

others, were agitated by the thought, he was risen. This might be he. Elias was predicted as the forerunner of Christ; and though we know that the prediction was fulfilled in John, this conception did not then prevail, from the disappointing character of Christ himself. This might be he. Around the person of Jeremiah, as we learn from the Apocryphal books, a circle of traditions had gathered. From the deep pathos of his writings, and the strange affection for his country, evident in every line of his writings, he was called, by way of eminence, the prophet of God. Jesus might, perhaps, be he, risen from the dead to witness the restoration of his country, the coming of the Messiah, and all the magnificent, but merely worldly expectations realised, which the Jews had centered around that event.

But how did it happen, that outside of the small circle of disciples, none could bring themselves to conceive the Messiah in Jesus? Usually speaking, for this reason, that the whole ministry of Jesus appeared to them to stand in utter opposition to the Messianic character and action. We associate greatness of character with nobility of appearance. We must be dazzled by outward grandeur that we may give credit to inward worth. We estimate things not as they are, but as they appear to be. And for the dented heart of fallen humanity, pretensions must ever be sustained by pomp. To the eye of the unprofessional spectator, the appearance of soldiers on holiday parade, in all the gaiety and glitter of unsoiled uniform, is more warlike and terrible than the aspect which they would present on the field of battle, stained with the marks of long and severe campaigning. The great Humboldt, the philosopher who seemed to have summed up in himself all the scientific knowledge of which the world was in possession, down to his own day, received innumerable tokens of the respect which was felt for him from the courts of Europe. Countries, who rested their own merits upon their titles and badges of distinction, estimated his also, by these titles and badges. Without these, he was nothing in their eyes, for how could they measure the knowledge, the operations, the profundity of the thoughts of a Humboldt? At the death of the simple philosopher, all these certificates of rank, patents of nobility, badges of distinction, were found huddled together, covered with dust that had long been undisturbed, in some neglected drawer. These things did not constitute his title to respect and remembrance.

The application is obvious. To eyes that expected in the Messiah, a magnificence of array corresponding to, but outshining the glittering grandeur of an Oriental monarch, Jesus had no form nor comeliness. "There was no beauty in him that he should be desired. He was despised and they esteemed him not."

II. We now come to the second, properly the chief question, for which the first was intended merely to prepare the way. "Whom say ye that I am?" "What have ye, who so long time have been with me, arrived at as the result of your intercourse? Have these opinions of the people exercised any, and what influence over your belief? What do ye know, and in what terms would ye confess your faith?" For be it observed, that the expression of faith is in itself already a strengthening and confirming of it; and therefore does Jesus require it of them here. We form our resolve or conclusion mentally, but that resolve is not felt to be binding,—it is associated with nothing without ourselves,—it does not appeal to our fellow-men, and lay hold of their sympathies, or gather strength from their co-operation, or their opposition, until it is announced in words, or embodied in a documentary form. Therefore does Jesus call upon them to speak out their opinion frankly, first before him, and then, at the proper time, when the church should be built by and upon their labors, before all men.

Then answered Simon, the mouth-piece of the Apostles, the most ardent of all,—then answered he quickly and gladly in the name of all, taking it for granted that none would contradict him,—by renewing the same confession which he had already made, and which Nathaniel had made at a period earlier still. Simon is not led astray; he is rendered only the more decided amid all the confused sayings of the people, and the contradiction encountered in Jerusalem. (See John's Gospel from the 7th to the 10th chapters.) Observe the fullness of his confessions. Without any preface such as "I believe," "we say," he declares at once, "thou art the Christ." But more. Had the Apostle stopped there, it might be inferred that he saw in Jesus only a distinguished man,—the man of men,—the fullness of manhood,—but still, only a man raised up by God, and specially endowed for a special purpose. But his closer intercourse with Jesus had opened up to him, through the working of the Spirit, a view into his higher nature,—he recognised in him the revelation of God. And still more; to show his sense of the reality of the divine manifestation in Jesus, he adds; "the Son of the living God." The image of the God-head as reflected in him, was so strong and powerful that through it the Father, as his eternal original, was for the first time revealed in his wondrous essence. All proven revelations of the living one were dead, when compared with the fullness which flows forth in all the varied exhibitions of the Saviour. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

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