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THE CHRISTIAN IN PALESTINE;
or,
SCENES OF SACRED HISTORY,
Historical and Descriptive.
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ILLUSTRATED FROM SKETCHES TAKEN ON THE SPOT,
BY W. H. BARTLETT.
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[figure between pp 107-108: Samaritans shewing the book of the Law]
(p. 108) FROM THE LAKE OF TIBERIAS TO SAMARIA.

No part of Galilee can be accounted as equal in interest to the Lake of Tiberias and its environs. Our Lord's frequent presence on its shores; the miracles which he performed there; his discourses, so sublime and tender, gave a sanctity to the scenes around, with which pious memories will continue to invest them to the end of time. We have followed his footsteps to the somewhat remote district of Casarea-Philippi. This was probably near the boundary of his journeyings in that direction. We are now to visit another part of the country, and one the name of which, though not so powerfully associated with the grander events of sacred story, yet brings to our own thoughts, scenes and occurrences of considerable interest.

Samaria was anciently the name of a mountain, then of a city, and at length of a whole district. This district lies immediately between Galilee and Judœa, and was consequently traversed periodically by the inhabitants of the former region in their way to Jerusalem at the time of the great festivals. It is not to be compared in extent with either of the other divisions of Palestine; but in its general character and condition seems little different from the more southern region.¹ According to Josephus, its boundary at the one extremity was near the town of Ginea or Jenin in the plain, and by the other, at the toparchy of Acrabatene. The Jews, in speaking of their country, were in the habit of omitting any mention of Samaria, enumerating only Judæa, Galilee, and Perœa.² But though thus expressing their contempt for the district, they never regarded it in the light of a heathen land, but reputed the soil, the roads, and the wells, holy. Hence our Lord, in asking water of the woman of Samaria, committed no offence against the prejudices of his people. He might drink of the water of the well though in the very heart of this despised region.

Soon after the commencement of the captivity of the ten tribes, constituting the kingdom of Israel, a people called Cuthœans, from the interior of Persia and Media, were sent by the conqueror to inhabit the waste and depopulated country. These strangers brought with them the religion of their native land ; and, mingling with the poor remnant of the Israelites left behind, or who had been allowed to return, they instituted, by the help of a priest, a form of worship which exhibited a strange combination of truth, error, and superstition. In the time of Alexander (p. 109) the Great, Sanballat, the then governor of the Samaritans, obtained permission to erect a temple on Mount Gerizim, and appointed his son-in-law—who, though the son of Jaddua, the high-priest at Jerusalem, had taken up his abode in Samaria— high-priest of the new sanctuary. This completed the sum of offences which the Samaritans had committed against the Jews; and hence the burning hostility of feeling manifested on so many occasions between the two people. "Such," says Josephus, " is the disposition of the Samaritans, that when the Jews are in adversity they deny that they are of kin to them, and then they confess the truth; but when they perceive that some good fortune has befallen them, they immediately pretend to have communion with them, saying that they belong to them, and derive their genealogy from the posterity of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh."³

The Samaritans suffered severely in the wars which attended, and succeeded the fall of the Jewish nation. But they still retained their ancient position, and exhibited no less virulence in after times against the Christians settled in their neighbourhood than the Jews themselves. About the close of the sixth century, they attacked them with sanguinary fury, and endeavoured to expel them from the province. A still more violent onset took place some time after, when a party of people from Caesarea, who had travelled to Sichem, professed themselves converted by the discourses of the Christian teachers. Many thousands of persons perished in the struggle which ensued. The land was left untilled; and it required the exercise of imperial power to save the entire country from ruin.

Samaria, the capital city of this division of the country, was built by Omri, king of Israel; of whom it is said that he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built after the name

¹ Quaresmius Terne Sanctœ Elucidado, t. i. p. 15.

² Reland, Palästina, lib. i. p. 179; lib. iii. p. 979.

³ Antiq. b. xi. c. 8.

of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria.⁴ Ahab adorned it according to his own luxurious taste; and the vices which were rampant within its walls, at length brought down upon it the signal vengeance of Heaven. "I will smite," were the words of prophecy, "the winter-house with the summer-house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord." This prophecy was fulfilled with the most terrific exactness. The siege of Samaria by Benhadad, king of Syria, was accompanied by circumstances, only one of which is sufficient to reveal all the horrors of that event: "There was a great famine in Samaria," it is emphatically said. "And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king! And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn floor, or out of the wine-press? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day; and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him; and I said unto her, on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the (p. 110) woman, that he rent his clothes, and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and behold he had sackcloth within upon his flesh."⁵

It was not, however, till long after this, that the city of Samaria was taken and levelled with the dust, by the armies of Esarhaddon. From this state of desolation it again arose, and remained a flourishing city till it was reduced in the wars of the Maccabees, by Hyrcanus, who let in the torrents from the neighbouring hills, and once more left it in ruins. But its ancient renown and noble position for defence induced Herod to rebuild it. From him it received the name of Sebaste, that is, Augusta, in honour of his patron the Emperor Augustus ; and it now again became a place of great strength and importance.

In the account which Mr. Elliot has given of his journey from Nazareth to Sebaste, he says, "The first view of the representative of the famous capital of the kings of Israel is very imposing. It is built on a high semi-spherical mount, standing alone in a valley encompassed by hills, and covered with terraces, of which we counted sixteen rising one above another. When each of these was defended with all the valour of the Israelitish host, in the days of their glory, and when the art of war was yet in its infancy, it can readily be conceived that a city so circumstanced must have been almost impregnable. On the north-east, about half-way between the summit and the base of the hill, eighteen limestone columns are still standing, which seem to have formed part of a parallelogram, whose dimensions were about a hundred and eighty by eighty yards. On the top are two more parallel lines of pillars, the one containing six, the other seven, in a comparatively perfect state. They are all without capitals, but appear to belong to the Doric order, and were doubtless erected by Herod. On the opposite side, on one of the highest terraces, are two rows of limestone columns, distant from each other about twenty yards, the one containing twenty-one, the other fifty-six. These seem to have formed a double colonnade, the present ruins of which are scattered over a space nearly a quarter of a mile in length; nor is it easy to determine whether it originally extended all round the mountain, which at that distance from the summit may be a mile and a half in circumference, or whether it only adorned the chief street of the city."⁶

⁴ 1 Kings xvi. 24.

⁵ 2 Kings vi. 25.

⁶ Travels in the Three Great Empires, vol. ii. p. 381.

Even in the time of Peré de Naud and d'Arvieux, the ancient Samaria, or Sebaste, had left only scattered traces of its ancient magnificence.⁷ The hill on which it stood was long ago covered with gardens and orchards, and its tranquil aspect presented then, as now, a strange contrast to that which it must have exhibited when covered with the splendid terraces, the turreted walls, and the castles and palaces of the august city.

It was in one of the towers, on the eastern side of the walls, if tradition speak true, that John the Baptist was imprisoned; when Herod, in the midst of feasting (p. 111) and revelry, sent the executioner to put him to death. The Empress Helena built a beautiful church over the spot, consecrated, it was said, by the ashes not only of John the Baptist, but of Elisha and Obadiah. When the Chevalier d'Arvieux visited the place, the tomb could only be seen through a narrow iron grating; but the curious stone door which then protected it has been thrown down, and lies in fragments near the entrance. Enough of the church remains to give an idea of its original extent and magnificence. The great altar towards the east, with its dome supported by marble columns, of the Corinthian order, are still sufficiently entire to excite the admiration of travellers. A mosque has been formed of the western end of the edifice, and Christians and Turks are said to share the building between them.⁸

Independent of the tradition respecting John the Baptist, the site of the ancient city of Samaria is interesting from its having been so early an object of care to the first teachers of the gospel. The labours of Philip the evangelist, the affectionate zeal of those by whom the success of his first efforts was secured, and the thankful devotion of the people themselves, prove the important position which Samaria then spiritually enjoyed in the eye of heaven.

We have spoken of Samaria first because of its ancient rank as the capital of the country known by the same name. Some travellers also have visited it, in their way from Galilee, before proceeding to Sichem. But the latter is the city which the pilgrim may be supposed to have first sought on his way from the Lake of Tiberias; and to that we now direct our attention.

Dr. Clarke travelled in the year 1801 from Nazareth to Samaria, and his account of the country through which he passed is highly picturesque and interesting. Passing over the plain of Esdraelon, and by the ruins of Jennin, already described, he and his party arrived at the ancient castle of Santorri, situated on a hill, and much resembling, he says, the old castellated buildings in England. "Having ascended to the castle," he continues, "we were admitted within the gate, beneath a vaulted passage, quite dark from its tortuous length and many windings. In the time of the Crusades, it must have been impregnable; yet is there no account of it in any author, and certainly it is not of later construction than the period of the holy wars. The governor received us into a large vaulted chamber, resembling what is called the keep in some of our old Norman castles, which it so much resembled, that if we consider the part acted by the Normans in these wars, it is possible this building may have owed its origin to them. A number of weapons, such as guns, pistols, sabres, and poignards, hung round the walls. Suspended with these, were the saddles, gilded stirrups, and rich housings, belonging to the lord of the citadel. Upon the floor were couched his greyhounds; and his hawkers stood waiting in the yard before the

⁷ Mauadrell, p. 68. Both this traveller and Pietro della Valle, state that these remains, though few, gave signs of a more than ordinary splendour. Viaggi. t. i. p. 325.

⁸ D' Arvieux Memoires, p. 86.

door of the apartment; so that everything contributed to excite (p. 112) ideas of other times, and a scene of former ages seemed to be realized before our eyes. The figure of the governor himself was not the least interesting part of the living picture. He had a long red beard, and wore a dress as distinguished by feudal magnificence and military grandeur as it is possible to imagine. He received us with the usual hospitality of his countrymen; dismissed the escort which had accompanied us; seemed proud of placing us under the protection of his peculiar soldiers; and allowed us a guard, appointed from his own troops, to insure our safety as far as Napolose. We had some conversation with him upon the disordered state of the country, particularly of Galilee. He said that the rebel Arabs were in great number upon all the hills near the plain of Esdraelon; that they were actuated at this critical juncture by the direst motives of revenge and despair, for the losses they had sustained in consequence of the ravages committed by Djezzar's army; but that he believed we should not meet with any molestation in our journey to Jerusalem."⁹

The road from the castle of Santorri to Napolose, Nablouse, or Neapolis, the Sichem of former times, passes over a rough and mountainous tract of country. When Maundrell visited this place in 1697, he found it in a very mean condition, though with a large population, and consisting mainly of two streets, running parallel to each other under Mount Gerizim. In his other mention of the city, he says, "It stands in a narrow valley between Mount Gerizim on the south, and Ebal on the north, being built at the foot of the former, for so the situation both of the city and mountain is laid down by Josephus. Gerizim," he adds, "hangeth over Sichem; and Moses commanded to erect an altar towards the east, not far from Sichem, between Mount Gerizim, on the right hand (that is, to one looking eastward, on the south) and Ebal on the left (that is, on the north) which so plainly assigns the position of these two mountains, that it may be wondered how geographers should come to differ so much about it; or for what reason Adrichomius should place them both on the same side of the valley of Sichem."¹⁰

An old Italian traveller, Pietro della Valle, traversed this same district in the year 1616. Having described the country around as most beautiful and fertile, he says, "that he found the city Napolosa exceedingly well inhabited."¹¹ According to Dr. Clarke's account, a great improvement must have taken place in the external appearance of Sichem since the time of Maundrell. "The view of this place," says the former, "much surprised us, as we had not expected to find a city of such magnitude in the road to Jerusalem. It seems to be the metropolis of a very rich and (p. 113) extensive country, abounding with provisions and all the necessary articles of life, in much greater profusion than the town of Acre. White bread was exposed for sale in the streets, of a quality superior to any that is to be found elsewhere throughout the Levant. The governor of Napolose received and regaled us with all the magnificence of an Eastern sovereign. Refreshments of every kind known in the country were set before us; and when we supposed the list to be exhausted, a most sumptuous dinner was brought in."

⁹ Travels, Part II. p. 608. Bnckhardt says, that the villages belonging to this district can raise an army of five thousand men. He adds, they are a restless people, continually in dispute with each other, and frequently in insurrection against the Pasha. Djezzar never succeeded in completely subduing them; and Junot, with a corps of fifteen hundred French soldiers, was defeated by them. P. 342.

¹⁰ Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, 1697, March 24th.

¹¹ *Habitata honestamente*. Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, Il Peüegrino. Boma, 1662, p. 322,

"There is nothing in the, Holy Land," continues the writer, "finer than the view of Napolose, from the heights around it. As the traveller descends towards it from the hills, it appears luxuriantly embosomed in the most delightful and fragrant bowers; half concealed by rich gardens and by stately trees, collected into groves, all around the bold and beautiful valley in which it stands. Trade seems to flourish among its inhabitants. Their principal employment is in making soap; but the manufactures of the town supply a very widely extended neighbourhood, and they are exported to a great distance upon camels. In the morning after our arrival, we met caravans coming from Grand Cairo, and noticed others reposing in the large olive-plantations near the gate."

Pietro della Valle states that Sichem, in his time, was the principal seat of the Samaritans; but that there was a saying common amongst the Jews, that, in whatever place they made their abode, they could never reach to the number of ten families.¹²

The same Pietro della Valle used great efforts while at Sichem to obtain a copy of the Scriptures in use among the Samaritans. The French ambassador at Constantinople had earnestly requested him to spare no pains in seeking to make this acquisition; and Pietro remarks, that he had good reason for this anxiety on the subject, for that in those ancient copies of the Scriptures, written in the Samaritan character, the pure and faithful sincerity of the text might be preserved in passages which, it was possible, had been corrupted by the Jews since the death of Christ. Maundrell was also engaged in some interesting inquiries while at Sichem. "Upon one of these mountains, Ebal or Gerizini," he says, "God commanded the children of Israel to set up great stones, plastered over and inscribed with the body of their law; and to erect an altar, and to offer sacrifices, feasting and rejoicing before the Lord. But now whether *Gerizim* or *Ebal* was the place appointed for this *solemnity*, there is some cause to doubt. The Hebrew Pentateuch, and ours from it, assigns *Mount Ebal* for this use, but the Samaritan asserts it to be *Gerizim*."

Respecting this matter, Maundrell entered into conversation with the chief-priest of the Samaritans. This priest, it is said, "pretended that the Jews had maliciously altered their text, out of odium to the Samaritans, putting for *Gerizim*, *Ebal*, upon no other account, but only because the Samaritans worshipped on the former mountain, which they would have, for that reason, not to be the true place appointed by (p. 114) God for his worship and sacrifice. To confirm this, he pleaded that *Ebal* was the mountain of cursing; (Deut. xi. 29 ;) and in its own nature an unpleasant place; but, on the contrary, *Gerizim* was the mountain of blessing, by God's own appointment, and also in itself fertile and delightful; from whence he inferred the probability that this latter must have been the true mountain appointed for those religious festivals; and not, as the Jews have corruptly written it, *Ebal*. We observed it to be in some measure true, that which he pleaded concerning the nature of both mountains; for though neither of the mountains has much to boast of as to its pleasantness, yet as one passes between them, *Gerizim* seems to discover a somewhat more verdant, fruitful aspect than *Ebal*. The reason of which may be, because, fronting towards the north, it is sheltered from the heat of the sun by its own shade; whereas *Ebal*, looking southward, and receiving the sun that comes directly upon it, must in consequence be rendered more scorched and unfruitful. The Samaritan priest could not say that any of those great stones which God directed Joshua to set up *were now* to be seen in *Mount Gerizim*; which, were they now extant, would determine the question

¹² Viaggi, p. 323.

clearly on his side."¹³ Like Pietro della Valle, Maundrell was unsuccessful in his attempt to obtain a copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch; he adds, however, a circumstance which gives us but a poor idea of the value of the priest's knowledge; for he says, "The priest showed me a copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch, but would not be persuaded to part with it upon any consideration. He had likewise the first volume of the English Polyglot, which he seemed to esteem equally with his own manuscript."

When Mr. Elliott visited Nablouse,¹⁴ he was shown in the synagogue of the Samaritans a copy of the Pentateuch on two rollers, which the priest and others declared to be the oldest manuscript in the world. According to their statement, it was written by Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron. Mr. Elliott says that it bears marks of great age, and is patched in different places with pieces of parchment. "Some of the learned," he adds, "are of opinion that it is only a transcript from Ezra's copy, written again in the old Hebrew or Phoenician letter, out of which Ezra transcribed it into that of the Chaldeans, then first adopted, and since commonly used by the Jews. Others are disposed to regard it as an independent record, which has been preserved ever since the days of Jeroboam, first by the ten revolting tribes, and subsequently by the Samaritans."

The opinions here alluded to respecting the copy of the Pentateuch in use among the Samaritans, have been modified and multiplied in the course of critical debate. But of late years, the value assigned to the decision of the learned German scholar Gesenius, has almost silenced the controversy. According to the inquiries of this profound critic, the Samaritan copy of the five books of Moses possesses no value as a guide in determining the correct reading of the ancient Scriptures. But still (p. 115) it is a precious relic of antiquity; and, differing so little as it does, and that in no important matter, from the Hebrew Pentateuch, it affords an unquestionable testimony to the general integrity of the Bible as we now possess it.

It is only in Nablouse that Samaritans, properly so called, are now to be found. But, few as they are in number, they retain all the peculiarities of their ancestors, and illustrate, in a very remarkable manner, some of the most interesting passages of the New Testament. During the middle ages, their existence as a distinct people appears to have attracted little notice. They shared with the other inhabitants of Palestine the evils which war, and its attendant convulsions, brought upon the land; nor was it till the latter half of the sixteenth century, that European scholars began to feel any curiosity respecting their character or customs. Julius Scaliger, a man of great erudition, led the way in the inquiries now commenced. He impressed upon the minds of contemporary scholars, the importance of obtaining a copy of that portion of the Scriptures which the Samaritans possessed in the original character; the character, that is, which the Hebrews used before the captivity; after which, as is well known, they employed that of the Chaldees. Scaliger's wish was furthered by the old Italian traveller whom we have quoted, Pietro della Valle. This zealous and devout pilgrim, as he loved to call himself, after failing to procure a copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch at Cairo, Gaza, or Nablouse, was rewarded for his labour by obtaining at Damascus both a copy of the Pentateuch itself, in the Samaritan character, and also a Samaritan version of that portion of Scripture.¹⁵ Our own venerable

¹³ Journey, p. 60.

¹⁴ Travels, vol. ii. p. 397.

¹⁵ The former of these he gave to the French ambassador, who sent it as a present to the fathers of the Oratoire de Saint-Honore'. Memoire sur l'Etat Actuel des Samaritains, par M.deSacy, p. 14.

Archbishop Usher procured at great expense six copies of this Pentateuch; and ten others were subsequently obtained by English scholars, or through their instrumentality.

It is an interesting fact, that the Samaritans have listened eagerly, at different times, to reports respecting the existence of remnants of their race in other parts of the world. At present it is said, the only Samaritans in the world are at Nablouse; and their number amounts to no more than eighty persons.¹⁶ Several were formerly to be found in Cairo, and various provinces of the East; and it was at one time reported that traces of them were discovered in European countries. A correspondence was commenced with the Samaritans of Nablouse and Cairo by the indefatigable Joseph Scaliger. His letters were answered; but such was the imperfect means of communication in those times between distant countries, that more than twenty years elapsed before the epistles written by the Samaritans reached the hands of any one competent to give them to the public.

Rather more than sixty years after the death of Joseph Scaliger, Robert Huntington,¹⁷ who, like Maundrell, was chaplain to the English factory at Aleppo, (p. 116) made a journey to Jerusalem, and entered, on his arrival at Nablouse, into a long conference with the Samaritans of that city. The interest which he appeared to take on the subject of their worship and customs, struck the Samaritans with astonishment, and they asked him if there were any Israelites in his own country.¹⁸ He replied in the affirmative; but it is somewhat difficult to understand in what sense he gave this answer; whether, that is, he understood the word Israelite in its most extended sense; or, whether he really believed that there were at that time Samaritans in the British isles. Having, however, heard his reply, they put a manuscript in his hand, and their surprise was redoubled when they saw that he could read their characters. Convinced by this circumstance that there were Israelites in England, they had also no longer any doubt but that these Israelites were their brethren. Huntington, taking advantage of this notion, advised them to write to these their supposed brethren; to state to them the principal points of their religion, especially those which distinguished them from the Jews; and to send with their letter a copy of the Law written in the Samaritan character. They immediately gave him the latter, and eight days after, sent the letter after him to Jerusalem which they had written to their brethren in England. Both the letter and the manuscript were subsequently transmitted to Thomas Marshall, the learned rector of Exeter College, Oxford. This accomplished scholar answered the letter, and the Samaritans were sufficiently encouraged by the notice which they received, to continue the correspondence for several years. Ludolf, a learned German of Francfort, also opened a correspondence with them in 1684, and two letters were received by him, written in the Hebrew language, but the Samaritan character.

After a long interval, during which this interesting subject was almost entirely neglected, the attention of European scholars was again directed to the inquiry, by the zeal of M. Gregoire, a French prelate, who obtained from the various consuls sent by his government to the East, in 1808, many valuable notices respecting the state of the

¹⁶ Elliott. Travels, vol. ii. p. 392.

¹⁷ Memoire sur l'Etat des Samarit, p. 16.

¹⁸ A very curious account of the Samaritans is given by Sir John Maundevill, in his " Voiage and Travaile," written in the fourteenth century. He speaks particularly of their belief in only one God; of their holding the Bible, "after the letter, and *using the Psaniere as the Jewes doe*; of their regarding themselves as the right sons of God, and being his best beloved among all other folk; and of their believing that to them belongeth the heritage which he has appointed for his beloved children." He also mentions their difference of dress, and their red turbans. C. ix. p. 109.

Samaritans. The communications which passed between the persons employed by the French authorities and the Samaritans, were at length committed to the care of the celebrated orientalist, de Sacy. On these he founded a memoir, and certain questions, which he addressed to the Samaritan priest, Salaméh, son of Tobias; and the answer which he received affords the best information we can expect to obtain respecting this remarkable people.¹⁹

From the abstract which M. de Sacy has given of the matters contained in the (p. 117) priest's letter, we learn that the Samaritans retain in all its strictness, the belief in only one God, to whom alone they render divine worship. The reports which had been spread accusing them of having a dove on their altar, or on the curtains or cover of the Law, and to which they were said to bow, are indignantly confuted; and the priest demands, how it is possible we should admit such an abomination into the house of God?

To the inquiry which M. de Sacy made respecting their continued use of sacrifices, he received for answer, that that part of their worship had, with one exception, ceased, since the end of the time of grace, and the disappearance of the Tabernacle. It is added, that their pontiffs, the priests of the family of Aaron, have substituted for the oblation of sacrifices the recital of certain prayers, which they have composed for the use of the faithful, and to enable them to honour God, and pray rightly for mercy, and the pardon of their sins. But the sacrifice of the Passover is still observed with all its rites. It can only be legitimately offered on Mount Gerizim; but about twenty-five years before the period when Salaméh's letter was written, the Samaritans were prevented from ascending this mountain, and they have since then offered the sacrifice within the city, encouraging themselves with the belief, that it forms a part of the *holy place*. In the act of killing the victim they turn themselves towards the mountain. They do the same in their solemn prayers, because that mountain, they say, is the house of the Almighty, the tabernacle of His angels, the place of the presence of His majesty, and the place appointed for sacrifices.

To the question, whether the paschal lamb must be of any particular kind, no answer was given; but to that respecting the bitter herbs eaten with it, Salaméh replied, that the Samaritans eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

Many learned men, says M. de Sacy, have supposed that the Samaritans do not believe in angels, or in a resurrection, and eternal rewards and punishment. He, therefore, put direct questions on these subjects. On the first, Salaméh answers, "We believe in the holy angels, which are in heaven." On the latter, he says "With regard to that which you observe in relation to the dead, that they will arise at the day of judgment, we acknowledge the truth of this doctrine." This is followed by a quotation from one of their prayers, and by passages from the Song of Moses; the only testimony, it is observed, which, receiving the Pentateuch, and not the other Scriptures, they could adduce in illustration of their belief.

The inquiries which M. de Sacy made as to their notions of the Messiah were very imperfectly satisfied. They appear to have confounded the Shiloh promised as a conqueror and deliverer, with some enemy of their race. Some have supposed that Solomon, others that Christ was pointed at, in their allusions to this subject; but they

¹⁹ Memoire, p. 37.

evidently share with the Jews the darkest of prejudices in reference to the Saviour of the human race.²⁰

(p. 118) Of their notions respecting the law written in their own peculiar character, we have already spoken. Some other points of less importance are noticed in the Memoir drawn up by M. de Sacy. Thus, in respect to marriage, they appear to be very doubtful as to the lawfulness of polygamy. Yielding to the corrupt influences of their age and country, they permit a man to marry two wives in the first instance; but if either of these wives die, the widower must remain for the rest of his life contented with the one left, unless she also die, when he is again permitted to make a double marriage.²¹ A peculiar sacredness is considered to pertain to their houses and synagogues. The latter retain more of the character of the ancient tabernacle than the Jews allow to their synagogues. This, perhaps, may be accounted for partly by the circumstance above alluded to, the proximity of the city of the Samaritans to Mount Gerizim; and still more by the belief prevailing among them, that their priests are regularly descended from the family of Aaron.

When, in the correspondence last alluded to, they were informed that none of their brethren now existed in any European country, they replied that such could not be the case; for that a hundred years back they had received information of many of their race and communion dwelling in a land which they named Askenaz, supposed to be Genoa, or some part of Germany. There is something sad and affecting in the passionate desire of this little remnant of a once mighty people to prove themselves not alone in the world. Happy would it be for them were the light to dawn upon their darkness, and lead them to the true Israel of God!

While Napoli, Nablouse, or Sichem, is itself thus interesting as reminding us of the times when it was the capital²² of a still powerful, though degenerate people, the mind contemplates with a far deeper interest, the pastoral scenes by which it is surrounded, and over which the spirit of old tradition broods with so holy a delight. It was in its green valleys, on the sunny slopes of its hills, and along its fertile plains, that the fathers of God's chosen people fed their flocks.²³ Fountains and rivulets without number irrigate this verdant tract of land; and it was this, it is said, which Jacob rejoiced, with his last blessing, to bestow upon Joseph, when after assuring him that God would bring him back to the land of his fathers, he added: "I give thee a portion above thy brethren; which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."²⁴ And here repose the remains of Joseph, the greatest of the characters in the ancient history of the world, when compared with kings and statesmen. His sepulchre is in the narrow valley, between Gerizim and Ebal, just outside the city, and occupying a portion of the ground purchased by Jacob of Hamor, the father of Shechem.²⁵ A small mosque points out the spot, venerated, it is said, with equal ardour by Jews, Samaritans, Mussulmans, and Christians.²⁶ (p. 119) Other tombs are also pointed out to the devout notice of the pilgrim.

²⁰ Memoires sur l'Etat actuel des Samaritains.

²¹ Memoires, p. 67.

²² This it became after the fall of Samaria. The present town is generally believed to occupy a position further westward in the valley than the ancient Israelitish city. Schubert, Reise in das Morgenland, b. III. p. 142.

²³ Gen. xxxvii. 12.

²⁴ Gen. xlviii. 21, 22.

²⁵ Gen. xxxiii. 19

²⁶ Maundrell, Elliott.

Eleazar, the son of Aaron, and Joshua, that mightiest, holiest, and most victorious of captains, were here gathered to their fathers; and as the mind contemplates their last resting-place, it is stirred with a profound feeling of the past; of the ages in which the instruments of divine power had more of the lustre about them of a divine heroism.

Jacob's well is on the road to Jerusalem, about twenty minutes distance from the town, at the extremity of the valley of Shechem. Maundrell says: "If it should be questioned whether this be the very well which it is represented to be, seeing it may be suspected to stand too remote from Sychar for women to come so far to draw water, it is answered, that probably the city extended further this way in former times than it does now, as may be conjectured from some pieces of a very thick wall, still to be seen not far from hence. Over the well there stood formerly a large church, erected by that great and devout patroness of the Holy Land, the Empress Helena. But of this the voracity of time, assisted by the hands of the Turks, has left nothing but a few foundations remaining.²⁷ The well is covered at present with an old stone vault, into which you are let down through a very strait hole; and then removing a broad flat stone, you discover the mouth of the well itself. It is dug in a firm rock, and is about three yards in diameter, and thirty-five in depth; five of which we found full of water. This confutes a story commonly told to travellers, who do not take the pains to examine the well, namely, that it is dry all the year round, except on the anniversary of that day on which our blessed Saviour sat upon it, when it bubbles up with abundance of water."

Pietro della Valle, who visited the spot above eighty years before Maundrell,²⁸ describes the well as almost entirely hidden and buried by the rubbish which the people of the neighbourhood had thrown over it, to prevent their cattle from falling in.²⁹ Mr. Elliott found it dry, and partially choked with the ruins of the building said to have been built by Helena. He adds his reasons for believing it to be the well by which our Lord conversed with the woman of Samaria. "First," he says, "springs supplied by mountain-streams generally find their exit in a valley. Secondly, our Lord was travelling from the holy city into Galilee, when he halted to refresh himself, and must necessarily have passed this way. And, thirdly, the scene of his conversation with the woman is placed near Sychar, which, there is little doubt, stood on the hill, directly above the reputed well."³⁰ Dr. Clarke says, eloquently, "The spot is so distinctly marked by the evangelist, and so little liable (p. 120) to uncertainty from the circumstance of the well itself, and the features of the country, that if no tradition existed for its identity, the site of it could hardly be mistaken. Perhaps no Christian scholar ever attentively read the fourth chapter of St. John without being struck with the numerous internal evidences of truth which crowd upon the mind in its perusal. Within so small a compass it is impossible to find in other writings so many sources of reflection and of interest. Independently of its importance as a theological document, it concentrates so much information, that a volume might be filled with the illustration which it reflects on the history of the Jews, and on the

²⁷ The venerable Bede describes the well as at that time within a church built in the form of a cross; and in the year 740, Bishop Willibald performed his devotions in the sacred edifice. Brocardus in 283, mentions the fountain, but not the church. Quaresmius, *Histórica Elucidatio*, t. ii. lib. vii. c. v.

²⁸ *Journey*, p. 61.

²⁹ *Viaggi*. b. ii. p. 325.

³⁰ *Travels*, vol. ii. p. 390. Those who are interested in the early history of the church, will feel an additional degree of veneration for Sichem, arising from the fact that it was the birth-place of the venerable Justin Martyr.

geography of their country. The journey of our Lord from Judaea into Galilee; the cause of it; his passage through the territory of Samaria; his approach to the metropolis of this country; its name; his arrival at the Amorite field, which terminates the narrow valley of Sichem; the ancient custom of halting at a well; the female employment of drawing water; the disciples sent into the city for food, by which its situation out of the town is obviously implied; the question of the woman, referring to existing prejudices which separated the Jews from the Samaritans; the depth of the well; the oriental allusion contained in the expression, *living water*; the history of the well, and the customs thereby illustrated; and the worship upon Mount Gerizim; all occur within the space of twenty verses."³¹

But affecting as are the associations connected with the view of Sichem, there is one feeling which they excite more powerful than all the rest. Neither the dispensations of Providence, nor the calls of Divine love, have availed to move the proud hearts of the people inhabiting that city set upon a hill. They are a monument and a spectacle to the world of error the most unteachable; of misfortunes the most afflicting. From age to age their numbers have been decreasing; like the soil on the once beautiful terraces which the storms of successive ages have worn away, leaving but the bare rock, the families of Israel have been swept along by the flood of time, or the desolating stream of war and revolution. There was nothing to build them up; and all that is left of them is but the remnant which seems, like Ebal or Gerizim, only spared to mark a particular province in the Divine dispensations. Through this, they have a root and foundations which no storm can shake; and as the bare rock, with the dews of heavenly blessing upon it, may once more rejoice in beauty, so may this now despised race again prove their title to reverence as a part of God's elect people, and take their station among the hosts of Israel.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

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Henry Stebbing (1687–1763)

³¹ Travels, vol. ii. p. 516. Schubert also very beautifully describes the whole of the scenery about Silbem. Reise in das Murgeland, b. iii. p. 152.



Better photo of the Samaritans shewing the book of the Law