

CHRISTIAN

VISITOR.



A Family Newspaper: devoted to

Religious & General Intelligence.

REV. E. D. VERY,

"BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE—BY LOVE UNFEIGNED."—ST. PAUL.

EDITOR.

Volume IV.

SAINT JOHN, NEW-BRUNSWICK, FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 1851.

Number 1.

BLINDNESS.

Blind!—Blind!—shut out from men!
 Prisoned from light in a starless den!
 I strain, but I cannot see thee, love!
 I look below—I look above:
 I dare the broad, bright, dazzling sun,
 The glittering waves as they leap and run,
 The shining cliffs, the burning shore;
 But all is night—
 Endless night—
 For ever, and ever, and evermore!

What are the skies and its suns to me?
 What is the mighty, mighty sea?
 The rushing rivers—the solid land?
 The blooming heather whereon we stand,
 And strive on the wondrous world to look?
 All is new like a sealed book!
 I struggle, I pray, I turn it o'er;
 But all is night—
 Endless night—
 For ever, and ever, and evermore!

God! Am I alone in this world of wo?
 Left—lost forsaken?—ah, no!—ah no!
 There is one beside who will ne'er forget:
 I see thee not, but I feel thee yet—
 The truest heart and the firmest mind,
 That ever kept watch by the helpless blind!
 Thy hand unlocketh a heaven-bright door?
 And the ghastly night
 Now dieth in light,
 For ever, and ever, and evermore!

We two will wander away—away—
 Where nothing is known but one divine day;
 Nothing of darkness—human strife;
 Peril or grief, or the pain of life;
 But all like our dreams of the stars above—
 (And thou wilt be ever beside me, love!)
 Come on sweet bride of the blind! we'll soar
 Beyond the night,
 Into endless light,
 For ever, and ever, and evermore!

[From the New York Observer.]

THE MODERN SAMARITANS.

What has become of the descendants of Samaritans, of whom so much is said in the Bible? Are there still members of this ancient sect? And if so, what are their opinions, their manners, habits &c.? I suppose that many of your readers have sometimes asked these questions; and a recent work which I have in my hands enables me to answer with accuracy.

Yes, there are Samaritans still. They have, at various periods, corresponded with learned men and theologians of Europe, who have sought from them information of their religious and social state. Thus, for example, towards the end of the seventeenth century, the celebrated historian *Basnage* received letters written by their priests. The Jansenist bishop *Gregory*, who lived in the beginning of the present century, obtained communications from them. One of our most learned contemporaries, the Orientalist *Sylvestre de Sacy*, employed the aid of French ambassadors or consuls to acquire new and more accurate information. Some German and English travellers have also visited the Samaritans. The result of all is a mass of documents upon this interesting people.

First of all, observe how wonderful the preservation of so small a people after so long a succession of generations. Here are men mingled with other nations; they have been created, persecuted and scattered; they have been enemies, not only the Turks, but Christians even, and the Jews properly called; they have suffered ignominy and contempt; yet, they have not wholly disappeared from the face of the earth! For eighteen hundred

years, they have stood a living testimony to the truth of several texts of the New Testament, and they continue to offer a picture of what their ancestors were.

Seek for descendants of pagan Greece and Rome: you do not find them. Idolatry is utterly, absolutely extinct in these countries where it formerly flourished so vigorously. But the two sects of Judaism are maintained to our days, because their existence was useful to confirm the truth of our Sacred Books. Admirable dispensation of God, who makes all concur to the strengthening of the Christian faith!

Formerly a few Samaritans lived in different countries of the East, in Cairo, Damascus, Jaffa, &c. But these scattered families became gradually extinct, or mingled with the other Jews. Those who still remain, with few exceptions, inhabit the town of *Naplous* (the ancient *Sichem* or *Samaria*). They number about 200 individuals, and live in a separate quarter called *Green-street*.

Political, domestic and intellectual state.

These Samaritans are under the dominion of Turks, who try in every way to extort money from them. Lately, in writing for aid to friends in Europe, they give an affecting account of their poverty. "We ask," said they, "some gifts for Mount Gerazim, for the prophets, for the poor, and for the priests of *Sichem*. Think of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of the land of Canaan which God gave them. Think also of our father Joseph, whose tomb is among us at *Sichem*, as well as the tombs of the prophets. The care of these monuments is confided to us; no one aids us in this; so, send us some of the gold and silver which God has given you, that we may restore the tombs, Mount Gerazim, the perpetual hill. Send us some alms for the sick and orphans of the place where Jehovah dwells; for we have much confidence in you."

Their ignorance too is very great. They have no schools, and the children receive but little instruction. They do not know their own history, and they fancy that the Israelites of France, England, Germany, and Italy are all Samaritans. This ignorance is not surprising. Devoted to the labors of agriculture, constantly oppressed by the Mussulmans, isolated from other nations, they do not feel the need of cultivating their minds. What do they care for the discoveries and progress of modern civilization? They have never heard of them.

The Samaritans are very proud of their origin. They maintain that they are descended from Jacob in a direct line through Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Their priests claimed, in the seventeenth century, to belong to the family of Aaron; but now they confess that their genealogy is not proved, and they are content to affirm that they descend from the tribe of Levi. I presume that they would be puzzled to furnish authentic documents to prove their assertion. But it is a harmless vanity. These priests enjoy rights and privileges which were attributed to the Levites by the law of Moses. They receive tithes, perform the duties of judges, and decide on all important matters.

The hatred of Samaritans towards the Jews still remains; so true it is that evil sentiments are the most difficult to root out! Some travellers say, indeed, that these hereditary enmities are somewhat mitigated; but the letters of Samaritans show the contrary. They confess frankly that they do not love the Jews, and do not wish to have any intercourse with them. They would think themselves dishonored and polluted, if they had dealings with those whom they regard as infidels and rebels against God. They detest and reject the very name of Jew.

How inveterate the depravity of the human heart! and how grateful should we be to Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has taught us not to regard these distinctions of nations and of races!

Samaritan Language.

The ordinary language of the Samaritans is the Arabic. They make use of their old idiom in their sacred books, and when they quote texts in their law, or write the names of their priests. They even maintain that the Samaritan language is the true Hebrew, the primitive Hebrew employed by God in the decalogue, the Hebrew of the patriarchs and of Moses. They say that David, Solomon, and the prophets posterior to Joshua corrupted the sacred language. But despite of the high value they attach to the idiom of their ancestors, they scarcely use it at all, in their ordinary intercourse. The Arabic being the prevailing language, they adopt it, to avoid increasing the resentments of their oppressors.

Sacred Books.

They have several copies of the Pentateuch, and among others a manuscript to which they attribute the highest antiquity. In their opinion, it is more than 3,000 years old. It is a copy of the books of Moses, written in the ancient Samaritan character. It is preserved in a velvet cover. The rolls of parchment are adorned with silver at the two ends; the cover is of green silk. This manuscript is much worn; but the letters are still quite legible. When the priest takes this manuscript, which is placed upon a platform behind a curtain, and shows it to the eyes of the faithful, they rise and bow with profound respect. The priest himself must make ablutions, put on his sacerdotal robes, and prostrate himself, before touching this sacred book. The author of this precious copy, according to the Samaritans is *Abisha*, grand-son of Aaron, and he made it thirteen years after the death of Moses. If this narrative were true, the Samaritan manuscript would be the most ancient of all that exist; but it is a mere tradition resting upon no real foundation.

Formerly, strangers,—the profane,—were forbidden even to look at this copy; but money overcomes obstacles. Some Europeans, having opened their purse to the poor inhabitants of *Naplous*, obtained leave to examine the book, and ascertained that it was seven or eight hundred years old. This calculation is rather different from that of the Samaritans. But they reply that envy and malice can alone contradict their testimony, and they persist in calling it *Abisha's* copy.

With the Pentateuch they have the books of *Joshua* and of *Judges*. At the head of the manuscript of *Joshua*, they have a brief chronicle from the creation of the world to *Mahomet*, the false prophet, whom they curse.—They do not put *Joshua* and *Judges* on a level with *Moses*, but place them apart in an appendix. Lastly, they have in their small library forms of prayer, some commentaries on the Pentateuch written in Arabic, some poems, and two translations of the books of *Moses*. These works are of little worth.

Religious creeds.

The creeds of the Samaritans accord sufficiently with the Pentateuch and are more pure even, in some respects, than those of the inhabitants of *Samaria* who lived in the times of Jesus Christ. They admit: 1st faith in God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob; 2d faith in Moses, his servant; 3d faith in the holy Law; 4th faith in Mount Gerazim, the house of God; 5th faith in a day of retribution.

The doctrine of the unity of God is fundamental with them. They respect the law which forbids the rendering to a creature the worship and homage due to God alone. Some Jews have accused the Samaritans of idolatrous

practices; but the latter have repelled with horror the reproach. "Our worship," say they, is addressed to God alone, according to the Law. We worship only Jehovah, who has neither beginning nor end. . . . Far from us be the thought of introducing abomination into the house of God!"

Several learned men have thought that the Samaritans deny the existence of angels.—But a more attentive study of their writings has changed this opinion. Angels are not in their view mere abstractions: they are real and living beings. "We believe," replied one of their priests to this question,— "we believe in holy angels who are in heaven."

As to the resurrection of the dead, they adopt the doctrine fully, and the doctors who have accused them of not believing it are in error. The Samaritans interpret of the immortality of the soul several texts of the Pentateuch, and belie also the assertion of some philosophers who pretend that Moses did not teach the doctrine of a life to come. They believe also in retributions beyond the grave. It is doubtful whether they pray for the dead. Mr. *Sylvestre de Sacy* presumes it from some passages in their letters; but the expressions are equivocal, and if they prayed for the dead, they would use clearer and more distinct language.

The notions of the Samaritans upon Adam's fall, the corruption of man and the need of redemption are sufficiently confused. They do not deny these doctrines, when they are stated; but neither do they affirm them explicitly.—Their sacrifices show, however, that they recognize the necessity of divine pardon.

(To be Continued.)

A Modern Jewish City.

Salonica is described by a correspondent of the *New York Evangelist*, as the most Jewish city to be found on earth. His description of this city, which he considers a most favorable point for missionary operations, is interesting:

Salonica is quite a Jewish city. Pass through the streets of Constantinople, and the porters, whom you meet, and who form so conspicuous a portion of the crowd, are nearly all Turks. Come to *Salonica*, and a crowd of Jews meet you at the landing to perform that office. Take a caique to go up the *Bosphorus*, and your caique-man is almost certainly a Greek. Come to *Salonica*, and Jewish boatmen surround the steamer to take you ashore. In the dry goods bazaar, half the vendors are Jews. The silk manufactories are in the hands of Jews. They sell the vegetables, and other eatables; and Saturday, when their shops are all shut, is a dull day for *Salonica*.

The man who does not provide his Saturday dinner on Friday, may fare worse than on washing-day. Collected here in such numbers, and constituting so large a part of the population, they are more free and unrestrained in the observance of their peculiar customs, and their character and habits are less modified by intercourse with "Gentiles," than in other cities. Whoever wishes to see modern Judaism as it is, should come *Salonica*. Probably no city in the world is so distinctively Jewish as this.

This renders *Salonica* a most favourable place for missionary operations among the Jews. Their numbers give them more of an independent feeling than they have elsewhere, and that feeling makes them less reserved and suspicious of intercourse with strangers.

There is no limit to the degree of intercourse a missionary may have with them, but that which his own time and strength set to it. They are a sociable people, fond of visiting and being visited, and the upper class of them, the 'hahamim,' or 'wise men,' (a term used instead of 'rabbi,') have little else