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JOHN THE BAPTIST'S QUESTION.

A STUDY IN GOSPEL THERAPEUTICS

FAITH is faith ; and, because it is what it is, it has in it no element of doubt. For doubt is alien to its nature. The believer gets his name as a believer from the fact that he believes. He has faith and faith harbours no doubt. It may be weak ; but, however weak it is, it not only is not unbelief or doubt ; it is the opposite of both. Yet in the believer, as distinct from his faith, there is room for much more than the faith for which he gets his name. Doubt or unbelief runs in the very teeth of faith. The believer, however, may have his own share of doubts and hesitations and unbelief. "The besetting sin," as Dr. Moody Stuart once put it, "of believers is unbelief."

The warfare of the regenerate, when "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh," is all along the line. Thus in them there is a conflict between faith and unbelief. The latter may vary in its range from a feeling of unresolved difficulties through hesitations and doubt up to militant and positive unbelief. In all its manifestations it joins issue with the belief of the Gospel. And it is of the same nature in the regenerate as it is in the unregenerate. In the former, it is the principle that wars against the faith which has the upper hand. In the latter it is the reigning principle. A life of doubt diversified by faith, such as it is, may give place to one of faith diversified by doubt. Where a living faith is, it may be much held down. And there may be such a refreshing and invigorating of the life of the downtrodden subject of regenerating grace that clearly and definitely and decidedly the victory lies with the new life. Yet, however high one may rise in the life of faith, while the believer is here on earth he is not exempted from experience of sifting and temptation ; and he may be much shaken by the assaults of unbelief. In connection with such experiences it is worth our while to take note of the method adopted by our Lord in dealing with one so tried. That method has in it lessons for us still. In two of the Gospels, Matthew xi. 2-5, and Luke vii. 18-23, we are told how John the Baptist sent some of his disciples to our Lord with the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another ?"

By the time that John sent his disciples with his question he had run his public course. His meteoric ministry was at an end. What a difference there was between his prison life and the bustle and stir that he had once known! His teaching had created a sensation in Israel. The people crowded to wait upon him; multitudes hung upon his lips and many accepted his baptism. Hopes were awakened and expectation was on tip-toe. Religious excitement rose to a high pitch; and John had borne all this strain. His has been a strenuous life.

But now the past is definitely past. The crowds no longer flock to hear him. He no longer as the prophet of judgment puts the trumpet to his mouth. He no longer summons Israel to repentance, nor does he direct his hearers to wait for the manifestation of that One who, coming after him, was preferred before him, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose. The hand of the tyrant lay heavy upon him; and the prison he had already entered he was not to leave alive. What in his dungeon his communings with his inner self may have been, what his review of the past and of his own heart may have been, we know very little about. But he was in such changed circumstances that he was bound to face questions that doubtless arose and challenged him to answer them. Had he run in vain or laboured in vain? Had he been but deluding himself and deceiving the people? Surely, if he was indeed the forerunner of Messiah, the herald of the King, and if the King had indeed come, He would not suffer His friend and faithful servant to languish in this dungeon. If the Kingdom was indeed so near and the Lord had indeed appeared he would surely not be left long to endure the rage of an ungodly Herod. If such thoughts found a place in his heart they were but natural. For there was no relief from the load that lay upon him.

John sent his disciples with his question. Not a few interpret this whole incident as though it were not to be thought of that such a man as the Baptist should give way for as much as a moment to the weaknesses to which even sanctified humanity is liable. They maintain that John knew no doubt or hesitation, but that in this whole matter he acted merely for the benefit of the few disciples that still had access to him in his confinement. There is no doubt that the answer which was sent to John was one that was fitted to benefit not only himself but also his disciples. Yet it looks altogether too much like a bit of make-believe and play-acting

on his part to send his disciples as he did if it was only their good apart from his own that he had in mind. It is quite true that John was a man great in godliness and in faith. But how often have the saints of God tripped and stumbled not where they were weakest, but where they were strongest? It is true also that the Baptist was a witness to the Light and his witness was self-consistent throughout. It was all of one piece. John in the course of his ministry drew a straight furrow from first to last. But it is a needless confusion to mistake John the public witness for John the Israelite indeed.

John was both an Israelite indeed and a witness for God. But many things might enter into his experience in his private character that did not reflect themselves in his public life. In his testimony he was no reed shaken by the wind; but John, the man, however apt we may be to forget it, was like his great prototype, in whose spirit and power he came, a man of like passions with ourselves. He was open to all the temptations and trials, and subject to all the weaknesses and infirmities that cleave to the children of God while they are here on earth. High as he had risen in the life of godliness, he was not out of the range for Satan's shafts. While in himself weak like other men, he had been throughout his ministry upheld by the Lord who had sent him to preach. He had no wealth of inherent resources such as might exempt him from the need of being constantly upheld. The prophet who in Israel was an iron post and brazen wall against the people was what he was not because of any innate strength that rendered him superior to what assailed him; but God who chose and called him with all his known weakness held him up and made good His own word of promise. This had been the case with Jeremiah: this was the case with John.

Jeremiah with all his unflinching faithfulness in proclaiming his message was no stranger to a sense of his own weakness. He felt the situation in which he was placed; and it was not because he took kindly to reproach and reviling that he was enabled to persevere. His Lord carried him through. Similarly on this occasion we see in the case of John the Baptist how apparent his weakness as a man was while this very weakness serves only to set off the marvellous constancy and unbending fidelity he showed as he executed the special task with which he had been put in trust.

The answer that our Lord sent back to John's question casts light on the precise situation that had to be met. It consists of

evidence such as was fitted, and no doubt intended, to silence any questionings that the Baptist might have. And this answer was directed to John himself. His disciples were but charged to convey it. In so doing they might profit by it. But the answer was not for them, but for their master, and this lets us see his state of mind. Besides the very suggestion that John was a reed shaken with the wind may have been called forth by the impression which his question made upon the multitude when that question was looked at in the light of his former teaching and witness.

The question itself was couched in the language of the Old Testament era. The fathers looked forward to the Coming Redeemer. The Seed of the woman had been long promised. The families of the earth that were accursed were to be blessed in the Seed of Abraham; and that Seed was expected. Messiah was to come as David's son to sit on the throne of Israel. And so from the standpoint of promise and prophecy, as yet unfulfilled, the Old Testament believers when they spoke of the order of things that He was to inaugurate might speak of the world to come. Of Himself they spoke as the Coming One. He was to come because He was promised; and the very name thus given speaks of a believing acceptance of the prophetic word which told of Him. He is promised; the promise will be made good; He will come. So the promised Deliverer was named the "Coming One." And it is in the words of an Old Testament believer that John the Baptist put his question: "Art Thou the Coming One, or do we look for another?" If the standpoint of the question is that of a believer in the prophetic word, the answer is one that accepts this standpoint as warranted, and it is given accordingly.

There were other possible answers that conceivably might have been given. There might have been, for instance, a direct affirmative, "I am." But all the ends that such an answer could secure were secured by the one that was in fact given. Or our Lord, knowing that John was downcast, might have sent him an answer full of direct comfort, assuring him that he need not be cast down. Or, again, He might have rebuked His forerunner for giving place even for a moment to questionings that were so much out of keeping with his own remarkable past. But, as prophecy declared of Messiah that He would not break the bruised reed, now was not the time to administer a direct rebuke. We may admit that there was reason for rebuke, yet we see how gently our Lord dealt with His tried servant. When his difficulty

was met let it be enough of rebuke for him that he has needed to be rebuked. The answer actually given was so satisfactory that once it was received John might well turn upon himself, "O! slow of heart that I was, when I gave place to such thoughts as have been the harassing companions of my solitary hours." Self-reproach would thus mingle with his satisfaction. So without unnecessary directness our Lord in His wisdom secured the two-fold result. He satisfied His friend and allowed him to take in the exact meaning of the situation in which he found himself.

On the other hand though the answer given was fitted to comfort the prisoner, it did not assume the form of direct comfort. Our Lord did not charge John's disciples to return to their master saying, "Fear not, John, you have not run in vain, neither have you laboured in vain. You have indeed been the forerunner of Messiah sent to prepare His way before Him. Your work has by no means gone for nothing." Yet without comforting in this direct fashion Christ comforted none the less really by the method which He adopted. Were the direct course taken, John, it is true, might realise that He to whom he had sent was indeed a prophet, and more than a prophet, one that knew heart secrets. But the indirect method adopted secured the desired result of cheering the Baptist's heart. For once his difficulties were met and he was satisfied on the main point, he might say to himself, "I have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain. This is very Christ, and I have neither deceived Israel nor been deceived myself. If it seems good to the Lord that my light should thus go out in darkness, so be it. He must increase; but I must decrease."

The answer given by our Lord secured that the various ends of comfort and correction and confirmation were attained. For it took John at the standpoint that he occupied and submitted to him evidence such as was fitted to satisfy his mind and to allay his fears. If he spoke the language of an Old Testament believer he was thrown back on those lively oracles to see what they had to say of the Hope of Israel. And the facts, which his two disciples were in a position to attest, were evidences that went to show that the signs proper to the Hope were forthcoming. Might he not read in the Prophets who told the covenant people of the coming redemption what signs they gave by which the Redeemer might be recognised when He came? The Evangelical Prophet had said, "Your God shall come and save you. Then the eyes of the

blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." Such were the promised tokens that should bear witness to the presence among them of their Redeemer. If they expected that He should come they must expect that His attesting signs should accompany Him.

Now the works promised were the very works that our Lord wrought. Some of them were wrought in the presence of John's messengers. Other similar works they might well hear spoken of among the followers of Christ, for they had been recently wrought. The messengers saw and heard these things and in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established. They could bring back to their master the report of what their eyes had seen and of what their ears had heard. So the answer that they were bidden convey to the Baptist was "Show the things that ye have heard and seen; the blind receive their sight; the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised and to the poor the Gospel is preached; and blessed is he who shall not be offended in Me."

There they were, competent witnesses, sent back with an answer that was meant to meet the precise case and need of him who had sent them with his question. They were charged to report what they had seen; and they had seen the signs of Messiah. Let them but report this and John is sent to the Scriptures of the Prophets. Are these or are they not the signs of Messiah? Look on this picture that Isaiah gives. Look on that picture that your disciples give; and say, are not these works which Jesus works and which they report the very works that are characteristic of the promised Redeemer and appropriate to His mission?

The works of our Lord bore witness to Him. They were the shining forth of His glory. As works of wonder they were fitted to arrest the attention of the spectators and to convince them that here there was no ordinary person. They were works that He wrought in the physical sphere that were in full harmony with the great work that He came to perform in the spiritual sphere. For this cause had He been manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. In carrying out this the end of His manifestation He works such wonders of grace that the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead rise to newness of life. There is a close analogy in this way between the

works of wonder that He performed in the course of His ministry on earth and the lasting work that He continues to work throughout the ages in His exhibition of mediatorial grace. This likeness fits these works to be signs. They are the proper works of the Saviour, bearing as they do the stamp of His characteristic beneficence. As works of beneficence and as works of wonder appropriate to the ends of His mission they may well be held to be signs and tokens that He is indeed the Christ. On one occasion we find our Lord appealing to them as proof that authenticated His claims: "If ye believe not Me, believe the works." They were evidence that could not easily be got over or gainsaid. By themselves they were well fitted to satisfy the onlookers and bystanders and all to whom the report of them comes, The signs of Messiah were surely exhibited and in view of them all that bowed to the authority of Holy Writ might well acquiesce in the claims that He made.

Such works as our Lord wrought might well satisfy as evidence of who He was. Yet the mere working of a sign or signs should not be enough to induce Israel to rest unquestioningly in the prophetic claims of one professing to come with a message from God. It was contemplated in the Law as a possibility for which provision had to be made, that men should arise and lay claim to a Divine commission who were but impostors. Such impostors might give a sign and it might be fulfilled. In such a case the people were not left defenceless. A principle of guidance was announced that would help them to discriminate between the false prophet and the true. The deceiver whose sign did not come to pass and whose word failed afforded a simple case. But if a sign was given and it came to pass this was not enough. For if the teaching of the would-be prophet drew them away from the Law of the Lord they were not to heed his sign. Thus a principle was laid down by the application of which they should be safely guided in discerning who were and who were not messengers from heaven. No addition or accretion to the Revelation previously given might be out of harmony with what they had already in their hands.

The possibility of legitimate growth or development of the Word of Revelation in the hands of Israel was not ruled out. But all professed advances that were not in keeping with the nucleus already given were excluded. What was new must be in harmony with what was old. It might be an opening up or a further

application of it. But it must not call in question the Divine Authority of the earlier Deposit. It must not slight or contemn what had admittedly come from God. The Old Testament gives us a record of development after this fashion. The prophets, and the historical writers, add to the primary Divine Revelation that the Law supplies. But they are all in keeping with the Law. And if the Law spoke of One like unto Moses who should be raised up, it virtually foretold the coming of the day when the order laid down by itself should be a thing of the past. For that Prophet who should be raised like unto Moses would resemble him in those respects in which Moses surpassed the ordinary members of the company of the prophets. Under the auspices of the coming Prophet a new order of things should be set on foot ; and this was so far understood in Israel that the days of Messiah were regarded in anticipation as a new world. The bud was opening and as it opened it disclosed more and more of what was previously hid in its bosom.

There was nothing in the teaching of our Lord that laid it open to the charge that it evacuated the Holy Oracles. No doubt there was in it an advance on anything that had been heard before. But it was an advance in full sympathy with the past. It was but an opening up of what was implicitly in the promises already given and an adaptation of the permanent elements of the past to the new conditions that were being introduced. In view of this with such attestation by way of signs there was an overflowing abundance of evidence to confirm His claims. His words taken by themselves were sufficient evidence of who He was. Never did man speak like Him. But there was not the mere evidence of works and of words ; there was account to be taken also of their conjoint witness. This is the evidence that is brought before the notice of John.

The words of our Lord bore upon them their own stamp. This told of heavenly origin and final authority. Such words made an appeal to all ; and we have on record in the Gospels the effect that they had on the multitudes that heard Him speak. They were astonished at His doctrine, for His word was with authority ; and they felt this. The officers sent by the rulers returned to say that never man spake like this Man ; and the common people heard Him gladly. Such was the effect produced by His teaching on outsiders. The inner circle of His true disciples knew His words to be the words of eternal life. This

they did because they were His sheep, and, being His sheep, they knew the voice of the Shepherd. As subjects of regenerating grace they were partakers of spiritual discernment; and this availed to make a discrimination between the voice of the Shepherd and that of the stranger. Thus His words alone were enough to tell them who He was. These words uttered His thoughts; and the thoughts of God are each of them a great deep. If heaven, earth and sea bear witness to the glory of their Maker and tell out His thoughts of wisdom and of goodness, of majesty and of might, so that, as it were, His handwriting is to be read upon them, surely the thoughts of God with regard to redemption are capable of authenticating themselves and proving that they are His thoughts indeed. It is a profoundly rational thing for him who apprehends their glory to accept them and to rest in them as the very thoughts of God.

There is such an agreement between the work of God in the hearts of those that He has called and His word that utters His thought that the Word evokes a response from their heart of hearts, and they can rest in quiet confidence in the Spirit-given Word. This they do when the self-same Spirit who gave it by inspiration seals it on the soul. Here is an abiding source of assurance to the children of God in all ages/and we may see in the case of John who indeed belonged to the Israel of God what effect the report of our Lord's teaching was fitted to have upon him. His disciples were bidden to tell him not only what they had seen but what they had heard. In doing this they would rehearse not only what they had heard others tell of the works of Christ, but what they had heard from either Himself or others of His Word. When John, an Israelite indeed, if ever any one was, heard the teaching of our Lord there was in his heart a chord that would vibrate to the message. As one of the flock of the Shepherd of Israel he might well know the Shepherd's voice, and on hearing it be fully satisfied that this was indeed the Word of God. Thus the report of what his disciples heard, apart altogether from the report of what they saw, might convince and satisfy him.

Our Lord's method of dealing with His servant shows His characteristic generosity. It is not only proof that He submits, but, as it were, proof upon proof. The works might satisfy. The words might satisfy. But here were works and words in conjunction. And surely such an overflow of evidence must overbear

and beat down all opposition. By the removal of the Baptist's difficulties all the other ends that were in order were secured. This sheds light on the precise situation as it existed and had to be met. To administer direct comfort, though, as we have seen, it might impress John with a sense of the knowledge and the insight of Jesus would fail to secure one of the ends even as regards comfort that the method adopted secures. To say, "Thou hast not run in vain, nor hast thou laboured in vain," would draw away John's attention from what was at the root of his trouble; or it would meet that trouble only indirectly. It would help to fix his thoughts on himself; and pleasant thoughts of oneself—or self-complacency, are not in the line of scripture comfort. It is the knowledge not of ourselves, but of the Lord, that ministers comfort to the Church of God. Thus our Lord, in drawing John's attention to the evidence He submitted that He was indeed the Christ, took the course that was fitted to disengage his servants' brooding thoughts from himself and his own case. Let him but look outward. Let him but consider objective truth, and such truth when considered aright would have upon him its own suitable effect.

The fact is significant in connection with the comfort ministered to the downcast prisoner that the witness which our Lord bore to John and the encomium that He passed upon him were not uttered in the hearing of his messengers. John had borne witness to the Light; the Light was now to bear witness to John. But it was only when John's disciples went back to their master that our Lord began to speak in the hearing of the multitude about John. Then He bore testimony to the greatness of the privilege which Israel had enjoyed in having such a messenger from heaven sent among them. This testimony was not meant for John; or it would have been given in the hearing of his disciples before they went away. In all likelihood John in his dungeon never heard that such witness was borne to him. For it was not on this wise that he was to be comforted. His consolation was to flow from the truth, that was sufficient to comfort, that God had indeed visited to redeem His people and had raised up for them a Horn of salvation in the house of His servant David. When this truth came home with convincing power it brought with it an absorption in the concerns of the heavenly Kingdom. This meant that one's own personal case was lost sight of. The principle proceeded upon in this instance is the principle that is

commonly employed by the Divine Wisdom in dealing with similar cases.

As a rule experience of Gospel comfort and of relief from felt burdens comes not by looking within or considering ourselves, but by looking without and considering Jesus Christ. He is the Sun in the firmament of Revelation and truly light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun—this Sun of Righteousness who has risen with healing in His wings. The word testifies to His glory; and it was a wise advice given by MacCheyne, "For one look you take at yourself be sure to take ten looks at Christ." Just as Peter walked on the waves so long as he looked to his Lord, as long as the believer considers Christ and has respect to the ample testimony that scripture bears to His glory, he will triumph. The walk of the Christian, as his life, is by faith. And as he walks and lives so he triumphs.

The principle illustrated in our Lord's treatment of the case of His servant, John, is one that runs through all His dealings with His Church in mediating the knowledge of Himself which He communicates to her through the Word. That Word bears witness to who He is and to what He has done. If the question is raised, "Is this Jesus of whom we have heard so much indeed the Christ for whose coming Israel of old looked?" what answer can be given to it? Has the kingdom of God been indeed set up on earth? Have the living and the healing waters indeed flowed forth from beneath the threshold of the House of God? Is there or is there not a River of the Water of Life clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb? Wheresoever these waters should go life and beauty were to attend their course, and with all its failures and shortcomings such has been the record of the Kingdom of God. Wherever Christ has come in history in the preaching of His Gospel there have been suitable signs following that serve to attest the Divinity of the message. Social life has been cleansed. Christian civilisation with its beneficent institutions is a standing phenomenon in the history of the world. It is a memorial of what the Gospel has done; and these are but the secondary fruits of the coming of Christ. The elevation of woman, the liberation of the slave, the righting of social wrongs, the purification and refinement of public life are but remote results of the advance of the healing stream. But there are not only the secondary, there are also the primary results of the coming of the Kingdom.

When Christ in His Gospel comes with power the direct and proper fruits of His coming are seen in lives that are renewed, in souls that have been saved, in sinners that have been born again. The proper works of Him who is revealed to destroy the works of the devil are seen in the spiritual sphere when He breaks the power of the kingdom of darkness, loosens the bands that hold fast the captives and sets the prisoners free. We have seen that His signs in the physical sphere answer His great work in the spiritual sphere. Even so as surely as He opened the eyes of the blind and unstopped the ears of the deaf He causes the spiritually blind to see and the spiritually deaf to hear. Many of the lame have learned to leap with delight in the knowledge of His salvation; and He has enabled them to walk at liberty in loyal obedience and to run with delight in the way of His commandments. Many leprous ones have felt His healing touch. He has cleansed them and their whole life ever since He visited them in mercy has been a witness to the reality of the change that His grace has wrought. Poor moral wrecks have been restored. Their flesh has come back like the flesh of a little child. The violent and the ungodly have been tamed and subdued. The Gospel is never without such seals and trophies to attest its heavenly origin.

The life of Christ is as it were perpetuated or reproduced in His spiritual progeny. As the Second Man and a quickening Spirit He has a spiritually quickened seed. They bear His image; they wear His likeness; and the life of each of them bears witness to the Gospel that has transformed it. They are so many epistles of Christ known and read of all men. These are the direct results of His intervening grace.

But just as when the noontide sun shines, not only is the landscape illuminated on which its rays fall directly even what is in shadow is bright by reason of the sunshine that is abroad. The shade itself is not the darkness of the night. So over and above the direct work of saving grace there is in the public life of Christian nations a high code of ethics accepted that would not otherwise find place, and practices that are freely indulged in when the darkness of night prevails hide their face as ashamed in the light of a Christian civilisation. Primary and secondary blessings alike that accompany and attest the Gospel of our Lord bear consentient testimony to the interposition of Heaven in the affairs of earth when our Lord came forth from the Father, and came into the world. The direct witness to the Gospel is

conveyed in the testimony of more than two witnesses. And the transmission of their record through intervening years is by the hands of men that believed their message, and each in his own place had reason to see that the river of God which is full of water carries down through the ages a fertilising and a fructifying stream.

In the case of John there was the evidence of two witnesses to satisfy him. He saw not those works that they reported, nor did he hear the words that they heard. Their report was sufficient to establish the facts and to authenticate the teaching. We are still in the same position. We cannot see those works that our Lord wrought, nor can we as His followers did, hear His voice as He spoke the words of grace. But for the perpetuation of His message He has given us the reports of onlookers; and these reports are a trustworthy record of His earthly ministry. We cannot, it is true, be in precisely the same relation to His teaching as His immediate followers were. But it is the same Jesus that works still, that speaks still and that is still to be recognised and known. The transmitted record of His disciples' witness stands good for all ages. The custodian divinely appointed for preserving and handing down the documents of our faith has handed them down to us; and the evidence afforded to their first readers of the works that they saw and put on record is with us yet. And this witness is fraught with a wealth of internal evidence that sufficiently attests the Gospel to the spiritual mind and carries with it the conviction that it is in truth the word of God and that the revelation which it contains is the unfolding of His thoughts. The Gospels make their appeal to successive generations and demand that the Christ whose glory they reveal shall be received as indeed the Son of the Living God.

Christianity as it takes its course through the world is ever attended by an increasing train of infallible proofs. For as it consistently produces its native fruits, and that most where it receives most faithful expression and closest adhesion, these fruits are an increasing confirmation of the truth of its witness that it is the one panacea for all the ills of earth. This it is; for it alone proclaims the one only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. And as the unfolding of the scroll of prophetic prediction takes place in the history of the world, as one prediction after another finds fulfilment, and the confirmation of old fulfilments is increasingly attested to us in the course of

investigations that are carried on in Bible lands, the later generations of men, if they are more remote in time from the age of the apostles, have, as it were, compensations that more than make up for any disadvantage they may feel to arise from the dim distance of the period in which the great facts of Revelation transpired. Christ in the Word still demands to be received. He offers, in the Word and in the history of His Kingdom alike, evidence that appeals most convincingly to those that are most loyal in heart and childlike in spirit. If the pure in heart shall see God, what is above all needed in order that God may be recognised in His work of grace as revealed in the mission of His Son, is that the heart should be set right, so that purged from malice and partial counsel it may be prepared to give to the claims of God the place that they demand as their own.

What holds good in regard to the general claim that the Gospel makes on the various ages of the world, in virtue of the revelation which it affords of Christ, holds good in still another department of life. Cases occur where serious-minded children of God in whom the Redeemer has discovered Himself after a saving manner fall into darkness and uncertainty. They are tempted to question or even to deny the reality of the discovery thus made. They may put the question, "Was it of a truth Christ that manifested Himself to me, or have I been deceived by the mere working of my own mind? Have I mistaken imagination for reality and fancy for fact?" How now would such an one be satisfied? Let there be but a renewal of his gracious acquaintance with the Lord of Glory and will not that satisfy? It will satisfy for the present. But what of the past? Has Christ indeed come to me or has He not? Well, if He has, He has wrought His own work, and the work of renewing grace is of a permanent character. It leaves traces that are unmistakable for its marks are indelible. If then He has come the blind see; and however little satisfied they may be as to the clearness of their vision there is the fact that whereas they were blind now they see. They cannot look upon themselves and no more can they look upon the Lord and His Gospel as they once did. They may contrast the stupid deafness that once greeted the teaching of the Divine Word with what it afterwards came to be to them. True, they lament that there is not the same alacrity on their own side that they once showed to hearken to its message and to search into its meaning. Yet their very sorrow that this is the case tells of the esteem and

goodwill that they cherish toward the Word. They may contrast their once leprous lives with what grace has done; and surely when they consider that what was once their delight is now their abhorrence and what was once their abhorrence is now their delight, they have in this a token that Christ indeed has made Himself known to them; for Satan does not cast out Satan. They were once dead; and now they are sensible of the death that still cleaves to them. As they are sensible of this they are ill at ease; and nothing would please them better than that this death should be taken away and their soul should live in the abounding fulness of an unfettered spiritual life. They surely live to God when this is the case. And they live because Christ has revealed Himself to them of a truth. From the effects of His presence they may safely conclude that He has indeed made Himself known to them as He does not to the world. That, however their languor may be removed and they may rejoice in his salvation they specially need to consider Him as He makes Himself known in His word. Let only the Spirit breathe upon the page and bring the truth to light and soul satisfaction is given. Resting in that Word the believer rejoices in the good news of the Gospel. So he answers the description of the true Israel who are circumcised in heart—that they rejoice in Christ Jesus.

Thus the method taken by our Lord to meet John's need and to give him such a gracious answer is a method that is fertile in applications. Time after time, in one way or another, He refers questioners to the record borne by competent witnesses who saw and heard for themselves and whose witness is offered to all ages in the narrative of our four Gospels. The same Jesus who then tabernacled among men is still accessible. And as through a pure transparent medium we may behold His glory in His works and in His words. He is still held in the galleries of His Gospel the Same yesterday, to-day, and forever. And as He passes by in this Gospel as it is read or preached, sinners that we are, we are warranted to make our way through the press to touch the hem of His garment. When we do this, healing virtue still flows forth from His sacred Person.

JOHN MACLEOD.

Inverness