

heaven"—words which are followed by a statement similar to that of the other two evangelists.

What, then, we have first to inquire is the peculiar import and force of this confession? It was a declaration that Jesus was the Messiah with all that was implied in that title in the mind of pious Jews educated in the earlier and sounder traditional expectations of the nation. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Learned men who have investigated the opinions of the Jews at and before the times of Christ, tell us that the more ancient Jews expected a divine Messiah, not a mere man, but one who in the dignity of both the divine and the human nature should rule over their nation. He was to be the Son of God, Most High, while at the same time he was to be the Son of David; and therefore the Messiah was spoken of under both titles, the Son of man, and the Son of God. The earlier Jews had far sounder views than their descendants of a later age. They read the Prophets in their natural sense, and were probably guided to some extent by traditions which floated down from prophetic times. They recognised the divine nature of the Messiah and the spiritual character of his government; while those of later times, more secular in their modes of thought and more political in character, looked for a conqueror of nations and a secular liberator of the descendants of Abraham. In these respects modern Jews have still farther deteriorated. Led on by their prejudices against Christianity they vehemently deny their Messiah to be divine.

The confession of Peter harmonizes perfectly with the exalted strains in which Simeon and Anna spake of their Lord when in his temple, the titles which they applied to him being expressive of the highest dignity. Whom do ye say that I the Son of man am, being the question, the reply is "Thou—the Son of man, art the Christ—the long expected Messiah, the Son—the only Begotten Son of the only living and true God.

This confession was received by the Saviour with high approval as a distinct avowal of faith in him as a Divine Messiah sent for the salvation of men, for Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Our Saviour clearly teaches, that his servant was led to the knowledge of the great truths just asserted, not by mere human intuition or power of reasoning, but that he had been guided by the influence of the Holy Spirit of inspiration, whom the Father sends to guide his people into the truth. Here was a great truth, here were great truths, which the natural heart would be slow to receive and unwilling to acknowledge. Far more likely would it have appeared, from the previous history of the speaker and the prevalent views of the time, that he would speak of his Master as a temporal Ruler, for this would have corresponded with his unconverted and worldly nature. But when he used expressions which told clearly of a higher sense, which implied the spiritual and divine nature of the Messiah, whose kingdom was in the heart of men, then he gave proof that God had taught him, then he showed that flesh and blood had not revealed it unto him, but the Father who is in heaven.

Did Peter in this reply speak for himself, or as the representative of his brethren? Though opposite answers have been given to this question, and though learned names may be quoted probably to an equal extent in favour of the idea of his speaking in behalf of the twelve, the reasons for concluding that he spoke for himself merely appear strong, if not conclusive. To the first inquiry of our Saviour, Whom do men say that I am, they said John the Baptist, &c., but when the second question is asked, "Whom do ye say