

The Baptism of Jesus, R.E.H. Uprichard

Problems have frequently arisen over the baptism of Jesus and its significance. More recently, this has involved the historicity of the event itself. Both R. Bultmann and M. Dibelius regard the event as "myth" and "legend" and tend to see a strong reshaping of the original occurrence in the synoptic presentation. /1 The historicity, however, of the baptism of Jesus is generally accepted. The creation of an event by the early church which would cause difficulties for the sinlessness of Jesus is unlikely. Even in the early church there were difficulties over the Lord's baptism. This is evident in the Apocryphal Gospel to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites. /2 Here the problem is of the sinless Jesus receiving a repentance baptism. The objection of John the Baptist in Mt 3.14 is hardly of this particular nature but it does reflect the same general difficulty. Traditionally the theological significance of the baptism of Jesus has been regarded as his anointing with the Spirit to the Messianic office in preparation for his public ministry. The implications, however, of this significance have scarcely been fully worked out, both in respect of the Lord's human and divine nature and to the subsequent form his life's work took. In introducing this theme, it will be convenient to approach it by means of the query as to why our Lord received John's baptism for this is the basic problem in connection with the baptism of Jesus. A number of answers have been proposed.

1. In receiving John's baptism it has been suggested that Jesus was aligning himself with John's movement without any admission of sin on his own part. So H.J. Holtzmann wrote: "He simply took his place in the movement called forth by the Baptist: there is no hint to the contrary concerning bearing sins of others, participation in the general sinfulness and the like." /3 J.A. Loisy is even more explicit: "The baptism of repentance did not render guilty those who received it without sin; a righteous man could submit to it in order to signify his intention to live purely, without confessing sins which he has not committed; he manifested his resolution to prepare himself according to his ability for the coming of the

kingdom." /4 Particularly with the eschatological emphasis in John's ministry, his baptism has been seen as more "aspiration for the future" than "regret for the past". T.W. Manson affirmed that "Jesus recognized in John's efforts to create a new Israel the purpose of God and willingly enters into it." /5

While there was an undoubted sympathy on the part of Jesus for all that John represented - evident both in Jesus' high appraisal of John and the fact that he is described as commencing his ministry in similar terms to that of John (Mt 3.2; cf 4.17) - and while part of the significance of Jesus relates to his identification with John's movement, to interpret its entire significance in this light is hardly correct. For one thing, the above hypothesis does not do justice to John's "baptism of repentance". That "repentance", even from a linguistic point of view, is now generally accepted as connoting not merely regret but a turning or conversion. /6 Hence, G.R. Beasley-Murray describes John's baptism as "a conversion baptism for the forgiveness of sins". /7 Further, it seems quite clear from the representation given to this baptism in the synoptic records, that all who came to John for baptism came on this understanding. They are precisely described in Mark as "confessing their sins" in conjunction with this baptism (Mk 1.5). Room is made for none to come other than those in this capacity. If physical descent from Abraham as a ground for self-commendation is decried by the Baptist, it is unlikely that he provided in his ranks for those to receive it "without sin".

2. Another view is that Jesus, in receiving baptism at John's hand, did actually confess his own sin. In his "Life of Jesus", Friedrich Strauss regards this as the only possible view of the matter. /8 Johannes Weiss holds a similar position: "With especial earnestness he will have made the vow of a new life, renewed faithfulness and devotion to the will of God." /9 So also Middleton Murry writes, "Whatever this man was, he was the incarnation of honesty. He would not have sought baptism for the remission of sins had he not been conscious of sin." /10

Apart from explicit apostolic statements affirming the sinlessness of Jesus, (Heb 4.15; 9.14; 1Peter 2.22; 1Jn 3.5)

it is obvious that by his words and actions during his ministry Jesus personally expressed and exhibited a unique relationship with God indicative of this sinlessness. He could challenge his opponents to convince him of sin (John 8.46). He claimed superiority over Abraham and implied eternity in his assertion (Jn 8.58). He forgave sins on his own authority (Mk 2.10) and pronounced judgment on them (Mt 11.20f). He clearly distinguished between his own relationship and that of his followers to God (Jn 20.17) and asserted categorically the evil nature of those to whom he spoke, without involving himself in their sinlessness, e.g., "...You who are evil..." (Mt 7.11). He demanded repentance of all (Mk 1.15). A. Oepke, writing specifically of the baptism of Jesus, has suggested that Christ's sinlessness in his own conscious experience was not ready made and a fixed conviction at an early date and, thus, John's repentance baptism for forgiveness presented no problem to him on this score at the time. /11 But though Jesus' conception of himself as judge and assessor of all mankind is climaxed toward the end of his ministry (Mt 10.32ff; 25.31ff), he seems to have exhibited this consciousness of a unique relationship to the divine sovereignty from the very outset of his life's work, as some of the above references indicate. There is not the slightest indication on our Lord's part of personal failure or sinfulness, and to depict the one who affirmed and acted as having a unique authority and relationship with God and who eventually assigned to himself the position of judge, as a sinner coming conscious of his own guilt to John's conversion-baptism for forgiveness, seems highly unlikely. His honesty is not to be impugned but if it were for sins he came it was for sins not his own.

An interesting variation on this theme of Christ's repentance is given by A. Plummer. He obviates the difficulty by altering the view of change or conversion involved in Jesus' repentance and by contrasting it with the common attitude of others who came to John's baptism. Of Jesus' baptism he writes: "He, like others, could bury his past beneath the waters of Jordan and rise again to a life in accordance with God's will. The change with them was from a life of sin to a life of righteousness....the change with him was from the home-life of intellectual and

spiritual development (Lk 2.52) to the life of public ministry as the Messiah." /12 This is scarcely a satisfactory explanation. It weakens the concept of change involved in John's baptism and gives it an entirely different object or purpose in Jesus' case than in that of the rest of mankind. In so doing it virtually ceases to remain a conversion-baptism for the forgiveness of sins, a feature basic to its significance. Plummer's thesis imports a Pauline theme, that of dying and rising again, certainly alien to the immediate context of Christ's baptism. While Jesus' baptism was obviously unique as compared to the others who came to John's baptism, there seems little justification for removing altogether the aspect of its relevance for the forgiveness of sins, especially in the light of John's objection to the baptism.

3. An answer to the difficulty is said to be found in Jesus' reply to John's objection recorded in Mt 3.15, "Let it be so now; it is proper (πρεπον) for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." A. Fridrichsen suggests that the force of the πρεπον relates to the divine will and that Jesus' submission to this does not necessarily imply any degree of Messianic consciousness at that time on his part. He writes, "Here is an idea perfectly in accord with Jewish thinking: the divine will must be blindly obeyed without asking the reason for it." /13 There is a similarity between this view and that of Calvin though there would obviously be disagreement over the matter of Messianic consciousness. Calvin comments, "The word righteousness frequently signifies in Scripture the observation of the law: and in that sense we may explain the passage to mean that, since Christ had voluntarily subjected himself to the law, it was necessary that he should keep it in every part. But I prefer a more simple explanation. 'Say nothing for the present', said our Lord, 'about my rank: for the question before us is not which of us deserves to be placed above the other. Let us rather consider what our calling demands and what has been enjoined on us by God the Father'. The general reason why Christ received baptism was that he might render full obedience to the Father...." /14 On Fridrichsen's view of the passage it might be suggested that Jesus came to John's baptism without any selfconsciousness of Messiahship, simply submitting himself for the present

to what he believed was God's will for him.

As an interpretation of Jesus' reply the hypothesis is not without merit. It is consonant with a certain degree of mystery in Jesus' words to John at this point. Clearly it presupposes that Jesus had formed some conviction as to what the divine will was and its relation to John's baptism. It is not beyond the bounds of reason to regard the baptism and, particularly, the subsequent affirmation of the voice as giving a further clarification to Jesus of the divine will. But it is disadvantaged by a certain vagueness. It does not give an adequate explanation of Christ's word 'to fulfil all righteousness' which, by dint of its quite suggestive form of expression, seems to require a meaning more than simply doing what was right or what appeared to be God's will at a particular point in time. Further, the interpretation does not explain how Jesus related it to his life's vocation. It is true that Jesus may not have wished to reveal this to John at that point, but more would seem to be required of Jesus in terms of motivation than an "anonymous" conviction of the divine will. To presuppose that Messianic consciousness dawned upon Jesus for the first time as he stood in the Jordan at his baptism immediately predicates the question as to what form his consciousness of the divine will took in his mind prior to the baptism, inducing him to come to the baptism. Fridrichsen's hypothesis does not seem to answer that question satisfactorily.

4. Oscar Cullmann sees the "servant" theme as dominant in the life and teaching of Jesus. His view of the baptism of Jesus naturally evinces the same emphasis. /15 According to him, Jesus at his baptism, as the Servant of the Lord, is portrayed as consecrating himself in response to God's call and as identifying himself as Servant with the sins of the people. This is the first step on the way to the Cross, the ultimate baptism, prefigured in the Jordan baptism. His thesis develops along the following precise lines. The voice at the baptism has no relation to Psalm 2.7, it cites Isa 42.1 alone. Jesus himself said that by his baptism he would "fulfil all righteousness", by which he meant that he would effect a general forgiveness. His baptism thus points to the Cross on which he would

achieve a general baptism for the sins of the world. For Jesus the words "to be baptized" mean to "suffer death for the people". This is clear in Jesus' use of the expression in Mk 10.38 and Lk 12.50. It is confirmed in Jn 1.29-34 where Jesus is described as the "lamb of God". John the Baptist deduced from the voice that Jesus was called to fulfil the mission of the Servant of the Lord. The root of the baptismal doctrine in Romans 6.1 and elsewhere in the NT of Christian baptism is in the baptism of Jesus.

The question as to how far our Lord was influenced by the Servant of the Lord concept has been hotly debated in NT circles. /16 There can be little doubt but that such influence was present. We need only indicate a number of the citations of Servant material by the evangelists to illustrate this: Lk 4.16f refers the preaching at Nazareth to Isa 61.1; Mt 11.5 couches Jesus' reply to John's question from prison in terms of Isa 35.5; Mt 12.18f cites Isa 42.1-4 as expressing the gentleness of Jesus' ministry; Mt 8.16f sees in Jesus' healing ministry fulfilment of Isa 53.4; Jn 12.38 quotes Isa 53 concerning Israel's unbelief. The point at issue here, however, is how far this kind of thinking was part of Jesus' motivation as he came to John's baptism or even as he left it.

Cullmann's thesis has much to commend it especially in the light of the later development of the Servant theme in our Lord's ministry. It may well be that, in the baptism of Jesus, we have the first conscious expression of this theme. But the thesis could bear modification where it postulates that the Servant motif was the dominant one and that to the virtual exclusion of others, especially the concept of the anointing of a Messianic king.

It is possible that ΠΟΥΣ may have been corrupted to ΥΛΟΣ in transmission but there is little textual evidence for this and ΥΛΟΣ rests on reasonably firm manuscript foundation. The theory, therefore, that the voice combines both the Servant concept of Isa 42.1 and that of the messianic king of Ps 2.7 is acceptable until proven defective. The explication of Jesus' reply, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this (ΟΥΤΟΣ) to fulfil all righteousness" (Mt 3:15) as referring to the general

forgiveness implicit in his death strains the meaning and places a rather too plenary exposition of OUTOS "to do this" - NIV; "Thus" - AV). The explanation of "being baptized" as meaning in our Lord's thought "suffering death for people" in the light of Mk 10.38 and Lk.12.50 is a most interesting feature. G.R. Beasley-Murray comments that it would be improper to read back our Lord's understanding at this later point in time to the baptism in Jordan, that it is unreasonable to attribute to Jesus at Jordan a ready-made structured plan of action based on the Servant-song and that what Jesus was referring to in Mk 10.38 and Lk 12.50 was his death, and he used baptism to refer to this and not vice-versa. /17 But as we shall see later, /18 our Lord did in fact, even at the time of his baptism, think of his baptism in Jordan as related to a baptism of ultimate suffering as a possibility. Cullmann cites John's testimony to Jesus as "lamb of God" (Jn 1.36) as further evidence of this servant theme, stressing that the Aramaic talyah can mean both "lamb" and "servant". The term "lamb of God" has been much discussed as to whether it connotes primarily the sacrificial lamb of OT thought or the triumphal ram of Apocalyptic literature. Both views are not mutually exclusive. But we note that in Jn 1.27-29 other themes are present besides the servant concept, for example, the anointing by the Spirit of one who is Son of God.

It seems quite proper to see the Servant motif as present in the records of the baptism of Jesus. Whether our Lord was conscious either before or after the baptism of being the Servant who would suffer the baptism of death is a moot point. But the linking of his baptism in Jordan with his suffering and death is a possibility. Cullmann seems to have overstressed the case by emphasizing the Servant theme to the exclusion of all others. There is no reason why it may not have been present and joined with others such as that of Messianic kingship.

5. A view similar to that of Cullmann is particularly evident in the work of W.F. Flemington which relates the baptism of Jesus to Christian baptism. /19 Flemington indicates that, for Jesus, baptism expressed and effected his oneness with the new Israel, bestowed a new experience of the Holy Spirit and witnessed to a deeper conviction of

his being the Son of God. The parallels with Christian baptism are identified from this experience as entrance into the church, the reception of the Spirit and the adoption of the believer as a son of God. These parallels are regarded as much too striking to be put aside. A number of scholars have subsequently developed this theme and traced the genesis of Christian baptism, not to our Lord's commission of Mt 28.19, but rather to his baptism in the Jordan. /20

However, the distinctions between Jesus' baptism and Christian baptism are more emphatic than the resemblances. A baptism of the Servant Messiah into solidarity with sinners can only with difficulty be related to entry of sinners into the church. The reception of the Spirit connoted for Jesus confirmation to the Messianic task, to the believer it means regeneration. The "divine adoption" in the heavenly affirmation was again to the Messianic office, for the believer it indicates the creation of a filial relationship to God. In these respects the baptism of Jesus was of a different nature from that of Christian baptism.

6. The view of Meredith G. Kline is also, in some ways, similar to that of Cullmann, though it presents its own distinctive emphasis. /21 It might be paraphrased thus: in his baptism Jesus, as covenant Servant, submitted himself to the judgment curse of God and thereby consecrated himself to his sacrificial death in the judicial ordeal of the cross. Kline's reasoning assumes the following lines: John the Baptist was the messenger of the Covenant, proclaiming not only the covenant blessing of the coming kingdom, but also the covenant curse of God's judgment on covenant-breakers. His baptism portrays a similar significance. It involves the idea of ordeal by water in a setting of God's judgment. Jesus, in submitting to it, exposes himself in symbol to the divine judgment, passes through the ordeal victoriously and hears the verdict of divine approval. Satan challenges this verdict in the temptations and the ordeal-struggle continues until Jesus' supremacy is vindicated on the cross. This view of his baptism agrees with Jesus' words in Mk 10.38 and Luke 12.50 as well as with the understanding of βαπτισμα as meaning an "overwhelming". Jesus' thought, in this respect, may

well have been structured along lines of the water-ordeal evident in the Psalms.

There can be little doubt as to the importance of the aspect of judgment in John's ministry - the Coming One would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing stick would be brandished by him. The axe was already placed at the root of the tree. The religious were fleeing from an imminent judgment. This side of John's ministry has received the stress which the Gospel writers give it. It seems not unreasonable to regard John's baptism as bearing this significance also. Certainly John's words, contrasting his baptism with that of the Coming One give this impression (Mt 3.11). Fire and water not only traditionally but in OT and Qumran thought are associated together with combat ordeal. /22 To this degree Kline's thesis reads convincingly. One wonders, however, if the covenant structures, which he suggests underlie, not only John's ministry, but also that of our Lord, are as prominent as he claims. If this influence was so formative, it seems strange that its intrusions into the gospel motif are not more strongly marked. It is possible to regard the parable of the vineyard in a "non-covenantal setting" and the minimal references to the coming of Elijah hardly accord with the significance that Kline attaches to it. This highly suggestive stress on John's ministry and baptism is, nevertheless, both enlightening and stimulating.

It further makes more meaningful the view of Jesus' baptism as an "overwhelming" and as being linked with his suffering and death. The usual objection to such a meaning is the non-appearance of βαπτισμα in non-Christian writings and its absence from the LXX. /23 The idea, however, of overwhelming calamity occurs in the OT and is often associated with water. The presence in the NT of a use of βαπτίζω and βαπτισμα to denote historic ordeals (1 Cor 10.2; 1 Pet 3.21f) accords with our Lord's use in Mk 10.38 and Lk 12.50. With regard to these two sayings of our Lord, two things seem to be particularly significant.

(a) The allusion of Jesus to themes which have a direct link with John's ministry, viz., casting fire on earth (Lk 12.49; cf Mt 3.11 and Lk 3.16) and the resultant

division among mankind which this causes (Lk 12.51; cf. Mt 3.12; Lk 3.17).

(b) The association of fire and water (baptism) in Lk 12.49,50, and the reference to the cup of wrath in Mk 10.38. Fire is commonly used in the OT to express the divine judgment (Deut 32.22; Ps 21.8f; 89.46; Isa 66.15f). Fire is linked with the cup in Ps 11.6 (AV, RSV but not NIV), and fire is conjoined with flood in the idea of God's judgment in Isa 30.27,28.

Both these features open up the possibility that even at the time of his baptism our Lord thought of his death as the ultimate baptism which his baptism in the Jordan prefigured. The precise problem is, however, the time when our Lord began to think in this way. Was it at Jordan, or did he come to "review" his baptism in this light as he approached his death and came to view the event as a baptism? The strongest evidence towards an earlier consciousness consists of the links with John's ministry in Mk 10.38, Lk 12.50 and an interpretation of "fulfilling all righteousness" which suits this view. Kline's further suggestions are not convincing on this score. He argues that the background for Jesus contemplating his sufferings as a water ordeal is found in the supplicatory Psalms where the righteous servant pleads for deliverance from the overwhelming waters, e.g., Ps 69. But precise evidence of this is not available from the words of Jesus himself. Christ's reference to Jonah's trial by water as analogous to his own judgment in the heart of the earth is also noted (Jn 2.2f; cf Mt 12.39,40), but as evidence of the foregoing is somewhat tenuous.

Kline's thesis substantiates the view that Jesus ultimately came to regard his death as a baptism. It provides most suggestive structures for attributing the beginnings of such consciousness to Jesus at his baptism. It does not, however, constitute conclusive evidence of this fact.

7. G.R. Beasley-Murray and A. Richardson best express the traditional view of the baptism of Jesus as his anointing with the Spirit to the Messianic office in preparation for his public ministry. /24 Beasley-Murray's treatment is fuller and takes the following

lines: in his baptism Jesus, as Messiah and representative person, aligned himself with John's movement, received the anointing of the Spirit, demonstrated his solidarity with mankind and consecrated himself to his Father in a commission both of judgment and redemption. In this thesis the emphasis is on Jesus as Messiah, combining the idea of Servant (evident particularly in the Son of Man identification) and kingly Son of God. He is not totally aware of the implications of this in respect of death at the time of his baptism but, during his ministry and especially as he approaches death, he comes to view such death as a baptism. The ultimate to which his baptism refers is not simply his death but rather his death, resurrection, ascension and victorious establishment of his kingdom, that is, to both judgment and redemption. It is, therefore, as fallacious to see the only reference to Jesus' baptism as being to his death alone, as to portray him stepping with clear-eyed consciousness from the Jordan on the straight road to Calvary.

Alan Richardson also sees the key-feature of our Lord's baptism as anointing. That to him is what the synoptic evangelists above all indicate. "In their eyes the significance of the baptism is that it represents the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit to the office and work of the Messianic Servant of the Lord." /25 Unlike Beasley-Murray, however, he defines a close and precise relationship between the baptism and the death of Christ and appears to accept that Jesus was conscious of his sin-bearing function as the sacrificial lamb even at his baptism.

The anointing of Jesus as Messiah by the Spirit as the fundamental significance of the baptism of our Lord - such a view has much to commend it. The very nature of the accounts seems to point in this direction. There is a growing objectivity about the presentation of the baptism in the synoptic records which throws emphasis on the event of the Spirit and the divine approval. Mark gives the impression that the vision and the voice were for Jesus alone (Mk 1.10). /27 Matthew alters the situation little, though he gives the voice in the third person (Mt 3.17). While Lk's version presents the divine approval, like Mark, in the second person - "You are my

Son" (Mk 1.11; Lk 3.22), the objectivity of the event is heightened by his description of the Spirit "in bodily form" (σωματικῶ εἶδει) like a dove for all, as it were, to see. The emphasis in the synoptic presentation on the voice and the Spirit in connection with the baptism is in itself significant. It is as though the meaning of the baptism is to be understood in terms of the Spirit's descent and the divine approval. This is most prominent in the Lucan form where the baptism of Jesus is quickly mentioned as occurring after the baptism of others and the stress is on the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the praying Jesus and the affirmation of the divine approval (Lk 3.21,22).

The way in which the evangelists interpret the baptism also favours this thesis. Luke, both in his gospel (4.18) and in his choice of material in the Acts (4.27 and 10.38) may be voicing a common understanding that the baptism of Jesus was his anointing with the Spirit. /28 John's Gospel omits the actual event of the baptism but yet records the Baptist's testimony to the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus (Jn 1.32f) and insists upon Christ's abundant endowment with the Spirit (Jn 3.34)

There was clear OT precedent for messianic anointing. Kings of Israel were anointed and so became Mesiah Yahweh, the Lord's Anointed (1 Sam 16.13; Ps 89.20; 2 Kings 9.3). Priests were also anointed to their sacred office (Ex 29.7; 40.13-15; Lev 8.12; Ps 133.2). While prophets with the exception of Elisha (1 Kings 19.16) were not anointed, the Isaianic Prophet possessing the character of both king (Isa 9.6f) and priest (Isa 53.12) was anointed with the Spirit of the Lord (Isa 11.2; 42.1;44.3;61.1). It is hardly without significance that Jesus, on the occasion of his baptism, received the divine approval in an affirmation reminiscent of both kingly and prophetic status (Mk 1.11; Mt 3.17; Lk 3.22; cf. Ps 2.7; Isa 44.1f). It may equally be significant that, consonant with the law which required that priests had to be thirty years of age to enter office (Num 4.3,47) and be ordained by one already a priest (Ex 29.9; Num 25.13), Luke specifies John's priestly forbears (Lk 1.5,13) from which he would inherit the office and indicates, immediately after his account of our Lord's baptism and prior to listing Christ's genealogy, that Jesus

was about thirty years old when he began his ministry (Lk 3.23). /29 Could not the "fulfilling of all righteousness" be viewed in this light as complying with the divine requirement concerning messianic anointing to the office of prophet, priest and king?

The significance of this anointing for Jesus' own experience is hard to determine. The view that by it Jesus, the man, was adopted into divine sonship does not accord with other evidence substantiating our Lord's divine nature. It is difficult to determine anything in the nature of a "religious experience" which our Lord may have undergone, since the evangelists' accounts seem to be of little interest in the "experiences" of Jesus. /30 The mould in which their presentation of the event comes to us suggests rather an anointing of the Spirit, indicating a confirmation to Jesus of his Father's call and that the time was ripe for his public ministry to begin. The relationship between the texts subsequent to the baptism, portraying the Spirit's abundance on Jesus (Lk 4.18; Jn 3.24) can hardly be construed as suggesting that, without the anointing of the Spirit, he would have been powerless to begin his ministry or that his sacrificial work would have been ineffective. Rather, they seem to imply that his anointing was the seal of divine approval and that all was now ready for that work to begin, in the Spirit, so that ultimately he might offer himself in the same Spirit, with his work completed, to the Father. Confirmation with a view to initiating his public ministry and not primarily endowment of his person, seems to be the emphasis of these assertions.

Thus, in our opinion, messianic anointing was of equal importance with the Servant concept in our Lord's baptism. We might, in conclusion, review the matter as follows. In his baptism Jesus submits himself as Servant-Messiah to John's baptism. He probably does this, aware not only of John's role as forerunner but also of his own as Servant-Messiah, however slight the beginning of such consciousness. It may be that in Jesus' baptism we have the first conscious step of his ministry as Servant-Messiah, who would suffer and die for his people, a step leading eventually to the baptism of the Cross. The realisation of his death as a baptism could, however, have been a later development, a gradual awareness as his

ministry progressed.

Jesus, thus, consecrates himself to his Father in the matter of his life's work as Servant-Messiah and, at the same time, identifies himself, consistent with his view of the task, with sinful humanity. His Father responds in confirmation of the Son's act by the Spirit's descent in dove-like appearance and the voice of approbation. This appears to constitute the Spirit's "anointing" of Jesus for his public ministry, in terms of a confirmation of the divine approval and an indication that the time was ready and the divine power to hand for the work to begin. It seems correct, then, for traditional theology to regard the baptism of Jesus as his anointing by the Spirit to the Messianic offices of prophet, priest and king, to his life's work for the Father as the Father's "anointed" Son.

Notes

1. R. Bultmann, Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition³, Göttingen 1957, pp263-70; M. Dibelius, Die Formgeschichte der Evangelien, Tübingen 1971, pp270-4
2. Gospel to the Hebrews, quoted in Jerome, Contra Pelagium 111,2; Gospel of the Ebionites, quoted in Epiphanius, Against Heresies, XXX: for the texts of the Apocryphal Gospels in English, see M.R. James, The Apocryphal NT, Oxford 1924
3. H.J. Holtzmann, Die Synoptiker, Leipzig 1901, p198
4. J.A. Loisy, Les Evangiles Synoptiques, Paris 1907, p405.
5. T.W. Manson, Message and Mission of Jesus, London 1937, p441.
6. J. Behm, Art, μεταβολω, μεταβολα, TDNT, IV, Michigan 1964, p989; J. Goetzmann, Art. μεταβολα sub. Conversion, Dict. NT Theology, Ed., C. Brown, Exeter 1975, Vol 1, p357; A. Richardson, Art. "Repent", Theol. Word Book, ed. A. Richardson, London 1965, p191; J. Murray, Art. "Repentance", New Bible Dictionary, London 1962, p1083.
7. G.R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the NT, 2nd ed., Exeter, 1976, p48.

8. F. Strauss, Life of Jesus (ET), Bonn 1846, p352
9. J. Weiss, Die Schriften des NT, Göttingen 1907, Vol I, p70
10. J. Middleton Murry, Life of Jesus, London 1926; p31
11. A. Oepke, Art. "Baptism", TWNT, Vol I, Michigan 1964
12. A. Plummer, St. Matthew, London 1909, pp30-31
13. A. Fridrichsen, "Accomplir toute justice", Congres d'histoire du Christianisme, Jubile Alfred Loisy, I, 1928, pp169-70.
14. J. Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, (ET), Vol I, Edinburgh 1845, p202
15. O. Cullmann, Baptism in the NT, London 1956, pp16-22.
16. Cf. the view of M.D. Hooker, Jesus and the Servant, London 1959
17. op.cit. p76
18. See p7
19. W.F. Flemington, The NT Doctrine of Baptism, London 1964, esp. pp13-33,43f,91f.
20. Cf. O. Cullmann, op.cit., and D.M. Baillie, The Theology of the Sacraments, London 1957, p77
21. Meredith G. Kline, By Oath Consigned, Michigan 1975 esp. pp50-62
22. Cf. in Isa 30.27-28; and reference to the river of fire, "The Torrents of Belial" in 1 QH3, 28f
23. So G.R. Beasley-Murray, op.cit., p74
24. Beasley-Murray, op.cit., pp45-67; also A. Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the NT, London 1961, pp178-181
25. op.cit. p178
26. ibid, p181
27. Cf. C. Scobie, John the Baptist, Edinburgh 1964, esp. pp15-16,142f; W.Wink, John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition, Cambridge 1968 partim; R.E.H. Uprichard, The Relationship of Jesus of Nazareth

Uprichard, Baptism, IBS 3, October 1981

and John the Baptist , Unpublished M.Th Dissertation,
The Queen's University of Belfast 1968 , pp3-17

28. I.H. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, Exeter 1978, p150
 29. J.E. Adams, Meaning and Mode of Baptism, Philadelphia 1975, pp16-20
 30. Richardson, Introduction, p178
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