



“Jesus the Prophet”

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“Jesus the Prophet”

Recent years have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in the prophetic aspects of Christ's teaching and works. Studies by O. Cullmann¹ and H. J. Schoeps² attest to an early tradition among Jewish Christians relating the prophet predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 18 15-19 with Christ. Bossuet³ and Guy⁴ both regard prophetism as a fundamental note of Christ's character. Daniélou⁵ has even suggested that the prophetic character is “un biais sous lequel toute son œuvre peut être envisagée.” Despite this interest in Jesus the Prophet, however, we possess little exegetical analysis of the gospels directed exclusively to this question. Hence the appearance of *Jésus Prophète d'après les évangiles synoptiques* by Père Félix Gils, c.s.sp., is most welcome.⁶ His thorough and penetrating examination of the synoptic text suggests many fruitful insights into the prophetic aspects of our Lord's ministry.

Even though there are indications in the Old Testament, apocryphal and rabbinic writings of the cessation of the prophetic gift in the intertestamentary period, there is also evidence that just prior to the Christian era the Jews were expecting a new prophetic outpouring. The Qumran documents, for example, attest to an interest in prophetism. And we know that the primitive Apostolic teaching (Ac 3 22 ; 7 37) identifies Christ with the prophet foretold by Moses. We also know from Acts that prophetism flourished in the early Christian community ; charismatic exegesis of the Old Testament ; ecstatic visions and wonderworking are all mentioned. To what extent did this prophetic milieu influence the primitive tradition and hence find expression in the gospel narrative itself? Gils attempts to answer precisely this question. From a careful study of the synoptics he reconstructs the primitive tradition and the very thought of our Lord himself. He finds both of these to be fully prophetic in the great tradition of Old Testament prophets.⁷

1. O. CULLMANN, *Saint Pierre, disciple, apôtre, martyr*, Neuchâtel, 1952 ; *The Christology of the New Testament*, Philadelphia, 1959.

2. H. J. SCHOEPS, *Urgemeinde, Judenchristentum, Gnosis*, Tübingen, 1956.

3. W. BOSSUET, *Jésus*, in *Die Religion des Neuen Testaments*, I. Haale, 1905.

4. H. A. GUY, *New Testament Prophecy*, London, 1947.

5. J. DANIELOU, s.j., *Le Christ Prophète*, in *Vie Spirituelle*, 78 (1948), p.155.

6. Félix GILS, c.s.sp., *Jésus Prophète d'après les évangiles synoptiques*, Louvain, 1957, 196 pp.

7. If Jesus is to be considered a prophet, this office must be understood as standing in the great line of Old Testament prophets. What then are the main lines of this tradition? The prophets were called in an irresistible manner and put in contact with the celestial

In this article, I shall expose Gils' exegesis without substantial comment of my own. As in Gils' original work there will be a twofold division of the matter : (1) the explicit synoptic testimony to Jesus' prophetic nature ; and (2) various indirect testimonies. Under the second heading will be considered the prophetic visions, for example, at the baptism and the transfiguration ; and predictions of the future, with particular emphasis on the Passion and Resurrection prophecies.

I. EXPLICIT TESTIMONY OF THE SYNOPTICS

The synoptics present several passages in which Jesus is specifically designated a prophet, asked to prophesy, or compared with Moses. We shall first examine the common synoptic tradition and then the teaching proper to Matthew and Luke regarding the direct attribution of the prophetic title. Then we shall review the numerous Mosaic allusions.

Common synoptic tradition

"A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house." Jesus addresses these words to his neighbors in the synagogue of "his own country" (Mt 13 54 ; Mk 6 1), which Luke identifies as "at Nazareth" (Lk 4 16). This passage is differently situated in the various synoptic narratives. Matthew places it after the Sermon on the Mount, a journey, the discourse on the mission of the Twelve, and the recounting of the parables. Immediately following the parable section, Jesus breaks with the crowd ; the scene in the synagogue illustrates the break.

Luke, however, places Christ's rejection at Nazareth at the very beginning of his gospel immediately after a brief summary of the public life. But despite this different sequence found in Matthew and Luke, Gils agrees with exegetes who see in this passage symbolic value. Vaganay, for example, suggests that this failure of Christ "in his own country" presages all subsequent failures up to the final one in Jerusalem.

Luke tells us that the Nazarenes "all wondered at the words of grace (λόγοι τῆς χάριτος) that proceeded from his mouth (Lk 4 22). Most authors understand this phrase to mean merely that Christ spoke "words of charm" "winning words." Gils does not think there

world. In their words as well as deeds, they transmitted to the people God's message concerning the present and the future. Several were great wonder-workers. In the last centuries before the Christian era, they expounded oracles of previous periods. (Cf. R. De Vaux's discussion of prophetism in *La sainte Bible . . . de Jérusalem*, Paris, 1956, 971-988.) Such traits must be verified in the person and ministry of Jesus if he is to be properly called a prophet.

is any reference here to any purely human oratorical gift of Jesus ; there is question rather of a prophetic charism.¹ From Acts we know that Luke employs χάρις to signify charismatic speech. Stephen who is "full of grace (χάρις) and power" overcame all his adversaries ; "they were no match for Stephen's wisdom and for the Spirit which then gave utterance" (Ac 6 10). Similarly, the patriarch Joseph is described as endowed with "favor (χάρις) and wisdom when he stood before Pharaoh" (Ac 7 10). Luke clearly describes Stephen and Joseph as endowed with charismatic speech.

A further indication that Luke does not understand λόγοι τῆς χάριτος as merely "words full of natural charm," is mention of the persecuted prophet theme in the immediate context.² When the synagogue gathering takes scandal at the "λόγοι τῆς χάριτος," our Lord responds : "I tell you no prophet is welcome in his own country" (Lk 4 24). This phrase is not merely a simple proverbial dictum. It emphasizes the tragic nature of the scene. Jesus is misunderstood just as were the ancient prophets. Hence Christ's rejection in the synagogue at Nazareth is cast in terms of a prophetic visitation.

In response to Jesus' question at Caesarea Philippi, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" the disciples answered : "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Mt 16 13-14). In Mark 8 28 the disciples formulate the same response omitting mention of Jeremiah. Luke likewise omits Jeremiah and changes the last phrase to "one of the old prophets has come back to life" (Lk 9 19). The common denominator of these opinions is obvious : Jesus is considered by all a prophet. Elijah, Jeremiah, even John the Baptist were known as such.

Following Jesus' arrest and appearance before the Sanhadrin, he is mocked. According to the first gospel the members of the council themselves perpetrate these outrages against Jesus : "Then did they spit in his face and buffeted him ; and others struck his face with the palms of their hands, saying : Prophecy unto us, O Christ : Who is it that struck thee?" (Mt 26 67-68.) Since Jesus is not blindfolded, the question must mean : "Tell us the name of the one who struck you !" Variant readings occur in the Marcan parallel passage. Gils prefers the text which does not mention the blindfold. However the injunction given to Christ is common to all the variant readings : "Prophecy" (Mk 14 65).

Gils feels that here Mark rather than Matthew is more faithful to the primitive tradition. Jesus is simply asked to utter a prophetic oracle ; there is nothing to suggest a response to a precise question.³ Luke, the third synoptic, is clear : Our Lord is simply asked to solve

1. GILS, *op. cit.*, p.17.

2. *Ibid.*, p.19.

3. *Ibid.*, p.24.

a riddle. The guards "blindfolded him and smote his face saying : ' Prophecy who is it that struck thee ? ' " (Lk 22 64.)

Matthew and the prophetic title

Matthew alone records two additional scenes in which our Lord is given the prophetic title. The first is the solemn entry into Jerusalem when our Lord is proclaimed the messianic king. "When he came into Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred, and everyone asked, 'Who is he?' The crowd answered, 'It is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee'" (Mt 21 10-11). From this spontaneous response we may judge that Jesus was commonly recognized a prophet by the Galileans.¹ But since the whole context of the triumphant entry emphasizes the royal character of Christ, we must not overemphasize the prophetic overtones of this passage.

In the last days of the Public Life the priests and Pharisees were greatly agitated by Jesus' parable of the murderous vinedressers "... and they wanted to have him arrested, but they were afraid of the people, for the people considered him a prophet" (Mt 21 46). Again, the very unobtrusiveness of the observation, "for the people considered him a prophet," witnesses to Jesus's popular standing as a prophet.

Luke and the prophetic title

It is in Luke, however, that we find the most frequent mention of the prophetic title, each time with a different theological nuance. After witnessing the restoring to life of the only son of the widow of Naim, the bystanders glorified God : "A great prophet has appeared among us and God has not forgotten his people" (Lk 7 16). The scene recalls the passage in the First Book of Kings in which Elijah restores life to the only son of the widow of Sarepta (1 K 17 8-24). In both cases there is question of the only son of a widow ; the miracle takes place before the town gates, the revived is returned to his mother, and the wonder-worker is acclaimed a prophet (Lk) or a man of God (1 K). These literary similarities attest to the Lucan dependence on the Elijah recitation.²

All three synoptics report the miraculous cure of an epileptic (Mt 17 14-21 ; Mk 9 14-29 ; Lk 9 17-43). But Luke alone notes that he was an only son ; and Luke alone reports that Jesus "... gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the power of God" (Lk 9 42-43). These are the same formulae found in the description

1. *Ibid.*, p.25.

2. *Ibid.*, p.26.

of Sarepta and Naim. Does Luke wish to associate this miracle also with the thaumaturgy of Elijah?

The context of Luke 9 37-43 indicates that he does. In the pericope preceding the miracle Matthew and Mark associate John the Baptist with Elijah (Mt 17 10-13 ; Mk 9 11-13). Luke not only fails to associate the Baptist with Elijah but actually identifies Jesus as the new Elijah (Lk 9 51-62). Similarly, in the cure of the daughter of Jairus, Luke notes that there is question of an only daughter, thus recalling the Elijah narrative. The teaching of Luke in all these miracles seems evident : Jesus, as a wonder worker similar to Elijah, ranks among the prophets of Israel.

At the house of Simon the Pharisee Jesus received a sinful woman. The Pharisee reflected, " If this man were really a prophet, he would know who and what the woman is who is touching him, for she leads a wicked life " (Lk 7 39). As in the two Matthean texts of the triumphant entry and the murderous vinedressers, this Lucan reference testifies to the general acceptance of Jesus as a prophet.

When our Lord heard that Herod was seeking to kill him, he remarked : " But I must go on today and tomorrow and the next day, for it is not right for a prophet to die outside Jerusalem " (Lk 13 33). In this archaic logion Jesus expressly calls himself a prophet.

The disciples on the way to Emmaus recount how Jesus "in the eyes of God and all the people was a prophet mighty in deed and word . . . ;" they had hoped " he was to be the deliverer of Israel " (Lk 24 19-21). We recognize here the portrait which Luke gives us in Acts in Stephen's discourse to the Council. Stephen tells us that Moses " was mighty in speech and deed," and God sent him as a " deliverer " (Ac 7 22-35). This association of Jesus and Moses naturally suggests the Deuteronomic promise ; perhaps the disciples at Emmaus looked upon Jesus as fulfilling the promise.

Jesus and Moses

What evidence exists indicating that the synoptics saw a *rapprochement* between Jesus and Moses ? As necessary background for this question we shall first determine more precisely the significance of the Deuteronomic citations in Acts 3 22 and 7 37.

The first Mosaic citation in Acts occurs in Peter's second discourse in the Temple : " Moses said, ' The Lord God will raise up (*ἀναστήσει*) a prophet for you among your brothers, as he has raised me up ! " (Ac 3 22). In early Christian writers, the verb *ἀνίστημι* frequently refers to the Resurrection of Jesus. Thus when we find Peter concluding his discourse only four verses after the Deuteronomic reference, " It was to you that God first sent his servant after he had raised him from the dead . . . , " (Ac 3 26) we may surmise that Luke sees the Resurrection as the fulfillment of the Mosaic oracle.

The second citation of the Deuteronomy oracle occurs in Stephen's speech before the Council. Here Moses appears as the persecuted prophet : the people refuse to accept him as their leader (Ac 7 35), they refuse to follow him (Ac 7 39), and they rebuff him (Ac 7 27). " This was the Moses who said to the descendants of Israel, ' God will raise up a prophet for you among your brothers, just as he raised me up ' " (Ac 7 37).

Luke's description of Moses obviously alludes to the rejection of Christ by the Jews. But there is also an indirect reference to the Resurrection. Consider the titles given to Moses : ruler (*ἀρχων*), judge (*δικαστής*) (Ac 7 27) ; ruler and judge (*ἀρχων καὶ λυτρωτής*) (Ac 7 35). Similar terms are applied to the Risen Christ : " God took him up to his right hand as leader and savior (*ἀρχηγὸν καὶ σωτήρα*) " (Ac 5 31) ; " He is the one whom God has appointed to be judge (*κριτής*) of the living and the dead " (Ac 10 42) ; furthermore, the verb *ἀνίστημι* of Acts 7 37 calls to mind the Resurrection.¹

These two passages of Acts do not merely relate the Deuteronomic oracle to the mission of Jesus in a general manner. Rather we have found in Acts 3 22 a precise reference to the Resurrection and in Acts 7 37 allusions to Christ's rejection by the Jews, the way to his ultimate exaltation. With this background we now turn to the synoptics.

The common synoptic tradition associates Moses and Jesus in two situations, the transfiguration and the multiplication of the loaves. The Mosaic overtones of the transfiguration are many (Mt 17 1-9 par.). The divine injunction, "Hear him" (Mt 17 5) recalls the Mosaic command, "It is He that you must heed" (Dt 18 15). The "high mountain" of the transfiguration recalls Sinai ; and the "bright cloud" recalls a circumstance of Moses' conversation with God.

Similarly, the synoptic tradition associates Moses and Jesus in the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. Reference to the manna of the desert is obvious. But the multiplication miracle equally anticipates the Eucharist. The literary formulas describing the Last Supper and the multiplication are almost identical (Mt 14 19 ; Mt 15 36 ; Mt 26 26 ; 1 Co 11 24). Owing to its great significance, the formulation of the Eucharist account was definitively set at a very early date. In fact, the literary formulas describing the Last Supper antedate the account of the multiplication of loaves, and not vice versa. Thus the gospel story of the multiplication of the loaves testifies to a *rapprochement* in the early tradition between this miracle and the Eucharist. And thus Jesus is represented as performing a prodigy similar to Moses' in the desert and at the same time symbolically announcing the Eucharist.² Such symbolic action was characteristic of the ancient prophets.

1. *Ibid.*, p.35.

2. *Ibid.*, p.38.

Matthew also suggests several parallels between Moses and Jesus, even though this gospel does not explicitly emphasize Jesus' prophetic character. Gils, for example, accepts the conclusion of Renée Bloch that Matthew's infancy narrative is reminiscent of the midrashic account of the birth of Moses. And Matthew's division of the teaching of Christ into five discourses furnishes a new Christian Torah divided, as was the Mosaic Pentateuch, into five parts.

Explicit testimony : conclusions

Certain conclusions emerge from our investigation of the explicit synoptic testimony to Jesus' prophetic nature.¹

1. The three synoptics were aware of different opinions current concerning the person of Jesus. They mention these opinions expressly in two summaries, on the occasion of the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16 12-14 par.) and of Herod's attempt to kill Jesus (Mt 14 2 par.).

2. Luke alone records a detailed scene in which our Lord is explicitly acclaimed a prophet by the crowd. After restoring life to the widow of Naim's son, Jesus is acclaimed prophet (Lk 7 16) in a manner reminiscent of Elijah (1 K 17 23).

3. Apart from the incident at Emmaus we have no indication that the Apostles and close disciples called Jesus a prophet. The Galileans however commonly regarded Jesus as a prophet.

4. Jesus calls himself a prophet only rarely and never very explicitly. The clearest testimony is given by Luke : "... for it is not right for a prophet to die outside of Jerusalem " (Lk 13 33) ; similarly, " a prophet is not refused honor except in his native place . . ." (Mt 13 57 par.). And in the eschatological address when Jesus warns of " false messiahs and false prophets " (Mt 24 24), perhaps we can supply the implication : " who are to come after me who am the true messiah and the true prophet."

5. The three evangelists never explicitly designate Jesus a prophet in their narrative sections. It is abundantly clear to them that the Lord is more than a prophet : he is superior to David (Mt 12 6) to Solomon and Jonah (Mt 12 42 par.) ; he is the Son of Man, the celestial being spoken of in Daniel. But we shall see shortly that the synoptics recount numerous predictions and miracles or prophecies in action which can leave no doubt that the synoptics considered Jesus a prophet.

We have no explicit indication, however, that Mark was especially interested in the prophetic title. Matthew's five part division of his gospel indicates an interest in representing Jesus as the new Moses,

1. *Ibid.*, p.43.

the new master of doctrine, the new prophet. Luke's interest in the prophetic title is most evident. His infancy account brings to mind the young Samuel. The charismatic character of Jesus is evident in the Temple scene (Lk 2 47) and in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4 22). He associates Jesus with Elijah (Lk 7 11-17) and Moses (Lk 24 19). And Luke alone reports the logion by which Jesus places himself clearly in the prophetic tradition (Lk 13 33).

6. Clearly the prophetic title did not originate with the synoptics ; no orthodox Christian community would have seen a need to create this title. Hence, Gils believes that the prophetic title is none of the oldest, if not the oldest, title attributed to Jesus during his public life. It fell into desuetude because it was unable to express adequately the full reality of Jesus.

7. Did Jesus consider himself one of the prophets of Israel? Our subsequent investigation will enable us to answer this question with more assurance. But even on the basis of the texts we have already seen we must suspect that Jesus was aware of a certain affinity with the prophetic wonder workers. And why would Jesus use such logia as Matt. 13 57 and Luke 13 33 if he did not want to be placed in the tradition of the persecuted prophets?

II. INDIRECT TESTIMONY

1) *Prophetic Visions*

At various times our Lord was in intimate contact with the celestial world. At his baptism in the Jordan the heavens opened and a heavenly voice spoke to him ; a similar experience was repeated at the transfiguration. On another occasion (Mt 11 25-30 par.) Jesus addressed an ecstatic hymn of thanksgiving to his heavenly Father. At the temptations in the desert he was in contact with Satan and angels. Luke tells that Jesus saw Satan fall from heaven, and that he was comforted by an angel in the garden of Olives. All of these varied experiences are considered prophetic visions by Gils.

The Baptism : At the very beginning of his public life our Lord experiences a divine visitation with a heavenly voice and outpouring of the Spirit (Mt 3 13-17 ; Mk 1 9-11 ; Lk 3 21-22). The synoptics, familiar as they were with the Old Testament, would immediately think of the inaugural visions of the ancient prophets. It is natural, then, that we find in the Baptism account literary echoes of the Old Testament. Ezekiel tells us that in the beginning of his prophetic career "... the heavens opened and I saw visions of God" (Ez 1 1). Matthew's baptism account exhibits obvious literary dependence on Ezekiel.¹

1. *Ibid.*, p.50.

Many exegetes agree that the opening of the heavens is an eschatological portent ; the baptism is an eschatological event inaugurating the events of the end of time.

According to most Catholic exegetes, John the Baptist and the crowd grouped along the shore witness the heavenly intervention. In this view, Jesus is publicly proclaimed the Messiah. But Gils contends that in the synoptic account Jesus alone experiences the mysterious events.¹ The evidence supporting this latter interpretation is considerable. Matthew and Mark make no mention of the crowd. In Luke "all the people" are indeed mentioned, by only by way of transition from previous events centering around John. The first two synoptics attribute the vision to Jesus alone, while Luke does not directly speak of the vision. ["... He went right up out of the water and the heavens opened, and he saw the Spirit of God " (Mt 3 16). "And just as he was coming out of the water he saw the heavens torn open and the Spirit coming down like a dove to enter into him..." (Mk 1 10).] Both Mark and Luke report a voice addressed directly to Jesus, "You are my Son." The use of the third person in the expression used by Matthew ("This is my Son") can be explained as a reference to Isaiah 42 1 and need not imply a group of bystanders.

Exegetes generally agree that the baptism account does have some dependence on Isaiah 42 1. The expressions *ὁ ἀγαπητός* ("beloved") and *ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα* ("in whom I am well pleased") and mention of the Spirit are all found in Isaiah 42 1. Many exegetes, however, understand principally a reference to Psalm 2 7, "You are my son ; today have I begotten you." Gils admits that the final gospel redaction undoubtedly expresses the notion of sonship. But Gils feels that the primitive understanding of the baptism was principally in the terms of the servant of Yahweh tradition.

We have seen that some elements of the baptism passage obviously refer to Isaiah 42 1. But why is no reference to "ebed" ("servant") found in the gospel account? Gils contends that "ebed" was very often translated by the Greek *παῖς* which can mean either "servant" or "son." Because of this ambiguity, *υἱός*, "son", could be introduced by later Greek redactors where *παῖς* did not mean "son" but "servant". This could easily happen in Hellenistic Christianity where the "servant" concept was not familiar. Thus Gils believes that Jesus heard the divine voice under the Aramaic form of "servant."²

The Fourth Gospel supports this "servant" interpretation.³ In John 1 32-34 the Spirit is seen to descend on Jesus who is *ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ Θεοῦ* ("the chosen one of God"). Both the title "*ὁ ἐκλεκτός*"

1. *Ibid.*, p.52.

2. *Ibid.*, p.57.

3. *Ibid.*, p.59.

and the gift of the Spirit recall Isaiah 42 1. "See ! My servant whom I uphold ; my chosen one in whom I delight. I have put my spirit upon him." (Is 42 1). The Baptist twice calls Jesus, "The Lamb of God," recalling the description of the servant in Isaiah 53 7, "Like a sheep that is led to the slaughter."

Because of these similarities between the Fourth Gospel and Isaiah, Gils accepts the hypothesis that the Johannine expression "Lamb of God" is a translation of the Aramaic *talya delaha*. This Aramaic expression can mean "lamb of God" or "servant of God." That the Fourth Gospel now reads "lamb of God" may be due to the influence of Isaiah 53. This influence of Isaiah on John's baptism account is quite consistent with the profound influence of the Servant Songs throughout all of John. O. Cullmann has written : that interest in Jesus, *Ebed Yahweh*, is particularly pronounced in the Johannine Gospel.

We have seen that Christ's baptismal vision is reminiscent of the inaugural vision described in Ezekiel 1 1. This literary relationship, while suggesting that Jesus also had an inaugural prophetic vision, does not definitely establish this interpretation. Likewise the literary dependence of the baptism account on Isaiah 42 1 tells us nothing definite concerning Jesus' position vis-à-vis the prophetic tradition. Granting that Jesus assumes the role of the servant at his baptism, the significant question for our purpose is : Will Jesus fulfill the program of the Servant precisely as a prophet? Gils contends that there existed an ancient tradition which partially synthesized the work of Jesus in terms of the mission of the Servant and that this mission was actually seen as prophetic. An examination of the synoptics will point up the close association they see between Isaiah and the prophetic office.

On numerous occasions Matthew makes direct reference to Isaiah (Mt 8 17 - Is 53 4 ; Mt 11 5-6 - Is 35 5-6 and Is 61 1 ; Mt 12 18-25 - Is 42 1-4). In these passages Jesus is variously described as accomplishing the mission of the Servant of Yahweh. He has received the Spirit and is thus prepared to announce the good news and to perform miracles — significantly prophetic. These passages represent a primitive tradition.¹ Prophetic overtones are certainly found in the scene in which John the Baptist questions the messianic character of Jesus. Jesus responds in terms of the Servant, "The blind are regaining their sight and the lame can walk, the lepers are being cured and the deaf can hear, the dead are being raised and good news is being preached to the poor" (Mt 11 5 - Is 61 1).

In recounting miraculous cures when Jesus imposed secrecy on his followers, Matthew quotes at length from Isaiah 42 (Mt 12 18-21). When Jesus speaks of his mission to the gentiles in this same passage

1. *Ibid.*, p.69.

we glimpse a missionary-prophetic figure, as well as an interpreter of Scripture, and office common among apocalyptic prophets.

Contrary to Matthew, whose many citations seem to be the theological commentary of the community or evangelist, Luke portrays Jesus as personally referring his mission to Isaiah. At the very beginning of his ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus proclaimed, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has consecrated me to preach the good news to the poor, he has sent me to announce to the prisoners their release and to the blind the recovery of their sight, to set the down-trodden at liberty, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Lk 4 18-19 - Is 61 1-2).

In fact, Luke's whole gospel is conceived in relation to the Spirit.¹ Naturally at the baptism, Luke mentions the gift of the Spirit, but, unlike the other synoptics, he refers back to this consecration time and again. Immediately after giving our Lord's genealogy, Luke reports, "Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit and he was led about in the desert for forty days by the Spirit" (Lk 4 1). To introduce the account of the public life, Luke again notes, "Under the power of the Spirit Jesus returned to Galilee" (Lk 4 14). And a little further on Luke puts on Jesus' lips the very words of the Servant, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . ." (Lk 4 18). In thus insisting on the pneumatic character of Jesus, Luke clearly depicts a distinctive character of every prophetic career. Thus Matthew and especially Luke portray Jesus as carrying out a prophetic calling inaugurated by his anointing at the baptism.

One final observation suggests itself. In various citations of Isaiah appearing in the first part of the gospels there is no allusion to the suffering Servant. In fact Jesus does not foresee a violent death after the example of the suffering Servant until Matthew 16 21 par. This first announcement of the Passion inaugurates a wholly new phase in the life of Christ which will be inspired especially by Isaiah 53. On the basis of this interpretation Gils contends that the baptism account should not be interpreted in function of the Passion.²

The Transfiguration : All three synoptics indicate that the transfiguration of our Lord occurred in the presence of the three privileged apostles, Peter, James and John (Mt 17 1-9 ; Mk 9 1-8 ; Lk 9 29-36). Jesus received the glory of the Son of Man of Daniel. Many literary contacts between the transfiguration account and the Book of Daniel (Dn 7 13 ; 10 5-16) testify to this relation. Thus in prophetic fashion Jesus is in contact with the heavenly world and as at the baptism he hears the declaration of the Father, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In our discussion of the baptism we have seen the strict dependence of this phrase on Isaiah 42 1.

1. *Ibid.*, p.70.

2. *Ibid.*, p.71.

(9)

The first mention of the Passion and Resurrection immediately precedes the transfiguration itself (Mt 16 21 par.). In Matthew and Mark Jesus returns to the topic while coming down from the mountain with the apostles (Mt 17 9-12.). Luke refers to the Passion within the transfiguration account itself. And all these of the synoptics return to the same theme (Mt 17 22-23 par.). We are thus in a literary section where attention is especially directed to the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus ; and Jesus is described in terms of the Son of Man and the Servant of Yahweh. From the time of the baptism, Jesus had been exercising the office of the humble Servant, with no allusion to the sufferings described in Isaiah 53. But beginning with Matthew 16 21 this definitely changes.¹

"It was then that Jesus Christ for the first time (ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο) explained to his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and endure great suffering . . ." (Mt 16 21). The phrase ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο is rarely found in the gospels. Matthew employs it to introduce the very first mission of Jesus, "From that time Jesus began to preach . . ." (Mt 4 17). Thus it seems to indicate an absolute beginning, an important turning point in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus begins to speak to the Twelve concerning his Passion at one certain moment. We can ask whether Jesus himself, in his human consciousness, did not begin to foresee this aspect of his mission while seeing in Isaiah 53 the divine decrees fixing the destiny of the Servant.

The baptism and the transfiguration form a diptych, both inaugurating a new phase in the life of Christ. In both instances, Jesus personally receives an heavenly outpouring. At the baptism he is called to fulfill the mission of the humble Servant and he remains faithful to this call despite the temptations of Satan (Mt 4 1-11 par.). At another given moment near the time of the transfiguration Jesus accepts the entire office of the Servant right up to the Passion : and as at the baptism he dismisses the tempter, who speaks now by the mouth of Peter (Mt 16 23).

Prayer of Thanksgiving : In Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving to his Father (Mt 11 25-30 par.) he applies a text of the Old Testament to a contemporary situation : "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth for hiding all this from the learned and intelligent and revealing it to children." This prayer recalls Daniel's thanksgiving for the power to interpret Nebuchadonozor's dream while "wise men" had been unable to fathom it. "I thank thee and praise thee, O God of my fathers" (Dn 2 23).²

The gospel context corresponds perfectly with that of Daniel. There is question here of secrets of the kingdom of heaven revealed to some, hidden to others. Furthermore, L. Cerfaux has established a

1. *Ibid.*, p.75.

2. *Ibid.*, p.79.

literary dependence of the gospel pericope on Daniel by a verbal analysis of the two passages. Hence by explaining and applying a text of Scripture to a contemporary situation, Jesus stands in the line of the apocalyptic prophets.

According to Gils other visions of our Lord indicate his prophetic character : the vision of the devil and the angels at the temptation in the desert (Mt 4 1-11 par.) ; the vision in which Jesus " saw Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning " (Lk 10 18) ; and, finally, in the vision of the angel (Lk 22 43) which recalls the scene in 1 Kings 19 4-7 in which an angel comforted the discouraged prophet Elijah.

2. *Predictions of the Future*

The ancient prophets of Israel looked both to the contemporary scene and to the future. They sought to direct the march of history according to the divine plan, while keeping in mind the ultimate intervention of the God of Israel. On the " day of Yahweh " there would be the definitive judgment of the nations and the chosen people ; this would inaugurate the eternal kingdom of Yahweh. John the Baptist undoubtedly stood in the line of the prophets. He preached in glowing terms the eschatological harvest ; in calling upon the wrath of God and inextinguishable fire he especially emphasized a future judgment (Mt 3 7-12 par.).

Even though Jesus' preaching of the Good News of the kingdom was less menacing than John's, he himself never lost sight of the judgment at the end of time. " The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand " (Mt 10 7) ; " The harvest is abundant enough, but the reapers are few. So pray to the owner of the harvest to send reapers to gather it " (Mt 9 37-38). In its eschatological perspective our Lord's message parallels John's.¹

At a certain time our Lord began to teach the crowd in parables. He reserved for the Twelve, a privileged group, the explanation of the parables. Christ was merely employing a practice common among the prophets and found in apocalyptic literature.² Isaiah used this method in his famous allegory of the vine (Is 5 1-6) ; Ezekiel described the capture of Jerusalem's ruler by the king of Babylon in terms of a great eagle who snatched away the tip of a cedar tree (Ez 17 1-11). But the literary genre of the parable is above all found in the apocalyptic writings on the end of time. The mysteries of this " day of Yahweh " are revealed by parables which are explained only by God or an angel. We find this genre employed in Daniel (chaps. 2, 4, 7-9) ; the Book of Henoch (chaps. 37-71) ; the IV Esdras

1. *Ibid.*, p.90.

2. *Ibid.*, p.93.

(chaps. 3-4, 9-12) ; the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (chaps. 36-50, 53-72) and even in *Pastor Hermes*.

There are many indications that Jesus ranks among these apocalyptic prophets. Time and again he employs their language : " You are permitted to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven but they are not. For people who have will have more given them . . . " (Mt 13 11-12) ; " Blessed are the eyes that see what you see ! For I tell you that many prophets and kings have wished to see what you see, and could not see it, and to hear what you hear, and could not hear it ! " (Lk 10 23-24) ; the Apostles are the " little ones " who know what is hidden from the " learned and intelligent " (Mt 11 25) ; beneficiaries of this knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom, the apostles must in turn preach it publicly : " For there is nothing covered up that is not going to be uncovered, nor secret that is not going to be known. What I tell you in the dark you must say in the light, and what you hear whispered in your ear, you must proclaim from the housetops " (Mt 10 26-27).

At first Jesus had envisaged the Twelve in the role of eschatological harvesters (Mt 9 37). But later at the time of the parables, this office is discharged by the angels (Mt 13 39) ; and the end is clearly not at hand : before the end the whole world must be sowed (Mt 13 38). Here our Lord clearly distinguished two stages in the realization of the Kingdom : the first stages commences with the sowing of the word of kingdom ; the second will begin at the harvest (Mt 13 3-8 par.).

Jesus characterizes these two stages by the figure of the mustard seed, " the smallest of all seeds," which will one day grow into a cosmic tree capable of holding all the birds of the heavens (Mt 13 31-32). A similar figure is found in the prophets who explicitly identify the birds with the people of the earth (Ez 17 23 ; Dn 4 9-18). In this figure Jesus is also inspired by the genre of contrasts found in the apocalyptic literature. The Kingdom, even though present, is hidden from the eyes of the world ; but one day it will attain dimensions of a cosmic tree.

In the traditional teaching of the prophets the messianic community would contain only the just. Jesus taught that such would be the case in the definitive Kingdom after the judgment. But during its terrestrial period sinners would be found mingled with the just.¹ Such is the teaching of three parables, the wedding banquet (Mt 22 1-14) ; the fish net (Mt 13 47-50) ; and the sower (Mt 13 37-43). Gils suggests that the many literary similarities between the parable of the sower and sections in Daniel indicate that Jesus is prophesying by announcing the eschatological accomplishment of the oracles of Daniel — a method of teaching in honor among the apocalyptic prophets of the intertestamentary period.

1. *Ibid.*, p.103.

The synoptics record several references to the trials that members of the Kingdom will have to endure during the earthly phase of the Kingdom. In the discourse on the mission (Mt 10 16-42) Jesus warns the Twelve they will be handed over to the courts and be flogged in the synagogues (Mt 10-17). Perhaps Jesus is here thinking of the eschatological fulfillment of Daniel 1 2 where the king of Jerusalem is handed over to the Nebuchadonozor. Support for this interpretation is seen in our Lord's promise of the Spirit, the eschatological gift *par excellence*, for those enduring persecution (Mt 10 20). The allusion to the coming of the Son of Man (Mt 10 23) further indicates Jesus' attention to the final consummation. The explicit citation of the prophet Micah in Matthew 10 35-37 shows still further that Jesus wishes to announce the eschatological fulfillment of the preaching of the ancient prophets: "For the son insults his father; the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's foes are the members of his own household" (Mi 7 6).

According to the synoptics the final salvation of each person is determined by his response to apostolic teaching. The Gentiles will receive this salvation — not by an assimilation to Jerusalem at the final consummation as was sometimes suggested in the Old Testament — but by accepting the Good News of the gospel. As we have seen, Jesus himself distinguished two stages in the kingdom: the terrestrial phase which will be succeeded by the purely heavenly phase. The explicit teaching of Gentile participation in the heavenly stage necessarily implied Gentile participation in the terrestrial Kingdom.

Intimately related to this catholicity of the Kingdom was the mysterious rejection of the Chosen People. Various vine figures were familiar figure of the Chosen People. Jesus as the prophets before him, frequently employed this symbol to teach the startling lesson that Israel would cease being the true vine of Yahweh.¹

The parable of the sterile fig tree (Mt 12 19), and the curse of the fig tree (Mt 21 19) are obviously symbolic. In the parable of the two sons (Mt 21 28-32) Jesus again announces the defection of the religious leaders of Judaism. In a clear reference to Isaiah 5 1-7 Jesus declares to the Pharisees, "That, I tell you, is why the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a people that will produce it proper fruit" (Mt 21 43). In alluding to the stone rejected by the builders (Mt 21 42) Jesus refers to an oracle of Daniel in which a mysterious rock first annihilates all the kingdoms of the world and then becomes a great mountain filling all the world (Dn 2 31-45) — a prophetic announcement of the eschatological fulfillment of a scriptural oracle. The parables of the wedding feast (Mt 22 16) and of the workers called to work at different hours (Mt 20 16) are references to the rejection of the Jews and the vocation of the Gentiles through the goodness of God.

1. *Ibid.*, p.111.

When Jesus warns the apostles of subsequent persecutions, he also indicates the world-wide extent of their preaching:¹ they "... will be brought before governors and kings on my account, to bear testimony before them and the heathen..." (Mt 10 18-22). In the eschatological discourse, we find the prophecy that "... this good news of the kingdom will be preached all over the world, to testify to all the heathen, and the end will come? (Mt 24 14). Even though this last pericope may be a later addition, Gils believes its eschatological perspective can be traced to Jesus himself. Gils also thinks a very ancient tradition supports the logion addressed to the woman who prepared Jesus' body for burial, "I tell you, wherever this good news is preached all over the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (Mt 26 13).

On several occasions our Lord performs miracles for pagans. The synoptics regard these miracles as symbolic action²: by bestowing his messianic blessing on the gentiles, Jesus was their first missionary. Such is the significance of the curing of the centurion's son (Mt 8 11-12), the curing of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Mt 15 27), and the miraculous cures in the Decapolis (Mk 7 31-37 and Lk 8 22-26). By these actions Jesus wished to prepare the apostles for their future mission; and in the best prophetic tradition, he had recourse to symbolic actions.

In addition to a universal missionary role, Jesus also conferred on his apostles a special sovereign authority whose exercise would be ratified in heaven. "I tell you, whatever you forbid on earth will be held in heaven to be forbidden, and whatever you permit on earth will be held in heaven to be permitted" (Mt 18 18). Following upon Peter's confession at Cesarea Philippi Jesus establishes Peter as the rock of a new edifice constituted by the messianic people.

Jesus' address recalls the warmth and imagery of the ancient prophets. "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for human nature has not disclosed this to you, but my father in heaven! But I tell you, your name is Peter, a rock, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not subdue it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you forbid on earth will be held in heaven to be forbidden, and whatever you permit on earth will be held in heaven to be permitted" (Mt 16 17-19). As in the parables and the prayer of thanksgiving (Mt 11 25-30 par.) the terms "reveal," "Father in heaven," and "Kingdom of heaven" have an apocalyptic ring.³

In the eschatological discourse (Mt 24-25 par.) Jesus prophesies the end of the world that will usher in the heavenly phase of the

1. *Ibid.*, p.114.

2. *Ibid.*, p.118.

3. *Ibid.*, p.124.

kingdom. The literary allusions of this discourse amply testify to its relationship with the apocalyptic writings. Because of this apocalyptic note Gils does not accept the opinion that there are two neatly distinguished themes in this discourse : the destruction of the temple and the end of the world. These two themes are closely interwoven.

For the ancient Jews the destruction of Jerusalem was not an isolated event but was the supreme catastrophe intimately related to the end of the world.¹ Our Lord announces certain signs which will presage the end (Mt 24 4-8 ; 29-35 par.). False messiahs, famines, and earthquakes will be multiplied ; there will also be heavenly signs, "... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light and the stars will fall from the sky..." ; and then the Son of Man will come. The parable of the fig tree, which emphasizes the possibility of discerning the approach of spring by certain signs, is an appropriate closing to this apocalypse of signs.

In the eschatological discourse, as elsewhere, Jesus also prophesied by commenting on the oracles of Daniel. Matthew 24 9-25 par. is a homogeneous composition based on various references to Daniel, including explicit mention of "the prophet Daniel" (Mt 24 15). In this section of the discourse we find apocalyptic midrash.² Our Lord announces the future by foreseeing the eschatological accomplishment of the prophetic oracles of Daniel. Even though Jesus gives certain signs indicating the moment of the final drama, he faithfully respects the apocalyptic tradition — to the God in heaven is reserved the secret knowledge concerning the end of time. "But about that day or hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father (Mt 24-36).

Prediction of the Passion and Resurrection : The primitive Christians understood the Passion in terms of the oracles of Isaiah. In their thought, Christ, though being the celestial Son of Man, embraced the program of the suffering Servant. The synoptics emphasize three predictions (Mt 16 21 par. ; Mt 17 22-23 par. ; and Mt 20 18-19 par.). These three stylized statements are similar to the very simple formula of the Passion account itself (Mt 26 2 ; 26 45 par.) and are probably the source of several other succinct predictions of the Passion (Mt 17 9 par. ; 17 12 par. ; Lk 17 25). From the following analysis we shall see the strict dependence of all these passages on Isaiah 53.

First of all, the verb *παράδιδόναι* ("to hand over") appears frequently in a Passion context. "The Son of Man is going to be handed over to men..." (Mt 17 22 par. ; cf. also Mt 20 18 par. ; 26 2 ; 26 45 par. ; Lk 22 21). And even on occasion the verb appears with an explicit Old Testament reference, "as the Scriptures say" (Mt 26 24 par. ; Lk 18 31). But in any event this usage recalls

1. *Ibid.*, p.128.

2. *Ibid.*, p.129.

Isaiah 53 6, "And the Lord made to light upon him (παρέδωκεν αὐτόν) the guilt of us all," and Isaiah 53 12, "Because he poured out (παρεδόθη) his lifeblood to the utmost."

The phrase *πολλὰ πάσχειν* ("to suffer many things") is found in several synoptic passages referring to the Passion; in Luke 24 26 this phrase is specifically referred to the Old Testament. In Mark 9 12 the evangelist associates *πολλὰ πάσχειν* with *ἐξουδενεῖσθαι*: "and does not the Scripture say of the Son of Man that he will suffer much (*πολλὰ πάθῃ*) and be refused (*ἐξουδενηθῇ*)?" Since "*ἐξουδενηθῇ*" may well refer to Isaiah 53 3 ("He was despised and avoided by men"), the authority of Isaiah is naturally extended to "*πολλὰ πάσχειν*. But "*πολλὰ πάσχειν*" may also derive from Isaiah 53 4, 11 as an equivalent of *sabal*; or the phrase may simply be an allusion to the collectivity of sufferings inflicted on the Servant of Yahweh.

In Matthew 20 19 Jesus gives a detailed description of his future torments: "and they will . . . hand him over to be flogged and mocked and crucified . . ." (*παραδώσουσιν αὐτόν . . . εἰς τὸ ἐμπαῖξαι καὶ μαστιγῶσαι*). Substantial agreement is had with the words of the Servant, "I have my back to the smiters . . . My face I did not hide from shame and spitting" (*τὸν νῶτόν μου δέδωκα εἰς μάστιγας . . .*). (Is 50 6.) Several other Passion passages also give evidence of Isaian influence. Isaiah 53 12 is recalled by Matthew 20 28. "... Just as the Son of Man has not come to be waited on, but to wait on other people, and to give his life to ransom many others."

Matthew 26 28 has several Isaian references. "You must all drink from it, for this is my blood which ratifies the agreement (*διαθήκη*), and is to be poured out (*ἐκχυννόμενον*) for many people (*περὶ πολλῶν*), for the forgiveness of their sins. *Ἐκχυννόμενον* may be a translation of *hè érāh* in Isaiah 53 12; the same verse also mentions *πολλοί*; and although *διαθήκη* is usually taken to refer to Exodus 24 8 or Jeremiah 31 31, can we exclude every allusion to Isaiah 42 6 and 49 8 where the same word appears in a context likewise mentioning the nations as beneficiaries of the Servant? And in Luke 22 37 Our Lord refers to Isaiah 53 12: "For I tell you that this saying of Scripture must find its fulfillment in me: 'He was rated an outlaw.'" In the light of these numerous and striking similarities it would be difficult to deny a dependence of the Passion accounts on Isaiah.

Of the three great announcements of the Passion, the third (Mt 20 18-19 par.) is the most detailed: "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the high priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the heathen to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and on the third day he will be raised to life." Gils considers such concrete details somewhat out of place on the lips of a prophet; such concreteness would be more natural in a biography. Hence, Gils suggests that this passage has been elaborated in the light of formulas used in primitive catechesis.

Did understanding of the Passion in terms of the suffering Servant originate with the Christian community or can we trace it to Jesus Himself? Gils contends that our Lord was really enlightened in his human knowledge by reading Isaiah 53. A perspective which Jesus had not previously considered opened up to him at a precise moment. If the synoptics link the first announcement of the Passion to the confession of Peter, it is because they recall that Jesus began to speak of his Passion shortly after the events at Cesarea Philippi.¹

We have seen that the literary formulation of the three Passion announcements depends largely on the Christian community; hence it is difficult to restore the primitive nucleus antedating this elaboration. But Gils, agreeing with Willaert, offers as the original logion uttered by Jesus the statement: "The Son of Man must suffer many things." (*δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν.*)

According to the evangelists our Lord clearly foretold his Resurrection. He identifies himself with the glorious Son of Man in Daniel; and because he has read in Isaiah 53 the prediction of his Passion, the vision of the eventual triumph of the Servant would scarcely escape him. Gils thinks that Jesus was especially enlightened in his human knowledge by both these prophetic writings. However, the attitude of the apostles after the crucifixion is difficult to understand if our Lord mentioned the Resurrection on the third day as our gospels testify. Furthermore, all the Resurrection pericopes give evidence of literary elaboration.²

In the three great predictions of his Passion Jesus states precisely: the Son of Man will rise "on the third day" (Mt-Lk) or "after three days" (Mk). A similar precision appears in Matthew 12 40, "For just as Jonah was in the stomach of the whale for three days and nights, the Son of Man will be three days and nights in the heart of the earth." But this last qualification, "for three days and nights," is not necessarily attributable to Jesus. Gils thinks this was introduced to satisfy a desire for explicit citations.

The declaration of Jesus regarding the destruction and rebuilding of the temple (Mt 26 61 par.) doubtless rests on some authentic prediction whose exact terms escape us. After the crucifixion the Jews recalled that Jesus had said "after three days I will rise again" (Mt 27 63); and in Luke 24 7 two angels remind the women at the tomb that Jesus said he would "rise again on the third day." Gils thinks these two temporal qualifications were inserted in the narratives by the synoptics who realized that the prediction of the Resurrection is fixed on the third day in their gospels. The pre-gospel literary formulation of the Resurrection naturally influenced the synoptic

1. *Ibid.*, p.141.

2. *Ibid.*, p.142.

tradition. Fortunately, we can observe some of the early developments in the formulation in Acts.¹

Immediately after Pentecost the apostles related the resurrection with the Parousia (Ac 3 19-21 ; 10 40-42 ; 17 31 ; 1 Th 1 9-10). But Jewish opposition quickly occasioned a more particularized, antithetic formula : " You have killed Jesus but God has raised him up " (Ac 2 23-24 ; 3 13 ; 5 30 ; 10 39-40 ; 13 28-30). In this hostile polemical context, Christian preachers were led to recount their teaching in chronological succession (Ac 10 37-42), sometimes beginning with the story of the Chosen People (Ac 13 17-33 ; 7 53 ff.). In such a chronology the designation of the Resurrection " on the third day " is very natural (cf. Ac 10 40). Such set formulas are readily accepted in a narrative genre.

Luke differs from Matthew and Mark in his account of the apparitions, since he insists that Scripture foretells the events surrounding the Resurrection. In Luke 24 44-46 we see that Jesus had known the meaning of the prophetic oracles and had commented on these to the apostles. But the meaning remained hidden to the apostles because they did not understand Scripture. In the same vein our Lord chided the disciples at Emmaus : " How foolish you are and how slow to believe, after all that the prophets have said " (Lk 24 25). The response of the angels to the women before the empty tomb is likewise significant : " Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee . . . " (Lk 24 6). When the holy women do recall the words of Jesus, they remember his teaching. Likewise in the three predictions of the Passion and Resurrection Luke alone of the synoptics emphasizes the apostles' lack of understanding concerning Jesus' prophecies.

The apocalyptic prophets ordinarily possessed the charism of understanding the significance of scriptural oracles. Gils thinks it was under the influence of Paul that Luke developed his theme of the apostles' ignorance contrasted with the charismatic understanding of Jesus.² Certainly the primitive community know this theme (Ac 3 17 ; 13 27) ; Paul emphasized it especially (1 Co 3 14-17) ; and Paul himself employed charismatic exegesis of Scripture texts.

SUMMARY

In *Jésus Prophète* Gils sees in Jesus the profile of the traditional prophetic figure.³ This prophetic portrait emerges not only from certain isolated pericopes, but at least traces of the prophetic theme are

1. *Ibid.*, p.146.

2. *Ibid.*, p.150.

3. *Ibid.*, p.155.

found on every page of the synoptics. Like the ancient prophets Jesus is frequently under the immediate influence of the supernatural world. The heavens open at his baptism and he hears God call him to the prophetic mission of the Servant of Yahweh. At the transfiguration, because he has steadfastly followed the vocation of the Servant, Jesus momentarily receives from his Father the glory promised to the Servant. Strengthened by this approval he resolutely sets out along the path of the suffering Servant to his passion and eventual glorification. These two prophetic visions at the baptism and the transfiguration are the double hinge of Christ's whole career.¹

To these and similar visions we may add other characteristics which associate Jesus with the prophets. Our Lord commented on the oracles of Isaiah and identified himself with the humble and suffering Servant. He likewise interpreted Daniel by attributing to himself the royal dignity of the Son of Man. We have seen how other books of Scripture were also important in the thought of our Lord. Without an exhausting view of the biblical passages that were commented upon by Jesus, we can still safely conclude that he habitually interpreted the authentic significance of Scripture — a common prophetic practice.

Scholars knew even before the publication of the Qumran documents that the prophets characteristically revealed the meaning of ancient oracles. Daniel is typical : a charism enables him to interpret parables (Dn 2 8) and oracles of Jeremiah (Dn 9 2). The discoveries at Qumran confirm the judgment that the case of Daniel was not unique. The commentator of Habacuc, for example, utilized an identical method. We are thus in a position to appreciate the attention which our Lord gave to the Scriptures. He merely employed, with greater insight, of course, the method common to the apocalyptic prophets of his epoch.²

The ancient prophets performed bizarre acts to which they attached symbolic significance ; but they likewise attached prophetic significance to ordinary events. Although we do not find in the Gospels actions as bizarre as those performed by Ezekiel, still many of Jesus' acts must be recognized as prophecies in action.³ As in the case of Ezekiel and Jeremiah he integrated these deeds with the message he transmitted to men. One cannot doubt that he was conscious of the prophetic significance of these acts. After the Resurrection the disciples understood the real import of these events they had witnessed.

In studying the prophetic attributes of Jesus as found in the synoptics, Gils does not wish to limit the Christology of the evange-

1. *Ibid.*, p.155.

2. *Ibid.*, p.159.

3. *Ibid.*, p.162.

lists. Jesus was for them the Messiah. He fulfilled the messianic role of the Servant of Yahweh and he identified himself with the Son of Man in Daniel thus claiming the function of the Sovereign of the Kingdom of God inaugurated on earth.¹ If the synoptics are convinced that the title of prophet, which they recognize in Jesus, does not at all exhaust the mystery of his Person, they do make it clear that the messianic King has accomplished his mission by borrowing the prophetic behavior long accredited in Israel. He chose miracle which recalled the ancient wonder-workers ; he employed symbolic deeds ; he inaugurated the Kingdom of God on earth. But as the prophets of old, he also announced the future judgment and eschatological Kingdom. To reveal the designs of God, he interpreted the Scriptures, thus borrowing a method of revelation especially in honor among the contemporary apocalyptic prophets.

In the opening lines of the Letter to the Hebrews the mission of the Son of God is placed in the prophetic tradition : " It was little by little and in different ways that God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets, but in these latter days he has spoken to us in a Son whom he had destined to possess everything . . ." (He 1 1-2). Is not this a felicitous expression of the synoptic teaching as well as the thought of Jesus himself ?

WILLIAM B. NEEMAN, S.J.

1. *Ibid.*, p.165.