

# ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis "JOHN THE BAPTIST IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS  
MOVEMENTS WITHIN JUDAISM"

## PURPOSE

This thesis endeavors to study the figure of John the Baptist in the context of contemporary religious movements within Judaism. The justification for the thesis lies in two specific areas: firstly, the growing reappraisal of the Gospel of John in the light of the Qumran discoveries and of its value as a source of information for Christian beginnings; and, secondly, the recognition that several leading studies on John the Baptist fail to allow for sufficient variety and vitality within Judaism to provide the proper and sufficient background for understanding John the Baptist.

## METHOD

The writer examined the accounts of the life and message of John the Baptist in the New Testament and the writings of Flavius Josephus in order to discover a consistent portrait of John which would accurately reflect the data available. Particular attention was given to the question of the reliability of the Fourth Gospel as a source of information and the accuracy of the picture of John the Baptist found therein. The emphasis in contemporary Judaism on such points as repentance, judgment, and messianic expectations was studied and compared with that of John the Baptist. Possible sources of the origin of the rite of baptism were studied with particular emphasis on Essene lustrations and proselyte baptism. Finally the question of the possible continuation of John's movement was examined along with the account of John's death and its significance.

## CONCLUSIONS

John the Baptist stands solidly in the context of contemporary Judaism, but a Judaism which is vital and changing and in which a rigid and fixed structure of Hebrew thought was not to be found. His whole life, his message, and his rite of baptism were seen to have been centered around the reconstituting of the people of God and the anticipation of the coming Mightier One. The consistent thread which bound together the various accounts of John's life was the preparation for a new beginning of the Hebrew nation which by its sinfulness had become apostate. John's birth narrative reflected the heroic figures of early Hebrew history. His desert experience clearly was to be associated with the Exodus tradition and the entering into the Promised Land. The Fourth Gospel proved to be a trustworthy source concerning John the Baptist and provided both additional information and necessary correction to the Synoptic account. From the Fourth Gospel it becomes evident that Jesus had been associated with John the Baptist and had gradually withdrawn from that movement as a result of Jesus' inability to reform the old way. The rite of baptism having its roots in proselyte baptism was related to the remission of past sin, but also anticipated the new age of the Mightier One who was a national Messiah. In his relationship with Jesus John saw in him the national figure, but one who was not fulfilling this in the way John expected. With his death John the Baptist's movement dwindled and some of his followers were assimilated into the Christian movement as a natural outcome of their leader's message and mission. Though some of John's followers may have continued in an independent group no evidence was found which indicated that such a group posed a threat to the Christian movement or created a literature of its own in honor of its martyred leader.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH THESIS

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~~The features~~  
Judaism were seen to have been held by the author. *All persons*  
concluded that no single movement within Judaism could be designated as the  
background and source of John the Baptist. Rather John was closely related to  
the major religious movements wherever these movements were truly a part of  
the Heilsgeschichte of Judaism.

JOHN THE BAPTIST IN THE CONTEXT  
OF CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS  
MOVEMENTS WITHIN JUDAISM

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of New College  
University of Edinburgh

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Joseph Ralph Hookey

March 1963



## PREFACE

Dorothy L. Sayers in her book The Man Born to be King describes John the Baptist in the following manner:

"His voice is harsh and strong.....his preaching rapid, rough, emphatic; his manner abrupt and authoritative. In his moments of ecstasy he is like an eagle; in his moments of awed humility he is a tamed eagle--but always an eagle, and when his voice is subdued, it turns to hoarseness, not to sweetness. He has no humor, no patience, and a one-track mind."<sup>1</sup>

It is this same John the Baptist who was designated by T. W. Manson as "magnificent in his failure."<sup>2</sup> Miss Sayers' picture of John is that of the imaginative playwright while that of T. W. Manson is the picture of the biblical scholar. Both emphases are correct and both are necessary, if John the Baptist is to be fully understood. In this study the writer has endeavored to follow the way of the critical scholar and at the same time to see John the Baptist as a dynamic figure who will not be cast in a preconceived role. The ambivalent character of the Gospel accounts reflects the individuality of John the Baptist and at the same time his integral relationship with his heritage.

For assistance in the preparation of this thesis the writer is greatly indebted to his advisor, the Reverend Professor James Barr, B. D., whose scholarship and enthusiasm combined with

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<sup>1</sup>D. L. Sayers, The Man Born to be King (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943) p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>T. W. Manson, The Servant-Messiah (Cambridge: University Press, 1953) p. 49.

his fresh and challenging approach to the Bible enabled this writer to pursue this study with some of that same spirit. Association with Professor Barr was both stimulating and rewarding.

The Reverend Professor James Stewart's encouragement, stimulation, and advice have aided the writer significantly. The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness also to the late Reverend Professor William Manson, D. D., whose many suggestions and helpful counsel were of immeasurable assistance. Professor Manson in his reverent yet scholarly approach to the New Testament was a constant source of encouragement and inspiration.

To the Faculty of New College the writer is indebted for warm friendship, intellectual stimulation, and genuine hospitality.

Finally, but not least, the writer acknowledges his great debt to his wife, Lois, whose constant help has made the completion of this study possible.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Antiq. - Josephus, Jewish Antiquities
- B. J. - " War of the Jews
- lQS - Manual of Discipline
- lQpHab - Commentary on Habakkuk
- CD - The Cairo Damascus Document  
The Zadokite Fragments
- lQM - War of the Children of Light  
Against the Children of Darkness
- lQH - Thanksgiving Hymns
- TWNT - Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament  
ed. G. Kittel
- Strack & Billerbeck - Kommentar zum Neuen Testament auf Talmud und  
Midrasch
- ZNW - Zeitschrift für die neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft
- ZTK - Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

## INTRODUCTION

### I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this dissertation is to study John the Baptist in the context of contemporary religious movements within Judaism. The writer will be concerned to answer the following questions: (a) Does contemporary Judaism provide adequate and sufficient background for a proper interpretation of John the Baptist or must one look beyond Judaism to explain John's mission, his message, and his baptism? (b) What is the significance of John the Baptist in the light of a study of the contemporary religious movements within Judaism? (c) Is the Gospel according to St. John in the light of these considerations trustworthy as a source for the interpretation of John the Baptist?

### II. STATING THE PROBLEM

In beginning this study on John the Baptist the writer approached the task believing that in a study of Hebrew thought one could find the key to the understanding of John the Baptist and also the appropriate background for interpreting the Fourth Gospel. The deeper I probed into the subject the more I became aware of the emergence of an unexpected and disturbing problem. It became evident to the writer that the Hebrew thought against which, or in the light of which, I had desired to understand John the Baptist was not as fixed and as rigid as I had imagined. Indeed the perplexing

question became - - what was the nature of Hebrew thought? No clear and unambiguous meaning could be seen with reference to what I had assumed was a consistent Hebrew background. Of course, one could have dismissed the matter by simply accepting the conclusion that John the Baptist fitted into a collection of ideas commonly held by a number of his contemporary Jews, but this would have avoided the question and such an approach would have merely allowed a temporary covering over of the problem which would have reappeared at disturbing intervals.

The lack of rigidity of Hebrew thought may be noted most readily in the marked difference of thought between the Old Testament and the period contemporary with John the Baptist reflected in the literature and the teachings of the Pharisees. To illustrate this point the concept of the resurrection can be examined briefly in the light of the Old Testament and in the subsequent development in Hebrew thought.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body was not a part of early Jewish teaching. The Old Testament does not speak clearly upon the matter of a life after death nor upon the question of a resurrection of the body. Some Old Testament passages may be noted as reflecting an interest in a life after death, but the meaning of these passages is not at all clear. Ezekiel (37) is probably not a discussion of the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. The passage does not suggest a future state, but rather is concerned with the present spiritual condition of the people.<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 26:17-19 suggests

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<sup>1</sup>Toy, The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel (1899) pp. 171, 172; G. A. Cooke, The Book of Ezekiel (ICC) (1936) p. 397.

a resurrection of the dead to life. In this difficult section (i.e. chapters 24-27) the people of God are to be vindicated during a great crisis in all of nature. Even the dead will awake and join in that jubilant time. Whether the author is advocating a resurrection of the individual is not certain, but the passage is used as a proof text for the Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

In Daniel (12:2f) we read "and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" which does not necessarily indicate a belief in a resurrection of the body although this is a possible interpretation.

The development of the belief in a resurrection is to be seen in the literature of the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha. However, one also sees in this literature a blending of the idea of a resurrection and the concept of immortality. Once the idea of a resurrection of the body was accepted as Hebraic then the way would be opened for many new ideas with reference to the nature of man and the concept of the soul. In the Psalms of Solomon, for example, it is expressed that the destruction of the sinner is forever but "they that fear the Lord shall rise again unto life eternal, and their life shall be in the light of the Lord, and it shall fail no more" (3:11-16). Again in 13:9, "for the Lord will spare his saints and will blot out their transgressions with his chastening for the life of the righteous is forever." Psalms of Solomon 11:7 and 15:15 reflect the belief that the resurrection will be for the

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<sup>2</sup>G. F. Moore, Judaism, Vol. II, pp. 296, 382.

righteous only and it is probable that the righteous would be limited to Israel.

A somewhat similar view is expressed in the Book of Enoch. In chapters 1-5 the ungodly are destroyed and the righteous are endowed with wisdom. In the Similitudes (37-71) there is a restoration to life on earth (51:1-5; 62:3-16). In other parts of Enoch it is the righteous who will arise from sleep (91:19;92:3). Little is said regarding the future of the righteous or the fate of the condemned. Testament of Levi 18 indicates a restoration to life on earth.

In the New Testament there are several references to the Pharisaic belief in the resurrection. A saying in Acts 23:6 is that "when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other part Pharisees, he cried out in the council 'Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial.'" In verse 8 of the same chapter we read, "for the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all." In Paul's defense before Felix he says,

"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets, having a hope in God which these themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust."  
(Acts 24:14f.)

And in Antiquities XVIII,i,3,

"They also believe that the souls have an immortal vigor in them and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously, or viciously, in this life and the latter are to be detained in everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again."

Such differences as exemplified by the idea of a resurrection may be explained by reference either to foreign influence or to developments within Judaism itself. It is not possible nor wise to deny the possibility of foreign influence on Hebraic thought, but it is also important that one recognize that new ideas which appear in Hebrew thought do not necessarily have to be traced to sources outside of Judaism, but may well be seen as the consequences of growth and development from within. Forces at work within Judaism may well result in new ideas which, even though found in other cultures, need not imply an interdependence. The criticism of the Pharisees by the Sadducees, for example, apparently hinged upon the fact that the Pharisees accepted as authoritative new ideas, ideas not found in the written Law, but there does not appear to be any criticism of Pharisaism for having accepted foreign ideas or having been under the influence of Hellenic culture.

It may well be that the generally accepted distinction between Hellenic and Hebraic may not have existed in as precise a manner as has been thought or that in the New Testament times influences from other cultures may not have been looked upon as serious threats to the vitality of Judaism. As will be observed within the body of the study there are movements within Judaism which in all probability represent reactions to certain syncretistic tendencies, but it is apparent that in John's criticism of the contemporary scene there is no anxiety about possible foreign influence.

To recognize that there is variety and vitality within Hebrew thought does not mean to imply that there is no form or structure at

all. On the contrary considerable structure is to be found. This recognition of the vitality of Hebrew life and thought prepares one for the fact that from time to time evidence will be forthcoming which will suggest positions contrary to the major emphases or trends of thought. Also allowing for this lack of rigidity in Hebrew thought will enable one to see John the Baptist as a part of a growing and developing religion and not as a stereotype whose every utterance must be in complete accord with every other utterance. Just as we have noted the likelihood of change and development in the Hebraic background of John the Baptist so also we must be prepared for change and development within John's own thought.

This leads us to a second difficulty in framing the problem or developing an approach to the study of John the Baptist, an extremely limited body of material from which to draw. The Pharisees and the Essenes, for example, as representative groups within Judaism, have fairly well-developed literature and systems of thought, but such is not the case with John the Baptist. The reported sayings of John the Baptist indicate that he restricted himself to several major themes and that he made little attempt to develop a system of thought for the daily guidance of his followers. It may have been that John felt so close to the Old Testament thought or that the end of the age was so near that he did not feel the need for developing an elaborate system of thought. These possibilities will be considered later in the study.

These two factors, the difficulty of fixing an unambiguous meaning to what we call Hebrew thought and the fact that John limited himself to only a few major themes, will dictate the emphasis our study of John the Baptist will make.

This leads us to a validation of the study. What reasons are there for a study of John the Baptist in the context of contemporary religious movements within Judaism?

### III. VALIDATION OF THE STUDY

The writer believes that this study of John the Baptist is justified for four reasons. First of all, the importance of John the Baptist as a historical figure is in itself sufficient justification for the study. John the Baptist was recognized as a figure of outstanding importance by Jesus and the Evangelists and has been so recognized by scholars and writers on the Gospels of subsequent generations. A thorough knowledge of John the Baptist is of great importance for an understanding of Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era as well as for an understanding of the later developments within the Christian movement. One can best interpret the Gospels by first coming to an understanding of John the Baptist, for John the Baptist stands at the beginning of the Gospel narratives not merely as the culmination of the old order, but also in some way as one integrally involved in the beginning of the new. The marked contrast between the old order and the new order will be seen in the light of an understanding of the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist.

Secondly, the writer believes that the study is justified because of the emphases made by certain writers on John the Baptist. When one considers the limited amount of information available on John the Baptist, he ought not to be surprised then to find only a few works devoted completely to the study of John. Those works which



have been concerned with John the Baptist in recent years which are of greatest importance are those of Martin Dibelius, Ernst Lohmeyer, Maurice Goguel, and Carl Kraeling.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the above mentioned writers the following have also written on John: John Blakiston, A. T. Robertson, Jean Steinmann, William C. Duncan, and Robert Eisler.<sup>4</sup> Numerous articles as well as introductory sections to lives of Jesus will be referred to in the body of the study.

The writer wishes to call special attention to the work of Carl Kraeling which is the major study in English in recent years. Kraeling's work in many ways reflects the principles and methodology of his former professor Martin Dibelius. The present writer's objections to Kraeling's effort do not stem from an objection to form criticism, but rather to the unsatisfying conclusions reached by that author. Although Kraeling's work is that of the careful scholar, one nevertheless must raise serious questions in four specific areas of

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<sup>3</sup>M. Dibelius, Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1911).

E. Lohmeyer, Das urehrentum. I Buch: Johannes der Täufer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1932).

M. Goguel, Au Seuil de l'Évangile, Jean Baptiste (Paris: Payot, 1928).

C. Kraeling, John the Baptist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).

<sup>4</sup>J. Blakiston, John the Baptist and his Relation to Jesus (London: J. & J. Bennett, Ltd. 1912).

A. T. Robertson, John the Baptist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911).

J. Steinmann, Saint John the Baptist (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958).

W. Duncan, John the Baptist (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1860).

R. Eisler, The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd. 1931).

interest - - Kraeling's use of sources, his interpretation of John the Baptist, his explanation of John's baptism, and his failure to allow for vitality and variety within Judaism. These points will be considered in detail in the relevant sections of the study, but it is important in this validation to suggest the critical points in need of further consideration.

With reference to Carl Kraeling's use of his sources the present writer questions the necessity of relying almost exclusively on the Synoptic accounts of John the Baptist to the serious neglect of the Fourth Gospel except in those areas where the Synoptics are completely silent and the information found in the Gospel of John in no way implies a contradiction of other gospel material. Because the present writer feels the great importance of this question, a chapter will be devoted to the value of the Fourth Gospel as a source of information and another chapter will be concerned with the portrait of John the Baptist in that gospel.

Also in the area of the use of sources this writer will examine Kraeling's acceptance of the Lucan birth narrative of John the Baptist as having originated in so-called "baptist circles" i.e. followers of John the Baptist who after John's death created a literature honoring John. It is sufficient at this point to note that Kraeling accepts the existence of a baptist literature and uses this in a rather circular manner to substantiate his later interpretation of John the Baptist as one who sees himself as the agent of the eschatological consummation. The writer will question not only the conclusions reached by such a process, but also the validity of the means by which Kraeling's conclusions are reached.

Questions will be raised with reference to Kraeling's interpretation of John's motivation for forsaking his father's vocation and his interpretation of John's attitude toward the nation as a whole. Was John the Baptist solely motivated by a revulsion against members of the priesthood with whom he had come in contact?

Is it necessary to interpret John's baptism in the context of Iranian mythology in which submission to John's rite would be a pre-enactment of immersion in the eschatological river of fire? This is basically the position suggested by Kraeling. It will be important to examine the contemporary scene to discover whether there is an explanation of John's rite drawn from within Judaism which would explain the rite as adequately as does the suggestion of Kraeling.

Does Professor Kraeling allow sufficiently for growth and development within Judaism to enable one to find therein the background for interpreting both John's rite and his message? Is it necessary to account for the appearance of new ideas within Judaism by reference only to foreign influence?

A third reason for the study of John the Baptist is the need to examine the material from the Dead Sea discoveries to determine whether our knowledge of John the Baptist is increased or seriously altered from that drawn from the gospel material and the writings of Flavius Josephus. Since almost all of the studies on John the Baptist were published before the full impact of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was widely felt, this source of information was not utilized.

Fourthly, the neglect of the Fourth Gospel as a source of information on John the Baptist is unwarranted. In the body of the thesis the writer will examine the reasons for the widespread unwillingness to make use of the Gospel of John except in the most limited manner and will attempt to point out that these reasons are insufficient to justify this attitude toward the gospel. The writer will be concerned to establish that the Fourth Gospel provides significant additional data to those found in the Synoptic accounts and also may well provide the information needed to properly understand the most difficult aspects of the Baptist's life, such as his own interpretation of his mission and his relationship with Jesus.

Although our major concern has been with the writings of Carl Kraeling, considerable attention will be given to the other major writers within the text of the thesis.

#### IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study will begin with a consideration of the early years of John the Baptist. This section will deal with both the Lucan birth narrative and John's desert experience. These two areas are important because together they place John the Baptist in the context of his Hebraic background and the prophetic heritage which will provide the foundation for a subsequent interpretation of John. Questions regarding the legendary character, the existence of a baptist literature, and John's motivation for his desert experience will be of major concern in the first chapter.

The two following sections will consider John's public ministry with special reference to his proclamation on repentance and judgment and his expectations of a messiah. Consideration will

be given to the significance of the concepts of repentance and judgment for the major contemporary movements within Judaism. In the information we have it is clear that John the Baptist anticipated the coming of a Mightier One who would bring to fruition that which John heralded. What was the contemporary messianic expectation? Did John the Baptist introduce a new concept of the messiah? These questions will be of significance, however, it will be necessary to leave unanswered some of the questions raised in anticipation of the possibility of further light gained from a consideration of the Fourth Gospel.

The fourth and fifth chapters will be devoted to the Gospel of John. Is the Gospel of John a trustworthy source for historical data? Can it be used only when it does not either contradict or imply a contradiction of the Synoptics? The writer will attempt to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the Fourth Gospel by discussing in the fourth chapter significant differences between the Synoptics and the Gospel of John with reference to the life and ministry of Jesus. If it can be established, at least in terms of probability, that the Gospel of John is a trustworthy source of information about Jesus and in some points even superior to the Synoptics, then it will be possible to approach the Gospel of John more favorably inclined than before. In the fifth chapter consideration will be given to the portrait of the Baptist in the Gospel of John with special attention being given to such key concepts as the "Lamb of God".

In the sixth chapter a study will be made of John's baptism and the possible sources for it. Pagan as well as Jewish sources

will be considered. Kraeling's use of Iranian mythology will be evaluated and particular attention will be given to the Essene or Qumran lustrations and the practice of proselyte baptism.

Chapter seven will deal with the culmination of John's life and movement and will examine the accounts of John's execution as well as the possibility of a continuation of the followers of John the Baptist as a sect.

A summary of our findings will be given in chapter eight. In this section an appreciation of John the Baptist's place in history will be made.

## CHAPTER I

## THE SYNOPTIC ACCOUNT OF THE EARLY YEARS

## Purpose

The writer will examine the information regarding the birth of John the Baptist as recorded in the Gospel according to Luke in an effort to determine the historical value of the account and what may be asserted about the figure of John. The second portion of the chapter will deal with the account of John's experience in the desert with particular emphasis on the significance of the experience in our understanding of John the Baptist.

## I. THE LUCAN BIRTH NARRATIVE

The Nature of the Source

In the first chapter of the Gospel according to Luke (1:1-80) a variety of literary forms are combined to relate the birth stories of John the Baptist and Jesus. Narrative material is interwoven with stories of angelic visitations and hymns of praise. The fact that this variety of material regarding John's birth is found only in Christian literature and that it reflects many Old Testament motifs demands an investigation of the nature, the possible origins, and the value of the Lucan birth narrative.

The narrative may well have come to Luke in a written form, probably in Hebrew or Aramaic, although, as Matthew Black points out, it may have come from a Greek translation found by

Luke, or may have been composed by Luke himself.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion concerning the Hebraic quality of the account is based on matters of style and grammatical structure.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that Luke may have copied a Greek source, but it seems unlikely that one of Luke's obvious ability in Greek would have made use of such a source other than as an aid.

Support for a Hebrew source behind the Lucan narrative can be seen in the expectation and ideals of the writer. For example, the emphasis on Hebrew messianic hope is to be noted in such passages as follows:

"He will turn many of the sons of Israel to  
the Lord their God.  
And he 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 1:16-17)

or

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most  
High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of  
his father David,  
And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever,  
And of his kingdom there will be no end. (1:32-33)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) p. 256, cf. p. 207.

William Manson, The Gospel of Luke (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930) p. 276.

A. Plummer, The Gospel According to St. Luke (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896) p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Dibelius, Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911) p. 68, suggests that too much stress ought not to be placed on the grammar.

<sup>3</sup>cf. Luke 1:46-55, 68-79, 2:29-32.



Furthermore, the Hebrew atmosphere is to be seen in the ideals of piety and the knowledge of Jewish religious customs.<sup>4</sup> These factors weigh heavily in favor of a Hebrew background for the Lucan birth narrative. As W. Manson has suggested, the words in Luke 1:65 "These events were talked of through the whole of the hill country of Judaea" place the tradition regarding the birth narratives in a Palestinian location.<sup>5</sup>

#### Origin of the Birth Narrative

The birth narrative, it has been suggested, in all probability came into Luke's hands in a written form drawn from Hebrew or Aramaic background. This source was not known to Mark, or at least he did not feel that it was relevant to his account of the life of Jesus. Luke alone contains the birth narrative of John the Baptist. This birth narrative is so clearly interwoven with the narrative concerning the birth of Jesus that one would conclude that they had already been combined before they reached Luke. If this be so, and if W. Manson is correct in placing the narrative in the Palestinian regions then is it not likely that the narratives were combined by an early Palestinian Christian? By placing the narrative found by Luke in a written form of Palestinian background one has not touched upon the question of interests at work which may have preserved the birth narrative of John the Baptist and eventually combined it with that of Jesus. Is it pos-

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<sup>4</sup>W. Manson, op. cit. p. 276

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

sible to discover the origin of the birth narrative? Taking into consideration the evidence we have available at present one must answer in the negative. However, even though the origin of the birth narrative cannot be ascertained, one can profitably explore the various groups which may have fostered and preserved the narrative. There are three groups which could be imagined as having an interest in preserving the narrative relating to the birth of John the Baptist. First of all, a group of Jews interested in the priesthood, who saw in John the Baptist one of the priestly line in whom purity and devotion to God were quite evident, may have fostered the narrative. Secondly, a group of followers of John the Baptist, who, after John's death endeavored to preserve the story of their leader may have created or kept the narrative from being lost. Thirdly, a Christian interest may have been represented in preserving a narrative about John which reflected his relationship to Jesus because of the prominent part played by John in Christian beginnings.

The consideration of these possibilities is, of course, based upon an assumption that the narrative reflects actual happenings. In the next section of this chapter the matter of the historical validity of the birth narrative will be considered, but the writer believes that these suggested interests may have been at work regardless of the historical accuracy of the account. The question, then is not: did the birth of John the Baptist occur as described in the narrative? but rather: what groups or interests may have been at work to preserve the narrative?

. . . . . Let us examine these possibilities.

What was the condition of the priesthood which would have reflected a concern for the figure of John the Baptist? The Jerusalem priesthood at the beginning of the Christian era was troubled by in-

ternal strife and conflict among the priests themselves. Flavius Josephus relates tales of disputes over the questions of tithes, privileges, and social position.<sup>6</sup> This dissension and bitterness was particularly serious just before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A. D. The office of high priest had become a political position which was sought after by means of bribes and gifts. High priests were appointed and deposed at will by Herod and Romans alike.<sup>7</sup> Although the evidence from Josephus with particular reference to the Temple is later than the time of John the Baptist, it undoubtedly reflects a culmination of the bitterness among the priests rather than a sudden outburst. The growing bitterness is reflected in the attitude of the Qumran community.

In addition to Josephus this unfortunate condition of the priesthood is reflected both in the Zadokite Fragments and in some of the Qumran literature.<sup>8</sup> The Damascus Document (4:15-18) speaks of the three nets of Belial with which he sought to seize Israel. The nets were fornication, wealth, and defilement of the Temple. In the Habakkuk Scroll (1QpHab.i 4f.) mention is made of the later priests of Jerusalem who are to be connected with the wicked priest (1QpHab.i, 8,16) who is the priest who rebelled and who did abominable deeds

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<sup>6</sup>Flavius Josephus, Antiquities, xx, 8, 8; 9, 2.

L. Finkelstein, The Pharisees (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938) Vol. 1, pp. 22-23.

E. Schürer, History of the Jews (Eng. Ed.) Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890) Div. 11, Vol. 1, p. 222.

<sup>7</sup>Josephus, op. cit. xx, 10; Schürer, op. cit. p. 196.

<sup>8</sup>Quotations from the Zadokite Fragments or the Damascus Document will be taken from the translation of Chaim Rabin, The Zadokite Documents (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).

and defiled the sanctuary of God (1QpHab. ii, 7-9).

In addition, as M. Black points out, "as far as the Scrolls are concerned it seems obvious that, in the early period of Selucid hellenization, there must have been a complete break with the Temple and its worship".<sup>9</sup> This separation of a priestly group fearing contamination (Ant. xviii, i, v) by other worshippers and other sacrificers eventually would lead either to a return to the Temple or the substitution of another type of worship or, what would be most likely, a limited contact with the Temple and the creation of another system of rites to compensate for the limited contact with the Temple.

The first alternative, a return to the Temple, would have necessitated some reform movement within the Temple system to assure the level of purity sought by the separatists. Of such a corrective procedure we have no report.

Joseph Thomas has suggested the second alternative, i.e. the development of an elaborate system of rites of baptism and a sacred meal as substitutes for the Temple ritual.<sup>10</sup> According to Thomas the Essenes had completely cut themselves off from the Jerusalem Temple because of the impurity of the Temple. However, as Black indicates, this extreme position is not necessarily based on a superior reading of the passage in Josephus and more recently evidence from the Scrolls. The passage from Josephus which refers to the relationship of the Essenes to the Temple (Ant. xviii, i, v) Black translates as follows:

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<sup>9</sup>M. Black, The Scrolls and Christian Origins (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1961) p. 40.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph Thomas, Le Mouvement Baptiste en Palestine et Syrie (Tournai: Gembloux, 1935) pp. 13 ff.

"Let no man send to the altar burnt-offering or a grain offering or frankincense or wood by the hand of any man affected with any of the types of uncleanness, thus empowering him to convey uncleanness to the altar...."<sup>11</sup>

This third alternative is thus the most satisfactory approach which allows for a continued limited contact with the Jerusalem Temple, but reflects the separatist concern for a purer way of life.

In the Scrolls the priest is held in high esteem. In the Damascus Document mention is made of confession to a priest (ix,13), that priests were members of the court (x,5), that priests supervised every group (xiii,2), and that the priests were given preference in seating during the assembly (xiv,3). In the Manual of Discipline (1QS) the exalted position of the priest is seen in his authority in matters of property (ix,7), the composition of the council (viii,1), and that priests were present in every place where men formed a unit (vi,3-4). Furthermore, the messianic expectations of the sect were connected with the Messiah of Aaron.<sup>12</sup>

It becomes evident, then, that considerable dissatisfaction with the Jerusalem priesthood and the Temple practices led some priestly elements to sever relationships with the Temple partially at least. From such separatist priestly groups may well have come such works as the Book of Jubilees and the Testaments of the Twelve

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<sup>11</sup> M. Black, op. cit. pp. 41, 42. See Damascus Document, xiv, 1-4, Rabin, op. cit. p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> 1QS 6:4-6; Damascus Document xx, 1  
K. G. Kuhn, "Die beiden Messias Aaron und Israel", New Testament Studies (1954/55) pp. 168-179.  
R. E. Brown, "The Messianism of Qumran", Catholic Biblical Quarterly (1957), pp. 53-82.

Patriarchs.<sup>13</sup> Both these works contain the expectation that the priestly line would prepare the way for the nation's deliverer.<sup>14</sup>

The priestly background of John the Baptist is firmly established in the Lucan material.<sup>15</sup> Zacharias, John's father, was a priest of the division of Abijah and Elisabeth, the mother, was one of the daughters of Aaron. Both parents were "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

(Luke 1:6)<sup>16</sup>

The well-established existence of priestly groups, such as that of Qumran coupled with the priestly background of John the Baptist has led several scholars to link John the Baptist with the Qumran community.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup>M. deJonge's attempt to fix a second century A.D. date for the Testaments is not convincing. DeJonge bases his argument largely on parallels with Christian literature and the writings of the Fathers. M. deJonge, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Assen: VanGorcum & Co., 1953). pp. 121ff. The possibility of fragments from the Testaments having been found at Qumran greatly weakens this view. Cf. D. Barthelemy and J. T. Milik, Qumran Cave I (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953) pp. 87ff.

<sup>14</sup>Carl Kraeling, John the Baptist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951) pp. 21, 22.

<sup>15</sup>Clayton Bowen's attempt to deny the priestly line of John by claiming that the genealogy of Jesus was originally that of the Baptist is groundless. See C. Bowen, Studies in the New Testament (Chicago: University Press, 1936) pp. 65 ff.

<sup>16</sup>See also on the division of the priesthood, Josephus Ant. viii, 14, 7; I Chronicles xxiv, 7-18; H. Danby, The Mishnah (London: Oxford University Press, 1933) p. 199.

<sup>17</sup>W. Brownlee, "John the Baptist", The Scrolls and the New Testament (ed. Stendahl) (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957) P. 35.

C. Fritsch, The Qumran Community, Its History and Scrolls. New York: MacMillan, 1956) pp. 112ff.

The present writer wishes at this point only to raise the possibility of a contact between John and the Qumran group. It is quite probable that John had some contact with groups similar to the Qumran community, but, at least with reference to the Lucan birth narrative, nothing appears which can be shown to reflect the influences of such priestly groups. The mention of John's priestly lineage in the Lucan birth narrative does not suggest any special interest in the matter. In addition the concern for separation which is characteristic of the priestly group does not appear significantly in the emphasis or teaching of the Baptist as will be shown below.

A second group which may have fostered and preserved the birth narrative of John the Baptist may have been followers of John the Baptist who came to believe that their executed leader was the messiah. Goguel, Kraeling, and Cullmann reflect a general agreement that a "baptist" group did exist and that some of the literature of this group was included in the Gospel records.<sup>18</sup> By "baptist" group is meant that body of followers of John the Baptist who continued his ministry and

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<sup>18</sup>M. Goguel, Au Seuil de l'Evangile, Jean Baptiste (Paris: Payot, 1928) pp. 41, 42, 74.

C. Kraeling, op. cit. p. 181

M. Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, Ltd., 1934) p. 124.

R. Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen Mandaischen und Manichaischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannes-Evangeliums" ZNW, 1925, p. 100 ff. suggests that Mandaeen literature designates John as Messiah.

J. M. Creed, The Gospel according to St. Luke (London: Macmillan, 1930) p. 71.

Paul Winter, "Magnificat and Benedictus Maccabean Psalms"

Bulletin John Rylands Library, Vol. 37 (Sept. 1954) p. 338.

Philip Vielhauer (ZTK) XLIX (1952) pp. 252-272) cited by J. L. Teicher in Journal of Jewish Studies Vol. 4, 1953.

J. Thomas, op. cit. pp. 140 ff.

practices even after John's death. This suggestion of a baptist literature as the source for Luke's birth narrative raises several important questions which must be answered before the basic premise can be dealt with adequately. First of all, can it be shown that a group of followers of John the Baptist did exist and that this group created a literature of its own? Secondly, if such a group did exist why then is this literature found only interwoven with Christian literature?

The New Testament indicates that John the Baptist had a group of followers who fasted (Mark 1:14), who carried messages for him while he was in prison (Mt. 11:2-6), who prayed (Luke 11:1), and some of whom left John to become followers of Jesus (John 1:40, 3:26). The existence of a group at Ephesus who had known only John's baptism (Acts 19:1-7) ought not to be used as evidence for the existence of a baptist sect. Those found by Paul were referred to as disciples (τινας μαθητας) which would indicate that these were considered as Christians who had not yet received Spirit baptism (Acts 19:2). As Professor Kraeling has rightly suggested "these people were Christians but had received only the earliest form of Christian baptism, which did not in itself confer the Spirit."<sup>19</sup>

Recognizing the existence of followers of John does not necessitate the belief that this group was a powerful and independent group which posed a threat to the early Christians. What is used to support

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<sup>19</sup>C. Kraeling, *op. cit.* p. 209, cf. p. 59.

E. Lohmeyer, Johannes der Täufer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932) pp. 26, 83-86.

T. W. Manson, "Mention of John in Acts", Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Vol. 36 #2, 1953-54, pp. 395 ff.



the contention of the existence of an important baptist group which created its own literature in honor of John the Baptist, a portion of which found its way into the Christian New Testament? The evidence basically is drawn from a textual variant, a recognition of John's prominence in the events of the early Christian movement, and an argument from silence.

First of all, let us look at the textual variant reading. In the portion of Luke's gospel commonly known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) the text is not clear whether Mary or Elisabeth was the speaker. The lack of precise identification of the speaker has led some to suggest that Elisabeth, not Mary, was the speaker.<sup>20</sup> The conclusion of these scholars is supported by some important Latin manuscripts.<sup>21</sup> However, a majority of other manuscripts indicate that Mary spoke the Magnificat and the present writer would conclude that the Latin texts are in error at this point. A possible explanation for this error may be that a copyist, having noted that the words immediately preceding this passage are those of Elisabeth, concluded that the words of the Magnificat belonged to Elisabeth as well. To support his conclusion

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<sup>20</sup>A. Loisy, L'Evangile selon Luc, (Paris: E. Nourry, 1924) pp. 100, 101.

B. S. Easton, The Gospel According to St. Luke (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1926) p. 14.

M. Goguel, op. cit. p. 72.

J. M. Creed, op. cit. p. 22.

Francis Burkitt, "Who spoke the Magnificat?" Journal of Theological Studies, VII (1906) pp. 220-227.

<sup>21</sup>E. Nestle, ed. Novum Testamentum Graece (Stuttgart: 1953) Luke 1:46. Additional support for this reading is found in Irenaeus and Origen.

that the speaker of the Magnificat actually was Elisabeth, Goguel has noted that Luke 1:56 which immediately follows the Magnificat states that "Mary remained with her", which, according to Goguel, should have read, "she remained with Elisabeth" had Mary been the speaker.<sup>22</sup> In objection to this view put forth by Goguel there is significant manuscript support at this point depicting Mary as the speaker. In addition the suggestion that the phrasing of Luke 1:56 is awkward is not convincing. Luke's style on matters such as that raised by Goguel is inconsistent and one should not lay too much stress on what appears to be a stylized awkwardness. For example, one could draw from this immediate section of Luke evidence that the author does name the subject of a new sentence even though the subject of the previous sentence is the same and no other person has appeared to cause confusion in interpretation. In Luke 1: 38, 39 this becomes clear. ἔλεπεν δὲ Μαριάμ. ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη κυρίου γίνεται μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥημά σου. καὶ ἀπελήθεν ἀπ' αὐτῆς ὁ ἄγγελος. Ἀναστᾶσα δὲ Μαριάμ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις... However when one moves to verse 40 ff. of the same chapter the stylistic inconsistency becomes apparent. καὶ ἐσοήθη εἰς τὸν οἶκον Ζαχαρίου καὶ ἠσπάσατο τὴν Ἐλισάβετ. καὶ ἔλεγεν ὡς ἤκουσεν τὸν ἀσπασμὸν τῆς Μαρίας ἡ Ἐλισάβετ ἐσχιρτήσεν τὸ βρέφος ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐπήνεθη πνεύματος ἁγίου ἡ Ἐλισάβετ... The conclusion is that such stylistic matters cannot be used alone as proof for such a position as that of Goguel. To the present writer the phrase "Mary remained with her" is appropriate and expresses clearly what had happened.

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<sup>22</sup>Goguel, op. cit. p. 72n.

The Magnificat forms a parallel to the Song of Hannah (I Sam. 2:1-10). Both psalms reflect God's mercy and his mighty works. The Magnificat and the Song of Hannah speak of the lowly being exalted, the hungry fed, the strong arm of the Lord scattering his enemies. It should be noted, of course, that these general themes are as suitable for the lowly estate of Mary as for the low estate of Elisabeth, whose unfruitfulness may well have been a mark of shame.<sup>23</sup> But as W. Manson has suggested, unless verse 48 "all generations will call me blessed" is altered in some way it is difficult to apply it to Elisabeth.<sup>24</sup>

The textual evidence then taken by itself allows the two interpretations. However, an important aspect of the similarity between the Magnificat and the Song of Hannah has been overlooked by those who would attribute the Magnificat to Elisabeth. The Song of Hannah only in a general sense reflects her individual joy and thanksgiving, but to a greater degree it reflects interest in the Messiah or king. The Song of Hannah is in all probability anticipating the Davidic kingdom and is a royal psalm. The question is, then, why, assuming Elisabeth was the speaker of the Magnificat, is the psalm so clearly a parallel to the Song of Hannah which anticipated a Davidic kingdom? Considering the priestly background of both Elisabeth and Zacharias and recognizing the existence of priestly separatist groups within Judaism, and following the lead of Goguel who suggests that this is baptist literature describing John as the Messiah, why then is there no suggestion of an anticipation of a priestly messianic figure? The fact that these

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<sup>23</sup>M. Dibelius, Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup>W. Manson, op. cit. p. 12.

questions cannot be answered satisfactorily weighs heavily in favor of the traditional interpretation of Mary as the speaker of the Magnificat.

A second aspect of the birth narrative of John the Baptist used to substantiate the view that behind the Lucan material stands a "baptist" literature praising John is seen by Goguel in the Benedictus (Luke 1:68-79). Goguel maintains that the prominence of John in the Benedictus indicates that this section could only have arisen in Baptist circles.<sup>25</sup> Goguel believes that the phrase in Luke 1:76 ἐν ἑσπέρῳ κυρίου indicates that John the Baptist was "le précurseur de Dieu", and not the forerunner of Jesus as the Christian interpretation affirms. Certainly Goguel is correct in pointing out that Christians have interpreted κύριος as a reference to Jesus, but it is not at all clear how Goguel's interpretation of the passage significantly changes the meaning or can be used to substantiate the claim that the passage originated in a Baptist sect.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Luke 1:68-75 reflects a messianic hope connected with the Davidic line and the addition of the psalm of Thanksgiving (Luke 1:76-79) specifically referring to John in no way alters this expectation. If there are specifically "Baptist" emphases in the Benedictus, they are not readily discernible, and the more reasonable interpretation would be that the Benedictus consists of a previously existing psalm to which the words of Zacharias are attached. The prominence of John the Baptist is merely a recognition of his significant role in the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

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<sup>25</sup> M. Goguel, op. cit. p. 74.

A. Von Harnack, "Das Magnificat der Elisabeth nebst einigen Bemerkungen zu Luc 1 und 2." Sitzungsberichte der kgl. preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (1900) pp. 538-556

<sup>26</sup> It is apparent that Christians soon applied to Jesus titles previously used only with reference to God, e.g. κύριος in Acts 2:34, though certainly not within Jesus' lifetime.

Goguel uses an argument from silence in that he notes that the Benedictus could not have originated in Christian circles because it contains no specifically Christian teaching.<sup>27</sup> An argument from silence is not the most convincing. The above criticism of the alleged Baptist origin of the material for the Lucan birth narrative has indicated the improbability of this viewpoint. Whether a passage contains specifically Christian teachings is not a valid criterion for judging its origin.

It is to be concluded, then, that the arguments which suggest that the Lucan birth narrative was first created and fostered within Baptist circles are extremely weak and unconvincing. The acknowledgement of the existence of followers of John the Baptist in no way commits one to the belief that the group developed to such a point that it created its own literature from which Luke drew his material concerning the birth of John the Baptist.

Finally, the birth narrative of John the Baptist may have been preserved by Christian interests. The birth narrative is found interwoven with that of Jesus and is found only in Christian literature. This significant fact alone weighs heavily in favor of attributing the origin and fostering of the birth narrative of John the Baptist to Christian interests. The combined narratives clearly reflect the later Christian interpretation of John as precursor and as inferior to Jesus. The attempts to discover other possible groups which may have fostered the birth narrative indicated that such evidence was not sufficient to allow one of these groups to be put forward as the unchallenged source.

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<sup>27</sup> Goguel, op. cit. p. 74.

Indeed, the weakness of these attempts to suggest other possible groups indicates that the most likely group at work in fostering the birth narrative of John the Baptist was Christian.

#### Historical Value of the Birth Narrative

Having considered the possible groups who may have fostered the birth narrative of John the Baptist and having concluded that the evidence weighs heavily in favor of a Christian interest at work it is necessary at this point to determine as far as is possible the historical reliability of the birth narrative.

Opinion varies widely with regard to the historical validity of this portion of Luke's gospel. Because of the apparent similarity between the Lucan birth narrative and several Old Testament narratives some scholars have viewed Luke's narrative as purely legendary. Professor Kraeling, for example, has suggested that "the existence in Jewish literature and folklore analogies to virtually all of the important elements of John's birth story shows that the narrative is fundamentally legendary and its episodes cannot be used directly for historical purposes."<sup>28</sup> In addition, Martin Dibelius has suggested that in the infancy narrative of John the Baptist old motifs are fashioned into a new web and as a result a type of historicity is excluded.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 18, 19.  
E. Lohmeyer, op. cit. p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Dibelius, op. cit. p. 74n.

The Old Testament episodes which have been seen as quite similar to the birth narrative of John the Baptist are the birth stories of Isaac, Samuel, and Samson. Although these Old Testament stories are not precisely the same as that of John the Baptist, there are striking notes of resemblance which must be acknowledged. For example, all three Old Testament episodes have in common with the Lucan narrative the fact that older childless couples are to be blessed with children.<sup>30</sup> In addition, there is the common element of the importance of religious worship in the Lucan narrative and in the account of Elkanah and Hannah. Although he is not a priest, the piety of Elkanah is noted in that he yearly went to the Shiloh sanctuary to sacrifice (I Sam. 1:3). The fact that Samuel as a boy ministered to the Lord in the presence of Eli (I Sam. 2:11) reflects the pious concern of the child born to Elkanah and Hannah.

An angelic visitation to announce the birth of children can be noted in the narratives concerning Hannah and Elisabeth. Judges 13:3 records the angelic visit to Manoah while Genesis 17:15, 16 and chp. 18 reflect the heavenly announcement to Abraham and Sarah.

The disbelief on the part of Sarah that she should bear a son is paralleled by Zacharias' doubt in the Lucan narrative. Zacharias is struck dumb for his unwillingness to believe and remains so stricken until the naming of the child (Luke 1:18).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 17); Manoah and his wife (Judges 13); Elkanah and Hannah (ISam. 1:18).

<sup>31</sup>In Ezekiel 3:26,27 the prophet is struck dumb and is able to speak only when God speaks through him. This is similar to the episode with Zacharias who can speak only when he acknowledges what God has instructed him to say.

A final common element is the matter of the instruction concerning the naming of the child. In Luke 1:13 the angel reveals that the child of Elisabeth is to be named John even though that name was not used by the family. In Gen. 17:19 Abraham is informed that his child is to be given the name Isaac.

What is the significance of these similarities between the birth story of John the Baptist and earlier Old Testament stories? One might well conclude that the Lucan birth narrative consists only of embellishing motifs drawn from the Old Testament. It must be admitted that such a conclusion is not at all impossible or improbable. It cannot be finally answered whether the stories surrounding the birth of John are historical or legendary. But more important than this is the question what is the significance of relating these particular Old Testament happenings to the birth of John the Baptist? Obviously, these Old Testament motifs enhance the figure of John. In addition, each of these allusions reflects a significant aspect of John's life and teaching. The allusion to Abraham and Sarah may well reflect John's later insistence that mere descent from Abraham was not sufficient to enable one to avoid judgment and that God could raise up a new people to Abraham (Matt. 3:8,9; cf. Luke 3:10-14). The Nazirite vows of Samson are to be compared with the ascetic way of life of John (Mark 2:18; Mt. 3:4; 11:18). Samuel's priestly associations as well as his willingness to criticize even the monarch are paralleled by John's priestly background and piety and his eventual clash with Herod over the latter's questionable marriage (Mark 6:17-29; Mt. 14:1-12; Luke 3:19,20; cf. Josephus, Ant. xviii,5,2).



From these similarities the present writer concludes that the Lucan birth narrative of John the Baptist has made use of Old Testament motifs not only to enhance the figure of John but also to foreshadow John's subsequent life and teaching. The historical value of the birth narrative is dubious if one thinks merely of the question did the birth occur just as described. The embellishments of the narrative do reflect accurately the subsequent work of John the Baptist as will be shown in the remaining portions of the study. The birth narrative is of value because it places John and the early Christian movement in their proper Hebrew setting and suggests that both John and Jesus represented a fulfillment of the Hebrew expectations and not a nullification of them. This last point will be returned to throughout the thesis.

## II. THE DESERT EXPERIENCE

Our sources reveal nothing of the life of John the Baptist between the period of the birth narrative and the beginning of his public ministry except the mention of his desert experience. The scarcity of information about this period in John's life has led some scholars recently to relate John with the Qumran community.<sup>32</sup> However, before this conjecture of a possible relationship between John and the Qumran community can be considered, it is necessary to examine the New Testament references to this phase of John's life which

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<sup>32</sup> W. Brownlee, "Comparison of the Covenanters of the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Pre-Christian Jewish Sects", Biblical Archaeologist (Sept. 1950) pp. 69ff.

A. S. Geyser, "The Youth of John the Baptist", Novum Testamentum I, (Jan. 1956) p. 71.

Charles T. Fritsch, op. cit. p. 112.

has led to the conjecture. In Luke 1:80 it is stated that John was in the wilderness until the day of his manifestation to Israel (cf. Luke 3:2,3). Luke implies that the time spent by John the Baptist in the wilderness or desert was a time of preparation for his public ministry and that once prepared John no longer continued in the desert. Matthew (3:5) follows Mark (1:5) in implying that the desert or wilderness experience was not only a preparatory stage and abode of John, but also that this continued to be the primary area of John's activity. This latter position gains support from a saying of Jesus in relation to John, "What did you go out to see?" and from the description of the attire and diet of John (cf. Luke 7:24ff, Matt. 11:3 ff. Mark 1:6). This writer believes that the implication by Mark and Matthew that John the Baptist continued in the desert as his main, though not only, area of endeavor, is the more satisfactory. In addition to the supporting passages suggested, the possible reasons given below for John's choice of the desert will tend to substantiate this position.

The Synoptic references do not designate John's place of activity except in general terms. Mark mentions the "wilderness" <sup>v</sup>ερημιας to which Matthew adds "the wilderness of Judea" and Luke adds "all the country around the Jordan". Although not specific, these references would indicate that John's desert experiences occurred in what is known as the Αρὰβία just north of the Dead Sea.<sup>33</sup> If so,

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<sup>33</sup> C. C. McCown, "The Scene of John's Ministry and its Relation to the purpose and Outcome of his Mission", Journal of Biblical Literature (LIX (June 1940) pp. 113-131.

Gustav Dalman, Sacred Sites and Ways (London: S.P.C.K., 1935) p. 87.

this would place John the Baptist for at least a portion of his life in close proximity to the Qumran community's dwelling place.<sup>34</sup> It would be most improbable that there was no contact between John the Baptist and the covenanters of Qumran. At this point, however, the writer only wishes to suggest the probability of contact on the basis of the proximity of their areas of activity. Further observations on this matter will appear below.

Related to the area of John's endeavor is the very important question of the possible reasons for John's choice of the desert or wilderness for his center of effort. The tradition which associates John the Baptist with the desert is well established and the writer rejects as groundless the view of Bultmann and Schmidt who suggest that the tradition was an invention of later Christians based upon Isaiah 40.<sup>35</sup>

Several suggestions have been forthcoming which have attempted to fill the gap in our knowledge of John's life and to explain at the same time his reason for the desert life. W. Brownlee, among others, owing largely to the silence of the sources on this matter, has suggested that John was in the desert due to his relationship with the Jewish

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<sup>34</sup>A. Dupont-Sommer, The Dead Sea Scrolls (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954) Map opposite p. 9.

G. Vermes, Les Manuscrits du Désert de Juda (Tournai: Descales, 1954) Map in preface.

<sup>35</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931) p. 261

Karl Schmidt, Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu (Berlin: 1919) p. 22 f.

sect of the Essenes.<sup>36</sup> Brownlee conjectures that John the Baptist, son of aged parents (Luke 1:7,18) was soon orphaned, and was adopted by non-marrying Essenes and brought up in their ascetic way of life. This view is supported by the fact that Essene groups were in existence in villages,<sup>37</sup> many towns (B. J. IIviii,4), in Jerusalem (Ant. xiii, ii,2; xv,x,5; xviii,xiii,3; B. J. IIxx,4), in the desert near Engedi near the Dead Sea (Pliny's Nat. Hist. v,17) which may well be the Qumran community who are generally considered to be Essene.<sup>38</sup> This suggestion is very appealing especially in light of the fact that Josephus describes the Essene practice of adopting children for the purpose of perpetuating their beliefs.<sup>39</sup> Further support for this view may well be seen in a comparison of the teachings and rites of the Essenes and those of John the Baptist. This will be done in a subsequent chapter.

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<sup>36</sup>W. Brownlee, art.cit. pp.69ff.

A. Geysler, art.cit. pp. 71.

J. Danielou, Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte et les Origines du Christianisme, Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1957) cited by M. Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: Viking Press, 1958) p. 59.

<sup>37</sup>Philo, Quod Omnis Probus Liber, 76, Loeb Classical Library Vo. ix, also Hypothetica ll.7 preserved in part by Eusebius.

<sup>38</sup>T. Gaster, The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957) p. 5.

F. M. Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (New York: Doubleday, 1958) pp. 37-38.

R. Marcus, "The Qumran Scrolls and Early Judaism", Biblical Research I (1956) pp. 9-47.

B. J. Roberts, "Qumran Scrolls and the Essenes", New Testament Studies III (1956) pp. 58-65.

A. Dupont-Sommer, The Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, & Co. Ltd., 1955) p. ix.

<sup>39</sup>F. Josephus, Wars Book II, viii, 2.

It is sufficient at this point to state that it is quite possible that John the Baptist's choice of the desert as a place of preparation and endeavor may stem from his previous association with an Essene group. It is to be noted that one is surprised that if John had been an Essene that Josephus, a former Essene novice,<sup>40</sup> makes no mention of this in his description of John the Baptist.

Professor Carl Kraeling in his excellent study of John the Baptist has accounted for John's choice of the desert on the basis of John's disappointment with his fellow priests in Jerusalem. Kraeling pictures John as the son of a rural priest, who, upon coming to the city of Jerusalem is repulsed by what he saw among his fellow priests. John's disgust with the pettiness of the servants of the Lord and an earnest desire to seek God, suggests Kraeling, led John away from the normal paths of men.<sup>41</sup> Mention has been made previously of the unfortunate condition of the priesthood at this period in Jewish history.<sup>42</sup> The Damascus Document (4:15-18) and the Habakkuk Scroll (1,4,8,16) reflect considerable ill-feeling toward the Temple priests among the sectaries.<sup>43</sup>

Kraeling is correct in his description of the plight of the Jerusalem priesthood, but there is little foundation for concluding

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<sup>40</sup>F. Josephus, *Life* II,10, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1956) p. 5.

<sup>41</sup>Kraeling, *op. cit.* pp. 23 ff.

<sup>42</sup>Josephus, *Ant.* xx,8:9,2.

L. Finkelstein, *op. cit.* Vol. I, pp. 22, 23.

E. Schürer, *op. cit.* Div. II, Vol. I, p. 222.

<sup>43</sup>M. Black, *op. cit.* p. 40.

J. Baumgarten, "Sacrifice and Worship among the Jewish Sectaries of the Dead Sea (Qumran) Scrolls", *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. xlvi, #3 July 1953, p. 142.

that John the Baptist was any more displeased by the priesthood than by other segments of contemporary Jewish life. In our sources John the Baptist does not specifically criticize either Temple practice or the priesthood, nor is there a rejection of these by John. He looks upon the whole nation as apostate, but does not single out the priesthood for special condemnation (Luke 3:7).

Our sources indicate very little basis for Kraeling's conjecture as to the choice by John of the desert. It is important to note that John would not have assumed his priestly responsibilities until his thirtieth year. If the Lucan reference to the age of Jesus (3:23) is correct, then one must conclude that John the Baptist had already accomplished much even before the time came for the acceptance of his duties as priest.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, although this point will only be mentioned here, it is altogether possible that John looked upon his desert way of life and the practices related thereunto as a fulfillment of his priestly responsibilities.<sup>45</sup>

The present writer believes that in approaching the matter of John's choice of the desert too frequently the significance of the area has been overlooked by many who would deal with the subject. As has been indicated earlier in examining the birth narrative, the heroic figures therewith associated clearly suggest that John and his mission are to be understood within the context of Hebrew history. Judging

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<sup>44</sup>Damascus Document 11:10

<sup>45</sup>This will be considered with reference to the rite of baptism.

from the Hebraic nature of the legends concerning John's birth<sup>46</sup> and the association of John with the prophetic spirit of ancient Israel,<sup>47</sup> this writer believes that John's choice of the desert was positive and deliberate. It was in the desert places or at least in places separated from densely populated areas that the Old Testament prophets were brought into close relationship with God (e.g. Elijah, Amos, and especially Moses). Indeed the wilderness experience of the people under Moses was looked upon as an ideal period of Hebrew piety and devotion. As W. R. Farmer points out "The activity of John the Baptist in the wilderness, Jesus' baptism by John, and Jesus' temptation in the wilderness all point to the fact that there were well-recognized messianic expectations associated with the wilderness of Judaea."<sup>48</sup> It is altogether reasonable and likely that the desert was a place of separation in which John prepared himself, but it was also his primary abode even during his public ministry. For John the Baptist the desert was steeped in the history of Israel and was a reminder of the piety of the past. He chose the desert as the place to establish a people newly prepared by baptism for the coming great day.<sup>49</sup>

### Summary

In the Lucan birth narrative John is born to an aged priest and his wife. The child brings with it joy and happiness, but also

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<sup>46</sup>M. Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel p. 124.  
 J. M. Creed, op. cit. pp. 306-307  
 W. Manson, op. cit. pp. 4 ff.

<sup>47</sup>For example, the use of Isaiah 40 and the association of John the Baptist with the figure of Elijah.

<sup>48</sup>W. R. Farmer, Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956) pp. 120, 121.

<sup>49</sup>See Joachim Jeremias, "Der Ursprung der Johannaufe", ZNTW xx, viii (1929) pp. 312-320.

the expectation that he will be of great significance to his contemporaries. Carefully chosen allusions to the Old Testament give the birth narrative a legendary character. The allusions themselves, however, reflect important aspects of the life and ministry of John the Baptist. He, as did Abraham, will begin a new people exemplified by piety. He will follow the Nazirite-like ascetic life as did Samson. He will prepare for the coming great king as Samuel had prepared for David. The desert experience also reflects the significance of Hebrew history in the life of John. The desert was both a place of preparation and of continued activity as John prepares for the coming mightier one. The foundation is now laid to examine the message of John and its impact upon his contemporaries.



## CHAPTER II

### THE PROCLAMATION OF REPENTANCE AND JUDGMENT

#### I. PURPOSE AND PROCEDURE

Our emphasis in this chapter will be upon the significance of the concepts of repentance and judgment in the thought of the contemporary movements within Judaism and upon the significance of these concepts in the teaching of John.

One of the aspects of first century Judaism which the writer believes to be of significance in this area of concern is the existence of considerable variety and vitality among the Hebrew peoples at the time of John the Baptist. This can be noted in the numerous sects and parties within Judaism. Although in certain basic areas these groups had much in common as they reflected a larger common heritage nevertheless divergent views and emphases are to be seen which reflect the special concern of the individual groups.

Rather than pursue the origins and histories of these individual sects or parties in Judaism the writer has chosen to approach the question of the relationship of John the Baptist to these groups by examining several important categories of thought and by so doing provide a basis for comparison with the teachings of John the Baptist on these subjects.

There can be little doubt that the message of John the Baptist was of considerable significance to many who heard it. Mark's statement that "there went out to him all the hill country of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem" (Mark 1:5) and the observation of Josephus that the people "seemed likely to do everything he might counsel" combine to reflect the fact that John the Baptist was en-

thusiastically received by his contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> However, when one moves from these rather sweeping general observations to a consideration of the recorded sayings of John the Baptist, the double problem of scanty material and an apparent lack of consistency within the sayings attributed to John becomes evident. The Synoptic gospels provide the primary source of our information on John the Baptist. The sayings of John reported in the Fourth Gospel will be considered separately after the writer has endeavored to examine the question of the reliability of the Fourth Gospel as a source of information.<sup>2</sup>

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus notes the existence of four philosophies or parties in Judaism.<sup>3</sup> From his description of these parties and from other sources it is possible to draw a comparison of them with the reported sayings of the Baptist. The writer has chosen to keep as a separate unit the Qumran literature even though there is a wide-spread identification of the Qumran community with the Essenes or at least some Essene-like movement.<sup>4</sup> From the descriptions

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<sup>1</sup>Josephus, Antiquities XVIII 5,2.

Although Josephus' presentation of the story of the Jews was undoubtedly designed to please his Roman readers, nevertheless, it provides supplementary information to that found in the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup>See chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>3</sup>Josephus, B.J. II, viii, 14 mentions the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the Zealots.

<sup>4</sup>A few of those who have so concluded are as follows:

T. Gaster, The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957) p. 5.

R. Marcus, "The Qumran Scrolls and Early Judaism", Biblical Research 1 (1956) pp. 9-47.

A. Dupont-Sommer, The Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., Ltd., 1955) p. ix.

B. J. Roberts, "Qumran Scrolls and the Essenes", New Testament Studies 3 (1956) pp. 58-65.

F. M. Cross, op. cit. pp. 37-38.

of the Essenes in Philo and Josephus it is evident that there existed considerable latitude of belief and practice.<sup>5</sup> The primary sources of information from the Qumran literature provide an important addition to our knowledge of religious atmosphere in which John the Baptist lived.

## II. REPENTANCE AND JUDGMENT IN JUDAISM

### General Observations

Repentance is one of the very basic concepts of the Old Testament and Hebrew thought. The Hebrew word שׁוּב meaning "to turn around, go back" is ordinarily used to convey the meaning to repent or to turn back from evildoing. The context, of course, would enable one to distinguish between the literal meaning and the religious meaning. The phrase שׁוּב וְשׁוּב was used to make certain the meaning "to repent". It transcends all matters of ritual and temple worship and reaches out to the blackest sinners of Israel as a hope which does not fail.<sup>6</sup>

Essentially the meaning of repentance in Judaism is a change of attitude toward God and a moral and religious reformation in one's own life. Underlying this concept of repentance is the belief that all evils are in the final analysis a tearing away from God.<sup>7</sup> Repentance means to turn about or to return to God. It involves not only a change of attitude toward God, that is, a turning toward God, but also it in-

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<sup>5</sup>Philo, Quod Omnis Probus Liber (75-9) Vol. IX Loeb Classical Library

Josephus, Ant. XIII, v9; XVIII, i, 5; B.J. II, viii, 2 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Solomon Schechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909) p. 326.

<sup>7</sup>G. Kittel, Theologisches Wörterbuch, s.v. שׁוּב (Bohm, Würthwein)  
G. F. Moore, Judaism (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1954)  
Vol. I, p. 507.

volves a renouncing of evil ways and thoughts. Repentance demands a marked change of conduct and motive.

Repentance in Hebrew thought involved the following: contrition for past sin, confession of sin,<sup>8</sup> renouncing of the old way of life, determination not to sin again, and a desire to live according to God's will.<sup>9</sup> It is clear that in the Old Testament repentance was the only condition of salvation,<sup>10</sup>

#### Repentance and Judgment among the Pharisees and Sadducees

We are more fortunate regarding the teaching of the Pharisees than the Sadducees because more of the writings of the Pharisees or those that reflect Pharisaic interests have been preserved. Since Pharisaism ultimately became the dominant stream in later Judaism and since the literature of the Apocrypha, the Mishnah, and the Talmud reflect much of Pharisaic teaching, there is some justification in looking back through these writings to discover the views of earlier Pharisaic groups.

Literature from the party of the Sadducees is rare, and, in fact, there is no undisputed work which can be attributed to the Sadducees. Mention is made in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 100b) of the books of the Sadducees which are not to be read.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid. p. 511. See Numbers 5:6f., Lev. 5:5. Schechter op. cit. p. 335.

<sup>9</sup>Schechter, op. cit. p. 335.

<sup>10</sup>Miller Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia; Westminster Press, 1946) p. 235.

<sup>11</sup>R. Herford, Christianity in the Talmud and Midrash (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903) p. 333, suggests that this reference may be to the works of the Judaeo-Christians, i.e. the New Testament. There were in all probability no Sadducees after the destruction of the Temple, and the term "Sadducee" may be a censor's emendation for "sectarian" or Gentiles.

Considerable emphasis in the Pharisaic literature is made on the matter of fate and responsibility. Josephus distinguishes between the Pharisees and the Sadducees on the question of the part played by God in human affairs. The Pharisees attribute all to fate (or providence) and to God, and yet allow that to do what is right, or the contrary, is principally in the power of man, although fate does cooperate in every action (B.J. II,viii,14). In contrast to this Josephus states that the Sadducees "take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is concerned in our doing and not doing what is evil; and they say, that to do what is good, or what is evil, is at man's own choice, and that one or the other belongs so to everyone that they may act as they please." (B.J. II,viii,14)<sup>12</sup>

What Josephus intended as the belief of the Pharisees is not clear. The term ἐκμαρμένον or "fate" is not a Jewish concept. It may well be that Josephus is expressing in Greek terms the biblical view that God acts in all things and yet men are endowed with a measure of freedom. In later Jewish writings, e. g. Pirke Aboth 3:24 it is said that "everything is foreseen; and freewill is given."<sup>13</sup> In the words of Schechter, "all that God does is only in the way of warning and reminding man that there is an Eye watching him, and that he will be responsible for his choice."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>See also Ant. XVIII,1,3; Ant. XIII,v,9.

<sup>13</sup>C. Taylor, The Sayings of the Fathers (Cambridge: University Press, 1897) p. 59.

<sup>14</sup>S. Schechter, op. cit. p. 285.

In some of the Pharisaic works of the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha there are indications of the Pharisaic view of God's activity. In Psalms of Solomon, which is generally accepted as a Pharisaic creation,<sup>15</sup> it is suggested that man is dependent upon God in all things (Ps. of Sol. 5:4-6). God is active in the affairs of his people as he disciplines them by means of foreign powers (Ps. of Sol. 2:1,15,24;8:15). The Pharisee was inclined to wait until the time at which God would fulfil his promises to his people (Ps. of Sol. 7:9;17:23;18:6).<sup>16</sup>

The Book of Jubilees (c.135-105 B.C.)<sup>17</sup> which also reflects Pharisaic interests combines the belief in divine omnipotence and providence with the belief in human freedom and responsibility. For example, in 5:13 we read "and the judgment of all is ordained and written on the heavenly tablets in righteousness -- even (the judgment of) all who depart from the path which is ordained for them to walk in; and if they walk not therein, judgment is written down for every creature and for every kind." In 21:21 ff in Abraham's words to Isaac, human freedom and responsibility to do either good or evil is indicated along with the consequences associated with the deeds.

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<sup>15</sup>Ryle and James, Psalms of the Pharisees (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1891) p. lix.

R. H. Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the O. T. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913) Vol. II p. 630.

Montet, Essai sur les Origines des Partis Sadduceen et Pharisien (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1883) p. 19.

<sup>16</sup>Ryle and James, op. cit. p.xlix.

<sup>17</sup>R. H. Charles, The Book of Jubilees, p. xiii.

These references tend to substantiate the description of the Pharisaic beliefs given by Josephus. The Pharisees believed in the providence of God and his activity in the affairs of men. In addition they taught that the individual was free to act as he chose and was responsible for the consequences of such choices.

In contrast to this Josephus indicates that the Sadducees believed that God was remote from the affairs of men and that he did not care about human affairs (B.J.II,viii,14). This view of the Sadducees the writer finds difficult to accept. It seems unlikely that the Sadducees, many of whom were priests who ministered regularly in the Temple, felt that God was far removed from their lives. The fact that the Sadducees accepted as authoritative the Law in which God's activity in human affairs is most evident would be out of harmony with a belief in the remoteness of God.

It is important to reiterate that Judaism did not consist of mutually exclusive groups. There were differences, there was a variety, but this is to be seen "within the framework of a commonly held faith."<sup>18</sup> Many of the divergences presented are to be seen as degrees of emphasis on particular views rather than as completely opposite viewpoints.

Closely associated with the matters of responsibility and repentance is the belief in a future retribution. The doctrine of a future retribution was an important part of Pharisaic teaching. This teaching may well have arisen as a result of the unfortunate events which befell even the most pious of Israel. Frequently, there appeared

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<sup>18</sup> John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959) p. 451.

to be no correspondence between the piety of an individual and the kind of life he enjoyed on earth. Often the saint was afflicted by many misfortunes while the sinners enjoyed unbounded prosperity. If the individual or the nation did not receive compensation for its deeds in this life, surely there must be some future reward or punishment.

From Josephus we learn that the Pharisees taught that the souls of good men are removed to other bodies and that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment (B.J.II,viii,14). In the Antiquities (XVIII,1,3) Josephus states that the Pharisees taught that there would be rewards and punishments under the earth based upon how one lived during the earthly life. The reward of virtuous life was to be restored to life while that of the unjust was an everlasting prison.

The idea of a judgment with a final determination of individuals appears in some of the intertestamental literature. In the Book of Enoch, there are scattered references to a resurrection at least of the righteous Jew. Enoch is informed of an interim place where all souls of men are kept until the time of the great judgment (chapter 22). This interim station has different sections for the righteous and for the various classes of the wicked. For those who will be restored to life there will be a new paradise in which no sorrow or suffering is to be found (Enoch 25, also chapter 54).

In the Book of Jubilees although there is no bodily resurrection there is to be a judgment at the close of the messianic kingdom (Jubilees 23:30). This judgment will involve both the human and the supernatural realms (Jub.5:10ff.). No respect will be shown to persons



and each will be judged according to his opportunities (Jub. 5:15f). There is no hope for the Gentile who apparently is under the guardianship of angels in order to accomplish his destruction (Jub.15:31).

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs reflect a view which is somewhat different from that of Jubilees. There is to be a resurrection extended to the dead of remote generations. Following a general resurrection there is to be a judgment.<sup>19</sup>

In the Psalms of Solomon it is stated that the righteous will rise to eternal life (3:16;13:9-11). The condition of the resurrected righteous will be one of joy (10:9) and happiness (14:7). Of the sinner it is said that he will be destroyed forever (3:13;9:9;12:8).

For the Sadducee there was no hope for the future life. Death meant the end of all things except possibly a shadowy existence in the realm of the dead.

The doctrine of a future retribution became an important part of Pharisaic teaching and of later Judaism. It may have arisen as a result of the suffering and persecutions experienced by the Jews who had only brief respite under the Hasmoneans, or as a result of the unmerited suffering of pious individuals.

#### Repentance and Judgment among the Essenes and the Qumran Sectaries

When one views the Essene practices and teachings, he is conscious of the similarity between this group and the Pharisees on the matter of repentance. The major sources of our information on the

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<sup>19</sup>Test. Benjamin 10; Test. Levi 18.

Essenes are the writings of Philo, Josephus, Pliny, and Hippolytus.<sup>20</sup>

It is probable that Hippolytus has made use of an edition of Josephus other than that available at the present.<sup>21</sup> Other later writers comment on the Essenes, but generally speaking, their observations are based upon the above sources and do not add substantially to our information.<sup>22</sup>

Josephus comments that all things are, according to the Essenes, best ascribed to God (Ant. XVIII,1,5). Elsewhere he observes that the Essenes affirm that fate governs all things and that nothing befalls men but what is according to its determination (Ant. XIII,v,5). Philo expresses a slightly divergent view that the "Godhead is the cause of all good things and nothing bad." (QOPL 84). In all probability Josephus has attributed a rigid determinism to the Essenes in order to emphasize the distinctions between that group and the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

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<sup>20</sup> Philo, Quod Omnis Probus Liber  
Philo, Hypothetica preserved in part in Eusebius  
Josephus, Ant. XIII, v,9; XVIII,1,5; B.J. II, viii, 2 ff.  
Pliny, Natural History V, 17.

<sup>21</sup> For other possible explanations of the similarities and differences between Hippolytus and Josephus see M. Black, "The account of the Essenes in Hippolytus and Josephus", The Background of the N.T. and its Eschatology, Davies and Daube, eds. (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1956) ll. 172-175; also see K. Kohler, Origins of the Synagogue and the Church (New York: Macmillan Co. 1929) p. 120.

<sup>22</sup> For example: Solinus, Polyhistor, xxxv, 7-10; Porphyry, "On the Abstinence from Animal Food"; Epiphanius, Against all Heresies, l. x.

Many attempts have been made to identify the sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls with one of the sects or parties of Judaism.<sup>23</sup> From the Qumran community has come a variety of types of literature both biblical and non-biblical. One of the more important non-biblical discoveries was the previously known Zadokite Documents. Although only fragments have been found, nevertheless it is apparent that this work emanated from the same source as did the hitherto unknown works such as the Manual of Discipline (IQs).<sup>24</sup>

The Zadokite work depicts God as being active in human affairs. It is said that he remembered the covenant (1,4), that God gave commandments to the people (iii,13,14), that he raised up a root of planting (i,7) and that he raised up a teacher of righteousness (i,11).<sup>25</sup> God is forgiving and eager that backsliders should repent and turn from their wickedness. Though God is forgiving he will "execute judgment

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<sup>23</sup>See for example:

M. H. Gottstein, "Anti-Essene Traits in the Dead Sea Scrolls", Vetus Testamentum, 4 pp. 141-147.

R. Marcus, "Pharisees, Essenes, Gnostics", Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXIII, pp. 157-161.

Duncan Howlett, The Essenes and Christianity, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957).

R. North, "The Qumran Sadducees", Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 17 (April 1955) pp. 44 ff.

<sup>24</sup>M. Baillet, Revue Biblique, LXIII, 1956 pp. 513 ff.

H. H. Rowley, Jewish Apocalyptic and the Dead Sea Scrolls (London: The Athlone Press, 1957) p.4.

F. M. Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran (New York: Doubleday, 1958) p. 35.

For Studies of the Zadokite Work see Schechter, Documents of Jewish Sectaries, Vol. 1, Fragments of a Zadokite Work (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1910); R. H. Charles, A & P Vol. III, pp. 786 f.; C. Rabin, The Zadokite Documents (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).

<sup>25</sup>Rabin, op. cit.

upon all that despise him."(i,2). It is said that God shall visit the earth to "return the reward of the wicked upon them."(vii,9; xiii,23).

Although some mention of backsliders who have fallen away is made (ii,6), there is evidence that the sect believed that these had not been chosen of God of old (ii,7,8). It is said that God caused to stray those whom he hated (ii,13). Yet the sect thought of God in his mysterious way making conciliation for its trespasses and pardon for its impiety (iii,18).

One sees then, that with reference to the Zadokite Work it is evident that God was active in human affairs, willing to forgive those who repented, but that he would judge the wrongdoer. Although this group recognized a measure of human freedom, nevertheless, God knows every action beforehand and even causes some to stray (cf. IQs 3:13ff.).

In other literature from the Qumran group a similar position is taken with reference to the relationship between God and man. The Qumran literature reflects a rigid determinism in which man is either placed under the power of the Spirit of Truth or the Spirit of Perversion (IQs 4:25). These two spirits have been created by God so that man might know good and evil (IQs 4:26). In addition, the spirits strive within man's heart in a battle for mastery of the individual (IQs 4:24). The Qumran teaching in which God has ordained all things and has assigned each man to one of the two spirits, nevertheless, allows for responsibility and punishment.

In the rule relating to admission of the candidate (IQs 5:10-13), the candidate is warned against entering insincerely and there is a warning against a candidate being baptized without repentance. The unrepentant "shall not enter into the water.... to come into contact with the Purity of holy men" (IQs 5:13-14). The efficacy of the cere-

mony is dependent upon faith, obedience and repentance (1Qs 2:25-3:12).<sup>26</sup>

In the Zadokite Work as well as in other Qumran literature there is an expectation of a judgment in which the wrongdoers would be delivered over to the sword. God apparently would act as judge upon his visit to earth (CD vii,9;xiii,21). God established his covenant with Israel even until eternity (CD iii,13) and ~~that~~ they who hold fast to the sure house are destined to eternal life (CD iii,21). In both the Manual of Discipline and the Habakkuk Commentary concern is shown for a judgment of those who do not belong to the sect and who have not accepted its teachings. For those outside the sect the future meant judgment and damnation to eternal fire (1QpHab. 2:11).<sup>27</sup> Those who did not recognize the covenant are those who are described as belonging to Belial's lot. In 1Qs 2:13 the men of Belial's lot are damned to eternal fire and God's anger will burn against them for eternal destruction. Those outside the community will receive destruction without a remnant or survivor (1Qs 4:13;5:11). The Habakkuk Commentary indicates that those who have reviled and insulted God's elect will be condemned to fire (1QpHab. 2:13). This judgment which God will establish will be

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<sup>26</sup>F. M. Cross, op. cit. p. 70n.

<sup>27</sup>On the matter of a cosmic conflagration see Matthew Black art cit. in The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, p. 175.

J. T. Milik, Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea (Napierville: Alec Allenson, Inc. 1959) p. 121 ff.

delivered into the hands of the elect who themselves will be rescued from the house of judgment (1QpHab. 2:11-14).

This final drama will not be only a time of judgment in which a cataclysmic fiery end will occur, but also this will be a time of purging and cleansing of a portion of mankind (1Qs 4:15-26).<sup>28</sup> As Matthew Black points out the concept herein reflected is "identical with the mission ascribed to the stronger one by the Baptist (cf. Matt. 3:12)".<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to the Sadducean position it is evident that the Qumran community held some belief in eternal life. This is to be seen in 1Qs 4:6 ff and 4:23 where the joy and goodness of the after-life are seen in contrast to the fiery end. In this purged condition a new kingdom of God will be established from which sin will be absent and man will live in obedience to God.<sup>30</sup> This new world will come about out of pain and travail as part of which there would be a final war of extermination in which the Sons of Light would triumph over the Sons of Darkness (1QM).<sup>31</sup> Although this final battle between the forces of light and darkness holds a prominent place in the Qumran writings, its significance for this study is limited.

### III. REPENTANCE AND JUDGMENT IN THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

#### General Observations

Even though there is a variety and a vitality within Judaism

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<sup>28</sup> M. Black, The Scrolls and Christian Origins (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961) p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> CD VII (xix) 5-6

<sup>31</sup> J. T. Milik, loc. cit.

as is evidenced by the very existence of different movements, nevertheless one ought not to conclude that each was markedly different from the others. Rather the differences between these groups ought to be seen in terms of degrees and not simply as totally disparate view-points. On the matter of repentance considerable agreement was seen in that all groups believed that repentance was necessary for the efficacy of ceremonies, rituals, and observances. Repentance involved turning away from the old way and a turning toward God. This change in conduct and attitude involved the penitent in different degrees of separation from the world. The Essenes (including the Qumran groups) represented the most obvious withdrawal.<sup>32</sup> The Pharisees separated themselves from their contemporaries to a lesser degree. Of the Sadducean practice we can only assume a similar withdrawal to protect against the contaminating influence of the unclean.

On the question of the coming judgment again there is variety to be seen in terms of degree. The Pharisees and the Essenes expected a final judgment in which the inequities of this life would be adjusted and the righteous rewarded. The future would be for the elect who would escape the judgment or at least survive the purging. For the Essenes the end would involve a fiery conflagration and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

#### John's Demand for Repentance

In what way does John the Baptist fit into this structure of Hebrew thought? Does the message of John reflect a viewpoint which

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<sup>32</sup>Philo's observation that the Essene groups were found in towns and villages does not indicate necessarily association with the world. It does indicate a latitude of strictness.

differs from the major emphases of contemporary Judaism? By examining the recorded sayings of the Baptist in the light of the conclusions already reached with reference to contemporary Judaism the writer will endeavor to determine John's relationship to his time.

1. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2)
2. "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism for the forgiveness of sins." (Mark 1:4; cf. Luke 3:7ff.)

In these two sayings the demand for repentance apparently reflects two different points of view. Is repentance related to the coming kingdom or is it primarily related to the past? B. H. Streeter has taken the former position and has rejected the Marcan description of John's baptism. Streeter writes, "St. Matthew's account of John the Baptist is not derived from St. Mark alone but from St. Mark and Q. As regards the preaching, it would appear to be entirely from Q. When therefore we find that the introductory summary of the contents of the preaching is given by St. Matthew in the form 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' and by St. Mark in the form 'a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' seeing there is evidence that Q has some few words of introduction, it is far more reasonable to suppose that St. Matthew transcribed a phrase from the introductory sentences of Q than that he gratuitously modified beyond all recognition a phrase which he found in St. Mark....Hence on purely critical grounds it is probable that our oldest authority Q represented John as preaching 'the kingdom of God is at hand'."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>B. H. Streeter, "Was the Baptist's Preaching Apocalyptic?" *Journal of Theological Studies*, XIV (1913), 550-551.



If one accepts Streeter's argument that the Q source as represented by St. Matthew is the earlier representation of John's preaching, then how is one to account for the adoption of the "Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" found both in Mark and Luke? To this Streeter answers, "the origin of the Marcan 'baptism for the remission of sins,' which is adopted also from him by St. Luke is easily explained as being a characterization of John's baptism as it was viewed later on from the standpoint of the experience of the later Christian baptism."<sup>34</sup> By accepting this purely eschatological significance reflected in Matthew as the primary portrayal of John's preaching, Streeter rejoices in eliminating an even more perplexing problem, viz. the acceptance of John's baptism by Jesus. Streeter would give to John's preaching and baptism a significance basically looking forward to future happenings and not regret for past sins. If Streeter is correct in drawing this sharp contrast between Matthew on the one hand and Mark on the other arguing in favor of the priority of the Matthean phrase, why then does the writer or redactor of Matthew add the puzzling saying of Jesus stating that his baptism by John is to fulfil all righteousness (3:15)? This conversation between Jesus and John at the Jordan suggests that Matthew was endeavoring to counteract some view regarding the baptism of John. It seems most probable that that view is the Marcan interpretation of John's baptism which was evidently current. It seems most unlikely that if the concept of the coming of the kingdom were the earlier and more accurate representation of John's preaching

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

that this concept would have been largely ignored by Mark and Luke. Streeter may be correct in suggesting that Mark's portrayal of the preaching of a baptism of repentance was colored by later Christian views, but his preference of Matthew poses an even more difficult question. If early accounts connected John's preaching with the coming kingdom, why then did not Mark and Luke grasp eagerly this which would have been indisputable evidence that John was in a very real sense the forerunner of Jesus? Streeter seems to have neglected the saying about John in Luke 16:16 that the "law and the prophets were until John; from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached" (cf. Matt. 11:12,13).<sup>35</sup> The present writer doubts the correctness of Streeter's either-or distinction. It is not at all necessary to see baptism for repentance (Mark) and baptism for the coming kingdom (Matt.) as being in opposition.

To return to the question, does the concept of repentance reflected in the message of John the Baptist differ from what has been seen in contemporary Judaism? To this Ernst Lohmeyer has answered in the affirmative.<sup>36</sup> According to Lohmeyer repentance in John's message did not involve a human change of mind, but rather was an act of God. Baptism is the medium revealed for man's rebirth and in baptism one enters a new type of being, believes Lohmeyer. Repentance, he says, is a change in one's being through the gift of revealed insight.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Rudolph Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1938) p. 69.

<sup>36</sup>E. Lohmeyer, Johannes der Täufer, pp. 67-73.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. p. 69.

Lohmeyer has suggested that the sole initiatory responsibility for repentance rests in the hands of God. Lohmeyer's position reflects precisely the problem raised in the introductory section, i.e. the lack of rigidity in the use of concepts. Both the stress on individual initiative and the action of God are included in the Old Testament and in the Intertestamental literature. It is this lack of exactness which allows the suggestion of Lohmeyer to be put forward. The tension between these two positions is somewhat lessened in the New Testament although even there it is not completely resolved. In answer to Lohmeyer one must note that certain passages from the Old Testament raise the question of the initiative in repentance (Jer. 31:18f; Psalm 85:5; Mal. 3:7). As G. F. Moore suggests, "In the Midrash on Lam. 5:21, 'Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned,' the Israelite church says to God: 'Lord of the world, it is for Thee to do'..... God replies, 'It is for you to do, as it is said Turn unto me and I will turn unto you' (Mal. 3:7)". The majority of Old Testament passages and the writings of the rabbis indicate that the initiative lies with man who must turn from his sinful way to God.<sup>38</sup> The New Testament picture is clearer. Repentance depends on the initiative of the individual. Even in his criticism of those who came to him, "who warned you to flee" (Luke 3:7), John the Baptist indicates that the act of repentance is an individual choice.

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<sup>38</sup>G. F. Moore, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 531.

Schechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, pp. 289, 324, 334.

Coming from a different point of view Joshua Starr has also suggested that the concept of repentance in the teaching of John the Baptist differed in meaning from that of contemporary Judaism.<sup>39</sup> According to Starr "the repentance preached by John for remission of sin involving only baptism and confession is nothing short of anti-thetical to the connotation of the Jewish idea, which emphasized the making of reparation and asking of pardon of the wronged".<sup>40</sup> Has not Starr emphasized too much the silence of our sources on this aspect of repentance? Certainly reparation is implied in John's instructions to the specific groups who came seeking guidance (Luke 3:10-14). To the tax collectors John said "exact no more than what is appointed you" and to the soldiers he said "be content with your wages." Furthermore, in his demand for fruits worthy of repentance one may well see the implication of reparation which Starr finds lacking. To this saying we must now direct our attention.

"Produce fruit worthy of repentance and do not think to say, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I tell you God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones." (Matt. 3:8,9 and Luke 3:8, cf. Luke 3:10-14)

In this saying John the Baptist demands an exemplary life which would reflect genuine repentance. John does not specify, or at least the sources do not indicate, what John meant by fruit worthy of repentance. However, in his instructions to special groups (Luke 3:10-14) John told his hearers that those who have an abundance of food

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<sup>39</sup> Joshua Starr, "The Un-Jewish character of the Markan account of John the Baptist," Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. LI, 1932 pp. 272 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

and clothing should share with the less fortunate, that publicans should exact no more than the law allows, and that soldiers should not seek personal gain.<sup>41</sup> These instructions were in themselves quite clear. In no way is John implying the creation of separate community. The indication is that the piety and virtue advocated were possible within the bounds of normal society.<sup>42</sup>

In the above quotation from Matthew the implication is clear that John the Baptist expected acts which reflected genuine repentance to accompany and follow the rite of baptism. Dependence upon Abrahamic descent as a substitute for genuine piety was warned against by John. In this the Baptist is not at all denying the value of Abrahamic descent, i.e. he is not suggesting that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Rather, John is saying that the exemplary piety which characterized the life of Abraham must be seen in Abraham's descendants or God will cause new children to rise up.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the instructions in Luke mentioned above two observations were made in Luke and Mark which may be seen as fruit worthy of repentance. Luke (11:1) notes that John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. The very fact that Luke made this notation implies that John taught his followers to pray in addition to the prayers ordinarily used by the Jews. The prayer which Jesus taught his disciples was apparently a Christian counterpart to the prayer of John the Baptist. What the prayer which John the Baptist taught was is not

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<sup>41</sup> See Josephus, Ant. XVIII, 5, 2 where the author states that John's exhortation was to morality and virtue.

<sup>42</sup> Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 83, 83.

<sup>43</sup> E. Lohmeyer, op. cit. pp. 173, 174.

known. One could only guess at its content although it undoubtedly included some eschatological aspect with the hope for deliverance as Kraeling has suggested, anticipating the coming of the Mightier One and the achievement of Abrahamic piety.<sup>44</sup>

Mark (2:18) noted that the disciples of John the Baptist fasted as did the Pharisees, but to what extent fasting was a special part of John's teaching is not indicated.<sup>45</sup> John's diet of locust and wild honey (Matt. 3:4) may only reflect the scarcity of food in the desert, but the present writer believes this observation points to John's fasting. In addition, Matthew (11:18) clearly indicates that John the Baptist was an ascetic in contrast to Jesus.<sup>46</sup> The fact that John's fasting is noted indicates that this fasting was in excess of ordinary Jewish practices, but it cannot be concluded from our sources that John required fasting of his followers. Ernst Lohmeyer without any basis in the texts has divided the followers of John the Baptist into two groups, those who fasted and those who did not.<sup>47</sup> There is no indication that fasting was required as a sign of repentance but, at least, the implication is that the followers of John the Baptist were known for their fasting.

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<sup>44</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 79

<sup>45</sup>The practice of fasting in contemporary Judaism can be noted in the following: Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Reuben 1:9f, Simeon 3:4, Judah 15:4. G. F. Moore, op. cit. II, pp. 261, 262. Strack-Billerbeck, II (1924) pp. 241-244.

<sup>46</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 11 ff., 200, denies that this is the proper interpretation.

<sup>47</sup>Lohmeyer, op. cit. pp. 114-116.

It is significant that nowhere in the New Testament account of the message of John the Baptist is any attempt made to define or explain repentance.<sup>48</sup> Undoubtedly there is complete certainty that the meaning of repentance was quite clear to the hearers of the Baptist as well as to the readers of the New Testament account. It may be stated without hesitation that the message of repentance preached by John the Baptist laid stress on human initiative in turning away from the sinful path and turning back to God.<sup>49</sup> This was in harmony with the emphasis of the majority of John's contemporaries who believed that repentance involved human initiative. John's message, however, was set in an eschatological framework as will be shown below. While John's message was in keeping with the emphasis of his contemporaries, John has given it a sense of urgency by stressing the nearness of the kingdom and the imminence of judgment.

#### John's Expectation of the Judgment

Integrally related to the concept of repentance in the teaching of John the Baptist is the concept of a coming judgment. John's demand for repentance of all, even the sons of Abraham, was enhanced by his proclamation of the nearness of the judgment. In this regard John stands directly in line with many of the prophets of the Old Testament.<sup>50</sup> He differs from his contemporaries in that he does not

<sup>48</sup>G. F. Moore, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 518

<sup>49</sup>Joseph Klausner, The Messianic Idea in Israel (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955) p. 428.

V. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan Co., Ltd., 1955) p. 151n.

J. H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the N. T. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 4th ed. 1951) s. v. μετανοεω.

<sup>50</sup>Isaiah 41:15,16;10:33-34; Amos 1:3; Jeremiah 51:33; Hosea 13:3; Habakkuk 3:12; Micah 4:13.

allow for the development of a system of casuistry.

Two striking features are to be noted in John's proclamation of judgment. First of all, John stressed the imminence of judgment. The use of the metaphors of the thresher and the woodcutter enabled John to proclaim the nearness of the day of wrath in the terms of the prophets which were readily understandable to his hearers. In Matthew 3:12 (cf. Luke 3:17) John declares:

"His fan is in his hand and he will cleanse his threshing floor and gather his grain together in his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

The figure of the thresher echoes Isaiah (41:15-16) where God says to Israel that Israel will be involved in the final threshing. Thus in Isaiah we read:

"Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth;  
Thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small,  
And shalt make the hills as chaff.  
Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away,  
And the whirlwind shall scatter them:  
And thou shalt rejoice in the Lord,  
And shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel."  
(Isaiah 41:15-16)

Later in IV Ezra this metaphor recurs indicating that God will judge both men and nations.<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere the chaff is used as a synonym for the wicked (Isaiah 17:13; Psalm 1:4; 35:5).

Thus in the minds of his hearers John's message could not be misunderstood. He proclaimed that the judgment was near. By his stress on the unquenchable fire John has implied the finality of the imminent judgment.<sup>52</sup> Already the thresher stands poised ready to

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<sup>51</sup>IV Ezra 4:30.

<sup>52</sup>Kraeling, *op. cit.* p42.



separate the chaff from the wheat.

The impact of John's proclamation is strengthened by the use of a second metaphor, that of the woodcutter in the act of cutting down a worthless and unfruitful tree.

"Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees, every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

(Matt. 3:10; Luke 3:9)

Again the element of fire is mentioned as the reward of the unfruitful. Fire is not used here by John the Baptist as a cleansing or a purging element as, for example, in the Qumran literature, but rather as the means to destroy the wicked.<sup>53</sup> In the Book of Hymns (1 QH III 28 ff.) we read the following passage referring to the final conflagration:

"When the hour of judgment strikes  
When the lot of God's anger is cast unto the abandoned...  
When the final doom of His rage falls on the works of Belial;  
.....  
When the rivers of Belial burst their high banks  
--rivers that are like fire  
Devouring all that draw their waters  
Rivers that are like fire  
Which sweeps with flaming sparks  
Devouring all that drink their waters  
--a fire which consumes all foundations of clay  
every solid bedrock (T. Gaster)<sup>54</sup>

The axe is at the roots, the time is at hand. In Isaiah (10:33-34) God himself is seen cutting down the unfruitful trees. In the Old Testament, the trees to be cut down for judgment are the trees of the forest, that is, the nations. On the other hand, Israel is referred to

<sup>53</sup> See below Chapter III with reference to a "baptism with fire".

<sup>54</sup> Theodor H. Gaster, The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957) pp. 112, 113.



as the fruit tree, the tree of God's own planting. Thus, when John the Baptist spoke of the unfruitful tree being cut down and burned this clearly indicated that the judgment would involve Israel itself. As with the metaphor of the thresher so also here, there is an unmistakable note of finality in John's message. The chaff will be burned with an unquenchable fire and the unfruitful trees are to be cut down, not merely pruned, and burned.

Secondly, John's implication that the people of Israel were the unfruitful trees or the chaff indicates that he felt the whole nation to be apostate and that Israel would not escape the judgment. One can see a similar note in the literature of Qumran. Here the group had separated itself because of the impurity of the nation.<sup>55</sup> The expectation of judgment can be seen in the Manual of Discipline where we read that God "has ordained a period for the ruin of error, and in the appointed time of punishment he will destroy it forever."<sup>56</sup> Although there is no detailed description of punishment there is mention of the "deep darkness of eternal fire."<sup>57</sup>

It is clear that in John's message those who repent and are baptized will escape from the wrath to come.<sup>58</sup> The righteous are as the wheat which will be gathered into the granary, or like the fruitful trees allowed to stand. In the message of the Baptist the right-

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<sup>55</sup>CD v, 7, 11; vi, 18; vii, 9.

<sup>56</sup>IQS 4:18f; 3:18; 4:26; 2:15; 5:19.

<sup>57</sup>1QpHab. 2:11, 19; IQS 2:7, 8.

J. Licht, "The Doctrine of the Thanksgiving Scroll", Israel Exploration Journal VI, 1956) pp. 1-13, 89ff.

<sup>58</sup>See below Chapter VI concerning baptism.

eous will not endure the penalties of the wicked. In the Qumran literature it is clear that God will rescue the doers of the Law (equivalent to members of the sect) from the house of judgment (1QpHab. 2:4). There will be a destruction involving those not of the covenant (1QS5:11ff., 19;4:12,13), but there will be a remnant (1QS 4:14). The members of the covenant will have eternal rejoicing in the victorious life of eternity (CDiii,13,21). The members of the redeemed community will be refined "with a holy spirit from all wicked deeds" and sprinkled with "a spirit of truth."<sup>59</sup>

Members of the Qumran sect will escape the judgment by faithful study and strict obedience to the law.<sup>60</sup> Followers of John the Baptist are to avoid judgment by repentance, baptism, and the producing of fruits worthy of repentance.

Judgment in both the Qumran literature and the message of John the Baptist is for all people, but the path by which to escape that judgment is open.<sup>61</sup> The message of judgment of both John the Baptist and the Qumran community reflects the prophetic teachings particularly of Amos and Hosea. The obvious similarities between John and the Qumran group reflect not an interdependence but rather a dependence

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<sup>59</sup>Miller Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: Viking Press, 1958) p. 352.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid. p. 294.

<sup>61</sup>G. Duncan, Jesus Son of Man (London: Nisbet and Company, Ltd. 1947) p. 80 insists that John's message was one of hope not judgment. However, as the texts clearly indicate, John did proclaim a judgment for all people, but did also emphasize the way to avoid the judgment.

upon the common heritage. The prophetic faith of the Old Testament.

The intensity of John's message of judgment is further heightened by his use of the epithet "brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7). This epithet (brood of vipers) is directed toward the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the account of Matthew. Welhausen has suggested, Matthew's designation of the Pharisees may reflect his use of unfavorable references to the Pharisees whenever possible (cf. Matth. 23:33; 12:34).<sup>62</sup> Luke does not specify any particular group against whom John directed this epithet. He merely refers to the crowds (Luke 3:7). Though this word ὄχλος is characteristic of Luke there is no reason to reject his denunciation of the crowds as inaccurate.<sup>63</sup> The inclusion of all John's hearers in the account of Luke is an indictment of the whole nation.

Professor Kraeling has rejected this application of the phrase "brood of vipers" as too harsh for the nation as a whole. He has suggested that the real recipients of the epithet were the ruling priests. According to Kraeling, only the priestly aristocracy could be described as "conscious of its prerogatives as the divinely instituted medium for the reconciliation of God and man, but which at the same time tended to substitute arrogance" for righteousness and integrity.<sup>64</sup> Kraeling's

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<sup>62</sup>J. Welhausen, Evangelium Matthaei (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1904) p. 5.

J. Creed, op. cit. p. 51n.

<sup>63</sup>Alfred Plummer, Gospel According to St. Luke (New York: Scribner, 1902) p. 88.

<sup>64</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 46ff.

conjecture is quite plausible, but the sources reflect no hint which would justify its acceptance. John does criticize all those who had turned from God and had not repented. There is no evidence that John limited his criticism to the priestly aristocracy. To say, with Kraeling, that the epithet is too harsh for the nation as a whole is to ignore the intensity of the occasion and of John's preaching.

Fritsch and Brownlee have seen in this indictment of the nation by John the Baptist a reflection of the influence of the Qumran community.<sup>65</sup> As indicated above, even though John and the literature of Qumran reflect the prophetic spirit of Israel, there is no need to see in this epithet any more than the characteristic fulmination of the Old Testament prophets.<sup>66</sup>

Nor can one accept the suggestion of J. Daniélou that the epithet directed against the Pharisees and the Sadducees indicates that John belonged to the unnamed group, the Essenes.<sup>67</sup>

The message of the Baptist on the coming judgment is in harmony with the significant movements within Judaism in that John expected an imminent and final judgment. In this John and his contemporaries stand in the line of the Old Testament expectations.

<sup>65</sup>C. T. Fritsch, The Qumran Community, Its History and Scrolls (New York: Macmillan, 1956) pp. 113-114.

W. Brownlee, "John the Baptist in the New Light of the Ancient Scrolls," The Scrolls and the New Testament (ed. Stendahl) (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957) pp. 33-53.

<sup>66</sup>M. Burrows, op. cit. p. 58.

<sup>67</sup>J. Daniélou, Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte et les origines du Christianisme (Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1957) cited by Burrows, op. cit. p. 59.

However, John proclaimed his message with an urgency and vigor that was lacking in the other movements. For John, in a very real way, the thresher already had his fan in his hand and the woodcutter had laid his axe to the roots of the unfruitful trees.

## CHAPTER III

## THE COMING MIGHTIER ONE

## I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The expectations of the Messiah reflected in the period of Judaism contemporary with that of John the Baptist cannot be woven into a simple and consistent pattern. Again we have reflected at this point the difficulty of formulating a completely consistent structure of Hebrew thought. The literature drawn from various leading movements reflects two major streams of messianic hope. Two major streams of thought regarding a Messiah or a messianic age can be delineated although it must be noted that these two streams frequently combined with each other and cannot always be distinguished.

The Old Testament prophecy basically suggests a national or political expectation which involves national independence and a time of peace and prosperity. Such a time would also be marked by piety and devotion to God. The key figure in such a restoration will be a scion of David who will rule as a king with justice over the land (Jer. 23:5).<sup>1</sup> This expectation of the prominence of David's line is reflected in the New Testament where the scion of David is equivalent to the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

Along side of this is another stream of thought which laid stress on a final catastrophe in which the world as it is would be

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jeremiah 30:9 and Hosea 3:5.

<sup>2</sup>G. F. Moore, Judaism, Vol. II, p. 329.

brought to an end and in its place a new world would appear in a supernatural manner.<sup>3</sup> In some of the apocalyptic literature a Messiah appears and will rule over God's people until the time of judgment,<sup>4</sup> while in other writings there is no figure who corresponds to the Messiah.<sup>5</sup>

The figure of one "like a human being" of Dan. 7:13f. apparently is to be identified with the chosen one of God of apocalyptic expectation. This figure who is to come on the clouds will act as a judge. G. F. Moore summarizes the apocalyptic expectations as follows:

"The Messianic Age comes to an end with the last great outbreak and onslaught of the heathen nations. They invade the land of Israel only to be exterminated by God. The dead of all generations, righteous and wicked, rise from their graves to appear before God in the last judgment. The earth is transformed to be the unending abode of the righteous, the wicked are cast, soul and body, into a hell of fire."<sup>6</sup>

With these two general streams of thought in mind let us now turn to the major movements within Judaism to determine how they represented either or both of these two streams and specifically in what way John the Baptist stands in relationship to the messianic expectations of his contemporaries.

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<sup>3</sup>The parables of Enoch combine the national hope with supernatural elements.

<sup>4</sup>IV Ezra, 12.

<sup>5</sup>Enoch 1:36; 91-104.

<sup>6</sup>G. F. Moore, op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 344, 345.



## II. MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS AMONG THE PHARISEES AND THE SADDUCEES

For the party of the Sadducees there was no messianic hope whatsoever according to several leading writers on the subject.<sup>7</sup> The leading opponent of this widely accepted view was Leszynsky who has attempted to demonstrate that the Sadducees had a doctrine of the Messiah which differed from that of the Pharisees in that their Messiah would come from the tribe of Levi.<sup>8</sup> This suggestion of a Messiah from the tribe of Levi is of particular interest in conjunction with the recent speculation regarding the two Messiahs of the Qumran literature.<sup>9</sup> Since genuine Sadducean literature is rare, or perhaps non-existent, the only way of supporting Leszynsky's view is by considering works not generally attributed to the Sadducees as having been created by them. Thus Oesterley has regarded the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs as originally Sadducean with the later Pharisaic interpolations.<sup>10</sup> I seriously doubt whether the Testaments ought to be depended upon as support for Leszynsky's position. The uncertainty of the date of composition, the question of possible Christian interpolations,

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<sup>7</sup>Schürer, History of the Jews, II, ii, pp 29-43. See also the following articles: Cowley, "Sadducees" in En. Bi., Eaton, "Pharisees" in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible.

<sup>8</sup>Leszynsky, Die Sadducäer, p. 94 ff. cited by J. W. Lightley, The Jewish Sects and Parties in the Time of Christ (London: Epworth Press, 1925) pp. 83 ff.

<sup>9</sup>See Below page 60 ff.

<sup>10</sup>Oesterley, The Books of the Apocrypha, p. 210 ff. cited by J. W. Lightley, op. cit. p. 86. Cf G. H. Box, E.R.E. Vol. xi, p. 45a.

and the fact that there are no specific Sadducean viewpoints in the Testaments combine to lead one to reject Sadducean authorship. The work of R. H. Charles has long been accepted as trustworthy in this area of literature. Charles has suggested that the Testaments were of Pharisaic origin with later Christian interpolations.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to Charles' position and in some ways providing necessary corrections is the interesting and provocative study of M. de Jonge.<sup>12</sup> De Jonge places the work in the hands of a Christian writer about 200 A.D. based largely on a comparison of certain portions of the Testaments with parallel concepts in Christian literature.<sup>13</sup> Although the use of such parallels is not always convincing,<sup>14</sup> nevertheless, de Jonge's work along with that of Charles provides sufficient reason for rejecting a Sadducean origin for the Testaments.

The absence of Sadducean literature and the silence of other sources on the subject lead one to conclude that the Sadducees, as a party, did not expect a Messiah. Admittedly the silence of the New Testament on this subject causes some concern. Why did the New Testa-

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<sup>11</sup>R. H. Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Vol. II, p. 282.

<sup>12</sup>M. de Jonge, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co. n.v., 1953).

Cf. Elias J. Bickerman, "The Date of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs", J.B.L. Vol. LXXIX (Sept. 1950) pp. 242-260.

<sup>13</sup>de Jonge, op. cit. p. 121

<sup>14</sup>The use of the Patriarchs to extol Christian virtues leaves much to be desired. The lives of these men do lend themselves readily to moral sermons. The Christology is very vague and often not consistent. The fact that fragments apparently belonging to the Test. of Levi have been found at Qumran weakens de Jonge's position considerably. (Cf. Barthélémy and Milik, Qumran I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953) pp. 87 ff.

ment writers not suggest this as a portion of their criticism of the Sadducees? It may have been that this was assumed as general knowledge which needs no comment. Even though the High Priest accuses Jesus of trying to be the Messiah, this does not necessarily indicate that he expected a Messiah. It may well have been merely an effort to place Jesus in the camp of the enemy, the Pharisees, and to force them to deal with the very difficult problem.

In contrast to the apparent Sadducean position, the expectation of a Messiah was an integral part of Pharisaic teaching. The Messiah's coming was to be heralded by certain events which were to be considered signs of his appearance.. As Schürer has pointed out,<sup>15</sup> one of the preparatory signs of the Messiah's coming is the occurrence of some special trouble and great affliction, the travail of the Messiah. The period of the affliction is to be preceded by omens of natural phenomena such as confusion and commotion in nature. Great strife will spread through the world, and nation will war against nation (IV Ezra 5:1-13; Mishnah Sota 9:15). Another element in the preparation for the Messiah is the return of Elijah.<sup>16</sup> It is sufficient here to mention that Elijah's functions were to vary from settling disputes and establishing peace and order to determining what is clean and what is unclean (Mishnah Eduyoth 8:7; Shekalim 2:5).

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<sup>15</sup>Schürer, op. cit. II, ii, pp. 154 ff.

<sup>16</sup>Weber, Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und Verwandter Schriften (Leipzig, 1897) p. 352 f.

Schürer, op. cit.

Lagrange, Le Messianisme chez les Juifs (Paris, 1909) p.210-213)

Bousset, Religion des Judentums, p. 232 f.

Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 244f.

R.B.Y. Scott, "The Expectation of Elijah" Toronto 1926, (The Canadian Journal of Religious Thought, Nov. Dec. 1926)

G.F. Moore, op. cit.

The time of the actual appearance of the Messiah varies in different writings. In Enoch (90:16-38) the Messiah does not appear until after the judgment. In most other writings which speak of a Messiah, he appears to do battle with the powers of evil before the judgment (e.g. Ps. of Sol. 17:24, 26,31,38,39,41). Various opinions are suggested by the later rabbis regarding the time of the Messiah's appearance (Sanhedrin 96b-97a), but these computations are not relevant.

The figure of the Messiah as reflected in the greater part of the Old Testament is that of a purely human person raised up by God. From time to time different writers attributed to this figure characteristics which suggested more of a divine than a human Messiah, but basically the human figure was retained. That the national Messiah was widely accepted by the popular mind is demonstrated, as Mowinckel points out,<sup>17</sup> by the fact that certain human figures were believed to be the Messiah and were able to win a following.

The human figure was expected to be of David's line. He was to reign over the restored kingdom when the nation had been delivered from domination by foreign powers (Is. 11:1;9:6;16:5; Micah 5:1; Jer. 17:25;23:5;33:17). The king was to be a scion of David although he is sometimes referred to simply as David (Jer. 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23f; 37:24; Hosea 3:5).

The Messiah's function in the earlier Jewish hope was that of ruler of the restored nation. He had little if any responsibility in establishing the kingdom.

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<sup>17</sup>S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956) pp. 284 ff.

Only during the brief period of the Hasmonean rule did the messianic hope attach itself to the tribe of Levi rather than the tribe of Judah (Jub. 31:13f; T. Reuben 6:10-12; T. Levi 18). Prior to the discovery of the Qumran literature G. F. Moore could state that post-Hasmonean Judaism discarded the idea of a Levitical Messiah.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the expectation of a human figure raised up by God, there was a future hope associated with the enigmatic figure of the Son of Man. This figure whose origin is probably outside Judaism was a pre-existent supernatural being. Those who do not feel that the Son of Man concept can be explained entirely from Jewish concepts usually connect the figure with Iranian thought. Even though the Son of Man concept may be traced back to Iranian thought it is to be noted that the figure as it appears in Judaism differs from that of Iranian thought. The Son of Man in Judaism has no cosmological significance.<sup>19</sup> He is not thought of as having a part in the creation of the world. Rather the Son of Man in Judaism is purely an eschatological figure, who is associated with the end of the age and to whom some of the characteristics of the national Messiah are attributed.

This supernatural figure had divine glory and was endowed with the qualities of wisdom and righteousness (I Enoch 49:3; 38:2; 39:5f; 46:3; 49:2). He is named by the Lord of Spirits before the creation of the world. His coming is a divine secret, but apparently the secret is revealed to the elect (I Enoch 48:7).

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<sup>18</sup>Mowinckel, *op. cit.* p. 289.

<sup>19</sup>W. Manson, *Jesus the Messiah*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1952) p. 184.

The significant function of the Son of Man is that of judge of the world based upon parallels between the visions and their interpretations in Daniel. It may be that in Daniel the Son of Man will share in the judgment. He is to be associated with God in judgment. It is a cosmic judgment in which even angelic powers will be judged (I Enoch 41:9; 55:4).

It is difficult to keep the concept of the Son of Man distinct from the figure of the national Messiah because the concepts seem to overlap and the characteristics of one are attributed to the other. Thus the national Messiah is at times understood to be in possession of certain virtues which tend to make him superhuman. In spite of the fact that some of the thoughts associated with the eschatological figure of the Son of Man, e.g. the resurrection, general judgment, the concept of a new creation, were widely accepted in Pharisaic Judaism, the figure of the Son of Man does not appear to have supplanted the national Messiah. Apparently the Son of Man concept was not a popular one with the ordinary people. The fact that the Son of Man is surrounded with "secrets" and that only those to whom the secrets are revealed are privileged to grasp the significance of the figure, suggest that the concept was popular only in very limited circles.

The Pharisaic concept of the Messiah is a mixture of the national human figure, who is of David's line and who will reign over a restored kingdom of Israel, and the figure of the Son of Man who is a pre-existent being whose function is to act as judge of the world and who in the meantime is hidden with God. In certain apocalyptic groups which may well be akin to the Pharisees the Son of Man figure overshadows the national Messiah. Such a group may have produced the

literature of the nature of I Enoch. Other groups, perhaps represented by such works as the Psalms of Solomon reflect messianic hopes which are centered in the national Messiah. The figure of the Son of Man became less prominent than the figure of the national Messiah in later orthodox Judaism,<sup>20</sup> but an other-worldly eschatology which had been part of the Son of Man concept remained alongside the figure of the national Messiah.

### III. MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS AMONG THE ESSENES AND THE QUMRAN SECTARIES

The traditional sources, i.e. Josephus, Philo, and Hippolytus, do not indicate that the Essenes shared in the expectation of a Messiah.<sup>21</sup> Although there is mention of other expectations of a future realization, the literature is silent with regard to a Messiah. Josephus implies that there is no resurrection of the body, but only immortality of the soul (B.J.II,viii,11). In contrast Hippolytus ascribes to the Essenes a belief in a bodily resurrection. Hippolytus states that the Essenes "acknowledge both that the flesh will rise again, and that it will be immortal in some manner as the soul is already imperishable."<sup>22</sup> The silence of our sources on the Essene belief in a Messiah need not be seen as evidence that such a belief did not exist. The very fact that hopes for a future realization are in evidence is sufficient to suggest that the Essenes in all probability did believe in a Messiah's coming. The silence of our traditional sources leads us to turn to the Qumran literature which reveals considerable messianic expectation.

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<sup>20</sup>Mowinckel, op. cit. p. 419 ff.

<sup>21</sup>Matthew Black, art cit., The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, p. 175.

<sup>22</sup>Hippolytus, Refut. Book IX, xxii.

Immediately as one looks at the Zadokite Work he is aware of the existence of messianic expectations (vii,21a;xx,1;xxii,23;xiii,20). In the Zadokite Work one becomes aware not only of the messianic expectations, but also of an unusual phrase "the Messiah of Aaron and Israel (לְ אַרְוֹן וְיִשְׂרָאֵל מְשִׁיחַ). Much interest has been centered around this phrase because of the reference to Aaron, thereby reflecting the possibility of a priestly Messiah, and because of the conflict with a passage in IQS referring to two Messiahs. Prior to the discovery of the Qumran scrolls the phrase from the Zadokite Work referring to the Messiah of Aaron and Israel was usually seen as designating a single individual. With the new light from the Manual of Discipline (IQS 9:11) serious questions have been raised regarding the correctness of the earlier translation. Karl Kuhn has explained the difference between the two passages as resulting from the altering of the text of the Zadokite Work coming from a period when the expectation of the two Messiahs was no longer understood.<sup>23</sup> Kuhn suggests that the singular form of the Zadokite Work should be a plural form thus harmonizing it with the Manual of Discipline. However, the finding of the singular form in cave IV in the oldest exemplar (75-50 B.C.) of the document causes one to find the suggestion of Kuhn unlikely. It is probable that there is lacking the exactness of terminology which would enable one to come to a definite conclusion. It is clear that two persons are involved in the expression from the Manual of Discipline, a priestly interpreter of the Law and a political

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<sup>23</sup>J.T. Milik, Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea (Napierville: Alec R. Allensen, Inc. 1959) p. 126  
 K. Kuhn, Die beiden Messias Aaron und Israel, New Testament Studies (Feb. 1955) pp. 168-179.



leader, but one wonders if the application of the term "Messiah" to both is correct? The real question is not the matter of explaining the variation in the text,<sup>24</sup> important though that is, but rather the attempt to ascertain whether the figure Messiah of Aaron ought to be considered as a Messiah in the accepted sense. To answer this question let us look first of all at the function of the Messiah in the Qumran literature.

In spite of numerous references to the Messiah in the Zadokite Work, it is not clear what his function will be. The period of time before the coming of the Messiah is termed the epoch of wickedness and members of the sect are to walk in the Law until the coming of the Messiah (vii,23). It will be part of the Messiah's work to make conciliation for trespasses (xiv,19). Those who do not hold to the rule will not be allowed to dwell in the land when the Messiah comes (xiii, 20). Most of the references in this document imply at least that the Messiah of Aaron and Israel (one figure) is the warrior who is to come at the last days. This figure apparently possesses no supernatural attributes but rather is the political figure of popular expectation.

In the Manual of Discipline the Messiah of Aaron clearly takes precedence over the Messiah of Israel particularly as the presiding officer. Kuhn translates IQSa ii,12-17 as follows:

- Ia. "(and the Priest) the Anointed One, shall come with them, (for he is) the head of the entire Congregation of Israel; b) (and before him shall sit the sons) of Aaron, the priest; c) and the (conveners) of the assembly, the honored men, they shall sit (before him, each) according to his place of rank.
- IIa. And then (shall come the Messiah) of Israel; b) and before him shall sit the heads (of the tribe, each)

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<sup>24</sup>M. Black, The Scrolls and Christian Origins (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961) p. 147.

according to his place of honor according to (their...) in their camps and their march formations; c) and all heads (of the houses of the Congregation, together with the wisemen of Israel) shall sit before them, each according to his proper place of rank."<sup>25</sup>

Kuhn concludes that "the entire passage shows us with complete certainty the concept of two Messiahs: (1) the Messiah of Aaron, the high priest and head of the entire congregation, and (2) the Messiah of Israel, the political leader, subordinate and second in rank to the former"<sup>26</sup>

The parallels drawn from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Lev. XVIII and Judah XXIV) by Kuhn as further support cannot be readily accepted because of the vast amount of Christian interpolation in the text. The serious challenge to the pre-Christian date of the Testaments, although not wholly convincing, causes one to be extremely cautious in his use of the Testaments.<sup>27</sup>

The Messiah of Israel, the political figure, recognized by Kuhn poses no problem. This figure is the Warrior Messiah who will slay the wicked and lay waste the earth (1QSb v, 24-25). Matthew Black draws attention also to a passage suggesting that the Messiah is only one figure although there are several eschatological figures.<sup>28</sup> In 1QSa ii, 11f. there is the passage "in the event of God begetting the Messiah to be with them."<sup>29</sup> In 1QSb v. 20-28 the identity of the messianic figure becomes clear. Black translates it as follows:<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>K. Kuhn, "The Two Messiahs", The Scrolls and the New Testament, ed. Stendahl (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957) pp. 56, 57.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. p. 57. Cf. J. T. Milik, Revue Biblique 60 (1953) p. 290f.

<sup>27</sup>M. de Jonge, op. cit. pp. 119-126.

<sup>28</sup>M. Black, op. cit. pp. 148, 149.

<sup>29</sup>Barthelemy and Milik, Qumran I, p. 110f.

<sup>30</sup>Black, op. cit. p. 151

"(For the Blessing of the Prince of the Congregation,..)  
 May the Lord exalt thee to an everlasting height, and as  
 a tower of strength on a lofty rampart.  
 Thou shalt smite the peoples with power of Thy word (lit.  
 mouth);  
 With thy rod thou shalt lay waste... the earth,  
 And with the breath of thy lips thou shalt slay the  
 wicked,  
 With a spirit of counsel and eternal might;  
 A spirit of knowledge and of the fear of God;  
 Righteousness shall be the girdle of Thy loins,  
 And faithfulness the girdle of Thy reins;  
 And He will set thy horn with iron and thy hoofs with brass...  
 ... Thou shalt tread down the nations as mud in the streets,  
 For God has raised thee up as the sceptre of rulers.  
 They shall come before thee and worship thee,  
 And all the nations will serve thee,  
 And by His holy name He will make thee great  
 And thou shalt be as a lion  
 .....tearing and there is none to restore...

It is clear that the figure of the Prince of the Congregation is the Davidic Messiah who will be the victorious political leader.

It is apparent from the examination of some of the Qumran literature that the figure of the Davidic Messiah, the Messiah of Israel, the Prince of the Congregation, will occupy the prominent place and exert leadership except in those areas where the High Priest of the Congregation would normally take precedence.

The scroll known as The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness does not aid significantly in solving our problem. The battle described therein is a future battle and the scroll is probably a blue-print of the coming apocalyptic war. In this scroll there is clearly a priestly interest and the High Priest plays a significant role in the final struggle. The imagery and language of this scroll causes considerable difficulty in discovering the exact relationship between the two messianic figures.

In addition to the figures (or figure) of the Messiahs

of Aaron and Israel (which most scholars believe to be two individuals) a third figure was also associated with the future hopes of the community, viz. a Moses-like Prophet of Deut. xviii, 18. The prophetic figure appears in IQS 9:11.<sup>31</sup> The figure of a prophet was apparently popular in later Judaism being found in addition among the Samaritans and Christians as well as the Jews.<sup>32</sup> The Prophet is mentioned in the Fourth Gospel (1:31) when John the Baptist is asked if he is the Prophet (cf. also John 6:14; 7:40). The Prophet was to precede the figures of Aaron and Israel and in all probability they were not to appear at the same time. There is only slight mention of the Prophet in the Qumran literature and he is to be associated with the expected Elijah redivivus of Malachi 4:5.

The difficulty in understanding the Messianic expectations in the Qumran literature lies not so much in the general emphases of the sect as in the use of the term Messiah. In recognizing that there is a lack of preciseness in the language of the sect and a lack of clarity as to the functions of the individual figures one's conclusions must be tentative. The messianic expectations of the Qumran group appear as follows: As a conclusion to the continuous struggle between good and evil which characterized the daily life of the sect, there would be a final crisis which would include pain and suffering (IQH III, 1-18) with a final struggle described in the War Scroll (IQM). The High Priest (hakkohen hako's) and the Prince of the Congregation (nes' ha'edah) will lead the sect in the final struggle. The final end would be brought about by God which would include the establishment of prosperity and peace of the kingdom.

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<sup>31</sup>Barthélemy and Milik, *op. cit.* p. 121 ff.

<sup>32</sup>C. F. Young, "Jesus the Prophet", J. B. L. LXVIII, p. 285 ff.

To return to a previously raised question, how is the term Messiah of Aaron to be understood? Undoubtedly the eschatological figures of Qumran expectations were three distinct persons: the Prophet, the Messiah of Israel, and the Messiah of Aaron. The Messiah of Aaron is a priestly figure whose function lies in presiding over the major activities of the sect in the period of the kingdom or the new age. His presiding over the messianic banquet marks the end of the old order and the acknowledgment of the beginning of the new. The expectations of the Qumran group in some ways reflected the language of the early Christian church. As F. M. Cross points out "they understood this 'New Covenant' to be at once the 'renewed (old) covenant' and the 'eternal covenant' to be established at the end of days, i.e. precisely in the New Testament sense."<sup>33</sup>

However, this new age has been brought into existence through the leadership of the Prince of the Congregation, the national hero who has slain the enemy and rallied forces behind him.

The language of the Qumran expectations prevents a clear and concise picture of the priestly messiah's function. He will serve as cultic leader and primary figure in the new age, but does not share significantly in the establishment of the new age. The appearance of the Messiah of Aaron marks an innovation in the messianic expectations of Judaism. With this figure there is an expansion of previous hopes as a result of the priestly nature and emphasis of the sect. It is doubtful that the Messiah of Aaron should be construed as a reappearance of the Righteous Teacher but rather as a distinct high priest whose position is leader in the new age. His function is separate from that of the Messiah of Israel.

In this ideal community only the sons of Aaron will have authority in law and property. The community will be completely set apart and will

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<sup>33</sup>F. M. Cross, op. cit., p. 164

not intermingle with the men of deceit. This ideal stage will come with the arrival of the messianic figures of the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel (1QS 9:11). Though the three figures mentioned will share in the consummation, it is quite clear that the Messiah of Aaron will be the leading figure. The Eschatological prophet reflects the reference in Deuteronomy (18:15-18). A second figure is the royal Messiah whose responsibility would be to lead the troops in the last war (1QM 5:1).<sup>34</sup> The third figure in the eschatology was the Messiah of Aaron who is the primary figure, the Star of Jacob.<sup>35</sup>

These particular aspects of the Qumran literature reflect the problem which the writer noted in the introduction. There is in Judaism an absence of a precise and fixed structure of Hebrew thought. Rather there is variety and vitality and growth even within some of the more conservative movements. To what extent does John the Baptist's messianic expectation reflect the emphases of the Qumran literature? It is to this question that we must now turn.

#### IV. THE MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

It is very difficult to discern the exact nature of the messianic figure expected by John the Baptist. The only source of information on this point is the New Testament. Josephus' reference to John contains no mention of a messianic expectation. In examin-

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<sup>34</sup>F. M. Cross, op. cit., p. 166

<sup>35</sup>F. M. Cross, op. cit., p. 165

\* W. H. Brownlee, "Messianic Motifs of Qumran and the New Testament," New Testament Studies 3, 1956/57) pp. 12-30.

K. G. Kuhn, art. cit., pp. 168-179.

ing the New Testament passage on this subject one must exercise caution in order to recognize what, if any, Christian influence has shaped the recorded saying of John the Baptist. The significant passage attributed to John is recorded by Matthew as follows:

"I indeed baptize you with water into repentance,  
but he that cometh after me is mightier than I,  
whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall  
baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."  
(Matt. 3:11)<sup>36</sup>

What does John mean, or to whom does he refer when he speaks of the Mightier One? It is evident that the Mightier One in the mind of the Synoptic writer is Jesus and the passage clearly is used with that meaning. But, did John the Baptist refer to Jesus? Before we attempt to answer this question let us examine the expression "the coming Mightier One" to endeavor to discover its significance. The passage states that someone who will come after John the Baptist will be greater than he. Lohmeyer, Grobel, and Cullmann have suggested that the phrase "the one that cometh after me" indicates that John the Baptist referred to one of his disciples.<sup>37</sup> This interpretation is based on the usage in the New Testament with reference to Jesus and His disciples. The following passages reflect this

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<sup>36</sup>Cf. Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:27,15,30; Acts 13:25.  
The variations regarding the sandals, carried or unloosed, do not appear to be of any significance.

<sup>37</sup>E. Lohmeyer, "Zur Evangelischen Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer", Journal of Biblical Literature LI (1932) pp. 311-317.  
K. Grobel, "He That Cometh After Me", Journal of Biblical Literature LX (1941) pp. 397-401.  
O. Cullmann, The Early Church (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1956) pp. 177-182.

meaning of discipleship:

Matt. 16:24 εἰ τις θέλει ὀπίω μου εἰσεῖν

Mark 8:34 εἰ τις θέλει ὀπίω μου εἰσεῖν

Luke 9:23 εἰ τις θέλει ὀπίω μου εἰσεῖν

If this saying is to be interpreted in this way, then John the Baptist has expressed the paradox that one of his own disciples is the Mightier One and that he (John) is not worthy to carry his shoes. This interpretation has been rejected by Kraeling as a Christian invention because "it reflects too accurately the relation between Jesus and John as the Evangelists understood it."<sup>38</sup> Surely it is not necessary to reject a passage as unauthentic merely because it reflects accurately a later interpretation, although this accuracy might suggest the need for caution.

The word ὀπίω normally is used to convey the meaning of time rather than discipleship although the latter meaning is certainly possible.<sup>39</sup> When the word occurs in the Septuagint, it usually carries the meaning of a succession in time (e.g. I Kings 1:6,24; Eccl. 10:14).<sup>40</sup> It is to be noted that on such questions as the meaning of words like ὀπίω usually in the final analysis the context determines the significance of the word. The New Testament usage reflects the meaning of discipleship although one must recognize that the words ὀπίω μου don't appear often enough for a conclusion to be reached on these grounds alone.

<sup>38</sup>C. Kraeling, John the Baptist, p. 55.

<sup>39</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament s.v. ὀπίω

<sup>40</sup>V. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd. 1955) pp. 156,157.



It is in the sense of discipleship that the present writer interprets the phrase ὁ δὲ ὀπίω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου ἐστίν.

Perhaps further clarity on the significance of the phrase may be gained by attempting to discover who the "Mightier One" was who was to come after John. It is indeed unlikely that John the Baptist meant that God himself was the Mightier One who was to come after John. No Jew of John's day would have been so bold to presume to have made such a comparison with God.<sup>41</sup> It is most improbable that John the Baptist would have either looked upon himself as a precursor of God or would have so stated the matter even if such had been the case. Both Lohmeyer and Grobel believe that John understood the Mightier One to be a human being and that John referred to his own disciple.<sup>42</sup> Grobel goes on to deny that there was any messianic intent in the saying under consideration. John the Baptist, according to Grobel, had merely acknowledged the great potential of one of his pupils. This writer finds himself in agreement with the identification suggested by Lohmeyer and Grobel, but doubts that Grobel is correct in eliminating any messianic intent from the saying. Clearly, John's whole message is couched in an eschatological framework and his whole emphasis is upon the coming greater one who is to be associated with

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<sup>41</sup>

F. C. Grant, The Gospel of the Kingdom (New York: Macmillan Company, 1940) p. 41.

Goguel, op. cit. p. 39.

Kraeling, op. cit. p. 54.

<sup>42</sup>Lohmeyer, art. cit., J.B.L. (LI, 1932) pp. 311-317.

Grobel, art. cit., J.B.L. (LX, 1941).

the judgment.

In opposition one finds such scholars as F. C. Grant, R. Bultmann, and M. Dibelius joined in denying that John the Baptist expected a human figure as the Mightier One.<sup>43</sup> Grant has dismissed such an interpretation as merely an attempt by Christians to establish the correct relationship between John and Jesus. Grant is correct in pointing out that this is the later Christian position, but one could argue that the later position came into being as an accurate remembrance and not a theological creation. Although the language may be figurative, nevertheless, the text describes John the Baptist as feeling unworthy to carry the sandals of the Mightier One.

Among those who have stated that the figure of the Mightier One was not merely a human being is Reitzenstein who identifies him with the Son of Man of Iranian or Mandaean sources.<sup>44</sup> How widely disseminated was the Heavenly Man myth of Iranian thought is difficult to ascertain. The present writer has found no evidence to link John the Baptist with the Heavenly Man myth.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the appearance of the Son of Man reflected in Jewish literature, e.g. I Enoch 61:8; 69:27,29; IV Ezra:13 does not have the ontological or cosmological significance of the Heavenly Man myth. The concern of the

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<sup>43</sup>F. C. Grant, op. cit. p. 45.  
Goguel, op. cit. p. 39  
Dibelius, op. cit. pp. 56 f.  
R. Bultmann, op. cit. p. 116.

<sup>44</sup>R. Reitzenstein, Die Vorgeschichte der Christlichen Taufe (Leipzig: Teubner, 1929) has attempted to link John the Baptist with the Mandeans.

<sup>45</sup>F. C. Grant, op. cit. p. 51 rightly points out that there is no evidence of extensive influence of esoteric groups holding this belief.

Son of Man in Jewish literature is with the last things.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, it is to be doubted that this concept had penetrated Judaism to the extent that one could identify it with John's expectations. The Baptist's continued association with Hebrew concepts and his efforts to prepare a people combine to lead one to reject Iranian thought as the source of John's hope.<sup>47</sup>

One of the aspects of popular Hebrew thought was that Elijah would return prior to the coming of the Messiah. Some have suggested that Elijah was the one whom John the Baptist expected.<sup>48</sup> The views of George Duncan on this matter are of particular interest. Duncan has conjectured that John the Baptist mistakenly thought that Jesus was Elijah. Popular writers on John the Baptist, according to Duncan, say that John was "afire with the conviction that the Messiah was soon to appear." Duncan then asks these popular writers to show where there is any clear reference to a Messiah.<sup>49</sup> There is, as Duncan indicates, no clear reference to a Messiah. However, the figure of the coming Mightier One combined with what this individual will accomplish (baptize with Spirit) indicate quite convincingly the expectation of the Messiah. Although the designation Messiah is not used specifically

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<sup>46</sup>William Manson, Jesus the Messiah (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1943) p. 183.

Hans Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955) p. 43.

<sup>47</sup>F. M. Cross, op. cit. p. 150n.

S. Mowinckel, op. cit. pp. 261-450.

<sup>48</sup>George Duncan, Jesus Son of Man (London: Nisbet & Co. 1947) p. 84.

A. Blakiston, John the Baptist and His Relation to Jesus (London: J. & J. Bennett, Ltd. 1912) p. 61

<sup>49</sup>Duncan, op. cit. pp. 82, 83.

with reference to the Mightier One, it may be safely assumed that this was in the mind of the Baptist.

Duncan's attempt to identify John's Mightier One with Elijah solves some of the perplexities of the New Testament presentation, but fails to be convincing for several reasons. First of all, the flavor and impact of John's message are not unlike Elijah (e.g. fire called down from Heaven, related to the baptism with fire, the attire, and the area of activity). These suggest not so much an anticipation of Elijah but rather an imitation of Elijah by John himself. Duncan rejects such a conclusion on the grounds that John "would never have taken so exalted and self-conscious a view of his mission".<sup>50</sup> Further support, of course, is to be found in John's specific denial that he was Elijah as recorded by the Fourth Evangelist. But one must recognize that John the Baptist could have denied honestly that he was Elijah and at the same time have fulfilled the function of Elijah and by his way of life give substance to the identification which he denied. Secondly, Duncan's conjecture that John's Mightier One was Elijah overlooks the problem that we have no expectation of a forerunner of Elijah. One should, of course, bring attention to the fact that John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel considers himself only a voice. This reflects John's humility and his sense of unworthiness, but does not lend support to Duncan's suggestion that John the Baptist proclaimed the coming of Elijah. The tension and the expectation of the imminent judgment in John's preaching indicate that John's Mightier One is the Messiah who will come with spirit and fire and not Elijah

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 85.

whose main anticipated function was that of settling disputes.

Two other possibilities remain to be considered. The Mightier One may have been either the priestly figure of the Qumran literature or the national Messiah. The anointed Priest (Messiah of Aaron) is one of the eschatological figures of Qumran along with the Prophet and the Messiah of Israel (1QS 9:11). It is the anointed priest who will be pre-eminent in the last days and who will preside over the eschatological banquet. A priestly Messiah is also important in the New Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse. In Rev. 1:12 ff. Christ is pictured in priestly garb tending seven golden candlesticks. Although Jesus is never specifically identified with the Messiah of Aaron in the New Testament, F. M. Cross has pointed out some suggestions of the category.<sup>51</sup> The messianic priest is called the Lamb in the Testament of Joseph (Ch. 19) and the Lamb is stronger than the lion in the Apocalypse (Ch. 17).<sup>52</sup> This writer cannot find reason for associating the Messiah of Aaron with the figure of the Mightier One, at least at this point in the study. The intensity of John's expectation does not seem to reflect the well-ordered life of the Qumran community. It is possible that John the Baptist stood in opposition to the deliberateness of the Qumran group having once been a part of it, but thus far we have no evidence to support such a conjecture.

The most reasonable identification of the coming Mightier One is with the national Messiah.<sup>53</sup> The national Messiah of David's line

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<sup>51</sup>F. M. Cross, op. cit. p. 165.

<sup>52</sup>See chapter five on the phrase Lamb of God.

<sup>53</sup>T. W. Manson, "Mention of John in the Acts", Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Vol. 36 (1953-54) p. 404.

was expected to be a righteous ruler to whom the heathen will yield (Ps. of So. 17:14 ff.). He is to be "equipped with the spirit and with divine powers and qualities."<sup>54</sup> In spite of the highest of attributes, the national Messiah was a man who is thought of as inaugurating the newly restored eternal dynasty of David.<sup>55</sup> The identification of the Mightier One with the national Messiah is not without difficulty. Goguel has correctly pointed out that no recorded saying of John the Baptist mentions the national Messiah.<sup>56</sup> Also, Mowinckel points out that the national Messiah was not thought of as a judge of the world which is one of the functions of the Mightier One.<sup>57</sup>

These difficulties are formidable but not impossible to overcome. One must recognize, as has been suggested above, that part of the problem in dealing with these concepts lies in the lack of preciseness in distinguishing one messianic category from another. Although John the Baptist does not clearly designate the Mightier One as the national Messiah in the Synoptic accounts this is probably what he had in mind in the use of the term Lamb of God recorded by the Fourth Evangelist. The criticism by Goguel must be allowed to stand pending examination of this concept of the Lamb of God in chapter five.

A similar position must be taken with the criticism of Mowinckel that the national Messiah is not ordinarily associated with judgment. We have reflected in the language of John the Baptist not the ordinary description of the national Messiah but attributes associated with the apocalyptic figure of the Son of Man of Enoch and Daniel.

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<sup>54</sup>S. Mowinckel, op. cit. p. 311.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. p. 327.

<sup>56</sup>Goguel, op. cit. p. 39.

<sup>57</sup>Mowinckel, op. cit. p. 319; Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 56, 57.

Seen in this light John's expectation looks forward to a coming judgment and to a coming judge. This has modified the picture of judgment of Malachi where God himself is to be the judge. A further observation needs to be made before Mowinckel's criticism can be answered. In what way was the one expected by John the Baptist ~~to be~~ understood as "mightier"? Perhaps in this is to be seen the key to the problem. John the Baptist spoke of the Mightier One in terms of a greater baptism. John was to baptize with water, but the coming one will baptize with Spirit and fire.<sup>58</sup> Since John's water baptism accompanied by repentance enabled an individual to avoid the impending judgment,<sup>59</sup> the baptism with Spirit and fire will be the judgment upon those who have not repented. This interpretation of the saying on the two baptisms has yet to be established,<sup>60</sup> but the writer wishes to suggest this conclusion at this point in order to tentatively give answer to Mowinckel's objection. The Mightier One, then, is mightier in that he will bring the judgment which John the Baptist merely proclaimed. But how is the national Messiah to be seen as a participant in this judgment? The writer would answer that one of the Messiah's functions will be to remove sin and the sinner. In Psalm of Solomon 17:41 the Messiah is pure and free from sin. The passage reads as follows:

"And he himself (will be) pure from sin, so that he may rule a great people.  
He will rebuke rulers and remove sinners by the might of his word."

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<sup>58</sup>This difficult saying will be considered in Chapter VI.

<sup>59</sup>See above Chapter II.

<sup>60</sup>See Chapter VI.

The answer to Mowinckel's criticism is tentatively suggested at this point. In later chapters further support for the position taken by the writer will be given. At this point the writer can only offer what he feels to be justified by the material thus far considered, recognizing that some objections and criticisms must be left standing until other areas are explored. The figure of the Mightier One does not reflect the clear distinctions we would desire between the national Messiah, Son of Man, Prophet, or the priestly Messiah. The attributes of individual expectations are applied freely to the other figures and consequently one's conclusions must allow for a certain overlapping of terms.

John the Baptist stood clearly in the heritage of Israel's great prophetic tradition. His message was a message of judgment for those who refused to repent and turn back to God. This judgment was imminent and final. Those judged unfavorably would be consumed by fire. However, John's message also contained hope for those who had repented and received baptism. The Mightier One of John's expectation was the figure of the national Messiah, one like David who would establish the eternal kingdom.



## CHAPTER IV

## THE RELIABILITY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

## I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Method of Procedure

In this chapter the writer will set forth a comparison of some of the significant events in the life of Jesus as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels with those recorded in the Fourth Gospel. The object of this effort will be to attempt to determine the trustworthiness of the Fourth Gospel's account of Jesus' life. If it can be shown that the Fourth Gospel is reliable as a source of information on the life of Jesus, then it will be legitimate to move from the established position to a consideration of the Fourth Evangelist's treatment of John the Baptist. Once having established the view that the Fourth Gospel is in several significant instances reliable even when not supported by the Synoptic writers, or possibly even when in contradiction to them, then serious consideration can be given to the Johannine portrayal of the Baptist.

Once having examined the above-mentioned instances the writer will then discuss the sources of the Fourth Gospel including the Jewish background, the use of the synoptic traditions, and the possibility of a special source not used by the Synoptic writers which led the author of the Fourth Gospel to alter or amend the Synoptic tradition.

### Present Status of Fourth Gospel

A half-century ago the question of the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics was generally felt to be that of the former having been aware of the existence of the latter. Divergent views were forthcoming regarding the reasons why John's gospel differed so significantly from the Synoptics. As R. H. Lightfoot has pointed out, one widely held view was that John had written to "supplement the other gospels by the addition of fresh primitive tradition concerning certain aspects of the ministry which had been neglected by, or were unknown to, the synoptic evangelists."<sup>1</sup> This view, recognizing its inadequacy, was to a large extent unchallenged until P. Gardner-Smith suggested that John had not known the Synoptics, even though he may have been familiar with certain traditions which had been circulated in oral form.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Gardner-Smith suggested that the divergences from the Synoptics in John's work are best explained on the basis of John's ignorance rather than deliberate contradiction.<sup>3</sup> To Gardner-Smith it was inconceivable that John should deliberately contradict the standard works. He suggests that as long as one considers that John's gospel is a revision of Mark and that John had altered Mark's work, then the historical value of John could not be great. However, if the Fourth Gospel is considered as "a survival of

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<sup>1</sup>R. H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>P. Gardner-Smith, St. John and the Synoptic Gospels (Cambridge, 1938) pp. 92 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 92

a type of first century Christianity which owed nothing to synoptic developments, and which originated in quite a different intellectual atmosphere, its historical value may be very great indeed."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. P. Gardner-Smith's work has been one attempt to deal with the question which has been raised by other scholars, viz., the historical value of the Gospel of John. Gardner-Smith has endeavored to take a positive position in order to support the trustworthy character of the Fourth Evangelist. Others have frankly stated that they could not accept the historical reliability of the Fourth Gospel except in the most limited definition of the term "historical". Among others M. Jean Reville states that "the Fourth Gospel is not a faithful historical account of the life and teaching of Jesus."<sup>5</sup>

C. H. Dodd has suggested that "for strictly historical material with the minimum of subjective interpretation, we must not go to the Fourth Gospel..... But it is to the Synoptic Gospels that we must go if we wish to recover the oldest and purest tradition of the facts."<sup>6</sup>

The obvious question to be dealt with first of all is the meaning of the term "historical". If one means by this a purely factual, uninterpreted account, then the Fourth Gospel cannot be accepted as historical. However, if historical is used to describe accounts which are essentially true but which contain an interpretative element then serious consideration can be given to the Fourth Gospel. One

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p. 96.

<sup>5</sup>M. Jean Reville, Le Quatrieme Evangile, p. 297, cited by W. F. Howard, The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation (London; Epworth Press, 4th ed., 1955) p. 128.

<sup>6</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Authority of the Bible (New York: Harper, 1929) p. 228.

cannot help but be aware of this element in John's Gospel. However, one must ask does this interpretative element distort the Johannine presentation? It will be our task to show that this is not the case.

Several factors have combined to cause the majority of biblical scholars to follow different paths in dealing with John's writing. First of all, some men would follow Clement in describing the Fourth Gospel as a spiritual book and thereby remove it from the level occupied by the Synoptic Gospels. Of course, this approach would not minimize the Fourth Gospel. On the contrary, it would recognize its significant contribution theologically and doctrinally. Another approach would honor the historical data of the Fourth Gospel only when ~~they are~~ substantiated by the Synoptics or when the unsubstantiated details would in no way conflict with what was generally accepted as reliable from the Synoptic view.

A third approach is to deal with the Johannine writings and to attempt to correlate the Johannine account with that of the Synoptics. This approach meets with difficulty at least on four crucial points with reference to the ministry of Jesus---a) the location of Jesus' ministry, b) the duration of the ministry, c) the cleansing of the Temple, d) the date of the Last Supper and crucifixion. These difficulties are formidable, but do not necessarily mean that the Fourth Gospel is unreliable. Indeed, as will be shown below, the crucial points mentioned may well be more nearly correct in the Johannine account than in the Synoptic accounts.

Two major reasons are usually put forward as sufficient to reject the Fourth Gospel as a trustworthy source of information. Some have suggested that the language of John's Gospel reflects Hellen-

istic influence and that the presence of such influence indicates that the Gospel is much later than the synoptics and therefore not as accurate or reliable.<sup>7</sup> The late date of John (circa the end of the 1st century A. D.) may not be an adverse factor. The lateness of the gospel may well be of great significance in the matter of considering the contradictions to or the corrections of the Synoptic data. That is, the very fact that John has altered, corrected, or emended his Synoptic sources demands an explanation.

The aspects of the Fourth Gospel which suggest non-Jewish influence are the stress on the struggle between light and darkness and truth with perversion.<sup>8</sup> The existence of this modified dualism in the Fourth Gospel can now be explained within the context of Judaism itself. The writings of men like Loisy, Bultmann, and Bacon represent the period before the discovery of the Qumran literature and reflect the efforts made to explain those aspects of the Fourth Gospel which stood in contrast to the Synoptic viewpoint. The discovery of the Qumran scrolls has revealed that there existed within Judaism of the pre-Christian era a modified dualism somewhat similar to that found in the Fourth Gospel. Recently R. E. Brown has pointed out that the

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<sup>7</sup> A Loisy, Le Quatrième Evangile (Paris: 2nd ed., 1921) finds Gnostic influences.

Rudolf Bultmann, ZNTW, XXIV (1925) pp. 100-146 cited by C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1955) finds Mandaean ideas present.

B. W. Bacon, The Gospel of the Hellenists (New York: H. Holt & Co. 1933).

<sup>8</sup> See for example the Prologue to the Gospel of John.

parallel dualistic aspects of the Qumran literature and the Johannine literature reflect a modified dualism and not the physical dualism of Gnosticism especially as seen in Iranian thought.<sup>9</sup> The dualism reflected in the Scrolls and in the Fourth Gospel has come into contact with Old Testament thought and has been interwoven into the concept of the creator God. The impact of the Qumran discoveries on the status of the Gospel of John has been summarized by Frank Moore Cross as follows:

"John has its strongest affinities not with the Greek world, or Philonic Judaism, but with Palestinian Judaism. Its concepts of truth, knowledge, spirit, and even the Word must be seen, not as rooted in Greek or Gnostic thought, but as concepts emerging precisely out of sectarian Judaism."<sup>10</sup>

The value of the Qumran discoveries for the immediate problem is that it is now reasonably certain that there existed within Judaism in the pre-Christian period language and concepts very similar to those found in the Fourth Gospel. This would mean that the language of the Fourth Gospel cannot be used as evidence of the unreliability of the Fourth Gospel as a source of information.

One must, of course, recognize that to indicate that the roots of the Fourth Gospel are to be found in Judaism does not mean that the Gospel is thereby completely trustworthy. It does mean that one of the main arguments for rejecting the Fourth Gospel as historically reliable is considerably weakened.

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<sup>9</sup> Raymond E. Brown, "The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 17, 1955 pp. 403-419; 559-574.

<sup>10</sup> Frank Moore Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (New York: Doubleday, 1958) p. 161.

A second major reason for rejecting the Fourth Gospel as trustworthy is that it reflects a highly developed Christology and a concise statement of the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist so different from that seen in the Synoptics that it obviously is much later and bears the influence of later Christian thinkers.<sup>11</sup> To this position the present writer must raise several objections. First of all, arguments for an early date for the Gospel of John can be undergirded by the implications drawn from the Qumran Scrolls which would place the Gospel within the limits of the first century and consequently within the life-span of one close to the events. Secondly, it is very difficult to determine the time required for the development of the Christological views in the Fourth Gospel. Only a few years would be necessary if the right person were present.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the Gospel of John reflects the Christological thought of the church does not necessarily mean that it has been shaped by later Christian thinkers. Rather it may well be that the acceptance of the Johannine position reflects the church's recognition of the correctness of the Fourth Evangelist's work. It is necessary also to question the necessity of a long period of time to account for the clarification of the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist. The Fourth Gospel reflects a more intimate knowledge of the Baptist's life and area of activity than does the Synoptic account. The Gospel of John points out that John the Baptist witnessed the descent of the

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<sup>11</sup> This view is reflected throughout the works of M. Goguel, Martin Dibelius and Carl Kraeling already cited.

<sup>12</sup> B. H. Streeter, The Four Gospels (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1953) p. 457.

Spirit on Jesus (1:32), that John acknowledged Jesus as the Lamb of God, and that John and Jesus were associated together for a period of time.<sup>13</sup> What the source of this special knowledge was is not certain. Tradition is almost unanimous that the Fourth Gospel was written in Ephesus.<sup>14</sup> This has been joined with the reference in Acts (18:24ff) to a group at Ephesus who may have been followers of the Baptist as a possible explanation of the Gospel writer's special knowledge.<sup>15</sup> More convincing is the possibility that the author himself or at least one of his associates may have been a follower of John the Baptist and consequently has a more intimate knowledge not only of the Baptist but also of the relationship with Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

The major objections to the Fourth Gospel have been seen to be seriously weakened in the light of the Qumran similarities of language and concept and a recognition of the possibility of an early date for the Gospel and that the author may have been a follower of John the Baptist.

Before a final conclusion on the question of the reliability of the Fourth Evangelist's evidence a comparison must be made between his account and those of the Synoptics with reference to the ministry of Jesus. We will follow this procedure because of the abundance of comparative data in the Gospels referring to Jesus' ministry. If it can be shown as a reasonable possibility that the

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<sup>13</sup>John 1:29;35-36 and John 3:26.

<sup>14</sup>St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III ii,1.

<sup>15</sup>This writer doubts that the group in Acts can be used as evidence of the Baptist sect. See Chapter I pp. 7-8.

<sup>16</sup>See Chapter V.



Johannine data referring to Jesus are trustworthy in several important areas, then it is reasonable to consider the Johannine account of John the Baptist with greater objectivity than has been done by many of the contemporary writers on the subject.

Relationship of the Marcan Account to that of the Fourth Gospel

As C. K. Barrett has pointed out,<sup>17</sup> just as it can be shown that Mark was used by Matthew and Luke based on the occurrences in Matthew and Luke of Marcan episodes in the Marcan order and by the use of Marcan language, so also analogous facts can be observed in regard to the Gospel of John.<sup>17</sup> Barrett's list of common factors duplicated here indicates the apparent dependence of John upon Mark for some of his information concerning Jesus.

Event	Mark	John
a. The Work and Witness of the Baptist	1:4-8	1:19-36
b. Departure to Galilee	1:14f.	4:3
c. Feeding of the Multitude	6:34-44	6:1-13
d. Walking on the Lake	6:45-52	6:16-21
e. Peter's Confession	8:29	6:68f.
f. Departure to Jerusalem	9:30f.	7:10-14
g. The Entry The Anointing	11:1-10 14:3-9	12:12-15 12:1-8
h. The Last Supper, with predictions of betrayal and denial	14:17-28	13:17-26
i. The Arrest	14:43-52	18:1-11
j. The Passion and Resurrection	14:53 16:8	18:12-20:29

Such lists are not in themselves conclusive proof that John used Mark, but at least they do indicate an impressive relationship.

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<sup>17</sup> C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1960) p. 34, 35.

Relationship of the Lucan Account to that of the Fourth Gospel

The evidence for a close relationship between the Gospel of Luke and the Fourth Gospel is less impressive than that related to Mark's Gospel but it does suggest that John was acquainted with and made some use of Luke. The efforts of J. M. Creed on this matter are exhaustive and this writer can only reflect the conclusions of that great scholar.<sup>18</sup> Certain common episodes appear with reference to the passion and triumph of Jesus. For example, both John and Luke note that Satan possessed Judas and led him to the betrayal (Luke 22:3; John 13:2,27; cf. 6:70); the prediction of Peter's denial is made at the supper and not after it as suggested by Mark. Other common details are the mention of the right ear of the high priest's servant having been cut off and the appearance of two angels on Easter morning which is in contrast to one angel in Mark.<sup>19</sup> In addition the mention of Mary and Martha appears only in Luke and John. John mentions Lazarus as their brother and Luke mentions the name in a different context (16:19f.). Only Luke and John refer to Annas. Also mention is made of a Judas other than Iscariot in John (14:22) and this may be the Judas of James in Luke's list of the twelve.

These similarities of sequence of episodes as well as the common verbal usages of John and Mark in addition to the common elements peculiar to Luke and John may be explained as mere coincidence but the evidence seems too impressive to allow such an explanation.

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<sup>18</sup>J. M. Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke (London: Macmillan and Co., 1930) pp. 318 ff.

<sup>19</sup>Barrett, op. cit. p. 32.

These common elements may be explained as the result of using common sources. But we have no extant common sources other than those theorized from our written accounts and there is no evidence which would prove that these sources existed in the sequence or used the same words and phrases reflected in our written documents. Therefore, it would seem reasonable to conclude, pending the discovery of sources mentioned, that the writer of the Gospel of John had access to Mark, possibly an earlier form, and also had some acquaintance with Luke.

The establishment, probable at least, of a contact between the Fourth Evangelist and the Synoptic writers necessitates a consideration of the divergences between them and an attempt to explain John's omissions, alterations, and emendations.

#### Differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics

The Johannine Gospel differs from the Synoptics on several major points relating to the ministry of Jesus. These areas of concern are the location and duration of Jesus' ministry, the cleansing of the Temple, and certain events of the passion and Easter narratives.

Let us look first of all at the matter of the location of Jesus' ministry. The synoptic writers reflect that Jesus' public ministry was concentrated in the region of Galilee while the Fourth Evangelist places Jesus both in Galilee and Judah. Though little mention is made of the Galilean ministry by John it does not contradict but rather it is supplementary to the Judean ministry. For example, John 4:44 f. indicates that Jesus went to Galilee briefly having spent some time in Judah.<sup>20</sup> In Mark's account Jesus only occasionally leaves

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<sup>20</sup> William Sanday, The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1923) p. 115.

Galilee for a journey toward Tyre and Sidon or the Decapolis and <sup>21</sup> he moved toward Jerusalem only once which was the time of his death. In contrast to this John indicates several visits to Jerusalem by Jesus who had in fact begun his ministry there (cf. John 2:13;5:1; 7:4 f.). Apparently the occasions for Jesus' visits to Jerusalem were Jewish festivals. Barrett has suggested that Jerusalem rather than Galilee was the center of Jesus' ministry.<sup>22</sup> Mark indicates more than one visit to Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-7;14:12-16). No final conclusion on the matter of the location of Jesus' ministry can be reached without giving thought to the matter of the duration of it as well.

The Synoptic accounts of Jesus' ministry can be fitted into a period of one year although no specific time is indicated by the writers. The conclusion is based upon mention of only one passover. In the Johannine narrative the events appear to be grouped around Jesus' visits to Jerusalem for the celebration of passover. The basic problem rests with the question of which chronological structure is reliable. If chronology is defined in such a way as to separate out any editorial emphases, then one could question the reliability of any of the gospel accounts. Chronology can, of course, be mixed with interpretive aspects and yet be trustworthy and instructive. The question confronting us is basically whether the chronology of John or that of Mark is the more trustworthy. The answer can only remain in the area of probability.

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<sup>21</sup>Barrett, op. cit. p. 37

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

The contradictions between Mark and John are not to be minimized but they may be mitigated to some extent. It is possible to say with Barrett,<sup>23</sup> that the Gospel writers (Mark and John) were not primarily interested in chronology. By this Barrett means that neither Mark nor John was interested in merely recounting events in a historical sequence, but that both were governed by other concerns. Mark, according to Barrett, reflects "primitive apostolic preaching, which dealt in the most summary manner with the biographical material that intervened between the baptism and the death of Jesus. John for his part seems to have been governed in his grouping of the material, to an even greater extent than Mark, by topical considerations."<sup>24</sup> This, however, does not mean that the Gospels contain no valuable historical information. It does mean that an attempt to construct a precise chronology would be a vain effort, and that judgment must be made on the reliability of individual points as these are examined.

A factor which cannot be ignored in this matter is the impression the reader gains from the Fourth Gospel that the author strives to correct what he feels to be erroneous statements in his sources or the accepted traditions. For example, in John 1:28 "these things took place in Bethany beyond Jordan," or in 1:44 "Bethsaida, the home of Andrew, Peter and Philip," or in 3:24 "John was not yet cast into prison." Inclusions such as these by the Evangelist do not add appreciably or significantly to our information, but do appear to be correcting previously accepted information. These deliberate in-

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Barrett, op. cit. p. 37

clusions indicate that the Fourth Evangelist does take the matter of chronology seriously and this necessitates an effort to determine the reliability of his observations and alterations.

In addition to the questions relating to the location and the duration of Jesus' ministry there are problems related to specific events of that ministry. The Synoptic account of Jesus cleansing the Temple is placed at a different period in Jesus' ministry from that recorded by the Fourth Evangelist although there is agreement on placing the cleansing at the time of Passover. In the Synoptic account the cleansing of the Temple comes at the end of Jesus' ministry (Mark 11:15-18; Matt. 21:12-17; Luke 19:45). This action is the culmination of a growing hostility and occurs during Jesus' only recorded visit to Jerusalem. In the Johannine account, the cleansing occurs early in his ministry during one of several visits to Jerusalem. The decision here can be reduced to the choice between two documents, Mark and John.<sup>25</sup> Since the Marcan account has only one visit to Jerusalem, of course, the cleansing of the Temple must be placed at that time which is near the close of Jesus' ministry. The weight of reason and probability seems to be on the side of the Marcan account. The expulsion of the buyers and sellers would most likely come in the later period of the ministry of Jesus at a point which marked the rising tension on both sides and a consciousness that the end was near.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Sanday, op. cit. p. 150.

<sup>26</sup>Among those supporting the Marcan view are:

H. J. Holtzmann, Die Synoptiker (Hand Commentar zum Neuen Testament) Tübingen, 1901.

A. E. J. Rawlinson, The Gospel According to St. Mark (Westminster Commentaries) (London: 7th ed., 1940).

In contrast, as Sanday has suggested, the Johannine placing of the cleansing of the Temple early in the ministry of Jesus would bring it to a point shortly after his baptism and his experience of hearing the Divine Voice announcing his Sonship.<sup>27</sup> The ministry of Jesus would then be marked at its early stages by the emphatic act of cleansing the Temple. Such an act may have indicated hope on the part of Jesus that some dramatic demonstration would precipitate the desired reform. If that were the case, the act did not succeed for our sources give no indication of a change in the Temple practices.

In favor of the Marcan arrangement is the fact that deliberate steps were taken by those who were offended by Jesus' action to remove him from the scene (Mark 11:18). This reaction by the Temple officials reflects the kind of response that such an act would have precipitated.

The matter is further compounded by significant similarities between the Johannine and Marcan accounts.<sup>28</sup> These similarities suggest that John knew and used Mark and this places greater emphasis on the need for an explanation of the alteration. It may be that John had before him other traditions which he felt were more trustworthy or he may have had some particular theological or doctrinal emphasis which overshadowed his sources' chronology. The former possibility which suggests other traditions presents an appealing explanation. This, however, has several shortcomings. In the first place, the existence of such a source is pure conjecture and no evidence is to be found for its existence except for the deductions drawn from the Fourth Gospel. Secondly, serious question can be raised about the probability of the existence of a source unknown to the Synoptic writers which is in sev-

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<sup>27</sup>Sanday, *op. cit.* p. 150

<sup>28</sup>Barrett, *op. cit.* pp. 162 ff.

eral places contradictory to them and which the Fourth Evangelist would have accepted in preference to the already accepted accounts.

If one accepts the second alternative and believes that the Fourth Evangelist has been governed by a particular theological or doctrinal emphasis, then he must ask whether this emphasis has made the Fourth Gospel unreliable. The present writer is conscious of the part played by topical considerations in the structure of John's Gospel, but this does not explain the fact that the author has taken particular pains to correct significant matters which have not added to a particular doctrinal emphasis (e.g. the notation that Bethsaida and not Capernaum was the city of Andrew and Peter, or that the anointing at Bethany took place four days earlier than in the other Gospels, etc.). On matters such as these, theological or doctrinal positions are not affected and one must conclude that these corrections result from what the author feels to be a superior source of information. We have raised the question of the probability of a written source unknown to the Synoptics only to dismiss it as untenable. As Dr. Streeter has demonstrated one has the impression that "besides Mark and Luke.....John used no other documentary source. Deduct from John what seems to be derived from Mark and Luke and only a few odd incidents remain."<sup>29</sup>

Thus far we have seen that it is unlikely that the Fourth Evangelist made use of a written source unknown to the Synoptic writers for his alterations and that even though theological or doctrinal emphases are to be noted in the structure of the Fourth

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<sup>29</sup>Streeter, op. cit. p. 417



Gospel. This does not explain alterations which apparently accomplish nothing in terms of these emphases. What then are we to say? It is doubtful that this should lead us to the conclusion that the author of the Fourth Gospel was the apostle John. If this had been the case then the author would not have depended so heavily upon Mark and Luke. His authoritative manner of making alterations, would, however, indicate that the author was one very close to the apostle.<sup>30</sup> Such a view would explain the lack of hesitation in correcting accepted views, it would explain the accurate knowledge of the geography and terrain reflected in the Fourth Gospel, and would allow for the occurrence of minor discrepancies between the various accounts.

Returning to the Johannine account of the cleansing of the Temple we note that the problem of placing in its proper sequence has not yet been solved. Should one follow the Marcan order which places this event at the close of Jesus' ministry or follow the Johannine view which places it early in his ministry? As has been indicated above the weight of probability appears to favor the Marcan view, but let us look more closely at the matter. First of all, one must ask whether the cleansing of the Temple by Jesus was as significant *an event* as the church has implied? If the event was of such great significance, why, then, did the Temple authorities ask on what grounds Jesus did this? The meaningful action taken by the Temple officials in the Marcan account comes not at the cleansing of the Temple, but rather as a con-

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. pp. 425, 426.

sequence of the discussion and dispute over the matter of authority. It appears that the various accounts agree on the critical point that the conflict between Jesus and the Temple officials came as a result of Jesus' claim to authority. This claim was viewed by the officials as blasphemous and is the basic conflict whereas the cleansing of the Temple merely provided the occasion for the conflict. Furthermore, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are in agreement that actually no overt action was taken by the Temple officials, although Mark does suggest the beginning of a plot by the priests.<sup>31</sup> The implication is that Jesus' action increased the tension of the moment and provided the occasion for a dispute over authority but nothing more. Thus, it would seem that a major argument for the Marcan order, i. e. that such an event would have occurred only near the end of the ministry of Jesus, is considerably weakened. Vincent Taylor has suggested further objections to the Marcan arrangement stressing "that the crowding of events by the author into the last week of Jesus raises serious problems and further that the subsequent events, viz., the confused testimony at the trial (14:58) is better understood if the saying about the Temple had been spoken earlier and the question about authority in which Jesus refers to John the Baptist seems to belong to the period nearer to the Baptist's active ministry than the Marcan setting allows."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>R. Bultmann, Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition (Göttingen: 2nd ed., 1931) p. 38 suggests that the mention of the priests' plot has been added to the text.

<sup>32</sup>Vincent Taylor, The Gospel according to St. Mark (London: Macmillan and Company, 1955) p. 461.

Acceptance of the Johannine chronology in placing the cleansing of the Temple early in the ministry of Jesus is the result of the re-examination of the Marcan order.<sup>33</sup> But what then is to be said of the Marcan arrangement? This writer believes that too much of the burden of proof of reliability has been placed upon the Fourth Gospel because of the widely accepted priority of Mark and the support of Matthew and Luke. However, as is now generally agreed, Matthew and Luke have made extensive use of Mark and that on matters of disagreement between Mark and John we have the choice between two traditions only. It would appear that Mark has constructed a pattern which reflects a growing recognition of Jesus and his mission and that this pattern may well have been at work in placing the cleansing of the Temple at the close of the ministry. In addition, the single visit of Jesus to Jerusalem in the Marcan account necessitates this action.

One final point of divergence between the Synoptic and Johannine accounts of Jesus' ministry is related to the chronology of Passion week. With reference to the anointing at Bethany John suggests that this occurred six days before Passover (12:1) while Mark places it two days before (14:1; cf. Matt. 26:1). In addition, although the Synoptic writers agree with John in placing the Last Supper near Passover (John 13:1,29; 18:28; 19:14,31; Mark 14:16; Matt. 26:19; Luke 22:13), difficulty arises over the question of identifying the Last Supper with the Passover feast. In the Synoptic account the Last Supper would fall on the beginning of Nisan 15 and

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<sup>33</sup>Among those favoring the Johannine setting are:

M. J. Lagrange, Evangile selon Saint Marc (Paris, 5th ed. 1929) p. 65.

A. H. McNeile, The Gospel according to St. Matthew (London, 1915) p. 300.

the supper would be the regular Passover and the crucifixion would have taken place after the Passover.<sup>34</sup> From the Gospel of John one would conclude that the Last Supper was held on the beginning of Nisan 14 and that Jesus suffered the following afternoon and that "his death will have taken place at the time devoted to the slaughter of the Paschal lamb."<sup>35</sup> The events in John are a day earlier than in Mark which would mean that in the Johannine account the Last Supper was not the Passover meal.

Here perhaps is the most difficult of the differences between John and Mark. Mark depicts the Last Supper as a Passover meal.<sup>36</sup> This John rejects. As Barrett has suggested,<sup>37</sup> the inner contradictions within the Synoptics do not undermine the Marcan arrangement and attempts to show the Jewish laws were violated during the passion period are of little help because both the Johannine and the Marcan accounts reflect minor infractions. The matter can be resolved finally only by a choice between the two accounts recognizing that strong arguments exist for the validity of each account. The evidence supporting the Marcan order is substantial. The tradition of Papias which associates Mark's information with Peter cannot be overlooked. The whole atmosphere of the Marcan account reflects a confusion which one

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<sup>34</sup>Sanday, *op. cit.* p. 150.

<sup>35</sup>Sanday, *op. cit.* p. 151. cf. Barrett, *op. cit.* p. 39  
G. H. Box, art. *Journal Theological Studies*, April, 1902.  
G. Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* (E. T. 1929) pp. 86-184.

<sup>36</sup>J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1935) pp. 18-34.

<sup>37</sup>Barrett, *op. cit.* pp. 40 ff.

would expect at such a time. Mark's gradual heightening of the dramatic tension may have been a literary device or it may have been an accurate remembrance. On the other hand the Johannine order is also impressive. One ought ~~not to~~ overlook the possibility that the author either was an apostle or was close to an apostle. The Johannine account allows for a more logical progression of events during the Passion Week without the need for the late hour trials noted by Mark. In addition the early identification by Paul of the Last Supper with the Paschal Lamb is similar to John's dating of the Supper. In both John and Mark preconceived notions may have been at work to have led to the alteration of the sources.

The conclusion of the matter lies in the area of probability. Having examined the major objections to the trustworthiness of the Johannine account and found them to be inconclusive and having indicated areas where the Fourth Gospel provides a more reasonable account of the events in Jesus' life than do the Synoptics, the writer would conclude that the Fourth Gospel deserves serious consideration as a source of information on John the Baptist. It is to the portrait of the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel that we must now direct our attention.

## CHAPTER V

## JOHN THE BAPTIST IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

## I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In the previous chapter our concern was to demonstrate the reliability of the Fourth Gospel as a source of information about Jesus. It was seen that in those areas in which the Fourth Gospel differed markedly from the Synoptic accounts that the Fourth Gospel may well have reflected the more accurate account. The emphasis of the writer was toward the establishment of an air of probability at least in which one could come to see that the Fourth Gospel was probably more nearly correct on certain significant points in the life of Jesus realizing that no absolute position could be reached.

After examining the evidence available the writer concluded that on certain crucial points the Fourth Gospel was historically reliable even allowing for the presence of interpretive elements. Once this position was established the next problem is to examine the Fourth Gospel's account of John the Baptist to determine the reliability of this picture. The writer believes that if the Fourth Gospel has been found to be trustworthy on crucial points in the life of Jesus where it is not supported by the Synoptics or even at variance with them, then one can at least approach the Johannine account of the Baptist more freely allowing the evidence to speak for itself.

### John's Mission in the Fourth Gospel

The Fourth Gospel clearly proclaims that John the Baptist had no purpose, no raison d'être, apart from serving as a witness to the coming Messiah. The Baptist's moralistic preaching and teaching reflected in Matthew and Luke and also in Flavius Josephus, is ignored by the Fourth Evangelist (also by Mark). In both the Fourth Gospel and in Mark John the Baptist is a witness, a voice proclaiming the need for preparation in anticipation for a coming mightier one.

John the Baptist is introduced rather abruptly in the Fourth Gospel in that his appearance interrupts the smooth flow of the Prologue. Because of the apparent suddenness of John's appearance it has been felt by some scholars that the Fourth Evangelist was creating a polemic against followers of John the Baptist who had allegedly claimed messianic status for their leader.<sup>1</sup> The leading exponent of this view was W. Baldensperger whose conclusions, though somewhat modified, have been accepted by several leading commentators on the Fourth Gospel.<sup>2</sup> The alleged controversy between the followers of Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>W. Baldensperger, Der Prolog des vierten Evangeliums: sein polemisch-apologetischer Zweck (Leipzig: Freiburg, 1898)

M. Goguel, Au Seuil de l'Évangile, Jean Baptiste (Paris: Payot, 1928) pp. 76 ff.

M. Dibelius, Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911) p. 119.

A. Loisy, Le Quatrième Évangile (Paris: 2nd ed. 1921) p. 96 recognizes a polemic, but doubts that it played an important role

<sup>2</sup>W. Bauer, Das Johannesevangelium, (3rd ed. 1933)

R. Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, (1941)

and John the Baptist following the death of both leaders is believed to have reached a serious level and that the followers of John the Baptist were dangerous rivals to the early church.<sup>3</sup> This viewpoint is reflected by O. Cullmann who draws from reference in later Mandaean texts and from the Pseudo-Clementine writings for support for his position.<sup>4</sup>

Cullmann, following Baldensperger's lead, attempts to prove that the early church was greatly concerned with providing a reply to the charge that since John the Baptist preceded Christ then he must also be superior. The structure of Cullmann's argument is somewhat unusual in that after finding evidence of a dispute over this point of chronology in the Pseudo-Clementine writings (Rec. I 54 and 60) he then concludes that this same problem not only exists in the Gospels, but exists in as serious a state as this manifestation of it in the Pseudo-Clementines.<sup>5</sup> To answer Cullmann let us look first of all at the evidence of the conflict over chronology in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. It is Cullmann's belief that the Clementines or the Jewish-Christian source of Κηρύγματα Πέτρου emanate from an

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<sup>3</sup>O. Cullmann "ὁ ὀπίω μου ἐρχομένος" in The Early Church, (SCM Press: London, 1956) p. 177

<sup>4</sup>O. Cullmann, Le problème littéraire et historique du Roman pseudo-Clementine (Paris: F. Alcan, 1930)

See also Mark Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer (1915) Svendaage Pallis, Mandaean Studies (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1926)

R. Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der ~~neuererschlossenen~~ Mandaischen und Manichäischen Quellen für das Verstandis des Johannesevangeliums" ZNW, 1925, pp. 100 ff.

<sup>5</sup>O. Cullmann, Le problème littéraire et historique du Roman pseudo-Clementine, pp. 178-180.



environment in which a sect of John the Baptist existed as a dangerous rival.<sup>6</sup> The radical view of the Baptist seen in the Κηρύγματα Πέτρον depicting him a false prophet representing the principle of evil was arrived at, according to Cullmann, on the basis of the theory of pairs (ουζυγιαι) in which the prior of two complementary elements represents the principle of evil.<sup>7</sup> John the Baptist, then, because he appeared historically prior to Jesus belongs to a succession of evil figures among whom are Eve, Cain, and Ishmael. Cullmann points out that the former view of the theory of pairs suggested that the second figure was the evil one, but this was reversed with reference to John the Baptist.

The position of John the Baptist in the Pseudo-Clementine writings is, of course, quite different from that of the Fourth Gospel. This Cullmann recognizes, but points out that the very existence of the position he has noted convinces us that the problem of historical priority of John the Baptist posed a difficulty for the Fourth Evangelist. This difficulty has been solved, according to Cullmann, not by relegating John the Baptist to the place of false prophet, but rather by depicting him as the μαρτυρ who refutes false ideas from the beginning.

One must be quick to recognize that the views of Baldensperger and the revisions of those views by Cullmann arise out of a genuine concern to find a satisfactory explanation for the attitude of the Fourth Evangelist toward John the Baptist. Before a reply can be made to the position of Cullmann and others that the Fourth Gospel contains a polemic against the followers of John the Baptist, it will be neces-

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid. p. 178.

<sup>7</sup>Homilies 2:16-17; Rec. 3:61.

sary to examine the evidence in the Gospel itself. However, in the background of our thinking several observations need to be kept, viz.

- a) Is the appearance of a controversy in the Pseudo-Clementines of any real significance to the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel?
- b) What evidence is there for the existence of a group of followers of John the Baptist which posed a threat to the early church so great that one of the Gospels was directed against it?
- c) Since the Marcan picture of John the Baptist is very similar to the Johannine picture does this mean that Mark too is a polemic?

We will return to these in the body of the study below.

In the Fourth Gospel John the Baptist is a witness who serves to announce and to single out Jesus as the Messiah. John's primary function is to announce the coming one who though later historically, nevertheless, takes precedence over John the Baptist himself. The nature of John's mission is pointed out clearly in the Fourth Gospel as the author describes the Baptist's work as bearing witness to the Light (1:7) and that he was not that Light himself (1:8). In addition, the account of an official delegation of priests and Levites from the Jews provides the author with the occasion to clarify the Baptist's work first negatively as he rejects certain categories (John 1:19-22) and then positively as John the Baptist affirms his function as a voice (1:23).

In response to the question "Who art thou?" from the priests and Levites, John the Baptist answered and confessed "I am not the Christ" (1:19b,20). This response by John the Baptist, if taken literally, implies that some had considered that John was the Messiah. This denial of John the Baptist which comes apparently without previous reference to the Christ by the delegation of the Jews may indicate

either our sources are incomplete with reference to the question of the Jews or that this belief that John was the Messiah was wide-spread and therefore John rejected this identification even before it is made by his questioners. Whether one ought to conclude that this is part of a polemic against followers of John the Baptist who claimed that he was the Messiah is difficult to answer. Indeed no final answer can be given. If not, what appears to be the more likely answer? Certainly there is a hint that some of the more imaginative elements surrounding John the Baptist may have heralded John as a hero who fulfilled some of the messianic expectations. John's garb, his strange way of life and his proclamation of the nearness of the kingdom certainly would have kindled the imagination of his hearers sufficiently to have resulted in some attributing messianic rank to him. The probability of this seems high and yet one can question whether this would justify the conclusion that a considerable following of the Baptist's had made such claims for him. The rejection by John of messianic claims would, it appears, have stifled any serious movement in that direction during John's lifetime and for a period thereafter. It is unlikely that advocates of such a view would have fostered it knowing that John had denied this himself. Furthermore, the mention of messianic pretenders in the Book of Acts does not include the name of John the Baptist (Acts 5:36ff). If John had made such claims, or if such claims had been made by his followers, this, in all probability, would have been reflected somewhere in the New Testament. The fact that John's exact status or position presented a difficulty to the early Christians could have been relieved somewhat had John been included in the ranks of messianic pretenders. The early church attempted to solve the

problem of John's position by asserting that he was Elijah redivivus who was expected to return before the appearance of the Messiah.

This leads us to the next question of the visiting delegation of priests and Levites. Following John's rejection of any claim to be the Christ, he is asked "Are you Elijah?" (Τὸ οὖν; οὐκ Ἠλίας  
εἶ; 1:21).<sup>8</sup> To this John answers in the negative. Elijah was expected to return before the Messiah in Jewish hopes (Mal. 3:1 cf. Mark 9:9-13). Upon his return Elijah was to settle disputes, and to turn the hearts of fathers to their children. The figure of Elijah was associated with John the Baptist in the birth narrative when the angel states that John will go "in the Spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). The denial or rejection of this category by John the Baptist is in contradiction to the Synoptic account. The identification of John the Baptist with Elijah is made emphatically by Matthew in 11:14 "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was to come" and in 17:12f. "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." A slightly less clear position is taken by Mark (1:6)

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<sup>8</sup>On the question of the return of Elijah see the following:

W. Bousset, Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1903) pp. 232 ff.

F. Weber, Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und verwandter Schriften (Leipzig, 1897) pp. 352 ff.

M. Lagrange, Le Messianisme chez les Juifs (Paris 1909) pp. 210-213.

G. F. Moore, Judaism in the First Century of the Christian Era Vol. II (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927) pp. 326, 357 ff.

R.B.Y. Scott, "The Expectation of Elijah" Canadian Journal of Religious Thought, Nov. Dec. 1926.

and Luke (1:17). Mark 9:13 is parallel to Matthew 17:12f. How are these contradictory positions to be reconciled? The position taken by Matthew in identifying John the Baptist with Elijah appears to be a later viewpoint and that of the Fourth Evangelist may be a pre-Synoptic stage of Christian belief.<sup>9</sup> The position reflected in Matthew's gospel, however, may be quite early. The identification of John the Baptist with Elijah had been firmly established by the time of the Fourth Evangelist at least in certain circles and it is therefore significant that the author of the Fourth Gospel chose to contradict this viewpoint. The Fourth Evangelist may have had a superior source in which John the Baptist specifically rejected any identification with Elijah or what is more likely the Fourth Evangelist himself has rejected attempts at this identification of John the Baptist with Elijah because this would introduce an unnecessary and complicating factor into his theological picture. The flavor of Jewish apocalyptic is not very significant in the Fourth Gospel. For that author the expectation of Elijah redivivus was not important and consequently he is not faced with the problem of finding a figure who will fill this role. To have said this does not mean that John the Baptist did not fulfill the function of Elijah or that Jesus himself did not consider John as the expected Elijah. It does mean that in both the Matthean and the Johannine accounts interpretive elements are present. In both accounts John the Baptist has been placed in the theological structure of the authors and as a result one must conclude that unless he rejects one account he must acknowledge the presence of the author's influence in

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<sup>9</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John (London: S.P.C.K. 1960) p. 144.

this particular matter. Matthew who is steeped in popular Jewish expectation includes John the Baptist as Elijah, an important segment of the messianic picture. John, on the other hand, is not so limited and places John the Baptist in the capacity of a witness without any reference to popular Jewish expectation.

In addition to his rejection of the title Messiah and Elijah, John the Baptist is reported by the Fourth Evangelist as replying negatively to the question "ὁ προφήτης εἶ σὺ;" (1:21). It is evident that there existed in Jewish hope the belief that a prophet would come to aid Israel in addition to the Messiah. C. K. Barrett cites the following passages in this regard:<sup>10</sup>

I Macc. 4:46; 14:41... "until there should arise a faithful prophet"

IV Ezra 2:18 "For thy help I will send my servants Isaiah and Jeremiah"

C. H. Dodd has noted that a widely accepted suggestion which has played a part in Manichaeism and Mandaean doctrine ~~is that there~~ existed the idea of the "one prophet who is incarnated in different historical individuals at various periods."<sup>11</sup> This conjecture probably has little or no relationship to the figure in the Johannine Gospel. As Dodd notes the only "early Christian documents which are cited in support are the pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions, but these are assigned to a date far too late to provide evidence relevant to the Fourth Gospel."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Barrett, op. cit. p. 144.

<sup>11</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1955) pp. 239, 240.

<sup>12</sup>Dodd, loc. cit. cites the work of Carl Schmidt, "Studien zu der Pseudoclementinen", in Texte und Untersuchungen, 1929

Goguel has equated the terms Prophet and Messiah suggesting that the statement "I am not the Christ" was a later insertion resulting from the fact that a later redactor did not perceive that the two terms meant the same thing originally.<sup>13</sup> Goguel's conjecture cannot be accepted. It is quite clear that in the Fourth Gospel the prophet is explicitly distinguished from the Christ. A prophet like Moses was expected to appear with Elijah before the Messiah.<sup>14</sup>

Also in the Manual of Discipline of the Qumran literature it is stated that a prophet is expected to come before the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel (1QS 9:11). Although W. H. Brownlee has identified the prophet as the Messiah,<sup>15</sup> the prophet is a distinct figure. Even though little is said about the expectation of the prophet, it is clear that this is not the Messiah.<sup>16</sup>

In the New Testament the evidence particularly in the Fourth Gospel is not consistent. In John 6:14 the term prophet may be seen as synonymous with Messiah. It reads as follows:

"Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world"

But in contrast to this John 7:40, 41 states as follows:

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<sup>13</sup>Goguel, op. cit. 7. 78n.

<sup>14</sup>J. Jeremias in TWBNT s.v. Mwōns.  
Strack-Billerbeck, IV, p. 378.

<sup>15</sup>W. H. Brownlee, "The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline" Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research (New Haven, 1951) Supp. Studies 10-12, p. 35n.

<sup>16</sup>See J. T. Milik, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert Vol I, p. 121 ff., Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea Napierville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc. 1959) pp. 125 ff.

"Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, "This is the Christ."

The Johannine usage reflects, then a lack of preciseness in the use of the term prophet, but evidence weights more on the existence of two distinct categories "prophet" and "Messiah".

The Fourth Gospel portrays John the Baptist's rejection of the several categories related to the Messiah as complete. John then affirms that he is a "voice" (Isaiah 40:3). Thus the Baptist stands in the line of authority of the Old Testament, but cannot be identified with any popular eschatological figure.

Many of those aspects of the Baptist's life and teaching familiar from other sources are not to be found in the Fourth Gospel. The instructions to others by Luke, the proclamation of judgment, the demand for repentance, the castigation of the nation do not appear in John's account except as part of a presupposed common knowledge. In the Fourth Gospel John the Baptist is a witness and serves only to point toward the coming Mightier One. What John expected the Mightier One to be like is the area to which we must now turn.

#### John's Estimate of Jesus as Recorded by the Fourth Gospel

The Johannine narrative contributes significantly to our understanding of the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus in three significant areas: a) John's designation of Jesus as the Lamb of God, b) the Baptist's early recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, c) a suggestion for the cause of the break between Jesus and John the Baptist.



As has been indicated in the previous chapter, the Fourth Evangelist clearly has before him, in some form, the Marcan account of the significant events in the life of Jesus. To this he brings fresh insights which add to our Synoptic picture, but which also create problems of interpretation. Let us look first of all at the phrase the "Lamb of God." Nowhere in the Synoptic account is Jesus so designated. Although this designation is widely used in the later church, the exact significance of the phrase as used by John the Baptist is not readily evident. It cannot be dismissed merely as a Christian intrusion into the narrative. Undoubtedly this phrase has its origin in the Old Testament but precisely what aspect of the Old Testament is not at all clear. The phrase "Lamb of God" is made even more difficult by the inclusion into any attempt at interpretation of the accompanying phrase "ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου." The Hebrew sacrificial system immediately comes to mind as background for this phrase but as C. K. Barrett has noted "the most frequent of all Jewish sacrifices the Τ'η σ (Tamid) or daily burnt offering, consisted of lamb, but this was not an expiatory sacrifice"<sup>17</sup> There are several possible interpretations of the phrase Lamb of God. This may be seen as a reference to the Paschal lamb, or to the servant passage in Isaiah 53, or as a reference to the sin offering, or possibly as a messianic designation equivalent to the king.<sup>18</sup> Each of these possibilities is appealing.

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<sup>17</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit. p. 146

<sup>18</sup>C. H. Dodd, op. cit. pp. 229 ff., 424, 428.

Let us look first of all at the sin offering. In the service of the Day of Atonement the animal used for the purpose of bearing the sins of the people was a goat and not a lamb (Lev. 16:21f.). Even allowing for the confusion of lamb for a goat by the author, one must ask whether the expiatory aspects of the death of Christ so meaningful in Christian thought are to be found in the emphasis of the Fourth Evangelist? After examining the Johannine writings one finds that only in John 2:2 where Christ is referred to as ἰλασμός is emphasis on the sacrificial nature of the death of Christ present.

A second interpretation which has found support and which has much to commend it is that of interpreting the Lamb of God as a reference to the servant figure in Isaiah. C. F. Burney has suggested that the reference in the Fourth Gospel was actually to the servant of Isaiah 53 and that the Aramaic ܬܠܝܗܐ (talya) can mean either servant or lamb.<sup>19</sup> Burney believes that the Greek text of John's gospel reflects a misunderstanding of the Aramaic and that the phrase ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ represents the Aramaic ܬܠܝܗܐܬ ܬܠܝܗܐ. The force of Burney's position lies not so much with the alleged Aramaic background to which one could raise objection,<sup>20</sup> but rather that

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<sup>19</sup>C. F. Burney, The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922) pp. 104-108. This is followed by

Jeremias, TWBNT I s.v. ἀμνός p. 343.

Cf. G. S. Duncan, Jesus Son of Man (London: Nisbet and Co. 1947). pp. 91 ff.

W. F. Howard, The Fourth Gospel in recent Criticism and Interpretation (London: Epworth Press, 4th ed. 1955) p. 100 ff.

<sup>20</sup>It seems unnecessary to introduce an Aramaic background when this does not aid significantly in our understanding.

the prophet Isaiah is used by the Fourth Evangelist (e.g. 1:23; 7:38; 12:37-39) and that the servant concept has prominence in his gospel. To reject Burney's suggestion of an Aramaic background for the Gospel of John does not, of course, necessitate the rejection of the possibility of an underlying Aramaic phrase behind the figure of the Lamb of God. The Fourth Evangelist may well have had in mind the servant figure who it must be remembered acts to an extent as a sin-bearer (Isa. 53:12). The figure of the servant of Isaiah as messianic in significance was current in the earliest period of the church's history.<sup>21</sup> That the early church adopted the two concepts of the servant and the sin-bearer as applicable to Jesus does not mean that John the Baptist's use of the phrase Lamb of God is a reflection of later theological viewpoint. The question whether such a recognition on the part of John the Baptist early in the ministry of Jesus is acceptable will be considered below.

A third interpretation of the phrase Lamb of God is that of relating it to the Paschal lamb. Again this interpretation is not without difficulty. C. H. Dodd raises the question whether the Fourth Gospel "shows other allusions to the Passover as a type of the death of Christ."<sup>22</sup> Dodd, then, proceeds to show the weaknesses of the citations from the Old Testament which are suggested as having been fulfilled in the Crucifixion (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Ps. 21(22):19; Ps. 49:22; Zech. 12:10). Dodd is correct in pointing out that the allusions to the Old Testament with reference to the Crucifixion do not represent convincing references to the Paschal ritual, however, the whole struc-

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<sup>21</sup>R. H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment (London: SCM Press, Ltd. 1941) pp. 113, 114.

<sup>22</sup>C. H. Dodd, op. cit. p. 233.

ture of the Fourth Gospel being centered around Jewish festivals lends weight to the interpretation of the Lamb of God as a paschal allusion. Although this area of thought of the Jewish festivals acting as a pattern for the Johannine writing is a study in itself,<sup>23</sup> nevertheless, several observations can be made here which indicate that the paschal symbolism is a significant factor in the Fourth Gospel. In the Gospel of John there are several references to the Passover as follows:<sup>24</sup>

- 2:13 And the passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
- 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, at the feast, many believed on his name.
- 4:45 So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone to the feast.
- 6:4 Now the passover, the feast of the Jews was at hand.
- 11:54-57..now the passover of the Jews was at hand...
- 12:1 Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany
- 12:20 Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast.
- 13:1 Now before the feast of the passover...
- 13:29 Buy what things we have need of for the feast.
- 18:28 They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the palace; and it was early; and they themselves entered not into the palace, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover.
- 18:39 Ye have a custom, that I should release unto one at the passover.
- 19:14 Now it was the preparation of the passover.

These passages cited by R. H. Lightfoot indicate clearly that the concern for the Passover pervades the Fourth Gospel. In the light of this one wonders whether C. H. Dodd's observation that the "paschal

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<sup>23</sup>Aileen Guilding, The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

<sup>24</sup>R. H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) pp. 349 ff.

allusions in the gospel are by no means clear or certain",<sup>25</sup> is correct. Indeed, it is evident that the paschal allusions are clear, but this does not mean that one is obliged to accept Lightfoot's interpretation of the Lamb of God as a paschal reference. The most damaging criticism to Lightfoot's view is that the Lamb of God in John is connected to the phrase "who takes away the sins of the world" and the paschal lamb is not essentially expiatory in nature.

This leads us to the final interpretation that the Lamb of God is a messianic allusion. C. H. Dodd has suggested that the phrase ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ is basically a messianic title virtually equivalent to ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ.<sup>26</sup> In the Johannine Apocalypse the Messiah is referred to as a lamb who stands superior to the lion (Rev. 5:11;21).<sup>27</sup> It is to be noted that the word for lamb differs in these two writings, ἀμνός appears in the Fourth Gospel, and ἀρνίον in the Apocalypse. This difference does not appear to be too significant. Dodd's belief that the Lamb of God has messianic significance is supported by the fact that in the context of the key passage Andrew says to Simon Peter "we have found the Messiah" (1:41). Beginning with verse 35 of the first chapter of John's Gospel we read as follows:

"Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples

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<sup>25</sup>C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.* p. 234.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* p. 238

<sup>27</sup>In the Testament of Joseph 19 the lamb is the designation given to the messianic priest who takes precedence over the lion.

heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which being interpreted, the Christ." (John 1:35-41).

It will be the function of the Messiah, says Dodd, to do away with or remove sin. To support this position Dodd cites the following passages:<sup>28</sup> Testament of Levi 18:9

"And in his priesthood the Gentile shall be multiplied in knowledge upon the earth,  
And enlightened through the grace of the Lord;  
In his priesthood shall sin come to an end,  
And the lawless shall cease to do evil.

Psalm of Solomon 17:29

"And he shall not suffer righteousness to lodge anymore in their midst,  
Nor shall there dwell with them any man that knoweth wickedness,  
For he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God."

In addition to the references cited by Dodd further support can be seen in another passage. The Messiah is characterized in Psalm of Solomon 17:41 as being pure, free from sin.<sup>29</sup>

"And he himself (will be) pure from sin, so that he may rule a great people.  
He will rebuke rulers and remove sinners by the might of his word."

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<sup>28</sup> Dodd, op. cit. p. 237

<sup>29</sup>S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956) pp. 309 ff.

Mowinckel states that because the Messiah is endowed with wisdom and God's spirit he is holy and "he can make his people holy also, cleansing them from sin, impurity, and heathenism so that they may live a life dedicated to God, and also giving them the moral and religious quality which is implicit in holiness."<sup>30</sup> Mowinckel also cites the Targum's interpretation of Isaiah 53, "it is said that he gains the divine forgiveness of sins both by interceding on behalf of his people, and by causing them to observe the Law and do right."<sup>31</sup> There is sufficient evidence in these passages cited to support Dodd's suggestion that the Messiah will remove sin from the world.

This final interpretation of the phrase Lamb of God as messianic is very appealing. One would be unwise, however, recognizing the subtleties of the Fourth Evangelist, to suggest that only one strand of the Old Testament background is to be found in this phrase. It is more likely that we have here an amalgamation of Old Testament ideas made up of distinct strands drawn from the sacrificial system, the servant passage of Isaiah, but especially from the messianic hopes of the Hebrew peoples.

Having noted the variety of strands of Hebrew thought in the background of the Fourth Evangelist's use of the phrase Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the next question is can this be properly accepted as an *utterance* of John the Baptist? One's acceptance of this as authentic depends essentially upon the acceptance of the Fourth Gospel as a reliable source. In the previous chapter

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid. p. 310

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. p. 318

it was shown that on several crucial points the Fourth Gospel reflected a more accurate account than that of the Synoptics. One must recognize, of course, that the portrait of the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel is incomplete and that it presupposes some of the important information to be found in the Synoptic accounts. This is not to suggest that the Johannine portrait is inaccurate. It must also be recognized that the figure of John the Baptist is blended into the Fourth Evangelist's theological structure, but, again, this need not imply inaccuracy. Recognizing these points, the question remains, can one accept the phrase "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" as an authentic saying of the Baptist? The present writer believes that an affirmative answer is possible. This would mean that from an early stage in the ministry of Jesus John the Baptist recognized and proclaimed him to be the Messiah. This need not imply that John the Baptist had reached a stage in the formulation of the Christian faith which appeared in a later period. It is not necessary to conclude that John the Baptist was fully aware of the potential meaning of the phrase "Lamb of God" which it came to convey in subsequent Christian thought. Essentially this is a messianic phrase and to deny the historicity of the encounter in which the phrase occurred because of the later significance of the phrase, as Kraeling does,<sup>32</sup> is to deny the possibility of growth and development in Christian thought.

Upon making this observation there comes to mind immediately the Matthean passage in which John the Baptist, while in prison, sends his disciples to Jesus to seek an answer to the question, "Art

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<sup>32</sup> Kraeling, John the Baptist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951) p. 127, 128.



thou he that cometh?" (Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23). The inquiry from prison appears to contradict the previous conclusion. Professor Kraeling despairs of any solution to the apparent contradiction between the Synoptic and Johannine positions believing that they are in absolute conflict.<sup>33</sup> The present writer has accepted the phrase Lamb of God as having messianic implications, what then can be said concerning the question of John the Baptist from prison "Art thou he that cometh?" The account of John's question from prison has a note of authenticity. But what does the report of John's delegation accomplish? If one accepts this as an actual happening, then in consideration of what has been previously concluded, one must acknowledge that John the Baptist had wavered from his earlier viewpoint. This event could be interpreted as an attempt by early Christians to lessen the contrast between John's conception of the Messiah and what they had seen in Jesus. Kraeling suggests that John the Baptist is merely a foil of the conviction of some early Christians who attempt to resolve the problem of their faith and its relationship to the proclamation of the Baptist.<sup>34</sup> The purpose of the account, then, according to Kraeling, was to give expression to early Christian concern about the nature of Jesus' ministry in relationship to John's messianic proclamation. Kraeling believes that if the words of John the Baptist regarding the Messiah in the Synoptic account are trustworthy then the problem reflected here is unreal. To this view exception must be

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid. p. 127

<sup>34</sup>Cf. J. Welhausen, Evangelium Matthei, (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1904) pp. 55-56.

taken. One must avoid dismissing a passage as lacking in authenticity simply because it does not fit into the interpretation sought by the particular scholar. It appears that this is what Kraeling has done. He has interpreted John the Baptist's message as referring to a messianic judge, a "transcendent man-like one who destroys the wicked in unquenchable fire" and, says Kraeling, there is no meeting ground between this figure and the wonder-working preacher of the kingdom.<sup>35</sup>

It is not necessary or desirable to interpret the teaching of John the Baptist only in terms of judgment and to force all of his sayings into this pattern. It is more acceptable to see in this inquiry from prison a legitimate question from the Baptist who has wavered from his affirmation of the messiahship of Jesus. As has been seen earlier the figure whom the Baptist expected was the national messiah who would be a military and political figure who would overcome the enemies of the Jews.<sup>36</sup>

If this be the figure whom John expected and the function the Messiah was to fulfill then there is no real objection to John's second thoughts on the matter expressing concern about the type of activity carried on by Jesus. The question from John the Baptist from prison was not merely a Christian effort "to resolve the problem of faith and history."<sup>37</sup>

It may well have anticipated an affirmative answer. The answer which Jesus sends, however, is both "yes" I am the fulfillment of what John proclaimed, and "no" I am not what John expected.<sup>38</sup> The inquiry from

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<sup>35</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 129

<sup>36</sup>See Chapter III.

<sup>37</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 130.

<sup>38</sup>T. W. Manson, "Mention of John in Acts" Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Vol. 36 #2, 1953-54, p. 400.

prison does not actually contradict the previous affirmation of John the Baptist reflected in the phrase the Lamb of God. It indicates that under the duress of imprisonment and the apparent concern over the type of ministry being performed by Jesus, John the Baptist sent his followers for a reassuring statement. The answer given to John's question does not go beyond what John already knew except in alluding to the prophecies of Isaiah (Isaiah 35:5; 61:1).

Thus far the Fourth Evangelist has indicated that John the Baptist expected a messianic figure such as the national Messiah and that by special revelation declared Jesus to be the one who was to come. This recognition and affirmation came at Jesus' baptism and in the subsequent period as John the Baptist learned of and witnessed the emphasis made by Jesus ~~that~~ he began to waver. This wavering is reflected in the inquiry from prison reflected in Matthew and Luke. In addition, evidence of some widening breach between Jesus and John the Baptist is reflected in the Fourth Gospel prior to the imprisonment of John.

The Fourth Gospel indicates that Jesus and John the Baptist had labored together. However, if John the Baptist recognized Jesus as Messiah at his baptism one wonders whether there would have been a collaborative period in which Jesus continued as a follower of John. The writer believes that such a period of collaboration took place and that this is a natural sequence if the following conditions are allowed: a) if John's baptism is seen as an initiatory rite bringing one into a prepared people in which case the Messiah would also share in the preparation for the final day; b) if the baptism is part of a moral program in which the Messiah would be the great example for his people;

c) if one allows for a growing awareness of the implications of Messiahship for Jesus; d) if the collaborative period is seen as being of a rather short duration.<sup>39</sup>

The passage in John 3:25 reveals the collaborative period between Jesus and John the Baptist. It may well be here, as Goguel suggests,<sup>40</sup> that John finally separated from Jesus. The passage is as follows:

ἔγενετο οὖν ζήτησις ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν Ἰωάννου  
μετὰ Ἰουδαίου περὶ καθαρῶν

The phrase μετὰ Ἰουδαίου is read in some manuscripts as μετὰ Ἰουδαίων. Both phrases are ancient and well-attested, although, as Barrett suggests,<sup>41</sup> the singular is probably the correct reading. Due to the uncertainty of the text conjectures have been suggested by Baldensperger (τῶν Ἰησοῦ) and Oscar Holtzmann (τῶν Ἰησοῦ) which would indicate that a dispute had arisen between the disciples of John the Baptist and Jesus or those of Jesus, i.e., Jesus' disciples.<sup>42</sup> These conjectures are very appealing because they point toward a comparison between Jesus and John the Baptist as is suggested by the context rather than to a discussion of purifications in general. However, the conjectures cannot be followed because either of the variant readings is acceptable. More than a dispute between either Jesus or his followers and the disciples of John the passage seems to serve only as an occasion to clarify the

<sup>39</sup>On the source and significance of baptism see Chapter VI.

<sup>40</sup>Goguel, op. cit. pp. 86-95.

<sup>41</sup>Barrett, op. cit. p. 184

<sup>42</sup>Cited by Nestlé, Novum Testamentum ad. loc.

position of John the Baptist. We have here preparation for 3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease", which is the climax of the Evangelist's picture of Jesus' rise to prominence and the Baptist's decline. This section of the Fourth Gospel suggests that Jesus and John the Baptist separated as a result of the rising popularity of Jesus. In 4:1f. we read "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples) He left Judaea and departed again into Galilee." One wonders whether Jesus' apparent desire to avoid competition with John the Baptist is sufficient explanation of the separation. The Fourth Gospel has indicated that the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus were concurrent for a period at least although this is not supported by the Synoptics. Mark indicates that Jesus did not call his disciples until after John's incarceration (Mark 1:14,16-20). In Mark it is not clear whether Jesus himself had embarked on his ministry prior to the call of his disciples. It is quite likely that Jesus had already begun his ministry and that the call of his disciples came later. This would mean that the conflict between the Fourth Gospel and Mark is only apparent and that the only question is whether Jesus had his disciples prior to John's arrest. Here the conflict cannot be resolved because our sources are quite opposite in point of view.

But, let us return to the cause of the break between Jesus and John the Baptist. Our sources have indicated a collaborative period in which Jesus worked with John the Baptist, and a concurrent period in which Jesus and John carried on separate ministries. Why did Jesus, who had worked with John, had learned from him, and who had been baptized by him, separate himself from the Baptist? In addition

to the indication of the Fourth Evangelist that Jesus wished to avoid competition with John two other possibilities need to be examined.

First of all, Goguel has suggested that Jesus separated from the Baptist on a matter of principle.<sup>43</sup> Jesus, according to Goguel, because of his conception of the absolute transcendence of God, felt that all human effort, including repentance still leaves man unacceptable to God.<sup>44</sup> Jesus, then, broke away from John's program of preparing a righteous people. Even after man had done all that was commanded, he would be still an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10). Man, even when entirely obedient still cannot make himself virtuous enough to earn the kingdom as a reward.<sup>45</sup> Certainly Goguel is correct in stressing that the transcendence of God formed a part of Jesus' teaching and thought. However, to see this as the major aspect is not correct. Such a position ignores Jesus' emphasis on God's mercy and forgiveness. In addition much of Jesus' teaching is not unlike the teaching of John the Baptist. Jesus also expects exemplary conduct as did John. If one were to accept Goguel's suggestion, he would be confronted with the problem of explaining the continuous high estimation of John the Baptist by Jesus. Clearly Jesus looks upon John as the highest of the old order, but the time for the new era has come. This leads us to a second possible explanation of the break between Jesus and John the Baptist.

Carl Kraeling has suggested that in part an explanation can be seen on the basis of temperament and background.<sup>46</sup> John the

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<sup>43</sup>Goguel, op. cit. pp. 235-257.

<sup>44</sup>Goguel, Life of Jesus (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. 1933) pp. 313f.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. p. 314.

<sup>46</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 149 ff.

Baptist is described as an impulsive figure loosing threats and invectives on his hearers while Jesus is pictured as one of the quiet of the land who brought a simple message of comfort and uplift. Kraeling moves closer to the truth when he suggests that Jesus, having become aware of his own power, and that the evil powers gave way before him, is conscious "that the Kingdom whose imminence John proclaimed was actually in a real sense already present."<sup>47</sup> This awareness on the part of Jesus, according to Kraeling, came about at his baptism, that as he came up out of the water he recognized that he was standing in the age of fulfilment.<sup>48</sup>

If one accept's Kraeling's viewpoint, he can explain Jesus' continuing loyalty to John the Baptist on the basis of Jesus' respect for a prophet whose expectations were now being realized. But, there are some difficulties with this viewpoint with which one has to deal. Kraeling's suggestion necessitates a re-evaluation of some of the material of the Fourth Gospel. The Fourth Gospel depicts Jesus as sharing in John's activities (3:25f). It would have been most unlikely that Jesus would have baptized others, or even accepted the need for baptism for all men without having been baptized first himself. If one accepts Kraeling's position that the baptism of Jesus marked his awareness of the presence of the new age, then the collaborative period reflected in the Fourth Gospel must be ruled out. It would be difficult to imagine Jesus sharing in the proclamation of something imminent when he himself recognized it as already present. Thus one must either reject the Fourth Gospel as a reliable source of information by accept-

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 152.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 154, 155.

ing Kraeling's interpretation of the baptism or discover yet another possibility.

Both Goguel and Kraeling have pointed to essential truths. Goguel is correct in pointing out that Jesus' teaching indicated the inability of men to win God's favor and thereby share in the Kingdom. The Kingdom was not to be entered by the human effort implied in the teaching of John the Baptist. The Kingdom came as a gift not as a reward. Kraeling is correct in emphasizing that the Kingdom which John had proclaimed had already begun to come (Luke 11:20). John the Baptist was still anticipating the event by fasting and with a concern to reconstitute the Sons of Abraham. Jesus was aware that the expected Kingdom was already present, partially at least, and that men were to live in response to God's goodness to them.

What then can be said? This writer would suggest that the most satisfactory solution to the problem at hand can be seen by beginning with the way in which the Fourth Evangelist has pictured Jesus' ministry. As was suggested earlier, the Fourth Evangelist in describing certain events in the life of Jesus has altered or emended the Synoptic account and in several points has presented a more plausible record. One such case was the cleansing of the Temple. There it was seen that by placing the cleansing of the Temple early in Jesus' ministry the Fourth Evangelist was implying that Jesus was attempting to reform the old order, to maintain the link with the established structure of the Hebrew religion. Similar emphases can be noted in other areas as well, especially on the question of the break between Jesus and John. The Fourth Evangelist by indicating that Jesus collaborated with John, even after his baptism, and that John served as a witness, has continued in his emphasis that Jesus attempted to work



through the established and recognized forms of the prophetic tradition. When did Jesus become aware of the need to break from the old as represented by John the Baptist? Did it come at a precise moment? It is apparent that this break from John was a gradual one or better came as a result of a gradual recognition of his inability to reform the old structure. Jesus had attempted with the cleansing of the Temple and his association with John the Baptist, but neither of these accomplished the desired reformation. It is perhaps not by chance that the Fourth Evangelist tells of the separation of Jesus from John the Baptist shortly after the account of the visit of Nicodemus who is shown that the old way is no longer sufficient and that a totally new way is demanded (John 3:1ff).

The conclusion, reflected in the Fourth Gospel, that Jesus had endeavored to work through the old structure to accomplish a reform is supported by the enigmatic saying from Q regarding "violence to the Kingdom." The quotation from Matthew is the more difficult and probably the more accurate. It reads as follows:

"From the days of John the Baptist until now  
the Kingdom of Heaven has suffered violence  
and men of violence take it by force. For all  
the prophets and the law prophesied until John."  
(Matt. 11:12-13).<sup>49</sup>

The passage is interpreted by Luke as he renders it:

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<sup>49</sup>See, M. Dibelius, op. cit. pp. 24-29.  
E. Lohmeyer, Johannes der Täufer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932) pp. 113, 114.  
G. Kittel, TWBNT I pp. 608-612, (Schrenk) s.v. βία / ομναι

"The Law and the prophets were until John: and from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it." (Luke 16:16).

The interpretation of the Matthean account hinges upon the translation of βίαις ἐκτεταί (biazetai) which may be middle or passive. The passive voice is quoted above but the middle might be a better translation; thus the text would read that the kingdom "shows its power" or "exercises its power."<sup>50</sup> R. Otto's suggestion of the middle voice is quite plausible and reflects the point we have been making. Otto suggests that the passage be translated as follows:

"The Law and the prophets were until John:  
From that time the Kingdom of God exercises  
its power and men of violence snatch at it."<sup>51</sup>

This saying contrasts different periods of history: a) the Law and the prophets which are anticipatory, b) the period of the Kingdom. John the Baptist stands as the dividing figure, the greatest of the old era, but not really a part of the new. John the Baptist represents the highest of the old order, but this was one of expectation which could not be reformed. Now with the proclamation of the Gospel the old has been superseded and the new age has begun into which men struggle to enter.

Once the Gospel was proclaimed the inadequacy of the old order, which had been unmoved by Jesus' attempts at reform, becomes

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<sup>50</sup> R. Otto, Reich Gottes und Menschensohn, pp. 84-88.

<sup>51</sup> Cited by Major, Manson, Wright, The Mission and Message of Jesus, (New York: Dutton & Co. 1938), p. 426.

apparent. The awareness of the presence of the Kingdom manifested at the baptism could not have been complete. The full significance of Jesus' mission came as a growing realization not as a momentary revelation.

The Fourth Evangelist places John the Baptist in the category of a witness, a voice, one whose primary function is to point toward the coming greater one. This one John designates as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This designation has messianic implications and is related to the expectation of the national Messiah. Although John the Baptist acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah at an early point, he wavers in his conviction (reflected in the Synoptics) and finally there is a break between Jesus and John. The Fourth Evangelist implies that the separation of these two unique figures resulted from the growing awareness in the mind of Jesus of the inadequacy of the old order and the fact that attempts at reform were ineffective.

The Fourth Evangelist is a trustworthy source of information on John the Baptist. What supplementary information is gained from this account does not contradict the Synoptic material on crucial matters. There are significant additions to our knowledge of John the Baptist particularly in his relationship to Jesus. However, the portrait of John in the Fourth Gospel is incomplete. One serious gap exists on the question of John's baptism. For the significance and the possible sources of this rite we must move to information gained outside the Fourth Gospel. To this important aspect of John's ministry we now turn.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE BAPTISMAL RITE

## "I baptize with water"

## I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

It is quite clear that in the eyes of his contemporaries the practice of baptism was the outstanding feature of John's ministry. This is indicated by the fact that the name "Baptist" (Matthew 3:1) or "Baptizer" (Mark 6:14) was applied to him. A study of John the Baptist would not be complete without an attempt to determine the origin and significance of this practice. The primary sources for information on John the Baptist's rite are meager. They are several New Testament references and the observations of Josephus. The purpose of this chapter is to study these sources as well as the practices of contemporary Judaism to endeavor to find the proper background and significance of John's baptism.

## II. THE NATURE OF JOHN'S BAPTISM

General Observations

From the accounts of John's baptism, it is evident that important differences exist in the sayings attributed to John himself about his rite.

Mark 1:8 "I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

Luke 3:16 "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

The contrast between the baptism of John and the baptism of the coming Mightier One is related to the work which the coming one is to accomplish. In each of the Synoptic accounts the author indicates that John the Baptist looked upon his baptism as inferior to the baptism of the coming Mightier One. Loisy has suggested that the distinction between the baptisms reflected here in the Synoptic accounts has been imagined by Christians.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to conclude that the Synoptic accounts reflect an intrusion of later Christian influence. The message and mission of John the Baptist as reflected in his preaching clearly indicate that John was anticipating the coming of one greater than he.<sup>2</sup> Ought not this same anticipation to be seen in the significance of John's baptism? John's function, as he himself declares, was that of a "voice", to prepare a people for the Lord.<sup>3</sup> John's ultimate emphasis would be his own decrease while the Mightier One increased. This view Loisy rejects denying that John the Baptist would have ever affirmed or conceived the subordination assigned to him by the Evangelists.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A. Loisy, The Origins of the New Testament (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1950) p. 36 suggests that the distinction between the baptisms has been imagined by Christians.

<sup>2</sup>T. W. Manson, "Mention of John in Acts", Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Vol. 36 #2, 1953-54, o. 398

<sup>3</sup>John 1:23.

<sup>4</sup>Loisy, Ibid.

The baptism of John carried with it the same preparatory aspects as did John's message. John's baptism in living water was in anticipation of the coming judgment he proclaimed, and it also carried with it a cleansing significance.<sup>5</sup> Mark (1:4) writes "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."<sup>6</sup> Mark's statement does not mean that John the Baptist forgave sins or that his baptism accomplished forgiveness. The Greek text of Mark is of help on this point εγένετο Ἰωάννης . . . κηρύσσων βαπτίσματα μετανόιας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. Both Goguel and Dibelius have emphasized that the preposition "for" (εἰς) used by Mark can express purpose.<sup>7</sup> That the remission of sins was fulfilled by John's baptism as Goguel and Dibelius have suggested is a possible conclusion. The very fact that Matthew raised a question about Jesus being baptized by John indicates that in the minds of some at least John's rite did convey the remission of sins. The discussion between Jesus and John before the baptism by the latter tells of John's objection to baptizing Jesus.

Matthew 3:14f. "But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph Thomas, Le Mouvement Baptiste en Palestine et Syrie, (Tournai: Gembloux, 1935) p. 72.

<sup>6</sup>See observations on B. H. Streeter in Chapter II, pp. 42 ff.

<sup>7</sup>M. Dibelius, Johannes der Täufer, p. 58.

M. Goguel, Jean-Baptiste, p. 43.

See also Rudolph Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man. (London: Lutterworth, 1943) p. 77.

Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The problem is whether the disagreement arose between Jesus and John because of Jesus' sinlessness and the submitting to John's rite<sup>8</sup> or whether the question involved the propriety of the greater being baptized by the lesser.<sup>9</sup> This latter alternative is probably the one in the mind of the Evangelist. Jesus underwent baptism not because he needed it, but in order that he might be the perfect example. The followers of Jesus were later required to be baptized and so the writer of Matthew depicts Jesus undergoing the rite as an example. Jesus is determined to live a fully righteous life.<sup>10</sup>

The acceptance of John's baptism by Jesus meant that he accepted John's message of the imminent judgment and the need for baptism for all.<sup>11</sup> In this regard Jesus stood with many of his contemporaries who were convinced that John was a spokesman of God who brought the challenge to turn to a new life. Jesus' acceptance of John's baptism poses difficulties only when one denies the rite its full meaning. What that meaning was leads us to return to the question of the Marcan text.

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<sup>8</sup>M. R. James, Aprocryphal New Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934) p. 6 records a quotation from Jerome in which the question of Jesus being a sinner is resolved by his receiving the baptism of John in case he may have sinned through ignorance.

<sup>9</sup>Kraeling, John the Baptist, p. 134.

<sup>10</sup>G. Kittel, Bible Key Words (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955) s.v. "righteousness" p. 35.

<sup>11</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition, (London: S.P.C.K., 1947) p. 35.

Although there was an apparent popular interpretation of John's baptism as accomplishing forgiveness, in a strict sense this must be rejected. Rather, as Kraeling has indicated, forgiveness or remission of sins is the action of God associated with John's baptism and not the accomplishment of the rite itself.<sup>12</sup> Vincent Taylor suggests that "the baptism has for its end (εἰς) the remission of sins....." and that "baptism gives expression to the act of repentance, and thereby becomes an effective action leading to the remission of sins."<sup>13</sup> This same association is to be noted in the Old Testament sacrificial system in which God's forgiveness was associated with the ritual, but the ritual did not provide forgiveness.<sup>14</sup> John's baptism is associated with repentance and it is this repentance which leads to the remission of sin. The act of baptism was, as Thomas suggests, a symbol "le signe extérieur du changement de vie auquel on se soumettait."<sup>15</sup>

Flavius Josephus, in his description of the Baptist, indicates that John intended baptism to be used for the purification of the body, the soul having been cleansed previously by righteous conduct.<sup>16</sup> The relevant passage from the writings of Josephus is as follows:

"...but 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

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<sup>12</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 121

<sup>13</sup>V. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan and Company, 1955) pp. 154, 155.

<sup>14</sup>A. Büchler, Studies in Sin and Atonement (London: Milford, 1928) p. 374.

<sup>15</sup>J. Thomas, op. cit. p. 72.

<sup>16</sup>Josephus, Ant. XVIII, 5, 2.



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."<sup>17</sup>

Josephus, who was an Essene novice at one time, apparently has given an Essene interpretation to John's baptism, and although his account does not conflict with that of the Christian writers, it neglects the important association of John's baptism with both the messianic hopes and the expectation of a judgment. Josephus gives us supplementary information about the nature of John's ministry, but it is to the biblical accounts that we must turn for a more complete emphasis.

In order to find the full significance of John's baptism one must consider it not as an isolated event, but as an integral part of his ministry. John the Baptist was remembered primarily for his rite of baptism, but this baptism must be seen in the light of his preaching as well as in the light of contemporary practices and emphases. The message of John the Baptist, as has been indicated, involved three closely connected aspects: the announcement of an imminent universal

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<sup>17</sup> Josephus, Ibid. Translation by H. St. John Thackeray in the Loeb Classical Library.

judgment, a call for repentance including baptism in order to avoid judgment, and the anticipation of a coming Mightier One. John's message was ethical as well as eschatological. His concern was to prepare people not only for the present era, but for the coming great day. It is in this eschatological framework that John's baptism is to be interpreted.<sup>18</sup>

In the biblical accounts three significant passages are to be examined to aid in the interpretation of John's baptism. These passages have already been quoted (supra. pp. 134, 135) and observations have been made with reference to the expectation of the coming Mightier One. It is our concern at this point to examine the significance of the distinction attributed to John regarding his baptism and that of the coming Mightier One. For convenience the passages in mind are presented here.

Mark 1:8 "I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

Mt. 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

Luke 3:16 "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Mark did not include the element of fire in his contrast between the two baptisms. He contrasted the water baptism of John with the Spirit baptism of the coming Mightier One. Spirit baptism came to be the

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<sup>18</sup>E. Lohmeyer, Das Urchristentum, 1. Buch: Johannes der Täufer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1932) pp. 146-156.

significant aspect of the later Christian rite. Mark's account appears to prophesy the emphasis of the later Christian movement.<sup>19</sup> However, recognizing the Old Testament emphasis on the endowment of the spirit (e.g. Isaiah 11:2 for the Davidic king, and Joel 3:1-5 referring to the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of the Lord) it is not impossible to accept John's prediction of a future baptism with Spirit by the Mightier One.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that the idea of a Spirit baptism may represent a Christian gloss,<sup>21</sup> but the expectation of a baptism with fire has a note of authenticity in keeping with the flavor of John's message.

The difficulty arising here with the addition "and fire" lies not only with an interpretation, but also with the fact that there is no manuscript evidence which would enable us to disregard this phrase. It may be that the phrase Spirit and fire ought to be read "fiery spirit" referring to the destructive aspects of judgment, but this leaves no hope or positive aspect to John's message. This also can be seen in a conjecture by Eisler and Barrett that the text should read "wind and fire" which would maintain the allusion to the winnowing fork.<sup>22</sup> The wind separates the chaff which is destroyed by fire

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<sup>19</sup>V. Taylor, op. cit. p. 157.

Kraeling, op. cit. p. 62.

<sup>20</sup>J. M. Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke (London: Macmillan and Company, 1930) p. 54. In opposition to this see

M. Dibelius, Die vorchristlichen Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer.

<sup>21</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 62.

<sup>22</sup>R. Eisler, The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1931) pp. 275 ff.

C. K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition (London: S.P.C.K., 1947) p. 126.

again leaving John's message as one of destructive judgment. Participation in John's baptism was to avoid the judgment of fire. The contrast between Spirit baptism and baptism with fire must be kept otherwise any note of hope is removed with reference to the coming Mightier One. John's baptism is anticipatory to the greater baptism which will involve a gift of the Spirit for those who have received John's water baptism and will mean fire for those who have not.

How did the emphasis upon fire become associated with John's rite and what is the source of John's practice of baptism? To these questions we must now turn in order to support some of the suggestions put forward as general observations.

### III. THE SOURCES OF JOHN'S BAPTISM

Because of the relationship of John's baptism to Christian baptism as well as because of its importance for an understanding of John himself, many scholars have endeavored to discover the sources from which John's baptism came.<sup>23</sup> Two major areas have been searched for possible origins of John's rite: the pagan rites of Greece<sup>24</sup> or

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<sup>23</sup>In addition to those special studies on John the Baptist already cited see the following:

H. G. Marsh, The Origin and Significance of New Testament Baptism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1941) pp. 75-82.

F. Gavin, Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments (London: S.P.C.K., 1928) pp. 26-58.

Wilhelm Brandt, Die jüdischen Baptismen (Geissen: Topelmann, 1910).

J. Leipoldt, Die urchristliche Taufe im Lichte der Religionsgeschichte (Leipzig: Hindrich, 1910).

John Lambert, Sacraments in the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903).

Joseph Thomas, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup>E. Schürer, Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes, III, pp. 261-262.

Iran<sup>25</sup> and practices of Judaism itself.<sup>26</sup>

Pagan Sources for John's Baptism

Those who have looked to pagan rites for the source of John's baptism have concentrated on the mystery religions or the mythology of Iran. The evidence for the use of baptism in the mystery religions at a period contemporary with John the Baptist is very slight.<sup>27</sup> It is certain that later in the history of the Christian church the mystery religions did have an impact, but as H. G. Marsh points out it is very doubtful that the early disciples were influenced at all by these pagan movements.<sup>28</sup> This observation would apply even more strongly to John the Baptist. It is most unlikely that John who was steeped in his Jewish heritage and who undoubtedly was reacting in part at least from the syncretistic emphases of his contemporaries and the compromises being made with hostile forces would have drawn his central rite and teaching from pagan sources.

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<sup>25</sup>R. Reitzenstein, Die Vorgeschichte der Christlichen Taufe 1929.

W. Bousset, H. Gressmann, Die Religion des Judentums (3rd ed. 1926) p. 533.

E. Meyer, Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums II (1921) pp. 198-199.

J. Thomas, op. cit.

C. Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 115 ff.

<sup>26</sup>E. Lohmeyer, op. cit., J. Leipoldt, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup>S. Cave, The Gospel of Paul (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1929) p. 273.

H.A.A. Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery Religions (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913) p. 229

<sup>28</sup>H. G. Marsh, op. cit. p. 4.

Furthermore, as both J. M. Creed and Joseph Thomas have pointed out, the lustrations of the mystery cults appear to be no more than preparatory baths and were not initiatory rites.<sup>29</sup>

Oepke has given a careful study of Hellenistic rites of lustrations and compared them with the Gospel material. His conclusion was that there is no hint that baptism was an offspring of Oriental background.<sup>30</sup> The writer believes that there is no need to pursue this source beyond this point.

Because of the later association of John the Baptist's name with the Mandaean religion and the practice of Mandaean baptism, Reitzenstein has seen this as the source of John's baptism.<sup>31</sup> Attempts to relate John the Baptist to the Mandaean movement have not been convincing.<sup>32</sup> A serious question arises with reference to the Mandaean literature as to whether it is early enough to be of any real value. In addition the Mandaean literature adds nothing to our knowledge of John the Baptist. Although there may be a relationship between John the Baptist and the later Mandaean movement,<sup>33</sup> there is no reason to con-

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<sup>29</sup>J. M. Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 310.

J. Thomas, op. cit. p. 319 notes that by the time of Tertullian the rites did have initiatory significance (see also Thomas, p. 340).

<sup>30</sup>Oepke, TWNT Vol. I s.v. βαπτισμα p. 534.

G. K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition p. 30, quotes Oepke as follows, "There is not a single syllable in the Gospels to hint that it was the offspring of Oriental syncretism."

<sup>31</sup>Reitzenstein, op. cit. pp. 152 ff.

<sup>32</sup>R. Bultmann, Z.N.T.W., XXIV, 1925, pp. 100-146. In refutation of Bultmann's views see C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1955) p. 121 ff.

<sup>33</sup>R. Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1934) p. 24, believes that the Mandaeans are descendants of John's disciples.

clude that John was dependent upon Mandaeism.<sup>34</sup>

By far the most interesting and reasonable suggestion of those who look beyond Judaism to explain John's baptism is that of Carl Kraeling. Beginning with John's message of the coming baptism of fire, Kraeling endeavors to connect this with the fiery stream in apocalyptic literature (Daniel 7:10; IV Ezra 13:10-11).<sup>35</sup> Kraeling, however, moves quickly beyond Jewish apocalyptic literature to Persian eschatology and there he notes the description of molten metal pouring over the world like a river.<sup>36</sup> Through this river all men will pass and in so doing either are purified or destroyed.<sup>37</sup> Kraeling suggests that "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 judgment."<sup>38</sup> Kraeling then proceeds to suggest that the water of John's baptism "represents and symbolizes the fiery torrent of judgment, and that the individual by voluntarily immersing himself in the water enacts in advance before God his willing submission to the divine judgment which the river of fire will perform."<sup>39</sup> John's baptism would, therefore, according to Kraeling, be a rite symbolic of the acceptance of the judgment which he proclaimed.

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<sup>34</sup>A. Loisy, The Birth of Christianity (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. 1944) p. 397n.

<sup>35</sup>C. Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 115 ff.

<sup>36</sup>Kraeling here follows C. M. Edsman "Le Bap<sup>te</sup>me de feu" in Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis IX (1940)

<sup>37</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 117

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 118

In answer to Professor Kraeling's appealing conjecture the writer must raise several points. First of all, if one examines the usage of fire in the apocalyptic literature referred to by Kraeling, one finds that the function of the fiery stream, or the fiery breath is to destroy or to consume the enemy. In Daniel 7:11 the beast who appears is slain and his body is consumed by the burning flame. In IV Ezra 13:10-11 we read as follows:

"But I saw only how 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 - - the fiery stream, the flaming breath, and the storm, and fell upon the assault of the multitude which was prepared to fight, and burned them all up so that suddenly nothing more was to be seen of the innumerable multitude save only dust of ashes and smell of smoke."

The purifying function of fire so necessary to Kraeling's conjecture is absent from his Hebrew sources. In addition in the emphasis of John the Baptist the function of fire is to consume or destroy, e.g. Matt. 3:12 "His fan is in his hand and he will cleanse his threshing floor and gather his grain together in his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."(cf. Luke 3:17).

A second objection to Kraeling's position is that although Kraeling had rejected the epithet "brood of vipers" as too bitter to be addressed to the nation as a whole,<sup>40</sup> nevertheless, by his interpretation of John's baptism he indicates that the whole nation needed to repent and undergo John's rite which anticipated the coming eschatological judgment. Kraeling indicates that John's baptism was

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<sup>40</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 49 states that "brood of vipers" is far too bitter "to be addressed to the nation as a whole in which John found many who took repentance seriously..."



applicable to all, including the Jews because before the judgment of God all needed to repent.<sup>41</sup>

A third objection to Kraeling's position is that according to him all men would undergo a baptism in the river of fire and that by participating in the baptism of John they were declaring their willingness to undergo the future judgment. However, in the New Testament description of John's message and baptism, it is clear that baptism and repentance provided the means to escape judgment ("who warned you to flee from the wrath to come"), and not, as Kraeling suggests, to merely preenact it symbolically. In Kraeling's conjecture he has ignored the great sense of urgency in John's message and the note of the imminent judgment. For John the Baptist the axe is already laid at the roots and the acceptance of baptism will enable one to avoid the baptism with fire and prepare him to receive the baptism with Spirit. Kraeling's conjecture must be rejected as unsatisfactory. Nowhere do we have evidence of a contact between John the Baptist and Persian eschatology except at those points where Iranian ideas have filtered into Judaism, but even these were remolded into a new form. The key point in Kraeling's view rests upon the use of fire as purging as well as a destructive force. In the New Testament account of John the Baptist fire does not carry a cleansing function. Rather, it is to destroy the wicked and ungodly.

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<sup>41</sup>  
Kraeling, op. cit. p. 118

Attempts to explain John's baptism as having originated outside of Judaism have not been convincing. So it is that we turn to Judaism itself to see if this will provide us with the background for John's work.

### Judaism as the Source for John's Baptism

Within the context of Judaism itself at the time of John the Baptist one finds considerable variety. Josephus had described four philosophies or parties of Judaism which reflected the vitality of this nation. Among these various parties baptisms, washings, ablutions, or lustrations were observed to a greater or lesser degree. Of these rites three may well provide the source for the baptism of John. These three are levitical lustrations, Essene (including Qumran) washings, and proselyte baptism.

### Levitical Lustrations

The rules for ritual purity and particularly the levitical lustrations have been seen by J. Lambert as the earliest historical source of John's baptism.<sup>42</sup> But is this the probable source? Objection has been raised to a view such as that of Lambert on the grounds that the levitical washings were only ceremonial in character and that they had no ethical significance nor power to remove moral stain.<sup>43</sup> Is it correct to draw such a sharp distinction between ritual

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<sup>42</sup>J. Lambert, *op. cit.* p. 57. See Leviticus 11-15:16:23f.; 17:15; 22:5-7; Exodus 29:4; Numbers 19:19-22.

W. Brandt, *op. cit.* pp. 20 ff. summarizes the post-exilic lustrations under eleven titles all of which are related to natural functions.

<sup>43</sup>C. K. Barrett, *op. cit.* p. 30

W. Morgan, *Religion and Theology of Paul* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1917) p. 209.

uncleanness and moral uncleanness?<sup>44</sup> It is probable, at least, in the popular mind that the levitical washings possessed a significance which extended beyond ritual cleansing, but this should not lead to the opposite extreme of claiming ritual washings as the prototype of John's baptism by suggesting that they possessed a sacramental character.<sup>45</sup> The levitical rites were, as were other rites such as sacrifices, dependent for their significance upon the action of God. The rite itself was a symbol including the action of God in response to the action of the penitent.

As one examines the levitical washings as a possible source for John's baptism he notes three major objections. First of all, the levitical washings presupposed and underlined an emphasis on separation from ordinary life which was not found in the teaching of John the Baptist. John does not lay stress on ritual purity, separation from the unclean, or the minutiae of detail which characterized the levitical concern of his contemporaries. In contrast John laid stress on repentance and baptism which would prepare one for the coming Mightier One and enable him to avoid the judgment. The very fact that John baptized in the River Jordan which was not suitable for purification in the levitical sense indicates that John's baptism probably did not originate in the levitical washings.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>F. J. Taylor, Baptism in the Church p. 8.

<sup>45</sup>W. O. E. Oesterley and G. H. Box, Religion and Worship of the Synagogue (New York: Scribner's sons, 1907) p. 289.

<sup>46</sup>The Mishnah, Parah 8:10 "The waters of the Jordan and the Yarmuk are invalid because they are mixed waters." Translation by H. Danby, The Mishnah (Oxford University Press, 1933) p. 707.

Secondly, the repetitious nature of the levitical washings suggests that John's baptism was not derived from this source. As one became unclean as a result of contact with those who were unclean he was required to perform the prescribed ritual washing. Not so with John's baptism. John's baptism had a once-for-all character. The levitical rite again and again is used to restore the contaminated one to the present community. In contrast John's baptism has a note of finality which not only is concerned with the past failure, but also which looks forward to participation in the anticipated kingdom.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, the levitical rite deals only with the present realm, while John's baptism is placed in an eschatological setting. His baptism is looking forward as well as looking backward. His baptism is related to the past sins, but it is preparation for the coming Mightier One and his kingdom. The sense of urgency, the tension resulting from John's expectation, is lacking in the descriptions of the levitical washings.

With these factors in mind this writer must say that the levitical washings being a part of the great heritage of Judaism provide in a most general way a background for John's rite of baptism, but one would err in attempting to suggest any closer connection between them.

#### Essene Lustrations

Josephus notes that entrance into the Essene movement involved a three-year probationary period during which the novice would be per-

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<sup>47</sup>J. Lambert, op. cit. pp. 56, 57.

mitted to gradually draw closer to the members of the sect as he proved himself worthy.<sup>48</sup> Of the probationer Josephus says that following the first portion of his trials he is brought into closer touch with their manner of life and shares in the purer waters for (ritual) cleansing, but is not yet allowed to join their common life.<sup>49</sup>

In a similar fashion the admission to the Qumran sect was gained by one's undergoing a probationary period and examination apparently of two years' duration (1QS VI, 14-23). There is no clear indication of the actual proceedings of one's admission into the Qumran group. Josephus mentions the participation in the ritual bath and the sacred meal, but the Qumran material is silent on these as stages of entrance into the group. Mention is made in 1QS V, 13, 14 that the unrepentant are not allowed entrance "into the water to (be permitted to) touch the Purity of the holy men."<sup>50</sup> This would indicate the necessity of repentance for the efficaciousness of the ritual. Brownlee translates as follows: "for they will not be cleansed unless they have turned from their wickedness"<sup>51</sup> Also one would conclude that this statement implies that a ritual bath following repentance would be a part of the admission ceremony.<sup>52</sup> This

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<sup>48</sup>Josephus, Wars, II, viii, 7.

<sup>49</sup>Cited by M. Black, The Scrolls and Christian Origins (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1961) p. 93

<sup>50</sup>W. H. Brownlee, "Dead Sea Manual of Discipline" Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research (Supp. Studies 10-12, 1951)p.20.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>M. Black, op. cit. p. 94

would mean then that similar admission practices which Josephus has noted with reference to the Essenes are to be found in the Qumran movement.

Although F. M. Cross has suggested that some of the constructions at Qumran are probably water cisterns and not baptistries,<sup>53</sup> nevertheless, it is clear that this group practiced ritual bathing. One must recognize that elsewhere in Palestine, cisterns have been discovered which had not liturgical significance, nevertheless, the emphasis on ablutions made by the group would suggest that at least some of these cisterns were baptistries. As W. H. Brownlee has observed "it is the nature of the society rather than the distinctiveness of the cisterns themselves, which make it appear probable that at least a few of them may have served as bathing pools."<sup>54</sup> The yearly renewal of the covenant (1QS 11,19 ff) as well as the existence of the daily lustrations imply that a regular bathing place was in use closer, for example, than the Jordan river.<sup>55</sup>

The Qumran baptistries, then, probably, as Matthew Black has suggested,<sup>56</sup> were used for a ritual which included descending and ascending, which marked the breaking away from the old way and en-

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<sup>53</sup>F. M. Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies, p. 50. Cf. M. Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: Viking Press, 1958) pp. 22-23.

<sup>54</sup>In K. Stendahl's The Scrolls and the New Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957) p. 39.

<sup>55</sup>See above note 46.

<sup>56</sup>M. Black, op. cit. p. 96

trance into the newness of the life under the covenant. This symbolism of course brings to mind the crossing of the Red Sea, as well as the Jordan, and undoubtedly this was a part of the significance of the ritual.

The nature of the Qumran or Essene lustration is not clear. From the design of the baptistries with steps for ascending and descending, it is probable that immersion was practiced. Chaim Rabin notes in another context as follows: "Let no man bathe in water that is dirty or less than the quantity that covers up a man."<sup>57</sup> This would suggest a general principle which would be applicable here.

Considering these various aspects what can be said in reference to the possible relationship between John's baptism and the Essene or Qumran lustrations? First of all, let us consider the common factors involved. In both the teaching of John the Baptist and in the sectarian movement there was stress on repentance. John called upon his hearers to repent and his baptism is termed by Mark as being a baptism for the remission of sins. The necessity of repentance for the efficaciousness of the Qumran ritual has been noted (1QS V, 13, 14). The demand for repentance presupposes that there has been a falling away from the faith. It is evident that John the Baptist looked upon the whole nation as apostate and in need of repentance and baptism. His rather severe language "Brood of vipers who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that be-

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Chaim Rabin, The Zadokite Documents (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) p. 50.

fits repentance and 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" (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7). Similarly, the Qumran covenanters looked upon those who did not belong to their movement as corrupt and outside the elect group. In 1QH V, 27 reference is made to the enemies of the sect as "vipers that could not be charmed" and as belonging to the realm of Belial. The members of the Qumran group were the true Israel following closely the commandments of the Law.

The fact that the Qumran group and John the Baptist both practiced the rite of baptism is not surprising, as Joseph Thomas has convincingly shown,<sup>58</sup> there were many "baptist" movements or rather groups which practiced baptism in the environs of Palestine. What is significant is that, as Matthew Black suggests, both the Qumran group and John the Baptist relate their baptisms "to a movement of repentance, of entry into a new covenant....in preparation for an impending divine judgment."<sup>59</sup> The Manual of Discipline lays stress on the coming destruction of wrong-doing.

"Now God, through the mysteries of His understanding and through His glorious wisdom has appointed a period for the existence of wrong-doing; but at the season of visitation He will destroy it forever." (1QS IV, 18f.)<sup>60</sup>

In addition both movements stress the confession of sins in public. This is seen in the ritual of admission to the Qumran group where the candidate takes "a binding oath to return to the

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<sup>58</sup>Joseph Thomas, *op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup>M. Black, *op. cit.* pp. 97, 122, 133, 135.

F. M. Cross, *op. cit.* p. 177.

1QS 5:8-23, cf. 2:25-3:12.

<sup>60</sup>W. H. Brownlee, "Dead Sea Manual of Discipline".



Torah of Moses...with wholeness of heart...and he shall further bind himself by a covenant to separate himself from all perverse men who walk in the way of wickedness." (IQS V,8-11). Mention of confession at the time of John's baptizing is noted by Mark (1:5) and Matthew (3:6), as they state that "they (those who went out to hear John) were baptized by him in the River Jordan confessing their sins."

These similarities provide an impressive foundation for concluding that John the Baptist inherited his rite from the covenanters of Qumran.<sup>61</sup>

However, before a conclusion can be reached one must look at those important differences which may prevent an exact comparison between the ablutions of the Essenes of Qumran and the baptism of John. The differences, in a manner similar to the points of agreement, are not in themselves convincing, but when taken together they provide a weighty argument. First of all, although both the Qumran group and John the Baptist think in terms of an impending judgment the note of imminence which so characterized John's message does not appear so strikingly in the writings from the Dead Sea Community. For example in the Zadokite Documents (XII,45) one reads,

"But everyone who goes astray so as to profane the Sabbath and the appointed times shall not be put to death, for it falls to men to guard him; and if he is healed from it, they shall guard him for a period of seven years, and afterwards he shall come into the assembly."<sup>62</sup>

Or one can note also in IQS V, 16 ff. particular lengths of time are mentioned as fines or probationary periods for such as the slan-

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<sup>61</sup>For example, Duncan Hewlett, The Essenes and Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957).

<sup>62</sup>C. Rabin, op. cit. p. 60.

derer, or stubborn of heart. Clearly, this type of thinking does not remove the anticipation of a coming judgment, but it does not have the same sense of urgency seen in John the Baptist's proclamation "the winnowing fork is in his hands" or "the axe is already laid to the roots."

A second difference between the Qumran group and John the Baptist is to be seen in the groups to whom an appeal is made. The Qumran community's basic appeal was to those who desired a greater purity of life than was possible in the normal routines particularly in contact with the Temple priesthood. In addition the Qumran group appealed to those who were dissatisfied with their own abilities and opportunities to obey the Law of Moses. The neophyte was called upon to separate himself from wickedness and from perverse men and to return to the Torah (1QS V,8,11,14). This would imply that the appeal of the Qumran community was to Hebrews who had a particular zeal for the Law. In contrast John the Baptist places the Hebrews in the same category as the Gentiles (brood of vipers) and his call is for repentance characterized by a newness of life, but there is no special emphasis on the Law of Moses or upon such restrictions which were so prominent in the life of the Qumran community. What is one to conclude from the fact that John the Baptist does not lay stress on the Law in the same manner as do the covenanters of Qumran? To conclude that John had no concern for the Law because there is no specific mention of it is unwarranted. Such a position based upon the silence of our sources overlooks two factors. First of all, the Gospels generally have placed the zealous advocates of the Law in an unfavorable light and in consideration of John's prominence in the beginnings of the Christian movement, they may have remained silent

on John's attitude toward the Law. Secondly, the limited space devoted to John the Baptist obviously does not allow for a detailed treatment of his teachings. The silence of our sources ought not to be used to imply that John had no concern for the Law or that obedience to the Law played no part in John's movement. What one can conclude is that in the thought of John the Baptist the end of the age was at hand and the concern for the Law emphasized by other groups was not significant in these last days. Also the Law presupposes an organized society in which the normal human relationships occur, but in the eschatological emphasis of the Baptist there was no concern for establishing a separate community in which the minutiae of the Law would be observed. John's emphasis lay with the individual and the new life that the individual would carry on in the midst of society until the arrival of the Mightier One.

Thirdly, there is lacking in the emphasis of John the Baptist the exclusiveness which so characterized the Qumran movement. There is no mention of a probationary period before one could receive the baptism of John according to our sources. Josephus does observe that the baptism of John was received after the soul had been cleansed by righteous conduct.<sup>63</sup> Even if one accepts this as an accurate description of John's emphasis, there is still lacking the formal examination and probation of the Qumran group. The spontaneity which characterized the appeal of John the Baptist's movement would have been stifled by a probationary period of at least a year before baptism could be received.

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<sup>63</sup> See Above p. 138.

Finally, in John's baptism we find a once-for-all act which is not to be repeated and which serves as an initiation into his movement. Indeed, it may be observed that in the Qumran practice there would be only one initiatory baptism marking one's entrance into the sect and that this once-for-all event did not lose this sense even though ablutions were repeated. This, of course, must be allowed to stand as a possibility. However, the stress on this initial baptism is not as great as that seen in relationship to the rite of John the Baptist. There is only one mention of the rite of baptism upon entering the Qumran group. In IQS V, 13 admission to the water is to be denied to the unrepentant. This, as Matthew Black points out, implies "not only that repentance alone qualifies for ritual cleansing, but the presence of such rite of purification (as Josephus reports) in the ceremony of admission."<sup>64</sup>

The baptism or ablutions seen in the Qumran literature appear to be purely ritual acts. This is in direct contrast to the view of K. Kuhn who has suggested that the baths "had for the Essenes, over and above their old meaning (to secure cultic purity), the sacramental function of mediating in the divine forgiveness of sins."<sup>65</sup> Kuhn further states that "in place of the sacrificial cultus of the Temple, which was no longer possible for them by reason of their distance from it, the baths and apparently also the communal meal, took on a new meaning, mediating salvation from God."<sup>66</sup> One has difficulty in find-

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<sup>64</sup>M. Black, op. cit. p. 94

<sup>65</sup>IQS iii, 3 ff.

<sup>66</sup>K. Kuhn, "The Meal" p. 68 in K. Stendahl's The Scrolls and the New Testament.

ing support for Kuhn's conclusions. Clearly that which gains atonement or forgiveness is not water for impurity apart from obedience to God's laws and His counsel (1QS III,6,7). As Brownlee renders this particular section,

"For it is through the Spirit of God's true counsel (in regard to) a man's ways that all his iniquities will be atoned so that he may look upon the life-giving light, and through a holy spirit disposed toward unity in His truth that he will be cleansed of all his iniquities, and through an upright and humble spirit that his sin will be atoned, and through the submission of his soul to all God's ordinances that his flesh will be cleansed so that he may purify himself with water-for-impurity....."<sup>67</sup>

What brings about forgiveness then is obedience to God's law and possessing an upright and humble spirit. The act of baptism in the Qumran ceremony is a ritual act which had a sacramental character probably only in the popular mind. The description of John's baptism given by Josephus appears to be more applicable to the Qumran rite than to that of the Baptist.

The similarities between the baptism of John and that of the covenanters of Qumran are impressive, but the differences are such that at most one may conclude from the information available thus far, that there is a possibility that the Qumran rite served to prepare the way for the Johannine baptism in an unbroken line of development. Beyond this possibility of a direct connection, one cannot go.

The work of Oscar Cullmann in showing a clear connection between the Essenes of Qumran and the later heretical Christian groups such as

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<sup>67</sup>W. Brownlee, op. cit., cf. the translation of Gaster, The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957).

the Ebionites, and those who created the Pseudo-Clementine literature, is very impressive.<sup>68</sup> Cullmann does not see a continuous line of influence from the Essenes of Qumran to the primitive church, but believes that the practices similar to those at Qumran became a part of the heretical groups after A.D. 70.

Going beyond the position of Cullmann is M. Jean Daniélou who suggests that some of the ordinals of the primitive Christian church (esp. "Traditions of Hippolytus") can be considered as coming from Essene sources.<sup>69</sup> Similarities in initiation rites are striking but as Daniélou acknowledges the essential difference lies in the unrepeatable nature of Christian baptism in contrast to the Essene lustrations which were frequently repeated.

As Matthew Black points out with reference to the "Tradition of Hippolytus", there is evidence of ritual baths preceding the rite of baptism in the early church.<sup>70</sup> Black believes that the Hippolytean tradition combined with a reference in the Epistle to the Hebrews (vi,12) where readers are counseled to leave elementary doctrine of baptismois and go on to maturity, "clearly means that there were Jewish-Christian groups outside Palestine practicing the Essene type of ritual washing."<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup>O. Cullmann, "Die neuentdeckten Qumrantexte und das Judentum der Pseudo-klementinen" in Bultmann Festschrift, pp. 35 ff.

<sup>69</sup>J. Daniélou, "La Communauté de Qumran et l'organisation de l'Eglise ancienne", Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses (1955) No. 1 p. 104 ff.

<sup>70</sup>M. Black op. cit. p. 101

<sup>71</sup>Ibid. pp. 114, 115.

Nevertheless, one cannot trace a direct historical connection between the Qumran practices and the later Christian practices. If John the Baptist could be shown to be that link in the historical sequence, then one could accept a clear historical development. But there is little, if any, evidence to place John the Baptist in this position.

The evidence brought forward by Cullmann, Daniélou, and Black indicates clearly the necessity of avoiding the easy approach of dismissing the similarities between the Qumran movement and early Christianity as mere coincidence. But the evidence for a convincingly drawn historical connection is not apparent. Therefore, the writer believes that the most one can state is that the common heritage of Judaism in its diversified form stands behind the movements of Qumran, John the Baptist, and Christianity as the common source from which these movements drew and to which they added their uniquely individual characters.

This leads us to a consideration of a final possibility to be considered as the source within Judaism from which John the Baptist's rite had its origin, viz. proselyte baptism.

### Proselyte Baptism

Proselyte baptism was one of the significant steps by which a Gentile became a Jew. It consisted of immersion in the presence of two witnesses accompanied by an examination as to the motive and the knowledge of the candidate.<sup>72</sup> Did this rite serve as the source of John's baptism? Serious doubt has been cast by Ewald on the exist-

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<sup>72</sup>Gavin, op. cit. pp. 33-35.

ence of the practice of proselyte baptism in the time of John the Baptist.<sup>73</sup> Proselyte baptism is not mentioned in the Old Testament. Neither is it referred to in Philo or Josephus. Ewald is on firm ground in pointing out that there is no real evidence that the rite was in use before the appearance of John the Baptist. The argument from silence is quite strong, but is it convincing? The fact that the practice of proselyte baptism did exist early in the Christian era certainly cannot be explained in such a way to suggest that the Jews of that time had adopted a rite which had come to be so significant in Christian circles.<sup>74</sup> In addition, as T. F. Torrance has indicated, the oldest material in The Mishnah, the discussions on the necessity of proselyte baptism between Hillel and Shammai, suggests that the practice was in existence before the Temple was destroyed.<sup>75</sup> The relevant passages from the Mishnah are as follows:

Pesahim 8:8 (Eduyoth 5:2 parallels this)  
 "The School of Shammai say: If a man became a proselyte on the day before Passover he may

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<sup>73</sup>Ewald, History of Israel (London: Longmans, Green Company, 1878-86) Vo. VIII, p. 121 denies that the rite was practiced at the time.

Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883) p. 109, denies a connection with proselyte baptism specifically, but suggests that John's baptism is related to the Jewish washings in general.

<sup>74</sup>H. H. Rowley, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism", Hebrew Union College Annual, XV, 1940, pp. 313-334.

<sup>75</sup>T. F. Torrance, "Proselyte Baptism", New Testament Studies Vol. I, #2, Nov. 1954.



immerse himself and consume his Passover-offering in the evening. And the School of Hillel say: He that separates himself from his uncircumcision is as one that separates himself from a grave."

A number of scholars with particular interest in this matter accept that proselyte baptism was practiced at the time of John the Baptist.<sup>76</sup>

However, the existence of the practice of proselyte baptism at the time of John the Baptist does not necessarily imply that there is a connection between it and the baptism of John. Before any possible relationship between John's baptism and proselyte baptism can be established, it is necessary to determine the significance of the latter. Did proselyte baptism remove ceremonial defilement or was it an initiatory rite? It is clear from the description of the proselyte following his baptism that this rite did have a sacramental character in the sense that grace was received by the proselyte coming with pure motive.<sup>77</sup> This view is rejected by Bousset, who denies the sacramental character of the rite.<sup>78</sup> The Talmud indicates that a change has taken place in the proselyte and that he is in all respects an Israelite. In Yebamoth 47a the following description of the examina-

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<sup>76</sup>I. Abrahams, Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels (1st series) (Cambridge: University Press, 1917) pp. 36-46.

E. Schürer, op. cit. Eng. ed. II, ii, pp. 319 f.

W. Brandt, op. cit. pp. 58 ff., also article in Encyclopedia Religion and Ethics Vol. 2, pp. 408, 409.

F. Gavin, op. cit. p. 31.

J. Jeremias, "Der ursprung der Johannestaufe" ZNTW (1929) XXVIII, pp. 312-320.

<sup>77</sup>H. H. Rowley, art. cit. p. 327

<sup>78</sup>W. Bousset, Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1903) p. 230.

tion of the candidate and his baptism are recorded:

"One who comes to be made a proselyte in the present time is to be asked: 'Why dost thou come to be made a proselyte? Dost thou not know that at this time Israel is afflicted, buffeted, humiliated and harried, and that sufferings and sore trials come upon them?' If he answers: 'I know this, and am not worthy' they are to accept him immediately....."

.....Two men learned in the Law shall stand near him and instruct him as to some of the weightier commandments. He immerses himself and when he comes up he is in all respects an Israelite."<sup>79</sup>

Kraeling denies that the proselyte is in all respects a Jew suggesting that the proselyte remains one step below the Jew by birth.<sup>80</sup>

Torrance has suggested that the proselyte in entering the covenant is a new creature and all his previous sins are forgiven.<sup>81</sup> G. F.

Moore, on the contrary, has indicated that proselyte baptism in no sense "was a real or symbolical purification" and that it was "essentially an initiatory rite with a forward and not a backward look."<sup>82</sup> Moore's suggestion would at first glance make the rite of

proselyte baptism an empty ritual.<sup>83</sup> However, I feel that what Moore is attempting to point out is that proselyte baptism is not a mere levitical lustration. The conflict between the two Schools indicates that the School of Hillel looked upon the convert as he "who separates himself from a grave" while the School of Shammai readily accepted the proselyte and allowed him to share in the Passover immediately.

<sup>79</sup>Gavin, op. cit. p. 33

<sup>80</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 103

<sup>81</sup>T. Torrance, art. cit. p. 151. See Genesis Rabbah 39 cited by Torrance, p. 152.

<sup>82</sup>G. F. Moore, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 334.

<sup>83</sup>I. Abrahams, op. cit. p. 42.

W. Brandt, "Proselyte Baptism" Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. ii, p. 408.

Daube concludes from this that the School of Shammai "did not look on the rites of entry as purificatory."<sup>84</sup> Daube suggests that the Hillelites brought a levitical concept into conversion.<sup>85</sup>

Was proselyte baptism merely a purificatory rite? The writer must answer in the negative because, as Daube writes, "pagans were not susceptible of levitical uncleanness, so in principle there was simply no room for purification."<sup>86</sup> If not a purificatory rite, are we then to conclude, as does Moore, that the rite was purely initiatory? Not at all. The proselyte by baptism as he came up out of the water was considered a new person, they are as people who have risen from their graves (Eccles. Rabba on 8.10). Indeed the newness following baptism even allowed marriage of the proselyte to former relatives, in theory at least. So significant was the rite of baptism that, as Daube points out, this could not be considered as merely a purificatory act.<sup>87</sup> To present proselyte baptism as either initiatory or purificatory is to deny that both aspects are present and indeed are necessary for the proper understanding of the rite. The baptism of the proselyte had both a backward and a forward look. His whole past life was wiped away and he was initiated into the new life of the covenant.

Recognizing these aspects of proselyte baptism, what then can be said about a possible relationship between it and the baptism of John? There are common factors to be noted which suggest that this

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<sup>84</sup>D. Daube, Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1956) p. 108

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid. p.107. In opposition see: K. Kohler, "Proselyte Baptism" Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. II, p. 500; C. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition, p. 31; I. Abrahams, op. cit. p. 36.

<sup>87</sup>Daube, op. cit. p. 112

rite may be the source of John's baptism. In both rites there is concern for the recipient of baptism to become in reality a son of Abraham. The proselyte, as has been indicated, was considered in a very real sense to have become a new person, a son of Abraham, a Jew in every way. In the teaching of John the Baptist there is stress on the need to live exemplary lives of piety like that of Abraham, and that mere physical descent was not in itself sufficient. God would raise up children to Abraham, according to the Baptist, implying that God will do just that unless the baptism of John is received. Also it is to be noted that both proselyte baptism and the baptism of John were related to repentance. Daube points out that there is an eschatological setting for proselyte baptism which of course is significant for John the Baptist. Daube sees, in considering the Tannaitic plans for the proselyte, the stress on the words "in this time" as indicating that the rabbis meant "an interlude evoking reminiscences of a happier past, but also, and even primarily the expectation of a glorious future."<sup>88</sup> The writer would allow this but with the observation that the eschatological flavor Daube finds here is no greater than in many other rites of Judaism. Yet this very emphasis on eschatology is one of the outstanding aspects of John's baptism. For John the axe was already laid to the roots and his baptism was in anticipation of the imminent coming of the Mightier One. The eschatological flavor hinted at in the rite of proselyte

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 118.

baptism is a key aspect of the rite of John. In addition to this difference on eschatological emphasis, other marked differences are to be noted which suggest that although John's baptism is rooted in the rite of proselyte baptism, it has been given unique qualities which prevent a simple identification of the two rites.

Proselyte baptism was self-administered while John the Baptist was apparently involved in the performance of the rite personally.<sup>89</sup> In Yebamoth 47b following the instructions and the examination of the candidate he participates in the actual baptism as follows:

"Two men learned in the Law shall stand near him and instruct him as to some of the weightier commandments. He immerses himself and when he comes up he is in all respects an Israelite."

or in Gerim I we read as follows:

"He immerses himself and when he comes up they address him (with) comfortable words."

The New Testament accounts clearly indicate that John himself was instrumental in the actual baptism of those who came to him.<sup>90</sup> For example, Matt. 3:5, 6

"Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region around about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

Luke 3:16

"John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water;..."

John 1:25, 26

"And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that

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<sup>89</sup>I. Abrahams, *op. cit.*, suggests that proselyte baptism was not self-administered or at least had to be in the presence of witnesses.

<sup>90</sup>In Luke 3:7 the text most generally used reads as follows: ἔλεγεν οὖν τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, while the western text reads ἐκώπιον αὐτῶν which could be interpreted to mean that baptism was self-administered in John's presence. The weight of the superior texts prohibits such an interpretation, however.

Christ, nor Elias, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth among you one, whom ye know not;....."

In addition to John's personal participation in the matter of baptism one notes that proselyte baptism was limited to Gentiles while John's rite was for both Jew and Gentile. John demanded baptism even of those who were Jewish.

John's rite of baptism is deeply and clearly rooted in the rite of proselyte baptism. Both demanded repentance and both brought a newness of life which was spoken of in terms of sonship to Abraham. Both rites involved an eschatological point of view, but that of John was far more significant than appeared in proselyte baptism. The greater stress on the preparation for the coming Mightier One seen in the emphasis of John the Baptist coupled with John's demand that this baptism be accepted by all indicates clearly that he had moved beyond the scope of proselyte baptism and had brought to his contemporaries a rite which marked the end of the old life as well as initiation into the people prepared for the coming Mightier One.

How then is John's baptism to be understood? Its roots are in the proselyte baptism of Judaism and its full significance can be best understood in this same context. The later rabbinical writers have elaborated on the details of proselyte baptism relating it to the Exodus event. The proselyte was regarded as having been redeemed from Egypt. His baptism corresponded to the crossing of the Red Sea or the passage of the Jordan (Jer. Pesahim 10:5).<sup>91</sup> In addition it was re-

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<sup>91</sup>"Interim Report on Baptism by the Church of Scotland", p. 14

lated to the "sanctification of Israel by water and by sprinkling of blood at Sinai before the giving of the Law (Bap. Yebamoth 46b; Kerithoth 9a, 81a)."<sup>92</sup> T. F. Torrance has suggested that the mixed multitude who came to John are to be compared with the mixed multitude of Jews and Gentiles baptized in the Sea and in the Cloud and separated then to be a holy people.<sup>93</sup> By a corporate act of baptism and repentance John the Baptist is raising up children to Abraham. This would suggest that Josephus' description of John's baptism,<sup>94</sup> recognizing the serious omissions in the account, βαπτισμῶν οὐριέων (to unite by baptism) is accurate and that John's baptism was intended as a means of entry into the new Israel.<sup>95</sup>

It is clear that John's baptism is universally needed.<sup>96</sup> He views the nation as apostate and apparently in need of re-entering the promised land symbolically by being baptized in the Jordan. We have noted that the Jordan River was not acceptable for levitical washings.<sup>97</sup> The River Jordan as the chosen place for John's baptism, at least the one most frequently used, suggests a symbolic re-enactment of Hebrew history. The River Jordan is to be associated with the vision of Ezekiel (chp. 47), the story of Naaman the leper (II Kings 5:1-15), as well as the crossing under the leadership of Joshua. These

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>From an unpublished paper which this writer was privileged to read.

<sup>94</sup>Josephus, Ant. XVIII, 5, 2.

<sup>95</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit. pp. 31 ff.

<sup>96</sup>H. Marsh, op. cit. p. 48.

Major, Manson, & Wright, Mission and Message of Jesus, p. 87

<sup>97</sup>See above note 46 and also Abrahams, op. cit. p. 33.

associations reflecting the great heritage of Hebrew history are to be connected with the Hebraic expectations surrounding the birth of John the Baptist. John who was expected to go in the power of Elijah may be reflecting by his association with the Jordan the anticipation of the return of Elijah to the place from which he was taken up.

(II Kings 2:1-12).

John's baptism has its roots in proselyte baptism, but to say this is not at all to deny the personal genius and initiative of John himself. By extending his rite to all people John the Baptist dramatically proclaimed that the nation had become as Gentiles and was in need of reentering the covenant. John came at the end of a prophetic line which gave an eschatological and messianic interpretation to the Exodus event. Particularly John the Baptist stands in relationship to Isaiah 40 ff. which looks forward to a new Exodus and a new crossing.

Having found in proselyte baptism what this writer believes to be the source of John's baptism recognizing the uniquely individual flavor given by John himself to this rite, one final aspect of John's baptism needs to be considered. We have suggested the source of John's baptism is to be found only in Judaism and that the understanding of the rite is best reached in terms of the great events of Hebrew history. Finally, is John's rite to be seen as a cultic rite? Does it replace the sacrificial system? Is this, possibly, to be seen as John's fulfillment of his priestly function?

These questions arise particularly in response to the pres-



entation of the baptism of John by Ernst Lohmeyer.<sup>98</sup> Lohmeyer rightly sees that no explanation of John's baptism need be searched for beyond Judaism. Within Judaism itself is sufficient explanation for the rite. Lohmeyer insists on the perfect parallelism between the baptism of John and the Jewish sacrificial system. John's baptism, suggests Lohmeyer, takes all the efficacy of the sacrifices and will serve as the basis of a new religion. According to Lohmeyer John's baptism is without traditional antecedents and is eschatologically new in that its significance comes from the Jewish cultic patterns and its external form is similar to Jewish ablutions. Lohmeyer designates John as the High priest of baptism.<sup>99</sup>

In answer to Lohmeyer's viewpoint several observations must be made. First of all, to assume that John believed his rite of baptism was of cultic significance and that in essence this would replace Hebrew sacrifices presupposes an attitude of John toward the Temple practices and the priesthood for which we have no evidence. It has been suggested earlier that groups such as Qumran Covenanters had rejected the Temple priests as unclean and had substituted their own rituals, partially at least, for some of the Temple activities. However, it is not at all clear that there was a total rejection of the Temple on the part of the Qumran group. Also it is possible that what we see in the Qumran group is a development of the cultic practices which compensated for the Temple rites which could not be regularly

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<sup>98</sup>E. Lohmeyer, op. cit. pp. 88, 149, 169.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid. p. 88

observed because of the difficulty of travel. With reference to John the Baptist we have no indication at all of a rejection of the Temple priesthood. Although they would have been included in the "brood of vipers", there is no specific rejection of them as a group. It is certain that baptizing groups were to be found in this general area and that in some of these the substitution of baths for sacrifices did occur.<sup>100</sup> But of John's relation to these groups we know little if anything, and without this or without some information which would suggest John's critical attitude toward the sacrificial system one is not justified in concluding that John's rite had a cultic significance and that it replaced the Temple practice. Thus Lohmeyer's suggestions are to be rejected, at least, in part.

John's rite of baptism has its immediate background in proselyte baptism. To this John brings a unique flavor in that his baptism is for all and is not merely into the present order, but is in anticipation of the coming Mightier One who will baptize with Spirit and fire. John's rite had a purificatory significance. It was not to be seen as purificatory in a levitical sense of ceremonial cleansing, but it did serve to mediate the remission of sin. Those coming to John filled with repentance received his baptism through which the old was done away with and there was a newness of life.

Ought we to see John's baptizing as a priestly act? John's priestly background is unquestionable.<sup>101</sup> The fact that John did not carry on his priestly responsibilities is difficult to explain. One either suggests, as did Carl Kraeling, that John the Baptist rejected

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<sup>100</sup>Joseph Thomas, op. cit. p. 87

<sup>101</sup>See Chapter II.

the priesthood because of his personal disappointment with what he discovered in the lives of his contemporary priests,<sup>102</sup> or he suggests that John saw in his desert life and ritual a fulfilment of his priestly function and responsibilities. The existence of priestly groups who separated themselves and observed priestly functions, contributes to the second alternative. That which is of greater importance here is the existence of a common tradition concerning Elijah's serving as a great High Priest who will anoint the Messiah.<sup>103</sup> This joined with the priestly emphasis of the Qumran group and the prominence given to the priestly leader (Messiah of Aaron) implies that John the Baptist, who was frequently associated with Elijah (e.g. birth narrative, dress, and location of ministry) may have followed this emphasis and saw his mission in this priestly framework. This suggestion answers several questions and is quite plausible. It depends, however, for its strength on John's rejection of the Temple and its priesthood for which we have no evidence.

It is probable that we have suggested a false disjunction. Rather than two alternatives, a third needs consideration. John had not yet come of age to function fully as a priest (CDC 14:10). His activities and his baptism need not be seen as rejections of the rites of the Temple, indeed John's prayer and fasting in excess of others may suggest a great loyalty to the Temple. Rather than a rejection of the Temple ritual one must see John the Baptist being concerned with

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<sup>102</sup>See Chapter I, p. 23.

<sup>103</sup>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Exodus 40:10 cited by T. F. Torrance, unpublished paper.

a different problem - - not the efficacy of the Temple rite, but the apostasy of the whole nation. Consequently, John's concern is not with the matter of substituting a new rite for old rites, but for being instrumental in reconstituting the apostate nation. Ceremonial uncleanness was of secondary concern to one whose great cause was the preparation of this apostate people for the coming Mightier One.

John the Baptist and his rite are to be seen and understood in the context of the great event of Judaism, the Exodus. John's desert background and habitation, his association with the figure of Elijah as well as other striking Old Testament heroes, his concern to see Abrahamic piety and exemplary life followed by a nation now apostate, his choice of the Jordan which was of significance in Hebrew history and his rite itself rooted in the very ritual which marked the Gentile's coming into a new life, all combine to indicate clearly that John the Baptist stands in the line of the great heritage of Hebrew history. His life and his rite can be best understood in the light of this heritage. By his baptism John is proclaiming the nation apostate and at the same time bringing the means through which the sons of Abraham will be brought into a new life of expectation and piety.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE CULMINATION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S LIFE AND MOVEMENT

## I. JOHN'S IMPRISONMENT AND DEATH

Considerable doubt has been cast on the validity of the account of the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist. In addition to references in the Synoptic Gospels (especially Mark 6:17-29, Matt. 14:1-12, and Luke 3:19-20) the writings of Josephus (Ant. xviii, 5,2) provide what information we have on the culmination of John's life.

In the Antiquities Josephus relates that Herod Antipas suspected John the Baptist of plotting an insurrection. Herod Antipas was deeply troubled by the hold that John had on the people. In order to avoid a future threat to his control Herod placed John in prison at the fortress of Macherus and had him beheaded there. John's imprisonment at Macherus indicates that he probably had been in Perea when he was taken prisoner. In addition to Galilee, Perea was also under Herod Antipas.

Professor Kraeling has objected to the trustworthiness of the Josephus account and suggested that Josephus had either imagined the political implications of John's mission or had completely misrepresented the circumstances of John's death.<sup>1</sup> If, however, the above interpretation of John's mission and message is reasonably accurate, that John expected and proclaimed the coming of the national Messiah, then

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<sup>1</sup>Kraeling, *op. cit.* p. 86

obviously such a presentation would have had political overtones.

The implication of the phrase Lamb of God found in the Fourth Gospel has been shown to have contained nationalistic implications.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, as T. W. Manson has rightly pointed out, the baptismal rite, when seen even in part as a rite of initiation into the messianic community coupled with John's proclamation could be seen from Herod's point of view only as a dangerous subversive activity.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly the Marcan account also appears to have political overtones. Although some have suggested that the Marcan account is filled with improbabilities,<sup>4</sup> the present writer believes it has a striking note of authenticity. The Marcan reflection on the character of Herodias is well substantiated by Josephus who relates Herodias' envy of Agrippa which ultimately led to the downfall of her husband Antipas. Herodias is seen as a scheming, jealous, ambitious woman who certainly would not be above the trickery described by Mark. The type of woman described by Josephus is certainly capable of Mark's episode in which Salome, the daughter of Herodias, secured the execution of John the Baptist who had condemned her mother's unlawful marriage.

Klostermann has raised the objection that the use of Salome, who was evidently quite young, to entertain the court was most unlikely.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See Chapter V.

<sup>3</sup>T. W. Manson, art. cit., Vol. 36, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, p. 406.

<sup>4</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 87.  
B. S. Easton, The Gospel Before the Gospel (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1928) p. 141 n.

<sup>5</sup>E. Klostermann, Das Markusevangelium (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1926) p. 69, and Merx, Das Evangelium Matthaei (Göttingen: Toppelman, 1902) p. 228 cited by T. W. Manson, art. cit. p. 408

Also Professor Kraeling objects to the lack of propriety involved in the dance of Salome.<sup>6</sup> However, T. W. Manson, with his usual candor, replies to similar objections raised by others that "we do not know how far the Herods subscribed to Graeco-Roman notions of propriety; on a good many points they seem to have been a somewhat uninhibited family."<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly John's criticism of the unlawful marriage of Herodias involved him in political matters. It would not have been the first time in Hebrew history that a prophet spoke out in criticism of the monarch (e.g. Nathan, Abijah, Jeremiah and especially Elijah).

Attempts which have been made to fix precisely the date of John's death have not been altogether successful. John's career was brief but meaningful. The evidence for the chronological limits of John's activity is not precise. Luke (3:1-2) refers to the "fifteenth year of Tiberius" as the beginning of John's ministry. If this statement is accurate, then reckoning on a chronology based upon beginning at the death of Tiberius this would place John's ministry in A.D. 28-29.<sup>8</sup> Professor Kraeling, basing his assumption on the death of Jesus having occurred in A.D. 30, concludes that John's death would have been late in the year 28 or early in 29 A.D.<sup>9</sup> However, if the reign of Tiberius began in 14 A.D., the fifteenth year of Tiberius would then be A.D. 29.<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 87

<sup>7</sup>T. W. Manson, Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>J. Fotheringham, Journal of Theological Studies, XXXV (April 1934) pp. 146-155, cited by T. W. Manson, The Servant Messiah (Cambridge: University Press, 1953) p. 38.

<sup>9</sup>Kraeling, op. cit., p. 93

<sup>10</sup>Ogg, George, The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, (Cambridge: University Press, 1940).

difficulty rests primarily, as Professor Kraeling notes, in the fact that we have no way of knowing precisely what chronological scheme Luke had in mind in this particular reference.<sup>11</sup> Generally, one can conclude, that in spite of the disagreement on the matter of exactly when the fifteenth year of Tiberius was, most scholars agree that John's ministry was probably only a year in duration.<sup>12</sup>

## II. THE CULMINATION OF JOHN'S MOVEMENT

It has been demonstrated that the sources available indicate that John the Baptist had considerable influence on his contemporaries, (Mark 1:5). His influence was seen among the poor, the publicans, the soldiers and even the Pharisees, Levites, and members of the royal court. Undoubtedly much of the influence John the Baptist exerted came to an end with his death, but his influence in the religious life of his contemporaries may not have ceased.<sup>13</sup> What the extent of that influence was and what form it may have taken are matters now to be examined.

Early in this study the possibility of a group of followers of John the Baptist existing even after John's death was examined.<sup>14</sup> The conclusion was made that clearly John the Baptist had followers,

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<sup>11</sup>Kraeling, *op. cit.* p. 94.

<sup>12</sup>R. Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (London: Methuen, 1931) pp. 288-311 argues that John was incarcerated for a long period and finally executed in A.D. 35. Eisler's views based upon the Slavonic Josephus have been generally rejected. The present writer would suggest that Eisler's view on this point is incorrect.

<sup>13</sup>Kraeling, *op. cit.* p. 158.

<sup>14</sup>See Chapter I.



but evidence for the existence of a significant group which created its own literature about John the Baptist was very questionable. It can hardly be doubted that the followers of John the Baptist were assimilated into the early Christian movement. Indeed such assimilation most naturally explains the sudden appearance of fasting and baptism as part of normal Christian life. And in addition, the assimilation of some of John's followers may also be seen as the cause for the effort to define as clearly as possible the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist reflected in the Gospels. But the question must be asked did the followers continue in any other way than as part of the Christian movement? If the present writer's interpretation of John the Baptist is correct, i.e. John recognized the anticipatory nature of his mission and that he would decrease as the expected one would increase, then a continuation of John's teaching and movement would have been surprising. If one denies that John acknowledged Jesus as Messiah, then a continuation of the Baptist movement would have been logical and necessary. If one acknowledges that John accepted Jesus as Messiah, even though John's concept of Messiah was not fulfilled, then he would not expect to find a continuation of John's movement.

The evidence which has been gathered to support the theory of a continuation of John's followers is inconclusive. It has been shown that the reference in Acts (19:3) to a group that knew only John's baptism ought not to be used as evidence of a Baptist movement.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>See Chapter I, p. 10.

Furthermore, as Professor Kraeling has pointed out, the attempts to connect a continuing line between John the Baptist and the later Mandeans are not convincing.<sup>16</sup>

Kraeling is correct in emphasizing that John had followers, but as he himself recognizes, one can only surmise in what way the disciples of John perpetuated his movement.<sup>17</sup> Kraeling uses as a basis for his conjecture the evolution of certain aspects in the Christian community. He distinguishes between the action of the disciples before the death of Jesus, during which period they preached and performed exorcisms, and the action after Jesus' death, when they engaged in the new activity of "witnessing."<sup>18</sup> The conclusion Kraeling then draws is that this same evolution must have taken place among the followers of John the Baptist. The present writer questions the reality of an evolution such as that described in the Christian movement. Obviously, the Christian disciples witnessed to the fact of the great event of the resurrection but to deny that they were witnesses before this seems to this writer to be rather forced. In addition to assume that this same evolution must have happened to the inner company of John's disciples is completely without foundation except in the mind of the originator of the idea. The present writer believes that the

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<sup>16</sup>R. Reitzenstein has so argued in Die Vorgeschichte der christlichen Taufe (1929). See also

R. Eisler, op. cit.

O. Cullmann, The Early Church, pp. 179-182.

In refutation see

Kraeling, op. cit. pp. 107 ff.

<sup>17</sup>Kraeling, op. cit. p. 163

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. pp. 164, 165.

idea originated precisely for the reason suggested above, viz. Kraeling's refusal to accept the Johannine narrative as valid in which John the Baptist recognizes Jesus as Messiah.

Undoubtedly many of the followers of John the Baptist found their way into the church just as earlier disciples of John had found their way to Jesus. The high estimation of John the Baptist, the continuation of many of John's teachings, and John's recognition of Jesus as Messiah combined to lead John's disciples into the Christian church.

There is no evidence to support Kraeling's conjecture that the fraternization of followers of John with the Christians came to an end and that there resulted intense rivalry.<sup>19</sup> This is pure conjecture. The supposed polemical aspects of John's Gospel need not be admitted as evidence of this rivalry. Undoubtedly the status and significance of John the Baptist posed a problem in the Christian church and this perplexity is reflected in the ambivalent attitude of the Gospel writers themselves toward John. Such matters as the precedence of John in time, that Jesus had been baptized by him and had once been his disciple combined to cause uncertainty about John's position.<sup>20</sup> John (1:13,30) reflects an attempt to solve this problem by showing Jesus' superiority as a preexistent one. But there is no evidence that such perplexity occasioned a split or precipitated an intense rivalry.

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<sup>19</sup>Kraeling, *op. cit.* p. 175.

<sup>20</sup>O. Cullmann, Le Problème littéraire et historique du Roman pseudo-Clementine (Paris: F. Alcan, 1930) p. 234-42, discusses the matter of John's precedence in time.

cf. Cullmann, The Early Church (London: SCM Press, 1953) pp. 179-182

J. Thomas, *op. cit.* pp. 107, 123-126.

Certainly, as Joseph Thomas points out, there were many syncretistic and gnostic groups who made use of the rite of baptism.<sup>21</sup> But this fact in no way connects John with such groups or necessitates an effort to discover such connections.

Finally, the sect of the Mandeans has been seen by some as undisputed evidence of a continuation of the Baptist movement.<sup>22</sup> The Mandaean literature reflects no information which could not have been drawn from the New Testament and adds to this body of information no new knowledge which one would expect of a group supposedly stemming directly from John's early followers.

It is to be concluded, then, that there is no convincing evidence of the existence of a significant Baptist sect which acted as rivals to the Christian movement and made messianic claims for its martyred leader. The arguments put forth to support the existence of such a group are based upon awkward or rather forced interpretations of passages of Scriptures or draw upon literature which is too far removed to be of any real significance.

This writer believes that those who have attempted to foster the Baptist sect theory have done so as a result of their denial of the validity of the Fourth Gospel's account of the relationship between Jesus and John. As a consequence, they are forced to explain the logical consequences of this rejection, viz. that John rejected Jesus and that John's followers continued as a rival movement possibly

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<sup>21</sup>J. Thomas, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup>R. Reitzenstein, op. cit.

R. Eisler, op. cit.

O. Cullmann, The Early Church, pp. 179-182.

making messianic claims for John.

The implications of the Qumran discoveries in providing sound arguments in favor of an early date for the Gospel of John and a reevaluation of the Gospel make the Baptist sect theory unacceptable.

## CHAPTER VIII

## SUMMARY STATEMENT

In bringing this study to a close the writer will endeavor to summarize his findings. The aim of this study of John the Baptist was to see John in the context of contemporary religious movements within Judaism. The choice of this framework in which to examine John the Baptist came about following the writer's discovery that the major writers on the subject have been ready to turn to sources beyond and outside of Judaism for explanation and interpretation of those aspects of John's life which were most striking, e.g. rite of baptism, concept of judgment involving fire, and his messianic expectations.

In the preliminary preparation for this dissertation he was at first convinced by two major emphases reflected in the critical efforts of men like Dibelius, Goguel, and Kraeling. One major emphasis was that the Gospel of John was perhaps the least trustworthy of the available sources and was to be set aside, and preference was to be given to the Synoptic accounts. The second major emphasis was to ignore John the Baptist's essential Jewish emphasis and teachings and to picture him as having been influenced by non-Jewish and Iranian mythology particularly. Though the two emphases are not stated as such, the present writer has found them to be undercurrents in the recent writings on John the Baptist.

The more the writer examined the sources the more he was convinced that these two emphases were not acceptable. Carl

Kraeling is undoubtedly correct in his emphases upon Dibelius' principle of Sitz im Leben (relation to contemporary life), but the question is whether the contemporary life was allowed to provide the actual setting. By this is meant that the contemporary life in which John the Baptist found himself was a Judaism obviously bombarded by pagan practices and cultures, but still vital enough to have produced groups like that at Qumran which recognized the dearth of piety in many circles but attempted to recreate a people prepared for God. It has appeared to this writer that the major writers on John the Baptist have been too quick to turn to alien cultures to provide explanation of John's work and by so doing have denied the variety and vitality within Judaism itself.

To refute this position so widely found regarding the proper background of John the Baptist, the present writer has endeavored, not by resorting to dogma, to portray contemporary Judaism with its variety and strengths and to see that John the Baptist is to be properly understood only in this context.

John the Baptist even in his birth narrative was shown to be associated with the great figures of Hebrew history. The Old Testament allusions drawn upon to enhance the birth narrative were seen to also reflect the later message and ministry of John the Baptist. Even in the birth narrative one is able to see the historical context in which John the Baptist stood. He is placed solidly in Hebrew history and in the heritage of the great men of the past.

John's desert experience was shown to be a continuation of the Heilsgeschichte of Israel. Having deliberately chosen the desert

not only for a place of preparation, but also for a place of abode, John the Baptist thereby associated himself with the great events in Hebrew history and especially the Exodus event.

The writer pointed out that the desert experience of John in no way related him to the Qumran group. Attempts in this regard have been futile and have had to remain in the realm of conjecture. One cannot deny the probability of contact, but there is no clear evidence to lead one to conclude that there was any mutual influence between John the Baptist and the Qumran group. Indeed, the same can be said for the major movements within Judaism. Many common features are to be seen because John stands boldly in the Hebrew heritage of the past. His life was steeped in the traditions, hopes, and expectations of Judaism.

In the recorded sayings of John the Baptist which are available it is clear that his message is most easily and properly understood in a Jewish context. John's message of repentance was in harmony with the contemporary beliefs and involved human effort in the turning to God. John looked forward to a judgment for those who did not heed the call for repentance and baptism for the remission of their sin. The judgment of fire which would utterly consume was drawn not from Iranian sources, but from the message of prophets such as Joel. Judgment was imminent and universal. The only escape was in repentance and baptism. The present writer believes that John the Baptist expected a national Messiah as was noted by the terms: Mightier One, and Lamb of God. John's relation to this national Messiah was that of a voice in the wilderness preparing



the way by a call for repentance and a warning of imminent judgment. Here again John is best understood in the light of his contemporaries. His message of repentance, judgment, and the coming Messiah was to be found in the major movements. John, however, rescued the message from the confines of orthodoxy and legalism and charged it with new intensity and gave it a new vitality.

John's message was integrally bound with the rite by which he was known, that of baptism. John's baptism had a two-fold emphasis. It was related to the sins of the past and at the same time looked forward to the coming great day. Pagan lustrations, levitical rites, Essene washings were all rejected as the source of John's rite. The writer could find no more satisfactory source than proselyte baptism which had been broadened in its scope and deepened in its significance by John the Baptist. By the use of this rite of baptism John declared the whole nation apostate and in need of a change of life. John's baptism, as with his birth narrative and his desert experiences, reflected the impact of Hebrew history and expectation. The rite was clearly related to the Exodus tradition and to entering into the Promised Land through the Jordan. It was noted that the Qumran community recaptured much of the Exodus in its desert habitation and the rules of the Mosaic camp were observed in preparation for the final war (1QM 3:12-4:11). The later rabbinical writings related the events of the Exodus tradition with the candidate in proselyte baptism. John the Baptist by his mission and message reflected this same pattern. The Exodus event was the ideal time in piety and devotion and the leading of God. Con-

sidering the Qumran emphasis and that of the Rabbis with proselyte baptism, the present writer concluded that John the Baptist also reflected this same emphasis in relating his work to a new Exodus event.

By examining the account of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel in comparison with that in the Synoptics the writer concluded that at several crucial points the Fourth Gospel was trustworthy as a source even when not supported by or in opposition to the Synoptics. It was concluded that the Gospel of John was at many points a reliable early source and that some of its philosophical and theological concepts were to be found to a great extent in contemporary Judaism, especially in such groups as that at Qumran. This conclusion in no way necessitated a connection between the Qumran group and the writer of the Fourth Gospel, but did indicate that the Gospel reflected more of Judaism than late Greek philosophy. The writer examined the question of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel and found no convincing evidence which would prohibit the use of the Fourth Gospel as an early and reliable source of information on John the Baptist. A portrait of John the Baptist as found in the Fourth Gospel was then drawn.

John was seen to have recognized Jesus as the Messiah and to have associated with him until a time of separation. The break came as a result of the awareness that John's message was one of anticipation while Jesus' message was one of fulfillment. What John preached as imminent Jesus acknowledged as present. John's acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah caused some of John's disciples to change loyalties and led to the decline of his movement.

The execution of John by Herod was seen to have been the result of John's political impact in his condemnation of Herodias' marriage as well as his message of the national Messiah. The impetus behind John's followers was removed at their leader's death. His followers were largely absorbed by the Christian movement and did not continue as a significant independent group.

John's significance cannot be fully grasped by a brief account of his life, but can be seen in a large measure in his impact upon his contemporaries. Measured in this sense, John the Baptist's significance was considerable, but as with all forerunners, John is overshadowed by the Mightier One. His efforts did not continue long after his death and John is remembered basically for his association with Jesus Christ.

John was a stern forbidding prophet. His passion and mission were so persuasive that many turned to be baptized by him. His challenge, his message, his rite did indeed prepare the way and in this sense, John was successful. John the Baptist called men to self-humiliation before God and to a recognition of their apostasy. His message even today has lost little of its urgency and challenge. John stands in the shadow of the Mightier One for whom he prepared the way and it is in this capacity and for this accomplishment that John will be remembered in history.

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