

ON THE PROPHET AS A SOCIAL ROLE: A COGNITIVE SEMANTIC ANALYSIS*

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Rezumat: Acest articol prezintă o analiză din perspectiva semanticii cognitive a rolului de profet în Biblie. Ipoteza pe care o discutăm se referă la faptul că profetul are un rol social, fiind reprezentantul unei categorii cu trăsături specifice de comportament și funcții sociale. Am analizat rolul de „profet” așa cum este el instanțiat în Vechiul Testament, cu scopul de a descrie trăsăturile stereotipice ale acestuia. În a doua parte a lucrării am cercetat în ce măsură Iisus poate să ilustreze acest rol social cu trăsăturile lui specifice. Am arătat că Iisus are toate atributele profeților biblici, fiind cel mai reprezentativ exponent al acestei categorii. Iisus „se califică” pentru acest rol social, însă îl depășește. El este mai mult decât un profet, prin aceea că are însușirea de a fi Fiul lui Dumnezeu, deci și o relație specială cu Dumnezeu-Tatăl.

Cuvinte-cheie: profet, Iisus, rol social, semantică cognitivă, stereotip, Biblie.

1. The aim and outline of the paper

The research questions that we ask in this paper are to what extent Jesus can be described as a “prophet” and to what extent he may be said to illustrate this social role. We will also assume that a “prophet” as a category represents a particular social role in a sociological sense, i.e. a category of individuals with characteristic behaviour and societal functions.

From the point of view of cognitive semantics, as shown by Dahlgren (1985, 379-398; 1985, 107-125) social roles represent a particular category of terms and require a specific type of analysis. The paper, therefore, examines the role of Jesus as a prophet, using cognitive semantics as a method of research.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Stereotype

The framework of analysis is cognitive semantics, using the linguistic stereotype for describing the social term PROPHET. The *stereotype* used in Putnam’s (1975) sense is a cognitive category (epistemic category). Putnam (1975) discusses Carnapian pair

* *Profetul și rolul său social. O analiză din perspectiva semanticii cognitive.*

intension/extension showing that the value of the intension is not to determine the extension of a term correctly, but to represent the minimum knowledge that a speaker has about a term if he knows it. In other words, the intension is the minimal information that a speaker has, who is accepted by the community as knowing a word. According to Putnam (1975, 115-116), stereotypes are “standardised sets of beliefs or idealised beliefs associated with terms.” For example, “the belief that tigers are typically striped orange and black is part of our stereotype of a tiger.”

Stereotypes are dynamic; they change in time (e.g. we discover that whales are mammals, not fish). A stereotype is a “simplified cognitive scheme.” It is a minimum of information, i.e. the minimum requirement of knowledge that a competent speaker possesses about a term.

As opposed to the *prototype*, which is considered the best example of a category, “the *stereotype* functions like a schema, which is perfectly compatible with all the elements of a category. It is an integrated structure, which contains all the common features of its elements” (Ajtony 2012, 69). A stereotype presents a simplification of reality, the so-called “cognitive shortcuts” based on different sources.

2.2. Dahlgren’s (1985) theory

Dahlgren (1985) continues the studies of Putnam (1975). Starting from the idea that the intention of the term, i.e. the encapsulated knowledge of intention reflects the extension of the term, Dahlgren (1985) demonstrated, through psycholinguistic experiments, that the types of features contained in the intention are very different. Her concern was what kind of features are included in the social terms. Thus, Dahlgren (1985) differentiates natural kinds (*tiger*, *lemon*) from social terms (*doctor*, *secretary*) regarding the features in their stereotype. Natural kinds are characterised in terms of attributes of the form (‘round’), colour (‘red’) and function (‘good for eating’); natural kinds are a “summary of experiences.” On the other hand, social terms are distinguished by five criterial features: perceptual, functional, behavioural, relational, internal, as in the following table. These were “repeatedly used” by the participants in the process (experiment) of description and recognition of social terms.

	Social Examples
Perceptual	wears white, female, works in a lab;
Functional	takes care of sick people, types, runs a state;
Behavioural	looks in the rear-view mirror, hard worker;
Relational	aspires for higher political positions, works well with people, high income;
Internal	knows right from wrong, unimaginative, intelligent college graduate.

3. A stereotypical description of the biblical prophets

The first step of the applied analysis is to discover the stereotypical features of the OT/NT prophets. The corpus of this analysis consists of fragments and episodes involving OT/NT prophets and their activities. We have tried to delineate the prophets' frame, in a semantic sense, starting from Dahlgren's model and applying Dahlgren's feature to the description of the prophets and their episodes.

To get relevant generalisations, we have examined a wide range of prophets as they appear in the biblical texts:¹ Abraham, Moses, Aron, Miriam the prophetess, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nathan; from the NT, John the Baptist and Jesus. Their properties, activities, actions and episodes were compared to detach certain generalisations. Thus, the analysis aims to observe the repeatable properties and propose a hierarchy regarding the obligatory versus optional features of a prophet.

Most of the biblical excerpts are taken from *New English Translation* (NET), which is a dynamic translation of equivalence, i.e. a "thought-for-thought," instead of a "strict word-for-word translation." The benefit of this translation is that it captures more easily the "original meaning of the text" (Ladd 2014, 31).² The analysis is conceptual rather than lexical precisely because we have used a translated text.

3.1. Definitions of the term *prophet*

The English dictionaries (*Oxford Dictionary*, *Cambridge Dictionary*, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, *Collins Dictionary*) attribute to a prophet two main properties: a prophet is in close contact with God; he imparts knowledge about the future. The theological scholar Lundbom (2010, 9-29) has identified six typical characteristics of the Israelite and ancient Near Eastern prophets: (1) they have a divine call; (2) they speak God's word; (3) they have divine visions; (4) they do mighty works; (5) they are filled with the Spirit; (6) they pray. Therefore, those of the prophets³ who exhibit all these features are "true prophets." For example, Moses is a "prototypical prophet," i.e. the prophet *par excellence*, because he shares all these features,⁴ while Amos and Nathan are less prototypical. On the other hand, there are also false prophets (Jer. 23) who claim to have several of these features. Non-prophetic individuals have one or two of

¹ Our conclusions are based on an analysis of the several prophets.

² The translation is made by twenty biblical scholars who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

³ But not all prophets exhibit all of these attributes. For example, the prophet Obadiah only claims to communicate the divine revelation he received from God.

⁴ For example, he is named by God "prophet" (Deut. 18:15-18; 34:10), he also encounters God "face to face."

these typical characteristics or no characteristic.⁵ Therefore, these features contribute to a prototype structure of the social role prophet.

Using Dahlgren's (1985) model of analysis, it is possible, however, to offer a more richly-structured description of "prophets" and of how they are integrated into society by a more detailed socio-cultural analysis of the prophet's activities. This is how a prophet's frame enriches a stereotypical description.

3.1.1. The prophets' physical appearance

Prophets have a particular physical appearance given by their typical clothes. Therefore, for example, both Elisha and John the Baptist wear "a garment of camel's hair" and "a leather belt around his waist." Their clothing is poor and uncomfortable (2Kgs. 1:8, Matt. 3:4). The recurrence of the same type of clothes shows that this is a stereotypical feature, a fact also confirmed by false prophets, who wear the same kind of clothing to deceive people (Zech. 13:4).

Notice that prophets did not wear a cultic garment (clothing) like priests, since they do not belong to any religious institution, and act as independent from the cult.⁶ Prophets were distinguished perceptually (by their *appearance*) from priests. Clothing is thus a prototypical feature, though not a defining one. On the other hand, there are no constraints on the age and gender of prophets. Usually, the prophet is a male (Moses, Isaiah), but this is not a rule. Women also assume the role of prophetesses; this is the case of Miriam and Deborah. In some situations, children and youths are called by God to act as prophets (Samuel is only a child, while Jeremiah is only a teenager when God calls them to be prophets). However, there are older people called to be prophets (Moses, who was eighty years old when he became a prophet). Thus, there is no gender or age condition. Therefore, gender and age are not distinctive elements like in the case of priests who have to be male and of a certain age to play this role.

3.1.2. Prophets' social and physical function (physical activities)

Social functional features refer to the role and function of different social categories to perform within their institutions. As shown by Dahlgren, what counts in the case of social terms are the constitutive features. These are the most important because they are determined by the structure of the institution and also show how a particular social role is constitutively defined. On the other hand, there are also behavioural features that may refer to other features than the functional ones (e.g.

⁵ In the biblical tradition, there are some individuals who had visions. For example, the king Pharaoh. These persons are not considered as prophets.

⁶ The garment of the priests was prescribed by the institution in which they function. This type of garment was considered a sacred clothing; it is described in Ex. 28:31-35.

doctor ‘work hard’; *secretary* ‘types’, ‘answers the phone’). Because the prophet is not linked to any specific social institution, even if he has a prescribed social role, we have grouped functional feature and behavioural feature. Most of the interesting information is visible when we see at their social function features and their relational features. The social function point to what they are doing in society, while the relational features describe their integration in society

Given our interest in Jesus as a prophet, we have divided the description of prophets into two parts, namely the interaction with God (divinity) and the interaction with humans (mortals). Thus, the primary social role of the prophets is their interaction with divinity. In other words, essential is the relation with God. This is also an obligatory feature.

Following Dahlgren (1985), through the examination of the selected excerpts, we have grouped important functional and physical features of the OT prophets in their interaction with divinity: receive God’s words; transmit the message to humans, i.e. make known the divine will to mortals; predict the future. All these physical and social activities are richly illustrated by the biblical texts and are part of the prophet’s frame (cf. Lakoff 1987).

In the Bible, prophets are perceived as God’s spokesmen. The etymology of the term itself provides some information. Thus, the Hebrew term **נָבִיא** (*nāvi*), translated as “prophet,” has the meaning of ‘spokesman,’ and ‘speaker.’ It implies the idea that prophets usually “receive God’s speech and, then they deliver and transmit it to humans (Harris et al. 1999, 544).

3.1.2.1. The prophets’ experience of divinity and his interaction with God

A defining characteristic is the prophet’s relation to divinity. Prophets always have a direct experience of divinity, which represents a direct interaction with God. In this cognitive experience of divinity, they receive a message and transmit the message, i.e. the prophecy (prediction).

The OT prophets evoke a variety of “cognitive experiences”: theophany, i.e. an audio-visual appearance and manifestation of God (Isaiah, Jeremiah); auditory experience (Samuel); vision and dreams (Daniel). In these cognitive experiences which the prophets have with God, they are called to exercise this role. They are aware and “conscious of having been specially chosen and called.” Because of this, they feel “forced to perform actions and proclaim ideas which, in a mental state of intense inspiration or real ecstasy, have been indicated to them in the form of divine relations” (Lindblom 1962, 46). Jeremiah, for instance, is called by God in an interesting way (Jer. 1:4-10). This episode very well illustrates God’s call. According to the text, God had chosen him for this role even before Jeremiah’s being conceived. God directly announced the message. In this dialogue, God uses performative acts: “I hereby give you the authority to announce to nations and

kingdoms” (see Austin 1962, 5). Therefore, the prophet is called to be God’s spokesman, i.e. to say whatever God tells him. For this, God promises protection and support: “I will be with you to protect you” (Jer. 1:8 NET). Therefore, the prophet is God’s servant called to transmit the message in the name of God.

The prophets’ typical activity is to predict the future, i.e. to make prophecies. A prophecy is a prediction of what will happen in the future.⁷ From the biblical perspective, knowing the future is not an intrinsic characteristic of prophets, but of God himself. Prophets do not arrogate to themselves this power to predict the future. They repeatedly affirm that only God possesses knowledge of future events. They do not speak out of their word, but God inspires them. They often declare that they are “possessed” by the spirit of God (“the spirit of the sovereign LORD is upon me because the LORD has chosen me”, Isa. 61:1). This “supernatural knowledge of the near future was to be a sign of the authenticity of divine appointment” (Harris et al. 1999, 544).

3.1.2.2. The content of the prophecy and types of predictions

There are at least two points of view from which we can classify the biblical prophecy: a) their content; b) the nature of the prediction.

a) In terms of their content, scholars classify the OT prophecies as follows: (1) judgment speeches (oracles of doom); (2) oracles of salvation (of hope), i.e. the prophecy of salvation. These are the two main forms of prophetic speeches in the OT which announce what God will do in the future (Wagenaar 2001, 4; Bullock 2007, 35; Metzger/Coogan 1993, 218).

(1) *Judgement speeches* announce “the evil fate awaiting the addressee” (see Metzger/Coogan 1993, 383). These include an accusation followed by an announcement of judgement. These accusations and announcements of punishment are addressed to different individuals or nations such as: “Babylon,” “Tyre,” etc. In their content, God is portrayed as a “Sovereign” and “Judge” who puts an end to all that is wrong. These are also called “prophecies of doom” or “prophecies of woe,” because they contain threats, warnings of doom and destruction. Especially, “prophecies of woe” are a subcategory which includes an accusation of wrong moral conduct. Some of them are conditional. In this category are the prophecies about different nations and kingdoms which are foretold to be destroyed such as the Assyrians, the Moabites, the Egyptians, the Babylonians. Specifically, in the OT, many prophets foretell the destruction of the city Babylon. For example, the prophet Isaiah foretells that Babylon would be overthrown by the Medes (Isa. 13:19).

⁷ The notion of seeing into future is an essential attribute of a prophet.

The prophet portrays God as the agent of destruction. The prophet compares the fate of Babylon with that of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. According to the Bible, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God as a manifestation of divine judgment. Later, the prophet predicts that Babylon's palaces will be taken over by wild animals (Isa. 13:21-22). This is a horrible scene of majestic Babylon which will be inhabited by a variety of wild animals: hyenas, ostriches, wild dogs and jackals. The picture is that of a depopulated city which shows how "great and terrible" is the day God' judgment. Thus, the prophet portrays the fall of Babylon as a type of God' general punishment of the wicked people. He announces the punishment of Babylon in the near future "her time is almost up." This is a characteristic of the prophets: to announce a terrible and great day of judgment with details of the things to come in the future. The prophet Jeremiah also foretells the destruction of the city Babylon at the end of seventy years (Jer. 25:12; 50:2).

In sum, these are a category of prophecies that are well represented in the OT, namely the "prophecies of doom and destruction."

(2) *Oracles of salvation.* The "oracle of salvation" (e.g. the prophecy of salvation) announces God's positive interventions on behalf of humans. They point to a time in the future when God will make everything new. In these, prophets give hope. Some of these are a form of apocalyptic and messianic prophecies. They announce the coming of the Messiah who will bring salvation and a future kingdom. The prophecies belonging to this category have the following structure, namely a recurring pattern of warnings followed by a proclamation of judgement and the promise of future restoration (Bucknell 2016, 36). A critical 'prophecy of salvation' which has a messianic tone is the prophecy of Isaiah (9:6-7) which is considered to foretell the coming of Messiah, i.e. Jesus (Isa. 9:6-7). In this prophecy, Isaiah speaks of the messianic hope describing the typical attributes and proprieties of the coming Messiah. He is portrayed as having the attributes of "Extraordinary Strategist, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." These are, in fact, common epithets of divinity. Moreover, the prophet foretells that the Divine Messiah will rule on David's throne. The prophecy contains verbs in the future: "dominion will be vast"; "he will bring immeasurable prosperity"; "will rule on David's throne," because it announces a future event taking place. This prophecy is a future projection of the 'messianic hope' and a prototypical description of Messiah. Through it, the prophet predicts a universal peace: "peace there will be no end" (Isa. 9:7 NIV). Because of this message, this prophecy falls into the category of the "prophecies of salvation and hope." The NT writers acknowledge that this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

b) Another classification concerns the nature of the predictions. In this regard, some are conditional prophecies, while others, unconditional prophecies. This classification takes into consideration the nature of the fulfilment of these prophecies.

The first category, i.e. the conditional prophecy is that type of prophecy whose fulfilment depends on the compliance of different individual with the conditions

given by God. The conditional nature of these prophecies is explicitly given by God to the prophet Jeremiah: “There are times, Jeremiah, when I threaten to uproot, tear down, and destroy a nation or kingdom. But if that nation I threatened stops doing wrong, I will cancel the destruction I intended to do to it” (Jer. 18:7-8 NET). The text expresses the general principle of conditionality which shows that God’s predictions were conditional depending upon the attitude of the addressee. If the nation threatened stopped doing wrong, then he would not destroy it. These prophecies have a moral content showing to those who await the fulfilment of this prophecy that human attitude towards God is important. A typical example is the prophecy of Jonah who at God’s command foretells that “at the end of forty days, Nineveh will be overthrown!” (John 3:4 NET). Nevertheless, the Bible says that this prophecy did not come to pass, because the people of Nineveh changed their behaviour towards God declaring “a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them” (John 3:5 NET). Thus, the people of Nineveh turn to God. And he showed mercy and love sparing the city. It seems that God changes his mind, not fulfilling this prophecy. This is a type of conditional prophecy which did not come true.

The second category, i.e. the unconditional prophecies, contains those prophecies that will come real no matter what human beings do. In their content, there is no condition predicated. Such is the case of the Messianic prophecies, the destruction of Tyre and the destruction of Babylon. The fulfilment of prophecies increases awareness of the truth of the prophecy.

3.1.2.3. Discursive and stylistic aspects of prophetic speech

The essential characteristic of the prophecies is that they contain future tense verbs: God’s speech (“I will give you the whole land of Canaan,” Gen. 17:8; “I will bring disaster,” Jer. 49:32); prophets’ speech (“the cities of Aroer will be deserted,” Isa. 17:2 NET).

Another characteristic of prophetic speeches is that they are stylistically striking and memorable texts, and because of this, they are loaded with:

- (1) symbols (Babylon is a symbol of evil; beast stands for kingdom or political power; dragon stands for Satan);
- (2) metaphors (marriage as a metaphor for the relationship between Yahweh and Israel; Shepherd as a metaphor for God);
- (3) images (angels; God as the Ancient of Days);
- (4) similes (“like a sheep that is led to the slaughter,” Isa. 53; “your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”, Isa. 1:18);
- (5) hyperboles (“Let my eyes overflow with tears night and day without ceasing,” Jer. 14:17);

(6) personifications (“Burst into song, your mountain, you forests and all your trees,” Isa. 55:12 NET).

A prophecy usually uses images and symbols from “the realm of reality.” In contrast, apocalyptic prophecy uses “reality” to project a “fictitious reality” of the apocalypse and of the destruction, which is to come. In this category, the prophet uses “many headed-dragons, fire-breathing horses with the heads of lions and tails like snakes, locusts with human faces” (Bucknell 2016, 34). Thus, the apocalyptic prophecy is highly figurative and hyperbolic.

The properties discussed above are evident in any prophetic text. Here are some examples. The OT prophecy contains verbs in the future: “within sixty-five years Ephraim *will* no longer *exist* as a nation” (Isa. 7:8 NET); “Babylon [...] *will be destroyed* by God just as Sodom and Gomorrah were” (Isa. 13:19 NET); “O Tyre! *I will bring* up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves” (Ezek. 26:3 NET); “*I will bring* disaster against them from every direction», says the LORD.” Some of these prophecies specify the exact time of fulfilment such is the case of Isaiah’s prophecy about the destruction of Ephraim, which will take place in sixty-five years. The prophet Jeremiah foretells that the Babylonian captivity will end after 70 years (Jer. 29:10). Therefore, the verb in the future is an essential characteristic of the OT prophecy.

From a stylistic point of view, we observe that the biblical prophecies contain:

(1) *Metaphors*: “vineyard” stands for Israel (“Now I will inform you what I am about to do to my vineyard,” Isa. 5:5 NET); “trees” maps people “The tree that you saw that grew large and strong, whose top reached to the sky, and which could be seen in all the land,” Dan. 4:20 NET); “good fruits” as a metaphor for “justice” and “righteousness”; etc.

(2) Prophets usually make use of a variety of *symbols*. For example, the prophet Isaiah uses the symbol of “Sodom and Gomorrah,” which is a symbol of evil and have been historically used as metaphors for vice and total depravity (“will be destroyed by God just as Sodom and Gomorrah were,” Isa. 13:19 NET). By using it, the prophet Isaiah creates a clash at a conceptual level, because “Babylon, whose very name conjures memories of glory and majesty, will become a symbol of destruction like Sodom and Gomorrah” (Watts 2005, 254). The prophet Daniel uses the symbol “Beast” to refer to a “Kingdom” (political power): “This is what he told me: «The fourth beast means that there will be a fourth kingdom on earth that will differ from all the other kingdoms. It will devour all the earth and will trample and crush it” (Dan. 7:23 NET). Another symbol is the “horn,” which also stands for “(political) power” (“From one of them came a small horn. But it grew to be very big, toward the south and the east and the beautiful land,” Dan. 8:9 NET).

In sum, we might say that prophecy is a particular “form of speech” specific to the OT prophets. The ability to prophecy is a distinctive attribute of the prophets. We have seen that the OT prophets possess knowledge about the future. And as a

result, this knowledge is the prophecy. This feature is mandatory since a prophet who does not make prophecies cannot qualify in this role.

3.1.3. Prophets' social relation (relational features)

Another distinct category of properties is that referring to the relational features (attributes) which describe their integration of some social categories in society. From this perspective, prophets are very well integrated into society, interacting in prescribed ways with practically all the other social groups. We have noticed following prophets' functions related to society: (1) perform mighty works and miracles for the people; (2) pray to God for the people; (3) criticise immoral acts in society; (4) provide counsel to kings; (5) judge people (pass judgement); (6) appoint and anoint kings.

(1) *Perform miracles and heal people.* The OT prophets perform miracles and heal the people. Their social function is that of "healer." An important miracle worker is Moses. He performs miracles in Egypt and in the wilderness of Sinai to bring people of Israel into the promised land. Other prophets who perform miracles are Elijah³⁷ and Elisha. Elijah raises the Widow's Son at Zarephath, while Elisha raises the Shunammite's son. In performing this miracle, Elijah takes the dead child in the upper room and stretches out over the boy three times. In this ritual, he invokes God's name asking him to return "boy's breath back." This gesture symbolises the transference of the life force to the deceased. After Elijah performs the miracle, the woman declares: "now I know that you are a prophet and that the Lord really does speak through you" (1Kgs. 17:24 NET). According to these words, the power of making "miracles" is a confirmation of prophetic activity and a stereotypical feature of this role. Thus, prophets work a miracle and resurrect dead people. But we have noticed that not all prophets have the power of healing the sick and perform miracles. Therefore, we might say that this is an optional feature since not all prophets work miracles.

(2) *Pray to God for the people, asking for healing, forgiveness and divine intervention.* Another important activity in their interaction with God, but also with humans (mortals) is the act of praying on peoples' behalf. The prophet Moses prays to God to stop the fire plague who consumed some people of Israel who provoke God's anger (Num. 11:1-2 NET). Moses prays, and God intervenes stopping the fire. This episode shows that prophet's prayer is effective. Other OT prophets who pray for people and receive an immediate answer are Abraham (prays for the King Abimelech), Elisha (prays for God's intervention during a time of war) and Jeremiah (prays for God's mercy, etc.).

(3) *Prophets' relation with power as represented by kings and the ruling classes.* The OT prophets are in contact with all the social categories (kings, priests, ordinary people), and they address many social problems. For example, prophets provide counsel and

advice to kings and political rulers. They function as political specialists for power and the ruling class. Some of them, were members of the court, being in the position of counsellors such is the case of Samuel, Nathan, Gad and Isaiah. King David has prophets as members of his court. One of them is Nathan, who supports David's kingship. He is "portrayed as a crucial royal counsellor and policy-maker" (Yoon 2010, 201). In this role, he encourages David to build the Temple (2Sam. 7:3). This kind of prophet "functions as counsellors or as specialists who intervene during crises by providing the king with personal counsel or a divine word as needed, with some regularity, and it is clear in the texts that their words are valued" (Yoon 2010, 233).

Another important prophet who advises the King of Israel is Elisha. He sends words to the King of Israel to be aware and not pass on a particular place because the Syrian armies are coming from that place (2Kgs. 6:9). In his role, he gives to the king political advice in how to organise his armies. And, when the Syrians arrange some plans for making a raid into Israel and attack it, the prophet Elisha informs the king of Israel to rearrange his army and take precaution against invasions. Thus, the OT prophets are political advisor and counsellor of power. Some of these prophets are themselves leaders such is the case of Moses, Aron, Samuel and David (who was king).

On the other hand, prophets also criticise the king and the ruling classes. But they are protectors of disprivileged classes and poor. For instance, the prophet Amos "criticises the people and the ruling classes" (Levenson 2012, 57). On behalf of God, he criticises the religious people asking them to promote social justice, not only to observe some religious rituals and follow certain cultic elements of worship (Amos 5:21-24 NET). The prophet asks them to promote social justice "because religious services are no substitutes for justice" (Andersen/Freedman 2008, 526). Using the similitude "justice must flow like torrents of water," the prophet describes "the ideal progress of justice and righteousness" (Harper 1910, 136). For him, a "just society" in harmony with God's will must practice "justice" and righteousness. Therefore, like an activist, the prophet Amos criticises the religious system (institution of the church) which was corrupt and unjust. He also condemns the oppression and exploitation of the poor.

Some of the OT prophets were involved in party political struggles. The prophet Elijah oppose the king Ahab and later, the king Ahaziah. He openly criticises and accuses King Ahab of abandoning God's commandments and following the god Baal of the fertility cult. Later, Elisha his successor fights for a change in society and the political system. He is involved in a political struggle using political persuasion. Elisha succeeds to bring Omri's dynasty to an end and appoints Jehu as King in Israel (2Kgs. 9). The prophet Amos conspires against the King Jeroboam (Amos 7:10-11), and Jeremiah represents a vocal member of one of

“the parties struggling to control Judah’s foreign policy in the years prior to the Exile,” Jer. 27-29 (EDB, 1086).

In an interview about *Activism, Anarchism, and Power* with Kreisler (2002), in *Conversation with History*, Noam Chomsky talks about two kinds of intellectuals and brings into discussion the biblical record. Here is the text of the interview.

When we, you go to, say, the Bible, you read the biblical record, there are people called prophets. Prophet just means intellectual. They were people giving geopolitical analysis, moral lessons, that sort of thing. We call them “intellectuals” today. There were the people we honor as prophets, there were the people we condemn as false prophets. But if you look at the biblical record, at the time, it was the other way around. The flatterers of the Court of King Ahab were the ones who were honored. The ones we call prophets were driven into the desert and imprisoned. Yeah, that’s the way it’s been throughout history. And, understandably. Power does not like to be undermined.⁸

Thus, Chomsky equates and regards prophets as “intellectuals” because they have the typical characteristics of intellectuals. They are a kind of social activists who give “geopolitical analysis,” and “moral lessons.” Chomsky also points to the prophets’ vocation of martyrs. This means that some of them are self-conscious of their message, and do not abdicate, although this can lead to unexpected situations, even death. They are ready to die for the truth and allow themselves to be killed. This happens because prophets are in opposition to a religious and monarchical institution.

As the Bible shows, the prophets Zechariah and Uriah are killed, while others are imprisoned for speaking the truth. The king Ahab imprisoned Micaiah the son of Imlah after he had delivered an unfavourable prophetic message (1Kgs. 22:27). Likewise, the king Asa imprisons Hanani, who was considered the seer (2Chron. 16:10). Jeremiah (Jer. 37:15) and John the Baptist (Mark 6:17) are other prophets imprisoned and then killed for proclaiming an unwelcome message to those in power. They suffer on behalf of God.

In sum, we can say that even though the principal mission of the prophet was religious, it was intimately related to politics, because the two were not separated in their society. This is evidence that OT prophets play the social role of a social and political activist. They address social problems and intervene in political struggles solving some problematic situations. The most important relational features of the OT prophets are: (1) criticise different social categories (attack the immoral kings and priests); is a moralist (condemns the evil in society); (2) people are afraid of them (King Saul is afraid of Samuel; King Ahab is afraid of Elijah); (3) behaves well

⁸ See <https://chomsky.info/20020322/>.

with disprivileged people (e.g. Elijah helps the Widow at Zarephath); (4) people show respect and admire them (e.g. King David admires Samuel and Nathan).

To sum up, everything that is outside of the interaction with divinity (God) are optional features. Because some of the prophets do these activities in their interaction with humans (work miracles, criticise, are leaders, etc.), while others do not.

3.2. Prophets' internal attributes (internal qualities)

OT prophets have important internal qualities (attributes) which we may group in different categories: (1) intuitive qualities (intuitive; intelligent; intellectual power (as Chomsky says they are “decent intellectuals”) inspiration (are called “inspired man” (Hos. 9:7); (2) supernatural qualities (divine power of intuition; supernatural power; access to the divine realm; charismatic individuals); (3) moral qualities (know right from wrong; possessor of truth; very religious persons); (4) relational internal traits, as brave, courageous (Elisha appears before the tyrant Ahab), authoritative, humble, submissive to God, but not to humans.

Summing up this section, we might say that Dahlgren's model proved viable in the description and construction of the OT prophets' frame. We have used Dahlgren's features for examining the social role prophet, and thus, we have built the OT prophets' frame (Lakoff's 1987). In the analysis, we have made a distinction between the prophets' interaction with God described by mandatory functional features and the prophets' involvement in human problems and interaction with the mortals described by more or less optional features. The prophets' frame offers a comprehensive description of this social role with all the activities of the prophet as well as with his stereotypical and his ideal virtues. The roles are linked to frames via a stereotype (Epstein 1999, 56-57).

The analysis shows the essential activities of the OT prophets. In our analysis, we have found a wide range of features of the OT prophets. Of these, some are the obligatory features which define the prototypical prophet. These are the social functional features which are the most important, namely: receives God's words; transmits, i.e. makes known the divine will to human; predicts the future. These are obligatory features and the prototypical features of the OT prophets, while the other features are optional as seen. Having this in mind, in the next section, we evaluate the extent to which Jesus “fits” this frame.

4. Jesus the prophet

Based on the stereotypical description of the social role “prophet,” we will examine the Gospels excerpts to see to what extent Jesus satisfies the criterial features for being a “prophet”. Thus, starting from the stereotype of “the prophet” as defined

in the theory of social roles, our aim is to see if Jesus has the stereotypical features of a “prophet.”

4.1. Jesus’ physical appearance

The Gospels do not describe Jesus’ physical appearance, unlike the case of OT prophets. The absence of clothing details is significant, on the one hand, it is suggested that it is not his physical appearance which matters, on the other hand, the absence of stereotypical clothing means that he is a unique character. However, there are details about Jesus’ psychological features. These show Jesus’ emotional and mental states. The biblical narrator mentions that Jesus: weeps⁹; cries; rejoices (Luke 10:21); is anguished and distressed¹⁰; is angered and grieved.¹¹ Details are given, however, regarding his age and his countenance. Therefore, even though we do not know what Jesus was like in physical appearance, we infer from the Gospels that he was a young man. Jesus was 33 years old when he was crucified. Stereotypically, a young man is good looking and healthy, because youth equates beauty. Thus, we hypothesise that Jesus has all the attributes of youth and the face of a young man. Matt. 17:2 (NET) is the only reference to his look: “He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.” This episode happens before Jesus was crucified; his physical appearance is transfigured before his disciples in the presence of the two prototypical prophets, Moses and Elijah. This description shows that he is like a heavenly being who belongs to another realm, probably to be read as a sign of his divinity. We might say, as Davies/Allison (2004, 695), that these are “the beams of divine glory through the veil of humanity. The passive presumably suggests that God transfigures Jesus.” Therefore, this event suggests Jesus’ appearance, but it also points to Jesus’ identity as Son of God.

4.2. Jesus’ roles, functions and activities

Like the OT prophets, Jesus performs the essential activities specific to prophets: (1) receives God’s words; (2) transmits them to humans, i.e. makes known the divine will to humans; (3) predicts the future.

⁹ “Jesus wept. Thus, the people who had come to mourn said, ‘Look how much he loved him!’” (John 11:35-36 NET). He also wept over the sins of Jerusalem (Mark 10:14, Luke 19:41)

¹⁰ “He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and became anguished and distressed. Then he said to them, «My soul is deeply grieved, even to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake with me»” (Matt. 26:37-38 NET).

¹¹ “After looking around at them in anger, grieved by the hardness of their hearts” (Mark 3:5 NET).

Jesus' experience and interaction with God. Jesus' experience of divinity is manifest in many ways. Even as a child, Jesus has a special relation with God the Father as evident from the episode of "the boy Jesus in the Temple" (Luke 2:40-52 NET). What matters is the answer given by Jesus, which is full of significance. It implies that Jesus relates himself to his Heavenly Father since he says that he must be in his Father's house, namely the Temple is his Father's house. Jesus' answer shows that he "has a unique relationship to God and a clear sense of his calling, one that transcends his relationship to his earthly parents" (Bock 1994, 61). Therefore, from childhood, Jesus is conscious of his identity and refers to God as his real Father because Joseph was only his human foster father. The scene shows Jesus' complex identity, and he is: on the one hand, the son of an earthly Father and, on the other hand, he is the Son of God. But, Jesus' "relation to his heavenly Father transcends all-natural family ties" (Fitzmyer 2008, 444; see also Temple 2009, 193). To sum up, this episode presents how Jesus relates himself to his Heavenly Father. He is stereotypically described like the OT prophets, but the description goes beyond this attributing to him a unique consciousness of divinity and close relation with God the Father.

Jesus' prophetic call. As seen, an essential feature of the OT prophets is their awareness of being called to be God's spokesmen. This is a distinctive feature because the divine call makes them suitable to fulfil this particular role. However, there is in no (explicit) episode in the Gospels that presents the moment when God asks Jesus to be his prophet. His Sonship makes it unnecessary for God to call him to duty further because, usually, sons continue their parents work. And Jesus understands this, and he has a feeling of his "divine call" apparent in his "I came for"; "I came to do" declarations. These excerpts reflect Jesus' conviction and consciousness that he is called by God to transmit a particular message. For example, sense of Jesus' divine call is presupposed by the following "I came" declarations (Mark 1:38, Matt. 5:17).

These particular declarations show that the prophet Jesus is conscious of his divine call. Moreover, there is also a public acknowledgement of Jesus' call, namely his baptism. Like in the case of OT prophets' theophanies, it is said that "a voice from heaven" saying: "This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight" (Matt. 3:13-17 NET). This experience gives him the public legitimation for his prophetic role. Thus, we might say that Jesus' baptism is considered a public calling of Jesus by God, i.e. the event "regarded as the occasion upon which Jesus became fully cognizant of his calling and mission" (Aune 1983, 161). Therefore, the voice is to help the people identify Jesus' call.

In another episode, Jesus affirms that he speaks and transmits the words of God: "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he does not give the Spirit sparingly" (John 3:34 NET). Jesus is aware that he speaks "the words of God" and that God sent him to transmit a message to mortals.

Jesus' interaction with God. Like the OT prophets, Jesus has a similar cognitive experience with God, namely an auditory experience. In an essential episode before his trial and crucifixion when Jesus speaks about his death, he has an interaction with God (John 12:27-30). In this episode, Jesus directly communicates with God. He asks God the Father to glorify his name. Like in the cases of prophets, God gives a direct and prompt answer from heaven. This is a typical auditory-theophany, namely manifestation of divinity experienced by the prophets. In the Bible, "thunder" is often associated with a theophany. The texts say that this voice was recognised only by Jesus. The crowd heard this voice, but they did not perceive it. They interpreted it as a peal of thunder. "In the OT, whether naively or poetically, thunder was described as the voice of God" (Brown 2008, 468). Thus, the communicative experience between Jesus and God the Father is not like that of the OT prophets. Because, as evident, this is a Father-Son relation, not a prophet-God relation, in which God the Fathers provides comfort and reassurance to his Son Jesus. He also strengthens him in his hour of need and suffering.

Jesus' identification with God the Father. There are excerpts which make it clear that a particular family-like bond between God and Jesus which enables Jesus to deliver God' message (Luke 10:22 NET). This fact shows Jesus' identification with God in a unique way. Like the OT prophets, Jesus assumes the responsibility to reveal the identity of God, but for Jesus, the activity of revealing is divine (Bock 1996, 1011). Because, unlike the OT prophets, Jesus identifies himself as having a special relation with God the Father. This is sufficient for suggesting that Jesus is "God' spokesman" like prophets, but even more as evident from this relation. They speak as between peers in a communion based on love and cordiality.

Jesus predicts the future. Jesus makes prophecies, some similar and some dissimilar to those of OT prophets. Therefore, it is interesting to compare Jesus' prophecies with those of the OT prophets, to see to what extent these are similar or not. A similar prophecy is about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world (Matt. 24:1-3, Luke 19:43-44). Moreover, in the episode, Jesus visits the Temple together with his disciples. Then, he foretells that this temple will be destroyed by enemies who will come and surround the city. Like the OT prophets, Jesus gives some horrific details, namely that the hostile enemies will build an embankment and surround the city of Jerusalem. As seen, the prophet Jeremiah who prophesized the destruction of the first temple. Thus, like him, Jesus is a prophet of doom announcing the time of judgment and destruction. The statement "a stone upon a stone" is a metaphor referring to a "total destruction" (Hagner 2002, 688). Moreover, Jesus also gives details explicitly foretelling what will happen to the citizens of Jerusalem and how they will be treated. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:24). Like the OT prophets,

Jesus gives a verdict for Jerusalem announcing God's judgment for these categories of people.

Moreover, like the OT prophets, Jesus makes prophecies about the "signs of the times" and "the end of the age" (Mark 13:3-13, Matt. 24:3-31). On the other hand, what is characteristic to Jesus are predictions about his own life; here they are: his disciples will betray him; Peter will deny him three times; chief priests and the experts in the law will make him suffer and finally will kill him; he will raise from the dead on the third day; the coming of the Holy Spirit; "his words will never pass away"; These are some of Jesus' predictions which are considered to have come true during his life. These give credibility to Jesus' message.

About himself, Jesus makes a shocking prophecy foretelling that one of his disciples will betray him (Matt. 26:21-22). This had come true when Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, betrayed Jesus and sold him for thirty pieces of silver. Later, Jesus predicts that all his disciples will leave and deny him. He also foretells that he will raise from the dead and will go to meet them into Galilee (Matt. 26:31-32). This prophecy comes true when Jesus was arrested, and his followers were scattered like "a flock." When this happened, the biblical writer mentions that all of his followers abandoned him. As noted, these types of predictions are specific to Jesus, and all these come true in what happened to him. For contemporaneous, as well as for the reader, this is an argument about the reliability of Jesus' prophecies. This is also an argument that the prophecies are true, and it also shows that those who have not fulfilled will come true sometimes in the future.

Another type of prophecy is the foretelling of the Holy Spirit's coming into the world (John 14:26). This prophecy says that the Holy Spirit who is will be sent in future "in the Name" of the Son. The future verb "will come" shows that this is a typical prophecy. Jesus foretells that the Holy Spirit will be sent as Jesus' representative (the name is a metonymy for person). Biblical writers confirm that this prediction came true after Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven. This refers to another divine person belonging to God's realm who will continue Jesus' activity. The prophecy implies Jesus' divinity based on the association between the Holy Spirit, who is divine and himself.

About his prophecies, Jesus makes a striking prediction which is unique and different from those of OT prophets. He foretells that: "heaven and earth will pass away, but (his) words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35 NET). Therefore, he predicts that his words would be everlasting. This highlights the validity of his predictions.

In sum, we might say that in examining the content of these prophecies, we have noticed that some of them are very similar to prophecies were made earlier by OT prophets such as "the destruction of Jerusalem." What is different about Jesus' prophecies is that he makes some predictions about himself (about his death), unlike the OT prophets. These are some of Jesus' prophecies which have come

true. Jesus' predictions evoke the prophet frame since these are like the prophetic utterances of the OT prophets. They stereotypically identify Jesus as a "prophet."

The truth of these prophecies is fulfilled during the story of his life. This gives credibility to his message. There are explicit references to the "Kingdom of God," but these are not embodied in prophecies, but in his teachings and parables.

4.3. Jesus' social relation (relational features)

Like the OT prophets, Jesus is very well integrated into society, interacting with different individuals in the community. He shows a variety of his relational features. We have noticed that Jesus has relational attributes (qualities): performs miracles and "mighty works"; prays to God for his disciples and other individuals; criticises immoral acts in society.

Jesus performs miracles and heals people. Jesus performs many miracles like the OT typical prophets. These miracles align him with the other prophets. But, unlike his predecessors, Jesus did not only work many more miracles than any OT prophet but occasionally of a different nature. In the Gospels, we have found the following miracles performed by Jesus. Having noticed, we have grouped them in three general categories:

(a) supernatural actions: changing water into wine; walking on water; calming of the storm; feeding of 4000 men and their families; feeding of 5000 men and their families;

(b) healings of different individuals: the healing of the official son; the healing of a man possessed by a demon in Capernaum; the healing of Peter's mother-in-law; healing a leper; the healing of a centurion's servant; the healing of a paralysed man; the healing of a man with a withered hand; healing of the Gerasene man possessed by demons; healing of a woman with internal bleeding; healing of two blind men; healing of a mute demon-possessed man; healing of a 38 year invalid; healing of a girl possessed by a demon; healing of a deaf man with a speech impediment; healing of a blind man; healing of a man born blind; healing of a demon-possessed boy; healing of a blind and mute man who was demon-possessed; healing of a woman with an 18-year infirmity; healing of a man with dropsy; healing of 10 lepers; healing Bartimaeus of blindness;

(c) raising of different people: raising of a widow's son; raising of Jairus' daughter; raising of Lazarus.

Some of these are unique features, as no OT prophet has healed any blind man or a paralysed person. Interestingly, Jesus is identified as a prophet when he does all these activities which are stereotypical actions of a prophet (the blind see, the lame walk, the good news is proclaimed to the poor). These miracles have a supernatural dimension and evoke the divine realm, the Son of God side of Jesus. Miracles are claimed to be a sign of his divinity.

Jesus plays the role of a social activist. Like the OT prophets, Jesus criticises the power represented by kings, the ruling classes and the institution of the church. Like the OT prophet, Jesus shares the fact that he does not belong to this institution; he acts as independent from the cult. He is a critic of this church institution of his day, remarking the moral decline of this institution which represents God's truth. Because, their religious leaders preach virtue, but do not have them or act accordingly.

Jesus also criticises the social injustice and inequalities of his time. For example, Jesus denounces King Herod as an immoral person. For this reason, the king wants to kill Jesus as he did with John the Baptist. He ironically names him "that fox" (Luke 13:31-34). In this episode, Jesus criticises King Herod using the symbol of craftiness. In the biblical tradition, the fox is considered as "the sliest of beasts."²⁵ Interestingly, Jesus evokes the prophets' fate referring to those killed in Jerusalem. It is an allusion to the prophets' vocation of martyrs. By doing this, Jesus foretells that he will face the same fate because he has the same vocation of a martyr.

Jesus criticises the religious leaders, those experts in the law (i.e. in the biblical texts) and Pharisees who represent the institution of the church (of his day) for their hypocrisy, and for not practising what they teach. He accuses them of being immoral and of breaking God's commandments (Matt. 23:27-31). Jesus is very critical against them condemning for all the crimes of the previous prophets. Further, he criticises the experts in the law very sharply for being immoral and unjust by devouring "widows' property," while making a show of their "long prayers" (Luke 20:46-1 NET). Therefore, Jesus is a harsh critic of the oppression and injustice that he observes around him, as well as a courageous advocate of the categories of poor and the outcast; we refer to those who have no voice in the society, like women, the diseased and the disabled people (Liew 2004, 2). It is evident that like the OT prophets, Jesus opposes corruption and criticises political power for the social injustice of his time, preaching and promoting liberty to as well as for those in bondage: "Jesus was primarily a religious prophet whose actions may be interpreted to be social activism shrouded with religiosity. Jesus did not directly challenge the occupying Roman Empire purely as a social activist, but he did challenge the religio-political injustices that emanated from it, in line with how former prophets would take social and moral transgressions to the task (Liew 2004, 3).

Jesus' relational attributes (features). In terms of social relation, Jesus displays a great range of relational attributes. The most important relational features: loves people and behaves well with people; shows mercy; forgives people; is loved and appreciated by people; some people are afraid of him; people show respect.

Jesus loves his disciples. He names one of them with a particular epithet, "disciple whom Jesus loved" or the "disciple beloved of Jesus." The narrator mentions the fact that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." Moreover, Jesus shows love not only to those who are his close friends but also to the Rich Young

Man: “As Jesus looked at him, he felt love for him” (Mark 10:21 NET)/“Jesus looked at him and loved him” (Mark 10:21 NIV).

Another character to whom Jesus shows his love is Zacchaeus. He who was the chief-tax collector at Jericho. The biblical text says that Jesus “looked up and said to him, «Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.» So, he came down at once and welcomed him gladly” (Luke 19:5-6 NET). He belonged to a social group which was despised by religious leaders as traitors because they were considered corrupt as well as working for the Roman Empire, not for their Jewish nation. Thus, Jesus is a striking prophet who loves sinners and eats with them.

Jesus shows affection for disprivileged women. Even though the Jewish tradition forbids a man to speak directly to Samaritan woman (John 4:27), Jesus not only speaks but like prophets (Elijah, Elisha), he also helps and shows compassion and tenderness to different individuals. For example, after Jesus heals the woman with the bleeding disorder, he calls her “daughter” (“Then he said to her, «Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace,»” Luke 8:48 NET). In an age/time of gender segregation, Jesus treats women with kindness and compassion.

Other individuals who are loved by Jesus: the poor; the unclean people, i.e. the lepers whom he heals (ten lepers); oppressors such is the case of centurion for whom he heals his dying servant. He says about him that he has “not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Luke 7:9). For these categories of people, Jesus performs miracles and provides for their needs sowing love. This fact shows Jesus’ generosity as well as the fact that he perceives the inner side of the people. Jesus is not impressed that they are “unclean” and “lepers.”

We might say that Jesus has the intuition of those people who understand him and accept him. Given his divine intuition, he knows those people around him who are virtuous, loving or capable of improvement at least. Such is the case of the Samaritan woman, and the woman caught in adultery whom Jesus rehabilitates, thus, helping them to become virtuous women (John 8:3-11 NET). Jesus is compassionate and shows mercy to this woman. He has a moral sensitivity towards sinners contrasting with the Pharisees who considered themselves righteous, but they were not. What matters in this episode is that Jesus shows mercy and forgives this woman making those who consider themselves self-righteous and pious discover their sins and leave contemptuously.

Jesus is loved, appreciated and gladly followed by people. Others perceive Jesus as a “pleasing” and “charismatic” person. He has a “magnetic power.” Everyone runs to him because his presence inspires curiosity. His coming is announced from man-to-man. They are curious and willing to see him and interact with him. Some peoples always call him. All these make him able to enter Jerusalem. On that occasion, people announce themselves of his coming and meet Jesus shouting and joy (Matt. 21:6-11). This is the most important episode which shows how much Jesus is loved and appreciated. What is interesting is that the crowds who see Jesus identify him as

“prophet” from Nazareth in Galilee. They give this answer to the question: “who is this”; that is a question about his identity.

Women show their love by being present at Jesus’ crucifixion; they accompanied Jesus’ body to the tomb (Matt. 27:55-56, Mark 15:40, Luke 23:49, John 19:25). Those who are loved by Jesus show their love back, i.e. the outcasts, sinners and tax collector. Unlike the OT prophets who are not always loved, Jesus is more loved, received and appreciated by some characters, because as seen, he is considered “the prophet,” i.e. “the most important prophet.” Some of these characters show respect to Jesus and recognise his prophetic role. Nicodemus the Pharisee, in a private interaction with Jesus recognise that Jesus is a prophet “from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him” (John 3:2 NET).

Therefore, Jesus’ actions are in contrast to Moses’ activities, which are “actions of doom and judgment, so typical of the prophetic actions of the prophets of Israel, while Jesus’ actions are uniformly merciful” (Mcknight 2000, 227). Probably this is the reason why so many people love him.

Some people are afraid of him. King Herod the Great fears the baby Jesus, ordering a genocide murdering the “innocence,” i.e. the male children (Matt. 2:16). Later, his successor King Herod Antipas fears the prophet John the Baptist (“because Herod feared John and protected him,” Mark 6:20 NIV) and Jesus. He thinks that Jesus is John the Baptist, who “has been raised from death” (Mark 6:16 NET). Later, when Jesus was brought before him, he is “very glad for he had long desired to see him because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some miraculous sign” (Luke 23:8 NET). Therefore, it is evident the King displays the same attitude towards the prophet Jesus.

Other individuals who fear Jesus are the religious leaders, the Pharisees, and the experts in the law. The Demons and the Demon-Possessed Man are also afraid of Jesus. Interestingly, demon-possessed men usually appeal to Jesus for help, but they cry out in fear: “Then he cried out with a loud voice, «Leave me alone, Jesus, Son of the Most High God! I implore you by God – do not torment me!»” (Mark 5:7 NET). This shows that they are afraid of Jesus and that they are inferior and that they have no power compared to his. Moreover, the demons who usually possess man were also afraid of Jesus “beg him not to order them to depart into the abyss” (Luke 8:31 NET).

The characters who identify and acknowledge as a prophet. At the level of society, Jesus’ role as a prophet is identified by certain of the characters he interacts with. He is named “prophet” or “the prophet.” The persons who label Jesus as a prophet are mostly simple individuals: (1) crowds (usual people); (2) the Samaritan woman and the man born blind; (3) the disciples.

(1) The Crowds use this epithet of identification: “«Who is this?» And the crowds were saying, «This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.»” (Matt. 21:9-11 NET). Thus, the crowds recognise Jesus’ prophet role.

(2) The Samaritan woman identifies Jesus’ role as a prophet. She observes that Jesus has “divine intuition” because he revealed her past life: “Sir, I see that you are a prophet” (John 4:1-36 NET). Moreover, at the end of the conversation, after knowing Jesus better, the Samaritan woman identifies Jesus as the “Saviour of the world” (John 4:42 NET). From the role prophet, we move higher to “Saviour” in the hierarchy of attributes assigned to Jesus. This is an epithet in the “Son of God” superposition.

(3) Disciples recognise that Jesus is a “prophet.” For them, Jesus is “a man who, with his powerful deeds and words, proved to be a prophet before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19 NET). From this, it is evident that they consider that Jesus is a prophet. But he is “more than a prophet” as shown from their expectation that he “was going to redeem Israel.” This is a stereotypical description which evokes the prophet frame but goes beyond it to the Saviour/Messiah frame. In an important episode, Jesus himself evokes the prophet frame. For instance, when he is rejected by the people from his hometown, he indirectly alludes to his prophetic identity using a proverb: “«A prophet is not without honour except in his hometown and in his own house.» And he did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief” (Matt. 13:54-58 NET).

In another episode, Jesus speaks about the judgment of God and compares (contrasts) his generation with that of the prophet Jonah who turned to God. He evokes the prophet frame by saying that “something greater than Jonah is here” referring to himself (Matt. 12:41 NET). Therefore, even though Jesus does not directly say that he is “the prophet,” he affirms his superiority by considering himself “greater than Jonah” the prophet. In this way, Jesus indirectly presents himself as superior to the OT prophets.

4.4. Jesus’ internal qualities

The internal qualities describe a social role, personality traits and internal attributes. We here refer to those attributes that make Jesus an efficient “prophet.”

Jesus affirms that he is “submissive to God,” accomplishing everything his “Father commanded”: “I am doing just what the Father commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father” (John 14:28-31 NET). Therefore, Jesus behaves like OT prophets who executed what God requires from them. In many episodes, Jesus shows his submissive attitude: “for I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me” (John 6:38 NET).

Like the OT prophets, Jesus possesses divine intuition which makes him have access to the divine realm. With this, he perceives supernatural individuals beyond

the space of perceptual accessibility: “I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me” (John 14:30 NET). The expression “the ruler of this world” stands for Devil (Satan). Jesus’ divine intuition observes the supernatural world and the spiritual forces. In another episode, Jesus sees beyond the metaphysical reality, i.e. beyond the curtain: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18 NET). Therefore, Jesus’ “supernatural intuition” is a stereotypical trait which identifies him in the category of the prophets.

Another important quality of the prophet Jesus is the “identification with the truth.” He speaks “the truth” and is the “possessor of the truth”: “Jesus replied, ‘I am the way, and the truth’” (John 14:6 NET). He also affirms that the reason why he was born is “to testify to the truth”: “For this reason I was born, and, for this reason, I came into the world – to testify to the truth” (John 18:37 NET). Thus, Jesus positions himself as a defender and protector of the truth like the OT prophets who also died for the truth.

Another internal quality Jesus has is authority. The characters who interact with him recognise this personal trait: “When Jesus finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed [...]; he had authority, not like their experts in the law” (Matt. 7:28-29 NET). The narrator also mentions that Jesus possesses a special “authority” which the other religious leaders do not have. Thus, we might say that like OT prophets, Jesus possesses similar internal qualities (attributes) as evident from the following attribute scheme:

(1) high moral attributes: critic, moralist (criticises the immoral acts of the religious leaders; condemns the evil in society); knows right from wrong, is a religious person (morality is associated with religion); possessor of truth (“I am the truth”); good; loving; forgiving and merciful (forgives sinners);

(2) intuitive and intellectual qualities: intelligent, wise (answers the difficult questions and dilemmas of the religious leaders, Pharisees, Sadducees and teachers of the law);

(3) supernatural qualities: authority, divine power, divine intuition, access to the divine realm, charismatic (these qualities are an argument of the Son of God side of Jesus attributed to his divine nature);

(4) relational internal traits: compassionate, courageous, humble (washes the feet of his disciples), “submissive to God”;

(5) cultural stereotype (representative of the poor and disprivileged).

In sum, we might say that Jesus’ internal qualities represent the whole frame of Jesus. The entire thesis is an attempt to understand the internal qualities of this character.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have shown that the “prophet” is a particular category with specific properties and features. We have proved that the “prophet” is an individual with a specific function and position in the social hierarchy. Jesus has all the attributes and properties of the biblical prophets. Thus, he qualifies for this social role. The description of Jesus’ prophet role is relevant for constructing the entire frame of Jesus. Therefore, our idea that Jesus is the centre of the superposition of these frames is correct. Jesus’ prophet role sheds light on the divinity of Jesus completing the social role “Teacher” that I analysed in my doctoral thesis.¹² Thus, the superposition of the two frames constructs the divinity and the humanity of Jesus corresponding to his major attributes: “Son of Man” and “Son of God.” Therefore, we might say that our concept of Jesus is a radial concept in Lakoff’s (1987) sense.

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