

AN IMPORTANT AND REMARKABLE DISCOVERY.

By LIEUT.-COL. F. MOLONY, O.B.E.

SUPPOSE someone asked us what form of worship Elijah, Elisha and the prophets of Israel followed in the northern kingdom, what should we say? Our reply probably would be that we wished we could answer definitely. For there is singularly little information given in the books of Kings. There is small doubt, however, that they worshipped and offered sacrifices in the High places. The good kings of Judah did this, and though in Israel worship became degraded, as, for example, Jeroboam the son of Nebat introduced the calves of Bethel and Dan, yet many refused to conform to this corrupt practice. In both Israel and Judah some offered a pure worship in the High places and some an adulterated worship. For instance, in 2 Kings xvi. 4, we read that Ahaz "Sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills and under every green tree." This was the idolatrous form which the prophets denounced. But, of course Elijah, Elisha and their successors offered a pure worship on the High places though we are not informed exactly what precise manner it followed.

We may be sure that Elisha did not attempt to send the Israelites three times a year to Jerusalem. The king of Israel would have effectually stopped that. The most that Elisha could do was to denounce idolatry, teach the pure worship of Jehovah, and try to restrict the sacrifices offered to God to definite places, where he and his assistants could keep check on the ritual. We know from 2 Kings iv. 9, that Elisha travelled about continually, was it not probably for this end?

If Elisha marked the places where he approved of sacrifices being made by setting up uncut stones at them, he had some good precedents for his action. See Gen. xxviii. 18, xxxi. 45, Joshua iv. 5, xxiv. 26, 1 Sam. vi. 18 and vii. 12.

It has long been known that Elisha's ministry had considerable success, because Esdras says in his second book, thirteenth chapter, 41st and 42nd verses (referring to the ten tribes which were carried away prisoners), "But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt. That they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land." This shows that Elisha had at least taught them what the statutes of God were.

Now these people of the ten tribes were probably aware that, if they travelled north or south far enough to get to an uninhabited country, it would land them in one with an uncomfortably cold or hot climate; so they most probably went east or west. Esdras says that they went to a region called Arsareth. An old map attributed

to Ptolemy shows Arsarata near the south-west corner of the Caspian, but the identification with Arsareth is very doubtful. Dr. Wolff writes, "Upon the height of Badagshaun are four free tribes of Israel; those of Naphtali, Dan, Zebulun and Asher." Also many Jews in Bokhara.

The Rev. Dr. Davis, of Ely, told the writer of a tribe called Jusufzai, situated near Waziristan and a little north of it. Dr. Davis served many years as a medical missionary on the north-west frontier of India. These Jusufzai are so like in face to other known descendants of Jacob, that many besides Dr. Davis are convinced that they are descended from Ephraim or Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

Mr. T. R. Glover, Public Orator at Cambridge, told us of a very exclusive tribe, living near Poona in India, called Beni-Israel. They make sacrifices, but do not observe the Day of Atonement. From this Mr. Glover concludes that they left Palestine before Titus' siege of Jerusalem.

The existence of the Jusufzai and Beni Israel make it probable that the year and a half "trek" which Esdras speaks of, was to India. But India was by no means an uninhabited land, even in those far back days; is it not probable, then, that part of the tribes went on towards China?

Evidence has now come to hand that they got to China, by at least 500 B.C., and that they have maintained there a pure worship of the true God such as Elisha may have taught their forefathers, though they have lost all their records.

The Rev. T. Torrance is a Presbyterian minister who worked for nearly forty years as a missionary of the American Bible Society. He spent his holidays in exploring the mountains of western China to ascertain the religious beliefs of the tribes. He was rewarded by election as F.R.G.S., and by discovering the religious secrets of the Chiang Min, a tribe whose habitat is in the mountains of the upper course of the Min river, a tributary of the great Yang-Tze-Kiang. Their district lies near the middle of western China, and 150 miles from Tibet.

Mr. Torrance published a book about them last year called *China's First Missionaries (Ancient Israelites)*, (Thynne & Co., 3s. 6d.). In this book Mr. Torrance gives much evidence that the Chiang are descended from the Patriarch Jacob, and probably from the so-called "Lost Ten Tribes."

This evidence is based on their faces, dwellings, towers, implements and traditions. It cannot be given fully here, but mention must be made that their traditions are that they are descended from twelve sons of one father, that they came from a very far country, that they were over three years on the way and crossed many great rivers. A glance at the map will show that if they came via India, they must have crossed that strange region where five great rivers flow close together in parallel courses for many miles.

Their religious beliefs and customs are remarkable. They are strict Monotheists and lay stress on the holiness of God. They hold that where God is worshipped an uncut stone should be set up. They

usually choose a block of quartz, for they prefer that everything used in their worship should be white. Their altars are also built of unhewn stone. They have three main sacrifices in the year : when the time for one of these is coming near, a lamb is chosen as near perfect as possible ; if it has any blemishes, a white cock is offered in addition to atone for these. The worshippers, their clothes and the lamb are all carefully cleansed. Their worship is at a sacred grove high up on the mountains. They assemble in the evening* ; thus distraction is rendered unlikely. The ceremony begins with prayers and chants and burning of incense. The lamb is then brought forward and the priest and elders kneel and place their hands on its head. It is then killed, but no bone must be broken in so doing. The blood is sprinkled on the white stone and on all sides. Part of the lamb is burnt upon the altar. The priest receives the shoulder, or foreleg and breast and skin as his portion. The rest is divided among the worshippers. The intestines † and inwards are cleansed, minced, cooked and eaten with unleavened bread. The Chiang have representations of the brazen serpent, and they used to have a custom very like the sending of the scapegoat into the wilderness, but the goats usually returned and ate the crops, yet they might not be touched. "According to their belief God does not require to be placated by man. God Himself provides the sacrifice." "They are very sure that the offering of sacrifices is not their invention, but divinely instituted." Indeed, it is very clear that they must hold this, or how can we account for their keeping their rites unchanged for such an immensely long period ? This may not be absolute proof that God instituted the sacrifices, but it seems good evidence.

Clearly all this points to the Chiang having derived their ceremonies from Elisha. But now we come to a still more interesting matter. The Chiang "solemnly assert that their sacrifices are only provisional ; they are but semblances of a supreme sacrifice yet to come. A divine agent is to come from heaven to be the great Sin-Bearer." Some call Him Je-Dsu. He is symbolized by a roll of white paper with a small skull in it. At the grove the Sacred Roll is planted in wheat seed, the usually accepted symbol of resurrection. A friendly Chiang man gave Mr. Torrance a summary of Chiang ritual which concludes, "The roll tells of Je-Dsu who is to come down from heaven and make atonement for sin like the lamb at the altar. When Je-Dsu descends that will be the true atonement." But it is necessary to remember that the roll is blank, the Chiang having lost all their documents *at least* 150 years ago, when they were subjugated by the Chinese.

From what source can the Chiang have got this wonderful expectation ? Abraham appears to have held it, for when he had been stayed from offering up Isaac on Mount Moriah he was so impressed by the importance of what had happened that he gave the place a significant name, "The Lord will provide." But they were the very words which he had addressed to his son in the morning concerning an intended sacrifice. Is it not probable that Abraham meant, "God will one day provide the efficacious sacrifice, of which our animal offerings are only

* See Gen. xxxi. 54.

† Cf. The Epistle of Barnabas, 7.

prophetic pictures or types." John viii. 56 confirms this view. But we do not meet with the same expectation, plainly stated, until John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." In Isaiah liii. 7 the prophet probably refers to lambs offered in sacrifice. The view that this great expectation was handed down from Abraham, through the sons of Jacob, to the ancestors of the Chiang, is so remarkable that we are bound to search for other possible explanations before adopting it. There have been many Jews in China, but no modern Jew believes that the expected Messiah will "Make atonement for sin like the lamb at the altar." The Rev. Professor A. C. Moule published a book called *Christians in China before the year 1550*. He doubts the report that St. Thomas actually reached China, but shows from dug-up crosses and other evidence that there were many Christians in China from the seventh century on. Yet it is difficult to believe that the Chiang-Min got their expectation of a coming Saviour from them. If Christians taught the Chiang they would have told them that their long expected Saviour had actually come, and had instituted the beautiful and simple rite of the Holy Communion. It hardly seems possible that these Chiang took from the Christians the single idea that God instituted the sacrifices as prophetic pictures of a Saviour to come, and yet rejected the whole of the rest of their teaching. Still less likely is it that the Chiang got their ideas from the Manichees, Moslems, or adherents of any other religion in China. Hence the evidence is that their great expectation has been handed down, partly without the aid of any written documents, for thirty-eight centuries! Evidence, surely, of the working of Almighty God. Many have now become Christians, and good Christians, for some have been martyred. They read the epistle to the Hebrews with great interest, and all claim the Pentateuch as their long lost title deeds. Whereas we should take shame to ourselves that they did not hear of the actual coming of Christ much sooner, does it not seem that God condescends to reward any belated zeal we have shown in sending the Gospel to the distant parts of the earth by confirming our own faith? And should we not rejoice that these Chiang have been talking to each other about the coming Saviour for so long, for surely God will honour their faith.

Mr. Torrance's book is full of other interesting facts about the Chiang-Min, and it is extremely well illustrated.

THE ANTI-CHRIST. By A. and W. Davies. *Thynne*. 6d.

This little book aims at proving that the "Man of Sin" is Mussolini. The writers assert that he will prove himself to be so by defeating England and France in war, and gaining possession for Rome of Palestine and Egypt. We hope that Mussolini will not see this! It would enormously encourage him! An Appendix adds chronologies of the first and second advents of our Lord.

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