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**The Colonial Church Chronicle,  
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(p. 191) THE MODERN SAMARITANS.

(From the "*English Churchman*.")

A LETTER to the *Times* from Yakub esb-Shaliby, "Chief of the Samaritans," has called attention to the present condition of what has been called "the oldest and smallest sect in the world." However completely we may reject the claim of the Samaritans to be genuine Israelites, and side with those scholars who regard them as having next to nothing of descent from the old Ten Tribes, we Christians cannot be indifferent to the fortunes of a community with one of whose members our Blessed Lord held the memorable discourse recorded by St. John, and which furnished converts to the ministry of not only His Apostles but Himself. Many predictions are observable in the Old Testament, bearing on "Ephraim" as well as upon "Judah;" but even if this body has by birthright no share in such mystic destiny, we have amply sufficient reason for taking a special interest in the surviving remnant which nestles still at the foot of the sacred mountain Gerizim.

The Samaritans were probably never numerous, yet in the twelfth century Benjamin of Tudela found some of them at Caesarea, Antioch, and Damascus, and yet later they were met with at Gaza, Jaffa, Antioch, and even Constantinople. But long-continued persecutions have at length reduced them almost to nothing; they have now dwindled to about 150 souls at Nablus. Here they preserve in their synagogue their one priceless heirloom, a manuscript of the Pentateuch, written, as they affirm, by Abishua, the grandson of Aaron; and here they annually ascend to the site of their Temple (already in ruins when Our Lord came) for the celebration of the Passover. Of late years several English and American travelers (p. 192) have visited them, and one—the Rev. J. Mills<sup>1</sup>—has embodied the results of his researches in a peculiarly interesting volume, which we would commend to all curious on the subject. Their condition appears to be in many respects pitiable. So long as Mr. Finn was British Consul at Jerusalem they had a warm and influential friend, but since then they have again become a prey to their Mohammedan oppressors. "Latterly," writes eshShaliby :—

"We have been excluded from the *neglis*, or town council, we have no longer any voice in the management of affairs, and are absolutely at the mercy of the other inhabitants. In vain have I applied for redress to the Governor of Damascus."

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<sup>1</sup> Three Months' Residence at Nablus, and an Account of the Modern *Samaritans*. By the Rev. John Mills. Murray: 1864.

Mr. Mills' work confirms the fact that the Mohammedans who form the bulk of the population of Nablus are peculiarly bigoted and hostile to all other religionists; he himself was followed with curses by Arab children whenever he walked through the streets. He wrote, in 1864:—

"They are the most fanatical and wicked of all in Palestine, and the local government, instead of exercising an ameliorating influence over its people, has, for years past, only made bad worse. The immoral state of things, both in high and low places, together with all the constant conflicts between parties which have disturbed the town and neighbourhood for centuries, have inured both the people and their officers to deeds of rapine and violence."

The local Greeks are—at least now—much better off than the poor and small Samaritan remnant. They have the potent influence of Russia constantly available in their behalf—just as the Romanists are able to look, with never-failing confidence, to France. The lot of the Samaritans might have been better had not the Protestant Mission, commenced by the devoted Dr. Bowen (afterwards Bishop of Sierra Leone), been well-nigh ruined by an untoward accident—a Missionary having chanced to shoot a Mohammedan youth. At present a converted Arab, the Rev. Yohannah el-Karey, pursues a similar effort, but we believe with very small success, and the prospect which a few years ago seemed so bright has again been overcast.

The author of the letter to the *Times* has formerly visited England, and returned to the East with money contributed for the relief of his suffering kinsmen. We regret to know that dissatisfaction was excited at Nablus by the manner in which this sum was expended. At present, however, the "Chief of the Samaritans" does not ask for money, but only for a renewal of effective political interference on the part of British diplomacy. Considering how much Turkey owes to English arms and English money, our ambassador and consuls need not be slow in constraining that Government to observe the primary duties of justice and tolerance towards a little inoffensive community. But the appeal we have been noticing ought also to revive in Christian hearts a longing for the conversion, in this its eleventh hour, of that community to faith in Him whom His enemies styled by their name, and who—as many have thought—applied it to Himself in one of His most touching parables.

### **Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com**

This reference is not located 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

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