It is a matter of course that everything which we can discover regarding Isaiah's experience of vocation is based upon the report given by Isaiah himself in ch. vi 1-11 of the Book of Isaiah 1). This is important, not only because of the method of historical research, but especially because of the question of what function and intention Isaiah's self report (Selbstbericht) has with regard to his message 2).

In this method dealing with the text of Isa. vi we are not primarily concerned with the question of what happened—as the historicity of Isaiah's experience is no longer a matter of great discussion—but, we need to understand the purpose of Isaiah's report 3). This approach

1) I am unable to follow C. F. WHITLEY's conclusions in: “The Call and Mission of Isaiah”, JNES 18, 1959, 38-48. According to WHITLEY, syntactical, word statistical, and historical (V. 11f.) comparisons are to prove that Isa vi cannot be written by Isaiah himself, but it must stem from a post-exilic writer. But, at first, the construction of the two introductory clauses (V. 1) can very well be correct. (Comp. e.g., D. MICHEL, Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen, Abh. z. Ev. Theologie, 1/1960, esp. p. 39ff). Beyond this, even if they were not correct an incorrect syntactical construction is no proof for or against someone's authorship. Secondly, the observation that several terms occur only in later traditions, does not compel us at all to assume that Isa vi is written by a later writer. This argumentation overlooks the possibilities that some expressions in Isa vi may begin with Isaiah or that they may have existed in an oral pre-stage, for example in the cultic traditions. Finally, WHITLEY does not mention those parts in Isa vi which undoubtedly go back to traditions older than Isaiah (see below).

2) This has been recognized in recent research by several investigations. Cp. E. JENNI, “Jesajas Berufung in der neueren Forschung”, ThZ 15, 1959, pp. 321ff.

3) This question is different from the autobiographical one which, for example, is treated in the article written by J. P. Love, “The Call of Isaiah”, Interp. XI, 1957, 282ff. Love also sees, that “the sixth chapter of Isaiah was not composed in a vacuum... What Isaiah was as a man, what he became as a prophet, what he proclaimed as a message, all are woven into the texture of this vision call” (p. 282) and that “the story of the call as it has come down to us, is the product of much reflection” (p. 291). But when evaluating the problems, Dr. LOVE does not ask for the “Sitz im Leben” and the intentions, for the historical context of this report in the whole of Isaiah’s prophetic existence, but he asks for the historical context of his (Isaiah’s) experience. Our concern is, over-against this, to investigate Isaiah’s self-report in the light of his prophetic existence. Also
includes several types of questions. One of them is traditio-historical. For, when we recognize the traditional character of the report we are in a better position to understand its function. On the other hand, the question of its function in itself shows that the report must be related to the stage of Isaiah's present prophetic existence. That means that it is not enough merely to investigate its traditional forms. One must also investigate the statements of the report themselves, i.e. Isaiah's statements about the characteristics of his experience. But finally, the report can help us discover something about the relationship between Isaiah's experience, standing behind it, and his prophecy. Whether or not such a connection exists between Isaiah's experience and his prophecy can only be discovered by a comparison of the contents of both. Thus the approach has to be at least threefold. We must examine the traditions, the statements themselves, and finally the context of Isaiah vi.

There is still another reason for thus combining several methods of investigation. This is the attempt to clarify the question of the uniqueness of the OT prophets. The opinion was held for a long time that the prophets were the great innovators, the real founders of the official religion of Israel. However, new research during the last generation has shown that this is not true, but that the prophets were dependent on many ancient traditions of Israel to a great extent. But at this point, the question arises again: Who were the prophets? Were they representatives, messengers, rejuvenators of the old traditions? Indeed they were! But does their uniqueness consist in this fact? This question must be posed if the question of the uniqueness of the prophets is to be researched. Therefore we must make inquiries regarding the relations between the old and the new in the prophets. And we must turn to the question of the special motives for their appearance. The following considerations shall deal with this problem on the basis of Isa. vi.

I.

As is well known, there is a close relationship between the pattern

LINDBLOM, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 1962, 127ff. and 186ff., is mainly concerned with the interpretation of Isaiah's ecstatic experience rather than with the interpretation of Isaiah's report about his experience. Compare, however, G. von Rads differentiation of this problem in Theol. II 4, 1965, 62f.: "In der Berufung selbst wurde dem Propheten sein Auftrag übermittelt; die Niederschrift dagegen geschah im Hinblick auf eine gewisse Öffentlichkeit, der gegenüber der Prophet sich zu rechtfertigen hatte".