

This thinksheet aims at a simple, important distinction:

PREDICTION is (literally) "pre-saying" something that's to happen. It may be (a) a random guess, (b) a learned guess, (c) an utterance of someone with PG ("prognosis," one of the parapsychic powers)--and may be considered, in a particular instance, (1) purely human, (2) divine (God saying something through the predictor), or (3) demonic (an irruption of chthonic influence or of the person's "shadow"). It's a major misunderstanding that prediction is a major matter in the Bible.... What's major, in the biblical tradition, is, rather, "PROPHECY," which I must put in quotes because it's technical:

1. It's like "prediction" only in having to do with the future. "Prophecy" is the Greek parallel to the Latin "prediction": its literal meaning is "pre-saying." Since in English a Greek equivalent has some sense heightened over the Latin, "prophecy" should suggest to you that something more is going on with "prophecy" than with "prediction."

2. It's unlike "prediction" in that....

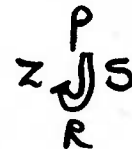
a. While both terms bespeak the future, "prediction" centers in the future and "prophecy" centers in God, the Lord of history (and nature).

b. The center of "prediction" is event, whereas the center of "prophecy" is will--what God wants, which will "out" as judgment/fulfilment.

c. Whereas you're washed up if your "prediction" fails, you win if your "prophecy" is "true," i.e. in conformity with God's will, shalom in justice and joy for the whole creation in praise of its Source and Destiny--even if some prediction within your prophecy comes acropper! E.g., the historical end of David's dynasty confounds ecstastic expectations that the dynasty would be "everlasting," but that's little skin off the nose of the prophecy, which is essentially theocratic (centering power-in-history in God) and only existentially monarchic (celebrating the God-honoring king).

d. The point of prediction is our control over the future, whereas the point of prophecy is that--in the light of the fact that God controls history and thus the future--we'd better let God control our present.

e. Prophecy as "forth-telling" by divine inspiration [+ "fore-telling"]. The distinction is important not only for hermeneutics, but also for Jewish/Christian relations and indeed global intercultural/interpolitical relations. Let's look at that middle item: JEWISH/CHRISTIAN RELATIONS. To shape a question--did Isaiah prophecy (a) Judaism, (b) Jesus-Christianity, (c) both, (d) neither? Well, can't say he "predicted" any of that! Yet the messianic yearning in the Scroll of Is. undeniably flows into Late Judaism, Jesus, Christianity, Rabbinism ("Judaism" today)....The diagram here shows, roughly, the "Judaisms" at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple (AD 70):



On the horizontal we have the extremes of what I'm going to call POLITICAL Judaism....

The leftest party ("Z") was the Zealots, revolutionaries who remain shadowy for us because they left no writings. Jesus had some of them among his disciples, all of whom were either outcultural or countercultural--though he taught that violence is in God's hands, not ours, and was "left" in all other senses than violence.

The rightest party ("S")--accomodationist, quisling, Saigonese--was the Sadducees, who with the national collapse were as washed up as were the Zealots. On the vertical is what I'm going to call RELIGIOUS Judaism....

"P" stands both for People Judaism and for Pharisee Judaism, the Judaism that survived to become today's "Judaism" because it was closest to the people.

"R" was Remnant Judaism, the nonpolitical sectarians--the Dead Sea Community (Qumran), John Baptist, Jesus, and others. The remnant Isaiah "predicted"? If so, Is. predicted Christianity and not Judaism! But Isaiah, remember, was a "prophet"!

[We may add also these forms of Judaism: "Mystical" and "Allegorical-philosophical.]