A NOTE ON JOHN 1: 29, 35.

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"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

This saying of the Baptist is freighted with theological meaning probably above any other formula of the ages. It is one which we would expect to result from long reflection and interpretation of the facts in the career of Jesus. It is possibly the best summary of the mission of the Messiah we have. And yet here it is at the very beginning of our Lord's messianic ministry before he has wrought or taught anything concerning himself or his mission. Who in all the world knew as yet that Jesus would die and that death was the road to messianic glory? Who knew that his death would be sacrificial as an offering of God? Who knew that thus he would atone for and take away sins? Who knew that this salvation was for all the world? Are not all these ideas the products of speculative and reflective theologizings upon the facts as made known in the death and life of Jesus? And yet here it is, a *theologoumenon*, an epitome of the meaning of the messianic mission of Jesus, used by the forerunner to introduce him to his disciples as the Messiah. It is an interpretation of the meaning of his life before any one had as yet known the facts which would convey that meaning. Besides the Synoptics seem clearly to teach that Jesus reserved teaching his messianic death until after the crisis at Cæsarea Philippi. "From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief-priests and scribes and be killed and the third day be raised up." (Mt. 16: 21). And the disciples could not believe this, but would have it be far from their Lord. Did the Baptist, with his meager intercourse with Jesus, know more of his messianic destiny than Peter, John and James after more than two years of intimate discipleship? And yet this saying of the Baptist implies not only the death of Jesus as the Messiah but also the Pauline

interpretation thereof. This situation has led exegetical critics to suggest several explanations of this seeming anomaly.

First—It has been held that these are not the words of the Baptist but a *theologoumenon* of the close of the first century of Christianity put into the mouth of the Forerunner by the evangelist. (Wendt's *Teachings of Jesus*, vol. ii., pp. 261f.) This opinion is widely held among critics and rests on the facts (1) that this evangelist is accustomed to intersperse his own *theologoumena* in his narrative (see 3: 16-21; 4: 31-36, &c.); (2) the author, who is also the writer of the First Epistle, does report the discourses of Jesus in his own vocabulary and style, and is not careful to reproduce the exact words of the Lord; (3) his purpose being to give, not a narrative report of the deeds and words of Jesus, but an interpretation of his life as the life-giving Messiah to those who receive him and believe on him (20: 31), does not bind to a verbatim report of sayings. So he gives the Baptist's language, not in the words of the Forerunner, but in his own interpretation of them after sixty years of Christian experience and in the full effect of their meaning as extended through just inference under added light. In putting this *theologoumenon* of Asian theology at the close of the first century into the mouth of the Baptist he makes him speak, not in his identical words, but in words which have come with the fuller content of meaning after years of interpretation of those very words. This he does because he is writing as an interpreter and not as a reporter, and is giving testimony, not as to his language, but as to his meaning. So, if one would get at the exact language of the Baptist, he must read out of this passage the Johannine *theologoumena* of propitiation through death for the sins of the world. (See I. John 2: 2.)

But, if we trim these words of all that might be attributed to the padding of the evangelist, will there be any residue left to the Baptist?

Second—Weiss thinks "the Lamb of God" belongs to

the Baptist, and the explanation, "that taketh away the sin of the world," belongs to the evangelist. (See *Biblical Theology*, vol. II., p. 359.) But this by no means removes the part of the saying which has been considered so incongruous with its setting. If John knew Jesus as the lamb of God, he must also have known of his sacrificial death and its atoning efficacy. Nor does the reference to Isaiah 53 lessen the weight of the words. Either we have here a *theologoumenon* of the evangelist, or a saying of the Baptist. The language of the book says distinctly it is the latter, but the style seems to be the former, and any effort to make it a combination of both is arbitrary and excused only by the direst exegetical extremity.

Third—But this terse epigrammatic yet pregnant expression need not be classed as a *theologoumenon* to account for its literary features. Oracles are also characterized by these same stylistic marks. May it not have been an oracle which the Baptist had received? The probability of this explanation of the saying in this context being the true one depends very greatly upon whether a place may there be found for such an oracle. That the Baptist did receive an oracle which he has not given in full words is distinctly stated in this content, viz: "He that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever than shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon him the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit" (v. 2, 33). It is true there is nothing here cited which would account for the passage under discussion. But it was not requisite to the author's purpose to quote all of the oracle at this point, and it may have contained much more than is here quoted. It would be expected that, if he was given the sign by which to recognize the Messiah, he would also have been given some statement of the purpose of that Messiah's mission. The verse clearly proves that the Baptist did receive oracles from God about the Messiah. Let us consider this context to see if there be no place in it for such an oracle. Jesus came to John when he was baptizing with a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins. Did Jesus make no

confession at that baptism? If so, must it not have been an unusual confession to have so moved John to hinder him for the reason that he rather had need to be baptized of Jesus? Suppose now that Jesus came confessing the sins of the world, and we have just such a situation accounted for. Then follows the Lord's answer that it was fitting thus to fulfill all righteousness, and the baptism takes place. As he comes up out of the water the heavens are opened, the Spirit descends as a dove and abides on him and the *Bath Qol* is heard, "This is my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased." The Spirit now resident in him drives him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, where he abides forty days in contemplation and reflection on his new-found messianic mission. (See an article on "*The Autobiography of Jesus*," in *Journal of Theology* for July, 1898, by Prof. B. W. Bacon). In this temptation as expounded in this article he consecrates himself to a messianic mission that is spiritual, redemptive and sacrificial. Then he returns and is publicly heralded by the Baptist as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." In a time when oracles from heaven concerning the advent of the Messiah were being received and the *Bath Qol* being heard, it is quite natural that this saying also which no earthly condition can reasonably account for may also have come from heaven, and the forerunner was the recipient, not only of a revelation as to the sign by which the Messiah might be identified, but also of a formula by which he might be publicly introduced with a forecast of his messianic mission to those who would receive him. This explanation does not require that the Baptist should know the full meaning of the words he spoke, much less his disciples whom Jesus found it necessary two years later to show how he must suffer and be killed and the third day be raised up. If, as Prof. Bacon shows in the article above referred to, Jesus reserved the experience of his temptation until this time in his ministry before teaching it to his disciples, he may well also and for the same reason have reserved teaching the content of this oracle.

It seems in every way better to construe the *logion* as an oracle revealed to the Baptist, rather than as a *theologoumenon* of the closing decade of the first century of Christianity put into the mouth of the Forerunner by the evangelist.

HARMONY OF MAT. 8: 5-13 AND LUKE 7: 1-10.

BY REV. A. E. THOMSON.

I. The Apparent Discrepancies.

These all lie in the fact that, according to Matthew, the centurion meets Jesus and makes his plea and enters his protest in person, while, according to Luke, he does it through others, sending two deputations to Jesus. Thus;

(a) "There came unto him a centurion, beseeching him." (Mat.).

"He sent unto him the elders of the Jews." (Luke).

(b) "And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him." (Mat.).

"Then Jesus went with them." (Luke.)

(c) "The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy, etc." (Mat.).

"The centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, etc." (Luke).

(d) "And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way, etc. (Mat.).

"And they that were sent returned to the house, etc." (Luke).

These discrepancies are too great to be explained away merely on the basis of independent witnesses. If either Matthew or Luke is wrong, his reliability is seriously impaired. If the centurion came in person, and conducted the whole business himself, Luke ought to have known it. If he did not come to Jesus at all, but conducted the business through messengers, Matthew ought to have known that. For the sake of our confidence in either narrator