

THE "COMING ONE" OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

EVEN those disciples of the Baptist who, when Paul came to Ephesus (Acts xviii. 24-xix. 7), still maintained their separate communal existence unabsorbed by the Church, agreed with the Christians that their master, John, had predicted One "which should come after him." When Paul succeeded in persuading them that this could refer to no other than Jesus they submitted to a second baptism; for as regards the distinctive feature of the Christian rite, the giving of the Holy Spirit, they professed, in manifest sincerity, "not so much as to have heard of it."

Whenever the Church learns to appreciate the value of *differences* in the record, instead of hastening to obliterate discrepancies in the supposed interest of the doctrine of inspiration, it will be perceived that we have here a representation quite widely divergent from that given elsewhere, *and correspondingly instructive*. For Mark i. 7, 8 presents the Baptist as proclaiming nothing else than just the coming baptism of the Holy Spirit, while in John i. 19-37, iii. 22-30 the Baptist, in addition to this proclamation, persistently and consistently follows his God-given mission of "making manifest to Israel" "Him that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit." And this individual is not only specifically and repeatedly pointed out, but the whole "witness of John" consists of nothing else than pointing out Jesus publicly and to all as the "Bridegroom," "the Son of God," and more particularly the "Lamb of God" whose blood avails to "take away the sin of the world." John's own baptism

thus becomes a mere prefiguration of this only real and effective purification. Of a "baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" nothing remains. John comes only to point to the Atoning Lamb, and to symbolize by a type the coming baptism of the Spirit. Here is certainly a difference.

Criticism has in our time so far prevailed against harmonistics as to secure a very widespread admission that John i. 19-37, iii. 22-30 represents not so much history as doctrine; the significance put by the Church of A.D. 100 upon the mission and institution of the Baptist in relation to its own Christology, its own rite of Baptism, and its own doctrine of Atonement. Matthew iii. 1-12 = Luke iii. 1-17, and the utterances of Jesus Himself as to the Baptist and his work are admitted to present a more historical view. It remains to make use of the fact of diversity in such a way as to draw the maximum of instruction from both forms, the more historical, and the doctrinally idealized as well.

We may defer for the present the attempt to obtain a reflex light on ideas and conditions of the Church in A.D. 100 from the change in point of view exhibited by the later documents, and confine ourselves to the simpler problem of the actual message and meaning of the Baptist in A.D. 28, assuming that the coincident testimony of the witnesses admitted to be earliest, especially when recording the utterances of Jesus Himself,¹ is to be preferred.

All our sources agree that the Baptist not only warned of a judgment to come in the general vein of prophetic exhortation, but in particular of "One that should come after him," who is not Jehovah Himself, though He executes the sentence of Jehovah; for it is inconceivable that the

¹ It is a well known fact that the Synoptists exhibit a minimum of divergence in recording the logia of Jesus. The reason is admitted to be superior care and reverence for this element of the tradition.

Baptist should compare himself to Jehovah as unworthy to "bear (or loose) His sandals"; and equally inconceivable that he should send to inquire of Jesus, "Art Thou the Coming One" (Matt. xi. 3 = Luke vii. 19) with such an understanding. The Christian Church from the beginning has assumed that by this Coming One he meant the Messiah. In fact, two at least of our Evangelists, as we have seen, assume that he meant Jesus individually. All the Synoptists alter the words "paths of our God" in the passage from Isaiah xl. 3, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God," into "*His* paths" in the interest of this specific application. Modern critics do not admit this meaning, but they go no further than to say, The Baptist is not speaking of Jesus individually, but of the expected Messiah. But if he meant the Christ, why did he not say so? Whence this new term "the Coming One" which reappears in varied form as "He that cometh behind me" or "after me"?¹ Why not ask, Art Thou the Christ? Moreover (1) there is little in the Baptist's representation of the Coming One to suggest the Son of David, the Horn of Salvation, the Redeemer and King of Israel, since not more than one of His accepted functions is dwelt upon, viz., the judgment.² (2) The Baptist's question,³ although presented in presence of the multitude, does not seem to suggest to the bystanders, friendly or hostile, any notion of Jesus' being the Christ. That He is such is still a secret from the public when revealed to Peter,⁴ "not by

¹ In Matt. xi. 3=Luke vii. 19 we have simply *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*; in Matt. iii. 11 *ὁ ὄπισθ' μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου*, slightly varied in Mark i. 7=Luke iii. 16. In John i. 15, 27, 30 *ὁ ὄπισθ' μου ἐρχόμενος*. In Acts xiii. 25, xix. 4 the *ὄπισθ' μου* omitted in Luke iii. 16 is restored in the form of *μετά*. But cf. Heb. x. 37 with Hab. ii. 3, Mal. iii. 1f.

² Cf. Matt. iii. 7-12=Luke iii. 7-17, and see below on the intrusion of the words *πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ* Matt. iii. 11=Luke iii. 16 from the logion of Jesus, Mark i. 8=Acts i. 5, xi. 16.

³ Matt. xi. 3=Luke vii. 19.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 13-20 and parallels.

flesh and blood," but by divine intuition. The later idea of our Evangelists, carrying back the public proclamation of Jesus' Messiahship to the very baptism itself, scarcely obscures the earlier representation derivable from Jesus' own words, and abundantly confirmed by the historical necessities of the case, that this declaration was reserved for the final entry into Jerusalem. The cry of the maniac of Khersa¹ is indeed generalized by Mark into a recognition by all the demons "whenever they saw Him";² but this self-contradictory theory of our second Evangelist is repudiated by Matthew,³ and while we may well accord some weight to the indications of Messianic acclamation in Matthew ix. 27, xii. 23, and xv. 22 (cf. John vi. 14, 15), which in turn are studiously excluded by Mark,⁴ some discount must be made for the evidences of assimilation between Matthew ix. 27 and xx. 30, 31, and the influence on Matthew of the motive apparent in his attachment of the genealogy. As the net result it will still be apparent, notwithstanding a possible sporadic outcry by a maniac, or even a stray reference to "the Son of David," that Messianism in the stricter sense played no considerable part in Jesus' public career until the last journey from Jericho to Jerusalem; and this is not easy to reconcile with the idea that the Baptist had sent two of his disciples to put to Jesus publicly the question, "Art Thou *the Messiah* or no?" especially when the answer was, to say the least, not a negative.

Is it then conceivable that the Baptist had some other expected personage in mind, or at least some special aspect of the Messianic work which might be popularly understood as committed to another? Two lines of inquiry are open:

¹ Mark v. 7 and parallels.

² Mark iii. 11, cf. i. 24, 34b.

³ Cf. the omission of Mark i. 23-26, 34b and alteration of Mark iii. 11 in Matt. xii. 15, 16.

⁴ For the reason see Wrede, *Messias geheimniss*.

1. Current Messianic expectations as known from contemporary literature, and the Coming One, or Coming Ones, there delineated.

2. The portrait drawn by the Baptist's own reported utterances in Matthew iii. 7-12 and parallels, taken together with his seeming readiness to apply it to Jesus after "hearing the works of the Christ" in the prison.

(1) It is undeniable that the judgment, or separation of the wheat from the chaff, which constitutes the one activity of the Coming One in the Baptist's presentation, belongs with the primary elements in the Messianic programme of the popular faith. It is a stereotyped feature of current eschatology that the kingdom of God supervenes upon a time not only of darkest discouragement, and of cruel oppression by the Gentiles, but also of inward corruption and disorder, physical, social and moral.¹

The age of Messianic deliverance is promised indeed, and according to many authorities the time is already fulfilled; but the promise is conditioned on Israel's moral reformation and observance of the law. This antinomy between the fixed belief in the "falling away," and the moral conviction that the Messianic kingdom can be given only to a righteous people, forms the foundation of a doctrine of the *purification of Israel*. This is accomplished by (a) the Judgment.

Originally the judgment is coincident with the destruction of the hostile powers. The first victims are the renegade and unworthy Israelites. Later, when a Messianic kingdom under Yahweh's vicegerent is expected as preliminary to the ultimate "restoration of all things" (1 Cor. xv. 24), a first judgment by Messiah² (which also has its accompanying "first resurrection") is distinguished

¹ See Volz, *Jüdische Eschatologie*, 1903, § 31: "Die letzte böse Zeit."

² Messiah and his immediate supporters are of course the agents of this judgment; cf. Matt. xix. 28=Luke xxii. 29, 30 and 1 Cor. vi. 2.

from the last or general judgment of God Himself. But when no personal Messiah, and no preliminary millennial reign of the Son of David is anticipated—and this is the earlier and, on the whole, the commoner form of the Messianic hope—"the judgment" is of course the judgment of God Himself, whether executed in person, or through the agency of the Destroying Angel. Now the Baptist unquestionably means by the "stronger than he" the executioner of the judgment toward whom he himself occupies the relation of a mere warning voice.¹ We have also seen that his comparisons imply that its agent is not Yahweh in person, but some representative such that it becomes proper to speak of him as the Reaper of Yahweh's harvest.² But before we can reasonably infer that the Baptist's Reaper is "the Messiah" in the accepted sense, it would be needful to show that he held also that special form of the Messianic hope which conceived the restoration of all things as preceded by a millennial reign of the Son of David. Our only means of judging as to this is to observe what element it is of the preceding eschatological literature which gives the colour to his warning.

But first let it be observed that there is no more instructive feature of the exhaustive study of Jewish eschatology, just published by P. Volz,³ than the demonstration that in the Messianic hope the *agent* is secondary and variable, while the essential *transactions* are primary and constant. Thus in some of its forms the judgment even precedes the appearance of Messiah; and in many forms no definite personality distinguishable from Yahweh Himself appears

¹ Whether the comparison of John to the "Voice in the desert" of Isa. xl. 3 rests upon actual tradition, or is only the adaptation of Mark. i. 3 and parallels by the fourth Evangelist, must be left undetermined.

² With the figure "He shall gather the wheat into his garner, and shall burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable" compare the function of the "angels" in Matt. xiii. 30, 39-42.

³ *Jüdische Eschatologie*, 1903.

as ruler in the Messianic kingdom. In particular we are told regarding the special feature of the execution of even the Messianic judgment, that its agent is not always the Messiah Himself.

"What falls to Messiah to do is elsewhere committed to the agency of angels. The chief passage is *Assumptio Mosis* x. 2, where we see the Angel executing the vengeance of Israel on their enemies, cf. Dan. x. and *Test. Dan.* vi."¹

In fact *Ass. Mos.* belongs to the writings which conceive the Messianic redemption as the intervention of "God alone,"² though preceded by "the angel" who prepares His way.

It must accordingly be regarded as doubtful, to say the least, whether the recorded utterances of the Baptist suggest any other preliminary to the final dénouement of Yahweh's reign over all the earth than that very work of judgment and purification by fire which he conceives as committed to the hand of the great Reaper.³

(b) Popular eschatology in the Baptist's time had another and in some respects more notable solution of the antinomy between apocalyptic tradition and the moral consciousness. The necessary purification of Israel would be accomplished by "*the Great Repentance.*"

As to the various forms in which this doctrine appears in apocalyptic, pseudepigraphic, and Talmudic literature, we

¹ Volz, *op. cit.* § 38, 3b, p. 277.

² Cf. Isa. lxiii. 5.

³ If it be replied that Amos also rebuked the false confidence of Israel in "the Day of Yahweh" by declaring it to be "darkness and not light," a day of judgment against Yahweh's own unworthy people instead of the expected triumph over their enemies; and yet does not exclude the hope of ultimate triumph for the purified remnant, the comparison is fully justified. But even granting the very doubtful authenticity of Amos ix. 11-15, the parallel only requires that the Baptist looked for "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," after the day of burning, which by no means necessarily involves a millennial reign of the Son of David. The noteworthy fact is that he has nothing to say about the nature of the "kingdom," but only of the impending "wrath."

must refer to the recent works of Baldensperger¹ and Volz,² as well as the older standard treatises of Schürer,³ Weber,⁴ Bousset,⁵ and R. H. Charles.⁶ Schürer's concise statement may well be cited:—

"The return of the prophet Elijah to prepare the way of the Messiah was expected on the ground of Mal. iii. 23, 24 (Engl. iv. 5, 6). This view is already taken for granted in the Book of Ecclesiasticus (xlvi. 10, 11). It is, as is well known, frequently alluded to in the New Testament (see especially Matt. xvii. 10; Mark ix. 11; also Matt. xi. 14, xvi. 14; Mark vi. 15, viii. 28; Luke ix. 8, 19; John i. 21). It was even transferred to the Christian circle of ideas. According to Malachi iii. 24 (iv. 6), the object of his mission is chiefly considered to be to make peace upon earth, and in general to substitute order for disorder (Matt. xvii. 11: ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα; Mark ix 12: ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα)."

Schürer next quotes from the Mishna (*Edujoth*, viii. 7) the passage already shown⁷ to be connected with Matthew xi. 12, 13 = Luke xvi. 16, and which, when taken with the other passages cited by Weber,⁸ is clearly seen to be a development of the doctrine of the ἀποκατάστασις along the lines of Ecclesiasticus xlvi. 11 (καταστήσαι φυλὰς 'Ιακώβ).⁹ In other words, an understanding of the "purification" with reference to correct genealogy (cf. Neh.

¹ *Die messianisch-apokalyptischen Hoffnungen der Juden*, 1903. See especially p. 96 f.

² Ut supra, § 33, "Die besonderen Heilspersonen," pp. 190–196.

³ Engl. Trans. *The Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, 1891, § 29, "The Messianic Hope," II. ii. pp. 154–165. The subsequent German edition makes no change in the portion here considered.

⁴ *Altsynagogale Theol.* (also *Lehre d. Talmud*), § 77. "Elia der Vorläufer des Messias."

⁵ *Legend of Antichrist*, the chapter on "The Two Witnesses of Messiah" and *Commentar* on Rev. xi. 3 ff.

⁶ R. H. Charles is curiously silent on the doctrine of the Forerunners of Messiah and the Great Repentance, both in his *Eschatology*, etc., 1899, and elsewhere, but in the articles, "Apocalyptic Literature" in Hastings, *D.B.*, and especially Cheyne's *Enc. Bibl.*, the literature is carefully reviewed.

⁷ Bacon, *EXPOSITOR* for July, 1902, article "Elias and the Men of Violence."

⁸ Ut supra § 77, referring to *Edujoth*, i. 5 and *Kiddushin*, 17a.

⁹ A trait belonging to Yahweh's servant in Isa. xlix. 6.

xiii. 23-30, and Luke iii. 8*b*). Against this conception of Elijah's mission, as merely the external one of "restoring the tribes" by separating the true descendants of the patriarchs from the "bastards,"¹ the same passage of the Mishna records the protests of several rabbis, though the doctrine seems nevertheless to have ultimately prevailed. Thus "R. Jehudah says: only to admit, but not to reject" (from the kingdom). R. Simon held that Elijah's mission was "merely to *settle disputes*."

"The learned say his coming is 'neither to reject nor admit, but merely with the object of making peace in the world.' For it is said: 'I send you Elijah the prophet, to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers' (Mal. iii. 24 [iv. 6])."

The protests are raised against a conception of the Elijan "purification" which seemed to make him usurp something of the Messianic prerogative of judgment. They point out that Elias' work is reformatory only, and in the case of the more liberal come almost to the point of the Gospel passage, in which John the Baptist figures as an Elias who does not reject, but welcomes the despised outcasts, the "sinners," and "people of the land," even at the expense of the self-righteous Pharisee.

Jealousy for the Messianic prerogative of judgment, however, raised no protest against the agreed point that Elias would settle all disputes; so that, as Schürer continues, "in the Mishna money and property whose owners are disputed, or anything found whose owner is unknown, must wait 'till Elijah comes'"; and 1 Macc. iv. 46 shows the antiquity of this idea. It remains side by side with a similar expectation of Messiah (John iv. 25). Even "the resurrection of the dead comes through the prophet Elijah," according to *Sota* ix. 15. Thus the line of delimitation

¹ טמזרים, i.e. the "people of the land," the "families who had entered by violence" (unlawfully) of *Edujoth*, and Matt. xi. 12, 13=Luke xvi. 16.

between "the Prophet like unto Moses" (Deut. xviii. 15), and his various forerunners, "Elias," "that prophet" (John i. 21-25), "Jeremias" (Matt. xvi. 14), the "two witnesses" Moses and Elias (Rev. xi. 3-13; Matt. xvii. 1-8 and parallels), or in extra canonical apocalypse and post-apostolic literature, "Enoch and Elias," is more or less ill-defined and vanishing. And this lack of precision, this multiplication of Messianic functionaries, is so far from a recent phenomenon that, on the contrary, it is obviously present in the very prophecy on which the expectations of Elijah and his work of purification and reform themselves are based. The last in order of our canonical prophets re-introduces the ancient figure of the "Angel of the Presence" of Exodus xxiii. 20-23, as the agent of the purification which must precede the great and terrible Day of Yahweh. In Malachi 1-3 he appears as the purifying "Messenger of the Covenant." If, conceivably, in the original intent this is no other than a theophany of Yahweh Himself, at least we know from Matthew xi. 10 and parallels that in New Testament times it was not so regarded; but the "Messenger," whose title has been transferred to the anonymous prophecy,¹ was, at least sometimes, identified with Elijah. His work is a purification of Israel by fire, and it "begins at the house of God."² "For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' lye; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." Malachi in fact, like *Ass. Mos.*, presents no personal representative of Messiah. The Messianic hope appears only in iii. 20 [iv. 2], under the figure of the dawning of the "sun of righteousness" (Yahweh Himself, cf. 2 Sam. xxii. 4). The personal agents are simply forerunners, "Elijah," and the "Messenger of the Covenant." But are these viewed as two or one? It is

¹ Malachi = "my messenger." Cf. Mal. i. 1 with iii. 1.

² Cf. 1 Peter iv. 12-17.

hard to say, because the author's attention is confined to the supreme need of purification before the great Day of Yahweh; but certainly eschatological thought in New Testament times found room for both: Elias the Awakener, and the Angel of Purification by fire.

Whether, then, it be Malachi, or John the Baptist, whose personifications are to be interpreted, there is supreme need of the warning against indiscriminate identification with "the Messiah" so well expressed by Volz in the concluding paragraph of his section on the *dramatis personae* of the redemption:—

"The personages of the redemptive drama are therefore all in a sense Messiahs; the Prophet, Moses, Elijah, Enoch, the Angel, Enoch (Daniel, Ezra, Baruch) are the heroes of apocalypse, Moses is the hero of Judaism learned in the Law, Elijah apparently the hero of popular eschatology; the Prophet is the figure partaking most largely of earthly nature; the Angel the most transcendental. We see, accordingly, even before turning to the Messiah in the stricter sense, that *the Messianic idea is many-sided*, and that but little has been affirmed when we say, "Jesus regarded Himself as the Messiah." What kind of Messiah? As a prophet, or a teacher of the Torah, or the bearer of angelic power, as a priest-king (*Test. Levi*, 18), or finally as a politico-nationalistic king?"

Of one thing we may be sure. The more immediate popular expectation in the Baptist's time was that directed not to the Messiah Himself so much as to the *forerunner* of Messiah, coming to his work of purification. And the deeper the sense of Israel's unworthiness, the stronger the emphasis laid upon this indispensable preliminary. Hence the Twelve are no sooner made acquainted with Jesus' Messianic calling than they ask, "How then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" The Transfiguration scene and the reference of Jesus to John the Baptist (Mark ix. 2-10, *vv.* 11-13 and parallels) both deal in different ways with this doctrine of the "forerunners" or witnesses of Messiah.¹

¹ Bacon, *Am. Journ. of Theol.*, April 1902. "The Transfiguration Story."

In Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, xlix., the Jew sets in its true light both these references and the opening narratives of Mark and John by saying:—

"We all expect that Christ will be a man born of men, and that Elijah, when he comes, will anoint him.¹ But if this man [Jesus] appear to be Christ, he must certainly be known as man born of men; but from the fact that Elijah has not yet come, I infer that this man is not He." In chapter viii. Trypho even says, "But the Christ, if He has indeed been born, and exists anywhere, is unknown, and does not even know Himself [as Christ], and has no power, until Elias come to anoint Him, and make Him manifest to all" (cf. John i. 26-31; v. 35).

We need not, then, find it so surprising if, when attention is drawn to Jesus by His mighty works, and perhaps to some extent by the formal and public demand of the Baptist through two disciples sent to ask, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" it nowhere seems to elicit a suggestion that Jesus may be the Christ, even if the Baptist so meant it; but only, "It is Elias," or "Jeremias,"² or "a prophet as one of the prophets." The superstitious popular rumour³ "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these miracles work in him" (Mark vi. 14 and 11) is based on the belief exemplified in Revelation xi. 3-13 and many later apocalypses, that the "forerunners" or "witnesses" of Messiah, Moses (Enoch) and Elias, are to work great miracles, culminating in resurrection from the dead, by which the false prophets of Antichrist are confuted, and "the great repentance" brought about.⁴

¹ Based on Zech. iv. 11-14; cf. Rev. xi. 3-6.

² On Jeremiah as a "forerunner" see Schürer, *ut supra*, p. 157, and Volz, p. 193; cf. also 2 Macc. xv. 13 ff., ii. 1 ff., and Bar. ix. 1.

³ The attributing of this to Herod in Mark vi. 16 is part of the highly legendary portrait of this cool-headed politician taken up by our second Evangelist from popular sources. It may rest upon a mistaken choice between the two readings current in the texts of verse 14, *ἔλεγον* and *ἔλεγεν*. Mark follows the latter (cf. v. 16). The former is historically correct.

⁴ Rev. xi. 13; cf. the authorities cited by Bousset, *Legend of Anti-Christ*, in the chapter on "The Two Witnesses." The *Repentance of Jannes and Jambres* quoted in 2 Tim. iii. 8, seems to have dealt with the same conception.

The belief that Jesus is John the Baptist *redivivus* is therefore but another form of the rumour, "It is Elias."

(2) It is in the light of these current eschatological ideas that we must answer the question, Whom did John the Baptist mean? For the first principle of historical exegesis is that a prophet must be supposed to mean that which his language would most naturally convey to the hearers addressed.

If, then, we ask again the question, Who is the Stronger than the Baptist, who comes after him, winnowing-fan in hand, to burn up the chaff and gather the wheat in his garner? Is this the Messiah?—our answer must partake of the indefiniteness of the eschatology of the time. If by the Angel of the Covenant whose work of purification by fire forms the great theme of "Malachi" John understood "the Messiah," we need have no hesitation in answering Yes. For one need only place side by side the Baptist's imagery and "Malachi's"—the blazing stubble fields from which the broods of vipers flee hissing at harvest time (cf. Mal. iii. 20 [iv. 1]: "The day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud and all that work wickedness shall be stubble"); the barren tree cut down and cast into the fire (cf. Mal. iii. 20 [iv. 1]: "The day that cometh shall burn them up, it shall leave them neither root nor branch"); the "Messenger of the Covenant" himself coming suddenly to his temple with a baptism of fire to purify the sons of Levi, as a refiner purges the dross from precious metals—to see whence the Baptist draws both content and form of his message. It is that of Malachi *without* the reference to the "healing" of the "Sun of Righteousness." If we may suppose that the Baptist understood by the Messenger of the Covenant and his purification by fire "the Messiah," then we may acquiesce in the current modern view, at least as regards his preaching in the wilderness. But from the foregoing it is clear that a truer answer would be. In

this warning of judgment the Baptist does not look beyond the purification itself. He does not define to himself who the Messenger of the Covenant may be; whether he is to be identified with Elijah, or with the Angel of the Presence, or with neither. He is simply the executioner of Yahweh's long-deferred wrath, the Reaper, the Purifier by flaming fire. And the "wrath to come" is now so near that it shuts out even the vision of the healing sunlight after the storm, save in the bare word "the kingdom is at hand."

We cannot even except John's alleged reference to the "baptism of the Holy Ghost." In Mark i. 8 this contrast between Christian baptism, with the fundamental significance of the gracious bestowal of the Spirit, and the Johannine lustration of repentance, is indeed put in the mouth of the Baptist himself, as who should say, "Repent, for judgment is just at hand; wash you from your sins, and seek forgiveness ere it be too late; for—there will shortly be a still more gracious opportunity of repentance!" But in Acts xi. 16 the genuine tradition still survives (altered in Acts i. 5 by the slight addition "not many days hence"), which rightly imputes this sublime promise to *Jesus*: "John indeed baptized in water, but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit." It is one of the most unmistakable of the many evidences of the contamination of older *Logia* material in Matthew and Luke by the use of Mark, that Mark iii. 11 and Luke iii. 16 coincidentally conflate the genuine old tradition of the Baptist's warning: "I baptize with water, *but he shall baptize with fire,*" with the previous conflation of Mark i. 8. The result is a form which makes the ignorance of the Baptist's disciples in Ephesus¹ completely incredible, emasculates the sense, and only serves the interest of making John predict the Christian rite and the Pentecostal gift. The form: "I indeed baptize you with water, but

¹ Acts xix. 2.

he shall baptize you with *the Holy Ghost and fire*" is really tertiary.¹ Who that is aware of the facts can doubt, as he reads Matthew iii. 7-12=Luke iii. 6-17, that the Baptist, when he knew the "reasoning in men's hearts" as to his own personality, really brought back his hearers from this, to him, superficial digression by a warning contrast between the present "baptism of water unto repentance," and the impending purification by fire at the hand of "the Messenger of Yahweh"?²

But if in the Warning of Judgment the Baptist displays no definite conception of the personality of "him that should come after him," we must admit that there is less room for so pronouncing as regards the Message from Prison. *Primâ facie* we should take the Coming One of the Inquiry, Matthew xi. 3=Luke vii. 19, to be the same as the Great Reaper. Is it then conceivable that in this case also the Baptist is still thinking of "the Messenger of the Covenant"? Or, if not, of whom?

Even before we endeavour to solve this problem it will be apparent from the foregoing that in any event question and answer alike are more likely to have given rise among the bystanders to thoughts of Messiah's forerunners than of Messiah Himself: so that the rumours actually current at a later time, Matthew vi. 14-16, viii. 28 and parallels, are in fact one and all rumours of the appearance of the *forerunner*, and not of the Messiah Himself.

But in fact we have a distinct clue to the Baptist's meaning in the definite statement that it was "the works of the Christ" which occasioned the embassy; and what

¹ The order "fire and the Holy Ghost" was of course excluded when the judgment was conceived as subsequent to the outpouring of the Spirit.

² Cf. the healing "waters of judgment" of *En.* lxvii. 13 by bathing in which the kings and great ones are purified from their lusts and healed (hot sulphur baths), which flow from the place of purgation of the lustful angels, and which in the world to come "will change and become a fire which burns forever."

"works" were meant appears more specifically still in the answer of Jesus, which combines in one the two salient phases of His career: the miracles of healing, and the preaching of glad tidings of repentance and forgiveness to the poor." Isaiah xxxv. 5-6 and lxi. 1 are doubtless the passages in mind; but the two are strangely bound together by a reference to a (spiritual)¹ resurrection not suggested by either. It recalls the fact that in Mark vi. 14-16 it was also the working of "these miracles" in him, in particular (if we may judge from the apparent relation to Mark iv. 35-v. 43), the series of mighty works culminating in the *raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead*, which led to the rumours concerning Jesus as "Elias"; or, as another form of the same belief, John redivivus. If the convictions of the Baptist's contemporaries are any gauge for his own, the most natural inference is that he also, when he "hears the works of the Christ" (Matt. xi. 2.) thinks of "Elias that was for to come," the essence of whose mission was to restore the wandering, re-establish the scattered "tribes of Jacob," and prepare Israel for the Day of Yahweh by "the great Repentance." For, as we have already seen, it is the characteristic feature of this mission of Elias that it accomplished the Great Repentance by means of "mighty works," most of all that "through the prophet Elijah comes the resurrection of the dead."² But is this compatible with the Baptist's own use of *ὁ ἐρχόμενος ὀπίσω (μετά) μου* on previous occasions as "the Messenger of the Covenant"? We have admitted that there is a *primâ facie* probability in favour of giving the

¹ Even those who accept Luke's inserted story of the Son of the Widow of Nain, or regard the incident of Jairus' Daughter as having already occurred, will hardly take this as a reference to literal raisings from the dead.

² *Sota*, ix. 15; quoted by Schürer, *ubi supra*. Note also that in the Lukan form the Message of the Baptist (Luke vii. 18-23) is immediately preceded by a *raising of the dead* of peculiarly Elijan type (Luke vii. 11-17; cf. 1 Kings xvii. 17-24).

same sense to ὁ ἐρχόμενος in Matthew xi. 3 as to ὁ ἐρχόμενος ὀπίσω μου in Matthew iii. 11. But were this argument much more rigorously conclusive than it really is, we have abundant contemporary evidence of the very indefinite conception of "the Messenger" which will have occupied John's mind. Above all we have side by side with the report itself of his inquiry, the very proof we are in search of, since Jesus Himself is represented by the Evangelist, at this very time, as declaring the fulfilment in the person of the Baptist himself of *both* the great personages of the prophecy of Malachi: "This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send *My Messenger* before thy face,'" and in almost the same breath, "If ye are willing to receive it, this is *Elijah* which was to come." An incongruity which was not felt by Jesus, or at least not by the Evangelists, is not likely to have hindered the Baptist. With the Baptist, as with Malachi himself, we must be content with uncertainty whether he thought of two agents of the purification of Israel or of one. But neither the occasion of the inquiry, nor the form of Jesus' answer, nor the popular rumours then or later current, suggest that the personality in question is the Messiah, but only one or other of the forerunners. In reality the Church, by its primitive doctrine of the double advent, ultimately solved the problem by making Christ His own forerunner for the work of "restoration" (Acts iii. 26, cf. verse 20), Elias becoming a mere "witness."

But what finally of Jesus' interpretation of the prophecy? Does not his answer compel us to think that in this case at least the Baptist was looking beyond the judgment of fire to the peaceful reign of the Son of David? We need not appeal to the example of John i. 21, where the Baptist's conception of his own personality and relation to Elias is certainly not brought any nearer into harmony with that of Jesus. We need only perceive the beautiful appropriateness of the answer by which Jesus

takes to Himself indeed the *work* of Elijah, the "restorer," the preacher of repentance, the raiser from the dead, the gatherer of the outcasts of Israel; but as to His own *personality* says only, "Blessed is he that findeth none occasion of stumbling in me." Then, if we will, we may take the utterance to the multitudes, after the disciples of John had gone their way, in its most exact and literal sense: *αὐτός ἐστιν Ἠλείας ὁ μέλλων ἔρχεσθαι*, "he (John) is *himself* Elias that was to come"; or, as we may venture to paraphrase, Not I, but John himself is the great Restorer, of whose coming he asks. As for *my* personality, blessed is he that will not let it be an impediment to his approbation (cf. verses 16-19) of the work he sees me engaged in.

B. W. BACON.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST.
MARK.¹

XXVII. WANDERINGS IN GENTILE LANDS, VII. 24-37,
VIII. 22-26.²

AFTER the bold step described in the last section, Jesus felt it desirable to withdraw from Jewish territory for a time, and betook Himself to the Gentile districts of Tyre and Sidon. He sought not only security, but also rest and seclusion. As St. Mark tells the story, Jesus' recent repudiation of Mosaic Law does not seem to have been premeditated, but rather a spark struck from the mind of Jesus

¹ These studies do not profess to be an adequate historical and doctrinal account of Christ, but are an attempt to set forth the impression which St. Mark's narrative would make on a reader who had no other source of information, and was not acquainted with Christian dogmatics.

² The section VIII. 1-21 is omitted here. It contains the Feeding of the Four Thousand, the Saying as to the Sign from Heaven, and the Discourse on the *two* Feedings. It seems to be out of place in this context; the story of the Four Thousand is apparently another version of that of the Five Thousand; and the section may be a later addition.