

CHAPTER NINE

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to destroy the works of the Devil and to deliver men from his slavery. It was first necessary to **destroy moral** darkness caused **by error** and **to bring** the **Light of True Knowledge** to men who **had been** led astray by the lie. This **Truth**, according to the assurance of our Lord, will set man free.¹

The Redeemer, according to Holy Scripture, was the Most High Prophet and Teacher. As the unique God-Man and as the Incarnated Word of God the Father, not only in the condition of His eternal pre-existence but during His life on earth, He maintained a continuous communication with the Father. He is the fulfilment of all the Prophets and all Prophecies² and not only did He **authentically** interpret the Revelation **that** was **manifested by means of** the Mosaic Law and the Prophets, **such** as no other man had **ever** spoken **of** before or shall speak **of again**, but **he also** fulfilled the Prophecies of the Old Testament by becoming the **conveyor** of the perfect **and** Divine Revelation. The **Prophets** of old had foretold the realisation of the **Divine Plan** concerning **Salvation** in Christ. The Lord announced the establishment of this new condition of **Salvation** **by** revealing Himself as the One Who reveals and **accomplishes** all the **ancient** Prophecies. The Great Prophet appeared **at the end of the** Old Testament because the Prophets spoke only **of Him**, and after Him no one **would** be able to speak **of** any new Prophecies.

The Hypostatic Union of the two Natures in Christ explain the high Authority with which the Great Prophet spoke, **that is** “...with authority and not as the Scribes.”³ Since the Revelation **of** Jesus Christ surpasses all those revealed by men, He completely fulfilled the measure of the perfect and Divine Revelation, in that no other complete **Revelation** can **ever possibly** appear. Jesus Christ is God’s Revelation and has become for us “*God’s Power and God’s Wisdom.*”⁴ For this reason, He assures us that He is the “*Light of the world*”⁵ **Who** alone reveals the Father and forgives all sinners who return **in** repentance to Him. He is the “*Way*”⁶ through which **we are** led to the Father and **through faith in Him we achieve Salvation.**

1. The Lord’s Prophetic Office According to Holy Scripture

According to the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Satan is the liar and the father of lies⁷ **who rules** over the world through deception and moral darkness, which he brought upon the **minds** of men through sinful passions **that lead** them away from the True God, **towards** idol **worship** and the **lusts** of the flesh. The Redeemer Who came to free men from this slavery, as the **Bearer** of Truth **that** sets man free

¹ 1 John 3:18. John 8:32. Cf. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, pp. 78-79. Damalas, *Catechesis*, p. 63. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 144-146. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 157-158.

² Matth. 3:15.

³ Matth. 7:29. Cf. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, p. 81.

⁴ 1 Corinth. 1:24.

⁵ John 8:12.

⁶ John 14:6.

⁷ John 8:44.

from all errors. **He is the One** Who was announced by Moses **as coming** as a Prophet **like** himself **and Who would** intercede between God and **men through** direct communication with God, **manifesting** Him to whom He **Wills**, speaking to them and giving them the Law.⁸ This Mosaic Prophecy was realised in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The Lord **indirectly** proclaimed the title of Prophet⁹ **for Himself** whereas in other cases, He **directly accepted** the title,¹⁰ **fulfilling** the Prophecy of Prophet Isaiah: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me; He has sent Me to preach glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to declare the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of recompense; to comfort all that mourn; that there should be given to them that mourn in Zion glory instead of ashes, the oil of joy to the mourners, the garment of glory for the spirit of heaviness: and they shall be called generations of righteousness, the planting of the Lord for glory.”*¹¹ He **assured** His Mission of **evangelising the Kingdom of God** not only to Capernaum but to all other cities **as well** because He **had been** sent for **that** reason.¹² Before Pontius Pilot He manifested that *“...to this He had come, to reveal the Truth.”*¹³

Being fully conscious that He is the **Bearer** of the complete and perfect Divine Revelation, He **did** not hesitate to assure His Disciples that He is *“the Truth”*¹⁴ and the *“Teacher.”*¹⁵ He **did** not hesitate to **proclaim Himself as** the Law-giver **Who** with Authority interprets and fulfils the Law, placing His Authority above that of Moses, Elijah and all the Prophets **because** the Father proclaimed Him **as His** *“...Only Begotten Son, in Whom I Am pleased... listen to Him.”*¹⁶ He **ascertained** that His words have Eternal Authority and value.¹⁷

The Holy Apostles and Disciples proclaimed **our Lord** Jesus to be the *“...Prophet in Power and Word before God and all the people...”*¹⁸ as **had been** proclaimed by Moses.¹⁹ As *“... the Only Begotten Son...”* *“...Who is in the bosom of the Father...”* and Who spoke **of** the Father **Whom** *“...no one has ever seen...”*²⁰ Christ became His *“...faithful Witness.”*²¹

⁸ Deut. 18:15, 18-19.

⁹ Matth. 13:57. Luke 4:18-19, 24; 13:33. John 1:46.

¹⁰ Matth. 5:17; 21:11; 23:8, 10. John 3:2; 4:19; 6:14; 9:17; 13:13. Acts 3:22.

¹¹ Is. 61:1-3.

¹² Luke 4:43-44.

¹³ John 18:37.

¹⁴ John 14:6.

¹⁵ Matth. 23:8.

¹⁶ Matth. 17:5. Mark 9:7. Luke 9:35.

¹⁷ Matth. 24:35. Mark 13:31. Luke 21:33.

¹⁸ Luke 24:19.

¹⁹ Acts 3:22-25.

²⁰ John 1:18.

²¹ Rev. 1:5.

2. The Lord's Prophetic Office According to the Holy Fathers

The Lord Jesus Christ was proclaimed as "Prophet" and "Teacher" by the first generation that succeeded the Holy Apostles. St Ignatios the Theophoros proclaimed Christ to be "...the truthful Mouth by Whom the Father has spoken..."²² and "...our only Teacher."²³

The Apologists opposed the idolaters who boasted of the wisdom of their philosophers, and asserted that the fullness of Truth can only be found in Christ. St Justine the Philosopher and Martyr who studied all the philosophic systems of his time, was encouraged by an old man to study the Prophets, which led him to Jesus Christ. He subsequently proclaimed that "...greater of all human teachings are ours..." because the Word became "...for us the Christ..." and took up "...flesh and word and soul." Those who dedicated themselves to the study of philosophy or made laws "...spoke well..." "...for they did not know everything about the Word." The Word is the Christ Who "...is the Power of the unspeakable Father and not the construction of the human logic."²⁴

Tertullian asked: "What is common between a Philosopher and a Christian? Between the disciple of Greece and the Disciple of Heaven?"²⁵

St Irenaeus stressed that "...we would be unable to learn differently about God, if our Teacher, Who is the Word, the exact Truth, did not become Man. Truly no one else would be able to narrate the Truth about the Father rather than His same Word."²⁶

Clement the Alexandrian urged everyone to "...accept Christ, to accept to see, to accept the Light." Characterising the sweetness of the Word that Enlightened us and which is more desirable than honey, he wondered: "How can He (Christ) not be desirable Who Enlightened the mind, which was in darkness and cleansed the eyes of the soul?" He assured us that if we had not known the Word and if we had not been Enlightened by Him, we would have been in darkness just as "...if the sun had not existed, everything would have been in darkness." Addressing the Incarnated Word he exclaimed: "I was misled until this day seeking God; because Thou hast Enlightened me, O Lord! I have found God through Thee and I enjoy the Father near Thee."²⁷

Origen wrote: "Those who have believed are assured of the Grace and the Truth through Jesus Christ and that Christ is the Truth according to His words 'I Am the Truth,' and the Knowledge, which guides men towards the Blessed Life, receiving (the Grace and the Truth) from the exact words and Teachings of Christ."²⁸

²² St. Ignatius, *To Romans*, 8, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 105.

²³ *Ibid*, *To Magneseans*, 9, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 95.

²⁴ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *2 Apology*, 10, § 8, in *B*, v. 4, p. 205.

²⁵ Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 46, *P.L.*, 1.

²⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 1, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1119-1123. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 362.

²⁷ Clement the Alexandrian, *Protrepticus*, XI, B, 7, 73.

²⁸ Origen, *About Principals*.

St Athanasios the Great stressed the necessity of the Lord's Teachings and observed **that True Knowledge** was "hidden" because of the "...madness of idolatry and atheism..." which "...ruled over the whole world." "So who was to teach about the Father"? Man was incapable of doing this, for everyone "...according to the soul..." had been wounded "...by the demonic deceit and the vanity of the idols." How would it be possible for someone to change "...man's soul and man's mind..." which no **human being** can see? "That which no one can see, how can it be understood?" It was necessary for the Word of God **Who** sees "...the soul and the mind..." **and** Who "...moves all in Creation through **which** we know the Father..." **to come**. He wanted to benefit men because "...He comes as a Man, taking up a body like theirs for Himself..." "...and as a Man lives amongst men, in order that through the works which the Lord will work through the **body, they** would understand the Truth and through Him will the Father be known."²⁹

St Augustine **commented on** the Lord's Prophetic Office: "I tried to prove that there is no teacher who teaches the Truth to men besides God, as it is written in the Gospel: One is your Teacher, the Christ."³⁰

3. The Lord as the High Prophet Because of the Hypostatic Union of His Two Natures

Jesus Christ is the **most** unique and only Teacher and Prophet compared to all other Prophets. He is incomparably perfect **and** the only One Who is **worthy** to be called "Teacher" with the absolute meaning of **the term and according to which** no other man **could** ever be **truly** called "Teacher" or "Prophet." The incomparable perfection of the Office **of our** Lord Jesus is **due to** the Hypostatic Union of His human Nature with the Divine Nature of the Word. He "...witnesses what He has seen..." not only **due to** the condition of His Eternal and **beginningless** pre-existence with the Father and the Holy Spirit but during His life on earth, **by** preserving His Communion with the Father and as "...the Son of Man Who is in the Heavens..."³¹ judging "...as He hears..." "...for He does not seek His own Will, but the Will..." of the Father.³²

Christ's incomparable superiority **having come as the Son of God**³³ is compared to all **other** Prophets who were sent **throughout** different periods as servants into the Divine Vineyard. **Our** Lord **did** not receive the Light as **did** the other Prophets **because** He is the Light. The Prophets received **Divine Revelation in their daily lives throughout the different centuries. The Supernatural conditions they experienced was** temporary and the Miracles **would pass by whereas** Christ is "...the Prophet powerful in words and in deeds."³⁴ His Life is a continuous Miracle and Supernatural condition. **Every** deed and word is a manifestation of the Great Miracle of the Incarnation of the Word and Son of God. **We do not find any simple, superior or**

²⁹ St. Athanasius the Great, *About the incarnation of the Word*, §§ 14 and 15, in Migne, P.G., 25, 120 and 121.

³⁰ St. Augustine, *Retractus*, I, 12, in Migne, P.L., 32, 602.

³¹ John 3:13.

³² John 5:30.

³³ Matth. 21:38-42.

³⁴ Luke 24:19.

extraordinary characteristics of the previous Prophets united without any imperfection in Him. Christ is the Eternal Word of the Father Who Enlightened the Prophets. He is the Anointed Messiah about Whom the Prophets spoke and Who was the final goal of all their Prophecies. He is the Divine Revelation Himself.

Origen proclaimed that “...previously the Christ and Word of God was in Moses and the Prophets, for without the Word of God how was it possible for them to prophesy about the Christ?”³⁵ This opinion was based on Holy Scripture that not only proclaims the Word of God as “...the Light which Enlightens every man coming into the world...”³⁶ but also ascertains that “...the Spirit of Christ...” which was within the Prophets “...manifested the sufferings of Christ and the glory after them.”³⁷ The activities of the Prophets referred to the coming of the Great Prophet and His Activities. This was a preparation. The Prophets of old pre-announced the realisation of the Divine Plan of Salvation in Christ by prophesying the future *Economia* of Salvation. When the time was accomplished, the Great Prophet came announcing the establishment of this new *Economia*, of which He is the Leader and in Whom all Prophecies are fulfilled.

The Prophecy of Christ is the end of all Prophecies. All the Prophets who will follow after Him, will be His witnesses and will continue although they will be unable to announce any new Prophecies.³⁸ Christ pre-announces the future similar to the Prophets of old except that an essential difference exists between them and Him. The Prophets did not prophesy about Christ and His Coming by means of their own abilities but through the Enlightenment of God whereas when Christ speaks of the future, He refers to Himself and reveals Himself as being the centre of the Age to come. He appears as the One Who will come to Judge the living and the dead.³⁹ Until the Second Appearance, the New World (His Church) will develop as a Supernatural structure built upon the ruins of the old world, which is the Kingdom of Heaven and of which He is the King.⁴⁰ The Church is a God-built structure which is also His Body⁴¹ and over which He rules as its glorious Head.⁴²

3. The Authority of the Lord as Prophet

The Hypostatic Union of His human Nature with His Divine Nature, manifest Christ as the High Prophet and explains the high Authority with which He decides and speaks. He does not use the usual phrase: “Thus said the Lord..”⁴³ according to which the other Prophets prepare their Prophecies and announcements in the Name of God. Instead our Lord speaks “...as having Authority and not as the Scribes...”⁴⁴

³⁵ Origen, *About Principals*, in Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, II, p. 155, note 10.

³⁶ John 1:4.

³⁷ 1 Peter 1:11.

³⁸ Martensen, p. 451.

³⁹ 2 Tim. 4:1.

⁴⁰ Rev. 11:15; 22:5.

⁴¹ 1 Corinth. 12:27.

⁴² Ephes. 4:5. Col. 1:18.

⁴³ Is. 45:1; 66:1. Jer. 2:1; 13:1; 22:1; 28:1; 29:1, 7; 32:1; 34:1; 40:2; 41:2; 45:2.

⁴⁴ Matth. 7:29.

Contrary to the old Law-givers of Israel and those who interpreted the Law, many times He repeated the phrase “I say unto you...”⁴⁵

The Lord appears as the High and the absolutely infallible Teacher Who reveals the Law in a completely new light, proclaiming that He “... has not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them.”⁴⁶ St John Chrysostom commented that “...that which was spoken was not a refutation of the priorities, but an intensification and fullness.” He fulfilled “the Prophets” who spoke about Him and He proved all the Prophecies to be Truthful. He accomplished and clarified the Prophecies, shedding complete light upon them. He fulfilled the Law because He did not break any of the laws and because He granted this also to us.⁴⁷

The Lord’s attribute as the infallible and unique Teacher of the Truth does not use His Office as the High Prophet or the utmost Teacher of Divine Truth. The Teacher knows only to expose, to explain and to prove the contents of the Divine Word, whereas the Prophet carries a new word and His Appearance coincides with new times for the Divine *Economia*’s history. The Lord, as the pre-eminent Prophet, “...watching as He should...” revealed God as no one else had ever done “...because He is in Communion with the fatherly Deity...” “...as the Only-Begotten Son.”⁴⁸ The old Revelation of the Prophets concerning God, as fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, appears completely new and, “...according to the capability of men to understand...” is complete.⁴⁹

Through His Prophetic Office, Christ guaranteed us that He is the “Light of the world” and he who follows Him “...will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life.”⁵⁰ This is “the Truth” in its absolute meaning. The Holy Apostles and all those who knew Him directly, bore witness that they had seen Him “...full of Grace and Truth...”⁵¹ “...the Wisdom of God and for the elect Jews and Greeks...”⁵² for in Him “...are all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.”⁵³ The beneficial influence of this Light, which originates from the Divine Teachings of the Great Prophet, was experienced by His Disciples as well as by St Peter who spoke on behalf of all the Apostles when the Teacher asked those who were scandalised and who departed from Him, “...do you also want to go?”⁵⁴ St Peter responded on behalf of all the Apostles by saying: “Lord, where shall we go? Thou hast words of Eternal Life...”⁵⁵ The same experience and beneficial influence that His Apostles had, the Lord invited every man who thirsts to come to Him⁵⁶ in order to drink and quench his spiritual thirst. He declared that from all those who believe in Him and accept His Teachings “...rivers of

⁴⁵ Matth. 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44.

⁴⁶ Matth. 5:17.

⁴⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew* 16, §§ 2 and 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 57, 240 and 241.

⁴⁸ John 1:14.

⁴⁹ Martensen, p. 450. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* VI, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 548. St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew* 16, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 57, 240. Origen, *Against Celsus*, VII, 41, in *B*, v. 10, p. 154.

⁵⁰ John 8:12.

⁵¹ John 1:16.

⁵² 1 Corinth. 1:24.

⁵³ Col. 2:3.

⁵⁴ John 6:67.

⁵⁵ John 6:68.

⁵⁶ John 7:37.

Living Water will come out of his belly...⁵⁷ for, "...he who drinks from the Water..." of His Teachings "...will not thirst forever..."⁵⁸ and he who preserves His Word "...will not see death for ever."⁵⁹

4. The Newness of the Revelation and the Incomparable Perfection of the High Prophet

The complete **originality of** the New Revelation **that** the High Prophet brought, is found in the sphere of the *Soteriology* (Teachings of Salvation). The Father appears forgiving, **by having** forbearance and love towards all those who turn to Him with repentance. **Christ** is the "Way" through which one **finds the** Father⁶⁰ and achieves Salvation through faith in Him as the Son and Word of God Who was sent by the Father **so** that all who believe in Him shall have Eternal Life.⁶¹ The Prophets proclaimed the Will of God, the Incarnated Word and Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who reveals within Himself the Father's Nature as love and the Eternal Plan of Salvation, which the Father conceived for the **Redemption** of the **whole** world. The Son comes to **fulfil** this Plan **and** "...to preach the Gospel to the poor; ... to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."⁶² The Prophets were called by God "...those who restore the things of Israel..." whereas the Lord "...came to restore all the world."⁶³ As long as He lived on earth, **Christ** was sent to all the lost sheep of the House of Israel⁶⁴ **and when** He accomplished the Work of Salvation, He sent His Holy Disciples to preach the Gospel "...into all the world..."⁶⁵ and to make Disciples from "...all nations..."⁶⁶ beginning **in** Jerusalem⁶⁷ and becoming His witnesses "...to the end of the earth."⁶⁸ It is also characteristic that the only Prophet with whom the Lord compared Himself and from whose life He recalled examples and analogies for His Teachings, Sufferings and Resurrection, is the Prophet Jonas who preached to the pagans of Nineve.⁶⁹

All of these show the newness of the Revelation through Jesus Christ **and that** which proved His incomparable perfection as Prophet **was** the perfect harmony of His Teachings with His Life. This harmony manifested the Mouth of the Father as the Mouth of the Prophet and His whole personality **reflected** the **Paternal Holiness** and Majesty to such extent that "...he who has seen..." **our Lord Jesus Christ** "...has seen the Father..."⁷⁰ and "...if anyone wills to do His Will, he shall know concerning the Doctrine, whether it is from God..." and that He does not "...speak on..." His own.⁷¹

⁵⁷ John 7:38.

⁵⁸ John 4:14.

⁵⁹ John 8:51.

⁶⁰ John 14:6.

⁶¹ John 3:16-18.

⁶² Luke 4:18-19. Is. 61:1.

⁶³ Origen, *Against Celsus*, IV, § 9, in **B**, v. 9, p. 238.

⁶⁴ Matth. 10:6.

⁶⁵ Mark 16:15.

⁶⁶ Matth. 28:19.

⁶⁷ Luke 24:47.

⁶⁸ Acts 1:8.

⁶⁹ Jonas 3:4

⁷⁰ John 14:9.

⁷¹ John 7:17.

Jesus Christ, the Incarnated Word and Son of God, proved to be the High Teacher and Prophet Who practised the Prophetic Office in a perfect manner. He manifested the Light of Divine Revelation as the last and final word that would be heard from Heaven. His Teachings and Work left no place for another new Revelation. It had universal character and Eternal Power as He Himself assured us by saying: *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will by no means pass away.”*⁷² He does not restrict Himself to certain nations but accepts all, regardless of culture, generation, nationality, tribe, language or complexion. Great and small, educated and uneducated, *“...male or female...”*,⁷³ *“...Greeks and barbarians, both wise and unwise...”*⁷⁴ are all Called to become Disciples of this Divine Prophet. All are Called as long as they desire and will to become *“...taught by God.”*⁷⁵

⁷² Matth. 24:35.

⁷³ Gal. 3:28.

⁷⁴ Rom. 1:14.

⁷⁵ John 6:45. Is. 54:13.