verse [3](#) God's care for his people is explained. Verse [5](#) again refers to a return to Egypt. [12:13](#) states that God delivered Israel from Egypt through a prophet, while [12:14](#) uses the name Ephraim when describing the sin of the contemporary people. Hosea regards the exodus from Egypt as the birth of the nation—and a return to Egypt means death for Ephraim. The exodus tradition shows God's grace in history on the one hand and God's judgement on the other in speaking of a return to Egypt.

Traditions related to the sojourn in the desert

The sojourn in the desert is linked to the name Israel in [9:10](#). In the next verse Ephraim is again used for the contemporary people. The time in the desert is often regarded as the time when there was a sincere relationship between the Lord and his people.

The metaphor of Israel as a grapevine full of grapes in [10:1–2](#) can also refer to the sojourn in the desert. The same is true of [10:11–13a](#). Verse [11](#) is the only passage in the Old Testament where Jacob and Ephraim are used in a parallelism. It is possible that Hosea is describing the history of the people in this passage and that he is referring to a time when there were good relations between God and the people. If this is true, it refers to the time in the desert. It is perhaps more probable that this section should be linked to the Jacob traditions. Ephraim and Judah are then names of tribes that became names of states, while Jacob refers to the old tribal league. The [p. 106](#) references to altars and the productivity of the land make this idea more attractive. It is also possible that Jacob does not refer to the old tribal league, but to the United Monarchy, when Judah and Ephraim still formed one nation (Jacob).

The election tradition in [1:9](#), [11:1–7](#) and [13:5–8](#) is also related to the exodus traditions and the sojourn in the desert. Here the traditions are a negative reflection on the people of the time of the prophet.

A covenant tradition

Clear traces of a covenant tradition in Hosea appear in [2:18](#), [6:7](#), [8:1](#), [10:4](#) and [12:1](#) in the context of [2:18–25](#), [6:7–11a](#), [8:1–3](#), [10:3–4](#) and [12:1–2](#). The word *berith* can be regarded as authentic in these texts. [Hosea 2:18](#) deals with a covenant that God made with the animals for the benefit of the people, [Hosea 6:7](#) and [8:1](#) indict the people because they broke their relationship with God and [10:4](#) and [12:1](#) regard Israel's treaties with other nations as a turning away from the Lord.

[Hosea 2:18](#) is part of a section that refers to other important traditions (the exodus and the sojourn in the desert, [2:10–11](#)). This supports the idea of a covenant tradition in the book of Hosea.

A Decalogue tradition

A number of passages contain traces of a Decalogue tradition, viz., [Hosea 12:9](#), [13:4](#), [8:4–6](#), [13:1–3](#) and [4:1–3](#). Hosea probably knew the Decalogue in a pre-final form. In [12:10](#) and [13:4](#) an introductory formula appears: 'I am the Lord your God, who led you out of Egypt.' This formula corresponds with the introduction of the Decalogue. In [12:9](#) this Decalogue tradition is connected with the traditions regarding the exodus and the time in the desert.

[Hosea 8:4–6](#) and [13:1–3](#) refer to the prohibition of making idols in the second commandment. These passages are directed against the practices of Hosea's day but may also refer to the traditions regarding the gold bull in [Exodus 32](#).

JACOB

In [Hosea 12](#) a number of traditions pertain to Jacob. As they all occur in the same chapter, the chapter as a whole will be discussed rather than in separate traditions. Here we read of Jacob's birth, his struggle with a divine being, his experience at Bethel, his flight to Aram, his servitude in Aram and his request for a blessing.

Here an important issue is the origin of these traditions and their relation to the traditions in Genesis. It is also a matter of dispute whether the traditions give a positive or a negative view of the patriarch.

The name Jacob occurs twice in this chapter and refers initially to the Northern Kingdom, but it is also used to make a connection with the past. The name is used with a double reference in verse [3](#). It refers to the contemporary people in the first instance, but the focus is shifted to the patriarch and in the next two verses a number of traditions relating to the patriarch are recounted, viz., those regarding his birth ([3](#)), his struggle with a divine being ([3-4](#); cf. [Genesis 32](#)), his experience at Bethel ([4](#)) and his asking for divine blessing ([4](#)). A whole complex of [p. 107](#) traditions concerning the patriarchs is linked to the name Jacob. The name Israel also has a double message in this passage, referring to both the patriarch and the people of the time of the prophet.

OTHER PENTATEUCHAL TRADITIONS

The promise to the patriarchs

This tradition occurs in [Hosea 1:10](#) and [9:10-17](#). [Hosea 1:10](#) refers to the number of the children of Israel who will become like the sand of the sea that can not be counted or measured. This can be compared to the promises to Abraham ([Genesis 22:17](#)) and Jacob ([Genesis 32:12](#)MT). The words of [1:10](#) are close to those of [Genesis 32:12](#), the promise to Jacob. In the promises reference is usually made to the descendants of the patriarchs.

[Hosea 9:10-17](#) has references to three of the traditions, viz., the promise to the patriarchs, the sojourn in the desert and the election and the tradition regarding Baal Peor. It is also related to the election in the desert and the Baal Peor tradition, that is related to the fertility cult. In this passage the Israel of the time in the desert, who sinned at Baal Peor, is compared to the contemporary Ephraim. The sin of the people during the time of the conquest was reflected in the service of Baal by the Israelites, who were supposed to serve the Lord. As regards the promise to the fathers, verses [11-14](#) refer to the infertility of Ephraim and verses [15](#) and [17](#) to the loss of the land. These references are thematically related to the promises to the patriarchs, but are here used not in blessings but in curses. They are, therefore, rather examples of discontinuity.

The destruction of Admah and Zeboiim

[11:8](#) refers to the destruction of Admah and Zeboiim (together with Sodom and Gomorrah in the time of Lot). The parallel in [Deuteronomy 29:23](#) (MT) is of importance, because that reference also appears within a context of judgement.

It is quite clear that Hosea uses the traditions of his people extensively. The Genesis traditions related to Jacob are used, for example, to demonstrate how Jacob cheated his brother. This depicts the Northern Kingdom as a land of economic greed and plunder.

CHRONICLES' USE OF TRADITIONS REGARDING PROPHETS²

² The following section is largely based on Van Rooy (1994).

Chronicles frequently refers to prophets. Even a cursory comparison of texts dealing with prophets in Chronicles and Samuel-Kings demonstrates differences within the data regarding the same prophets. Chronicles clearly reflects on the function of prophets and prophecy in a changing society. One has to presuppose that the changing position and influence of the prophetic movement after the exile are reflected in these books. Chronicles uses older traditions than Samuel and Kings but frequently reinterprets or adapts the information to fit into the chronicler's scheme. **P. 108**

In the Deuteronomic History and in Chronicles attempts are made to describe the history of Israel—but these descriptions remain interpretations within a certain frame of reference. Each description and interpretation was directed at a certain community with a specific message. The point of view from which this description was made is related to this message and reflects something of the circumstances in which the text was created. This text pictures, rather, recreates the history of a nation to bring a message in a new time. We have two versions of the history of this nation. By comparing them, the message of each in its own point in time becomes clearer. The reinterpretation in Chronicles remains linked to the context of that time, even though we are looking through the eyes of tradents and their developed tradition. The writer(s) of Chronicles had many traditions at their disposal, especially the written traditions of Samuel-Kings. It is quite probable that the text they used differed from the Massoretic text, but they had a text with a number of traditions about prophets. They used those traditions, often in a new framework, to bring a new message in a new time.

This section will focus further on what can be deduced from the text about the role of prophets during the time when the books were written, especially in comparison with Samuel-Kings. Chronicles reflects a time when classical prophecy changed into a related but different phenomenon. Chronicles reflects one of at least two positions, viz. the theocratic stream, while the visionary or eschatological stream is reflected in deuteroprophetic literature. The way in which prophets appear in these books will be illustrated by discussing only a few representative examples.

REGAL RESUMÉS

At the beginning and end of the description of the time of a king so-called regal resumés frequently appear in Chronicles. In the final resumés reference is often made to further sources. Of the fifteen final instances in Chronicles, eight have references to works (words) of prophets ([1 Chron. 29:29](#); [2 Chron. 9:29](#); [12:15](#); [13:27](#); [20:34](#); [26:22](#); [32:32](#); [33:18–19](#)). In the other instances reference is made to the book of the Kings of Israel (and Judah).

Two examples will suffice for these references to prophets. The description of the reign of King David is concluded in [1 Chron. 29:29–30](#). 'Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer, with all his reign and his might, and the events that happened to him, to Israel, and to all the kingdoms of the land' (NKJ). The conclusion to the reign of Jehoshaphat is as follows ([2 Chron. 20:34](#)): 'Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is mentioned in the books of the kings of Israel' (NKJ).

The following prophets are mentioned in this way in Chronicles: Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Ahija, Iddo, Shemaiah, Jehu, Isaiah and Hozai.

For the purpose of this paper it is **p. 109** more important to ask what the purpose of these references to prophetic sources could be. The text offers no reason, but it is quite

clear that the writer(s) wanted to place himself (themselves) squarely within the prophetic tradition.

PROPHETS IN CHRONICLES WITH PARALLELS IN THE DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY

There are a number of instances where prophets occur in Chronicles with parallels in the Deuteronomistic History. An example is in [1 Chron. 17](#), which can be compared to [2 Sam. 7](#), regarding the prophet Nathan and David's desire to build a temple. There are only a few minor differences between the two texts, e.g., the omission of 2 Sam. 7.14, with its reference to the possible judgement of Solomon, one of the Chronicle's heroes. These minor changes in the tradition testify to the theological position of the writer(s). In some instances the context of an episode in the two texts may differ, even though the data may correspond quite closely. This can be seen in [1 Chron. 21](#). Its parallel in [2 Sam. 24](#) forms part of the appendix to 2 Samuel, while the story forms part of the main narrative in Chronicles.

PROPHETS IN CHRONICLES WITHOUT PARALLEL IN THE DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY

In some instances Chronicles introduces new material. In some of these instances there is some link with material in the Deuteronomistic History and in others no link at all.

Examples of instances in Chronicles with no link at all include some general references to prophets, for example in verse [22](#) of the Psalm in [1 Chron. 16](#) (with a parallel in [Psalm 105:15](#)), Jehoshaphat's exhortation to the people to believe in God and his prophets ([1 Chron. 20:20](#)), the reference in [2 Chron. 24:19](#) that God sent prophets to warn the people in the time of Joash and the reference in [2 Chron. 36:16](#) that the people mocked the prophets.

There are also some instances where the chronicler refers to prophets known from the Deuteronomistic History, but introduces new material about them. The letter of Elijah could be an example of this. In some of the instances reference is made only to a person known from the Deuteronomistic History. In 1 Chronicles reference is made to Heman, who is called the king's seer. His sons were among the musicians appointed by David. A person with the same name is mentioned in [1 Kgs. 5:11](#) as a wise man. It is not clear whether the same person is meant, but what is important is the link between Levitical musicians and a seer. In [1 Chron. 26:28](#) reference is made to the seer Samuel who dedicated things that were given in the care of Levites. Again a link is made between a seer and the Levites. These 'new' traditions introduced in Chronicles form part of the chronicler's attempt to link the contemporary Levites with the authentic voices of the prophets of history.

There are also instances where Chronicles gives an expansion of material from Kings and introduces a prophet in the process. This is perhaps the case in [2 Chron. 15:1-8](#) and the prophet Azariah, the son of Oded. The episode may be related [p. 110](#) to [1 Kgs. 15:12](#), where reforms of Asa are mentioned. In Chronicles the prophet Azariah is introduced and his words were instrumental in causing the reform. Another example could be in [2 Chron. 16:7-10](#) with its reference to the seer Hanani. He may be the father of Jehu, mentioned in 1 Kgs. 16.1. The cause of his words is Asa's treaty with Ben-Hadad. A parallel can be found in [1 Kgs. 15:17-22](#). In the prophecy Hanani preaches against this treaty. In [1 Kgs. 15:23](#) reference is made to Asa's illness. [2 Chron. 16:12](#) adds that he did not seek the Lord in his illness. The prophecy of Hanani may be an addition to give the cause of the illness. The chronicler often uses speeches like this one to state his own theological convictions.

The findings on the prophetic material with no parallels in Kings can be summarized in five points:

- They comment on and supply interpretations of events described in Kings, linking events to the king's relation to the Lord;
- Their words are primarily directed at the king;
- Their message goes back to a theological view that trust in God results in blessing and mistrust brings judgement;
- Two groups can be distinguished, viz. prophets also known from Kings and prophets introduced in Chronicles; and
- Three of them had to suffer on account of their message.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Four general tendencies in the Chronicler's treatment of prophets can be distinguished: 1. He goes much further than the Deuteronomistic History in emphasizing the prophetic dimension in Israel's history and introduces new material; 2. prophetic speeches are more closely related to the prophetic books; 3. the chronicler's prophets have more resemblances to the classical prophets of the prophetic books than to the deuteronomistic prophets; and 4. he uses prophets to fill gaps in the Deuteronomistic succession of prophets.

The many references to prophetic works in the regal resums are an attempt by the prophet who is writing to connect his work with the prophetic tradition. Prophets are transformed into historians in Chronicles. The writer of Chronicles must have had some link with the cult. In the words of the classical prophets in their books, the cult is often attacked. This aspect of the prophets' word does not function in Chronicles. This can be due to the writer's attempt to demonstrate continuity between the prophets of history and his own tradition, which is more related to priestly circles. This necessitated an adaptation of the prophetic traditions.

Prophets in Chronicles are often linked to the progress of the theocracy. They played an important role in the founding of the monarchy. They admonished kings and pronounced blessing or judgement, depending on the king's reaction. They were the guardians of the theocracy—and the rejection of their words resulted in judgement, as can be deduced from the reference in [2 Chron. 36:16](#) that the people mocked the prophets. The actions of the prophets were often linked to [p. 111](#) the chronicler's doctrine of retribution. Disobedience resulted in judgement and obedience in blessing. In this regard the rejection of treaties with foreign nations played an important role.

[2 Chron. 25](#) illustrates two aspects of the way prophets are introduced in these books. This chapter describes the history of Amaziah, with the parallel passage in [2 Kgs. 14](#). In Kings no prophets are mentioned; in Chronicles two prophets are introduced. In this way Amaziah gets his prophetic counterparts. In the first instance, in verses [7–9](#), a man of God instructed the king not to use Israelite mercenaries against Edom. He obeyed the unknown man of God, with positive results. In verses [15–16](#) the actions of another unknown prophet are described. After his return from his victory over Edom, Amaziah bowed down before the gods of the people of Self. This prophet came to rebuke the king. The king refused to listen. The result was that judgement was pronounced on him. In the following passage the defeat of Amaziah in a battle against Israel is ascribed to his sin and disobedience. Positive and negative retribution is explained through the introduction of two unknown prophets in this chapter. In the theocracy the prophets had the task of proclaiming God's words to the kings of Judah, and they received blessing or judgement in accordance with their reaction to these words. The fate of people and king often depended on their response to the prophetic word.

In Chronicles the prophets emphasized the true cult, almost on a par with the actions of kings. Part of the prophetic message is that Judah's prosperity is related to her fidelity to the cult. This can be contrasted to the many negative remarks of the classical prophets about the cult. The prophets are responsible for the reconstruction of the temple.

It remains a valid question whether the changes regarding the prophets in Chronicles against the Deuteronomic History did not lessen their role. When a prophet becomes institutionalized, something of his message is lost. Prophets are often used in Chronicles to legitimize institutions of the writer's time. It is possible that this treatment of prophets, with only short-term predictions, must be seen as a reaction against the rise of the apocalyptic with its focus on the future and its use of unclear figures of speech.

In the Persian period the role of the prophets became smaller and prophecy was transformed into apocalyptic. If it is accepted that the apocalyptic and the Levites were opposing parties, the way prophets are pictured in Chronicles can be regarded as part of an ideological struggle. In history as recreated in Chronicles, kings, prophets and Levites played the major parts—and only the Levites remained in the new society and a changing world. They are the legitimate successors of the leaders of the pre-exile community. The temple was to serve as the focal point of a new community and prophets are used in Chronicles to emphasize this role accorded to the temple.

The coupling of Levites with the prophets and the kings of the people's history also served to emphasize the more important role to be played by [p. 112](#) the Levitical hierarchy. Only they remained of the leading pre-exilic institutions. On account of their historical ties with prophets and kings, the Levites were fit to lead the people into a new future.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is clear that tradition played an important role in the history of Israel and in the formation of the Old Testament. The traditions God commanded his people to hand down from generation to generation were mainly related to God's acts on behalf of his people. As the Old Testament evolved during the course of many centuries traditions were often handed down orally for generations before they were written down. In this way the Old Testament reflects an expanding process of revelation through which God unfolded his plan with his creation, and especially with his people.

The Old Testament speaks thus about a history of salvation that as a whole itself became a tradition. This tradition was written down, expanded, reinterpreted and remained God's Word for his people during this process. The Old Testament is however more than just a record of traditions. It is God's Word that is normative for his children. All presentday ecclesiastical traditions must be tested against this normative Word.

Biblical traditions are both historical and revelational. They relate both to the redemptive acts of God in the history of salvation and to the prophetic word that accompanies and explains these redemptive acts. Today normative biblical tradition must continually be interpreted and be applied to new life situations. In this way the ancient traditions of the Old Testament will always speak anew in a world lost in sin.

What now can be deduced further from the Old Testament's use of traditions? People today, like those of every human society have their own traditions. They came into existence in various ways, they developed in various ways. We should not reject our traditions—but we may also not be bound by our traditions. In this regard the Old Testament's use of its traditions may help us.

One thing is sure, the modern evangelical should never regard traditions as fixed and unchangeable nor yet ignore them. Without traditions we lose our roots, but traditions

must not hamper necessary development and growth in our faith and in our churches. As in the Old Testament old traditions were used to bring a new measure in a new time so we need to evaluate our own traditions to determine what can be used—in a new framework if necessary—to give us new direction.

We must exercise our liberty in Christ by using traditions creatively to meet the demands of our time. In this way traditions can be used to instruct people living in a new time with new demands.

There is no need for a negative view of traditions as such. Just as the biblical writers exercised great liberty in dealing with their traditions, fitting them into new frameworks, rephrasing them to answer the demands of new circumstances, teaching new lessons by using old traditions, so we should exercise liberty as people enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

To do this we must use our traditions [p. 113](#) selectively, not just cling to an old way of doing things, retaining what is relevant for our situation and discarding what is irrelevant. We must not discard the essentials of our faith to make the message of the gospel acceptable to man, but we must reject old forms that no longer serve a purpose as vehicles to transmit God's normative Word.

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II

The New Testament as Tradition

Brian Wintle

Tradition especially as it relates to Scripture has been a thorny issue in some segments of the Protestant Church ever since the Reformation. The difference of opinion is in a sense historical. The further away the church moved from the Roman Catholic Church, the lower the place that was apparently given to tradition. Or, to put it differently, the stronger the emphasis on *sola scriptura* the less the value officially given to ecclesiastical tradition.

It is true, nevertheless, that all segments of the church either deliberately or unwittingly do give value to tradition. It has been well stated that even the segments of the church that officially give no credence to tradition are in their very doing so honouring their respective traditions.

The subject of this paper is the New Testament as tradition. However, the primary focus of the paper will be on a prior issue—that is, the place given to tradition in the New Testament writings. In other words, it is necessary to determine how tradition is viewed and understood in the New Testament writings before we can understand in what sense it is valid to refer to these writings themselves as tradition.

We could begin with the general statement that although Jesus appears in the synoptics to have been quite harsh in his criticism of and opposition to Pharisaic tradition in particular, we find that there is an overall positive evaluation of tradition in the apostolic and sub-apostolic church. Now, if this statement can be substantiated, it reflects a situation that needs explaining; after all, the apostolic church was ostensibly built on Jesus Christ as its foundation. So how do we explain this?

I

JESUS AND TRADITION

In the synoptic gospels, Jesus appears to be in conflict with the religious leaders—the scribes and the Pharisees—over three aspects of the Jewish law: the sabbath, ritualistic purity, the issue related to the Corban vow and divorce. So we shall begin by considering what was the issue in these controversy narratives. Besides this, we will need to examine the significance of the antitheses in [Mt. 5:21–48](#) when Jesus apparently [P. 116](#) set his teaching in antithesis to rabbinic teaching.

The sabbath controversies