

## IN MANY FRAGMENTARY AND VARYING UTTERANCES

### The Use of Messianic Prophecy in Apologetics

#### § 1. THE MISUSE OF MESSIANOLOGY

Used as we are to the centrality of Christ in our religious thinking, we have the tendency to attribute a like centrality to the figure of the Messiah in the religious thinking of Judaism and the OT. This, however, is a grave mistake.

Christian dogma, centered entirely on Christ, makes Christology one of the essential points of its attainment and development. This is not true of messianic thought in Jewish teaching, which puts the emphasis not on the person of the Messiah but on the restoration of the nation; furthermore, in Jewish thinking messianism holds a less important place than the Torah or the elect nation. . . . We can, in fact, read through some of the ancient juridic texts, such as the Mishnah, without finding a single allusion to the Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

This failure to recognize what is a unique emphasis of Christianity has sometimes led us in the past to expect from messianic prophecy something more—or, rather, something different—than it is prepared to give. It has led to the imposition of a messianic meaning (better, a christological meaning) on texts that will not sustain it when examined in the light of sound historical criticism. It has led to the attempt to find a complete Christology in the OT, according to which the most minute and even trivial details of our Lord's life and personality were systematically foretold in prophecy; parallel columns represented point by point OT prediction on the left and NT fulfillment on the right.

I am well aware that the limitations of this type of proof from prophecy are known to all of you, and that its extravagances are

<sup>1</sup> J. Bonsirven, S.J., "Judaïsme," *DBS* IV, 1232.

avoided nowadays by professors of apologetics. My purpose is again pointing out its shortcomings, using for my outline the proof-texts employed in a well-known manual of dogmatic theology, is therefore not just another, unneeded indictment of a notorious misuse of Scripture. Rather, I want to show by this means, first of all, how extremely complex and delicate is the interpretation of OT messianism if this interpretation is to correspond with reality. Secondly, I hope to show that what is wrong with the parallel-text argument is not its extravagances, but the argument itself.

The manual which I have chosen<sup>2</sup> is neither better nor worse than the average in its selection of texts fulfilled "miro ac vere stupendo modo in persona Jesu." In the following paragraphs I shall try to survey these texts as rapidly as possible.

1. As to Christ's origins. *Erit ex semine Abrahae*: Gn. 22, 18. This verse, a repetition of 12, 3, is not a prediction of a personal Messiah. Furthermore, the weight of critical opinion today probably favors a reflexive rather than a passive understanding of the verb: Abraham and his descendants will be the standard according to which God's blessings may be measured (as in Gn. 48, 20).

*Ex tribu Juda*: Gn. 49, 8-10. The most recent, and perhaps most successful, attempt to define the meaning of this obscure and disputed text ends with the conclusion that it celebrates the initial successes of David's imperialism, which gave Israel a place among the nations and marked the ascendancy of Judah among the tribes.<sup>3</sup> It is one of those passages that reflect the messianic hope that was centered in the Davidic dynasty, but it contains no direct reference to the Messiah.

*Ex radice David*: Ps. 88(89), 36-38; Is. 11, 1f. (a) The first of these texts is a parallel version of the dynastic oracle of 2 Sm. 7, 8-16, and quite likely an older form of it. These and other similar texts testify indisputably to the divine promise of an enduring Davidic kingship. Like Gn. 49, 10, the passage is messianic, but the messianism is of a dynasty, not of an individual. (b) Is. 11, 1f.

<sup>2</sup> Tanqueray-Bord, *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae* I (Tournai 261949) 262-268.

<sup>3</sup> W. L. Moran, S.J., "Gen. 49, 10 and its use in Ez. 21, 32," *Bib* 39 (1958) 405-425.

is one of the texts that depend on the dynastic oracle. The prophet looks to a Davidic king to come who will rule with justice, reversing the unjust social conditions tolerated and abetted by the kings of Judah and denounced so bitterly by the prophets Isaiah and Micah. The prophet ascribes to this king no qualities that could not be ideally hoped for in any scion of David, thus in itself the messianism of the passage need not look beyond the next Judahite king who would replace Ahaz. The reference to the "stump of Jesse" in v. 1, however, encourages many to the conclusion that the prophet's perspective lies beyond the historical Davidic dynasty, and that he envisages a restoration that is metahistorical or eschatological.<sup>4</sup> If this interpretation is correct (and I am not convinced that it is), then Isaiah in c. 11 was expecting a somewhat different Messiah than in cc. 7 and 9.

*Ejus mater erit virgo*: Is. 7, 14. The average person is far more familiar with this passage as it is cited in Mt. 1, 23 than as it appears in Isaiah's own context. As is well known, however, the Hebrew text does not speak of a virgin, but of an *'almâ* (RSV "young woman," CCD "the maiden," SBJ "la jeune fille"), a word which in Hebrew and in the cognate Semitic languages is quite as ambiguous as the English "girl," neither supposing nor excluding virginity. It is altogether unlikely that Isaiah foresaw the virgin birth of the Messiah. Rather, as recent study of the contemporary Near Eastern literary milieu has revealed, what the text signals is a wonderful, "divine" birth (in the sense that a reigning king is called "god" in Ps. 44[45], 7), a fulfillment of the Davidic dynastic oracle which it presupposes.<sup>5</sup> The prophecy is certainly messianic, but neither here nor in the exalted language of Is. 9, 1ff. does the prophet say anything that forces us to look beyond the immediate future of the ruling dynasty for its intended fulfillment. Isaiah intends a contemporary sign for Ahaz in the face of the Syro-Ephraimite war with its threat to the dynasty; the most obvious significance of the prophecy is in reference to Hezekiah.<sup>6</sup> Hezekiah

<sup>4</sup> So numerous Catholic authors; also Sigmund Mowinckel in his indispensable work on messianology, *He That Cometh* (New York 1956) 17.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. Gelin, S.S., "Messianisme," *DBS* V, 1181; Mowinckel, 110-119.

<sup>6</sup> Thus SBJ, cf. Auvray-Steinmann, *Isaïe* (Paris 1951) 46. J. Coppens, "La

was, of course, the fulfillment of the prophecy only in a limited way. The Alexandrian translators of the OT testified to their recognition of the wonderful nature of the Messiah's birth when—contrary to their practice everywhere else—they rendered 'almâ with *parthénos*, and it is in this form that the prophecy appears in Mt. 1, 23.

2. The place and time of Christ's birth. *Ejus patria erit Bethleem Ephrata vel Judae*: Mi. 5, 2. Though the authorship of this verse is questioned, there is no doubt that it is a messianic prophecy (the following v. 3 almost certainly alludes to Is. 7, 14). It is by no means equally sure that "Bethlehem," lacking in the Greek, is original in the text (it is regarded as a gloss and accordingly omitted in the SBJ translation). In any case, Ephrathah is here contrasted with the rest of the clans of Judah because it is the source of the Davidic dynasty "of ancient days." The prophet does not mean that the coming messianic king will also necessarily be born in the birthplace of David. The midrashic version of the text cited in Mt. 2, 5f. merely tells us how this verse was interpreted at the time of our Lord's birth.

*In tempore quo secundum templum adhuc stabat*: Hag. 2, 7-10; Dn. 9, 24-27. (a) The prophet Haggai, encouraging the postexilic Jews in their work of reconstruction, predicts a greater glory for the second temple than for that of Solomon; the passage has nothing to do with Christ. A messianic sense has been superimposed in the Vg of v. 7: "et veniet desideratus cunctis gentibus." But the Hebrew verb is plural, which means that the subject *hemdâ* must be a collective noun. Modern translations universally have something like: "the treasures of all nations shall come in" (RSV and CCD). (b) Dn. 9, 24-27 is the famous "prophecy of the seventy weeks," as to whose meaning it is said that more than a hundred

prophétie d'Emmanuel," in *L'Attente du Messie* (Tournai 1954) 42, also lists among Catholics making this interpretation R. Simon, B. Lamy, A. M. LeHir, J. Corluy, L. Billot, and E. Burrows. Cf. John L. McKenzie, S.J., "Royal messianism," *CBQ* 19 (1957) 41 f. Frederick L. Moriarty, S.J., "The Emmanuel prophecies," *ib.* 231 f. raises to this interpretation the objection of chronology. But the "25 years" of 2 Kgs 18, 2 follows on a synchronism, repeated in v. 9 f., that is certainly wrong: the chronology of Ahaz' reign is at best obscure.

opinions still prevail.<sup>7</sup> Let it suffice here to say that it is doubtful that any single Catholic author today would refer these verses to Christ in any sense other than typical. The readily available commentary of P. P. Saydon will be found to extend the messianology of the passage quite as far as any modern author will, and Saydon ends by adopting, in the historic sense, the Maccabean interpretation that has by now found almost universal acceptance.<sup>8</sup> The text contains no timetable of messianic fulfillment.

3. The precursor. *Praecursor et ejus praedicatio annuntiatur*: Mal. 3, 1f. The precursor announced in Mal. 3, 1 is Yahweh's, not his Messiah's. In v. 23, probably the supplement of another author, this precursor is named Elijah. The Gospel's application of this text to the opening of the messianic age and the preaching of John the Baptist is the result of later Jewish speculation on the character of Elijah.<sup>9</sup>

4. Christ's attributes. *Messias erit Filius Dei*: Ps. 2, 2-7. Ps. 2 is certainly a messianic psalm, and it certainly speaks of the king as the son of God. Whether it says this directly of the Messiah, or of the reigning king clothed in a messianic character, remains the question. On this point even Catholic exegetes differ widely. A respectable number of Catholic authorities would now say, with regard to this and others of the "royal" psalms, that the psalmist refers to the reigning king, who always *could* be the Messiah, and who is the symbol of the messianic faith rooted in the Davidic dynasty with its divine guarantees.<sup>10</sup> But whether directly mes-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. L. Dennefeld, *Les grands prophètes* (Paris 1946) 688.

<sup>8</sup> *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (New York 1953) 507 f-508 e. Though in ancient times the passage was taken as directly messianic (Dennefeld counts 22 varieties of this interpretation in the Middle Ages), there was far from any unanimity of opinion. Clement of Alexandria and Quintus Julius Hilarianus took the anointed prince of v. 25 to be Zerubbabel, while for Hippolytus he was the high priest Jeshua. Since LXX and Theodotion had "anointing" for "anointed" in v. 26, the Fathers usually interpreted this of the Jewish priesthood: so Tertullian and Chrysostom. The Maccabean interpretation was defended as early as 397 by Hilarianus. Cf. J. T. Nelis, S.S.S., *Daniël* (Roermond 1954) 101 f.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. M. J. Lagrange, O.P., *Le messianisme chez les Juifs* (Paris 1909) 210-213; Mowinckel, 298 f.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gelin, 1178; Coppens, "Les Origines du messianisme," *L'Attente*. . .

sianic or not, the psalm does not predicate divine sonship of the king in any metaphysical sense; it is the adoptive sonship of 2 Sm. 7, 14. Though frequently cited in the NT, this passage is never used in reference to the Incarnation mystery (cf. Heb. 1, 5, where it is cited together with the Nathan oracle; in Acts 13, 33 it refers to God's glorification of the Messiah in the resurrection).

*Deus fortis, princeps pacis*: Is. 9, 5-7. The wonderful titles of the messianic king, wonderful though they are, are not divine in any metaphysical sense.<sup>11</sup> This prophecy goes with Is. 7, 14 as part of the so-called Book of Emmanuel, belonging to the period of the Syro-Ephraimite war. As has been indicated above, Isaiah's Emmanuel was probably king Hezekiah.

*Super eum requiescet Spiritus Domini*: Is. 11, 2. This is a standard OT expression for a charismatic function assigned by the Lord (cf. Jgs. 6, 34, etc.). It is surely unnecessary to point out that the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit was unknown to the prophet; by God's "spirit" he understands his vital and vitalizing power.

*Erit humilis, mansuetus et misericors*: Is. 11, 1-5; 42, 1-4; 61, 1-3. These are hardly exclusive attributes of the Messiah. We shall refer below to the second two of these texts, concerning the Servant of the Lord.

*Erit thaumaturgus*: Is. 35, 4-6. This postexilic, non-Isaianic passage describes Israel's happy state in its return from exile. The wonderful deeds are those of Yahweh. The text is not personally messianic.

5. Christ's functions. *Messias erit doctor et propheta*: Is. 61, 1; 42, 1-6. (a) The subject of Is. 61, 1 is the prophet himself, not the Messiah, as is conceded by everyone. (b) Concerning the identity of the Servant of Yahweh who appears in the four Servant songs of Deutero-Isaiah (42, 1-4[5-7]; 49, 1-6[7-9]; 50, 4-9; 52, 13-53, 12), it is almost true to say *quot homines tot sententiae*. As this is

35 f.; J. de Fraine, S.J., *L'Aspect religieux de la royauté israélite* (Rome 1954) 372 ff.; Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., "Notes on OT messianism and apologetics," *CBQ* 19 (1957) 7, note 7; McKenzie, 27-40; Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms I* (Dublin 1953) xix-xxiii.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah I* (Dublin 1941) 112.

one of the most complicated problems the Scripture has to offer, we can do little more than simply note the fact here.<sup>12</sup> Suffice it to say that concerning the unity of the complexus, its authorship and date, and, above all, the identification of the Servant (one or several? collective or individual? real or ideal? royal or prophetic? historical or eschatological?), there is the utmost disparity of opinion, among Catholics as well as non-Catholics. Those Catholic authors who would make the Servant the Messiah *qua talis* are certainly in a minority. Neither did pre-Christian Judaism understand the Servant passages to refer to the Messiah.<sup>13</sup> Of our Lord's identification of himself with the servant, we shall speak at length later on.

*Legislator et rex novi regni:* Is. 55, 3f.; Ps. 2, 6; Zech. 9, 9f.; Jer. 23, 5. (a) The ruler spoken of in Is. 55, 4 is David. It is true, this is David in his messianic character, and the passage is of the messianic covenant, but there is no direct reference to the Messiah. (b) On Ps. 2, 6 we have spoken above. (c) The Deutero-Zechariah prophecy is messianic, and doubtless directly messianic, contrasting the kingly ideal to be fulfilled in the Messiah with Israel's sad experience of the historical kingship. Obviously, Jesus' literal enactment of the text as described in Mt. 21, 4f. and parallels goes beyond what the prophet had in mind. (d) Jer. 23, 5 also appears to be directly messianic, of the Davidic king who will re-establish the kingly line, ruling according to the kingly ideal. It is only proper to add that the kingship envisaged in all these texts was far transcended by the spiritual kingship of Christ.

*Sacerdos secundum ordinem Melchisedech et victima:* Ps. 109(110), 4; Mal. 1, 11; Is. 53, 4-10. Just as Christ's kingship was fulfilled in a way unexpected by Israel, so was His priesthood, as the author of Heb. 4, 14-7, 28 is at great pains to show. (a) Ps. 109(110) is one of the royal psalms; what was said above regarding Ps. 2 holds here equally well. When the poet called the king

<sup>12</sup> The reader can gain an idea of the scope of the problems and the literature in the subject from Gelin, 1192-1195; Mowinckel's ch. VII, 187-257; Otto Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das AT* (Tübingen 21956) 402-406.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Lagrange, 204 ff.; Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (New York 1955) 162.

a priest after the fashion of Melchizedek, he meant that he was a priest-king of Jerusalem, as Melchizedek had been (Gn. 14, 18). Israelite tradition drastically modified the priestly aspect of Near Eastern kingship, and there was, strictly speaking, no royal priesthood in Israel.<sup>14</sup> But 2 Sm. 8, 18 (cf. the significant alteration in 1 Ch. 18, 17) refers to David's sons as priests, though they are distinguished from the official Levitical priesthood; in 2 Sm. 6 David clearly exercises priestly functions in the religious rite of the transfer of the Ark, as does Solomon in 1 Kgs. 8, 5.14.55.62f. It is this early characteristic of the Davidic kings that is developed in the poem. (b) Mal. 1, 11 contrasts with the unworthy sacrifices being offered in Jerusalem the pure sacrificial worship of the messianic age. The nature of this sacrifice is undetermined. (c) Is. 53, 4-10 is part of the final Servant canticle, cf. above. In this passage the Servant suffers not precisely as a sacrificial victim, but as the victim of unjust persecution.

6. Christ's passion and death. *Triginta argenteis aestimabitur*: Zech. 11, 12. When read in context, it is plain that there is nothing messianic about this text. In Mt. 27, 9f. it is combined with some Jeremianic allusions and ascribed simply to "Jeremiah." On Matthew's use of the OT, cf. below.

*Flagellabitur, et alapis caesus conspuetur*: Is. 50, 6. The sufferings of the Servant, cf. below.

*Cum sceleratis reputabitur*: Is. 53, 12. Also the Servant.

*In siti sua felle et aceto potabitur*: Ps. 68(69), 22; 21(22), 16. Hardly anyone would suggest that these psalms are messianic in any sense but typical. They describe the sufferings of a just man unjustly punished, whose sufferings sometimes closely parallel our Lord's. But as Kissane points out,<sup>15</sup> there is nothing in them that cannot be paralleled in, for example, the sufferings of Job; and there is also in them what can in no way be applied to Christ (Ps. 68[69], 6, for instance). That they typically refer to Christ does not make them refer to Him any less; but as far as apologetics is concerned, typology is only an interesting coincidence.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. de Fraine, esp. 320-330; Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago 1948) 337-344.

<sup>15</sup> *Psalms I*, 95, 300.



*Manus et pedes sui perforabuntur*: Ps. 21(22), 17f. Cf. the remarks just made. The Vg's *foderunt*, maintained in the New Psalter, is far from certain. The Hebrew is corrupt, and the Versions differ. Kissane, on the analogy of Jb. 33, 21, has: "My hands and my feet are wasted away." That the evangelists, who exploited so much of the typology of this psalm, made no use of v. 17, makes us suspect that the Vg interpretation of it was unknown to them. In any case, *foderunt* (supposing that the Hebrew had *kā'arū* rather than *kā'arī*) suggests the digging action of fetters rather than piercing.

*Et vestes dividuntur*: Ps. 21(22), 19. Cf. above.

*Sepelietur in sepulcro divitis*: Is. 53, 9. The ". . . et divitem pro morte sua" with which Vg endows the Servant is almost universally admitted to depend on a faulty text. Specifically, *'āšîr* is to be corrected to *'ōšê ra'* ("evildoers" in CCD), now with the support of 1QIs<sup>a</sup>.

7. Christ's resurrection and glorification. *Caro ejus non videbit corruptionem*: Ps. 15(16), 9-11. It is the tendency of modern Catholic authors to interpret this text as typically messianic: the obvious sense of the Hebrew is that the psalmist will be preserved from premature death.<sup>16</sup> The use of the psalm in Acts 2, 25ff. derives from the Greek rather than the Hebrew; it is one of the texts that have caused an ancient question to be revived, whether at least in part the LXX must be regarded as an inspired translation, in such cases where there is a substantial difference between its meaning and that of the original. Other Catholic authors reconcile the NT use of this psalm text and the original Hebrew meaning by appealing to the presence of a *sensus plenior*. At all events, apart from the special enlightenment of the Holy Spirit on which the NT depends, no christological meaning would be apparent in the text.

*Habebit regnum universale*: Ps. 2, 1-13. Cf. above. The terminology is applicable to a reigning Judahite king.

Thus far our author's use of his texts. "Constat ergo," he concludes, "quod prophetiae messianicae . . . omnes in Jesu Nazareno

<sup>16</sup> So Kissane, *Psalms* I, 65. He believes that this is also what the Greek means.

et in eo solo fuere penitus adimpletae." In view of what I have said thus far, I am sure this statement needs no further commentary.

Actually, while the author has included a little of everything in his list of texts, he has in the main stuck to those that do have a messianic connection. What is wrong is not the selection of texts, but the entire methodology. The "A in the OT = B in the NT" procedure inevitably assumes precisely what apologetics seeks to prove, that the NT is correct in regarding itself as the fulfillment of the OT. This it does on the wholly fallacious premise that the Christology of the NT can be found point by point in the OT, that the OT writers, in other words, meant just what the NT writers mean when the latter refers to the former. By ignoring historical exegesis, the argument can make an appeal to no one who does not already accept the NT's account of itself. The meaning of A is defined by B, then A is pointed to triumphantly as the anticipation of B. Whatever this may be said to be, it is obviously not apologetics.

The NT writers, it is true, find Christ on every page of the OT. The NT, however, is not a book of apologetics. It is a collection of writings by Christians for Christians, which in its use of the OT leans on a typology already accepted in Christian faith. When Matthew, for example, cites a text like Hos. 11, 1 in connection with the Holy Family's sojourn in Egypt, he can do so only in view of a typology that permitted him to refer to Christ virtually anything that in the OT was stated of Israel.<sup>17</sup> As a matter of fact, it is only *by exception* that the NT adheres to the strictly historical sense in citing the OT; in general, it interprets according to a deeper, spiritual sense.<sup>18</sup>

Determination of the spiritual sense of the Scripture is a legitimate, in fact a necessary task of the exegete, insisted on by Pope Pius XII in *Divino afflante Spiritu*. Without it, we can hardly have theology. Anyone who admits the unity of the Bible and believes

<sup>17</sup> Cf. J. A. E. van Dodewaard, "La force évocatrice de la citation," *Bib* 36 (1955) 482-491.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. L. Venard, "Utilisation de l'AT dans le Nouveau," *Initiation Biblique* (Tournai 31954) 446-450; *id.*, "Citations de l'AT dans le NT," *DBS* II, 37-50.

in its inspiration by the one divine Spirit cannot ignore the validity of typology. But typology and spiritual senses have no function in apologetics. They presuppose faith, they do not lead to it.

## § 2. THE NATURE OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY

1. *The nature of prophecy.* What has often been presupposed in arguments like the one we have been discussing, is a concept of prophecy verified neither in the OT nor the NT. Whatever is to be said of the charism of prophecy in the abstract, it is a verified fact that one property of biblical prophecy is its obscurity. We simply do not look for, and have no right to expect, in OT prophecy anything like a blueprint of the future.

In 22, 19 Jeremiah prophesies of the hated king Jehoiakim that he will have "the burial of an ass," that is, no burial at all, that his body will be cast outside the city as so much refuse. However, according to 2 Kgs. 24, 6 and 2 Ch. 36, 8 Jehoiakim received a normal burial with his fathers in Jerusalem. Since the king died detested by his subjects who had already experienced the bitter and disastrous results of his policies, we can say that what Jeremiah predicted might well have been carried out quite literally. But it does not appear to have been. Similarly, the prophet said of Jehoiakim that none of his descendants would sit on the throne of David (36, 30). Actually, his son Jehoiachin did so, for all of three months, before he was deported to Babylon and replaced by his uncle Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. Again we can say, and truly, that the substance and spirit of Jeremiah's prophecy were fulfilled. But we must also recognize that the prophet clearly had no photographic idea of the future.

A classic indication of the generic as opposed to the specific nature of the prophetic vision can be seen in Isaiah's prophecy of invasion in 10, 27-34 (the introduction to the messianic passage which follows in 11, 1ff.). Here the prophet graphically describes the Assyrian army proceeding from the north, city by city, through Geba, Gibeah, Anathoth, Nob, to the summit of Mount Zion. Actually, when the invasion came, Sennacherib followed the seacoast and entered Jerusalem from the west. Another classic indication is in the detailed prophecies against Babylon found in Is. 13, 17ff.;

14, 4ff.; Jer. 50, 15; 51, 58, etc. Babylon was to be destroyed by the Medes, leveled like Sodom and Gomorrah, to remain a dwelling place only for wild beasts; her walls were to be thrown down, her gates burnt with fire, her king brought down to Sheol. Babylon did fall, not to the Medes, but to the Persians; and the conquest of the city was peaceful, with no bloodshed and no destruction.

These examples could be multiplied by the hundreds. What they prove is that while the prophet does foresee the future, he foresees it within the limitations imposed by his personal, historical, and cultural background.<sup>19</sup> Messianic prophecy is no exception to this rule.

In Jer. 33, 14-26 occurs the prophecy of a messianic king: "a just shoot for David; he shall do what is right and just in the land. . . . Never shall David lack a successor on the throne of the house of Israel." Coupled with this is the equally categorical statement: "Nor shall priests of Levi ever be lacking, to offer holocausts before me, to burn cereal offerings, and to sacrifice victims." It is quite evident that to the prophet (not Jeremiah himself, but one of his disciples) the perpetuity of the Levitical priesthood is taken as much for granted as the perpetuity of the Davidic kingship. It is all very well to say, as we rightly do, that the perpetual priesthood was fulfilled in a way not contemplated by the prophet; so was the messianic kingship fulfilled in a way he did not contemplate. This being so, how probable is it that we should find in prophecy details of the Messiah's birthplace, and the casual information that he would be buried in a rich man's tomb?

2. *The nature of messianology.* The limitations inherent in the prophetic vision result in a multiformity of OT messianism that is blandly ignored by the parallel-text argument, but which cannot be ignored by any apologetics that proposes to argue realistically from promise to fulfillment. In its broadest possible sense, what we call messianism is hardly distinguishable from Israel's conviction of its

<sup>19</sup> Cf. S.T., 2-2, 171, 6 ad 2: "Quandoque vero prophetica revelatio est impressa similitudo divinae praescientiae, prout scilicet cognoscit ordinem causarum ad effectus. Et tunc quandoque aliter evenit quam prophetatur. Nec tamen prophetiae subest falsum; nam sensus prophetiae est quod inferiorum causarum dispositio, sive naturalium sive humanorum actuum, hoc habet ut talis effectus eveniat."

divine election and of God's continuing providence. Within this framework, the most varied conclusions emerged, all of which contribute to the messianic expectation, all of which find their fulfillment in Christ. Christianity is the fulfillment of the Israel of the old covenant, not of a few of its ideas.

By ignoring the varied forms of messianism and concentrating attention on a supposed messianology that developed only from generation to generation, here with an additional hint by a court poet, here with a further detail from an unknown prophet, we arrive at an obvious caricature of the OT and of the OT religion and revelation. In this acceptance, the millions who lived and died within the old covenant would have served no function other than to point up the lack of a redeemer. It would result that no demand of faith could reasonably have been made of anyone during Israel's long history, if there is no messianism properly speaking until the OT exists complete, to serve as the source of the selected texts which "omnes in Jesu Nazareno et in eo solo fuere adimpletae."

Yet there are wide areas of the OT in which there is no personal messianism whatever. If the monolithic messianism of the parallel columns were based on the historical development of revelation, we should expect to find the most clearly defined ideas about the Messiah and His fulfillment in the last of the OT books. How little this expectation is justified, will be apparent to anyone who pages the books of Wisdom, Sirach, and Ecclesiastes. The author of Wisdom, who has accepted the Hellenistic conception of the soul, believes in an extraterrestrial blessed immortality; there is no room in his thinking for either a resurrection or for personal messianism. Ben Sira, on the other hand, sticks to an older view of human destiny that explicitly rejects a blessed immortality (cf. 41, 4); neither does he contemplate a resurrection, and he retains only faint echoes of the messianic hope. Ecclesiastes is skeptical alike of Wisdom's optimism and of Sirach's complacency with the tried-and-true; he does "not doubt about God's existence and power, but rather concerning his readiness to intervene radically in history or in the individual human life. . . . He knows that the world was made and is watched over by God, but the tragedy of man is that he cannot achieve contact with this divine Being, which is too deeply

hidden from him."<sup>20</sup> In such a perspective, there is no place for messianism.

The artificial conception of OT messianology as a single process of development supposedly reaches a major plateau when the messianic hope has been "narrowed down" to the house of David by means of the dynastic oracle delivered by the prophet Nathan. Yet in none of the authentic words of the prophets Amos and Hosea is there any reference to a Davidic Messiah. This does not mean that they have nothing to contribute to messianism, but they preached in a northern Israel where the dynastic oracle had no relevance. Davidic messianism is found in Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah, Judahite prophets all. But the Judahite Ezekiel, though he too speaks of a restoration of the Davidic line, appears to be a man whose heart is hardly in what he says. It is difficult to see in "my servant David" (34, 23) the messianic king foretold by Isaiah, since Ezekiel carefully withholds from him the royal title and circumscribes his prerogatives, lest the kingship once more should fall into the evil ways that had contributed to Israel's downfall. "His references to David are somewhat automatic, and they lack the warmth that Isaiah gave them. His messianism is collective. Essentially, his true Messiah is the renewed temple."<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Obadiah 21 explicitly restricts future kingship to Yahweh alone. Yet Ezekiel has written a vital page in messianism of which Christ is also the fulfillment: his very minimization of the kingship is part of the prophetic spiritualization of messianology.<sup>22</sup>

Above in connection with Jer. 33, 14-26 we saw that the perpetuity of the Levitical priesthood was coupled with that of the Davidic kingship in the later prophetic mind. Such is certainly the messianism of Ezekiel; as just noted, the Levitical succession is far more important to him than the Davidic. Levitical messianism is the only messianism of Ben Sira (45, 24f.). It is part of the messianic viewpoint of the Chronicler. In Judaism it gave rise eventually to the notion of two Messiahs, the priestly and the royal,

<sup>20</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des AT I* (Munich 1957) 452ff.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Steinmann, *Le prophète Ezéchiel et les débuts de l'exil* (Paris 1953) 263.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des AT I* (Stuttgart 1957) 327-329.

the Messiah of Aaron and the Messiah of David. This is the messianic doctrine of the Qumrân community, with which it has become evident that primitive Christianity had much in common. There is little room for this messianism in the proof-text argument of apologetics; but room must be made for it in any argument that sets out to deal with the messianic expectation realistically.

Still within the area of the prophet's limited vision, we must face the fact that the royal Messiah of prophet and psalmist was something rather different from Christ the King. While it is true that the language they use of the king is the result of a messianic concept of the kingship, it nevertheless remains that the language is applicable to the reigning or about-to-reign monarch. We have no right to presume without necessity that the prophet was looking for the fulfillment of his prophecy anywhere but in the immediate future. As G. E. Wright has said, "the dividing line between the historical and the eschatological conceptions of kingship is very difficult, if not impossible, to draw; the second was simply the extension of the first to the age of God's fulfillment of his covenanted promises."<sup>23</sup> Modern critics have tried, without achieving any generally accepted formula, to define the point of this division, to determine when Israelite messianic thinking became metahistorical—when, in other words, it became apparent that the existing dynasty was not, in the normal working of divine providence, to fulfill the promises. But regardless of the point of division, we must never forget that the messianism of the OT was that of a people, not of a church, and that the Messiah was conceived of as an Israelite king. The justice and judgment which he was to administer were those that had been habitually denied an oppressed people under faithless rulers. Furthermore, the eschatology of the OT is earthbound. When Klausner writes<sup>24</sup> that our Lord's words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn. 18, 36), "cannot be imagined in the mouth of a Jewish Messiah," he surely minimizes the potentialities of his own people; still, the fact remains, such a Messiah was not being expected by Israel, the prophets included. National messianism did not exclude spiritual messianism—that is not the point. The

<sup>23</sup> *The OT Against Its Environment* (London 1950) 64f.

<sup>24</sup> *The Messianic Idea*, 392.

point is, however spiritual the messianic concept was, it was also national in its aspirations, and these aspirations were not fulfilled in the messianism of Jesus. St. Luke shows the Apostles themselves, after the experience of the Resurrection but before Pentecost, sharing this national hope: "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1, 6).

Associated with this is the prevalence in the messianic prophecies of the abundant material blessings that are to be the characteristic of the messianic age. These are part of the prophets' mental framework in thinking of the return of the ideal conditions of the earthly paradise. How literally these details were taken is evidenced by the gusto with which Judaism enlarged on them in its later writings. We can hardly deny that the notion of a renewal of nature was no less real to the prophets than their notion of what the original paradisiacal condition had been; we have no right to dismiss as so much foolishness the Jewish acceptance of their words at their face value. If we have a better understanding of the meaning of these prophecies than the Jews did, we must also recognize that it is a better understanding than the prophets themselves had.

Much more could be said about the varieties of the messianic expectation. OT messianism is not a single, wholly consistent, progressively developing, exclusively spiritual doctrine that has anticipated the Christology of the NT. It can be made this only at the expense of ignoring many of its important emphases and imposing on much of the remainder an understanding that has come only through the enlightenment of Christian faith. We cannot survey its aberrant elements and aberrant developments without acknowledging the disparate and limited concepts of the very authors from whom we draw our knowledge of the messianic hope.

The confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi was not the casual affirmation one might think possible from the practice of lining up a half dozen psalm and prophetic texts which are called the proof from prophecy. Peter's confession, bolstered though it was by signs and the living Presence, was a step into the unknown, an act of faith. It is presented as such in the Gospel. I fear that in our apologetics we have sometimes given the impression that "Thou art



the Christ!" was something less than a wonderful discovery, the acceptance of revelation.

### § 3. PROMISE AND FULFILLMENT

In the preceding two sections I have often adopted a more negatively critical tone than I might otherwise be disposed to use were I not dealing with the apologetical use of the OT. Apologetics must be prepared to cope with such negative criticism, since it addresses itself not to the man of faith but the man seeking faith.

According to the Vatican Council, for such a man seeking faith "voluit Deus cum internis Spiritus Sancti auxiliis externa iungi revelationis suae argumenta, facta scilicet divina, atque imprimis miracula et prophetias, quae cum Dei omnipotentiam et infinitam scientiam luculenter commonstrent, divinae revelationis signa sunt certissima et omnium intelligentiae accommodata."<sup>25</sup> The argument from messianic prophecy that would serve as such an adjunct to divine grace, I would humbly suggest, ought to be formulated in the following terms.

1. The point of departure should be not the OT expectation, but the NT realization. The reasons for this procedure are of both the practical and the theoretical order. (a) As far as the practical side of the question is concerned, we would do well to be guided by the advice of a master of apologetics, Dr. Frank Sheed, in his suggestions for the handling of analogous arguments.<sup>26</sup> Beginning with the prophecies, as I have indicated above, will involve endless discussion over the exact meaning of texts, discussion which, if honestly pursued, will as often as not end in a *non liquet*. Furthermore, the apologist does not always possess the exegetical training required for such a study. (b) This procedure is the only sound one theoretically. As I hope I have brought out, no OT writer adequately foresaw the NT fulfillment. Thus an argument that proceeds from the OT to the NT will inevitably commit the fallacy of having more in its conclusion than is contained in its premises. Such an argument will depend on an arbitrary selection of texts

<sup>25</sup> DB 1790.

<sup>26</sup> *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines* (New York 1943) 57-60 (on the Marks of the Church); cf. suggestions on the handling of prophecy, 209-212.

that have been chosen because they "fit." In view of the variety of the messianic expectation, and given another arbitrary selection of texts, it will be just as possible to "prove" that Jesus was not the Messiah as to prove that He was.

2. Not only must we begin with the NT fulfillment, we must also begin with the recognition that it is in every way greater than the OT promise. Jesus is not the OT Messiah, He is much more. He conceived of Himself as the culmination of the messianic hope, but in a way that far transcended anything that could have been in the imagination of an OT prophet. With characteristic modernity, John Henry Newman observed the implications of this fact nearly ninety years ago:

I think it observable that, though our Lord claims to be the Messiah, He shows so little of conscious dependence on the old Scriptures, or of anxiety to fulfill them; as if it became Him, who was the Lord of the Prophets, to take His own course, and to leave the prophets to adjust themselves to Him as they could, and not to be careful to accommodate Himself to them. The Evangelists do indeed show some such natural zeal in His behalf, and thereby illustrate what I notice in Him by the contrast. They betray an earnestness to trace in His Person and history the accomplishment of prophecy, as when they discern it in His return from Egypt, in His life at Nazareth, in the gentleness and tenderness of His mode of teaching, and in the various minute occurrences of His passion;

—and for the evangelists, we have noted, this was confirmatory argumentation, after they had recognized Him for what He was in His resurrection and glorification;—

but He Himself goes straight forward on His way, of course claiming to be the Messiah of the Prophets, still not so much recurring to past prophecies, as uttering new ones, with an antithesis not unlike that which is so impressive in the Sermon on the Mount, when He first says, "It has been said by them of old time," and then adds, "But I say unto you." Another striking instance of this is seen in the Names under which He spoke of Himself, which have little or no foundation in any thing which was said of Him beforehand in the Jewish Scriptures. They speak of Him as Ruler, Prophet, King, Hope of Israel, Offspring of Judah, and Messiah; and His Evangelists and Dis-

ciples call Him Master, Lord, Prophet, Son of David, King of Israel, King of the Jews, and Messiah or Christ; but He Himself, though, I repeat, He acknowledges these titles as His own, especially that of the Christ, chooses as His special designations these two, Son of God and Son of Man, the latter of which is only once given Him in the Old Scriptures, and by which He corrects any narrow Judaic interpretation of them; while the former was never distinctly used of Him before He came, and seems first to have been announced to the world by the Angel Gabriel and St. John the Baptist. In these two Names, Son of God and Son of Man, declaratory of the two natures of Emmanuel, He separates Himself from the Jewish Dispensation, in which He was born, and inaugurates the New Covenant.<sup>27</sup>

Jesus did not proclaim Himself the Messiah, He permitted the proclamation; there is much significance in this distinction. Never did He call Himself by the most characteristic messianic title, Son of David. He had not come to be merely what the prophets had looked for; it was not the prophets' ideas but their ideals that He fulfilled. Both the synoptic Gospels and John testify that He most characteristically thought of Himself as Son of Man, and today none but the most hypercritical will question this datum of the Gospel. (Parenthetically, one may note how the common apologetical argument from prophecy to fulfillment tends to ignore the figure of the Son of Man at the expense of ignoring Jesus' own proclamation of Himself. The reason for this, of course, is that the Son of Man is not a "messianic" title.) The Son of Man enters Jewish soteriological thinking from Dn. 7, where he evidently stands for Israel. But—and this is the point of Jesus' identification of Himself with the figure—he is a glorified Israel, an Israel that has attained salvation. Judaism had not made the association of the Son of Man with the Messiah (the association in the apocryphal Book of Enoch is still *sub iudice* as a possible Christian interpolation); the synthesis made by our Lord was to enrich the messianic concept with spiritual reality and to dissociate it firmly from earthly and political connotations.<sup>28</sup> Along with the figure of the Son of Man,

<sup>27</sup> *A Grammar of Assent* (New York 1947) 341f. Cf. Jaak Seynaeve, W. F., *Cardinal Newman's Doctrine on Holy Scripture* (Louvain 1953) 279-287.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Max Meinertz, *Theologie des NT I* (Bonn 1950) 162f.; Reginald H.

actually as part of it, is our Lord's proclamation of Himself as the Servant of the Lord of the Second Isaiah. Again, the synthesis was Jesus' own, it had not been made by the Jews.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the prophet may have known of the Servant—whether to him he was a collectivity or an individual, real or ideal—, in Jesus' life, death, and glorification he achieved his ultimate, incarnate reality.

In uniting in Himself and refining the fragmentary utterances of OT prophecy—and, be it noted, in discarding some of them—our Lord did a unique thing, a thing as unique as His own person. His was a work of fulfillment—never before or after has fulfillment been so complete or so satisfying—and it was a fulfillment that the prophets would not have disavowed, though they could not possibly have foreseen it without being Christians before their time.

3. How, then, do we construct the bridge between the prophetic utterances and their fulfillment: this is the crucial question. The answer, we have seen, is not to be found in pretending that there is any equation as to the letter. The equation must rather be sought in the spirit which animated the prophecies. This means that we must really understand what the prophets were concerned with in their expectation, and we must be able to see that Jesus Christ, as He proclaimed Himself, was and is the insurpassable realization of their hopes. "When men saw that He fulfilled so gloriously, and so finally, all that God had promised by His prophets of old, they found that they could do no other than confess 'My Lord and my God.' . . . Because He fulfills all that God had revealed of His own mind, will, purpose and nature under the Old Covenant, we

Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus* (London 1954) 95-108. Mowinckel, 346-450, in his exhaustive treatment makes the suggestion of a non-Jewish origin of the Son of Man figure, part of our Lord's universalism.

<sup>29</sup> On Jesus' identification of himself as the Servant, cf. Zimmerli-Jeremias, *The Servant of God* (London 1957 = *pais theou* in *ThWNT* V) 98-104. Jesus' work of selection, combination, and transformation of the OT ideals is well treated by H. Riesenfeld, "The mythological background of NT christology," Davies-Daube, *The Background of the NT and its Eschatology* (Cambridge 1955) 81-95. Cf. also Eamonn O'Doherty, "The organic development of messianic revelation," *CBQ* 19 (1957) 22-24.

affirm Jesus Christ to be the unique and supreme Revelation of God." <sup>30</sup>

(a) The prophets stand firmly on Israelite soil, and their Messiah is an Israelite king. But it must be remembered, first of all, that the figure of the king in ancient Near Eastern society is not the merely political one of a modern secular ruler. The king is the anointed of the Lord and His representative, the one who furthers God's plans. What those plans might be in the final analysis, the prophets could only surmise in part. "No one can ever precisely and concretely predict what God will do." They shared the aspirations of their people, and they expressed these aspirations in varied conventional ways. But they always knew that God was not bound by their conventions. They are fully cognizant that the word they speak is God's, and that "God's word is always filled with the mystery of His Being." Thus it can be said that, however earthbound and national their expression of their hopes, they themselves expected that their fulfillment would be something greater.<sup>31</sup>

(b) Secondly, Israel the nation was to the prophets Israel the people of God. In the very earliest of the classic prophets (the prophet Amos) we have already the doctrine of the "remnant," a doctrine that is older than the prophets, which from the first enunciates the truth that God's concern is with the Israel of faith.<sup>32</sup> Only history itself could reveal to the prophets what form the remnant was finally to take. Jeremiah and Ezekiel identified it with Israel in exile, and they looked for a new covenant on Palestinian soil that would be all that the former covenant had failed to be. Their hopes were only partly realized, for the restored Israel reverted to most of the vices that the prophets had condemned through the centuries. But Ezekiel's clear proclamation of the principle of individual responsibility, coupled with the diaspora and postexilic proselytism, marked in principle the transition from

<sup>30</sup> John McIntyre, *The Christian Doctrine of History* (Grand Rapids 1957) 49f.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. J. van der Ploeg, O.P., "Profetie en vervulling," *Studia Catholica* 28 (1953) 81-93, esp. 84-89.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. R. de Vaux, O.P., "Le 'reste d'Israël' d'après les prophètes," *RB* 42 (1933) 526-539.

the Israel of the flesh to the Israel of the spirit. When Jesus announced that the new covenant had finally come to pass in a form that wholly transcended national distinctions, He had brought prophetic teaching to its ultimate term, in a development that is throughout organically connected.<sup>33</sup> Better than they themselves knew, the prophets had foretold the kingdom of God.

(c) Because of this genuine organic development we are not dealing with typology, a mere repetition of patterns, but with fulfillment. When Jesus combined in Himself the many disparate ideals of prophetic expectation, He did so in a manner no prophet had ever foreseen, but in a manner that is a perfect realization of their best hopes. There is nothing in His fulfillment that the prophets would have refused to acknowledge as such a realization. The time of fulfillment had been as much hidden from the prophets as from anyone else. That they may have expected the coming of the messianic age in their own lifetimes no more conditions their prophecies than the fact that the first Christians, including writers of the NT books, looked for the return of the Lord in their lifetimes conditions the ultimate fulfillment of that expectation. Jesus appeared at a time which, as we are informed by contemporary history and the recently recovered Qumrân literature, was alive with the immediacy of fulfillment. No one else of that time, no one before it or after it, has the remotest claim to be compared with this scion of David as the fulfillment of the prophetic hope.<sup>34</sup> Neither are we to look for

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Fuller, 64-78; Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London 1958) 40-73.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Klausner, 395: "R. Akiba proclaimed Bar-Cochba as Messiah, even though he was not of the house of David, had done no miracles, and was not even distinguished for great piety. Bar-Cochba's great spirit of heroism was sufficient *in itself* to make him Messiah in the eyes of the greatest of the Tannaim, R. Akiba. Yet we know that before the time of Bar-Cochba descent from the house of David ('son of David') was considered so essential a qualification of the Messiah that the emperors Vespasian, Domitian, and Trajan ordered that any Jew claiming to be of the house of David should be sought out and executed. If, therefore, R. Akiba and the greater part of the Jewish people saw in Bar-Cochba, who is nowhere said to be of the house of David, the King-Messiah, it must be assumed that between the Destruction and the revolt of Bar-Cochba (70-132 C.E.) the political element in the Messianic idea was dominant."

another. One needs no bias in favor of Christianity to concede that a more exalted conception of fulfillment than Christ's is unthinkable.

4. Finally, I would observe with Father van der Ploeg that the earliest apostolic appeal to prophecy, to the extent that we are acquainted with it from the Acts of the Apostles, joined this appeal to the preaching of the Resurrection. It was the Resurrection that proved to the Apostles that Jesus was the promised Redeemer, and in the light of this knowledge they saw the fulfillment of prophecy.<sup>35</sup> I have said at the outset that we must begin with the realization if we would see how it was foreshadowed in the OT. Here I would add that we cannot expect the argument from prophecy to stand alone without the support of the tremendous mysteries revealed in Jesus Christ. It can never be a demonstration. It must always remain one of the external aids to the divine grace without which no man can solve the problem, "What think you of Christ?" These conditions always supposed, I believe that it can be made a convincing argument along the lines I have suggested, "omnium intelligentiae accommodatum."

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. van der Ploeg, 89ff.