

## EDITORIAL

I THINK that this is perhaps the first LIFE OF THE SPIRIT which has contained an article by a Jewish contributor. The theme of the number formed also the theme of a conference of Catholics and Jews held at Spode House last June. In these ecumenically minded days, I am sure readers will agree, it is just as important for Christians and Jews to try and understand one another, and to learn how to talk to each other about their religious beliefs, as it is for Catholics and Protestants to discuss their differences, and try at least to find a common language.

The figure of the Messiah, that is the Christ, is clearly the central point where Christianity and Judaism touch each other, and diverge. In this review, of course, we are concerned with Catholic, not with Jewish, readers. But we have no doubt that being well informed about Jewish messianic ideas should help Catholics to a better appreciation of the messianic character of their own religion, which means a better understanding of the person of our Lord, and of what it really means when with St Peter we make our profession of faith to Jesus that 'thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'.

MESSIANIC FULFILMENT IN ST LUKE'S GOSPEL<sup>1</sup>

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ST LUKE dedicates his gospel to Theophilus, a man of some rank, it would seem, and tells him that his intention is to help him 'recognize the solid grounds of the instruction he had received' (i, 4). To appreciate his gospel to the full, then, we need to have some sort of idea about what instruction Theophilus *had* received. If we assume that he had received much the same sort of instruction as all other first generation converts of the apostles and their followers—and it seems a reasonable enough assumption to go on, until the contrary is proved—then it is possible to form some idea of what it consisted of from the

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the Spode House Conference of Catholics and Jews, June 1960.

Acts of the Apostles. Instruction (*catechesis*) would naturally follow on and amplify preaching or evangelization (*kerygma*); and from the various speeches of the apostles given in the Acts we gather that the cardinal points of their preaching were as follows: (1) to show that Jesus is the Christ, that is that he fulfils the *expected*, prophetic, messianic requirements—'therefore let all the house of Israel know that God made him both Lord and Christ (Messias), this Jesus whom *you* crucified' (Acts ii, 36); (2) to show that the Christ must suffer and rise again, and salvation must be preached to the gentiles in his name—'I have stood bearing witness to both little and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen, that the Christ, by suffering, by being the first of the resurrection of the dead would proclaim light to the people and the gentiles' (*ib.*, xxvi, 23).

This second series of points was, of course, by no means expected—it was precisely the burning controversial issue, the wholly *unexpected* thing about the gospel. It could only be proposed to people's belief, and defended from the prophets, if people were first convinced that Jesus was the expected Christ, or Messias. The whole programme is summed up in the following text, 'and for three sabbaths running he argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proposing that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and that "this is the Christ, Jesus whom I proclaim to you"' (*ib.*, xvii, 3). This basic point—proving that Jesus is the Christ—could only be made, presumably, by pointing to the expected, conventional messianic signs in his life; these would be his credentials.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that apostolic instruction was modelled on Jesus' own method of teaching. On the evidence of the gospels he first satisfied his disciples that he was the Christ—he led up to Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi. Only after that did he go on to tell them that the son of man must suffer many things. . . . Not that they believed him even then (cf. Luke xxiv, 25-6, 46).

Now Luke, according to his own prologue, is giving Theophilus the evidence, that is, the solid grounds for the instruction he had received; the evidence therefore for the messianic credentials of Jesus first of all, and then for his teaching on the controversial unexpected heart of the gospel. But in this article we will only be concerned with the evangelist's substantiation of the

claim that 'Jesus is the Christ', not with the claim that 'the Christ must suffer, and rise again, and salvation be preached in his name to the gentiles'.

What then were the current messianic expectations that Jesus, according to St Luke—and indeed the rest of the new testament—fulfilled, in order to 'prove' himself to be the Christ? I think we can agree with the Jewish scholar Joseph Klausner, in his book *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, that there were four main pictures of the hoped for Messiah which had been gradually built up by the whole Israelite tradition of the old testament, pictures that were on the face of it by no means always consistent with each other.

(1) The first was of the glorious, mighty, triumphant Christ who would conquer the oppressor gentile nations—of a Christ who was the projection into the future of the Davidic victories and Solomonian splendours of the past (cf. Pss. ii, xlv (xlv), cix (cx)).

(2) The second was of the humble, peaceful, healing Saviour, who would bind up the wounds of his people and preach peace to them that were far off and them that were nigh—of a figure who was the projection of the sobered hopes of a people returned from captivity in Babylon. For the prototype of this figure one must go behind David to Moses (cf. Zac. ix, 9; Isa. xlii, 1-4).

(3) According to a third expectation the human Messiah was replaced by God himself, who would come in person to save his people. This too was a post-exilic development of the messianic hope (cf. Isa. xl, 1-11; xliii-xlv; Mal. iii).

(4) Finally in a fourth development the personal human Messiah is replaced by the corporate 'Messias-nation', which is endowed with the attributes of the warlike, triumphant Christ of the first messianic picture. This development is represented by the prophecy of Daniel (cf. vii, 13, 27), and was stimulated by the national resurgence under the Macchabees in the middle of the second century B.C.

St Luke shows, in effect, that Jesus fulfils all four kinds of messianic expectation, in spite of their apparent incompatibilities, and that he is the glorious Messiah, the humble Messiah, the divine Saviour, and the embodiment of the messianic nation. We can do no more here than consider four episodes in the gospel—which will not, of course, correspond neatly to the four kinds of expecta-

tion we have outlined, but which will have some bearing on all of them.

*The baptism, genealogy and temptation* (Luke iii, 21-iv, 13).

The voice from heaven that bore testimony to Jesus (iii, 22) utters a composite quotation of Psalm ii, 7 and Isaias xlii, 1, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased'; the text is almost identical with the parallel passages in Matthew iii, 17 and Mark i, 11. But there is another reading, anciently attested, in which the voice simply quotes Psalm ii; 'Thou art my Son, I this day have begotten thee'. There are sound reasons for thinking that this was the original text, and that it got assimilated by later copyists to the other two gospels. If this is so, then the heavenly voice is designating Jesus as the triumphant warrior Christ of the Davidic psalm. If the composite reading is preferred, then he is being designated as both the glorious and the humble Christ.

It is from the second psalm, and such similar passages as Psalm cix (cx), that the Christ-title of 'Son of God' is derived. This title in the gospels, it must be clearly stated, does *not* directly signify the divine nature of our Lord. It was precisely a messianic title, it belonged to the Davidic kings of Israel as the anointed of the Lord. One might regard Psalms ii and cix (cx) as coronation psalms, in which the conferring of the kingdom on a man, to be God's representative, is thought of metaphorically as a divine begetting or birth.

The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus has a similar significance. It recalls the prophecy of Isaias xi, 1ff.: 'And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him . . .'. It is precisely in virtue of the Spirit resting upon him that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed of God, anointed by the Spirit of God. But the Spirit came down in the form of a dove, and this should take our minds further than David and the house of Jesse, back to the story of the flood, and the dove that came back to the ark carrying a spray of olive. Thus Jesus is shown to be more than the anointed representative of God to his chosen people, more than the old kings of Israel; he is the anointed harbinger of peace and reconciliation to all mankind. In his person the Spirit is restored to man, which man's wickedness had forfeited in the days of old (cf. Gen. vi, 3). St Luke then proceeds to reinforce these suggestive

symbols of the baptism scene by taking the genealogy of Jesus back beyond Abraham, where Matthew started it, to Adam. Jesus is the son of David, he is the son of Adam (the second Adam, as St Paul will say), and the son of God. No merely national Messias of the Jewish people, he is the cosmic, universal, Christ, and as such he immediately goes out to do battle with the ancient enemy of mankind.

Thus the baptism, genealogy, and temptation, show Jesus to be the glorious, warrior, Christ of the first strand of messianic expectation—and much more. This is a feature we will notice again; Jesus not only fulfils, he *transcends* Israel's messianic hopes.

*The visit to Nazareth* (Luke iv, 17-30)

In this passage our Lord applies to himself the opening verses of Isaias lxi, a chapter in which the prophet describes a time of messianic blessings, which are however bestowed by a humble, not a glorious Messias. The blessings admittedly include, in verse 2, 'the day of vengeance of our God', presumably on the gentile oppressors (cf. v. 5), but the quotation in St Luke significantly omits the phrase, and our Lord, after reading the passage, counteracts any exaggerated ideas his hearers may have been inclined to have on this score by his remarks on the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian. The reaction of his fellow citizens indicates just what exaggerated ideas they were inclined to have.

The figure with whom Jesus identifies himself is clearly the Messias, because he speaks in the prophecy about God having anointed him, and says what this anointing consists of, namely the outpouring on him of the Spirit. The way in which anointing with oil was regarded as symbolic of the gift of the Spirit is shown by the stories about the anointing of Saul and David (I Kings (Sam.) x, 1-6; xvi, 1-13).

But this anointed figure of Isaias has none of the splendour of a king. His function is not to rule or conquer, but to bring a message ('to preach the gospel', v. 17), and to make a proclamation ('to preach', v. 19); that is to say he is a *messenger* and a *herald*. These were the functions of the old testament prophets, which is why Jesus goes on to refer to himself as a prophet. Finally the figure in Isaias declares that he has been *sent*. Now for a person

to be *sent* as a *messenger* and a *herald* means that he is some sort of a subordinate to the one who sent him, he is a servant. That 'He who has been sent' or 'The Sent-One' (it is one word in the Greek) was regarded as a messianic title is at least suggested by John ix, 7; but it was a title clearly more suited to the humble than to the glorious Christ. It is a perfect contrast to the glorious Christ title 'He who is to come' or 'The Coming-One', of which we will see more shortly. For an interesting light on the different emphases of the different gospel narratives, we may compare Luke iv, 43, 'To other cities also I must preach the kingdom of God, for that is why *I was sent*', with the parallel text in Mark i, 38, 'Let us go into the neighbouring towns and cities that I may preach there also; for this purpose *am I come*'.

Thus Jesus is here claiming for himself the function of humble Messiah. But these messianic titles, *Sent*, *Messenger*, *Herald*, which are derived from this passage of Isaias and other similar ones, have further implications. For they are among the functions or roles which our Lord conferred upon his disciples; the very name 'apostle' means 'one who has been sent', and it was as *heralds* (preachers) with a *message* (the gospel) that our Lord sent his apostles. In other words they (and the Church founded on them) would share in his messianic function. The solidarity of his followers with him in his messianic functions is shown in such a passage, to take only one, as Luke x, 16, 'He that listens to you listens to me, and he that despises you despises me; while he that despises me despises him that sent me'.

So far we have seen divine testimony born to the character of Jesus as the glorious Christ, and his own claim to be the humble Christ. But both the testimony and the claim need substantiation. It is in the subsequent chapters of the gospel, describing the deeds of Jesus, that the substantiation is given. It would take too long to give chapter and verse for the assertion, which I consider is a true one, that *all* our Lord's miracles were messianic signs which fell into categories established by the prophets. But the important point is that the miracles of his Galilaean ministry, the healings and the feedings of the multitudes and the casting out of devils (to be regarded perhaps as 'release for the captives', Isa. lxi, 1), were all signs appropriate to the humble Messiah. This consideration brings us to our crucial third passage.

*John's question to Jesus* (Luke vii, 18-28)

John the Baptist was conscious of his own mission as the fore-runner of the Christ; he had seen and heard the testimony of heaven borne to Jesus as the glorious Christ; and when he was in prison he heard, as St Matthew puts it in his account of the episode, of 'the works of the Christ' (xi, 2). But the problem for him was that these works were the works of the humble Christ, of the humble 'Sent-One', not of the triumphant 'Coming-One' whom, as he thought, he had baptized in the Jordan. He himself had been sent as a herald and messenger. Was he then only the herald of a herald? Would there be a second and glorious Christ to follow Jesus? One strand of Jewish rabbinic tradition did work out a sort of theory of two Messiahs, in order to resolve precisely the sort of dilemma, created by the prophecies, that must have been troubling John. And so he sends to ask 'Art thou the Coming-One, or are we to expect another?'. This title of the Coming-One is derived principally from Psalm cxvii (cxviii), 26, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord', a text recited daily at the Sanctus in the mass. It occurs again in the Apocalypse as a divine title 'He who is and who was and who is to come'. And we look forward to our Lord's second coming, which in one sense will not be his second but his first coming, because his first appearance at the incarnation was a *mission*, a being sent rather than a coming in this very special messianic sense. The dilemma which puzzled John, and which some of the Jewish rabbis evaded by postulating two Christs, two Messiahs, Christian doctrine has resolved in terms of the second coming, that is of two manifestations of one and the same Christ.

Jesus, naturally enough, did not expound this in so many words in his answer to John. But he clearly could not accept the dilemma which John's question assumed, because he was the glorious Christ, and yet he must continue to play the role of the humble Christ, because it was in virtue of that role that 'the Christ had to suffer'. Furthermore, he was already, but in a hidden way, performing one essential task of the Coming-One, namely inaugurating the age to come.

So he answered in what we could almost regard as a prophetic cipher. By the allusions of his answer he refers John to Isaias lxi, 1, which is, as we have seen, a humble Messiah passage. But his answer also contains an allusion to Isaias xxxv, 5, which runs:



'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy'. This picture of blessings is no different to that which is proper to the work of the humble Messiah; but we get the point of this apparently rather flat allusion, if we look at the preceding verse, *Isaias xxxv, 4*, to which the 'then' of v. 5 refers: 'Say to those who are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not. Behold, your God *will come* with vengeance, with the recompense of God; *he will come* and save you'. Thus our Lord's answer could be deciphered as 'Yes, I am he who is to come; I am he who is to come with a vengeance'. It is a cryptic claim to be more than the glorious Christ, to be in fact the divine Saviour of the third strand of messianic expectation. If we hear in his last words to John's messengers, 'and blessed is he that is not scandalized at me', an echo of *Isaias viii, 13-14*, the lesson is reinforced. So also is it by his quotation from *Malachias iii, 1*, with which he concludes his short discourse to the crowd about John the Baptist.

*Peter's confession and the transfiguration (Luke ix, 18-36)*

Peter's confession is the climax of what we might call the first act of the gospel drama, of which the chief instructive purpose is to establish that 'Jesus is the Christ'. Our consideration of John's dilemma should show how difficult it necessarily was for our Lord to establish this all-important ground work of the gospel, in spite of his manifestly messianic miracles. And even though Peter's confession had been preceded a short while before by such a stupendous messianic sign as the feeding of the five thousand, his confession of Jesus as the Christ remains a great act of faith, and can not be regarded as drawing an easy conclusion from evidence that sticks out a mile. For the evidence all pointed to Jesus as the humble Christ, and Peter acknowledged him, in words which echo *Psalm ii* (much more so in Matthew than in Luke), as the glorious Christ. He had triumphed, thanks to the Father's revelation (*Matt. xvi, 17*), over the very genuine and natural doubts which John's question expressed.

And so it is that immediately after Peter's confession our Lord goes on to the even more difficult second stage of instruction, and begins to teach them that 'the Son of man must suffer many things . . .' (*Luke ix, 22*). This is our first encounter with the title



'Son of man'. The context of its use shortly after in v. 26, which talks about the Son of man coming in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels, shows its dependence on Daniel's 'Son of man' (Dan. vii). This figure is a personification of the messianic race; our Lord, in using it, lays claim to being the embodiment of the messianic people. He is in person 'the Israel of God', in person the remnant of the old Israel of which the prophets, Isaias in particular, had so much to say, in person the head, or beginning, of the new Israel the Church, of which St Paul will have so much to say. The title 'Son of man' has many ramifications; it is a name that takes Jesus, so to say, outside the limitations of Israel, and links him with mankind at large; it is an Adamic name, St Paul as good as translated it into 'the second Adam.' It lies at the root of his doctrine of the Church as the body of Christ.

If we call Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ the climax of the first act of the gospel, we could regard the transfiguration as the closing tableau to that act. It recapitulates all the lessons, or rather all the patterns, which have been gradually unfolded during our Lord's ministry in Galilee. We can only glance in a very summary manner at the significance of some of the details in a picture of extraordinary symbolic richness.

First Jesus is manifested as the one to whom the Law and the Prophets (Moses and Elias) bore witness. And in particular we are reminded of the manifestations of God to each of these figures on Mt Sinai or Horeb (Exod. xxiv, 9; xxxiii, 18; III(I) Kings xix, 9). But we notice that this is not a manifestation of God to Jesus, as those theophanies had been manifestations of God to Moses and Elias; he is rather in the same relation to them and the apostles as the Lord God had been to them individually. This is a theophany, a manifestation of God, not *to* Jesus but *in* Jesus. It is really the three apostles, rather than Jesus, who like the two prophets of old have the experience. The cloud comes and overshadows them, as it had covered Moses; the voice speaks to them, as it had spoken to Elias. Peter talks to Jesus as Moses and Elias had talked to God. The apostles awoke and 'saw his glory'. In other words they see him not only as the glorious royal Christ to whom Moses and the prophets bear witness, but as the divine Christ and king of Israel, whom Moses and the prophets served.

But Moses and Elias are talking to him about his 'decease' which he is to accomplish in Jerusalem. The word St Luke actually uses is

'exodus'. Our Lord is going to accomplish another exodus by his death; indeed his death and resurrection are going to *be* another exodus of a new people of God, summed up and epitomized in Christ their head.

The cloud and the voice really repeat, in slightly different 'picture language', the theme of the baptism scene. The cloud is an alternative symbol for the overshadowing Spirit of God. The voice this time alludes no more to the triumphant Psalm ii, but by the epithet 'my *chosen* Son', or, as in the alternative reading, 'my *beloved* Son', it echoes such a passage as Isaias xli, 8—'but thou, Israel, my servant Jacob whom I *chose*, seed of Abraham whom I *loved*'—or Isaias xlii, 1—'Jacob my servant, I will uphold; Israel my *chosen*, my soul delighted in him'. (I have quoted these passages according to the Greek translation, which would underlie the gospel allusions.) Thus Jesus is once again being designated as the humble Messiah, characteristic of the prophecies of the second half of Isaias, but this time by reference to passages—commonly called the 'Servant passages'—which stress almost the identification of this figure of God's servant with his people. He is the embodiment of the Christ-nation, but this is now the *suffering* Christ-nation, not the triumphant Christ-nation of Daniel's Son of man.

Jesus is the Christ. This is the primordial article of the Christian faith, the seed from which the Christian religion and Church grew, and it is a seed that was germinated in the old testament. This is the original point of division between Christianity and Judaism. And yet in current usage we often use the name 'Christ' as if it were, so to say, no more than our Lord's surname—something like Smith or Baker. At least we should try and make ourselves aware of the tremendous and mysterious significance of this surname, which is indeed the necessary clue to a proper understanding of the gospels, and the whole new testament.