

MISSIONS TO THE JEWS.

BY MRS. W. B. NORTHUP, BELLEVILLE, ONT.



O those of us who view the Christian Church, not merely as a beneficent organization happily existing at the present day, but as a divinely ordained institution, founded by its great head, the son of Mary, the descendant of David, the carpenter of Nazareth, on the lines and with the members of the old Jewish Church, it must seem passing strange that a paper on the Mission to the Jews should be needful or even possible. Words would fail to express the astonishment, probably the indignation, that would have seized the members of the first Church Council at Jerusalem, had one of the blessed Apostles, inspired by prophetic foresight, arisen and predicted that eighteen centuries later, the despised Gentiles would be carrying, not only to the heathen world, but even to the Jews at Jerusalem the glad tidings of great joy, which they were commissioned to bring to every nation. Time, however, with unfaltering step has marched steadily on, eighteen centuries have rolled by, the prophecies of the dispersion of Israel and the growth of the Saviour's Kingdom have been fulfilled, and to-day it is at once our pressing duty and our exalted privilege to go to the oppressed kinsmen and countrymen of Jesus and his Apostles, and tell them of that life, that love, that salvation, and that heaven which their forefathers made known to ours, and to which we owe all our happiness here and our hopes for the hereafter.

It is now generally recognized that the missionary activity of a Church is an unfailing barometer to register its spiritual life, and it must be a subject of devout thankfulness to each of us to see that, as the years roll by, the barometer of our Church is steadily rising; still in the missionary work to which this paper is devoted I am sure that all will agree that we have not done all we should, and, perhaps, alas, not all we could.

It is not my purpose here to advocate the cause of missions, but I will venture briefly a few reasons why the Mission to the Jews has special claims on the members of our Church. And, in the first place, let me say a few words of explanation so that we may understand not only who, but where and what, the Jews are.

Geographically, intellectually, and socially then, the Jews throughout the world may be conveniently divided into three sections, first: those living in the interior of Africa, mainly in the Provinces of Algiers, Tunis and Morocco, numbering about a million, with whom may be joined those residing in Arabia Felix, Persia and Turkestan, in all about 350,000 more. This section is quite outside the borders of civilization, the people are ignorant, superstitious, bigoted and most fanatical, and yet among

them, while our mission stations are few, much seed has already been sown, and not a few sheaves already gathered in. Want of money, however, rises on every hand as an insuperable barrier and has withheld the Gospel still from many hundred thousands.

The second section includes the Jewish population of the more important cities that fringe the southern shores of the Mediterranean, the Jews of Egypt, European Turkey, Asia Minor, Palestine and parts of Russia, Austria and Poland. These, though far from being ideal types of modern civilization, are better educated, more intelligent, less bigoted than the first mentioned, and in every way superior to them. The grinding oppression, constant exactions and daily injustice to which they are exposed and which in Russia seem to have culminated in national expulsion, have, not unnaturally, embittered many against Christianity, while the idolatrous practices of the Roman and Greek Churches have disgusted a people who, whatever their faults, are never idolators.

Here, too, the want of money hampers the work on every hand and yet much has been done. Missionary stations have been opened in all these countries, while agents, assistants, teachers and colporteurs are daily journeying through the lands.

In Constantinople a large school is maintained and attended by over 600 children. In Russia, prior to the late imperial decrees, whose effects can as yet hardly be estimated, a wonderful movement had been for some years attracting the attention and calling forth the prayers of the Christian world. Its leader was one Joseph Rabinowitch, a lawyer in South Russia, who had for years been interested in the question of the Jewish future, and, in 1883, during the time of persecution, he visited the Holy Land with a view to investigating the possibilities of a Jewish return. Study and reflection at length led him to believe that the historical Jesus was the true Messiah, and that the marvellous sufferings of the Jews in the last 1,800 years were their punishment for His crucifixion.

His contention has ever been, "the key to the Holy Land lies in the hands of our Brother Jesus," and this expression, "our Brother Jesus," has always been his watchword. A powerful talent it has been too, for hundreds of families not joining any church have united in one communion under the title of "The National Jewish New Testament Congregation," "the Sons of the New Covenant," or "the Brethren and Friends of Christ." In this section, too, is the Holy Land with its most interesting and important mission at Jerusalem, but of that I shall speak later on.

The third and last section comprises all those who live in the western half of Europe, principally in Germany and Austria, numbering over two million, to whom may be added the Jews