

Jew longed for and believed in the advent of this man, whom they called the Messiah, it is difficult for us now to conceive. Whenever any Jew exhibited any unusual faculty, they at once asked themselves if the Messiah had come at last, and indeed put the same question to the man himself. They interrogated John the Baptist, who began his public career sooner than Jesus did. They were eager to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and indeed were on one occasion determined to make him king by force. John the Baptist himself seemingly was of the opinion that Jesus was the long-expected deliverer, although he, too, as it would seem, like many of the Jewish multitude, began to doubt. Jesus was troubled by strange internal conflicts, himself thinking at one time that he was the Messiah, and at another time that he was not, but always desiring the redemption of Israel. Immediately before his first public appearance this internal disquietude was set at rest by his refusing to accept the role of a military redeemer of his people. It was no easy struggle. Popularity and fame lay on one side, and on the other side the obscurity of a simple preacher. It was such a self-sacrifice as Moses made when he chose to be with his people rather than prince of Egypt, and places him amongst the rare and noble of mankind. But, as has happened more than once, this triumph over himself was regarded by the people as the mark of a poltroon, who had not sense enough to seize the opportunity; and many of his friends forsook him. To sacrifice oneself and be known as a hero is not so bad; it is another matter to sacrifice oneself and be called a weakling. But he did not repent

when he found the road a hard one; he only went the more frequently apart into a desert place or up the mountain side to be alone, to draw a fresh supply of strength from communion with his Father in heaven. He saw that the consequence of disappointing the public would bring him into collision with their leaders, the Pharisees and Scribes, but he did not flinch. Peter, James and John, at the head of a small band of disciples, attracted and fascinated by the beauty, simplicity and mysterious depth of his character, and believing him to be the Messiah in spite of his inexplicable reluctance, as they supposed, to make himself known, followed him like faithful dogs through days and weeks of gloom and uncertainty, held up and kept from falling by the master's hand. It was no holiday to be of his chosen disciples. To follow him was to take up the cross, to encounter opposition and derision. Jesus did not hesitate to attack the representatives of the popular fallacies, and they repaid him with hate and hostility. He must finally either abandon his work or else suffer a violent death. Jerusalem had in days gone by too often risen up against the prophets of Jehovah, as Jesus knew,—“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” he cried, “thou that killest the prophets and stonest them with stones that are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings; and ye would not!” He was preparing himself for a similar fate, and bravely set his face to go to Jerusalem. He would not for any danger, however imminent, relax his efforts to bring his fellow-countrymen to a true knowledge of God as their Father in heaven; and he would never lose his