reason why this enquiry was made. I will  
state them, and append to them my own  
view. (1) It has been a very generally  
received idea that the question was ask:  
*for the sake of the disciples themselves*,  
with the sanction of their master, and for  
the purpose of confronting them, who  
were doubtful and jealous of our Lord,  
with the testimony of His own mouth.  
This view is ably maintained by Chrysostom, and has found strenuous defenders in  
our own day. The objections to it are,—  
that the text evidently treats the question  
as coming from John himself; the answer  
is directed to John; and the following discourse is on the character and position of  
John. These are answered by some with  
a supposition that John *allowed the enquiry to be made* in his name; but surely  
our Saviour would not in this case have  
made the answer as we have it, which  
clearly implies that the object of the  
miracles done was *John’s* satisfaction.  
(2) The other great section of opinions on  
the question is that which supposes doubt  
to have existed, for some reason or other,  
in the Baptist’s own mind. This is upheld  
by Tertullian and others, and advocated  
by De Wette, who thinks that the doubt  
was perhaps respecting not our Lord’s  
*mission*, but His *way of manifesting Himself*, which did not agree with the theocratic views of the Baptist. This he considers to be confirmed by ver.6. Olshausen  
and Neander suppose the ground of the  
doubt to have lain partly in the Messianic idea of the Baptist, partly in the  
weakening and bedimming effect of imprisonment on John’s mind. Lightfoot carries this latter still further, and imagines  
that the doubt arose from dissatisfaction  
at not being liberated from prison by some  
miracle of our Lord. Others have supposed that John, perplexed by the various  
reports about the worker of these miracles,  
sent his disciples to ascertain whether it  
was really He who had been borne witness  
to by himself. (3) It appears to me that  
there are objections against each of the  
above suppositions, too weighty to allow  
either of them to be entertained. There  
can be little doubt on the one hand, that  
our Saviour’s answer is directed to *John*,  
and not to the disciples, who are bonâ fide  
messengers and nothing more:—“**Go and  
shew John**” can I think bear no other interpretation: and again the words “*blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in  
me*” must equally apply to John in the  
first place, so that, *in some sense, he* had  
been offended at Christ. On the other  
hand, it is exceedingly difficult to suppose  
that there can have been in John’s own  
mind any real doubt that our Lord was  
*He that should come*, seeing that he himself had borne repeatedly such notable  
witness to Him, and that under  
divine direction and manifestation (see ch.  
iii, 16, 17: John i. 26–37).

The idea of his objective faith being shaken by  
his imprisonment is quite inconsistent not  
only with John’s character, but with our  
Lord’s discourse in this place, whose description of him seems almost framed to guard against such a supposition.

The last hypothesis above mentioned is  
hardly probable, in the form in which it is  
put. We can scarcely imagine that John  
can have doubted who this Person was, or  
have been confounded by the discordant  
rumours which reached him about His  
wonderful works. But that *one form* of  
this hypothesis is the right one, I am certainly disposed to believe, until some more  
convincing considerations shall induce me  
to alter my view. (4) The form to which  
I allude is this: John having heard all  
these reports, being himself fully convinced Who this Wonderworker was, was  
becoming impatient under the slow and  
unostentatious course of our Lord’s self-  
manifestation, and desired to obtain from  
our Lord’s own mouth a declaration which  
should set such rumours at rest, and (possibly) which mighht serve for a public  
profession of His Messiahship, from which  
hitherto He had seemed to shrink. He  
thus incurs a share of the same rebuke  
which the mother of our Lord received  
(John ii. 4); and the purport of the answer returned to him is, that the hour  
was not yet come for such an open declaration, but that there were sufficient  
proofs given by the works done, to render  
all inexcusable, who should be offended in  
Him. And the return message is so far  
from being a satisfaction designed for the  
*disciples*, that they are sent back like the  
messenger from Gabii to Sextus Tarquinius, with indeed a significant narrative  
to relate, but no direct answer; they were  
but the intermediate transmitters of the  
symbolic message, known to Him who sent  
it, and him who received it.

It is  
a fact not to be neglected in connexion  
with this solution of the difficulty, that  
John is said to have heard of the works,  
not *of Jesus*, but **of (the) Christ**: the  
only place where that name, standing  
alone, is given to our Lord in this Gospel.