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(Page 3b) **MODERN SAMARITANS**

At the Congregational Church yesterday Rev. H.E. Jewitt, of Redwood City, officiated in the absence of Rev. Dr. Dwinell, the pastor. In the evening a missionary concert was held, and on that occasion Mr. Jewitt, who has the advantage of extended personal observation in Palestine, spoke of "The Modern Samaritans, as Seen by an Eye-witness." He said that Shechem is the only place in the world where the sect known as Samaritans is to be found. Politically, they became independent of Judea when the ten tribes revolted, under Jeroboam. Ecclesiastically, they are found claiming substantial agreement with the Jews as late as the return from captivity. But from that time onward their hostility to the Jews increased rapidly. In the fourth century, B.C., they obtained permission from the Persian King to build a temple on Mt. Gerizim, which should be to them what the temple at Jerusalem was to the Jews. This temple was destroyed in the year (B.C.) 129. Its ruins now constitute one of the attractions of a visit to the mountain. This Samaritan race was so powerful that even in the fourth century of the Christian era they were regarded as the "chief and most dangerous adversaries of Christianity." In the fifth century they began to sink rapidly into obscurity. At present day there is a mere remnant of the race extant. Less than 140 men, women and children comprise all that remnant of this once strong nation, and these few are gathered together in Shechem, where they have a synagogue.

Soon after our arrival in the city we were met by Youhannah El Karey, an Arab missionary educated in England and laboring in Shechem. He took us to the Samaritan quarters. Arriving at the house of the high priest, we were conducted to the flat roof, where half a dozen prominent Samaritans were assembled. As the sun was setting we all descended to the little synagogue, where about fifty men and boys were gathered for worship. The floor was covered with mats, upon which no shoes or boots may be worn, according to oriental custom. The side of the room toward Mount Gerizim was hung with satin drapery. Here, in a recess, the high priest took his position; both he and the people kneeling with faces toward the holy mountain. The service lasted half an hour, and consisted of the chanting of prayers. Sitting upon the flat roof outside, looking through the grated windows of a small dome into the room below, were a number of veiled women, who, like all oriental women, were denied entrance into the assembly of men. This Samaritan place of worship is famous, not only as the last remaining synagogue of the sect to be found in the world, but also as the depository of the famous copy of the books of Moses known as the Samaritan Pentateuch. This Parchment is guarded by the high priest with jealous care. On the day following the service, accompanied by an interpreter, we followed the priest into the synagogue, and saw the precious parchment. The roll is fifteen inches wide, and is said to be nearly sixty feet long. It contains the five books of Moses, written in the Samaritan text. This comprises the whole of the Samaritan Bible, and only about sixteen copies of this, in whole or in part, exist at the present time. The Samaritans claim that this version is about thirty-five hundred years old, and that this copy is older than the Christian era by twenty years. The version is traced by critical investigators, however, no further back than the time of the second temple, and this copy to the sixth or seventh century of the Christian era. But even this makes this manuscript over twelve hundred years old- a rare old document. In the Samaritan language there are but three or four works written in the Samaritan text.

Shechem lies at the base of Mount Gerizim. We made the ascent of the mountain along a narrow trail. A little to the east of the summit, we came upon a small enclosure, within which was a trench. In this we found ashes and the charred bones of lambs. Not far away was another pit, in which the Passover lambs had been roasted a week before our arrival. The Jews in Jerusalem and elsewhere no longer sacrifice a lamb at the Passover, the reason assigned being that the temple site is in the hands of the Moslems. We attended a Passover service in Jerusalem where, in place of the lamb, there was the shank bone of a lamb. The Samaritans, however, retain possession of their sacred mountain, and so assemble annually near the ruins of their old temple. After a religious service- which lasts till nearly sunset- several young men lead in five or six lambs; just as the sun goes down the high priest recites rapidly Exodus xii., 6. While he is speaking the lambs are seized and their throats are cut. The young men strip off the skins of the animals and thrust wooden spits through the carcasses, and hang them in one of the trenches, which has been heated sufficiently to roast them. About midnight, in the clear light of the full moon, the lambs are removed from the pit; the meat is eaten in haste and the ground is searched for mislaid pieces, and the bones and all remnants of flesh are thrown into the shallow trench and burned, according to the Mosaic command.

The little remnant of the once powerful Samaritan nation is fast dying out. Their customs, their worship and their sacred book are, therefore, of striking interest. Apparently not many years will pass before it will (next column) be written of them, as a race, that they are extinct.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

Rev. H.E. Jewitt is Rev. Henry Erastus Jewett (1842-1910) retired to Berkley Cal.

Rev. Dr. Dwinell is Israel Edson Dwinell D.D.(1820- 1890) Cal.- Visited Isrel.

Brother El Karey was **Youhannah El Karey**, a son of an native of nablus, who was a member of the Greek Church in Nablus. Kary met Rev. John Mills and attended the Baptist College, Pontypool and Regent's Park. He married Alice Maude Mary Roper, daughter of Moses Roper in Wales. He is mentioned in *That Goodly Mountain and Lebanon: Being the narrative of a ride through the countries of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee into Syria, in the month of August, 1872* by **Thomas Jenner**, and *The Ride Through Palestine* by **Rev. John W. Dulles, 1881**