

Prophetic utterances in narrative texts, with reference to 1 Samuel 2:27-36

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ABSTRACT

Some insights of narrative theory are utilised in a study of the prophetic utterance of the unknown man of God in 1 Samuel 2:27-36 in an attempt to explore the function of prophetic utterances in narrative texts. A short review of the appearance of prophets in the Deuteronomistic history is given. In studying this utterance many uncertainties appear, also regarding references to the fulfilment of the prophecy. The point of view of the reader has a profound influence on the interpretation of the text, as demonstrated by divergent readings of the text. This passage can be viewed as an example of external focalisation in the Deuteronomistic history and also as an example of a narrative with blanks.

A INTRODUCTION

Prophetic utterances occur frequently in narrative contexts in the Deuteronomistic history. The prophets from whom these utterances emanate act as characters in the narrative in many of these instances, as is the case with Nathan in 2 Samuel 12 or Isaiah in the time of king Hezekiah of Judah. Utterances of unknown prophets or of prophets of whom only the names are mentioned are also encountered frequently. In these instances these prophets also often form part of the main narrative. In some instances only the words of the prophet are given, without the prophet forming part of the main narrative or taking part in a dialogue with another character in the narrative. The purpose of this paper represents an attempt to define the role and function of prophetic utterances in narrative texts, specifically in the Deuteronomistic history, with special reference to the words of an unknown prophet to Eli in 1 Samuel 2:27-36.

B METHODOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

Some of the insights of narrative theory are utilised in this paper. Prophetic utterances in the Deuteronomistic history can often be linked to the point of view or perspective of the narrator. In these instances it functions on the

level of the modality of the narrative, which Genette (1980:162) defines as the 'different points of view from which the life or the action is looked at'. In this the subjects of perspective and distance are important. These are in their turn related to the difference between the narrative techniques of showing and telling. Perspective is related to the question of which character's point of view orients the narrative (Genette 1980:186). The different perspectives are related to what he calls focalisation (1980:189). Bal (1980:108-109) defines focalisation as the relationship between the represented elements in the narrative and the perspective from which it is presented. She also distinguishes between character-bound focalisation, where the focaliser is also a character in the narrative, and external focalisation, where an anonymous focaliser, who does not form part of the narrative, is found.

In this narratological approach to the text, attention is also paid to information offered by a diachronic analysis of these texts. This is in agreement with the method utilised by Oosthuizen (1988:57, 65 note 2) while trying to place the narrative in its original context and define a contemporary reading of the narrative.

C POINT OF VIEW IN THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

The subject of point of view in the Deuteronomistic history is in many respects complex. If it is accepted that its final, or near final, form must be dated to the Babylonian exile, the point of view of the narrator was to demonstrate to the Babylonian exiles that the judgment that befell them was just on account of the people's persistent disobedience to the Lord (cf Van Rooy 1988:876-877). If it is accepted that a previous edition of the book must be dated to the time of the Josianic reform, it is indeed possible that the point of view of that edition, namely one in favour of that reform, could be ascertained in some parts of the present work. It is also true that the editors of the Deuteronomistic history utilised sources for the compilation and editing of their work. Each of these sources had its own point of view and it is possible to define the point of view of these sources in some instances. From the remark in Judges 17:6 and 21:25 ('There was no king in Israel at that time. Everyone did just as he pleased') it can be deduced that the narrator regarded the absence of a king as detrimental. This can be contrasted with the anti-monarchical trend that appeared in some instances in 1 Samuel, with regard to the introduction of the monarchy.

Besides the point of view regarding the Deuteronomistic history as a whole,

the points of view of different characters in the narrative and the point of view of the reader. In defining the role of prophetic utterances in the Deuteronomistic history, these points of view will be taken into account.

D A REVIEW OF THE APPEARANCE OF PROPHETS IN THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

In this section of the paper attention will be given to the statement of Deuteronomy 18 regarding prophets, the place of prophets in Deuteronomistic recapitulations in the narrative (such as the one in 2 Ki 17, after the fall of Samaria), the function of prophets who play an active part in the narrative and the function of prophets - known or unknown - who appear on the scene with a message from God and who disappear after delivering the message, without playing a part in the development of the narrative.

1 Deuteronomy 18:15-22

The task of a prophet is defined in this passage and linked to a guideline for distinguishing between true and false prophets. The true prophet is called by God, and God will command him on what to tell the people. This prophet must be obeyed by the people. The test of a true prophet is the fulfilment of his predictions. Four elements can be distinguished in this statement regarding the task of a prophet, namely a calling by God, a message from God to the people, obedience to his word, and fulfilment as the guideline for recognising a true prophet.

2 Prophets in a Deuteronomistic recapitulation

The point of view of the narrator appears overtly in the judgments passed on the Kings of Israel and Judah in the Deuteronomistic history and also in recapitulations. As regards the role of prophets in the Deuteronomistic history, the recapitulation - after the fall of Samaria in 1 Kings 17:7-23 - is of great importance. The cause of the judgment on Samaria is explicitly stated, namely the sins of the people and their refusal to repent. In this recapitulation, reference is made to the prophets, and their message is summarised as a call to repentance. The people did not obey this call, and this resulted in the fall of the Kingdom of Israel. In verse 23 it is stated that this happened in accordance with the warnings delivered through God's servants, the prophets. In this recapitulation the guidelines of Deuteronomy 18 can be discerned. The prophets were called and commissioned by God. They warned the people, but the people refused to obey their words. The fall of Samaria

and the Northern Kingdom was, therefore, a fulfilment of the words of the prophets - and this marked them as true prophets. What is remarkable is that the actions and words of the prophets in the Deuteronomistic history are not primarily linked to a call to repentance, as stated in Deuteronomy 18 and mentioned in 2 Kings 17:13. Their usual message is one of judgment. The fulfilment of each of these prophecies of judgment either follows the pronouncement of judgment or - when this is not the case - is specifically linked to the pronouncement by way of a direct reference to the pronouncement of judgment (as is the case in 2 Ki 17:23).

In this recapitulation the narrator gives his appreciation of the history of the Northern Kingdom and in doing so he refers to the prophets. They are instruments of God, have been called by God, are his servants (v 23) and through them he has warned the people (v 14). By doing this the narrator wants to convince his readers that his point of view is in accordance with God's point of view. That is part of the perspective of the narrator, and prophets are his instruments to make this point clear.

3 Prophets who play an important role in the course of the narrative

In the Deuteronomistic history frequent reference is made to prophets or people delivering a prophetic message (according to Dt 18). Reference is also made to prophets without quoting their words, as is the case with Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25. As regards the role of the prophets, some of them play a major part in the main narrative. Samuel is an example of this, being one of the main characters at the beginning of the book of 1 Samuel. His prophetic utterances also form part of the main narrative. Keeping in mind the narrative techniques of showing and telling, Samuel appears as a prophet in a context of showing. This becomes clear when the words of the unknown prophet against the house of Eli (in 1 Sm 2:27-36) are compared with the words of Samuel to the same effect (1 Sm 3). In the case of the unknown prophet it is simply stated that he came to Eli and said to him: 'Thus says the Lord'. His message is stated, but he does not enter in dialogue with Eli, no detail pertaining to time and space is stated and no reaction of Eli to his words is given. In the case of Samuel and his message of doom, dialogue and time and space play an important role - and Eli's reaction is stated. It is therefore possible to conclude that the unknown prophet's message is used in a context of telling, with the narrator telling the reader what God's view of the house of Eli is. Samuel is used in a context of showing, showing the same point of view by way of dialogue and the setting of time and space.

Many of the words and deeds of the prophets who appear in the Deuteronomistic history can be compared with those of Samuel. They form part

of the main narrative and engage in dialogue with other characters. This is the case with Nathan, Gad, Ahijah (when proclaiming that Jeroboam will become king, and pronouncing doom on the house of Jeroboam), Shemaiah (1 Ki 12), the man of God from Judah in the time of Jeroboam as well as the old prophet from Bethel, the unknown prophets (of 1 Ki 20), Micaiah (1 Ki 22), Elijah, Elisha, the man from the group of prophets (2 Ki 9), Isaiah and Huldah.

Two groups of utterances can be distinguished among the words of these prophets. The one group consists of brief instructions or predictions pertaining to the present or the near future. The other group consists of utterances containing a perspective or prediction for the not so near future. An example of the first group is Samuel's appearance in 1 Samuel 7, where a call to repentance is given during a period of Philistine oppression. This is followed by the positive reaction of the people and their subsequent victory over the Philistines. For the purpose of this paper this group will not be discussed in detail. The emphasis is on the prophecies containing a perspective for the not so near future.

The instances important for this paper are the prophecy of Samuel in 1 Samuel 8 regarding the establishment of the monarchy, his actions recorded in 1 Samuel 15, the appearance of Nathan (2 Sm 7 and 12), Ahijah (1 Ki 11 and 14), the man of God (1 Ki 13), Elijah (1 Ki 21) and Huldah (2 Ki 22). What is important in these passages is that they present, through the words of the prophet, the point of view of God in the history of his people. These prophets are used as focalisers in the narrative, and indeed are not there simply to present just their own points of view, but God's. The narrator does not want to present just his own perspective, but the perspective of God as well. His point of view coincides with God's, and that is the perspective from which the narrative is presented.

In 1 Samuel 8, Samuel is instructed to proclaim the law of the king to the people. This probably demonstrates the anti-monarchical tendency of the source used by the Deuteronomistic historian in this instance. In 1 Samuel 15, God's judgment on Saul's kingship is made clear, as well as the election of David as king in the place of Saul. This emphasises the positive point of view regarding David in the History of David's rise to power by demonstrating God's positive point of view vis-à-vis David. In Nathan's prophecies in 2 Samuel 7 and 12 both the promise of prosperity and an everlasting dynasty, and the pronouncement of judgment on the house of David are linked to God's judgment of the situation, to his point of view. In 2 Samuel 7, at the beginning of the succession history, the special position of David is demonstrated by the prophecy Nathan pronounced at God's behest. In 2 Samuel 12 the reader is again not left to draw his own conclusions

regarding David's sins but, through the prophet, God's judgment is made clear. God's punishment of these sins determines much of David's subsequent history.

It is impossible to discuss all the instances of this type in the Deuteronomistic history, but it is clear that many of them serve the same purpose. This seems true of the appearance of Ahijah (1 Ki 11 and 14), the man of God from Judah (1 Ki 13), Elijah (1 Ki 21) and Huldah (1 Ki 22). God's point of view is stated and the narrator wants to make it clear that his point of view is the same as God's.

It can also be demonstrated that the four points made in Deuteronomy 18 regarding the actions of a prophet play a role in the description of prophetic activity in the Deuteronomistic history. In all the instances in this group the fact that the prophet was called and commissioned by God is stated in one way or another. The expression 'Thus says the Lord' is often prefixed to their words. As the prophetic word was often a word of judgment and the pronouncement of doom, the call to obedience to this word is not frequent. What happens more often is that the judgment is postponed or modified as a result of submission and penitence on the side of the hearer. This is encountered in the case of Ahab in 1 Kings 21, when he bowed before the word of God's judgment. It can also be seen in the time of Josiah, when the judgment on Judah and Jerusalem was postponed on account of the reforms of Josiah (2 Ki 22, as part of the message of Huldah).

The fulfilment of the prophetic word, however, receives special emphasis. In the majority of the instances the fulfilment is described soon after the pronouncement. Thus the fulfilment of the pronouncement of the death of Hophni and Phinehas in 1 Samuel 2 and 3 is described in 1 Samuel 4. Ahijah's prediction that Jeroboam would become king of Israel is encountered in 2 Kings 11, and the fulfilment in 2 Kings 12. Ahaziah's death is described in the same chapter (2 Ki 1) as its prediction by Elijah. The same can be found in the case of a number of predictions of deliverance from difficult circumstances or of victory or defeat in battle (1 Ki 20, 2 Kings 3,7,8,9,19 and 20). In some instances the fulfilment is mentioned later on in the books. Nathan's prophecy to David in 2 Samuel 7 is at least partly fulfilled in Solomon. The fulfilment of the prophecy of the man of God from Judah in 1 Kings 13 is mentioned in 2 Kings 23:15-16, but then with an explicit reference to the prophecy. Ahijah's prophecy on the fall of the house of Jeroboam is given in 1 Kings 14 and the fulfilment in 1 Kings 15, again with a pertinent reference to the prophecy. The fulfilment of Elijah's prophecy against Ahab, following the death of Naboth, in 1 Kings 21 is mentioned in 2 Kings 9:25-26. It is mentioned again in 2 Kings 10:10 and 14, with a reference to the prophecy of Elijah. Such a reference to the prophecy is also en-

countered in the case of the revelation to Jehu in 2 Kings 10:30, to which reference is made in 2 Kings 15:12.

4 Prophets who did not play an important role in the course of the narrative

The instances of importance are Judges 2 (an unknown messenger of God), the unknown prophet of Judges 6:8 and the man of God in 1 Samuel 2. As regards the utterance in Judges 2:1-4, it must be noted that it occurred shortly before Joshua's death. The language is closely related to that of Deuteronomy, and it does not consist of a prediction or a situational command, but rather of an appreciation of the deeds of the people connected to a pronouncement of judgment. The deeds of the people are judged in this utterance by the messenger of God in terms showing the narrator's point of view with regard to the history of the period of the judges.

The same occurs with regard to the prophet in Judges 6:8. It is connected in the course of the narrative with the fact that the people cried to God, but the unknown prophet plays no role in the development of the narrative. He condemns the people, but this is neither linked to a call to repentance nor to a pronouncement of judgment.

In both these instances the narrator uses the prophets as focalisers, to pause in the course of the narrative and to give God's point of view, which again concurs with that of the narrator. The unknown man of God in 1 Samuel 2 is the subject of the next section of the paper.

E THE MAN OF GOD IN 1 SAMUEL 2:27-36

1 Introduction

The prophetic utterance of this man of God is complex in many respects. It does not contain only a reference to judgment on the house of Eli, but it refers to a reliable priest as well as to the anointed of the Lord. It is not clear from the message of the unknown prophet to whom this priest and anointed refer, and there are no clear indications by way of references to this utterance in the rest of the narrative, even up to the end of the Deuteronomistic history, that give a clear-cut answer to this problem. The fulfilment regarding the death of the two sons of Eli on one day is given in 1 Samuel 4:11, without an explicitly stated reference to the prophecy of either this unknown prophet or Samuel in 1 Samuel 3. A reference to this prophecy does, however, appear in 1 Kings 2:27. There the banishment of Abiathar is interpreted as a fulfilment of this prophecy against the house of Eli, but it is never stated that the house of Eli was superseded by Zadok or

the Zadokites. Abiathar was one of the priests of Nob, according to 1 Samuel 22, the son of Ahimelech and the grandson of Ahitub, who is linked by way of the reference to Ahijah in 1 Samuel 14:3 to the house of Eli. During the rebellion of Absalom mention is made of a son of Abiathar with the name of Jonathan. In 2 Samuel 8:17 another son of Abiathar is mentioned, with the name of Ahimelech, the same name as his father's. To make it even more confusing, there is the fact that Zadok is called the son of Ahitub in 2 Samuel 8:17 as well as in other parts of the Deuteronomistic history. This would make Zadok the uncle of Abiathar, if the same Ahitub is meant in both genealogies. The possibility of confusion or an attempt to establish the Aaronite descent of Zadok exists, even though Cross (1973:214) mentions the possibility of two different Ahitubs in the two genealogies. 1 Samuel 14:3 must also be taken into consideration. There a priest with the name of Ahijah is mentioned. He is called the son of Ahitub (the grandfather of Abiathar), and Ahitub is called the brother of Ichabod, the grandson of Eli and the son of Phinehas. This reference connects the priests of Nob to the priestly house of Eli. This Ahijah was, according to this reconstruction, an uncle of Abiathar. Tsevat (1961:209-214) accepts the evidence of 1 Samuel 14:3 as trustworthy. In spite of the probable confusion in the text, also regarding the genealogy of Zadok, it is apparent that the Deuteronomistic historian wanted to link the house of Eli to the priests of Nob, especially by means of the remark in 1 Samuel 14:3. This, read together with the reference to Abiathar and the judgment on the house of Eli in 1 Kings 2:27, points to the partial fulfilment of the prophecy against the house of Eli by the massacre of the priests of Nob by Saul, and to the further fulfilment of that prophecy by the banishment of Abiathar by Solomon during the struggle for the succession to David.

2 The point of view of the reader in 1 Samuel 2:27-36

The literary history of 1 Samuel 2:27-36 is reconstructed in diverse ways by different scholars. The views of the different scholars on this prophecy and related matters demonstrate the importance of the point of view of the reader for the interpretation of this passage.

Tsevat (1961) is an example of those scholars who want to postulate a late date for at least parts of the utterance. A basic premise for his interpretation is that if a prophecy corresponds closely to its fulfilment, the prophecy must be regarded as a *vaticinium ex eventu*, and not as a true prediction (1961:195). With this point of view in mind, it is fairly easy to understand his interpretation of the words of this unknown prophet. Thus he links verse 36, with its reference to the descendants of Eli going to the

faithful priest and asking him to add them to one of the priestly orders, to the effects of the Josianic reform (1961:192-193). This verse points to a time when priests who were not connected to the central sanctuary found themselves in an economic predicament. They were thus forced to beg for admittance to one of the priestly orders at the central sanctuary. He dates this addition to the time of Josiah's reform or shortly thereafter. He interprets the reliable priest of verse 35 as a reference to the Zadokite priesthood which superseded the house of Eli. 'The anointed' must then be a reference to the monarchy, with the implication that this addition must also be dated before the Babylonian exile (1961:193). Verse 33, with its reference to a restricted but active priestly role of the house of Eli, must be dated before the banishment of Abiathar. The reference to the death of the two sons of Eli must be dated after the battle in which they were killed (1961:164). Tsevat restricts the original prophecy to verses 27-33 and accepts a date for it close to the time of the unknown prophet. This he bases on the fact that Abiathar must have reached a ripe old age (serving David before he became king, and living till the time of Solomon), something that contradicts the words of verses 31b and 32b, that there would not be an old man in the house of Eli (1961:195). The original prophecy tells the story of the house of Eli, their sin and punishment (1961:209). His approach is influenced - one can even say, conditioned - by his thesis that this passage contains a narrative of Kareth, a narrative of premature death. The predictions that fit the fulfilment too neatly must be regarded as later additions.

McCarter (1984) is an example of those scholars who ascribe the whole of 1 Samuel 2:27-36 to the Deuteronomistic redaction. He recognises many phrases and devices of the Josianic historian in this passage. The aim of the passage is to associate the death of Eli and his two sons with the massacre of the priests of Nob in 1 Samuel 22:6-23 and with the rejection of Abiathar in favour of Zadok, who was the primogenitor of the dominant priestly family in Jerusalem. He summarises his view as follows (1984:16): 'In this way the old stories are made to express the Deuteronomistic polemic against the non-Jerusalemite priesthood - the priests of the "high places" '. The appearance of this unknown man of God is but a 'literary device of the Josianic historian' (1984:89). McCarter also links verse 33 to Abiathar, by way of the reference in 1 Kings 2:27 (1984:90-91). The faithful priest is Zadok and verse 36 points to the effects of the reform of Josiah, as stated in 2 Kings 23:9 (1984:91). It may seem evident that Samuel was the successor of Eli, but the editor makes it clear, also by way of the link between this passage and the prophecy of the man of God from Judah in 1 Kings 13:1-3, that Zadok is this priest (1984:92). The secure house is, therefore, also the house of Zadok, which played a dominant role in the time of Josiah

(1984:93). For the Deuteronomistic historian the house of Eli represented all priests outside of Jerusalem who laid claim to the priesthood. Their rejection is the natural corollary of the election of the Zadokites. McCarter states that the books of Samuel and Kings display a relentless march of history towards David as the anointed of God, Jerusalem as the chosen city and Zadok of Jerusalem as the chosen priest (1984:93). His choice for a Deuteronomistic construction in this passage clearly determines his interpretation.

Ackroyd (1971) also wants to date the passage late, partly due to the overlap with 1 Samuel 3. He puts it as follows: 'It provides an opportunity for a major comment on the meaning of the story' (1971:38). In this way the loss of the ark and the fall of the house of Eli is placed in the framework of God's larger purpose for his people. He also emphasises the replacement of the house of Eli by the house of Zadok (1971:39) and links verse 36 to 2 Kings 22-23 (1971:40). He remarks that the previous promises to the house of Eli have been reversed on account of their failure. Privilege cannot be maintained for the one to whom it was promised when obedience is lacking (1971:39-40). His view does not differ much from McCarter's.

Peterson (1981:40-41) distinguishes three strata in the narratives about prophets called 'men of God'. One is post-Deuteronomistic, one Deuteronomistic and one occurs in prophetic legends, as in the case of Elijah and Elisha. 1 Samuel 2:27-36 forms part of the Deuteronomistic strata.

Stoebe (1973:86) is also of the opinion that the whole passage was revised and actualised at a later stage. He also regards verse 36 as related to the Deuteronomistic reform, but regards verse 34 as the conclusion to the older prophecy and verses 35-36 as a later addition (1973:118).

Campbell (1986:67) regards verses 27-34 as part of his prophetic source for 1 Samuel 1 through 2 Kings 10, which he dates to the late ninth century. He regards verses 35-36 also as a Deuteronomistic addition. He discerns a contrast between the house of Eli and Samuel in 1 Samuel 1-3. Samuel is the representative of the new, prophetic order and the house of Eli of the old, priestly order (1986:66). His interest in matters pertaining to his idea of the growth of prophecy plays an important part in his interpretation of this passage.

Mauchline (1971) is of the opinion that the narrative in its present form is not wholly coherent and that it shows signs of reworking (1971:54). He regards only verses 27-30 as part of the ancient record. Verse 33 is a later addition, reflecting the experiences of the Shilonite priests in Nob after the destruction of Shilo (1971:55). Verse 35 points to Samuel as the reliable priest and verse 36 to Zadok. The anointed is David (1971:55-56). The humiliation of the house of Eli can refer to the dismissal of Abiathar by Solo-

mon or the sorry state of the Levites referred to in 2 Kings 23:8-9 (1971:56). Mauchline's conclusion is that the passage contains a historical kernel, with Samuel as the reliable priest referred to. The reference was edited to refer to Zadok. It is clear that he attempts to take the whole corpus of texts of which this passage forms a part into account for his interpretation, with attention to synchronic and diachronic evidence.

Against the general idea of a link between this passage and the Deuteronomistic historian, Noth (1963) regards it as improbable that verses 35-36 could be linked to the Deuteronomistic reform (1963:394). Verse 36 is undeuteronomistic (to his mind) and he regards it as part of the original utterance which dates from shortly after the death of Solomon.

Van den Born (1956:27) wants to connect the passage to a Zadokite-priestly writer. Smith (1912:21) also wants to date the passage late. He is of the opinion that 1 Samuel 4:1 follows logically on 1:25. The older historian would have left us to draw our own conclusions, but the writer of this passage wanted to make the lesson clear. Here he touches on what is currently known as the difference between the narrative techniques of telling and showing - a modern way of distinguishing between the styles of different narrators.

On the other side of the spectrum stands Eslinger (1985:129), who regards this passage as 'an integral narrative punctuated with so-called Deuteronomistic ideology'. He takes the final form of the text as his point of departure and wants to subject it to a close reading within the context of 1 Samuel 1-12. With this point of view as his starting point, he presents some very interesting interpretations for parts of this passage, like his idea that the statement that there would no longer be an old man in the house of Eli must be a direct reference to Eli himself, who is called an 'old man' in verse 22. As regards the predictions of verses 33, 35 and 36, he wants to look for a fulfilment in the corpus he restricted him to (1 Sm 1-12). The person referred to in verse 33, the one from the house of Eli who would not be destroyed from the altar, could then be Ichabod or Samuel, with Samuel the more likely candidate (1985:137). The death of Hophni and Phinehas in 1 Samuel 4 is the fulfilment of the prophecy in verse 34 that Eli's two sons would die on the same day (1985:137-138). He connects verse 35, with its reference to the reliable priest, to Samuel. The reference to the anointed is an anticipation of the monarchy (1985:138-140). He concedes that the fulfilment of verse 36 is problematic in the corpus of 1 Samuel 1-12 (1985:140). He concurs, however, with the views of Noth and Keil and Delitzsch, who do not want to posit a single clear fulfilment of this prophecy. He states that this prophecy 'exhibits the characteristics of the literary phenomenon that Iser calls "blanks" ' (1985:140). This leaves it to the reader to fill in the

blanks, without the presupposition that there must be one correct answer. It may be necessary to move beyond the bounds of the corpus in which he chose to find an answer to the problem.

The views of Willis do not differ much from Eslinger's. He also wants to read his text (1 Sm 1-7) as a unity (1971:289) and within this corpus 1 Samuel 1-3 constitutes a novella or saga, telling the reader something about the birth, family and early childhood of an important man (1972:39). He regards the coherence of the material as very important, because through this coherent unity the writer or editor wanted to express some theological truth to his audience (1979:207). It must be quite clear that Willis's and Eslinger's choice for the final text as the context for the interpretation resulted in a different reading of the text from those using a diachronic approach, and especially those opting for a Deuteronomistic context.

Cross (1973) also deals with this passage in his discussion of the priestly houses of Ancient Israel (1973:195-215). He follows Wellhausen's threefold development in the priesthood, from an early stage without a hereditary priesthood, through a stage when a Levite priesthood gained a dominant role in Jerusalem to the post-exilic theocracy with the house of Aaron as the ruling party (1973:195). He also follows Wellhausen's theory of a Mushite origin for the priestly house of Eli at Shilo and the priestly house of Dan appointed by Jeroboam (1973:196-198). As regards matters more directly related to the passage under discussion, he links David's appointment of two high priests in Jerusalem to the two major priestly houses of his kingdom. Abiathar was the representative of the Mushite house of Eli of the old northern sanctuary at Shilo, and Zadok was the representative of the Aaronite house of Hebron (1973:208). After the dismissal of Abiathar the house of Aaron became gradually stronger with the result that in the time of the chronicler the house of Eli could be linked to Aaron. Cross accepts the Aaronite descent of Zadok (1973:208) and rejects the notion that he was of Jebusite descent (1973:209-214). He favours the idea that the Ahitub appearing in the genealogy of Abiathar was a different person to the Ahitub appearing in the genealogy of Zadok (1973:214). 1 Samuel 2:30-36 points to the opposition between the house of Eli and the house of Zadok (1973:213).

It is clear from this discussion that the reader's point of view has an important bearing on his interpretation of this passage. In summary, the following points of view can be distinguished among the views of the scholars discussed above: Tsevat's idea of a narrative of Kareth and his view of *vaticinium ex eventu*; Campbell's theory of a prophetic source and the opposition between the old, priestly order and the new, prophetic order; the Deuteronomistic redaction of McCarter and Ackroyd and many others as

the origin of this passage and its meaning at the time of the Josianic reform; the Zadokite-priestly writer of Van den Born; Eslinger's close reading of the passage as part of 1 Samuel 1-12, with the related view of Willis; and Cross's view of the two priestly houses of Ancient Israel and the struggle between them and their place in the United Monarchy (the view of Cohen 1965, can also be compared with this view).

3 The point of view of the narrator

With the different points of view in mind, the task of describing the point of view or perspective of the narrator in 1 Samuel 2:27-36 is not an easy one. The choice of the reader in his approach to the narrative determines his interpretation of the point of view of the narrator. If the reader accepts a Deuteronomistic narrator from the time of the exile, the perspective of the narrator would be quite different from that of a prophetic narrator from the ninth century. Keeping this in mind, one could, however, attempt to describe the techniques used by the narrator and expound his point of view and the perspective of the narrative that can be deduced from it. This could help to interpret his use of prophetic utterances in the narrative.

As regards the narrative techniques used in the Deuteronomistic history, the distinction between the techniques of showing and telling is very important. The two techniques are often used alternatively in the same piece of narrative, but in some instances the one predominates and in other instances the other. This distinction becomes clear when the utterance in 1 Samuel 2:27-36 is compared with the preceding and subsequent sections in the book. In the preceding section the sins of Eli's sons are shown to the reader and their conduct is contrasted with that of Samuel (1 Sm 2:12-26). The behaviour of Eli's sons is illustrated by one episode in their lives, and by the liberal use of dialogue in this description. This is followed by an illustration of Samuel and his mother and their behaviour. The blessing Samuel received from Eli is also contrasted with the rebuke of Eli's sons. In the course of this description God's evaluation of the situation is given, but the reader would in any case have been able to draw his own conclusion from the events shown to him. In 1 Samuel 3 the judgment on Eli's house is pronounced by Samuel, and again the narrator predominantly uses the technique of showing. The events are situated in time and space, liberal use is made of dialogue both between Eli and Samuel and between God and Samuel, and even Eli's reaction to the pronouncement of judgment is given. The pronouncement of judgment on the house of Eli (1 Sm 2:27-36) exhibits, on the other hand, the technique of telling, even though the words are pronounced by a character in the narrative, the unknown man of God. No

information is given regarding time and space; neither dialogue nor the reaction of Eli to these prophetic words is found. The narrator wants to state God's point of view in this narrative, by way of this prophetic utterance. The point of view of the narrator can be seen in the preceding and subsequent sections and this passage makes it clear that the point of view of the narrator is in agreement with God's point of view. This is also in accordance with one of the narrator's basic presuppositions, namely that God is in command of history.

If one looks at the subject of the fulfilment of the prophecy, an important aspect of prophetic utterances in the Deuteronomistic history, the fulfilment of this prophecy demonstrates unique features. The fulfilment of most of the prophetic utterances in the Deuteronomistic history can be seen in one episode. A victory, for example, or a defeat in battle is predicted, and this takes place shortly afterwards. When the fulfilment of a prophecy does not follow it immediately, explicit reference is often made to the prediction of the specific prophet. This is, however, not the case with this prophecy. The sign is fulfilled in the death of Eli's sons. Later on, reference is made to this prophecy with the banishment of Abiathar. No reference, however, is made to this prophecy at the massacre of the priests of Nob, even though the narrator wants to make the relation between the house of Eli and the priests of Nob clear by way of the reference in 1 Samuel 14:3. The narrator never explains whom he meant by the anointed or the faithful priest. There is an abundance of theories, as shown in the previous section, but this abundance demonstrates that the narrator is not clear at this point. In this sense it is indeed possible to speak of a blank in the narrative, as argued by Eslinger. The narrator did not regard it as important to make the reference clear in his narrative. This implies that the narrator's aim with this passage cannot be found in those blanks - as if the narrative favoured the Zadokite priesthood or demonstrated the primacy of prophecy against priesthood. In the course of the narrative, judgment is pronounced on the house of Eli on account of the sins of his sons. This is in agreement with one of the major themes of Deuteronomistic history, which is that sin results in punishment. This is often explicitly stated with regard to kings. The same is true of priests, as this passage demonstrates with regard to the house of Eli. Unfaithful priests are not above judgment or banishment on account of their priestly office. This point of view of the narrator is affirmed by this unknown man of God. The election of Eli's family to the priesthood in Egypt already does not guarantee that they will keep possession of this office. Just as Jeroboam was appointed to become king of the Northern kingdom after the division of the United monarchy because of the sins of the house of David, a new priestly line could be appointed to su-

perse the house of Eli. With this point made, the narrator is not really interested in the question of what line that would be. This passage is an example of focalisation - and, indeed, external focalisation as this man of God does not really play a role in the course of the narrative.

F CONCLUSIONS

This utterance of the unknown man of God can be regarded as an example of a narrative with blanks, but it is also an example of a narrator's alternation of the techniques of telling and showing in order to focalise in his narrative. In doing this, he supplements his own point of view, shown in the preceding and subsequent passages mainly by use of the technique of showing, by telling the reader that his point of view is in agreement with God's point of view. It is not only theologians and politicians who habitually lay claim to God's support for their cause - a historian can do so as well.

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