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THE CONCEPT OF PROPHET IN NEW TESTAMENT

A thesis presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary
Department of the New Testament

In Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
Master of Sacred Theology

by
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Approved by :
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Paul H. Bultman

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INTRODUCTION

I cannot but consider it an honor to be able to submit this thesis at Concordia Seminary. I value it not only for the contents of this work but also because it marks my year of studies here.

In the German universities the prophets were looked upon as "mad fellows". Indeed any idea of God revealing Himself to men was frowned upon and I was left with doubts. The material of this thesis has convinced me that God takes great care to reveal Himself to man and that we may place our trust in His revelation of Himself. So, by this work, my whole Christian faith has been more firmly established.

For this work of strengthening I wish to thank Concordia Theological Seminary. My work here has proved more valuable than much of the training I received in the German universities. Especially I thank Dr. W. Arndt and Dr. F. E. Mayer for their guidance. I consider myself very fortunate to be able to sit under such men.

I. ETHYMOLOGY OF "PROPHET"

Προφήτης is compounded from πρὸ and φημί. It apparently emphasizes the idea of speaking out or uttering.

Thus φημί belongs to the root φη which gives it the common radical sense of to bring forth into the light, to make known, or to declare. It is interesting that historical writers use φημί when quoting the words of anyone by prefixing it to the quotation. The verb is also interjected into the recorded speech of another.

Πρὸ involves the notion of 'on' or 'forth' and serves to emphasize the idea of utterance already inherent in φημί. This preposition is from the same root as the Latin pro, German fur, vor, English fro (forward), fore (forefront). It does not primarily convey the idea of foretelling (utterance of prediction) but rather, in this connection, means 'to speak forth', 'to utter out'.

The etymology of this word, then, points to a prophet as one who proclaims the word of another - proclaims (utters) a revelation.

Thayer: p. 651

Lindell and Scott: A Greek English Lexicon 1871, p. 1750

Robertson and Davis: A New Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament 1933, p. 260.

II. CLASSICAL GREEK CONCEPT

The noun προφήτης is used with at least three meanings in Classical Greek. The first class is most closely allied with the New Testament usage. Thus Euripides (who was born about 480 B.C. and lived in the most triumphant period of Athenian history) uses προφήτης in his tragedies as the term for one who speaks for a god and interprets his will to men. In Rhesus (c. 450) - probably his earliest tragedy - v. 972 speaks of Orpheus as the prophet of Bacchus, who knew the truth. In Orestes (408) v. 364, προφήτης has the same meaning. Here Glaucus is the prophet of Nereus, who revealed to Menelaus the truth that his brother Agamemnon was dead. The clear significance of these references pertains to men speaking for (πρὸ-φημί) a god who had a knowledge not ordinarily possessed by men.

Plato uses προφήτης as equivalent to "mouthpiece." In the Republic, Book II, 366 B., the prophets are the sons of gods - i.e., being in contact with the gods, they know the truth and can reveal it. Aeschylus in the "Eumenides," v. 19, states the case still more emphatically. The prophets not only originated from gods, but were themselves gods. The first prophet was Γαῖα (Earth). The fourth in succession is the Delphic Apollo whom Zeus set upon the prophetic throne. His three predecessors were not called προφήτης but πρῶτο-μεν-τις (the first seers). Aeschylus ("Eumenides") names the Delphic Apollo with the phrase, Διὸς προφήτης δίκῃ Λοβίας πατρὸς

(the spokesman of Father Zeus is Apollo). But he also uses προφήτης to refer to a speaker of the Manteis, τὸ μὲν κλέος σοῦ μαντικὸν πεπεσμένον ἤμεν. προφῆτης δ' οὐτινὰς μαρτυροῦμεν. (Ag. 1098) "We have heard of your fame to be able to interpret the will of God, but we are not looking for prophet."

It seems clear that the προφήτης is important because of the one for whom he speaks. His own speech is not what entitles him to the nomen προφήτης. This is clearly illustrated by the second class of usages. We see this very clearly in "Euripides," who uses προφήτης to mean "to be a speaker." In the "Bacchanals" Teiresias the prophet is old and blind, so Cadmus is his-προφήτης- speaker (ἐγὼ προφήτης σοι λόγων γενήσομαι) "I will become a speaker of your word." Apparently the prophetic message gives Cadmus his title.

The usage of προφήτης as one who speaks for one who is not a god is further illustrated by the prophets in the house of Paris who were only speakers for this house. In Aeschylus ("Agamemnon" 408) we read, πολλὰ δ' ἔστεινον τοῦ ἐνέποντες δόμων προφῆται → "The prophets of the houses bewail many things, saying thus...."

The third class is those who make themselves speakers. A better example than the one of Paris' house is in Pindar in the fragment 150. Careful study of this passage makes this clear that this prophet is self appointed (μαντεύσομαι, προφητεύσω δ' ἐγώ . "O Muse, deliver your oracle! I will interpret it."

The poet here asks the Muse (not a God) for the privilege of being her speaker, her prophet. He was not chosen to be one, but he tries on his own account to become a prophet, or rather, a speaker for the Muse. The next section which deals with the Old Testament background of προφήτης will show how alien this self seeking is to the Biblical prophet.

Briefly summarized Classical Greek knows various prophets. Some of them were considered as being able to foretell the future, and were therefore held in high esteem.

They were gods or the sons of gods. Others had obtained a better position in their household by being the speaker of the house. The third party - as in Pindar - was the self-appointed prophet.

III. OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT

The overwhelming majority of the cases of the word in the New Testament are either quoted from the Old Testament., or name one of the Old Testament prophets. I have not yet analyzed the meaning of such prophets. All the prophets of the old covenant mentioned in the New Testament writings were men chosen by God to be His speakers -

שׂוֹמֵר

In every account of a prophet's call which we possess, the initiative is with God. In Exodus 4, 10 - 16, we find Moses striving to escape the hard task to which Jehovah is calling him. His first excuse is that he is not skilled in public speaking, and so is not fitted to be an ambassador to Pharaoh. Jehovah assures him that He will go with him. "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." Moses is still unwilling, so Jehovah relieves him of the responsibility of speech and tells him that Aaron his brother shall speak for him. "And thou shalt speak unto him and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth and teach you what ye shall say. And he shall be thy שׂוֹמֵר - spokeman - 'prophet' - unto the people; and he shall be thee instead of a mouth and thou shall be to him instead of God."

The conception of prophet here is that the prophet is God's "mouth." Only God is able to call prophets. Aaron, who is a prophet to Moses, sees in him God, as it were; he is to him "instead of God." More clearly we see it in

Exodus 7, 1-2: Jehovah said to Moses, "See I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee." In the light of these and similar statements (Jeremiah 1, 9; Deut. 18, 18), it is quite clear that the prophet was looked upon as one who declared the will of Jehovah in Jehovah's stead to the people.

The genuine prophet seems very reluctant to become a prophet at all, and discharges the function only under protest and through a divine inward compulsion. Not only is this true of Moses, but also of Jeremiah and others. The same kind of compulsion is intended when a prophet, receiving the prophetic message, says: "The hand of Jehovah was upon me" (I Kings, 18, 46), or "came upon me," or "fell upon" such and such man.¹ And others like: "the spirit of God came upon," or "rested," or "Spake by," or "fell upon the prophet."²

The divine initiative is further illustrated when we find that a prophet may have to wait for Jehovah's answer to a question, as Jeremiah waited for ten days (Jer. 42, 7). From this passage we see that the prophets were not always inspired, and at the time when they did not prophesy they were ordinary men. Only the descent of the "hand of Jehovah" or the "Spirit of Jehovah" upon a man or group of men makes them prophets. The Spirit of Jehovah, as I mentioned, is often called the cause of a prophecy, as in

1. II Kings, 3, 15; Ezek. 1, 3; 3, 14; 8, 1.
2. Numbers 11, 25 f.; 24, 2; Isaiah 48, 16; 61, 1; Joel 2, 28;
Ezek. 2, 2; 11, 5.

II Samuel, 23, 2, "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me." To define this spirit I will quote Isaiah 63, 10-11; "They rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. Where is he that put his Holy Spirit in the midst of them?" The Spirit here is personified. It is talked of as a person who is sent out by God and acts. Job says: "A spirit passed before my face," (Job 4, 15). It is somebody who is independent and at the same time sent out by Jehovah. By way of definition we might say that "this Spirit who inspires the prophets is presented to us as a unique being, having personal characteristics, at once identical with and different from Jehovah."

God uses prophets as his earthly representatives. Through their mouth He speaks and to them He reveals His plans and tells them what to do. Amos 3, 7 "Surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His counsel unto His servants, the prophets." Willingly or unwillingly they are His servants, and they trust Him. Daniel was able to accomplish that his God be worshipped and feared throughout Darius' empire because he "trusted in his God" - Dan 6, 25.

God on the other hand did not forsake His prophets. They felt His presence. The best example for that is the prophetic experience of Jeremiah. In chapter 15 and 20 he expresses the most intimate consciousness of the divine presence which we can find in the Old Testament.

One more important aspect of the prophet's function consists in the "liberation" of a word of God, which is

objectively powerful far beyond the personal range of the prophet's activity. Once spoken and current, His word is, as we might say, depersonalized, and enters upon its own independent history. God Himself takes care of the further development and fulfillment of the spoken word. Naturally the word of a prophet as a "man of God" has peculiar power beyond that of other men, because it is described as the word "which shall not return to Him void" - Isaiah 55, 11. A number of comparisons describe the objective power of such a divine utterance. It is a destroying fire, before which the people are but as fuel (Jer. 5, 15; Hos. 6, 5). "It is a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces," - Jer 23, 29. In its permanence it is contrasted with the withering grass and the fading flower (Jer. 15, 19). The word of a prophet is in fact something more than only a said word. It is an act which cannot be undone. It enters the arena of history and it will be fulfilled.

I have already mentioned that the prophets were ordinary men when they were not prophesying. They were consciously and continuously waiting to be called by Jehovah for new orders, for the Spirit of God. Hosea 9, 7, uses the term "man of the Spirit" as an equivalent to "prophet." Ezekiel frequently speaks of the Spirit as entering into him. Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah use different terms. Amos 7, 14 f.; 8, 1, simply says of his call "Jehovah took me," and of his visions "Jehovah made me see." Isaiah describes the compulsive power of which he was conscious as "the hand of Jehovah" (Is. 8, 11). Jeremiah says "the word of Jehovah

came to me" - 1, 4. He was "God's mouth" as Jehovah said of him, - 15, 19. He and the others were not responsible for the words they were uttering. Because of that we might rightly describe the revelation of the law and the prophets as the word of God spoken through His chosen men.

Because the New Testament frequently refers to these prophets we shall deal with the New Testament evaluation of them in the section immediately following. Our New Testament study especially of Matthew will emphasize of what great importance the predictions of future events is in the concept of prophet. Any student can multiply examples of this phenomenon from the Old Testament prophets.

IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT

A. REFERENCES TO THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

As we have seen, the term προφήτης did not originate in the New Testament. It was a known expression in Classical Greek. Naturally, the meaning of προφήτης is not always the same in the New Testament as in Classical Greek. However, we shall find some similarity. Before the final conclusion about the concept of this word can be reached we must check systematically every occurrence in the New Testament. Indeed, this is the most important part of our study.

In Matthew 1, 22, we read: Διὰ τοῦ προφήτου "through the prophet." The preposition διὰ shows that the prophet was the means by which the occurrence was announced. The prophet is the organ, the mediator of God's plan. God Himself is the source and cause, whose plans are expressed διὰ τοῦ προφήτου. It means that God gave to the prophet the command and the words which he proclaimed. The prophet received the words spoken by the Lord τὸ εἰρηθεῖν ὑπὸ κυρίου. It was not a chance or a human plan, but it came ὑπὸ κυρίου "from God." Διὰ is the antithesis to ὑπὸ and denotes, as we said, the organ, whereas ὑπὸ denotes the source and author of the prophecy. Matthew's use of prophecy presupposes that the divine plan existed before it was revealed through the prophet. Accordingly the prophet

has nothing to do with the originating of the plan, but his reason is employed only in transmitting the already existing plan.

The *ἵνα* is here the purpose particle with the meaning "in order to." It puts the occurrence into the final stage. It started in the Old Testament, but here it ended. *ἵνα πηρῶσθῃ* shows that something would occur or is occurring which was promised in the past. The "fulfilling" indicates a promise which was made in the past. Perhaps it is not necessary to stress this, but to me it is of great importance, because in this case we can investigate when and through whom God revealed His plan. The prophecy quoted here was made by Isaiah (7, 14). For our purposes it is not necessary to discuss the contents of the prophecy made by Isaiah, but we must stress the line of connection between the Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament fulfillment. I shall deal with this more fully later.

As we said, "fulfilling" points to a past promise which in this case has occurred. We may complete this *τοῦτο ὅλον γέγονεν* with *ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου* "by God." God was not only the author of the prophecy which He revealed through the mouth of Isaiah, but He is as well the executor. He Himself takes care of the fulfillment of His plans.

Matthew 2, 5: *οὕτως γὰρ γέγραπται διὰ τοῦ προφήτου .*
"It was written by the prophet." *διὰ* indicates "agency."
The prophet was not the absolute, independent revealer, but he was only the agent of God and acted only as such.

The Scribes looked upon the word of a prophet as a certain source of factual information.

In Matthew 2, 15, we have the same sentence and structure as in 1, 22. God is the author and executor of His plan, as revealed by the prophet. The $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \pi\lambda\upsilon\sigma\omega\delta\eta$ refers to the flight of Jesus into Egypt and His stay there in order that the prophecy of Hosea 11, 1, might be fulfilled. Matthew emphasizes God's fulfillment of His prediction by relating, that the angel of the Lord caused Joseph to flee to Egypt. It is God Himself who fulfills that which He reveals through His prophets.

Matthew 2, 23:

"In order that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled." We are confronted here with a new construction. The $\delta\omicron\pi\omega\varsigma$ with the subjunctive $\pi\lambda\upsilon\sigma\omega\delta\eta$ means that, according to God's purpose, the prophecy was brought to pass or was proved by Christ's settling in Nazareth.¹ The validity of the prophet's message is clearly connected with God's future action in history. Robertson² thinks that the $\delta\omicron\pi\omega\varsigma$ clause has the same meaning as the $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ clause in 1, 22. Matthew probably had Isaiah 11, 1, Jeremiah 23, 5, and Zechariah 3, 8, and 6, 12, in mind, and did not give the collective quotation as he assumed that this prophecy was known. Accordingly, the $\delta\iota\delta$ phrase is the same as in Matthew 1, 22. The prophets were the mouth-pieces of God and were revealing God's plans.

1. Theyer: N.T. Greek Dictionary, P. 450.
2. Robertson: N.T. Grammar, P.

Matthew 3, 3: διὰ ἁγίου τοῦ προφήτου "through Isaiah the prophet." Isaiah is the mouthpiece of God who revealed God's own plan (Isaiah 40, 3). Matthew gives here his own explanation, or, better, he makes his own remark about the appearance of John the Baptist: "for this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah." The γὰρ merely shows that John the Baptist took the near coming of the Kingdom of Heaven as the cause of his preaching of repentance. John was the crying voice about whom Isaiah prophesied. The ἔτιν , v. 3, is historical present, and his appearance is a proof that the Kingdom of Heaven is near (Matthew 4, 14). The meaning and structure of this passage is the same as Matthew 1, 22. Isaiah 8, 23, and 9, 12, are quoted.

Matthew 5, 12: "For thus they persecuted the prophets before you." Christ speaks about the prophets of the Old Testament. Through this parallel Christ shows a connection or equality between the Old Testament prophets and His apostles. The τοῦς πρὸ ὑμῶν proves this statement. Jesus tells His disciples that the Old Testament prophets are their predecessors in profession. οὕτως indicates it clearly enough. It means "eodem modo" -- "in the same way." It is a characteristic of a prophet that he has to suffer persecution for being a worker for his God and proclaiming Him and His plans -- for being a prophet.

Matthew 5, 17: ὅτι ἦλθον κἀναρῶσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοῦς προφήτας "that I came to abrogate the law or the prophets." Christ

divides the Old Testament into two parts: ὁ νόμος - πῆλιπ is one, and οἱ προφῆται - οὐρανὸς ἰσραὴλ is the other. Ὁ νόμος is the Pentateuch, and οἱ προφῆται, all the other Old Testament writings. According to Strack,¹ this distinction was not known in the old Jewish literature. But it prevails in the New Testament. According to him, it would be difficult to arrive at the conclusion that such distinction was known at Jesus' time. Whether we agree with him or not, Jesus distinguishes between these two parts. It is the only place in the New Testament where a disjunctive particle ἢ is used in speaking of the law and prophets. The ἢ is never used in the meaning of a conjunctive καὶ. The ἢ is always used as a disjunctive particle, "to distinguish one thing from another in words of the same construction."² Christ did not come to destroy the one or the other part of the Old Testament. He does not look upon the prophets as if they were only completing and finishing the ethical side of the law. To Him both are important. The mention of prophets with the law shows that He meant the Old Testament as a whole, the entire revelation. The fulfillment (πληρῶν τῶν προφητῶν) exists in accomplishment of all that which the prophets have revealed about the future of the Kingdom of God. "Πληρῶν is to finish, fulfill, accomplish; that is, a complete realization of all which till now was only a promise and prophesy."³ In that regard, Christ has fulfilled the

1. H.L. Strack & P. Billerbeck: Kommentar zum N.T., 1922, P. 240; T. Zahn: Evangelium des Matthaus, 1903, P. 207.

2. Wiener: Grammar, P. 413 f.;
Theyer: Dictionary, P. 275.

3. Carl F. Keil: Commentar über das Evangelium des Matthaus, 1877, P. 151.

law and prophets; that is, the whole Old Testament.

In Matthew 7, 12, Matthew speaks about "ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται" "the law and the prophets." The particle καὶ has a conjunctive meaning. It is used in the same way in Matthew 11, 13, and 22, 40; Luke 16, 16; John 1, 45; Acts 13, 15, and 24, 40; and Romans 3, 21. The is never used as a disjunctive particle like in 5, 17, but always as a conjunctive particle.¹ We have to take it as such, and, there ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται are viewed as a unit. There is no possibility of division between them. The one is as important and divine as the other. Strack-Billerbeck maintains that Moses received the Tora from God's mouth or hands, and that the prophets had only a gift of the spirit of prophecy, and therefore that the Tora is more important than the rest of the Scriptures.² This explanation from the Midrash is vague, because, as we know, the books of the prophets were not only the result of the gift of the spirit, but God Himself spoke to the prophets and that He Himself ordered them to reveal His will and plans. The prophets were mouthpieces of God in the same way that Moses was. The conjunctive καὶ makes no distinctions between the two. It puts both on the same level of divine revelation. See our treatment of prophet in the Old Testament. This passage is one of those in which "prophets" must mean the literary product

1. Strack and Billerbeck: P. 241.

2. Theyer: N.T. Dictionary, P. 315.

of the prophets. This usage indicates a strong emphasis on the message rather than on the man, as 11, 13; 26, 56; John 6, 45.

Matthew 8, 17. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet." Once more the *ὅπως* with the subjunctive means that according to God's purpose the prophecy was proved by the New Testament event predicted in the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus, by His work of healing, fulfilled the prophecy which was recorded regarding Him as the Messiah. Isaiah 53, 4, is quoted, and so it is proved that the content of his prophecy was given him by God. God at that time took care of His own plan and fulfilled it. Matthew records only that Isaiah's prophecy was carried out.

Matthew 11, 13: "The prophets and the law." Matthew is here not speaking about the person of the prophets but about the Books of the Prophets, together with the Law, the Pentateuch, - in other words, about the entire Old Testament. See Matthew 7, 12.

Matthew 12, 17: "In order that it might be fulfilled what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet." As to the significance of *διὰ*, compare Mat. 1, 22. Isaiah 42, 1-4, is quoted here. The Evangelist sees the fulfillment of the words of the prophet in Jesus' appearance.

Matthew 12, 39: "but the sign of Jonah the prophet." Jesus here stresses that He will give them no sign other than His death and burial. The same sign of Jonah was to be repeated.

Matthew 13, 17: "that many prophets and righteous men desire to see." The prophets who had the order from God by which they were made speakers of His word were not able to see Jesus, in spite of their longing that He might come at their time, (I Pet. 1, 10 ff.). We find the same idea in Luke 10, 24. Instead of "righteous," Luke has "kings." The disciples were far from appreciating at its full value the fact of His appearance, and the privilege of being His disciples and His agents. The prophets who prophesied His coming longed in vain for the fulfillment of the great Messianic promises. In Mat. 10, 41, and 23, 29, the prophets and righteous of the Old Testament are spoken of in the same way as here.

Matthew 13, 35: "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." For "that it might be fulfilled," see Mat. 2, 23. The quotation is from Ps. 78, 2, - a Psalm by Asaph to whom Matthew gives the name prophet. He considered him one who had the Spirit of God and spoke in parables.

Matthew 13, 57: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country." Mark 6, 4, uses the same words as Matthew recorded. A prophet here is a man who is filled by the Spirit of God and who by His authority pleads for the cause of God. In our passage the prophet is not able to work because the circumstances under which he has grown up are against him. Everybody sees in him an ordinary man and therefore they cannot believe that God has

chosen him for His own purpose. We find the same meaning, though not in an exact quotation, in Luke 4, 24, and John 4, 44.

Matthew 22, 40:

"In these two commandments the whole law hangs and the prophets." Here once more the law and prophets are put together. It means the whole Old Testament. The κρέματα shows the whole importance of these two commandments. Around them everythings is built up. They are the absolute necessity in the Old Testament.

Matthew 23: 29, 30, 31. The "prophets" in this passage are the prophets of the Old Testament. As to their fate we read that they were murdered. The Jews could not stand the messengers of God and therefore their death was violent.

Matthew 23, 37. With broken heart Jesus is grieving about Jerusalem. Jerusalem is here spoken of as a nation. It was and is sinning heavily - ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς προφῆτας "thou that killest the prophets." The present participle does not indicate the past but also the present and constant killing.¹ Jesus has surely in mind the fate of John the Baptist. Not only the prophets of the past are spoken of, but of the present as well. Very probably Jesus had His

I. H. A. Wilh. Meyer: Handbuch über das Evang. des Matthäus, P. 375
Carl F. Keil: Commentar über das Evang. des Mat., P. 453.
R. C. H. Lenski: The Interpretation of St Matthew's Gospel,
P. 921.

own fate in mind. Yes, the fate of the prophets was to be murdered - as in 23, 29 - 31. Rom. 11, 3.

Matthew 24, 15: "spoken of by Daniel, the prophet."
Jesus refers to Daniel 12, 11, and 9, 27. The *διὰ* as in Mat. 2, 5, shows that Daniel as a prophet spoke not of his own accord. Jesus acknowledges and points this prophecy out, assuring that it will be fulfilled. The abomination of desolation with the effect of complete destruction would appear. He gives advice on how to behave in this emergency prophesied by Daniel. Christ foretells the grave situation which would unavoidably occur.

Matthew 26, 56: *Τούτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν λέξις καὶ τῶν προφητῶν* "But this all was done in order that the Scriptures of the prophets should be fulfilled."

Τούτο ὅλον This whole thing has occurred for one reason and for one reason alone - that the Scripture be fulfilled. *τῶν προφητῶν* is here genitive subjective - "written by the prophets." See 7, 12. The prophets have put down the plans of God for the future. Now God is carrying out His Prophesied plans. Jesus is thus voluntarily putting Himself into His captor's hands. It had to be *ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν λέξις καὶ τῶν προφητῶν*.

Matthew 27, 9: "Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah, the prophet, saying." Matthew indicates the fulfillment of a prophecy. *Τὸ ἰσχυρὸν διὰ* stresses once more the character of the prophet, that God spoke through him, that he only revealed the word which was given to him

by God. *Διὰ Ἰερεμίου* causes here some difficulties, because not Jeremiah but Zechariah 11: 12, 13, records this prophecy. Some interpreters see in it a slip of memory by Matthew, which could easily have been caused by Jeremiah 18, 2.¹ But this view destroys the infallibility of the Scriptures. The possible explanation, according to Lightfoot,² is that "one of the older ways of dividing the Scriptures was to begin with the law and to call this part 'The Law.' Next, the section commencing with the Psalms was called 'The Psalms' although it contained other writings. The third part began with Jeremiah and included the other prophets, and yet the whole was called 'Jeremiah'."³

Mark 1, 2: "As it has been written in Isaiah, the prophet." Mark starts his Gospel with an Old Testament quotation. *Γέγραπται* the perfect tense "it has been written" connotes that what has been written still stands. Is. 40, 3, is quoted. In verse 4 we have *ἔγένετο* the prophecy made by Isaiah was fulfilled.

In Luke 1, 68, we hear Zecharias praising God, and in 1, 70, he says: "καθὼς ἐλάλησεν διὰ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων ἀπ' αἰῶνος προφητῶν ἡμῶν" - "as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." "God spoke διὰ στόματος" "through the mouth" of his prophets, men whom He has chosen to be His mouthpieces. The *ἁγίων* ἁγίων - "holy" is to be taken as an adjective. The epithet

1. H. A. Wilh. Meyer, P. 457.

2. Lensky, P. 1082.

3. Ibid.

"holy" characterizes the prophets as organs, not of a human and consequently profane world, but of a divine revelation. "Holiness" is the distinctive feature of all that emanates from God. ἅγιος is not to be understood absolutely, as if there were prophets from the creation of the world - ab orbe condito -, but relatively since the time when the first prophets started to preach.

In Luke 1, 76, Zacharias speaks about John the Baptist: καὶ εὖ δεῖ, παιδίον, προφήτης ὑψίστου κληθήσεται
"But thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest." Προφήτης ὑψίστου puts John in the choir of those prophets about whom he speaks in 1, 70.

We have given ample proof of the submission of the prophets to God. This passage emphasizes this in two ways. The possessive genitive makes the prophet a servant. The term "the Highest" shows the supremacy of God when compared with prophet.

Luke 3, 4: "As it has been written in a book or words of Isaiah, the prophet." The perfect γέγραπται "has been written" always implies that, once written, the words stand to this day. Luke alone has the phrase "in a book of words." Only here and in Acts 7, 42, in the New Testament we have the phrase "book" for the written down prophecies. Isaiah 40, 3-5, is quoted from his entire "book." βιβλίον would have properly be translated "saying."

Luke 4, 17: "A roll of the prophet Isaiah." In the synagogue Jesus was handed and read from the roll of the

prophet Isaiah. The prophecies were read in the synagogue as the sacred words of God, because the prophets were acknowledged as God's men.

In Luke 4, 24, Jesus says "Amen, I say to you, that no prophet is acceptable in his native place." We have this expression in Mat. 13, 57, and Mk. 6, 4. The prophet cannot find acknowledgement of his exceptional character among people who have for long lived with him on terms of familiarity.

In Luke 4, 27, Jesus proves that the same thing happened to the prophet Elisha. He was not able to heal any of the lepers in Israel. He belonged to his native land. Yet, his miraculous power was shown on a pagan leper of heathen Syria. Jesus tells here that prophet was given the power by God to perform miracles.

Luke 6, 23: "For in like manner, did their fathers unto their prophets." The context of this verse shows, that Jesus wants His disciples to know that, as His adherents, they will have to suffer. Their sufferings will be a continuation of the sufferings of the prophets of Jehovah. By their very sufferings, they will be raised to the rank of the old prophets *וְיִשְׁמְרוּ* - "in the same manner" - they will be treated.

Luke 7, 16: "A great prophet rose up among us." Christ is called here a "great prophet," and as such "a-rose among us." Great prophet means a prophet of the first rank such as Elijah. Christ is called so on account

of the miracles which He performed. Though He is called "a great prophet," He is not as yet recognized as the Messiah.

Luke 7, 39: "If he were a prophet, he would know this." The Pharisee speaks his doubts about Jesus being a prophet. He expected that a prophet would have a supernatural knowledge about who people were. A sinful woman was serving Him and touching Him, so the Pharisee concluded that Christ was not a prophet.

In Luke 9, 8, Jesus is spoken of as Elijah who appeared and by others as one of the old prophets who had now risen. Jesus was to some Elijah, who appeared once more. We have ^{ἐγὼ} because Elijah never died - "nam Elias non erat mortuus."¹ Others thought of Him as an "old prophet," a prophet from the Old Testament, without identifying Him. The people of Herod's court evidently believed in the possible bodily resurrection of prophets.

In Luke 11, 47, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees, "you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them." Through this building, which reminds the Pharisees of the killing of prophets, they give their consent to the shameful deeds of their fathers. Godet goes still farther in saying "Your fathers killed; you bury; therefore ye continue their work."²

In 11, 50, Christ refers to the prophets of the Old Testament whose blood was shed "from the foundation of

1. Bengel: P. 234.

2. Godet: A Commentary on the Gospel of St Luke, P. 334.

the world." As to *ὑπο καθολῆς κόσμου* see Luke 1, 68.

In Luke 13, 28, Jesus speaks about the Old Testament prophets: "And all the prophets in the Kingdom of God." The prophets will be in heaven at the day of judgement.

Luke 13, 33. Jesus says, *ὅτι οὐκ ἐνδέχεται προφήτην ὑπολείπειν ἐξω Ἰερουσαλήμ*. "For it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Christ considers Himself a prophet and as such He must perish in Jerusalem. The emphasis is not on the will of Jesus, but on the plan of God. The *δει* in this verse is the important word. Jesus states that He will go to Jerusalem because that is God's will. As a prophet He shows His obedience to the plans of God. Jerusalem will once more have the privilege of murdering a prophet, but according to God's plan - "that the blood of all prophets may be required from this generation." (Luke 11, 50).

In Luke 13, 34, Jesus speaks of prophets who perished in Jerusalem. This verse is still part of the discourse in verse 33.

Luke 16, 16: *Ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται μέχρι Ἰωάννου*. "the law and the prophets were till John." Jesus here makes an important statement about the old covenant. The "law and the prophets" as a source of God's revealed plans belong together and we are told here that it reached "until" John, that is, John still belonged to it. He is the last one of the old covenant prophets and

in conjunction with Luke 7, 28, it is clear that the old covenant closed with John. After John, Jesus the prophet began the era of the new covenant.

Luke 16: 19, 31. "They have Moses and the prophets." To have Moses and the prophets is to have the Old Testament word which was the word of God. This word is the all-sufficient means of salvation. The effectiveness of the words is stressed.

In Luke 18, 31, Jesus made the prophecy about His death. He says: "Lo, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all the things that have been written through the prophets for the Son of Man shall be accomplished." With *τελεσθήσεται* -future passive - Luke denotes passive abandonment to suffering more forcibly than the active future used by Matthew and Mark. The time has arrived for the fulfillment of what the prophet in the Old Testament had foretold as to the passion of the Messiah. The preposition *δι* expresses instrumentality and denotes that the prophets did not produce in their own minds the message they proclaimed. God was the author.

Luke 24, 25: "Jesus, a stranger to two of his disciples, rebukes them for lack of understanding, and for hesitancy in accepting all the words of the prophets. "All the words," refers to everything the prophets had written down. Not only a part of it, because they have prophesied His suffering and death and not only His power and majesty as a Messiah.

Luke 24, 27. Jesus explained the Scriptures: ἀρξάμενος
ἀπὸ Μωυσέως καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν "Begin-
ning from Moses and from all the prophets." Moses and
the prophets are the Old Testament scriptures. In explain-
ing them, Jesus surely pointed to all the prophecies con-
cerning Him in both of them. He began with the historical
books, and as He finished He explained the prophets. He
surely explained all-πάντων-of the prophets. The second
ἀπὸ indicates and shows that the explanation began anew with
every prophet.

Luke 24, 44. Jesus says "that it is necessary that
there be fulfilled all the things that have been written
in the law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning
me." The importance of δεῖ has to be stressed. It shows
that all the prophecies and the divine scriptures have to
be fulfilled. It shows farther that these prophecies were
in the Scriptures and that God had decreed the passion and
resurrection of Christ. He implies that these things for
the greater part now have been fulfilled. Jesus divides
the Scriptures into three parts: the law ἡ γ' ἰσ, the proph-
ets □' Ν' γ], and hagiographa □' γ] ἰσ γ]. The threefold divi-
sion of the Old Testament scriptures was known to the
Jews.¹ It is the only place in the New Testament where
the threefold division of the Old Testament is made.

John 1, 25. The delegation from Jerusalem discon-
tinues the mode of questioning found in 1, 21, and they

I. H. A. Wilh. Meyer: Handbuch über das Evang. Markus & Lukas,
P. 583.

began to press upon John the Baptist by asking him why he baptizes if he is not ὁ πρῶτος ἰσραήλ "that prophet." For ὁ πρῶτος ἰσραήλ see chapter 1, 21.

In John 1, 45, Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets has written, Jesus." Every believing Jew had passionately awaited the day of His appearance. Moses and the law both contained prophecies of the coming Redeemer. Here both are looked upon as being the revealed word of God. The ἑξήκοντα Μωυσεῖος... καὶ οἱ πρῶτοι ἰσραήλ points to how much the Old Testament contains about Christ. Christ is the sum and substance of the Old Testament; to Him pointed the earliest promises (Gen. 49, 10).

John 6, 45. Jesus says to the Jews: "It has been written in the prophets." He points out to the Jews that the prophets, whom they considered as divine messengers and as men whom they could trust, were in agreement with Him. The quotation is from Isaiah 54, 13. Through the plural "prophets," Jesus seems to indicate that He meant the prophetic Scriptures and not only Isaiah 54, 13, because we find the same thought in Jeremiah 31, 33, ff., and Joel 3, 1, ff.

In John 7, 52, the pharisees give Nikodemus the answer, "Search and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." The present tense ἀγέρεται "arises," indicates a general proposition that at no time Galilee can furnish a prophet. God would never choose His man from Galilee. "It seems almost incredible that these Pharisees did not know that Jonah hailed from Galilee (II Kings 14, 25) and that most

likely also Nahum and Hosea came from that country."¹

In John 8: 52, 53, the Jews are telling Jesus that Abraham and the other prophets died. They meant the physical death of the prophets and misunderstood Jesus who spoke about the eternal death. They considered Jesus as not equal to Abraham and not greater than the other prophets.

Acts 2, 16. "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." *Τὸ ἐργασμένον* - the perfect tense always has its own strong present connotation. Once spoken (often "it has been written") the thing stands, because the prophet speaking (Joel 3: 1-5) is the organ *δύ* of God. Peter here is saying that the prophecy, Joel 3, 1-5, has now entered upon its accomplishment and what the hearers have seen is the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Acts 2, 30. Peter speaks about David "as being a prophet.... He made utterance concerning the resurrection of Christ." David foretold the resurrection of Christ because he was a prophet and in that capacity he knew - *καὶ εἶδω* about it, because God "swore it to him" - *ὅτι ὅρκῳ ἤμοσεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός*. Peter has here a very strong argument for the reliability of David as a prophet. God not only spoke and revealed His will to him, but he swore it. He swore it in order that no doubt whatsoever should arise about the resurrection of Christ.

Acts 3, 18: "Moreover, what things God announced in advance through all the prophets mouth, that His Christ

1. Lenski: Interpretation of St John's Gospel, P. 591.

should suffer, He did thus fulfill." God Himself foretold His plan through *διὰ* the mouth of His prophets. The prophets were only His mouthpieces, through whom God Himself was speaking. The events which were announced a long time ago came now to an end. God took care of the fulfillment of His prophecies - so He was not only the author but also the executor.

Acts 3, 21: "Of which God spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets, since the world began." The prophets are men of God through whom He spoke. "Since the world began" must be taken relatively as in Luke 1, 68.

Acts 3: 22, 23. Moses said, "A prophet will the Lord God raise up for you." Moses the mediator - prophet, the mediator of the old covenant on Sinai revealed God's plan that God will "raise up" a prophet like himself. The *ὅς* *ἐμὲ* points strongly towards the character of the future prophet. He shall be like Moses - it means he shall be a mediator of a covenant, naturally a new one. Yes, indeed, the future prophet will be a mighty one, because "every soul which shall not hear that prophet shall be completely destroyed." God gives through the mouth of Moses a serious warning to all who should disregard His promised prophet - Messiah.

Not only Moses prophesied the coming of Messiah, but all other prophets following Samuel (Acts 3, 14), who opens the series of prophets in the stricter sense, "announced these days"; i.e., the days on which Messiah (that prophet) will come.

Acts 3, 25. "You yourselves are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant." The υἱοὶ τῶν προφητῶν denotes their close connection with the prophets. The prophecies were meant for them. They ought to have great respect for the words which God revealed to them "through"

His holy men. The prophets are therefore their spiritual fathers, because through them they were made children of the covenant - διαθήκη - in which God bound Himself to bless all generations.

Acts 7, 37. "A prophet will God raise up for you from your brethern, like me." Moses is quoted here as the one who said these words (Deut. 18, 15). It is a very strong prophecy about the future Messiah. For ὡς ἐμέ' see Acts 3, 22.

Acts 7, 48. καὶ οὕτως ὁ προφήτης λέγει "as the prophet says." A prophecy from Isaiah 66, 1, is quoted. The prophet here represents the Old Testament which revealed the word of God.

Acts 7, 52. "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" The Israelites persecuted everyone of the prophets through whom the Holy Spirit spoke to them. The prophets of the Old Testament are meant here. It is the same charge made here which Jesus made in Luke 11, 47.

Acts 8: 28, 30. "And he read the prophet Isaiah." We can state only here that the rolls of prophets were read not only in a synagogue, but by individuals elsewhere also. The Ethiopian could not understand the passage,

Isaiah 53, 7, and especially about whom the prophet spoke. Philip had to explain the prophecy to him.

Acts 10, 43. "About this one all the prophets bear witness." All the prophets (as in 3, 23) revealed the same thing about Jesus, that in Him believers have remission of sins. *Τούτω* points very strongly to Jesus. The Messiah was the object of all prophecies. God used the prophets especially for revealing and preparing the people for that prophet who will come.

Acts 13, 15. "And after the reading of the law and the prophets." By law and prophet the Old Testament is meant. Parts of them were read on the Sabbath in the synagogue and were explained.

Acts 13, 20. *Ἔως Σαμουὴλ προφῆτου* "until Samuel the prophet." Samuel as such belongs to the judges who governed Israel. The *ἔως* states that at the same time he was a prophet (I Sam. 3, 20).

Acts 13, 27. "They knew Him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath." *Τούτων ἀγνοήσαντες* not having known Him means Jesus as the self-evident subject nor *καὶ τῶν φωνῶν τῶν προφητῶν* - the voices of the prophets who spoke about him. "The voices of the prophets" revealed the coming Messiah.

Acts 13, 40. *Ἐν ταῖς προφηταῖς* "In the prophets." The book of prophets in the Old Testament is meant here as in Luke 24, 44, and John 6, 45. Habakuk 1, 5, is quoted.

Acts 15, 15. "And to this agree the words of the

prophets." From *οἱ λόγοι τῶν προφητῶν* - though plural - James singles out a passage in conformity with which the agreement takes place, namely Amos 9: 11, 12. By all the prophets of the Old Testament are meant.

Acts 24, 14. Paul declares before Felix in his own defense: "Believing all things which are according to the law, and which are (written) in the prophets." The prophets to him are God's men through whom God spoke and everything they revealed is true, because it came from God.

Acts 26, 22. Paul declares: "I set forth nothing else, than what the prophets and Moses did say should come." "Prophets and Moses" - the entire Old Testament foretells what will happen and Paul believes it, because they were the men through whom God revealed His holy plans. Everybody should believe what the prophets revealed. Paul is hoping that Agrippa believes the prophets. Paul takes it for granted as Agrippa was educated as a Jew and therefore that he ought to recognize the prophets as the men who were mouthpieces and organs of God.

Acts 28, 23. "Persuading them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the prophets." Paul is in Rome and speaking to the Jews of that world capital. His main idea is to explain to them that both the law of Moses and the prophets spoke about Jesus, the Messiah, Who came here to establish the Kingdom of God.

Acts 28, 25. "Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers." Isaiah was a

prophet "through" διὰ whom the Holy Spirit τὸ πνεῦμα ἐὸ
ἔμειν ἐλάλησεν - spoke. Paul quotes Isaiah 6, 9 f., and
stresses that a prophet is a man through whom God spoke to
the people in the past.

Romans 1, 2. "Which he has promised beforehand by
his prophets in the Holy Scriptures." The pronoun αὐτοῦ
"His" prophets denotes the close relation which unites a
prophet with God, whose instrument he is. The epithet
ἁγίων "holy" - shows the divine origin of the Scriptures.
Holiness is the seal of their divine origin.

Romans 3, 21. "Being witnessed by the law and the
prophets." The Mosaic law and the prophets were speaking
all the time about the δικαιοσύνη θεῶν. Paul will stress
the Old Testament revelation concerning Christ and salva-
tion which we find in Him.

I Thessalonians 2, 15. "And they killed the Lord Jesus
and the prophets." The Jews in their blindness killed Jesus
καὶ τοὺς προφῆτας "and the prophets." The prophets are
mentioned after Jesus, but Paul here surely has the proph-
ets of the Old Testament in mind. He speaks of the behavior
of the Jews in the past, and so he first speaks of the hor-
rible crime - the killing of Jesus, (- ἀποκτείναντων -
part. aorist) and then he speaks about the history of the
Jews. They were not better than those who killed the proph-
ets.

Hebrews 1, 1. "God at the old time spake unto the
fathers by the prophets." ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας - God spake. The

prophets were not speaking to the fathers, but God was. The prophets were only God's mouthpieces through whom He spoke. They were the principle channels through which the word of God was communicated.

Hebrews 11, 32. "And the prophets" The author of the Hebrews-Epistle means here a group of the Old Testament prophets.

James 5, 10. "And an example of the suffering, take, brethren, the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord". This is the only passage in which James mentions "the prophets." They were servants of God. James makes it very clear what he means with "prophet." They were the men οἱ ἐλάλησαν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου - "who spoke in the name of God."

James uses ἔλαλεν and not λέγειν. They only make utterance, they did not speak their own words, but the word of God. God used them as His mouthpieces. Ἐν ὀνόματι means not that they were His representatives by their own will, but God had authorized them. They had His authority to speak.

I Peter 1, 10. "About which salvation the prophets sought and searched, who prophecied about this grace, concerning you." By προφητείας Peter understands the Old Testament prophets. Προφητείας explains that they were chosen by God to reveal His plans concerning salvation.

II Peter 2, 16. "A dumb ass, by speaking in human voice, hindered the prophet's madness." Peter speaks here about the Old Testament Balaam, who in spite of the fact that God spoke to him, and forbade him to go to King Balak,

went on (Numbers 22, 7, ff.). His beast spoke with human voice and hindered his coming to Balak. The prophet, though he was a servant of God, was disobedient to Him. The prophets, being human creatures, were not perfect.

II Peter 3, 2. "To remember the words spoken in advance by the holy prophets." Peter means here the prophets of the Old Testament and calls them "holy." As "holy" men of God, the prophets always spoke the truth.

Rev. 10, 7. "According to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets." By the prophets he can only mean the Old Testament prophets.

Rev. 10, 10. "Because those two prophets tormented them that dwell upon the earth." The meaning of prophet in our passage is rather difficult of explanation. In connection with verse 3, I assume that our prophets are the same as the two witnesses. There are different views as to what historic personalities these two prophets signify.

Rev. 16, 6. "For the blood of saints and prophets have they poured out." The author has here in mind all prophets of the Old and New Testament whose blood "they poured out."

Rev. 18: 20, 24. "The saints and the prophets and the apostles." The prophets are the men of God, all of them who were killed on this earth.

Rev. 22, 6. "The Lord God of the holy prophets." This signifies the Lord from Whom is the prophecy of both covenants.

These three (last treated) passages from Revelation stress

the New Testament's constant assumption of the identity of its prophetic gift with that of the Old Testament in essential characteristics. The single use of the term *προφητιας* to denote both groups collectively is one of the most forceful linguistic proofs of the primitive Church's faith in this matter.

SUMMARY

The constant use of the word "prophet" as equivalent to sections of the Old Testament indicates clearly the current opinion of the reliability of the Old Testament. The New Testament use of the term in this way indicates that the New Testament authors did not divorce Christianity from the Old Testament. To the contrary, they regarded the written prophecies as essentially linked with the essence and life of the kingdom of God as they spread it. (Acts 24, 14)

This is farther emphasized by the New Testament use of the prepositions *ἐν* and *δι* and the conjunction *καί*. These prepositions express the strong convictions of the New Testament writers that the prophetic word was God's word. The prophets were essentially organs for the transmission of His Word and the events of their era had to occur as the actualization of the prophetic word. (See again Matt. 1, 22, - p. 9.

This emphasis upon the intimate relationship of the Old Testament prophets with the New Testament church is vividly illustrated by the passage in Hebrew 11: 37, 38. Here the constant sufferings of the prophets are mentioned as examples of faith. (faith being at the very center of the New Testament).

Peter emphasizes this high estimate of the prophets in II Peter 1, 21. He terms them extraordinary messengers of God and asserts that the Holy Ghost urged them to speak and gave them a message. "Prophecy came not in the old

time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The modern tendency to depreciate the prophetic element of the Old Testament is clearly at variance with the spirit of the primitive Christianity. In Luke 24, 25, Christ reproves His disciples for their lack of faith in the prophets. Modern tendencies encourage such a lack of faith. In Acts 16, 6, the apostle Paul speaks of the promise made to the fathers as promised by God. He thereby connects the prophet with the New Testament in highest possible way - through the one God.

In I Peter 1, 12, the Messianic revelation is contrasted with the personal, rational inquiry of the prophets. These must be taken as a repudiation of any belief which ascribes revelation to the prophet's own minds. So emphatic are these facts, that it is safe to say that a true understanding of the life of the early church cannot be realized without an appreciation of the fact that it viewed the prophets with as much respect as the pious Jews of the Old Testament.

B. JOHN THE BAPTIST

It is interesting that the concept of prophet in the New Testament does not confine itself to retrospect. The prophets of the Old Testament - particularly Elijah - find a kindred spirit in John the Baptist. John forms the great personal link between the two covenants. It is only fitting that we should now turn our attention to those passages which deal with John the Baptist as a prophet.

Matthew 11, 9. "What are you looking for, a prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet." John the Baptist was considered by many as a prophet; that is, a man sent by God to proclaim His message and reveal His future plans. They thought of him as one of the line of Old Testament prophets. Christ Himself throws a light upon John as a prophet by saying, "and more than a prophet." "More" could be taken as a masculine or as a neuter. Both would be right. But the absolute "more" is never used in the New Testament as masculine, and therefore we have to take it as neuter. The neuter interrogative pronoun, *τί*, supports this view. The Vulgate translates it "plus quam prophetam."¹

In verse 10, Jesus explains why John is more than a prophet by quoting Malachi 3, 1: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face; which shall prepare the way before thee." John is more than a prophet insofar as he is sent by God to open the hearts of men to the coming Messiah.

1. Vulgate: Matthew 11, 9.

So John had a peculiar position. He stood on the verge of the Old and New covenant. He was the ring in the chain by which both circles of the religious life were linked together.

Matthew 14, 5. "because they regarded him as a prophet." John the Baptist is spoken of here. The people regarded John as a man sent by God to be His special spokesman, and one who was proclaiming the future events which God had commanded him to reveal. He was considered a prophet in the strict Old Testament meaning.

Matthew 21, 26. "all regarded John as a prophet."
cf. Matthew 14, 5.

Mark 8, 28. The meaning of προφήτης is the same as 6, 15; Matthew 16, 14; and Luke 9, 19.

Mark 11, 32. ἔλεγον τὸν Ἰωάννην ὄντως εἶναι προφήτην ᾄν.
"They held that John was really a prophet." The structure is a Latinism.¹ The people believed John was a prophet.
"That ᾄν is not to be taken as a pluperfect (against Blass & 57, 6, note that ἐρεῖν would not be proper because John was no longer alive)."²

Luke 7, 26. Jesus speaks about John the Baptist. He is not only a prophet, but is more than a prophet. He was prophesied to be the forerunner of the Messiah. This is probably the same event as recorded in Matthew 11: 9, 10.

Luke 20, 6. The people were convinced that John the Baptist was a prophet. From the context we can see that Jesus Himself conceded him to be such and that in a certain

1. Blass & 70 page 236

2. D. J. Wohlenberg: Das Ev. des Markus, P. 307.

sense "his authority really depended on the acknowledgement of John." 3

John 1: 21, 23. A delegation from Jerusalem asked John the Baptist ὁ πρῶτος ἐπ' αὐτῶν; καὶ ἀπεκρίθη· οὐ.

"Art thou that prophet and he answered 'no'." It seems very improbable that John could entirely deny that he was a prophet. Jesus Himself speaks about him in Matthew 11, 9, that he was more than a prophet. All the confusion about this passage will vanish when we consider the article ὁ πρῶτος - that prophet, not a prophet. The question as such can be understood only in the connection with Deut. 18, 15. In this passage the future Messiah is revealed as a prophet. This was the prophet whom the delegation had in mind, after John denied being Elijah. John had to deny flatly and without hesitation that he was that prophet. That prophet is Christ. John was only his forerunner, as he describes himself: "I am the voice that crieth in the wilderness." He quotes a prophecy by Isaiah 40, 3, which was known to the priests and Levites, and which they should have recognized as a prophecy concerning the Messiah. Because of what John said, he indicated that the prophecy in Isaiah 40, 3, was fulfilled in him.

In John 1, 25, the delegation from Jerusalem discontinues the mode of questioning found in John 1, 21. They begin to be critical toward John the Baptist by asking him why he baptizes if he is not ὁ πρῶτος that prophet. For ὁ πρῶτος cf. John 1, 21.

SUMMARY

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1, 2). John the Baptist was sent by God as His representative and mouthpiece. His authority in prophesying was from God.

John the Baptist is the prophet who stands between the Old and the New Testament prophets. He started prophesying in the wilderness and "had his raiment of camels hair and a leather girdle about his loins" Matt. 3, 4. This is a striking similarity between John's mode of life and that of Elijah. About Elijah, we read in II Kings 1, 8, "He was an *ἀνὴρ τρίχης* (Septuagint) - hairy man and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins." *Ἀλοῦς* refers here not to his person, but to his clothing. Otherwise some other clothing would be mentioned and not only the leather girdle around his loins. That probably was the reason why the Pharisees took him for Elijah. Not only the people and the Pharisees, but also Jesus speaks about him in Matt. 11, 14. "This is Elijah which was for to come" (*ὁ μὲλλον ἐρχεσθαι*). This verse in connection with Luke 1, 17, "And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah,....to make a people ready for the Lord," leads us to the conclusion that Christ thinks of John the Baptist as His forerunner. Christ was the Messiah before whom God promised to send a messenger. Mal. 3, 1.

John is referred to as the greatest of the prophets in

the Old Testament (Luke 7, 28; Matthew 11, 11). His greatness was in this, that he was the one about whom it was prophesied that he would be the forerunner of Christ. As such he was sent out by God to be His prophet.

We note Christ's assertion that although John the Baptist was the greatest of the prophets under the Old Testament, he was less than the least of the members of the kingdom of God. These words of Jesus have reference to John's not living to see the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in Christ's death and resurrection, and to his not possessing the privileges which belong to the members of the New Testament church.

A prominent characteristic of the prophet John was that he began to prophesy in the wilderness. He avoided men but spoke to those who sought him out. The prophet of repentance led the same life as the penitents themselves should lead. His prophecy was concentrated around foretelling the nearness of the Messiah. "He that cometh after me....was before me" - John 1: 15, 27. He knew that he was that prophet who was to foretell the impending advent of the Messiah. He declares the deity of Christ who is coming after him, but was before him. He considers himself not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoes. John 1, 27. The main differentiation between John the Baptist and the Old Testament prophets consists in the historical proximity of the promised Messiah. When Christ began His work, the importance of John waned. John himself

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realized this. (John 3, 30.) "He must increase, but
I must decrease."

C. JESUS THE PROPHET

Jesus is a prophet in a unique sense. In this chapter we shall deal with all the passages where He is spoken of as a prophet.

Matthew 16, 4. Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" They considered Him to be either John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah. This means they saw in Him one of the important prophets of the Old Testament who reappeared. If not that, He was said to be "one of the prophets," a man who has God's authority.

- Matthew 21, 11. "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." These words acknowledge Jesus as a special messenger of God, sent to proclaim divine revelations.

John 6, 14, is important. There the people, seeing the miracle which Jesus performed, declared: "This is truly that prophet that should come into the world." Jesus fulfilled expectations and ideas which the people had about the Messiah. He is called the prophet that should come *ὁ ἐρχόμενος* "he that cometh"; i.e., "is about to come according to prophetic promise and universal expectation, the coming one."¹

In Matthew 21, 46 - "The people regarded Jesus as a prophet." The people generally speaking recognized and considered Him as such, seeing His zeal for the cause of God and His urging of the salvation of men.

In Mark 6, 15, Jesus is spoken of as a prophet. "Others said that He is Elijah, and others said that He is a prophet

as one of the prophets," E.i., an ordinary, common prophet, one of the category of prophets and not necessarily the greatest one - Elijah. According to the opinion of the people, there were categories of prophets. Jesus to some of them was the most important and the best known, that is Elijah, because of what He said and because of all the miracles which He performed. Some others put Him in the category of ordinary Old Testament prophets without any distinction. Even as such He is considered as sent by God, and working according to His commands.

In Luke 9, 19, Jesus asked His disciples whom the people considered Him to be. The answer is that some considered Him as John, others as Elijah, and still others as one of the Old prophets. The same expression is used about Him in Luke 9, 8; Matthew 16, 17; and Mark 8, 28, where the same event is recorded.

In Luke 9, 8, Jesus is spoken of by some as Elijah who appeared and by others as one of the old prophets who had now risen. Jesus was to some Elijah, who appeared once more. We have ἐγὼν because Elijah never died - nam Elias non erat mortuus. Others thought of Him as an old prophet without identifying Him.

Luke 11, 49, records the words of Jesus in connection with Luke 11, 47. Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ εἶπεν ἕποσεν εἰς αὐτοὺς προφῆτας καὶ ἀποστόλους Therefore also said the wisdom of God "I will send them apostles and prophets."

"Therefore" In connection with Luke 11, 47, because they

were consenting with their deeds to the killing of prophets. "The wisdom of God" will send out more prophets and they will be killed by them also. The words attributed to the wisdom of God are not a quotation from the Old Testament, nor from a lost book of the Bible.¹ It does not seem to be a reference to Christ Himself. It points to the divine counsels, to God's plans.² According to God's plans, prophets would be sent out. A distinction between prophets and apostles is clearly stated. Apostles are not simply the new prophets.

Luke 24, 19. Two of Jesus' disciples in giving an explanation refer to Jesus as Him "who proved to be - ἐγένετο - a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." In spite of the disappointments they had because their messianic hope was not fulfilled, Cleopas said - ὅς ἐγένετο - "who proved to be a prophet." Jesus was a prophet ἐναντίον τοῦ Θεοῦ "before the face of God." This means that Jesus had been aware of the eye of God resting on Him. He was so remarkable that people - λαός - Israel - had noticed that, and had recognized Him as a prophet.

John 1, 44. As Matt. 8, 57; Mk. 4, 4; Luke 4, 24.

In John 6, 14, the people who were miraculously fed by Christ discovered and acknowledged in Christ a man sent by God and said "This one is truly the prophet that is coming into the world." Christ is to them ὁ προφήτης (cf. John 1, 21). The people expected that prophet to have the God-given

1. H. A. Wilh. Meyer: P. 404.

2. Dr Arndt: St Luke (mimeographed notes), P. 68.

power to perform miracles. By what they saw, they recognized immediately that Christ was that prophet whom they were expecting.

John 7, 40. The people were impressed by the words of Jesus and some supposed Him to be *οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης* - "this is truly the prophet." As to the *ὁ προφήτης* of 1, 21.

In John 9, 17, the pharisees asked a blind man who was healed by Jesus what he thought about his healer. The answer was prompt - *προφήτης ἐστίν* - "He is a prophet." Under prophet he understood a divine messenger. This healed man concluded from the miracle which happened to him that only a prophet, a man sent by God, who was furnished with supernatural power was able to perform this miracle. This experience (similar to John 4, 19) was the cause of pronouncing Jesus a prophet. There is no other explanation of that because from verse 12 we conclude that this healed man had never seen Jesus.

SUMMARY

The many New Testament references to the popular opinion that Jesus was a prophet certainly indicate that this was one of the great impressions His life left with the people of His day. His behavior and speech apparently must have been such that they conformed to the current definition of a prophet. John 6, 14, attributes this opinion to the miracle which Christ performed. The estimate of the Baptist at the beginning of Christ's ministry must have strengthened this opinion (John 3, 34). Indeed John 6, 14, records an opinion that Jesus was the prophet, who was to come into the world. This is evidently a reference to the great prophet mentioned in Deut. 18, 18.

In I Peter 1, 11, we are told that the Spirit of Christ gave revelation to the prophets. After the incarnation this mediate activity of Christ became immediate. The importance of this immediate revelation is spoken of in John 3; 31, 32: "He that cometh from above is above all, he that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth. He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he has seen and heard, that he testifieth and no man receiveth his testimony." Jesus gave the same estimate of His work in John 8, 28.

In the whole 25th chapter of Matthew Jesus foretells the end of the world. However, His chief message was Himself. Thus many of His predictions deal with His cruci-

fixion. John 3, 14. He taught that faith in Himself was the basic need of life, John 6: 35, 47.

Since His ascension, Christ's prophetic work has again become mediate. The New Testament prophets derive their ability from the working of the glorified Christ. Eph. 4, 11. "And He gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers." Christ is the great prophet and all other prophets are his instruments. Through His prophets God revealed His plan concerning the future. Heb. 1, 1 "God intime past spake unto the fathers through the prophets." They were His worthy servants, but He used His only co-equal Son, as the direct medium of revealing the gospel.

D. NEW TESTAMENT PROPHETS

The references to the New Testament prophets are few, but are interesting because they do not often enter the mind of one in connection with the concept of prophet.

Matthew 10, 41 "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." In this passage, Christ is not referring to the Old Testament prophets. The δεχόμενος present participle cannot refer to the Old Testament prophets, as various commentators explain it.¹ Christ cannot be speaking about the Old Testament prophets here because He, the Prophet and Messiah, was already walking and working on this earth. As I said, the present participle δεχόμενος points too strongly against the idea that Christ is speaking of the Old Testament prophets. This is strongly supported by the identical form δεχόμενος in verse 40, referring to Christ's audience. Even if the passage would stand isolated, the grammatical construction speaks against its referring to the Old Testament prophets. Matthew 23, 34, supports strongly and sufficiently my conclusion. Christ says here ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω πρὸς ὑμᾶς προφῆτας "Behold, I send unto you prophets." I send, present tense. Christ is sending out prophets. Agabus, in Acts 21, 10, is an example. Christ shows here that He is God and was making use of His divine attributes in sending out prophets. These prophets would have authority from

1. Carl F. Keil: Commentar ueber das Ev. des Matt., 1877, P. 264 f.
H. Olshausen: Biblischer Commentar, 1847, P. 350 f.
Hein. Aug. Wilh. Meyer: Commentar ueber das N.T., 1844, P. 214 f.

Christ to preach and pronounce the Kingdom of Heaven, where Christ is reigning, sitting at the right hand of His Father.

Acts 11, 27. "Now in these days there came down from Jerusalem prophets to Antioch." In these days: ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῶν ἡμετέρας means here in the days when Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch. Barnabas and Paul were there in 43. They stayed there for one year (Acts 11, 26) and during this time it is in 44 Luke says that prophets arrived from Jerusalem. Προφῆται were inspired men who delivered their message on the basis of a received revelation. Their working was entirely analogous to that of the Old Testament prophets.¹ Agabus was one of them (Acts 11, 28). Though his prophecy was of smaller importance than that of the Old Testament prophets as far as its contents are concerned. He had the qualification as a prophet from God. Prediction of future events is the main characteristic of prophecies Agabus made. Agabus had the revelation given him by God, and he was predicting a famine which would occur in Jerusalem. Agabus, the prophet, was predicting the famine οὐρανῶν τοῦ πνεύματος through the Spirit. This characterizes him as a prophet who foretold what the Spirit revealed to him. According to Josephus, the famine in Jerusalem occurred in 46, which was two years after the prophecy was made by Agabus.

Acts 13, 1. "There were in Antioch with the existing church prophets and teachers." Prophets are the men in the apostolic church about whom we know that they received the
I. H. A. W. Meyer: Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles, 183,
P. 223.

Holy Spirit for the pronouncement of divine messages. Note
αὐτῶν λαλοῦντων πλῶσταις in 10, 46, and 2, 4. The
names of the prophets are not given, but it may be that some
of the five names given were those of prophets and some
those of teachers. Through one of the prophets the Holy
Spirit spoke in verse 2 and announced to the church the
utterance revealed to him by the Spirit. So it is charact-
eristic of the prophets that the Spirit speaks through them:
verse 2 *εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον. ἔχουρίσατε δι' μου*
The Spirit is the deciding factor here. The imperative *ἐχο-
ρίσατε* "separate me" shows that the Spirit gave the direction
and demanded whatought to be done. The prophet did not act
on his own but he was only used as the mediator by the Holy
Spirit. It seems that the prophets were not localized at
Jerusalem only. In Acts 11, 27, Agabus, a prophet, came
to Antioch from Jerusalem. Here he is not mentioned at all,
so the prophets mentioned now in the Antioch congregation
were the local prophets, who were members of this congrega-
tion.

Acts 15, 32. "And Judas and Silas, being themselves
also prophets, comforted the brethren." Judas and Silas
were representatives sent from Jerusalem to Antioch. In
Antioch they proved their prophetical ability in comforting
παρεκρίθησαν διὰ λόγον πολλόν. As prophets, they had
the ability granted them by the Holy Spirit, to comfort
the distressed Gentile Christians. They strengthened them
in their faith that they had salvation in Christ outside

of the Law.

Acts 21, 10. "A certain prophet, named Agabus, came down from Judea." Agabus is surely the same prophetas in 11, 28. As he came, he took the girdle of Paul, bound his own feet and hands, and said: "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle." He stresses that *ὡς ἔφη τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον* he does not speak his own opinion, but that of the Spirit of whom Agabus is only organ.

I Corinthians 12: 28-29. "And God did set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers." Paul speaks here about the prophets whom God gave to the congregation in his time. They were sent by God. God gave them a mandate to be men who, having received the Holy Spirit, were to be His speakers. He mentions them together with apostles, but differentiates between them, as well as between teachers. These New Testament prophets received special messages from God which they had to deliver to the church. They must not be confused with searchers who sought the Word contained in the Holy Scriptures.

I Corinthians 14, 29. "And let prophets speak, two or three, and let the others discern." When prophets are together, a few of them shall speak, and the others shall judge *δοκιμασέτωσαν* whether they really were prophets and whether the Holy Spirit spoke through them. They had to prove that they were prophets.

I Corinthians 14, 32. "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." The prophets are not mere instruments of their spirits, but the prophets are their own masters and they speak when they desire to do so. The spirit here is not the Holy Spirit, but the genitive is possessive and indicates that Paul is speaking of the soul or rational faculty which receives divine revelations.

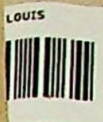
I Corinthians 14, 37. "If anyone thinks he is a prophet." If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet, means that he judges for himself whether he received the Holy Spirit of prophecy or not. If he had, he would have to acknowledge that what Paul wrote is of God. Paul shows here his apostolic authority and at the same time he stresses that the prophets are directly subject to the Lord. They are His speakers.

Ephesians 2, 20. "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." The prophets here mentioned are those of the new dispensation. That is evident from the position of this term. First apostles, then prophets, are mentioned, as in I Cor. 12, 28. The prophets are the foundation of the building in which Christ is the cornerstone. The believers are the edifice. The cornerstone is here distinguished from the foundation. The church rests on Christ, and on the apostles and prophets, who as His representatives are edifying the building.

Ephesians 3, 5. "It has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Now - ¹⁵¹ - limits



the revelation to the New Testament prophets. $\xi\upsilon\varsigma$ means by the Spirit the revelation was given to the prophets. The apostles and prophets of the new dispensation were the only classes of inspired men -- $\omega\varsigma\ \nu\upsilon\upsilon\ \lambda\pi\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\ \delta\upsilon\phi\theta\upsilon\gamma\ \epsilon\upsilon\ \pi\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\epsilon$ The pronoun $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ His, in connection with apostles and prophets, refers to Christ, Whose messengers they were.



SUMMARY

The New Testament era of prophets did not come to an end with Jesus, the Great Prophet. In Matthew 23, 34, Jesus says, "Behold, I send unto you prophets." This is the Word of God, and as such must be taken at its face value, because no sincere theologian can for a moment doubt the validity of God's Word.

All the prophets with whom we have dealt have spoken to be chosen men of God, through whom God spoke. Christ as God promised to send prophets. These prophets were to be the mouthpieces through whom He would speak. During His lifetime, Christ spoke about prophets as man sent by God and through whom God spoke. The meaning of prophet in Matthew 23, 34, cannot possibly be different. In spite of that, theologians are inclined to the view that the prophets who appear after Jesus' ascension were merely teachers or interpreters of a system of doctrine.

We saw that the Old Testament prophets received both the content and form of their prophecy from God and the usual expression for reception was "the hand of Jehovah was upon me" or "the Spirit of God fell upon" such and such prophet. These were the circumstances under which prophecies were received. It may be that some theologians do not find or rather do not admit such conditions in the New Testament. But the way in which God at times dealt with some of the apostles must not be forgotten. Let us first examine Acts 10,

10. Here Peter says "There fell upon him ἐκστασις".
And in verse 11 "He saw heaven opened" ..and "there came
a voice to Him" (v. 13). In Acts 11, 5, Peter says "I
saw a vision in ἐκστασις." In Acts 22: 17-18, Paul also
speaks of seeing as the immediate result of the ecstasies.
In 2 Corinthians 12, 4, Paul gives a description of a
prophetic state in which he himself once was. He was com-
pletely in the power of the Spirit. Under such conditions
God spoke to this man. From these passages we see that the
conditions in the New Testament concerning God's approach
towards His men are still the same as in the Old Testament.

Further, we have two passages (Acts 11, 27, and 21,
10) in which the prophet Agabus is mentioned as one who
prophesied "through the Spirit." He makes it very clear
in Acts 21, 10, that not he himself, but "the Holy Spirit,"
was the author of the words which he uttered. The term
προφητεία has the very same meaning as in the rest of
the New Testament.

Wherever the term prophet occurs in connection with the
apostolic church a very clear distinction is always made
between apostles, prophets, and teachers (I Cor. 12: 28-29;
Eph. 4, 11). The concept of prophet in this part of my
work is in complete agreement with all other usages of this
term. A prophet is here not a teacher, but a chosen man
through whom God spoke.

It is self-evident that the prophetic office is no
longer found in the Christian Church. Apparently, this



divine institution was provided for the difficult days of the Church's establishment and growth. The disappearance of the apostolic office, often linked with the prophetic in the New Testament, is a similar phenomenon. Once the written Word was established, the personal organs for its transmission were no longer needed, and passed from the life of the Church.

By way of final conclusion, we are glad to say that the concept of prophet in the entire New Testament is the same. A prophet is a chosen man of God, through *fid* whom God speaks. He is the means through whom God spoke to men -- an organ of revelation.

E. PROPHET - POET

Titus 1, 12, ought to be treated separately, as it is out of the scope of the meaning which we have treated so far.

Titus 1, 12. "One of themselves a prophet of their own, said..." Baul speaks here of the Cretans and quotes Epimenides, whom they called *πρῶφῆτης*. "Prophet" Epimenides was not a prophet, but only a poet. The heathen Cretans probably called him such, and therefore Paul also calls him "prophet." Paul elsewhere always conforms to the very conservative estimate of prophecy which was current among the pious Jews of his time. We cannot believe that he totally reverses his opinion here by canonising the heathen poet. Such a view would violate all historical perspective.

It is the only passage in the New Testament where we find that classical meaning of *πρῶφῆτης* which is equivalent to poet. See classical usage by Pindar - Fragment 150.

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