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" J O H N T H E B A P T I S T "

Charles H.H. Scobie.

Summary of Thesis.

Submitted to the University of Glasgow
in candidacy for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

September,
1960.

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The chief sources for the study of John the Baptist are the New Testament, and one paragraph in the "Antiquities of Josephus." Neither the Slavonic additions to Josephus' "Jewish War", nor the Mandaeen literature are of any value they are both later compilations, and do not draw upon any independent historical sources.

John does not appear to have been associated with either the Sadducees or the Pharisees, and certainly not with the Zealots, since his message was not a political one, and he did not advocate violence. Rather, he is to be associated with the non-conformist, sectarian, baptist movement, made up of various groups active, principally in the Jordan valley, from the 1st. Cent. B.C. onwards, and including the Essenes and the Qumran sect.

The narrative of John's birth and infancy in Luke was originally compiled separately, and most probably in Hebrew ; it is largely legendary in character. It is possible that John, as a youth, was adopted by an Essene group, though this is incapable of proof.

John's preaching was grounded in the prophets and the apocalyptic tradition. He proclaimed the imminent approach of the end of days and of the judgement, when the wicked would be destroyed in a river of fire, while on the righteous would be poured out the blessings of God's holy spirit. The judgement would be executed by "the Coming One" a Messianic figure, in many ways akin to the Son of Man. In face of the coming judgement, John demanded that men should repent and live righteous lives. His teaching was addressed to Jews, and did not go beyond the boundaries of Jewish ethics.

John demanded that his hearers should submit to baptism, which he administered. Proselyte baptism arose rather late to have influenced John, and in any case it

differs from his baptism in several important respects. Most helpful are the baptismal rites of sectarian Judaism, especially the Qumran baptism of initiation, by which a person became a member of the eschatological community of the new covenant. John's baptism is to be understood in terms of such a rite, though there were also important differences.

John regarded himself as the eschatological prophet though probably not identifying himself definitely with either the Moses or the Elijah branch of this expectation. He attracted a group of disciples, who shared in his ministrations and in his practices of prayer and fasting. John's asceticism was not the result of expulsion from an Essene order, nor can he be regarded as a Nazirite ; it was primarily an expression of repentance and humiliation before God.

Jesus was originally a follower of John, and submitted to his baptism, but then he broke away to become an independent preacher. John did not hail Jesus as Messiah at the Baptism ; it was only when he was in prison that this possibility dawned on him. John's hailing of Jesus as Son of God and Lamb of God cannot be regarded as historical, but it is true that Jesus held a very high opinion of John.

During the period when the ministrations of John and Jesus overlapped, John went and ministered in Samaria. A survey of Samaritan sectarianism reveals how this was not impossible or unlikely occurrence, and it can be shown how John's message would find many points of contact.

On his return to Peraea, John was arrested by Herod Antipas and imprisoned at Machaerus. John's message, though non-political, could have important political repercussions and it was as a precaution rather than a punishment that he was put to death.

After John's death a group of his disciples continued a separate existence, and they came to regard John as

Messiah. The sect was never large nor important, and probably did not last beyond the 3rd. Cent. A.D. There is evidence that it contributed to the Mandaeen synthesis.

Though John's background was the baptist movement, was nevertheless an independent and original figure. The chief features of his ministry were its prophetic roots, its vigour and simplicity, and the primacy of preaching. Modern research uncovers a picture of John different in details from that found either in Josephus or in the New Testament. In some respects he was a more original and more independent figure than our sources allow ; but at the same time, on his own merits, he hardly deserved the fame that has been allotted because of his incorporation into the Christian tradition.

"JOHN THE BAPTIST."

Charles H.H. Scobie.

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in candidacy for the degree of
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ABBREVIATIONS.

- BASOR - Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.
 HCUA - Hebrew Union College Annual.
 HDAC - Hastings' Dictionary of the Apostolic Church. T. and T. Clark. Edinburgh. 1915.
 HDB - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible. T. and T. Clark. Edinburgh. 1898-1904.
 HDGC - Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels. T. and T. Clark. Edinburgh. 1906.
 HJ - Hibbert Journal.
 HTR - Harvard Theological Review.
 ICC - International Critical Commentary.
 JBL - Journal of Biblical Literature.
 JJS - Journal of Jewish Studies.
 JTS - Journal of Theological Studies.
 JQR - Jewish Quarterly Review.
 NTS - New Testament Studies.
 RB - Revue Biblique.
 SBT - Scottish Journal of Theology.
 TWNT - Theologisches Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament. Edited by G. Kittel. 6 Vols. Stuttgart, 1933-1959.
 VT - Vetus Testamentum.

The Dead Sea Scrolls :

CDC - The Damascus Document.

I QS } Both these abbreviations are in use for The
 DSD } Manual of Discipline.

I QIS a - St. Mark's Isaiah Scroll.

PART I - THE SOURCES.

The picture we gain of John the Baptist depends entirely on the sources of information from which our picture is built up. Any treatment of the life and work of John must be preceded by a careful investigation and assessment of the source material.

1. THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Our most important source is the New Testament. The early Christian kerygma sometimes began its outline of the life, death and resurrection of Christ with a mention of the baptism of John. This is so in Acts 10:37 where Peter, in a sermon, talks of "the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached....." In Acts 13:24,25, Paul, in his sermon at Antioch, likewise refers to John who "preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel", prior to the coming of Jesus. Thus, from the start, John had a place in the Christian message. When we turn to the New Testament, we find that the early Church preserved quite an amount of information concerning John in written form. Each source within the New Testament must be considered in turn.

a) Q Material.

The symbol Q designates the source common to Matthew and Luke, whatever its exact nature may have been.¹ It was certainly a sayings collection, with little or no narrative material, and a strong case can be made out that it is the *λόγια* document known to Papias, that it was originally in Aramaic, and that it existed around 50 A.D.

The first sections of Q concern John the Baptist. Any introductory section is lost, but the phrase *περίχρως τοῦ Ἰωάννου*, which is common to Mt and Lk (Mt 3:5; Lk 3:3) may have been part of such an introduction, describing briefly the appearance of the Baptist.²

1. See B.H. Streeter, "The Four Gospels", pp 271-292; V. Taylor, "The Gospels", pp 36-43; T.W. Manson, "The Sayings of Jesus", pp 15-21.
2. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 66.

The first Q passage which has survived is the account of John's preaching found in Mt 3:7b - 10 and Lk 3:7b - 9. John urges his hearers to bear fruit that befits repentance, and not to trust in their descent from Abraham, for the judgement is imminent when every tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down and burned. The first and third evangelists have each added their own introduction, Mt addressing the words to the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt 3:7a), and Luke to the multitudes (Lk 3:7a). In this Q passage the agreement between Mt and Lk is extremely close.

A further Q section on John's preaching is found in Mt 3:11,12 and Lk 3:16,17. As there is overlapping with Mk, it is impossible to say what exactly stood in Q. Probably Q had the words "I baptize you with water, but he who comes after me is mightier than I." Probably Q also had the words, "he will baptize you with holy spirit and with fire", although this has been much disputed.¹ Certainly, Q had the words which follow, "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Probably Q also had the reference to Jesus' sandals. Lk follows Mk in saying, "the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy (Mk adds - "to stoop down and") to untie"; but Mt, who perhaps follows Q (?), has, "whose sandals I am not worthy to carry."

There follows in all three Synoptic Gospels the account of Jesus' baptism by John. Streeter argues that Q must have had an account of the baptism - "John's Preaching, the Baptism and the Temptation obviously form a single section, and a source which contains the first and third must have contained the second, which not only connects the other two, but is the point round which they hinge. Q, therefore, must have contained an account of the Baptism."² But this seems most unlikely. Narrative sections in Q are very few, and serve only to introduce or explain sayings; an account of the baptism in Q is therefore unlikely. The versions of Mt and Lk can be adequately explained as being drawn from Mk, with slight alterations, so that W.L. Knox's summing up seems just - "If Q contained an account of the Baptism it has left no decisive trace."³

Q has the account of the question which John asked Jesus from prison - "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Mt 11:2-6; Lk 7:18-23). Q must have had only the

1. On this passage see Part IV, pp 119 f.
2. "The Four Gospels", p 188.
3. "Sources of the Synoptic Gospels", Vol II, p 4.

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briefest of introductions, perhaps, "John sent through his disciples, saying....." and, "Jesus answered them....."; it concentrated almost entirely on the actual words spoken. Mt and Lk expand the narrative a little, each in their own way.

Quite a large section of sayings of Jesus concerning John are preserved in Q. In Mt 11:7-11 and Lk 7:24-28, Jesus hails John as a prophet and more than a prophet; he was the messenger prophesied by Malachi; no one has been greater than John, yet "he who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."

The difficult saying beginning, "The law and the prophets were until John" is found in Mt 7:12 and Lk 16:16, but as the forms of it are different, at least one of the evangelists has altered the saying as it was in Q.

The contrariness of those who condemned John's asceticism and yet called Jesus a glutton and a drunkard is the subject of the Q passage preserved in Mt 11:16-19 and Lk 7:31-35.

In Q we thus have a considerable quantity of material on John the Baptist, amounting in all to approximately 21 verses.

b) Mark.

Mark's Gospel, like Q, begins with an account of John the Baptist, but unlike Q, it contains considerable narrative material. Both Matthew and Luke depend on Mark's account and often draw upon it.

Mark's opening account of John is brief, but packed with information. John appears in fulfillment of prophecy, preaches a baptism of repentance in the wilderness, which attracts large crowds who come to be baptized. John's dress and food are described. The only account of his message is contained in the words, "After me there comes one who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with holy spirit."

Mk 1:9-11 gives a brief account of how Jesus came to John and was baptized by him. But then, after mentioning that it was "after John was arrested" (Mk 1:14) that Jesus began to preach, Mk's chief concern is with Jesus.

In Mk 2:18 f. there is an account of how the people asked Jesus why, when John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fasted, his disciples did not.

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Thereafter John is forgotten until the mention in 6:14-16 that Herod thought Jesus was John raised from the dead causes Mk to tell the story of how John was arrested and met his death. There follows in Mk 6:17-29, the story of how Herodias daughter danced before Herod, and, on being offered the grantin of any request, asked, at the prompting of her mother, for the head of John the Baptist.

Prior to Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, there is another mention of the popular belief that Jesus was John the Baptist come again (Mk 8:27, 28.).

In Mk 9:11-13 the disciples question Jesus about the expectation of the return of Elijah. Jesus says Elijah has already come "and they did to him whatever they pleased." Evidently, he is referring to John.

Finally, in Mk 11:30-33, in answer to the question about authority, Jesus asks his questioners, "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" They refuse to answer this question for they had not believed in John, though all the people had held him to be a real prophet.

There is thus a total of 19 verses in Mark which refer to John the Baptist.

c) Luke.

It is evident that the third Gospel, like Mark and Q, originally began with the ministry of John the Baptist, for Lk 3:1 f. has at one time served as the opening of the book.¹ As it now stands, however, Luke belongs to a later group of Christian writings which were interested in tracing matters further back, especially to the descent and birth of Jesus. The infancy narrative of John (Luke I) is a separate section, with its own complex problems, and it will be dealt with in Part III.

From Chapter 3 onwards, Luke, as we now have it, gives an extensive account of John, drawn mainly from Q and Mark.

1. Streeter, "The Four Gospels", p 209.

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Luke dates the appearance of John and tells us that "the word of God came" to him "in the wilderness", whereupon he commenced to preach (Lk 3:1-3); he quotes Is 40:3, as does Mark, but adds to it Is 40:4,5. (Lk 3:4-6).

Then comes an account of John's teaching. Lk 3:7 b -9 comes directly from Q, with 7a being an editorial addition. Lk 3:10-14 has no parallel elsewhere and is, therefore, usually assigned to Luke's special source, L, whether a written or an oral collection. It is conceivable that this section belonged to Q, and that Matthew failed to reproduce it, since Luke's special source appears to have preserved little or no material concerning John. Lk 3:10-14 follows on naturally from the Q passage preceding it, Lk 3:7-9. That this was so is, however, quite incapable of proof, and it is best to regard the section as coming from Luke's special source.

Lk 3:15, an editorial verse, mentions that "all men questioned in their hearts, concerning John whether perhaps he were the Christ." For the rest of the teaching section, Lk 3:16a follows Mk, and Lk 3:16b, 17 follows Q. Lk 3:18 is editorial; in it John is represented as preaching the good news to the people.

Luke does not give a full account of John's imprisonment and death as Mark does, but he introduces at Lk 3:19,20, a note to the effect that John, for having criticized Herod's marriage, was imprisoned.

Lk repeats the question about fasting, which is found in Mk (Lk 5:33; Mk 2:18.)

John's question to Jesus, and Jesus' words about John are found in Lk 7:18-35, this section being based entirely on Q, with some editorial additions. Thus in Lk 7:18 John's disciples have been reporting to him what Jesus has been doing; 7:20 expands the narrative further, and 7:21 mentions some of Jesus' miracles as a preparation for Jesus' reply; 7:29,30 tells us that "the people and the tax-gatherers" had been baptized by John, while the Pharisees and scribes had not.

The first mention of John's death comes in Lk 9:7-9, the passage where Jesus is said to be John risen from the dead. Lk draws on Mk here, but alters the sense somewhat, refraining from making Herod himself actually say that Jesus must be John. Lk follows Mk in the account of Peter's confession where this belief is again mentioned (Lk 9:19).

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In Lk 11:1 the request of Jesus' disciples that he should teach them to pray "as John taught his disciples" occurs. This verse has no parallel elsewhere.

Lk 16:16 is a Q saying (see above, p 6.).

Finally, apart from slight editorial alterations, Lk 20:1-8, the question about authority, follows the Markan account.

Luke thus has a total of 51 verses which directly concern John the Baptist. If Lk 3:1-3 and 11:1 be regarded as editorial, then Lk 3:10-14 is the only passage where Luke draws from a source other than Mark or Q (unless, as suggested above, it does in fact come from Q.)

d) Matthew.

Like Luke, Matthew draws upon Q and upon Mark in his accounts of John. Chapters I and 2 are occupied with the genealogy and birth of Jesus, so that Matthew's account of the Baptist begins at Chapter 3.

Mt 3:1-6 follows Mk fairly closely except that he rearranges the material a little and adds one verse as a summary of John's message - "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Mt 3:2).

In his account of John's teaching Mt draws on Q (Mt 3:7-12). The story of the baptism is taken from Mk but is prefaced by two verses (Mt 3:14,15), which seek to meet the difficulty of understanding why Jesus should submit to a baptism of repentance and which are clearly secondary.

Mt 4:12 copies Mk 1:14 in placing the start of Jesus' ministry after John's imprisonment.

Mt 9:14, the question about fasting, follows Mk.

Mt 11:2-19 reproduces the Q passages on John's question to Jesus, and Jesus' sayings about John. Mt's version of the difficult saying about the law and the prophets being until John is found here (Mt 11:12,13); Lk has it in a different context (Lk 16:16). Mt also inserts here two verses - "And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mt. 11:14,15).

Mt follows Mk's chronology in not relating John's death until he has occasion to relate the fact that Herod thought Jesus was John risen again. Mt 14:1,2 repeats Mk's story of the beheading of John. Mt condenses the account considerably, using just over half the number of words employed by Mk. In v 5, he adds that Herod feared the people who held John to be a prophet.

Mt 16:14 (Peter's Confession) repeats Mk 8:28.

Mt 17:10-12 follows Mk 9:11-13, the disciples' question about Elijah. But Mt adds the explanatory comment (v. 13) - "Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist."

Mt 21:23-27 repeats Mk 11:27-33, the question about authority.

To the Parable of the Two Sons (Mt 21:28-31), Mt appends a saying, "For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him, and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him." (Mt 21:32). This has similarities with Lk 7:29,30 but it is an independent saying, probably from a special Matthean source, though of course it could be a Q saying which Lk has omitted.

Thus it can be seen that while Matthew has 59 verses concerning John, with the exception of Mt 21:32 he has no sources apart from Mark and Q; only 7 verses are peculiar to him, and of these, 6 can be attributed to editorial alterations

e) The Fourth Gospel.

The Fourth Gospel stands apart from the first three. It has a paradoxical character, for it has much less interest in historical accuracy as such and more interest in theological considerations than the Synoptics, yet at the same time its author had access to independent, trustworthy and very early sources, unknown to the Synoptics. This is admirably illustrated by its references to John the Baptist.

The Fourth Gospel may be regarded as a further stage in early Christian literature, in which the interest does not begin with John's ministry,

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nor even with Jesus' descent and birth, but with Jesus' pre-existence. After the Prologue, however, the narrative proper commences with the Baptist.

The Prologue to the Gospel is twice interrupted (Jn 1:6-8, 1:15) by references to John. These verses seem awkward and interrupt the rhythmical scheme of the Prologue, which reads naturally without them.¹ They stress the inferiority of John, who came not as the Light, but only to bear witness to the Light, and who acknowledged that Jesus ranked before him. They are thus to be regarded as an interpolation by an editor or redactor.

In the narrative concerning John which commences after the Prologue at Jn 1:19 f., the various events are related as having occurred on successive days.

On the first day (Jn 1:19-28) a deputation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem come and question John, who denies that he is either the Christ, Elijah (contrast the Synoptic view) or "the prophet"; he quotes Is 40:3 to them (none of the Synoptics puts the Isaiah quotation in John's own mouth as the Fourth Gospel does here.) John says - "I baptize with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." These two verses are similar to, and probably imply knowledge of the Synoptic account (Mk 1:7,8; Lk 3:16; Mt 3:11). Verse 28 gives the location of this incident as "Bethany beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."

On the second day (Jn 1:29-34), John sees Jesus approaching and hails him as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." The Fourth Gospel has no narrative of the baptism of Jesus: the nearest approach is this passage where John relates how he saw the spirit descending on Jesus and was divinely assured that this was he who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. "And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God", he concludes (Jn 1:34).

The third day (Jn 1:35-40) provides us with invaluable information, including the fact that some of the disciples of Jesus were originally disciples of John. Two such men, one of them being named as Andrew, leave John, and follow Jesus with whom they go and stay. Andrew finds his brother, Simon Peter and brings him to Jesus also.

After this, the narrative is concerned with Jesus who, on the next day goes to the wedding at Cana. Thereafter he goes

1. Cf. G.H.C. Macgregor, "John", p 9.

to Capernaum "for a few days" (Jn 2:12). The next verse relates how, as "the Passover of the Jews was at hand, Jesus went up to Jerusalem." After this Jerusalem visit, "Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judaea" (Jn 3:22). At this point the Fourth Gospel recounts parallel ministries of John and Jesus, for while Jesus and his disciples baptize in Judaea, John also baptizes at Aenon near Salim (Jn 3:23), for he had not yet been put in prison. This last remark (Jn 3:24) looks very like a correction of the Synoptic account which implies that there was no overlap.

The following passage (Jn 3:25-30) again deals with John's relation to Jesus. The introductory verse "Now a discussion arose between John's disciples and a Jew over purifying" - does not connect very easily with what follows. John's disciples complain that Jesus is baptizing and attracting a great following; but John repeats his assertion of the superiority of Jesus, comparing their relation to that of bridegroom and friend of the bridegroom, and concluding with the saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Jn 3:31-36 is not, as some have supposed (and as a reading of the A.V. would suggest) a continuation of the words of John. There has been dislocation of the text, and 3:31 does not continue the previous verse, but follows on from 3:21 according to some scholars, or more likely from 3:13.¹

Jn 4:1 mentions the Baptist - "Now when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), he left Judaea, and departed again to Galilee."

There is no account in the Fourth Gospel of the death of John, but there are two later references that look back to him. In Jn 5:33-35, Jesus, in speaking to the Jews, reminds them, "You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth". John was "a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light", but he is inferior to Jesus.

Finally, in Jn 10:40-41, it is said that Jesus went to the place across the Jordan where John at first baptized. There he attracted many people, who said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true."

The Fourth Gospel thus has 42 verses dealing with John. One or two may be based on the Synoptic account, but the large

1. See G.H.C. Macgregor, "John", p 77.

f) Acts.

While the book of Acts contains no direct narrative of the life of John the Baptist, it does mention him on several occasions.

Firstly, John figures in accounts of early Christian preaching. In Acts 10:37 Peter talks of "the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached....." In Acts 13:24,25, Paul, speaking of Jesus says that, "before his coming John had preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course he said, 'What do men suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie'". This saying is also found in the Synoptics and John. In Acts 1:22, when Judas' place is to be filled, the new apostle has to be "one of those men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John....."

Next, Acts twice quotes a saying of Jesus about John. In Acts 1:5, Jesus, at his Ascension says, "John baptized with water but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." This is very similar to the saying found in all three Synoptics (Mk 1:8 Lk 3:16: Mt 3:11), where it is spoken by John; here, however, it is attributed to Jesus.

Finally, there are two references in Acts to persons who had been baptized "into John's baptism." In Acts 18:24 f., we are introduced to Apollos, who "taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John." In Acts 19:1 f. there is the story of how Paul discovered at Ephesus some people who believed, yet who had not heard of the Holy Spirit as they had only been baptized with John's baptism. These people were baptized by Paul and received the Holy Spirit.

Acts thus gives us 15 verses of information on John the Baptist, from the viewpoint of the early Church, of which only 3 verses depend directly on the Synoptics.

g) The Trustworthiness of the New Testament Evidence

Having surveyed the New Testament references to John, we must now ask how trustworthy they are and how far we can rely on

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them in reconstructing the life and ministry of John.

The reliability of much of the material has been called in question especially by the form-critical school. The more extreme views of this school cannot be accepted, but these scholars have nonetheless an important contribution to make towards the study of John.

While the form critics have been successful in classifying various types of sayings and stories, they have had least success in dealing with straightforward narrative material.¹ The narrative of John and his baptismal activity, for example, really defies the form critic. Such material is called by Ribelius "Mythen", and by Bultmann "Geschichtserzählung und Legende", by which he means traditional narrative material, not properly to be classed as miracle stories, which have a religiously edifying rather than a historical character.² But these critics' treatment of "myths" or "legends" does not surely stem from their form-criticism, since the actual form of the narrative is able to tell us very little; their scepticism is imported from elsewhere. Similarly, in their treatment of other passages, the form critics lean too heavily on unproved assertions. Where an Old Testament text is linked with a story, it tends to be assumed that the story has been invented by the community to fit the text. Thus Bultmann approves K.L. Schmidt's view that "in the wilderness" in Mk 1:4 is a secondary addition;³ the conception of John as a "desert-preacher" depends on the Christian view which saw in Is 40: 3 a prophecy of the forerunner of Jesus. Again, Bultmann dismisses John's prophecy of the Messiah as the bearer of the Spirit, on the

2. Bultmann, "Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition", p 150.

3. Op. cit., p 151.

1. Cf. V. Taylor, "The Formation of the Gospel Tradition", pp 29-32.

very doubtful grounds that the view of baptism as the sacrament which bestows the Spirit is specifically Hellenistic.¹

Form criticism is of great value, however, in its stress on the Sitz im Leben of the primitive oral forms. The tradition was passed on by the Christian community, and therefore the selection, adaptation and preservation of the isolated stories and sayings depended on the life and activities of the community. On the whole, this is no reason to disbelieve the historical accuracy of the material which has been preserved, yet in the case of John the Baptist especially, there are grounds for holding that the early Christian community was far from unbiassed in its attitude.

The reasons for holding this are as follows.

1. The New Testament material is inconsistent and bears traces of development. In the Synoptics, John is regarded as the returning Elijah², whereas this is denied in the Fourth Gospel (Jn 1:21). In the Synoptics, John does not hail Jesus as the Messiah³, whereas, in the Fourth Gospel, John hails Jesus as the Lamb of God, the Son of God and the bestower of the Holy Spirit. In the Synoptics, John and Jesus come into contact only at the time of Jesus' baptism, whereas the Fourth Gospel knows of a period of contact; the Synoptics state that Jesus began his ministry after John's arrest, while this is specifically denied in the Fourth Gospel (Jn 3:24.)⁴
2. The excessive stress on the subordination of John gives rise to suspicion. According to the New Testament, John's sole importance is as the forerunner of Jesus. But the fact that John continued his independent ministry after the baptism of Jesus, and the fact that when in prison he appears not yet

1. Op. cit., p 151.

2. See Part VI, pp 209-216.

3. See Part VIII, pp 239, 240.

4. See Part VIII, pp 248, -253.

to have decided whether Jesus was the Messiah or not (Matt 11:1f.; Lk 7:18f.) suggest differently. All the examples of inconsistencies given above can best be explained as being due to alterations designed to minimize the importance of John. This trend is especially seen in the Fourth Gospel where, for example, the Prologue is interrupted to stress John's inferiority, and where he is the one who must decrease while Jesus increases (Jn 3:30). All this seems to do less than justice to John as an independent religious figure.

3. There is a suspicion at some points that John's message has been "Christianized." Luke concludes his account of John's message by saying, "So then, with many other exhortations he preached the Gospel to the people" (εὐηγγελίζετο τὸν λαόν - Lk 3:18). Here John seems to be regarded as the first Christian preacher. Suspicion has also been cast for this reason on Matthew's summary of John's message, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2)¹, and on the description of John's baptism as "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4 and parallels). These last two references are, however, open to question.

These tendencies are readily understood when we realize that during the period of the formation of the New Testament there was a continuing baptist sect, made up of disciples of John who had not gone over to the Christian Church. The evidence for this is ample and convincing, and is dealt with in detail in Part XI. When we remember how this sect must have viewed John, and how they put forward certain claims for him, then we can appreciate why the New Testament material has been adapted to meet this situation.

Along with these tendencies to alter and adapt the

1. See Rawlinson, "St. Mark", Westminster Commentary, pp13,14.

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traditional material, we must also note that there are reasons for holding that much of the New Testament evidence is authentic.

1) Eyewitnesses of the events in which John figures must have survived into the period when the first documents were produced. There is no reason to doubt the evidence of the Fourth Gospel which indicates that several of Jesus' disciples were originally followers of the Baptist (Jn 1:35f.). It is significant that one of the qualifications of an apostle was that he should be "one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John....." (Acts 1:22).

2) The very tendency to minimize the figure of John in the early Church lends weight to those passages which give a high estimate of John. Even Bultmann regards as authentic Jesus' words about John preserved in Q, and found in Matt 11:7-11a, 16-19; the Marcan passage 11:27-30 (the question about authority); and also the saying in Matt 21:32.

3) Even where the evidence is contradictory, it is usually possible to see where and why the alteration has been made. Thus the original form of the material can be determined and can be accepted as historical.

4) Many factual details are recorded in the New Testament which could not be interpreted either as favouring the Baptist or as being part of a polemic directed against him. The Acts references to the fact that the Christian movement began during John's ministry, the fact that John baptized, the fact that this baptism was usually in the Jordan, the geographical references in the Fourth Gospel to Aenon near Salim and Bethany beyond Jordan, the diet of the Baptist - in all such cases it is most reasonable to suppose that these facts are related for the simple reason that they are true. The story of the death of

the Baptist also (Mk 6:17-29, Mt 14:3-12), while many details may be questioned, contains the simple fact that John was put to death by Herod, a fact in which the New Testament writers have no dogmatic or apologetic interest.

5) There is some evidence of underlying Semitic sources in much of the material with which we are concerned, though the work of Dalman, Torrey, Burney and Black cannot be said to have provided conclusive evidence.¹ Retranslation provides wordplays between "children" and "stones" in Lk 3:8 (Matt 3:9), and also between "flee" (φύγετε - בָּרוּחַ) in Lk 3:7 (Matt 3:7) and "root" (ρίζα - שָׁרֵשׁ) in Lk 3:9 (Matt 3:10). Parallelism and Semitic grammatical constructions can be found also, the best authenticated examples being confined to the sayings of John.² Burney especially has argued strongly for an Aramaic source behind the Fourth Gospel,³ and there are certainly many examples of Semitisms in the Fourth Gospel's passages on John. This whole argument from Semitisms has to be used with great caution, however, and must be taken along with other arguments for or against a passage's authenticity. In the Fourth Gospel especially, possible Semitisms are not sufficient to uphold certain passages where the writer has clearly been influenced by theological motives.

From these considerations it would appear that Q is our most reliable source. It is probably the earliest, and it contains the greatest proportion of material concerning John. It has the highest estimate of John, and bears no sign of "Christianizing" his message. The clearest evidence of Semitisms comes from the Q sayings. In Q there is no suggestion at all that John hailed Jesus as the Messiah, and

1. The most recent contribution to this question is M. Black's scholarly and objective work, "An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts" (1946); Black is much more cautious than his predecessors in this field.
2. See Black, op. cit., p 206.
3. "The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel", 1922.

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therefore no contradiction with the incident of John's question from prison, which is a Q passage.¹

John's question from prison is a very important passage (Matt 11:2-6, Lk 7:18-23), and is discussed in Part VIII, pp 236 f, 253 . The fact that it is a Q passage is in favour of its authenticity. John's question, "Are you the Coming One?" is an accurate reflection of his Messianic expectations.² Jesus' refusal to give a direct answer to John's question bears all the marks of authenticity; John is left to make the leap of faith. Above all, since it is this passage which has caused so much trouble by its apparent contradiction of the more general New Testament view of the relation between John and Jesus, it is impossible to imagine such a passage being invented by the early Church. For these reasons we accept it as genuine, and an important piece of evidence.

Mark has slightly less to tell us, but preserves a number of factual details of great value, and on the whole is a fairly unbiassed work as far as John is concerned.

Matthew and Luke have very little independent information, apart from what they draw from Mark and Q, and in their fairly frequent editorial verses, they display the interests of the early Church.

The Fourth Gospel is a paradox. To some extent it is much the most biassed, and does not hesitate to alter the facts to a considerable extent in order to minimize the importance of John.³ Yet at the same time, in Chapters 1 - 4, it clearly draws upon a source quite unknown to the Synoptics, which obviously, as factual details and mention of geographical locations clearly show, preserves authentic early tradition.

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1. See further Part VIII, pp 239 f.
 2. Cf. Part IV, pp 102 f.
 3. Cf. Part XI, pp 298-300.

2. JOSEPHUS.

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A. The Greek Text.

The only mention of John the Baptist in the ordinary Greek text of Josephus is found in "The Antiquities of the Jews", XVIII, 5, 2. After relating how the army of Herod Antipas was defeated by that of Aretas, Josephus says,

"Some of the Jews believed that Herod's army was destroyed by God, God punishing him very justly for John called the Baptist, whom Herod had put to death. For John was a pious man, and he was bidding the Jews who practiced virtue and exercised righteousness toward each other and piety toward God, to come together for baptism. For thus, it seemed to him, would baptismal ablution be acceptable, if it were used not to beg off from sins committed, but for the purification of the body when the soul had previously been cleansed by righteous conduct. And when everybody turned to John - for they were profoundly stirred by what he said - Herod feared that John's so extensive influence over the people might lead to an uprising (for the people seemed likely to do everything he might counsel). He thought it much better, under the circumstances, to get John out of the way in advance, before any insurrection might develop, than for himself to get into trouble and be sorry not to have acted, once an insurrection had begun. So because of Herod's suspicion, John was sent as a prisoner to Machaerus, the fortress already mentioned, and there put to death. But the Jews believed that the destruction which overtook the army came as a punishment for Herod, God wishing to do him harm." 1

This passage was for long accepted as being authentic, but in modern times it has been questioned.² Schürer held that it must be regarded with suspicion. Most writers are willing to admit that Josephus did write something about John,

1. Translation by H. St. John Thackeray, in Loeb Classical Library. For a critical edition of the Greek text, see B. Niese, "Flavii Iosephi Opera", Vol IV, Berlin, 1890.
2. It has not, however, been questioned so vigorously as the passage in the "Antiquities" concerning Jesus; it should be clear that the Jesus passage is of very doubtful authenticity and stands on a quite different footing from this passage on John.

but several hold that the text as we now have it bears the marks of Christian interpolations.¹

But there is good reason to believe that the text is authentic.

1. Internal evidence. The style and vocabulary are those of Josephus, and it is generally acknowledged that there is no reason on this score for attributing the passage to any other author.

2. External evidence. This too, is favourable, for the passage has been quoted from early times. Origen refers to it in "Contra Celsum", I, 47 (c. 250 A.D.), saying that "Josephus testifies in the 18th Book of his Antiquities, that John was the Baptist; and that he promised purification to those that were baptized."

The first full quotation is found in Eusebius, "Ecclesiastical History", I, 11, 4-6 (c. 330 A.D.) where Eusebius quotes from the 18th Book of the Antiquities. The entire passage is given. (See Niese for the variants, none of them of any significance.)

3. If the passage were an early Christian interpolation we would expect at least some reference to John's Messianic preaching, and to his testimony to Jesus, these being much the most important features of his ministry from the Christian point of view. But as it stands the passage makes no mention of these, nor is it even directly in line with the Gospels, ascribing a quite different motive for Herod's execution of John. Any advantage gained by such a forged testimony of Josephus, would be outweighed by the apparent contradiction with the Gospels. If it be claimed that the interpolator deliberately

1. See Eisler, "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", p 246; Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 17.

had the subtlety to write such a testimony, making it disagree with the Gospels, then it can only be said that this man had the education and outlook of a modern critic!¹

There thus seems to be no good reason for rejecting the text as a whole.

As regards Christian interpolations in the passage.

- a) It has often been held that Josephus would not call John "a good man" (ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα), and that this must be a Christian addition. But as Josephus makes out John to be a teacher of virtue and of piety, who desired that mens' souls should be purified by righteousness, there is no reason why he should not have called him a good man. Josephus was always interested in showing that Judaism was a highly moral religion. We may compare his favourable accounts of the Essenes.
- b) Similarly, the words "very justly" have been held to be an addition. But the whole tone of the passage suggests that Josephus shared the popular opinion that John had done nothing worthy of death.
- c) It has been held that Josephus would not have called John "the Baptist" without further explanation, and that this title has been borrowed from the New Testament. But it is difficult to see what further explanation could be given other than the description of John's baptizing activities which follows: and if the New Testament evidence is worth anything at all, it is clear that "the Baptist" was a designation in widespread use, so that Josephus could easily have heard of it. (The use of the different forms of "baptize" in the passage is significant for, apart from the term βαπτιστής, Josephus' usage is quite independent of the New Testament.²)

1. See Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 18.

2. See Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", I, p 33.

d) Eisler¹ finds several other Christian interpolations and alterations, but none of them can be regarded seriously. He would restore part of the original text as follows - "For Herod killed him, a wild man (with a shaggy body and clothed in animal's hair, who incited) the Jews (to liberty and) bade them practise justice towards each other and piety toward God, and to band together through baptism." This is not textual criticism but guesswork based on pre-conceived ideas.

There is one variant reading which deserves mention. Niese reads ἡσθησαν ἐπὶ πλείστον, "they were greatly pleased" or "delighted." But the better reading is ἡρθησαν ἐπὶ πλείστον, "they were greatly moved" or "roused". The latter reading also makes it easier to understand why Herod should intervene. Eisler² renders ἡρθησαν "they were roused (to revolt)" and thinks that ἡσθησαν is a Christian "correction". This may be so, or the variant may have arisen quite accidentally through the confusion of two very similar words.

We therefore accept that this passage in the Antiquities is from the pen of Josephus.

B. The Slavonic Version.

The works of Josephus have undergone translation into many languages, and so it was not surprising when the discovery of the so-called Slavonic version of the "Jewish War" was announced in 1866 by A.N. Popov. This version is actually written in a dialect of Old Russian, and survives in a number of Russian manuscripts of the 15th and 16th Centuries. What was surprising was the announcement by the discoverer that this version contained hitherto unknown passages on John the Baptist.

1. "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", pp 246-249.

2. "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", pp 246, 247.

and Jesus. Later, Popov published the text of part of these passages.

Few scholars had access to the version, however, until in 1906 the Esthonian scholar, Alexander Berendts of Dorpat, published a German translation of the passages relating to John Jesus and the early Church. Berendts also prepared a German translation of Books I-IV of the Slavonic "War", but he died in 1912, and the translation was eventually published by his colleague Konrad Grass in 1924-1927.¹

It was Berendts who was the first to suggest that the Slavonic version can be traced back to an original, composed by Josephus. We know from the Preface to the "War" that Josephus first wrote an Aramaic version of this work, for he says that he proposed to "translate into the Greek tongue those books, which I formerly composed in the language of our own country, and sent to the upper Barbarians." From the next section it is evident that by these he meant "the Parthians and the Babylonians, and the remotest Arabians, and those of our nation beyond the Euphrates, with the Adiabeni." Berendts suggested that the Slavonic version is based on this Aramaic original and that the Slavonic "additions" were parts of the Aramaic original which were suppressed when the Greek translation was made for a rather different public.

Berendts and all other scholars who have studied the text of the Slavonic version are agreed on this point: that the Slavonic version was made from a Greek original, for the translation is a clumsy and literal one and occasionally actual Greek words are carried over into the Slavonic. But Berendts held that this Greek version was in turn translated from the

1. A. Berendts and K. Grass, "Flavius Josephus vom Jüdischen Kriege, Buch I-IV nach der slavischen Uebersetzung deutsch herausgegeben und mit dem griechischem Text verglichen." Dorpat, 1924-1927.

Aramaic.

Berendts' views found little support, and were strongly attacked by Schürer. In 1909, J. Frey advanced the view that though the John and Jesus passages are interpolations, they can be ascribed to a Jewish writer of the late first Century. Hoennicke, on the other hand, held that they should be classified along with the New Testament Apocrypha. In 1911, A. Goethals suggested that the additional material was based on the Memoirs of Hegesippus mentioned by Eusebius. In 1924, G.R.S. Mead, in his book, "The Gnostic John the Baptizer", held that the Slavonic passages "are based on echoes of popular traditions still floating about in the Jewish environment of Christianity in, say, the last third of the first century". In the 1920s, Robert Eisler revived and modified Berendts' theory. His views were expressed in various articles, and then in his book, "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist."¹ He held that the Greek book, "The Jewish War" was a version of an earlier Aramaic work, "On the Capture of Jerusalem" (Halosis), and that a Greek version of the latter was translated into the Slavonic, in Lithuania, between 1250 and 1260 A.D. Eisler's theory was widely criticised by many scholars.² Recently, Eisler's theories have again received favourable notice from a number of writers. S.G.F. Brandon, in his book, "The Fall of Jerusalem" re-states Eisler's case in modified terms. R. Dunkerley ("Beyond the Gospels", Pelican, 1957) admits the possibility of the Slavonic passages preserving some first century witness

1. The original German work is "IHEOYE BAZIAEYEZ OY BAZIAEYEZAS". Die messianische Unabhängigkeitsbewegung vom Auftreten Johannes des Täufers bis zum Untergang Jacob des Gerechten nach der neuerschlossenen Eroberung von Jerusalem des Flavius Josephus und den christlichen Quellen 2 vols. Heidelberg, 1929-1930. The English translation, from which all quotations are taken, is "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist, according to Flavius Josephus' recently rediscovered 'Capture of Jerusalem' and the other Jewish and Christian sources." Translated by A.H. Krappe. Methuen, London, 1931.
2. The best treatment of Eisler is "The Historic Christ", by J.W. Jack. London, James Clarke & Co. Ltd. 1933.

to the historicity of Jesus and to the start of the Christian Church. G.A. Williamson, in an Appendix to his translation of "The Jewish War" (The Penguin Classics, 1959), supports Eisler's view.

An English translation of the chief Slavonic additions will be found in an Appendix to Vol III, of Dr. St. John Thackeray's translation of Josephus, in the Loeb Classical Library; and another translation can be found in J.M. Creed, Harvard Theological Review, Vol XXV, pp 303-314. The two passages which mention John the Baptist are as follows (the translation is that of Creed) -

a) Inserted into "The Jewish War," II, 7.

Now at that time there walked among the Jews a man in wondrous garb. He had put the hair of beasts upon his body, wherever it was not covered with his own hair; and in countenance he was like a wild man. He came to the Jews and enticed them to liberty, saying: "God has sent me to show you the way of the law, whereby ye may be freed from many masters.. And there shall be no mortal ruling over you, save only the Highest who has sent me." And when the people heard this they were glad, and there went after him the whole of Judea which is about Jerusalem. And he did nothing else to them, save that he dipped them in the river Jordan and let them go, admonishing them to cease from evil works. And (he said that) there would be granted to them a king who would set them free and subject all who were not obedient, but himself would be subject to no one. Some mocked at his words; but others put faith in him. And when they had brought him to Archelaus, and the teachers of the law were gathered together, they asked him who he was and where he had been until then. And he answered and said: "I am a man, and hither the divine spirit has brought me; and I feed on cane and roots and wood shavings." But when they threatened to torture him if he did not desist from these words and deeds, he spoke nevertheless: "It is meet rather for you to desist from your shameful works and to submit to the Lord your God."

And Simon, an Essene by birth, a scribe, arose in wrath and spake: "We read the divine books every day, but thou, but now come forth from the wood like a wild man, dost thou care to teach us and to seduce the multitudes with thy cursed speeches

And he rushed upon him to rend his body. But he spake in reproach to them: "I will not disclose to you the mystery which is among you, because you would not have it (or, him). Therefore has unspeakable misfortune come upon you, and through your own doing." And after he had thus spoken, he went forth to that region of Jordan, and, since no man durst hinder him, he did what he had done before.

b) Inserted into "The Jewish War," II, 9.

Philip, while he was in his kingdom, saw a dream, to wit that an eagle plucked out both his eyes. And he called together all his wise men. And when each interpreted the dream differently, that man, whom we have before described as walking about in the hair of beasts and cleansing the people in the waters of Jordan, came to him suddenly, without being summoned. And he said: "Hear the word of the Lord. (This is) the dream which thou has seen. The eagle is thy venality, for that bird is violent and rapacious. And this sin will take away thine eyes, which are thy dominion and thy wife." And when he had thus spoken, Philip expired before evening. And his kingdom was given to Agrippa, and his wife Herodias was taken by his brother Herod. But for this reason all who were learned in the law abhorred him, but dared not accuse him to his face. That man alone, whom they called a wild man, came to him in wrath and said: "Forasmuch as thou has taken thy brother's wife, thou evil man, even as thy brother has died a merciless death so wilt thou too be cut off by the heavenly sickle. For the divine counsel will not stay, but it will destroy thee through evil afflictions in other lands; because thou dost not raise up seed to thy brother, but gratifiest fleshly lust and committest adultery, seeing that he has left four children. But when Herod heard that he was wroth, and commanded that they should beat him and drive him out. But he incessantly accused Herod wherever he found him, until he (Herod) (at length) treated him with contumely, and ordered that he should be slain.

Now his manner of life was marvellous and his life not human. For as a spirit without flesh so he continued. His mouth knew no bread, moreover at passover did he taste unleavened bread, saying: "In remembrance of God who redeemed the people from bondage is (the unleavened bread) given to eat, and for the flight, since the journey was in haste." But wine and strong drink he would not so much as allow to be brought near him, and every beast he abhorred (for food); and every injustice he rebuked; and wood-shavings served him for his needs.

We are not directly concerned with the Jesus passages, except in so far as they have a bearing on the authenticity of

of the Slavonic version as a whole. It will be noted that in the above passages John the Baptist is not actually named; similarly in most of the Jesus passages, Jesus is referred to as "the wonder-worker".

When compared to the ordinary Greek text of the "Gospel", the Slavonic version is found to contain numerous variants. As well as additions of which the John and Jesus passages are the most outstanding examples, a considerable number of passages are omitted or abbreviated. One characteristic of the version is that passages which appear in the Greek as indirect speech, are put into direct speech.¹ From the language and style of the Slavonic version, and from various glosses inserted by the translator, it is generally agreed that the translation must have been made in the 12th or 13th Century.² But regarding the Greek work from which the translation was made, diverse opinions have been held regarding its nature and date.

Those who claim that the Slavonic version goes back to an Aramaic work, try to prove this by finding traces of a Semitic original.³ But as we have seen, the Slavonic was translated from a Greek version and must therefore stand at two removes from an Aramaic original. Nothing daunted, Eisler gives a list of supposed misreadings of Semitic words (pp 132-133). The only Semitic word that he can find however is "maglawijem" which, he says, "is nothing but the Hebrew 'maglabhejhem'", meaning "their whips." But there was a word *μαγικλάβιον* current in late Byzantine Greek meaning "strap" or "whip", and this is quite sufficient to explain the word in the Slavonic.⁴ It must be confessed that the attempts to find a Semitic original are very far from convincing.

1. See Creed, HTR, XXV, pp 284, 285.

2. See Creed, HTR, XXV, pp 291-303.

3. Eisler, "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", pp 131-134.

4. For the controversy over this word see Zeitlin, JQR, XX, pp 15, 16; Eisler, JQR, XXI, pp 37, 38; Zeitlin, JQR, XXI, pp 401, 402.

5. See Jack, "The Historic Christ", pp 50 f.

As regards the two passages dealing with John, Eisler not only postulates a Semitic original, but claims to detect two sources: "one evidently a biographical account composed by one of John's disciples, the other a compilation of prophetic dreams and their interpretation and speedy fulfilment, the latter no doubt of Essene origin."¹ This is pure conjecture, for which he offers no evidence whatsoever.

Moreover, there are good reasons for doubting that the additions could ever have come from the hand of Josephus.

a) If Josephus' original Aramaic version did contain these remarkable accounts and did survive, it is very strange that no mention is made of them in any writer, Jewish or Christian, and especially that none of the Fathers make use of them as testimonies to the truth of the Gospel record.

b) There are historical errors in the additions which are inconsistent with authorship by Josephus. E.g. Herodias' first husband is said to be Philip the Tetrarch (it is significant that the Gospels make the same mistake): it is said that Herodias' second marriage took place after the death of her first husband; it is said that at the death of Philip his tetrarchy was given to Agrippa. In each case the information differs from that given in the authentic works of Josephus.²

c) There are chronological inconsistencies in the additions, for they say that John the Baptist appeared before Archelaus (who was deposed in 6 A.D.); and their data concerning Herodias and Philip means that John cannot have been executed until after 33-34 A.D. when Philip died. Eisler accepts this fantastic chronology, but this can only be done by completely discounting the evidence of the New Testament.

1. "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", pp 226, 231.

2. See further Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", pp 26, 27.

d) The Slavonic version is very anti-Roman in tone, and contains passages severely condemning the Romans (who are referred to as "Italians" or "Latins", terms never used by Josephus). These passages are in complete contradiction to the attitude of Josephus, who admired the Romans, and who sought to ingratiate himself with them.¹

e) In the Slavonic version the names of the months are not given in the Hebrew form, but only in the Syro-Macedonian form which would not have been understood by the Jews for whom Josephus intended his Aramaic version. Even if the Syro-Macedonian names were inserted by the translator from Aramaic into Greek, he would at least have kept the Hebrew name and added the other one thus - "Nisan, which the Macedonians call Xanthicus." This kind of double naming is always used by Josephus (the other way round of course) when he is working from Hebrew sources, but writing for Greek readers.²

Furthermore, there are definite indications that the Greek text underlying the Slavonic version was a compilation from various sources, made in the Byzantine period.

1. There are passages in it clearly dependent on the New Testament, which could only come from the hand of a Christian writer, e.g. the words in the passage on John the Baptist, "and there went after him the whole of Judea which is about Jerusalem (cf. Mk 1:5, Mt 3:5); the reference to the rending of the veil of the Temple; the reference to Lazarus. Whether the passages depend directly on the New Testament is not certain; it may be that the New Testament material has been transmitted via the works of some of the Church Fathers.³ Eisler, however acknowledges these Christian interpolations, but defends the

1. See Jack, "The Historic Christ", pp 50 f.

2. See Zeitlin, JQR, XX, pp 3-5, 11, 12; Eisler, JQR, XXI, pp 32-35; Zeitlin, JQR, XXI, pp 400, 401.

3. See Jack, "The Historic Christ", p 104.

rest of the text (i.e. the parts not obviously depending on the New Testament) as being part of an original by Josephus!

2. The Slavonic version is related to the ordinary Greek version of Josephus. A study of the Greek presumed by the Slavonic shows that it is often similar to the ordinary Greek version of Josephus and especially to one branch of manuscripts (LVRC). These manuscripts form one of two main textual traditions and are held by Niese to be generally inferior to the other group, PA(M). Further, although the compiler of the Slavonic version manages to keep his version self-consistent most of the time in spite of much material being omitted, on at least one occasion he betrays the fact that he has been working from the Greek Josephus. Herod, in a speech, urges his troops to battle with the Arabs to avenge the brutal murder by the Arabs of the Jewish ambassadors. The account of this murder is found in the Greek Josephus but has been omitted by the compiler.¹ A dependence on the Greek version thus rules out an independent version based on an Aramaic original.²

3. The Slavonic version has many similarities to the Hegesippus and the Josippon. The Hegesippus is a fairly free Latin translation of the Greek Josephus, abounding in Christian interpolations, which was composed in the 4th Century A.D. The Josippon is a Hebrew version of Josephus, with Jewish interpolations; it is usually ascribed to the 9th Cent., but in its original form it may be earlier.³ Certain passages found in the Greek Josephus (e.g. the account of the rising of Menahem, the son of Judas of Galilee; the section of King Agrippa's speech referring to the Parthians) are omitted from the Hegesippus and from the Josippon and from the Slavonic. These versions also agree against the Greek Josephus at certain points. E.g. the Greek Josephus says that Herod arrested

1. See Creed, HTR, XXV, p 283.

2. See further, Creed, HTR, XXV, pp 288-290.

3. See Zeitlin, JQR, XX, p 33 f.

John because he feared John's influence over the people; the Hegesippus, Josippon and Slavonio (following the New Testament) say that the reason was John's denunciation of Herod's adultery. Again, the Josippon and the Slavonio give a different version of the death of Herod's brother Phasaël than that found in the Greek Josephus. It seems clear that the compiler of the Greek underlying the Slavonio knew the Hegesippus and perhaps also the Josippon.

4. The Slavonic version draws on various Church Fathers. Zeitlin finds parallels in Justin, Origen and Eusebius, and especially in Julius Africanus.¹

5. Use has also been made of the Christian Apocrypha, e.g. the Acts of Pilate (Gospel of Nicodemus.)²

Thus it becomes clear that not only was there no Semitic original underlying the Greek text from which the Slavonic was translated, but that the Greek text was compiled from the ordinary Greek Josephus and from a variety of sources, most of them Christian. The presence of Byzantine Greek words, such as "Franki", "Latins" and "Maglawijem" confirms that this compilation was made in the Byzantine period. The author of the additions was clearly a Christian, for when placed together the interpolations are seen to make up a connected series which testify to all the chief events of the New Testament.³

Such a compilation need occasion no surprise; an analogy is to be found in the Hegesippus which is full of Christian interpolations. In the Hegesippus, however, no attempt is made to pass off the interpolations as the work of Josephus. But the compiler of the work underlying the Slavonic version was probably writing for a people who had not read Josephus at all before. It must not be thought that he was a forger.

1. See JQR, XX, pp 24, 25, 26f.

2. See Zeitlin, JQR, XX, pp 18, 19.

3. Greed, HTR, XXV, pp 314, 315; Jack, "The Historic Christ", p 101, 102.

He probably believed that Josephus must have referred to John and Jesus in the "War". The fact that no reference was to be found would, to his mind, probably be attributable to a Jewish censor. Therefore it was his duty to reconstruct the sort of thing that Josephus must have written.

The Slavonic version is thus of no value as an historical source for the study of John the Baptist. We are in agreement with Goguel who characterises it as "une fiction littéraire",¹

C. The Reliability of Josephus.

The Greek text of "Antiquities", XVIII, 5,2 is thus the only genuine part of the works of Josephus which refers to John the Baptist but, while accepting that this passage is from the pen of Josephus, there still remains the question of the reliability of his evidence.

As a historian, Josephus is suspect for many reasons.² Niese remarks that "he was assuredly no historian of the first rank, no conscientious or unbiassed inquirer, seeking truth alone, but a writer whose supreme object was to produce a certain impression."³ He used sources which are almost entirely unknown to us, so that we cannot check on how accurate his use of them is. Being born in 37 A.D. he had no first-hand knowledge of the period with which we are here concerned, and it is possible that he may either have misunderstood or deliberately altered the information which came down to him, whether in written or oral form. He was capable on occasion of great exaggeration, and of swallowing some incredible tales.⁴ Above all, he was clearly guilty both of distorting and omitting much material in order to serve the two main purposes of his

1. "Jean-Baptiste", p 30.

2. For estimates of the value of Josephus see C. Guignebert, "The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus" pp 15-19; G.F. Moore, "Judaism", Vol I, pp 208-210; B. Niese, article, "Josephus", in ERE, Vol VII, pp 569-579.

3. ERE, Vol VII, p 576.

4. G.A. Williamson, "The Jewish War", p 14.

writings, namely, to defend his own life and conduct (which at times left much to be desired), and to defend the Jewish people raising them in the estimation of the Roman world. This latter motive especially, led him to throw all the blame for the Jewish revolt on a few fanatics, to play down Jewish hatred of Rome, to omit all reference to the Messianic expectations of the Jews, and to idealize certain aspects of Judaism, representing the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, for example, as if they were Greek philosophical sects.

The passage in which John figures contains no obvious exaggerations or impossibilities, and of course Josephus had no personal interest in the events related. It must come from a source of some kind, but there is little to indicate that the source was unreliable, though the actual facts concerning John are rather meagre. The main grounds for doubting its trustworthiness are firstly, that it gives a favourable view of John, regarding him as yet another example of Jewish piety and virtue. But surely this in itself is no evidence of untrustworthiness. Secondly, Josephus portrays John as a pious teacher of righteousness but makes no mention whatsoever of any Messianic preaching or eschatological reference; Here certainly his bias is to be detected.

We must therefore be cautious in our use of Josephus, but, as G.A. Williamson says, "when he has no axe to grind and is not indulging in patent exaggeration he is an informative and reliable historian."¹ There are no grounds for doubting most of what he does tell us, but we must regard it as a one-sided account. It is largely the truth, but by no means the whole truth.

1. "The Jewish War", pp 14, 15.

3. EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS.

Outside of the New Testament, surprisingly few early Christian writers mention John the Baptist.

Justin Martyr (c. 114-165 A.D.) argues in his "Dialogue with Trypho" that John was Elijah.¹ Trypho had stated the Jewish view - "For we all expect that Christ will be a man (born) of men, and that Elijah when he comes will anoint him." Justin quotes from Isaiah, showing how the prophecies have been fulfilled, but he clearly has no sources apart from the Old and New Testaments.

Tertullian (c. 155-c. 222 A.D.), in his "Treatise on Prayer", I, states that "all John's doings were laid as groundwork for Christ", and expresses the opinion that "the whole work of the forerunner passed over, together with his spirit itself, unto the Lord. Therefore, after what form of words John taught to pray is not extant, because earthly things have given place to heavenly."

Hippolytus (c. 160-235 A.D.) witnesses to a belief in two forerunners. John, the son of Zacharias, was the "forerunner and herald of our Saviour", but a further coming of Elijah is to be expected before the Second Advent. A summary of John's ministry, based on the Biblical account, is given, with the following addition - "He also first preached to those in Hades, becoming a forerunner there when he was put to death by Herod, that there too he might intimate that the Saviour would descend to ransom the souls of the saints from the hand of death."²

Origen (c. 185-c. 254 A.D.) refers to the testimony of Josephus in the 18th Book of his "Antiquities". Josephus, "although not believing in Jesus as the Christ", is an independent witness to the truth of the Gospel account.³

1. "Dialogue with Trypho", 49-51.

2. "Treatise on Christ and Anti-Christ", 44-46.

3. "Contra Celsum". 47.

These writers are interesting as reflecting the views of the early Church on John, but they have no independent historical traditions about the life of John.

John figures in several apocryphal works. The Gospel according to the Hebrews (possibly c. 110 A.D.) enlarges on the story of Jesus going to be baptized by John.¹ According to Epiphanius,² the Gospel of the Ebionites also expanded the account of Jesus' baptism. It contained this passage - "John was baptizing, and there went out unto him Pharisees and were baptized, and all Jerusalem. And John had raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was wild honey, whereof the taste is the taste of manna, as a cake dipped in oil." Epiphanius adds his own comment - "That, forsooth, they may pervert the word of truth into a lie, and for locusts put a cake dipped in honey." The Ebionites were vegetarians and substituted "cake" (ἑγκρίς) for "locust" (ἀκρίς).³ The Gospel of Nicodemus (Acts of Pilate), which may date from about the 4th Century, recounts John's preaching in Hades, to prepare the way for Christ there.

John figures also in several apocryphal infancy gospels. The Book of James (Protevangelium), which probably dates from the 2nd Century, enlarges on the story of John's infancy.⁴ Other infancy Gospels depend on the Book of James.⁵

Finally, there are a series of references, mainly to the disciples of John, in the Clementine Homilies and Recognitions. These passages are dealt with in Part XI.⁶

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1. Quoted in Part VIII, p 241. See James, "The Apocryphal New Testament", p 6. The quotation comes from Jerome, "Contra Pelagium", III, 2.
 2. "Against Heresies", XIX.
 3. See Part VII, p 224.
 4. See James, "The Apocryphal New Testament", p 38.
 5. On the question of the infancy gospels see further, Part III, pp 99, 100.
 6. Part XI, pp 300-306.

In view of the claims that have been made for it, the literature of the Mandaeans must be examined as a possible source for our study of John the Baptist. The Mandaeans still exist in Iraq at the present day,¹ and were first discovered by Westerners in the 17th Cent. Though copies of their sacred writings were brought back to Europe, little progress was made until the publication of a Mandaean grammar by T. Nöldeke, in 1875. The main books were translated into German by M. Lidzbarski in the first quarter of this century,² and this translation was the basis of the theories of several scholars. The most important books are the Book of John; The Qolasta (liturgical texts); and the Ginza ("treasure").

The Mandaeans were termed by the 17th Cent. missionaries, "Christians of St. John", because of the high regard in which they held John the Baptist. This is a most misleading designation, as they are in fact strongly anti-Jewish and anti-Christian. We are not concerned here with giving a full survey of Mandaism,³ the sacred writings of which have been described as "an extraordinary farrago of theology, myth, fairy-tale, ethical instruction, ritual ordinances, and what purports to be history."⁴ The system is Gnostic in its main features, and basically dualistic. There is a world of light ruled by "the Great Life", and a world of darkness ruled by Ruha d'Kudsha (the Holy Spirit). This world and man were created through the agency of the Demiurge, Ptahil, man's body belonging to the world of darkness, though his soul belongs to the realm of light.

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1. An excellent description of the present day Mandaeans is given in E.S. Drower, "The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran."
 2. "Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer" (1915); "Mandäische Liturgien" (1920); "Ginza, der Sohtaz, oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer" (1925).
 3. For such a survey see W. Brandt, article "Mandaeans", ERE, VIII, pp 380-393. See also Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste" pp 186 f.
 4. C.H. Dodd, "The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel", p 115

The soul must pass upwards through a series of "wards", and this it can only do if it has been duly prepared. This preparation can be accomplished only by the correct performance of the Mandaean ritual, especially of baptism,¹ and by gaining the knowledge of the Mandaean myth.

This myth is a complex one, but concerns basically the descent of a divine being, Manda d'Hayye ($\gamma\upsilon\acute{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \tau\eta\varsigma\ \xi\omega\eta\varsigma$) He overcomes the powers of darkness and returns safely to the realm of light, thus enabling the soul to ascend in similar fashion. This act of redemption, however, took place before the creation of man, and the gnosis was imparted to Adam by the Great Life, assisted by Hibil, Shitil and Enosh. Throughout history, man has been assailed by agents of evil powers, including Misha bar Amra (Moses), Christ, and Ahmat, son of Bizbat (Mohammed). Christ is viewed as a false prophet, who is opposed by two figures, Yohana (John the Baptist) and Enosh-Uthra. This latter figure appears to be Jesus, viewed in a favourable light.²

On the face of it, a literature compiled about the 8th Cent. A.D. would not seem to be of importance to the study of John the Baptist. The theory has been elaborated by several scholars, however, that the Mandaean literature can take us back to a pre-Christian complex of religious ideas which entered Christianity via John the Baptist. John was a "pre-Mandaean", who took over this redemption mystery, which was itself of Iranian origin. Christianity developed from the Baptist's group, basing itself on the redemption myth, but the baptist sect split away from the Christian Church and continued

1. For a description of Mandaean baptism, see E.S.Drower, "The Mandaean of Iraq and Iran", pp 105-118.

2. See C.H. Dodd, "The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel", pp 119 f.

an independent existence. Within this continuing sect, both the redemption mystery and independent traditions concerning John were preserved, and are now to be found embedded in the Mandaean literature. It is not denied that there are post-Christian elements in Mandaeism, but it is held that the pre-Christian elements can be identified and dated.

This theory has taken various forms, and, if true, would provide us with important source material for the study of John giving us material concerning his beliefs and practices, as well as historical details of his life and ministry.

In the first place, proponents of this point of view suggest that certain beliefs found in early Christianity, were inherited by the Church via John the Baptist. This theory has been followed out along two main lines.

1) Firstly, there is the theory of the redemption myth, which is said to have entered Christianity via John the Baptist. This has been most fully worked out by R. Reitzenstein,¹ who, using Manichaean and many other sources as well as Mandaeism, has attempted to reconstruct the original Iranian myth. Central in this is the idea of the Primal Man or Heavenly Man, a pre-existent divine being, who was sent forth from God at the beginning of time, and who came into contact with the powers of darkness. God raised him again to the kingdom of light, but part of him was left behind in this world, and from this part of his nature the human soul originated. Man is thus linked with the Heavenly Man, and through him can find redemption and access to the kingdom of light.

Reitzenstein traces this myth from Persian origins, via Babylonia and Syria to pre-Christian Judaism. He draws support

1. Especially in "Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium", 1921. A good treatment of Reitzenstein's views will be found in W. Manson, "Jesus the Messiah", especially Appendix D, "The Heavenly Man Redemption Myth", pp 174-190. See also J.M. Creed, "The Heavenly Man", JTS, 1925, XXVI, pp 113-136.

from the generally accepted view that post-exilic Judaism was influenced, to a certain extent, by Iranian ideas. The Heavenly Man myth is responsible, in his view, for the "Son of Man" conception in Daniel, and parts of I Enoch and IV Ezra. Further proof is sought in the exaltation of Adam, the first man, in certain Jewish and Jewish-Christian works. John the Baptist's message was centred in this Heavenly Man Redeemer, and from this, the Christian message took shape. Reitzenstein sees the influence of the myth especially in Pauline theology with its ideas of the pre-existent Christ, the man from heaven, the redeemer who has overcome the powers of darkness.

2) Secondly, the theory of Mandaean influence on Christianity via John the Baptist has been worked out especially with regard to the Fourth Gospel.¹ Parallels in thought and wording between the Gospel and certain parts of the Mandaean literature are explained as being due to the Fourth Gospel drawing upon ideas which entered the early Christian Church by means of John the Baptist and his followers.

It is undeniable that many such parallels occur as Bultmann and Bauer have both shown. There are, for example, key words such as "light", "life", "truth", and "glory". The symbols of "water", "Bread" and "the spring of life" are held in common. There are some passages in the Mandaean writings which immediately bring Johannine passages to mind. Of these, the most striking are² -

"A shepherd am I who loves his sheep; I keep watch over
my sheep and my lambs;
Around my neck I carry my sheep, and they wander not
from the village.
I bring them into the fold, the good fold, and then
with me they find pasture.
From the mouth of Euphrates, Euphrates the radiant,
I brought them wonderful gifts.

1. See "The Mandaeans and the Fourth Gospel", V. Taylor, HJ, XXVIII, pp 531-546.
2. As quoted by W.F. Howard, Interpreter's Bible, Vol 8, pp 455, 456.

"No wolf leaps into our fold, and of fierce lion they need
not be frightened,
Of the tempest they need not be fearful, and no thief can
ever assail us:
No thief breaks into their fold, and of the sword they
need stand in no terror."

"The true envoy am I
In whom is no lie:
The true one in whom is no lie,
In him is no blemish or fault."

"A vine are we, a vine of life,
A tree which cannot die:
A tree of praise, whose fragrance stays
All men with breath of life."

In addition there are similarities between the Christ of the Fourth Gospel and the Mandaean Saviour, who is sent by his Father down to earth, to the world of darkness, in order to give life to his own, whom he chooses, and to lead them out of darkness into light. He is hated by the world, but ascends again to the realm of light after praying for his own. Here, Bultmann puts forward views similar to Reitzenstein, and asserts boldly that "the figure of Jesus in John is portrayed in the forms offered by the Gnostic Redeemer-myth."¹

It is further claimed that the Mandaean literature has preserved independent traditions concerning John the Baptist, and that this is a further proof that the ideas which we have just been discussing above were introduced by him into the early Christian Church. It is true that the Mandaean writings contain references to John, but their nature and extent must be carefully analysed.

The passages dealing with John appear in the Ginza, and in the Book of John. A few examples of these passages may be given. In Ginza II, 1, 151-154, Hibil-Ziwa says -

1. "Theology of the New Testament", II, p 12. For other parallels, see V. Taylor, HJ, XXVIII, pp 536-542.

In those days, a child shall be born who will receive the name of Yōhānā; he will be the son of old Zakhriā, who shall receive this child in his old age, even at the age of a hundred. His mother, Enishbai, advanced in years, shall conceive him and bring forth her child. When Yōhānā is a man, faith shall repose in his heart, he shall come to the Jordan and shall baptize for forty-two years, before Nebou shall clothe himself with flesh and come into the world. While Yōhānā lives in Jerusalem, gaining sway over Jordan and baptizing, Jesus Christ shall come to him, shall humble himself, shall receive the baptism of Yōhānā and shall become wise with the wisdom of Yōhānā. But then shall he corrupt the sayings of Yōhānā, pervert the baptism of Jordan, distort the words of truth, and preach fraud and malice throughout all the world. In the day when the measure shall be full, I will come myself (Hibil-Ziwa) to him, I will appear to him in the form of a little child three years and one day old, and I will talk to him of baptism and instruct his disciples. Then I shall tear him from his flesh, carry him in triumph into the world of pure light and baptize him in the clear, limpid waters of the Jordan. I will give him garments of glory and cover him in clothing of light, I will stir up in his heart a hymn of praise echoing that which the angels of light raise to their Lord at all times and for all eternity. After the death of Yohana, the world shall fall a prey to error. The Roman Christ shall overthrow the peoples, the twelve seducers shall travel through the world: for thirty years the Roman shall manifest himself to men.

The baptism of Manda d'Hayye by John is described in Ginza V, the teachings of John are given in Ginza VII, and John is mentioned again in Ginza XVI. The Book of John, as the name suggests, contains material concerning John, though much of it is simply Mandaean teaching placed on John's lips. One passage deals with portents at John's birth -

A child was planted out of the height, a mystery revealed in Jerusalem. The priests saw dreams; chill seized on their children, chill seized on Jerusalem. Early in the morning he went to the temple. He opened his mouth in blasphemy and his lips of lying. He opened his mouth in blasphemy and spake to all of the priests: "In my vision of the night I beheld, (I beheld) in my vision. When I lay there, I slept not and rested not, and sleep came not to me by night. I slept not and rested not,

(and I beheld) that a star appeared and stood over Enishbai. Fire burned in Old Father (Abā Sābā) Zakhriā; three heaven-lights appeared. The sun sank and the lights rose. Fire lit up the house of the people (synagogue), smoke rose over the temple. A quaking quake in the Throne-chariot, so that Earth removed from her seat. A star flew down into Judaea, a star flew down into Jerusalem. The sun appeared by night, and the moon rose by day." (Book of John, 18). 1

John's birth is described in the Book of John, 32 -

"My father," says Yahyā, "was ninety and nine and my mother eighty and eight years old. Out of the basin of Jordan they took me. They bore me up and laid me in the womb of Enishbai. 'Nine months', said they, 'thou shalt stay in her womb, as do all other children.' . . . I was born from Enishbai in the region of Jordan."

The region of Jerusalem quakes and the wall of the priest rocks. Elizar, the great house, stands there and his body trembles. The Jews gather together, come unto Old Father Zakhriā and they speak to him: "O Old Father Zakhriā, thou art to have a son. Tell us now, what name shall we give him? Shall we give him for name 'Yaqif of Wisdom', that he may teach the Book in Jerusalem? Or shall we give him for name 'Zatan the Pillar', so that the Jews may swear by him and commit no deceit?"

When Enishbai heard this, she cried out and she said: "Of all these names which you name, will I not give him one; but the name Yahyā-Yōhānā will I give him, (the name which Life's self has given unto him.

This same section mentions John's upbringing -

When Anōsh, the treasure, heard this he took the child and brought it to Parwan, the white mountain, to Mount Parwan, on which sucklings and little ones on holy drink are reared up.

(There I remained) until I was two and twenty years old. I learned there the whole of my wisdom and made fully my own the whole of my discourse. They clothed me

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1. The translations from the Book of John are taken from G.H. Mead, "The Gnostic John the Baptizer", pp 35 f.

with vestures of glory and veiled me with cloud-veils.

John appears as a preacher -

Yahya proclaims in the nights and speaks: "Stand not I here alone? I go to and fro. Where is a prophet equal to me? Who makes proclamation equal to my proclamations, and who doth discourse with my wondrous voice?" (Book of John, 21).

Other passages speak of John's invulnerability to fire or sword, a dialogue with Eshu Meshiha (Jesus) is recorded, and an account given of John's marriage. On his death, John ascends triumphantly into the realms of light.

In order to hold the type of view we have just been discussing, it is necessary to maintain that the Mandaeans originated in Palestine (or Transjordan), and that they are also pre-Christian in origin. Even if the arguments that the doctrine of the heavenly redeemer and certain passages in the Fourth Gospel entered Christianity via a "pre-Mandaean" John be rejected, it would still of course be possible to hold that independent traditions concerning the life and ministry of John were preserved by his disciples, and that the Mandaeans are the descendants of this continuing group of disciples. In this case the Mandaeans would not be pre-Christian, but would have originated about the same time as the Christian Church.

A variety of further arguments have been advanced in favour of a Palestinian and early origin of the Mandaeans¹. The river Jordan is frequently mentioned in the Mandaean literature, both in the liturgical texts and elsewhere, and Jerusalem is regarded as the holy city. The Mandaean dialect, it has been held, is very similar to Nabataean. The Mandaeans give themselves the name of "Nasoraean", and this has been connected with the

1. For a detailed discussion of these arguments see Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 220-240.

Nazaraeans mentioned by Epiphanius.¹ The Mandaean baptismal rites have similarities to those which were to be found in certain Jewish sects.

It will be apparent from this brief survey that the Mandaean literature does indeed have affinities with early Christian thought, and does indeed contain much material concerning John; it can also be argued that the Mandaeans are of early Palestinian origin. The crux of the problem lies in the dating and evaluation of the material. The Gospels date from the 1st Cent. A.D., while the Mandaean literature was compiled around the 8th Cent. A.D. The natural explanation would seem to be that some form of Christianity was one factor contributing to the Mandaean synthesis. If the matter is really the other way round, the onus of proof lies very much with those who assert this. The assertions of the Mandaean school must therefore be carefully examined.

The theory that the message of John can be reconstructed from the Mandaean literature is, in fact, open to criticism at many points. Reitzenstein's mass of evidence is often far more ingenious than convincing, and it has to be remembered that even the Iranian origin of the myth on which he lays such great stress has to be reconstructed from writings ranging, in their present form, from about the 3rd. to the 7th. Cent. A.D.² While all these later writings may very well incorporate much earlier material, Reitzenstein's separation of the older strata from the more recent is at times very arbitrary.³ It is true that the development of the Son of Man concept in Judaism may have been partly influenced by non-Jewish ideas about an

1. Cf. Part II, pp 57-58.

2. Cf. W. Manson, "Jesus the Messiah", pp 179-183.

3. Cf. C.H. Dodd, "The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel", pp 122, 128. Reitzenstein makes much of a "Mandaean apocalypse", dating from c. 70 A.D., which he claims to have reconstructed from the Mandaean literature, and also of the saying about destroying the temple. For a detailed treatment of these two matters see Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", pp 124-135, where it is shown that the Mandaean material cannot possibly be regarded as having the priority which Reitzenstein claims for it.

"Original Man", but only to the extent of borrowing the title "Man", and of suggesting a connection with the first man, Adam.¹ But there is no evidence of the existence of a pre-Christian redemption myth as reconstructed by Reitzenstein.

Similar criticism has to be applied to the work of Bultmann. On the whole, the Johannine parallels to the Mandaean passages tend to be shorter and simpler in form. Bultmann contends that they are therefore later in date; this appears to be an unwarranted assumption. As C.H. Dodd points out, for example, when Bultmann "adduces the conversations between the Great Life and Manda d'Hayye (or Hibil), which precede the mission of the latter into the lower world, and suggests that the simple allusions in the Fourth Gospel to the sending of the Son by the Father presuppose the elaborate mythical apparatus of the Mandaean passages, he is arguing against the natural supposition in such a case."² A probable explanation of the similarities between the Fourth Gospel and Mandaeism is that Mandaeism has drawn upon older sources, among which may have been the Fourth Gospel. It is possible, as Taylor suggests, "that both the Evangelist and the Mandaean authors have independently drawn upon the same stock of common forms, symbols and figures, and to some extent of ideas as well."³

The Dead Sea Scrolls might well be expected to shed light on this question, for they have revealed to us almost exactly what Reitzenstein and others have postulated - a pre-Christian, Jewish fringe sect, reflecting Iranian influence, and itself in an excellent position to influence John the Baptist, and through him, early Christianity.⁴ If Reitzenstein and Bultmann are right, the Scrolls are the very place where we

1. See Culmann, "The Christology of the New Testament", pp 141-150; Richardson, "An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament", pp 141-144.
2. "The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel", p 123.
3. HJ, XXVIII, p 545.
4. See further Part II, pp 56, 57.

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would expect to find the ideas which they claim entered Christianity via a "pre-Mandaeism" and John the Baptist.

What result does a comparison of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Mandaean literature produce? This is a complete subject in itself which has so far scarcely been mentioned, but a few very tentative conclusions may be mentioned.

Comparison shows that for the greater part the two literatures are quite different, the Scrolls being basically Jewish, the Mandaean writings basically Gnostic. There are certain areas of agreement, however, which must be carefully analysed. Three main points should be noted.

1. The main area of agreement lies in the concept of a dualism, or modified dualism, expressed principally in the light-darkness contrast. The division between the world of darkness, ruled by various evil powers, and the world of light, ruled by the "High King of Light" is basic to Mandaism; while a similar dualism, expressing itself, for example, in "the war of the sons of light with the sons of darkness", is a striking feature of the Scrolls. ("Sons of light" is also a Mandaean term, designating angels.) The contrast is also expressed in terms of Truth and Error. The Dead Sea Scrolls speak of the "Sons of Truth", and of "knowing the Truth", but often the term is simply the equivalent of the Torah. The Mandaeans use the term Truth (Kushta), although the content of it is to them very different.

It is more than likely that this form of dualism is of Iranian origin, and had infiltrated into Judaism in pre-Christian times. But there is no need of any "pre-Mandaean" hypothesis to account for this; these ideas were general and very widespread, and not necessarily tied to any Gnostic system. In any case, the Qumran dualism is really, as Burrows

comments, "A dualism of good and evil, not of spirit and matter"

2. Other parallels may be pointed out. T.H. Gaster mentions the following terms as common to Mandaeism and the Scrolls²; "the elect", "God's plantation", "enlightened", "Crown of glory", and "false prophets." We note also, of course, the rite of baptism, practised in "living water". On close examination, the parallels are not impressive. To take an example, the Mandaeans often call themselves "God's plantation"³, a term which also appears in the Scrolls. But the true origin is almost certainly to be sought in Isaiah 60:21, and surely that cannot have been due to "pre-Mandaean" influence! To take another example, not given by Gaster, the Mandaean passage about the "good shepherd" quoted above (p 40) might be compared with the "New Covenant" fragment from Qumran⁴, which speaks of the time when God "will appoint for them a faithful shepherd." But apart from the actual idea of terming an eschatological figure "shepherd", there is no real parallel, and the idea as it appears in the Scrolls can readily and most naturally be explained in terms of Old Testament concepts.

In almost every case, these parallels offer no support at all for the "pre-Mandaean" hypothesis. They can either be traced to an origin in the Old Testament, or else are terms in widespread use in many religions. In some cases, e.g. "the elect" and "the enlightened", they probably reached Mandaeism via Manichaeism, in which they figure prominently. All the indications are that these are common terms, passed from one group to another, with Mandaeism being the last in the line, and not the first.

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1. "The Dead Sea Scrolls", p 258.
 2. "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect", pp 30, 31 and elsewhere in notes.
 3. References in Gaster, op. cit., pp 31, 307.
 4. See Gaster, op. cit., pp 289, 290.

3. Most striking of all are not the parallels which the Scrolls provide to Mandaeism, but the parallels which they do not provide. There is no trace of the "heavenly man" redempti myth in the Scrolls. No idea is found of the soul as a spark of light, imprisoned in the world of darkness. The Teacher of Righteousness was indeed revered by the sect, but he was neither heavenly nor a redeemer. The expected Messiahs of Aaron and Israel are poles apart from the figure reconstructed by Reitzenstein, while the Qumran sect's picture of "things to come" has nothing whatever in common with the perilous upward journey of the soul past the demon-guarded "wards".

Study of the Scrolls would thus seem to cast very grave doubts on the Mandaean hypothesis, especially as advanced by Reitzenstein.

An examination of the traditions concerning John which are preserved in the Mandaean literature does not encourage us to believe that they are either early or genuine. The passages dealing with John are not numerous. Very few details are in fact given, and we learn little that is not found in the New Testament. The references, for example, to "Old Zakhriā" as John's father, and to "Enishbai" (Elizabeth) as his mother, along with such incidents as the star appearing in Judaea at John's birth, and the debate as to what John should be called, suggest very strongly borrowing from the New Testament. The passages are obviously padded out with descriptions of how John administered Mandaean baptism, and taught Mandaean doctrine. The account of John's marriage, for example, is merely a case of the attributing to John of later Mandaean practice, since celibacy is forbidden to the Mandaeans; John, the father of eight children, is the ideal type of family man whom the Mandaeans extolled. The keynotes of John's preaching, according to the New Testament, are, on the other hand, completely

lacking: there is no mention of the imminent judgement or of the need for repentance, nor is there any knowledge of the martyrdom of John.

Furthermore, analysis of the John passages in the Mandaean literature¹ reveals that John does not appear in any of the liturgical texts, which is where we would expect to find him, especially in the baptismal liturgy. The John passages belong to the latest strata of the Mandaean literature, and for the most part bear the mark of the Arab period. John is, moreover, presented neither as the Messiah nor as the founder of the sect, which is what we would expect if the literature was preserved by a sect of the followers of John.

The material concerning John would thus seem to have been introduced into Mandaeism at a late date. It may have been derived directly from the New Testament of Syrian Christianity or, perhaps more likely, via some apocryphal or Gnostic work.²

The other arguments in favour of the early Palestinian origin of the Mandaeans are also very suspect. Perhaps the strongest are those based on the use of the terms "Jordan" and "Jerusalem". Jerusalem, however, is thought of as being situated on the Jordan, and this does not encourage us to believe in the historical accuracy of the source. The references to the Jordan could be regarded as an important link with John the Baptist, but, as we shall see³, John did not confine his baptism to the Jordan, and it is doubtful whether he attached any special significance to it. Both terms could easily have been acquired by the Mandaeans from later sources; the use of the term "Jordan" to designate baptismal water is,

1. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 259-263.

2. Cf. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 119 n.

3. Part V, p 195.

in fact, found in the Syriac Christian liturgy.¹ The arguments based on the similarity of the Mandaean dialect to Nabataean, and on the identification with the Nazaraeans are precarious in the extreme. The similarities between the Mandaean rite of baptism and those of certain Jewish sects are not sufficient to establish a definite connection; many such rites were also found in Babylonia. Mandaean baptism is repeated, and thus quite different from the once-for-all baptism administered by John.

It would appear most unlikely, therefore, that the Mandaean literature can provide us with any pre-Christian material which could have entered the early Church via John the Baptist, or with any genuine traditions concerning the life and ministry of John. These conclusions are confirmed by the more sober estimate of Mandaean origins which is now accepted by many scholars. Quite a lot of weight deserves to be given to the earliest writer to mention the Mandaeans, Theodore bar Koni, who, writing in 792 A.D., states that they were founded by one Ado, a wandering beggar from Adiabene, and that their doctrine is borrowed from the Marcionites, the Manichees and the Kantaeans (these latter may have been a Babylonian sect). The first two sources certainly did play a part in the Mandaean synthesis, and Enosh-Uthra (Christ, viewed in a favourable light) bears a strong resemblance to the Manichaean Jesus, behind which lies the Jesus of Marcion. Babylonian elements have also played their part and probably account for some of the older strata in the Mandaean literature.

F.C. Burkitt² has shown convincingly that many of the Jewish and Christian elements in Mandaicism have been acquired

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1. On this and the following arguments see Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 220-240. Thomas, however, accepts the Palestinian origin of the Mandaeans.
 2. JTS, XXIX, pp 225-237.

via the Peshitta (the Syriac Bible, dating from the early 5th. Cent. A.D.). The figure of Eshu Meshiha reflects Christ as he was presented by the Byzantine Church which came into contact with and very probably persecuted the Mandaeans. As Burkitt points out, "In several places 'Christ' is actually called 'the Byzantine' (Rumaia), and further we are told that the disciples of this Christ become 'Christians', and turn into monks and nuns who have no children and who keep fasts and never wear white clothes like the Mandaeans (GR 11 55)."¹

Mandaeism is thus a compilation of many diverse sources. Some of these, especially the Babylonian elements, are undoubtedly old. It seems clear, however, that any Jewish or Christian elements entered Mandaeism partly via Marcionism and Manichaeism, possibly through certain apocryphal traditions, and certainly via Syriac Christianity.

The references to John the Baptist belong, as we have seen, to the latest parts of the Mandaean compilation. There is a very good reason for the exaltation of John at this comparatively late date. Toleration was granted to religious sects by the Arabs only on condition that they had a prophet and a sacred book.² It would seem to be the Arab invasion which led the Mandaeans to present John as their prophet. It may well be that they had acquired some knowledge of John prior to the Arabs, from Syriac Christianity or from apocryphal or Gnostic traditions, and that it was a case of expanding these when the situation required it.

Our survey has shown that Mandaeism is of no value in providing source material for the life and teaching of John the Baptist.

1. JTS, XXIX, p 229.

2. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 261.

PART II - JOHN'S BACKGROUND.

1. The General Background.

No person can be properly understood except against the background of the place and period in which he lived and worked. John the Baptist lived in Palestine and was roughly a contemporary of Jesus, and this means that his general background has been widely studied, since it virtually coincides with that of Jesus. No period in Jewish history has been more intensively investigated than that which forms the background and preparation for the New Testament. It is not thought necessary, therefore, to present a detailed treatment of the general background of John's ministry¹, and attention will be concentrated on two special features of this background only.

We must ask firstly to which branch of Judaism John belonged. The social, political and religious outlook of the Jewish people varied tremendously; into what category can John be placed? He was, as we shall see, a highly individual figure, yet that does not prevent us assigning him some sort of classification.

Clearly, he would have little or no sympathy with the Sadducees, in spite of his priestly descent. He preached a coming judgement, while they denied a future life and retribution. His Messianic proclamation would probably be viewed as politically dangerous by the collaborationist Sadducees. With their wealth and privilege, they would have little in common with the ascetic prophet of the wilderness. The representatives of the Jerusalem authorities who asked Jesus the question about authority (Mk 11:27-33 and parallels), and

1. On this see e.g. C. Guignebert, "The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus"; G.F. Moore, "Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era"; Macgregor and Purdy, "Jew and Greek"; Tutors Unto Christ", Part I.

who "did not believe" John, were very probably of the Sadducean party.

John may have felt more sympathy towards the Pharisees, with whose general outlook and whose eschatology he had much in common. Yet their legalistic temper and concern with the tradition which was built up around the Torah is foreign to John's radical prophetic outlook. The Fourth Gospel records that a delegation from the Pharisees were sent to question John (John 1:24); they appear in order to seek information, and pass no judgement on him. Thus it would seem that John stood apart from the Pharisees, though not being entirely antagonistic to them.

With the Zealot party, John certainly had no connections. His message was not a political one¹, and he was opposed to violence.

There remains one further branch of Judaism with which John does appear to have had closer connections, and this we shall now consider separately.

2. The Sectarian Background.

John appears as a preacher and a leader of a group of disciples, in the Jordan valley, in the early 1st Cent. A.D. His movement is on the fringe of Judaism, in opposition to the accepted ideas of most orthodox Jews; it is chiefly noted for the rite of baptism.

Setting aside our preconceived ideas, and trying to view John's movement in its historical context, we cannot help noticing that it is in fact only one of a number of groups with similar characteristics which flourished in the same place and around the same time. In Palestine and Syria, especially in

1. On this subject, see Part IV, pp 151-156.

the region of the Jordan valley, for a century or more B.C., and for several centuries A.D., there existed a variety of groups which, although differing from each other on many points yet are sufficiently alike in general outlook to be classified together as "the baptist movement", baptism being one of the more important practices which they have in common. In order to form an impression of this movement information has to be gathered from many sources; this has been admirably done in the classic book on the subject, "Le Mouvement Baptiste en Palestine et Syrie" (1935) by Joseph Thomas. His work is to be supplemented by reference to the numerous original texts, to other works dealing with or mentioning particular branches of the baptist movement, and to more recent discoveries, particularly the Dead Sea Scrolls. In our study of John the Baptist, we are interested only in the baptist sects which existed prior to or contemporary with John, and these shall now be listed.

1. The Essenes, who are to be regarded as part of this movement, are mentioned by Pliny the Elder, and described at some length by Josephus and Philo, though the accuracy of some of their statements is open to question.¹

Philo describes a widespread Jewish sect, noted for their piety, goodness and purity of life. They live in communities and "Avoid the cities because of the iniquities which have become inveterate among city dwellers".² They have all possessions in common, reject the practice of slavery, and join together in common meals. Josephus gives a fuller description, both in his "Antiquities" and in "The Jewish War". He describes them as a sect, settling in large numbers in every town. They live a

1. On the Essenes see Lightfoot, "St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon", especially the Dissertations on the Essenes, pp 349-419; F.C. Conybeare, article, "Essenes", HDB, Vol I, pp 767-772; W.D. Niven, article, "Essenes", HDAC, Vol I, pp 367-369.

2. "Quod Omnis Probus Liber", IX, 75.

simple and pious life, and members are only admitted after a probationary period. They have a regular baptism of purification, when the members, clothed in white linen, "bathe their bodies in cold water",¹ and we hear also of their common meals. The Essenes, according to Josephus, reject marriage, but adopt other men's children. There is, however, one order which allows marriage. They believe that the body is corruptible but the soul is immortal, and in their view of the future life they "share the belief of the sons of Greece".² Pliny, in his "Natural History", mentions "the solitary tribe of the Essenes", who live on the West side of the Dead Sea, allowing no women, yet making up their numbers by a stream of new recruits.

The date of origin of Essenism has been much disputed. Josephus seems to indicate that it arose during the reign of Jonathan (161-148 B.C.), but his first definite historical reference is to a certain "Judas the Essene" in 105 B.C.³ No precise date can be given, but certainly the movement was in existence before the start of the 1st Cent. B.C.

2. The Dead Sea Scrolls sect formed an important part of the baptist movement.⁴ Doubtless it will be many years yet before the dust of controversy settles, yet the consensus of sound scholarship seems to agree that the Scrolls came from a

1. "Jewish War", II, 8, 5.

2. "Jewish War", II, 8, 11.

3. "Antiquities", XIII, 5, 9 and XIII, 11, 2.

4. The literature on this subject now runs into several thousand books and articles. A sound and scholarly treatment will be found in Millar Burrows, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", and "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", and both books contain good Bibliographies for further reference. English translations of the Scrolls are given by Burrows, or may be had in T.H. Gaster, "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect." The original text of the Manual of Discipline is to be found in "The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery", Vol II, edited by M. Burrows.

Jewish sect, which retreated to their wilderness monastery during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.) and remained there with the exception of a break of about 30 years following the earthquake of 31 B.C., until the monastery was destroyed by Roman troops in 68 A.D. The disputed identifications of the Teacher of Righteousness, the Wicked Priest, and the other terms used in the Scrolls do not concern us directly here. A feature of the sect was their sacred meals at which bread and wine, blessed by a priest, were distributed; and also their baptisms which will be more fully examined at a later stage. A strict set of rules governed the conduct of members, and this is preserved for us in the Manual of Discipline.

3. A sect of Nazareans (*Ναζαραιῶται*), mentioned by Epiphanius, has been widely discussed.¹ On the one extreme are those who try to show that Jesus never existed and that the Jesus "myth" originated with the Nazareans; on the other are those who treat the description of Epiphanius as quite worthless. Epiphanius is not always very reliable, and suspicion has been aroused as he also mentions a later Jewish-Christian sect called *Ναξωραιῶται*. But Epiphanius himself, being aware of the similarity in name, anticipates objectors and insists that the two sects are quite separate.

The Nazareans, according to the specific statement of Epiphanius, existed prior to the time of Christ.² They were Jewish, in origin at any rate, but lived in the East of the Jordan, in the region of Gilead and Bashan. They observed circumcision, the Sabbath and the Jewish feasts, they honoured the Patriarchs, but they rejected the Torah. In particular

1. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 37-40; Guignebert, "The Jewish World in the time of Jesus", pp 200, 201.

2. Adv. Haer, XXIX, 6.

they objected to the laws of sacrifice; they themselves had no sacrifices, and were strict vegetarians. They rejected the doctrine of predestination, and had^d no use for astrology.

Nothing is said about baptismal rites, but the sect is included in this survey because of close similarities with some of the other sects being considered; the fact that Epiphanius links them with the later Elkesaites, and also the fact that they had abandoned animal sacrifice, make it likely that they may have practised lustrations.

4. A Jewish sect known as Hemerobaptists is mentioned by Hegesippus and Epiphanius, in the Apostolic Constitutions and in the Pseudo-Clementine literature. According to Epiphanius, it flourished prior to the year 70 A.D.¹ As the name suggests, the sect's main characteristic was the rites of washing which were practised every day, before their meal, according to the Apostolic Constitutions (VI, 6,5). Apart from these washings, and strict laws of purity, this group was not distinguished from the rest of Judaism.

Various identifications have been proposed for the Hemerobaptists², the likeliest being with the Essenes.³ But it has also been claimed that the Hemerobaptists were in fact the followers of John the Baptist; not entirely without reason, since a passage in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies calls John a ἡμεροβαπτιστής (Hom. II, 23). What became of the group after 70 A.D. is not known; it is possible that they appear in a list of Jewish heresies by Justin as the βαπτισταί.

5. The Masbotheans are mentioned by Hegesippus, Ephrem and in the Apostolic Constitutions. Apart from the fact that they were a Jewish sect, we know almost nothing about them. The

1. "Panarion", XIX, 5, 6-7.

2. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 36, 37.

3. But Hegesippus differentiates between Essenes and Hemerobaptists.

name Masbotheans, however, is suggestive. The Aramaic **ܡܒܬܝܬ** means "to baptize", and the Aramaic form **ܡܒܬܝܬܐ** would mean "baptists". If these were indeed "Baptists", then various identifications are possible, the likeliest being that they are Justin's **Βαπτισται**, and/or the Hemerobaptists.¹

6. In the Tosefta and in the Talmud, reference is made to "Morning Bathers" (**לְבַי שְׁחָרִית**) who bathe themselves every morning.² These might be identical with any of the groups mentioned so far; identification with the Hemerobaptists is favoured by many scholars.³ There are other groups of ^{after the time of John, but which nevertheless illustrate the} less interest here since they date from ^{continuation of} earlier tendencies.

Josephus tells us of an ascetic teacher, Banos, whose disciple he became, and who lived in the wilderness "using frequent ablutions of cold water, by day and night, for purity's sake."⁴ Josephus must have known him around 55 A.D.

Another group is that from which Sibylline Oracles, Book IV emanated.⁵ This work dates probably from around 80 A.D., and comes from a group which, although Jewish, rejects Temple

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1. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 40-42.
 2. Tos. Jadaim II, 20; Berak. 22a. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 44.
 3. Mention may be made here of the word **בְּאִי** found in the Mishna which has been held to mean "the Bathers", and in which has been found an allusion to some Essene or Baptist group. This is highly unlikely, however. In the Mishna itself the word is opposed to **בְּרִי**, meaning and ignorant or stupid person (Mikwaoth 9, 6), and is discussed and explained as meaning "learned" (Shabbath 114). See Lightfoot, "Colossians and Philemon", pp 369-370; Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 45.
 4. "Vita", II, 10-12.
 5. "The Sibylline Oracles", Books III-V, H.N. Bates, S.P.C.K., London 1918; Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 46-60; article on "The Literature and Religion of the Pseudepigrapha", Interpreter's Bible, I, pp 432, 433; Lightfoot, "Colossians and Philemon", pp 96, 97.

worship and sacrifice, and calls on men to "wash your bodies from head to foot in running streams, and lift up your hands to heaven, asking forgiveness for the deeds done aforetime, and make propitiation with gifts for your impiety; God will give repentance and not destroy." Ebionites¹ is a general term covering various groups of Jewish-Christians, one branch of which laid special stress on asceticism, rejection of sacrifices, and frequent baptisms, which they claimed, had been commanded by Peter. The Elkesaites² originated around 100 A.D. with the preaching of Elkesai, who combined astrological speculations with Judaism and prescribed ablutions in running water for the forgiveness of sins. The "Vita Adae et Evae", which pictures Adam and Eve doing penance, while immersed in the Jordan, may have originated in a baptist sect, though almost nothing is known of its origin. Wells considers that it originated in the Diaspora, and dates it anything from 60 A.D. to 300 A.D. Pfeiffer dates it prior to 70 A.D.³ The date is thus very uncertain, and the study of the work is complicated by the fact that it has been subjected to Christian editing.

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1. Article, "Ebionites", W. Beveridge, ERE, V, pp 139-145; Thomas "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 156-183; J.A. Fitzmyer, "The Qumran Scrolls, the Ebionites and their Literature", in Stenmähl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", pp 208-231.
 2. Article, "Elkesaites", W. Brandt, ERE, V, pp 262-269; article "Elcesaites", L. Ginsberg, The Jewish Encyclopedia, V, pp 89, 90; Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 140-156; Lightfoot "Colossians and Philemon", pp 374, 375.
 3. See commentary by Wells in Charles, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha", II; Pfeiffer, "The Literature and Religion of the Pseudepigrapha", in Interpreter's Bible, I, pp 425, 426.

Some of the earlier sects may well have been connected or even identical with each other. Whether or not the Dead Sea Scrolls sect were Essenes has been much disputed¹; certainly they had a great many features in common. Pliny, speaking of the Essene settlement on the West shore of the Dead Sea is almost certainly referring to the Qumran monastery. But Josephus and Philo seem to have something more widespread in mind - the third philosophy or sect of the Jews, large in numbers, with members in all the chief towns and cities. Josephus, moreover, seems to know of divisions within the Essene movement, for he says that as a rule Essenes are celibate, "yet there is another order (τάγμα) of Essenes, which, while at one with the rest in its mode of life, customs and regulations, differs from them in its views on marriage."² This branch admits women under certain conditions. The Essenism known to Josephus and Philo seems therefore to have been a wide movement embracing differing sects. The Qumran sect were doubtless Essenes in this broad sense, but they were not the only Essenes. "Essenes" very probably was a general term covering much if not all of the sectarian baptist movement.

This survey has indicated, in brief outline, the extent and composition of the baptist movement, and its main features will now be apparent.

As regards location, the movement began in Palestine itself where the Essenes of Josephus and Philo were widespread. The real centre of the movement, however, was the Jordan valley, partly, no doubt, because of the plentiful supply of water for

1. See W.H. Brownlee, "A Comparison of the Covenanters of the Dead Sea Scrolls with Pre-Christian Jewish Sects", *Biblical Archaeologist*, 1950, pp 50-72; M. Burrows, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", pp 279-294, and "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", pp 263-269.

2. "The Jewish War", II, 8, 13.

rites of lustration. The Qumran monastery was situated in the wilderness of Judaea, and Josephus tells us that Banos lived in the wilderness. The pre-Christian Nazareans were located East of Jordan, in Gilead and Bashan, and after 70 A.D. the centre of gravity definitely shifted to Transjordan, from whence the movement spread through Syria, to Asia Minor, and reached even to Rome.

As regards time, both the Essene movement and the Dead Sea Scrolls sect are attested as existing before the 1st Cent. B.C. The dating of some of the others is rather doubtful, but Banos and the IV Sibyllines group, though later than Christ, are quite uninfluenced by Christianity.

Some type of baptism is the most important factor which the different sects have in common. Apart from the fact that they had special lustrations, however, we are not given much detailed information in our sources. The Dead Sea Scrolls are extremely valuable here, giving us new and detailed information. This aspect of the movement will be more fully discussed in Part V.

The groups making up the baptist movement might well be designated as "fringe sects". Geographically they tended to move to the fringe of Palestine and even beyond; but in another sense they were out off, or cut themselves off, from the main stream of orthodox Judaism. This is seen especially in their attitude to the Temple and to its sacrifices. The pre-Christian Nazareans objected strongly to sacrifice, and the references in IV Sibyllines, though dating from c. 80 A.D., are so strongly worded that their rejection of sacrifice can hardly be due to expediency, but rather to principle. In all probability none of the sects participated in the Temple worship, but for the most part this seems to have been due, not to opposition to sacrifice as such, but to opposition to the Jerusalem

priesthood.

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The Essene attitude to the Temple is not entirely clear¹; they may at one time have participated in its worship², but it seems certain that they later abandoned this practice. Josephus states that they sent offerings to the Temple, but did not offer sacrifices.³ Similarly, in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the passages in the Damascus Document referring to sacrifice probably date to an early period when the sectarians participated in Temple worship⁴; but the general view is that "the Wicked Priest" and "the last priests of Jerusalem" have defiled the sanctuary, so that the sectarians are thus prevented from offering sacrifice. There is no condemnation of sacrifice as such, however, and indeed the Scrolls look forward to the restoration of the true priesthood and the resumption of sacrifices. The situation in the greater part of the baptist movement seems therefore to have been that while the sectarians did not reject the Temple cult, in practice they had abandoned it.

Another strong tendency running right through the movement is asceticism, in some, but not all, cases manifesting itself especially as vegetarianism. Philo remarks on the frugality and simple living of the Essenes, and Josephus tells how they despise riches. The Dead Sea Scrolls sect lived a strict monastic life, and their food was rationed, though archaeological evidence suggests that they were not vegetarians.⁵ The

1. On this, see Lightfoot, "Colossians and Philemon", pp 371, 372.
2. This is suggested by two passages in Josephus, "Jewish War" 1, 3, 5 and VI, 42, 2. Cf. Lightfoot, op.cit., pp 372, 380.
3. "Antiquities", XVIII, 1, 5. On this important passage, and its variant reading, see Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 12, 13.
4. On the relation of the Scrolls sect to the Temple, see Baumgarten, "Sacrifice and Worship among the Jewish Sectarians of the Dead Sea (Qumran) Scrolls", HTR, XLVI, 1953, pp 141-159; Burrows, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", pp 237, 238; Burrows, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", pp 363-366.
5. See Allegro, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", p 116.

Nazareans, on the other hand, were convinced vegetarians, holding that the Law forbade all sacrifices and eating of meat. Banos certainly lived an ascetic life and the fact that he fed "on such things as grew of themselves", may signify that he was a vegetarian. Both Ebionites and Elkesaites were ascetics and vegetarians.

The strength of the baptist movement may be judged by the considerable literature which it produced. Some, perhaps many, of the works classed as "Pseudepigrapha", may have come from the movement in its earlier stages.¹ The Dead Sea finds especially have revealed the type of literature which one of the sects produced. The IV Sibylline Oracles group is represented by that book, while the Elkesaites had their "Book of Elkesai". The Ebionites produced the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions.

In origin, the whole movement was basically Jewish; the sects adhered to Jewish ethical monotheism, and with the notable exception of the laws of sacrifice, most of them observed the Torah. But various features of the movement are strange and new, and suggest outside influence; these include asceticism, living in monastic communities, certain beliefs, and especially the importance attached to rites of baptism. From the Exile onwards, Babylonian ideas undoubtedly influenced Judaism, but with the conquests of Alexander the Great, and the religious syncretism which resulted, it was Iranian religion especially which influenced Palestine.²

Iranian influence probably accounts for several features

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1. Dupont-Sommer suggests that the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Enoch, Jubilees, and the Psalms of Solomon are Essene works. ("The Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes", p 38).
 2. For archaeological evidence of the penetration of Iranian religion into Syria see Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 419, 420.

of the Essenes such as their beliefs on angelology (Josephus, "War", II, 8,7) and the worship of the sun (Josephus, "War" II, 8,5). The Dead Sea Scrolls have brought further evidence of the influence of Iranian religion, for the doctrine of the two spirits, and the whole concept of "modified dualism" underlying the Scrolls is probably ultimately of Iranian origin, as Dupont-Sommer has shown.¹ Dupont-Sommer says of the Manual of Discipline - "Until now no ancient document of Jewish origin had ever been produced which bore so clearly as this book of instruction, the mark of Iran."²

That Hellenistic influences were also active in Judaism is also beyond doubt; these emanated principally from the Hellenistic cities encircling Palestine and probably also, more indirectly, via Egypt. Neo-Pythagorean influence upon the Essenes is claimed by many scholars and indeed Josephus says of the Essenes that they "live the same kind of life as do those whom the Greeks call Pythagorean" (Ant.XV,10,4). Josephus is here seeking an analogy, however, rather than explaining the origin of the Essenes who, in his opinion, were not affected by outside influences. There are reasons for doubting any great Neo-Pythagorean influence on sectarian Judaism,³ one cogent reason being that the sectarians, like their spiritual ancestors the Hasidim, would probably have a deep and undying hatred of things Greek.

It is this "baptist movement" which forms the background of John's life and work. John appears in the middle of the movement both geographically and chronologically. In his

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1. "Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes", pp 118-120.
 2. "Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes", pp 127,128.
 3. For a discussion of the views of Zeller who contends strongly for Neo-Pythagorean influence on the Essenes, see Lightfoot, "Colossians and Philemon", pp 381-386.

wilderness ministry he preached within a few miles of Qumran, and it seems impossible to believe that he was not acquainted with the beliefs and practices of the Dead Sea and other sects. He lived at a time when the sects flourished and were at the height of their popularity and influence. John's ministry was marked especially by the rite of baptism, which figures so prominently also in the sectarian movement. John's asceticism also places him in line with these baptist groups, but out of line with more orthodox Judaism.

A further indication of John's link with this branch of Judaism is to be found in the description of John by Josephus, as one who "was bidding the Jews ^{to} practiced virtue and exercised righteousness toward each other and piety toward God, to come together for baptism." As Abrahams points out¹, this is very similar to Josephus' description of the oath to be taken by the Essenes, each of whom must promise that "in the first place he will exercise piety towards God, and next that he will observe justice towards men." Here εὐσεβεία and δικαιοσύνη are the chief characteristics of both John and the Essenes, and the other terms used of John by Josephus (ἀρετή, ἁγνεία) are also used by him of the Essenes.

As we study John's message and ministry, we shall discover further close points of contact. In so far, therefore, as John was connected with any branch of Judaism, and in so far as he was the product of the background from which he emerged, that background appears to have been the sectarian baptist movement. This is not in the least to deny that there were original features in his life and work. Every religious

1. Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", I, p 34.

leader or reformer has to begin somewhere, to use terms and concepts with which his hearers are familiar before going on to show how he differs from these usually held ideas. Having established the branch of Judaism with which John appears to have had most in common, we must now in the pages that follow, seek to discover in detail how far he was merely a product of his environment, and how far he broke away from it⁶⁰ to become an independent and original thinker and preacher. It is only when this survey has been completed, that we will be able to make a final summary and assessment.¹

3. The Geographical Background.

The New Testament mentions several geographical locations in connection with the life and ministry of John.² Of these, the most important is "the wilderness"; it was here that John spent his youth (Lk 1:80), that he heard the prophetic call (Lk 3:2), and that he first appeared proclaiming his message (Mk 1:4; Matt 3:1). From Jesus' remarks about John (Matt 11:7 f.; Lk 7:24 f.), we know that the crowds, in order to hear John, had to "go out into the wilderness."

For the Jew of the first century the word "wilderness" would bring to mind a very definite picture; it was a word which had a geographical reference, and which was also rich with historical connotations. Being John's environment for the most important years of his life, it must have played no small part in forming his character and shaping his outlook.

The term used in the New Testament with reference to John is ἔρημος ; this is an adjective, with ὥστε understood. In Lk 1:80 it is used in the plural; in the other references it is singular. ἔρημος is the usual word for

1. See Part XII.

2. On the location of John's birthplace, see Part III, p 98.

wilderness in the New Testament, the form *ἐρημία* being found only four times.

The principal equivalent term in the Old Testament is *מִדְבָּר* (which the LXX almost always translates *ἐρημος*) . Another word of similar meaning, used sometimes in the Old Testament in parallelism with *מִדְבָּר* is *יַשְׁמוֹן* (Jeshimon), usually transliterated instead of translated. A third term *אֲרָבָה*, 'Arabah, is also sometimes rendered *ἐρημος* in the LXX.

As the English term "wilderness" conjures up, for different people, widely varying pictures, it is important to understand the nature of the region. *מִדְבָּר* probably derives from *דָּבַר* in the sense of "to guide or lead (flocks)". It is a region in which, because of the scarcity of pasture and water, flocks have to be driven from place to place; that is to say, it can support only a nomadic, Bedouin type of existence. It is not entirely devoid of vegetation (Joel 2:22) though that can become dried up in the heat (Jeremiah 23:10). Because there is no settled population, the wilderness is described as uninhabited by man (Job 38:26), though Joshua 15:61,62 does mention a wilderness which has a few towns in it.

The terms Jeshimon and 'Arabah imply an absence of any vegetation. *יַשְׁמוֹן* derives from *שָׁם*, meaning "to be desolate", while *אֲרָבָה* derives from *אֲרָב* probably meaning, "to be arid or sterile".

Of these terms, *מִדְבָּר* is the most common and the most general. It is used frequently of the land through which the Israelites passed on their wanderings following the exodus, but where a particular region is meant, a definite

name is attached e.g. wilderness of Shur, wilderness of Paran, etc. It is used of various regions of Palestine, and of desert regions generally. For example, it is used in Is 40:3 - "A voice cries, In the wilderness (וּבְּרֵיתִי וּבְּרֵיתִי) prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert (וּבְּרֵיתִי וּבְּרֵיתִי) a highway for our God." Here the place referred to is the desert regions lying between Babylon and Palestine through which the triumphant returning exiles will pass. וּבְּרֵיתִי וּבְּרֵיתִי, while it can (as in Is 40:3) have a general reference, is most frequently used, as a proper name, to indicate the great depression in the earth's surface including the Jordan valley and extending to the Gulf of Aquabah; and especially the part of this region South of the Dead Sea. וּבְּרֵיתִי וּבְּרֵיתִי is also used most frequently as a proper name; while its extent is difficult to define exactly, it seems to have been part of the region known as the wilderness of Judah.

As these Hebrew words have only one Greek equivalent, it might not be possible to say, out of context, exactly what region was being referred to in the New Testament as the ἐρημος. The term had a certain vagueness, and the wilderness probably was thought of as a large region stretching down to the Gulf of Aquabah, down into the Sinai Peninsula, and up into Palestine itself. In this way historical events connected with any particular part of the wilderness came to be identified in a loose way with "the wilderness" in general.

It is possible, however, to identify with a fair degree of accuracy the region in which John lived. Matthew is especially helpful as he specifically tells us that John began his ministry in "the wilderness of Judaea" (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας - Mt 3:1). This is the region known in the Old Testament as וּבְּרֵיתִי וּבְּרֵיתִי, "the wilderness of Judah". It was bounded on the West by the Judaeian plateau, and on the East by

the Dead Sea and by the last stretch of the River Jordan. To the North and South its boundaries are less easy to define. Joshua 15:61,62 mentions six cities in the wilderness, of which only Engedi can be identified with certainty; it stood on the West shore of the Dead Sea, roughly midway between the North and South ends of the Sea.¹ Jeshimon was probably the most desolate part of this wilderness, lying immediately to the West of the Dead Sea.

Clearly, it was principally in the part of the wilderness at the North end of the Dead Sea that John was to be found during his ministry. The fact that there went out to him "all the country of Judaea, and all the people of Jerusalem" (Mk 1:5) supports this, and of course, John baptized in the River Jordan, which flows into the North end of the Dead Sea. As G.A. Smith points out,² the routes from Judaea to the East were governed by the presence of fresh water. Apart from Engedi and 'Ain Feshkah (which of course have the Dead Sea to the East of them), the only fresh water is at Jericho. Therefore the routes from Bethlehem, from Jerusalem and from Bethel converge at Jericho, for the Jordan was forded at a point to the South East of that city. There are actually two fords here, which can be crossed at most times of year;³ these are known in the Old Testament as "the fords of the Jordan" (Judges 3:28), or "the fords of the wilderness" (II Sam 15:28). John's hearers from Judaea and Jerusalem would thus come by one or other of these routes, and would reach the Jordan at these fords. This accords well with the traditional site of Christ's baptism by John, which has been pointed out since the early 4th century.⁴

1. It has recently been proposed to identify three of the towns with ruins in the Bugei'a, a few miles from Qumran. See Burrows, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", p 21.
2. "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land", p 263.
3. See G.A. Smith, "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land", p 266.
4. See G.A. Smith, op. cit, p 496. For a description of the place, see H.V. Morton, "In the Steps of the Master", pp 104 f.

It must not be supposed, however, that John remained anchored to one spot. In Lk 1:80 - "He was in the desert places" - the use of the plural seems to imply free movement. Likewise Lk 3:3 which says that John "went into all the region about the Jordan", also implies some moving around. But neither of these references need indicate that John went outside the wilderness of Judaea.

This area is a striking one; for all who have visited it in person it has remained indelibly stamped on their memory, and from early times travellers have vied in their descriptions of this awesome region.¹ The Jordan valley is a great cleft in the earth's surface, sloping downwards until, at the point where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea, it is 1292 feet below sea level, the lowest point on the earth's surface. South of the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan valley is only about four miles wide, but at its Southern end it broadens to a plain fourteen miles wide.

The wilderness of Judaea can hardly have included the banks of the Jordan, and the immediate area around Jericho,² for the waters of the Jordan make possible an area of lush vegetation in the midst of the desert. To-day a jungle-like growth extends for a short way on either side of the river, then breaks off abruptly, but in New Testament times, by means of an irrigation system, the Jericho area was prosperous and noted especially for its dates and balsam. "Jericho was the gateway of a province, the emporium of a large trade, the

1. Fine photographs can be found in Grollenberg, "Atlas of the Bible", pp 347-352, and especially the collection on p 124, under the title, "Where John the Baptist Lived and Died."
2. Daniélou ("Les Manuscrits De La Mer Morte Et Les Origines Du Christianisme", p 16), who notes Pliny's description of the area, is probably wrong in assuming that this fertile region around Jericho would be considered as part of the wilderness.

the mistress of a great palm forest, woods of balsam and very rich gardens. To earliest Israel she was the City of Palms; to the latest Jewish historian 'a divine region', 'fattest of Judaea.'¹

Beginning from this fertile oasis along the Jordan's banks in the North, and from the shores of the Dead Sea further South, the wilderness rises sharply Westwards to meet the Judæan hills. In a few miles as the crow flies, the land rises from 1300 ft. below sea level to between 1500 and 2000 ft. above sea level. G.A. Smith gives a vivid description of a journey he made through the wilderness, travelling from Judaea down towards the Dead Sea.

"For an hour or two more we rode up and down steep ridges, each barer than the preceding, and then descended rocky slopes to a wide plain, where we left behind the last brown grass and thistle; the last flock of goats we had passed two hours before. Short bushes, thorns, and succulent creepers were all that relieved the brown and yellow bareness of the sand, the crumbling limestone, and scattered shingle. The strata were contorted; ridges ran in all directions; distant hills to north and south looked like gigantic dust-heaps; those near we could see to be torn as if by waterspouts. When we were not stepping on detritus, the limestone was blistered and peeling. Often the ground sounded hollow; sometimes rock and sand slipped in large quantity from the tread of the horses; sometimes the living rock was bare and jagged, especially in the frequent gullies, that therefore glowed and beat with heat like furnaces." 2

H.V. Morton writes of the same area -

"Some writers have described this hot gash in the earth's crust as the most horrible place in the world, while others have found it strangely beautiful. It is, I suppose, a matter of temperament or, perhaps, liver. If you are not feeling too well, I can imagine

1. G.A. Smith, op. cit., p 266.

2. Op. cit., p 313.

that the Jordan valley with its overwhelming heat and its airlessness, and Jericho with its flamboyant vegetation, its reptiles and its insects, could be a terrible nightmare All around are piled dead rocks twisted in the agony of some prehistoric convulsion, unlike the good clean rocks from which men can build their homes; obscene rocks stained with yellow slime and covered with a ghastly shroud of salt." 1

The heat, which both these writers mention, can be almost unbearable, and this accounts for the sickly and degenerate character of the natives of the Jordan valley.²

It is not surprising to find that this background is reflected in the preaching of John the Baptist. The dry grass and scrub of the wilderness can catch fire and blaze for miles, sending the scorpions and vipers scuttling for safety. Here surely is the basis for John's exclamation, "You brood of vipers who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mt 3:7; Lk 3:7). The stones from which God is able to raise up children to Abraham (Mt 3:9; Lk 3:8) were strewn over the face of the wilderness, or were perhaps "the slimy shingle" along the Jordan's banks.³ The tree, with the axe laid at its roots (Mt 3:10; Lk 3:9) would not be found in the desert regions, but it would be seen close by, near the Jordan, which in Old Testament days was a place where trees were felled (as II Kings 6:1-4 shows). The tree which did not bear fruit may have been near Jericho, the City of Palms.

It is significant for the study of John that the wilderness was an area rich in religious and historical associations. It was not far from the site of Sodom and Gomorrah, at the Southern end of the Dead Sea, the scene of the drama of Genesis

1. "In the Steps of the Master", p 95.

2. See G.A. Smith, op. cit., p 498.

3. See G.A. Smith, op. cit., p 495.

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19. "In this awful hollow, this bit of the infernal regions come up to the surface, this hell with the sun shining into it, primitive man laid the scene of God's most terrible judgment on human sin."¹ Though John lived in the wilderness, he was never far from the wickedness of cities; the apostasy of Jerusalem, and the luxury and immorality of Jericho would be the targets of his preaching.

Remembering how events connected with any particular part of the wilderness came to be identified with "The wilderness" in general, we recall that it was in the wilderness that God revealed Himself to Moses (Ex 3). It was in the wilderness that Israel was delivered, received the Law, and entered into the Covenant. Elijah fled to the wilderness, to Horeb, where he heard the still small voice (I Kings 19); and David also took refuge in the wilderness (I Sam 23-26 ; Ps 63:1).

The river Jordan also had important associations. The crossing of the Jordan by the Israelites (Joshua 3) marked the end of the wilderness wanderings and the entry into the promised land. Naaman the Syrian was cured of his leprosy by washing in the Jordan (II Kings 5).

These historical associations would be largely responsible for the eschatological associations which became attached to the area. Just as the wilderness had been the scene of God's deliverance of Israel, so it would be the scene of His future deliverance. Thus in Hosea 2:14,15, God says of Israel,

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak tenderly to her.
And there I will give her her vineyards,
and make the valley of Achor a door of hope.
And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth,
as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt."

1. G.A. Smith, op.cit., p 504.

In Ezekial's vision of the river flowing from the Temple, the water flows Eastwards, through the wilderness, into the Dead Sea (Ezekial 47:1-12).

It may have been partly its eschatological associations which led many to take refuge in the wilderness during the Maccabaeen revolt (I Macc 2:29; II Macc 5:27, 6:11, 10:6; Ps of Sol 17:19). Certainly this was in the mind of the "Egyptian false prophet", mentioned by Josephus, who gathered a band of men and led them "by a circuitous route from the desert to the Mount of Olives"; and it must also have been at the back of the rebellion led by Theudas, who led his followers to the Jordan, expecting that the waters would divide as on the first entry into Canaan.¹

Similar eschatological expectations would doubtless be at least partly responsible for the wilderness and Jordan valley becoming the focus of the baptist sectarian movement. An intensive search of the wilderness around the Qumran area in 1952 resulted in the discovery of 267 caves, of which 37 showed definite signs of occupation. Most of these caves would have been occupied by men connected with Qumran, but other parts of the wilderness are similarly honeycombed with caves, in which the members of other groups may well have lived.² The Qumran monastery is located in the Wilderness of Judaea, and the sect believed that they were thus fulfilling the prophecy of Is 40:3 as this passage from the Manual of Discipline shows -

"When these things come to pass for the community in Israel, by these regulations they shall be separated from the midst of the session of the men of error to go to the wilderness to prepare there the way of the Lord; as it is written, "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." This is the study of the law, as he commanded through Moses, to do according to all that has been

1. On these two passages, see Part VI, pp 207 , where they are quoted in full.
2. See H.V. Morton, "In the Steps of the Master", pp 91, 95.

revealed from time to time, and as the prophets revealed by his holy spirit." 1

It may well be that in the positioning of the monastery, the sect also had in mind both the prophecy of Hosea and of Ezekiel. The valley of Achor (the modern Buqei'a) lies a few miles Northwest of Qumran,² and if the sect took Ezekiel 47 literally, they would expect the river to emerge either at Qumran itself, or else a little further South, where the Kedron enters the Dead Sea. Thus we can see that for the sectarian movement especially, the wilderness was a place with important eschatological significance.

John's choice of the wilderness as the scene of his ministry is bound to have been affected by these considerations and we can see how he must have shared the "wilderness eschatology" of the sectarian movement. It has frequently been pointed out that Is 40:3, quoted by the Dead Sea Scrolls sect, is also used in the New Testament of John, though only the Fourth Gospel places the words on John's own lips.³ It has also been noted that the expression "The Way" is used in an unqualified, absolute sense in Acts to denote the Christian movement (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:4, 24:14). This comes very close to the usage of the Qumran sect, who referred to the faithful as "those who choose the Way" (777 777) 1

- I QS 9:16-21), "the Way" thus being a contracted form of "the Way of the Lord" of Is 40:3. It seems certain that the usage of the early Church has been derived in some way from that of Qumran, and there is also clearly some link between the homily on the "two ways" of light and darkness, truth and

1. I QS 8:12-15. Cf. I QS 9:16 f.

2. See Allegro, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", p 149. Burrows, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", p 21.

3. Cf. Part VI, p, 212. On this subject, see S. Vernon McCasland, "The Way", JBL, LXXVII, 1958, pp 222-230.

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error in the Manual of Discipline, and similar homilies in such early Christian works as the Didache, the De Doctrina Apostolorum, and the Epistle of Barnabas.

It is possible that it was John the Baptist himself who provided the link between the sectarian and the Christian usages of the expression "the Way". John had close links with the sectarian movement as we have already suggested. Whether he actually spoke the words or not, it is very likely that he was influenced by Is 40:3. And it is highly significant that Jesus should say of John that he "came to you in the way of righteousness" (Matt 21:32). It may well have been through John that the term entered the Christian movement.

The wilderness was also looked upon as the home of evil spirits by some people. In Leviticus 16, Azazel, the spirit to whom the scapegoat is sent bearing the sins of the people, dwells in the wilderness; in the inter-testamental period, he becomes the leader of the evil angels.¹ In IV Macc 18:8 Satan is called "the seducer of the desert" (*λυμεὼν τῆς ἐρημίας*), and in Matt 12:43, the ejected unclean spirit wanders through the desert places (*δι' ἀνύδρων τόπων*). The charge levelled against John, "He has a demon" (Matt 11:18; Lk 7:33), while connected primarily with his asceticism, according to the context, may also have been suggested by John's living in the wilderness, the home of evil spirits.

In all these ways, the wilderness must have influenced the life of John. We can recognize also, of course, that another reason for going to that area would be that it suited the life of asceticism to which John committed himself, while the river Jordan would also serve as a most convenient place for baptism.

The wilderness must also have left its mark on John in other ways less easy to define, but of deep significance.

1. See article, "Azazel", HDB, I, pp 207,208; Guignebert, "The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus", p 100.

Steinmann speaks of the "simplifying, unifying and cleansing influence" of the desert.¹ The wilderness imposed a life of self-discipline. The wild grandeur of the scenery would speak to John of the majesty and awfulness of the deity. Long periods of solitude would give time for prayer and meditation, and pave the way for piercing insights into the divine nature and purpose. In the stark simplicity of John's message in the severity of his condemnation of sin, and in his own burning and passionate conviction, we can see the influence of the wilderness in which he lived.²

In addition to the general term "wilderness", two more exact indications of the place of John's ministry are given in the Fourth Gospel.

In John 1:28, it is said that the events just related (the deputation of priests and Levites questioning John) "took place in Bethany beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing." No place is known with the name of Bethany which exactly fits this text and several ways out of this difficulty have been proposed. The variant reading "Bethabara" (*Βηθαβάρᾱ* or *Βηθαπαβᾱ*) textually inferior, probably can be traced to a conjectural emendation on the part of Origen, who could not find a suitable "Bethany" when he visited Palestine.³ It has been suggested that this place was in fact the well known Bethany, the village about two miles from Jerusalem, which is frequently mentioned in the Gospels. Thus Pierson Parker has argued that *πέραν* means here "across from, opposite, over against", and that the phrase means, "Bethany, which is across from the point of the Jordan where John had been baptizing."⁴ This describes quite well the position of the well known Bethany,

1. "Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition", p 171.
2. This section was completed before there appeared the article by Robert W. Funk, on "The Wilderness", in JBL, LXXVIII, 1959, pp 205-214. This article covers much the same ground as this above, and reaches similar conclusions.
3. For this view see Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 79 n; Macgregor "John", p 26.
4. P. Parker, "Bethany Beyond Jordan", JBL, LXXIV, 1955, pp 257-261

which is roughly due West of the point where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea. Parker's arguments, however, fail to convince, and the whole point of the phrase "beyond Jordan" is clearly to distinguish this place from the well known Bethany which is mentioned elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel. Πέραν indicates that this place was located on the East side of the Jordan. As John baptized in the Jordan, the place was probably on the East bank, or at any rate, close to the river. No other convincing explanation has so far been found,¹ and we must content ourselves with saying that Bethany beyond Jordan was a small place on or near the East bank of the Jordan, presumably near the fords, the name of which, in later centuries, became forgotten.

Bethany beyond Jordan, being on the East side of the river, would be part of Peraea, the domain of Herod Antipas, a fact of some importance. Though not strictly in Judaea, it could probably still be thought of as being in "the wilderness of Judaea", taking that term not in a political, but in a broad geographical sense.

According to John 3:23, "John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim", while Jesus and his disciples conducted a ministry in Judaea. This place too has proved a puzzle to most commentators, some of whom have ranged as far afield as the Negeb in order to locate it. "Aenon" means "springs", and "Salim" means "peace", and it has been suggested that the name is to be interpreted symbolically, and not as referring to an actual geographical location at all. This is a very far-fetched suggestion, however, and the Fourth Gospel gives many exact locations. Only two alternatives are worthy of serious consideration.

1. Several ancient writers, and many scholars following them, claim that Aenon near Salim lay about 8

1. For other possibilities see Macgregor, "John", p 26.

miles south of Scythopolis, on the West bank of the Jordan. This is the opinion of Eusebius, and of Jerome; it tallies with the place marked on the mosaic map of Madaba, and also with the account of the pilgrimage of Silvia of Aquitania.¹ It is thus attested from the 4th Cent. A.D. onwards, but there is no proof that the tradition is a really early one. One objection to this site is that there is no record of there being a town called Salim there in the 1st Century and the way in which the author of the Fourth Gospel locates Aenon as being "near Salim", suggests that this Salim was a well-known place. But the main objection, which really disposes of this site, is that it would be quite pointless to say that "there was much water there" (John 3:23), if it did in fact lie on or very near the West bank of the Jordan; that would be too obvious to require saying.

2. There was a well known town called Salim, in Samaria, about three miles East of Shechem. Seven miles to the North East there is still a village called 'Ainun. Between the two lies the great Wady Far'ah where there is "a succession of springs, yielding a copious perennial stream, with flat meadows on either side, where great crowds might gather."² It has been objected that this place is not "near to Salim", being seven miles away, but Salim is the nearest place of any size by which it could be identified. This identification has the support of Tristram, and also of Conder, who says, "The site of Wady Far'ah is the only one where all the requisites are met - the two names, the fine water supply the proximity of the desert, and the open character of the ground."³ The evidence seems to be overwhelmingly in favour of this second site.

1. See Nestle, "Salim", HBCG, II, p 551.

2. W.W. Moore, "Aenon", HBCG, I, p 35.

3. Moore, op.cit., p 35

Both of these sites lay in Samaria, and the significance of this will be dealt with in Part IX. Although within the Roman province of Judaea, they could hardly be regarded as being within "the wilderness of Judaea". "The wilderness" in general might, however, be regarded as stretching into Samaria, for much of the terrain there is similar to that which lies immediately to the South in the wilderness of Judaea proper.

Part III - BIRTH AND INFANCY.

1. Parentage and Birth.

For our information concerning the birth of John the Baptist we are dependent largely on the first chapter of Luke's Gospel where a detailed account is given not only of the birth of John but of the circumstances which preceded it and of those which immediately followed it. The chapter is extremely important as it can tell us not only the story of John's birth but perhaps also something of the people who preserved and handed on the story.

Along with the narrative of the infancy of Jesus, the story of John's infancy constitutes a distinct and separate section, Luke 1:5 - 2:52. The preface to the Gospel (Lk 1:1-4) is composed in elegantly worded Greek, on the model of the prefaces to ancient histories such as those of Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius.¹ The contrast with the section beginning at Lk 1:5 could hardly be more marked, for here the style, grammar, vocabulary and thought forms are unmistakably Semitic. This is true of the narrative up to the end of Chapter 2; but then comes another distinct break, for 3:1 f. is the beginning of a new narrative. Indeed the opening verses of Lk 3, with the elaborate six-fold dating, again in the fashion of ancient histories, read exactly like the beginning of a new book. We must assume that the author of the Gospel attached the infancy narratives to the Gospel after the main body of it had been written. The Preface may also have been added at this time, or else it may have stood immediately prior to Chapter III in the first edition. Many scholars believe that 1:5 - 2:52 was added when Luke expanded Proto-Luke

1. Creed, "St. Luke", p 1; Plummer, "St. Luke," pp 1,2.

into the full Gospel¹, but acceptance of the Proto-Luke Hypothesis is not necessary in order to recognize that the infancy narratives are a secondary addition.

Within the section Lk 1:5 - 2:52 there are two more or less parallel sets of stories concerning the infancies of John and Jesus. The two narratives are integrated by the placing of the annunciation to Mary (1:26-38) after the annunciation to Zechariah (1:11f.), and by the insertion of the story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth (1:39f.) When allowance is made for editorial revision, it can be seen that the narrative concerning John can easily stand apart, for it is quite complete in itself. Some scholars hold the view that the infancy narrative of Jesus was composed with the stories of John serving as the model.³ It is clear that the story of Jesus, whatever its exact origins, has been integrated into that of John, and not vice versa. Thus, for example, the phrase "in the sixth month" in Lk 1:26, relates the annunciation to Mary to the narrative concerning John, for the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy is meant. The narrative of Jesus' birth does not concern us here, except in so far as it has a bearing on the stories about John. We will therefore merely note the strong probability that, as well as Lk 1:5 - 2:52 being a separate unit, at a still earlier stage the narrative of John's infancy stood by itself.

When we come to examine the story of the birth of John in detail, we cannot but be struck by the distinctive character of

1. Streeter, "The Four Gospels", p 208 f.

2. See Bultmann, "Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition", pp 176, 177; Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 16.

3. See Creed, "St. Luke", p 7.

the narrative, for almost every sentence contains words, phrases or ideas which echo Old Testament passages. The poetical sections are virtually mosaics of Old Testament quotations; if we underline all the phrases in the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55) for example, which are to be found somewhere in the Old Testament, there is very little of the passage left.¹

Moreover, the stories as a whole are obviously legendary, and based on Old Testament models. This is not to deny that there is some historical fact around which pious imagination has woven the legendary material. But clearly the source of many of the ideas is to be found in the birth stories of Isaac (Gen 17:15-21), of Samson (Judges 13:2-24), and of Samuel (1 Sam 1:1-23).

A knowledge of Jewish customs is also evident, such as the divisions of the priesthood (1:5), the duties of the priests (1:8f), the layout of the Temple (1:9-11), the Nazirite vow (1:15), and circumcision (1:59).

But the narrative is Semitic also in the very grammatical constructions and sentence formations, and this has led many scholars to suggest that it is based on a Hebrew or Aramaic original. It seems unthinkable that this narrative could have been composed by a Greek author. As Streeter, for example, says,² "No one who thought in Greek could have produced either ἐποίησε κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ - 1:51, or ἤγειρε κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ Δαβίδ — 1:69." There are many such expressions which have no parallel anywhere in Greek literature. Except, of course, in the Septuagint, which is a translation, often a very literal one, of the Hebrew Old

1. Cf. Plummer, "St. Luke", pp 30, 31, where fifteen close Old Testament parallels are noted.

2. "The Four Gospels", p 266.

Testament. This brings us to the theory which is the great rival of the view that the Lucan infancy narratives are based on a Semitic original, namely, the theory that they were composed by Luke himself in the style of the Septuagint. This is the view which was put forward by Dalman, Moulton and Harnack which was accepted by many other scholars including Burkitt and Cadbury, and has recently been argued by N. Turner and P. Benoit.

Although, of course, this theory has variations, its basis is that the many so-called Semitisms in Lk 1 and 2 can all be adequately and completely accounted for either by the peculiarities of Luke's own style, or by quotations from the LXX. The fact that Lk 1 and 2 is more Semitic than the rest of the Gospel is to be explained by the numerous quotations from the LXX, but especially by the fact that Luke deliberately composed the narratives in the style of the LXX, giving them an archaic ring in order to create a certain atmosphere. The characters in these stories stand on the threshold of the Gospel, yet they also belong to the Old Testament era so that an Old Testament style is suitable for them.² Modern English writers can produce a style modelled on the Authorized Version, and as Luke was a skilful author it would have been possible for him to have done something similar.

The careful linguistic analysis of the protagonists of this school cannot be lightly set aside. They have certainly

1. A detailed exposition of this view is to be found in Adolf Harnack, "Luke the Physician", pp 96 - 102, 199-218. For two recent discussions of the subject from this point of view, with references to the earlier literature, see N. Turner "The Relation of Luke I and II to Hebraic Sources and to the Rest of Luke Acts", NTS, II, pp 100 - 109; and P. Benoit, "L'Enfance de Jean-Baptiste selon Luc I", NTS, III, pp 169-194. For a survey of the earlier literature see Moffatt, "Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament", pp 266-273.
2. See Harvard Theological Review, XVII, pp 83 - 89.

shown that the contrast between Luke 1, 2 and the rest of the Gospel in terms of Semitisms versus pure Greek has been overstressed by some writers. They have shown that several words and constructions that have been instanced as evidence of Semitisms in Lk 1, 2 are in fact almost as common in the rest of Luke-Acts. (We must not forget, of course, that other parts of Luke-Acts are probably also ultimately dependent on Semitic sources). Also, it must be acknowledged that this school have shown how most of the Old Testament references reflect the LXX version, and how the writer must certainly have been very well versed in the LXX.

In spite of these arguments, however, the view that a Semitic source was used is much the likeliest. Luke 1 abounds in Semitisms and it is not therefore surprising to find that it can be turned into Hebrew with ease. But the important point is that when it is turned into Hebrew, the poetic character, not only of the Magnificat and the Benedictus, which are obviously hymns, but of several other parts as well, immediately becomes apparent. There are perhaps six poetical sections in Lk 1; the Greek does not follow them slavishly, for a translator and probably also an editor must have been at work, but in nearly all cases the Hebrew metre shows through, regardless of the occasional gloss or alteration. This was shown by R.A. Aytoun who translated the poetical sections into Hebrew. He based his translation on the Hebrew New Testament of Franz Delitzsch, who was not concerned with metre, but only with translating the New Testament into Hebrew as accurately as possible. It is the merit of Aytoun's work that he showed how, when some quite permissible alterations were made to Delitzsch's version, the

Hebrew metre became apparent. Aytoun found that the following sections of Lk 1 were poetical in structure - vs 14-17, 30-33, 35-37, 42-5, 46-55, 68-79.¹ Aytoun's conclusions have been supported by many scholars, though there are, as might be expected, minor disagreements as to metre and exact arrangement of the poems.

It is important to notice that when these sections are seen to be translations of Hebrew poems, the most natural conclusion is that the rest of the narrative too was in Hebrew, as some of the poetical sections are so closely bound up with the narrative²

There are other indications that a Semitic source lies behind the infancy narrative, and that this source, moreover, was in Hebrew rather than Aramaic as has sometimes been suggested. The most recent study of the Aramaic approach to the problem is that by Matthew Black, and he is much more cautious than his predecessors in this field. He does suggest a possible word play in Luke 1:46, 49,³ between the Aramaic for "magnify" and "great things"; in order to make this more convincing, however, he has to rearrange the opening verses of the Magnificat. While Black shows how some of Luke 1 could have come from Aramaic sources, most of the constructions and features of style which he cites, such as parallelism, can equally well be explained as coming from a Hebrew original.

The indications are that the source was in Hebrew rather than Aramaic. One of the most striking proofs of this concern John's name. The Greek Ἰωάννης translates the Hebrew יְהוֹנָתָן or יְהוֹנָדָב (the full form), meaning "Yahwe is gracious." In true Old Testament fashion, the situation

1. See further, R.A. Aytoun, "The Ten Lucan Hymns of the Nativity in Their Original Language," JTS, Vol XVIII, 1917, pp 274-288.

2. See Aytoun, *op. cit.*, p 288.

3. "An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts", p 111, 112.

in which the name is given connects with the meaning of the name.¹ The aged Elizabeth is barren, but Yahweh had heard Zechariah's prayer and has graciously granted his request for a son; therefore the son shall be called, "Yahweh is gracious. This would not be apparent to the Gentile Greek readers of Luke's Gospel, but can only be explained in terms of a Hebrew original.

Furthermore, there are several places where Old Testament references seem to depend on the Hebrew original rather than on the LXX version. These have been the subject of much debate however, and the fact that we cannot be sure what the exact text either of the Hebrew or of the Greek Old Testament, was in Luke's day, considerably complicates matters. One example may be given. Lk 1:17 has ".....to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children." The Massoretic text reads לְבָבוֹת אֲבוֹתָם עַל בְּנֵיהֶם which is perfectly good Hebrew, but a problem to Greek translators. The LXX chose to make the phrase all singular - καρδίαν πατρός πρὸς υἱόν . But Lk 1:17 seems to be an independent translation of the Hebrew which took the other way out - καρδίας πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα , making the phrase all plural in agreement with בְּנֵיהֶם .

Two objections to a Hebrew original have been brought forward. The first is the assertion that by the beginning of our era, the writing of Hebrew poetry was a lost art. This belief has been based in part on the fact that Josephus at one point seems to betray an ignorance regarding Hebrew metre.² Both the Psalms of Solomon, however, and especially the Qumran Hodayoth, or Thanksgiving Psalms were composed within a century if not even closer to the time of the composition of the infancy

1. See P. Winter, "Some Observations on the Language in the Birth and Infancy Stories of the Third Gospel", NTS, I, p 120.

2. Antiquities, II, 16,4. See Aytoun, JTS, XVIII, p 276.

narrative. The Qumran Psalms in fact offer a very close analogy, though there is no indication whatsoever of literary dependence.¹

A second and even more basic objection has been the claim that by the first century A.D., as far as new compositions were concerned, Hebrew was a dead language. But the Dead Sea discoveries have produced not only hymns, commentaries, a manual of discipline and so on, written in Hebrew, but also (from Murabba'at) letters and contracts in Hebrew. These finds show, as Allegro points out², that "Hebrew was still being used in the first half of the second century of our era among Jews of Palestine, in a live and forceful manner which gives no sign either of being at its last gasp or of artificial resurrection for political or nationalistic ends." Nor are these finds the only evidence of the use of Hebrew in this period.³

Neither of these objections to a Hebrew source are therefore valid. Furthermore, in addition to these linguistic considerations, examination of the thought and theology of the narratives confirms the theory that a source was used.

The idea that Luke actually composed the birth stories himself becomes quite impossible when we realize that in them, as H.L. MacNeill says, "there is nothing whatever that is

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1. See Dupont-Sommer, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", p 69; Daniélou, "Les Manuscrits De La Mer Morte Et Les Origines Du Christianisme," pp 17, 18. Daniélou points out parallels to the Scrolls especially in the Benedictus, but these are confined to ideas and thought forms which were in widespread use, and do not in any way suggest literary dependence.
 2. "The Dead Sea Scrolls", p 175.
 3. See Jehoshua M. Grintz, "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple", JBL, LXXIX, March 1960, pp 32-47.

distinctively, necessarily, Christian. Everything in these two chapters, on the contrary, is definitely, positively, patriotically, and enthusiastically Jewish."¹ Whatever may be thought of Lk 2, this is certainly true of Lk 1. When taken in their present context, with allowance for perhaps the odd editorial alteration, the narratives may seem superficially to fit in with the Christian point of view; but closer examination of the narrative of John's infancy reveals a quite distinctive outlook. The most important aspects of this outlook are as follows -

a) The use of κύριος. Throughout Lk 1, κύριος clearly refers to God, and translates יהוה. Thus in Lk 1:46 -

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,"

"Lord" is paralleled by "God, my Saviour". This is in striking contrast to the rest of the Gospel, where κύριος is a favourite title of Jesus. This point, in itself, would show that Luke was not the original author. The one exception is Lk 1:43 where Mary is referred to as "the mother of my Lord"; this marks it out clearly as an editorial alteration probably by Luke himself.²

b) The view of John. In Lk 1 there is a very high estimate of John, such as is approached elsewhere in the New Testament only in the Q passages where Jesus praises him (Lk 7:24-28; Mt 11:7-11). Up to a point the infancy narrative

1. H.L. MacNeill, "The Sitz im Leben of Lk 1:5-2:20", JBL, LXV, pp 126, 127.

2. See Winter, NTS, I, p 113.

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agrees with the Christian view of John as a prophet (1:76), the new Elijah (1:17), who will preach repentance (1:17,77).¹ But it goes further than this and further than any other part of the New Testament, for, since "the Lord" means God Himself in Lk 1, John is presented as the forerunner of God, and not of the Messiah.

"And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the
Lord their God,
And he will go before Him (i.e. God) in the spirit and
power of Elijah."
(Lk 1:16,17).

He will "go before the Lord to prepare his ways" (1:76)². There is no room here for a Messiah, indeed John himself is virtually cast in that role: his birth is due to an act of Divine intervention, he is filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (1:15), and with his birth God has already "visited and redeemed his people" and "raised up a horn of salvation".³ John's position in Lk 1 could hardly be more exalted.

c) The priestly emphasis. The infancy narrative of John is unique in the New Testament in the place given to the priest. John, who, as we have just seen, is regarded very highly, possibly as Messiah himself, is born of priestly parents. Zechariah is a priest, and his wife was "of the daughters of Aaron" (Lk 1:5). Elizabeth (^{Ἑλισάβετ} ; Hebrew ^{אֵלִישֶׁבֶת}) was, significantly, the name of Aaron's wife (Ex 6:23). As Kraeling remarks, "It is a priest, officiating in God's presence, to whom it is revealed that God"

1. Cf Benoit, NTS, III, pp 180-182.

2. For similar views of. Bultmann, "Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition", p 177; Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 71; Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 17.

3. Lk 1:68,69. The Benedictus, in its present context, certainly refers to John. See further, p 95 .

plan of national deliverance is about to be put into execution."¹ John is not represented as coming from Jerusalem circles, however, but from the humble, pious, rural priesthood.

All these considerations point beyond doubt to a Hebrew source lying behind the infancy narrative of Lk 1. We have seen the improbability of Luke having composed them himself. Indeed, from what we know of Luke's methods in writing his Gospel, we might expect him to have used a written source. Luke himself states that he knew "many" such sources (Lk 1:1), and his use of Mark and Q are excellent examples. As far as we know, Luke, the only Gentile author in the New Testament, was not a Semitic scholar, and it is therefore unlikely that he was the one who translated the Hebrew source into Greek. This consideration enables us to effect at least a partial reconciliation between those who believe in a Hebrew source, and those who believe that Lk 1 was originally written in Greek. We must assume that whoever translated the Hebrew original into Greek, must have been very well versed in the LXX, a not unreasonable assumption. Thus it is, that with so many references to the Old Testament, the language of the translation is "Septuagintal Greek". Especially where familiar quotations were concerned, the LXX would immediately spring to mind. And yet, as we have seen, the influence of Septuagintal language is not so strong as to have covered up entirely the Hebrew nature of the original.²

1. "John the Baptist," p 21.

2. We may note that this may account for one or two cases where it has been claimed that the Lucan narrative follows the LX as against the Massoretic Text. Just as a divinity student may use the language of the Authorized Version in translating a piece of Hebrew in an examination, and may be caught out by the fact that the examiner has slightly altered the Hebrew text, so the translator may have once or twice used a LXX phrase without checking exactly on the Hebrew before him.

Furthermore, we know that Luke, in using his sources, edited them and improved them, polishing up the Greek. This can be seen e.g. in his treatment of Mark.¹ The preponderance of Septuagintal Greek, and occasional touches of Luke's own style (both of which were so stressed by Harnack and his followers) can thus be reasonably explained by the view that the infancy narrative first existed in Hebrew, was then translated into Greek by some unknown person, and that finally Luke incorporated this Greek document into his Gospel, with editorial modifications.²

The question of who produced the Hebrew source which lies behind the infancy narratives is one which can be more conveniently dealt with at a later stage, during the discussion of the baptist sect (see Part XI, pp 297, 298).

Although it was noted above (p 87) how several of the poetic passages in Luke 1 are closely linked with the prose narrative, this is not so true of the two main psalms, which call for special mention.

1) The Magnificat. (Lk 1:46-55). As it stands, this psalm is attributed to Mary, in which case it belongs to the narrative of the infancy of Jesus. But in the oldest Old Latin MSS and in some quotations in Irenaeus and a few other Church Fathers, the reading is, "And Elizabeth said." This has led scholars to the belief that the Magnificat should properly be attributed to Elizabeth, and that it thus belongs to the Baptist narrative. It is difficult to see why anyone should change "Elizabeth" into "Mary", but easy to see why the reverse change should be made. Moreover, in v 56, immediately

1. See e.g. S. MacLean Gilmour, *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 8, pp 3, 4.

2. Cf. W.L. Knox, "Sources", Vol II, p 40, n. 2.

after the Magnificat, we read, "And Mary remained with her"; but if it was Mary who had just been speaking, we should have expected, "And she remained with Elizabeth". Harnack, Loisy and others have suggested that in the original text no name was indicated and that this led to the double reading, but this is not very likely.¹ The likelihood is that in the original Elizabeth was the speaker, but that someone, in all probability Luke, in the course of his editing, changed it to Mary in order to lay more stress on the birth of Jesus and less on the birth of John.

It has frequently been observed that this psalm, as a whole, may originally have been a quite separate composition. If v 48, and the *poet* in v 49, be removed as later glosses designed to integrate the psalm into its present context, then the remainder forms a coherent whole.²

2) The Benedictus. (Lk 1:68-79). Although Harnack maintained steadfastly that Luke himself was the author of the Benedictus, and that a Semitic original is quite impossible,³ even his loyal followers waver here. Thus, in a recent discussion, P. Benoit, who argues against a Semitic original for Lk 1 as a whole, admits that a Hebrew Psalm must lie behind the Benedictus.⁴

As in the case of the Magnificat, most of the wording is general in tone and has nothing particular to do with the present context. Even more certainly than in the case of the Magnificat we can assert that originally it must have stood alone.⁵ Differing analyses of the psalm have been suggested,

1. See Creed, "St. Luke", p 22; Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 72.
2. Cf. Bultmann, "Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition", p 178.
3. "Luke the Physician", pp 101 f, 206-209.
4. NTS, III, pp 182-191.
5. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 74.
6. See Benoit, NTS, III, p 184, n 1.

but all agree that there is a very definite break, in metre and in subject matter, at the end of v 75.

vs 68 - 75 is a psalm of praise to God who has visited and redeemed his people, and probably originally consisted of 5 strophes. The phrase, "in the house of his servant David" in v 69, is meaningless, for the context shows beyond all doubt that it is John's birth which is being celebrated here. But John was of priestly descent; it is Jesus who was of the house of David (Lk 1:27). How did this reference to Davidio descend come to be in a psalm which is applied to John? It is possible that the psalm was one which celebrated the birth of a Davidio Messiah¹, and which was applied to John. But as Aytoun shows² the phrase definitely spoils the metre when the original Hebrew is reconstructed, and it should therefore be excluded as a gloss. Doubtless it was inserted by Luke when he revised his source, with the object once again of toning down the high estimate of John. The result has been (from Luke's point of view) very successful, for the usual interpretation is that vs 68 f. refer to Jesus, and that v 75 brings a change of subject, John now being referred to.

Scholars hold either that vs 76, 77 are an interpolation and that vs 78, 79 are the continuation of vs 68-75³, or, that vs 76-79 are an addition and go together.⁴ Probably the latter alternative is to be preferred. There is no agreement as to whether vs 76f., which make the psalm refer specifically to John, are Christian in origin or belong to the original source.

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- 1., Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p74.
 2. JTS, XVIII, p 284.
 3. Benoit, NTS, III, p 185.
 4. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 74.

As a result of this examination of the narrative of Lk 1, what can we say of its historical value? We have already indicated that the narrative is legendary in character (p 34), but that this means only that the facts have been embellished, not that the whole thing was invented.¹ Two considerations prevent us from placing much reliability on the details of the story. The first is that the origin of so much of the narrative obviously comes from Old Testament models; the second is that the point of view of a later day has been read back into the narrative. We may take it that the narrative was not composed until after John's death. By then he was acknowledged to have been a great figure, hence at his birth it was foretold, "He will be great" (Lk 1:15); he turned out to have a considerable part in the purposes of God, hence there must have been unusual circumstances attending his birth;

during his life he was an ascetic (Lk 7:33; Mt 11:18), hence it was foretold at his birth, "he shall drink no wine nor strong drink" (Lk 1:15).

Beyond the fact that John was of priestly descent, and that the names of his parents were Zechariah and Elizabeth, it would be unwise to claim much historical basis for the narrative.² The general impression may be gained, however, of the type of people John's parents probably were. Zechariah belonged to the rural priesthood; he would officiate at the Temple for only two weeks of the year. Kraeling³ has pointed to the evidence of a deep cleavage between the rural priesthood, and the more aristocratic and worldly Jerusalem priests. John's parents were deeply pious, "they were both righteous before God

1. Cf. Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 19f

2. Cf. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 70;

3. "John the Baptist", p 24 f.

(Lk 1:6), and prayer and reading of the Scriptures would play a prominent part in their lives.

Much has been inferred from the statement in Luke 1:36 that Elizabeth was the "Cousin" of Mary. The term used is *συγγενίς* which does not mean "cousin" in the modern sense at all, but merely "kinswoman".¹ It does not even affirm a close family connection, but could easily mean that they merely belonged to the same tribe. Later tradition and art have assumed a close connection, and John and Jesus have been pictured as children, playing together. The evidence of the rest of the New Testament, however, does not support this idea and indeed casts doubts on the idea of any previous link between John and Jesus (cf. e.g. John 1:31 - "I myself did not know him.")

If Mary and Elizabeth were related, that would mean that Mary was of priestly descent, since Elizabeth was "of the daughters of Aaron" (Luke 1:5).² Jesus would thus have both kingly and priestly ancestry, a point which would strengthen his Messiahship especially in the eyes of those who looked for a Messiah from Israel and a Messiah from Aaron.

It would therefore be unwise to claim any historical truth for the statement in Luke 1:36 of the relation between John and Jesus. In the first place, the vague term *συγγενίς* may merely be a device used to link the two narratives together. And secondly, the real motive may be to suggest priestly descent for Jesus. The narratives of the infancies of John and Jesus

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1. See Plummer, "St. Luke", p 25; article "Cousin", in HDB, Vol I, p 509.
 2. See Plummer, "St. Luke", p 21.

do not really have any connection with each other, and probably it was the knowledge of the way in which their paths crossed at a later date which led the compiler of Luke 1, 2 to project this connection backwards into their infancies. If this be the case, the chronology of Luke 1 cannot be considered as absolutely reliable either. John is made out to be six months older than Jesus (Lk 1:36); he certainly began his public ministry before Jesus did and was thought of as preceding Jesus. He may well have been considerably more than six months older than Jesus.

We do not know exactly where John was born, but according to Lk 1:39 his parents lived in the hill country, in "a city of Judah". By the "hill country" (ἡ ὄρευνή) is meant the mountainous, central part of Judaea, in which Jerusalem is situated, (cf. Lk 1:65). But apart from the scene in the Temple, the events do not take place in Jerusalem, but in an unnamed city. There were certainly priestly towns, of which Hebron was the chief, but there is no evidence that priests were confined to these towns only, in New Testament times. The suggestion that *Ἰούδα* is the name of the town and should be taken as representing Juttah, which lay just South of Hebron, has little likelihood either.¹ The modern traveller to Palestine is shown Ain Karim, a beautiful village about three miles West of Jerusalem, as John's birthplace.² But this tradition cannot claim to be earlier than the 6th Cent. A.D. Although we know the general region from which John came, his exact birth place remains unknown.

Accounts of the birth and infancy of John are found in some

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1. See Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, II, p 677.
 2. See H.V. Morton, "In the Steps of the Master", p 144, 145; L. Farmer, "We Saw the Holy City", pp 229-237.

non-canonical books, but of these only one can be considered as being at all early, probably dating from the 2nd Century.

The Book of James (also referred to as the Protevangelium) is an infancy Gospel dealing largely with the childhood of Jesus and expanding considerably the canonical narratives on which it obviously depends. Some details are added to the story of John and it is told how Herod's massacre of the infants put John's life in danger also. Elizabeth escaped with her child, and a mountain swallowed them up to keep them in safety. Herod's officers question Zechariah, but when he claims to know nothing of his son's whereabouts, he is slain in the Temple.

There is nothing here of historical value. The author, though he draws heavily on the Old Testament, is clearly ignorant of first century Judaism; apart from the New Testament narratives, his main source was his own imagination. In any case, it is probable that the main section which deals with John and with Zechariah's martyrdom, is a later addition, since Origen, who knew the book of James, relates a quite different version of the death of Zechariah, according to which he was put to death because he allowed Mary, after the nativity, to take her place among the virgins of the Temple (an obviously pagan idea!)¹ The fact that more than one version of the story existed may indicate a fairly early tradition that Zechariah was martyred; but no great reliance can be placed on stories of this type.

The only other infancy gospel which can be assigned to the second century is the Gospel of Thomas, but John does not figure in it. All other infancy narratives depend on the Book of James and the Gospel of Thomas, plus the canonical

1. See M.R. James, "The Apocryphal New Testament", p 38.

Gospels, or else are so late as to exclude any possibility of the survival of genuine material.

2. Infancy and Youth.

For our knowledge of the infancy and youth of John we are entirely dependent on one verse, Luke 1:80, "And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel."

During much of his ministry John lived the life of an ascetic preacher in the wilderness area, but what was he doing in the wilderness as a boy? Why was he not in the care of his pious and priestly parents, in his home town, the "city of Judah" of Luke 1:39? The answers to these questions are largely a matter of conjecture, but we can recall how the wilderness area especially the Jordan region, was the heart of the baptist movement (see p 61). We have already noted that this movement apparently formed the background of John's ministry, although he went on to be an original and independent preacher. The theory, therefore, that John may have been adopted as a boy by one of the baptist sects fits the facts well, though of course it is incapable of proof.

Brownlee¹ was among the first to ask, "What was John the son of a priest doing in the wilderness in his tender years?" He called attention to what Josephus says of the Essenes -

"Marriage they disdain, but they adopt other men's children, while yet pliable and docile, and regard them as their kin and mould them in accordance with their own principles" 2.

1. W.H. Brownlee, "A Comparison of the Covenanters of the Dead Sea Scrolls with Pre-Christian Jewish Sects", Biblical Archaeologist, Vol. XIII, Sept. 1950, No. 3.
2. "The Jewish War", II, 8, 2.

The two-column "Rule of the Congregation", discovered by the Dead Sea (1 QS a) gives instructions for the training of boys apparently from the age of ten upwards.¹

Brownlee's original suggestion was taken up by many scholars, among them A.S. Geyser, who in an article² notes the similarities between the beliefs and practices of John and those of the sect of the Scrolls and concludes that John's "outward appearance, words and acts betray the fact that he has been formed by one or another of the Essene sects inhabiting that very region between Khirbet-Qumran and Massada."³

Geyser seeks to back up this view by an analysis of Luke 1 and 2. Luke 1:80, the verse to which so much attention is directed, is, says Geyser, a curiously unsatisfying verse. It entirely fails to explain the change which came over John. We are introduced to him as one born of priestly parents in a city of Judea; and the next we hear of him he appears in the wilderness as an ascetic and a prophet who "instead of sending penitents to sacrifice for their sins according to the priestly rule of Leviticus 14:16, baptizes them in the Jordan, and commands them to practise brotherly love."⁴

A solution is to be found when it is realized that in Luke 1 and 2 we have two exactly parallel infancy accounts, one of John the other of Jesus. Geyser sets out the accounts in two columns and seen in this way the parallelism is certainly striking. For example, the angel appearing to Zechariah (1:11) parallels the angel appearing to Mary (1:28); "You shall call him John" (1:13) parallels "You shall call him Jesus (1:31); the hymn of Zechariah (1:67f.) parallels the hymn of Mary (1:46f.),

1. Translated in Burrows, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls" pp 393-395, and T.H. Gaster, "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect ", pp 285-288.

2. "The Youth of John the Baptist", Novum Testamentum, Vol I, Jan. 1956, pp 70-75.

3. Op. cit., p 71.

4. Op. cit., p 70.

and so on. The parallels exist not only in the general layout but even extend to details.

1:80a ("And the child grew and became strong in spirit") parallels 2:40; but the one place where the parallelism breaks down is that 1:80b is the only thing which corresponds to 2:41-51 (Jesus at the Temple at the age of twelve). Geyser suggests that a parallel did exist in the original source, but that this part of the story was deliberately suppressed by Luke.

Assuming on the one hand that the close parallelism was continued in the stories of John and Jesus at the age of twelve, and on the other hand that John was brought up by the Essenes, Geyser sketches the missing section as follows - "It would have told us an episode from the life of John as bar-mizwa, it would have supplied an illustration of his exceptional knowledge of the law as revealed in an examination by the Essene teachers. It would further have told us something in relation to his parents, perhaps the fact that, owing to their advanced age, John was already orphaned by this time, that he was nevertheless conscious of the fact that he belonged to his heavenly Father. He went with his adoptive parents to the Judean desert and obeyed them."¹ Geyser cannot bring forward any very convincing reason why Luke should suppress this story apart from a general desire on the part of New Testament writers to oppose the continuing Baptist sect.

While this reconstruction of Geyser's is far-fetched, the general hypothesis of adoption by some baptist sect is an attractive one. The break with home life could be explained

1. Op. cit., p 74.

by the fact that John's parents died, or by the fact that they entrusted him to the care of some monastic community.

Acceptance of the hypothesis will depend on just how closely we believe John to have been linked with the baptist movement. To hold that John was probably brought up in this way does not, however, in the least prejudice the belief that as an adult he broke away from his immediate background to become an independent figure.

Apart from the infancy narrative contained in Luke's Gospel our sources know of John only as a grown man. He is revealed to us as a man with a message; he is above all else a preacher. We must now enquire, therefore, what his message was. Josephus has little to tell us beyond the vague statement that "John was a pious man, and he was bidding the Jews who practiced virtue and exercised righteousness toward each other and piety toward God, to come together for baptism."¹ We are, therefore, largely dependent on the New Testament evidence.

1. The Eschatological Proclamation.

There can be little doubt that the keynote of John's teaching and preaching was the proclamation of the imminent approach of the end of days and of the judgement. This is evident from John's sayings, preserved in Q, with their vivid pictures of the vipers fleeing the wrath to come, the tree about to be cut down, and the separating of the wheat from the chaff. Josephus, as we have seen,² avoids all mention of such matters, and his picture of John is thus very defective at this point; the New Testament tradition is much more reliable.

In Part II, we suggested that behind John's saying about the vipers fleeing (Matt 3:7, Lk 3:7), probably lay the picture of a wilderness fire, in which dry grass and scrub can blaze for miles, sending animals such as scorpions and vipers scuttling for safety.³ If this is so, it is a warning of the destruction which will take place, unless people repent.

The figure of the tree being cut down (Mt 3:10; Lk 3:9) may also have been based on personal experience, but it has a

1. See Part I, p 20.

2. Part I, p 34.

3. Part II, p 73.

literary background as well. For example, Is 10:33,34, speaking of the judgement which will fall upon the Assyrians, says -

"Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts,
will lop the boughs with terrifying power;
the great in height will be hewn down,
and the lofty will be brought low.
He will cut down the thickets of the forest
with an axe
and Lebanon with its majestic trees will fall."

As Kraeling points out,¹ in the Old Testament this figure is used only of judgement which will fall upon the Gentiles; but in Sirach the reader is warned -

"Do not exalt yourself through your soul's counsel...
You will devour your leaves and destroy your fruit,
And be left like a withered tree." (6:2,3);

and of the unfaithful wife it is said -

"Her children will not take root,
And her branches will not bear fruit". (23:25).

In Wisdom of Solomon 4:3-5 it is said of the ungodly that

"Even if they put forth boughs for a while,
standing insecurely they will be shaken by the wind,
and by the violence of the winds they will be uprooted.
The branches will be broken off before they come to
maturity,
and their fruit will be useless,
not ripe enough to eat, and good for nothing.

The metaphor of winnowing is an even more familiar one. Sheaves were taken to a circular threshing floor and there threshed by means of an ox-drawn threshing sledge. "As its name suggests, this implement was a simple hardwood sledge curved up at the front with jagged splinters of stone or iron underneath. As it was dragged round the threshing floor by oxen, it chopped the straw at the same time as it loosened the

1. "John the Baptist", p 44.

grain."¹ The threshing floor is used in the Old Testament as a metaphor of punishment, e.g. Jer 51:33 - "For thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come." Similar uses are found in Amos 1:3, Hab 3:12, Mic 4:13: cf. also Joel 3:13.

But John's saying refers not so much to the actual threshing as to the winnowing which follows it. "When the threshing was finished, the grain was still mixed with broken straw and chaff, from which it had to be separated by winnowing. With a wooden fork or shovel, the chopped mixture was tossed into the wind, which blew the light chaff a fair distance, and the straw not quite so far, while the heavy grain fell to the ground again in a heap."² Both processes are referred to in Is 41:15,16 where God says to Israel -

"Behold I will make of you a threshing-sledge,
new, sharp, and having teeth;
you shall thresh the mountains and crush them,
and you shall make the hills like chaff;
you shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away,
and the tempest shall scatter them."

So familiar is this metaphor in the Old Testament that the wicked are often referred to as chaff. E.g. Psalm 1:4 - "The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away"; cf. also Job 21:18, Ps 35:5, Is 17:13, 29:5, Hos 13:3.

John thus spoke in words which had their roots in the preaching of the prophets, words which were simple, clear and direct and which would be readily understood by his audience.

We must remember that John did speak in metaphors and

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1. "Everyday Life in Old Testament Times", E.W. Heaton, London, 1956, p 102.
 2. Heaton, op. cit., p 102.

and must beware of reading too much into them; yet the outlines of John's message can be clearly discerned.

a) He proclaimed a coming judgement, in which the righteous would be separated from the wicked. The chaff is separated from the wheat, the former standing for the wicked, and the latter for the righteous. The metaphor of the tree also implies a separation between good and bad: between the tree that bears good fruit and that which does not bear good fruit.

b) The judgement was to take place in the immediate future; the great crisis was almost upon men. "Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees", and the judge already has the winnowing fork in his hand.

c) As a result of this judgement, the wicked will be punished. The chaff is removed and burned, while the bad tree is cut down and thrown into the fire.

d) How far John also proclaimed the reward of the righteous and the coming Kingdom has been the subject of debate. Matthew 3:2 states that John preached, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand", but this has been explained as a Christianizing of John's message.¹ On the other hand, the high esteem in which John was held by Jesus suggests an area of agreement between the two. Jesus differs from John so strikingly on many points that surely we must find in the idea of the coming Kingdom, one of the points on which they did agree.²

In one of his sayings John speaks of the wheat being gathered into the granary (Lk 3:17, Matt 3:12), and this clearly indicates that the righteous will be rewarded.

Further, as G.S. Duncan points out,³ even the sternest Old Testament prophets did not confine themselves solely to a

1. See Part I, p 16.

2. See further, Part VIII, p 260.

3. "Jesus, Son of Man", p 81.

message of judgement, but held out some promise of deliverance. "Judgement must always be part of the message of the preacher who recognizes that man may reject the salvation which God has to offer; but it cannot have been the whole of John's message. We ought rather to regard the Baptist - as the Church from the beginning has regarded him - as the herald of a coming salvation¹

It is rather going beyond the evidence of our sources to call John a preacher of salvation, but we do accept that he proclaimed a reward for the righteous as well as punishment for the wicked, and that he must also have had some concept of the coming reign of God which would be ushered in, following the judgement. But this position is subject to two provisos.

Firstly, we have very little evidence regarding the nature of the rewards and of the coming reign of God as they were pictured by John. Because of the uncertainty attaching to Matt 3:2, we cannot even assert that John actually used the term "Kingdom". We shall see below that John spoke of a future outpouring of God's holy spirit, but beyond this, we cannot go.

Secondly, while this element was present in John's message the very paucity of the evidence for it reminds us that John concentrated by far the greater part of his attention on stern warnings of future punishment, and on practical counsels as to how punishment may be avoided.

2. He That Cometh.

Not only did John proclaim the imminent judgement, and the punishment of the wicked, he also foretold the advent of a person, who would come at the fast-approaching end of days to execute this judgement. This Messianic figure is spoken of especially in Mt 3:11, 12, Mk 1:7,8, and Lk 3:16,17. The saying about the mightier one who is coming after John, whose

1. G.S. Duncan, "Jesus, Son of Man." p 80.

sandals he is not worthy to untie, and the contrast between John's baptism and the future Messianic baptism appears to have stood in both Mark and Q;¹ but the Q saying was longer and went on to develop the role of the coming one as the judge, with the winnowing fork in his hand separating the wheat from the chaff (Mt 3:12. Lk 3:17).

The saying about the one who is to come after John actually appears in the New Testament seven times, never in exactly the same form. The references are - Mk 1:17; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:15, 1:27, 1:30; Acts 13:25. The differences in the subordinate clause, "The thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie", are unimportant.² But, as Kraeling suggests,³ there seem to be two main forms of the principal clause, namely -

1. After me there comes he who is mightier than I.
(ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσσω μου .
2. He who is coming after me is mightier than I.
(ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου ἐστίν.

Mark, Luke, Jn 1:30 and Acts have variants on 1, while Matthew, Jn 1:15 and Jn 1:27 are versions of 2. Jn 1:15 and 1:30, however, are similar -

1:15 - He who comes after me	} ranks before me, for he was
1:30 - After me comes a man who	

In these two texts the saying has been altered so as to make John testify to Christ's pre-existence. In the Fourth Gospel, all three texts are made to refer to Christ and to emphasize the inferiority of John. Jn 1:15 is almost certainly an editorial addition inserted to emphasize John's inferiority even further, and even Jn 1:30 may possibly be a later addition.⁴

1. Part I, pp 5,6.
2. "Thong" is omitted in Mt 3:11, Acts 13:25; Jn 1:27 has "sandals" in the singular; Jn 1:27 and Acts 13:25 have ἄξιος instead of ἱκανός ; Mt 3:11 has "carry" instead of "untie"; Mk 1:7 "stoop down."
3. Kraeling, "John the Baptist," p 54.
4. G.H.C. Macgregor, "John", pp 19, 20, 29.

From the earliest sources, Q and Mark, it is quite clear that John, in speaking of this coming Messianic figure, was not referring to Jesus. The coming judge belongs still to the future, albeit the very near future. We shall see how even at Jesus' baptism, according to the earliest and best sources, John did not proclaim Jesus as Messiah. This is further borne out by John's question from prison when he sent his disciples to ask Jesus whether he was in fact the coming one (Lk 7:18-23, Matt 11:2-6)¹.

It has been argued that the saying about the coming one does definitely refer to Jesus, since the words "he who comes after me" recall a New Testament expression for a disciple "following after" his master, e.g. Mk 1:17 (Mt 4:19) "Jesus said to them, Follow after me (δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου)"; Mk 8:34 (and parallels), "If any man would come after me (εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔλθειν), let him deny himself....."² This expression is a well known Rabbinic one (אַחֲרַי גִּיח - cf. I Kings 19:20) with the double meaning of "walk after" and "be a pupil of"; the disciple quite literally walked behind his Rabbi, and the Talmud refers to this practice in connection with the first century Rabbis Gamaliel and Jochanan ben Zakcai.³ Further, it is argued that ὀπίσω cannot properly have a temporal reference, but only a spatial one. On this interpretation therefore, the saying means, "One who follows after me, i.e. one of my disciples, is mightier than I." If this is so, then the disciple referred to would of course be Jesus, and the saying would refer directly to him. This is an ingenious explanation, though rather far-fetched. It contradicts the clear evidence that John pictured this figure as being still in

1. For a fuller treatment of this question see Part VIII, pp 239 f.

2. See K. Grobel, "He That Cometh After Me", JBL, LX, 1941, pp 397-401.

3. See Grobel, op. cit., p 397.

the future, and must be rejected. John had no thought of identifying the coming Judge with Jesus.

The evidence of the New Testament suggests that the phrase, "the Coming One", was in use as a Messianic term.¹ The crowds hailed Jesus as he entered Jerusalem, εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου (Mt 21:9 and parallels). While it is possible to interpret these words as being addressed to a precursor, it is more likely that they were intended to hail the Messiah. Certainly Matthew interprets them in that way for him ὁ ἐρχόμενος is paralleled by "the Son of David" (Mt 21:9). Luke inserts the term βασιλεὺς after ὁ ἐρχόμενος (Lk 19:38). John has εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ (Jn 12:13). A similar use of the term is probably to be seen in Jn 11:27, where Martha confesses to Jesus, σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὃς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος Heb 10:37 applies the expression to Christ, "For yet a little while, and ὁ ἐρχόμενος shall come and shall not tarry."²

As to the origin of the phrase, the expression, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord", is a direct quotation from Ps 118:26. Though originally addressed to pilgrims coming to the Temple, the New Testament writers make it refer to the Messiah; whether the text was so interpreted prior to the New Testament is not known, but it is highly probable. While Ps 118:26 must have been the main source of the Messianic use of ὁ ἐρχόμενος, it may be that Daniel 7 also played a part. The

1. Rabbinic sources speak frequently of "the Coming Age" (see Moore, "Judaism", I, p 271) but do not use the expression "the Coming One."
2. Other possible echoes are found in Jn 3:31, Rev 1:4. In Jn 6:14, ὁ ἐρχόμενος is used of the Moses-like prophet. It has also been suggested that the term applied to the returning Elijah, since Mal 3:1 says, "Behold he is coming", and various New Testament texts, e.g. Matt 11:14, speak of "Elijah who is to come." This is doubtful, however, since the form ὁ ἐρχόμενος is never found in connection with Elijah either in the New Testament, or in the LXX of Malachi.

form ἔρχόμενος is used in the LXX¹ of Dan 7:13 - "behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man." This may be an indication that the Son of Man was thought of as the Coming One.

Taking into consideration this background of the phrase, and bearing in mind the evidence of Mt 11:3, it seems highly probable that the version of the saying which begins ὁ (ὁπίσω μου) ἔρχόμενος was the original form.

Accepting, then, that John did proclaim the advent of a future Messianic figure, how did he picture this figure? This is a difficult question to answer, since our source material is so scanty. John does, however, say three things of this Messiah - that he holds the winnowing fork in his hand; that he is mightier than John; and that in contrast to John's baptism, he will baptize with holy spirit and with fire. Each of these sayings contributes to our picture of John's Coming One

a) The saying about the winnowing fork (Matt 3:12, Lk 3:17) is valuable so far as it goes, and shows that the Coming One is to be the agent of the judgement. He is the one who will separate the wheat from the chaff, and administer the punishments and the rewards. It is worth noting that in Rev 14:14, a passage which very probably reproduces an earlier Jewish apocalyptic, the Son of Man is pictured as holding a sickle and reaping the earth.²

b) The saying about the Coming One being mightier than John can also tell us something. In this saying John compares himself to the Coming One, to his own disadvantage; he is not worthy even to untie the thong of his sandals. This comparison "shows that the person in question is not God, for to compare

1. In Theodotion only.

2. Cf. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 41.

oneself with God, even in the most abject humility, would have been presumptuous for any Jew in John's day."¹ That is to say, John is definitely speaking of a Messiah, and not of God himself. Further, even allowing for figurative language, the fact that John could speak of the Messiah as wearing sandals suggests that he thought of him, to some extent at least, as a man. A Rabbinic saying provides a parallel - "Every work which a slave performs for his lord, a disciple must do for his teacher, except loosing his shoe."²

An attempt to extract more information from this saying has been made by Walter Grundmann³, who would explain it in terms not of the Coming One but of the Mightier One. He turns to the only other place in the New Testament where the form "mightier" (*ἰσχυρότερος*) occurs, which is in Lk 11:20-22:-

"But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man (*ὁ ἰσχυρὸς*), fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger (*ἰσχυρότερος*) than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted, and divides his spoil."

Grundmann suggests that what we should see in this passage is the most primitive Christian theology of all. The *ἰσχυρὸς* guarding his palace and his goods, represents Satan who has dominion over the kingdoms of this world (of. Lk 4:6) and has men bound (of. Lk 13:16). But the Messiah is the *ἰσχυρότερος* who attacks Satan, defeats him, divides his spoil, and sets men free. The saying of Jesus comes in the context of the Beelzebul controversy, and the point of the saying is that Jesus identifies himself with the *ἰσχυρότερος* who is already overcoming the power of Satan. Further, Grundmann

1. Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 54.
2. Keth 96a. R. Joshua ben Levi (c. 250 A.D.).
3. In Kittel, TWNT, Vol III (1938), pp 402-405.

suggests that the phrase "and divides his spoils" (Lk 11:22) is based on Is 53:12 - "and he shall divide his spoil with the strong", so that Jesus here claims to be both the conquering Messiah and the Suffering Servant.

This interpretation is very interesting for a study of the thought of Jesus, though it may well be reading too much into a simple parable. It is difficult, however, to see its relevance for the earlier saying of John. It would only be relevant if *ἰσχυρότερος* were a Messianic title, but this does not appear to be the case; most probably these two occurrences of *ἰσχυρότερος* are due to coincidence. The shorter forms of Jesus' saying in Mt 12:29 and Mk 3:27 do not have the term *ἰσχυρότερος*. Moreover, in John's saying, the comparison is between John and the Messiah, who is mightier than John; whereas in the saying of Jesus, the comparison is between Satan and the Messiah, who is mightier than Satan.

The word "mighty" can be used to describe a person given and in Is 9:6 one of the titles of the Messiah is "Mighty God". special powers by God¹, ^ In Ps Sol 17:43, 44, it is said of "the anointed of the Lord" that "he will be strong and stumble not..... he will be mighty in his works." But probably too much must not be read into this saying. The Coming One will be mightier than John because, whereas John only spoke and prophesied about the judgement, the Coming One will actually execute the judgement.

c) This leaves us with the saying about the baptism of the Coming One which is contrasted with John's baptism-"I baptize you with water ; he will baptize you with holy spirit and fire." This saying appears as part of John's preaching in Mt 3:11, Lk 3:16 and Mk 1:8 (Mark omitting "with fire"); while in Acts 1:5 and 11:16 (in both cases without "fire"), it is

1. Cf. Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 56.

attributed to the risen Christ. Cf. also Jn 1:33. The original form and the exact meaning of the saying have been the subject of much study and discussion.

The future baptism with fire is almost certainly to be understood in connection with the other references to fire in John's preaching, where fire is to be the instrument of punishment following the judgement. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire"; "the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire"; and if our interpretation is correct (above, p. 104) even the saying about vipers may have involved fire. The Coming One will punish the wicked with fire, and he will baptize with fire; these, we suggest, are different ways of expressing the same idea.

How can the future punishment of the wicked be described as a baptism? ^{of fire} To answer this, we must remind ourselves that in his prophecy of a fiery punishment John stood firmly within the Old Testament and apocalyptic tradition. The idea begins in the Old Testament. Amos 7:4 pictures the Lord God "calling for a judgement by fire." Is 31:9 speaks of "the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem"; In Ezek 38:22, the Lord rains down on Gog and his hordes "torrential rains and hailstones, fire and brimstone." According to Mal 4:1, "the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all the evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up....." Cf. also Mal 3:2.

In the post Old Testament period, especially in the apocalyptic literature, the idea of the punishment of the wicked by fire was greatly developed and elaborated. For example, in Enoch 90:24-27 the judgement is described -

"And judgement was held first over the stars, and they were judged and found guilty and went to the place of condemnation, and they were cast into an abyss, full of fire and flaming, and full of pillars of fire. And those seventy shepherds were judged and

found guilty, and likewise cast into that fiery abyss. And I saw at that time how a like abyss was opened in the midst of the earth, full of fire, and those blinded sheep were brought, and they were all judged and found guilty and cast into that fiery abyss, and they burned And I saw those sheep burning and their bones burning."

In the Psalms of Solomon we hear of "flaming fire and the wrath against the ungodly" (15:6). In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the wicked are condemned to "the gloom of the fire eternal" (1 QS 2:8); they will be punished "with fire of brimstone" (1 QpHab 2:11), in the end they will "come into judgements of fire" (1 QpHab 2:12,13). The New Testament has numerous references to future punishment by fire (see e.g. Mt 5:22, 13:40, 42, 50, 25:41; Lk 17:29; 1 Cor 3:13-15; II Thess 1:7.) The Lake of Fire in Revelation (19:20 etc.) is also derived from this tradition.

But even more relevant to our study of John is a similar and related idea, that of a river of fire. This is first mentioned in Dan 7:10 where it is said of the "one that was ancient of days" that

"his throne was fiery flames,
its wheels were burning fire.
A stream of fire issued
and came forth from before him."

Immediately after this, "the beast was slain, and its body given over to be burned with fire" (Dan 7:11). We again meet this "fiery stream" in IV Ezra 13:10.¹

Almost certainly we are to see in this idea an example of Iranian influence on Judaism.² Kraeeling sums up the position concisely - "In Persian eschatology, the mountains which are made of metal melt at the end of the world, and the

1. IV Ezra 13 may have been written after the time of John, but is almost certainly earlier than 70 A.D. See Charles, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha", II, pp 551, 552.
2. Cf. Part II, pp 64, 65.

molten metal pours over the earth like a river. All men pass into this river of molten metal and in doing so are either purified or destroyed. Since in Persian thought this conception, already presupposed in the Gathas, is part of a well-coordinated system of eschatology, it is entirely possible that we have here the ultimate source of all those realistic interpretations of the function of fire in the final judgement...."¹ Kraeeling has made the idea of the eschatological river of fire the key to the whole understanding of John's baptism, for he suggests "that the water of baptism represents and symbolizes the fiery torrent of judgement, and that the individual by voluntarily immersing himself in the water enacts in advance before God his willing submission to the divine judgement which the river of fire will perform."² Soon after Kraeeling wrote his book, there was published the Hymns of the Dead Sea Scrolls sect in one of which there appears the most striking description of the river of fire hitherto known; it shows Iranian influence even more clearly. T.H. Gaster translates as follows:-

"when the hour of judgement strikes,
 when the lot of God's anger is cast
 upon the abandoned,
 when His fury is poured forth upon dissemblers,
 when the final doom of His rage
 falls upon all the works of Belial;
 when the torrents of Death do swirl,
 and there is none escape;
 when the rivers of Belial
 burst their high banks
 - rivers that are like fire
 devouring all that draw their waters,
 rivers whose runnels destroy
 green tree and dry tree alike,
 rivers that are like fire
 which sweeps with flaming sparks
 devouring all that drink their waters

1. Kraeeling, "John the Baptist", p 117. Cf. also Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 40.
2. "Kraeeling, "John the Baptist", p 117.

- a fire which consumes
all foundations of clay,
every solid bedrock;
when the foundations of the mountains
become a raging blaze,
when granite roots are turned
to streams of pitch,
when the flame devours
down to the great abyss,
when the floods of Beliel burst forth
unto hell itself¹

It is now easy to see how John could speak of future punishment as a "baptism" of fire. John himself always baptized in a river, usually the Jordan, John only immersed people in a river of water, but the Coming One would immerse the wicked in a river of fire.

While this is certainly the sense in which we are to understand the future baptism of fire, it is not so certain that it should be made the key to John's baptism of water.²

According to John, it is the Coming One who will administer the fiery punishment. In the Old Testament it is always God himself who punishes with fire, the one exception being Malachi 3:2 where it is said of the "messenger" of the Lord that "he is like a refiner's fire." But the idea of the Messiah as the agent of punishment is found in the post-Old Testament literature. For example, in LV Ezra 13 it is from the mouth of the Son of Man that the fiery stream comes -

"He sent out of his mouth as it were a fiery stream, and out of his lips a flaming breath, and out of his tongue he shot forth a storm of sparks. And these were all mingled together and fell upon the assault of the multitude which was prepared to fight, and burned them all up."

In a number of the references we have noted to judgement by fire, the idea is present of fire as a purifying or refining

1. "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect," pp 142, 143.

2. See Part V, pp 193, 194.

force. The messenger of Mal 3:2 is "like a refiner's fire" and "he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver." This appears to have been part of the original Iranian conception¹ according to which all men must pass through the river of fire in which they will be either purified or destroyed. This is the idea present in I Cor 3:13-15. More common than this, however, is the simple idea of the punishment of the wicked, and it is this idea of punishment, and not of purification, that John preached. For John, it is only after separation has been made between the good and bad trees, that the bad trees are thrown into the fire (Mt 3:10, Lk 3:9); it is only after the wheat and the chaff have been separated that the chaff is burned with unquenchable fire (Mt 3:12, Lk 3:17).

The baptism with holy spirit has proved a more difficult problem to solve, and many have even denied that John ever spoke this phrase. The root of the trouble is that baptism with the Holy Spirit looks very like a Christianizing of John's message. It has been held by scholars that the Q form of the saying was, "I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with fire"; Mark reinterpreted this in a Christian sense and reproduced it as, "I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"; and finally both Matthew and Luke conflated Mark and Q to produce their version, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."² A serious weakness of this view, however, is that it involves the coincidence of both Matthew and Luke making an identical conflation, whereas normally, since Matthew and Luke use exactly identical Greek, it would be assumed that both were drawing on Q. Q is,

1. See Kraeling, quoted above, pp 116, 117. Cf. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 40.
2. This is the view e.g. of F.C. Grant, Interpreter's Bible, Vol 7, p 651. Cf. also T.W. Manson, "The Sayings of Jesus", p 41.

moreover, the earliest and most reliable source¹ for the reconstruction of John's Message.¹ Further, the saying in both Matthew and Luke is intimately linked with the saying which follows, "whose winnowing fork is in his hand etc.", which certainly comes from Q. Therefore the normal principles of criticism would suggest that Q did have "He will baptize you with Holy Spirit and with fire", and this must have a strong claim to be considered as the original version.

With regard to whether or not John could have spoken of the Holy Spirit, it should be noted in the first place that what appears in the saying is "holy Spirit" (*ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ*), which should be written without capitals and without the definite article. The later Christian writers obviously interpreted it in the sense of the "Holy Spirit", but to suggest that John may nevertheless have used the words does not imply that he was anticipating the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is not necessary to enumerate the usages of the term "spirit of God" in the Old Testament and in Judaism.² The actual phrase "holy spirit" is found in the Old Testament (Is 63:10,11; Ps 51:11), is mentioned in the Psalms of Solomon (17:42), and occurs in the Rabbinic literature. It is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSD 4:20, 8:16; CDC 2:12). There is nothing improbable therefore in the suggestion that John could well have spoken of God's "holy spirit".

If John did speak of baptism with holy spirit, remembering what has been said about the baptism of fire, it is natural to conclude that in the case of the baptism with holy spirit also "baptism" is used somewhat metaphorically. Just as the baptism of fire stands for the future punishment of the wicked, so the baptism of holy spirit would stand for an outpouring of God's

1. Part I, p 18 .

2. See Moore, "Judaism", I, p 421 ; H.B. Swete, article, "Holy Spirit", HDB, II, pp 402 - 411.

spirit at the end of days. The reference is not to the future institution of another rite of baptism; to suppose that John foresaw the development of Christian baptism would be most improbable. But there is nothing at all improbable in the view that John was proclaiming a future outpouring of God's spirit.

The classic Old Testament prophecy is found in Joel, 2:28, 29 (the passage which is quoted in Acts 2:17 f.) -

"And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh,
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions,
Even upon the menservants and the maidservants
in those days, I will pour out my spirit."

In Ezek 39:29, God says of Israel - "I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God."

How could this future outpouring of God's spirit be thought of as a baptism? Here again it is unlikely that John was being original; he was rather using ideas which would be familiar to many of his hearers. Already in Ezek 36:25-27, the future gift of the spirit is linked with the idea of sprinkling with water -

"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you"

Similarly, in Is 44:3 we read -

"For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my spirit upon your descendants,
and my blessing on your offspring."

Abrahams has pointed out¹ that in two of the passages cited

1. "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", I, p 43.

above (Joel 3:28,29; Ezek 39:29) the word used for the "pouring out" of God's Spirit is **נָפַח** which is properly applicable only to liquids. He also comments - "In Rabbinic Hebrew the word which means 'to draw' liquids (**נָטַח**) is often used of drawing the holy spirit."

Once again, however, the most striking parallel comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls, for the Manual of Discipline speaks of a time when "God will refine in his truth all the deeds of man, and will purify for himself the frame of man, consuming every spirit of error hidden in his flesh, and cleansing him with holy spirit (**שִׁדְּחָא בְּרוּחַ קוֹדֶשׁ**) from all wicked deeds. And he will sprinkle on him a spirit of truth, like water for impurity." (DSD 4:20, 21).¹ No doubt this passage is based on Ezek 36:25. It is clearly eschatological in its reference; it is at the end of days at "the appointed time of judgement which has been decreed", that the spirit will be sprinkled on man. Here is a very close parallel to John's preaching on the giving of God's holy spirit,² thought of metaphorically in terms of a rite of baptism.

There is thus ample evidence to show that if John did speak of a baptism of God's spirit, he was dealing with ideas already long familiar. Whether there existed in his day also

1. The translation of this passage has been a matter for dispute. Brownlee has rendered it - "God will purify by His truth all the deeds of a man, and he will refine him more than the sons of men..." (See BASOR, No 135, Oct 1954, pp 36,37.) This translation suggests that the "man" is a Messianic figure, who will be endowed with God's spirit. The word for man is **אָדָם** and Brownlee points out that both it and its equivalent *ἀνθρώπος* are used Messianically. The correct translation, however, is almost certainly not that of Brownlee, but rather the one given above. See also M. Burrows "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", p 316. For a justification of the translation, "purify for himself the frame of man" rather than Brownlee's "refine him more than the sons of men", see Y. Yadin, "A note on DSD IV 20", JBL, LXXIV, 1955, pp 40-43.

2. **שִׁדְּחָא בְּרוּחַ קוֹדֶשׁ** is perfectly rendered by *ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ*.

the idea that it would be the Messiah who would pour out the spirit, is not so easy to determine; the usual idea is of God pouring out his spirit.

One passage in the Damascus Document (2:12), speaking of the remnant, may say - "And He (God) will make known to them by the hand of His Messiah, His Holy Spirit....." But the reference may not be to the Messiah at all, but rather to "His anointed ones", i.e. the prophets.¹ The interpretation is so uncertain that we cannot build on it in any way.

Almost equally uncertain is the reading in the Isaiah scroll (I Q Isa) of Is 52:14, which may be rendered -

"I so anointed his appearance beyond anyone else, and his form beyond that of other sons of men."

This might suggest a Messianic interpretation of this passage; and if the reading "so shall he sprinkle many nations" is accepted, we could see how the servant's anointing would qualify him to anoint or sprinkle others. There is here, however, no mention of sprinkling God's spirit, and in any case the whole passage is still so uncertain that we cannot draw any definite conclusions.²

In the absence of any direct evidence that the Messiah was thought of as being instrumental in the eschatological outpouring of the spirit, it may be that this idea was original to John. But it is also possible that such a belief existed, though it has left no trace.

What exactly is the meaning of the eschatological outpouring of the spirit? Kraeling³ links it very closely with

1. See Brownlee, in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament" p 44; C. Rabin, "The Zadokite Documents", p 8.
2. See W.H. Brownlee, BASOR, No 132, Dec 1953, p 10 f; M. Burrows, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", pp 313, 314; "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", pp 315, 316.
3. "John the Baptist", p 61 f.

the baptism of fire. Arguing from the position that "spirit" and "breath" are the same word in Hebrew and in Greek, he points to the tradition of the "fiery breath" of the Messiah with which the unrighteous will be destroyed. (See the passage quoted from IV Ezra, above, p 118). Kraeling compares this idea with II Thess 2:8 where it is said that the Lord Jesus will slay the lawless one "with the breath of his mouth" (Of. Is 11:4), and also notes Rev 11:5, where the two witnesses have power if any one would harm them, to pour fire from their mouth and consume their foes. On this basis Kraeling wants to regard the spirit foretold by John as "a purgative and destructive force working through the Messiah."¹ The Messiah's fiery breath is but another way of talking of the river of fire. Similarly, Goguel wishes to equate fire and spirit.² Eisler takes πνεῦμα (π ν ε) in the sense of the "wind" by which God punishes sinners, as, for example, in Ps 1:4 where the wicked are "like chaff which the wind drives away"; he collects various passages from Isaiah, Jubilees, Sibylline Oracles and elsewhere which reflect this idea of judgement by wind.³

The evidence for this view is slight, however, and none of the passages we have cited above as pre-Christian examples of the idea of the outpouring of the spirit can be interpreted as viewing the spirit as a destructive force. It is not on the wicked, but on God's people that the spirit will be poured. Though the sense of cleansing and purifying is present in Ezek 36:25 and DSD 4:20,21, yet in all the texts the gift of the spirit is regarded as a blessing, as e.g. the parallelism in Is 43:3 clearly shows -

1. "John the Baptist", p 62.

2. "Jean-Baptiste", p 40.

3. "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", p 275 f. Eisler believes John had in mind a threefold trial of water, wind and fire which will annihilate the wicked, but through which the just will pass unscathed.

"I will pour my spirit upon your descendants,
and my blessing on your offspring."

Cf. also the parallelism in Ezek 39:29.

This evidence which we have just considered points to the fact that John did speak of a Messiah who would baptize with holy spirit. Apart from the argument that the saying is a Christianizing of John's message, the other main objection which has been raised is based on Acts 19:1-7, where Paul finds at Ephesus a group of disciples who knew only John's baptism.¹ When Paul asks them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" they replied, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." How, it is argued, could John have spoken of a holy spirit if these disciples had never heard of it?²

This interpretation completely fails to understand the text. The reply of the disciples does not mean that they had never heard of the idea of the outpouring of the spirit; to be ignorant of this, they would have to be ignorant of Ezekiel, Isaiah, Joel and so on. What they did not know, however, was that "there is a holy spirit", i.e. that the holy spirit was a present reality. Paul's question was, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit?" These disciples still thought the spirit was in the future, so their reply naturally means: we are quite unaware of the fact that the new age has already dawned and that the spirit has already been given. It was this that Paul explained to them, and it was this defect that Paul remedied by the laying on of hands, so that "the Holy Spirit came upon them" (Acts 19:6)³

In view of all this there is little reason to doubt that John spoke of a Messiah who would baptize, not with water, but

1. See further, Part XI, pp 294-297.

2. See e.g. T.W.Manson, "The Sayings of Jesus", p 41.

3. Cf. Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 99, n 2.

with both fire and holy spirit. This, as we have seen (p 120) is the natural conclusion to which the Q form of the saying points. Upon the wicked, the Coming One will pour out a river of fire; but upon God's people, or at any rate upon those who had repented, received water baptism and lived righteously, the Coming One will pour out God's spirit and all the blessings which that entails. That Mark omits the baptism of fire is not surprising. Most likely this is a Christianizing of John's message, since for the Christian, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit were closely linked.¹

3. John's Message and Jewish Expectations.

We have now gone as far as our sources will allow in reconstructing John's proclamation of the coming judgement and his picture of the Coming One. It remains to ask, with what branch of Jewish expectation did John ally himself?

In his preaching of the coming judgement, John stood in the true prophetic tradition. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, he condemned wickedness, especially among God's own people; they need expect no preferential treatment, but must rather expect swift and inevitable punishment. To a certain extent, John was also in line with the apocalyptic line of Jewish thought, which developed the ideas of the prophets especially in the inter-testamental period. Whereas the prophets often thought of judgement as being administered on earth, by some nation whom God used for His purposes, the apocalyptists expected the judgement to take place at the end of

1. It is interesting to note that while Matthew has nine references to fire and Luke has six, only one passage in Mark (9:42-48) mentions fire. Could it be that Mark, compiling his Gospel in Rome after the Neronian persecution, purposely avoids references to fire, since the Christians were blamed by Nero for causing the fire of Rome? Cf. Tacitus, Annales, XV,

days, following the resurrection, and preceding the ushering in of a new age when God and/or His Messiah would reign supreme. The apocalyptists usually expected the end to take place soon, and sometimes ventured to predict when and exactly how it would occur. In so far as John looked for a judgement by fire, in which all the wicked would be punished, his message has a very apocalyptic ring.

Furthermore, John can be seen to have many affinities with the baptist sectarian movement. The ideas both of the river of fire which will be poured ^{out} on the wicked, and of the future outpouring of the holy spirit find their closest and most striking parallels in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as we have noted above (pp 117, 122). This supports our contention that it is the sectarian movement which formed John's background.

In one important respect, however, John's picture of the future contrasts strongly with that of the apocalyptic-sectarian strain in Judaism. John seems to have concentrated on essentials, and to have gone back to the vigorous simplicity of the prophetic message. There is no hint in John's message of an elaborate blueprint of the future. Not for him the apocalyptic arithmetic of Daniel, or the conducted tours of Enoch, or the military strategy for the war against Gog and Magog; his was a simple message of punishment for evil and reward for righteousness. As we have seen, though he spoke of a coming Kingdom in some sense¹, he declined to go into details.

Turning now to the Coming One foretold by John, can we identify this figure with any particular Jewish expectation? It is common to distinguish two main branches of Messianic expectation at the beginning of our era.² Both developed during the

1. Above, pp 107, 108.

2. See especially S. Mowinkel, "He That Cometh", Oxford, 1956.

inter-testamental period, and were based on Old Testament ideas. There was on the one hand, a national form of expectation, which looked for a new representative of the house of David to lead the armies of God's people to victory over the Gentiles, thus ushering in a period of unprecedented material prosperity. On the other hand, there was the eschatological, or supernatural, or apocalyptic expectation, to which we have already referred, and which looked for a heavenly being, the Son of Man, who would come suddenly on the clouds of heaven to judge the earth. Such a twofold division can, however, be a dangerous oversimplification. Recent discoveries have confirmed just how varied and diverse Messianic expectations were, and just how foolish it is to be too dogmatic in trying to classify them.

Various identifications have been proposed for the Coming One proclaimed by John. One view which we shall deal with first is that this figure was actually Elijah. This was the claim of Albert Schweitzer¹, who thus challenged the normal Christian view that John thought of himself as Elijah, and therefore the forerunner of the Messiah. According to Schweitzer, John never thought of himself as Elijah, nor even did the people. "Jesus was the first and only person who attributed this office to him",² the identification being part of the "secret" of Jesus' Messiahship. Schweitzer does not produce much evidence to back this theory beyond claiming of John that "the description of Elias does not fit him at all, since he had done none of those things which Elias was to do"; especially, he did no miracle and was thus only a natural man

2. Schweitzer, op. cit., p 371.

1. A. Schweitzer, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus", London, 1910, pp 371 - 374.

without any evidence of supernatural power. For John, the coming great one was to be Elijah, and John's preaching "was only designed to secure that at His coming that Great One should find a community sanctified and prepared to receive the Spirit."¹

G.S. Duncan revived this view²; he holds that John could never have thought of himself as Elijah because "the Baptist would never have taken so exalted and selfconscious a view of his mission."³ He denies that he is Elijah in Jn 1:19 f., behind which passage Duncan says "we may trace an undeniably genuine tradition."⁴ John viewed himself merely as a voice, but he proclaimed the coming of a "mightier one." Elijah on one occasion called down fire from heaven; and the messenger of Mal 3:1f., who is probably identified with Elijah in Mal 4:5, was to be like a refiner's fire. The "mightier one" foretold by John was therefore none other than Elijah. Duncan suggests that John may have thought of himself in terms of Elijah's servant who is briefly mentioned in I Kings 18:43, 19:3.

W.H. Brownlee has also suggested that it was Elijah whom John expected.⁵ In support of this he cites Sirach 48:3 where it is said that Elijah brought down fire from heaven three times (see I Kgs 18:38, II Kgs 1:10, 1:12). Further, Brownlee holds that the returning Elijah was interpreted as Moses redivivus, the prophet like unto Moses of Deut 18:15.

1. "Quest of the Historical Jesus," p 372.

2. See G.S. Duncan, "Jesus, Son of Man", London, 1947, pp82-87.

3. Duncan, op. cit., p 85.

4. Duncan, op. cit., p 85.

5. See, "John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls", in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", pp 48 f.

He bases this on the "many striking resemblances between their careers, most notably in the revelation each received at Horeb and in the mysterious end to their lives in Transjordan."¹ Still further, Brownlee holds that the returning Elijah was equated with the Servant of the Lord, since in Sirach 48:10 Elijah has as his eschatological mission the Servant's task "to raise up the tribes of Jacob" (cf. Is 49:6).

One defect of the view of Schweitzer, Duncan and Brownlee is that, if pressed to its logical conclusion, John emerges as the forerunner of the forerunner, which seems a bit far-fetched. This difficulty is, however, met in an article by the most recent scholar to accept the idea that John's Coming One was to be Elijah. J.A.T. Robinson² follows previous writers in pointing to John as "the man of fire par excellence"³, quoting in addition the gloss on Lk 9:54 where James and John say to Jesus, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them, as Elijah did?". John's Coming One is the messenger of Mal 3:1 - "The messenger of the covenant, behold he is coming, says the Lord of Hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?" Like previous writers, Robinson points to John's denial that he is Elijah, in the Fourth Gospel, the historical value of which Robinson thinks to have been greatly enhanced by the Dead Sea Scrolls finds.

Robinson's originality consists in his challenging of the common assumption that Elijah was regarded as the forerunner of

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1. Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 48.
 2. "Elijah, John and Jesus : an Essay in Detection", in NTS, Vol 4, No. 4, July 1958, pp 263 - 281.
 3. Robinson, op. cit., p 265.

the Messiah. Although a scholar of the standing of G.F. Moore can say¹ that "It was the universal belief that shortly, before the appearance of the Messiah, Elijah should return", Robinson claims that there is no pre-New Testament evidence for the expectation of Elijah as the forerunner of the Messiah.²

What John therefore expected, says Robinson, was that Elijah would come, not as forerunner, but as Messiah. This gets rid of the "forerunner of the forerunner" difficulty, for John only expected one figure.

All the forms of the view that John expected Elijah as the Coming One have grave difficulties. We are not concerned here with John's view of himself - that is the subject of Part VI - but it must be said that there is considerable evidence that John did think of himself as the eschatological prophet.

Schweitzer's statement that John "had done none of those things which Elijah was to do", is just not true, for John in fact did the main thing which Elijah was expected to do - he called the people to repentance, and to be reconciled with each other prior to the day of judgement (cf. Mal 4:5,6).

Apart from this, however, there are other difficulties. We noted that those who follow Schweitzer, Duncan and Brownlee must hold that John was the forerunner of the forerunner. Robinson's way out of the difficulty is not at all convincing. The question of the disciples in Mk 9:11, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" together with references in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Justin³, suggest that there was an expectation that Elijah would be the forerunner of the Messiah, though it may not have been universal. Mal 4:5 says Elijah

1. "Judaism", II, p 357.

2. Robinson, op. cit., p 269.

3. See further, Part VI, pp 208,209.

will come "before the great and terrible day of the Lord" to "turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers....." As John clearly proclaimed that the Coming One would actually carry out the judgement and punishment of the wicked, the Coming One could hardly be Elijah who was to come before the judgement, and call the people to repentance. Robinson's view is purely a hypothesis with very little evidence to support it, and quite a bit of evidence to contradict it.

John's Coming One, as we have sketched him, was no forerunner; he was to be the judge, the instrument of the punishment of the wicked, and the instrument of the outpouring of God's Spirit. This can only be a Messiah of some description.

Is there then any branch of Messianic expectation with which we can connect John's Coming One?

It has been suggested that he predicted the advent of a national, Davidic Messiah.¹ T.W. Manson, for example, thinks that the figure expected by John was akin to the Messiah of Psalms of Solomon, 17.² This psalm, dating probably from the mid-1st Cent B.C., prays that God will "raise up unto them their king, the son of David, at the time in the which Thou seest, O God, that he may reign over Israel Thy servant." (17:23). This king is to "purge Jerusalem" and "destroy the Godless nations"; he will "gather together a holy people."

"And there shall be no unrighteousness in his days in their midst,
For all shall be holy, and their king the anointed of the Lord,
For he shall not put his trust in horse and rider and bow,
Nor shall he multiply for himself gold and silver for war,

1. Cf. the twofold expectation mentioned above, p 128.
2. "The Sayings of Jesus", p 41. On the Psalms of Solomon see Charles, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha", II, pp 625-652, from which also the translation has been taken.

Nor shall he gather confidence from a multitude for the day of battle" (17:36,37).

"For God will make him mighty by means of His holy spirit....
And the blessing of the Lord will be with him; he will be
strong and stumble not,
His hope will be in the Lord: who then can prevail against
him?
He will be mighty in his works, and strong in the fear of the
Lord" (17:42-44).

In spite of the statement that this figure will not rely on military might, he is none the less very much an earthly Messiah. The judgement he brings will be directed against the Romans who have defiled the Holy City.

There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that John looked for such a warrior king who would lead his armies against the Romans. In our sources, no mention is made by John of judgement upon the Gentiles; it is the unrighteous Israelites whom he calls to repentance. John's message, as we shall see,¹ was not at all political in character. There is no mention in Psalms of Solomon 17 of a fiery judgement, and it is to the Messiah, not to the righteous that God's holy spirit will be given.

It has also been suggested that John's Coming One may have been a priestly Messiah, a variant of the national Messiah. For a certain time, and in certain circles, a priestly rather than a Davidic Messiah was expected; though probably the two beliefs existed side by side in the Qumran community.² John was of priestly descent, and his followers showed a considerable interest in the priesthood; it has therefore been suggested that "it is possible that the Baptist expected a levitical Messiah, and meant to prepare for his coming."³ The main

1. Below, pp 151-154.

2. On the priestly Messiah, see Mowinkel, "He That Cometh", pp 286 f.; on the Messianic expectations of the Qumran sect see K. G. Kuhn, "The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel", in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", pp 54-64, and Burrows, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", Chapter XXVI, pp 297-311.

3. E. Stauffer, "New Testament Theology", p 24.

objection to this view is simply the complete lack of direct evidence for it; nowhere in our sources does John ever speak of a priest or of the priesthood, and it may be therefore doubted whether this idea can have been important to him. Nevertheless it is quite possible that priestly ideas did play some part in John's expectation.

Turning now to the other branch of Jewish expectation, can we identify John's Coming One with an apocalyptic Messiah? Did he expect the coming of the heavenly Son of Man? There is much to be said for this, and we have already noted that in his view of the coming judgement, John was clearly influenced by apocalyptic ideas.¹ The judgement of all men, and the punishment of the wicked by a river of fire strongly suggest a supernatural Messiah. We have seen how IV Ezra 13 portrays the Son of Man as destroying the wicked with a fiery stream.² The term ὁ ἐρχόμενος may reflect Dan 7:13,³ while the picture of the winnowing fork is akin to the picture of the Son of Man in Rev 14:14.⁴ Jesus, in so far as he used pre-existing concepts, favoured the Son of Man expectation, and since he was closely associated with John at first, and always had a high regard for him, it is likely that this was an idea which they held in common.

In contradiction to this view, however, we have also noted evidence which points to an earthly rather than a supernatural Messiah. This is suggested by the fact that John dares to compare himself to the Coming One, albeit to his own disadvantage when he says, "The Coming One is mightier than I."⁵ Similarly,

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1. Above, pp 126, 127.
 2. Above, p 118.
 3. Above, p 112.
 4. Above, p 112.
 5. Above, pp 112, 113.

John's saying about untying (or carrying) the Coming One's sandals points to an earthly, human figure.¹ Furthermore, if John sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the Coming One, or shall we look for another?" (Lk 7:19, Matt 11:3), he cannot have regarded the Coming One as a supernatural figure.

The evidence appears to point to two quite contradictory conclusions. Kraeling says that "there is for John no possible meeting-ground between the wonder-working preacher of the Kingdom and the transcendent 'man-like one' who destroys the wicked in unquenchable fire, save on the assumption of a break with his fundamental convictions, for which there is no adequate justification"². Our study seems to have ended in complete contradiction.

There are various ways out of this dilemma. One is to hold that John began by thinking of a supernatural Messiah, but later changed his view when it dawned on him that Jesus might be the Coming One. But this fails to explain the "mightier than I" and the "sandals" sayings, and it involves as Kraeling says, "the assumption of a break with his fundamental convictions, for which there is no adequate justification."

Escape from the dilemma can also be sought by denying either one or other term of the equation. Some writers deny or ignore the apocalyptic or supernatural element of John's proclamation. T.W. Manson, for example, holds that "there is no indication that John thinks of the Messiah as a supernatural being"; he is merely "a human Messiah endowed with supernatural power and authority."³ Such a conclusion can only be arrived at by setting aside a considerable part of the evidence. Especially

1. Above, p 113.

2. "John the Baptist", p 129.

3. "The Sayings of Jesus", p 41.

when we see John in his proper background, it becomes impossible to eliminate completely the apocalyptic element. Other scholars, for example, Goguel¹ and Kraepling², seek to deny the earthly attributes of John's Coming One. This involves especially the denial of historical value to the question of John from prison. This is certainly another possible way out. But we have seen reason to hold that John's question from prison is historical, and not the sort of incident to have been invented by the Christian community.³ This point of view also comes up against the "mightier than I" and the "sandals" sayings.

Another way out of the difficulties raised by John's Messianic expectations is to suggest that he looked for an earthly figure who would subsequently be exalted to become the heavenly judge. There is a certain amount of evidence that such an expectation did exist in John's day, and that it formed, moreover, the closest approach to the thought of Jesus himself which we can find in the literature of Judaism at this period. In the Book of Enoch, especially Chapters 70 and 71, the secret is revealed of the identity of the Son of Man, who has been described in previous parts of the book. Enoch himself is translated to heaven, where the Head of Days "came to me and greeted me with His voice, and said unto me; Thou art the Son of Man."⁴ Here we have the idea of an ordinary man being exalted to heaven and appointed Son of Man by God.

1. "Jean-Baptiste", pp 39, 63-65.

2. "John the Baptist", pp 129-131.

3. Part I, p 19.

4. Enoch 71:14. R.H. Charles in his "The Book of Enoch, Translation and Commentary" (1912) makes a whole series of emendations for which there is no textual evidence whatsoever, on the grounds that Christian scribes must have altered the text. This is most improbable since a) if Christians had altered the book the alterations would be more numerous and more obvious, and b) it is inconceivable that Christians, who believed Jesus to be the Son of Man would deliberately alter a document to make it state that Enoch was the Son of Man.

The significance of this concept for the study of the New Testament cannot be dealt with in detail here; in any case this has already been done by Rudolph Otto.¹ If such a belief did exist in John's day, we can see how all the evidence concerning John's Coming One could be fitted in to such an expectation. John looked for a historical person, walking this earth, as yet unrecognised, who would be exalted to heaven at the fast-approaching end of days. The drawback of this theory is that the dating of the Book of Enoch has been widely questioned, as has the inferences which have been drawn from it. The prevailing view is that no conception of an earthly son of Man existed in John's day, the idea originating in the mind of Jesus.² Nevertheless, this theory has not been given the consideration it deserves, and it may well provide the best possible explanation of John's views. Jesus could have then taken them over from John, his own original contribution being the idea that the exaltation of the Son of Man could only come about through suffering and death.

There is one final possible explanation, and that is that John was deliberately vague as to the exact type of Messiah he expected. We have noted how simple his view of the coming judgement was;³ may it not be that he made his Messianic expectations as simple as possible also by refusing to give a detailed description? It is significant that he is not reported as using the term Son of Man, nor for that matter, Son of David, Son of God, The Branch, Elect One, or any other Messianic title. He speaks only of the Coming One, which is the vaguest possible

1. "The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man"; see especially pp 176-243.

2. For a recent exposition of this viewpoint see O. Cullman, "The Christology of the New Testament", pp 137-152; also W. Manson, "Jesus the Messiah", especially pp 113-120.

3. Above, p 127.

title.¹ The fact that the Messiah will come is an obvious one, and beyond this the user is not committed. Instead of speculating exactly when and in what manner the Messiah will come, people would be better employed preparing themselves by repentance for his coming.

If it be held, therefore, that the evidence is insufficient to establish the expectation of a Messiah both earthly and heavenly on the lines suggested by Otto, then the best explanation of John's Coming One is that he was deliberately a vague figure as far ^{as} exact details were concerned, though his imminent coming was a very real idea to John.

4. Man's Response.

John's eschatological proclamation was followed by a demand upon his hearers that they should respond in a certain way. To some extent there is here, as Kraeeling points out², a parallel with early Christian preaching which can be divided into "proclamation" and "exhortation".³ Just as the early Christian proclamation prompted the question, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), so John's proclamation prompts the multitudes to ask, "What then shall we do?" (Lk 3:10). The two aspects of the message are, of course, intimately connected, the one with the other.

Before examining the sort of response John demanded, we may ask briefly of whom John made the demand. Who composed his audience? Josephus (Ant. XVIII, 5, 2) and the New Testament (Mk 1:5, Mt 3:5) agree in stating that John's preaching attracted large crowds. The Q teaching preserved in Mt 3:7-10 and Lk

1. It is noteworthy that Mowinkel uses the phrase "He That Cometh" as a title for his book which describes the whole range of Messianic beliefs.

2. Kraeeling, "John the Baptist", pp 65, 66.

3. κήρυγμα and τῶν παλινεστίων.

3:7-9 is, however, introduced differently by Matthew and Luke.¹ According to Matthew it was addressed to the Pharisees and Sadducees, according to Luke, to "the multitudes". Cf. also Luke 3:10. Probably Q had no introduction,² and the evangelists have each added their own. Matthew's reference to "Pharisees and Sadducees" is typical of the First Gospel which comes down heavily against them (cf. especially Mt 16: 1-12); for this reason, the accuracy of Mt 3:7 is doubtful.³ Luke is probably much nearer the truth in representing John's teaching as being addressed, not to any special group, but to the crowds in general; of course, in Lk 3:12-14 Luke also gives a sample of John's teaching directed to specific classes of people. It is conceivable that the saying beginning, "You brood of vipers!" was spoken with a certain section of John's audience in mind, but Kraeeling goes completely beyond the evidence in trying to make out that it was addressed to "the priestly aristocracy."⁴

Turning now to the response which John expected his hearers to make, his first demand was for repentance. "Bear fruit that befits repentance", he warns his hearers (Mt 3:8, Lk 3:8); "I baptize you with water for repentance", he states (Mt 3:11 - perhaps an addition by Matthew). Matthew and Luke characterize John's message as "a baptism of repentance" (Mk 1:4, Lk 3:3), and Matthew summarizes it, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Mt 3:2).

Repentance is never defined in the New Testament. It is assumed that its meaning is known, and this is not to be wondered at as repentance lay at the very heart of the prophetic message,

1. See S.E. Johnson in "Interpreter's Bible", Vol 7, p 265.
2. See Part I, p 5.
3. Cf. Kraeeling, "John the Baptist", p 47 ; T.W. Manson, "The Sayings of Jesus", p 39.
4. "John the Baptist", pp 47-50.

and is "a cardinal doctrine of Judaism".¹ Numerous passages in the Old Testament speak of the need for repentance, and of the forgiveness which it brings, not only in the Prophets but also in the Law. The penitential psalms are expressions of repentance. Originally it was the nation that was addressed by the prophets, but from Ezekiel onwards the idea of repentance was individualized; it is the wicked man who must turn from his sins. Cf. Ezekiel 18:21- "But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die." In the teaching of the Rabbis repentance was given an exalted place; according to them, it was created before the world.²

Strangely enough, although the idea plays such a prominent part in the Old Testament, there is no noun for "repentance" in Biblical Hebrew. The normal word used is the verb **נָשׁוּב** which can mean literally to turn, go back, return. Wickedness is viewed as a departure from or a falling away from God and from the will of God. To repent therefore means both to turn from evil and to turn towards God. In post-Biblical Hebrew, **נִתְּנָה** is used to mean "repentance".³ The Greek **ἐπιστρέφειν** preserves this basic idea, whereas **μεταμέλειν** and especially **μετανοεῖν** which is much the commonest word for "repent" in the New Testament, both imply the change of mind and heart involved in repentance.⁴

1. Moore, "Judaism", I, p 500. On repentance see Moore, "Judaism", I, pp 500-502, 507-534; article, "Repent, Repentance", W. Morgan, HDB, IV, p 225.
2. For references, see Moore, "Judaism" I, p 526.
3. The very **נָשׁוּב**, frequently rendered "repent" in the A.V., means "to be sorry for" something, or for having done something. Often it signifies the change of mind which this sorrow brings about; with the sense of change of mind, it can be used of God, as well as of man. It is only used a few times of repentance from sin, however. See HDB, IV, p 225.
4. See Arnt and Gingrich, Greek - English Lexicon (based on Baur), pp 512-514.

Repentance presumes a state of sin. It is in the light of this that John's addressing his hearers as a "brood of vipers" is to be understood. It was the serpent who tempted Eve to sin and by the time of Rev 12:9, if not earlier,¹ the serpent was identified with Satan himself. "Brood of vipers" may therefore have had, as T.W. Manson suggests,² much the same force as "children of Satan." Kraeling wants to distinguish between snake (ὄφεις) and viper (ἐχιδνα). According to him, a viper was looked upon as "basically noxious in character, a creature of venomous malignity"; and to call anyone a viper was "not merely to accuse him of improper motives, but to castigate him as evil in his innermost being."³ Obviously John did not pull his punches in denouncing the wickedness of his hearers and their need, therefore, of repentance.

Repentance involves the recognition of and the confession of sins: "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). But repentance must also involve a real change of the mind and heart and will; thus Ezekial says, "Repent and turn from your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit." (Ezek 18:30, 31).

It was recognised that this inner change had to be genuine; according to the Mishnah (Yoma 8, 9) if anyone repents, but with the intention of sinning again, and again seeking forgiveness, then his repentance is not true repentance at all.

1. See Moore, "Judaism", I, pp 478, 479.
2. "The Sayings of Jesus", p 40.
3. Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 48. Yet another suggestion (see G.R.S. Mead, "The Gnostic John the Baptizer", p 13) is that the phrase reflects Micah 7:17 where it is said of the Gentiles that "they shall lick the dust like a serpent."

Moreover, it is fully recognized that repentance must be manifested in deeds. "Bear fruit that befits repentance" (Mt 3:7, Lk 3:8) represents the Jewish view exactly. The Greek *μετάνοια*, is thus not adequately rendered by "change of mind"; we must attach to it also the wider meaning it held in Judaism including especially the good works which prove its genuineness.

The efficacy of repentance was greatly stressed.¹ It was, of course, regarded as the indispensable condition of God's forgiveness, and this forgiveness is readily granted by God: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Is 55:7). Even the worst sinner, if he repents, will be forgiven.

John, in his call for repentance, was thus very much in line with one of the central beliefs of the Old Testament and of the Judaism of his day. His proclamation of the imminence of the end would, however, give his teaching on repentance a special urgency.

It is often pointed out, in connection with John's message, that repentance and the coming of the Messianic age were frequently connected. This is true of one strand of Jewish thought in John's day and for some time thereafter. The continual non-appearance of the expected crisis was a problem for most branches of Jewish belief, especially as one foreign yoke succeeded another. So it came about that a simple explanation was devised, in some circles, to account for the delay in the coming of the new age. This explanation had its origin in the

1. Moore, "Judaism", I, pp 520-534.

2. See Moore, "Judaism", pp 521-526.

Old Testament belief that if only Israel would repent and return to God, they would be pardoned and God would restore the national fortunes.

During the Roman period, the idea gained ground that while God was certain to bring the Messiah one day, what was holding matters up was the wickedness of the Jewish people. The blame for the delay rested on the people, not upon God. According to this view then, there is no one, fixed, appointed time; the Messiah will only come when the proper conditions are fulfilled, whenever that might be.

Writing of the belief that the coming deliverance is conditional on repentance, G.F. Moore says - "This is the burden of the prophets from first to last; it is written in some of the most pertinent and impressive chapters of the Law".¹ While this is true in a general way, it was only in the Roman period that the idea was linked with the non-appearance of the Messiah. By the 3rd Century A.D. it was a well-established Rabbinic doctrine, and the accepted explanation of the non-appearance of the Messiah.

The fact that the Rabbinic evidence is strongest for the 3rd Century A.D. does not mean that the doctrine did not exist much earlier. There are several records of a debate between two Rabbis of the late 1st Century A.D. who discussed the question.² Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus held that "If the people of Israel do not repent, then they will never be redeemed"; i.e. he held that the Messianic deliverance is conditional on repentance. He was opposed by Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah, who could not accept the logical conclusion of this, that if Israel

1. Moore, "Judaism", II, p 350.

2. On this subject, see Strack-Billerbeck, I, pp 162 f.

never repented they would never be redeemed. He believed the deliverance did not depend on man at all, but would come in God's own time.

It was the view of Eliezer ben Hyrcanos which became dominant in the orthodox eschatology of Rabbinic Judaism. Though the earliest reference to the debate on this question dates from the late 1st Cent A.D., the basic idea is very much older. This view is clearly stated by Rabbi Jose the Galilean (c. 110 A.D.) who said, "Great is repentance, for it brings near the (Messianic) redemption." For a list of quotations of subsequent Rabbinic sayings on this question, see Strack-Billerbeck, I, pp 162f, 598f.

Sometimes the idea seems to be that God did set an appointed time, or times, but as the condition of repentance was not operative, the end is still delayed. Thus Rab (died 247 A.D.) said : "All times (which have been appointed for the redemption are past (without the redemption having come); the matter now depends only on repentance and good works" (Sanhedrin, 97 b). A rather different view is that ascribed to Rabbi Johanan (died 279 A.D.) He believed that God had set an appointed time for the end, which had not yet come, but which would come whether the people repented or not. But if the people would repent, even for one day, then the end would come before the appointed time (Ex. R. 25, 87a).

In the majority of cases the condition is repentance, but there are a number of sayings which mention other conditions such as almsgiving, the study of the Torah, and the correct keeping of two or even one Sabbath.¹ The oldest of these quotations is one ascribed to Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai (c.150 A.D.) - "If Israel kept only two Sabbaths according to the rule they would be immediately delivered." (Shabbat, 118 b).

1. See quotations in Strack-Billerbeck, I, pp 599, 600.

If John's message is to be interpreted in the light of this line of thought, then his idea must have been to call the nation to repentance and to the performance of good works in order to make possible and indeed to hasten the coming of the Messiah.

It must be noted, however, that "Great is repentance, for it brings near the redemption" expresses only one approach to the question, that which became dominant in Pharisaic, orthodox Judaism. John's sympathies, however, lay more with the apocalyptic outlook which tended to expect the new age at a fixed time. This is implied in the apocalyptic calculations of the time of the end; if the end did not come when expected then it was not due either to men's sin or to a change in the will of God, it was due to a miscalculation. Now it is this view (without the arithmetic calculations) which John appears to have favoured: for him, the end is about to come whether men want it or not. It is in the face of the inevitable end that men are called to repent in order that they might escape the wrath of God. Abrahams expresses the difference between the two points of view when he says - "The formula of John (or Jesus) was: Repent for the Kingdom is at hand. The Pharisaic formula was: Repent and the Kingdom is at hand."¹

Closely linked with John's call to bring forth fruits that befit repentance is his warning, "Do not presume to say to yourselves 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." (Mt 3:9, Lk 3:8). This saying has sometimes been interpreted as meaning that in the sight of God all racial distinctions are abolished and that only repentance and righteousness count, but this is to go beyond John's meaning. His hearers were Jews (cf. Mk 1:5, Mt 3:5); the fact that he warned them against relying on descent from Abraham shows that those being addressed

1. "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", I, p 34.

were in fact descended from Abraham. John's warning to the Jews was that mere physical descent from Abraham was not enough but that repentance and a righteous life were also necessary. Nothing is said of John's attitude to the Gentiles, and there was presumably nothing distinctive or startling in his attitude to that question.

Once again, John is but repeating and emphasizing the teaching of the prophets. The conception of a Chosen People had always been open to abuse : the danger was that the privilege of choice was stressed, but the responsibility forgotten. "Even if we sin we are thine, knowing thy power", says Wisdom of Solomon 15:2; in the popular mind this could easily be misinterpreted, and the next phrase forgotten - "but we will not sin, because we know that we are accounted thine." In the Judaism of John's day opinions varied regarding Israel's position as the Chosen People, and regarding the fate of the Gentiles. There were Rabbis who believed that "All Israelites have a portion in the world to come"¹, but the more general view was that wicked Jews would be punished. There were Rabbis who believed that "No Gentiles have a portion in the world to come"², but the more general opinion was that righteous Gentiles would be rewarded. What John was up against, however, in all probability was not the teaching either of the prophets or of the Rabbis but the popular understanding, or rather misunderstanding of the concept of the Chosen People according to which Jews could expect to receive preferential treatment even when they had lived sinful lives.

Behind this saying of John we should probably see not only a general reference to membership of the Chosen People, but also a reference to the common belief that God had been, and

1. Mishnah, San. 10: 1.

2. Gittin 45b; Baba Batra 10 b.

might still be, especially merciful towards Israel for the sake of his servant Abraham, or for the sake of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Indeed the Old Testament itself provided texts to encourage such a view, e.g. Gen 26:3, 5 - "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfil the oath which I swore to Abraham your father because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws." Here Abraham's obedience is the ground for God's goodness to his descendants. Another example of this view may be seen in II Kgs 13:22, 23: Israel, under Jehoahaz, was threatened by Hazael, king of Syria, "but the Lord was gracious unto them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and would not destroy them; nor has he cast them from his presence until now." Similar appeals to God, on account of the patriarchs, are to be found in the inter-testamental literature. E.g. in II Macc 8:15, prayer is made to God for those whom Nicanor intended to sell into slavery "if not for their own sake, yet for the sake of the covenants made with their fathers, and because he had called them by his holy and glorious name." This same theme runs through the Rabbinic literature. In Ex 32, after the incident of the golden calf, Moses pleads with God not to destroy the Israelites, but it is only when Moses says, "Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants" that "the Lord repented of the evil which he had thought to do to his people." Rabbi Hezekiah ben Hiyya¹ commented on this passage - "Moses' intercession was not accepted by God until he made mention of the good desert of the forefathers." It is perhaps misleading to talk of belief in

1. Tanhuma, Wayyera 9. This Rabbi was of the 3rd Century A.D. but he is merely illustrating this long-standing belief.

a "treasury of merit" by means of which Jews could draw upon "the merit of the fathers"¹. Nevertheless it is not difficult to imagine how, in the popular view, descent from Abraham could lead to moral complacency. It was such a complacency that John sought to shatter by declaring that each Jew would be judged entirely on his own merits.

In John's view, God did not depend on Israel; if they all broke the covenant and defied God's Law, the omnipotent God could easily create a new people. In the passage cited above from Ex 32 this is what God threatens to do when he says to Moses, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation." God threatens to destroy all the Israelites except Moses, who would become the father of a new Israel. John looks at the stones strewn over the face of the wilderness and declares that "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." Perhaps John had in mind Is 51:1,2 where Abraham is the stone from which Israel was hewn -

"Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
And to the quarry from which you were digged,
Look to Abraham your father,
And to Sarah who bore you."

Mere physical descent from Abraham by itself will count for nothing at the judgement.

John's first demand was therefore that men should repent. His second demand was that they should be baptized; we shall deal with this in Part V. This brings us to John's third and final demand, that men should live righteous lives.

This demand was expressed in various ways. Josephus, anxious to portray Judaism as a religion of high moral standards, concentrated almost entirely on this aspect of John's teaching;

1. See Moore, "Judaism", I, p 544.

2. See Part II, p 73.

John, he tells us, "commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God" Jesus said that "John came to you in the way of righteousness" (Mt 21:32). John himself called on the people to "Bear fruit that befits repentance" (Mt 3:8, Lk 3:8). We have noted above that for John, as for other Jewish teachers, righteous living was the essential fruit of repentance; these two, to vary the metaphor, are but different sides of the same coin.

What was the "way of righteousness" advocated by John? Undoubtedly it would consist mainly in governing one's life in accordance with the Torah, and this is borne out by the four sayings of John which preserve definite moral injunctions.

There is firstly, his fearless word to Herod Antipas: "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." John's grounds for this ruling are to be found in Lev 18:16, 20:21.¹

The other three definite rulings are related in the passage which is found only in Luke (3:10-14), and which probably came from Luke's special source L.² The authenticity of this passage has been disputed, but "there is every reason to suppose that details of the Baptist's teaching were preserved in Palestine and, at all events, the present section contains the kind of instruction he must have given."³

These sayings are quite straightforward and need little explanation. It is to be noted that to John's hearers they would be neither startling or original; they are merely applications of the fundamental principles of Jewish ethics.

1. See further, Part X, p. 287.

2. Part I, p. 8.

3. B.S. Easton, "Luke", p. 39.

The tax collectors (τελεῖναι) were especially despised as collaborators with the Romans and as traitors to their own people; the system of farming out taxes offered ample scope for oppression and fraud. They are exhorted by John to act justly and take only exactly what is due. The soldiers (στρατευόμενοι)

) addressed by John were most probably Jewish,¹ as there is no indication elsewhere that John preached to Gentiles or had any dealings with them at all. These men may well have been engaged on police duties rather than being on active service. The powers entrusted to them could also be misused as John's answer suggests - "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

The command to share clothing and food with him who is in need (Lk 3:11) has been compared to the teaching of Jesus in Matt 5:40 - "If any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well." This comparison is a false one, however, because Jesus' saying is part of a much more radical ethical demand. It is given as an example of returning good for evil; it is to the person who is suing you for your coat that you are to give your cloak. John's saying, on the other hand, fits in with the usual Jewish teaching on almsgiving.² "Is not this the fast that I choose to share your bread with the hungry, when you see the naked, to cover him" (Is 58:6,7). "He who opposes a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours him" (Prov 14:31). Numerous quotations in this vein could be given from the Old Testament and inter-testamental literature. Similarly, the Rabbinic writings continually praise charity to the poor and needy; it is significant that the usual word for almsgiving is

1. Plummer, "St. Luke", ICC, p 92.

2. On almsgiving see Moore, "Judaism", II, pp 162 - 179.

7p78 , "righteousness."

John is portrayed for us, in Josephus especially, as a man of exceptional piety. There are references in the Gospels to the practice of fasting and to special prayers, but all of these references apply to the group of John's disciples, and nowhere do we hear of John laying extra obligations on the crowd at large. Discussion of prayer and fasting is therefore reserved until Part VII.

5. John's Message and Political Questions.

As we have seen¹ above, John's Coming One was in no sense a political figure, or warrior Messiah. In so far as John did preach the coming Kingdom, it was a Kingdom which would be ushered in by God and the Coming One, and not by men's efforts either by way of repentance,² or by way of force of arms.

According to our sources, John's message was not a political one; yet we must take note at this point of the theories of Robert Eisler, who interprets the whole of John's ministry in political terms. Eisler believes John to have been "Johanan b. Zekharjah, a priestly Rekhabite descended from a famous sept of wonder-workers and rain-charmers."³ Building on the statement of the Slavonic Josephus that John enticed the Jews to liberty by declaring to them, "God has sent me to show you the way of the law, whereby ye may be freed from many masters," Eisler portrays John as condemning all Jews who had submitted to the Idumaeen line and to Rome. He demanded that all who had done so should receive proselyte baptism before being counted as true Jews again, and he preached the coming of a liberator-king.

1. pp 132, 133.

2. Cf. pp 142-145.

3. "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", p 566.

Eisler connects John and his disciples with the "fourth sect" of the Jews, the rebel party founded by Judas of Galilee. These were known, Eisler believes, as the "barjonim", those who "stand outside", the "extremists;"¹ and they are to be identified with the later sect of "Dosithean Sadducites", who produced the Damascus Document. Since, according to the Slavonic Version, John's ministry began in the time of Archelaus, he is pictured as a leader of the insurgents in the period after the death of Herod the Great. A few Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts designate John as a "high priest" (Kohen gadol), so Eisler links this with the fact that one of the demands which the revolutionary party made of Archelaus was that they should be allowed to elect the high priest, and he supposes that John was so elected by the rebels. John was arrested, as the Slavonic version relates, and brought before the Sanhedrin by Archelaus. In spite of a violent attack by one, Simon, John made a deep impression on the tribunal and was allowed to go free. He then returned to the Jordan region and continued his preaching as before.

Upon John's announcement of a coming liberator, three Messiahs came forward to claim this post-Judas the Gaulanite, Simon of Peraea, and the gigantic shepherd, Athrongas. Archelaus, with Roman assistance, crushed this rebellion and Simon and Athrongas perished, while Judas and some of his followers escaped to the mountains. John continued to act as high priest to the outlawed rebels to whom, Eisler claims, he "had administered the sacramentum militare".² Ten years later, there was a further revolt occasioned by the census of Quirinius, and again led by Judas; but it also ended in failure.

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1. Op. cit., pp 252, 253.
 2. Op. cit., p 567.

Eisler considers Luke 3:14f. to be "a sort of field sermon delivered before the march into battle" on the occasion of one or other of these two revolts.¹ The στρατεύόμενοι meaning "persons going to war", are the rebel troops who ask John, their "priest dedicated to warfare", or "army chaplain",² "What must we do?" The command to "do violence to no man, exact from no man by intimidation, make no raids upon houses, be content with your rations", is held to correspond closely to advice given by Josephus himself to the volunteers and insurgents whom he recruited in Galilee. The comrades-in-arms are to share with each other - "let him who has two under-garments give to him that hath none, and he that hath provisions let him do likewise." The rebels had demanded of Archelaus the abolition of oppressive taxes, but John rules (Luke 3:12,13) that in view of the necessity of finding finances for the war of liberation, taxes must be continued, but not at an excessive level.

John's baptism also is seen as being largely political in significance,³ a sacramentum in the sense of a soldier's oath of allegiance, by which he enrolls in the army of the new Israel. "The new Israel, regenerated through the baptism of John into a 'new covenant' with the national God, is primarily a Militia of the coming Messiah, an army of the Christ, the future anointed national king who is their war-lord and army commander, and to whose service their soldiers' lives are devoted."⁴

After the failure of the two revolts mentioned, Eisler pictures John as living in hiding in the bush of the Jordan valley, "appearing only now and then, like a bodiless spectre, a jinn of the wilderness, a wild man or a satyr, causing consternation with his ever and anon repeated announcement of the

1. Op. cit., pp 262 f.

2. In German, "feldgeistlicher".

3. Op. cit., pp 267 f.

4. Op. cit. p 270.

coming terror of the last days, now and then baptizing newly won fighters for the last messianic war."¹ A fresh impetus was given to the revolutionary movement, however, by Pilate bringing the Roman standards into Jerusalem, fulfilling, in the eyes of pious Jews, Daniel's prophecy of "the abomination of desolation". It was at this time (19 A.D.) so Eisler believes that Jesus went to be baptized by John. Though a follower of John for a period, Jesus went on to proclaim his own distinctive message, and to form his own band of disciples, some of whom had previously been adherents of John. Eisler's reconstruction of the life and ministry of Jesus do not concern us here, and we merely note that he holds that John continued his hermit-like existence in the wilderness until he was arrested and executed in 35 A.D., "after he had wearied Antipas for many years with his repeated predictions of punishment, and by his messianic preaching of baptism and liberty had aroused the suspicions even of politicians who knew nothing of his activity in the time of Archelaus and the war of Varus".²

Eisler's theory is so manifestly false that one hardly knows where to begin to criticize it. Basically, it distorts the truth because Eisler rejects the most reliable sources, and builds on the least reliable. The keystone of the theory is the two passages on John in the Slavonic Josephus, which Eisler believes to go back to an original Aramaic version of "The Jewish War", but which in fact, as we have already seen are Byzantine interpolations in a Greek version of Josephus,³ and which have no claim to be regarded as reflecting an independent historical source. Moreover, he does not hesitate to drag in

1. Op. cit., p 567.
2. Op. cit. p 291.
3. Part I, pp 23-33.

fragments of "evidence" from the latest and most unreliable sources if they appear to offer the least support for his conjectures; these references range from the apocryphal gospels to the Josippon, the Toledoth Jeshu and the Arabian Nights!

Eisler's theory can only stand if the clear evidence of the Gospels is dismissed as being utterly false. This Eisler is prepared to do, for he believes the Gospels have come down to us "covered with a thick layer of pious frauds, as is the case with the sacred writings of all peoples".¹ But he is not even consistent, for he is ready to accept any parts of the Gospel record (e.g. Luke 3:10-14) which fit in with, or can be made to fit in with, his pre-conceived notions.

Eisler's methods are equally unscientific, for his treatment of texts is in many cases purely arbitrary. Whatever does not suit his theory he rejects as Christian interpolations; when evidence is lacking this is held to be due to Christian censorship, and so the text is "emended" and "reconstructed."²

The Slavonic passage (War II, 7) on which Eisler builds so much is quite different in language, tone and on the facts from the genuine reference in "Antiquities", XVIII, 5,2. Eisler surmounts this difficulty by holding that Josephus drew on two sources, an official Roman one for the Antiquities passage, and a Baptist or Naṣōraean one for the Slavonic passage. But evidence for this Baptist source is entirely lacking. Eisler believes that the Slavonic passage shows John's message to have been a political one, and he then proceeds to connect John with almost everything that is known about the Zealot movement from the death of Herod onwards. So an elaborate theory is constructed, with John being elected high priest and so on, regardless of the fact that there is not a shred of evidence to support it.

1. See Jack, "The Historic Christ", p 13.

2. See Jack, "The Historic Christ", pp 99 f.

Further, it is not at all clear that the Slavonic version does regard John as a political figure. It is true that it makes him say, "God has sent me to show you the way of the law, whereby ye may be freed from many masters. And there shall be no mortal ruling over you, save only the Highest who has sent me"; and also that John declared that there would be granted to them a king who would set them free. But these statements do not constitute enticement to armed rebellion; they are in fact quite in line with the New Testament picture of John who demands obedience to God and to the Torah, and who promises the coming of a (non-political) Messiah. That the Slavonic passage is not thinking in political terms is further shown by the fact that John appears before "the teachers of the law", and is questioned on theological, not political questions. Further, the fact that he is thereafter released shows that Archelaus cannot have suspected him of having political motives.

Eisler's theory is open to many more objections, such as the fantastic chronology he is forced to accept, but enough has been said to show that this massive and erudite attempt to interpret John in political terms is a complete failure.

PART V - JOHN THE BAPTIST.

John's ministry was characterized not only by the preaching and teaching which we have just been considering but also by the rite of baptism. So prominent a feature was this of John's ministry that he was generally known as "John the Baptist" or "John the Baptizer."¹

Both Josephus and the New Testament have the form Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής (Josephus once, the New Testament, 13 times.) ὁ βαπτίζων appears three times, in Mk 1:4, 6:14, 6:24, but the fact that the form βαπτιστής also appears in Mk (6:25, 8:28) suggests that they were used interchangeably. In Mk 1:4 there is a variant reading; the best text is that which keeps the ὁ before βαπτίζων, and reads - "John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness....."

Apart from the fact that John baptized, the data provided by our sources are meagre and can be easily summarized. The principal place where the rite was performed was in the river Jordan, though in the Fourth Gospel we hear of him baptizing at Bethany beyond Jordan and also at Aenon near Salim (Jn 1:28, 3:23). In all cases the baptism appears to have been in a river and therefore in running water.² Although it is not specifically stated, the baptism was almost certainly by total immersion. The word βαπτίζω³ nearly always means a washing of the whole body, and we read that when Jesus had been baptized, "he came up out of the water" (Mk 1:10, Mt 3:16). John himself presided in some way at the ceremony; he baptized people, and people could be said to be baptized by him. Baptism was doubtless preceded by an exhortation by John, and

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1. This is also doubtless, as Oepke says (Kittel TWNT, p 544), an example of the Jewish custom of differentiating between people of the same name by adding another name. cf. the four Simons of Mt 10:2, Mk 3:18, Mk 14:3, Acts 10:6.
 2. Aenon means "springs", and "there was much water there" (Jn 3:23). Cf. Part II, p 80.
 3. See below, pp 162, 163.

then the people were baptized, "confessing their sins" (Mk 1:5, Mt 3:6). This is the only trace of the service which must have accompanied the rite, but whether this confession was a formal one prescribed by John or purely an extemporary prayer of confession by those about to be baptized, we are not told.¹

The information in our sources concerning the meaning of John's baptism is also meagre. The only statement by John himself is the saying in which he contrasts his baptism, which is "with water", with the coming Messianic baptism with holy spirit and with fire.²

This leaves us with two statements about the baptism of John, one by Mark and one by Josephus, which appear to be rather contradictory.

Mk 1:4 states that "John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." This statement is paralleled in Lk 3:3.

Josephus tells us in "Antiquities", XVIII, 5, 2, that, according to John, "baptismal ablution would be acceptable, if it were used not to beg off from sins committed, but for the purification of the body when the soul had previously been cleansed by righteous conduct."

Mark seems to suggest that the baptism had a moral significance, conferring forgiveness of sins, following on repentance whereas Josephus seems to suggest that it had a purely ritual or ceremonial significance and definitely states that it was not for the remission of sins. The difference between these two accounts is probably not so great as at first appears, as we shall see later.

1. Cf. Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 97.

2. Cf. Part IV, pp 114 f.

It is not specifically stated in our sources whether John's baptism was repeated or whether it was performed on each person only once. Usually it is assumed to have been performed only once because of its close connection with Christian baptism.¹ It would be possible to argue that Christian baptism received its character from the uniqueness of the Christ event; there is no need for repeated cleansing, for Christ has washed us from our sins when he died once for all upon the Cross. The only individual baptism described is that of Jesus, and he is baptized only once. But this is rather a special case, since Jesus' baptism marked a turning point in his career, after which he and his disciples separated themselves from John. In Clementine Homilies II, 23, John is described as a Hemerobaptist; but no reliability can be attached to this statement.²

The fact that John baptized large crowds of people and that they returned to their homes and daily occupations suggests, however, that baptism was performed only once. Confirmation of this conclusion must await a consideration of the meaning of John's baptism.

We must now try and interpret this evidence, in order to discover, if possible, the origin and meaning of John's baptism.

It will be as well that we should first examine briefly the

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1. There is actually some evidence of baptismal rites being repeated in the early Christian Church. Jewish-Christians practised frequent washings, but even among orthodox Christians there are traces of a repeated rite. In Heb. 6: 1, 2, "the elementary doctrines of Christ" are said to include "baptisms" (βαπτισμῶν), in the plural; most commentators take this as a reference to Jewish rites of washing. Tertullian states that candidates for baptism are to refrain from the daily bath for a week (De Corona, 3). Hippolytus, in describing how baptism is to be administered on a Sunday, mentions a preparatory washing on the previous Thursday (Apostolic Tradition, 20).

2. Cf. Part XI, pp 302, 303.

meaning of βαπτίζειν¹, especially as some have attempted to explain the meaning of John's baptism from philological considerations.

Unfortunately, βαπτίζειν, in the New Testament period, was not a word with a long history behind it, certainly as far as Biblical Greek is concerned; it occurs in the LXX only four times, as against 77 times in the New Testament.

The simple verb βάπτειν is, however, common in Classical Greek, and in the LXX, meaning usually to "dip". Hence it can also be used of dyeing cloth (i.e. by dipping it into a dye); of drawing water (i.e. by means of dipping a bucket into a well) and of a ship sinking (i.e. dipping under the sea). It is used in the sense of dipping in the LXX, (translating 510), e.g. in Ex 12:22, Lev 4:6, Josh 3:15; and also in the New Testament, in Lk 16:24 ("send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water"), Jn 13:26 (dipping the morsel at the Last Supper), and Rev 19:3 ("a robe dipped in blood" - but the reading is uncertain).

βαπτίζειν is the intensive form of βάπτειν. In Classical Greek it can be used with meanings similar to βάπτειν such as to dip, or to draw wine (i.e. by means of dipping a cup in a bowl). It is used of ships sinking, or being sunk. Metaphorically, it means to "overwhelm"; Josephus, for example, uses it of refugees flooding into Jerusalem - ἐβάπτισαν τὴν πόλιν - "they swamped the city" (War IV, 3, 3). Usually the idea is that of being overwhelmed by evil or ill fortune;

1. Cf. Part II, p

1. A. Oepke, TWNT, Vol I, pp 527-544; Liddell, Scott, Greek Lexicon, revised by Stuart Jones and Mackenzie, Oxford, 1940, pp 305, 306; Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Arndt and Gingrich (based on Bauer), Cambridge, 1957, pp 131, 132; "The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, illustrated from the Papyri and other non-literary sources", Moulton and Milligan, London, 1930.

this meaning is found in a papyrus of the mid-2nd Cent B.C.¹

The word is used only four times in the LXX, but these usages are significant:-

1) In II Kgs 5:14 it is used of Naaman washing himself in the Jordan: "He went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan:....." The Hebrew verb used here is **בָּטַח** which in the Old Testament normally means to "dip"; but in the post-Old Testament period it, and the Aramaic **בָּטַח**, came to be used rather of the Levitical lustrations.² The best guide to the meaning of this passage is to compare v 14 with vs 10 and 12 which present a parallel³:- "Go and wash (**וַיִּטַּח**) in the Jordan seven times....."; "Are not Abana and Pharpar.. better than all the waters of Israel....? Could I not wash (**וַיִּטַּח**) in them and be clean?" (**וַיִּטַּח** - used of ceremonial uncleanness). Naaman dips himself into the Jordan in order to wash himself and become clean.

2) In Is 21:4, the LXX uses **βαπτίζειν** metaphorically in a phrase meaning, "horror has fallen upon me" (Hebrew verb **נָפַל**, Piel). The idea here is the metaphorical one of being overwhelmed or swamped with horror, just as person might be if water swept over him. For the idea, cf. Ps 124:4,5 - "Then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters."

3) In Sirach 31 (34) 30 **βαπτίζειν** is used of ritual washing after pollution. "If a man washes (**βαπτισόμενος**) after touching a dead body, and touches it again, what has he gained by his washing (**ἐν τῷ λουτρῷ αὐτοῦ**)?" Here again the parallelism shows that "washing" is the true meaning.

1. Moulton and Milligan, op. cit. p 102.

2. Cf. Oepke, TWNT, I, pp 532, 533. From this root comes **בָּטַח** the word used for the ritual bath, especially that of proselytes.

3. Brown, Driver and Briggs, Hebrew Lexicon, Oxford, 1906, p 371.

This washing after contact with the dead may have involved only the sprinkling of water (Nos 19:11-13), though Nos 19:19 states that it involves also the washing of the whole person and of his clothes.

4) In Judith 12:7 βαπτίζειν is used of Judith washing herself at the fountain of water every night. This was also probably some type of ritual lustration.¹

It is thus clear that in John's time the word βαπτίζειν had various meanings. It could mean virtually the same as βάπτειν to dip, or to immerse in a liquid. Two other meanings had been derived from this:-

a) To wash, by dipping or immersing in water. This is used of ritual washings.

b) A metaphorical meaning, i.e. to be overwhelmed by some disaster.

In the New Testament, both these meanings are found. The meaning of ritual washing is found in Lk 11:38, and Mk 7:4 (though this reading is found in some MSS only); both these cases refer to the ritual washing of hands before meals. The metaphorical meaning of being overwhelmed is found in Mk 10:38, 39 and Lk 12:50. Much more frequently, however, "baptize" is used in the New Testament with reference to the Johannine and Christian rites of baptism.

The question has often been raised as to whether βαπτίζειν implies total immersion. This is not necessarily implied; e.g. when drawing wine with a cup, the whole cup does not necessarily go into the liquid; βαπτίζειν is used of a rite where (in some cases at least) only sprinkling of water took place. But in most cases it is clear that a total immersion is envisaged e.g. cloth being dyed, a ship sinking. There is no definite evidence as to whether the ritual washings of the Old Testament

1. For these last two examples cf. Oepke, TWNT, I, p 533.

were by total immersion, but it is very likely that they were (except, of course, where sprinkling is laid down as the method. Certainly the later proselyte baptism, which evolved from the earlier washings, was by total immersion.¹

The corresponding noun is either βαπτισμός or βάπτισμα but neither occurs in the LXX. In the New Testament, βαπτισμός is found in Mk 7:4, Heb 6:2, 9:10, meaning ritual lustrations. βάπτισμα on the other hand, seems to be used only of baptism proper. The usage of Josephus in his passage on John the Baptist is quite different; he uses two words for John's baptism - βαπτισμός and βάπτισις, the first of these two being used in the New Testament, as we have just said, for ritual lustrations, while the second is not found in the New Testament at all.

It cannot be claimed that this survey of the Greek words used about John's baptism has shed a great deal of light on the origin or significance of that baptism. That the candidates were dipped into water is fairly obvious, and that the immersion was total is very likely. The metaphorical meaning of overwhelm with disaster does not seem to offer any direct clue. Obviously the best approach is through the meaning of "to wash", possibly in connection with the Jewish ritual and ceremonial washings. But to attempt to build any theological structure on philological foundations is clearly a grave error.

In taking up the question of the origin and meaning of John's baptism, we would do well to realize that religious rites involving the use of water are a most frequent phenomenon in the study of Comparative Religion, and can be traced over many centuries and among many peoples.² It is not enough

1. See I. Abrahams, "How Did the Jews Baptize?", JTS, XII, pp 609 - 612.

2. Cf. Oepke, TWNT, I, p 528; Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 288-341.

therefore merely to produce some rite which has similarities to John's baptism in order to establish a connection between the two. The rite must be attested as having existed at a time and in a place which make a connection probable. Various possibilities fall to be considered.

1. Lustrations in Judaism.

Various rites involving the use of water existed, though they were never of the first importance, in orthodox Judaism.

In the Old Testament we meet with various beliefs which were held in common with other Semitic religions, and indeed with a great many religions throughout the world.¹ These relate almost entirely to ritual purity and ceremonial purity.

The regulations governing ritual purity are found principally in Leviticus 11 - 15, which deal with unclean animals, uncleanness due to childbirth, menstruation, various diseases, especially leprosy, and various issues. Uncleanness due to death and contact with the dead is dealt with in Nos 19. Usually a complete bath is required to remove the uncleanness (the Hebrew term is קָטַף); and often clothes had also to be washed (וַיִּטְבַּח is used of washing clothes but not of persons.) In some cases sprinkling is the method laid down (Hiphil of זָרַק). Rinsing and washing of the hands are also mentioned in the Old Testament (Lev 15:11 - שָׁטַף; Deut 21:6 - קָטַף). In some cases it is specifically stated that "living" or "running" water must be used (מֵי חַיִּים - see Lev 14:5, 6, 50, 51, 52, Nos 19:17). Nos 19:1-10 lay down the laws for the making of "water for impurity" (מֵי זָרָה), by mixing the ashes of the sacrifice of a red heifer with water. This water was sprinkled on whatever was to be purified (Nos 19:13, 18, 19, 21.)

No unclean person might take part in the worship of God. Hence washings precede the consecration of a priest or Levite

1. See article, "Unclean, Uncleanness", HDB, IV, pp 825-834, b A.S. Peake.

(Ex 29:4, 40:12; Lev 8:6; Nos 8:6, 7, 21); the high priest washes on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:4,24, cf. 16:26,28); and priests wash before entering the sanctuary (Ex 30; 17-21). Not only priests, however, but any Israelite who was unclean for any reason was debarred from participation in religious rites and feasts.

The origin and exact meaning of the Old Testament laws of purity need not concern us here¹, but the basic distinction is between the clean ($\gamma\iota\eta\zeta$ from $\gamma\eta\zeta$) and the unclean ($\alpha\kappa\iota\zeta$ from $\alpha\kappa\zeta$). Uncleanness was clearly thought of in material terms, as something exterior. It was thought of as being infectious to a certain extent; and it had nothing to do with moral ideas, as can be seen from the fact that objects, as well as persons, may become unclean.

When we turn to the post-Old Testament period², we find that considerably increased attention was given to rites of lustration; these were probably developed especially about the 1st Cent B.C. Existing regulations were expanded, new ones were introduced, and the Rabbis were given wide scope for exercising their wisdom and ingenuity. The degree of importance which the various washings came to attain may be gauged from the frequent references in the New Testament, and also from the Mishna, the largest of the six books of which is devoted to laws of purification. Twelve treatises deal in fine detail with the different types of uncleanness, how they can be contracted and how they are to be removed. Six grades of water are distinguished for use in the different lustrations.

Not only were the Old Testament laws followed, but many new regulations were introduced concerning e.g. the washing of

1. See Peake, HDB, IV, pp 825-827.

2. See E. Schürer, "History of the Jewish People", Division II, Vol II, pp 106-111; Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 350-356.

hands - before sitting down to a meal, before touching sacred books, at morning prayer, and so on. (Cf. Mt 15:1-2, Mk 7:1-5)

We have seen how John is portrayed in our sources as a man of exceptional piety,¹ and it is therefore certain that he must have observed the Jewish laws of ritual purity. As far as fasting and prayer were concerned John and his disciples were extremely strict, and indeed went beyond the letter of the law;² it is unthinkable that they should have been lax in the observance of the laws of purity. Jn 3:25 mentions a discussion which arose "between John's disciples and a Jew over purifying" (*περὶ καθάρσιμου*). The context suggests that this discussion may have had to do with baptism, yet "purification" is mentioned (cf. Jn 2:6) and so most probably rites of ritual purity are meant. John and his disciples must therefore have been interested in these rites.³

The statement of Josephus that John's baptism was "for the purification of the body" suggests that it was ^a rite of ritual purity. While it is certain that John must have observed such rites, his own baptism, which earned him the name of "the Baptist", was clearly something different. If it were merely a ritual lustration, such as those we have just been describing, then there would have been nothing remarkable about it.

Healing lustrations are known in many religions; only one instance is recorded in the Old Testament, when Naaman's healing is closely linked with his washing in the Jordan (II Kings 5:10-14). This, it will be remembered, is one of the four uses of *βαπτίζεν* in the LXX. The evidence of the New Testament seems to indicate the existence of belief in healing lustrations in post-Old Testament Judaism. This is apparent from the story

1. Part IV, pp 148 f.

2. See Part VII, pp 220-231.

3. On this passage see further Part VIII, p 250.

of the man at the Pool of Bethesda (Jn 5:2-9), with which we may compare Jesus telling the blind man to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam (Jn 9:7).

John certainly baptized in the Jordan some of the time, but there is nothing in our sources which would suggest that any healing properties were ascribed to his baptism.

2. Proselyte Baptism.

Having failed to find an explanation of John's baptism in terms of ritual or healing lustrations, we turn now to another type of lustration within orthodox Judaism, proselyte baptism. The majority of scholars find the origin of John's baptism in this rite, and it therefore deserves most careful consideration.

Rabbinic sources describe how a Gentile is to be made a proselyte¹ by a three-fold initiatory rite, consisting of circumcision, ablution ($\pi \lambda \nu \gamma \epsilon$) and sacrifice. Our information about this rite is derived mainly from two descriptions in late sources, a) a passage in the Babylonian Talmud (Yebamot 47), and b) a small work entitled "On Proselytes" (Gerim), which is an "extra-canonical" tractate of the Talmud, dating from c. 1300 A.D. Both of these, despite their late date, embody much earlier material, some of which may go back to the 2nd Cent A.D. The two accounts diverge slightly, but agree on the main points.² They can be supplemented from numerous much shorter references in the Rabbinic literature.

The candidate is first questioned as to why he wishes to become a proselyte, and is warned of the trials which Israel endures. If he wishes to proceed, he is then given a course of instruction summarizing the main requirements of the Law.

1. On Proselytes in general see Moore, "Judaism", I, pp 325-353; W.G. Brande, "Jewish Proselyting, In the First Five Centuries of the Common Era", Brown University, Providence, R.I., 1940; article, "Proselyte", by E.G. Hirsch, Jewish Encyclopedia, X, pp 220-224.
2. The texts are printed in full (in English), in parallel columns for comparison, in Gavin, "The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments", pp 33-35.

The candidate is then to be circumcised, and when healed, he is brought for baptism. He is partially immersed in water in the presence of two men, learned in the Law, who recite to him some of the lighter and some of the weightier commandments. Then the candidate is immersed in the water, "and when he comes up he is in all respects an Israelite" (Yeb 47b). The tractate Gerim adds an address of congratulation after the immersion. Slightly different instructions are given for the admission of female proselytes. The baptism was by total immersion.¹

Merely to describe proselyte baptism is not enough; it is of the first importance to try and ascertain when the practice came into being, for if it was later than the time of John, then it has no relevance for a study of the origin of John's rite. Christians used to speak of Jewish proselyte baptism as an imitation of Christian baptism², but in more recent times the improbability of this has been recognised, and much controversy has taken place as to exactly when the Jewish rite originated. Frequently it seems to be assumed that it was in existence in New Testament

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1. I. Abrahams, "How Did the Jews Baptize?", JTS, XII, pp 609-612; cf. C.F. Rogers, "How Did the Jews Baptize?", J.T.S, XII, pp 437-445.
 2. See Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 99.

times.¹ Schürer² holds that in the Mishna all three requirements (circumcision, baptism and sacrifice) "are presupposed as already being of long standing; nay for Rabbinical Judaism they are so much matters of course that, even apart from any explicit testimony, we should have had to assume that they were already currently practised in the time of Christ." Schürer "assumes" the existence of proselyte baptism in the time of Christ, because of the fact that Gentiles were considered unclean and would therefore have to take a bath of Levitical purification.

1. E.g. T.F. Torrance has expounded the meaning of Christian baptism in the light of Proselyte Baptism; see "Proselyte baptism", NTS, I, pp 150-154, and especially, "The Origins of Baptism", SJT, II, 2, June 1958, pp 158-171. He believes that Proselyte Baptism was in use before the time of the New Testament but his evidence for this is limited to ten lines at the end of the article on "Proselyte Baptism". In the second article mentioned above, he sidesteps completely the all-important historical question of whether Christian baptism could or did originate from Jewish Proselyte Baptism; he claims that in the study of Christian baptism we may take our cue from Proselyte Baptism, and continues - "By that I do not mean at all that we are to see in proselyte baptism itself the source of the Christian rite, but that proselyte baptism helps us to see a line of interpretation embedded in the Jewish tradition, which throws considerable light upon what the New Testament writers took for granted in regard to the origins of the Christian rite." What does this mean? Are we just to assume that the origins of Christian baptism lay in proselyte baptism without considering the evidence, or even when the evidence is against it? Torrance is rightly pulled up by T.M. Taylor, NTS, II, pp 193-198, who shows on what unstable foundations Torrance's theological structure is built up. What Maimonides said about baptism is doubtless interesting, but is quite irrelevant for the study of the origin of Christian baptism. Much of the material quoted by Torrance is centuries later than the New Testament period.

2. "History of the Jewish People", Division II, Vol II, p 320.

It is indeed certain that from the first new converts would participate in the various rites of ritual purity; they would not be able to take part in the worship of the Temple, or the Passover, or other feasts and ceremonies until they had first carried out the prescribed lustrations and thus ensured that they were clean.¹ But there is no evidence that these

lustrations were considered to be any different from the usual Levitical washings, and especially there is no evidence that they constituted part of the rite of initiation, which was by circumcision only. It is only at a much later stage that baptism appears as part of the rite of initiation, and an important ceremony in its own right. Just when this happened is a matter of dispute.

The word προσήλυτος translates the Hebrew, גֵּר and regulations concerning גֵּר are found in the Old Testament, though at first the word does not seem to have been used to signify a convert, but rather an alien immigrant, resident in Israel, but without civil rights.² Even within the Old Testament, however, we read of "the alien (גֵּר)" who "will cleave to the house of Jacob". Ex 12:43-49 also speaks clearly of the "stranger" (גֵּר) who becomes a member of the Israelite community - "When a גֵּר shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land." Here the גֵּר becomes an Israelite, the initiation being effected by the rite of circumcision. In the Old Testament, the גֵּר are given exactly the same status as native-born Israelites. "You shall have on statute, both for the גֵּר , and for the native." (Nas 9:14 of. Ex 12:48).

1. Cf. above, p 165.

2. See Moore, "Judaism", I, p 328.

By the Persian period the word is used in the generally accepted sense, though the Jewish attitude to proselytising varied greatly. In the Maccabean period we hear of considerable proselytising, mostly by force;¹ Galilee became largely Jewish in this way. In these cases admission to Israel was by circumcision. It is evident that as we approach the turn of the era, the admission of proselytes was a widespread practice,² especially in the Diaspora. The movement for the conversion of the Gentiles was probably at its peak in the mid-1st Cent. A.D.³, but after the First Revolt most Jews took up a more intolerant attitude towards Gentiles.

It is important to note that Philo (c.30 B.C. - 54 A.D.), while frequently speaking of proselytes, makes no mention of baptism. Even more significant is the case of Josephus (37A.D. - c.100 A.D.) who writes at such length about the history and customs of the Jews. He often mentions the admission of proselytes; but where the method of admission is given, it is by circumcision only.

The silence of the New Testament itself is an important piece of evidence. The Gospels give a prominent place to the baptism of John, but there is no word of proselyte baptism. It is especially strange that Paul, who employs many references to circumcision in his writings, should make no reference to the baptism of those who entered the Old Israel.⁴

This brings us to the first possible reference to proselyte baptism, which is in the Mishna (Pesachim VIII, 8 ; Eruyot V, 2). This passage records a debate between the schools of Hillel and Shammai as to whether or not a Gentile who was circumcised on

1. Josephus, "Antiquities", XII, 9, 1 and XIII, 11, 3.
2. Cf. Philo, "Vita Mosie", 2; Matt 23:15.
3. See Guignebert, "The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus" p 231.
4. Cf. Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 364, 365.

the eve of the Passover might wash and partake of the paschal lamb. It is argued that this must refer to a debate held before the destruction of the Temple, but this is not necessarily the case as a great deal of purely academic debate concerning the Temple and its ritual took place in the Rabbinic schools. However, the most important point is that there is nothing in the passage to indicate that a ceremony of initiation is referred to. It was apparently usual for proselytes to be admitted before the Passover so that they could then take part in the feast. What is referred to here is the ordinary bath of purification before Passover, necessary for those unclean for any reason.¹

Abrahams cites the Jerusalem Talmud (Pesahim VIII) and the Tosefta (VII, 13) - "Rabbi Eleazar ben Jacob says : Soldiers were Guards of the Gate in Jerusalem; they were baptized and ate their Paschal lambs in the evening." This he claims as an example of proselyte baptism prior to the destruction of the Temple.² Here again, however, the washing is definitely connected with the Passover, and no mention is made of the ceremony of initiation.

The first clear reference to proselyte baptism is found in the Babylonian Talmud (Yebamot 46a) in a passage which reports the differing opinions of R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos and R. Joshua ben Hananiah; the discussion of these Rabbis may be dated as late 1st or early 2nd Cent A.D. If a proselyte had been circumcised, but not baptized, R. Eliezer would admit that he was a proper proselyte; if he had been baptized but not circumcised R. Joshua would admit that he was a proper proselyte.³

1. For this point of view see Taylor, NTS, II, p 195. Cf. Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 358. See also Rowley, HCUA, 1940, p 316.

2. Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", I, p 37. See also Rowley, HCUA, 1940, p 317.

3. On this passage see Rowley, HCUA, 1940, pp 317-319.

The implications of this passage are rather obscure, but it seems to suggest that about the end of the 1st Cent A.D. baptism and circumcision could be regarded as alternative methods of entering the Jewish faith. There is no evidence, however, from any other source that circumcision could be omitted; it was always regarded as essential. What this passage may really reflect therefore, is a stage when baptism was coming to be regarded as an essential part of initiation, but was not necessarily regarded as such by all the authorities.

Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher has also been cited as a witness;¹ he lived in the late 1st and early 2nd Cent A.D. and his works were written down after his death and published by his pupil, Arrian, in the mid-2nd Cent. In Discourses II, 9 we read - "When we see a man trimming between two faiths we are wont to say, 'He is no Jew but is acting a part', but when he adopts the attitude of mind of him who is baptized and has made his choice, then he is not only called a Jew but is a Jew indeed. So we also are but counterfeit 'baptists' (παρὰ βαπτιστάι), Jews in name only, but really something else....." Here becoming a Jew and being baptized seem to be equated,² and if this is the case then we have a witness to proselyte baptism possibly as early as the end of the first century A.D. But the value of this evidence is lessened by uncertainty about the date, and also by the fact that "It is not certain whether in this sentence..... Epictetus is thinking of Jews or of Christians, who at this time were often confused with them."³

There can be little doubt that the practice of baptizing proselytes, as well as circumcising them, was established by the early 2nd Cent. It is surprising, however, how few references

1. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 360, 361; Marsh, "The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism", p 10.

2. This has been denied by some. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 361; also Marsh, "The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism", p 10.

3. F.E. Matheson, "Epictetus, The Discourses and Manual", Vol II, Oxford, 1916, p249. The above translation was taken from this book.

there are in early Rabbinic literature; the Mishna really only contains the one possible allusion mentioned above (p 171). It is equally surprising that early Christian literature contains no references at all to it, especially in the case of writers who discuss the subjects of Judaism or baptism or both e.g. Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Tertullian.¹

It is generally held that proselyte baptism developed from the lustrations prescribed in the Old Testament and expanded in post-Biblical Judaism. Gavin shows how one line of thought in Judaism regarded Gentiles as being beyond the provisions of the Law altogether, but how the other thought of Gentiles as being unclean in a sense recognized by the Law. Hence, by means of a bath of purification, it was possible for them to attain the same level of purity as Jews.²

Some time during the 1st Cent. A.D., however, the convert's first bath of ritual purity began to take on an added significance and to be regarded as part of the initiation proper. Our survey has shown that there is no reliable evidence of baptism as an initiation rite until the end of the first century; the conclusion is inescapable that the destruction of the Temple must have played a decisive part in this development. Sacrifice would no longer be possible, and for women converts some type of lustration would be the only possible token of admission to Judaism. Even granting that the destruction of the Temple was the factor which led to baptism being elevated to a leading role in the admission of proselytes, it is only from the second century on that there is reliable evidence that this was the

1. Cf. Plummer, article, "Baptism". HDB, I, p. 239.

1. Cf. Plummer, article, "Baptism". HDB, I, p. 239.

2. Gavin, "The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments", pp 29, 30.

Two different interpretations of proselyte baptism propounded at a later date by some Rabbis must be mentioned. They have, however, nothing to do with the original and basic meaning of the rite.

(1) Proselytes raised a legal question when they cut themselves off from their previous life and became Jews. This led to the propounding of the Rabbinic dictum, "a newly converted proselyte is like a newborn child", which served as the basis for several discussions. The earliest reference is to be found in the treatise Yebamot in the Babylonian Talmud, where it is associated with the name of R. Yose ben Halaftha (mid-2nd Cent. A.D.)¹.

The Rabbis were concerned with such legal questions as the status of sons born previous to a proselyte's conversion, and how this affected the laws of inheritance. One passage is much quoted, in which R. Hananiah claimed that the reason why proselytes were so grievously afflicted was because they had failed to observe the seven commandments of Noah. But Y. Yose countered this by quoting the saying about the proselyte being as a new born child. The implication is that the convert's past life has been completely obliterated. But there is no suggestion that the rite of baptism confers forgiveness of sins, and certainly there is no idea whatsoever of "re-birth" such as is found either in the Mystery Religions or in Christianity.

(2) Proselyte baptism raised another kind of problem; the only rite of initiation mentioned in the Torah was circumcision, so how can baptism be justified? This did not present too great a problem for the imagination and ingenuity of the Rabbis. Thus, R. Judah the Patriarch (fifth generation,

1. For further Talmudic references, see Gavin, op.cit., pp 51, 52; also Moore, "Judaism", I, pp 334, 335.

Tannaïm) pointed out the analogy between the experience of the proselyte and the experience of Israel in the wilderness. The Israelites were circumcised (inferred from Josh 5:2 f.), baptized, and sprinkled with the blood of the covenant sacrifice (Ex 24:3-8). The passage R. Judah referred to in connection with baptism was Ex 19:10, where the Israelites are told to wash their clothes, preparatory to God's revelation on Sinai.

This Rabbinic teaching arose merely to find a justification for baptism in the Torah, and has no bearing on the original meaning of the rite. It is, of course, frequently cited as a close parallel to Paul's teaching on Christian baptism in I Cor 10. Paul there certainly uses the Rabbinic method, but his interpretation is original to himself, as his interpretation of the rock as referring to Christ shows. All the Rabbinic passages on the subject are too late to have influenced Paul. They represent a line of interpretation in some ways similar to Paul's, but quite independent of it.

On the basis of this survey it will be seen that any connection between John's rite and proselyte baptism is extremely unlikely; even allowing for the fact that proselyte baptism must have evolved over a period of time, that evolution took place after the time of John, in the second half of the 1st Century A.D. and it did not become an established practice until the beginning of the 2nd Century A.D.

Though John's baptism has often been compared with that of proselytes, there are, moreover, many significant differences.

1. John's baptism was confined to Jews, whereas, of course proselyte baptism was confined to Gentiles, wishing to enter Judaism.

2. John's baptism had a moral significance, being closely linked with his demand for repentance, whereas proselyte baptism was a ritual washing only.

3. John's baptism was very closely linked to his intensely eschatological preaching; it anticipated the Messianic baptism of fire and holy spirit. John appealed to people to be baptized in view of the imminent approach of the end. Proselyte baptism ^{lacked} any such vital and direct eschatological reference, although in a general way the acquiring of status as a Jew would be thought of as an advantage in the world to come. Thus the candidate for baptism (in Yeb. 47a) is reminded that the keeping of the commandments will be rewarded - "Know thou that the world to come was made only for the righteous."

The reception of proselytes in orthodox Judaism, however, must have been quite different from the eschatological fervour which surrounded John's rite.¹

4. John's baptism was administered in running water, and frequently in the Jordan. Proselyte baptism, on the other hand, was usually performed in a bath (mikweh) or baptistry; the Rabbis discuss the minimum size and lay down that it must contain at least forty seahs.² Further, Rabbinic law specifically states that the waters of the Jordan are unsuitable for baths of purification.³

5. John administered his baptism, whereas proselyte baptism was self-administered.⁴ As Stauffer remarks, this administration of baptism was a new and unique feature; it is the reason why John was called "the Baptist."⁵

As far as the first point is concerned, it has frequently

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1. Cf. Bultmann, "Theology of the New Testament", I, p 39.
 2. See Rogers, JTS, XII, pp 437-445.
 3. Parah 8:10.
 4. Cf. Rowley, HCUA, 1940, pp 322, 323.
 5. "New Testament Theology", p 22.

been claimed that John's inspired originality lay in his view that all Jews had apost^{ta} _A ¹ and must therefore re-enter Israel just as a proselyte does. This is an attractive explanation of John's baptism, but it cannot be accepted in view of extreme unlikelihood that proselyte baptism could have influenced John, and in view of the other differences listed above. We must proceed to ask whether there is not a much more likely explanation to be found at the period of time when John lived, and in the branch of Judaism with which he had the closest connections.

3. The Baptist Movement.

We have already shown that the background of John's ministry is not to be found within orthodox Judaism, but rather within the non-conformist, baptist movement which flourished especially in the 1st Century B.C. and the 1st Century A.D. on the fringe of Judaism.² The sects comprising this movement had as their distinguishing feature, baptismal rites of some kind, and we must now ask whether it is from them that John may have derived his baptism.

The very names Hemerobaptists, Masbotheans, ~~and others~~ and "Morning Bathers" show the importance of lustrations in these sects. Josephus describes the baths of the Essenes, while the Dead Sea Scrolls provide us with valuable evidence regarding the baptismal practices of the Qumran sect.

To some extent the lustrations of these sects were the

1. This theory was worked out in detail by J. Leipoldt in his book, "Die urchristliche Taufe im Lichte der Religionsgeschichte", (Leipzig, 1928). It is also the line followed by Eisler, for whom Israel's apostasy consisted in their recognizing the non-Jewish royal house of the Herods and the Roman overlords, thus breaking the "royalty law" of Deut 17:14,15. (See, "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", p 251.)

2. See Part II, pp 65-67.

usual Jewish baths of ritual purity, to which we have already referred.¹ All the sects were basically Jewish, and strict in the observance of the Law. Some of the Essene washings must have been of this type, and the Qumran sect also practised them, as this passage from the Damascus Document makes clear:-

"Let no man bathe in water that is dirty or less than the quantity that covers up a man. Let him not purify a vessel in it. And as for every rock-pool in a rock in which there is not the quantity that covers up (a man), which an unclean person has touched; he renders its water unclean with the uncleanness of water in a vessel." (CDC 10:12,13).

Here reference is made to the ritual cleansing both of persons and of vessels. The references to "water for impurity" in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1 QS 3:4, 3:9, 4:21) are extremely interesting,² and suggest that the sect may have carried out the sacrifice of the red heifer, which, the Law lays down, was to be done "outside the camp", away from the sanctuary (Nos 19:3).

To a certain extent also, the washings of the baptist movement can be regarded as further extensions of the Jewish ritual and ceremonial washings. We have noted the tendency in the inter-testamental period to extend the lustrations prescribed in the Old Testament³; this process was carried even further by the non-conformist sects. Although our information is very meagre, the rites of the Masbotheans and the Morning Bathers were probably of this nature; the main novelty in their practice would be the frequency of their lustrations. The causes of uncleanness were probably extended also, as the references of Josephus to some of the Essene washings suggest. They washed after contact with a member of

1. Above, p 164.

2. Cf. above, p 164.

3. Above, p 165.

inferior grade, or with a Gentile;¹ after the discharge of excrement, "though this.....is a natural function";² and also after contact with oil.³

Further, many of the sects practised washings before meals. This was done by the Hemerobaptists, and Josephus tells how the Essenes, after working until the fifth hour, "assemble in one place and, after girding their loins with linen clothes, bathe their bodies in cold water. After this purification, they assemble in a private apartment which none of the uninitiated is permitted to enter; pure now themselves, they repair to the refectory, as to some sacred shrine."⁴

There is one passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls which may refer to washings before meals (1 QS 5:13,14), but this is very doubtful, and we may accept the conclusion of K.G. Kuhn on this matter when he says that "no passage in the Qumran texts has yet been found where it says expresslythat the meal is always preceded by a bath."⁵

Washings before meals may have been an extension of the practice of hand-washing before meals, or alternatively, it may be regarded as a type of ceremonial washing prior to an act of worship, since the Essene meals were to a certain extent sacred meals.

There is also evidence of a baptism of initiation. This may have existed among the Essenes of Josephus, but first hand evidence is available only in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The main passage dealing with initiation into the sect is found in the Manual of Discipline (1 QS 1:16-2:18), which describes how "all who come into the order of the community shall pass over into the covenant" (1 QS 1:16.)⁶

The priests and Levites take part

1. "Jewish War", II, 8,10.
2. "Jewish War", II, 8,10.
3. "Jewish War", II, 8, 3.
4. "Jewish War", II, 8, 5.
5. In Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 68.
6. For the position that this refers to initiation cf. Cullman in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 21; T.H. Gaster, "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect", pp49f; Dupont-Sommer, "The Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes", pp 92-95; Allegro, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", pp 105-107.

in the ceremony, detailed instructions for which then follow. The candidates have to make a confession of sin in the following terms -

"We have committed iniquity, we have transgressed, we have sinned, we have done evil, we and our fathers before us, in walking contrary to the statutes of truth; but righteous is God, and true is his judgement on us and on our fathers; and the mercy of his steadfast love he has bestowed upon us from everlasting to everlasting."

(1 QS 1:24 - 2:1).

The priests recite blessings on all those who walk in God's ways, and the Levites recite a series of curses on "all the men of Belial's lot", to which the candidates make the response, "Amen! Amen!" This initiation may have taken place in conjunction with the annual review of the sect which is the subject of the next paragraph (1 QS 2:19-25).

Further evidence regarding the nature and meaning of the rite of initiation can be gained from the next section (1 QS 2:25 - 3:12) which takes up the theme of those who refuse to enter God's covenant. We are told of such a person that

"He will not be purified by atonement offerings,
and he will not be made clean with water for impurity
He will not sanctify himself with seas and rivers,
or be made clean with any water for washing.
Unclean, unclean will he be all the days that he
rejects the ordinances of God, not being
instructed in the community of his counsel."

Here, the person who is not a member of the community is considered to be unclean (*NDG*). Since the man who does not become a member is not cleansed "with any water for washing" it is clear that the man who does become a member is cleansed by some rite of baptism.

The passage continues by saying of the man who enters the sect that

"in a holy spirit he will be united in his truth,
 and he will be cleansed from all his iniquities;
 and in an upright and humble spirit his sin will be
 atoned,
 and in the submission of his soul to all the statutes
 of God, his flesh will be cleansed;
 that he may be sprinkled with water for impurity,
 and sanctify himself with water of cleanness."

In the context of initiation into the sect, this reference to rites of lustration indicates that admission was by means of "water of cleanness."

A further passage in the Manual of Discipline also deals with the ceremony of initiation (1 QS 5:7-20). It tells of how all those who "enter into the covenant" must take upon themselves "a binding oath", and must separate themselves from "all the men of error". Such wicked people "shall not enter the water, in order to touch the sacred food of the holy men, for they will not be cleansed unless they have turned from their evil. For there is something unclean in all who transgress his word." Here again the statement that those who are wicked "shall not enter the water" implies that those who join the sect do enter the water, in a baptism of initiation.¹

Where this baptism (or any of the other Qumran lustrations) was carried out is not clear. The Qumran monastery has a remarkable system of cisterns², and it has frequently been suggested that they were used for this purpose.³ But these cisterns are in no way unique; they are typical examples of Palestinian water storage cisterns. The steps may have been to allow people to descend into the water, but they are just as

1. Cf. J.A.T. Robinson, HTR, L, p 182.

2. See R. de Vaux, RB, April, 1954, pp 206-236.

3. E.g. by Brownlee, "John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls", in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 39.

likely to have been for the purpose of access to the water as the level receded when the water was gradually used up. Much, if not all of the water in the cisterns would be needed by the community, which may have totalled several hundred persons at a time.¹ For at least nine months of the year the monastery, set as it is in a very barren region, would be entirely dependent on the cisterns for ordinary domestic uses. It is difficult to conceive of even a large cistern being used regularly by many people, bearing in mind that the water could not be changed for nine months of the year; ordinary hygiene let alone the strict views of the sect on purity would seem to make this impossible.²

If the cisterns were not used, where were the baptisms, especially that of initiation, carried out? In the context of the initiation, baptism in "seas and rivers" is mentioned. A sea (יָם) can mean anything from the Mediterranean to the great basin in the Temple; because of the high salt content, it is unlikely that the Dead Sea would be used. Allegro is probably nearest the mark when he suggests that "the sectarians would have preferred the running water of the Jordan with its ancient associations, or even of 'Ain Feshkha to the south, to the static tanks of the settlement."³

John is unlikely to have been influenced by the ritual or ceremonial lustrations of the baptist movement, or by washings before meals, but the baptism of initiation at Qumran obviously presents a close parallel. We shall therefore now enquire into the meaning of this baptism of initiation.

1. Allegro, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", p 90.

2. On this subject see J.A.Fitzmyer, in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 226.

3. "Dead Sea Scrolls", p 90. Cf. the opinion of F.M.Cross, Jr. quoted in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 298, "There is no reason to connect these cisterns with the well known practice of the sect (i.e. baptism); more probably 'living water' was used....."

Firstly, it is clear that the basic idea is that of cleansing. This is true of all the Qumran lustrations; water is always used, whether it is sprinkled, or whether the person enters it. The commonest verb in passages relating to baptism is קָדַשׁ, meaning (in the Piel) "to cleanse, or purify". The person is said to "bathe" or wash" (קָדַשׁ - used in CDC 11:24 of ordinary bathing. Also וַיִּקְדַּשׁ). Before baptism, a man is "unclean" (אִשְׁמוֹ). The basic metaphor is clearly, as in the case of the Old Testament ritual washings, that of actual physical dirt being washed away by water. There is no suggestion of the idea of death and rebirth, or of "a liturgical participation in the crossing of the Red Sea"¹; the metaphor is purely that of cleansing.

Secondly, in common with the other lustrations of the sect, the baptism of initiation may have been regarded, up to a certain point, as taking the place of the Temple sacrifices and mediating forgiveness of sins. We have already noted that the baptist movement did not participate in the Temple worship.² Although to a large extent the objection seems to have been to the Jerusalem priesthood rather than to sacrifice on principle, the members of non-conformist sects tended, through time, to ascribe less importance to sacrifice and more to their own rites, especially of lustration. One of the most important conclusions reached by J. Thomas in his classic study of the baptist movement, is the recognition of this tendency for baptisms to take the place of sacrifice. He links this with a widespread tendency of the time towards a spiritualization of religion.³ Josephus tells us that the Essenes "do not offer

1. J. Heron, "The Theology of Baptism", SJT, 1955, pp 39-41.
2. Part II, p 63.
3. "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 425-430.

sacrifices, because they profess to have more pure lustrations"; and Philo, although he does not mention baptism, says of the Essenes that "they have shown themselves especially devout in the service of God, not by offering sacrifices of animals, but by resolving to sanctify their minds."²

Striking confirmation of this view has come from the Dead Sea Scrolls,³ where the communal life, the rites, the prayers and righteous conduct of the community are thought of as being of more value than, and as taking the place of, animal sacrifice.⁴ The passage on baptism in I QS 2:25 f. shows that the washings of the sect especially were thought of, along with the other practices of the community, as having value in atoning for sin. In I QS 3:4,5, the parallelism makes this especially clear -

"He will not be purified by atonement offerings,
and he will not be made clean with water for impurity,
He will not sanctify himself with seas and rivers
or be made clean with any water for washing."

K.G. Kuhn, in summarizing the evidence, says that "the baths had.....over and above their old meaning (to secure cultic purity), the sacramental function of mediating in the divine forgiveness of sins. In place of the sacrificial cultus of the Templethe baths, and apparently also the communal meal, took on a new meaning, mediating salvation from God."⁵

That the Qumran baptism of initiation had a moral significance is confirmed by the references to confession and repentance. Baptism was preceded by confession of sins, and we have already quoted the terms of the confession.⁶ The

1. "Antiquities", XVIII, 1, 5.
2. "Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit", XII, 75.
3. Cf. Baumgarten, "Sacrifice and Worship among the Jewish Sectarians of the Dead Sea (Qumran) Scrolls", HTR, XLVI, 1953, pp 141-159.
4. See I QS 9:3-5.
5. In Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 68.
6. Above, p 181.

members of the sect called themselves "the penitents of Israel" (בַּתְּנִיטִים יִשְׂרָאֵל - CDC 6:5,8:16). The stress on repentance is especially significant; I QS 5:14 says that the wicked "will not be cleansed unless they have turned from their evil." The whole point of the passage, I QS 2:25 f., is that lustrations are of no value whatever if a person "rejects the ordinances of God". Here is no ex opere operato rite, but a baptism which confers forgiveness of sins only on condition of repentance.

The baptism of initiation, in addition to conferring the forgiveness of sins and cleansing a person from uncleanness, also marked the entry of a person into the new Israel. By baptism, a person became a full member of the Qumran sect. As has already been indicated, the sectarians believed that the Jerusalem priesthood had become corrupt, and that the nation as a whole had apostatized. Only the sectarians themselves remained true to God, and their separation from the unfaithful was dramatized by their withdrawal into the wilderness. They called themselves "the holy congregation", "the elect", "the Sons of Light" and "the Sons of Truth", thus claiming that they were the only true Israel, chosen by God and in receipt of His truth and guidance. Initiation is spoken of as "entering into the covenant". The conception of the covenant is a fundamental one for the Old Testament. The characteristic of Israel was that it had been chosen by God and had entered into a covenant relationship with Him.¹ Since those who were initiated into the sect were already Jews, how could they be thought of as "entering into the covenant"? The Damascus Document gives us a clue when it speaks of "all the men that have entered the new covenant".² The covenant into which the sectarians have

1. See G. Ernest Wright, "The Faith of Israel", Interpreter's Bible, Vol I, pp 352-357.

2. CDC 8:21, 20:12.

entered is a "new covenant", words which recall immediately the prophecy of a "new covenant" by Jeromiah - "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers.

... But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah

31:31-34). In this passage we find the keynotes of the life of the sect - the study of the Law, the knowledge of God, and cleansing from sin. The study and discussion of the Law is the means by which the way must be prepared in the wilderness;¹ the Teacher of Righteousness was the divinely authorized interpreter of the Law, and the methods of Biblical study, exemplified in the commentaries of the sect, probably go back to him. The knowledge of God was one of the main aims of the sect; the Commentary on Habakkuk, commenting on 2:14, says that "afterward knowledge will be revealed to them like the waters of the sea in abundance." The author of the concluding psalm of the Manual of Discipline can say, "Blessed are Thou, O, my God, who openest to knowledge the heart of Thy servant", and, "thou hast taught all knowledge."² Cleansing from sin, as we have already seen, was effected by the rites of the sect, especially lustrations. The fact that entering the sect is spoken of as

1. I QS 8:12-15.

2. On knowledge in the Scrolls, see Burrows, "Dead Sea Scrolls pp 253-257.

"entering the covenant" therefore suggests that the "new covenant" of Jeremiah was an important concept for the sect, and that entry was virtually into a new Israel.

This idea of a new Israel is very largely an eschatological concept. The present time is "the period of wickedness" and "the days of the dominion of Belial"; but the sect looked forward with keen anticipation to "the final age" and "the end of days." In the coming consummation, the sectarians would play a leading role. They are the Sons of Light who would, with God's help, defeat the Sons of Darkness, all the various enemies of the true Israel, in the campaigns of the great eschatological war.¹ In the glorious future which lies beyond this, the "Sons of Truth" will enjoy "healing and abundance of peace in length of days, and bringing forth seed, with all eternal blessings and everlasting joy in the life of eternity, and a crown of glory with raiment of majesty in everlasting light."²

The baptism of initiation was thus an extremely important ceremony, mediating forgiveness of sin, conditional on repentance, and signifying entry into the eschatological congregation of the new Israel, bound to God by a new covenant. Naturally, it would also be a ceremony of dedication for those entering the community. The vows taken bound them to separate themselves from "all the men of error", and to devote themselves to the worship and service of God within the community.

Here we appear to have a very close parallel to the baptism of John - a baptism confined to Jews, with a moral significance, with an eschatological orientation and probably performed in a river. In all these respects it offers a much closer analogy

1. Detailed in "The War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness."

2. I QS 4:7, 8.

than proselyte baptism which, as we have seen, possessed none of these features.¹ We shall, therefore, now consider John's baptism in the light of this sectarian baptism of initiation.

4. The Meaning of John's Baptism.

Our sources, as we have already seen,² possess an apparent contradiction, in so far as the Synoptics speak of "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins", whereas Josephus states that John's baptism was "for the purification of the body", i.e. that it was purely a ritual purification. The divergence between the two accounts is, however, not so great as at first appears.

Though the New Testament speaks of the rite as being "for the forgiveness of sins", this does not mean that it was thought of as automatically conferring forgiveness in a magical way, at the time of baptism. John, like every Jew, would believe that only God can forgive sins, and probably he would think of the forgiveness as being conferred at the time of the judgement. Josephus, for his part, does not speak of repentance, but he does mention that baptism was administered "when the soul had previously been cleansed by righteous conduct." This phrase is not far removed from the concept of repentance which, it will be remembered, in Judaism, signified a positive turning towards righteousness, just as much as a turning from sin.

We cannot, however, explain away the definite statement of Josephus that John's baptism was "for the purification of the body". It is conceivable that the New Testament writers have been guilty of "christianizing" John's message,³ but on the

1. Above, pp 176, 177.

2. Above, p 158.

3. Cf Part I, p 16.

whole it is Josephus who is suspect, for a variety of reasons.

1. Josephus lived later than the time of John and almost certainly had no first hand evidence. He may well therefore have thought of John's baptism as being identical with that of the hermit Banos, with whom he lived for a while.¹

2. It may be that Josephus was guilty of distorting the evidence. We have noted how he constantly leaves out of his writings mention of the Messianic expectations of the Jews, and of their eschatological beliefs.² Thus, in his account of John's baptism, he must leave out a vital clue to its meaning, namely, its eschatological reference.

3. Further, Josephus can hardly have been unaware of the growing Christian movement, and his statement that John's baptism was not for the remission of certain sins is highly suspicious. Having accepted John as a fine example of Jewish piety, this looks very like an attempt to dissociate John from the new sect of Christians with their baptism of remission of sins.³

4. Finally, as we have already argued above, if John's baptism was merely a ritual purification, then there would have been nothing remarkable about it. Josephus portrays John as such a harmless and unoriginal figure that his portrait completely fails to make sense. Why should he have been termed "the Baptist", and why did he attract such large crowds, if there was nothing special about his baptism? We have already seen how defective is Josephus' view of John's message; the same is true of his explanation of John's baptism.

For these reasons, Josephus' view is to be rejected, and the view of the New Testament is much to be preferred.

1. Part II, p 59.

2. Part I, p 34.

3. See Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", I, p 32.

Now, we have seen that while the ritual purifications of Judaism had no moral significance, yet within the baptist movement, there was a tendency to develop a type of baptism which did mediate forgiveness of sins, conditional on repentance. Such baptism developed out of the earlier Jewish lustrations, and indeed it may well have retained ritual as well as moral connotations. Certainly, the ordinary ritual washings existed alongside of it.¹ John must have known of this baptism whether or not he was ever actually a member of the Qumran sect. His baptism seems to have been an extension of the trend which we have traced within the sectarian movement. For John, the moral significance was all-important, and the greatest stress was laid on repentance. Here we see how John's baptism linked up with his preaching. The demand for repentance in view of the fast-approaching Messianic judgement was, as we have seen, the essence of John's message. Repentance must be sincere and must express itself in good works. To this John added the demand that such an important act should be symbolized by the rite of baptism. As we have already suggested, John would probably think of the forgiveness being conferred, not at the moment of baptism, but at the judgement itself. This very close connection between John's preaching and his baptism is witnessed to by the phrase used by Mark and Luke - John appeared "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." The baptism could not be understood, and had no significance apart from the preaching of the message. The baptism was a symbolic act by which the essence of the message was dramatized in the experience of those who accepted the message. We may compare the idea of prophetic symbolism; Jeremiah, for example, was told to break an earthenware vessel to symbolize the impending destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 19:10 f.),

1. Cf. above, p 179.

and Elisha, on his deathbed, bade Joash fire an arrow to symbolize that he would defeat the Syrian army. (II Kings 13:14f.) So the act of baptism symbolized a person's repentance, and his hope that God would wash away his sins and grant him forgiveness when, ^rthrough the Coming One, He judged the earth.

In arriving at this conception of baptism, the conclusion is inescapable that John must have been influenced by passages in the prophets which interpret cleansing in moral and spiritual terms. To some extent this was already true of the sectarian movement. We have seen, for example, how use was made by them of Ezekial 36:25, where God says to Israel, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you."¹ John, however, was far more of a true prophet than the Qumran sectarians were. His message is essentially a prophetic one, and in his conception of baptism we cannot but feel that here is a new Isaiah crying,

"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes;
Cease to do evil, learn to do good....."
(Isaiah 1:16,17).

When the prophets speak of moral cleansing in terms of lustration, they are using the idea of washing in a metaphorical sense only, for, as we have seen, there is no evidence that any moral significance was attributed to the Old Testament rites of ritual and ceremonial purification. John, however, following the lead of the sectarian movement, fused the prophetic appeals for moral cleansing with an actual rite of baptism.

John's preaching was essentially eschatological, and so was his baptism. In this too it was closely related to sectarian baptism, especially the Qumran baptism of initiation. How far the concept of a new Israel and of a new covenant was present

1. See Part IV, p 122.

in John's mind, our sources do not permit us to say. But we may note that this is essentially a moral concept, entirely in keeping with John's outlook. Both John and the sectarians agree that membership of the old Israel is not enough, and in itself is no guarantee of salvation. For the sectarians, Israel had apostatized, and for John, those Jews who came to hear him preach were a brood of vipers, who must not think that they can place any reliance on their descent from Abraham. Following the analogy of the Qumran baptism, we can say with confidence that John's baptism too must have been thought of as admitting people to the eschatological community.

For John, however, this community, must have been something very different from the Qumran community. Although a group of disciples did gather round him, he had no intention of founding a sect.¹ The great majority of those baptized were expected to return to their daily tasks (Luke 3:10-14), and certainly there is no hint that they were required to join a highly organized monastic community. There was no pooling of property, no rigorous interview, no period of probation. Nevertheless, all those baptized by John could be thought of as the eschatological community in a wide sense - the community of those who by repentance, symbolized in baptism, and by righteous conduct were prepared to face the judgement of the Coming One, and who would in due time share the rewards of the righteous. We cannot go any further than this in deducing the nature of John's expectation on the basis of sectarian beliefs, for our sources are very meagre, and John in all probability gave no detailed picture of what would take place in the last days.²

We have noted previously³ the view of Kraeling that John's baptism symbolized the advance enactment of the candidate's

1. See further Part VII, p 217.

2. Cf. Part IV, p 127.

3. Part IV, p 117.

willing submission to the divine judgement which the river of fire will perform. On this view, the river of water stands for the river of fire which the Messiah will pour out in judgement on sinners. In a general way, no doubt the thought of the coming judgement by the river of fire would be in the minds both of John and of those who came for baptism. Yet the basic idea of the immersion in the river is not that of submission to judgement, but that of the cleansing or washing away of sins. This is clear from our whole survey, both of the meaning of the word βαπτίζεῖν, and of the understanding of baptism in Judaism, especially in the baptist movement.

We can now understand why John's baptism was not a repeated rite.¹ It was not a ritual washing which required to be repeated every time a person became unclean. It marked the once-for-all decision of a person to break with sin and to enter the community of those who sought to prepare for the imminent advent of the Coming One and his two-fold baptism of fire and holy spirit.

We can see also why the rite was performed by John and not by the person being baptized, as was the case with all other Jewish lustrations. In Part VI, we shall show how John regarded himself as having a definite role to play in the purposes of God. His preaching was the last minute warning before the judgement. Just as his message was divinely authorized, so was his rite of baptism, and it was therefore fitting that he should administer it. As Stauffer puts it, "The act of baptism is bound up with a unique historical figure who finds his eschatological mission in the administration of baptism."²

The question may be raised as to whether John's baptizing

1. Cf. above, p 159.

2. "New Testament Theology", p 22.

in the Jordan had any special significance. We have seen how the whole area in which John worked was rich in historical and religious associations.¹ It may well be that these influenced John in his decision to conduct his ministry in the wilderness.² The analogy of the story of Adam and Eve fasting and doing penance while immersed in the waters of the Jordan³, is often cited. But no great reliance can be placed on this text. It dates almost certainly from after the time of John, and seems to have originated in the Diaspora. It has been subjected to Christian editing, and there is a likelihood that the river was not originally the Jordan, but rather the Gihon, which is certainly what other Rabbinic sources would lead us to expect.⁴ We have also noted the association of the Jordan with the story of Naaman, but apart from the general idea of cleansing, there is nothing to link the Old Testament healing miracle with John's rite. It may well have been the case that the Qumran sectarians used the nearby waters of the Jordan for baptism,⁵ but if this is so no special significance can have been attached to the river, since no mention of it appears in the Scrolls.

The decisive factor must surely be the reference to John's baptizing at Aenon near Salim, which, as we have seen, was not in the Jordan at all. If John could baptize elsewhere, the Jordan could not have been of importance to him, apart from its general historical and religious associations.

In conclusion, our survey of the origins of John's baptism has shown that there is no need to look beyond the bounds of

1. Part II, pp 73-4.

2. Part II, p 76.

3. In the "Vita Adae et Evae"; See Part II, p 60.

4. Cf. commentary in Charles, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha", Vol. II.

5. See above, p 183.

Judaism for the source of his ideas. John probably observed the Jewish ritual lustrations, but his own baptism was not of this type. Nor can it be held to have been adapted from proselyte baptism, since that rite appears to have been a later development. In any case, proselyte baptism is quite different from John's rite. A much closer analogy is to be found in the lustrations of the baptist movement, especially in the Qumran baptism of initiation; John's rite seems to have developed from this type of baptism. It was very closely linked to his preaching, and symbolized a person's repentance and hope that as he washed himself by immersion in water, so God would cleanse him from his sins at the approaching judgement. The person thus baptized became a member of the eschatological community, not in the sense of joining any organized monastic body, but in the general sense of belonging to the New Israel, which was composed not necessarily of those descended from Abraham, but of those who recognized the need for repentance and who looked for the imminent advent of the Coming One who would pour out fire and holy spirit on the wicked and on the righteous respectively.

PART VI - JOHN THE PROPHET.

Having dealt with John's message and ministry, the question arises as to how John regarded himself. The people "questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ" (Luke 3:15); what was John's own interpretation of his role?

This is no easy question to answer since the evidence is so slight, and since the reliability of some of it is in doubt. Josephus gives us no direct evidence at all. In the New Testament, the only place where John speaks of his own office is in John 1: 19-23, where he denies that he is the Christ, or Elijah, or the prophet; he is only the voice crying in the wilderness in fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3. But we have seen how the Fourth Gospel is determined to minimize the importance of John at all costs.¹ Its evidence, therefore, must be treated with great caution. Apart from this passage, there is quite a bit of evidence of how John's contemporaries regarded him, especially of how Jesus regarded him, and there is also indirect evidence which will help us to answer the original question as to how John regarded himself.

The key term which appears in almost all of the passages dealing with John's office is that of "prophet". Unfortunately, our understanding of what this concept meant in John's day has been extremely distorted. We look back at John in the light of the beliefs of the early Church; and we also overstress the contrast between prophet and priest. We must, however, think ourselves back to the period immediately preceding the birth of the early Church, and discover what the concept of prophecy would mean for John and his contemporaries.

1. Part I, pp 15 f .

Our starting point must be the realization that at the start of the Christian era the Jews believed that prophecy had long since ceased.¹

The view that the prophetic spirit had been withdrawn is found even in the Old Testament itself. Zech 13:3-6 makes it clear that the only prophets left were false ones. Ps 74:9 says -

"We do not see our signs;
there is no longer any prophet,
and there is none among us who knows how long."

The fact that the religious writings produced in the inter-testamental period are almost all pseudonymous was due to the popular belief that God's Spirit, which had inspired the prophets of the Old Testament, was now withdrawn. In I Macc 9:27, in the account of the death of Judas, it is said: "And there was great tribulation in Israel, such as was not since the time that a prophet had appeared unto them."

The only exception to this belief that prophecy was extinct, in the inter-testamental period, arises in the case of John Hyrcanus.² The office of prophet is ascribed to him both by Josephus ("The Jewish War", 1,2,8) and in Test. Levi 8:14. But this is merely an indication that Hyrcanus was believed in some quarters to be God's anointed king, an eschatological figure combining the three Messianic offices of prophet, priest and king. With the passing of such beliefs about the Maccabean dynasty, prophecy once again became a purely eschatological concept.

The Rabbinic literature also upholds this view. Zeitlin states - "The same opinion, that prophets ceased among the

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1. On this section see especially, Gullmann, "Christology of the New Testament", pp 13-50.
 2. See F.W. Young, "Jesus the Prophet : a Re-examination", JBL, LXVIII, 1949, pp 289-291.

Jews after the Persian period, is corroborated in the Talmudic literature where it is stated that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were last of the prophets." ¹

Thus in the 1st Cent. A.D. prophecy was a thing of the distant past. Yet if prophecy was thought to be dead there was an equally strong opinion that at some point in the future prophecy would return. To be more precise, the return of prophecy would mark the dawning of the new age. As we shall see, in all the passages to be quoted, the revival of prophecy is an eschatological concept.

Again, the first evidence is found within the Old Testament itself. According to Joel 2:38f. the new age will be marked by the return of the spirit of prophecy (note the close connection between prophecy and God's Spirit) -

"And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...."

Sybylline Oracles III, 781 reads, "For naught but peace shall come upon the land of the good: and the prophets of the mighty God shall take away the sword."

In the inter-testamental period, however, the idea developed that one prophet would arise at the dawning of the new age. And so most writers speak of "a prophet" or "the prophet", and not of "prophets." We shall note first that in some forms of this expectation, no special figure is mentioned as the prophet; then we shall note the cases where one particular person was expected to return as the eschatological prophet.

a) The Prophet.

A few passages refer to the prophet in general terms.

1. Quoted by Young, JBL, LXVIII, p. 291

In I Macc. 4:46, in the account of the purification and rebuilding of the temple, it is said - "They pulled down the altar, and laid down the stones in the mountain of the house, in a convenient place, until a prophet should come and decide concerning them." Here a difficult problem is solved by being shelved until a future prophet should settle the matter. Again, in I Macc 14:41, we read - "And the Jews and the high priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a faithful prophet should arise..." By this is meant that "this popular decree should remain in force until an authentic communication from God should make some other enactment."¹ In these two cases the coming prophet is to settle any outstanding problems and reveal God's will.

Another reference is found in Test. Benjamin 9:2 which reads - "Nevertheless the temple of God shall be in your portion and the last (temple) shall be more glorious than the first. And the twelve tribes shall be gathered together there, and all the Gentiles, until the Most High shall send forth His salvation in the visitation of an only-begotten prophet." Here the coming prophet is the bringer of salvation.

Apart from these references, the eschatological prophet is usually thought of as some particular person. There is some evidence of the expectation of Enoch, Baruch and Jeremiah.² But the great mass of the evidence is divided between belief in a returning Elijah and belief in a returning Moses.

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1. Schurer, quoted in Charles, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha", Vol I, p 119.
 2. See Gullmann, "Christology of the New Testament", pp 17,18.

b) The returning Elijah.

This form of the belief originates in Malachi 4:5,6 - "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." Malachi 3:1-4 speaks of a rather different figure, "the messenger of the covenant", whose task will be to purify the Temple cult and priesthood, preparatory to the coming of the Lord Himself in judgement. It is now generally conceded that Mal 4:5,6 is a later addition in which the "messenger of the covenant" has been reinterpreted as the returning Elijah whose task is no longer to prepare the Temple, but "to restore peace and social well-being to the community so as to avert God's wrath in the day of judgement."¹

Sirach 48:1-12 provides another clear reference to the belief that "the prophet" will be Elijah. A passage dealing with Elijah concludes -

"Who wast taken upwards in a whirlwind,
And by fiery troops to the heavens,
Who art ready for the time, as it is written,
To still wrath before the fierce anger of God,
To turn the heart of the fathers unto the children,
And to restore the tribes of Israel."

The last line in the Greek version reads - *καταστήσαι φυλὰς Ἰακώβ* . This is probably echoed in Mark 9:12 - *Ἠλίας μὲν ἐλθὼν πρῶτον ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα*. Obviously, this passage depends on the one in Malachi, with the addition of "to restore the tribes of Israel."

The close connection with Elijah's translation shows us why Elijah especially was chosen as the future prophet. He

1. R.C. Dentan, Interpreter's Bible, Vol VI, p 1144.

did not do as men do, but was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven (11 Kings 2:11). In Jewish legend (most of it later than 1st. Cent. A.D.) Elijah's activities really only began with his translation, that unusual occurrence providing ample scope for stories of his frequent returns to earth.¹

"Rabbinic literature abounds in references to Elijah.² Difficulties in dating mean that very little of the evidence is of value for New Testament study. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia it was thought in the second half of the 1st. Cent. A.D. that Elijah would appear shortly before Messiah to restore to families the purity which in the course of time had become doubtful. A century later Elijah's office was "to bring peace and adjust all differences." Other functions later ascribed to Elijah were the adjustment of all legal, ritual and Scriptural problems, "but the notion which prevailed at the time of the origin of Christianity, that Elijah's mission as forerunner of the Messiah consisted mainly in changing the mind of the people and leading them to repentance, is not unknown to Rabbinical literature." (The Jewish belief that Elijah is present as "angel of the covenant" at the ceremony of circumcision, and the belief about the presence of Elijah at the Passover are worth noting, but they are probably mediaeval in origin).

Finally, we can find evidence in the New Testament regarding the coming of Elijah. Here we are only concerned with the witness certain passages bear to contemporary Jewish beliefs, and not with the opinions of the Christian authors.

When the doings of Jesus became known, there were some people who thought he was Elijah come again. "It was said

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1. See article "Elijah", Jewish Encyclopedia, V, pp 121-128, for a selection of these legends. Possible allusions to the Elijah legend are also found in I Macc 2:58; Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:14, I Enoch 89:52; II Baruch 77: 24; IV Ezra 7: 109.
 2. Cf. Young, JBL, LXVIII, p 293, and the references he gives there.

by some that Elijah had appeared." (Lk 9:8; Mk 6:15). Again, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked what the popular opinion about him was, and the disciples reported that some thought he was Elijah (Mk 8:28, Mt 16:14, Lk 9:19). In Mark 9:11 and Matt 17:11 it is said that the scribes taught that "first Elijah must come". Jesus confirmed this, adding that "Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things." In John 1:21, one of the questions John the Baptist is asked is, "Are you Elijah?".

To these should perhaps be added the incident at the Cross when Jesus cried out in the words of Psalm 22:1, "Eloi, Eloi....." and the bystanders thought he was calling for Elijah. They, of course, misunderstood Jesus' words, but evidently they thought it at least conceivable that Elijah would come to earth and make a dramatic last minute rescue.

Thus we have quite a body of evidence that there was a widespread belief that the eschatological prophet would be Elijah come again. A variety of functions were ascribed to him. He would decide various outstanding problems before the new age was ushered in, but principally he would call the people to repentance just prior to the day of the Lord.

c) The prophet like unto Moses.

There was, however, another version of the belief in the eschatological prophet. While some writers indicate a belief in Elijah come again, others hold that the prophet will be "like unto Moses."

The origin of this belief is found in Deut 18:15, where Moses says -

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken."

It is not our concern here to enquire exactly what the original writer meant by these words; we are concerned only

with their interpretation at a later date.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have contributed important evidence regarding the expectation of the Moses-like prophet. The Manual of Discipline 9:10,11 reads, ".... they shall be ruled with the first laws with which the men of the community began to be disciplined, until the coming of a prophet and the anointed ones of Aaron and Israel." Here we have the expectation of three eschatological figures, the prophet and two Messiahs.¹ In the Testimonia text from Qumran², this threefold expectation is expanded and explained by the texts which are quoted -- Deut 5:28,29 and Deut 18:18-19, referring to the prophet like unto Moses; Nos. 24:15-17, referring to the "star out of Jacob", the secular kingly Messiah; and Deut 33:8-11, the blessing of Moses on the tribe of Levi, referring to the expectation of the priestly Messiah. Here is clear proof of the expectation of the eschatological prophet in the person of the returning Moses.

Further evidence is found in the New Testament itself.

John's Gospel probably preserves the most ancient tradition at this point. In John 1:19 f., the deputation asks John the Baptist who he is. When he denies being the Christ, they ask, "What then, are you Elijah?" (cf. previous section). When this is denied, there is one possibility left, "Are you the prophet?". The fact that the previous question excludes the returning Elijah, and that the reference is not merely to "A prophet" but to "the prophet" makes it clear that the priests and levites from Jerusalem were asking if John was the prophet "like unto Moses". Likewise, in John 7:40, "the people" say

1. On the two Messiahs see K.G.Kuhn, "The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel", in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", pp 55-64.
2. See T.H. Gaster, "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect", pp 353-355.

of Jesus, "This is really the prophet." Even clearer is John 16:14 where, following the feeding of the 5000, the people say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!" Jesus, having just repeated the miracle of the manna, is the prophet like the first Moses.¹ More indirect evidence of the existence of the belief is afforded by the New Testament writers who identify Jesus as the Moses-like prophet. Matthew pictures Jesus as a new Moses giving a new law; some scholars hold that this motif is found in Luke also, Luke 9-18 following the outline of Deuteronomy 1-26; Peter quotes Dt 18:15 in Acts 3:22,23 and applies it to Jesus; Stephen quotes Dt 18:15 in Acts 7:37, the whole point of his speech up to this verse being the parallel between the rejection of Moses, the first saviour of his people, and that of Jesus, who is the second Moses.

In view of this accumulation of evidence it may be held that Matthew Black is right when he says that "there is reason to believe that one of the liveliest of popular Jewish expectations in the New Testament period was that of the coming of a prophet 'like unto Moses', foretold at Dt 18:15....."²

It may be added here that the Moses-like prophet is the central figure in Samaritan eschatology. A fuller treatment of this and an explanation of its significance for the study of John the Baptist will be found in Part IX, pp 266;276.

This survey has made clear that at the beginning of the Christian era, there was a strong belief in a coming prophet. In some cases he was not named, but more frequently he was thought of as being either the returning Elijah or the returning Moses. Probably we would be wrong to set these views in too

1. Another reference is almost certainly to be found at John 7:52, where Papyrus Bodmer II (c.200 A.D.) has the definite article before *προφῆτης* so that this reads - "The prophet does not arise out of Galilee" (cf. John 7:41,42). The existing text has caused much trouble, being in conflict with Old Testament and Rabbinic evidence; The Papyrus Bodmer II reading looks like the original one.
2. "Servant of the Lord and Son of Man", SJT, Vol 6, 1953, pp 2,3.

violent opposition to each other. It is unlikely that most people held dogmatically either to one view or the other. Thus the deputation to John (Jn 1:19f) can ask if John is Elijah and when this is denied, they ask if he is "the prophet". There is a little evidence that sometimes two prophets were expected.¹ The Transfiguration and also Rev 11:3f. may reflect such a belief, but it is possible that the combining of Moses and Elijah is a Christian idea.

The above study has made it abundantly clear that the coming prophet was an eschatological figure. Prophecy was dead; its rebirth would be a sign of the new age. It is quite wrong therefore to speak of someone claiming to be "merely a prophet"₂ in contrast to someone claiming to be "a Messianic figure". Anyone who claimed to be a prophet was claiming to be the prophet. Anyone claiming to be a prophet was claiming to be a Messianic figure, not in the sense that he was the Messiah himself, but in the sense that he was ushering in the new age.

Thought has been greatly confused by allowing the New Testament to cloud over the picture of pre-Christian Judaism. The New Testament believes that prophecy has returned, notably following the day of Pentecost. There were many prophets in the early Church. (See e.g. 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20, 3:5, etc.) Matthew (10:41) can talk about receiving a prophet as if that was a common occurrence, as indeed it was - in the Christian Church. But "Prophet" has now changed its meaning; there is almost an order of prophets in the Church, and the eschatological prophet is no longer meant.

Our survey and examination of all the available evidence shows that previous to, and outside of, the early Church,

1. Gullmann, "Christology of the New Testament", p 18.

2. Cf. Young, JBL, LXVIII, pp 297, 298.

"prophet" was an eschatological term with a definite, limited meaning. This point may be finally driven home by citing two examples of men who claimed to be prophets. The true nature of this claim, and the consequences of it are clear from the quotations.

Josephus (Ant.XX,5,1) says -

"Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan, for he told them that he was a prophet, and that he would by his command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it; and many were deluded by his words. However, Fadus did not permit them to take advantage of his wild attempt, but sent a troop of horsemen out against them, and took many of them alive. They also took Theudas alive, and cut off his head and carried it to Jerusalem."

This man claimed to be "a prophet", which could mean nothing else than the eschatological prophet. It is very interesting to note that a journey of the people through the desert taking their effects with them recalls Moses leading the Israelites, whereas the dividing of the Jordan recalls Elijah doing the same (II Kings 2:8)

Josephus (War II, 261f.) tells another story -

"A still worse blow was dealt at the Jews by the Egyptian false prophet. A charlatan, who gained for himself the reputation of a prophet, this man appeared in the country, collected a following of about 30,000 dupes, and led them by a circuitous route from the desert to the Mount of Olives. From there he proposed to force an entrance into Jerusalem and, after overpowering the Roman garrison, to set himself up as a tyrant."

The man's followers were killed and dispersed, but he himself escaped.

Clearly then, Young is right when he says that "the claim

of prophecy could be made only within the context of those events which herald Messianic times."¹ The claim to be prophet was a momentous one indeed, and one which, in view of a Roman government ever alert for any sign of revolt, could have the most dangerous consequences. Even if the person claiming to be the prophet interpreted the office in a quite peaceful and non-militarist way, he would run a very grave risk of being misunderstood either by a certain section of the Jewish people or by the Roman government.

Two further points regarding the eschatological prophet must be noted. The first is that he is often regarded as a priest as well as prophet. This would be a logical consequence of the fact that both Moses and Elijah were priests. In Test. Levi 8:12 f. where John Hyrcanus is portrayed as prophet (cf. above, p 198), he is of priestly descent - "the third shall be called by a new name, because a king shall arise in Judah, and shall establish a new priesthood, after the fashion of the Gentiles, and his presence is beloved, as a prophet of the Most High, of the seed of Abraham, our father."² It is clear that the contrast between prophet and priest has been over-drawn in modern times,³ and that in John's day prophecy and priesthood so far from being opposed were expected to be linked in the person of the eschatological prophet.

Secondly, the relation of the prophet to the Messiah is an important one, though not an easy one to discover. G.F. Moore says,⁴ "It was the universal belief that shortly before the

1. JBL, LXVIII, p 298.

2. See further, Stauffer, "New Testament Theology", p 24 ; T.H. Gaster, "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect", pp 38, 315.

3. See especially the extremely valuable Chapter II, "The Law and the Prophets", in H.H. Rowley, "The Unity of the Bible", 1953.

4. "Judaism", II, p 357.

appearance of the Messiah, Elijah should return." The evidence, however, is not as strong as is sometimes supposed. The question of the disciples in Mark 9:11, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" probably indicates such a belief, and Justin Martyr probably passes on an earlier Jewish tradition when he says that it was a common Jewish belief that Elijah would be the precursor of the Messiah.¹ Most of the texts quoted in our study speak of the prophet as the forerunner of God and of the new age. The Dead Sea Scrolls have in fact provided us with the first definite pre-Christian evidence of the prophet as the forerunner, in this case of the two Messiahs. While many people therefore probably did expect the eschatological prophet to be the forerunner of the Messiah, this expectation was hardly a universal one, and there are indications of other forms of belief where the prophet was expected with no Messiah, or where the two offices merge.²

We have already noted that in John 1:19-23, John is pictured as denying that he is the eschatological prophet, or Elijah or the Christ. In view of his preaching of the Coming One, which we have already dealt with, John cannot have pictured himself as the Coming One or Messiah. The question still remains, however, as to whether John may not have pictured himself as the eschatological prophet. The Fourth Gospel, so intent on minimizing the importance of John, cannot be trusted at this point. We therefore turn now to the rest of the New Testament evidence, which we shall deal with in four stages.

1. Jesus regarded John as the eschatological prophet, as will be seen from the following passages -

Mt. 11:7-11; Lk 7:24-28. Jesus addresses the crowds concerning John and asks them, "Why then did you go out? To see a prophet?" (or, "What then did you go out to see?" A prophe

1. Dialogue with Trypho, 8:4, 49:1.

2. See Gullmann, "Christology of the New Testament", p. 23.

He tells them - "Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.'" According to Jesus, John is a prophet in so far as he has the characteristics of the prophets of old; he is "more than a prophet" in so far as he is the prophet foretold by Malachi.

Mt 11:13,14, which is not paralleled in Luke, makes this very clear. Jesus says, "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who is to come."

Mk 9:11-13; Mt 17:10-13. In this passage the disciples actually question Jesus regarding the belief "that first Elijah must come." Jesus confirms the belief that Elijah "does come first to restore all things", and says that "Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased." Matthew adds the explanatory comment (17:13) - "Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist."

2. The Christian writers themselves regarded John as the eschatological prophet. For example, when Mark (1:2) inserts the quotation from Malachi 3:1 before the quotation from Is 40:3, he makes it known that he considered that John was the returning Elijah as prophesied by Malachi. He neither puts the words into the mouth of Jesus nor of John; he merely states that these prophecies were fulfilled in the ministry of John.

Whatever may have been the original meaning intended in the source on which Luke draws, in Luke 1 as it now stands, John is pictured as the eschatological prophet who is "filled with the Holy Spirit" and who will "turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, and will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (Luke 1:15-17).

Zeehariah prophesies, "And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, and will go before the Lord to prepare His ways....." (Luke 1:76). John is the returning Elijah of Malachi 4:5,6. The concept of the returning Elijah seems to be "spiritualized" in the phrase "he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah". John is not actually Elijah on this view, but rather a prophet "like unto Elijah". Contrast the rather more literal tone of Mt 11:14 where Jesus says "He is Elijah who is to come."

Probably we should include here Luke's statement that "the word of God came to John, the son Zeehariah, in the wilderness" (Luke 3:2). It is very doubtful whether Luke had any authority for saying this, but it clearly shows that he regarded John as a prophet called to this office through hearing the word of God, exactly as the prophets of old were.

3. We have seen that Jesus, and the early Christian writers following him, regarded John as the eschatological prophet. Next, we look for evidence that the people regarded John as the eschatological prophet. Quite apart from what Jesus and his followers thought, did anyone else regard John as "the prophet"?

Two New Testament passages are relevant here and they are the more valuable because in them the writers have no special axe to grind.

Matthew's account of the death of John is found in 14:3-12. Clearly he is abridging the Marcan version of the story, but at v5 he slips in almost accidentally the fact that though Herod wanted to put John to death, "he feared the people because they held him to be a prophet."

Equally valuable is the narrative of the question about authority (Mk 11:27-33; Mt 21:23-27; Lk 20:1-8). When Jesus turned the tables on the priests and scribes and asked them, "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?", they "were

afraid of the people, for all held that John was a real prophet¹.

4. Finally we come to the basic question - did John regard himself as the eschatological prophet? None of the previous points we have made are sufficient proof of this. Indeed we have seen in a previous section¹ that Schweitzer, for example, held that John did not regard himself as the returning Elijah, but that Jesus was the first and only person to make this identification. In the absence of reliable evidence of any saying of John himself on the subject, we seek a solution in what John did rather than in what he said.

a) The place of his ministry is significant. John chose to preach in the wilderness, near to the Jordan, in an area which, as we have already seen had strong eschatological associations.² Many Messianic movements were born in this region. In addition to the evidence given in Part II, we may note further that the wilderness (East of Jordan) was the scene of Elijah's translation (II Kings 2:1-12) and of the death of Moses (Deut 34:1-6); , and therefore the ideal place for their return. Strangely enough it is the Fourth Gospel which makes John quote Is 40:3 as the justification for his wilderness ministry (John 1:23), while all three Synoptics, though quoting the text, do not place it on John's lips (Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4; Matt 3:3). Whether or not John actually quoted this text of himself, it seems certain that he did go into the wilderness because he believed it to be the correct place for an eschatological ministry.

b) John's dress is also of significance here.

Mk 1:6 reads - "John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle round his waist" The parallel in Matthew is found at 3:4 - "John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist....."

1. Part IV, p 128.

2. Part II, pp 74 f.

What kind of garment was this? Since it says camel's hair, and not skin or fur, we are to understand probably a coarse cloth made of the hair. There are examples moreover of the cloth but not of the skin, being used in this way.¹ The ζώνη was a girdle or belt which would gather in the garment at the waist. Hair and leather would be the cheapest and simplest materials available for the two items of dress.

In donning this garb John's asceticism would undoubtedly influence him, but the conclusion is inescapable that his main motive was to display the traditional dress of the prophet.

i. The hairy mantle goes back to Elijah. He wore a garment, an קַיִטָּן. It was a sort of badge of office, and even possessed magical powers (II Kings 2:8). Elisha's inheriting Elijah's mantle is the equivalent of inheriting his prophetic office (I Kings 19:19, II Kings 2:13,14). Nothing is said of the exact nature of the garment in the Elijah passages, but קַיִטָּן is used in Gen 25:25 of Esau - "all his body was like a hairy mantle." The mantle became the traditional garb of a prophet. Zech. 13:4 says - "On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; he will not put on a hairy mantle (קַיִטָּן) in order to deceive." Here false prophets are spoken of; they are condemned for being dressed like prophets but not acting or speaking like them. In the Martyrdom of Isaiah², Isaiah and the faithful prophets are pictured as being clothed in garments of hair.

ii. The leather belt also goes back to Elijah. In II Kings 1:8 it is mentioned along with the mantle. "He wore a garment of hair cloth, with a girdle of leather about his loins."

John's wearing of these two articles of dress proclaimed to all that he was a prophet. Of his own free will he

1. E.P. Gould, "St. Mark" ICC, pp 7,8.

2. See "Ascension of Isaiah", 2:10; and also, Part XI, p 314.

deliberately gave this impression.

Although both belt and mantle are first mentioned in the Old Testament in connection with Elijah, it does not follow that he was the first to wear them. He certainly was not the last, as the other references show. The dress was worn by many prophets and John's acceptance of it does not show that he necessarily claimed to be Elijah - it is quite possible that he may have claimed to be the prophet "like unto Moses", or merely to have been "the prophet".

c) John's message was essentially a prophetic one. He was no Rabbi expounding the intricacies of the Torah, but a prophet calling on the people to repent and turn from their wickedness. The fact that the Jews are a chosen race, that they have Abraham for their father, will not save them from the judgement. In the same way the ancient prophets foretold the judgement about to fall on the nation which thought that Jahweh would protect them, though they were morally, socially and politically corrupt. John's denunciation of Antipas also bears the marks of a prophet, a man who feared no one, not even the king.¹ John vigorously denounced Antipas, just as Elijah had denounced Ahab (I Kings 21:17f.)

d) The fact that John baptized, in contrast to other types of baptism which were self-administered,² suggests that he thought of himself as fulfilling some important office. This baptism, symbol of repentance, was very closely linked with the imminent coming of the Messiah, and suggests that John viewed himself as the eschatological prophet, preparing the people for the arrival of the Coming One.

The conclusion is inescapable that John deliberately cast himself in the role of prophet. The place of his ministry, the

1. On this episode, see further Part X, pp 287-291.

2. Above, p 194 .

the dress he adopted, his message and his ministry allow of no other description than that of "prophetic". But we have already seen that anyone claiming to be a prophet, inevitably claimed to be the prophet. In the situation in which John appeared, his actions must clearly have demonstrated a claim to be the eschatological prophet, ushering in the new age and preparing for the Messiah. John's priestly descent would make him specially fitted for this office, in view of the expectation that the coming prophet would also be a priest.¹

The evidence does not allow us to say that John associated himself definitely either with the Elijah or the Moses branch of the expectation. The Synoptics associate John with Elijah because they regard Jesus as the second Moses.² Jesus himself very definitely regarded John as the returning Elijah, but he may conceivably have been reserving the idea of the second Moses for himself, since his own ministry had many prophetic features also. The main piece of evidence for John regarding himself as Elijah is his dress, but, as we have seen, this dress had come to be the accepted garb of any prophet and would be just as suitable for the prophet "like unto Moses." The wilderness ministry might recall Elijah, but it would be even more likely to recall Moses leading the Israelites in the wilderness.

Probably the best explanation would be that John was content to picture himself as the prophet in general terms, as in the branch of the expectation where no special person was indicated.³ Jesus, however, suggested that John was the returning Elijah, thus opening up the way for the identification of himself with Moses. The Synoptics follow this line, but the Fourth Gospel, in clear contradiction to the Synoptics,

1. Above, p 208.

2. See A. Richardson, "An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament", p. 167.

3. See above, pp 199, 200.

makes John deny even the office of eschatological prophet.

We would therefore hold that John was aware of the expectation of the eschatological prophet who would immediately precede the new age. He believed that God had called him to this office, and so he set out to warn the people of the imminent judgement and to prepare the people by calling them to repentance. As with the ancient prophets, this was a dangerous calling and John would realize the dangers full well. Nevertheless, in the true prophetic tradition he spared neither the king nor the religious leaders in his attacks on wickedness. He believed that he had a decisive place in God's plan, that he stood on the threshold of the new age and indeed that he was ushering in the new age. He was the beginning of the end. His task was indeed to prepare the way for the great events about to take place.

PART VII - THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN.

John the Baptist had no intention of founding a new sect, far less of starting a new religion.¹ The imminence of the end of days dominated his thought, and ruled out any idea of setting up a permanent organization. Yet there is clear evidence that a group of disciples formed around John during his ministry, and continued to exist after his death.

Both Josephus and the New Testament, as we have previously noted, testify to the large numbers of people who flocked to hear John preach and to be baptized by him. We have also seen how, according to Luke 3:10-14, John did not demand that people should leave their daily occupations; rather, they were to remain at their present tasks and carry them out, showing justice and kindness towards those with whom they came in contact. John's baptism was not a baptism of initiation in the sense of initiating people into a sect; it was a baptism of initiation only in the much wider sense in which those people baptized became members of the community of those who, by repentance, baptism and righteous living were prepared to face the Coming One and his twofold eschatological baptism.

This interpretation is denied by those who would see in Josephus' phrase, βαπτισμῷ συνιέναι², an indication that those baptized by John were initiated into a sect. This is the view e.g. of Goguel who renders the phrase "s'unir par un baptême."³ But it is highly doubtful whether Goguel's arguments can be accepted; most likely the phrase means simply "that the people were invited to come as a people must, in

1. Cf. Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 89.

2. The context is: "John..... was bidding the Jews who practice virtue and exercised righteousness towards each other and piety toward God, to come together for baptism." Antiquities, XVIII, 5,2.

3. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", pp 16n, 19. This is also the view of H.G.Marsh, "The Origin and the Significance of the New Testament Baptism", p 64.

numbers rather than each one separately."¹ The great mass of people were not enrolled in a sect or made members of a religious community; the "disciples of John" must have been a relatively small number of those who were baptized.

Josephus does not speak of any "disciples of John," and the New Testament is our main source of information regarding this group. Nothing is said of these disciples prior to the mention of Jesus' baptism at the hands of John, but the Fourth Gospel mentions them three times during the period after the baptism of Jesus but before the arrest of John.² In John 1:35 we read that "John was standing with two of his disciples" as Jesus passed by; in John 3:25 a discussion is mentioned "between John's disciples and a Jew over purifying"; and in John 4:1 reference is made to the fact that the Pharisees "had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John". When John was in prison his disciples report to him on the activities of Jesus, and he sends two disciples to question Jesus (Luke 7:18-23, Matt 11:2-6). The practice of prayers and fasting by John's disciples is referred to in Luke 5:33, Mark 2:18, Matt 9:14, but whether John was at this time dead, or still imprisoned, we cannot say.³ Finally, we note that on the death of John, his disciples "came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb." (Mark 6:29, Matt 14:12).

In the Clementine literature there are references to the disciples of John, according to which they were thirty in number and included Simon Magus, Dositheus, and "one woman" who was called Luna". The accounts preserve for us the fact that John did have a group of disciples, but are entirely

1. Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 119.

2. Jesus' baptism is, of course, not actually related in the Fourth Gospel.

3. Cf. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 44.

unreliable with regard to details.¹

We have already pointed out that John's disciples must have formed a relatively small group and this is confirmed by John 4:1 with its mention of Jesus making and baptizing more disciples than John. What was the nature of this group, and what exactly was a disciple?

A disciple² (μαθητής), in Greek, is a pupil or learner; the word is frequently used, e.g. in Plato, for the pupil of a philosopher. In the New Testament the word is used for John's disciples, for "the disciples of the Pharisees" (Luke 5:33, Mk 2:18), and very frequently for the disciples of Jesus, sometimes referring to the Twelve, sometimes to a larger group. Various analogies have been cited in the attempt to shed some light on the true nature of the disciples of John.

The scribes or Rabbis had their pupils,³ Talmide Hakamim, "disciples of the learned", who surrounded their teachers "with an atmosphere of reverent devotion."⁴ The "disciples of the Pharisees" were probably such pupils of Rabbis.⁵

John, however, does not appear in the role of a scribe, teaching pupils the subtleties of scriptural exegesis. The mention by Thomas of the followers of Judas the Galilean is even less helpful, though Banos, whose disciple (ξηλωτής) Josephus was, may be a closer analogy.⁶ But obviously the closest and most useful analogy of all is to be found in the disciples of Jesus, the other group to whom the New Testament applies the term μαθηταί . The disciples of Jesus learned from him and were the recipients of his teaching; but more than

1. See further, Part XI, pp 300-306.

2. See article, "Disciple", HDB, I, pp 609,610, by J. Massie.

3. See Moore, "Judaism", I, p 43.

4. Guignebert, "The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus", p 68.

5. The phrase has caused difficulty to some commentators, since Pharisees as such would not have disciples.

6. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 89.

this is implied, for they entered into a close personal relationship with Jesus, seeking to obey him and serve him as well as listen to him. To some extent the μαθητής of the Greek philosopher, and certainly the pupil of a Rabbi, was not merely a learner but an adherent of his teacher.¹ This aspect of discipleship is especially stressed in the New Testament as may be seen from such a text as John 15:8 - "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples." Jesus' disciples share his ministry of preaching and even of exorcism (Luke 10:17-19), and also help to attend to his personal needs (Cf. e.g. John 4:8).

In the disciples of John we should, therefore, probably see a small group of men, doubtless having been baptized by him, who chose to remain close to him in order to hear his preaching and teaching and to aid him in his ministry. That there was any formal organization of this group is unlikely; certainly nothing as complicated as the Qumran sect and probably not even an inner circle as in the case of Jesus.

Two pieces of information regarding the practices of this group during John's lifetime have been preserved for us. Firstly, we gather that they had special prayers. In Luke 5:33 we read that "the disciples of John offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees"; while in Luke 11:1, Jesus' disciples say to him, "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." The latter text especially must certainly be historical as no Christian writer would ever invent the idea that the Lord's Prayer was given in imitation of the practice of John.

Clearly what is referred to here is not the normal prayers

1 Cf. HDB, I, p 610.

which a Jew would use, such as the Shema, a form of the Shemonah Esreh, grace at meals, etc.¹ We are dealing here with special prayers composed by John for use by his disciples. A fairly close analogy to this is to be seen in the practice of Rabbis who composed prayers which were preserved by their disciples; a considerable number of such prayers are to be found in the Talmud.²

The word used in Luke 5:33 is δέησις which means a request or petition, and probably John's prayers would be petitionary in character. The closest analogy which we can hope to get to John's prayers is probably the Lord's Prayer itself for, as Kraeling points out, "there is little in it that could not have been made the subject of petition in Baptist circles quite as appropriately as in Christian circles."³ It has been suggested that the phrase, "Thy holy spirit come upon us and cleanse us", which appears as part of the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2) in a few MSS, was originally part of a prayer of John's; but this is extremely far-fetched.⁴ The furthest we can go is to suggest that John's prayers, like his preaching, would be predominantly eschatological in outlook; they would probably include petitions for the forgiveness of sins, and for God to be merciful at the coming day of judgement.

Although John taught his disciples to pray, there is no need to suppose that his prayers were secret⁵ and he may well also have given the crowds some instruction in prayer.

The second piece of information the New Testament gives us about the disciples of John is that they practiced fasting. "The disciples of John fast often..... and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." (Luke 5:33).

1. See Moore, "Judaism", I, pp 291-296; II, 212f.

2. Moore, "Judaism", II, pp 214 f.

3. Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 79.

4. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 93, n4 ; Steinmann, "Saint John the Baptist," p 75.

5. Cf. Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 94.

"Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, 'Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?' (Mark 2:18).

"Then the disciples of John came to him saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?'" (Matt 9:14).

In this, John's disciples were following the example of their master, whose asceticism contrasted with the example of Jesus, as we learn from Matt 11:18 - "John came neither eating nor drinking....." The parallel passage in Luke has - "John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine." (Lk 7:33).

From these references it is clear that one of the most marked characteristics of the life of both John and his disciples was their asceticism. G.F. Moore asserts that in Jewish piety "There is no ascetic strain, in the historical and usual sense of the term."¹ But this is open to question, and indeed has been questioned.² Ascetic ideas and practices have never dominated Judaism it is true, but in Old Testament and inter-Testamental times an "ascetic strain" can very definitely be discerned. We may note that in the references given above, the fasting of John and his disciples puts them out of line with Jesus and his disciples, but into line with the Pharisees.

Israel's faith was born in the wilderness and the Israelites did not forget the desert's discipline, even when settlement in Palestine brought to them the pleasures of civilisation. The references to fasting in the literature of Judaism are numerous; not only were there the public fasts,³

1. "Judaism", II, p 263

2. See J.A. Montgomery, "Ascetic Strains in Early Judaism", JBL, Vol LI, 1932, pp 183-213, esp. p 185.

3. See Moore, "Judaism", II, pp 55-69.

for example in connection with the Day of Atonement, but special fasting is a mark of piety in most Godly men. Moses neither ate bread nor drank water for forty days and nights while he received the words of the covenant (Ex 34:28); Daniel's vision (in Dan 10) was preceded by three weeks during which he had no meat or wine; the saintly Judith "fasted all the days of her widowhood, except the day before the sabbath and the sabbath itself, the day before the new moon and the day of the new moon, and the feasts and days of rejoicing of the house of Israel" (Judith 8:6). In Old Testament times we hear of an ascetic order of Rechabites¹, possibly connected with the later Nazarites though the Nazirite vow usually seems to have implied only a temporary asceticism². In John's day, many people appear to have made a practice of fasting twice a week (cf. Lk 18:12), on Mondays and Thursdays. But ascetic influences are especially marked in the non-conformist, baptist sects, as we have already noted.³ Prayer and fasting, it is worth noting, were often linked⁴, as they are in Luke 5:33 - "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers."

Concerning John's asceticism we have two pieces of information: he neither ate bread nor drank wine (Lk 7:33); he did eat locusts and wild honey (*ἀκρίδες και μέλι ἄγριον* Mk 1:6, Matt 3:4). The latter represent the food of the desert, and it is curious how much difficulty they seem to have occasioned.⁵ The apocryphal Gospel of the Ebionites substitutes for *ἀκρίς* (locust) the word *ἐγκρίς*, denoting a cake made with oil and honey. To this day

1. II Kings 10:15 f.; Jer 35:1-10. Guignebert, "The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus", p 192.
2. Nos 6:1-21. See article, "Nazirite", HDB, III, pp 497-501, and below, pp 225-227.
3. Part II, pp 63, 64.
4. Montgomery, JBL, LI, 1932, p 188; Moore, "Judaism", II, pp 259, 260.
5. See H.R. Reynolds, "John the Baptist", pp 152, 153n.

travellers in Palestine are shown carob-pods or "locust-beans", known as "St. John's Bread".¹ Yet, strange as it may seem to some, locusts were eaten and indeed still are eaten in parts of the East. Two points about John's diet of locusts deserve mention. Firstly, the locust was a clean animal and its consumption is specially permitted by the Law (Lev 11:22 - a clear proof, of course, that locusts were eaten). Secondly, if John ate locusts he was not a vegetarian. Almost certainly it was the vegetarianism of the Ebionites which made them remove the reference to locusts, and several of the baptist sects including the pre-Christian Nazareans were strong vegetarians.² With this aspect of the baptist movement, therefore, John was not in sympathy.

According to the Slavonic version of Josephus, John ate no flesh or bread and drank no wine; "wood-shavings served him for his meals." Eisler notes that this ascription of a vegetarian diet to the Baptist, "flatly contradicts the Gospel tradition of his feeding on locusts", but he prefers to follow the Slavonic version and some later traditions which state that John confined himself to a vegetable diet.³ Eisler believes that what John ate was *ἄκροδρυα*, "tree-fruits", but that this was "maliciously distorted into *ἄκρίδες* by the hand of an enemy of the Baptist's sect, desirous of making the Baptist appear as one feeding on vermin, naturally loathsome to Gentile Christians of the educated classes." The "wood-shavings" of the Slavonic Josephus, a strange diet indeed, do not worry

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1. See Brownlee, in Stendall, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 33. For another modern attempt to explain away the locusts see Rawlinson, "St. Mark", Westminster Commentary, p 9.
 2. See Part II, pp 63, 64.
 3. "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", p 236.

Eisler¹; he supposes that the words καρπῶν ξυλίνων "wood fruits", i.e. wild fruits, were altered to καρφῶν ξυλίνων "chips of wood", probably by Josephus himself as a "caustic punning witticism." Such "reconstructions" are unlikely to convince anyone, and all attempts, ancient and modern, to make John into a vegetarian, are doomed to failure.

The wild honey may have been either "a glutinous substance exuding from the bark of trees",² or else actual honey deposited by wild bees.

When we ask why John confined himself to such a diet and refrained from bread and wine we are confronted with a number of possible answers.

1) It might be that John fasted of necessity, that a meagre diet was imposed on him by the wilderness where he lived. This is unlikely, since John would almost certainly have been able to obtain food if he desired at a nearby town such as Jericho. To suggest that the wilderness was the cause of John's asceticism is to put the cart before the horse; much more probably it was because of his ascetic principles that John chose to live in the wilderness.

2) It has been held that John was a Nazirite. The law for Nazirites³ is found in Numbers 6:1-21 where regulations are given for the taking of a temporary vow. During the period of the vow, the duration of which is not specified, the Nazirite must take no wine or strong drink (Nos 6:3,4), must not shave his head (Nos 6:5) and must avoid all contact with the dead (Nos 6:6-12). The procedure is also laid down for the

1. Op. Cit., p 237.

2. Rawlinson, "St. Mark", Westminster Commentary, p 9.

3. On this subject see D. Eaton, "Nazirite", HDB, III, pp 497-501.

terminating of the vow by offering certain sacrifices (Nos 6: 13-20). The Nazirite vow probably dated back to fairly early times,¹ and yet it was common in the New Testament period (for an example see Acts 21:23f).

In addition to the usual temporary Nazirite vow, there seems also to have been such a thing as a Nazirite vow for life, where a person was dedicated to the Lord by his parents before his birth. Examples of this are Samson and probably also Samuel.²

It is to this latter, permanent type of Naziriteship that John, it is suggested, may have adhered. Abstention from strong drink (Mt 11:18, Lk 7:33) was a characteristic of the Nazirite, and in Lk 1:15 the angel says to Zechariah that John "will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb." Thus, it is claimed, John is consecrated as a Nazirite before his birth just as Samson was (Judges 13:3f).

But there are several objections to this point of view.³

Firstly, outside of the Infancy Narrative there is no mention of the fact that John was a Nazirite and no indication that he was fulfilling a vow.

Secondly, there is no mention of John letting his hair grow, which was the characteristic mark of the Nazirite.

Thirdly, there is no evidence that John observed the laws of purity very strictly as the Nazirite had to do. Indeed, by going out to meet the people instead of living in a strict

1. T. Eaton, HDB, III, p 499.

2. The connection between Rechabites and Nazirites is uncertain. See Eaton, HDB, III, p 498.

3. Cf. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 286, who does not think that John was a Nazirite.

monastic community John demonstrated that this was just where he differed from a sect such as that of Qumran with their tremendous stress on ritual purity.

Fourthly, John's asceticism in one respect went beyond that of the Nazirite for there were no restrictions as to what a Nazirite might eat. But it was John's meagre diet of locusts and honey and his abstaining from bread which attracted public attention.

Finally, regarding the reference in Lk 1:15, we must remember the legendary nature of the narrative¹. The writer certainly had in mind the stories of Samson and Samuel and in part modelled his account on them. It is likely that he reads back John's later asceticism into the story of his birth and uses this to bring out another resemblance to heroes of the Old Testament.²

3) John's asceticism has been connected with the Essenes. Some writers³ point to the resemblances between John's way of life and that of the Essenes of whom, Philo, for example, says - "Having each day a common life and a common table they are content with the same conditions, lovers of frugality who shun expensive luxury as a disease of both body and soul".

(Hypothetica, IX, 9, 11). Philo also implies that honey was part of the frugal diet of the Essenes since he mentions that among their tasks "some superintend the swarms of bees."

(Hypothetica, IX, 9, 8). Further, the Damascus Document (assuming that it is in some sense of "Essene" origin) has a short passage on food laws, which C. Rabin⁴ translates -

1. See Part III, pp 84, 96.

2. Cf. Kraepling, "John the Baptist", p 13 - "There is, in the earliest tradition, no tangible basis for the later view that John was observing the sanctifying dietary regimen of the Nazirite."

3. See Daniélou, "Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte", p 18; M. Burrows, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", p 58.

4. "The Zadokite Documents", pp 60-63.

"Let no man defile his soul with any living being or creeping thing by eating of them, from the larvae of bees (in honey) to all the living things that creep in water. And as for fish, let them not eat them unless they have been split while alive and their blood has been poured away. And as for all locusts in their various kinds, they shall be put into fire or water while they are alive, for this is what their nature requires."

This passage allows locusts to be eaten provided they are roasted or boiled alive, and also, as Rabin explains,¹ apparently allows honey to be eaten provided that it is filtered. Here, then is evidence that John's diet was also that characteristic of the Essenes.

Such a presentation of the case is, however, rather one-sided, for the Qumran sect at least, was not just so ascetic as some writers imagine. One characteristic of their life was their common meals, and archaeological evidence shows that at some of their meals meat was consumed.² The 1958 excavations at 'Ain Feshkha,' discovered an agricultural settlement linked with the Qumran monastery.³ Moreover, if a member could be punished e.g. by having his food ration cut by a quarter (1 QS 6:24), the normal diet can hardly have been the bare minimum.

Furthermore, while John abstained from bread and wine, the Qumran sect partook of bread and wine at one of their most important ceremonies - the common meal. Danielou points out⁴ that according to Jerome, the Essenes abstained from wine and strong drink, but obviously this does not apply to the Qumran Essenes. Steinmann tries to get round the difficulty by asserting boldly - "the Essenes did not drink wine at their meals, but tiros, a name meaning sweet grape-juice."⁵ It is true

1. Op. cit., p 61.

2. Allegro, "The Dead Sea Scrolls", p 116.

3. Revue Biblique, April, 1959, "Fouilles de Feshka. Rapport preliminaire", R de Vaux, pp 225-255.

4. "Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte", p 18.

5. "Saint John the Baptist", p 59.

that in the Scrolls the word used for wine is always וַיִּרְוֶהוּ but this is a common Old Testament word for ordinary, fermented wine, and its inebriating qualities are referred to frequently.¹

Though there are superficial parallels between John's asceticism and that of the Scrolls sect, it would seem that John was more rigorous in his asceticism.

It is possible to advance a variant form of this theory which is more convincing. Allegro² suggests that John's diet of locusts and honey "may indicate that the food he was able to eat was strictly limited owing to his purity vows taken in the Qumran Community." This hint of Allegro's may be expanded by quoting something Josephus says of the Essenes -

"Those who are convicted of serious crimes they expel from the order; and the ejected individual often comes to a most miserable end. For, being bound by their oaths and usages, he is not at liberty to partake of other men's food, and so falls to eating grass and wastes away and dies of starvation. This has led them in compassion to receive many back in the last stage of exhaustion, deeming that torments which have brought them to the verge of death are sufficient penalty for their misdoings."

"The Jewish War", II, 8, 8.

If John had at one time been a member of the Qumran sect, but had then been expelled, he might likewise not have been "at liberty to partake of other men's food," and so might have been reduced to locusts and wild honey.

This form of the theory also, however, is not particularly convincing. In the Gospels John is not pictured as a miserable outcast unable to touch any other men's food; his fasting is rather a matter of principle. Moreover, John ⁿjoined the

1. See e.g. Hos 4:11. See also the discussion of the word in the article, "Food", HDB, II, p 33 by A. Macalister; and the remarks of Kuhn (in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 260, note B), and of Burrows ("More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", p 367.)
2. "The Dead Sea Scrolls", p 164.

practice on his disciples; and surely we are not to assume that all his disciples had likewise been expelled from Qumran.

4) In the light of the foregoing we can take it that John fasted of his own free will, as a matter of principle. It remains to enquire as to the significance of his asceticism, and here again a number of alternatives, not necessarily mutually exclusive, present themselves.

The fact that John's food "grows by itself in nature, without cultivation or breeding", Brownlee thinks "may represent a repudiation of civilization as corrupting."¹ Some such idea probably lay behind the asceticism of Josephus' teacher Banos, who "dwelt in the wilderness, wearing only such clothing as trees provided, feeding on such things as grew of themselves."²

This may have been present in John's mind, though Lk 3:10-14 does not suggest that John condemned civilization as such. Again, John may have been consciously imitating some Old Testament figure.³ Moses and Daniel both fasted as a preparation for revelation; and so John may have thought that his asceticism would better fit him to understand God's will.

But undoubtedly John's motives must principally be understood in the light of the prevailing Jewish conception of fasting, that it expressed humiliation before God and symbolized repentance for sin.⁴ This was the significance of fasting as a liturgical practice, especially on the Day of Atonement. In a classic instance of repentance in the Old Testament, that of Nineveh, in the Book of Jonah, the people proclaim a fast as a symbol of repentance (Jonah 3:5). A text such as Sirach

1. In Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament", p 33.

2. Josephus, "Vita", 2.

3. Cf. above, p 223.

4. Cf. Steinmann, "Saint John the Baptist", p 159.

34:26 is also revealing - "If a man fasts for his sins, and goes again and does the same things, who will listen to his prayer? And what has he gained by humbling himself?" The idea of fasting as a penance for sin is also evident in the inter-Testamental literature.¹ The call for repentance lay at the heart of John's message; in their fasting, John and his disciples were demonstrating the life of repentance and righteousness which they believed God demanded.

Thus we can gain some picture of the group of disciples who gathered round John, aiding him in his ministry and sharing in his life of prayer and asceticism. In so far as his disciples shared John's ministry, they too would play their part in warning the people of the approaching end, and calling them to repentance. Could it be that they conceived of their task as including something more than this? J.A.T. Robinson, in a thought-provoking article,² puts forward the hypothesis that John and his disciples may have thought of themselves as in some way a redemptive group, making atonement for the sin of Israel. This conception suggests Robinson, may have been taken over by John from the Qumran community, the final object of whose "discipline, repentance and purification" was that they might "become the embodiment of the Servant ideal, the Elect of God for his atoning work."³

In support of this, Robinson suggests that the hypothesis would help to solve a puzzle as old as the New Testament itself; Why did Jesus submit to baptism by John? Jesus later spoke of suffering in terms of baptism (Lk 12:50, Mk 10:38); and so may not Jesus have seen his own baptism, not as a confession

1. See Moore, "Judaism", II, pp 257-259.

2. "The Baptism of John and the Qumran Community", HTR, 1957, pp 175-191.

3. Op. cit., p 187.

of sin, but as a "setting foot on the path of redemptive suffering?"¹ In a more general way also, Robinson suggests that his hypothesis would help us to understand why Jesus was attracted to John in the first place and why he spoke so highly of him later on, things which are difficult to explain if John was merely the stern prophet of doom, which many writers hold him to have been.

In further support of Robinson's ideas it may be noted that fasting was sometimes thought of as having some atoning significance. Those who practised the semi-weekly fasts may have thought that they were thus showing "a vicarious piety which might incline God to overlook the deficiency of others and be gracious to the whole nation."²

Plausible though it may seem at first sight, there are in fact many objections to Robinson's suggestion. For one thing, the idea of redemptive suffering is not nearly so prominent in the Dead Sea Scrolls as he suggests. It is present in a few texts, but can hardly claim to be a leading idea.

Furthermore, there is no support for this theory whatsoever in our main sources, Josephus and the New Testament. We have seen how the idea of coming judgement and the punishment of the wicked dominated John's thought; we have suggested that John probably also thought that the righteous ^owould be rewarded and would receive the gift of God's spirit.³ But he stressed each man's responsibility for his own sin; the merits of the fathers would not atone for a man's misdeeds,⁴ so it is most unlikely that he thought of himself and his group atoning for sin.

1. Op. cit., p 186.

2. G.F. Moore, "Judaism", II, p 262.

3. See Part IV, pp 107, 108.

4. See Part IV, pp 147, 148.

Robinson finds that his hypothesis fits in well with the Fourth Gospel's view of John¹, but the passages he cites are strongly suspect of reflecting the later Church's theology rather than his torically accurate sayings; on such a foundation it would be most unwise to build.

Through his own ministry, John gave the final warning and the final chance of repentance; that, however, was as far as he would go and the idea of a redemptive group making atonement for the sin of Israel is both completely lacking in our sources and foreign to John's thought. There is no evidence that John's disciples were otherwise minded; their purpose was not redemption or atonement but rather sharing in the ministry of their master by calling individuals to repent and accept baptism.

1. HTR, 1957, pp 189-191.

PART VIII - JOHN AND JESUS.

It is largely because of his connection with, and relation to Jesus, that John the Baptist has been so highly esteemed in later centuries. The fact that John did have connections with the early Christian movement has resulted in the preservation in the New Testament of much valuable information about John; the fact, however, that so much of our portrait of John has to be seen through Christian eyes means inevitably a certain amount of distortion of the picture. We have already indicated how the New Testament evidence is reasonably reliable with regard to certain facts of John's life and to the broad outlines of his message. It is with regard to John's relation to Jesus that the distortion is likely to be greatest, and we must therefore proceed with special caution here.

In this thesis we are concerned primarily with the life and work of John, and not with either Jesus or the beginnings of the Church, except in so far as these have a bearing on our study of John. No attempt will therefore be made to give a full treatment of, for example, the significance for Jesus of his baptism by John. That belongs to a study of the life and work of Jesus. What we are attempting to do here is precisely what the New Testament does not do - to look at things from John's point of view.

That there was a connection between John and Jesus is beyond all possible doubt. Two of the best attested facts of the New Testament are that Jesus was baptized by John, and that Jesus later spoke very highly of John. Not only are the sources good,¹ but there is in addition the very strong argument that the

1. See Part I for analysis of the many references.

Church could never have conceivably made up these facts, which caused it considerable embarrassment. For the sake of the Church's ideas on the uniqueness, the sinlessness and the pre-existence of Christ, it would have been much more convenient to forget about John's dealings with Jesus; the fact that they are in the New Testament is due principally to the way in which they were so firmly embedded in the earliest accounts of Christian origins.

Josephus has nothing to contribute to the study of John in his relation to Jesus. The evidence of Acts¹, tells us almost nothing which we do not already learn from the four Gospels, which are therefore our main source of information. It will be helpful to consider briefly the evidence of the Synoptics and of the Fourth Gospel in separation, before attempting an assessment of the evidence as a whole.

1. In all three Synoptic Gospels, following their accounts of John's ministry and message, Jesus appears abruptly on the scene out of the blue. "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan", says Mark (1:9). In Luke, the entry is even more abrupt, for Jesus appears in the middle of a sentence - "Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized....." (Luke 3:21). Matthew elaborates slightly, telling us that "Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him" (Mt 3:13); and then tells of John's objection to baptizing Jesus, and of Jesus' reply.

The accounts of the baptism are short and similar (Mk 1:10, 11; Lk 3:21, 22; Mt 3: 16, 17), and all three Synoptics affirm that immediately after his baptism Jesus went into the wilderness.

1. Summarized in Part I, p 13.

Thereafter, on the Synoptic view, Jesus and John never again came into personal contact. Matthew and Mark, immediately after their Temptation narratives, tell of how Jesus, hearing that John had been arrested, went to Galilee and began his ministry there (Mk1:14, Mt 4:12); Luke tells of his return to Galilee, (Lk 4:14), having already mentioned John's arrest (Lk 3:19,20). Apart from the undeniable fact that Jesus was baptized by John, personal contact between the two is reduced to the bare minimum. Jesus only comes to John to be baptized, and as soon as he is baptized the two part never to meet again.

The Q source records one other, indirect encounter in the account of how the imprisoned John sent his disciples to Jesus, to ask, "Are you the Coming One, or shall we look for another?" (Mt 11:2-6, Lk 7:18-23). This passage is an important one, and it has caused great confusion, being in apparent contradiction to the narrative of the Baptism. If John hailed Jesus as the Messiah at the time of his baptism, how can we explain his later question from prison?

The other references to John in the Synoptics and especially Jesus' tributes to John have already been listed in the section on Sources.¹

2. The Fourth Gospel presents a rather different picture. Its references to John have also already been summarized in the section on Sources.²

The account of Jesus' baptism is told completely differently from the Synoptics; whereas they state that Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, the Fourth Gospel never actually mentions this fact! We are left to infer ^{this} from the words of John

1. Part I, pp 4-10.

2. Part I, pp 10-13.

"I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him (Jesus). I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (Jn 1:32, 33). Taken in conjunction with the Synoptics this can be easily recognised as a reference to Jesus' baptism; but if someone read only the Fourth Gospel would they know that Jesus had been baptized by John? This question is perhaps beside the point, since both the author of the Fourth Gospel and his readers in all probability were aware of the Synoptic account; but it does show how the Fourth Gospel seeks to gloss over Jesus' baptism and any possible idea of subordination which that might conceivably imply.

Passing now to the rest of the Fourth Gospel's account of the relations between John and Jesus, we note that the allusion to the baptism in John 1:32, 33 refers to it in the past, ("I saw the Spirit descend"); the events of John 1:29 onwards must therefore be assumed to have taken place after the baptism. Whether the Fourth Gospel thinks of John and Jesus being in contact prior to the baptism is not easy to say. There is the verse in the Prologue - "John bare witness to him and cried, This is he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me" (Jn 1:15); and there is John's remark to the deputation from Jerusalem - "Among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me..." (Jn 1:26, 27). If either of these sayings has any historical basis they could conceivably have been uttered before the Baptism. But the chronology is vague, and we cannot make positive assertions. What we can say, however, is that Jesus does not appear on the scene with the abruptness which characterizes the Synoptic account.

Following the baptism then, the Fourth Gospel recounts a period of contact between John and Jesus, interrupted, if the present order of the Fourth Gospel be correct, by visits by Jesus to Galilee and Jerusalem. Not only does this allow John to bear witness to Jesus as the Coming One, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, and "he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit", but in this period Jesus gathers disciples around him and conducts a ministry in Judaea parallel to John's ministry (Jn 3:22). This contradicts the Synoptic view that following Jesus' baptism (and temptation) there was no contact between John and Jesus due to the fact that John had been in prison. As if to block any future attempts at harmonization, there comes the clear statement - "For John had not yet been put in prison" (Jn 3:24).

There is no indication in the Fourth Gospel as to when the period of overlap came to an end, or of when John was arrested and executed. Jesus' reference to John in Jn 5:33-35, where he calls John "a burning and shining lamp", seems, however, to be a reference back to John after the period of overlap had come to an end.

We must now attempt to assess this evidence, with its contradictions, to see if we can discover what form the relation of John to Jesus really did take. We will therefore survey the subject in chronological order.

a) Prior to the Baptism.

As we have seen, there is no account of dealings between John and Jesus prior to the baptism. It is hard to believe, however, that this was their very first meeting, or that Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan in order to be baptized, as the Matthean rewriting of Mark would have us believe (Mt 3:13).

It may well have been that it was on a journey to Jerusalem by means of the longer route through Peraea¹, that Jesus first heard the fiery preacher by the fords of Jordan; or it may have been reports of John's ministry which brought Jesus South from Galilee. Other Galileans had also come to Judea, for we know that Andrew and Simon Peter were disciples of John (Jn 1:35f.)

We may assume that Jesus heard for himself the preaching of John, thought deeply about it, relating it to his own ideas, and in all probability conversed either with John or with his disciples before submitting to baptism.

b) The Baptism.

A close examination of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism shows that in Mark, followed by Matthew, it is Jesus only who sees the vision and hears the voice (Mk1:10,11, Mt 3:16,17)². (The contention of some older scholars³ that the subject of εἶδεν in Mt 3:16 is ὁ ἰωάννης is quite unacceptable, as comparison with Mark clearly shows.) Luke alters the wording to make the vision and voice more objective - "the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form (σωματικῶς εἶδεν), as a dove, and a voice came from heaven". This, however, still does not state that John, or anyone else, saw the vision or heard the voice.

In the narrative of the baptism we have, beyond doubt, an account by Jesus himself of an experience of tremendous importance to him personally. The meaning and symbolism of the dove do not concern us here. As only Jesus experienced the

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1. For the dangers of the more direct route, cf. Luke 9:51 f., and Josephus, "Antiquities", XX, 6, 1.
 2. Cf. Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 132.
 3. See H.R. Reynolds, "John the Baptist", p 335, n 2.

vision it must be to him that we owe the description, just as he is the only possible source of the narrative of the Temptation. At this particular point, therefore, there can be no doubt that the Fourth Gospel has altered the narrative, when it makes John say, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove....." (Jn 1:32). This is to ascribe to John a knowledge and awareness of Jesus' inner consciousness which he could not, at the time, possibly have possessed.

Recognition of this fact provides the key to the unravelling of the main contradiction in the Gospel record regarding the relations between John and Jesus. In the Synoptics, by themselves there is no contradiction.¹ John's prophecies of the Coming One are spoken to the crowds, before Jesus arrives on the scene, and are not applied to Jesus at all. As we have just shown, the vision of the heavens opening and the descent of the Spirit is seen by Jesus, but by no one else. Therefore, in the Synoptics, John never hails Jesus as the Messiah. It is only when He is in prison that the thought dawns upon him.

The Fourth Gospel is clearly secondary and acting from theological motives, in altering the Synoptic account of the baptism to make John witness the vision. John hails Jesus as Son of God, Lamb of God and so on, in complete contradiction to the Synoptic view. Once again it is obvious that the earlier Synoptic view is to be preferred, and that the Fourth Gospel has allowed theological considerations to alter the historical facts.

Apart from the references to the voice and the vision the narrative of the baptism consists of almost nothing at all. Jesus "was baptized", then "came up out of the water."

1. This is most clearly seen in Q, in which there was probably no account of the baptism and therefore no possible contradiction. (Cf. Part I, pp 18, 19). Mark likewise has no contradiction at all. It is only when Matthew and especially Luke begin to make the experience of Jesus into something more objective, that the difficulty begins to arise.

The one exception is Matthew's account of John's objection to baptizing Jesus (Mt 3:14, 15); this is clearly a later addition reflecting the Church's embarrassment that Jesus, who was sinless, should have submitted to a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. It is extremely interesting to note how this concern of the Church is carried a step further still in the Gospel according to the Hebrews which contains this passage -

"Behold the mother of the Lord, and his brethren said unto him, John the Baptist baptizeth unto the remission of sins; let us go and be baptized of him. But he said unto them: Wherein have I sinned that I should be baptized of him, unless peradventure this very thing that I have said is a sin of ignorance?"¹

This trend is continued in the Gospel of the Ebionites which makes John, after he has baptized Jesus and seen "a great light" shining, fall down before him and say, "I beg you, Lord, baptize me."²

The trouble was the sinlessness of Jesus. The Gospel according to the Hebrews makes Jesus himself re-affirm his own sinlessness, yet submit to baptism in case it should be necessary for any other, unknown reason. Matthew's way round the difficulty is for Jesus to declare that "it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness"; probably he means that Jesus underwent this righteous act as an ^aexample for later believers.

Having regard to what we have been able to reconstruct of the meaning and purpose of John's baptism³, we can appreciate that when Jesus was baptized, along with the crowds of others who had heard John preach, he was aligning himself with those who believed that they were living in the last days and that God was about to break into human history. He was demonstrating his approval of John's movement and his sympathy with

1. See Part I, p36.

2. Quoted by Epiphanius, "Against Heresies", XXX.

3. Part V, pp 189-196.

John's view that orthodox Judaism was lacking in something, and that all men must prepare themselves for the coming consummation. Repentance was certainly demanded by John, but we will remember how repentance signified a positive turning toward righteousness, just as much as a turning from sin.¹

Christian theology has often found difficulty in Jesus' acceptance of John's baptism; Jesus has been thought of as undergoing it in order to consecrate the sacrament of baptism and provide the example for Christians to follow; or his repentance has been thought of as not being on his own behalf, but on behalf of others; or his submission has been thought of as part of his complete self-identification with sinners.² The discussion of these theological points of view does not, however, lie within the scope of this thesis.

In spite of the fact that the baptism of Jesus by John is so well established in the early Christian tradition, this does not deter Robert Eisler from "amending" and "reconstructing"

the Synoptic narrative of the baptism.³ This he does by the simple expedient of removing all references to Jesus, thus producing "a statement which is not only no less but is indeed even more intelligible than the traditional text"! The "intelligible" result is that the divine voice is spoken to John, and it is John, not Jesus, who is tempted by Satan in the wilderness. The Temptation narrative, Eisler feels, with the temptation to turn stones into bread, and the sojourn "with the wild beasts" is far better suited to the ascetic John, than to Jesus. Here Eisler's arguments are at their very weakest, and he cannot produce a shred of evidence to support his fantastic "emendations."

1. Part IV, pp 139-142.

2. This last view is the most satisfactory. Cf. O. Cullmann, "Baptism in the New Testament", pp 18, 19; A. Richardson, "An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament", pp 180, 181.

3. "The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist", pp 280-287.

c) John's References to Jesus.

Although the Synoptics give us no sayings of John which are directly applied to Jesus, the Fourth Gospel does make John hail him as the Coming One. As we have already indicated, it is certain that the Synoptic account is the more historically correct. It is the concern of the author of the Fourth Gospel to make John bear witness to Jesus, and consideration of this witness shows how it reflects the theology of the later Church. Thus John is made to anticipate the following ideas - The pre-existence of Christ (".... he was before me", Jn 1:15, 1:30); Christ as the Son of God (".....I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God", Jn 1:34); the atoning death of Christ "(Behold the Lamb of God", Jn 1:29, 36); and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit ("....this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit", Jn 1:33).

The historicity of these testimonies has been defended along two lines. There is the simple view that we must believe the Fourth Gospel to be literally true, and that John must therefore have anticipated, by divine inspiration, the so-called "later doctrines". By studying various Old Testament passages he was guided to apply the ideas of Son of God and Lamb of God to Jesus. There is another possible view; that John did use the terms Son of God and Lamb of God, but meant them merely as Messianic titles and did not read into them the ideas which the early Church did.

John's testimony that Jesus is the Son of God has been defended in these ways. Assuming that John heard the voice at the baptism saying to Jesus, "Thou art my beloved Son", it is

perfectly possible that John should have then declared Jesus to be the Son of God. But we have already shown that Jesus, and he alone, heard the voice, as the earlier and more reliable Synoptic accounts testify. Undoubtedly Jesus was conscious of a unique relation to the Father, and undoubtedly the baptism played a vital part in his realization of this, but to make John speak out loud the inner thoughts of Jesus is an anachronism on the part of the writer of the Fourth Gospel. Later in his ministry Jesus did reveal on one or two occasions a consciousness of his Sonship (see e.g. Mk 8:38, Mt 25:34), but it was only in the early Church and especially the Hellenistic Church that Jesus' special relationship to God came to be denoted by the term "Son of God."

It has been held, however, that "Son of God" could have been used by John purely as a Messianic title. The roots of this idea are to be found in the Old Testament, (II Sam 7:14; Ps 89:27; Ps 2:7), but there is not a great deal of evidence that it was in use as a title for the expected Messiah in New Testament times,¹ and the Gospel references are few in number. On the basis of Mt 16:16 and Mt 26:63, however, we may conclude that "Son of God" was occasionally used as a synonym for "the Messiah". Theoretically, then, John might have so used it of Jesus. But we have already argued that John never hailed Jesus as the Messiah; and furthermore, neither Jesus himself, nor his followers, used the term during his lifetime. It was only after the Resurrection that it was applied to Jesus along with other Messianic titles.² It is therefore impossible to believe that John hailed Jesus as "Son of God", whatever exactly the phrase be taken to mean.

1. See W. Manson, "Jesus the Messiah", p 105; O. Cullmann, "The Christology of the New Testament", pp 273-275.

2. Cf. Bultmann, "Theology of the New Testament", I, p 50.

Similarly, defence has been made along these same two lines of John's hailing of Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

This expression, in the New Testament, undoubtedly reflects a mixture of several Old Testament ideas, the Passover Lamb, the lamb to which the Suffering Servant is likened in Isaiah 53, the ram sacrificed in place of Isaac, and possibly also the scapegoat of Lev 16:21 f.¹ It is claimed, however, that John could have foreseen the redemptive efficacy of Christ's death through the study of these Old Testament passages, and that by means of divine inspiration he was led to make this prophecy. This is the view of anyone would interpret the Fourth Gospel as being in every word literally true. But it is also the view of some who believe that the ideas of Messiah and Suffering Servant were already combined in the Dead Sea Scrolls;² if this were the case, since John may have had some connection with the Qumran sect, it would be quite understandable that he should predict a suffering Messiah. In answer to this, it must be said that there is no clear evidence whatsoever of the identification of Messiah and Suffering Servant at Qumran;³ the only suffering referred to is that of the whole community.⁴ There can be little doubt that the idea of a suffering and dying Messiah was original to Jesus, and the earliest written reference to the atoning death of the Messiah comes from the early Church (I Cor. 15:3). To make John hail Jesus as Lamb of God is therefore an anachronism. In any case it is a concept quite incompatible with the stern Messianic judge whom John expected, and who was

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1. On the Lamb of God see Richardson, "An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament", pp 225-229; Oullmann, "The Christology of the New Testament", pp 71, 72; Barrett, "St. John", pp 145, 147.
 2. See Brownlee, in Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament" pp 50, 51. Cf. J.A.T. Robinson, HTR, L, July, 1957, p 189.
 3. See Burrows, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", p 66.
 4. See further, Part VII, pp 231-233.

not to give his life for sinners, but was rather to burn them up in a river of fire. It may further be added that the phrase, "who takes away the sin of the world", expressing as it does a thought "grandly universalistic", could hardly have been spoken by John.¹

It has also been held that John used the phrase "Lamb of God" in reference to Jesus, in a Messianic sense, basing his thought on the apocalyptic picture of the ram as a military leader. This line of thought lies behind some of the references in the Book of Revelation (e.g. Rev 17:14) to the conquering Lamb. Recently, C.H. Dodd has argued that this is the sense in which the term is used in the Fourth Gospel.² He points to such passages as Enoch, 89, where the great horned sheep stands for Judas Maccabaeus, or possibly for the Messiah, and to the Testament of Joseph 19:8, where the conquering Messiah is pictured in these terms - "There came forth a lamb, and on its left all the beasts and all the reptiles attacked, and the lamb overcame them and destroyed them." It seems very doubtful whether this is the sense intended in the Fourth Gospel, however, for the phrase "who takes away the sin of the world", strongly suggests the idea of an atoning sacrifice. It would still be possible, of course, to argue that John used the term in a Messianic sense, but in addition to the arguments against this which we have already considered, we must remember that John's Messiah was not a national or political figure,³ and would therefore have nothing in common with the conquering ram.

It cannot therefore be held that John hailed Jesus as Son of God or Lamb of God in either of the two senses outlined above.

1. See G.H.C. Macgregor, "John", p 28.

2. "The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel", pp 230-238. See, however, Richardson, "An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament", 225-229.

3. Part IV, pp 151-156.

With regard to John's testimonies to Christ's pre-existence (John 1:15, 1:30) and to Christ as the bestower of the Holy Spirit (John 1:33), while it would be possible for John to have conceived of a pre-existent Messiah, and while he did actually expect the Messiah to baptize with holy spirit, yet it cannot be accepted that John applied these concepts to Jesus. The question of Christ's pre-existence did not arise until some considerable time after Jesus' death, when the ideas of Jesus as Son of God and Logos were developed. The references in John 1:15 and 1:30 probably have as their main purpose, the countering of claims for John's superiority based on the fact that he preceded Jesus in point of time.¹ Similarly, to hail Jesus as the bestower of the Holy Spirit is to anticipate the day of Pentecost, and the thought of the early Church.

There is a further testimony by John to Jesus in Jn 3:27-30 where John again emphasizes that he himself is not the Christ. "He who has the bride", he says, "is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease." The "friend of the bridegroom", according to Jewish custom,² played an important role in arranging the marriage contract, taking part in the ceremony and presiding at the wedding feast; but his was a purely subordinate role, and he joyfully gave chief place to the bridegroom. The metaphor aptly describes John's important though subordinate, relation to Jesus. It is impossible to accept that John said this of Jesus, for it reflects the later Christian view of the relation between the two. Almost certainly it is based on Mk 2:18 f. (and parallels), where Jesus

1. See further, Part XI, pp 308, 309.

2. See I, Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", II, p 213.

Also Barrett, "St. John", S.P.C.K. 1955, pp 185, 186.

is compared with the bridegroom at a wedding feast. Similarly, the concluding saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease", represents what happened later ^{rather} than ~~than~~ anything John actually said.

d), The period of overlapping ministries.

We come now to the period recounted in the Fourth Gospel, when, for a time, following Jesus' baptism, John and Jesus conducted parallel ministries. Once again the Synoptic account is in contradiction; which is to be accepted? Two main lines of thought are possible.

Firstly, the Synoptics may be right in indicating that Jesus left John and, after the Temptation, went straight to Galilee to begin his ministry there. The Fourth Gospel alters the facts, as it often does, to further its theological and apologetic aims. "Tradition is wholly against the supposition that at any time Jesus' ministry overlapped John's. Our Evangelist's correction of the Synoptic account is prompted by apologetic motive. The Johannine mise-en-scène serves to provide a final opportunity for placing Jesus and John side by side in such a way that John's witness to the Christ may be renewed and Jesus' superiority to his forerunner dramatically set forth."¹

The second possibility is that the Synoptics either knew nothing of the joint ministry, or else, concerned in their own way to minimize John's connection with Jesus, omitted all reference to this period. On this view, while the Fourth Gospel's account is not completely historical, it does nonetheless have a basis in fact.

In considering these possibilities, it is not strictly true to say that "tradition is wholly against the supposition that at

1. G.H.C. Macgregor, "John", p 90; see also pp 46, 47.

any time Jesus' ministry overlapped John's." There are two traditions, the Synoptic and the Johannine. As Matthew and Luke in all probability are entirely dependent here on Mark's chronology, it is not a case of three Gospels versus one, but of one tradition versus another. The fact that the author of the Fourth Gospel alters much material does not in the least alter the fact that he has access to early and accurate sources independent of the Synoptics.

It is quite true that the period of overlap does allow John to witness to Jesus, but there has already been ample opportunity for that at the time of the baptism. Two points require to be noted -

i) If the author of the Fourth Gospel wanted to provide a further opportunity for John to witness to Jesus, why go to the length of inventing not only an overlap, but a period of joint ministries during which Jesus baptized as well as John? (Jn 3:22, 3:26, 4:1). This is an idea which has proved trouble: some and indeed we have only to look at Jn 4:2 to see a clumsy effort to correct the impression that Jesus baptized alongside John.

ii) This section contains factual details, such as the information that John went to Aenon near Salim while Jesus ministered in Judaea, which suggest an early source, not an invention.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this section would never have been invented by the author of the Fourth Gospel; in spite of his additions and alterations, early memories of a Judaeen Ministry exercised by Jesus can clearly be detected.

What exactly the relations were between John and Jesus in this period, we cannot say. If Jesus merely baptized, then it would be possible to regard him as one of John's "disciples"

sharing in John's ministry. This may well have been the case initially, but we are told that Jesus himself called disciples (Jn 1:35f) and that they were associated with him during the joint ministry (Jn 3:22). This seems to imply a certain degree of separation, and this is borne out by the fact that John and Jesus baptized at different locations (Jn 3:22, 23), and that Jesus began to have greater success than John (Jn 4:1). Was this a friendly separation, and a division of spheres of work between equals? Or does it signify a period of friendship followed by a break?

It may be that Jn 3:25 f should be taken into consideration here. John 3:25 says that a "discussion arose between John's disciples and a Jew over purifying" (περὶ καθαρισμοῦ). This follows immediately on the verses recounting the overlapping ministries of John and Jesus, but it is impossible to find the connection between the two. Even as it stands, regardless of what precedes it, Jn 3:25 f. is difficult to understand. Who was the "Jew"? What was the dispute about? An attempt to improve matters a little is introduced by certain MSS which read Ἰουδαίων for Ἰουδαίου. A very probable solution, however, is that a slight alteration has been made to the original text which may be restored by emendation, to make the dispute take place between John's disciples and either Jesus or Jesus' disciples (reading either μετὰ Ἰησοῦ or τῶν Ἰησοῦ). The change is a small one, of one word only, but it would make sense of the whole passage, which then follows naturally on the mention of the overlapping ministries. Tension arose between John and Jesus, and some of John's disciples came to Jesus and disputed with him. While this emendation seems an extremely

1. See Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 89; W.F. Howard, "John", Interpreter's Bible, Vol 8, p 515; Barrett, "St. John", p 184.

likely one, yet it is an emendation and incapable of definite proof. It does not necessarily imply a break between John and Jesus, but only a gradual parting of the ways. The context suggests that the discussion may have been about baptism, but we have seen that "purification" suggests rather a reference to the various Jewish rites of ritual purity.¹ In this case, we may conjecture that Jesus and his disciples were not strict enough for John's liking (cf. Mk 7:1-23).

The idea of a period of co-operation and then a definite break has been worked out in detail by Maurice Goguel.² He notes the brief encounter of John and Jesus according to the Synoptic view and feels that this is quite inadequate to explain, among other things, the very high opinion of John, which Jesus undoubtedly held. The Synoptics attempt to separate the ministries of John and Jesus, but Jn 3 is a more reliable witness to the facts. Behind these early chapters of the Fourth Gospel Goguel detects a special source, independent from the Synoptics, as is shown by the fact that it makes Jesus' disciples come over from John, instead of being called in Galilee, and makes Peter a native of Bethsaida (Jn 1:44) instead of Capernaum as the Synoptics indicate (Mk 1:29). Goguel goes on to reconstruct an early period when Jesus preached a similar message to that of John, and like him, baptized. Traces of Jesus' preaching at this time are to be seen e.g. in the Sermon on the Mount with its demands for perfection. But after a while, Jesus' thought developed; he broke with John and stopped baptizing. John believed that if men repented and were baptized they would be rewarded by the Messiah; they were to be the wheat gathered into the granary. But Jesus, his thought dominated by the absolute transcendence of God, came to see how

1. See Part V, p 166.

2. See Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", pp 235-274.

nothing which men do can make them deserve entry into the Kingdom. All are debtors; all are "unprofitable servants" (Lk 17:7-10). Hence Jesus was led to the preaching of the "Gospel", stressing the love and forgiveness of God. God is not the stern Judge of John's preaching; He wants men to be saved. Jesus gave up baptism because of the danger that people would think it guaranteed entry into the Kingdom. He gave up asceticism and left the wilderness in order to take the message of salvation to sinners, thus demonstrating God's initiative in salvation, as opposed to John who expected people to come to him. Goguel develops his "interprétation psychologique" in a very interesting fashion to which a brief survey cannot do justice.

It must be said that Goguel's theory goes considerably beyond the evidence. Its chief defect is the way Jesus' teaching is chopped up, in arbitrary fashion, and assigned either to before or after the break with John. The teaching of Jesus is much more of a consistent whole than Goguel is willing to recognize. God's free offer of salvation does not pre-suppose the kind of character delineated in the Sermon on the Mount, but can it not work towards the production of such a character in the forgiven sinner? Goguel's reconstruction of Jesus's message before the break with John is pure supposition, but his ideas on the development of Jesus' conception of the Gospel, in contrast to the outlook of John, are on the whole highly probable.

The evidence of John 3 definitely points to an overlap of ministries, though what exactly took place during that overlap, we cannot say. John and Jesus seem to have moved apart, but not necessarily with either ill feeling or a definite break. Jesus' preaching of his own distinctive Gospel probably began when he moved to Galilee about this time. John was arrested,

so that the question of direct relations between the two did not again arise. Two small indications show that it is wrong to think of a quarrel or a violent break. One is John's question to Jesus from prison (Mt 11:2-6; Lk 7:18-23); this may indicate puzzlement on John's part, but hardly open opposition between him and his disciples and Jesus and his disciples. More incidental, and therefore more valuable, is the comment which Matthew adds after telling of how John's disciples buried their master - "and they went and told Jesus" (Mt 14:12). If the disciples of John went to share their sad news with Jesus, the two groups could hardly have been at loggerheads. Rather, they had been maintaining a friendly, though separate existence.

e) After John's imprisonment.

The Q source has preserved the account of how John in prison, sent disciples to Jesus to ask "Are you the Coming One, or shall we look for another?" (Mt 11:2-6, Lk 7:18-23). We have already noted the conflict between this passage and the Fourth Gospel's view that John recognized Jesus as the Coming One at the time of the baptism. It is possible to attempt a reconciliation between the two views. It can be supposed that John's faith failed, as he lay in prison, and as reports on the ministry of Jesus did not square with his idea of the Messiah. Alternatively, it has been suggested "that the question was asked for the sake of John's disciples, who needed strengthening or correcting in their beliefs."¹ But we have already argued that the Fourth Gospel is not historical in making John hail Jesus as the Coming One, the Lamb of God, and so on. The conflict is thus removed and we can accept the fact that, whatever their exact relations during their overlapping ministries, it was only when he was in prison that the possibility dawned on John that Jesus might be the Coming One for whom he had sought to prepare.

1. Plummer, "St. Luke", IOC, p 202.

Although there was no other contact between John and Jesus, we must not fail to note Jesus' words about John which have been alluded to a number of times already.

The Q source preserved a block of material containing sayings of Jesus about John. Following the episode of John's question to Jesus, Jesus ironically asked the crowds what they went out to the wilderness to see, a reed shaken by wind? or a man clothed in soft raiment? John was neither of these, he was a prophet, and "more than a prophet". Jesus, as we have already seen,¹ is here hailing John as the eschatological prophet, the returning Elijah.

This is followed by the tribute - "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he". (Matt 11:11, Lk 7:28). No special meaning should be read into the phrase "those born of women" - it merely signifies "the human race." As the sentence stands, it reflects the idea that the kingdom is already present, at least partially. John was a supremely great man, but he did belong to the old dispensation. Now that the kingdom has come, those in it, i.e. Jesus' disciples, are "greater" than John. "They are greater, not in their moral character or achievements, but in their privileges."²

There are those, who hold³ that the phrase "yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he", is a later addition by those who saw in the first half of the saying "a threat to Jesus' primacy."⁴ But they have not made out a convincing case, and the ideas of the kingdom being already

1. Part VI, pp 209, 210.

2. S.E. Johnson, "Matthew", Interpreter's Bible, Vol 7, p 382.

3. See Kraeling, "John the Baptist", pp 138-140, 207.

4. Kraeling, op. cit., p 140.

present and of its contrast with the old order are perfectly in keeping with the rest of Jesus' teaching.

Another saying of Jesus about John is preserved in different versions by Matthew and Luke - "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence (βιάζεται) and men of violence (βίασται) take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John", (Mt 11:12,13); "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone enters it violently (βιάζεται)", (Lk 16:16).

This saying is a very difficult one, and we cannot reconstruct the original wording or the original meaning with confidence.¹ It is generally held that Matthew's form is on the whole nearer to the original. βιάζεται could be either passive - "suffers violence" - or, as Otto suggested, middle, meaning "exercises force", "shows its power".

βίασται has been variously interpreted as men of violence, zealots, or demonic powers; or, alternatively, in a good sense, "men of spiritual force." The basic idea is either a) that the kingdom is under attack by enemies, human or demonic, or b) that those willing to take risks and make sacrifices are pressing their way into the kingdom. From our point of view, however, the important point, which is valid regardless of the different interpretations of the rest of the saying, is that Jesus regards the ministry of John as a turning point in his story. There are two eras: the old era, that of the law and prophets, and the new, that of the kingdom. Though John marks the dividing line, yet he actually belongs to the old era, "the law and the prophets were until John" and the kingdom is "since then."

1. On the Saying see T.W. Manson, "The Sayings of Jesus", p 13; Kraeling, "John the Baptist", pp 156, 157; Goguel, "Jean - Baptiste", pp 65-69; Johnson, Interpreter's Bible, Vol 7 pp 382, 383.

Much more straightforward is the reference to John in the following passage -

"To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another, 'We piped to you, and you did not dance, we wailed, and you did not weep'. For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by all her children." (Lk 7:31-35; Mt 11:16-19).

The picture is of children playing; one group propose a game of "Weddings", but their companions object; so a game of "Funerals" is proposed, and this too is rejected. So "the men of this generation", in their perversity, criticize John for his asceticism and Jesus for his lack of it.

All three Synoptic Gospels relate the question about authority (Mk 11:27-33, Mt 21:23-27, Lk 20:1-8), in reply to which Jesus himself asked a question - "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" This trapped the questioners, for if they replied, "From heaven", they would be asked why they had not believed John; while if they answered, "From men", they would have reason to fear the people, "for all held that John was a real prophet." Jesus held, therefore, that John's ministry and his baptism were "from heaven", that is, divinely authorized.

Matthew alone preserves another word of praise for John - "John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and harlots believed him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him" (Mt 21:32).

These are all the references by Jesus to John which the

Synoptics preserve.¹ The Fourth Gospel, significantly, records no such words of praise. The sole exception might be John 5:33-35, words spoken by Jesus to the "Jews" - "You sent to John and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony which I receive is from man; but I say this that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp (ὁ ἑκκαύων καὶ φαίνων), and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light". This compliment must be read in the context of the Fourth Gospel, however. John may have been "a burning and shining lamp", but his sole function was to prepare for and to witness to Christ, who is the true Light.

In the Synoptic sayings which we have considered above and which are of undoubted authenticity, we have therefore several indications of the very high regard in which John was held by Jesus. Jesus did not hesitate, under any circumstances, to pay tribute to the divinely-authorized ministry of John the Baptist.

We have concluded that Jesus' baptism was not nearly so sudden as the Synoptics would imply, but that he must have heard and pondered John's message before submitting to baptism. Though this had a profound effect on Jesus, its significance was not, at the time, apparent to anyone else. The immediate consequence was that Jesus associated himself with John's

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1. Some scholars hold that the passage about "the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matt 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-30) refers to John. See Kraeling, "John the Baptist", pp 136, 137; T.W. Manson, "The Sayings of Jesus", pp 89-91; G.R.S. Mead, "The Gnostic John the Baptizer", pp 16 f. The Matthean version is clearly secondary, and so it is held that it is John, the great preacher of repentance, who is the only sign; he preached repentance to Israel just as Jonah did to the Ninevites. Manson points to the similarity between the names "John" and "Jonah"; Mead suggests connections with legends about the Great Fish. But, as the more original Lucan version shows, it is clearly Jesus himself, by his preaching of repentance (Mark 1:15), who is the only sign - "as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation" (Luke 11:30).

disciples and with John's ministry, and at some point began a parallel ministry of his own. With a group of disciples, the nucleus of which had previously owed their allegiance to John, Jesus moved away from John, although the separation was probably not an unfriendly one. After some time John was arrested, and Jesus and his disciples moved to Galilee. There was no further direct contact between the two, though John, while in prison sent his disciples to question Jesus.¹

Any attempt to understand the significance of the inter-relationship between John and Jesus must begin with the undoubtedly high opinion which Jesus held of John. He was the eschatological prophet; the greatest of those born under the old order; his baptism was "from heaven". It is difficult to understand how Jesus could think so highly of John and yet differ from him so radically.²

The differences between John and Jesus are obvious. John was an ascetic, while Jesus certainly was not; this was one of the most striking differences noted by the people (cf. Lk 7: 31-35, Mt 11:16-19).

John remained for the most part in the wilderness, and the people had to go there to hear him. Jesus, on the other hand, travelled freely in towns and villages, sought people out, and entered the houses even of notorious sinners.

John's message was essentially a stern one, the keynote being warning of imminent judgement and punishment. Jesus, on the other hand "came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of "God" (Mk 1:14). John's message cannot be described as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, "the good news"; but that is exactly what

1. For a fuller treatment of the chronology of the latter part of John's ministry see Part X, p 282.

2. See Kraeling, "John the Baptist", pp 146 f.

Jesus' message was.

For John, the coming Kingdom is still in the future, albeit the immediate future. For Jesus, the Kingdom is partially present, already breaking in.

A proof of this is the mighty acts of Jesus, the healing of the sick, the casting out of evil spirits, and so on. John, on the other hand, "did no miracle" (Jn 10:41).

John, we may assume, gave a central place to the Law, to which his own practices of prayers and fasting were additional burdens. Jesus accepted the Law in a sense, but contrasted what was said to the men of old, with his, "But I say unto you"

John's ethicoal teaching was typically Jewish; whereas Jesus demanded a much more radical ethic.¹

John's Messiah is a Judge, separating the good from the evil, and burning the evil with unquenchable fire. For Jesus, the Messiah is a suffering servant, whose victory can only come through a Cross.

John's teaching implies that by the performance of certain acts men can earn the right of entry into the Kingdom; but Jesus taught that whatever men do, they are still "unprofitable servants" in the sight of God.²

These differences, combined with Jesus' high opinion of John present considerable difficulties, the disentangling of which belong to a study of the life and thought of Jesus rather than to the present study. A few possible lines of solution may, however, be very briefly indicated.

1. Allowance must be made for the development of Jesus' thought. He had to start from somewhere, from the section

1. Cf. Part IV, p 150.

2. Luke 17:7-10. See Bultmann, "Theology of the New Testament I, p 14, and Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 260. Cf. above, pp 251, 252.

of Judaism with which he was the most nearly in sympathy, and then go on to make clear to his followers his own distinctive contribution. Although we have rejected Goguel's dividing up of the Gospel material,¹ yet his general position has much to commend it. Jesus began as a disciple of John, but then went on to exercise an independent ministry.

2. Stress must be laid on the points on which John and Jesus did agree. These would certainly include dissatisfaction with current trends in Jewish thought and practice, fervent eschatological expectations, conviction of the need for decision, for repentance and for righteous living, and for the need of dedicating oneself wholly to the service of God. We must remember that there was a stern side to Jesus' teaching, which can be overlooked when he is contrasted with John. Jesus, like John, could address his hearers as, "You brood of vipers" (Matt 12:34; cf. Matt 3:7, Lk 3:7), and could give warning that "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt 7:19; cf. Matt 3:10, Lk 3:9).

Jesus' high opinion of John is one reason for holding that John must have given a place to the Kingdom of God in his preaching.² This argument, however, must be used with great caution. It cannot be used to urge, for example, that John expected a suffering Messiah³ or that he thought of his group of disciples as making atonement for Israel⁴, since these ideas are not supported, but are rather contradicted by the other evidence available.

3. Jesus' approval of John must be seen in proper perspective. Jesus did not accept John's preaching and teaching in detail; and he did not even accept John's ministry as part of the Kingdom: "news of the Kingdom of God is preached" (Lk 16:16). What

"The law and the prophets were until John ; since then the

1. Above, p 252.

2. Part IV, p 107.

3. Above, p 245.

4. Part VII, pp 231-233.

good

Jesus held was that John had a place in God's purposes. God's purposes, however, were developing. John's role was an important one, but it was only a stage in the process which was culminating in the person of Jesus himself. John's ministry was divinely authorized and used by God to call the people to repentance; now, however, the new age was actually breaking in and the age of the Gospel was succeeding the age of the Law. Jesus' attitude to John has therefore been accurately summed up by the later Church which saw in John the herald and precursor of the Kingdom.

To attribute to John a precise knowledge of the nature of the Kingdom and of the Christ is a historical error; but this does not alter the fact that in His providence, God used John as the forerunner of the Kingdom.

PART IX - THE SAMARITAN MINISTRY.

We have seen how the ministries of John and Jesus overlapped for a certain period. During this period, Jesus and his disciples were "in the land of Judaea" (John 3:22), but John and his disciples went to "Aenon near Salim" (John 3:23).

The location of Aenon near Salim has already been discussed¹, and we have seen how the two possible sites are both in Samaria. The place favoured by Jerome and Eusebius lies on the West bank of the Jordan, but the more likely site is in the heart of Samaria, near the well known Samaritan city of Salim.

The fact that John, according to this reference, preached and baptized in Samaria has proved a great stumbling block to many. C.W. Wilson, for example, in the article on "Salim" in Hastings Dictionary of the Bible², says that "it has been objected to this site (the Eusebius-Jerome one) that, as it was in Samaria, the Jews would not have gone to it to be baptized." Wilson goes on to point out, however, that Scythopolis, a town of the Decapolis, was nearby and it had a large Jewish population. But if John was concerned with preaching to Jews only, then he made himself curiously inaccessible by going to Aenon near Salim. We must ask ourselves seriously whether John did not in fact go to Samaria in order to preach to Samaritans.

Such an idea seems extremely unlikely at first sight, for "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). When the true position of Jewish-Samaritan relations in the first century A.D. is examined, however, the possibility of John's Samaritan ministry becomes far less remote. A brief outline of John's Samaritanism and of Samaritan sectarianism will help to make this clear.

1. Part II, pp 79, 80.

2. HBD, IV, p. 354.

1. The Samaritans.

Until comparatively recent times injustice has been done to the Samaritans, in so far as the sources for their history have been found in the Old Testament, Josephus, and later Jewish writings. At the times when these accounts were written, however, there existed a hatred and a contempt for the Samaritans on the part of the Jews which made unprejudiced history impossible. We have thus been dependent on extremely biased sources.

The basis of this Jewish account is found in II Kgs. 17. According to it, upon the fall of the Northern Kingdom (721 B.C.) "the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel" (II Kgs 17:24). Although it is stated in the previous verse that "Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria" this was not meant to imply that the entire populace was removed. Some of the people remained, and they intermarried with the incomers. There follows the story of how these various peoples, suffering from attacks of lions said to be sent by Jahweh because they did not worship him, begged the King of Assyria to send them a priest from among the exiles to teach them Jahweh worship. This was done, but as well as worshipping Jahweh, the peoples worshipped their own Gods, thus practising a syncretistic religion - "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence" (II Kgs 17:33).

In origin the Samaritans were therefore of impure race and syncretistic religion. From the time of the return of the Jews from their exile, there was active hatred between the two groups.

The Samaritans set up a rival sanctuary on Mount Gerizim; they accepted only the Pentateuch which they altered so as to justify their own claims. They are often referred to as "Kuthaeans" from their supposed country of origin. Down to the New Testament period and beyond it, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.

This then, is the essence of the Old Testament and Jewish accounts of the origin and history of the Samaritans. In comparatively recent times, however, the Samaritans and their literature have been rediscovered,¹ allowing us to see their history from a very different point of view. The critical historian must seek to piece together a reliable picture from Jewish and Samaritan sources, both of which are at times highly biassed.

The Jewish-Samaritan split is now seen to go much further back than the time of the fall of the Northern Kingdom. North-South rivalry goes back at least to the time of the conquest,² and the division may be even earlier if, as some think, only the Northern tribes were in bondage in Egypt. During the divided monarchy there was intermittent warfare between the two sections but that did not prevent a great deal of intercourse taking place, both countries regarding themselves as sharing the same racial and religious heritage.

After the fall of the Northern Kingdom, some deportations did take place, but they were not large in number.³ Undoubtedly, colonization also took place, but in spite of this the Northern Israelites continued to worship Jahweh as did their brothers in the South. There continued to be some contacts on the

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1. See J.A.Montgomery, "The Samaritans, the Earliest Jewish Sect", pp 3-12.
 2. Oesterley, "History of Israel", Vol II, p 143.
 3. Montgomery, "The Samaritans", pp 49f.

religious level (cf. II Chron 30), and the prophets looked for a reunion of Israel and Judah (Isa 11:11f.; Jer 31:3-5; Ezek 37:15f). It is clear that up to the time of the Exile at any rate the rivalry between North and South was a political, and not a religious one. After the Exile, the Samaritans offered to help rebuild the Temple, an offer which was promptly if not rudely rejected. The attempts of Sanballat to frustrate the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem were again political in inspiration. There is, moreover, no evidence that the racial policies of Nehemiah and especially of Ezra were directed against the Samaritans, or that Samaritans as such were considered racially impure.¹

The Samaritans have a Pentateuch in its main essentials the same as that of the Jews, and the religious break cannot therefore have been final until after the time of the final compilation of the Pentateuch. Probably the split occurred somewhere between the mid-5th and mid-4th centuries B.C. The Samaritans suffered badly during the Maccabean period, but after 63 B.C. Samaria was freed from the Jews and became part of the Roman province of Syria.

There are two main characteristics of Samaritanism. One is their view that the true site of the Temple was on Mount Gerizim. Several alterations were made in the Pentateuch to justify this, the most notable being the compressing of the Messoretic Text's Ten Commandments into nine and the addition of a long tenth Commandment which refers to the selection of Gerizim as the Holy Mount. Secondly, they accept only the Pentateuch; the prophetic and historical books being obviously unacceptable to them.

1. Oesterley, "A History of Israel", Vol II, pp 152-156.

It is quite wrong, however, to suppose, as has often been done¹, that the Samaritans had no belief in the resurrection, or in any kind of Messiah. New doctrines were introduced by means of the supplementary oral law², and also through the medium of the various Samaritan sects.

Special mention must be made of the Messianic beliefs of the Samaritans. Obviously these could not take the same form as Jewish expectations, since they did not accept the prophetic books, and since anything connected with Jerusalem or with the house of David was abhorrent to them. Thus it is that their belief centred in the Taheb (or Shabeh), meaning the "restorer". Authority for this figure had to be sought in the Pentateuch and he was therefore conceived of as the "prophet like unto Moses" of Deut 18:15. To call this figure the Samaritan "Messiah" would, however, be misleading, for he was never thought of as being other than a mortal man, who would restore the Divine favour to the true people of God.³

Although this belief in the Taheb is still held by the Samaritans to this day it is undoubtedly of pre-Christian origin. Dt 18:15 is embedded in the Samaritans' tenth Commandment, a key passage of scripture for them, the text of which was fixed by the 2nd Cent B.C. if not earlier.

It is interesting to note an account Josephus gives of a rising among the Samaritans which was crushed by Pilate. The Samaritans believe that in the time of Eli (whom they regard as a schismatic) the vessels of the Temple were hidden in a cave in Mount Gerizim. This event marks the beginning of the period of God's disfavour which will only be terminated when

1. See M. Gaster, "Samaritan Oral Law and Ancient Traditions", Vol I, "Samaritan Eschatology", p. 1.

2. M. Gaster, "The Samaritans", p 48f.

3. See M. Gaster, "Samaritan Eschatology", pp 221-277.

the Moses-like prophet comes and recovers the Temple vessels. The antiquity of this belief is apparent from Josephus' story -

"But the nation of the Samaritans did not escape without tumults. The man who excited them to it, was one who thought lying a thing of little consequence, and who contrived everything so, that the multitude might be pleased; so he bade them get together upon Mount Gerizim, which is by them looked upon as the most holy of all mountains, and assured them that, when they were come thither, he would show them those sacred vessels which were laid under that place, because Moses put them there. So they came thither armed, and thought the discourse of the man probable, and as they abode at a certain village, which was called Tirathaba, they got the rest together to them and desired to go up the mountain in a great multitude together. But Pilate prevented their going up, by seizing upon the roads with a great band of horsemen and footmen, who fell upon those that were gotten together in the village; and when they came to an action, some of them they slew, and others of them they put to flight, and took a great many alive, the principal of whom, and also the most potent of those that fled away, Pilate ordered to be slain." ("Antiquities," XVIII, 4,1.)

It may be added that Jn 4:25 provides yet further evidence of Samaritan "Messianic" expectations.

2. The Samaritan Sects.

The evidence concerning the Samaritan sects, coming as it does from Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Samaritan sources, is very confusing and contradictory.¹ One of the fullest sources, is the Samaritan historian Abu'l Fath (14th Cent.A.D.) whose accounts clearly incorporate earlier material.

A sect of Sabbaeans is known, said to have been founded either by Sabbai or Sabbaeus, and though the accounts of their

1. A good summary of the available data will be found in Montgomery, "The Samaritans", pp 252-260.

origin are historically very doubtful,, they seem to have been in existence prior to the Christian era. From Abu'l Fath we gather that in the 4th Century the Sabbaeans had their own ecclesiastical organisation, and refused to co-operate with the great Samaritan High Priest Baba Raba. As late as the time of Masudi (10th Cent. A.D.) we learn that the Samaritans were divided into two main groups, the Dositheans and the Sabbaeans. We thus have very little information about the Sabbaeans; although probably only a minority movement, the fact that they survived so long is significant.

The sects of the Gorothenians and the Masbothaeans, mentioned by Hegesippus and Epiphanius are known to us virtually only by name.

This brings us to the sects associated with the name of Dasis or Dositheus. Here we are confronted with an amazing mass of contradictory evidence. Dositheus is assigned by various sources to periods ranging from the time of Alexander the Great to the 4th Century A.D.! Abu'l Fath tells of a Dustan and a Dasis sect, regarding these as quite separate, although the data he gives concerning them is remarkably similar.

Some scholars think that only one sect existed, others that as many as six are needed to account for all the evidence. In all probability, however, we are dealing with two main sects.

1) There are references which show the existence of an early sect of Dositheans, said by Abu'l Fath to have originated in the time of Alexander the Great. They had their own strict laws of purity, and of the Sabbath, and they separated themselves from the orthodox Samaritans. A number of Patristic references support the early existence of this sect,¹ and

1. Mont gomery, "The Samaritans", p 255.

testify to the fact that it denied the resurrection. There is evidence that it continued to exist for a very long time. We hear in Photius of a Samaritan sect around 600 A.D. which followed "a certain Dosthes or Dositheos". They claimed he was the prophet foretold by Moses, that he had taught that the world is incorruptible, and that he denied the resurrection.

ii) Separate from this sect there are many references to another group, but unfortunately, while there may originally have been a distinction in the name, this has been completely lost. This sect originated at the beginning of the Christian era; Patristic references confirm this,¹ speaking of a certain Dositheus, who was associated with Simon Magus. The references to this sect agree that, unlike the earlier one, it affirmed the resurrection. The members practised ritual immersion, and prayed while in the water, with their bodies veiled. They buried their dead girded, and with sandals and staff. Abu'l Fath lists a number of sects which were derived from this one.

Obviously this second Dosithean sect originating at the beginning of our era was the most important and influential one. Bowman is probably right in showing that whereas the Sabbaeans always appear as a minority opposition party, the Dositheans probably had a profound influence on orthodox Samaritanism. Very likely it was these Dositheans who introduced the doctrine of the Resurrection into Samaritanism. Bowman says of the period of Baba Raba (4th Century A.D.) - "One wonders if the Samaritan Community was not virtually Dosithean by this time."² There is evidence that Baba Raba was greatly influenced by them. Indeed one may conjecture that the reason why they are not heard of after the 4th Century A.D. is that their main beliefs and

1. Montgomery, "The Samaritans", p 255.

2. J. Bowman, "Contact Between Samaritan Sects and Qumran?", *Vetus Testamentum*, VII, April 1957, No. 2, p 187.

practices, if not all the details of their cult, had passed into orthodox Samaritanism. After the 4th Century A.D. the Sabbaeans and the earlier Dositheans (who denied the resurrection) appear as minority opposition parties; by this time orthodox Samaritanism had accepted belief in the resurrection.

3. Samaritanism and the Baptist Movement.

A large number of parallels and points of contact can be seen between Samaritanism, particularly Samaritan sectarianism, and the Jewish baptist movement. This is especially true of the Essene and Qumran branches of the baptist movement. In determining the significance of these similarities dating is an important factor. We have considerable information about orthodox Samaritanism in pre-Christian times, but the main Samaritan sect, the Dositheans who accepted the resurrection, are said to have originated in the first half of the 1st Cent. A.D. Yet this cannot have been a sudden thing, and it would be impossible for the Dosithean type of sect to have arisen overnight. The ground must have been prepared for some time previously.

The points of contact are indeed many. The veneration of Moses is a prominent feature of Samaritanism¹; as they did not accept the prophetic books, Moses was the only true prophet. Similarly, the Essenes revered Moses very highly, anyone who blasphemed him being punished with death.² The expectation of the Moses-like prophet, noted above (p 266) is characteristic especially of the Dead Sea Scrolls sect. It is noteworthy that in the Qumran "Testimonia", a collection of Messianic proof texts³, the passages, Deut 5:28,29 and Deut 18:18,19 are combined

1. Montgomery, "The Samaritans", pp 225-232.

2. Josephus, "Jewish War", II, 8, 9.

3. Translation given in T.H. Gaster, "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect", pp 353-355.

Strict Sabbatarianism is a feature of Samaritanism, and is especially mentioned in connection with both the Dosithean sects.¹ Ultra-Sabbatarianism was characteristic also of the Essenes, and the Damascus Document contains a very strict Sabbath code.² Similarly, strict laws of ritual purity, which are said to have characterised both Dosithean sects, are typical also of the Essene movement.³ Ritual immersion was practised by the later Dosithean sect, as in the sects of the Jewish baptist movement.

Differences concerning the calendar are noted as features of the pre-Christian Sabbaeans and of the early Dositheans. A. Jaubert has found affinities between the Samaritan calendar and that in use at Qumran.⁴ Prayers to the sun may be witnessed to in Samaritan literature, and something similar is referred to in connection with the Essenes.⁵ Belial, as the power of evil, occurs in Samaritanism, and is frequently mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁶ One Samaritan sect is said to have retreated into the wilderness, just as the Qumran Essenes did; another was known as the Zadukai, recalling the frequent phrase, "Sons of Zadok" in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Samaritans were, of course, opposed to the Jerusalem Temple, and many of the Jewish baptist sects likewise severed their connection with the Temple. But there is need for great caution here; it is doubtful just how far the Jewish sects did cut themselves off from the Temple, and also just how far this

1. Montgomery, "The Samaritans", pp 33, 170.

2. CDC 10:14 - 11:18. Josephus, "Jewish War," II, 8, 9.

3. Cf. CDC 10:11-13, 12:11-18; Josephus, "Jewish War", II, 8, 10.

4. VT, VII, 1957, pp 35-61.

5. Montgomery, "The Samaritans", p 263n. Josephus, "Jewish War," II, 8, 5. Cf. DSD 10:1-3, 10:10.

6. T.H. Gaster, "The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect", p 311.

was a matter of principle. Nevertheless, when we learn that some of the Samaritan sects gave up their devotion to Gerizim, we can see how closely the two sectarian movements could have approached each other.

Jewish sectarianism made copious use of the prophetic books, which the Samaritans rejected. But we hear also of some Samaritan sects, the later Dositheans, for example, who had certain books, among them those of "the Sons of the Prophets". Here again we can see how the barriers would break down on the sectarian level.

A further point which is relevant here is the close link between Samaria and the earliest Christian Church. Though Jesus is recorded at one point as saying, "Enter not into any city of the Samaritans" (Matt 10:5), elsewhere Jesus betrays a very sympathetic attitude to the Samaritans. (See Luke 9:5 ff, 10:31 ff, 17:11 ff.) Jesus' visit to Samaria, as a consequence of which "many believed in him" is related in John 4. The first Christians were to be witnesses "in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The first Christian mission led by Philip, took place in Samaria (Acts 8). So far therefore from having no dealings with the Samaritans, the early Christians came into close contact with them. At least some sections of the Samaritans, we may conclude, were receptive to the Christian message; the ground must have been prepared to some extent and there must have been some points of contact.

Note. Oscar Cullmann has called attention to certain aspects of this Samaritan mission in "The Early Church", IX, "Samaria and the Origins of the Christian Mission", pp 185-192, and "The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity", JBL, LXXIV, pp 213-226. He thinks that the ἀλλοι of John 4:38 ("I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour; others have laboured and you have entered into their labour"), were the Hellenists, led by Philip. These

Hellenists, of whom the most notable was Stephen were not Diaspora Jews, but a group with very close affinities to the Essenes, as may be seen from the main points of Stephen's speech (Acts 7) - the prominent place given to Moses; the expectation of the Moses-like prophet; the rejection of animal sacrifices; and the rejection of the Jerusalem Temple. Little wonder that these missionaries, forced to leave Jerusalem because of persecution, did well in Samaria.

The evidence we have briefly surveyed does indicate that though the hatred and contempt of orthodox Judaism and orthodox Samaritanism were proverbial in New Testament times, yet on the sectarian level matters were rather different. Numerous points of contact existed between the Jewish baptist movement(and also early Christianity) and Samaritanism, especially Samaritan sectarianism. Epiphanius actually names four Samaritan sects, one of which he calls "the Essenes". It may be that there was a Samaritan branch ^{of} the Essenes; or it may be that one or more of the sects, without actually being Essenes, were sufficiently like them for confusion to occur.

Some scholars would consider that these similarities "do not indicate any direct contacts but are to be explained by the fact that their backgrounds were similar.....They were exposed to the same winds of doctrine that were blowing through the whole region."¹ That may be very true, yet the evidence we have surveyed does suggest some contact with each other, and indeed they may well have influenced each other to some extent.

4. John the Baptist and the Samaritans.

In view of this survey, we can see how any objections to a ministry by John among the Samaritans on the grounds that they

1. Burrows, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", p 262. See also J. Bowman, VT, VII, No. 2, pp 184-189.

would not be receptive to his message, fall to the ground. He would find many points of contact, and there is therefore no good reason for doubting that John did preach and baptize in Samaria.

The reason for his choice of Samaria is unknown to us, but it would not be unreasonable to suppose that many Samaritans had already been to hear him and already been baptized by him. It may be that some of them persuaded John that if he felt like a move he should come to Samaria. And so it came about that while Jesus ministered in Judea, John ministered in Samaria (John 3:23).

What would be the deeper reasons for John, a strict Jew, going to Samaria? We have already seen the many evidences of contact between Jews and Samaritans on the sectarian level; and this contact, so far from being based on lack of strictness, was often connected with ultra-strictness on points such as ritual purity and Sabbatarianism. But if John was strict in the sense that he demanded repentance and obedience to God's law, he also had his more tolerant side. Doubtless remembering the prophetic passages which hoped for a reconciliation between North and South, between Israel and Judah (above p), he must have regarded the Samaritans as also being the sons of Abraham (as indeed they were). In any case, for John the important thing for a man was not whether he was a son of Abraham, but whether he brought forth fruits that befitted repentance (Lk 3:8). There is no evidence that John ever took his message to Gentiles (unless the soldiers of Lk 3:14 were Gentiles), but he did make this advance, that he was willing to include the schismatic Samaritans in his appeal for repentance by God's people. In this John had probably been given something of a lead by some of the Essenes; he, in turn,

gave a lead to Jesus and the early Christians, though they broke down the barriers in a way of which probably John never dreamed.

While in Samaria, John may have modified his teaching to suit his hearers' point of view, yet we can see how the Samaritans would be able to grasp two of the chief characteristics of John's ministry; his claim to the prophetic office, and his call to repentance.

1. John's claim to the prophetic office. Orthodox Samaritanism probably acknowledged Moses as the only prophet, while certain sects did acknowledge some prophets¹, but all Samaritans were agreed in the expectation of a future prophet.² Anyone claiming to be the eschatological prophet would therefore command the interest and respect of the Samaritans. We have seen previously that John did claim to be the coming prophet. We also saw that although in Christian sources John is represented as the second Elijah, probably John himself did not definitely adhere to either the Elijah or the Moses form of the belief.³ The Samaritans, of course, would interpret his ministry in terms of the Moses-like prophet, this being the form the belief took in Samaritanism.

The fact that John was an ordinary man, who "did no miracles" (John 10:41) would be no drawback, for the Samaritans did not expect the Taheb to be endowed with supernatural powers. The Samaritans "expected only a man endowed with human qualities of a higher nature, but nothing divine."⁴

2. John's call to repentance was the keynote of his ministry. And such a call to repentance was exactly what the Samaritans would expect from the Taheb. M. Gaster, in discussing the ancient traditions of the Samaritans, says that the Samaritans

1. Cf. above, p 273 .

2. Above, p 266 .

3. See Part VI.

4. M. Gaster, "Samaritan Eschatology", p 223.

"envisaged the means of turning away the Fanuta (the Divine disfavour) to be with repentance, cleansing from sin, outwardly and inwardly."¹

Thus we can see that John would find very definite points of contact in Samaria, and it is not surprising that "people came and were baptized" (John 3:23). It might well be said that John prepared the way for the first Christian missionaries in Samaria, just as, in a sense, he prepared the way for Jesus himself in Judaea.

In this connection, we have noted Gullmann's interpretation of the "others" referred to in John 4:38,² as meaning the first Christian missionaries. The passage is a difficult one since verses 36 and 37 seem to point exactly opposite morals. It may well be that in vs 37 and 38, the author writes from the point of view of a later age. Yet enough consideration has not been given to a more straightforward interpretation of the passage.

The first part of the passage obviously refers to the immediate situation and the quick results which Jesus' contact with the Samaritan woman has brought about. No sooner has he planted the word in her heart, than a whole crowd of Samaritans come flocking to hear him (John 4:28-30), so that sowing and reaping can be said to take place together (v 36). But that is only one side of the picture; it is also true that "One sows and another reaps" (John 4:37). In this case, Jesus tells his disciples "others have laboured" first. Since the word is plural, it cannot refer to Jesus himself. But this narrative follows almost immediately after the account of the overlapping ministries when John baptized at Aenon near Salim (John 3:23).

1. "Samaritan Eschatology", pp 251, 252.

2. Above, pp 273, 274.

The most natural explanation would therefore be that the "others" who prepared the way for Jesus, were John and his disciples. Whichever way the passage is interpreted difficulties occur, but from what we have already seen of John's connections with Samaria, the case that he and his disciples are referred to must be regarded as a very strong one.

Two further pieces of evidence linking John with Samaria must be mentioned. One is the references in the Clementine literature which link John with Simon Magus and Dositheus.¹ The historicity of these accounts is extremely doubtful, yet they may just preserve an accurate memory of the fact that John did have a connection with Samaria.

The other evidence concerns the traditions which hold that John was buried in Samaria. From the time of Theodoret (393-457 A.D.), there has been a firm belief that the disciples of John brought him to Samaria for burial. Two Churches, dedicated to John and purporting to be built on or near the site of his burial, date probably from the 4th-5th Cent. A.D. and the 7th Cent. A.D. respectively.² These traditions are not early enough to be very reliable, yet there seems little reason why anyone should invent Samaria as the place of burial, unless there was some early tradition to that effect. Parrot suggests that John's disciples might have buried him nearer Machaerus, where he was executed,³ "but they chose to go further afield to Samaria, thus avoiding Herod's jurisdiction."⁴ However much truth there is in this suggestion that John was buried in Samaria, there is here certainly another piece of

1. See Part XI, p. 303.

2. See A. Parrot, "Samaria, the Capital of the Kingdom of Israel" S.C.M., 1958, pp 122, 124.

3. See Part X, p. 286.

4. Parrot, op. cit., p 126.

evidence which links John in some way with Samaria.

John was probably arrested soon after his return to Judaea from Samaria¹, and we can easily imagine either a group of his Samaritan disciples requesting his body for burial, or else, his Jewish disciples thinking it best that their master's mortal remains should rest somewhere outwith the domains of Antipas, and therefore handing them over to some of John's Samaritan followers.

1. Cf. Part I, p 280.

PART X - ARREST AND MARTYRDOM.

John met his death at the hands of Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, and the ruler of Galilee and Peraea. John's attitude to politics and to the authorities has been the subject of much dispute. We have already found ample reason to reject the Slavonic additions to Josephus, upon which Eisler's wild theories were founded, as having no historical value.¹ We have shown how John's Coming One was not a political figure, and how in his teaching he was content to accept the social and political status quo.² It was only towards the end of his ministry that John came into conflict with established authority, and even then John's motives were moral and religious rather than political.

In so far as John's ministry was exercised in "the wilderness of Judaea" he would be within the Roman province of Judaea, and the same would be true of the period spent in Samaria. There is no record of any dealings between John and the Roman authorities.

John's ministry extended further than this, however, for John 1:28 tells of how he was baptizing "in Bethany beyond Jordan"³. Wherever exactly this was, the fact that it was "beyond Jordan" places it clearly in Peraea, the domain of Herod Antipas. We must assume that after his Samaritan ministry, for some reason or another, John re-entered Peraea and returned to the scenes of his former activity. It must have been in Peraea that he was arrested, and it was there that he met his death.

While John was conducting his ministry in Samaria, Jesus and his disciples were preaching and baptizing in Judaea (John

1. Part I, pp 23-33.

2. Part IV, pp 151-156.

3. See Part II, pp 78, 79.

3:22).¹ How long this period of overlapping ministries lasted we do not know, but after an unspecified period of time, Jesus and his disciples left Judea and went North to Galilee (John 4:1), via Samaria.

This left John free to return to the scenes of his former ministry, if he so desired. Apparently he did this almost immediately. If our interpretation of John 4:38 as referring to John the Baptist and his disciples is correct,² then it would appear that John had already left Samaria when Jesus passed through on his way to Galilee.

This viewpoint is, of course, inconsistent with the Synoptic view, or at any rate with the view of Mark, which is followed by Matthew, that it was only "after John was arrested", that "Jesus came into Galilee" (Mark 1:14; Matt 4:12). We have already seen, however, that at this particular point it is the Fourth Gospel which seems to preserve early and authentic source material, while the Synoptics are guilty of altering the facts in order to reduce Jesus' contact with John to a minimum.³ It is interesting to note that Luke, in his handling of the Marcan material, avoids saying that it was after John's arrest that Jesus returned to Galilee (Luke 4:14). It is true that Luke mentions John's arrest in Luke 3:19,20, but clearly that is not a chronological, but a topical positioning of the information, since in the following verses (Luke 3:21,22) he reverts to the narrative of Jesus' baptism. Could it be that Luke was aware that Mark 1:14 was not strictly accurate? At any rate, for reasons already given we hold the Fourth Gospel's view to be more correct than the Synoptic, and on the basis of

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1. On the period of the overlapping ministries, see Part VIII, PP 248-253.
 2. Part IX, pp 277,278.
 3. Part VIII, p 249.

the admittedly meagre information it supplies, the following outline of the last stages of John's life can be reconstructed.

1. After a period of co-operation, John and Jesus part company, John going to Samaria, while Jesus remains in Judaea.
2. After this period of overlapping ministries, Jesus decides to go North to Galilee.
3. John therefore leaves Samaria and comes South, so that when Jesus passes through Samaria, John has already left.
4. John returns to the scene of his former ministry, presumably to a point in Perea on the East side of the Jordan, within the territory of Antipas.
5. Soon thereafter, John is arrested by Antipas, thrown into prison, and after another unspecified period of time, is executed.
6. News of John's death is brought to Jesus, while he is in the middle of his Galilean ministry (Matt 14:12).

John's arrest, imprisonment and death are narrated both in the Gospels and in Josephus.

Mark's account is the fullest (Mk 6:17-29) and tells of how Herod Antipas imprisoned John because of his denunciation of Antipas' marriage to Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Antipas really respected John, according to the Marcan account, but Herodias plotted against him and with the help of her daughter, tricked Herod into executing John. Matthew gives a shorter summary of the Marcan story (Mt 14:3-12), and Luke is content with only a brief mention -

"Herod the tetrarch, who had been reprov-
ed by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and
for all the evil things that Herod had done,
added this to them all, that he shut up John
in prison." (Lk 3:19,20).

Alongside the Gospels must be laid the narrative of Josephus, in Antiquities XVIII, 5, 1 and 2. This tells of how Antipas married the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia. When

Antipas was on a visit to Rome, however, he lodged with a half-brother of his named Herod, with whose wife, Herodias, he fell in love. Herodias agreed to elope with Antipas on condition that he divorced his wife. His wife, however, got word of what was happening and, pretending to be ignorant, asked to be allowed to go to Machaerus. Antipas, suspecting nothing, granted this request, but his wife promptly fled and made her way to Arabia, to her father. Aretas thereupon raised an army and made war on Antipas, whose army he soundly defeated.

Some of the Jews, Josephus goes on to tell us, thought that the defeat of Antipas' army was a well-deserved punishment sent from God because of what Antipas had done to John the Baptist. Here follows Josephus' account of John¹, which includes the statement that Antipas, fearing that John's great hold over the people might tempt him to raise a rebellion, took him prisoner, sent him to Machaerus, and there put him to death. It was for this act, so it was said, that Antipas suffered defeat at the hands of the King of Arabia.

The accounts of the Gospels and of Josephus have been assailed as being inconsistent and contradictory. There are certain difficulties, it is true, but both accounts seem to be basically reliable, and to be complementary rather than contradictory.

The Gospel account cannot, of course, be taken entirely at its face value for it is obviously a story which has grown in the telling. To object to the promise of Antipas that he would give to the dancing girl "even half of my kingdom" (Mk.6:23) is to misunderstand the nature of the story, in which exaggeration certainly plays a part. It has been held that the story was composed on the basis of Elijah's dealings with Ahab and Jezebel

1. See Part I, p 20.

John being the new Elijah; and also under the influence of the story of Esther's appearance before King Ahasuerus (Esther 5:1f) who promised to grant any request of Esther "even to the half of my kingdom". This phrase had probably become proverbial, however, and the Old Testament parallels are not close enough to warrant the conclusion that the New Testament story is a pure fiction. It has also been objected that, "a princess of the proud Herodian house" would not "demean herself by dancing like a slave girl publicly in the presence¹ of a half-intoxicated crowd of men."¹ By ordinary moral standards it certainly would be outrageous for a princess to perform an Oriental solo dance in this fashion, but when we remember the moral standards of the Herodian family, we can believe anything. Rawlinson sums up by calling the Marcian story "an account, written with a certain amount of literary freedom, of what was being darkly whispered in the bazaars or market places of Palestine at the time."²

It is possible, however, that in the early Christian community there were better sources of information than mere rumours. Luke 8:3 lists among the women who ministered to Jesus and his disciples, "Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward". Nothing else is known of Chusa; as ἐπίτροπος of Antipas, he would be "the manager of his household and estates".³ Acts 13:1 mentions among the "prophets and teachers" in the church at Antioch, "Mannan, a member of the court of Herod the Tetrarch" (Ἡρώδου τοῦ τετραρχοῦ σύντροφος). σύντροφος means literally "foster-brother", and opens up the fascinating possibility of a connection with

1. Rawlinson, "St. Mark", Westminster Commentary, p 82.

2. Rawlinson, op. cit., p 82.

3. Plummer, "St. Luke", ICC, p 216.

Manaen the Essene, who won the favour of Herod the Great.¹ The term, however, may only mean "a member of the court" as the Revised Standard Version renders it. A position of some influence and authority is certainly implied, and Manaen would undoubtedly receive a place at the royal table.

Some account of John's death as seen from within the court of Herod, might therefore have found its way into early Christian circles, via either Chuza or Manaen.

The account of Josephus, taken by itself, does not present so many difficulties, the main one being chronological. On the basis of Lk. 3:1, the death of John must have taken place about 29-30 A.D. The defeat of Antipas at the hands of Aretas occurred in 36 A.D. This indicates a longer lapse of time between the two events than is suggested by the narrative of Josephus. The punishment does not necessarily need to follow close upon the crime, however, and the death of John may well have made such an impression that it was easily brought forward as the explanation of events which took place five or six years later.

More serious difficulties arise when the two accounts are compared, for there are some apparent contradictions between them.

1. The Gospels say that Herodias was the wife of Antipas' brother Philip², whereas according to Josephus, Herodias was married to a man called Herod, a half brother of Antipas. It is possible to argue that the man had a double name, Herod Philip, and thus harmonize the two accounts. In fact there was a Herod Philip, a half brother of Antipas, but he was someone quite distinct from Herodias' husband; he was tetrarch of

1. See article, "Manaen", by H. Cowen in H.D.B. III, pp228,229.

2. Mk. 6:17, Mt 14:3.

Itursea and Trachonitis and died in 34 A.D. He, moreover, married Salome, the daughter of Herodias. It seems therefore that the Marcan account has made a mistake and confused Herodias' husband with her son-in-law. Considering the fantastically complicated Herodian family tree, with its marriages lawful and unlawful, such confusion can be both understood and excused.

That it is the Marcan account which is at fault is further confirmed by the fact that although Matthew (14:3) follows Mark, Luke (3:19) drops the name Philip, thus avoiding the historical error. ¹

2. A second apparent contradiction concerns the place of John's execution. Taken by itself, the Marcan story might be thought to have taken place at Tiberias. This is suggested by the fact that the banquet was attended by the "courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee" (Mk 6:21). ²

Josephus, on the other hand, definitely says that John was imprisoned and executed at Machaerus, the castle by the Dead Sea.

Actually the indications of place in the Gospel story are very slight and there is no real difficulty in accepting Josephus' version. Machaerus was a palace as well as a prison, and the court could well have been in residence there. If John was arrested in Perea, Machaerus would be the natural place to take him.

3. The most noteworthy divergence between the two accounts lies in the motive assigned to Antipas. According to the Gospels, John was imprisoned because of his denunciation of the marriage of Antipas and Herodias. Mark pictures Antipas

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1. The reading of the A.V. "his brother Philip's wife", is an inferior reading (ACKX and some versions) which harmonizes Luke with Mark and Matthew. It is clearly to be rejected.
 2. For this argument see Kreeling, "John the Baptist", pp 92, 201, 202.

as arresting John yet, at the same time respecting him, "knowing that he was a righteous and holy man" (Mk 6:20) and keeping him safe. Matthew alters the story at this stage and says that Antipas "wanted to put him to death" but "he feared the people, because they held him (John) to be a prophet" (Mt.14:5). In both Mark and Matthew, John's death is brought about by the scheming of Herodias, who "had a grudge against him and wanted to kill him" (Mk. 6:19). Presumably this grudge was due to John's condemnation of the marriage.

The marriage of Antipas and Herodias was a clear breach of Jewish Law. It is true that under the law of Levirate marriage, where two brothers are living together and one dies, leaving no son, the surviving brother has the duty of taking the widow to wife. The eldest child of this union then succeeds to the name and inheritance of the deceased brother.¹ This law, however, had no relevance in this case for Herodias' husband was still living. The marriage therefore violated the law of Leviticus 20:21 - "If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity". (cf. Lev 18:16). Thus John had no hesitation in declaring boldly, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mk 6:18).

The Gospel account gives the impression that the whole matter was a domestic affair and that John's death was due to the personal anger of Antipas, and especially of his wife, Herodias. Josephus, on the other hand presents the incident wholly from a political point of view. Naturally, allowance has to be made for the viewpoint of the different writers: Josephus was interested in political events; the Gospel writers were not. Kraeling, however, has shown very clearly how for a person like

1. The law is found in Deut 25:5-10. On Levirate marriage, see S.R. Driver, "Deuteronomy", ICC, pp 280-285.

Antipas such a "personal" matter was at the same time, inevitably political. ¹

Antipas' first wife was the daughter of Aretas II, ruler of the Nabataean Kingdom. Modern exploration and discoveries have shown how this extensive kingdom, with its capital at Petra, was a power to be reckoned with. Control of caravan routes made it economically strong, and its desert warriors could give it an extremely effective fighting force. Antipas ruled Peraea, a narrow strip of territory, East of the Jordan, which was very much open to Nabataean influence and infiltration. Antipas' marriage to Aretas' daughter can only be viewed as an attempt to consolidate and secure his hold East of the Jordan.

Similarly, Antipas' treatment of his wife would also be viewed in a political light. When she heard of Antipas' intentions and fled to her father, he naturally viewed this not only as a personal insult, but as a breach of a political alliance. Possibly he saw it also as a good excuse for extending his kingdom, and so he fitted out his expedition against Antipas. He was just too successful, however, for his victory over the forces of Antipas prompted the intervention of a Roman army under Vitellius.²

Bearing in mind this background, it can be readily be appreciated that when John came forward and denounced Antipas' marriage to Herodias, this was a move fraught with political consequences. John preached by the Jordan, some of the time on the East side i.e. actually in Peraea. To condemn Antipas' split with the Nabataeans could easily be interpreted as subversive activities, an attempt to rouse the Jews of Peraea against their king. This, from the political side, was the

1. See Kraeling, "John the Baptist", pp 88-91.

2. Josephus, "Antiquities", XVIII 5, 1 and 3.

reason for John's arrest.

It will be noted that Josephus nowhere states that John preached rebellion; it was as a precaution against this that he was arrested. Antipas "feared that John's so extensive influence over the people might lead to an uprising (for the people seemed likely to do anything he might counsel). He thought it much better, under the circumstances, to get John out of the way in advance, before any insurrection might develop, than for himself to get into trouble and be sorry not to have acted, once an insurrection had begun." ¹

When this is taken along with the Gospel account, we can see now how the two fit perfectly together. John's condemnation of the unlawful marriage, and Antipas' political fears were in fact different aspects of the same series of events. Nothing shows more clearly that John's Messianic preaching must have been completely non-political. If he had foretold the advent of an earthly leader and a warrior king, Antipas would have acted right away, and the attitude of Josephus to John would have been far less favourable. John denounced Antipas on moral grounds, however, and it was only because of the political consequences of this that Antipas was forced to arrest him as a potential revolutionary, even though John had no intention of being a revolutionary in this sense.

In regard to the main essentials of the story, therefore, the accounts of Josephus and of the Gospels complement rather than contradict each other. The arrest and death of John seems to have made a great impression at the time, and this impression is reflected by Josephus and the Gospels, from their own particular viewpoints.

1. "Antiquities", XVIII, 5,2.

The characters in the story are vividly portrayed for us, though Antipas appears in the Marcan account in a curiously favourable light. He arrested John, yet nevertheless "heard him gladly", knowing that he was "a righteous and holy man". (Mk.6:20). The impression Mark gives is that John was taken into a sort of "protective custody", and the blame for his death is laid entirely on Herodias. This hardly squares with the picture Josephus gives us, and it is interesting to see how Matthew has altered the narrative, asserting that it was Antipas who wanted to put John to death from the very first, the only reason preventing him being his fear of the reaction of the general public. (Matt.14:5). This account is nearer to the view of Josephus, and more likely to be correct.

The characterization of Herodias in the Gospels, on the other hand, is exactly in line with what we know about her. She was an ambitious and unscrupulous schemer who egged on her husband unmercifully until she brought disaster upon both of them. Jealous of Agrippa's kingly rank, she prevailed upon the reluctant Antipas to go to Rome and seek the favour of the Emperor Calus. Agrippa informed the Emperor against them, however, and Antipas was shorn of his possessions and money, and banished, along with Herodias, to Lyons, in Gaul. Thus, we might add, Herodias was also punished for her part in the death of John.

Above all, this episode gives us a wonderful insight into the character of John himself. It shows us a true prophet, meeting the fate of a prophet with high courage and a firm faith in God. The story of his dealing with Antipas shows how John was prepared to condemn sin wherever it was found, whatever the consequences. How far John understood the political

implications of his action, as we have outlined them above, is not easy to say, but certainly he can have had ^{no} illusions about the danger in which he was placing himself by attacking Antipas.

The ruins of Machaerus remain to this day on the spur of a hill on the Eastern shore of the Dead Sea. Alexander Jannaeus was the first to build a fortress on the site, but Josephus tells us that -

"when Herod came to the throne, he decided that no place would better repay attention and the strongest fortification, especially in view of the proximity of Arabia; for its situation was most opportune, commanding as it did a view of Arab territory. So he surrounded a large area with walls and towers, and founded a city there, from which an ascent led up to the ridge itself. Not content with that he built a wall round the very summit and erected towers at the corners, each 90 feet high. In the middle of this enclosure he built a palace, breath-taking in the size and beauty of the various rooms; and at carefully chosen spots he constructed a number of tanks to receive rain-water and maintain a constant supply. He might well have been competing with nature in the hope that the impregnability the place had received from her might be outdone by his own artificial defences. He further provided an ample store of weapons and engines, and managed to think of everything that could enable the occupants to snap their fingers at the longest siege."

Antipas inherited Macha^aerus from Herod the Great and there is no reason to doubt that it was here that John spent the last portion of his life.

Modern explorers have surveyed the site² although it still awaits a thorough and competent archaeological investigation.

1. Translation by G.A. Williamson in "The Jewish War", Penguin Classics, p. 397; equivalent of War VII, 6, 2.
2. See H.R. Reynolds, "John the Baptist", pp 411, 412; H.V. Morton, "In the Steps of the Master", pp 282-291.

As well as the fortress, there was also a town on a nearby hill, with a causeway connecting the two. The dungeons of the fortress are still to be seen.

The view from the hill top of Machaerus is an exceptionally fine one, and if John was allowed any freedom at all, he could see below him the blue waters of the Dead Sea; Northwards the river Jordan and the wilderness of Judaea, where he had lived and worked; and in the far distance, the hills of Samaria. On a clear day he would see almost to Jerusalem itself, and on the opposite shore of the Dead Sea he would certainly see the monastery of Qumran. The scene of a whole lifetime's activities would be spread out before his eyes.

The Gospels indicate that John was imprisoned for a period of time before being put to death, and that during this period he had a certain amount of freedom in so far as his disciples could visit him, and relay messages, between him and Jesus, for example (Lk 7:18-23; Matt 11:2-6). Josephus mentions no interval, but his account is not inconsistent with the Gospels; he tells of how, "because of Herod's suspicion, John was sent as a prisoner to Machaerus, the fortress already mentioned, and there put to death."¹

The difficulties raised by the story of John's question to Jesus have already been dealt with,² and we have seen how it seems unlikely that John did in fact hail Jesus as the Coming One at the time of the baptism. On this view, John's question from prison represents not the dawn of doubt, but the dawn of faith.

John sent his disciples from prison to ask Jesus, "Are you the Coming One, or shall we look for another?" Jesus sent a reply, but not a direct one; "Go and tell John what you have

1. "Antiquities", XVIII, 5,2.

2. See Part VIII.

seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offence at me". (Luke 7:19-23).

What John's response to this message was, we shall never know. Certainly he must have thought hard and long about the reports he had been hearing of the ministry of Jesus, reports which described a rather different kind of Coming One from the figure whom he had been led to proclaim. Did John end his life defeated and disillusioned, or aflame with new faith and hope? The question cannot be answered. We can only say that if he died as he had lived, then John must have faced his executioner bravely, knowing that he was now to be numbered among the prophets, saints and martyrs who had given their all in the service of God.

PART XI - THE BAPTIST SECT.

Having completed our study of the life and work of John the Baptist, we will now ask what became of his followers after his death. Some of John's disciples, as we have seen, transferred their loyalty to Jesus (Jn 1:35f); and it is very likely that more would follow suit, after the death of John. At the time of John's death, however, the group of John's disciples were still in being, for they "came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb." (Mk.6:29; Matt 14:12).

There is, furthermore, a considerable body of evidence that the group of disciples of John was not wholly swallowed up in the growing Christian Church, but rather, continued its separate existence for a considerable period of time. It will be simplest if we consider first the evidence for a continuing baptist sect; then we may approach the more difficult questions of its character, origin, and relation to the early Christian Church. The evidence is considered in chronological order, so far as possible.

1. The evidence of Acts.

In Acts 18:24-28, we are introduced to Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria, who came to Ephesus. "He was an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John."

In Acts 19:1-7, we hear of how, when Paul came to Ephesus, he found there about a dozen disciples, who had not received the Holy Spirit.¹ "Into what then were you baptized?" he asked.

1. On the meaning of Acts 19:2, see Part IV p 125 .

"Into John's baptism", they replied. Paul then told them how the Coming One, foretold by John, was in fact Jesus; He baptized them, laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Although Apollos and these disciples are mentioned close together in the book of Acts, and although they are both located at Ephesus, they do not necessarily fall into the same category.¹ The disciples apparently did not know about Jesus; whereas Apollos "taught accurately the things concerning Jesus" (Acts 18:25). It was necessary for Paul to re-baptize the disciples whereas there is no word of Apollos being baptized, and he merely receives some additional teaching. The disciples did not receive the Spirit until after their Christian baptism; whereas Apollos was already "fervent in the spirit" before Priscilla and Aquila took him in hand. (Acts 18:25, 26). (It is open to question, of course, whether ζέων τῷ πνεύματι means the Holy Spirit in the full Christian sense). The two incidents therefore require to be taken separately, in the first instance.

a) The dozen disciples of Acts 19:1-7 cannot possibly be regarded as Christians; they did not know about Jesus, or at any rate did not know he was the Coming One, and they did not possess the Holy Spirit. The confession of Jesus as the Christ and the possession of the Holy Spirit were the two most important and absolutely essential distinguishing marks of the Christian from the earliest days. On the other hand, these people had been baptized into John's baptism. The inescapable conclusion is that they were members of the group of John's disciples.

In opposition to this conclusion it is common to point out

1. Cf. Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 96; Goguel, "Jean Baptiste", p 100. On these passages see also, Lightfoot, "Colossians and Philemon", p 402.

that the author of Luke-Acts calls them "disciples" (μαθηταί).¹ This term is confined solely to members of the Christian Church; therefore the disciples at Ephesus must have been full Christians. The fallacy of this argument is at once apparent. For one thing, there is no doubt, whatever interpretation we accept, that in this passage we have a very special case. It is dangerous to apply a general rule to an exceptional case. Furthermore, although the term "disciple" can generally be assumed to be the equivalent of "Christian believer" in the New Testament, the author of Luke-Acts himself uses it of the disciples of the Pharisees, and of the disciples of John (Lk 5:33, 7:18,19). If he uses it of the disciples of John before their master's death, it is rather pre-judging the issue to say that he cannot use it after his death. The determining factor in the interpretation of "disciples" in Acts 19:1 must therefore be the context, and the rest of the passage. This indicates clearly that these people were not Christians at all, and that they can only be classed among the "disciples of John."

(b) The case of Apollos, as we have noted above, is rather different and must be approached with caution. Although it is said that he "knew only the baptism of John", yet he also "spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus" (τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ). Comparison with Mk 5:27 and Lk 24:19 suggests that this phrase means the facts of the earthly ministry of Jesus, and not Christian belief or doctrine concerning Christ.² Even so, the likelihood is that he is to be regarded as a Christian, albeit "un chrétien imparfait" as

1. See e.g. J.L. Teicher, "Has a Johannine Sect ever Existed?" JJS, IV, 4, 1953, pp 143f.

2. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 102, 103.

Thomas puts it.¹ He probably represents a very primitive type of Christianity, before baptism was re-introduced.²

It has been argued that both Apollos and the disciples were of the same belief, and both represent some primitive and imperfect type of Christianity. Luke, finding this in his sources, did not understand their position and therefore made them disciples of John.³ We reject this argument, but even if it were true, it would suggest that later on in the first century, when Luke was writing, he knew of a surviving sect of John's disciples. J.L. Teicher argues that the disciples were Hebrew Christians who believed the advent of the Holy Spirit still to be in the future,⁴ but his arguments are far from convincing.

2. The evidence of the Lucan infancy narrative.

This had already been analysed in Part III, where it was shown that behind Luke 1 there lay a Hebrew source, relating the birth and infancy of John, which was later translated into Greek and used by Luke. Very probably this source was originally separate from the infancy narrative of Jesus.

It is most unlikely that any Christian, believing that Jesus was the Messiah, would display such a detailed interest in the birth and infancy of John. The compiler must have

1. Op. cit., p 101.

2. There is no evidence that Jesus or his disciples baptized, from the time of the Galilean ministry onwards. The absence of any command by Jesus to baptize apart from Mt 28:19 is most striking. The authenticity of Mt 28:19 has often been questioned; it is in any case a command of the risen Christ, given only sometime after his death and resurrection. The early chapters of Acts do speak of baptism from the day of Pentecost onwards, but is Luke here not reading back the practice of a later day? There certainly is a strong probability that for a period, albeit a short one, the earliest Christians did not practice a baptism of their own.

3. Cf. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste", p 104.

4. JJS, IV, 4, 1953, pp 145 f.

thought much more highly of John than any ordinary Christian would. This is further borne out by the highly distinctive character of the sections which deal with John; we noted especially the use of *κύριος* to mean God and not Christ, the exalted conception of John not as precursor of the Messiah but as forerunner of God Himself, and also the priestly emphasis in the narrative. It was also shown how the Magnificat, and the whole of the Benedictus originally belonged to the narrative of John, which thus regards him very highly indeed. The only conclusion which can be drawn from this evidence is that the account was produced, not in the Christian Church, but among a group which continued to revere John. The narrative may not have very great historical value as far as the infancy of John is concerned, but it is of considerable value as a testimony to the existence of a continuing baptist sect in which John was given an exalted, almost Messianic position, and in which there was a decidedly priestly emphasis. Indeed, we may agree with Kraeling when he says that the main value of the narrative derives from the fact that it is "a record of the piety of the Baptist circles that created it."¹

3. The evidence of the Fourth Gospel.

W. Baldensperger was by no means the first to show how the Fourth Gospel contains a powerful polemic against John and his followers, but he set out the idea and carried it to its extreme limits in his book, "Der Prolog des vierten Evangeliums".² Pointing to Acts 18 and 19 he suggested the existence of the baptist sect at Ephesus, the place of origin of the Fourth Gospel. Not only the first chapters of the Fourth Gospel, but

1. See Kraeling, "John the Baptist", p 20 f.

2. Freiburg, J.C.B. Mohr, 1898.

the whole Gospel, so Baldensperger believed, had as its main aim, anti-Johannite polemic.

It certainly is true that the Fourth Gospel seizes upon every opportunity to emphasize the inferiority of John to Jesus¹. The Prologue is twice interrupted² for this purpose (Jn 1:6-8, 1:15); Jn 1:15 also counters the undeniable fact that John preceded Jesus in point of time by the saying - "This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me"; John denies most pointedly that he is the Messiah, or Elijah, or "the prophet" (Jn 1:19f); again in Jn 3:28, John says, "I am not the Christ"; in Jn 3:30 he says of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease"; John 10:41 tells us that in contrast to Jesus, "John did no sign". To this list we may add the striking fact that the Fourth Gospel does not even relate the fact that Jesus was baptized by John.

E.F. Scott sums up the Fourth Gospel's references to the Baptist "Indeed, it is not too much to say that John is introduced into the narrative for no other purpose than to bring out this fact of his inferiority."³

Baldensperger carries his argument much too far;⁴ for him the point of the whole Gospel is to show that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and not John, as the baptist sect held. Setting aside such an extreme position, the evidence is nevertheless strong enough to permit us to say that one of the aims of the Evangelist was to counter excessive claims which were being made for John the Baptist. The way in which it is stressed that John is not the Light, and not the Messiah

1. See Lightfoot, "Colossians and Philemon", p 403.

2. Part I, p 11.

3. "The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology", T. & C. Clark, Edinburgh 1906, p 78.

4. E.g. he finds anti-baptist polemic in John 20:31, a verse which is perfectly understandable without any such reference

suggests that this was in fact what was being claimed on his behalf.

4. The evidence of the Clementines.

Further valuable evidence is preserved for us in the Clementine Recognitions and Homilies. Unfortunately, many features of the Clementine literature are still obscure. We are concerned with the Recognitions and the Homilies, both of which have a fictitious narrative in which are embedded considerable doctrinal sections represented as discussions between Clement and Peter. Modern studies have shown that "most probably both are recensions of a common source, produced in Syria in the early 3rd Cent A.D., itself being a compilation of earlier works. They represent a type of Jewish Christianity, though there are differences and inconsistencies in doctrine."¹

Direct references to the "disciples of John" are found in the Recognitions. In Recognitions 1:53, Peter relates how he went up to the Temple, after the death of Christ, "to bear witness concerning Him, and at the same time to charge the Jews with many foolish things which they were doing. For the people was now divided into many parties, ever since the days of John the Baptist." Chapter 54 lists these various sects, mentioning the Sadducees, the Samaritans, and the scribes and Pharisees, and continues -

"Yee, some even of the disciples of John, who seemed to be great ones, have separated themselves from the people, and proclaimed their own master as the Christ."

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1. Article, "Clementine Literature", Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol 5 pp 797-799, London, 1959. See further, Article "Clementina", in The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, New York, 1909, Vol III, pp 141-143. E.J. Goodspeed "A History of Early Christian Literature", Chicago, 1942, pp 127, 128. Quotations from the Homilies are taken from the Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Vol XVII, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1870: and from the Recognitions from the Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Vol III, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1867.

Peter and the other apostles then proceed to answer the arguments of the various parties in a kind of public disputation on the steps of the Temple (Rec 1:55f.), in the course of which,

"One of the disciples of John asserted that John was the Christ, and not Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus himself declared that John was greater than all men and all prophets, 'If then', said he, 'he be greater than all prophets, he must be held to be greater than Moses, and than Jesus himself. But if he be the greatest of all, then must he be the Christ.' To this Simon the Canaanite answering, asserted that John was indeed greater than all the prophets, and all who are born of women, yet that he is not greater than the Son of Man. Accordingly Jesus is also the Christ, whereas John is only a prophet; and there is as much difference between him and Jesus, as between the forerunner and Him whose forerunner he is; or as between Him who gives the law, and him who keeps the law." (Rec 1:60).

Rec 1:63 sums up the different arguments, reminding the reader how the apostles taught "the disciples of John, that they should not suffer John to be a stumbling block to them."

While the narrative framework is completely fictitious, there is, nevertheless, preserved for us here the fact that a sect did exist, which exalted John to the rank of Messiah. The Recognitions give a detailed reply to arguments which were evidently being put forward, claiming that John was greater than Jesus.

Further references to John are made in Hom 2:23, 24 and Rec 2:8, in which he is linked with Simon Magus and Dositheus. Relating the story of Simon, Hom 2:23, 24 says -

"There was one John, a hemerobaptist, who was also, according to the method of combination, the forerunner of our Lord Jesus; and as the Lord had twelve apostles, bearing the number of the twelve months of the sun, so also he (John) had thirty chief men, fulfilling the monthly reckoning of the moon.....Of these thirty, the first and the most esteemed by John was Simon; and the reason of his not being chief after the death of John was as follows:-

He being absent in Egypt for the practice of magic, and John being killed, Dositheus desiring the leadership, falsely gave out that Simon was dead, and succeeded to the seat,"

A similar account appears in the Recognitions (2:8) -

"For after that John the Baptist was killed when Dositheus had broached his heresy, with thirty other chief disciples, and one woman, who was called Luna this Simon, ambitious of evil glory, as we have said, goes to Dositheus, and pretending friendship, entreats him that if any one of those thirty should die, he should straightway substitute him in room of the dead....."

These apparently parallel narratives have in fact, significant differences.¹ The reference to John in the Recognitions is purely a chronological one, and he is not linked at all with the heretical sect which is mentioned. The Homilies on the other hand make two startling assertions - that John was a hemerobaptist, and that he was the founder of a sect of thirty disciples, which included Simon Magus and Dositheus. The Recognitions only mention John in the passing, whereas the Homilies show a highly hostile attitude towards him. The link with Simon and Dositheus was in fact one of the biggest insults which could be directed against John; Simon, to early Christian writers, was "the source and spring of all later heresy",² and to present him as the disciple and successor of John is to make John the arch-heretic. Probably the naming of John as a hemerobaptist is meant to be an insult too. The Hemerobaptists³ were a Jewish sect, about whom little is known; probably however the Homilies would regard them as a rival and heretical

1. For a discussion of these passages, see Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 127-129.

2. A.C. Headlam, article, "Simon Magus", in HDB, IV, pp 520-527 quotation from p 520.

3. See Part II, p 58 .

group. That John was really a Hemerobaptist is highly improbable; his baptism was not a daily one, but a once-for-all ceremony.¹

Evidently then, the Homilies were in bitter opposition to John, regarding him as the father of all heresy; whereas the Recognitions have omitted the assertion that John was a Hemerobaptist, and so altered the rest of the narrative as to remove the connection between John and the heretics, Simon and Dositheus. Comparison of the two accounts suggests that the Recognitions are the later form and are an orthodox revision much more favourable to John.

It is worth noting here that the passage from Recognitions 1:54 cited above (p 300) may contain an echo of the argument that John and his disciples were linked with the heretic Simon. The account says that "some even of the disciples of John, who seemed to be great ones, have separated themselves from the people....." The phrase, "who seemed to be great ones" may be intended to recall Act 8:9,10, where Simon is introduced as claiming "that he himself was somebody great", and where the people said of him, "This man is that power of God which is called great."

No historical value can be attached to the claim that John was associated with Simon; the Clementines contain the only assertion to this effect, an assertion obviously inspired by malice. Yet, as we have already suggested², there may be a grain of truth in the story if John did sojourn for a brief period in Samaria.

In addition to these direct references to the "disciples of John", there is further evidence of a more indirect kind. This is to be found in the theory of "pairs" (συζυγία) which

1. See Part V, p 194 .

2. Part IX, p 278 .

is set forth in the Homilies. (Hom 2:15,17, 2:33, 3:22). God, "teaching men with respect to the truth of existing things, being Himself one, has distinguished all principles into pairs and opposites " (Hom 2:15). Of these pairs, the first part is always inferior to the second; God, placing before man "small things first, and great ones afterwards, such as the world and eternity." (Hom 2:15). Examples of such pairs are given e.g. Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob. (Hom 2:16). Hom 2:17 then continues - "In like manner, the combination with respect to Elias, which behoved to have come, has been willingly put off to another time, having determined to enjoy it conveniently hereafter. Wherefore, also, he who was among the sons of men came second." The text here may be slightly corrupt, but the general meaning is clear. "Elias" is John the Baptist, "he who was among those born of woman" (cf. Lk 7:28, Mt 11:11). He is paired with "he who was among the sons of men", i.e. Jesus. By the law of pairs, Jesus is therefore superior to John.

A similar reference is to be found in Hom 3:22 -

"But a companion was created along with him (i.e. with man), a female nature, much differing from him, as quality from substance, as the moon from the sun, as fire from light. She, as a female ruling the present world as her like, was entrusted to be the first prophetess, announcing prophecy with all those born of woman. But the other, as the son of man, being a male, prophesies better things to the world to come as a male". 1

Here again, John "born of woman", is contrasted with Jesus, "the son of man", who is superior and who "prophesies better things."

The Recognitions also deal with the theory of pairs, which

1. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", pp 126, 127. For male and female pairs, cf. Hom 2:15.

is set out in Rec 3:59 -

"God has appointed for this world certain pairs;
and he who comes first of the pairs is of evil,
he who comes second, of good."

The rest of 3:59 elaborates the theory, which is picked up again in 3:61 -

"The ten pairs of which we have spoken have therefore been assigned to this world from the beginning of time. Cain and Abel were one pair. The second was the giants and Noah; the third Pharaoh and Abraham; the fourth, the Philistines and Isaac; the fifth, Esau and Jacob; the sixth, the magicians and Moses the lawgiver; the seventh, the tempter and the son of man; the eighth Simon and I, Peter; the ninth, all nations, and he who shall be sent to sow the word among the nations; the tenth, Antichrist and Christ."

There are several differences from the Homilies, the most striking being that all mention of John has been dropped, and "The tempter" is paired with the "son of man". Undoubtedly the passage has again been revised by a more orthodox editor, who wished to delete the ideas which were so unfavourable to John¹.

Though Gnostic in origin, and though applied to Peter and Simon Magus, this theory of pairs is principally directed against the view that John must be superior to Jesus because he preceded him in point of time. The length to which the writer goes to work out the elaborate theory, shows how concerned he is to combat excessive claims being made for John. While the Fourth Gospel is content to show John's inferiority to Jesus, the Clementine Homilies go very much further and by implication class John as a false prophet, in the succession of Eve, Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Aaron and Anti-Christ. Such feeling against

1. See above, p 303 ; also, Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste" pp 125, 126.

John can only have been generated by conflict with the continuing Johannine sect.

The Clementine literature is sometimes dismissed, in discussion of the Johannine sect, with one or two brief references. Our survey has revealed however, overwhelming evidence for the continued existence of the disciples of John and of their conflict with the Church.

Goguel, who quotes only Rec 1:60, suggests that the Clementines may only reflect an argumentum ad hominem, put forward by persons who had no connection with a baptist group. A detailed examination of the Clementines shows this to be an utterly inadequate explanation.

The evidence of the Clementine literature may be summarized under three heads. Firstly, there are definite statements that "some of the disciples of Johnseparated themselves from the people, and proclaimed their own master as the Christ." Secondly, one source, reproduced more accurately in the Homilies and toned down in the Recognitions, shows a bitter hatred of John, depicting him as essentially evil and the father of all heresies. Thirdly, there are detailed arguments to refute the ideas that John was superior to Jesus and was in fact the Christ. The direct accounts of the continued existence of the disciples of John might by themselves be open to doubt; but the indirect evidence is much more powerful. No one would work up such a hatred of John or would construct the elaborate theory of pairs unless there existed a rivalry with a continuing sect of John's followers.

5. The evidence of Ephraem.

The 4th Cent. Syrian father Ephraem, giving a list of the

1. Goguel, "Jean-Baptiste," p 107.

various Jewish heresies, mentions "the disciples of John", who glorify him and claim that he is greater than Christ, as he himself testified when he said that among those born of women there is none greater than John.¹ As Thomas has shown, there are certain similarities between this passage in Ephraem and the passage in Recognitions 1:54 f (above, p 301), the likeliest explanation of which is that they both drew on some early source.² It may well be, therefore, that the notice of Ephraem cannot be reckoned as an independent piece of evidence; in any case it does not add anything at all to the evidence of the Clementines.

Though we could wish for fuller information concerning John's disciples, the evidence we have surveyed gives convincing proof of their continued existence, and allows us to reconstruct at least a partial picture of the sect. The main features would appear to be as follows.

a), They claimed that John was the Christ. The Lucan infancy narrative, as we have seen³, has almost reached this position. The source which underlies Luke 1 regards John as the forerunner of God Himself, with whose birth God has visited and redeemed His people, and raised up a horn of salvation. We have shown how the Magnificat and the whole of the Benedictus originally belonged to the narrative of John, which thus regards him very highly indeed.

Behind the insistence of the Fourth Gospel that John was not the Light, and not the Messiah, very probably lies a desire to counter a group who were making just such claims.

The Clementines state specifically that some of the disciples of John "separated themselves from the people, and

1. The Latin text is given in Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 117.

2. See Thomas, op. cit., pp 116-118.

3. See above, pp 297, 298.

proclaimed their own master as the Christ."

b) Another clearly recognisable feature of the Johannine sect is their claim that John must be greater than Christ since he preceded him in point of time.¹ The chronological argument was of great weight in antiquity; and Jewish apologists, for example, were concerned to show that Moses preceded the Greek philosophers. John certainly preceded Jesus, and spoke of him as "he that comes after me" (Mt 3:11). Here then, was a strong argument for the disciples of John.

The history of this dispute can be traced through several stages. Gullmann² thinks traces of it can be found even in the Synoptics: Mal 3:1 and Is 40:3 are quoted in Mark 1:2,3, to show that it was the divine intention that John should precede Christ; Mt 11:11b was "preserved to serve as a reply to the chronological argument utilized by champions of the Baptist sect"; Mt 3:11, stresses that "he who is coming after me is mightier than I."

This exegesis may be somewhat strained, but there are no doubts at all when we turn to the Fourth Gospel. It accepts the validity of the argument that precedence in time implies superiority, but counters the Baptist sect with the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence, so that John says - "He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me." (John 1:15, 30).

In view of the argument as we have traced it so far, we can now see in clearer perspective the fantastic lengths to which the source underlying the Clementines went in order to combat the disciples of John. They either neglected or rejected the Fourth Gospel's approach, and instead set about to refute the whole accepted idea that priority in time implies

1. On this section see, "ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος." O. Gullmann, in "The Early Church", S.C.M. London, 1956.
2. Op. cit., p 180.

superiority. Hence the elaborate theory, with proofs from the Old Testament, that in each pair it is the evil principle which comes first and the good second.

The Baptist sect apparently found this chronological argument a most powerful one, and used it with effect in disputes with the Church.

c) A third feature was their continuance of the rite of baptism. The disciples of John at Ephesus were baptized "into John's baptism" (Acts 19:3) and we may assume that the rite continued to be a distinguishing feature of the sect. We have already noted¹ that the designation of John as a "hemerobaptist" by the Clementine Homilies is not sufficient proof that a repeated baptism was practiced by the sect. Presumably it was a once-for-all baptism which was continued, and probably as time went on, the idea of baptism as the token of initiation into a sect would become more prominent, while the idea of baptism as a preparation for the imminent judgement would fade a little, due to the obvious delay in the arrival of the last day.

d) The priestly character of the Lucan infancy narrative has been noted,² and although this feature does not appear in any of the other sources, it may well have been typical of the continuing baptist sect. The priesthood was certainly important in other sects of the baptist movement. The Essenes had a priesthood³, and the Dead Sea Scrolls show us just what an exalted position the priests had in the Qumran sect; the lay members are assigned certain functions, but no meeting can be held without a priest, and, as Burrows says, "the ultimate power, both legislative and judicial, seems to have been

1. See above, p 303, and Part V, p 194.

2. Part III, pp 91, 92.

3. Josephus, "Antiquities", XVIII, 1, 5, "Jewish War", II, 8, 5.

reserved to the priests."¹ Since John himself was of priestly descent, we can well imagine that priests were specially honoured by his disciples.

Although the sects of the baptist movement held the priesthood in such high regard, they appear to have held themselves aloof from the worship of the Temple, and almost certainly their own priests were looked upon as being the true priesthood, in contrast to the corrupted priests, who ministered in Jerusalem.² It is therefore puzzling to find an acceptance of the Temple worship in Luke 1, where John's father performs his duty by burning incense in the Temple (Lk 1:9). During John's ministry, on the other hand, there is no indication whatsoever of an acceptance of the Temple. John lives in the wilderness, cutting himself off from the Jerusalem cult, and the Jerusalem priests appear only in the role of hostile investigators of his authority (John 1:19f). We know from Mark 11:27 f. (and parallels) that the chief priests were antagonistic to John, and did not accept his message. These pieces of information can be reconciled only by supposing that John broke with the Temple priesthood when he went into the wilderness, exactly as the Qumran sect must have done. We have already noted that there is evidence of a cleavage between the type of rural priest, represented by Zechariah, and the more aristocratic and worldly Jerusalem priesthood.³ Zechariah continued to carry out his duties, but John made this cleavage into a clean break.

The infancy narrative suggests that the continuing sect

1. "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls", p 358.

2. See Part V, p 186.

3. Part III, p 96.

still cherished priestly ideals; they looked back to a time when the Temple worship was something to be honoured, and they may well, like the Qumran sect, have looked forward to a time when the true priesthood would be restored.

Apart from these special features, the life and doctrine of the sect must have been essentially Jewish. If any other features were introduced, e.g. of a Gnostic character, they did not come from John. B.W. Bacon seems to think that various sects, such as the Dositheans, the followers of Simon Magus, the Mazbotheans, Sabseans, and Hemerobaptists can all be traced back to John the Baptist via Simon and Dositheus.¹ Apart, however, from the doubtful references in the Clementines², the only evidence he can find to support his contention is that such sects continued the rite of John's baptism. John may have been part of the baptist movement, but it is quite wrong to make him its originator; baptist sects existed prior to him and independently of him.³ It is equally wrong to accept uncritically the assertions that Simon Magus and Dositheus were disciples of John, and that they were the originators of all Gnostic heresy. The continuing sect of John's disciples may have been drawn into the syncretistic process, but there is no definite evidence of this. Even if it is true, no Gnostic elements can be traced back to John himself.

We have now completed our survey of the evidence for the existence of the sect, and of the nature of the sect in so far as it is revealed in our sources. Finally we must consider

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1. "New and Old in Jesus' Relation to John", JBL, XLVIII,
 2. Above, p 302.
 3. Cf. Part II.

the origin of the sect. There is no direct evidence concerning this, and we must therefore infer what happened from what we know of the disciples of John during John's lifetime, and from what we know of the later development of the sect.

Even before John's death, several of his disciples had transferred their allegiance to Jesus, and after his death more would probably be drawn into the Christian Church. To those who did not become Christians, but continued a separate existence the first and greatest problem must have been posed by the death of John itself. Did this not invalidate his message? The first Christians faced a problem which was superficially similar, but which was in fact made radically different by the resurrection appearances of Christ. John did not rise from the dead, and his followers had to seek a different type of explanation.

When we remember that John was thought of, and also thought of himself as the eschatological prophet,¹ the probability is that his disciples would think in terms of a martyr prophet. The older idea, found in the Old Testament, that long life and worldly prosperity are the reward of the righteous no doubt died hard. Yet, also in the Old Testament, and especially from Maccabean times onwards, the idea of the suffering of the righteous became firmly established and a theology of martyrdom took shape.²

In the Old Testament the prophets constantly faced opposition, persecution and even death. One text may be taken as a summing up of much of the Old Testament history -

1. See Part VI, pp 209-216.

2. On this subject see especially the many interesting references collected by E. Stauffer in "New Testament Theology", pp 331 - 334, Appendix 1, "The Principal Elements of the Old Biblical Theology of Martyrdom"; see also Chapter 21, "The Passion of Christ's Forerunners", pp 98-100.

"The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them (the people of Israel) by His messengers, because he had compasseion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words and scoffing at His prophets....." (II Chron 36:15,16).

In the inter-testamental literature, the idea of martyrdom becomes especially prominent, and the Maccabean martyrs were greatly revered. See, for example, the gory account in II Macc 7 of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons, one of whom addresses Antiochus as follows -

"You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for His laws" (II Macc 7:9).

Lists of martyrs were kept. (Cf. IV Macc 16:20-22, 18:11f) Jesus quotes from a lost wisdom martyrology in Lk 11:49:-

"Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.

There is evidence that there existed in New Testament times a cult of the martyred prophets. Jesus refers to those who "build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous." (Mt 23:29, Lk 11:47).

Thus, even allowing for their belief that John was the prophet, the last and greatest of the prophets, John's disciples could nevertheless have seen that he stood in a noble succession and that by his death he merely suffered the traditional fate of the prophet. Undoubtedly God would speedily act and avenge his death.

Mk 9:13 is of special importance here. In an obvious

reference to John, Jesus says - "But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him." This last phrase, "as it is written of him", can only be interpreted as meaning that some writing foretold a martyr's fate for the returning Elijah. Presumably this was an uncanonical book, part of an Elijah literature, traces of which are known to us.¹ If this be the case, such a book would be of cardinal importance to the disciples of John and would assure them that John's death did not invalidate his claim to be the eschatological prophet, but rather supported it.

Of special interest here is the early Christian "Ascension of Isaiah" which incorporates a non-Christian, Jewish "Martyrdom of Isaiah", the original of which must have been written in Hebrew.² This Jewish Martyrdom pictures the apostasy of Israel under Manasseh; this results in a withdrawal to the wilderness by Isaiah and many of the faithful prophets, where they live an ascetic life clothed in garments of hair. Isaiah, however, is accused by the false prophet Belchira, is seized and then martyred by being sawn asunder. This "Martyrdom" was known by Justin Martyr, and almost certainly also by the author of Hebrews (11:37); and most probably dates from the first half of the first century A.D. It is therefore an important witness to the concept of the martyr prophet. It may even be more than this. With what group did such a work originate? One possible answer is the Qumran community to whom the pattern of apostasy - withdrawal to the wilderness - martyrdom of prophetic leader would be familiar. On the other hand,

1. See Stauffer, "New Testament Theology", p 98, and Note 267. Some commentators hold that Jesus is here referring to an Old Testament text; but no text fits this reference. Another way out of the difficulty is to rearrange the text of Mark 9:11-13. Cf. Blunt, "Saint Mark", Clarendon Bible, p 208; Rawlinson, "St. Mark", Westminster Commentary, p 121.
2. See R.H. Charles, "The Ascension of Isaiah", London, 1900; R.H. Charles, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament", II, pp 155-162; J. Armitage Robinson, article, "Ascension of Isaiah", HDB, II, pp 499-501.

it might even be that the Martyrdom of Isaiah originated with the continuing sect of John's followers themselves, to whom Isaiah, sawn asunder by the wicked king, would be the prototype of John, beheaded by Herod. In the "Martyrdom", Isaiah preaches against Judah and Jerusalem, calling them Sodom and Gomorrah, and this would be very much in keeping with the fiery preacher of repentance who prepared the way in the wilderness. If the baptist sect did produce this work, it could easily have passed into the Christian Church where it would receive the later Christian additions. This must remain an interesting hypothesis, incapable of proof, but at any rate the work does help us to see how a martyred prophet could be held in great honour.

It is along these lines, we must assume, that John's disciples would seek to explain their master's death. Whether they expected him to return from the dead we cannot say, but certainly they would look for a speedy end of the present situation with the coming of the judgement.

The next stage or stages in the development of the sect would see an ever-increasing regard for their martyred founder. The Lucan infancy narrative would seem to represent an intermediate stage; John is not yet regarded as the Messiah, but he is well on the way to it.¹ John's disciples were coming to see in him the chief, indeed the only eschatological figure, for John was the one who had gone before the Lord, i.e. God, thus leaving no place for a Messiah. The particular group of disciples who produced the infancy narrative was located in all probability in Judaea. Though it must have been small, yet

1. Above, p 307 .

their thoughts and beliefs as reflected in the narrative give us glimpses of a sincere, pious and vital group with their own strongly-marked characteristics. MacNeill suggests that the narrative was the work of a group rather than of an individual; he calls it "the precipitate of the life and feeling of a probably rather isolated religious community."¹

When we recall the part played in John's ministry by his sojourn in Samaria², we can perhaps detect one influence which would hasten the acknowledgement of John as the Messiah. We saw that Samaritan eschatology knew only one "Messianic" figure, the Moses-like prophet. While John was preaching to, and baptizing Jews his prophetic ministry would undoubtedly be interpreted in terms of the forerunner of the Coming One. When he moved to Samaria he would doubtless stress the subordinate status which he believed himself to hold. But after his death, possibilities of misunderstanding would arise, especially among Samaritans. John had been a prophet; was he not therefore the Taneb of Samaritan expectation?³ To the Samaritans, the Taneb was no forerunner of another figure, he was the eschatological figure. It is easy to see how, in this situation, John came to be elevated into the position of a Messiah.

Whatever the exact reasons, this is undoubtedly what happened; John came to be regarded as the Messiah. This is the belief to which the Clementines bear witness. That this position was only attained gradually can be seen by the fact that to begin with, the baptist sect seems to have maintained reasonably friendly relations with the early Christian movement;

1. H.L. MacNeill, "The Sitz in Leben of Luke 1:5 - 2:20", JBL, Vol LXV, 1946, p 126.

2. See Part IX.

3. Part IX, p 266 .

it was only at a later stage that real opposition developed.

We have already seen that the separation of John and Jesus, during the period of their overlapping ministries was a friendly one.¹ When John was put to death, his disciples went and told Jesus (Matt 14:12). John was held in high regard by Jesus, and by the first Christians. The Q source reflects this early period of friendship, devoting much space to John, and portraying him in a favourable light.² The combining of the infancy narratives of John and Jesus, however, exactly this took place, also presupposes some kind of friendly contact between the two groups, in spite of the differences that were developing. This phase probably lasted until about 50-60 A.D. (taking this as a likely date for the compilation of Q), but it can hardly have lasted much longer.³ The differences would become too marked, and both groups would diverge from each other, each making stronger and more exclusive claims for John and Jesus respectively.

In the Synoptics, the portrait of John is not quite so favourable as that of Q; by the time we come to the Fourth Gospel there is clearly a background of enmity with the baptist sect and a need to combat the claims it made for John.

As far as geographical extent is concerned, the sect of John's followers was not confined to Judaea. Acts and the Fourth Gospel show how it had spread to Asia Minor and was active in Ephesus, while the Clementines attest its presence in Syria.

1. Part VIII, p 253 .

2. Part I, pp 18, 19 .

3. Cf. MacNeill, JBL, LXV, pp 123, 130, who thinks that the narratives represent "the earliest, very primitive and very imperfect, linking or blending of what later were again regarded as two quite distinct and separate movements"; they were "the product of a community somewhere in Judaea, outside Jerusalem, in the period between 50 and 60 A.D., probably not long before 60 A.D."

As regards time, the New Testament testifies to the existence of the sect in the 1st. Cent. A.D. ; the Clementines to its existence in the 2nd. and probably also the 3rd. Cent. A.D.

It is evident, however, that the disciples of John were at their strongest in the mid-1st. Cent. A.D. but thereafter declined rapidly. It is sometimes asked why, if there was a continuing sect, it is not mentioned by more early Christian writers. The answer may be partly that it does not appear in the lists of Christian heresies, because it was not considered Christian at all.¹ But basically the answer is that by the 2nd. Cent. it was too small and unimportant to deserve attention. The Clementines do not come from the mainstream of Christian tradition, and probably by the 2nd. Cent. the disciples of John were to be found only in some Syrian backwater.

It has been held by some scholars that the disciples of John did not fade out altogether, but have in fact survived to the present day in the shape of the Mandaeans. We have, however, already examined the evidence² and concluded that this is not the case. The Mandaean literature contains no reliable early traditions concerning the life or teaching of John, and cannot be regarded as having originated in the continuing sect of John's disciples.

1. See Thomas, "Le Mouvement Baptiste", p 137.

2. Part I, pp 37-52.

PART XII - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

We stated at the outset that the picture we gain of John the Baptist depends entirely on our sources of information (p 4). Stauffer comments that "the portrait of John the Baptist has undergone a good deal of change in the course of time. Of our oldest sources, the Gospels paint an apocalyptic figure, the Greek Josephus a moralist, the Slavonic Josephus a political, Byzantine art an ascetic, and Mandaeen speculation a mythological figure." ¹

Our study of the available source material revealed the fact that it varied greatly in reliability. The Mandaeen literature is to be rejected entirely as a possible source for the life and teaching of John, the references to John being based on Syrian Christian, apocryphal or Gnostic traditions introduced into the literature at a late stage in its compilation (pp 37-52). The Slavonic Josephus is likewise of no historical value, being a translation of a work, based on the Greek version of Josephus, and compiled in the Byzantine period. The writer knew the New Testament accounts of John and Jesus, and drew upon various early Christian and apocryphal sources (pp 23-33). Early Christian writers outside of the New Testament, do not mention John very frequently, and they clearly do not draw upon any independent historical sources.

This leaves us with the evidence of the Greek Josephus, which amounts to one paragraph in the "Antiquities", and with the evidence of the New Testament, which is fairly extensive and therefore our chief source of information. Neither of these sources, however, are first hand accounts;

1. "New Testament Theology", p 21.

they were committed to writing some time after the events occurred; and they reveal the interests and the prejudices of their authors (pp13f,33f).

The larger part of the reliable source material consists of sayings of John and we are also given a few essential details of his life. The narratives of his birth and infancy are legendary to a great extent and cannot be relied upon in detail. The genuine source material for the study of John is thus very limited and very sketchy. We could wish for far greater detail, and this has doubtless been the motive for the compilation of the various apocryphal accounts which at various dates have sought to expand and supplement the New Testament record.

By reason of the meagreness of our sources, it is very difficult for us to approach John closely and to seek to understand the inner workings of his mind and heart. If we accept the whole New Testament record as being literally true, there would be some basis for such an investigation, but the unreliability of much of the material, especially the infancy narratives, compels us to draw back from such a task.

The attempt has been made in one book, "John the Baptist: A Modern Interpretation",¹ to "interpret John's character from the point of view of twentieth-century psychology, and to understand him as a struggling human being". The author, true to her self-imposed task, first analyses John's parents and finds them to have been "repressed puritans"; "there was no laughter in their home, and neither of them was gifted with a sense of humour." Because of their childlessness, they "were never free from a feeling of guilt". The experience of Zachariah in the

1. By Margaret Goldsmith, London, 1935; the quotations in the next two paragraphs are taken from this book.

Temple lends itself well to a psychological analysis; he goes to fulfill his duties "in a state of abnormal excitement", and the appearance of the angel is a hallucination which lays bare his subconscious mind. His temporary dumbness is proof that his hallucination was a severe nervous shock. Returning home, Zachariah^{is} now vigorous and full of purpose, for "his renewed psychological assurance had given him a fresh vitality." His new mood is communicated to Elizabeth, and when the fear of barrenness thus leaves her, she conceives.

Because of the strange events at the time of his birth, John was from the start "set apart from his contemporaries", and pointed out as someone special. He was not allowed by his parents to play with other children, or to go to school, since his life was to be wholly dedicated to God. Taking literally the whole of the infancy narrative, Goldsmith believes that Zechariah brought up John with the idea that "he was to help carry out the ultimate salvation of his people". The result was that "his childhood was repressed and unnatural". So the various aspects of John's personality and of his message are given a psychological explanation. His parents were "obsessed by their faith and by the oppression of their people. They knew a great deal about blind obedience and about retribution, but tolerance and human kindness had little place in their harsh religion." Because of this, John's conception of God was one of a stern and unmerciful tyrant. Similarly, John's parents imposed on him the Nazirite vow, forbidding him ever to cut his hair, or to drink wine; and John grew up in terror of breaking the rules which governed his life and of offending God. His parents, having died when he was in his teens, John withdrew into the wilderness. Desperately afraid of the temptation to sexual sin, John

drove himself to a fanatical asceticism.

Goldsmith's analysis is much more extensive, but enough has been said to indicate the main lines of her thought. The book is open to various objections such as a rather uncritical use of apocryphal sources, and an overdrawn contrast between a stern Jewish Jehovah and a Christian God of love, but the principal criticism is that the author accepts every detail of the New Testament record, building especially on the details of the infancy narrative. Unfortunately, a psychologist requires a considerable amount of data to attempt a convincing analysis, and in the case of John we just do not possess reliable details of his upbringing and of his personal life which make this possible. Except in a very general way, no psychological reconstruction can be made, certainly not on the scale attempted by Goldsmith, interesting though her analysis may be.

We can be certain only of a rather sketchy outline of the life of John. He was born, of priestly descent, his parents being Zechariah and Elizabeth, in a town of the Judean hill country, some time before the birth of Jesus. He appeared as an ascetic and a preacher, in the wilderness of Judaea, attracting large crowds of hearers, many of whom submitted to baptism. Among these was Jesus, who at first allied himself to John, but who then embarked on an independent ministry. During this period of overlap, John went North into Samaria, and there preached to and baptized Samaritans. When Jesus left Judaea, John returned South and entered Peraea where he was shortly afterwards arrested by Herod Antipas. After a period of imprisonment at Machaerus, John was put to death. The New Testament suggests that the public ministry of John was an extremely brief one, beginning

shortly before the time of Jesus' baptism (cf. Lk 3:1,2,21) But it is possible that the New Testament is not accurate here and that John's ministry actually began sooner than the early Christian writers suggest.

While our direct source material is thus limited, our understanding of John can be broadened by setting what information we have against the background in which John lived and worked. Our knowledge of that background is fairly extensive, and has been further enlarged within recent years.

The geographical background of John's ministry was, for the most part, the wilderness of Judaea and the area around the fords of Jordan (p67f). Here, a knowledge of the historical and of the eschatological associations of the area can add greatly to our appreciation of John's work.

Noting how John cannot be classified along with either Sadducees, Pharisees or Zealots; we have suggested that John's true background was "the baptist movement", consisting of the various non-conformist, sectarian groups which appeared on the fringe of Judaism, concentrated especially in the Jordan valley, from before the 1st. Century B.C. and continuing into the first centuries of our era. In so far as John can be classified in terms of first century Judaism, and in so far as he was the product of the background from which he emerged, that background, we suggested, was this baptist, sectarian movement.

Our survey of John's message and ministry have tended to confirm this tentative conclusion. He links the sectarian and the Christian usages of the term, "The Way" (p76). The closest parallel to his prophecy of punishment by a river of fire, is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (p117); and the Scrolls also provide a close analogy to

the concept of the future outpouring of God's spirit thought of metaphorically in terms of a rite of baptism.

With regard to John's baptism itself, we have seen how the common view that it was derived from proselyte baptism rests on very unstable foundations, and how a much closer and more helpful analogy is to be found in the Qumran baptism of initiation (pp 167-176). Repentance, such a keynote of John's thought, was a condition of forgiveness in the Qumran conception of baptism.

John, we have suggested, thought of himself as "the prophet". The expectation of the prophet is witnessed to in the Scrolls; the only pre-New Testament evidence at present available concerning the expectation of the Moses-like prophet comes from the Qumran finds (p 204). In his asceticism, John put himself out of line with orthodox Judaism, and into line with the sectarian movement. His priestly descent would also put him in line with the Qumran sect, but, as we have seen, there is no direct evidence of any part being played by the priesthood, in John's teaching (p 133).

It has frequently been suggested in the past that John was an Essene, but the arguments for this have not been very convincing.¹ The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has however, considerably altered the picture, and has provided several important parallels to the thought of John.

In addition to these close analogies and similarities to the baptist movement, we have also, however, frequently pointed to the fact that John was an original and independent figure.

His differences from the sectarian movement are obvious. As we meet him in the New Testament, he is clearly not a

1. Coguel, for example, dismisses the theory on the grounds that John's baptism was not repeated as was that of the Essenes; nothing is said of the cult of angels in connection with John; John's dress is quite unlike that

member of the Qumran, or of any other group. He did not retire into a monastery, and live the sheltered life of a pious, religious community. He was an individual figure, subject to no man. And if he attracted a group of disciples, there is no evidence that he imposed any kind of monastic discipline on them (p 193).

His rejection of monasticism appears to have been due to a desire to make contact with the people. While he did not withdraw from the wilderness, nevertheless he positioned himself near the fords of Jordan where the presence of a main travel route to Jerusalem would ensure him many hearers.

If we accept the term "Essene" as a general one describing all, or at least a large part of the baptist movement (cf. p 61), then John may be regarded as an Essene. But he was an evangelistic Essene, though such a phrase may have been for many in John's day a contradiction in terms.

It seems certain that John must have known and have been influenced by one or more of the sects of the Baptist movement. But a person such as G.L. Harding goes much too far when he says that "John the Baptist was almost certainly an Essene, and must have studied and worked in this building (the Qumran monastery): he undoubtedly derived the idea of ritual immersion, or baptism, from them." ² There is no evidence that John was a member of the Qumran sect. If he was so as a man, then he must have broken away from them. Steinmann suggests that John may have been "a postulant or novice who left the Community before taking the final oath of the Covenant." ³

1. (Contd.) of the white robes of the Essenes; John's ideas of the imminent approach of the Messiah have no parallels in Essene thought. See "Jean-Baptiste" p 285.
2. "London Illustrated News", 3rd. Sept. 1955.
3. "Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition", p 60.

The hypothesis of adoption as a boy (pp100f) is a more attractive one, though it too is incapable of proof.

But we must remember that the Qumran sect was not necessarily the only one of its type; it was merely part of the larger baptist movement. It is the only sect of which we have detailed, inside knowledge, since the others are known to us only from descriptions from outside sources. The Qumran literature should therefore be regarded as a representative of a type of thought within Judaism. It is with this type of thought that John has the closest connections; it is from this type of background that John broke away to exercise an independent ministry.

We may now note several original and outstanding features of John's ministry, in which his differences from the rest of the sectarian movement are further ^Parent.

1. The most fitting way to describe John's ministry is to say that it was prophetic. His proclamation of imminent judgement, including his metaphors of the tree being cut down, and of winnowing, are grounded in the preaching of the prophets (pp104f), as is the idea of the future outpouring of the spirit (pp120f). His demand for repentance in the face of the coming judgement, the keynote of his preaching, is likewise a rediscovery of the heart of the prophetic message, and, as in the case of the prophets, John demanded that repentance be expressed in terms of righteous living and social justice. Likewise, in his conception of baptism, John must have owed much to those passages in the prophets which interpret cleansing in a moral and spiritual sense (p192).

The category of "prophet" is the one ascribed to him by Jesus and by the early Church, and it is the one, so we have contended, which John chose for himself (p216).

This feature of his ministry distinguishes John from all his contemporaries; for many long years prophecy had

been considered dead, a thing of the past. In orthodox Judaism especially, the red-hot molten metal of prophecy had long since hardened into Pharisaic legalism. Even in the sectarian movement, while the prophetic books were highly valued and intensively studied, the true spirit of prophecy was lacking, especially where, as in the case of Qumran, the community had become a rigidly organized and strictly governed sect. In John, however, the flame of true prophecy was rekindled.

2. It follows from this that his ministry was essentially a preaching one. He was a man with a message, and he conceived it as his urgent duty to put that message across to all who would listen. His nickname "the Baptist" suggests that his rite of baptism was the most important feature of his ministry, but that was hardly the case, for it was subordinate to his preaching. It was essentially a piece of prophetic symbolism, an acting out of his demand for repentance in face of the coming judgement. Israel needed to be cleansed from sin, and this need was dramatized by those who submitted to John's baptism. Hence we have the curious phrase, "John came --- preaching a baptism ---" (see p 191). Similarly, John's asceticism, which has been the source of so much speculation and dispute is best regarded as being principally a symbol of humiliation before God and of repentance for sin (p 230). Neither John's rite of baptism, nor his practice of asceticism could be properly understood of themselves; they only made sense when they were related to his message.

Here again, John stands out in contrast not only with the sectarian movement, but with almost all branches of contemporary Judaism. Pharisees and Essenes for example, were both concerned, in their own way, with the study and correct observance of the Torah; their leaders were thus

teachers, not preachers. The primacy of preaching, however, was one of the most marked features of John's ministry.

3. Another feature of John's ministry which our study has made very apparent is the simplicity of his message. His metaphors were bold and easily understood. For John, there were but two classes of men, the righteous and the wicked. On the righteous would be poured out the blessing of God's spirit; but the wicked would perish in the river of fire. John might have been accused of over-simplification, but not of any lack of clarity in his thought. His appeal for repentance and righteousness would be readily understood, and if Luke 3:10-14 is authentic, he was clearly able to expound a practical, down-to-earth, ethical application of his message.

This concentration on essentials is matched by an apparent refusal to go into details, a refusal which marks John off from a considerable part of Jewish apocalyptic expectation. His view of the reward of the righteous, and of the coming Kingdom, is barely hinted at. We know only that he spoke of an outpouring of God's spirit, but we cannot even be sure that he used the term "Kingdom" (p 108). Similarly, in his view of the coming Messiah, John, we have suggested, appears to have been deliberately vague. He did not commit himself to any particular branch of expectation, but used only the most general title available, "The Coming One" (p 137). In casting himself in the role of the eschatological prophet, he does not appear to have claimed to be either Moses or Elijah come again, but to have contented himself with claiming to be "the prophet" (pp 199, 215).

This simplicity provides a very strong contrast to the background from which John emerged. Not for him, we have

already commented (p 127), the apocalyptic arithmetic of Daniel, or the conducted tours of Enoch, or the military strategy for the war against Gog and Magog, or against the Sons of Darkness. John's was essentially a simple message, and in its simplicity lay its strength.

John's ministry was thus prophetic to the core; it was essentially a ministry of preaching, marked by great simplicity. These factors would all aid greatly John's determination to take his message to the people.

John's originality and independence presuppose some sort of call to the prophetic office. Apart from Luke's use of the conventional phrase, "the word of God came to John" (Lk 3:2), we have no information concerning the experience which led John to appear preaching his baptism of repentance. It may well be that he was partly influenced by a strict upbringing (cf. above, pp 320f), and we have also suggested the influences the wilderness may have had on his thought (p 77). But where our sources are so reticent, it would be unwise to speculate further.

It has not been the purpose of this study to attempt an assessment of John's influence on Jesus, but only to see John as he was in himself. Nevertheless, the results of our survey have obviously an important bearing on the origins of the Christian faith. Jesus was an adherent of John, before breaking away to form his own movement. Some of John's disciples went over to Jesus, and on John's death many more may well have followed suit. Inevitably they must have brought into the early Church many features of the baptist movement. Most notably, the rite of baptism itself must have entered the early Church in this way. This thesis is not concerned with the study of the early Church, but clearly it suggests that any investigation into the origin and meaning of Christian baptism should begin not with the proselyte baptism of orthodox Judaism, but

with the sectarian baptism of initiation into the eschatological community of the new covenant.

In attempting a final assessment of John as a religious figure, we find it difficult to achieve a balanced judgement. For the greater part of our material we are dependent on Christian sources, and for an independent assessment we have to try and discount the particular prejudices and biasses, not only of the New Testament, but also of centuries of Christian tradition. In attempting such an assessment, we have to reckon with two contradictory trends.

The first is the tendency in Christian tradition to belittle John. Almost from the start, Christians were very concerned to emphasize the subordinate and inferior status of John, and to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus. We saw how this tendency is clearly to be traced in the New Testament, especially in the Fourth Gospel (pp298f). To begin with, this tendency would be aggravated by the existence of the continuing baptist sect. But all down the centuries, John has been pictured as taking very much a second place to Christ; he was in the phrase of Augustine, "lucerna non lux," (Cf. Jn 5:35, and see p257). He appeared for the sole purpose of preparing the way for, and witnessing to Christ; with the baptism of Jesus, his work was done, and God's spirit was even thought to have been withdrawn from him.¹

As a result of this, we tend to compensate for the bias of Christian tradition, and affirm that John was a much more important figure than is usually supposed.

But against this tendency to belittle John in Christian tradition, there has also been an opposite tendency at work. The name and fame of John have been preserved and spread

1. See the note on the evidence of Tertullian, Part I, p35 .

abroad throughout the whole earth, in a way which would never have happened were it not for John's connection with Christianity. The continuing baptist sect was never a strong movement, and lacked the power to survive. It may therefore be truly said that his place in the Christian tradition has also tended to give John a greater status than he would otherwise have deserved.

As a religious leader of one of the several baptist groups operative in the Jordan valley during the first century, John certainly made quite an impression on his contemporaries, but hardly did anything to warrant our classing him on the same plane as such great figures in the history of the faith of Israel as Moses or Samuel or Elijah or Jeremiah.

He did show originality and imagination and courage, yet it remains true that the greatness he achieved was largely due to the circumstances and situation in which he was placed. He was not born great - his parents were of humble priestly stock; he did not achieve greatness - for his own efforts do not merit such a word; but he did have greatness thrust upon him. Because of his revival of the true spirit of prophecy, because of the simplicity and the urgency of his appeal for repentance and cleansing, John's movement provided the starting point for the mission and message of Jesus. Jesus had to start somewhere, to use existing ideas and then go on to show how he differed from them.

John's greatness is thus due primarily to his position in the history of religion. He is the bridge between the Old Covenant and the New; he is "the clasp of the two Testaments".¹

1. Reynolds, "John the Baptist", p 12.

He is in a sense, a bridge between Judaism and Christianity. Dissatisfied with the orthodox religion of his day, whether of the Pharisees or the Sadducees, rejecting any idea of political or military action, he put all his faith in a dramatic intervention into human history with the advent of the Coming One. He reached forward for something that would shatter the present order of things and introduce a completely new order. His mission was to prepare the people so that they might be fit to take their part in that new order.

Up to a point, of course, John was wrong. There was no dramatic intervention into human history, no dramatic separation of the wicked and the righteous. How John died we do not know, whether crushed with disappointment, or ablaze with hope, (p 293). But for the Christian, John's dreams and hopes were fulfilled, though in a way which far transcended his limited conception of God and of His workings.

All this does not detract from John's record. He was used by God in a way which went beyond his understanding, yet he was true to the light he saw. Mistaken though he was in thinking that man can ever satisfy God through his own efforts, whether by observance of the Law, or by baptism, or by prayer or fasting, he is nevertheless to be highly commended for his zeal in conducting his ministry, and for his courage in the face of danger.

His message was a stern one, and we have found no evidence to support the view that he and his disciples thought of themselves as making atonement for the land, or that he expected a Messiah who would make atonement for sin. His message was one of hope for those who lived in humble and pious expectation of the end of days; but for few could his preaching have been called "gospel", "good news",

and for many, his preaching must have been a source of terror and dismay. John's faith was strong, faith in the God whom he served; his hope was strong, hope of a swift righting of the wrongs of this puzzling life. But to faith and hope must be added the greatest of the trinity of the virtues, love. It was this quality which was lacking in John's message; and it was this very quality which became incarnate in Jesus Christ.

By and large, therefore, John has not been unjustly treated over the centuries. Modern research uncovers a picture of him which differs in details from that found either in Josephus or in the New Testament. In some respects he was a more original and more independent figure than our sources allow; but at the same time, on his own merits, he hardly deserved the fame that has been his lot because of the part he played in the purposes of God.

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This is the English version of -

"ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ

Die messianische Unabhängigkeitsbewegungen vom Auftreten Johannes des Täuflers bis zum Untergang Jakob des Gerechten, nach der neuerschlossenen Eroberung von Jerusalem des Flavius Josephus und den Christlichen Quellen". 2 Volumes. Heidelberg 1929-30.

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