

The Jesus of Matthew: A Prophet

by Ronald W. Graham

This sermon explores the theme of Jesus as a prophet in Matthew's Gospel, highlighting his fulfillment of prophetic words, his relationship with John the Baptist, and his role as a prophet in the eyes of others.

Scripture: Matthew 3:17

Topics: "Jesus As Prophet", "Biblical Prophecy"

Description

Ronald W. Graham delves into the significance of Jesus being perceived as a prophet in the Gospel of Matthew. He explores the theme of fulfillment in Matthew's Gospel, highlighting how Jesus' life events fulfilled prophecies. The sermon also touches on the Moses typology present in Matthew, the role of John the Baptist as a prophet, and how Jesus viewed himself as a prophet. The conclusion emphasizes Jesus as a teacher who embodies the prophetic tradition, with a deep affinity for the prophets of old and a personal, childlike communion with God.

Transcript

"Herod feared the people, because they held Jesus to be a prophet." (Matt. 14:5, RSV).

Introduction

I have three words of introduction.

1) Versions

Many times the scripture I shall cite in the course of these lectures will be from the first edition of the Revised Standard Version, which I have been using regularly since the New Testament translation published in 1946. At other times we shall be hearing the 1971 second edition, the 1968 edition of the Jerusalem Bible, the 1970 edition of the New English Bible, the 1971 edition of Today's English Version, the 1973 edition of the New International Version, and on occasion the 1611 edition of the King James Version. These are respectively denoted in my manuscript but will not be distinguished in this oral presentation.

2) Inclusive language

When the wording is mine I shall refer to men and women, her as well as him. When I am citing the writings of others, including scripture, I shall nearly always respect the past by sticking with what is there in

the original and we shall time and again understand "man" and "men" and "he" to be generic, including women as well as men.

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In referring to Jesus, I shall always use "he" because I am at a loss to know what we are saying if we deny the scandal (if you like) of his historical particularity, namely, his maleness. In my text I have lower cases for "he" and "him" when used of Jesus because we are thinking of him as the human face of God.

The scriptures refer to God in both masculine and feminine terms, though, to be sure, the masculine predominates, especially in the "Father" language. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who [reverence] him" (Ps. 103:13)--that is the Psalmist's imagery, and it is there; like as a nursing mother comforts her child, so God comforts those who are depressed, disconsolate, and afraid (cf. Isa. 66:13)--that is the imagery of "Isaiah," and that is there too.

God may be personal--that may be how God is best, though nonetheless inadequately, described. We are shut up to using human words and human experiences to describe God; and the language of personhood is the best we have and it is the most honoring. Better that God be "he" or "she"--it matters not which--; better that God be he or she than that God be mindless, heartless, uncaring, unfeeling, uninvolved it. But to speak of God in personalistic terms does not make God a Person, much less a male person. God has no sexuality--he is not male, nor is she female; God is just, well, God is just God. We attribute to God the highest attributes found in humankind: attributes found sometimes in this man, sometimes in this woman; found in the greatest, most fully human, women and men, men and women.

For one thing, I shall use the term "God" as much as possible. For another, I shall on occasion use "Him" and not switch from "Him" to "Her." Third, in the text I have capitalized "He" and "Him" in order to hint that the Deity is not anthropomorphically masculine.

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3) Procedure

Now to get down to the main business on hand this evening. First of all I should like to say a word about the gospel, the Gospels, and the human face of God. Second, we shall pay attention to Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as a prophet. Third, we shall draw five conclusions.

1. The Gospel, the Gospels, and the Human Face of God

a. The New Testament

The only thing Jesus of Nazareth had to show for his matchless life, and cruel, undeserved death, and surprising resurrection was the church and the scriptures that the church wrote to explain and define itself.

Those scriptures--what, around the end of the second century, Tertullian of North Africa first called the "New Testament"¹ are primarily a body of documents witnessing to the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament is the record of what the early church knew (or thought it knew) about Jesus, what it believed and taught, and what implications for life it drew from its memories. The books that make up the New Testament "enshrine for us the comment and exposition and application of the teaching and the significance of Jesus by some of the earliest Christians, [people] who lived very near indeed to the

historical source of light, [persons] who had known the apostles or known others who had known them."² The Jesus of the Gospels is Jesus as seen by his contemporaries.³ What we have of Jesus is not what he said but what he is remembered as saying or is thought to have said.

What we are given is the impression Jesus left.

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what emerges [from a study of the Gospels] is a lively picture of the kind of thing that Jesus did, the kind of attitude which his actions revealed, the kind of relations in which he stood with various types of people he encountered, and the causes of friction between him and the religious leaders.⁴

b. The Gospels

As far as the New Testament is concerned, we can make Dodd's affirmation chiefly on the basis of the Gospels. The early church produced some twenty or more books that go by the name of "Gospel of" the Gospel of Thomas as well as the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Peter as well as the Gospel of John.⁵ But from early in the second century four such writings were being singled out from all the rest as of pre-eminent authority. Why four--these four--and not five or three? "The Gospels could not possibly be either more or less in number than they are" is the answer to that question made by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, toward the end of the second century. "Since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, . . . the foundation of the Church [which] is the gospel, fittingly has four pillars."⁶ It would be simpler, and perhaps nearer the mark, to say, "There are four Gospels in the New Testament because there just never were any others like them."

They are four, and not one. Yet there is a oneness to them. Irenaeus immediately proceeds to say this: "[God] gave us the gospel, fourfold in form but held together by one Spirit."⁷ Fourfold--but one.

One. It is said that a church member in the late third century would not have possessed the New Testament in one complete volume, as we do. The first and most important volume would have been the EVANGELLION

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"The Gospel," for it was the singular that was regularly used of the fourfold gospel, and it was a century later before people "began to speak of each Gospel separately as a Gospel, and to use the plural of the four."⁸

One Gospel. Tatian, an Assyrian Christian, confronted with the fact that the first three Gospels contain much that is represented twice and three times over, conceived the notion of combining all that was contained in the four Gospels, without repeating any part common to two or more, into a single connected narrative. So he took a Greek text of the Gospels current about A.D. 170 in Rome, where he was living at the time, and rearranged it--a scissors and paste job, as we would phrase it. It came to be called the Diatessaron--dia tessaron "out of four, [one]." On his return to his native country, it became the Gospel for many churches up and down the valley of the Euphrates. It is a loss that neither the Greek nor the Syrian texts survive.⁹

In a sense the church does live with only one Gospel. For one thing, the first three Gospels have been known as the Synoptic Gospels, and each of the first three Evangelists as a synoptiker, "a synoptic writer,"

for the last two centuries now.¹⁰ Synoptic, because Matthew, Mark, and Luke may be seen together; synoptists, because all were writing from the one general view. One consequence of that is that few commentators on, say, Matthew, can resist comparing Matthew's Gospel with those first of Mark and then Luke. A commentary on one of the Synoptics tends to become a commentary at one and the same time on all three. For a second thing, experientially and devotionally the church's image of Jesus tends very much to be a composite one, in large measure a harmony of all four Gospels. The Western church might have banned the

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Diatessaron--one connected story in written form--as heretical, but West, as East, has lived with the Jesus of "the Gospel," rather than the Jesus of Matthew, as distinguished from the Jesus of Mark, as compared with the Jesus of Luke, as contrasted with the Jesus of John.

But that one gospel--the good news of the fact of and the significance of the fact of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth--takes a fourfold form, as Irenaeus clearly saw and as the Roman church rightly judged, as against Tatian. Even with all the emphasis on the threefold tradition, there is the gritty fact of the Gospel of John: the "Fourth Gospel," as it used to be called at the height of its disparagement. And it is the fourfoldedness of the form that is going to be set before us these four nights.

c. The human face of God

Matthew's Gospel begins: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ [i. e., Jesus as Messiah], the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1). According to a number of ancient manuscripts, Mark's starts: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1). Luke writes that he is going to tell the story of the Jesus who "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (2:52). John commences with a Prologue about "the Word [that] became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (1:14), but at the end he says that his purpose was to bring people to believe, and nurture them in the conviction, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31).

Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham, Son of God, the Word, one who stood high in the estimation of both his peers and his God--each of these is a category for interpreting the significance of Jesus of Nazareth. And the list could be greatly lengthened. In his 1953 study,

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The Names of Jesus, Vincent Taylor listed ten principal names and titles of Jesus in the New Testament and then went to consider a further thirty two.¹¹ In his 1959 statement on The Christology of the New Testament, Oscar Cullmann discusses nine, or perhaps ten, categories: a list not quite identical with Taylor's.¹² The fact is that no single category exhausts all that a given Evangelist testifies to about Jesus. Which is understandable. The more significant the person and the richer the personality, the more numerous the categories of understanding need to be; the deeper the mind and the broader the spirit, the greater the variety of people who appreciate that person.

I am therefore being quite limiting, highly selective, and somewhat arbitrary in choosing to speak about: The Jesus of Matthew: A Prophet; The Jesus of Mark: A Worker of Miracles; The Jesus of Luke: A Man of Prayer; and The Jesus of John: Lover of Men and Women.

What will be said may constitute a beginning for looking at the Jesus of Nazareth, whom we confess as the human face of God; it is by no means intended to depict, much less define, the end of such a description. There is mystery in Jesus, depths beyond depths, as in every human being--as there is mystery in God, height beyond heights.

2. Jesus as a Prophet in Matthew

As a Book, the Old Testament has three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. In general, the writers of the New Testament feel closer kin to the Prophets than to the other two, though Matthew has a greater respect for the Law than the other three.

Jesus might have been a teacher, a prophet, a sage, or an apocalypticist. (By apocalypticist I mean "a seer whose main task was to

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enable his contemporaries to understand the signs of the times in which they were living, . . . and to inculcate the qualities of vigilance, endurance and steadfastness which were demanded by such a moment in history."¹³ More than any other Evangelist, Matthew has an interest in the relation of Jesus to the prophetic tradition and the role of the prophet in Judaism.

a. Fulfillment

For one thing, there is the motif of fulfillment. Matthew is convinced that many of the happenings in the life of Jesus took place in order to fulfil some word by a prophet. "This took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" (1:22): it is almost a formula. These are the events that took place to fulfil prophecy:

Mary's conceiving and the naming of her child;¹⁴

the place of Jesus' birth;¹⁵

the Holy Family's flight to Egypt;¹⁶

Herod's killing of the two-year olds;¹⁷

Jesus' being brought up in Nazareth;¹⁸

Jesus' spending some time in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, across the Jordan;¹⁹

the ministry of healing and casting out of demons;²⁰

Jesus' withdrawal from the people at one stage and his ministering incognito;²¹

Jesus' teaching in parables;²²

his entry into Jerusalem;²³

Judas' burial in the potter's field.²⁴

Three times the theme of the fulfillment of scripture appears on the lips of Jesus: in relation to the purpose of his ministry,²⁵ the

reason for his not calling to his defense twelve legions of angels,²⁶ and his betrayal and arrest.²⁷ On the one hand, each of these citations lacks the formula shape that all the others have, although the idea of fulfillment runs through them. On the other hand, they are quite vague and general--"the law and the prophets," "the scriptures," and "the scriptures of the prophets": they lack the quotation of scripture and the reference to a particular prophet. Just what scripture is in mind in the last two of them is unknown.

Five brief comments may be made on this aspect of Matthew's Gospel. One, the idea that specific events in the life of Jesus took place in order to fulfil some prophetic word is never placed on the lips of Jesus. This is an explanation of Jesus that we owe to the Evangelist, not to Jesus, and Matthew may very well be aware of that fact. Two, every single one of these fulfillment formula statements is peculiar to Matthew. Three, what is fulfilled, with the exception of the virgin birth, is not at the center of what is most significant about Jesus. Four, the scriptures cited are from Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Exodus, and the Psalms, with the stress on the prophetic books. Jesus is made to stand within Israel's prophetic tradition. Five, Matthew has a notion of the prophets and the Law belonging together and Jesus' teaching was the climax to the prophetic interpretation of the Law.²⁸

b. A Moses typology

Moses occupies an incomparable position in the history of Israel. None among his contemporaries could match him, none among his successors equal him. He was prophet, priest, and lawgiver--without peer as a prophet, says the writer of Deuteronomy, capsulating his achievement: "There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."²⁹

There is something of a Moses typology in Matthew. There is in the birth-story of Jesus what is also there in the birth-story of Moses: a perceived threat to a king triggers an infanticide.³⁰ There is the sojourn in Egypt, and God's calling his Son out of Egypt is like Moses' leading Israel out of the land of slavery.³¹ The temptation in the desert of the Jordan has something of the character of the proving of Moses before the establishing of the covenant with Israel.³² Furthermore, the teaching of Jesus given in five blocks is perhaps parallel to the five books traditionally ascribed to Moses.³³

All of this is found only in Matthew.

c. John the Baptist

1) The Evangelist regards John the Baptist as a wilderness preacher who has been sent to prepare the way for Jesus Christ and in this he was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.³⁴

2) John was held in high regard by the populace as a prophet and it was for that reason that Herod the tetrarch feared to put him to death.³⁵

3) When Jesus was questioned once about the character and source of his authority, Jesus rejoined:

"I will ask you just one question, and if you give me an answer I will tell you what right I have to do these things. Where did John's right to baptize come from: from God or from men?" They started to argue among themselves, what shall we say? If we answer, 'From God,' he will say to us, 'Why, then, did you not

believe John?' But if we say, 'From men,' we are afraid of what the people might do, because they are all convinced that John was a prophet."³⁶

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4) In this passage by inference and in two others explicitly Jesus expresses his appreciation of John as a prophet. He had occasion to say this to the crowds one day about the Baptist:

"When you went out to John in the desert, what did you expect to see? A blade of grass bending in the wind? What did you go out to see? A man dressed up in fancy clothes? People who dress like that live in palaces! Tell me, what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you [and] you saw much more than a prophet."³⁷

5) Herod the tetrarch might have feared the people but he feared even more breaking his impulsive promise to his wife's dancing daughter³⁸ and so he had John beheaded after all, and Matthew adds this at the end of his grim story: "And [John's] disciples came and took the body and buried it; and they went and told Jesus."³⁹ On the way down the mount of Transfiguration, Jesus had conversation with his intimates, Peter, James, and John about the coming of the Son of Man. The three said to him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" To which Jesus replied, "Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased." "The disciples," adds Matthew, "understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist."⁴⁰

d. The disciples

1) Jesus is represented as regarding his disciples as prophets. By implication, in the Sermon on the Mount, they are the new prophets who are destined to suffer persecution as had the old: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you."⁴¹

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2) Of the ministry of the Twelve Jesus said this:

To receive you is to receive me, and to receive me is to receive the One who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet as a prophet will be given a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a good man because he is a good man will be given a good man's reward.⁴²

3) In the context of chapter 23, they are the prophets who are scourged, or who will be scourged, in the synagogue of the Pharisees during the time of the early church.⁴³

4) As in the Old Testament so in the New, there are both true prophets and false prophets and not all who claim the name deserve it, as Jesus points out in a saying that is peculiar to Matthew:

"Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father. When that day comes, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name, cast out devils in your name, and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them to their face, 'I never knew you; out of my sight, you and your wicked ways!'⁴⁴

e. Jesus as a prophet in the eyes of others

1) The common people took Jesus to be a prophet. The Evangelist says that at one time when Jesus came to the territory near Caesarea Philippi, which was an important Greco-Roman city on the Southwest lower slope of Mount Hermon, he put this question to the disciples: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (NIV). They said, 'Some say John the Baptist, . . . others say Elijah, while others say Jeremiah or some other prophet.' (TEV). Then Jesus asked, "What about you? . . . Who do

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you say I am?" (TEV).⁴⁵ The multitudes were not totally off target!

2) When Jesus was entering Jerusalem, "triumphantly" as the tradition has it, the crowds answered the city's agitated question, "Who is this?" by saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee."⁴⁶

3) Jesus entered the city, cleansed the Temple, and returned in the evening to Bethany, which is a mile or so to the east of the Temple. The next morning he returned to the Temple area and began to teach. When the chief priests and the Pharisees saw the direction his teaching was taking, says Matthew in a passage that is peculiar to him, "though they would have liked to arrest him they were afraid of the crowds, who looked on him as a prophet."⁴⁷

4) The people's welcoming Jesus as a prophet receives some derisive confirmation in the trial before Caiaphas the high priest, the scribes, and the elders. At the end, writes Matthew, in an account which in essence is found in all three Synoptic Gospels: "They spat in his face and beat him; and those who slapped him said, 'Prophecy for us, Messiah! Guess who hit you!'"⁴⁸

f. Jesus and the prophets

At a number of points, Jesus is represented as having a deep appreciation for and a sense of affinity with the prophets.

1) One time when some scribes and Pharisees came to him asking for some tangible sign that would validate his message he responded with a word of commendation for the moral preaching of Jonah.⁴⁹

2) Some four chapters further along (chap. 16), there is a repetition of this question, perhaps more threatening this time, by

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Pharisees and Sadducees, and again the example and experience of Jonah is set forth in response.⁵⁰

3) In the predictive passage in chapter 24, one of the signs to be looked for is one that the Jesus of Matthew sees the prophet Daniel as having written about.⁵¹

4) On a day when Jesus found himself taking issue with Pharisees and scribes over moral priorities in religion--assiduous attention to the cleansing of cups and the washing of hands coupled with neglect of and disrespect for parents--he is said to have expressed a fellow feeling for a frustrated, disappointed, and disheartened Isaiah: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said . . ."⁵²

5) The persecution that Jesus foresaw for at least some of his followers he perceived as being as wrong for them as it had been for prophets of old.⁵³ The thought of it called forth the lament:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold your house is forsaken and desolate.⁵⁴

6) The so-called Golden Rule: "In everything do to others what you would have them do to you"--regarded by some as the be-all and end-all of Christianity--is said by the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount to be nothing but a summing up of "the law and the prophets."⁵⁵

7) The answer that was given to the question, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" was this:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great

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and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."⁵⁶

And then comes the clincher, found only in Matthew, "On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."⁵⁷

8) Jesus' teaching in parables and the disappointing response he often encountered is seen as a repetition of Isaiah's experience and in that sense a fulfillment of prophecy (propheteia).⁵⁸

9) What Jesus taught and what he accomplished was of such a character that "many prophets and righteous men," he said, 'longed to see what you [disciples] see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."⁵⁹

10) In a saying found only in Matthew, the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount affirms that he in no wise came to abolish the law and the prophets: on the contrary: "Truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished."⁶⁰

11) In Jesus' summing up of the Law and the prophets--not simply the Law; in his feel for Isaiah and his situation; in his evaluation of his own life and ministry; and In his affirmative and creative stance toward the Law and the prophets. we have already begun to move beyond Jesus' affinity with and appreciation for the prophets of Israel to his viewing himself as a prophet.⁶¹

g. Jesus viewing himself as a prophet

1) In two places in Matthew, Jesus straightforwardly and unambiguously identifies himself as a prophet. At the end of extensive instructions to his disciples, Jesus speaks with the prophet's poetic parallelism: "To receive you is to receive me, and to receive me is to

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receive the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet as a prophet will be given a prophet's reward.⁶² (The saying is peculiar to Matthew.) Plainly Jesus was referring to both himself and his disciples, who had just been granted authority to conduct healing ministries of their own and preach the good news of the Kingdom of heaven as prophets.⁶³

2) Likewise, in consequence of a visit to Nazareth where his own people--friends and neighbors--stumbled at his well-known, familiar background and persistently questioned his authority, finally rejecting him,⁶⁴ Jesus was led to exclaim, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."⁶⁵ (And, incidentally, the upshot of that was that "he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."⁶⁶

These two unequivocal statements which Matthew places on the lips of Jesus come at the end of two important sections of the Gospel: the commissioning of the disciples to heal and preach and Jesus' own teaching in parables. The Jesus of Matthew understands his healing and teaching ministry to be the work of a prophet living within and out of Israel's prophetic tradition.

Conclusion⁶⁷

1) In August 1928 there was a conference of British and German theologians at which C. H. Dodd delivered a paper entitled, "Iesous ho didaskalos kai prophetes." It was later published in expanded form as a chapter, "Jesus as Teacher and Prophet," in *Mysterium Christi*.⁶⁸ We have concentrated on Jesus as prophet in Matthew but he really should be viewed, perhaps above all in Matthew, as a teacher who is also a prophet: a teacher--a teacher among teachers, an expert in the Law who

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possessed the skill of the scribe; a prophet--speaking out of and addressing himself to particular circumstances in history, like the prophets speaking out of a sense of direct communion with God and therefore speaking with a certain intransigence, authoritativeness, and urgency as well as with their freedom and directness; and perhaps we should add to teacher and prophet, a touch of the charismatic, esoteric seer thrown in.

But to say that Jesus was a teacher who was also a prophet should not be allowed to obscure the fact that he was not just a teacher among teachers but that as a prophet he was a religious figure in his own right.⁶⁹ What do I mean by that?⁷⁰

2) For one thing, fundamental to Jesus' life and ministry was his baptism, which is best understood as an expression of a vocational decision akin to the seminal "call" to prophesy felt by Men like Moses, Samuel, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Advocates of a doctrine of the sinlessness of Jesus are regularly puzzled by Jesus' being baptized by John, when John's was a baptism signifying repentance.⁷¹ It seems to me that Jesus' baptism expresses his response to a "call," a call to a vocation, in this case "sonship" and all that that entailed. As Matthew depicts our Lord's baptism., it is a highly personal, deeply spiritual, that is, a religious, experience:

And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."⁷²

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3) Second, the prophetic vocation involves the possession of--if "possession" is the most appropriate word--a divine revelation that is received in intimate communion with God. So Matthew has this, as also has Luke: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the

Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."⁷³

And to that only the Jesus of Matthew adds:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."⁷⁴

4) Third, the Hebrew prophets thought of themselves as not merely declaring the Word of God, but as playing a part in the fulfillment of that Word. The prophet believed that his ministry had actual consequences in history, under God's Providence. (This was something that distinguished the prophet from the "mere" teacher.)

Jesus is in this tradition, with its concomitant sense of self-worth. He speaks as though his life and work was the decisive event in history. Especially, so it seems, did he expect momentous consequences to follow from his death. Matthew has it that from the time of the Caesarea Philippi incident, "Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day he raised."⁷⁵

Moreover, Jesus foretells that death, not as an accident that may happen to him but as an event held within the Providence of God whose intention it is to save: "Drink of [this cup], all of you," said Jesus at the Last Supper, "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."⁷⁶

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5) Finally, to say that Jesus was a prophet is to say something about his personal religion, if it be permissible for me to put it that way.

His communion with God is direct, personal, childlike. He brings to God unshakable faith in his goodness and power as a "living God."⁷⁷ His prayer is a serene acceptance of God's will, whether it call him to do or to suffer. He repudiates the notion of prayer as a meritorious religious exercise and insists instead that it is essentially converse with "your Father who sees in secret."⁷⁸ In addition, he bids his followers do what he himself does: "ask . . . seek . . . knock," in the assurance that the child who asks the parent for bread will be given bread and not a stone.⁷⁹

His own prayers, in lonely places and in the crises of life, are surely of this character. "His final prayer in the Garden, reasserting faith in the boundless power of God, craving help in desperate need, and rising to unreserved acceptance of His will, represents the ideal to which all prayer of the prophetic type tends."⁸⁰

Jesus recognized in John the Baptist "a prophet, and more than a prophet." If Jesus was so persuaded of John, how much more we of Jesus. But that dimension of his Person and Work--"a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet"⁸¹--lies beyond the scope of this survey.

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