

far greater than he appeared to his contemporaries, and all that his baptism promised to do appears utterly insignificant compared with what it has actually done.

The Baptist addressed all who came to him in the same stern tone of authority. Young and old gathered round him, and among them must have been many whom he had known in earlier life, and some to whom he had been taught to look up to with humility and respect. But in his capacity of prophet he made no distinction. All alike he exhorted to repentance; all alike he found courage to baptise. In a single case, however, his confidence failed him. There appeared among the candidates a young man of nearly his own age, who was related to his family. We must suppose that he had had personal intercourse with Christ before; for though one of our authorities represents John as saying that he knew him not except by the supernatural sign that pointed him out at his baptism, yet we must interpret this as meaning only that he did not before know him for his successor. For it appears that before the appearance of the sign John had addressed Christ with expressions of reverence, and had declared himself unfit to baptise him. After this meeting we are told that on several occasions he pointed out Christ as the hope of the nation, as destined to develop the work he himself had begun into something far more memorable, and as so greatly superior to himself, that, to repeat his emphatic words, he was not worthy to untie his shoe.

Now, before we enter into an examination of Christ's own public career, it will be interesting to consider what definite qualities this contemporary and sagacious observer remarked in him, and exactly what he expected him to do. The Baptist's opinion of Christ's character then is summed up for us in the title he gave him—the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. There seems to be in the last part of this description an allusion to the usages of the Jewish sacrificial system, and in order to explain it fully it would be necessary to anticipate much that will come more conveniently later in this treatise. But when we remember that the Baptist's mind was doubtless full of imagery drawn from the Old Testament,