

his followers ; yet mention of these must of necessity be frequent in Letters which have for their chief purpose the discharge of an apostolic care of the Churches. We must inquire, then, how the allusions to these matters in the Letters accord with the accounts of their institution, as given by the Evangelists. Such digressions shall be made where an opportunity most conveniently arises, but in general the thread of our examination will be that which we have named.

Besides being useful in the way we have already indicated, *i.e.* as shewing the currency of the Gospel story, and its wide reception before the narratives of the Evangelists were composed, an inquiry like the present may perhaps serve a further purpose. It may furnish us with means of forming a better estimate of the relative importance, in the eyes of those to whom the Holy Ghost recalled all those things which Christ had commanded, of each part of our Lord's life and teaching, than we could arrive at in any other way. We shall see on what points of the history most stress is laid in the Letters, and what parts are brought least into prominence. To accomplish this will be a gain of no small value. To take an instance in illustration : we believe that our examination will shew us that the miracles of Christ, on which now so much stress is laid in Christian polemics, and on which the antagonists of Christianity seize, as the most vulnerable part of the Gospel story, and as that on which the value of Christianity most depends, were not deemed of the greatest importance by the first preachers of the Gospel. They were contented (while giving indications that they knew of and believed in the whole of the miraculous part of the

Lord's history) with asserting most definitely, and with constant reiteration, the one greatest miracle of all—the miracle of his own resurrection, and let the rest pass with but little notice, as though these by no means formed the lever whereby the world was to be moved and the nations won to Christ, after the Wonder-Worker was Himself taken up into the skies. If in points like this we learn to estimate the Gospel history as those estimated it who were Christ's first spokesmen to the world, it seems not unlikely that our judgment on the whole of Christ's life and office will become more clear, and our efforts to appreciate and explain it be more consistent and satisfactory.

J. RAWSON LUMBY.

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*A CHAPTER OF GOSPEL HISTORY; OR, JESUS  
JUDGING HIS CONTEMPORARIES AND HIMSELF.*

I.—JOHN'S DOUBTING MESSAGE TO JESUS.

(*St. Matt. xi. 1-6.*)

EVERY thoughtful reader of the evangelic history must have been struck with the contents of the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. The general heading of the Chapter may be given as: *Jesus judging his contemporaries and Himself.* The title, if appropriate, is a sufficient guarantee of the importance of the contents. For who does not feel what interest must attach to the opinions expressed by such an one as Christ concerning the men of his own time, amidst whom his lot was cast and his life-work performed, and concerning Himself in relation to, and in self-defence against, his

contemporaries? Here, then, we have gathered up into one Chapter a precious collection of such opinions: criticisms of the Jewish world by Him who came not to judge the world but to save it; self-assertion, self-vindication, self-appreciation on the part of the meek and lowly One, over against honest doubt, unstable faith, and haughty unbelief. It ought to be worth our while to make a study of the words of wisdom here recorded. We need not inquire too anxiously whether all these words were spoken at one time. Matthew's way of grouping his matter topically may give rise to legitimate doubts on that point. Yet the connection of thought is very close, and light is thrown on each utterance by looking at them all together, so that we ought to be thankful to the Evangelist for putting it into our minds to consider all these moral judgments in a connected study, by throwing them together into one group in his narrative. From that study we must rise deeply impressed with the profound wisdom of words whose difficulty and originality, both in thought and in language, are the best guarantee of their authenticity; and not less with the many-sided character of the Speaker, who is shewn to us here at once severe and gentle, self-asserting and self-forgetting, resigned under present disappointment, yet confident in regard to the future, full of caustic humour, and also of tenderest pathos. One special point of interest we must advert to in a sentence by anticipation, on account of its apologetic value. We shall find our Lord in this Chapter speaking about Himself, as He appears habitually speaking in the Fourth

Gospel, the solitary instance of the kind in the Synoptical Gospels, viz. in the words contained in Verse 27. The point of importance to observe is that Christ so speaks, asserting his own importance as occupying a central and unique position in relation to God and the world, in the same circumstances as those in which he is usually presented in the Johannine Gospel, viz. as one placed on self-defence by proud unsympathetic unbelief. The fact once observed suggests the key to the obvious difference in tone between the Synoptical and Johannine utterances of Christ. In the Synoptical narrative, Jesus is shewn at work mainly among a receptive population in the provinces; while in John, what we see for the most part is Jesus in presence of and in conflict with the unbelief of the wise and the prudent. Hence what we find in the first three Gospels is a record of precious words spoken by One full of grace and truth, who is ever bent on giving rest to weary souls; while in the Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, we find many self-vindicating words uttered by One who is compelled, by the hard sceptical attitude of the influential class of Jewish society, to assert his own importance. Reading these we are apt to ask, Can this be the same Jesus with whom we have become familiar in the pages of Matthew, Mark, and Luke? But this text in Matthew's eleventh Chapter (found also in the Third Gospel, though in a somewhat different connection) comes in to arrest a hasty judgment, by shewing us a sample of Christ's style in certain circumstances; a solitary sample, because the circumstances were exceptional, so far as the synoptical method of

dealing with the Messianic history was concerned, a sample the like of which many occur in John's Gospel, because the fitting circumstances are there the rule.

Of this Chapter, then, whose contents we propose to consider, the following is a bird's-eye view :—

1. John the Baptist sends a doubting message to Jesus, and receives a reply in which Jesus, in effect, claims to be the Christ, and refers to his work of mercy in evidence of his claim. (Verses 1-6.)

2. Jesus takes occasion to express, in the hearing of the people, a critical opinion of John, exhibiting his character at once in its strength and in its weakness. (Verses 7-15.)

3. Jesus next proceeds to animadvert on the generation amid which the Baptist and Himself lived, led thereto by reflection on the unworthy reception both had received at their hands. (Verses 16-19.)

4. Next come severe reflections on the fickleness and instability of *quondam* believers in the Cities of the Plain, who had seen his mighty works and for a time followed Him as the Christ. The nature of these reflections indicates that they must have been uttered subsequently to the Galilean crisis, whereof an account is given in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. (Verses 20-24.)

5. Then follows an estimate of the net result of the Messianic ministry up to date, with a devout expression of contentment with the same as the will of Providence. (Verses 25-26.)

6. The Son of man, in spite of the insignificance

of his present success, asserts his importance as the Son of God, heir of the future, and sole medium through whom men attain the knowledge of the Father, indispensable to men, however much they may now despise Him. (Verse 27.)

7. The solitary One, Judge of his age, understood by none of his contemporaries, casts his eye across the ages, and addresses the receptive of all time, inviting them to come to Him that they may find rest to their souls. (Verses 28-30.)

Of these sections we shall treat in as many papers, with possibly a supplementary one on the remarkable text in the second section concerning the kingdom of Heaven suffering violence. (Verse 12.) The first section will occupy our attention throughout the remainder of the present paper.

Much discussion has taken place concerning John's doubt, whether it was real or affected; and if real, what was its cause? It would be wearisome and profitless to rehearse all the opinions on either point; but we may notice in a few words the last speculation we have come across in reference to the former of the two. A German theologian, author of a very interesting work on Religion, written from the view-point of modern speculative theism, seems to be of opinion that the important thing to be noticed in connection with John's message, is not the doubt which it expressed on his part, but rather the doubt which it was the means of putting an end to in the mind of Jesus concerning his own Messiahship. The whole situation of Matthew

xi., this writer thinks, points to a change in the idea of the kingdom entertained by Jesus, and the Baptist by his message of inquiry helped, so to speak, to bring the new idea to the birth. "Consider," he says, "that already, ever since the first great successes of his preaching, and especially since the first wonderful cures, in which the truly electrical effect of his word on the excitable populace became apparent, the thought of a Messianic endowment and vocation had many a time occurred to his mind in a distant far-off sort of way, and once emerged into consciousness could not again be banished, but rather grew stronger through struggles with doubts and hesitations. Imagine now the direct question of the Baptist coming to Him in this state of mind: one must be a bad psychologist who cannot conjecture what the impression made by this question, and what its result, must have been. What had long moved the spirit without assuming definite shape, or leading to the formation of a fixed purpose, is suddenly, by a single word spoken at the right moment by the right man, brought to maturity, or, at least, set into a state of such violent fermentation, that the next outward experience will suffice to bring about the great decision. Shall we err if we recognize in the answer of Jesus to John an effect of this sort wrought by the latter: if out of this answer we hear coming to our ear the tone of one just emerging out of doubt into clearness and certainty? He ventures not to say *yes* off-hand and downright, for doubt is not yet quite overcome—doubt lest, from a *spiritual* Messiah, the people, even the best of them, should turn away disenchanted, offended

(witness that 'blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me'). Yet, on the other hand, he does not say *nay*; therefore he simply rehearses the facts, and leaves the Baptist to draw his own inference."<sup>1</sup> We have quoted this passage partly as an exegetical curiosity, partly because it is an ingenious attempt to account for the Messianic consciousness of Jesus on naturalistic principles, partly because it puts before our readers at once a view of the facts as nearly as possible the opposite of what we believe to be the true one, and so serves the purpose of a foil to bring out by contrast the real situation. Doubt in the mind of Jesus we believe there was none. He who hears in his words a tone of doubt, hears it *into* the words, not *out* of them.<sup>2</sup> The recipient of John's message knows perfectly well what to think of Himself, and has known all along, and has by no means been as one groping about in the dark, feeling his way to the Messianic consciousness by the aid of outward events and accidents. On the other hand, doubt in the mind of the Baptist we believe there was; serious doubt, arising out of no personal or petty source, but caused by the way in which the Messianic career of Jesus was developing itself, doubt just such as the prophetic temperament of the Baptist and the general character of his preaching would have led us to expect. Let us enlarge on this a little, as it will help us to understand better what we find our Lord in the sequel saying concerning John.

<sup>1</sup> Pfeleiderer, "Die Religion," vol. ii. p. 442. Leipzig, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Pfeleiderer speaks of a *heraus-hören* in connection with the supposed tone of doubt in the words of Christ.

We repeat, then, there was real, serious, honest doubt in John's mind concerning Jesus; and doubt, be it observed, *not in regard to the identity of the worker of the works reported to John with Jesus*, but in regard to the *nature* of the works viewed as Messianic. The former view of the Baptist's doubt has been supposed to have been favoured by the expression: "the works of Christ" (τοῦ χριστοῦ, verse 2). Certain works were reported to John as done by some one, who on account of those works, believed himself, or was believed by others, to be the Christ; and John wanted to know whether the doer of these reputedly Messianic works was Jesus whom he baptized, and whom he announced to the people as the Coming One—such is the turn given to the matter by the hypothesis alluded to. But this notion, improbable in itself, is excluded by the simple circumstance that the expression *the Christ*, though strictly an epithet, not a proper name, in the Gospel, is nevertheless used by the Evangelist in this place as a personal name. For thus runs the record: "John, hearing in prison the works of the Christ, sending by his disciples said to *him*." The identity of "the Christ" of fame with Jesus in John's view is implied. He had heard of the Messianic works of Jesus, and as he was staggered by these he sent to Jesus to know what to think of them. That he was staggered by the character of the works is plainly indicated in the reflection, "Blessed is he that is not offended in me." Obviously John had stumbled at something in the public life of Jesus, and the something was just the works which Jesus sent the disciples of John back to report to their master.

But why should John stumble at those works, so full of the spirit of love and mercy? *Just because they were works of mercy.* These were not the sort of works he had expected Messiah to busy Himself with; at all events so exclusively. There was other work he thought very necessary to be done, which, to his surprise, the Christ was not doing. If we want to know how John expected the Christ to occupy Himself we have but to go back upon the records of his preaching. The Baptist pictured the Messiah as coming to judgment with an axe in his hand, to cut down a tree that bore leaves only, and no fruit; with a fan in the other hand wherewith to separate wheat from chaff, the wheat to be gathered into the garner, the chaff to be cast into the consuming fire. He thought Christ would come full of the fury of the Lord against iniquity; and lo, He had come full of the fire of charity, come anointed with the spirit of enthusiasm in the work of evangelizing the poor, healing the sick, and restoring to purity and peace the sinful and miserable. It was a surprise, a disappointment, a stumbling-block to the prisoner at Machærus, looking out upon the world from within the sombre prison walls. He had looked for judgment, and beheld unaccountable patience, and the grim Hebrew prophet was astonished; none the less that his own forlorn plight brought very vividly home to his mind how evil the time was, and how utterly ripe for judgment.

In this astonishment and doubt John was not only in harmony with his own antecedents, but with what we may venture to call the *prophetic temperament*. The prophet, from the nature of his vocation, is a

man more likely to have sympathy with manifestations of Divine righteousness than with manifestations of Divine longsuffering. In modern phrase, he thinks of God as a Power making for righteousness and against unrighteousness, more than as a Power that dealeth not with us after our sins, nor rewardeth us according to our iniquities, that waiteth to be gracious and overcometh evil with good. He has more zeal for moral law than for the action of Divine grace in human history. When we say this, we do not forget that there are splendid exceptions, notable above all the author of the second half of the Book of Isaiah, whether Isaiah or another. But we take it that, on the whole, severity in enforcing moral obligations, and in insisting on moral penalties, is the side to which prophetic infirmity leans. Jonah—to whom we may be permitted to refer without going into critical questions respecting the book that bears his name—Jonah, we say, may here be adduced as typical. In his zeal for righteousness, perhaps we may add, in his patriotism, that prophet wished Nineveh destroyed, and he was scandalized to find the God of Israel going in for a policy of clemency. The Divine character altogether, indeed, as it revealed itself in human affairs, appeared to him marred by the vice of *mercifulness*. "I knew," he said, not by way of praise, but of *complaint*, "I knew that thou art a gracious God, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."<sup>1</sup> Out of the same root of prophetic zeal for righteousness grew John's doubt. He could not reconcile himself to the idea of a Messiah

<sup>1</sup> Jonah iv. 2.

distinguished principally by soft-hearted pity for the sinful and miserable. He found it all the more hard to do this that the advent of the Messiah appeared to him just one of those great crises in the world's history when Providence lays aside its apparent indifference and dilatoriness, and begins the work of vengeance in earnest. John, and we suppose the same thing is true of all Hebrew prophets, was aware that there are long periods during which Divine Providence, as a Power making for righteousness, seems to have fallen asleep and become like a quiescent volcano; and that there are other times at which God seems to waken up, to draw his arm forth from his bosom, to become like a volcano in a state of renewed activity, when, in the sublime language of an ancient prophet, he rends the heavens, comes down, and causes the mountains to flow down, as in lava streams, at his presence.<sup>1</sup> And he took for granted that the time of the Messianic advent would be a time not of volcanic quiescence but of volcanic activity. The long period of antecedent inactivity he regarded as the time of merciful visitation, but with the advent of Christ would come in, he thought, the time of judgment. And in one sense he was not wrong, for Israel's judgment-day was not far off; and just on that account it was needful that the messengers of mercy should make a hasty run over all her borders, urging her with unwonted earnestness to repent.<sup>2</sup> But he was too hasty and too impatient, and hence he was offended in Jesus.

The reply sent back by Jesus to John amounted to

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxiv. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 23.

this, that the sure marks that He was the Coming One, the Christ, were just the very works which had awakened his (John's) surprise. "Go and tell John what ye hear and see. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, deaf persons have their hearing restored, dead ones are raised up, and the poor are evangelized." It was a good reply, not only on its own merits but from the point of view of Old Testament prophecy, as it claimed for Jesus as marks of his Messiahship some of the most outstanding features in the picture of the Messianic era drawn by that very prophet from whom John took his own watchword: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> It ought to have had great weight with the Baptist, and have led him, on reflection, to see that the conception he had formed of the Messianic vocation was a very one-sided one. Let us hope that it had this effect on his mind, and brought to his weary heart the comfort of feeling that his life-work had not been a mistake originating in a noble hallucination and ending in smoke. As for us moderns, what value can we attach to the message sent back to the imprisoned prophet? Happily we are relieved from the necessity of arguing in behalf of the authenticity of the message, as even naturalistic critics accept it as, on the whole, a genuine *logion* of Jesus. Only they think the works enumerated are not to be interpreted literally, but rather are to be regarded as the spiritual effects of Christ's preaching on receptive souls. It was spiritual effects which the prophet described in figurative language,

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6; xlii. 7; lxi.

and it was spiritual effects which Jesus reported in the same poetic style. The people, blinded by Phariseism, had recovered spiritual vision, the (morally) leprous publicans had been cleansed, the spiritually dead who had been occupied in burying their dead had been raised to a new divine life.<sup>1</sup> In one respect only will modern naturalism allow the so-called miracles to be real objective physical facts, viz. in the case of those healings which were wrought by what Mr. Matthew Arnold calls "moral therapeutics," a department of medical science which he thinks has not been sufficiently studied.<sup>2</sup> All the unbelievers in miracles proper believe that Jesus wrought such cures. Renan expounds the theory of moral therapeutics very naïvely. "Who will dare to say," he asks, "that in many cases where the injuries were not serious the contact of an exquisite person is not worth all the resources of pharmacy? The pleasure of seeing Him heals. He gives what He can—a smile, a hope, and that is not vain."<sup>3</sup> Obviously this limitation of the physical effects of Christ's ministry to the cures wrought by "moral therapeutics" is due to speculative prepossession. Apart from such prepossession there is no reason for doubting the objective reality of all the works enumerated in the reply of Jesus to his forerunner. But while we say this, we cordially admit that, after all, the most convincing mark of Messiahship is that which comes last in the list,—“the poor are evangelized;” we do not object even to the proof of its supreme importance in the view of the speaker Himself which has been drawn from the order

<sup>1</sup> So Keim, "Geschichte Jesu von Nazara," Band ii. p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> "Literature and Dogma," p. 143. Fourth Edition.

<sup>3</sup> "Vie de Jesu," p. 260.

in which the verbs "see" and "hear" stand, "hear" coming before "see" ("the things which ye hear and see.")<sup>1</sup> The evangelization of the poor was really the divinest thing in Christ's ministry, the most original phase thereof, and the phenomenon which most convincingly shewed that a new thing, destined to make all things new, had appeared in the world—the religion of humanity, the universal religion. In this respect the evangelization of the poor was similar in import to the evangelization of the "publicans and sinners;" was, in fact, the same phenomenon on a different side. "The poor" means man stripped of all adventitious conventional distinctions, reduced to his primary elements, which are common to all men. Therefore the religion which concerned itself about the poor thereby announced itself as a universal religion, a religion for all mankind, and for all men on equal terms. Such a religion is surely Divine; but such a religion, when first it made its appearance, could not but seem a very strange and startling phenomenon; and therefore it is no wonder, after all, that not only narrow-hearted Pharisees, but even the nobler-minded John, should be at a loss to know what to make of it.

Having recounted rapidly his mighty works, Jesus appended the reflection, "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." We are not to find in the words traces either of harshness towards John, or of wounded feeling in the speaker. The tone of compassion rather than of severity or soreness is audible in the utterance. Jesus felt keenly how much John missed by being in such a state of

<sup>1</sup> Keim, "Geschichte Jesu," ii. p. 359, presses this point. In Luke vii. 22 the verbs occur in the reverse order.

mind, that that in his own work which was most godlike was a stumbling-block to him. Translated into positive form the reflection means, "Blessed are they to whom the mercy and the grace of which I am full, and whereof my ministry is the manifestation and outflow, are no stumbling-block but rather worthy of all acceptance." In Christ's view, the kingdom of heaven He preached was, above all things, a kingdom of grace—a gift, a boon from a loving Father to weary heavy-laden men; and He believed they were truly blessed who regarded it in that light, and welcomed it as such. The word blessed (*μακάριος*) was one He used to denote rare felicity, or heroic virtue as the moral condition of the enjoyment of such felicity: Blessed are the poor, the mourners, the pure in heart, for theirs is the kingdom, they shall be comforted, they shall see God. "If ye know these things, happy [*μακάριοι*] are ye if ye do them." He thought the term not inapplicable to the case of those who neither shut their hearts to the kingdom of grace, like the Pharisees, nor stood in doubt of it, like the Baptist, but gave it prompt and enthusiastic welcome. The occasion was worthy of the sacred solemn word. "Blessed, I say emphatically, is he who is not offended in me, the King of grace, the Son of man, brimful of redeeming compassion, the friend of the poor, the publicans, the sinners." In saying this Jesus simply proclaimed his own profound sense of the absolute value and incomparable importance of the new thing that had come down from heaven to earth, and his unwavering conviction that He was in the true God-appointed Messianic path. When he went on to say of John

that, notwithstanding all his greatness, the least in the kingdom was greater than he, He was merely repeating the same thought in a different form of words. In either case it was not disparagement or censure of John that was intended ; but proclamation of the priceless worth of that whereof he and so many others stood in doubt. To be pitied is he whose prepossessions and prejudices are such that he cannot appreciate the characteristics of the new era ; to be congratulated is he, however insignificant otherwise, who can appreciate these and experience a thrill of joy as he witnesses their manifestation. Such, we take it, is the simple import of the words, "blessed is he who is not offended in me."

ALEX. B. BRUCE.

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*THE BOOK OF JOB.*

III.—THE FIRST COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS IV.—XIV.)

(3) BILDAD TO JOB. (CHAPTER VIII.)

BILDAD restates the argument of Eliphaz ; but he both gives it a new edge and clearness and puts it on another basis. Like Eliphaz, he affirms the law of the Divine Providence to be that it renders good to the good and evil to the evil,—*malis male, bonis bene* ; but he enunciates this law with more force and in a harsher tone. Eliphaz, whom we have conceived as a man of the prophetic order and spirit, in entire accord with that conception of him had based his conclusion on oracles and visions ; but now Bildad—the sage, who leaned much on the ancient and proverbial wisdom of the East, in entire accord with that conception of his character and

bent bases the same conclusion on the traditions of the fathers. In Verses 2-7 he states this law of the Divine Providence, and applies it to the case of Job; and in Verses 8-19 he confirms his statement of it by an appeal to the wisdom of the ancients, a wisdom leisurely gathered from their long experience and verified by the experience of subsequent generations. Thus to the voice of divine oracles, cited by Eliphaz, he adds the voice of universal human experience; so that once more Job finds both Heaven and earth arrayed against him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

- 1.—*Then answered Bildad the Shuchite and said:*
2.                   *How long wilt thou speak thus,*  
*And how long shall the words of thy mouth be a boisterous storm?*
3.                   *Doth God wrest judgment?*  
                      *Doth the Almighty wrest justice?*
4.                   *Though thy sons have sinned against Him,*  
*And He hath given them over to their own offences,*
5.                   *If thou wouldst seek unto God,*  
*And make supplication unto the Almighty,—*
6.                   *If thou art pure and upright,*  
                      *Then will He wake up in thy behalf*  
*And restore the habitation of thy righteousness,*
7.                   *So that, though thy beginning be small,*  
                      *Thy end shall be very great.*
8.                   *For aye now of the former generation,*  
*And apply to the wisdom of their forefathers;—*
9.                   *For we are but of yesterday and know nothing,*  
*Because our days on earth are but a shadow:—*
10.                  *Shall not they teach thee, speak to thee,*  
*And well forth proverbs out of their hearts?*
11.                 ‘*Can the papyrus grow where there is no marsh,*  
*Or the rush wax large where there is no water?*
12.                 *While yet in its greenness, and though it be uncut,*  
                      *It withereth before any other herb:*
13.                 *So fareth it with all that forget God,*  
*And thus shall the hope of the impious perish.*