

and thirst, eat, sleep and grow weary like themselves, must have made it well nigh impossible for them to recognize in this lowly



REV. DANIEL M. GORDON, D.D., HALIFAX.

companion the eternal Son of God. They constantly required to enlarge their conception of Him, as He went on disclosing and interpreting Himself to them. It is told of Michel Angelo that his criticism on one of Raphael's early paintings was the one word "Amplius"—Broader—the young artist must take broader views if he would be true to his subject. So the disciples were constrained to be always widening their horizon in the effort to form a true conception of Christ.

As we read the Gospel and try to picture the impressions that would be made on them by the words of Jesus, we see that, through all the teaching, the most important and controlling element was their increasing knowledge of their Teacher. Not that we can clearly trace the steps by which they attained their larger views of Christ. These wider conceptions did not come in regular order like rippling circles as they broaden from the centre; true education never does proceed in that fashion; they came, rather, amid their intercourse with Christ, like glimpses caught from some mount of vision, as Moses from the top of Pisgah might learn more about Canaan in an hour than Israel upon the level could learn in years. We can see the deepening impression made upon them by His character, by the charm of His purity, by His beauty of holiness, by His sympathy and tenderness, by His absolute freedom from sin and stain. They cannot account for Him as for other men, cannot classify Him with others, cannot enclose Him within the limits of their own life. He is very near to each of them and yet immeasurably beyond them, so that no horizon of excellence within their range seems broad enough to include Him.

#### HIS TEACHING ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES.

This conception became clearer and more controlling as they listened to His words. He spoke, for instance, about their ancient Scriptures and religion, confirming this part, changing that, and casting fresh light on all. He showed them the meaning and value of their Law: He took up and applied the testimony of their prophets; and, as they listened, they looked on their nation's life and literature as bearing witness of Him, finding in Him their explanation and fulfilment. In harmony with this, Paul considered it to be the special honor of his nation, the reason of their election of God, of their place in history, of their possession of the fathers and the promises and the law, that they might prepare the way for Christ. But can we not see what a broadening of the disciples' conception of Jesus was implied in all this, when He whom they looked on face to face was thus recognized as the One to whom their nation and their Scriptures had through centuries been moving as their final goal and explanation?

He claimed, and they acknowledged His claim, to be the Messiah; but yet, when they tried to get clear ideas of this office, they were confused by the picture they had already formed of the Messiah promised by the prophets; and so, instead of interpreting Jesus by their conceptions of what the Messiah should be, they changed their picture to make it harmonize with Him; they

altered their views of the Messianic office in the new light cast upon it by their knowledge of the Messiah.

He spoke much about the kingdom of God: and they had so many false views of it to correct, and so many false hopes of it to abandon, that they were slow to learn the meaning of His words. Indeed, it was not until after He had left them and had been exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, that, in the light thus thrown back upon His life, they were able to understand His teaching. They gained correct views of the kingdom only as they came to correct ideas about the King.

#### THE VALUE OF HIS WONDERFUL WORKS.

They saw Him do many wonderful works, but the crowning value of those works was, as John says of the first miracle at Cana, that in them Christ "manifested forth His glory." His works were more than the mere relief of misery that was pressing at the time; they revealed a source of help that would be open for all time. Jesus was disclosing Himself in them as the Lord of life, conquering all forms of sickness, casting out powers of evil, breaking the bands of death, as Lord of nature, too, reclaiming the physical world to spiritual ends, giving a pledge and foretoken of the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. They looked and listened as He forgave the sins of the penitent, as He brought the burdened soul out into the liberty of the sons of God, and as He laid His power upon the heart and conscience, creating new ideas of life and giving the possibility, the hope and the assurance of their attainment. It was a signal proof of Christ's authority when He cleansed the temple from defiling traffic, it was a fuller disclosure of his power and goodness when He cleansed the temple of the body from all manner of sickness and wielded control in the great temple of the material world; but He manifested forth His glory still more clearly when He set up His throne in the heart and conscience where God alone should be supreme. To vindicate His claims over the most sacred affections, to constrain the soul's loving devotion so that all its energies would wheel into line for His service, to convince men that He is Lord of the conscience, and that they could not be wrong in obeying Him, this far surpassed the miracles wrought in the material world as manifestations of His Glory.

By many figures and illustrations, too, He helped the disciples to more accurate and adequate conceptions of Him. He was the Bread of life to satisfy the hunger of the soul, the Light of the world in following Whom they could not walk in darkness, the Good Shepherd Who would lay down His life for their sakes, the Resurrection and the Life in Whom to believe is to live for ever. He was the Way, the only way to the throne and fellowship of the Father; the Truth, to Whom, if they but see Him, all truth loving souls will cleave; the Life apart from Whom the souls of men are dead; the Vine, by Whose power they might be rich in every virtue. These figures are to us familiar as household words, but they must have been startling enough to their first hearers, constraining them to form larger and yet larger conceptions of Christ.

#### HIS REVELATION OF THE FATHER.

He spoke to them often about the Father. No doubt they had thought themselves familiar with the God of Israel, but now they must recast their conception of Him and must think of Jehovah as revealed and interpreted by Jesus, brought nigh to them in the form and language of a human life. It is not as if the assertion of His own claims were opposed to the Father's authority, on the contrary, the more that He said about His own Divine nature the clearer became His testimony about the Father. He would have them recognize that in His own tenderness and sympathy and self-sacrifice they saw the fullest possible expression of the Father's character, that the forth-putting of His own power and His own righteous and loving life disclosed to them the works and ways of the Most High. Trying to grasp this truth, which was still beyond their reach, one, who seemingly spoke for all, said: "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us," and Jesus answered, as if in surprise as well as in reproof: "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" and then He added those words which lie at the foundation of our Christian theology. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

#### THEIR PERPLEXITY REGARDING HIS DEATH.

But apparently most perplexing of all to them was what He said about His death. It confused as well as pained them; they could not fit it in with the extended views which they were forming of Him, so far from broadening their conception, it seemed to brand Him with shame and failure. Looking back upon it afterwards they saw how little at the time they understood His teaching about the atonement, how the very purpose of His coming was that He might give Himself for men, how the one appointment made in remembrance of Him was the memorial of His death, how, even at the coming of those Greeks, He spoke of His death as the great attraction by