

Topics from the Gospel of John Part III: The Meaning of "Witness" in John

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Among the numerous terms that can be classed as specially Johannine, the word *witness*, whether a verb or a noun, is outstanding. The noun **μαρτυρία** occurs fourteen times in the Gospel, and the verb **μαρτυρέω** thirty-three times; in the Johannine Epistles **μαρτυρία** occurs seven times, and **μαρτυρέω** ten times; and in Revelation **μαρτυρία** is used nine times, and **μαρτυρέω** four times. The Johannine usages of these two terms outnumber their total usage in the rest of the New Testament.

Obviously John gave great importance to this concept in his presentation of the message about Christ. Its general meaning denotes attestation of some person or event which might naturally be the object of antagonism or skepticism. Because of the stupendous miracle of the Incarnation which brought other miracles with it, some sort of confirmation was necessary if Jesus were to be regarded as anything more than a wandering prophet who made fantastic claims. The support for His claims became the witness which is Christian testimony. This term thus became the summary of the apologetic teaching that the Gospel advanced in defense of Jesus' life and work.

Μαρτυρία ("witness") does not refer primarily to the corroboration of Jesus' historical existence and works, though it is so used on occasion (John 15:27; 21:24; 1 John 1:2; 4:14), nor to particular events in the story (except in John 19:35). The witness

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is mainly to the character and significance of His person. The attestation of the factual history is only the first step toward the witness of His significance in the divine revelation and in the reality of experience.¹

The concept of witness is also closely related to the progressive presentation of the person of Jesus in the Johannine narrative. It appears in every major section of the Gospel, but the heaviest concentration occurs in the second, third, and fourth sections that deal with Jesus' ministry. The establishment of His claims necessitated convincing testimony, and the addition of personal witness to the mute attestation of His "signs" made John's proclamation doubly effective.

The first use of witness appears in the Prologue (1:1-18), describing the work of John the Baptist: "He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him" (1:7). The ministry of John was introductory, paving the way for the revelation of God in Christ by summoning men to repentance and to the renewal of their relationship with God. John was the messenger who directed men's faith toward God, not the object of faith himself. He came to testify concerning the coming Messiah, not to take His place. The Gospel of John does not record the baptism of Jesus as the Synoptics do (Matt. 3:1-17; Mark 1:4-11; Luke 3:15-22), but it deals much more fully with the effects of the baptism. The function of John the Baptist is merely epitomized; the introduction of Jesus is given much more space. The Prologue simply presents John as the prophetic figure who closed the old dispensation of the Law and who opened the door to the new dispensation of grace (cf. Luke 16:16: "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached").

The second section of the Gospel, the period of consideration (1:19-4:54), opens with a more detailed statement of the witness of the Baptist. Not only did he disclaim any messianic office, and deny that he was Elijah or the prophet of which Moses spoke (Deut. 18:15), but he pointed directly to Jesus as the person whom he had been sent to introduce. Declaring Jesus to be the Lamb of God, he used a word that connotes a sacrificial lamb, and so connected Him with the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7b: "Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He

1 *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "μάρτυς," by H. Strathmann, 4:498.

did not open His mouth." His statement that Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit recalls the prophecy of Ezekiel:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances (Ezek. 36:26-27).

John's final word to his disciples was: "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34).

John's dual testimony to Jesus presented both His atoning ministry and His right to divine authority. In these respects Jesus was superior to the Law: He was Himself the final sacrifice to take away sin, and possessed an authority greater than that of Moses. In the wake of the revival produced by John's preaching came the new message of a Redeemer and Revelator who would introduce the new age of the kingdom. The witness of John put Jesus in the focus of the attention of men who were eager for some new work of God.

From this witness came Jesus' first disciples. They began their investigation of Him on the basis of John's teaching. As they interviewed Him one by one, they emerged from that interview to express their belief that He was indeed the One "of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote" (1:45), "the Son of God . . . the King of Israel" (1:49). Through their initial reaction to Him others were induced to join their group, so that by their witness others were drawn to Jesus.

Jesus used the word *witness* concerning Himself in the conversation with Nicodemus: "We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness" (3:11). He emphasized His personal knowledge of spiritual realities which His hearers generally rejected because they could not equate these realities with their experience. To Jesus the new birth was no mystery; it was the normal effect of God's intervention in human life, and He testified to His firsthand knowledge of its power. For Jesus, spiritual realities were as familiar as physical realities are to us. He did not present them as theses which He had developed, but as experiences of His past. "I speak," He said, "the things which I have seen with My Father" (8:38).

The third section of John, the period of controversy (5:1-6:71), deals much more fully with the idea of witness. This section depicts the tensions and debate that arose in Judaism over the teachings and actions of Jesus. Because He had healed a paralytic on the

Sabbath He was accused of being a rebel against the Mosaic Law. When He asserted His authority by saying, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (5:17), He compounded the offense in their eyes by blasphemy, for He placed Himself on a level with God. The ensuing argument with the religious leaders evoked an appeal to the various witnesses which accredited His ministry. John used this occasion to present five of them.

JOHN'S FIVE WITNESSES TO CHRIST

THE WITNESS OF THE FATHER

As already stated, Jesus had a peculiarly vivid consciousness of God that transcended that of any ordinary human being. He claimed that He was the special object of the Father's love (5:20) and that He was the administrator of the Father's judgment (5:22-27). Particularly was the Father's witness apparent in the works of Jesus, for He performed them by delegated power (5:20)--a type of witness which was extended also to Jesus' followers as noted by the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 2:4). At the crisis of Jesus' career as described by John, He prayed that the Father's name might be glorified, whatever His own fate might be. A voice from heaven responded, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). Jesus said that the voice had not spoken primarily for His sake, but that the multitude might know that He was fulfilling the Father's commission, and that the victory was assured. On the basis of the Father's witness Jesus claimed that He was the confidant of the Father, who disclosed to Him all His purposes and acts, and that the Father had entrusted to Him the power to impart life (5:20-21). This commission was the first witness of His high position.

THE WITNESS OF HIMSELF

A second witness was Himself, though at this point He discounted His own testimony: "If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true" (5:31). Jesus did not mean to say that He did not tell the truth, or that He did not have a proper estimate of Himself, but rather that His witness would not be fully admissible. The Old Testament law demanded that two or three witnesses external to the man on trial be called (Deut. 19:15). Morris argues that Jesus' witness by itself would not be true because it would be unsupported; independent information would be required.² From the

² Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Wni. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971). p. 325.

personal standpoint, His witness was valid, for who would know more about Him than He would Himself? This aspect He mentioned in a later conflict: "Even if I [do] bear witness of Myself, My witness is true; for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I came from, or where I am going" (8:14).

THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Jesus said, "You have sent to John and he has borne witness to the truth . . . He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for awhile in his light" (5:33, 35). The recurrence of the concept of light recalls the statement of the Prologue: "He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light" (1:8). Jesus characterized John as a lamp shining in the darkness. It is adequate for the night season, but is unnecessary in the full blaze of day. If Jesus' ministry were of no greater significance than John's, it would have been meaningless. The lesser prepares the way for the greater. Jesus evidently felt that the witness of His person and work outweighed any human testimony that could be given to Him. The people, however, had accepted John's words and had placed confidence in him. His testimony, therefore, should be convincing to them (5:34-35), for he had exercised enormous popular influence which had prompted the investigation of the religious authorities and the arbitrary arrest by Herod Antipas.

THE WITNESS OF JESUS' WORKS

"The works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (5:36). The "works" comprised His miracles or "signs," which illustrated the operation of divine power on every aspect of human life. Whether they dealt with the material or immaterial world, whether they involved the forces of nature, or physical disease, or death itself, they revealed a power resident in Jesus that set Him apart from the rest of men. These works were not only the physical marvels of healing or of raising the dead, but involved also the restoration or renewal of inner life. The transformation of Peter, the generation of a new quality of faith in the nobleman of Cana, the spiritual education of the Samaritan woman, the enlightenment of the blind man, the new understanding gained by Mary and Martha are also samples of the works of God. In most instances mentioned in the Gospel spiritual effects accompanied the physical effects, and made these "works" a testimony to the mission and power of Jesus.

Furthermore, His works were never performed for mere exhibition or self-aggrandizement. Jesus did not rest His claim solely on the extraordinary character of His works, as a magician might establish his reputation by the spectacular tricks that he performed. Instead, the miracles were the normal result of Jesus' divine personality as He came in contact with human problems and acted on them. In the words of the blind man, "Since the beginning of time, it has never been heard that any one opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing" (9:32-33). John has told us plainly that the seven "signs" which he cited as convincing works of Jesus were simply samples selected from a much larger potential list. Others which are mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels would confirm the conclusion that Jesus did indeed do the works of God.

Incidentally, there is no indication in the Gospels that His enemies ever denied the factual character of Jesus' works. In rabbinic tradition, He was condemned not as a worker of fraudulent miracles, but as a sorcerer. The fact that He performed remarkable deeds was not questioned. Stauffer states that "around A.D. 95 Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus of Lydda speaks of Jesus' magic arts."³ This position in the rabbinic tradition — accusing Him of sorcery — is perhaps reflected in the accusation of demonic power that Jesus' enemies brought against Him (8:48).

THE WITNESS OF THE SCRIPTURES

In referring to the testimony of the Scriptures He meant the Old Testament, especially the Pentateuch. The first five books of the Old Testament, which the Jewish people call the Torah, or Law, were particularly revered as the work of Moses. The scribes continually studied them in order to ascertain the requirements of God for their daily worship and conduct. By the observance of the Law they hoped to obtain eternal life. "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me" (5:39). The attitude of the people is reflected in the words of the young ruler described in the Synoptic Gospels, who asked Jesus, "What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" When Jesus asked him if he knew the commandments, he replied that he had kept them from his youth. Jesus then told him to sell his property, give the proceeds to the poor, and to become His disciple (Matt. 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23). Jesus did not

3 Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 9, quoting *Shabbath* 104b: *Tosophila Shabbath* 11. 15.

say that the Law was inconsequential; but He indicated that He was the means of bringing its revelation to perfection. The attainment of eternal life, or the life of the age to come, could be possible only through Him. The Scriptures, then, were intended to draw men to Him.

The witness of the Scriptures was not only the projection of its ethical focus on a coming revelation in His person, but was also the fulfillment of hope in a coming Messiah who would bring spiritual deliverance to all mankind. The first prophecy of the Bible, recorded in Genesis 3:15, announced that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head of the serpent. In other words, the descendant of the woman, human, but appointed by God, would conquer the power of evil and undo the mischief that God's adversary had already done. The "line of the seed" is subsequently traced through the genealogies of the Old and New Testaments until its end in the Son of Mary, who is called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). He is the heir to the blessings promised in the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18), and to the kingdom promised in the covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:12-16). He is also the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (Isa. 52:13-53:12), whose astounding prophecy depicts graphically the rejection, vicarious suffering, agonizing death, and final triumph of One who was led like a sacrificial lamb to the altar of sacrifice, who was entombed in a rich man's grave, and yet survived to prolong His days and to see the purpose of Jehovah completed through His life. Micah had even predicted the exact place of the Messiah's birth: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic. 5:2). John alludes specifically to this text as messianic and states that the rulers rejected Jesus because He came from Galilee, not realizing that He had actually been born in Bethlehem (John 7:41-42).

This general reference to the Scriptures in John 5:39, 46 is amplified by several other citations or allusions elsewhere in the Gospel. John the Baptist applied to himself the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3, by which he claimed to "make straight the way of the Lord" (John 1:23). In summarizing the rejection of Jesus' ministry, John referred to Isaiah 6:10: "He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them" (John 12:40). Having thus identified this prophecy with the career of Jesus, John

added: "These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he [Isaiah] spoke of Him [Jesus]" (12:41). A comparison of Isaiah and John shows that Isaiah designated by the pronoun "He" the person of Jehovah who appeared in such glory that the prophet was prostrated before Him; John says that the prophet saw the glory of Jesus. By this equation John attributes to Jesus the glory of the Father, and asserts that the Scriptures witness His deity.

In the narratives of the Crucifixion there are three declarations that the aspects of that event fulfilled the Scriptures. The first declaration (19:24) is the division of Jesus' garments among the members of the execution squad, referred to in Psalm 22:18: "They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." The second declaration is Jesus' cry of thirst, recorded in John 19:28-29 and foreshadowed by Psalm 69:21: "They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The same psalm, incidentally, was connected by the disciples with the cleansing of the Temple: "Zeal for Thy house has consumed me" (John 2:17; Ps. 69:9).

The third declaration related to the omission of the breaking of Jesus' legs on the cross: "Not a bone of Him shall be broken" (John 19:36). The passage is taken from Exodus 12:46, or possibly Numbers 9:12, which referred to the lamb sacrificed at the Passover. The oblique reference in John 20:9 alludes to "the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead." Luke asserts that in the postresurrection period Jesus gave definite teaching to the disciples from the Scriptures concerning His death and resurrection (Luke 24:26-27), but specific predictions concerning the latter are difficult to identify. Whether he relied on types, or whether the key to some has been lost is difficult to ascertain. Judging from analogy with the preaching of the apostles, one can only say that such passages as Psalm 16:8-11, which was quoted by Peter as prophetic of the Resurrection (Acts 2:24-32), may have been utilized. John, however, does not provide apposite citations. Such passages as are cited and the general trend of Scripture as previously noted do confirm the witness of the Old Testament to the claims of Jesus.

These five witnesses were mentioned by Jesus in defense of His person before His accusers. John presents them immediately before introducing the turning point of Jesus' career at the feeding of the five thousand. No one of them is elaborated into an extensive argument; they seem to serve as reference points or as indications of an apologetic procedure rather than as a comprehensive discus-

sion of the testimony of Jesus' divine character. They are, however, representative of the converging lines of testimony that point to a conclusion: He is, as John stated, the Son of God. The Synoptic Gospels contain the same lines of evidential support for Jesus' claims, but they are not categorized as definitely. John seems to have composed a more selective and direct apologetic.

These five witnesses are supplemented by others of more subjective nature mentioned later in the Gospel. As the tension between Jesus and His opponents increased, His insistence on the validity of His claim became stronger. The period of conflict (7:1-11:53), following the period of controversy, was marked by outward hostility that gradually crystallized into a definite attempt to take His life. The loss of favor with the multitude because of His refusal to become a political leader (6:15, 66) caused a sharp division of opinion among His followers. "Some were saying, 'He is a good man'; others were saying, 'No, on the contrary, He leads the multitude astray'" (7:12). The general impression given by the narrative of chapter 7 is that of confusion, except that the hierarchy of Jerusalem decided to arrest Him (7:32, 44). The attempt was, unsuccessful because the arresting posse was overawed by His teaching (7:46) and possibly because of dissenting voices within the tribunal itself (7:50-51). One thing, however, was clear: Jesus was definitely challenged, and was placed on the defensive by His enemies.

Jesus' reply to the questionings and attacks was a fresh affirmation of His claims, "I," He said, "am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (8:12). The Pharisees retorted that since He was bearing witness of Himself, the witness would not be valid because it would not be unprejudiced. Whereas Jesus had conceded this point on a previous occasion, He did not do so here. The apparent contradiction between 5:31 and 8:14 can be resolved if one recognizes the differing bases for His statements. On legal grounds, self-testimony is not valid because it is presumably biased; but on personal grounds, who would know more about Him than Himself? This affirmation makes the point precisely: "My witness is true; for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I came from, or where I am going" (8:14). Jesus appealed to the principle stated in the Law that the testimony of two persons is valid (Deut. 17:6), and then spoke of the witness of Himself and of the Father. This amounted to self-affirmation; He took His stand on the witness

of His self-consciousness. It seems as if He were saying that there could be no higher court to which He could appeal than Himself and the Father; or, to phrase it differently, His own consciousness of His relationship with the Father is the absolute which should be self-evident.

In the subsequent text He takes the attitude that He is simply stating what is fact; He is not manufacturing pretensions nor entertaining fancies. Despite the incredible magnitude of His claims — "Before Abraham was born, I AM" (John 8:58) — He is simply speaking naturally from the level on which He lived.

The rejection of this personal witness was inevitable in the light of the prevalent unbelief. Jesus recognized that it would not be convincing to His enemies, and He consequently reverted to an appeal to His works, which were undeniable. The account of the healing of the blind man which followed the argument of chapter 8 shows the impact of Jesus' ministry on an unprejudiced beneficiary of it, as well as the negative reaction of His enemies. The reality of this miracle was acknowledged by many, who said, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?" (10:21). In response to those who demanded of Him a declaration of messiahship, He said, "The works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me If I do not the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works; that you may know (γινώτε) and understand (γινώσκητε) that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (10:25, 37-38).

The uncertainty and conflict that filled the last few months of Jesus' life were brought to a crisis by the raising of Lazarus. The rulers were all the more determined to destroy Jesus, because, they feared a popular uprising that would endanger their relations with the Roman government. The high priest Caiaphas openly declared that it would be better to sacrifice Jesus than to risk a war that might cost Israel its status as a semi-independent state and displace the ruling class of the people (11:48-50). Evidently Jesus had won back some popular favor, for John states that at His entry into Jerusalem "the multitude who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, were bearing Him witness" (12:17). Their testimony confirmed the miracle of Lazarus' resuscitation which they had seen for themselves.

In this period of crisis (11:54-12:50) Jesus withdrew from public notice; at least, John gives the impression that He devoted the

last hours before the cross to the small band of people who were sympathetic with Him. In the discussion that followed the Last Supper, Jesus mentioned two more witnesses to Him that would emerge after His death: the Holy Spirit, and the disciples themselves.

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

These appeared in the period of conference (13:1-17:26), which was devoted to the preparation of the disciples for the final struggle. He intended them to become His representatives in the world after His departure. The function of the Holy Spirit would be to encourage (παρακαλεῖν) the disciples in His absence. They had been accustomed to depending on Him for their information and guidance. Without Him they could quickly become disorganized and discouraged. In order to ensure a continuing reality of spiritual experience that would enable them to proclaim His message with certainty, Jesus agreed to send them the Spirit, who, He said, was abiding with them and would be in them (14:17). His witness concerning Jesus would reassure the disciples of the verity of their past experience, and would empower them to meet new conflicts.

The witness of the Spirit would then have a twofold direction. His presence would confirm the disciples in their faith and bring to them a further revelation of truth concerning Jesus. "He will bear witness of Me," said Jesus (15:26). Peter confirmed this aspect of the Spirit's work in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. In affirming the reality of Jesus' resurrection, he said: "Therefore having been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He [Jesus] has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (Acts 2:33). The coming of the Spirit and the manifestation of His presence certified the validity of Jesus' claims and was intrinsically a witness to His truthfulness.

The witness of the Spirit refers to the witness which the Spirit brought as well as to the witness which the Spirit constituted. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide the disciples into all truth, and that He would declare things to come. In the shaping of the disciples' thinking and by conferring on them the endowment of prophecy He would continue and corroborate the testimony of Jesus. The disciples could therefore count on divine direction and aid in their ministry which would be in itself a testimony to the continuing work of the Lord.

The linking of the witness of the Spirit with the witness of the disciples gives the basis for their experiential testimony. John pursued this matter further in his first epistle by saying that the con-

nection of the living disciples with the resurrected Lord depends on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Twice in his epistle he assures his readers that "we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us," and then adds, "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 3:24; 4:14). For this reason he is able to say later that "the one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself" (5:10). The witness of the Spirit conferred on the disciples an unshakable certainty in their own experience, and in their faith.

The witness of the Spirit would also be manifested in His effect on the world. Jesus said that the Spirit would convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). These three things are the most difficult to impress on any man, for he can always attempt to justify himself by asserting an excusable motive for evil actions, or by pleading a relative scale of ethical standards in the place of absolute righteousness, or by assuming that judgment is indefinitely deferred so that it is no real threat. The witness of the Spirit becomes evident when it can make a sinning person acutely aware of these absolutes by comparison of himself with the righteousness of God in Christ.

THE WITNESS OF THE DISCIPLES

The last witness on John's list is that of the disciples themselves. "You will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning" (15:27). The completeness and intimacy of their experience would make them competent witnesses to the character and message of Christ. The apostolic writers lay great emphasis on the value of eyewitnesses. Luke states in his preface that he drew much of his information from those "who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word" (Luke 1:2) — phraseology which sounds much like an echo of the Johannine prologue. In Jesus' parting commission to the disciples as given in Acts, He told them they would be witnesses to Him after the Holy Spirit had come on them, and that they would have a worldwide ministry (Acts 1:8). Peter affirmed this mandate when he said, "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (Acts 3:32). Paul, contending for the historical reality of the resurrection of Christ, said that one of His postresurrection appearances was attested by more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom the majority were living when he wrote his epistle (1 Cor. 15:6). Had he not valued the testimony of the eyewitnesses, there would have been no point in stating that they were still living.

John, of course, does not attempt to give any extended account of apostolic witness as Luke does in Acts. On the other hand, his

Gospel was written at a later date than Acts, and undoubtedly assumes what was known to his readers, that the apostolic witness, including his own, had been spread far and wide, and that it had its origin in Jesus' commission to witness and in the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They were responsible for maintaining a loyal adherence to Him, and for propagating His message to the world.

THE EFFECT OF THE WITNESS

The perpetuation of this witness is described in the First Epistle of John, which seems to have been written as a postscript or application of the teaching of the Gospel. The author affirms that he based his teaching on the witness concerning the Word of life, which he had experienced by physical contact, and which was manifested to him and to his associates. The content of this witness was the sonship of Christ, who had come to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). The divine empowering of this continuing witness was accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who creates and confirms the new life that results from salvation. The effectiveness of the witness of the church depends on the validity of its spiritual experience. The Holy Spirit provides the inward witness that enables the believer to render an effective outward testimony by keeping Jesus in the focus of his consciousness.

This inner witness provides the verity and continuity that constitute the dividing line between the experiences of the believer and the unbeliever. "The witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1 John 5:11-12).

In conclusion, this witness of which John speaks is self-authenticating. The Prologue uses the figure of light, and calls Jesus "the light of the world," a metaphor which He used in controversy with His enemies. "I," He said, "am the light of the world: he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." The instant reaction of the Pharisees was, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true" (John 8:12-13). Light, however, needs no authentication; it validates itself. Nobody needs to label or to describe light; it speaks for itself. In the same way the reality of Christ makes its impact on human life and verifies His claims by the transformation that it produces on all that He affects. The risen Christ is His own best witness, and He confirms the subordinate witnesses that support His claims.

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