

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OLD TESTAMENT
PROPHECY AND NUER PROPHECY –
A COMPARATIVE THEOLOGICAL STUDY**



Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch

Study Leader: Prof HL Bosman

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to compare ancient Israelite (Old Testament) prophecy with Nuer prophecy within its respective religious contexts, to detect the differences and similarities.

The most important differences between Israelite (Old Testament) and Nuer prophecy are:

- Israelite prophecy presupposes monotheism while Nuer prophecy functions within a polytheistic religious context.
- Nuer understanding of creation is far less explicit than the Israelite accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2.

In explaining the reasons for the dissimilarities between Israelite (Old Testament) and Nuer prophecy, reference was made to the difference in geographical location, cultural and societal context.

Among the more important similarities between Israelite (Old Testament) and Nuer prophecy are the points of view related to sin and sacrifice, as well as the distinction between true and false prophets and the role of prophets in society.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie beoog om 'n vergelyking te tref tussen antieke Israelitiese (Ou Testament-) profesie en Nuer-profesie binne hulle onderskeie religieuse kontekste, en om ooreenkomste en verskille te identifiseer.

Die volgende is die belangrikste verskille tussen Israelitiese (Ou Testament-) en Nuer-profesie:

- Israelitiese profesie voorveronderstel monoteïsme terwyl Nuer-profesie binne 'n politeïstiese religieuse konteks funksioneer.
- Die Nuer-begrip van die skepping is aansienlik minder eksplisiet as die Israelitiese weergawes van die skepping in Genesis 1 en 2.

'n Verklaring van die gronde vir die verskille tussen antieke Israelitiese (Ou Testament-) profesie en Nuer-profesie het faktore soos verskille in geografiese lokaliteit, kulturele en samelewingskontekste in ag geneem.

Sommige van die belangriker ooreenkomste tussen antieke Israelitiese (Ou Testament-) en Nuer-profesie wat genoem word, is die vertrekpunte betreffende sonde en offerande, sowel as die onderskeid tussen ware en vals profete en die rol van profete in die samelewing.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my original work and has not previously, entirely or in part, been submitted at any University for a degree.

J-T PUK

DATE

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM

How do we explain Old Testament prophecy to the Nuer community in Sudan? The problem I am trying to address, as a member of the Nuer community, is the lack of background to Old Testament prophecy which I have personally experienced.

The Nuer in Sudan are known as a religious people and their tradition has become known as Nuer Religion, according to Evans Pritchard (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 1-5).

The problem arose when Christianity came to Sudan again around 1902 (Falk, 1979: 295-298). Some Missionaries went to Nuer Land and established Christian Churches and many people turned to Christianity and were baptized.

Within a few years, this problem arose when the Nuer had heard and read the Old Testament Scriptures. They discovered that their traditional prophets, whom they knew very well, were not mentioned in the Bible. Having realized that, they came with this question: why have our prophets not been mentioned among the Old Testament prophets?

The issue created an atmosphere of uncertainty and this has shaken some Nuer Christians' faith or belief. As a result, some Nuer Christians have decided to return to their previous traditional belief or faith.

When the problem was discovered, this researcher felt that, since it was a problem that harmed Christian faith, it should not be ignored. It had to be addressed through carrying out a comparative study by which the Old Testament Religion and prophecy could be explained to the Nuer community in Sudan.

1.2 HYPOTHESIS

There are similarities and differences between Old Testament and Nuer prophecy that will facilitate the explanation of Old Testament prophecy to the Nuer community.

These similarities and differences will be identified when this research is set out in the comparative study.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This thesis will consist of a literature study of existing research into Nuer and Old Testament prophetism and will also incorporate material from oral sources of Nuer religion known to the researcher. The method will also be comparing the two religions and their views on prophetism. Through this comparative study, it will be possible to discover their similarities and differences.

- ♦ Chapter One will comprise an introduction, the hypothesis and the methodology of the research.
- ♦ Chapter Two will explain Nuer religion and its prophecy according to how it understands God.
- ♦ Chapter Three will deal with Old Testament religion and its concept and view of God.
- ♦ Chapter Four is devoted to a comparative study whereby the similarities and differences of Nuer and Old Testament views are identified.

- ♦ The final Chapter will consist of a conclusion, summary and research addressing the basic question and the researcher's personal contribution to Old Testament studies.

1.4 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO PRESENT-DAY SUDAN

A brief historical background concerning Sudan will serve as a brief introduction. Sudan (a country in north-east Africa and situated to the south of Egypt) was formerly ruled jointly by Egypt and Britain. Sudan obtained its national independence from the British government in 1956. The population of Sudan consisted of many cultures and religions. The northern population consists mainly of Arabs who adhere to the Muslim religion (known as Islam), while the inhabitants of the southern part, part of the west, and part of the east of the country are Black Africans who mostly became Christians. Only a few of them still hold on to African traditional beliefs and some of them are Muslims.

Sudan was known as a Christian Kingdom in 1887, before it gained its independence. In 1902, Christianity came back to life when Missionaries from various denominations came back to Sudan for the second time. When they came, they established the Christian Churches in the Sudan. Some came before independence and some came after independence. From that time on, Christianity has not died, instead it has spread in Sudan, despite Islamic fundamentalist resistance.

The Christian church is now spread and all over Sudan, despite the civil war that has been going on in the country for almost four and a half decades.

According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, Second Edition, Volume 1, 20% of the population in Sudan in 2001 is Christian.

CHAPTER TWO

NUER PROPHECY (RELIGION)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

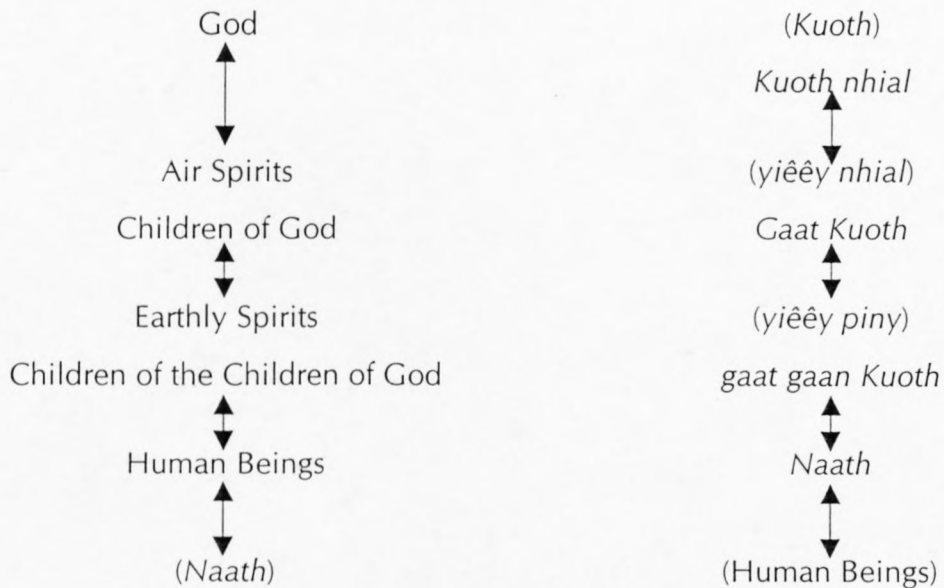
The Nuer tribe or community is one of the largest tribes in Sudan. Before it came in contact with Christianity in 1936, its religion was known as Nuer Religion – Nuer Traditional Religion, according to Evans Pritchard, who wrote about Nuer Religion. He said in his book that Nuer Religion consists of three beliefs, which come in the following sequence:

- 1) The Nuer believe in God as a Creator, whom they call Spirit of Heaven (*Kuoth nhial*) or God (*yiêê nhial*). They believe that this God lives in Heaven.
- 2) Nuer society believes in the existence of Spirits which they placed into two categories:
 - (a) Spirits of the air or above.
 - (b) Spirits of the earth or below.

The spirits of the air are usually addressed by the Nuer community as Children of God and small gods.

The same belief applies to the spirits of the earth or below. They are called Children of the Children of God and they are honoured as small gods too.

With this kind of belief, they are worshipped by the Nuer people as small gods, and now all the prayers and sacrifices are channeled to God through them. This diagram below shows their position.



This has been Nuer Religious belief in Sudan, according to Evans Pritchard (1956: 10-62).

2.1.1 Living Being

The Nuer community in Sudan believes that there is a living being who lives in heaven. That living being is called *Kuoth*, which means God. They believe that a supernatural being must be the creator of the universe and all the creatures that exist.

They strongly believe that this being is the maker of heaven and earth and all the living and non-living creatures, including human beings. Despite this strong belief in God being the creator, the Nuer people do not know how God created them.

2.1.2 Air Spirits – Children of God (Nuer)

(yiêêy nhial – gaat Kuoth)

Nuer people believe that there are air spirits that they say are children of God, because they stay above in the air near God, the creator. In other words, they see them as supernatural air powers. These spirits are usually sent by God to the world and the Nuer worship God through them because they consider them to be God's children.

2.1.3 Earthly Spirits – Children of the Children of God (Nuer)

(yiêêy piny – gaat gaan Kuoth)

These earthly spirits are known as children of the children of God. The Nuer community believes that they are children of the children of God, which demonstrates God's power or authority among the people, by performing supernatural acts. Nuer believes them to be God's messengers. If a snake bites a person, they could say that it has been sent by God to bite that person, otherwise the snake would die, or they say that God sends such kinds of creatures.

2.1.4 Human Beings (*Naath*)

The Nuer people see human beings as the lesser creatures among all the creatures in God's creation. By comparing himself or herself with an ant (*côô*), they suggest that in God's eyes, they are nothing. They are just creatures or people, and for this reason they fear God very much. That is why Evans Pritchard treats Nuer religion as the best religion, because of their obedience to God. The Nuer

fear God to the extent that they do not use God's name in swearing anyhow, because of their fear of Him. In most cases they use the names of the spirits that they think are God's children, for using God's name falsely is forbidden, for He is too great, and Nuer people fear Him a lot (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 1-5). The Nuer community believes that God is a spirit (Mbiti, 1970: 23-24). In this regard, Nuer people are very religious and they fear God by not considering themselves important before God (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 1-10).

2.2 NUER RELIGION: GENERAL VIEWS

In continuing the focus on the Nuer view of religion, I will be using Evans Pritchard mostly, together with my personal experience, because few people have written about Nuer religion, besides Evans Pritchard.

According to the Nuer's belief in Sudan, God is spirit and his place is in Heaven. He is like wind or air. He is the mover of all creatures for he is the Creator (Mbiti, 1970: 23-24).

The Nuer considers some of the objects that they observe to be God's Spirit or his children. Examples of such are the sun and moon, stars and sky and rain, but it doesn't mean that they are God. They are there as his manifestations.

They believe that God demonstrates himself through these mentioned phenomena, for the Nuer people strongly believe that God is a spirit (*Kuoth nhial*).

The Nuer community believes in the presence or existence of other spirits. According to the Nuer belief, there are spirits of sky or air. Those near God are known to them as *Kuoth nhial*. There are also lower or earthly spirits (*Kuth piny*) (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 1-4).

When Nuer people worship or pray, they look to the sky or Heaven, convinced that God is in the sky as a Spirit (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 106-107).

God is Spirit, a transcendental being who is everywhere and is only seen in the works of His creation and He speaks only in the language of inner spiritual experience (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 120-121).

Nuer believes that God is great and majestic (*Tutgaar*), which refers to his omnipresence. He is everywhere, like wind (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 4-5).

I mentioned the names of some spirits because it is part of the Nuer belief. I want my readers to have the background for understanding these lower spirits.

The Nuer community regards these lower spirits as God's children. The Deng's spirit, which they believe to be the first fallen from Heaven, is the greatest of the spirits of the air. *Deng*, which means rain (*nhial*) in Dinka, Dinka is a tribe neighbouring the Nuer tribe. *Teng*, is the spirit of the air, which has been said to be from Dinka too. The spirit *Cuolwic* is a soul of a person who has been killed by lightning. This is considered to be a Nuer name. The spirit *Rang* is a Mabith spirit and was believed to be from Baggaara tribe Arabs. *Garang* spirit was from Dinka. *Mani* spirit was said to be from Arab, and is known as a war spirit. The spirit of *Wiu* was regarded to be a war spirit too, associated with a clan-spear

name: *Wiu of Gaatgan Kir*. The spirit *Buk* was known as the mother of *Deng*. *Buk* was a Dinka name and is a female. Her spirit was associated with rivers (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 29-33).

Prophets were believed to be people who have been possessed by the Spirit of God. They bring a message from Him and give it to the people. They offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the community. When they speak, it is the spirit that speaks through their lips (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 302-305).

2.3 NUER VIEW OF CREATION

The Nuer community believes that the whole universe was created by the divinity who created people, the great divine living being who lives in heaven (Johnson, 1994: 72-73).

According to Evans Pritchard, Nuer people do not try to explain how God created the world and human beings. He says they believe that people were created in *Jagêêi*, Western Nuer land, at a certain tree called the Tamarind Tree, which Nuer calls *Koat Lic* or *Jiath Liec*. This tree, it has been said, was destroyed by a fire in 1918. This is what they call a creation. They just believe that people came out from under the tree and they do not have concrete knowledge about how creation was performed (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 6-7).

Concerning the creation of other creatures, they also strongly believe that God made heaven, earth, water and, on the earth, beasts, birds, reptiles and fish and for this reason, they regard Him as the source of all their lives.

The Nuer community experience God as the giver of cows and different kinds of plants such as grain (millet) and spears, for their sustenance. They call this God the creative spirit, but regarding their own creation, they just say that they were found there (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 6-10).

The concept of creation is a common idea among African natives. According to Gabriel Setiloane, the Sotho/Tswana community believes that they came from a hole in the ground, and other creatures as well (Setiloane, 1986: 38-39).

2.4 NUER CONCEPT OF SIN

Sin, according to Nuer definition, comes as a result of breaking what the entire society observes as a norm or a law. According to Evans Pritchard, sin came as a result of failure to conform to the accepted norms, which means that misconduct or misbehaviour towards a member of one's family is a sin (*duer*). When a person causes evil to another person, God brings a curse upon such a person. Nuer says, if you want to be right with God, be right with the people (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 16-17).

There are two types of sin. There is a real sin and there is a fault sin, according to the Nuer's concept of sin. There are things that the Nuer community has set as norms: killing, stealing, adultery, sexual relations with your kin or relatives. These are prohibited by the Nuer community and this is established as law, therefore those who trespass, are sinning.

When a person breaks one of these norms knowingly, it is a real sin (*duer*). If a person commits anything unknowingly, this is a fault (*guââc*).

If a man commits adultery with a woman, he is fined to “pay” six cows. If a person has a sexual relationship with a family’s kin it causes many deaths, unless a special rite is performed by the leopard-skin priest. When a Nuer person suffers from any sickness, the Nuer people assume that it may have come as a result of fault (*guâc*) (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 10-62).

When people discover that there is a serious sickness, they offer sacrifices in the belief that someone may have committed a sin or a spirit has become angry when not being given what is supposed to be given to it. In such a situation, the Nuer say this misfortune comes as a result of their sins and something must be done. People offer sacrifices to God as sin sacrifices and pray to God, saying “Our father the universe is yours, move evil out of our way”. When they offer sacrifices to God because of misfortune, they believe that a sin or something wrong occurred and they ask God to show forgiveness by lifting that misfortune from them (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 21-25).

Beidelman said that Nuer people always want to know the cause of sin. He puts it clearly that sin is a result of failure to observe or respect norms that the community may have set (Beidelman, 1981: 131-135).

He goes on to say that sexual relations with relatives is a dangerous sin and kills people with *ruaal* or sickness. People will die unless a leopard-skin priest offers sacrifices (Beidelman, 1981: 140-143).

The sin comes through committing the thing that the entire society thinks is shameful. Something bad is brought into the community in general. I am saying this because there is no record of God revealing Himself and telling the Nuer what is right and what is evil, as He did with the Israelites.

2.5 NUER CONCEPT OF SACRIFICES

According to Evans Pritchard, the Nuer do not bargain with God, the Creator, through sacrifices as they do with spirits, because the spirits of the air are owned by people and they could make their wishes known through men.

The Nuer community assumes that they worship God, who is the spirit figure *Deng*, which they considered to be the most powerful spirit of Heaven. According to Nuer people, they think that spirits are not individual, but are God in a different figure.

They even believe that God (*Deng*) has several forms and therefore God (*Deng*) could be present in various prophets who have been possessed by its spirit (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 51-52).

There are three major sacrifices and there is one minor sacrifice. The major sacrifices are thanksgiving, redemption and sin offerings. The Nuer offer sacrifice when a person is killed by lightning, to fix his/her soul in the heavenly home so that he/she does not come back to the earth. He becomes a spirit of Heaven and is called *Cuo/wic* (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 55-60).

Sacrifices are also offered when a person is sick, when a sin has been committed, when a wife is barren, sometimes at the birth of a new child, at the initia-

tion of sons, marriage, funeral and mortuary ceremonies, after homicide, and at the settlement of a feud, to spirits of the dead fathers and war, lightning and famine (Hutchinson, 1992: 303-304).

According to a writer on Nuer religion, prophets offer sacrifices on behalf of the people (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 45-48).

The leopard-skin priests offer sacrifices of reconciliation and compensation on behalf of the people. According to Evans Pritchard, Nuer, in giving sacrifices to God, consider the importance of the life, the blood and chyme (*riem* and *wau*) of victim animals being sacrificed (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 197-230).

In worship and in sacrificing, the Nuer people make offerings to the highest or greatest Spirit, God (*Kuoth nhial*), through the spirits. For they believe that regardless of these spirits, there is only one God (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 50-51).

2.6 NUER LEOPARD-SKIN PRIESTS (*KUAR TUAC*)

The Nuer community has two types of priests known as leopard-skin priests; earthly priests (*Kuâr Muon*) and cattle priests (*Wut Hook*). They always wear leopard-skins over their shoulders as a symbol of their priesthood, to differentiate them from other community members (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 289-290).

The Nuer does not believe that the priests are prophets, for they are not possessed by any spirit. They have certain traditional functions in Nuer society and they are honoured as diviners and prophets (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 290-291).

Earthly priests are associated with earthly things. This priest, if he goes where people make pots, the pots can be broken or cracked. This earthly priest anoints crops and digging sticks with butter, before the seeds or crops are sown (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 291-292).

These priests are responsible for offering homicide sacrifices. When a man kills another man, he has to come to the leopard-skin priest and the priest draws the point of a fishing spear down his right arm where it joins the shoulders, and after this, the priest offers an animal, which is known as the cow of blood (*yang riem*). If the priest does not do it, the killer must die because of the blood of the man he killed (*Nueer*) (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 293-294).

This priest conducts another sacrifice whereby he addresses the ghost of the dead man and says to him that his death has been paid for and his kinsman can marry a wife who can bear children in his name. This sacrifice is called gall bladder cow (*yang ketha*) and the priest gives them a cleansing medicine to drink (*wal nuer*) (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 294-295).

The priest joins the two parties by letting them drink and eat together without any fear, to show that the enmity is gone. After this, other sacrifices follow and the cattle of the compensation are distributed to the dead man's relatives, paternal and maternal, and the rest is kept for late's family (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 296-297).

The final thing that the priest does in the final sacrifice, is to declare to God that the compensation has been completed and the slayer may now be at peace in his home and return to his normal life in the community.

When the compensation for the slaying is made, and the leopard-skin priests have performed the function of cleansing the killer and the rite to terminate blood feuds, they rise and address the assembly, to inform them that cattle have already been paid for the slaying. They say to the killer that he has been released and he should go without fear. The priest warns the kinsmen of the slain person that they should not do any harm to the killer's kinsmen (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 292-293).

The priest may cut some of the hair of the man who occasioned the death and the blood which it entered into his body is purged, which means the blood feud is at an end (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 106-114).

The priest conducts an argument ceremony when two persons are in a dispute and people do not know who is right and who is wrong. The priest digs a hole before them representing a grave. The accuser and the accused each either step over it or take hold of the shaft of the priest's spear placed above it, as they make their declarations while they sit on the priest's leopard-skin (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 297-298).

The priest then utters an invocation over a tethered victim saying to the victim, a goat or other animal, that its blood is being shed on account of the man who is at fault (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 296-297).

Then he turns to God, calling on God. "O God, of our fathers, God who created all things, God of the universe, God of flesh (*ring*), I call for you to look upon these persons and let the man who is at fault die. O God, listen to my prayer". If the guilty person falls sick, the priest makes a sacrifice for him and gives him

medicine to drink, promising him or her reparation (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 295-298).

The priesthood of the two leopard-skin priests, came from *Gêêh*, who was believed to be the first priest. Another source says they came from two clans among the Nuer, namely *Gaat liaah* and *Jimem*. *Gêêh* was the ancestor of the two clans, from whom the leopard-skin priests derive their powers (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 114-115).

2.7 NUER PROPHECY AND PROPHETS

2.7.1 Prophet Ngundeng

The writer wishes to compare the Nuer culture with the Old Testament as an aid in the understanding of the Old Testament because the Nuer culture is similar to the Old Testament tradition (Fiensy, 1987: 72-82).

I will use Douglas Johnson because there are no other sources concerning Nuer prophets and prophecy.

According to the information obtained from Evans Pritchard and Johnson, it is believed that Ngundeng was the first prophet who had achieved fame among the Nuer. Ngundeng Bong was from the Lou clan, from *Gaat liaah*, which was known as the earth-master's clan. Prophet Ngundeng is said to have been born around the 1830's.

Ngundeng was born when his mother's monthly bleeding was no longer there because she became old, for his parents had lived for a long time without children. Bong's father was said to be from a certain clan called Bul from Western Nuer, and his mother from Lou Nuer clan. Her name was Nyayieel.

When Nyayieel gave birth to Ngundeng, she was an old woman and many people could not believe it until they had seen the child. Ngundeng's birth was regarded to be a miracle birth, because he was born with lower and upper teeth and he was also a left-handed child. He was considered to be a dangerous boy because a left-handed child born to a woman without monthly periods and being born with teeth was seen as potentially most dangerous.

Ngundeng would not fight with his peers, and whoever wanted to fight, had to be content with fighting someone else. He was treated as a coward by his peers.

According to Douglas Johnson, Ngundeng got married to four wives before he became a prophet (Johnson, 1994: 80-81). When he was possessed by Deng's divine spirit, he used to go to the forest and wander there alone, fasting for a long period, drinking nothing but water and eating human faeces. He avoided speaking with people or arguing with the people.

He first built a small mound in Jikany, but abandoned it when he decided to come to Lou (Johnson, 1995: 78-79).

When he came to Lou, in a certain prayer in which sacrifices were offered, he declared to the people that he had been seized by Deng divinity. After declaring himself, he began to eat normal food. It has been said it was he who taught

people how to pray through his songs which drew on both Nuer and Dinka in religious imagery. He claimed that his divinity was for all, not for the Nuer clan only. He wanted to establish a reputation as a peacemaker, which he demonstrated at Pading when he refused to wage war against Dinka (Johnson, 1994: 82-84).

According to Douglas Johnson, this demonstrated the prophet's gift of life, and helped to establish Deng's primacy over all other divinities.

I quote the following statement from Johnson: "The greatest first of divinity is the gift of life; it was as the creators, protectors and controllers of life that prophets established themselves as men of divinity. Through their blessings and prayers they attempted to cure the sick and ensure the fertility of women and cows and ensure the abundance of crops. As the givers of life, they could also be the takers of life; their curse was supposed to carry the power of death, and their sacrifices in war could destroy their enemies. Life and death alike are controlled by divinity and men of sanctity or men who work with magic are both deemed able to manipulate life and death through the aid of a divinity or a lower power" (Johnson, 1994: 84-85).

It has been noted that Ngundeng had also demonstrated power of killing. He also resurrected a Dong by striking it with a bundle of grass, and he caused a child's and his maternal cousin's death when they denied him. According to Johnson, it was believed that Ngundeng raised some dead people during the Pading battle.

He was the first owner of a divinity among the Nuer. He introduced the idea of spiritual belief. He created the new role of the vessel of divinity (*Gok Kuoth*). All the earlier prophets fashioned their own role in the context of their community. None in the Nuer society had such an idea of being a prophet as Ngundeng (Johnson, 1995: 72-75).

He could kill enemies and people who refused his commandments. He could kill animals as sacrifices by merely shaking his baton (*dang*) and his pipe (*tony*) at them. He was able to improve the fertility of the women. He treated women from all over the Nuer's lands, including the wife of a prophet, Deng Laka. It has been said that he cured people from various diseases (Johnson, 1994: 86-87).

He built his famous mound in which he buried all the diseases and bad things known as *puom*, *Aiweel* or *bie*, which means Deng's place (*Luak Deng*). Those who participated in the building were said to have come from all over the Nuer's lands with sacrifices and included other tribes: Dinka, Shilluk, Murle and Anuak. According to Garang, the building took four years. Garang is the brother of prophet Ngundeng, who gave a full report to the writer on how the mound was built (Johnson, 1994: 88-93).

Another eyewitness said that many sacrifices were brought. Ivory too was brought to adorn the mound; a large fence surrounded the base, and this base was six feet high with a diameter of about one hundred feet, and six dozen elephant tusks, two facing Gun and four facing Mor, Jikany, Anuak and Murle. It has a spear being decorated with ostrich eggs and feathers. The date was around

1900 (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 88-89).

This mound-style building was said to be borrowed from Dinka, which *Deng* himself may have seen in eastern Nuer. This mound, to which they used to bring their sacrifices, became a cult center to all the Nuer clans. According to Evans Pritchard, the mound was blown up by the British Government in 1928 (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 305-310).

According to Evans Pritchard and Johnson, Prophet Ngundeng was accused of waging war against Dinka at Pading in 1878. This information was not true. It was noted that Dinkas were the ones who raided the Nuer at Pading (Johnson, 1994: 100-117).

The eyewitnesses, Nyuot Nyakoang and Nuar Mer and others said, instead; Ngundeng was in favour with the Dinka. They said he instructed the Nuer that if they found a Dinka person, they should bring to him without any harm done upon him. Some Dinkas were brought to him and he gave them good treatment, milk and some presents, spears and clubs, and he sent them to their own land. Ngundeng proved himself to be a peacemaker (Johnson, 1992: 200-201).

Dinka's four clans came to Pading and attacked Nuer. Indeed, Ngundeng speared the ox that was tethered between Dinka and Nuer. The bull broke the rope and fell among the Dinka and there was lightning and thunder from the sky.

When both parties heard it, they all fell down and Prophet Ngundeng took his sheepskin sleeping mat (*duâl*) and hit one of his people with it and all his people rose to life and they chased the Dinka and killed them. From that time on the Nuer believed that Ngundeng was a true prophet, because he performed this miracle (Johnson, 1995: 206-207).

Ngundeng cursed a person who disobeyed his orders. When he said to his people all Dinka's spears should not be taken away, this one man disobeyed and his legs split open until he repented and he was healed by Ngundeng.

Prophet Ngundeng revealed himself as a peacemaker by refusing to wage wars with the Dinka, for he used to say to his people that it is not good for one's divine sons to fight. It is believed that the war with the Dinka, was only a defence battle. They defended themselves, because the Dinka had come to attack them in their locality (Johnson, 1995: 197-221).

His preaching was through hymns and miracles performed at Pading. His blessings and generosity enabled him to create harmony. He healed people from various diseases during 1888-1889. His mound was built by all people, which reveals him to be a peacemaker.

Ngundeng experienced rivalry from some prophets. They were Deng Laka and his son, Dual Diu, and Nuar Mer from Gaawar, Lam Tuthiang, Bul Kan, Guet Thie, Car Koryoam and Nyakong Bar (Johnson, 1992: 12-22).

Nyakong Bar from Eastern Nuer claimed to be a prophetess. She was one of Ngundeng's rival prophets. When she came to Ngundeng, her divinity disappeared and she became a normal woman (Johnson, 1992: 108-117).

He allowed some of these prophets, namely Reath and Duoth Thar, to operate by sending them as his messengers. He, however, also denounced them in one of his hymns (Johnson, 1995: 96-99).

Evans Pritchard and Johnson have said that Ngundeng was not favoured by with the Government. He was accused, by the Dinka, that he had made himself King of the Nuer (Johnson, 1995: 115-118). He could not defeat the Government. Instead the Government defeated him. The Government came and burnt his village and took away the Nuer community's cattle. Ngundeng and his people went to the bush where only he was able to cause rain to come to relieve his people from thirst. Before he died, he put all his prophecies in songs. He finally died in 1906 (Johnson, 1992: 121-125).

Ngundeng's prophecies came to him in the form of hymns. He sang them to the people and explained their meanings to them. The Nuer community believes that some of his prophecies have already been fulfilled and others are being fulfilled now, one of which concerns the current war that has been going on for almost four decades (Johnson, 1992: 328-344).

2.7.2 Prophet Guek's narrative

Guek was Ngundeng's youngest son. His mother's name was Nyanduong. Nyanduong had difficulty in bearing a live child and Ngundeng's divinity could not heal her, according to Douglas Johnson. Ngundeng was given a frog by a Dinka magician. The frog was cooked and given to Nyanduong and Nyanduong ate it. When she had eaten it, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son and he was named Guek, meaning frog (Johnson, 1995: 97-98).

When Ngundeng saw the son, he began to say that all his speeches would be sealed by Nyanduong. The divinity of his father seized or possessed him and he succeeded his father as a prophet.

According to an eyewitness, Mr Pency Coriat, Guek would go up on the mound that his father had built and shout in a language that people could not understand (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 304-305).

Guek decided to complete the building of his father's mound (*bie*). He invited all the Nuer, including prophet Dual Diu, but the latter did not come because he was not in a good mode with Guek. People were willing to come and work, bringing along with them sacrifices to acknowledge Deng's divinity (Johnson, 1992: 174-176).

Guek decided to settle Lou Nuer's disputes and proved himself to be doing justice among the Nuer. When the Government people heard this report, they were unhappy. They made several attempts to kill Guek and his people. There were two leaders who were with the Government, including Prophet Dual Diu,

Lam Tuthiang and Guet Thie. These persons were siding with the Government and this Diu was with them. Diu was a prophet. Guek and the district commissioner had differed with regard to road construction, and Lou Nuer had to choose to put mud on the mound and bring their disputes to the prophet or to put mud on the road and take their cases to Coriat and his Chiefs who were siding with the Government (Johnson, 1992: 182-185).

Prophet Guek rejected the building of the roads and recruitment of Chiefs and policemen, although the rejection did not come from Guek, but from his peers. They said to him: If you were Ngundeng, you would have killed them. Why should they not use the ordinary path? They decided not to agree with white men.

Guek was accused of preventing people from paying taxes to the Government and of collecting it for himself by a Dinka interpreter and two other Mor Chiefs. They also informed the Government that Guek said he would not work and that whoever laid hands on him, would die. He would kill the Government's troops with his father's baton (*deng*) by which the Dinka was killed at Pading (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 304-305).

According to Evans Pritchard, Guek was not willing to fight the Government. He was willing to make peace with the Government. He sent some gifts to the Government and the Government rejected his presents because of the wrong reports that they had received.

Prophet Guek was urged to fight the Government or *Turuk* by Lou Nuer elders, his peers, his nephew Deng Bor, Kueth Peat, Dhiew Dhieng, Muoh Kor and Nyaak Kuic (Johnson, 1992: 191-193).

The Government began to wage wars against Prophet Guek and his people in Lou's areas. Prophet Guek was killed, together with thirty other persons from Ngundeng's family, before he could spear the ox in 1929. His body was put on the tree of bad things (*jiath jïäkni*). His testicles were cut off and his wives came and buried him (Johnson, 1995: 196-219).

Guek is considered to have been a failed prophet and that it was not Deng's divinity that had failed. It has also been said that Guek did nothing different from his father's performances. But he had been able to chase magicians, complete his father's mound (*bie*) and fight the battle with Anglo-Egyptian troops in which he was killed (Johnson, 1995: 196-219).

2.7.3 Prophet Deng Laka and his Son, Prophet Dual: Short narrative

Prophet Deng Laka and his son, Prophet Dual, were from Gaawar Nuer's area. It is said Deng Laka appeared in 1878. Prophet Deng was judged to be a true prophet in Gaawar's area for he chased away the magicians (Johnson, 1992: 1-22).

Prophet Deng Laka died in 1907, after Ngundeng's death, and his son Dual Diu succeeded him as a prophet (Johnson, 1992: 1-22).

Prophet Deng Laka, according to Evans Pritchard, was believed to be a prophet of the spirit.

Prophet Daul Diu was from the Gaawar section and his spirit was from the Dinka tribe. He also acquired his divinity like Ngundeng, by fasting. The information is that he left his home and went to the bush where he was found collecting one hundred shells of the giant land snail and arranging them in rows (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 305-307).

He was a man with many wives and he did not stay long in his home area. He was looking for an opportunity in the Government, and he has been said to be from the Dinka. He was busy seeking for a position with another man who was a Dinka too (Johnson, 1995: 126-127).

Prophet Dual Diu was judged to be a true prophet after he succeeded his father and chased away the magician prophets or diviners. Dual Diu was one of the prophets whom the Government opposed drastically, because he was against the idea of magical medicines (*ji Kulaang ni*) (Johnson, 1992: 1-22).

It has been said that Dual Diu became one of the magicians by building or dedicating two small shrines to the divinity which he called earthly God (*Kuoth piny*), when he came back from exile in Western Nuer, as a Dinka fetish (*Kulang*), and he died in 1968 after Sudan's independence (Johnson, 1992: 1-22).

2.7.4 Prophet Wutnyang

Here the researcher relies on Hutchinson because he is the only one who has written about the Prophet Wutnyang. No other sources are available.

Prophet Wutnyang is a young man. He arose as a prophet in 1992. Hutchinson said Wutnyang Gattek wore a long blue *jalabia* and a white rosary necklace complete with a cross and has also worn the white beads on his ankle that are usually worn by a Shilluk King (*Nyikang*) as a kind of divine dress (Hutchinson, 1992: 339-340).

According to the same writer, Wutnyang's divinity does not contradict Christian church power. He also said Wutnyang was even encouraging Christians publicly to continue praying in their churches, for he is not against Christian worship. His divinity is like Christian divinity. He believes in one God, like Christians (Hutchinson, 1992: 338-339).

It is believed that Wutnyang has been building up his spiritual power by associating with Prophet Ngundeng's prophetic truth. By doing so he is identified as of *deng* divinity, which is seen by the Nuer community as the most powerful spirit of the air. He has claimed to be possessed by Deng's spirit, as proclaimed by Ngundeng Bong (Hutchinson, 1992: 340-341).

Wutnyang's message has to do with peace and cooperation among the Nuer, Dinka, Anuak and Uduk. According to the source (Hutchinson), Wutnyang had worked very hard to establish peace among the Upper Nile tribes. These tribes are in a state of crisis, for they have divided themselves into many sections (Hutchinson, 1992: 339-340).

The source (Hutchinson) says that Wutnyang has accepted this great challenge to reunite the southerners in one movement. He said southerners should be proud of themselves as southerners. This young man has been roused by

Ngundeng Bong's prophetic songs, which remain crucial points of reference to be remembered by Southern Sudan people (Johnson, 1992: 198-199).

The Nuer community believes in Ngundeng's prophecy which he gave to their ancestors in the form of hymns. For this very reason, people believe that the deaths and all the suffering that the southerners experience are not meaningless; it ultimately will result in people's freedom, as Ngundeng predicted previously (Hutchinson, 1992: 338-339).

Because of this hope of the Nuer people, Wutnyang arose and has relied heavily on the earlier revelations and spiritual activities of Prophet Ngundeng Bong to develop his reputation. By 1992, he had gathered his "white army", untrained civilian soldiers consisting of several thousand loyal Nuer recruits, known as his personal army and, together with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) dealt the single most powerful blow to the National Army in the middle of October in Upper Nile State province. In this raid of his, many lives were lost (Hutchinson, 1992: 338-339).

Before he launched this war, he had told people that Malakal Town would fall into his hands, but the town was lost and the war took a lot of lives. His prophecy was not fulfilled. People came to understand that he is not a true prophet because his prophecy did not come into fulfilment.

It is said that Wutnyang claimed to be a powerful seer who could recognise thieves and that he could cause their death if they refused to confess publicly by returning all the materials that they had stolen. The source (Hutchinson) tells of an occasion where Wutnyang sacrificed twenty-three oxen and invited the

thieves to come forward publicly. Three thieves were convicted by their own consciences and came forward. This kind of act was considered to be a sign of the divine (Hutchinson, 1992: 343-344).

The writer said Wutnyang addressed all the southerners three times, telling them that if they wanted to be independent and be respected by other people, they had to work hard, their work should not be fighting alone. While fighting, they should continue working in their areas, cultivating their lands (Hutchinson, 1992: 341-342).

He went on to urge them to stop arguing about what the Dinka had done and what the Shilluk had done. They fought among themselves. He said it was better for the southerners to work together as southerners in the south. He challenged his fellow southerners that they should not subscribe to the policy of tribalism that was being propagated by some people who were interested in drawing tribal lines. He said it was better for the southerners to live together in peace and that anybody can be a leader if he was a southerner, no matter where he came from (Hutchinson, 1992: 340-343).

According to a report that has been quoted, Wutnyang had tried his level best to make peace between Nuer and Dinka, Anuak, SPLA, Anyanya II and the Sudan Government in his time.

It is said that what gave Wutnyang courage in trying to bring southerners together, was Ngundeng's prophecies. For Ngundeng prophesied that he would have his own government. Wutnyang wanted to prepare all the southerners for this hope (Johnson, 1992: 344-351).

Wutnyang has brought messages of peace and encouragement on several occasions, according to the writer (Hutchinson). On the second occasion, he delivered the message of peace and unity among the southerners. On the third occasion, he addressed the people and said that they should not depend on relief from the UN only; they had to work hard so that others could respect them (Hutchinson, 1992: 342-343).

Wutnyang has stressed the value of economic self-sufficiency and political independence. Above all, he believes that a united southern Sudan could come. According to the source, Wutnyang has revealed himself to be a man of peace and this has been shown by all attempts that he has made (Hutchinson, 1992: 340-350).

2.8 TRUE AND FALSE NUER PROPHETS

The researcher has taken Prophet Ngundeng and Prophet Wutnyang to be examples of true and false prophets among the Nuer prophets. How do people recognise the true and false prophets?

According to the Nuer community's perspective, the Nuer people distinguish a true prophet and a false prophet through their lifestyles or characteristics. Whoever claims he is a prophet, must have some sign or symbol that could distinguish him from the ordinary members of his community.

Sometimes it is difficult for people to differentiate between them because they all claim that they are possessed by the spirit of the divine, God (*Kuoth*). The true prophet is usually recognised by his community through the fulfilment of the prophecy that he received from God and conveyed to the people, and the false prophet is recognised because his prophecy does not come to fulfilment.

The true prophet speaks the truth and performs miracles, and he does not make a compromise with what is wrong in the sight of God. The true prophet also has the authority of healing and authority of cursing and blessing people (Hutchinson, 1992: 338-339).

The false prophet is always deceiving people by telling them what the spirit does not reveal to him, and that prophecy is not seen to be true by its fulfillment in history. The false prophet's prophecy is always against the true prophet's prophecy.

As the researcher has said earlier, these two prophets have been targeted as paradigms. The Nuer community treated Prophet Ngundeng Kur as a true prophet, for he had been able to perform miracles, one of which was the miracle that he did when Dinka came and attacked them at Pading River. He killed the Dinka people with his divine baton (*deng*) (Anderson and Johnson, 1995: 206-207).

Some of Ngundeng Bong's prophecies became true. The current living example is the present-day war that has been going on for years in Sudan. After he did the aforementioned miracle at Pading River, those who were against him, accepted him as a true prophet (Johnson, 1994: 206-207).

The Nuer society must see in to it that the prophet must manifest anomalous extra-ordinary attributes to demonstrate the validity of the claim to new and unusual authorities (see also Overholt, 1989: 106-107).

The false prophet is usually known as a greedy person who demands goats and other material things for his own use and wants to be rich. Such a prophet is treated as a magician by the community (*guan Kuluang ni*) diviner (*guan wal*) (Johnson, 1991: 12-22).

According to Evans Pritchard, Nuer people call these types of men using magic *ji wal*. He had met one, namely Buom, who was a magician possessed by *teny's* spirit. This man was known to all Nuer community as a cunning person, and selfish and greedy. According to Pritchard, he was acquiring large herds of cattle from his own kin (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 307-310).

The false prophet must be from the evil one because the evil one deceives people and his prophecy does not come to fulfillment. Among the Nuer's prophets, Ngundeng is considered to have been a true prophet because some of his prophecies have already come to fulfilment and some are being fulfilled now. Prophet Wutnyang, according to Hutchinson, does not have prophecies of his own and I know that what he said has not come to fulfilment. He said Malakal Town was going to fall into his hands, and that did not happen (Hutchinson, 1992: 345-348).

Prophet Ngundeng's songs about Southern Sudan and its future are regarded as true because his prophecies are being fulfilled now just as he predicted them; that was why Wutnyang himself had associated his divine calling with Ngundeng's, by saying that he was possessed by Ngundeng's divinity (Hutchinson, 1992: 348-350).

2.9 ROLE OF NUER PROPHETS

According to the Nuer community, prophets are set apart by God who has possessed their spirit for special purposes. They are mediators between God and people. They receive a message from the spirits and bring it to the people. The prophets give sacrifice to God on behalf of the people and they pray to the spirits on behalf of them too (Anderson and Johnson, 1995: 206-207).

It is the role of the prophets to inform their community of what will happen because they have a vision from the divine. They make people alert to the danger that could happen, such as famine, floods, wars, diseases and other disasters. Prophets perform miracles, they cause rains to fall, they heal sick people, and they prevent some disasters by offering sacrifices to their God (Johnson, 1994: 84-85).

Prophets could bring a curse on people who do not obey the spirits. For example, Ngundeng cursed a person who disobeyed his command. The man was in pain until he repented, then he was healed (Johnson, 1994: 206-207).

The prophets bring peace and blessing upon their people when they comply with what their prophets, tell them to do. Prophet Ngundeng brought a curse upon his people when they did not obey what he commanded them to do. Prophets have a great role to play in their communities. They make decisions on behalf of the people for they know what is right and what is not right. They lead people onto the right path (Johnson, 1992: 191-193).

Prophets are peacemakers. Ngundeng at the time, refused for several times to go in war with Dinka at Pading. He used to tell the people that it was not good for the divine's sons to fight each other. When he refused to wage war with Dinka, his own people plotted against him. Prophets, according to the Nuer people, are also judges. They settle their people's disputes as spiritual leaders and as men of God (Johnson, 1994: 210-211).

CHAPTER THREE

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

SHORT INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND CONCERNING THE OLD TESTAMENT

It is believed that Israel originated from Abraham at the time of his migration to Palestine, the country to which God had guided him around 2000-1550 BC (Bright, 1972: 47-66).

The Old Testament is understood to record the beginning of the universal and human history, starting from Adam, at the creation. Adam was the first human and Abraham was the first recipient of the blessing of all nations (Gen 12:1-3).

The Old Testament is known as a Hebrew *Canon*; the first five books are known as Torah, law, and it starts with the creation narrative (Gen 1:1 – 11:1; Num 10:10).

It records Israel's faith in God as Creator, and not just Redeemer. The history begins with Israel's forefathers before the Sinai Covenant (Gen 12-50). Abraham has been regarded as the father of the Hebrew nation through whom God made the covenant, which was known as a patriarchal covenant.

The Old Testament tells about God's covenant and it is recognized as the ancestral accounts, with emphasis on the call of Abraham as a recipient of divine blessing (Kaiser, JR, 1998: 28-29).

The books of the Torah are known as the Pentateuch or Law. God has revealed Himself in the Old Testament through acts, in the theophany and through the Word, and this obviously began with God as the Creator.

The relationship between God and Israel was initiated by God Himself, for He had chosen them to be His own people. The covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel was of major concern; the Mosaic covenant calls Israel to be a Holy Nation and Moses was the Lawgiver of Israel and covenant mediator.

Israel is considered to be the servant of Yahweh. Their mission was one of modelling the Kingdom of God on earth, to proclaim God's salvation to the ancient Near East, with the Mosaic covenant emphasising the love of God (*Shema*), saying Israel should love the Lord Yahweh with all their heart (Deut 6: 4-5). This is believed to be the Old Testament theology, or the Old Testament belief structure.

3.2 OLD TESTAMENT RELIGION: GENERAL VIEW

There were three great religions in the ancient Near East: the Egyptian, Assyro-Babylonian and Canaanite. These had the greatest political impact on the Israelites' religion. This research only focusses on Israel's religion. The writer from whose article this information was obtained, said that the two theophanies that come from Exodus 3 and 6 have been described as the heart of Old Testament belief. These particular chapters are helpful in understanding the earlier religious history of the Israelites as reflected in the Pentateuch (Thompson, 1995: 57-74).

Religion cannot be understood adequately without knowledge of its intimate relationship with every aspect of personal and national existence (Smothers, 1990: 744-745).

Prophecy, in the Jewish setting, plays a mediatory role. The prophets received messages from God, Yahweh, and conveyed them immediately to the people for whom the particular message was meant (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

To understand the Israelite's religion, one has to go back to the beginning of Israel's history. Right from the beginning, when their Lord Yahweh revealed Himself to them or to their ancestors, it was by his own initiative. This God appeared when He called Abraham from Ur to go to the land that He was going to give Israel (Smothers, 1990: 744-745).

An adequate knowledge of the Israelite's religion is possible if a comparative study is made to identify those religious elements that Israel had adopted from the religions of neighbouring nations (Smothers, 1990: 744-745).

The Jewish religion started with Israel's fathers. This became evident when God called Moses. He told Moses that He was the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob (Exodus 3:1-7).

After God revealed Himself to Moses and the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land, God gave them His Commandments. Merrill quotes the first four Commandments which require His chosen people to recognize Him only: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for

yourself an idol in the form of anything in Heaven above or on the earth beneath or in waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, I am a jealous God punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands (generations) of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not misuse the Name of the Lord your God for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His Name. Observe the Sabbath Day keeping it holy, as the Lord your God had commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, or the alien within your gates, so that your servant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God had commanded you to observe the Sabbath Day (Deut 6:15) (Merrill, 1994: 143-143).

During the exile, the synagogue became organized or united and literature flowered; most of the Torah, the Deuteronomic history and, probably, the pre-exilic messages of the prophets were recorded. The Torah's development confirmed the coming into being of Judaism (Smothers, 1990: 742-743).

There was a struggle between zealous Yahwists and Baalists, and it has been reported that this kind of struggle was the one that influenced Yahwism-Judaism, and especially in terms of how Jews could understand their God Yahweh and worship him (Smothers, 1990: 742-743).

The Jewish community experienced their religion individually as well as communally, for they could cooperate by coming together for worship. Many were strengthened through the awareness of being part of a religious community, and through various ritualistic activities such as praising God together and praying. The individual was both strengthened by the group and more closely related to one another by their coming together in worship as one community of God, Yahweh. Their coming before Yahweh was the source of their strength and unity (JL, 1986: 880-881).

During the Persian rule, around 539 BCE, some captives returned to Judah, while Nehemiah was Governor of Judah, and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt under his leadership round about 400 BCE. It has also been said that Ezra came to Jerusalem and tried to focus on all basic aspects of Torah teaching. The Prophets Haggai and Zechariah supervised the rebuilding of the Temple around 520-515 BCE (Smothers, 1990: 742-743).

In 323 BCE, under the dominion of Alexander the Great, the apocalypticism emerged in conjunction with the purification of the Temple, which was introduced by the Maccabean revolt. According to Millers, Judaic religious developments were marked with diversity when new teaching was introduced (Smothers, 1990: 742-743).

3.3 OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF CREATION

According to the Bible and other sources, the Jewish community and the Christian community believed that the creation story in the Bible tells of the actual creation of the whole world, because the Bible is the inspired Word of God and the action itself was a divine action.

The creation was believed to have been the work of the same God who revealed Himself to the Jewish people throughout their history. This God was said to be the One who rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and gave them the land Canaan as their settlement as He had promised their ancestors (Deut 26:5-10) (Miller, 1990: 182-183).

The concept of creation in the Bible originates from the Old Testament. Creation as the primordial origination of the whole world, is at the beginning of the whole universal history. According to some scholars, there are additions; biblical creation could be regarded as God's continuing ordering and maintaining of the world (Smith, 1991: 314-315).

Brown made it clear that creation, as an active work, is in process or continuance (Ps 8:9; 33; 104). This means God's continual creative activity is at work. God continues with creation within His creation (Brown, 2000: 293-294).

Most modern theologians or readers of the Bible or Scriptures associate biblical creation with the book of Genesis, which actually has two versions of the creation story (Gen 1:1 - 2:3 (P) and 2:4b-25 (J)). The Priestly account (P) describes a process of creation extending over six days, beginning with God's command for

the creation of light over the watery dark when He said, "let there be light" (Gen 1:3) (Brown, 2000: 293-294).

It is accepted by some conservative scholars that the book of Genesis, which contains the history of the creation, had been compiled by Prophet Moses, based on the sources indicated by the various divine names (Harrison, 1979: 239-240).

As I have already mentioned, and as Rogerson points out, all creation was completed by the Maker according to the book of Genesis One and Two:

First day: He created the light.

Second day: He made the firmament and separated the waters, resulting in the heavens and the seas.

Third day: Creation of dry land and plants and trees.

Fourth day: Creation of lights, like the sun.

Fifth day: Creation of the sea creatures and birds.

Sixth day: Creation of animals and humans.

Seventh day: The Maker and Author of time rested.

(Gen 1-2) (Rogerson, 1989: 197-204).

According to the priestly tradition, priestly narrative was about the formation of independent structures and the separation of things into their various positions (Brown, 2000: 293-294).

God created man in His own image (Gen 1:27). God is the Creator of all things and everything belongs to Him. God the Creator gave humans dominion over creation, a stewardship assignment. In terms of this recognition, all people are accountable to God if they misuse the good creation of God (Smith, 1991: 314-315).

Man and woman are distinguished from animals by being created in the image of God (Gen 1-27).

Since ancient times, people have been interested to know the origins of the universe. Survived literature from several ancient nations reveals that they were eager to hear stories about the creation.

The biblical writers also gave an account of this. Their account reflects that Israel's God was the Creator. He created "good heavens" and a "good earth". The reference to God as the Creator is not limited to Gen 1:1 – 2:4b alone. It also occurs in the book of Psalms (Ps 8:3-4), which talks about God's creation: "When I look at the sky, which you have made, at the moon and the stars, which you have set in their places. What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit?" (Ps 8:3-4) (Smith, 1991: 313-314).

Biblical creation, as has been said, is a continuous creation. The call of Abraham by God is considered to be a new act of creation as God was to bless all the nations of the whole earth through him (Smith, 1991: 315-316).

Gerhard von Rad's opinion is that the creation accounts in Gen 1-2 are only the prologue to God's redemptive acts in history, which was quite influential. He says that creation and salvation have been spoken of together in a different way in the Bible in the following texts: Ps 1:36; Is 42:5-9; Is 5:9-10. He quotes: "O Jacob he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Miller, 1990: 182-183).

God assigned human beings a significant role in His own wonderful creation by allowing humans to name the earth's creatures. This was a sign that showed that human beings are important in God's good creation (Miller, 1990: 182-183).

Wisdom has been regarded to be a part of the creation. Patrick Miller says the Jewish traditions of the creation of the Word was involved. The Jewish people believed that the Torah personification wisdom was present with God from the beginning, which means wisdom comes from God and it is with God (Miller, 1990: 182-183).

According to the theory of continuous creation, God's action in Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the history and creation, represents a new creation in the New Testament (II Cor 5:17). Christ undergirds all of creation (John 1:1-9; Eph 1:9-10; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3). The New Testament reveals that Jesus was the one who made all things. All things were created by Him (Eph 3:9).

Jesus was the agent of God, used in creating the world (Heb 1:2) (Smith, 1991: 314-315).

The Christian tradition is that Jesus was the image of the invisible God, by being the first born of all creation, for in him all things were created. This is indicated in the Gospel of John (1:1-3): "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

Jesus is considered to be the personified wisdom and spoken Word of God as God spoke the word that separated light from darkness in primeval times (Miller, 1990: 182-183).

"The accounts of Gen 1-2 prepare the reader for the record of the first people being placed after the creation in the Garden of Eden, temptation by the serpent, rebellion against God, expulsion from the garden and the degenerating effect of sin in society" (Smith, 1991: 314-315).

God's new beginning of history involved a new act of creation. In this manner, creation as the beginning of history can anticipate the end of history (Brown, 2000: 293-294).

3.4 SIN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The concept of sin, in the Bible, is related to a rebellion or a revolt against God's commandments, which came immediately after the creation, when God had completed the whole world and the formation of Adam and Eve (Jefford, 2000: 1124-1125).

The Bible makes it clear that human beings, or Adam and Eve, were instructed by the Lord that they should not eat from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. God said to them clearly that if they eat it, they would die. Adam and Eve did not obey God's command; they ate from the tree (Gen 3:1-7).

Sin is a violation of God's order. Sin came as the disobedience of human beings to God. It affects all humankind, individually and corporately, placing all under condemnation and sentence of death (Smothers, 1990: 827-828).

In the primeval history as told in Gen 1-11, the issue of sin or disobedience of human beings has resulted in the alienation and estrangement of humankind from God the Creator. The conception of sin leads to the fracture of human society and disruption of nature. It created an enmity between the woman and the serpent, between woman and man, between woman and her sons, man and the ground from which he was made. Human beings became mortal and enemies of one another, each struggling to take life from others until the ground finally gains the victory (Gen 4:1-16) (Freedman, 1992: 1282-1283).

The Old Testament also pictures sin as a violation of the righteousness of the nature of God. For He is righteous and a Holy God in terms of His nature. He sets forth as a criterion for His people, a righteousness like His own. He wants His chosen people to be holy like Himself. Any deviation from God's own righteousness is usually viewed as a sin (Lev 11:45) (Simmons, 1991: 1283-1284).

According to Smothers, "The grace of God is its only court of appeal, and faith the only medium of redeeming grace". He goes on to say that the most common word for sin in the Old Testament means missing the mark, in other words, missing the way or goal. Sin is a failure to do a righteous thing (Smothers, 1990: 827-828).

Sin indicates the human being's moral and spiritual failure, either toward God or toward human beings (Gen 20:9). Lamentation states, "our fathers sinned and are no more, and we bear their punishment, slaves rule over us and there is none to free us from their hands" (Lam 5:7).

The actions of sin involve humans rebelling against God. Sin is a rebellion; one of the central thoughts in the Bible shows it as humanity's estrangement from God, by missing the purpose for their life and surrendering to the power of evil rather than good. The Bible describes sin as an attitude that personifies as a rebellion against God. Rebellion was the root of Adam and Eve's action, which later became the root of humanity's plight ever since (Simmons, 1991: 1281-1282).

The Israelite community was cautioned by the prophets so that they could come to repentance and to righteousness and do justice (Is 1:2-20; Jer 3:1-5; 5:1-31; Hos 4:1-19; Amos 5:10-13) (Jefford, 2000: 1224-1225).

In the Old Testament, the violation of the covenant that God had made with Israel was a sin, for the Israelites were bound by it (Ex 19:24). Each year on the day of atonement, the nation went through a covenant renewal. The high priest consecrated the people by sprinkling blood on them, and making atoning

sacrifices. The Israelite community came to renew their vows to the Lord to be a covenant-keeping people, because, by then, any breach of the covenant was considered to be a sin (Deut 29:19-21) (Simmons, 1991: 1282-1283).

The Eerdmans Dictionary says that, when Israelites realized that sin is destructive and broke the relationship between man and God; the recognition of the reality of sin in the life of Israel made them realise that there is a great need for repentance and atonement. On this basis, they were bringing their sacrifices to God so that the broken relationship between themselves and their God could be restored (Jefford, 2000: 1225-1226).

Sanders sets these questions: Who is there that has not sinned against his God? Who that has kept the commandments forever? All humans who exist are sinful. Freedman describes sin as a criminal act, as wrongdoing or wickedness. To disobey God means despising Him. He concludes that sin is disobedience, rebellion, disloyalty, injury to God's holiness (Sanders, 1992: 40-47).

To Israel, sin was transgression of the Law of Moses, as well as rebellion against God Himself. It was a violation of the sacred covenant between God and Israel: e.g. "The sin of these young men was very great in the Lord's sight, for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt" (1 Sam 2:17).

In theological terms, it means to revolt against God. In other words, it is a violation of God's Law. Millers put it as, rebellion against God and an assault on the Divine Order (Smothers, 1990: 827-828).

Judaism understood that sin separates a human being from God. Human existence is ultimately sinful, since human activities consistently violate the norms of the natural world. The consequences of ignorance and violations are revealed in humanity suffering (Jefford, 2000: 1224-1225).

The Bible confirmed that human beings were deceived by the serpent, and as a result sin came into the entire world and brought bad relationships into the creation of God. The original sin of Adam and Eve introduced death (Gen 3:1) (Danne, 1975: 445-446).

When Adam and Eve ate from the tree, they began to feel ashamed. They sewed fig tree leaves and covered themselves with it (Gen 3:7) (Eichrodt, 1964: 380-391).

Sin is due to human choice (Ezk 18:4; 19-20). God, in the Old Testament, established the law as a standard of righteousness. Any violation of this standard is defined as sin. He/she who keeps the law is a righteous person and he/she who does not keep the law is considered to be sinful (Deut 6:24-25) (Simmons, 1991: 1282-1283).

The general Jewish view of sin has been accepted throughout the New Testament. John says everyone who sins, breaks the law. In fact, sin is lawlessness (1 Jn 3:4). St Paul also states that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). All human beings are considered to be sinners because sin came through Adam (Rom 5:12).

Through lack of obeying the will of God the Creator, all persons begotten according to nature, are born in sin (Rom 5:12).

The Jewish community, because it was bound to the covenant, has strong feelings of sorrow on account of sins and a determination to follow the commands of God (Macrae, V 4, M-P, 1975: 890-903).

“The psalmist would confess: behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Ps 51:7). The experience of Isaiah, in his inaugural vision where his moral inferiority and sinfulness as a mere human were immediately apparent also shows this (Is 6:1-7) (Cover, 1992: 1282-1283).

3.5 SACRIFICES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Israelite community comes before their Lord Yahweh with thanksgiving, worship and sacrifices. The word worship is seen as a duty or work/service; in other words, worship and sacrifices are acts of service rendered to Yahweh in the Tabernacle and later the Temple. Generally, it is a human's service to God through or in the form of worship and prayers and sacrifices. On the other hand, the Israelite people express their hopes and fears while seeking God's blessing upon them.

Though God is beyond nature and history, through the medium of His Temple He makes His presence manifest. God's presence was lived and experienced by His worshippers, the Israelite people. For this community it has been a pleasure to honour their God, Yahweh, in such an established way (Anderson, 2000: 1148-1150).

The sacrifices and offerings were based on the mosaic covenantal thought in the Temple (Smothers, 1990: 742-743).

“Sacrifices are considered to be the provisioning of the deity’s banquet table. The people could come to celebrate before the Lord with praises and thanksgiving. This kind of action symbolizing the miraculous availability of the deity within the Temple, allows this reality to be lived and experienced by the human community” (Anderson, 2000: 1148-1149).

The basic types of animal sacrifices were believed to be four types of offerings:

- (a) Burnt offerings (*ôlâ*)
- (b) Peace offerings (*šêlamîm*)
- (c) Purification offerings (*‘hattâ*)
- (d) Reparation offerings (*‘ašâm*)

Freedman also mentions thanksgiving and vowed sacrifices apart from the major ones (Lev 4:1 – 5:13; Lev 16:1) (Freedman, 1992: 870-890).

Anderson places the ritual occasions into three categories of foundation sequences. The regulation that prophet Moses gave to the Israelites in Num 7:1-15:

- 1) Ordination of Priests and Levites (Lev 8:9; Num 8:1), dedication of the Tabernacle (Num 7:1).

- 2) Festival Laws and the *tîmûl*, daily burnt offerings (Lev 16; 23; Num 28-29).
- 3) Specific rituals pertaining to the life cycle of the individual, e.g. childbirth (Lev 12), leprosy (Lev 13-14), vows of the Nazirite (Num 6:1), impurity from discharge (Lev 15:13-15), defilement that comes as a result of touching a dead body (corpse) (Num 19:1).

(Anderson, 2000: 1148-1150).

The regulation particularly in the Deuteronomistic theology was that all the sacrifices be offered only in Jerusalem. All the legitimate sacrifices were usually taken to the Temple at Jerusalem (Deut 12:13-14). Another rule for burnt offerings was that it must be a male calf, or sheep, or goat, without any blemish or spot (Lev 22:17-25). This kind of ritual was part of public worship, known as a purification occasion (Num 28-29) (Smothers, 1990: 784-785).

Within the Biblical narratives the act of sacrifices had been regarded to be the most important feature of the liturgy of the Temple, because it gave honour and reverence to the deity and it was unique in so far as it required constant human attention. For the act in providing a sacrifice, the Israelite was not only providing a service to the deity, but also set himself in a position of subservience to his deity (Anderson, 2000: 1148-1149).

The daily Temple ritual included set sacrifice in addition to occasional offerings being brought by an individual worshipper (Num 28-29). Other sacrifices were made at periodic festivals or on days of worship, including other more regular

offerings, plus the addition of special sacrifices such as the paschal lamb (Ex 12:1) (Smothers, 1990: 784-785).

The regulated sacrifices were laid down as follows: The first one burnt offerings, the second one peace offerings, the third one purification offerings, and the fourth one atonement sacrifices. The Torah is said to have several rules for worship and sacrifices with regard to how to administer burnt offerings: where to bring the animal, how to lay on hands, where to kill it, how to handle the blood, and how to prepare the altar. The regulations are in accordance with the instructions that God gave to Moses on Mt Sinai (Lev 7:37-38) (Anderson, 2000: 1148-1149).

The Hebrews believed that human sin brings defilement and when they make sacrifices, they had to bring a sin sacrifice first to purify the altar (Lev 9:7-21; 14; 19). All the meat went to the Priests or Levites. The worshipper received the removal of sin or guilt. The Priest who dealt with the sacrificial ritual, sprinkled the blood, burned the fat and placed the ashes where ashes are heaped (Dyrness, 1979: 154-155).

These two types of offerings are expiatory, the sin offering (*hâttâ*) (Lev 4:1-5; 5:13; Num 15:22-31) and the guilt offering (*âsâm*) (Lev 5:14; 6:7; 7:1-7) (Smothers, 1990: 784-785).

These sacrifices were the basic types of animal sacrifices, burnt offerings being a gift that the Israelites gave to the deity. The peace offerings were three in number: The first one thanksgiving sacrifice, the second one a vowed sacrifice and the third one the free will offering (Lev 7:11-18).

The purification offering was seen as part of a process of purification (Lev 4:1). With an atonement sacrifice the blood had to be sprinkled for the atonement and purification, to make a person holy or cleanse him/her from the sin that was committed (Lev 16:16). The Israelites had to keep themselves pure or separate from their uncleanness to avoid defiling the Tabernacle of the Lord that was in their midst (Lev 15:31). They did this so that the deity would not leave the sanctuary (Anderson, 2000: 1148-1150).

After having laid hands on the animal, in an act of identification or ownership, the worshipper could slaughter the animal by cutting its throat and the Priest sprinkled the blood of the animal, purifying the worshipper as well as other elements. A sacrifice of this nature was usually accompanied with offerings of flour and oil, along with a libation of wine (Ex 29:38-42; Lev 23:28; Num 15:1-16) (Cartledge, 1990: 784-785).

This is the law of the holocaust, cereal offerings of purification, offerings of the reparation, offerings of consecration and offerings of peace. These offerings were demanded by the Lord when he commanded Moses to institute them and they had to be observed by Israel (Lev 7:1-37).

These offerings were made occasionally by Israelites. They were not offered as ritual sacrifices. Thus, the rest of the laws for sacrifices in the Pentateuch could be viewed as ritual sacrifices according to several rules that the Lord God had laid down for them to serve as their full recognition of Him (Lev 7:1-7) (Anderson, 2000: 1148-1150).

Immediately after Moses had finished the building of the Tabernacle, the leaders of Israel and heads of ancestral houses, the leaders of the tribes who were present, offered their offerings to the Lord and they were accepted for the use of the Tabernacle and for the Levites' various services (Lev 7:1-37).

Their Lord God made it very clear to them that all the first born were His, for He had saved them from slavery in Egypt (Ex 13:11-16). They should also give to God the first fruits of the land as a kind of thanksgiving offering (Miller, 1990: 178-184).

The Lord set a blessing to be said in time of worship and offering sacrifices by the Priests. The priests at the time were Aaron, his two sons and another two from two tribes of Israel: "The Lord bless you and watch over you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look kindly on you and give you peace (Num 7:1-7).

This prayer was known as the Aaronite prayer or blessing because Aaron was the high priest. Israelites were given instructions on how they should make their offerings to the Lord through His servant, Moses (Partain, 1994: 180-181).

3.6 PROPHETS AND PROPHECY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The function of prophecy in Israel was understood to have a role of mediation between God and people through Prophets. Prophecy deals with communication: receiving the message from God and conveying it to the people of Israel (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

Feedback was integral to the process and prophets were in a position between deity and audience. Prophets received and carried the prophecy to and the response from the Israelite community in both directions, because people were free to respond to a Prophet's words either with acceptance or rejection (Amos 2:10-12; 7:10-17; Jer 5:12-13; 11:18-20; 20) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

According to the Bible and many other sources Abraham was called a prophet on account of his personal intercession (Gen 20:7). Aaron was considered to be a "prophet" too, because he spoke on behalf of Moses and God (Ex 7:1). Moses, the mediator of the law, was understood to be the leader of the Israelites and a prophet at the same time (Num 12:1-8; Deut 18:15-18; 34:10) (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

Some prophets carried prophecy, which resulted in conflict, like what happened between Jeremiah and Hananiah. Both claimed that they had messages from Yahweh (1 Kings 22; Jer 14:11-16; 28:1-17), until Jeremiah invoked the criterion of the fulfilment of a Prophet's prophecy as the appropriate way to resolve the problem of who speaks for Yahweh as a prophet (Jer 28:5-9; Deut 18:21-22) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

Those who did not have messages from Yahweh were proved to be false prophets and those who did have messages from Yahweh were proved to be true prophets. The false prophets' messages lacked a valid commission (Jer 14:13-14) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

Verhoef has said that all the true prophets received their messages from the Lord Yahweh. They received it as a kind of revelation and God indeed spoke through such prophets (Jer 37:2; Haggai 1:1-3). The Lord Himself fulfils His Words. He is watching to see to it that His Words come true (Jer 1:12) and what He says would be done (Ezk 12:25; 28). He guarantees the fulfilment of the prophet's words (Ezk 33:33; Dan 9:24). The Word of the Lord will not fail to do whatever He plans for it (Is 55:10-11; Jer 18:1) (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

Prophets who came forward at Yahweh's direction, have their message directly from the deity. They do not wait for any consultation to be made to them. Within the Israelite world, the results of divination, like the words of prophets, were considered to be wholly or totally from the Lord Yahweh (Prov 16:33) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

False prophets were referred to at the beginning of God's revelation, since the serpent, or Satan, was considered to be the first false prophet to lead to the disobedience of humanity (Gen 3; John 8:44) and warning in Deut 13:1-5 and 18:20) (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

During the period of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, the idea of monotheism was introduced. Yahweh was going to be triumphant over evil through his servant Israel (Is 40-55; 44:6; 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13; 53:12) (Eakin, JR, 1990: 742-744).

In all these spheres, the prophets both proclaimed God's judgements and announced God's salvation (Jer 20:22). The Old Testament prophet is a proclaimer of the Word, as God called him/her to warn and to exhort, comfort, teach and counsel and to be bound to God alone (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

In this regard biblical Israel was not unique. What, however, gives much of biblical prophecy its distinctive flavour was the prevalence of the Deuteronomistic idea of a prophet like Moses who was going to come and who was going to speak Yahweh's Word to the Israelites and to whom obedience would be required (Deut 18:15-22) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

As a result, the Old Testament presents prophets as privileged intermediaries between Yahweh and His chosen people, Israel. The message of the prophets tends to mirror Deuteronomistic theology in assuring that a special relationship existed between Israel and Yahweh. A covenant, which required obedience to certain commandments was defined. The result of such obedience could be prosperity and peace or blessing, but the result of disobedience could be curse (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

In the seventh century, the prophet Jeremiah was considered to function both in a political and religious sense when he was ministering under King Josiah. He stressed the covenantal obligation and a proper motivation for Yahweh to make a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34) (Eakin, JR, 1990: 742-743).

The major historical and cultural context of Old Testament prophecy was the period of the Israelite and Judean monarchies. This period continued through the exile to early postexilic times. This period has influenced the function and message of the biblical prophets (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

Israel's situation in Canaan, the ark of the covenant and Yahweh's kingship: in Israel, judges were empowered by Yahweh's spirit when Israel was at war with the surrounding nations. In the monarchial system there were Levites, Priests and Prophets. In the eighth century, during the time of the prophets Amos and Hosea, there was tension between Yahwism and Baalism. Israelites particularly emphasized social justice and covenant fidelity. In Juda, Isaiah stressed faith in God and the holiness of Yahweh and Micah was no less a proclaimer of judgement than his contemporaries (Eakin, JR, 1990: 742-743).

All the prophetic books, namely Joel, Obadah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakuk, and Malachi were associated with the reigns of specific Kings from the time of the prophets Amos and Hosea in the mid-eighth century, to Haggai and Zechariah in the late sixth century. Their texts refer to events and situations in which the Israelite nation was involved (Amos 6:14; Is 36-39; Jer 39:1) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

Verhoef said that Jews had forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses. The latter were the following: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

Among the Old Testament prophets, fifteen have been associated with written collections that bear their names, from Isaiah through Malachi, excluding Daniel, because he is referred to in other prophetic and Deuteronomistic history books. Other prophets have not been named (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

There were two groups of prophets. The first group was known as *neb'im* (the plural refers to the true prophets) and the other group was associated with the heathen, like in the story of the prophet Elijah and Baal's prophets who were 450 in number (1 Sam 10:5; 10-12; 1 Kings 22:4; 18; II Chron 18) (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

The tradition indicates that all Israelite prophets were prophesying in a specific period and under specific Kings. They were associated with monarchs or kings, according to Gleason, who placed them sequentially (Archer, Jr, 1979: 371).

Those prophets who were not recognized as Yahweh's prophets were regarded as ecstatic prophets. These types of prophets were in contrast to Amos, Jeremiah, Elijah and Elisha, who were from Yahweh's Council (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

In conclusion, it can be said that the normative prophetic form in the Old Testament arose in the person of the prophet Moses, who was the constituting standard of comparison for all the future prophets (Deut 18:15-19). Moses was a true prophet of Yahweh, for he was instrumental in carrying out the ten plagues upon Egyptians (Ex 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12:1). He was a mediator between God and the Israelite community. He was a liberator and founder of Jewish monotheistic religion (Ndiokwere, 1981: 123-124).

Overholt has said that Israelite prophecy came to an end immediately after the early postexilic period. When prophecy came to an end, the office of prophethood was seemingly transformed into a visionary who led Israelites into the period of apocalyptic interpretation (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

There is evidence that Jewish prophecy ceased at the time of Ezra and from that time on there was no prophecy until the eschatological age. There was a period of 400 years between Malachi and John the Baptist (Boring, 1992: 496-502).

3.7 TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In this section, the researcher will describe the characteristics of true and false prophets who will be identified by their various approaches and the nature of their bases. The prophet's activities are usually known to his society because he works as an intermediary among his own people. The members of the particular religious community, usually judge the prophet's actions by evaluating the prophetic claims. Such a prophet would be recognized in Judeo-Christian tradition, the crucial aspect being prophetic behaviour and the prophet's speech. In the Gospel according to Matthew, at the end of the sermon on the mount, our Lord Jesus gave a warning against false prophets. He indicated that people should be aware of false prophets who would come in sheep's clothing but inwardly were wolves. He concluded that people could know them by their fruits (Matt 7:15-21). I am personally convinced that false and true prophets are usually identified by their deeds, in other words the fruit that they bear, in accordance with Overholt's view of the false prophets (Overholt, 1989: 163-183).

The false prophet's prophecies peace when there is no peace. "For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer 8:11). Another example is from unknown prophets who had composed a poem which said: "All the attacking nations would be driven away by Yahweh". This poem was included in the Book of the prophet Isaiah. Another false prophecy was uttered by the prophet Nahum. "Take up a harp, walk through the city, o prostitute forgotten play the harp well, singing many a song so that you will be remembered" (Is 17:12-14; 23:16-17).

The Bible records Yahweh as saying: "Thus says Yahweh, almighty. Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of Yahweh. They keep saying to those who despise me". Yahweh says: "You will have peace" and to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts, they say no harm will come to you. All these prophecies are lies. They don't lead the people to abandon their evil ways and to turn to justice. Such prophets are false prophets (1 Kings 22 and II Chron 18) (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

This happened when Jeremiah and Hananiah had given contrary messages to the people. The prophet Jeremiah delivers his message of danger and the false prophet Hananiah countered Jeremiah's message by saying there would be no danger. The false prophet of peace usually says what people want to hear (Jer 28:6-14) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

Hananiah was confident in himself that he was a true prophet of Yahweh. He wanted to show that the Spirit of Yahweh was with him and that Jeremiah was a false prophet. He went to Jeremiah and snatched the yoke from his shoulders, broke it in pieces and announced triumphantly. "You have broken a wooden yoke, but in its place you will get a yoke of iron. For I have put an iron yoke on the necks of these nations to make them to serve Nebuchadnezzar. They will serve him. I have given him even control over the wild animals within two years" (Jer 28:11).

Thomas Smothers suggests that, if King Ahab could return from the battle unharmed, then the Lord would not have spoken through the prophet Micaiah; and indeed his prophecy did come true (Smothers, 1994: 314-315).

The community to whom both prophets gave their messages, could not have been able to distinguish who was false and who was true, until the Lord gave a message to Jeremiah for Hananiah, who claimed to be sent by Yahweh. Jeremiah went to Hananiah. "Thus says Yahweh, you have broken a wooden yoke, but in its place you will get a yoke of iron. For I have put an iron yoke on the necks of these nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and they will serve him. I have given him even control over the wild animals" (Jer 28:13-14; 1 Kings 22; Jer 14:11-16). This reflects the conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

Hananiah got people to trust in his lies by telling the Israelite community that he had been sent by Yahweh, whereas Yahweh never sent him. Finally, Jeremiah announced to Hananiah that he would die, according to Yahweh, and

indeed he died in the same year (Jer 28:17) (Wittenberg, 1993: 63-77).

Another example of two prophets, one false and one true is the following: King Ahab consulted the prophets to find out whether the Israelites could succeed in defeating their enemies or not. The first prophecy was a warning of defeat and the other one promised victory over their enemies. Prophet Micaiah prophesied that Israelites were going to be defeated by their enemies, and Zedekiah, the son of Chenananah, prophesied the Israelites' victory over their enemies. Both of them were claiming that they were sent by Yahweh. They were appealing to the same authority (1 Kings 22:1-32). Prophet Micaiah was imprisoned although he told the truth to the king by confirming their defeat (Rofe, 1988: 142-143).

How did the Israelite community come to know the difference between the two prophets; who was false and who was true? The entire community of Israel came to know, when prophet Micaiah's prophecy was fulfilled by the death of King Ahab (1 Kings 22:1-23 and Jer 14:11-16) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

In distinguishing the true from the false, it has become clear that prophetic ecstasy was a sign of a false Prophet. This kind of ecstasy group was earlier known as *Nâbi* (1 Sam 9:10 and Jer 7-8). The word *Nâbi* later became a general term for prophets, in other words it indicates the prophets' office and function. The plural *Neb'im* refers to a group of prophets (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078) who were true prophets, the other group being false prophets (1 Kings 22:1 and II Chron 18).

False prophets were identified as false prophets, because they were mere professionals. They were being paid by the king, whom they were working for in the palace as his servants, and for this reason they could speak what should be in the interest of their kings or monarchs or bosses, with the exception of Samuel. He was one of the professional prophets, but he was not a false prophet. The prophet Nathan provides another good example: Nathan was working in king David's court. The court ecstasies were usually found in groups and there is no doubt that their professional status could have been a corrupting influence (1 Kings 22:1). This group of prophets, ecstatic prophets, are referred to in 1 Sam 10 (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

According to the Israelite prophetic norm, if a prophet does not acknowledge the authority of Moses and does not subscribe to the doctrines of the Exodus theology, such a prophet was regarded as a false prophet. Ezekiel says they are guided by their own wisdom and have received no word from Yahweh (Deut 13; 18; Jer 32:8; Ezk 13:2-3).

Such a prophet is a man of immoral life and his message is always about peace. The true prophet is a man who always speaks against sin and calls people to be transformed into holiness and his message is about judgement upon a community that does what is evil in God's eyes (Jer 23:1). False prophets cannot see Yahweh because they are not from Yahweh's Council where the true prophets receive divine messages in the Royal Court of Heaven (Perdue, 1994: 646-647).

The true prophet has stood in the council of Yahweh and has heard his voice and has been sent by him (Jer 23:18-21; 22; 28). For the Word of Yahweh is consistently against sin (Ezk 14:7-8). "They say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your face from all your abominations". The false prophet Zedekiah obviously appeals to his ecstatic credentials in countering the word of the true prophet Micaiah (VA, 1986: 844-845).

In Israel, if a prophet incited the people to worship any other God than Yahweh, such a prophet is false and deserves to be put to death. The second condition is that if a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and the word does not come to fulfilment, which would prove its veracity. It is a word that the Lord Yahweh has not spoken, and it should not be put into consideration. Such a prophet misleads the nation and brings harm upon it (Deut 18:20-22). For the Word of the LORD does not fail to do whatever He planned for it (Is 55:10-11; Jer 18:1) (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

Prophet Jeremiah accused his opponents of not having stood in the council of Yahweh. The council of Yahweh is a criterium for being a true Prophet. There were some prophets who were going after other gods, such as Baal (Jer 6:13) (Grabbe, 1993: 113-115).

The false prophets were not inspired by Yahweh, in spite of their claims to speak in the name of Yahweh in using common Yahwistic oracle formulas (Ezk 8:1-28) (Wittenberg, 1993: 210-215).

One of the true prophets was Elijah who acted against Baal prophets by defeating and killing them all. He performed some other miracles and his successor, Elisha, did miracles too. They both did miracles because they were from the Council of Yahweh and they were identified as true prophets (Grabbe, 1995: 183-185).

It has been observed that those who are making trouble in the churches, nowadays are followers of the false prophets. Some have broken away from their main churches and formed their own movements and churches. The false prophets of this 21st century demand money from people for the healing ministry. They have been discovered through their deeds, as the Bible says, and they will be known by their fruits (Mark 13:22-23) (Nkiodwere, 1981: 97-106).

3.8 ROLE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

The proper inauguration of the office of prophetism comes with the prophet Moses. The Lord God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. The relationship between God and Moses was a very unique one (Dyrness, 1979: 212-213).

Prophets usually speak against whatever is not good in the eyes of the Lord God. In Israel, the true prophets rebuked the Israelites whenever they committed sin, because prophets were aware that people fail when they do evil things by not doing what Yahweh, their God, wanted them to do. Prophets sometimes could speak to the kings when they saw that kings went against Yahweh's will. The prophet of God reminds people about God's demand for obedience, justice and righteousness. Prophets do not allow people to go after

any other god, except Yahweh (Grabbe, 1995: 105-106).

In Israel, prophets counselled the king in a very critical manner. He did not fear any of the kings, and checked the power of the monarch or king. The prophet had the ability to speak and explain and interpret the events that may have happened in the past and future events, for he saw and knew what had passed and what would happen in the future (Schneidewind, 1970: 231-235).

The prophets were empowered by God. Many of Scriptures' authors were prophets, for the Lord had revealed or made known to them all the mysteries because they were His servants (Schneidewind, 1970: 243-244).

The true prophet had to come from Yahweh's Council and did not run after other gods. Elisha was a good example of such a prophet. Elisha acted against the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 17:19-21; 2 Kings 1-2).

As a prophet of Yahweh, he was able to perform some miracles, and his successor, Elisha, did the same. The Old Testament prophets were known as Yahweh's prophets, on account of their unique characteristics and their role of receiving and announcing messages that they received from Yahweh. They could see to it that proper worship was encouraged and conducted (Grabbe, 1995: 183-185).

The role of the prophet was to make God's Words known to the people by explaining them to the community. The prophet Moses was known as a good teacher and interpreter because he taught the people the Word of God. The prophet had authority to reveal God's message to the people. He had the

privilege of the divine mission by which he received the true revelation of God's Word. This divine authority, according to Wittenberg, was only from Yahweh (Wittenberg, 1993: 210-215).

According to the Old Testament, God gives His divine authority to whom He chooses. For example, to Deborah, who gave a divine order or a command to Barak. She said to Barak: "These are the commands of the Lord God of Israel: go and draw ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun and bring them with you to Mount Tabor, and I will draw Sisera, Jabin's commander, to the torrent of Kishon with his chariots and all his rabble, and there I will deliver them into your hands (Judges 4:5-7).

An unnamed man of God rebuked the priest Eli because of his evil performance before the Lord (1 Sam 4:6-7) (Macrae, 1975: 890-903).

Amos, Micah and Isaiah protested and announced God's judgement, simply because of misbehaviour and lack of justice. The prophet Elisha also protested and announced condemnation and judgement on King Ahab and his wife Jezebel when they used their authority wrongly, by dispossessing Naboth of his land by force. It was this authority, given to them by Yahweh, that enabled them to reveal the injustice that was prevailing in King Ahab's reign. Prophets wanted peace and justice to prevail among the people of God (1 Kings 21:17-28) (Wittenberg, 1993: 34-37).

The role of the prophet is to bring a message of hope from the Lord. God gave Ezekiel a message of hope, that Yahweh promised a new hope of the possibility of new life: "These are the Words of the Lord God: O My people, I will open

your graves and bring you up from them, and restore you to the land of Israel. You shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from them, O My people" (Ezekiel 37:1-14) (Wittenberg, 1993: 105-106).

The task of the prophet is to deliver Yahweh's message to the actual people in an actual situation without fail. It is the role of the prophet that he should announce the coming of any disaster, for an individual and for communities at large as well. Prophets announce or prophecy good and evil which could come in the future (Kaiser, 1975: 290-296).

Prophets played a great role in the Israelite Kingdom. Prophets were regarded as advisors to the kings, and kings sought the advice of the prophets because prophets received visions from the divine: e.g. (Jer 21: 10) "I have set my face against this city, meaning to do them harm, not good, says the Lord. It shall be handed over to the King of Babylon and he shall burn it to the ground. King Zedekiah had Jeremiah brought to him and consulted him privately in the palace, asking him if there was a Word from the Lord. 'Indeed there is', said Jeremiah, 'you shall fall into the hands of the King of Babylon' " (Jer 37:17-21) (Cover, 1992: 477-489).

When King Jehoshaphat and King Ahab were not satisfied with the prophecy delivered by other prophets, they consulted Micaiah and he reconfirmed their defeat by declaring to them that the enemies were going to win and King Ahab was going to die in that war (Rofe, 1988: 142-143).

The prophet is usually a man of prayer, like Moses. Moses was known to be an intercessor, for he could intercede on behalf of the Israelites, praying to God for divine mercy for the people, fully knowing their sin and disobedience. "The prophet knows his people's sin, but yet he dares to appeal to the mercy of God, no matter how extensive the history of rebellion and stubbornness" (Miller, 1990: 122-123).

A good example is Moses himself. Moses made a prayer of appeal, asking God not to execute the punishment upon Israelites, which He had already decided to do. God changed His mind, and He did not fulfill what He was about to do because of His servants' intercession on behalf of his chosen people (Exodus 32:14).

Jesus prayed on behalf of the people, asking God to forgive those who were crucifying him: "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:24) (Miller, 1990: 124-125).

It is almost characteristic of the intercessors of the Old Testament that their passionate intercession is most clearly present when the sin is greatest. Abraham offered an appeal in prayer, interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah, where his nephew and family were living (Miller, 1990: 122).

A prophet had divine power to perform miracles. Elisha made a widow's jar not to run out of meal, and her jug never lacked any oil, until the famine passed (1 Kings 17:8-16).

The prophet was a person who had divine powers of healing. Prophet Elisha, by divine authority, was able to heal Naaman's leprosy, by commanding him to go and dive seven times into the Jordan River. By the same divine authority, Elisha brought a curse upon Gehazi, who deceived him. Naaman's leprosy thereby went over to Gehazi (Miller, 1990: 126-131).

Prophets were called men of God (1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 3:13-20). A prophet was usually known as a man of God, which indicates greater importance than that of a mere prophet (1 Sam 9:9-10). Overholt says that Deuteronomy recognized the prophet Moses as a great prophet sent from God. He was the model of one who was to come, a prophet from the midst of the Israelites, of the brethren, like Moses (Deut 18:15) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARATIVE STUDIES: NUER RELIGION AND THE OLD TESTAMENT RELIGION

4.1 NUER AND OLD TESTAMENT RELIGION: CONCEPT OF GOD

a) *Nuer Religion*

According to Evans Pritchard and others who have written about Nuer Religion and prophecy, the Nuer concept of God is that there is a Spirit of Heaven, which they say is God (*Kuoth nhial*) and they also believe that there are other spirits, which they believe to be small gods (*Kuuth*).

The Nuer call these spirits small gods (*Kuth*) for they are seen as God's children. According to Evans Pritchard, the Nuer place these spirits into two categories: "above spirits" and "below spirits" (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 1-10).

This belief has been regarded as central to the religion of the Nuer people. This God of Heaven is the Spirit. He is not seen, as He is invisible. Even though the Nuer sometimes treated some creatures as having some kind of divine spirit, the real idea of God being the Spirit is there (Mbiti, 1970: 23-24).

The Nuer believe that this Living Being must be the Spirit of Heaven. The Nuer people worship this God occasionally, and in most cases, they worship Him through the spirits that they believe to be children of God, or small gods (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 306-309).

The Nuer religion has prophets like any other religion, according to the Nuer understanding of prophets. They believe that prophets are always possessed by the Heavenly Spirit. The heavenly God gives them spiritual power. For whoever is possessed by the Spirit of God, he declares that he has been possessed by the spirit of the divine.

The Nuer community believes that prophets have power to heal people and the power to curse people, and even to kill people. The Nuer people fear prophets, for they believe very strongly that God is with them and they sometimes talk of a prophet as being owned by God. When a person is possessed by the spirit, he is usually called (*guân Kuoth*) or person of God (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 303-310).

Prophets bring messages from God and give it to the people. Prophets offer sacrifices on behalf of the people. This is the Nuer religion (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 304-305).

b) *Old Testament Religion*

The Israelite religion is a monotheistic religion. The LORD in the Old Testament, declared to the Israelite people that He is the only LORD, as reflected in the Ten Commandments that He gave them. He commanded them, very strongly, that they should not have another god before Him and that they should not bow down to any other god (Deut 6:15) (Merrill, 1994: 143-143).

The God of the Old Testament was the God who revealed Himself to the Israelites through their forefathers, who also later declared Himself to Moses

when he called Him. He told Moses that He was God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob (Ex 3:1-7).

This God was always being worshipped by the Jewish community. He is a jealous God and He does not want to be worshipped together with other gods. Knowing Him as a jealous God, Yahweh, who rescued them from cruel bondage in Egypt, the Jewish community had always shown Him great reverence. They called him Lord Yahweh and the religion has been called Judaism (Church, 1991: 1173).

The Old Testament is regarded as a sacred scripture, inspired by God and hence free from any error, and it is believed that all the normative instructions in the Scriptures have come from Yahweh, who has been believed to be the inspiration of the authors of the Old Testament (Segundo, 1992: 70-78).

The Jewish people recited God's Word from the Torah in the Synagogue or Temple and they worship Him with sacrifices (Smothers, 1990: 742-743).

The Jewish Religion proclaims one God, Yahweh, which is confirmed by the commandment that states that He is the only God, He is alone, ultimate and absolute as the covenant-God, Yahweh. This is how the Old Testament views God. This was the belief of Judaism, which has also become Christian belief (Miller, 1990: 97-108).

c) **Summary**

In comparing the Nuer concept and the Old Testament concept of God, I would say that there are differences and similarities.

The differences are that the Nuer community talks of God but they are not very certain of Him. The second difference is that the Nuer believe that God is a Spirit and at the same time they believe in the existence of other spirits. The Nuer concept of spirits is quite different from the Old Testament concept of spirits. The existence of God as a Spirit has been confirmed by Evans Pritchard (1956: 307-309).

The Nuer society recognises the spirits as children of God (*gaat Kuoth*). They call them small gods and they worship them instead of worshipping God directly. They worship God through them. The Old Testament believes that God is a Spirit. He is an Eternal Spirit, the Infinite Creator and Preserver, Judge of the entire universe.

The Lord Jesus Christ confirmed it: "God is Spirit, those who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). He alone should be worshipped according to the Old Testament faith. The Old Testament does not believe in many spirits. It believes in one Spirit, that God alone is a Spirit. Before the creation, the Spirit of God was moving over the waters (Gen 1:1-3).

The similarities are as follows: They both believe in the existence of God and they agree that God is a Spirit in the way that they look at Him, but yet they are different because the Old Testament recognises the existence of one God, and not a big God and small gods, one spirit and not many spirits as the Nuer believe.

4.2 COMPARISON OF THE NUER AND OLD TESTAMENT VIEWS OF CREATION

a) *Nuer View of Creation*

The Nuer community's understanding of the creation, involves the belief that the Living Being whom they call Spirit of Heaven or God, was the One who was the Creator. The Nuer people have an idea of creation, but they do not make suggestions about how the creation came into being.

They just believe that the world had been created and the creation must have been brought about by this Living Being that they believe to be the Creator. They claim that people came out from under a certain tree, which is called the Tamarind Tree, in Western Nuer Land (*Jagêêl*). That tree is called (*Koat Lic*) (leg) (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 304-335).

As for other creatures, they do not even know how God, whom they believe to be the Creator, has created them. But they strongly believe that they were created by God. How He created them, they do not say. This idea of creation is similar among various African peoples, such as the Sotho/Tswana, who say people came out from the ground or a hole (Setiloane, 1986: 38-39).

b) *Old Testament View of Creation*

The Jewish community and Christians believe that the creation, as it is recorded in the Bible, is the real account of creation, because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and the action itself was a divine action. It is believed that the world was created by God, who has revealed Himself to the Jewish people throughout their existence, the God who rescued them from slavery in Egypt,

and who gave them the land Canaan as their settlement as He had promised to their forefathers (Deut 26:5-10) (Miller, 1990: 182-183).

Smith says their concept of the creation originally came from the Old Testament. There is no other record of the creation from which Jews and Christians could learn. Some scholars suggest, additionally, that creation as given in the Bible could be regarded as a continuing ordering and maintenance of the world (Smith, 1991: 314-315).

Brown believes that creation is an action of God, which is a process or continuous in nature and his primary references are the following: Ps 8, 9, 33 and 104. God continues with creation within His creation (Brown, 2000: 293-294).

This God of Genesis 1 and 2 is proclaimed in the Bible to be the only God of the whole world (Funderburk, 1975: 742-760).

Rogerson (1989: 197-204) relies on what is said in the Bible, namely that all creation was completed in six "days" by the Maker (Gen 1-2).

Christoph Bultmann accepts the history of the creation because the Bible describes God saying "Let there be light", and there was light. He considers the light to be a revelation to humanity. God has taught human beings through the action of creation, that is recorded in Genesis, Chapter 1. It is a reference to primeval history which we can grasp through daily sunrise, for the sunrise is taken to be a divine revelation to humankind. The writer referred to the light that came to the world as a beginning of light in creation. Light is a divine act as well as sun (Bultmann, 1995: 23-32).

According to the priestly tradition, the narrative in Genesis 2 deals with the formation of independent structures and the separation of things into their various positions (Brown, 2000: 293-294).

God created man in His own image (Gen 1:27). God is the Creator of all things and everything belongs to Him. God, the Creator, gave humans dominion over creation as an assignment of stewardship. In recognition of this, Smith said all people are accountable to God, their Creator, if they misuse or harm the good creation of God (Smith, 1991: 313-315).

Man and woman are distinguished from animals by being created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27).

The biblical writers testified that Israel's God was the Creator. There has been no other creator. He created "good heavens" and "good earth". Smith, the writer, did not only point out evidence of this aspect of the creation in Gen 1:1 – 2:4b alone, he also referred to the Book of Psalms (Ps 8:3-4), which talks about God's creation: "When I look at the sky, which you have made, at the moon and the stars, which have been set in their places (Smith, 1991: 313-314).

God assigned human beings to a significant role in His own wonderful creation by allowing Adam to name the earth's creatures. This was a sign to show that human beings are important in God's good creation (Miller, 1990: 182-183).

God created them, male and female. God blessed them and God said to them, "be fruitful and fill the earth (Gen 1:26-27). Originally, all creation goes back to the description of the Book of Genesis.

c) **Summary**

A comparison of the Nuer view of creation and the Old Testament view, after an examination of both, reveals that according to this research analysis, both have an idea of creation, but they are different. The Nuer believes that there was a creation by God (*Kuoth*), but they do not explain how God carried out the creation.

Concerning the creation of the world and all the creatures that are in it, they just assume that they were created by God, the Creator, for they have an idea of a being that they call God, the Creator. They are not certain about the formation or creation of human beings. They believe that they came out from under the tree that they see as their place or origin.

The Old Testament concept of the creation believes that the world and all in it was created by God in six days. The story of the creation is found in the Book of Genesis, Chapters 1 and 2. The creation of human beings was different from the creation of other creatures. For God said, "Let us create human beings in our own image, in our likeness". God, according to the Bible, even allowed humans to participate in His creation by letting Adam name all the earth's creatures.

God gave humankind dominion over the whole world (Gen 1:26-27). God created them as male and female, and He told them that they should multiply and fill the earth. So, they are quite different. The Old Testament is aware of the creation in a detailed manner, whereas the Nuer community's view of creation lacks detail. This research discovered that the Old Testament account is the true one and the Nuer concept of creation is just imagination or assumption.

4.3 COMPARISON OF NUER AND THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF SIN

a) *Nuer Concept of Sin*

I am personally aware that the Nuer history does not tell of a time when God revealed Himself to them and could teach them what is sin and what is not sin. The Nuer people came to know what is good and what is bad through their daily practice.

According to the Nuer community, there are two kinds of things that they believe to be sin (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 10-62). The real sin (*duer*) is the sin that people do knowingly by breaking the norms or laws that the entire community had laid down to be respected, such as not stealing, killing, lying, committing adultery and sexual intercourse with relatives. When people break one of these laws, it is a sin ethically and culturally.

The second thing that the Nuer regard as sin, is a fault or mistake that is committed unknowingly. The Nuer call this *guâac*. Generally Nuer's concept of sin is that anything people do which is not lawful is sin (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 10-62).

b) *Sin in the Old Testament*

The Old Testament concept of sin and the concept of sin in the Bible as a whole, is that it involves a rebellion or revolt against God's commandments. Jefford says sin came quite soon after God had completed the creation of the world and had formed Adam and Eve (Jefford, 2000: 1224-1226).

Price agrees with Jefford that sin is the disobedience of human beings to God. Sin affects all humankind individually and corporately, placing all under condemnation (Price, 1990: 827-828).

According to Childs, all humankind became sinners because of the sin of their ancestors: from Adam to the offspring of Noah, Japheth, Ham, who later became the forefathers of all human beings in the world (Childs, 1979: 146-147).

Miller stated that death and all suffering came to all humans because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve to God's commandments, through which He told them that they should not eat from the Tree of Good and Evil, and they ate from it (Gen 3:1-7) (Miller, 1990: 232-233).

The Old Testament pictures this as a violation against the righteousness of nature of God, for God is holy and righteous and His creation should portray righteousness like His own. Any deviation from God's demand for righteousness is viewed as a sin (Lev 11:45) (Simmons, 1992: 1283-1284).

Cover has said that all humans are sinful. He describes sin as a criminal act, wrongdoing or wickedness. He went on saying all various forms of evil distress, is to disobey God. All the bad acts usually come as disobedience to God's commandments and they are from the evil one. Sin is disobedience, rebellion, disloyalty, injuring God's holiness (Cover, 1992: 31-40).

Sin results from human choice (Ezk 18:4 – 19:20). God, in the Old Testament, established the law as a standard of righteousness. Any violation of this standard is defined as a sin. He/she who keeps the law is righteous and he/she does not

keep the law is considered to be sinful (Deut 6:24-25) (Simmons, 1991: 1282-1283).

Punishment has been understood to be a vindicative rectitude and not vindictive passion, and is the reaction of the holiness of God against all the violations. Punishment of sin is more than a natural penalty. A penalty inflicted by divine judgement and belonging to the moral age. Sin came to the world through a temptation of the first human beings (Keran, 1962: 75-105).

c) ***Summary***

In comparing the Nuer concept of sin and the concept of sin of the Old Testament, I would personally say that they are different. After I had studied both concepts, I realized that the concepts of sin differ although the results or effects of sin are similar. The Nuer traditional belief about sin is that sin comes when people break one of the following norms in terms of which there is a law: committing adultery, killing, stealing, lying and having sexual intercourse with your kin. The big question is, where did the Nuer get these laws? Who gave it to them? These constitute their traditions and culture. Another idea is that the failure to observe what the community sets as a rule brings embarrassment or shame to the entire Nuer community. The Old Testament concept of sin is that any violation of God's commandments is a sin (Ex 19:24) (Simmons, 1991: 1282-1283).

The origin of sin, according to the Bible, is presented in the Book of Genesis 3:1-7. God gave a command to Adam and Eve and they broke it. The Bible states it very clearly that disobedience of humans broke the relationship

between God and man. Sin comes when people do not obey *God's commandments*, which He gave to the people to be respected. This is the difference between the Nuer view of sin and the Old Testament view of sin. Fromm has said that human imagination fills with evil as they surrender their power to the evil ones (Fromm, 1966: 159-178).

As to their similarities, they both believe that the result of sin, is curse, misfortune, and even death. Both agree that sin came as a result of disobedience of human beings to God's commandments, as well as the traditional rules of the society. For the Nuer community's norms became like law, which is like the Law of the Bible. That is why they both agree that disobedience brings curses on people and even death.

4.4 COMPARISON OF NUER CONCEPT OF SACRIFICES AND SACRIFICES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

a) *Nuer Concept of Sacrifices*

The Nuer society gives sacrifices to God with full recognition that God has made them fortunate or that all that they own are gifts from God. According to the Nuer's traditional worship, they have three major ways of giving in their cult: sacrifices of thanksgiving, when they are favoured by God with good things such as good harvest, safety and new-born children, and many other good fortunes.

The second sacrifice is a redemption sacrifice for sin, sickness and any misfortune that may have occurred in the family or in the society as a whole. In the

invocation, they ask God to take the sacrificial animal being offered and to allow them to have the sick person by healing him/her (Evans Pritchard, 1956: 197-230).

The third sacrifice is a kind of compensation. When the compensation is made, the priest offers sacrifices for the release of a person who may have killed a man and he reunites the two parties who are at enmity by letting them eat together and then the enmity that has been there between the two groups comes to an end and people go back to their normal life. Sacrifices are usually offered by the prophets on behalf of the people in the case of thanksgiving sacrifices and redemption sacrifices. The leopard-skin priests offers sacrifices for reconciliation and compensation and sacrifices for misfortunes, such as the death of cattle and crops, when they do not yield well. According to John Mbiti, the Nuer, in many cases, offer sacrifices to God only on the important occasions (Mbiti, 1970: 188-189).

b) *Sacrifices in the Old Testament*

The Israelite community comes before their God, Yahweh, with thanksgiving in worship. They usually offered their sacrifices to the Lord in the Tabernacle. To them it is a duty which people render to God. In worship, they express their hope and fear while seeking God's blessing upon them. Worship and sacrifices in Israelite society were made for the pleasure of honouring their Lord Yahweh according to a set system (Anderson, 2000: 1148-1150).

The Israelites' worship was usually dominated by the knowledge that Yahweh, their God, was unique and He could not be mingled with any other gods. He

was the only God, who saved them from slavery in Egypt, and when they came before the Lord, they came with praise and thanksgiving sacrifices to Him (Clements, 1968: 70-71).

The sacrifices are usually offered in accordance with Mosaic covenantal thought and centralizing sacrifices during worship in the Temple (Eakin, JR, 1990: 742-743).

The basic types of animal sacrifices are believed to have been four kinds of offerings or sacrifices:

- (a) Burnt offerings (*olâ*)
- (b) Peace offerings (*šelamin*)
- (c) Purification offerings (*'hattât*)
- (d) Reparation offerings (*'ašâm*)

In addition to these, there are thanksgiving and vowed sacrifices. These are apart from the main ones (Lev 4:1-5; 13; 16:1) (Cover, 1992: 870-890).

The Israelite, in their worship, remembered God, Yahweh, and His gracious acts, and they celebrate their liberation. They came with thanksgiving and burnt offerings as sacrifices for sin and with their tithes from the first fruits of the land that their God had given them. They were commanded by their God that they should offer animals that were without any spot or blemish. They had to be clean (Num 7:1-8).

The regulated sacrifices have been laid down as follows: The first one, burnt offerings; the second one, peace offerings; the third one, purification offerings; and the fourth one, atonement sacrifices. The Torah is said to provide several rules for worship and sacrifices for individuals and individuals' sacrifices. These regulate how the administrator burns the offering, where to bring the animal, how to lay on hands, where to kill it, how he should handle the blood, and how he should prepare the altar. The regulations are portrayed as being in accordance with the instructions that Yahweh gave to Moses on Mt Sinai (Lev 7:37-38) (Anderson, 2000: 1148-1150).

The Lord God made it very clear to the Israelites that all their first born children are His, for He rescued them from slavery in Egypt (Ex 13:11-16). They could also give God their first fruits of the land as a kind of thanksgiving offerings.

c) ***Summary***

With regard to the concept of offering sacrifices, the Old Testament and Nuer tradition reveal differences and similarities. Their differences have been observed in the research as follows: They are different because they don't offer their sacrifices to the same God. Each one of them offers their sacrifices to the God known only to them. The Israelite or Jewish community gave their sacrifices to God directly and the Nuer offer their sacrifices to God through what they call spirits or small gods, or children of God. When making a sacrifice to God, the Israelite society offered burnt offerings and the Nuer do not offer burnt offerings to God. The researcher regards these as the differences with regard to their sacrifices.

The researcher discovered that there are some similarities. They are similar because they both recognize fully that they should honour God with sacrifices, and they are fully aware that all that they own are from God.

The researcher found out that they both give thanksgiving sacrifices and peace offerings to God. They both also offer redemption sacrifices to God and sin or purification offerings and many other similar offerings, such as flour, oil and wine.

Both believe that God takes blood and the life of animals that they give to God as sacrifices and they both also believe that, in return, they receive God's blessing. They acknowledge that God deserves and is worthy of worship and of receiving sacrifices.

4.5 COMPARISON OF NUER AND THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS AND PROPHECY

a) *Nuer Prophets and Prophecy*

Generally, the Nuer community believes that prophets are people set apart by God for a special purpose. Prophecy comprises messages from God (*Kuoth*) that He delivers to the people through prophets.

According to the information that I obtained from Evans Pritchard and Douglas Johnson, the Prophet Ngundeng was the first prophet who achieved fame among the Nuer tribe.

When he was possessed by the Deng's divine spirit, he built a small mound in the Jikany area before he came to Lou area, and when he came to Lou area, he built a big mound, which the Nuer call *biê*, in a place called *Wecdeng* (place of Deng) (Johnson, 1994: 78-79).

Ngundeng was prophesying in the form of songs or hymns. He sang the songs to the people and explained their meanings to the people too. Prophet Ngundeng was believed to be the one who taught people concerning prayer and worship. He was able to draw on Nuer and Dinka for his songs. He claimed that his divinity was for all and not for the Nuer alone (Johnson, 1994: 82-84).

Prophet Ngundeng performed some miracles at Pading. He killed Dinka people with Deng's baton when the Dinka attacked him and his people at Pading. The second miracle that people believe he performed was a curse. He cursed a person who disobeyed his orders. A man's legs were paralyzed until he repented and then he was healed by Ngundeng (Anderson, 1995: 206-207).

Ngundeng wanted to establish a reputation as a peacemaker, which he proved at Pading, when he refused to wage war with the Dinka people (Johnson, 1994: 82-84).

It has been noted that Ngundeng demonstrated the power of killing. He caused a child's death and one of his maternal cousin's death. Johnson said that Ngundeng also seemed to have raised some dead people from the dead (Johnson, 1994: 72-75).

He could kill his enemies and people who refused his commands. He healed people from various diseases (Johnson, 1994: 86-87). Ngundeng was succeeded by his son, Guek. Guek did not do much apart from his father's performances. He completed the mound that his father started and he made sacrifices and he was finally killed by the Government in 1929 (Anderson, 1995: 196-219).

Prophet Deng Laka and his son, Prophet Dual Diu proved themselves to be true prophets by chasing away the magicians or diviners in Gaawar's area (Johnson, 1992: 12-22).

The last prophet that I compared with Prophet Ngundeng, is the prophet Wutnyang. Wutnyang appeared as a prophet in 1992. He proved himself to be a man of peace by trying to make peace among the Nuer sections, as well as other tribes of the Southern Sudan. He associated himself with Ngundeng's divinity, for he believes in Ngundeng's prophecy concerning Southern Sudanese achievements (Hutchinson, 1992: 340-341).

He fought with Sudanese national troops in 1992, but was defeated by the Government troops (Hutchinson, 1992: 338-339).

b) ***Prophets and Prophecy in the Old Testament***

According to the Old Testament, the function of the prophets and prophecy in the Israelite community was understood to be that of mediating between God and the people.

Their prophecy, therefore, function as divine-human inter-communication. The prophet receives the message from God and conveys it to the people of Israel (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

God chooses prophets by inspiring them with His Spirit and gives them messages for the people of Israel. Moses was the mediator of the Israelites and prophet at the same time (Num 12:1-8; Deut 18:15-18) (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

Elijah, Elishah, Amos, Jeremiah and others, were given messages by God and they were true prophets, for they were chosen by Yahweh (Overholt, 2000: 1068-1088).

Regarding Israel's situation in Canaan, the Ark of the Covenant and Yahweh's Kingship, judges were empowered when making war against surrounding nations. In the monarchical times there were prophets like Amos and Hosea. There was tension between Yahwism and Baalism. Israelites emphasized social justice and covenant fidelity, while in Judah, Isaiah stressed faith and the holiness of Yahweh, and Micah was no less a proclaimer of judgement than his contemporaries (Eakin, JR, 1990: 742-744).

All these prophets, Joel, Obadah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakuk, and Malachi, were associated with specific Kings from the time of the prophets Amos and Hosea in the mid-eighth century. Texts dealing with them refer to events and situations which the Israelite nation experienced (Amos 6:14; Is 36-39; Jer 39:1) (Overholt, 2000: 1086-1088).

It is accepted that all normative forms of Old Testament prophecy came to depend on the person of the prophet Moses. Moses was regarded to be a true prophet of Yahweh, for he had been able to perform many god-like acts (Ex 8-12). He was a mediator between God and the Israelite community. He was a liberator and the founder of the Jewish Monotheistic Religion (Ndiokwere, 1989: 123-124).

c) ***Summary***

Through the comparative studies that have been carried out by the researcher, it has been indicated that Old Testament and Nuer traditions show differences and similarities, too. The differences stem from the fact that their prophets do not come from one divine being or one source and for this reason they are not the same. Also, their prophecy is not from the same God. It comes from different gods and the way they look at God is also not the same. Nuer prophecy sees God as being many for they believe in the existence of God and other spirits, which they believe to be gods too, whereas the Old Testament prophecy sees God as the one and only God, with no other gods or spirits besides Him.

There are some similarities, which the researcher discovered during the comparative studies. There are some similarities in the way they understand the prophets and prophecy. They believe that prophets are God's messengers, who receive messages from God and who then send them to convey these to the people. They share the opinion that prophets have divine power to perform god-like acts or deeds, and they believe that they are men of God.

Both traditions, therefore, understand prophecy to be a message from God, which He gives to the people through prophets. In other words, prophecy involves the intermediary role of the prophets in communicating God's Word or Message to the people.

4.6 COMPARISON OF THE TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS OF THE NUER AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

a) *True and False Nuer Prophets*

According to the Nuer society's understanding of the true prophet, the true prophet is a person who has been possessed by the Spirit of the God of Heaven (*Kuoth nhial*). The community comes to know him/her as a true prophet when his/her prophecy is fulfilled.

The true prophet has divine authority, which enables him/her to give barren women children and heal sick people. The true prophet does what is right before God and he is a peacemaker, like prophet Ngundeng, who refused to wage war with other people. Ngundeng refused support for Nuer and Dinka to fight against each other, because they are the sons of one divinity. According to the Nuer community, Ngundeng is regarded to be a true prophet (Anderson, 1995: 210-211).

The false prophet, according to the Nuer people, is a person who claims to be true, but his/her prophecies do not come to fulfilment, or do not become true; such as prophet Wutnyang, who claimed that he was a prophet and associated his divinity with Ngundeng's divinity so that he could gain popularity or a good

reputation.

He did not have any divine power like Ngundeng. He tried to bring peace among the southern tribes, but he could not make it happen. He was like some prophets in the Old Testament who claimed that they had a message from Yahweh, but Yahweh did not send them.

Wutnyang was one of those prophets who deceived people and said that he was going to capture one of the big towns, but he could not make it happen. Instead, many lives were lost during the war, which he headed in 1992 (Hutchinson, 1992: 334-338).

The Nuer community understands that a false prophet does not have a future vision. He is just a greedy person who wants many material goods and wants to be a rich person (Johnson, 1991: 12-22).

b) *True and False Prophets in the Old Testament*

According to the Bible, the true prophets were people such as Moses, Elijah, Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the rest of the true canonical prophets of the Old Testament.

Moses was regarded to be one of the true prophets. According to the Ndiokwere and the Bible, prophet Moses was known as a liberator and founder of the Jewish Monotheistic Religion and receiver of the Torah. He performed miracles in Egypt by the power that Yahweh, his Master, gave him (Ex 8-12) (Ndiokwere, 1981: 123-124).

In Israel, a normative prophetic office was recognized to be vested in Moses, because it has been said that any prophet who does not recognize the authority of Moses and Deuteronomy and the doctrines of the Exodus, such a prophet is as a false prophet (Deut 12, 18; Jer 32:8) (Cover, 1992: 113-115).

The prophet Elisha and others were considered true prophets of Yahweh. Elisha stood firm and killed the Baal prophets (Verhoef, 1997: 1066-1078).

All the prophets who were from Yahweh's council were identified as true prophets. They had power to perform miracles and their prophecies were fulfilled (Grabble, 1993: 183-185).

The false prophet's prophecy always speaks about peace when there is actually no peace (Jer 8:11). They were regarded as *nábi* (1 Sam 9:10). Prophet Zedekiah was considered to be one of the false prophets, for he claimed to be sent by Yahweh and his prophecies about Israelite's victory over their enemies had not come true. Whereas he has opposed the prophet Micaiah's prophecy about the Israelites' defeat, The prophet Micaiah prophesied that Israelite were going to be defeated by their enemies (1 Kings 22:1-32) (Rofe, 1988: 142-143).

These types of prophets were identified as false prophets. They were known as ecstatic prophets. They operated in contrast to Yahweh's prophets, such as Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Jeremiah (Overholt, 2000: 1066-1088).

In Israel, if a prophet incites worship of other gods besides Yahweh, such a prophet is a false prophet and deserves to be put to death. The false prophet is usually recognized by his false prophecy, as his prophecy does not come into

fulfilment because the prophecy is not from Yahweh. He is not inspired by Yahweh for he is not from Yahweh's council (Ezk 8:1-28) (Wittenberg, 1993: 210-215).

Among the Old Testament prophets, there were, therefore, true and false prophets.

c) ***Summary***

According to my personal judgement, having studied both traditions with regard to their views of true and false prophets, there are some differences and some similarities, too. Both traditions came to understand that a true prophet is a prophet that has a true message from God and His message is fulfilled. It does not fail. According to the research findings, I found out that Nuer people considered Prophet Ngundeng to be one of their true prophets, for they say that some of his prophecies have been fulfilled and some, perhaps, are on the way to be fulfilled.

The research also discovered that there are true prophets and false prophets in Old Testament prophecy. The Old Testament considered Moses to be one of the true prophets of the Old Testament. There is also similarity in distinguishing the false prophets from the true prophets. Both believe that a false prophet's message does not come true, because the prophet speaks on his own behalf, not from God. In the Nuer understanding of false prophets, prophet Wutnyang has been taken by the researcher to be an example of the false prophet. Prophet Wutnyang was known to be a false prophet when his prophecy failed just recently, in 1992 (Hutchinson, 1993: 210-215).

An example of a false prophet in the Old Testament, is prophet Zedekiah, in 1 Kings 22:132. This prophet's prophecy did not come into fulfilment. In this case, the research considers that these four examples display the similarities in understanding the true and the false prophets. Despite such similarities, the researcher found out that they still are different, simply because they are not from the same God. For the Old Testament religion or prophecy speaks of the inspiration of the prophets and the Word of God, whereas the Nuer prophecy talks of prophets being possessed by the various spirits or divinities. Whereas the Old Testament uses the word "inspiration" and Nuer, in most cases, uses the word "possession", which is different from how the Old Testament expresses this. The Old Testament uses possession and calling and its source is one God. Nuer uses possession and its sources are different spirits.

4.7 COMPARISON OF THE NUER AND THE OLD TESTAMENT ROLE OF PROPHETS

a) *Role of Nuer Prophets*

According to the Nuer society, prophets are people who have been possessed by divine spirits for a specific role that they could play within their community. They receive a message from their divine spirits or God and convey it to the people. As to the role of prophets, they predict the future and inform people about what is going to come, such as wars, diseases, famine and any danger that could be coming.

The role of prophets indicates that they should heal sick people and should be able to give barren women children. It is a role of the true prophets to perform miracles and curse the disobedient, like prophet Ngundeng did. The Nuer community believes that one of the prophet's roles is prayer. God hears their prayers for they pray on behalf of the community. It is a role of prophets to make sacrifices to God on behalf of the people (Johnson, 1995: 206-207).

The Nuer society believes that one of the prophet's roles involves the settlement of disputes among the people of the community, like judges. It is the role of the prophets to make decisions on behalf of the whole community, as spiritual leaders, as well as political leaders (Anderson, 1992: 191-193).

b) ***Role of the Old Testament Prophets***

According to the Bible and other sources, the prophets usually spoke against whatever is not right in the eyes of the Lord Yahweh. Israel's prophets had to rebuke the people when they went astray from the Lord, because they were aware that whenever people failed to observe God's laws, problems came upon the people.

Prophets could sometimes speak to the kings when they saw that kings took wrong decisions that did not agree with Yahweh's will. The prophets reminded people about God's demand for obedience, justice and righteousness. The prophets did not allow people to go after any other god, except Yahweh of Israel (Grabbe, 1995: 105-106).

In Israel, the prophets could even counsel the kings in a very critical manner. They did not compromise with sin, they did not fear anyone. Prophets could even check the authority of the monarchs or kings. It was a role of the prophets to teach and to interpret the narrative of what had happened in the past, as well as predict future events through divine knowledge they had obtained from Yahweh (Schneidewing, 1975: 231-235).

The prophets announced the message that they received from the Lord Yahweh to the people and they encouraged people to practise proper worship of their God (Grabble, 1995: 183-185).

Prophets announced judgements or condemnations on the kings. The prophets Amos, Micah and Isaiah announced God's condemnation of King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, when they took Naboth's land by force. It is a role of the prophets to call for peace and justice to prevail among the people of God (Wittenberg, 1993: 34-37).

Praying was also part of the role of the prophets in the Old Testament. In other words, a prophet is a prayerful person. Moses was known to be a good intercessor, for he could pray on behalf of his community, appealing to God for divine mercy for the Israelites, fully recognizing their sin and disobedience. The prophets knew their people's sin or faults, but yet they dared to appeal to the mercy of God, no matter how extensive the history of rebellion and stubbornness (Miller, 1990: 122-123).

The Lord Jesus also prayed on behalf of the people who were crucifying him: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:24). The prophets had the divine power of healing and performing miracles. Prophet Elijah healed Namaan's leprosy and performed other miracles (Miller, 1990: 126-131).

c) **Summary**

Both traditions seem to have similarities with regard to understanding the role of the prophets, but they also have differences.

The similarities, which the research has revealed are as follows: Both traditions of prophecy and both religions understand that the role of the prophet is to bring messages from God to the people. A prophet's role is to lead people to God and to interpret the past events and predict the future events.

Both believe that healing and cursing are part of the role of the prophets, for they are aware of the divine authority that God gives to the prophets. They share the idea of prophecy as a role of prophets, and they are similar in acknowledging the mediating roles of the prophets between God and man. The only difference that the comparative study has discovered is that the assignment of this role to the prophets, does not come from the same God. Otherwise they are similar, theoretically and practically.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL RESEARCH SUMMARY

5.1 RESEARCH SUMMARY

After having examined and compared the concept of the two traditions of prophecy of the Nuer and the Old Testament, the researcher discovered their differences and similarities. These differences and similarities were discovered while the various conceptions of God and their beliefs were examined by the researcher.

Concerning their concepts of God, both seem to have developed an idea of the existence of God as the Creator of the whole universe. They seem to recognize God as Spirit. The difference is that the Nuer community believes in more than one spirit and that is God with His children. The Nuer believe in spirits as children of God (*gaat Kuoth*) or small gods (*kuuth*). According to the comparative research study, the researcher came to the conclusion that the Nuer society's belief is polytheistic, for they believe in a number of spirits or gods.

Whereas, in the Old Testament, there is one God who cannot be related to any other gods. He is alone. In this regard the researcher found out that there is also a big difference between the two concepts of prophecy. For the Old Testament's belief is a monotheistic belief, which is far from the Nuer belief.

The views on creation reveal great differences, for the Nuer people do not claim certainty about creation, about how God has created the whole universe and

human beings. They usually say that all the creatures were found to exist already. They do not have an explanation for how they were created by God. Concerning the creation of human beings, the Nuer believe that they came from under the Tamarind Tree, which they call *Koat Liec*, but the idea of there being a Creator is at the back of their minds.

The Old Testament concept of the creation is understandable and clear, for it indicates that God, the Creator, created the whole universe and human beings in six days and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, there is a big difference between them.

In their view on sin, they are quite different too, because the Nuer believe that sin is not fulfilling what the norms require, whereas the view of the Old Testament is different. The Bible says the basis of sin is disobedience to God's commandments (Gen 3:1-7). The only similarity is in the result of sin. Both believe that the result of sin is curse and death, otherwise they are quite different.

Concerning the concept of sacrifice, both traditions believe that it is right to honour God, the Creator, and giver of all that they have. Both bring sacrifices for thanksgiving, redemption and peace to God as a sign of their appreciation of God's care for them. In this area of sacrifice, they seem to be similar. The only difference is that the researcher discovered that the Nuer make sacrifices to God through spirits and the Old Testament sacrifices are usually offered directly to God, but that similarity relates to their concept of God.

According to the research findings, both traditions understand an essential meaning of the prophets and prophecy, for they believe that prophets are

messengers of God, who are carrying God's message to the people, and they all know that prophets are people set apart by God for the special purpose of conveying God's message to the people. But, despite recognising this similarity, they are still different because they have different beliefs, for the God in whom they believe is not the same as the God such as He is presented in the Bible.

Concerning their understanding concerning prophecy, both have an idea of the meaning of prophecy, namely that prophecy is a message from God, which God relates to the people through the prophets whom He set apart for this purpose. Yet, this similarity does not prevent their differences. They are different because their sources are not the same.

Their opinions on true and false prophets are similar in their differentiation between true and false prophets. According to information that I obtained, they both accept that true prophets are prophets who have a true message from God, and the message does not fail like the one of the false prophet. Both believe that a false prophet's message is not fulfilled and ceases to be valid in a very short time, but there are differences as pointed out by the research.

With regard to the role of the prophets, there are some similarities, for they do understand the role of the prophets in their various contexts. Both are aware that the prophet's role is an intermediary role. Prophets are mediators between God and human beings. They believe that prophets predict future events and inform people about them, and still they have differences for they relate to different concepts.

5.2 THE RESEARCH RESPONSE TO THE BASIC QUESTION

Before I answer the basic question of why Nuer prophets are not mentioned in the Bible, I would like to assure my readers that the research towards this comparative study that has been carried out, has discovered that there are differences and similarities in the two prophetic traditions.

Therefore, to respond to the uncertainty of the Nuer community or the question which asks why their prophets have not been mentioned among the Old Testament prophets, the following must be made clear: the answer is that the Nuer prophets are not recognized by the Old Testament because of the below mentioned differences, which the research found to be the main reasons or gap that made the two traditions not to be in contact to one another.

Part of the reason why Nuer prophecy is not included in the Old Testament prophecy is because of the distance in terms of chronological and geographical contexts.

The Israelite community's history, which is recorded in the Old Testament, goes back twenty centuries, before the coming of Christ, whereas the Nuer society's history of prophecy began around the nineteenth century A.D., after the birth of Jesus Christ.

Geographically, the Israelite nation, where the Old Testament originated, lived in the Middle East, thousands of miles away from where Sudan is situated in Africa. The researcher feels that this could be one of the reasons why the Nuer prophets were not included. Because the Old Testament was written from that

far context, there was no contact between the two communities so that the Nuer's prophecy could be added to the Old Testament prophecy.

This must be an actual fact, for each one of them is situated in a different continent and their prophecy came in a different period or time. Time factor must be the main reason why Nuer prophets are not considered to be part of the Old Testament's prophets.

The researcher recommends that the study of the Old Testament should be taken into account seriously by the Nuer Church Pastors, Evangelists and all Christian believers in Sudan, where there is a multitude of religions, a multitude of cultures and multi-ethnic groups, because of the tribal groupings.

The Old Testament is the first historical book of humankind, in which God reveals himself to the world through Israel. The Old Testament is the only book that talks about the whole creation of the world and human beings. For it is the only book that shows humankind creation. The Old Testament is the only foundation of all believers. Therefore, the Church should play a prophetic role in Sudan.

The Nuer concept of the divine being is totally different from the Old Testament view of God. That also is why the Nuer prophets are not recognized as part of the Old Testament prophets. The two prophetic systems, according to the researcher's facts, are quite different with regard to their beliefs; the Old Testament God is not to be related to any other gods, whereas the Nuer people believe in more than one god. For they believe in a god and other small gods which they considered to be "God's children". This difference prevents Nuer

prophecy from being recognized by the Old Testament prophecy and the Old Testament from recognizing Nuer prophecy. The Nuer worships these spirits as gods whereas in the Old Testament there is a belief of only one God and this truly shows their differences.

The research has discovered that the two traditions of prophecy have similarities which could be considered to be their relationships. They are similar with regard to most of their views on the existence of God, for they both believe that there is a God who created the whole universe and humankind. They both believe of the existence of God as a Creator before they came in to one context. Before that, each one of them knew God as Creator in its own context, and for this reason they are truly similar, only that their sources are different as I indicated in their difference above.

There are similarities regarding the understanding of the prophets and prophecy, for they are aware that prophets are messengers of God who bring people messages from God. They confess that prophecy usually is a message from God to the people and they believe that prophets have divine authority. The research found similarities in their concepts of the role of the prophets in some aspects.

In the area of offering sacrifices to God, the research also noticed that these are similar, for they bring sacrifices to God with full recognition of the fact that they are created by God and whatever they have or own is from God. Both believe that it is their obligation to honour God by offering sacrifices to Him. Both are fully aware that they could receive the blessing of God in return.

Therefore, I would strongly recommend that these similarities be treated as a relationship between the two traditions of prophecy. The researcher is hereby assuring the Nuer community that the Old Testament God is the only God who blesses all earthly people and nations through Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) and this surely includes the Nuer community. Therefore, the researcher strongly believes that this humble research recommendation and his findings will clarify the Nuer society's uncertainty towards Old Testament prophecy and belief.

5.3 CONCLUSION: RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

I regard my personal contribution to Old Testament studies, after having carried out this comparative study regarding the relationship between Old Testament prophecy and Nuer prophecy, as follows:

I discovered that the writers who have written about Nuer prophets and religion did not undertake any comparative study like this comparative research undertaken in this research.

Therefore, as far as this comparative study is concerned, I could say that it has contributed to advancing Old Testament research.

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