

ed from the straw by the oxen and their sled which were driven over and over it. The fan was a three-pronged wooden fork or shovel which was used to throw the threshed grain and chaff up into the wind that it might blow the chaff and rubbish out of the good heavy grain. The threshing floor was generally made on the top or side of a hill that it might be well exposed to every breeze. The Coming One has the winnowing shovel already in His hand. His threshing-floor is the world where the truth is known, His fan is the proclamation of the Gospel and the wind the influences of the Spirit. His wheat is His saints and His granary in the first instance the state of grace and ultimately heaven. **Unquenchable fire.**—In the East as in some parts of our own land the straw and chaff were burned. The fierce blaze of this straw fire is symbolical of the fire of God's judgment consuming religious and moral chaff. When once this is kindled it will be impossible to put it out. The duration of this flame is not so much in the thought of the speaker as the hopelessness of mitigating it.

13. Then cometh Jesus.—Christ came from his home in Nazareth, four days journey, for this purpose. He had heard tidings of the movement, he knew it was from God and he desired to have a part in it as it was an earnest preparation for the coming Kingdom.

15. Suffer it now.—The answer of Jesus implies the knowledge of His own Messiahship and consequently that John had good ground for his misgiving. But he removes the scruples of the Baptist by telling him that his relationship is only a temporary one and would soon be changed. As yet, however, John is the minister of the law which Jesus desires to fulfil. (Schaff.) **It becometh us.**—It is not a matter of absolute necessity (Matt. 16 : 21 ; 26 : 54), nor of absolute duty (John 13 : 14), but of moral fitness (Heb. 2 : 10) (Williams.)

Fulfil all righteousness.—To leave nothing undone which would be honoring to the solemn and significant ordinances of God. (Morison.) Every reader feels something of the difficulty which John felt. Why should the sinless Son of God submit to the baptism of repentance? As applied to sinful men it was necessarily a baptism of repentance, but it was also a consecration to, and preparatory initiation for, the new Covenant of the Kingdom. (Edersheim.) Christ's reply, therefore, may be understood to include the following

truths: 1. His baptism was a recognition of the divine mission of John and linked His own ministry with that of the Baptist. 2. It was an expression of His complete identification with a sinful race, yet not so as to imply a confession of personal sin. But perhaps it was a foreshadowing of that perfect confession of the sins of His people which He would make as their Great Representative and Sin-Bearer. 3. It was the outward symbol of His consecration to the service of the new kingdom and of His initiation into its duties.

16. And Jesus when He was baptized.—Combining the statements of the three Gospels, Jesus went up from the water at once, praying as He went, and while He was going up and praying the heavens were opened.—To our Lord and the Baptist the appearance was as though the sky had really opened. (Ezek. 1 : 1 ; Acts 7 : 56.) (Williams.) **The Spirit of God.**—Jesus was now entering on His public duties as Messiah and so was baptized with that fullness of the Spirit which was necessary to fit His true humanity to be the instrument of His higher nature in that work.

Descending as a dove and coming upon Him.—Read the Baptist's own account (John 1 : 32-34.) This is to be understood literally. It is a supernatural fact to which all four Evangelists testify. The Divine Being considered it fitting that a visible embodiment of the Spirit should inaugurate our Lord as Messiah. The form of the dove was chosen because it was a symbol of deliverance (Gen. 8 : 8) ; of purity (Lev. 5 : 7) ; of harmlessness (Matt. 10 : 16) ; and of endearment (Song 6 : 9). (Williams.) John says (1 : 32) "it abode upon Him." The form probably hovered over Him only for a short time ; but although the outward sign was temporary, the anointing of the Spirit was permanent. As the baptism of Christ was the last act of His private life, so from this moment His ministry and mediatorial work, in the active official sense, begins. (Alford.)

17. Lo a voice from heaven.—The form of the words in Matthew would suggest that they were addressed to John but the account in Mark and Luke shows that they were addressed to Jesus, although audible to John. **My beloved Son in whom I (was and) am well pleased.**—This expression of the perfect and ineffable complacency of the Father in the Son, refers, (in its original form) to the past as well as to the present. Observe