

PRIESTS, PROPHETS, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

by Daniel Day Williams

Our topic focuses attention on a critical contemporary issue. The power and weakness of organized religion, the relation of the religious traditions and institutions to the search for solutions to pressing human problems, and the radical criticism of all religion in the name of a secular hope are obvious aspects of our present situation. The terms "priests," "prophets," and "establishment" come out of the history of religion, particularly of Western religion. We are required, therefore, to analyze the traditional meanings of these terms, if we are to understand the issues concerning religious living which we face today.

A simple view of the matter would be that the establishment means the religious institutions with their organized power, their privileged status, their respectability as maintainers of the status quo. The establishment can be understood simply as the alliance of political power with religious prestige and organization. Priests are chaplains to the establishment, and the prophets, when they are not smothered by it, are the critics who set us free from its dead weight. This is a common view found among both liberal and radical critics of the religious tradition. Our topic calls to mind a saying of Walter Rauschenbusch, leader of the Social Gospel movement, "The kingdom of God breeds prophets; the church breeds priests and theologians."¹

It will be a primary aim of this paper to show that this is too simple

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ZYGON

a view of religion in any culture, including our present culture. It is important, first of all, to treat these three elements as functions, not simply as offices. I shall consider the nature of the priestly and the prophetic functions, and the function of "establishment" as a social and political power. The interrelations of these three functions are complex. Drastic changes are taking place in our present society; but my thesis is that the functions of priesthood, prophecy, and establishment are perennial. The critical issues today concern the form and reform of these functions, not their elimination.

"Priesthood" is the most universal of our terms. Every religious group and culture has had some form of leadership and office which has the function of mediating the divine, or the holy reality, to the culture. The Holy, to use Rudolph Otto's designation, is whatever is experienced and related to as the *numinous*, the tremendous and fascinating reality which stands behind and beyond all finite existence and which calls forth awe, reverence, and service. For the purpose of our analysis we can regard the divine as whatever is taken as the ultimate meaning-giving reality. Every culture and every person depends upon or searches for something which gives integrating and final meaning to existence. In functional terms we shall call that, however it is conceived, the "divine."

The priestly function is the mediation of this divine reality. This traditionally includes rites and sacraments which celebrate the divine. It includes the preservation of tradition and dogma about the nature of the divine. It includes the ministry of teaching, initiation into the religious community, and the care of persons who need the healing, the renewal, the reinforcement of faith which comes from the power of the priestly function to communicate the divine. We should not forget that "priesthood" has usually designated a special class or group, with authority, prestige, and privilege. It is often hierarchically ordered so that there is a structure of authority within the priesthood. But the priestly function appears wherever persons become interpreters and mediators of the divine, and help other persons to find healing, meaning, and hope in the symbols, truths, and love which the "priest" communicates. Clearly then there are priesthoods wherever persons have the power of giving ultimate direction and reinforcement to the faiths of men, whether those faiths be religious or secular. Scientists who communicate their faith in the meaning of life are exercising a priestly function, and they may on occasion be received with a reverence and dependence surpassing that of the traditional priesthood.

The term "prophet" brings us more within the orbit of one religious

tradition, the Judeo-Christian, Western tradition. The Hebrew prophets who represent this category have a religious outlook and function which has distinctive elements found in other religions only by analogy. If one reviews the interpretation of the Hebrew prophets by Abraham Heschel, Martin Buber, and James Muilenberg, to mention three major scholars, we find that prophecy as it appeared among the Hebrews involves the total perspective of the Hebraic faith.² It sees the divine at work in history as personal purpose, as righteous judgment, and as mercy leading to hope. Recognizing that we are dealing summarily with one of the towering aspects of religious history, we can state these aspects of the prophetic message and function:

1. The prophets see life and history under the aspect of the divine purpose for a particular people which is bound up with the divine purpose for the world. The prophets do not question Israel's election, "You only have I known of all the nations on the earth," but they interpret it as the call to obedience to the righteous God who claims the whole of life. There is no separation of sacred and secular for the prophets. They separate the sacred from the profane.

2. The profane is the violation of the moral will of God. The divine demand is justice, the ordering of the whole life of the people according to the righteous will of God. That righteousness is personal and moral and is primarily concerned with the care of the strong for the weak, the protection of the defenseless, the overturning of the structures of injustice, and the exclusive worship of the One God.

3. The prophets come into conflict with the established political order and religion, not because they reject the authority of the king-ship, or the necessity of the order of the community, but because they put the moral claim ahead of everything else including the religious forms and rituals. The words of Amos are deathless precisely because they pose this perennial issue and resolve it in the moral dimension:

I hate, I despise your feasts
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies,
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal
offerings,
I will not accept them,
And the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will
not look upon.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

[Amos 5:21-24]

ZYGON

4. In this penetration to the foundation of the community's life the prophets do in a sense un hinge all securities in tradition, institution, and national expectation. But Buber points out that, for all the prophets of the period of the monarchy, kingship is not rejected. The prophetic expectation is a theopolitical kingship, one endowed with power to further the realization of God's will for his people. This is one illustration of the fact that the prophetic cannot be understood as the rejection of the establishment. Yet it does drive beyond the present establishment to a future order. Here then is the fourth major theme of the prophets: the expectation of the act of God which will break up the evil orders, and establish the good Kingdom.

It is in this sense that the prophets are predictors. They did make some specific predictions in political affairs, some of which were confirmed by events and some of which were not. But the essence of prophecy is the moral prediction, that is, the promise of God that what is crooked will be set straight.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me for he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. [Isa. 61:1-2]

5. Finally, it is a distinctive mark of prophecy that the prophets are individuals. They do not all say the same thing, or see history exactly alike. They all expect an act of God, setting the world straight, but sometimes this is put in utopian terms, sometimes in mystical vision, and, as the Old Testament moves on to its end, a new form of expectation appears. The Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah appears in the prophetic tradition, but is he a prophetic figure, or a messianic figure? That question remains one of the mysteries of biblical interpretation. Both the prophetic and the priestly functions have personal elements, and we cannot simply cut them to fit our categories as we characterize them in broad terms.

The relation of priesthood and prophecy is a fascinating topic. We recognize a tension between them. The prophetic critique of the priests and the ceremonial side of religion is one of its persistent themes. It is worthwhile, however, to point out that the relations of these two functions are complex. Priests can be trained to be priests, and technical aspects of their functions can be taught. At the same time every theological school is wrestling with the question of the relation of theological education to the growth of faith and the development of committed character in priests and ministers.

Prophets cannot be taught to be prophets, although sometimes the

phrase "school of the prophets" is used. The Old Testament gives hints of communities of prophets which seem to have a kind of cultic or social status. Jeremiah himself in one place identifies both priests and prophets as defenders of the status quo. Possibly one mark of the true prophet is that he does not call himself a prophet. Prophecy arises through the movement of the spirit of God in the spirit of man. This cannot be controlled, or contained, and it produces a tension with all established forms and traditions. Priests can be ordained by the community and have their activities in some measure prescribed. Prophets have another mode of ordination, and they make their own rules.

Having pointed to these contrasts, let us note some important relationships. There is nothing in the priestly office or function which necessarily negates the prophetic spirit. The priest is mediator of the divine, the holy. The holy brings judgment against everything profane, that is, against everything insofar as it contradicts the holy. The authentic priestly witness to the divine, therefore, may have a prophetic character.

Again, it is the priestly function within the establishment which preserves the prophets' message and reaffirms it through the liturgy of the community. Call it paradox if we like, and sometimes it has an ironic aspect, but without the priestly conservation in the establishment, the prophetic word would be lost, or become merely eccentric to the community. The prophets do not reject the religious community. Drastic as their condemnation of it is, they still call the community back to its true foundations.

Hosea depicts the struggle in the divine heart graphically:

I will destroy you, O Israel
Who can help you . . .
Return, O Israel to the Lord your God
I will heal their faithlessness
I will love them freely.

[Hos. 13:9; 14:1; 14:4]

What Heschel calls the "pathos" of God is reflected in the prophets' suffering as they address the nation in love and in judgment. The prophet sees the moral ambiguity of every community before God, but he does not reject the claim of the common life and its forms. He declares the holiness of what ought to be without obliterating the holiness of being.

The third term of our analysis, "establishment," gives us many problems. It has been used widely in American culture only very recently.

ZYGON

It is usually used in a pejorative, political, and propagandistic sense. It would be interesting to inquire how this word has sprung into general use, and who uses it and why. Analysts of the term point out that one characteristic of an establishment in the contemporary sense is that no one will admit he belongs to it. It is a term often used to identify some group or power which is regarded as the enemy. It usually carries an overtone of criticism, if not rejection, and is rarely a term of affection or approbation. We need, therefore, to do some ground clearing as to what we are talking about.

The meaning of establishment in the history of modern religion is "the ecclesiastical system established by law." According to the Oxford Dictionary, its first usage was in 1731. The American Constitution in the First Amendment forbids Congress to enact any law "respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Taxation exemptions, military exemption, chaplaincies, and oaths at swearing-in ceremonies of officials or witnesses all may be called elements of establishment.

Also, it is well known that the disestablishment of religion in its traditional form can lead to the implicit establishment of other sets of values: scientific, humanistic, and educational. And there can be unofficial establishment through social prestige and power without legal establishment.

We come to the meaning of establishment in American culture today. The term is usually used to refer to some configuration of power and prestige which influences all the important decisions and which sets the boundaries of what is acceptable to those who hold decisive power.

Whether such an American establishment, or more than one, exists in American culture is a nice question for sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists. Richard Rovere in a well-known essay on *The American Establishment* shows that the term is often used to define a group which one considers to have seized power and to hold it against the common good. He quotes an editorial in the *Louisville Courier Journal*:

The Establishment is a general term for those people in finance, business, and the professions, largely from the Northeast, who hold the principal measure of power and influence in this country irrespective of what administration occupies the White House. . . . It is a working alliance of the near-socialist professor and the internationalist Eastern banker calling for a bland bipartisan approach to national politics.³

Rovere himself sees the real American establishment in the liberal, internationalized, respectable world of the great foundations, and the

Foreign Policy Association. He says its authority is enormous in organized religion (Roman Catholics and Fundamentalists to one side), in science, and indeed in all the learned professions except medicine. Those who recognize in Reinhold Niebuhr one of the chief prophetic voices of contemporary Christianity will be surprised to hear that according to Rovere, he is the theologian of the establishment.

A different look at the establishment is that of Norman Mailer, who means by the term the liberal, optimistic, moralistic idealism which gives spiritual tone and direction to the culture of the respectable and affluent. He says: "The Establishment has no idea of death, no tolerance for heaven and hell, no comprehension of bloodshed. It sees no logic in pain. To the establishment these notions are a detritus from the past."⁴

Another variant on the establishment theme is Richard Wentz's article in *The Christian Century* for April 12, 1967, in which he professes to see a new establishment of religion growing in the departments of religion in state universities; but his concern is spiritual not legal. He says the academics in these departments are gradually claiming the "right to speak for all the good and the true in the realm of religion." He thinks this academic establishment is too comfortable, probably cannot understand religion viscerally, and should recognize the danger of its own position of power.

The political use of the term appears again when leaders of the NAACP are criticized by their own left as being "too close to the establishment."

This variety of usages should put us on our guard. There are many American establishments, both secular and religious. Certainly there are groups of great power, prestige, and sometimes wealth who have much to say about the direction of American culture. But we should remember with Richard Rovere that the establishment always has an opposition. Where there are insiders, there are outsiders. There are those who profit from forms of establishment, and there are injustices in every establishment. But we need to see also that establishment represents a function in culture which is necessary. It is the function of the organization, institutionalization, and leadership which embodies a set of values, a style of life, and which gives some continuity to the common life. From this point of view there are elements of establishment in the American Constitution, in the tradition of the common law, in education, labor, the professions, and in the arts and sciences.

Establishments are nearly always conservative in the sense that they

seek no revolution which would destroy their power or existence, but seek an amelioration of those things which they see as self-destructive or wrong. American establishments tend to represent a strongly middle-class, voluntaristic, individualistic, democratic tradition.

If we turn to the elements of establishment in the religious institutions, we see that the American political establishment permits the organization of religion on a voluntary basis. Within this framework the American churches and synagogues represent a large concentration of spiritual, political, and economic power. In spite of the trends toward secularism, the size and power of the voluntary religious associations is one of the extraordinary features of American culture. A present development is the breaking of the Protestant-Catholic wall and the realignment of institutions, schools, publications, and social action projects on ecumenical and interfaith lines. The Anglo-Saxon Protestant "establishment" is undergoing a drastic shakeup.

We must face the weighty internal and external criticism now brought against the religious institutions and traditions. I shall turn to this; but my purpose so far has been to point out that "establishment" in our culture is a complex of values, behaviors, institutions, and traditions which has a considerable fluidity. The establishment function as the holding of a central core of values, outlook, and social coherence is necessary to human society. Revolutionaries seek the overthrow of one establishment in order to create another.

The important issue today is not how we can get rid of an evil force called "The Establishment" and have the good society without any such social force. That is a juvenile way of looking at the problem, even from a revolutionary point of view. We are concerned with the real issues which a consideration of these three functions—prophet, priest, and establishment—poses for us today. I shall deal with three: first, the criterion of truth which can fulfil and guide a faith about the meaning of life; second, the displacing of religious forms by secular forms; and, third, the search for a strategy within the establishment for dealing with the critical social problems of our time.

CRITERIA FOR TRUTH

All important questions including the religious questions drive toward the issue of a final criterion of truth. The priestly and prophetic elements in the religious tradition drive toward this question, and the answer given is fundamental for Western culture. I shall characterize that answer and then acknowledge its chief contemporary rival.

Consider the prophets. They profess to speak the truth of the divine

judgment, "Thus saith the Lord." But there are false as well as true prophets. Jeremiah himself says: "Wise men, prophet, and priest, all deal falsely, they heal the wound lightly: saying 'peace, peace' when there is no peace" (8:10). Jeremiah's suggestion here is profound. The criterion of true prophecy is permanent rather than superficial healing. The peace called for must really come. The validation of the prophetic message does not rest on the prophet's authority or charisma alone, but it appeals to the divine purpose in history. The vindication lies in what God will do.

This search for a historical resolution becomes more problematical for Israel as the history of prophecy goes on. The tension between the present reality and the divine righteousness grows. The expectancy which the prophetic message creates becomes more and more the subject of apocalyptic conceptions. There is to be a divine intervention in history and a supernatural resolution of the ambiguities of history.

There is another issue implicit in the prophetic word: the determination of what constitutes justice. The prophets declare for the divine righteousness with its concern for the equality of all before God and the protection of the weak. They defend the poor, the exploited, the homeless. They denounce those who join house to house until there is no room (Isa. 5:8). They point to specific evils, and they demand concrete correction. But the prophets do not give principles for the determination of what is just. They do not elaborate a legal system. They do not work out the assumptions which might underlie the formation of a viable method for the adjudication of disputes. Most of this task is either ignored or left to the tradition—Torah. Martin Buber says the Torah combats social corruptions by means of a rhythmic social restoration, a renewed leveling of the ownership of the soil and the re-establishment of common freedom.⁵ But to carry this out in a complex society becomes a problem of social and legal engineering for which the prophetic word alone does not give guidance.

Priestly authority to declare what is true is always derivative. It comes from the tradition and institutions which are accepted as having a divine foundation or revelation. Priests have authority as long as this mediation actually is believed in, but the priest does not originate the truth which he declares.

Hence we come to the crucial question: within priesthood, prophecy, and the establishment, where is the criterion for the judgment, renewal, and direction of life to be found? The answer given in the Judeo-Christian tradition is quite clear. It is *nowhere* within these

three. Priesthood, prophecy, and the establishment require a criterion of judgment which is above them all.

The form which this takes in Judaism and Christianity is *messianic*. The prophetic expectancy rises to the hope for the appearance of the anointed one of God whose name shall be called "wonderful, counselor, the mighty God and everlasting father, prince of peace." Martin Buber traces the Hebrew conception of the *nabi*, the prophet, as a leader and liberator. Moses is so understood and the prophets after him. The later prophets see the vocation of the prophet himself as the enduring of suffering and martyrdom. It is the transition to new leadership. "The suffering *nabi* is the antecedent type of the acting Messiah." The truth of Israel will be embodied in its purity in the Servant (*Meshullam*), the perfected one.⁶

The structure of this view of history is the foundation of the biblical answer to the question of the criterion of truth. Christianity asserts that the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, has come into history and is the truth and the life. There is an interesting correspondence between one of the christological traditions and our topic, for Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King. That is, in Christian theology the fulfilment and criterion of these three functions receive their final determination in none of them, but in the form of the Servant who suffers in love that all may be made one in the new reality which God is creating in history.

The prophetic role of the Messiah is etched in the whole record of Jesus' life. There is the prophetic message of judgment on the powerful, the exploiters; the call to justice and purity of life; the insistence on the weightier matters of the law. Now Jesus declares the imminence of the Kingdom. It is "at hand." Later Christian theology developed a new periodization of history. The time after the Messiah's life and death is the time of preaching the Gospel. The apocalyptic expectation is pushed to the end of time so that in a sense the prophetic structure is maintained intact.

The priestly role of the Messiah offers an important contrast. He becomes himself the priest, and there are priestly functions of healing, of teaching, and of the origination of the ritual memorial of his death. But the decisive element in his priesthood is that it is defined wholly by his service, and this service involves the full sharing of our humanity: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (Heb. 4:14). The Epistle to the Hebrews displaces the sacrificial cult of religion with the sacrifice of the man. There is

now only one priesthood, all others are unnecessary. So in the *Revelation of St. John* there is no temple in heaven, for the Lamb himself is there. Thus the messianic doctrine becomes the foundation for a unification of religious experience with the criterion of human loving service as the key to the divine.

Christ's role as King offers an important and subtle problem in the structure of Christian faith. Its foundation is that Christ is acknowledged as Lord and that he has triumphed over the earthly powers, made a spectacle of them (Col. 2:15). Therefore the principalities and powers, the governments, are in principle subjected to his rule, even though that rule remains embattled in earthly history.⁷

Here the tension between the forms of religious expectation in the establishment and the Messiah as the suffering man who gives himself for God and the neighbor comes to its highest point. Jesus was crucified within the laws of the establishment and by its powers. The priestly class for the most part appears judged by his words and his death. The political and legal powers conspire in his rejection. He maintains his prophetic role; but the fulfilment of prophecy comes through the death of the divine anointed one himself, a theme which gradually developed in later prophecy (and in the Qumran community).

H. Richard Niebuhr sums up the significance of this approach to Christology. He says it is difficult to classify Moses as a founder of a *religion*. He originated a society. So also "Jesus Christ who mediated the radical faith to folk Moses and the prophets did not reach seems out of place in the classification of founders of religion. He appeared as a strange figure who constituted both threat and promise to men in their political, economic, and moral existence as well as in their religion."⁸

I have so far been setting forth the structure of the theological approach to the criterion of final judgment without trying to make a case for any one interpretation of that criterion. Of course to say that this is the prophetic-messianic view does not settle the question of its validity. If we hold, as I do, that every fundamental perspective, including the scientific way of thinking, involves decisions of faith which cannot be wholly objectified, then we shall have to acknowledge that there is no way of exhibiting a single truth criterion which all reasonable men must accept.

The messianic theme does, however, involve an approach to the criterion of truth which has been constitutive for Western culture and for modern science. This is the view that truth is disclosed in history as the result of human action and through encounter with the divine

ZYGON

working in history. This is to say that both for the traditional messianic faith and for scientific experimentalism the resolution of the problem of truth comes through historical experience. All life is experimental. We have to discover what history will disclose about our concepts, our values, and our theories. Such truth as we have is the result of the meeting of man with the course of nature and the events of history in ways which challenge our inadequate ideas and lead us to seek a wider coherence, fuller communication, and more significant inquiry into the nature of things.

In Christian theology this position is formally expressed in the doctrine that Christ is the *logos* of being. All truth coheres in him, but this can be known only through the continuous and progressive validation which comes with historical experience, and that process is never finished in time. There is, therefore, a significant analogy between the traditional structure of messianic faith and the commitment of science to a continuous criticism, reconstruction, and fulfilment of inquiry through historical experience.⁹

There are many faiths. And there are many claims to methods of determining truth which make no use of the tradition we have been describing. The chief alternative within our culture to the christological criterion of truth is a rational humanism in which the guidance of life is sought through a rational determination of human needs, a criticism of present values, and a reconstruction of society and individual life so as to fulfil human potentialities. John Dewey was a major exponent of this faith in its most profound and critical form.¹⁰

I do not think these two faiths are in complete opposition. A Christian humanism and a rational humanism which respect man in his potentialities and seek to release his creativity have much in common. I am concerned here to point out that each is a faith and that the question of the priestly, prophetic, and establishment functions drives us to decide for a final criterion of judgment. From a theological point of view the humanist faith keeps much of what a Christian humanism affirms. It leaves out only grace, divine forgiveness, and an ultimate hope.

SECULAR PRIESTS AND PROPHETS

The question being asked in our time is whether we need any of these traditional categories or forms for understanding our situation or doing anything about it. The turn toward the secular is an impressive aspect of the present religious situation. Indeed the passion for the secular solution has appeared within the religious establishment itself. One of the

younger critics of the present church, Stephen Rose, says, "For the explorers, the church will be understood as an institution which not only preaches and teaches but also possesses the organization needed for full abandonment to the pain and promise of secular life."¹¹ Some want to interpret the "secular meaning of the Gospel" with at least a moratorium on the word "God," for it is only the secular meaning which can reach Western technological man.¹²

We should have some clarity about the meaning of "secular." Its root is "the age" or "the time." The secular is that which belongs to this time and place. It is the opposite of the ultimate, the transcendent, or the eternal. Secularism as a faith, or quasi-religion, is the faith that the meaning of life is to be found in the meeting of the problems at hand, enjoying the fulfilments which are given in the pilgrimage from birth to death, and expecting nothing more or less than is yielded by a courageous intelligent response to the world as it presents itself here and now.

There is an interesting piece of theological history here. The first modern attempt to separate faith from religion was that of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, who took the position that faith as understood in the New Testament is not "religiousness" but "sets a question mark against all religion." They saw "religion" as man's attempt to relate himself to God through his feeling, ethical striving, and the ritual which seeks rapport with the divine. Faith, the early Barthians said, is none of these things. It is the miracle of a free personal response to God's word.

Now in mid-century the break between faith and religion has been carried a step further. Now one finds the position that the secular is all the meaning there is, and the way to faith is complete immersion in the problems of the secular world.

I offer one suggestion to explain this development in part. It is not that religious experience and concern have disappeared, that is, concern with the ultimate reality; but human problems are so pressing, and the outrage at the indifference of conventional religion to those problems is so great that the term "secular" has taken on a new meaning. It now means concern with humanity, the passion for persons and personal relationship. Man's freedom, his dignity, his survival in the twentieth century is the nerve of sensitive human concern. What is now called the "secular" world means the human world as it really is. This need not be opposed to "religion," as I see it, except where religion has become dehumanized.

Two points of view can be taken with respect to this search for mean-

ing in the secular. One is that which Paul Tillich defended: that religion is the substance of culture as culture is the form of religion and that therefore an ultimate concern, a search for the meaning of life in the face of death, an openness to the transcendent reality which gives meaning to temporal things is an inescapable dimension of man's life.¹⁸ Tillich held that secularism is a vacuum and that this vacuum will be filled with religious content, either a demonic religion, such as the quasi-religion of fascism, or a humanistic idealism, or a decision for the traditional faiths. In his view, secularism cannot last.

The other view is that, under the impact of modern science and technology, a new form of human consciousness is taking shape in an expanding response to the possibilities now opened up in nature and history. Man can immerse himself in this process of problem solving, create new technologies, prolong life (freeze victims of disease until a cure is discovered), explore the planets and stars, and in this endlessly expanding life find all the meaning and hope that he needs. In this view, the prophetic and priestly functions are drastically transformed. The possessors of technological skill become the priests, and the engineers and researchers become the prophets.

If the priestly and prophetic and messianic functions have meaning, then Tillich's view is far nearer the truth than the second. But we recognize that today priestly and prophetic functions do appear in secularized modes. One aspect of this is the role of psychiatry in our culture, and I shall pursue it briefly because it throws light on the present relationship of the sacred and the secular.

One could make a strong case that the major role of psychiatry (I use the term in a broad sense) is priestly. There is the mediation of a healing reality to people who are anxious and hurt. There is the penetration to the deeper levels of guilt, estrangement, and loneliness. There is the offer of release and new freedom. The mode of ministry is personal, caring, and patient. There is the confessional, and a form of absolution based on discovery of the roots of guilt feelings. And there is the hope of a life released for love, and coping with the problems of existence. It is more difficult to make a case for psychiatry's fulfillment of the role of providing a structure of belief; but this also is surely present in the faith placed in the healing process, and in the profession and its doctrines. Some spokesmen, such as Erich Fromm, become theologians of the movement, offering its view of life as the way to freedom, the mastery of the art of loving, and proclaim man's new faith in himself. I do not identify Fromm's philosophy with that of all psychiatry, but

only illustrate how the priestly function of mediation of truth is carried out by a distinguished contemporary psychiatrist.

But the prophetic role is present also. Sigmund Freud surely has prophetic stature in the attack of the mind-set of Victorian society, his discovery of a new world of forces and structures in the person, and his critique of religion and civilization. In *The Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he became a social prophet, calling for man's struggle with the realities of life. Freud resembles the Hebrew prophets in his rejection of a simple utopianism. His standpoint is stoic rather than optimistic. He is in sharp contrast here to some of his present disciples, such as Herbert Marcuse and Norman Brown, who are genuine utopians, believing that a fully eroticized and happy society is possible using technology and therapy to remove everything which threatens man's joy.¹⁴

A Freudian critic of this utopian outcome is Erik Erikson, and it is to his position that I call attention. Erikson says: "These are two great sources of contemporary identity and identity confusion: faith in technology and a reassertion of a kind of humanism. Both are apt to be dated in their utopianism and inadequate for the gigantic struggle for man's mastery of his own powers."¹⁵ Here the psychologist becomes a critic of the exaggerated confidence of some contemporary faiths. But Erikson's prophetic critique goes deeper. His address to the Psychoanalytic Association in 1961 on "Psychological Reality and Historical Actuality" is an examination from within of the role played by psychiatry in the modern period.

Erikson argues for the extension of the range of psychiatric concern into the realms of politics and history. Psychiatry has reflected the liberal epoch with its trust in rational enlightenment and individual freedom and has neglected studying the nature of "political leverage." Psychiatry has a burden of guilt for its contribution to a romantic optimism in which an "id-utopia" is to arrive through the release of infantile sexuality. But there is a further point in Erikson's critique. He asks what it is which has contributed to the psychiatrists' reluctance to recognize the drive for power in history. And he says one source is the "reluctance to recognize this aggressive drive in one's professional actuality."¹⁶ Here is the prophetic note at a profound level. The search for moral judgment has turned within. "Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips." Erikson refers to Robert Oppenheimer's use of the word "sin" to describe the fall of man into a tragically dangerous plight. Here the language of secular proph-

ZYGON

ecy, which begins with a technical analysis in the psychological clinic, becomes the language of traditional priesthood and prophecy. I do not cite this to make theological capital out of it or to prove that the tradition is sufficient. Quite the contrary, it is cited to show the perennial need for the prophetic word, whether it appears within traditional religious auspices or not.

But there is a further point. While Erikson's critique is made on moral grounds, it includes insight derived from structures in the human psyche which have become identified through empirical analysis. In this case they are the structures of repression and rationalization which psychologists know very well. Here then the prophetic function has incorporated a technical and scientific element. This is something new in human history. Past prophecy has moved at a profound moral level, but it has on the whole been separated from technical knowledge. It is possible that in our time the prophetic function will appear most powerfully where it joins an ultimate moral sensitivity to a technical grasp of the structures and dynamics of human existence. Technical knowledge does not create the prophet, but it may immeasurably strengthen the effectiveness of his word.

REFORMATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

We are faced with decisions about the religious traditions and institutions. There are some who speak as if the task of our time is complete overthrow of all present elements of establishment, both political and religious. Granted that revolutionary changes in our social structure and the forms of religious institutions are required, I cannot find much relevance to our American situation in talk about "overthrowing the establishment." The decisive question is what kind of changes, evolutionary and revolutionary, are required in our institutions, churches, synagogues, education, and political order. It is not a question we answer neatly by plan. History is full of imponderables, and if we have a religious view of life, there is the working of the divine power and purpose which always does the unexpected. But there are two major aspects of the decisions we now have to make about our inherited religious institutions and outlook.

The first is the decision about the use of the resources of the present establishment for producing needed social change. If you ask where the really pressing moral decisions are being made in religious institutions today, look at the church budgets in local congregations and in national church organizations. How shall these resources be used? How much should go for church buildings and program, and how much for social action projects? Can churches do without certain amenities in

order to invest in integrated housing in American communities which otherwise will not have it? Can they create radically new forms of ministry?

What kinds of expectations do congregations have concerning how their minister spends his time? Should he do less pastoral calling, and give more hours to the local school board? Is he primarily the chaplain to his congregation, or does he belong in the forefront of the social movements in his community? These are the questions which are being asked within the religious establishment today. They involve a respect for the priestly function, but also a prophetic insight into the present need of man in the light of his divine origin and destiny.

The other aspect of our decision is spiritual. Can we find the meaning of existence and the foundation of faith within the inherited traditions? Or must we move beyond them? The establishment preserves the tradition, sometimes very badly, but without the establishment it disappears. It preserves the sacred books, the Torah and the Testament; the sacraments of God's action; the Passover and Good Friday; Handel's *Messiah*, Honegger's *King David*, and Stravinsky's *Mass*. The establishment is the tradition-conserving community, but there are some who must leave it. They "can't go home again."

I shall not argue here who is right or wrong, but I will state briefly the grounds upon which a decision to remain within the religious tradition could be made.

Much depends upon our attitude toward the elements of sacred story, of symbol, of images of the relation of man and God which the biblical faith provides. Themes, such as creation and fall, the image of God in man and man's guilt, the mystery of election to responsibility, the Suffering Servant action, the heights and depths of prayer, the redemption of tragedy, and the hope for fulfilment in and beyond history are the heart of the tradition. It is not a question of whether this gives us literal and rational knowledge of all things. It is the question of whether these symbols and themes reflect the depths of life. If man can live without God's grace and forgiveness, if he can be fully human, solving his temporal problems without seeking an ultimate good and finding God, his supreme companion in the universe, then what the religious tradition has stood for will wither away.

But if man is the being between time and eternity, between life and death, between God and nothingness, then what we have to fear is the superficiality of believing that man can live by technological mastery alone without the call to the sacrificial spirit, the love which bears with tragedy and which finds hope in the ultimate divine reality which

cannot be shaken. It is this reality to which priesthood, prophecy, and establishment in their true functions point.

Certainly no religious tradition is strong or wise enough to live without criticism. My view is that we need the non-ecclesiastical functions of priesthood and prophecy as well as those within the tradition. But the priestly and prophetic traditions and the messianic affirmations contain also the power of self-criticism. When that power is released from within or by challenge from beyond, even the conservative establishment may be renewed. The Protestant Reformation began in the theological lecture room of an Augustinian monk. The present reform of Vatican II began with the spirit of a Pope of the Roman Church and is now carried in powerful reconstructive energy by the hierarchy and priesthood. Just at the time when priesthood has apparently lost its social prestige and even its religious authority to mediate the divine word directly, it has recovered its relation to the divine power which makes all things new and has become the prophetic voice calling for new human and churchly order. With that paradox we leave our topic.

NOTES

1. Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1918), p. 137.
2. Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962); Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949); James Muilenberg, *The Way of Israel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).
3. Quoted in Richard Rovere, *The American Establishment* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 6.
4. Norman Mailer, *The Presidential Papers* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963), p. 246.
5. Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 231, 233.
7. This doctrine of the kingship of Christ and his rule of the earthly powers became one of the theological weapons of the confessing church in Europe against nazism (see W. A. Visser t'Hooft, *The Kingship of Christ* [New York: Harper & Row, 1948]).
8. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1943), pp. 39-40.
9. I have dealt more fully with the problem of truth and criteria in "Truth in the Theological Perspective," *Journal of Religion*, Vol. XXVIII (October, 1948).
10. John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934).
11. Stephen C. Rose, "1984; Some Scenarios for the Church," *United Church Herald*, X (July, 1967), 23.
12. Paul Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1963).
13. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 57.
14. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955); Norman O. Brown, *Life against Death* (New York: Random House, 1959).
15. Richard I. Evans, *Dialogue with Erik Erikson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).
16. Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), p. 212 *et passim*.