

majority and advance that of the exceptional few. But the existence of these few is the significant fact which lends dignity and even splendor to the moral history of Israel. In spite of all their failures, of which their best men were ever keenly conscious, no other nation can make anything like as good a showing. When Christ came the people of Israel had Him crucified in the bitterness of their antagonism to the spirit of His Kingdom, and only a handful of genuine disciples offered themselves for the propagation of the new faith. One feels as if His mission had narrowly escaped failure. But, disappointing as His reception was among the Jews, there is no reason to suppose He would have personally fared better anywhere else on earth, and even the scanty following would have been almost certainly wanting, so that His mission would have been a failure altogether.

In another respect, too, the Jewish ethical development was in advance of any other nation. The results of it had been committed in writing in a series of religious books, which had come to be accepted as authoritative even by that portion of the nation which was really out of sympathy with the spirit of their contents. There were no greater sticklers for the divine inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures than the very Scribes and Pharisees who so grossly perverted their meaning. They thus became, somewhat unconsciously, missionaries of a system much higher than they themselves practised or believed in. Nor was their mission altogether in vain. It is a little difficult to estimate the exact amount of influence which the Jewish synagogues exerted over Gentile peoples, but about the most interesting class we discover anywhere in the New Testament history are the proselytes of the gate—Gentiles who attended the services of the synagogues, attracted by the purity of their religious teaching and the loftiness of the moral principles set forth in the Jewish scriptures. It was a class which early supplied Christianity with a large body of its adherents.

Without going further into details, therefore, it is apparent that Christianity began its new development on the summit of the very highest moral elevation which the world had