

Prophets (2)

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p. 58 The prophets appear in I Samuel as groups playing various instruments, dancing and acting like ecstasies. In other words, they worked themselves up into a frenzy under the influence of music and dancing, and then finally went into trances. Saul himself is said to have thrown off his clothing, gone into a trance, and lain naked all night. Today we have a much clearer neuro-psychological understanding of this phenomenon, such as is presented in the illuminating analysis by William Sargant in Battle for the Mind . . .

p. 59 As a result of this research, a good deal is now known about the transformation of behaviour patterns. In the past many liberal biblical scholars argued that when it is said of Saul that he received a new heart, it does not mean that he was "converted," but that he was believed to have been changed by some process of sympathetic magic, becoming a different personality from what he had been before. However, this is not magic, but physiology or neuropsychology. The description in I Samuel (not mentioned by Sargant) of the ecstatic prophets, of Samuel's relationship to them, and of Saul's activities in connection with them, is almost identical with descriptions of similar movements in quite recent history. St. Paul was troubled by some of these manifestations, such as "speaking with tongues," although he recognized that they had a place in infant Christianity. . . .

p. 60 In agreement with most scholars I used to think that there was no prophetic literature before the eighth century B.C. Edward Robertson of Manchester had long insisted, with almost no success, that Deuteronomy goes back substantially to Samuel. I cannot accept his specific formulation of the argument, but Deuteronomy is unthinkable apart from the prophetic movement, and the prophets of Israel are equally unthinkable without Samuel.