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## John the Baptist and Spirit-Baptism

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**Key words:** New Testament; Holy Spirit; John the Baptist; Pentecost; judgment.

### I. Introduction

In 1960, E. Best noted that the majority of contemporary commentators and scholars denied that John the Baptist had made any reference to Spirit-baptism as found in the four Gospels (Matt. 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33).<sup>1</sup> His own view is John originally prophesied that the Coming One would baptize with wind and fire.<sup>2</sup>

The situation did not significantly change for another decade. In 1970, Dunn wrote that 'today most scholars would deny that John mentioned the Holy Spirit'.<sup>3</sup> He further noted that the two most popular scholarly opinions were John spoke either of a baptism with fire alone, or of a baptism with wind and fire. His own view, however, is that John foretold a baptism with Holy Spirit and fire.<sup>4</sup>

Since 1970, the pendulum has been swinging Dunn's way. Today, more and more commentators and scholars support the essential reliability of John's saying in Q 3:16 (Matt. 3:11//Luke 3:16). These include W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison,<sup>5</sup> J. Ernst,<sup>6</sup> J.A. Fitzmyer,<sup>7</sup>

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1 'Spirit-Baptism', *NovT* 4 (1960), 236.

2 'Spirit-Baptism', 240-42.

3 *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 8.

4 *Baptism*, 8-22. The monograph is followed by a more focused article in 1972. See Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', *NovT* 14 (1972), 81-92.

5 *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), I, 316-18.

6 *Johannes der Täufer* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 305-8.

7 *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 473.

L. Goppelt,<sup>8</sup> R.A. Guelich,<sup>9</sup> I.H. Marshall,<sup>10</sup> R.P. Menzies,<sup>11</sup> J. Nolland,<sup>12</sup> M.M.B. Turner<sup>13</sup> and R.L. Webb.<sup>14</sup>

The pendulum, however, has not swung all the way. Recently, W.B. Tatum reports that the Jesus Seminar only gives John's prophecy of a Spirit-baptism or a Spirit-and-fire baptism an overall rating of 'possibility' rather than 'probability' or 'certainty'.<sup>15</sup> The reason for this skepticism is understandable. The saying 'too obviously reflected the church's view'<sup>16</sup> of the relationship between John's water-baptism and Jesus' Spirit-baptism to be considered probable (cf. Acts 1:5, 11:16).

In this article, we shall examine John's prophecy concerning the baptism of the Coming One and advocate an interpretation of John's prophecy that would hopefully remove any lingering doubt about the essential reliability of John's saying in Q 3:16. The reader will have to decide for himself or herself whether the purpose of the article has been achieved.

## II. Two Related Questions Raised by John's Prophecy

In examining John's prophecy, there are two related questions. The first question has to do with the original form or wording of John's saying. This is because the NT preserves two versions of John's prophecy: the one refers to a baptism with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8, John 1:33, cf. Acts 1:5, 11:16); the other refers to a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16). In other words, did John speak of a baptism with the Holy Spirit (one element) or a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire (two elements)?

The second question has to do with the original meaning of John's prophecy. While Luke appears to understand John's prophecy to be fulfilled in God's gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42, 11:15, cf. 1:5, 11:16), we should not too readily assume that John the Baptist understood it in the same way. After all, John prophesied before the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In other

8 *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 138-39.

9 *Mark 1-8:26* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 27-28.

10 "The Meaning of the Verb "to Baptize" ", *EvQ* 45 (1973), 136-37.

11 *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 135-36.

12 *Luke 1-9:20* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 152-53.

13 *Power from on High* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 172-5.

14 *John the Baptizer and Prophet* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 275.

15 *John the Baptist and Jesus: A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1994), 130-31. The weighted average for all the votes casted by the scholars in the Jesus Seminar is actually 0.41. This lies within the rating for 'possibility' which ranges from 0.2501 to 0.5000. The rating for 'probability' ranges from 0.5001 to 0.7500. The rating for 'certainty' ranges from 0.7501 to 1.0000.

16 *John the Baptist*, 130.

words, it is important for us to ask the historical question: how did John envisage the future baptism of the Coming One?

In what follows, we shall treat the two questions together since they are closely related and could not ultimately be separated.

### III. John's Original Prophecy

There are four main scholarly positions with regard to the original wording and meaning of John's prophecy.<sup>17</sup> While two of these make no reference to the Holy Spirit (Views *a* and *b* below), the other two do (Views *c* and *d* below). We shall examine each of these in turn.

#### *a. Baptism with fire*

This is a fairly popular view.<sup>18</sup> It argues that John preached a message of judgment and prophesied the Coming One would judge with a baptism of fire. The experience of the early church at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–42), however, was such that John's promise of a baptism with fire is interpreted as a baptism with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:5, 11:16). While Mark 1:8 represents this tradition, Q conflated John's original words with its Christian interpretation (Matt. 3:11//Luke 3:16).

Though this reconstruction appears attractive and plausible, it faces a number of serious difficulties:

(1). It does not explain Q's wording. Given the reconstruction described above, we would expect Q 3:16 to speak of a baptism of 'fire and the Holy Spirit' and not a baptism of 'the Holy Spirit and fire'. In other words, the original element (fire) should come before and not after its Christian interpretation (the Holy Spirit).<sup>19</sup>

(2). Luke appears to make a distinction between John's prophecy in Luke 3:16 (both the Holy Spirit and fire) and Jesus' promise in Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4–8, and 11:16 (only the Holy Spirit).<sup>20</sup> Had Luke under-

17 See Best, 'Spirit Baptism', 236–43; Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 81–83; Guelich, *Mark*, 27–28; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 272–78.

18 See *inter alios* S. Brown, 'Water-Baptism' and 'Spirit-Baptism' in 'Luke-Acts', *ATR* 59 (1977), 136; R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 111, 246; H. Fleddermann, 'John and the Coming One (Matt. 3:11–12//Luke 3:16–17)', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1984 Seminar Papers* (ed. K.H. Richards; Chico: Scholars Press, 1984), 381, 384; W.F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1948), 19; T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), 41; S. Schulz, *Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 368; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 157.

19 See, for example, Isa. 44:3, John 3:5, 7:38–39, Rev. 4:5, 5:6.

20 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 84; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 272; J.E. Yates, *The Spirit and the Kingdom* (London: SPCK, 1963), 4–5, 26.

stood Pentecost as the fulfilment of John's prophecy *simpliciter* (rather than Jesus' promise), he would have retained the reference to 'fire' in Acts 1:5 and 11:16. Furthermore, he would have described the tongues from heaven as simply 'tongues of fire' and not 'tongues *as* of fire' (Acts 2:3).

(3). It is not easy to see how a baptism with fire is interpreted by the early church as a baptism with the Holy Spirit. In the OT and Judaism, God's eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit to his people is seen primarily in terms of blessing and not judgment,<sup>21</sup> and this is the way the early church understood it.<sup>22</sup> In other words, there is a conceptual difficulty in the proposed reconstruction: John's prophecy of a baptism of fiery judgment is somehow interpreted as a baptism of blessing involving God's eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit.

(4). Related to the above is the improbable picture of John as a prophet of doom who preached judgment without hope and prophesied a further baptism of destruction without salvation.<sup>23</sup> This view is especially problematic given Jewish eschatological hope of salvation and restoration.<sup>24</sup>

(5). Finally, we must remember that while the NT speaks of a baptism with the Holy Spirit and a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, it never speaks of a baptism with fire alone. As Dunn writes, 'the fact remains that we have no text which speaks of baptism in fire; it is a purely hypothetical construction'.<sup>25</sup>

#### *b. Baptism with wind and fire*

This is also a popular view.<sup>26</sup> It argues that John preached a message of judgment and prophesied the Coming One would judge or baptize with wind and fire (*ἐν πνεύματι καὶ πυρὶ*). Given the winnowing imagery in Q 3:17 (Matt. 3:12//Luke 3:17), it is obvious what the Coming One's baptism of wind and fire meant. The wind would separate the

21 See, for example, Isa. 32:15, 44:3, Ezek. 36:27, 37:14, 39:29, Joel 2:28–29, Zech. 12:10, 1QH 7:7, 9:32, 12:12, 13:18–19, 14:13, 25, 16:6–9, 12, *m. Sota* 9.15, *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 20b, *Exod. Rab.* 48, *Deut. Rab.* 6.14, *Cant. Rab.* 1.1, *Lam. Rab.* 2.4.

22 See, for example, Matt. 10:20, Mark 13:11, Luke 11:13, 12:12, 24:49, John 7:38–39, Acts 1:8, 2:17–18, 38, 11:15–16, Rom. 8:2, 15–16, 1 Cor. 6:11, 2 Cor. 3:3–8, 17–18, Gal. 3:14, 4:6, Eph. 1:13–14, 1 Thess. 4:8, Heb. 2:4, 6:4, 10:29, 1 Pet. 1:11–12, 1 John 2:27, 3:24, 4:13.

23 Guelich, *Mark*, 27.

24 See, for example, Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 219–60.

25 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 84.

26 See *inter alios* C.K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1947), 126; R. Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (London: Methuen, 1931), 275–80; C.H. Kraeling, *John the Baptist* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 59–63; E. Schweizer, *TDNT*, 6.399.

chaff from the grain, and while the grain would be gathered into the barn, the chaff would be burned with fire.

Again, the experience of the early church at Pentecost (when, according to Acts 2:2-3, both wind and fire appeared) was such that John's prophecy of a baptism with wind and fire is interpreted as a baptism with the Spirit and fire (taking *πνεῦμα* to mean 'Spirit' rather than 'wind').<sup>27</sup> The adjective 'holy' is later added to the noun 'Spirit' for clarification. This became John's prophecy of a baptism with 'the Holy Spirit and fire' in the Q tradition. Mark (or his tradition) omitted the words 'and fire' in Mark 1:8 because he wished to emphasize the redemptive, rather than the destructive, aspect of John's saying.

Of the two positions discussed so far, this is undoubtedly the more plausible. While the previous position is a purely hypothetical reconstruction, there is at least some manuscript support for the reading *ἐν πνεύματι καὶ πυρί* in Luke 3:16.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, this manuscript evidence is too weak to bear the weight placed on it.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the last point, this reconstruction faces a number of serious difficulties:

(1). Had John prophesied a baptism with both 'wind' and 'fire' in Q 3:16, we would expect an explicit reference to the winnowing 'wind', as well as to the destructive 'fire', in Q 3:17.<sup>30</sup> But this is conspicuously absent, leaving the reader to fill in the all-important but missing link.

(2). Had John prophesied that the people ('you') would experience a baptism with *both wind and fire* in Q 3:16, we would expect that the grain, as well as the chaff, would experience both wind and fire in Q 3:17. But what we actually find is that only the chaff experiences both wind and fire. Not surprisingly, some scholars find it hard to believe that Q 3:16 and 3:17 refer to the same activity or event.<sup>31</sup>

(3). Like the previous reconstruction, there seems to be a conceptual difficulty in the proposed reconstruction: John's prophecy of fiery

27 A third possibility is to understand it to mean 'breath'. This position is taken up by C.H. Kraeling, *John the Baptist* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 61-63, 114-15, 117. John's prophecy is then understood as the destruction of the wicked by the fiery breath of the Coming One (cf. Isa. 11:4, 2 Thess. 2:8, Rev. 11:5). There are at least two problems with this view. First, as we shall see immediately, the manuscript support for the reading *ἐν πνεύματι καὶ πυρί* is too weak to make this interpretation probable. Second, like Views *a* and *b*, this interpretation sees John largely in the role of a prophet of doom and destruction.

28 Both Barrett (*Holy Spirit*, 126) and Best ('Spirit-Baptism', 240 n. 4) cite manuscripts 63 and 64 as well as Tertullian, Augustine, and Clement of Alexandria.

29 Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 473; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 141 n. 1. Even the scholars who support this interpretation admit that the manuscript support is either 'very slight' (Barrett, *Holy Spirit*, 126), or 'scanty' (Best, 'Spirit-Baptism', 240 n. 4).

30 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 88; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 276.

31 See, for example, Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 88; Marshall, *Luke*, 147.

judgment (a baptism of wind and fire) is somehow interpreted as a prophecy of blessing (the Holy Spirit) and judgment (fire) in light of what happened at Pentecost. But this is improbable since the early church did not see Pentecost in terms of judgment or blessing-and-judgment.

(4). Again, like the previous reconstruction, it is improbable that John was 'simply a preacher of hell-fire and brimstone,'<sup>32</sup> and that he would promise those who responded to his preaching a further baptism which was largely retributive and destructive. It would seem far more reasonable to think that 'what John held out before his hearers was a baptism which was neither solely destructive nor solely gracious, but which contained both elements in itself.'<sup>33</sup>

### *c. Baptism with the Holy Spirit*

This is not as popular as Views *a* and *b*.<sup>34</sup> It argues that Mark 1:8 (a baptism with the Holy Spirit) is more primitive than Q 3:16 (a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire) and that it contains the original prophecy of John the Baptist. In view of Acts 1:5, 2:3, and 2:19, the Q tradition is taken as 'a Christian *pesher*-ing to the Pentecost fulfilment.'<sup>35</sup>

But this reconstruction is problematic:

(1). In our earlier discussion,<sup>36</sup> we have noted that Luke appears to distinguish John's prophecy in Luke 3:16 (both the Holy Spirit and fire) from Jesus' promise in Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-8, and 11:16 (only the Holy Spirit). The fact that Luke did not retain the reference to 'fire' in Acts 1:5 and 11:16 would suggest that he did not see Pentecost as the fulfilment of John's prophecy in Luke 3:16 *simpliciter*.

(2). Mark 1:8 fits so well the experience of the early church at Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:5, 11:16) that it is difficult to see why the early Christians would add 'and fire' to 'the Holy Spirit' in Q 3:16.<sup>37</sup> The difficulty escalates when we take into account the fact that in the context of John's preaching, 'fire' denotes judgment and not blessing (cf. Q 3:9, 17).<sup>38</sup> It is, therefore, more probable that Mark (or his tradition)

32 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 85. See also Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 474; Marshall, *Luke*, 147; Nolland, *Luke*, 152.

33 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 86.

34 See *inter alios* Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (London: Oliphants, Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1974), 90; J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991-4), II, 35-9; W.R. Schoemaker, 'The Use of *Ruach* in the Old Testament, and of *Pneuma* in the New Testament', *JBL* 23 (1904), 53 n. 53.

35 Ellis, *Luke*, 90.

36 See View *a* (Baptism with Fire) Point (2) above.

37 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 85.

38 Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 135; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 273.

abbreviated the fuller saying in the Q tradition because he wanted to stress the salvific aspect of John's prophecy.

(3). Given that John was both a prophet of woe and a prophet of weal, we would expect that he prophesied a future baptism of both blessing and judgment, and not simply a baptism of blessing or of judgment. If this is so, then we would not expect John to speak only of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Q tradition of a Spirit-and-fire baptism (both salvific and destructive) fits John's prophetic context so much better than the Markan tradition of a Spirit-baptism (largely salvific).

#### d. *Baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire*

This is again a popular view.<sup>39</sup> It argues that Q 3:16 (a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire) is more primitive than Mark 1:8 (a baptism with the Holy Spirit) and that it contains the original prophecy of John the Baptist. Mark and John omitted the reference to 'fire' because they wanted to emphasize the salvific aspect of John's prophecy.<sup>40</sup>

Of the four views considered, this is by far the most probable. Unlike the other three positions, it takes into account the fact that John was neither simply a prophet of woe nor simply a prophet of weal, and his prophecy of a future baptism contained both elements of blessing and judgment.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Dunn writes: 'the Q tradition matches its Jewish context so well and its picture of the Coming One is at such odds with the Christian picture of Jesus that it is almost impossible to deny the substantial authenticity of the Q tradition.'<sup>42</sup>

Obviously, this view is not without its own difficulties. Best, for example, raised three objections:<sup>43</sup>

39 In addition to the more recent scholars mentioned in Section I (Introduction) above, see G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1962), 36–37; A.G. Patzia, 'Did John the Baptist Preach a Baptism of Fire and the Holy Spirit?', *EvQ* 40 (1968), 27; C.H.H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 70.

40 R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 57; Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 85; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 15–16; Guelich, *Mark*, 17, 26; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 135, 141; G.T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist, 1976), 239; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 70, 73 n. 1.

41 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 317; Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 86; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 305–8; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 474; Guelich, *Mark*, 28; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 139, 144; Nolland, *Luke*, 153, 155; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 67–73; J.E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 140–1, 143; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 292–95, 304–5.

42 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 85.

43 Best, 'Spirit-Baptism', 236–37. Similar objections are found in Guelich, *Mark*, 28; Tatum, *John the Baptist*, 130–31; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 273–75. Tatum argues that the baptismal saying has only double attestation (Mark 1:8, Q 3:16). But this overlooks John 1:33, which appears to be an independent tradition (Brown, *John*, 65–66).

(1). According to Acts 19:2 ('*Ἄλλ' οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν*), the disciples of John the Baptist had heard nothing of the Holy Spirit. If this is so, then John could not have prophesied a future baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire.

(2). While the OT and Judaism expected the Holy Spirit as an eschatological gift, this is a gift from God himself and not a gift from the person of the Messiah. Admittedly, *T. Levi* 18:6–8 and *T. Jud.* 24:2–3 are exceptions to this general rule. But these are probably Christian interpolations. It is unlikely that John made the connection between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the person of the Messiah. That connection must be attributed to the early church in light of her experience at Pentecost.

(3). John preached eschatological judgment and prophesied a Messiah who would cleanse Israel by a fiery punishment. While a fire-baptism (judgment) would fit this context, a Spirit-baptism (blessing) would not. In any case, it is not easy to see how these contrasting baptisms could be linked together. This is especially so since the Qumran writings do not provide a suitable parallel to the Spirit-and-fire baptism in Q 3:16. The former is concerned with individual cleansing and not communal judgment by the Holy Spirit.

(i). *Best's First Objection*

Best's first objection is the least weighty of the three. This is because it seems most improbable that given the presence of the Holy Spirit in OT and Jewish thoughts (especially Qumran), these disciples of John knew nothing of the Holy Spirit whatever.<sup>44</sup> More probably, Luke meant that they had not yet heard of the coming and gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.<sup>45</sup> A close parallel to this reading of Acts 19:2 could be found in John 7:39 (*οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα*) which also occurs in the context of believing in Jesus first and receiving the Holy Spirit second.<sup>46</sup>

(ii). *Best's Second Objection*

Best's second objection raises the question as to whether Spirit-baptism meant the bestowal of the Holy Spirit by the person of the Messiah. The scholarly opinions are divided on this point. While some

44 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 87; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 306–7; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 273.

45 Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 306–7; Marshall, *Luke*, 147; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 73 n. 1; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 273–74.

46 F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 406; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 274 n. 33.

support this interpretation,<sup>47</sup> other prefer to see the Holy Spirit as an agency of cleansing comparable with water and fire.<sup>48</sup>

The main proponent for the former interpretation is Dunn.<sup>49</sup> While he agrees with Best that *T. Levi* 18:6–8 and *T. Jud.* 24:2–3 are too uncertain to provide any concrete evidence,<sup>50</sup> he argues against Best by pointing to the evidence of 1QIsa. 52:14–15, 1QH 16:12, 1QS 4:21, and CD 2:12. 'It is just possible . . . that the people of the Scrolls looked for the coming of a Messiah who would bestow God's Spirit in virtue of his own anointing with the Spirit.'<sup>51</sup>

Dunn, however, feels that the evidence is still not sufficiently strong to establish a clear-cut case for the Messiah's gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, he resorts to the creative genius of John the Baptist and concludes that it was his originality which led to the fusing of the thought of an eschatological outpouring of the Spirit with the thought of a Spirit-anointed Messiah.<sup>52</sup> But there are difficulties with Dunn's position.<sup>53</sup>

(1). 1QIsa. 52:15 ('he shall sprinkle many nations because of himself') does not specify the Messiah's means of cleansing the nations far less that the Messiah will sprinkle the nations with the Holy Spirit.<sup>54</sup>

(2). 1QH 16:12 could not be used to support such a reading of 1QIsa. 52:15. Here, the Holy Spirit is either God's agent of cleansing,

47 See *inter alios* C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 50, 53; Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 86–92; W.L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 52; F. Lang, *TDNT*, 6.943; Meier, *Jew*, 39, 40; Patzia, 'John the Baptist', 27; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 71–73. Webb (*John the Baptizer*, 276–77, 292–94, 304–5) argues for the Coming One's gracious bestowal of a spirit or disposition of holiness (not the Holy Spirit) upon the righteous. For a critique of Webb, see Turner, *Power*, 178 n. 28.

48 See *inter alios* Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 37; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 317 n. 48; Guelich, *Mark*, 25; D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 247; J. Lambrecht, 'John the Baptist and Jesus in Mark 1.1–15: Markan Redaction of Q?', *NTS*, 38 (1992), 374; Marshall, 'The Meaning of the Verb "to Baptize"', *EvQ* 45 (1973), 139; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 140; Nolland, *Luke*, 153; Yates, 'The Form of Mark 1.8B', *NTS* 4 (1958), 335–37; *idem*, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 11–17, 29, 43.

49 See also Nolland, *Luke*, 152; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 233–34, 274.

50 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 88–89. See also M. de Jonge, 'Christian Influence in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs', *NovT* 4 (1960), 204–7; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 68 n. 1, 136 n. 4.

51 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 91.

52 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 91–92.

53 M.M.B. Turner, 'The Spirit of Christ and Christology', in *Christ the Lord* (ed. H.H. Rowden; Leicester: IVP, 1982), 182–83; *idem*, 'The Spirit of Christ and "Divine" Christology', in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ* (ed. J.B. Green and M. Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 419–20.

54 Turner, 'Christology', 182.

or God's means of cleansing. In either case, there is no indication that the Messiah will bestow God's Spirit on others.<sup>55</sup>

(3). 1QS 4:21b could not be used to support such a reading of 1QIsa. 52:15 either. On the one hand, God (not the Messiah) is the agent of sprinkling or cleansing in this text. On the other hand, what God sprinkles is probably not the Holy Spirit but a spirit (human disposition) of truth (cf. Ps. 51:10, 12, Ezek. 11:19, 18:31, 36:26, 4 Ezra 6:26, *Jub.* 1:20–23).<sup>56</sup>

(4). CD 2:12 ('He [God] made known His Holy Spirit to them by the hand of His anointed ones [the OT prophets]') could hardly support 'the idea of the Holy Spirit being somehow passed on'<sup>57</sup> to others. More probably, it refers to the fact that throughout Israel's history the people have been able to hear the voice of the Spirit in the words of the prophets (cf. Neh. 9:30, Hos. 9:7, Zech. 7:12, 1QS 8:14–16).<sup>58</sup> In other words, it is a matter of divine revelation not divine bestowal of the Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

(5). While we must not overlook John's originality, we must confess that we do not know all that much about him.<sup>60</sup> More importantly, we must not overlook Jesus' originality, and we must face the fact that early Christians consistently attributed to Jesus both the promise and gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>61</sup>

In view of the above, it is more probable that John spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Coming One's agency of cleansing the people. Scholars often cite the following texts to support this interpretation: Isa. 4:4, Ezek. 36:25–27, 1QH 16:12, 1QS 3:7–9, and 4:20–21. But a note of caution is necessary at this point:

55 1QH consistently speaks of God and not the Messiah as the giver of the Holy Spirit (7:7, 14:13, 16:9, 17:26).

56 Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 78–83; J. Pryke, '“Spirit” and “Flesh” in the Qumran Documents and some New Testament Texts', *RQ* 5 (1965), 345, 350–51; A.E. Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 208–9, 226; M. Treves, 'The Two Spirits of the Rule of the Community', *RQ* 3 (1961), 449–50; P. Wernberg-Möller, 'A Reconsideration of the Two Spirits in the Rule of the Community', *RQ* 3 (1961), 422–24, 439–41.

57 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 91.

58 Hill, *Greek Words*, 247 n. 1; Pryke, 'Spirit and Flesh', 346; Sekki, *Meaning of Ruah*, 80; Turner, 'Christology', 182.

59 See, for example, 1 Sam. 14:12, 16:3, Pss. 16:11, 51:6, 103:7, Prov. 1:23, Isa. 40:13–14, Jer. 16:21, Ezek. 39:7, Hab. 3:2.

60 J. Reumann, 'The Quest for the Historical Baptist', in *Understanding the Sacred Text* (ed. J. Reumann; Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1972), 194. Arguing against Dunn, Turner (*Power*, 179–80) notes that 'there was no "small step" between a messiah endowed with the Spirit and a messiah universally endowing with the Spirit, only a yawning chasm between such ideas.'

61 See, for example, Luke 24:49, John 7:37–39, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7, 20:22, Acts 2:33, 1 John 2:20, cf. John 4:10–14, 6:63, Acts 1:4–5, 11:16, 16:7, Rom. 8:9, Gal. 4:6, Phil. 1:19, 1 Pet. 1:11, Rev. 3:1, 5:6.

(1). It is not obvious that Isa. 4:4 refers to the Holy Spirit as such.<sup>62</sup> For example, the Targum to Isa. 4:4 speaks not of the Lord removing the filth of the daughters of Zion by the 'Spirit' of judgment and the 'Spirit' of burning, but by a 'command' of judgment and a 'command' of extirpation.

(2). It is not clear that Ezek. 36:25–27 refers to the Holy Spirit as an agency of eschatological cleansing. God is the one who will cleanse Israel (36:25), give them a new heart and spirit (36:26), and grant them the Holy Spirit (36:27). In Rabbinic Judaism, this divine presence is often understood in terms of God's promise of the Spirit of prophecy in Joel 2:28–29.<sup>63</sup>

(3). It is not certain that 1QS 3:7–9 and 4:20–21 refer to the Holy Spirit either. It is quite possible, as we have just seen, that these Qumran texts speak of a spirit (human disposition) of holiness and not the Holy Spirit of God.

Even if some of these references, like 1QH 16:12, speak of the Holy Spirit as an agency of purification, we still have to face Best's third objection that the Qumran texts (which speak of a Holy Spirit of individual cleansing) cannot be adduced to provide a suitable parallel to John's prophecy (which speaks of a Messiah who will cleanse Israel by a judgment of fire). It is to this objection we now turn.

### (iii). Best's Third Objection

Best's third objection raises the question as to whether John the Baptist envisaged the Coming One performing one baptism (Spirit-and-fire baptism) or two baptisms (a beneficial Spirit-baptism and a destructive fire-baptism). Again, the scholarly opinions are divided. While some argue that John envisaged only one baptism,<sup>64</sup> other argue that he envisaged two baptisms.<sup>65</sup>

Of the two possibilities, the former (a single baptism) is more probable than the latter (two contrasting baptisms):

(1). The two elements of 'the Holy Spirit' and 'fire' are joined

62 As suggested by G.W.H. Lampe, 'The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke', in *Studies in the Gospels* (ed. D.E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 162. See also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 37; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 317; Dunn, *Baptism*, 12; Marshall, *Luke*, 147; Nolland, *Luke*, 153.

63 Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 104–8; Turner, *Power*, 130–31.

64 See *inter alios* E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 662; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 317; Dunn, *Baptism*, 11–14; *idem*, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 84, 86; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 473–74; Marshall, *Luke*, 146–48; Nolland, *Luke*, 153, 155; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 139 n. 3; Turner, *Power*, 185.

65 See *inter alios* Brown, *John*, 57; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 305–8; Guelich, *Mark*, 28; F. Lang, *TDNT*, 6.943; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 67–73; Taylor, *Immerser*, 139, 142; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 290–5, 304–5.

together by a solitary preposition (ἐν).<sup>66</sup> While this is not a conclusive argument,<sup>67</sup> it does mean that had the Q tradition understood the Coming One would perform two contrasting baptisms, it could have made that clear.

(2). Q 3:16 refers to a single group of people ('you'),<sup>68</sup> who would experience the Coming One's baptism of Spirit-and-fire. While it is just possible that this one group consisted of two subgroups, this is made more difficult by the next argument.

(3). What was contrasted in Q 3:16 was not the two baptisms of the Coming One, but John's baptism of water and the Coming One's baptism of Spirit-and-fire. To argue that John was contrasting both his baptism with the Coming One's baptism and the Coming One's Spirit-baptism with his fire-baptism would unbearably overload John's prophecy.

Having decided that John probably prophesied a single baptism of Spirit-and-fire, we still have to face Best's objection that the Holy Spirit (normally understood as beneficial) and fire (normally understood as destructive) appear to be strange bedfellows.

In response, it must be said that the combination is not as strange as it seems. What has not been noted sufficiently in the past is the close relationship between God and fire in Judaism. On the one hand, God is said to be a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24, 9:3, Isa. 33:14).<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, fire often appears as a symbol of God's overwhelming presence: Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush (Exod. 3:2), Israel's experience of God at Sinai (Exod. 19:18), and Ezekiel's visions of God in Babylon (Ezek. 1:27, 8:2).<sup>70</sup> Thus, 'in almost all the OT theophanies fire appears as a way of representing the unapproachable sanctity and overpowering glory of Yahweh'.<sup>71</sup>

What is significant for us here is the fact that within this God-fire

66 Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 84.

67 Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 139 n. 3; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 289–95.

68 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 317 n. 48; Dunn, *Baptism*, 11; idem, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 84; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 473; Meier, *Jew*, 37.

69 See also Exod. 24:17, Num. 11:1, 2 Sam. 22:9, Pss. 18:8, 68:2, 97:3–5, Isa. 10:17, 29:6, 30:27–33, Jer. 23:29, Mic. 1:4, Jdt. 16:15, cf. Heb. 12:29.

70 See also Gen. 15:17, Exod. 13:21–22, 40:34–38, Lev. 9:23–24, Num. 14:14, Deut. 4:11–12, 15, 33, 5:22, 24, 26, Judg. 13:20, 2 Sam. 22:13, 1 Kgs. 18:38, 1 Chr. 21:26, 2 Chr. 7:1, Pss. 18:8, 12, 50:3, 97:3–5, Dan. 7:9–10, Zech. 2:5, Mal. 3:1–2, *I Enoch* 1:3–6, 14:18–22, 71:1–10, *Pseudo-Philo* 11:5, 14, *Ezekiel the Tragedian* 90–103, cf. Acts 7:30, Heb. 12:18–19, Rev. 1:14–16, 2:18, 4:5, 19:12.

71 Lang, *TDNT*, 6.935. See also J.K. Kuntz, *The Self-revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 34–35, 198, 208, 211; M.E. Stone, 'The Question of the Messiah in 4 Ezra', in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (ed. J. Neusner, W.S. Green, and E.S. Frerichs; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 213.

relationship, fire stands not only for divine judgment,<sup>72</sup> but also for divine protection and purification.<sup>73</sup> In Deut. 9:3, God is described as a consuming fire who will go before his people to destroy their enemies.<sup>74</sup> In Zech. 2:5, God promised to be a protective wall of fire around the wall-less city of Jerusalem.<sup>75</sup> In Mal. 3:1-3, God pointed to the day in which he would be like a refiner's fire that would purify and refine his people like gold and silver.<sup>76</sup>

Given this close association between God and fire in Judaism, it does not at all seem strange that the Holy Spirit should be linked to fire in Q 3:16. Thus, instead of God being pictured as a purifying and consuming fire, what we have in the Q tradition is the Spirit of God being pictured as a purifying and consuming fire.<sup>77</sup>

This fits in well with John's comparison between his baptism with water and the Coming One's baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire.<sup>78</sup> While his own water-baptism had limited cleansing and purifying power, the Spirit-and-fire baptism of the Coming One would have ultimate cleansing and purifying power.<sup>79</sup> The Coming One is indeed mightier than John (Mark 1:8, Matt. 3:11//Luke 3:16).

#### IV. John's Expected Figure

But which of the eschatological figures in Judaism did John have in mind when he spoke of the Coming One? In an extensive consideration of this question, Webb summarizes John's description of the Coming One with the following five elements: (1) his activities include

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72 See, for example, Gen. 19:24, Exod. 9:24, Lev. 10:2, Num. 11:1, Deut. 4:23-24, Pss. 79:5, 89:46, Isa. 33:14, Jer. 4:4, 11:15, Ezek. 15:6-7, 22:21, 31, Hos. 8:14, Amos 1:4, 2:5, Mic. 1:4, Nah. 1:6, Zeph. 1:18, 3:8, *1 Enoch* 48:9, 54:1, 6, 91:9, 100:9, 102:1, *2 Enoch* 10:2, *1QH* 3:25-26, 17:13, *1QS* 2:8, 4:13, *2 Apoc. Bar.* 44:15, 48:39, 4 Ezra 7:38, 13:10-11, *Jub.* 9:15, 16:5, 36:10, *Pss. Sol.* 15:4, *Sib. Or.* 2:196-205, 252-55, 283-307, 3:46-62.

73 Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 38; Dunn, *Baptism*, 12; Lang, *TDNT*, 6.937; Nolland, *Luke*, 153.

74 See also Ps. 68:1-2, Isa. 10:16-17, 29:5-8, 30:27-33, Ezek. 38:22, 39:6.

75 See also 2 Kgs. 1:9-15, 6:17, Ps. 18:8, 4 Ezra 13:10-11, *the Lives of the Prophets* 21:2, 12, Rev. 11:5, 20:9.

76 See also Num. 31:23, Ps. 66:10, Prov. 17:3, Isa. 1:25, 4:4, 6:6-7, 48:10, Jer. 6:27-30, 9:7, Ezek. 22:17-22, Zech. 13:9, Mal. 4:1-3, Wis. 3:5-6, Sir. 2:1-6, 1 Cor. 3:12-15, 1 Pet. 1:6-7, *Josephus Ant.* 20.166, *J.W.* 6.110.

77 This association is more relevant to Q 3:16 than the association between Elijah and fire (2 Kgs. 1:9-12, 2:11, Sir. 48:1-9, *the Lives of the Prophets* 21:2, 12, 15), as suggested by J.A.T. Robinson, 'Elijah, John and Jesus', in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1962), 30-31.

78 There is a possible allusion to Num. 31:23, where both 'water' and 'fire' are seen as cleansing and purifying agents with 'fire' being the more powerful of the two.

79 Turner, *Power*, 183.

judgment and restoration; (2) he is coming; (3) he is mighty; (4) he will baptize with a holy spirit and fire; and (5) his judgment and restoration is portrayed employing threshing-floor imagery.<sup>80</sup>

After reviewing various eschatological figures in the OT and Second Temple Jewish literature, Webb concludes that Yahweh is the one who fits these descriptions of John better than any of the other eschatological figures (such as the Davidic Messiah, the Aaronic Messiah, the angelic prince Michael or Melchizedek, the Son of Man in Daniel and I Enoch, and Elijah-redivivus).<sup>81</sup>

Webb, however, rejects the notion that John contemplated Yahweh as the Coming One. He argues that there are clear indications in John's description of the Coming One (such as John is not as mighty as the Coming One and is not worthy to untie the sandals of the Coming One) which suggest an agent of Yahweh rather than Yahweh himself.<sup>82</sup>

Unfortunately, Webb does not identify this agent of Yahweh with any of the eschatological figures. He believes that it is not possible to make a precise identification of John's expected figure: 'The evidence pointing to an agent provides almost no clue as to which of the other expected figures John expected'.<sup>83</sup>

From our discussion above, it appears that Webb is overly pessimistic in his conclusion that the evidence provides no clue as to which of the eschatological figures John had in mind. Webb's main problem lies in the fact that he believes the Coming One is going to bestow a holy spirit upon the repentant Jews.<sup>84</sup> But, as we have just argued, the reference in Q 3:16 is rather to the Coming One's cleansing of the people with the Holy Spirit and fire.

If we are on the right track, then the strongest candidate for John's Coming One would appear to be the Davidic Messiah:<sup>85</sup>

(1). There is a known tradition in Judaism that the Davidic Messiah will be endowed with the Holy Spirit to execute justice and judgment (Isa. 11:1-5; *I Enoch* 49:3;<sup>86</sup> 62:2, 1QSb 5:25, 4Q161 frs.

80 *John the Baptizer*, 221.

81 *John the Baptizer*, 222-27, 259, 283.

82 *John the Baptizer*, 284-87.

83 *John the Baptizer*, 286. See also L. Goppelt, *Theology*, 1.38; Meier, *Jew*, 35, 40; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 78-79; Taylor, *Immerser*, 145.

84 *John the Baptizer*, 274, 283, 289-95, 304-5.

85 See *inter alios* Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 314; Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', 89-92; Manson, *Sayings*, 41; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 70-73, 140; Turner, 'Divine Christology', 419-20; *Power*, 185-7.

86 There is considerable doubt whether the Elect One in *I Enoch* is the Davidic Messiah. But, whatever the case, there are Davidic and messianic associations in the profile of the Elect One (including motifs from Ps. 2:2 and Isa. 11:1-5). See G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'Salvation without and with a Messiah: Developing Beliefs in Writings Ascribed to Enoch', in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 58-65.

8–10, *Pss. Sol.* 17:37, 18:7).<sup>87</sup> This is consistent with our interpretation of Q 3:16.

(2). Moreover, there are references to the cleansing of Israel and the purging of Jerusalem by the Davidic Messiah within this tradition (*Pss. Sol.* 17:22, 30, 45, 18:5, cf. *1 Enoch* 46:1–8, 48:1–50:5, 62:1–63:12, 1QSb 5:24–29, 4Q161 frs. 8–10, *2 Apoc. Bar.* 39:1–40:4, 4 Ezra 12:31–35, 13:21–50).<sup>88</sup> The similarities between the two *Psalms of Solomon* and Q 3:16 are telling. Not only are the expected figures endowed with the Holy Spirit, they are also seen as agents of Yahweh for the cleansing and purification of Israel.

(3). Finally, there are references within this tradition that associate the Davidic Messiah with the theophanic language of consuming fire (*1 Enoch* 52:4–6,<sup>89</sup> 4 Ezra 13:10–11).<sup>90</sup> In the former passage, the appearance of the Messiah (or the Elect One) is going to be like fire, and nothing is going to be able to withstand his awesome presence. In the latter passage, the man from the sea (most probably the Davidic Messiah in 4 Ezra 12:31–33)<sup>91</sup> does not become entangled with his enemies but destroys them with fire from a distance.

It seems obvious by now that there are considerable affinities between John's prophecy and the messianic tradition described above. We could perhaps summarize our discussion by saying that John envisaged a messianic figure endowed with the Holy Spirit who would

87 Admittedly, there are not a large number of clear references to the Davidic Messiah in the literary sources (mainly in *1 Enoch*, 4 Ezra, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Psalms of Solomon, the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*). But we must not overlook the popular messianic movements both before and after the time of Jesus that could be found in the writings of Josephus (*Ant.* 17.271–85, 18.4–10, 23–25, *J.W.* 2.55–56, 433–34, 652–54, 4.503–13, cf. *Acts* 5:36–37, 21:38). See Dunn, 'Messianic Ideas and Their Influence on the Jesus of History', in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 367; C.A. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 242–48; W.J. Heard, 'Revolutionary Movements', in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. J.B. Green, S. McKnight, and I.H. Marshall; Leicester: IVP, 1992), 689–91; R.A. Horsley and J.S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 88–134; B. Witherington, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 81–96; N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 167–214, 307–20.

88 G.L. Davenport, 'The "Anointed of the Lord" in Psalms of Solomon 17', in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism* (ed. J.J. Collins and G.W.E. Nickelsburg; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 72–75, 81–82; Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 140; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1981), 208; D.S. Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM, 1964), 318.

89 Cf. *Exod.* 24:17, *Deut.* 4:24, *Pss.* 68:2, 97:5, *Isa.* 33:14, *Ezek.* 22:21–22, *Mic.* 1:4, *Jdt.* 16:15.

90 Cf. *Num.* 11:1, *Deut.* 9:3, 2 *Sam.* 22:9, *Pss.* 18:8, 50:3, 97:3, *Isa.* 30:27, 33, *Ezek.* 22:21.

91 J.H. Charlesworth, 'From Messianology to Christology', in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 245.

cleansing Israel from all her uncleanness (whether caused by external or internal factors). Since this messianic figure would be empowered by the Holy Spirit, his coming would be like consuming fire which both refines and destroys. John did not explicitly say that this would be the Davidic Messiah. But his juxtaposition of a number of motifs (such as the Coming One, baptism, the Holy Spirit, consuming fire) suggests that this was probably what he had in mind.

If we are not mistaken, then there does not seem to be any specific Christian element in John's prophecy to suggest that Mark 1:8 and Q 3:16 'too obviously reflected the church's view of the relationship between JB [John the Baptist] and Jesus'.<sup>92</sup> John did not expect the Coming One would bestow the Holy Spirit upon his followers. Instead, he expected the Coming One would cleanse and purge Israel with the power of the mighty Spirit.

But this prophecy of cleansing and judgment stands in considerable tension with Jesus' earthly ministry of salvation and blessing.<sup>93</sup> What John envisaged (Q 3:7-9, 15-17) was much more consistent with Jesus' parables of eschatological judgment which speak of a final separation of the wheat from the tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, cf. *Gos. Thom.* 57), the good fish from the bad fish (13:47-50), and the sheep from the goats (25:31-46).<sup>94</sup> Not surprisingly, there were considerable doubts in John's mind concerning Jesus and the style of his ministry (Q 7:18-23, cf. 7:31-35).<sup>95</sup>

This is not to say that there are insurmountable difficulties between John's prophecy of the Coming One and the four Evangelists' perception of Jesus as the fulfilment of that prophecy. But it is to say that John's prophecy of eschatological cleansing and judgment was not fully realized in Jesus' earthly ministry. While the Evangelists' juxtaposition of John's prophecy of Spirit-baptism and Jesus' reception of the Spirit suggests that eschatological cleansing has been initiated or inaugurated by Jesus' earthly ministry, it will not be consummated until the manifestation of the Son of Man from heaven.<sup>96</sup>

92 Tatum, *John the Baptist*, 130.

93 Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 664; Witherington, 'Jesus and the Baptist—Two of a Kind?', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1988 Seminar Papers* (ed. D.J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 234, 240, 244.

94 D.R. Catchpole, 'John the Baptist, Jesus and the Parable of the Tares', *SJT* 31 (1978), 558, 560, 570.

95 For the essential reliability of these pericopes, see J. Breech, *The Silence of Jesus: The Authentic Voice of the Historical Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 22-26; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), 55-60; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 663-64, 678; W.G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment* (London: SCM, 1957), 109-11; N. Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 41; Witherington, 'Jesus and the Baptist', 233, 239; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 281-82.

96 Yates, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 5, 6-7, 29, 36-37, 129. Yates (*Spirit and Kingdom*, 4-5, 13,

## V. Conclusion

From the above, we may conclude that John the Baptist did not envisage the Coming One would grant the Holy Spirit to his people in any manner comparable to Jesus' bestowal of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. What he envisaged is a messianic figure (probably the Davidic Messiah) who would once-and-for-all cleanse and purify Israel with the power of the fiery Spirit. Given the Jewish background and understanding of John's prophecy, there is no need to doubt the essential reliability of John's reference to a Spirit-and-fire baptism in Q 3:16.

### Abstract

The article discusses the authenticity of John the Baptist's prophecy of baptism with the Holy Spirit in the light of the various interpretations which have been offered of the original wording. In the light of the Jewish background it is concluded that the Davidic Messiah would once and for all cleanse and purify Israel with the power of the fiery Spirit rather than that he would bestow the Holy Spirit upon his followers.

96 (*Continued*) 38-40, 167-68, 176-77), however, has rightly been criticized by Hill (*Greek Words*, 246) for making a sharp distinction between the Spirit as a personal agent of spiritual cleansing (Mark 1:8, Q 3:16, John 1:33, 3:5-8, Acts 11:16) and the Spirit as a powerful but impersonal endowment or gift from God (Acts 1:5, 2:38, 8:9-24, 19:1-7).

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