

I will close, trusting that each of us may feel benefited by our meeting together at this time, and that we may go home prepared to do our duty faithfully in the small corner in which God has placed us. As the little hymn says—

"You in your small corner,
And I in mine."

God's Choice of Israel.

Written for the Review.

Every gardener aims at getting his produce upon the marked at the earliest possible date in the season. His profits depend upon his skill in bringing his plants to maturity sooner than his neighbors. But he knows that it would be vain to anticipate the summer by scattering his seed broadcast over his garden while the snow yet lies and every night brings frost. So he spares himself the useless attempt. Yet meantime he is not idle. The better to gain his end he marks off one sheltered corner where the sun is strongest, and after enriching the soil as much as it will bear, he covers it over with a glass frame. Under this protection he sows his seed, where it may be safe from the deadly frost and the chilling wind, to send up its tender shoots with hope of life. He knows that by the time the plants have gained some little strength the warmer days will have come, and in ground all prepared he will set them out, already well on their way to full growth, that the whole garden may become fruitful. It is not that the one corner is dearer to him than the rest of the garden, but he gives it special treatment for the sake of the rest. And the result justifies his method.

So is it with God's treatment of the little people of Israel. With them He made a special covenant; to them He gave a special revelation; for them He wrought great wonders of providence; around them He threw the protection of special institutions. But it was not because God was partial and had no thought for the rest of the world. Though the Jews were slow to learn the lesson, these exclusive privileges were given not for their own sake, but that through them all the nations of the earth might be blessed. They were through these to be trained and disciplined to become God's messengers of truth and righteousness to all mankind. And, though it involved long centuries of apparent neglect for the heathen, it was really the speediest method of bringing about the effective evangelization and the complete redemption of all mankind. Nor was there any unnecessary delay in breaking down the enclosure of Jewish national institutions. Many things go to show that if the universal extension of the church beyond the national limits had taken place a day earlier than it did the whole experiment might have proved a failure and the world might have been thrown back to where it was at the time of Abraham's call. Even as it was Judaism furnished only a small company of serviceable messengers for the Messiah at his appearance. And more than once since then the spreading church has narrowly escaped being overwhelmed by the reaction of heathenism. Even yet it has a hard struggle for life and its actual fruitage has been small as compared with what it will yet become. The ultimate result will fully vindicate the divine love for all nations of mankind as well as the wisdom of the plan for securing the earliest redemption of the race.

A Plea for Israel.

Scattered by God's avenging hand
Afflicted and forlorn,
Sad Wanderers from their pleasant land
Do Judah's children mourn:
And o'en in Christian countries, fow
Breathe thoughts of pity towards the Jew.

Yet listen, Gentiles, do you love
The Bible's precious page?
Then let your hearts with kindness move
To Israel's heritage.
Who traced those lines of love for you?
Each sacred writer was a Jew.

And then, as years and ages passed,
And nations rose and fell,
Tho' clouds and darkness oft were cast
O'er captive Israel,
The oracles of God for you
Were kept in safety by the Jew.

And when the great Redeemer came
For guilty man to bleed,
He did not take an angel's name;
No—born of Abraham's seed—
Jesus, who gave His life for you,—
The God Incarnate—was a Jew.

And tho' His own received Him not,
And turned in pride away,
Whence is the Gentiles' happier lot?
Are you more just than they?
No! God in pity turned to you—
Have you no pity for the Jew?

Go, then, and bend your knee to pray
For Israel's ancient race;
Ask the dear Saviour every day
To call them by His grace:
Go—for a debt of love is due
From Christian Gentiles to the Jew.

Jesus, the Messiah.*

BY REV. ADDISON P. FOSTER, D.D.

The Old Testament is full of promises of the coming Messiah, or the Anointed (in Greek, Christ). Three classes of officials were then set apart to God's service by anointing,—prophets, priests, and kings, and the Messiah was to combine these three offices in His person. As prophet He was to be the greatest teacher on record; as priest He was to mediate between God and man, and offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins; and as king He was to set up the Kingdom of God among men and rule in men's hearts. In Jesus' day the Jews were eagerly anticipating a coming Messiah, and the feeling spread that Jesus might be the promised One. But was He, and what was the proof? Even John the Baptist raised these questions and from his prison sent disciples to make inquiry, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?"

CHRIST'S MIRACLES A PROOF.

Jesus made answer, as was His wont, by an appeal to facts. He wrought a number of miracles and directed His visitors to report them to their master. What proof was there here? Why this, first of all, that here was a fulfilment of prophecy. This was exactly what Isaiah had foretold would be (xxxv. 5, 6). The Messiah should cure blindness, deafness, lameness, dumbness. But more, these miracles in themselves proved in Jesus a power that must belong to the Messiah. Here were credentials of Messiahship, the exhibition of qualities that must come from God only. The Messiah was one divinely anointed for service, and one divinely sent. He was to speak for God, mediate with God, reign as God. He must, then, exert the power of God; and here was Jesus doing this very thing. In Christ's reply to John there is a notable statement which emphasizes the peculiarity of His miracles: "the poor have good tidings preached to them." This is not a miracle, but it exemplifies the spirit of the miracles and shows their purpose. It is introduced at the close of a list of miracles, much as the command, "Thou shalt not covet," ends up the Decalogue, to indicate a spiritual meaning in all that precedes. The miracles and all Christ's work were benevolent, they all prepared the way for the preaching of the Gospel, they all taught something regarding Christ as a Saviour. The Messiah should usher in a reign of righteousness and peace. There were physical healings, to be sure, but greater than these was salvation from sin through an accepted Christ. This preaching to the poor, this divine mercy to those most needy, was, after all, the essential feature in proving Messiahship. Without it Jesus could not be the One that was to come "for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth."

CHRIST'S SUPERIORITY A PROOF.

John the Baptist was a great reformer. Christ's commendation of Him was remarkable. Up to that time there was not one among men greater than John. There was rare heroism and high moral character in that wonderful prophet standing by Jordan's brink, calling on all men to repent, drawing thousands from city and village to hear him, unflinchingly denouncing sin in a tyrant's palace. Such men, with absolute purity in their heart, with lightning on their tongue, with fearlessness in their eye, and dropping from sight without complaint at the coming of a greater,—such men are rare indeed.

But great as John was, he lived in the shadows of Judaism. The morning was breaking, but it was not for him. He was great indeed considering the darkness around him, but a very child in the daylight of Christianity should be greater. The privileges of Christ's Kingdom develop character as was impossible before. It is the difference between daylight and night for growing plants.

*A Meditation based on (Luke vii. 18-50) in the Bible Study Union Course on "The Teachings of Christ."