

Record of Christian Work

East Northfield, Massachusetts

June, 1921, Vol. 40, No. 6

(pg. 414)

THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH.

One of the most interesting stories that comes out of the war deals with the Samaritan remnant who live at Nablus, near Jacob's well at Sychar. Communication with the colony was cut off during the war, but with the reopening of Palestine it has been possible to learn of their fate. Dr. W. E. Barton has had letters from the leaders, and tells the story in "Bibliotheca Sacra."

Dr. Barton visited the Samaritans in 1902. The late Mr. E. K. Warren became personally interested in them at the time of the World's Sunday School Convention in Jerusalem, and organized and financed an American Samaritan Committee, which among other benefits established a school at Nablus where boys were taught Arabic, Hebrew, French and English, and girls were taught to read and also to make lace. The war closed the school, and greatly impoverished the colony, but a census taken on March 20, 1919, reported 81 males and 60 females, a total of 141. That is a loss of 16 males and 11 females as compared with 1915, but it does not destroy hope of survival, although there is a shortage of potential mothers and a danger from inbreeding.

From the standpoint of Biblical scholarship the main interest in these people centers in their possession of a codex of the Pentateuch, believed to be the most ancient Biblical manuscript in existence. Dr. Barton says the scroll is 23.69 meters long and 39 centimeters wide. The skins are browned with age. There are 129 columns of the text, irregular in width and containing from 68 to 75 lines each. The codex is kept in a silver case, jealously guarded from outsiders,—it has been the plan to substitute some other ancient manuscript when distinguished visitors wished to see it. But through Mr. Warren's planning the codex has been photographed on plates 11 ½ x 15 ½ inches, forty-three in number, each exhibiting three or four columns of the original text.

The American Samaritan Committee will retain ownership of the photographic plates for the present, but prints will be sold, without copyright restrictions, by its representative in Palestine, Hon. John D. Whiting, United States Vice-Consul at Jerusalem. We may look forward to new light upon the text of the Pentateuch as soon as scholars have had time to digest this codex.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

This reference is not listed in ***A Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition, Revised, Expanded, and Annotated***, by Alan David Crown and Reinhard Pummer, ATLA Bibliography, No. 51, **The Scarecrow Press, Inc.** Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford. 2005