

Herod's Soldiers. Deputies From the Sanhedrin. Crowds of Neophytes Come to John

In Dothain, where Jesus had calmed the raving possessed, Jews and pagans had, since the Babylonian Captivity, dwelt together indiscriminately. On I do not now clearly remember John's words when baptizing Jesus, but they were something like the following: "May Jehovah through the ministry of His cherubim and seraphim, pour out His blessing over Thee with wisdom, understanding, and strength!" I cannot say for certain whether these last three words were really those that I heard; but I know that they were expressive of three gifts, for the mind, the soul, and the body respectively. In them was contained all that was needed to convert every creature, renewed in mind, in soul, and in body, to the Lord.

While Jesus ascended from the depths of the baptismal well, Andrew and Saturnin, who were standing to the right of the Baptist around the triangular stone, threw about Him a large linen cloth with which He dried His Person. They then put on Him a long, white baptismal robe.¹ After this Jesus stepped on the red triangular stone which lay to the right of the descent into the well, Andrew and Saturnin each laid one hand upon His shoulder, while John rested his upon His head.

This part of the ceremony over, they were just about mounting the steps when the Voice of God came over Jesus, who was still standing alone and in prayer upon the stone. There came from Heaven a great, rushing wind like thunder. All trembled and looked up. A cloud of white light descended, and I saw over Jesus a winged figure of light as if flowing over Him like a stream. The heavens opened, I beheld an apparition of the Heavenly Father in the figure in which He is usually depicted and, in a voice of thunder, I heard the words: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus was perfectly transparent, entirely penetrated by light; one could scarcely look at Him. I saw angels around Him.

But off at some distance on the waters of the Jordan,



Before the baptism of Jesus, only a small white scarf was put upon the newly baptized; but after Jesus' baptism, a larger garment was used. I saw Satan, a dark, black figure, as if in a cloud, and myriads of horrible black reptiles and vermin swarming around him. It was as if all the wickedness, all the sins, all the poison of the whole region took a visible form at the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and fled into that dark figure as into their original source. The sight was abominable, but it served to heighten the effect of the indescribable splendor and joy and brilliancy spread over the Lord and the whole island. The sacred baptismal well sparkled and glanced, foundations and margin and waters—a pool of living light. One could see the four stones that had once supported the Ark of the Covenant shining beneath the waters as if in exultation; and on the twelve around the well, those upon which the Levites had stood, appeared angels bending in adoration, for the Spirit of God had before all mankind rendered testimony to the living Foundation, to the precious, chosen Cornerstone of the Church around whom we as so many living stones, must build up a spiritual edifice, a holy priesthood, that thereby we may offer an acceptable, spiritual sacrifice to God through His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased.

Jesus then ascended the steps and entered the tent near the baptismal well. Saturnin brought the garments which Lazarus had been holding all this time, and Jesus put them on. When clothed, He left the tent and, surrounded by His disciples, took His stand on the open space near the central tree. John in joyous tones addressed the crowd and bore witness to Jesus that He was the Son of God and the promised Messiah. He cited the Prophecies of the Patriarchs and prophets now fulfilled, recounted what he had seen, reminded them of the voice of God which they had heard, and informed them that when Jesus returned he himself would retire. John referred also to the sacred memories that embalmed the spot upon which they were standing on account of the Ark of the Covenant's having rested here when Israel was journeying to the Land of Promise. Now, he continued, had they seen the Realization of the Covenant witnessed to by His Father, the Almighty God Himself. John referred all to Jesus, and called this day that had beheld the ful-fulfillment of the desire of Israel blessed.

Meanwhile many newcomers had arrived on the spot, and among them some friends of Jesus. I saw in the crowd Nicodemus, Obed, Joseph of Arimathea, John Marc, and others. John bade Andrew announce the baptism of the Messiah throughout Galilee. Then Jesus spoke, confirming in plain and

simple words the truth John had proclaimed. He told them that He would withdraw from them for a short time, after which all the sick and afflicted should come to Him and He would heal and console them. They should in the meantime prepare themselves by penance and good works. He would withdraw for awhile, and then return to lay the foundations of that Kingdom which His Father had given to Him. Jesus made use of a parable when thus addressing the crowd: that of a king's son who, before taking possession of his throne, withdrew into solitude, there to prepare himself and implore the assistance of his father.

Among His numerous listeners were some Pharisees, who received His words with ridicule. "Per-haps, after all," they said, "He is not the carpenter's son, but the supposititious child of some king. Is He now about to return to His kingdom? Will He assemble His subjects and march upon Jerusalem?" The idea appeared to them foolish and absurd.

John recommenced his work, and continued throughout the whole day baptizing at the sacred well of Jesus all that were on the island. They were for the most part people who later on joined the Community of Jesus. They stepped into the water that covered the rim of the pool, the Baptist standing outside on the edge itself baptizing.