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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS

OF

The Victoria Institute

OR

Philosophical Society of Great Britain

VOL. LXXI

1939



LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY

THE INSTITUTE, 1, CENTRAL BUILDINGS, WESTMINSTER, W.C.1

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The Rev. S. Runsie Craig Memorial, 1939.

828TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1., ON MONDAY, MARCH 20TH, 1939,
AT 4.30 P.M.

LT.-COL. F. A. MOLONY, O.B.E., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read, confirmed and signed.

The CHAIRMAN then called on the Rev. T. Torrance, F.R.G.S., to read his paper entitled "The Survival of Old Testament Religious Customs Among the Chiang People of West China."

The meeting was then thrown open to discussion in which Dr. Barcroft Anderson, Miss A. Duncan, Miss L. C. Ord, Mr. Sidney Collett and Mr. R. Duncan took part. A written communication was received from the Rev. Principal Curr.

THE SURVIVAL OF OLD TESTAMENT RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS AMONG THE CHIANG PEOPLE OF WEST CHINA.

By THE REV. T. TORRANCE, F.R.G.S.

WHAT an astonishing part the Jewish nation has played, from first to last, on the stage of the world's history! Born on Mount Moriah, cradled and schooled in Egypt, disciplined in the wilderness, and domiciled in a land far too small to sustain its ever-increasing numbers, it very early became a Divinely governed commonwealth, sending forth, from sheer necessity and by express calling, her products of saving truth and God-fearing men to all peoples. This export was remarkably facilitated because Palestine lay at the cross-roads of the then known earth, from which travel and traffic followed well-known land and sea routes towards every quarter of the globe. In a word, Israel was a missionary nation. No nobler destiny could have been conferred on any people. To this she owed her greatness and her prosperity. Her sons were ordained to flit hither and thither like bees fructifying the races of the earth with the pollen of a heavenly revelation.

If the *Diaspora* in the sixth century B.C. left the hive of the land empty for a little, this but accelerated the fulfilment of the appointed mission. Cast out upon the world at large, only a fraction of the Israelites returned. The others remained abroad.* When the land again grew full to overflowing, more colonies pushed out everywhere. Between earlier and later emigrations, settlements occurred in Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Egypt, along the North African coast, through the Pillars of Hercules to the Gold Coast, while successive waves of Semitic influence swept westwards across the Sudan from the Nile to the Niger, of which distinct traces can still be found, especially among the Ashantis, who retain a fusion of Jewish blood and a long list of Hebraisms.† Maccabean coins have been found in Natal and Zululand. The Masai have a version of the Decalogue. The Falushis of Abyssinia are well known. So are pockets of Israelites in Arabia. "The Jews," Luther says, "inhabited Ratisbon a long time before the birth of Christ."

To the East the Beni Israel live in India. Numerous Afghans claim descent from King Saul. A converted Jew, Dr. Wolff, who travelled in Central Asia from 1843 to 1845, found ancient settlements of Israelites in different parts. Those in Bokhara and Mowr told him that Israelites of the tribe of Naphtali and Zebulon lived in the Hindu Koosh, among the Balkwee and used the expression, "Hear, O Israel."‡ The Bokharan Jews possess an ancient MS. of Daniel§ which chapter viii, 14, has 2,400 instead of 2,300.

Other Jews, in their trek eastwards, travelled on more than one occasion to China. Their presence here was first made known to the West by Jesuits, who found a small colony at Kaifungfu in Honan. Since then different writers have written on the Chinese Jews, the sum of their findings being that they were once numerous in China, and a special official dealt with their affairs. They arrived about 221-206 B.C.; had their Scriptures, maintained customs of ceremonial purity and were called "The People of the religion that extract the sinews."|| The Honan colony is now extinct.

* Cf. 2 Esdras xiii, 40-45. 1 Kings xiv, 15.

† Cf. Williams, *Hebrewisms of West Africa*.

‡ Dr. Wolff, *Bokhara*, p. 317.

§ P. 201.

|| *The Jewish Encyclopædia*, vol. 4, p. 33.

The earliest settlement of "Jews" in the Far East was, undoubtedly, on the western frontier of China. But since these lived among mountains little traversed by Europeans, their presence was not early recognised. About twenty years ago, in our travels there, we found that people locally known as Chiang-min were indeed descendants of ancient Israel. Numerous villages of them are found in the Min river region. The Min is a tributary of the Yangtse-kiang.

One saw they were a unique people. Their features were Jewish. Even those of mixed blood did not have that small eye-membrane, the epicanthus, which is peculiar to Mongol races. Their address and manners were un-Chineselike. Their architecture, villages, defence towers, husbandry, laws, social and domestic relations proclaimed their Biblical origin. Their religion, especially when investigated, told plainly the same tale. And it is of it now we speak particularly. For its old-world character deserves to be widely known.

They worship only God. To them the Creator of heaven and earth is one and supreme. His Name is Abba Chee, the Father Spirit, or Father of men's spirits. They think of Him as neither remote nor aloof, but as a Personal Being, who has a heart of affection for His offspring—an affection distinguished by that righteousness which is becoming to such an intimate relationship to men.

The immaculate purity of His transcendent unchanging nature is symbolised by a conical, or mount-shaped piece of white glistening rock standing in its natural unhewn state on the roof of every house. In the villages these upstanding white stones draw the eye at once of every traveller. It is impossible not to ask what they mean, so unique are they. When this is learnt the thought immediately follows, that as much as their appearance is singular and outstanding, so is the truth they teach concerning the God the people love and worship. There is no word in any ethnic religion equivalent to the Bible holiness, but this Chiang symbol plainly expresses it.

That God is holy, just and good is the firm belief of this people. He is the moral Governor of the Universe, the sure Rewarder of good and evil. To His justice the oppressed can appeal for redress; before Him the unjust are certain to be condemned.

All moral and temporal blessing flows from Him. He is the light and life of men. Such a creed rises immeasurably above the inventive power of human reason. For it demands that God be worshipped in the way of holiness. The condition of blessing is holiness. Naturally, this is impossible with men, yet the conviction prevails that, by the goodness of God, the condition is provided. It may be obtained by way of sacrifice when sin, in the revelation of the Divine power, is righteously judged and cleansed away.

The conception behind this belief is radically different to the heathen evaluation of sacrifice. The heathen have no true sin-offering. The Chiang hold the necessity of the removal of sin's impurity before the Father Spirit extends His forgiveness and protection to man. He cannot overlook sin. It has to be dealt with. The very heart and motives of the worshipper He scrutinises to see that they are sincere. The penalty of hypocrisy, as expressed by their symbolic language, is transfixion by a brazen arrow from heaven. They mean a direct stroke of judgment from God.

The Chiang faith is inscribed indelibly and unequivocally in their ritual. Sacrifice requires an altar. On that the sin-offering may alone be made. The reason given is that it is there that God chose to reveal His mercy and His light. It is His trysted place of meeting with men. That is sufficient. It behoves man to accede to His authority. There is no other reason. If salvation is to be secured, naturally it must be after the manner of its own laws, and at the required place.

It follows that the erection of the altar cannot be left to chance or caprice. Its stones are to remain unhewn. Upon them a shaping, embellishing tool is forbidden. Human invention has no place in the approach to God. Salvation is divinely provided for man apart from his imagination or help. Cut or polished stones in the altar would defile its holy purpose.

A flat rock *in situ*, or a natural slab of rock placed on supporting stones, may be utilised. But, generally, the altar is a bank of earth faced with stones. Nothing could be simpler or easier of construction, and its site is ground chosen, set apart, and sanctified for the one holy purpose of sacrifice.

Moreover, the altar requires to be named. Whose is it? By what exactly may it be known? Since it is for Abba Chee, His sign on it is demanded. The white stone of His holiness, accordingly, is as a mark set up thereon. It at once lets its identity be known, and prohibits the service of any other god there. The glistening unit of rock seals it with the Divine name.

Tradition ordains that the place of a public altar should be on a mount, or eminence. Each community has its own. To it, men should betake themselves at stated seasons, notably thrice yearly. Chiang worship is essentially a high place worship even as in early Israel, though it is without the corruptions or perversions of the Canaanites. Fascinating, then, is the study of its Old Testament procedure, even if that is lacking somewhat in perfection owing to the lapse of years. What remains is much, and of comparative purity.

To quote from my book: "A high place is not chosen, as might be supposed, for its commanding elevation. It is rather chosen because they think of God as dwelling in the heavens, and ascent to His altar gives natural expression to their desire to meet Him. Upon the Mountain side the soul is shut in with God and the world shut out. Nothing intervenes between man and his Creator. Here amid unspoilt surroundings in the true sanctuary of nature, the Father Spirit is pleased to meet with the humble suppliants of His grace.

"Those who doubt this have to explain why the Chiang worship takes place at night. There is nothing then to be seen but the starry lights of heaven. Absolute silence reigns. Distraction is far removed. The whole thought is centred on the act of worship. Only a true seeker after God cares to make the climb. To him the darkness is no deterrent, the risk of inclement weather no hindrance. The securing of the Divine Presence is the quest of the soul. Into his own moral darkness he wants the light to shine."*

The altar is in the midst of a grove. The grove may be simply a clump of trees, or an extensive wood. Its trees are sacred in the sense that none may be cut. But there is one tree that is peculiarly sacred behind the altar. It forms an indispensable

* *China's First Missionaries: Ancient Israelites*, Thyne & Co., 3s. 6d.

feature in Chiang worship, not for itself but for what it represents. It is not called the Tree of Life, though it seems to lend itself somewhat to this idea. It is affirmed that it is God's tree. To it may be tied the animal for sacrifice. The stone, the tree, and the altar give locality, centralisation, and reality to worship.

The sacrifice is mostly that of a lamb. It has to be without blemish, and without spot. If it has a spot then a white cock is slain to atone for that. Very carefully is the lamb inspected beforehand and cleansed. Only when pronounced perfect is it passed as acceptable. The scrupulosity here is as strict as in the order of the priesthood. No novice, or unsanctified person, even the son of the priest, may presume to officiate at the altar. Similarly, the elders of the people must be men of acknowledged uprightness. God is holy. He can only be approached in the sanctity appropriate to His nature. Every vessel, utensil, and article used at the altar is cleaned and set apart for its holy purpose. Never can anything at the altar, not even the rope that leads the lamb to the grove, be put afterwards to a profane use.

In conformity to the need of sanctity, the worshippers have to bathe their bodies, wash their clothes, separate themselves from all defilement, and wear white garments. Body and soul require to be clean. A good man is called a white man, a bad man, a black man.

The initial act of worship is to surround the white stone in a cloud of "incense" smoke. Then sin is transferred to the head of the lamb by the laying on of hands. This constitutes the crucial act in the whole altar ritual. It indicates what all positively declare, that the lamb bears their sin by way of substitution. With one voice it is insisted that this is the method of the forgiveness of sin originally made known of God to their fathers. The judgment of death has to fall on iniquity before God will bless men. Without the sprinkling of blood on the altar, on the white stone, and on the worshippers, which is done by a wisp of grass, there can be no cleansing of sin and uncleanness. No person, not even the priest, has the right to pray apart from the judicial removal of what is offensive to God.

Unanimity of belief on this point is remarkable. Sin is something abhorrent to God and that leads irrevocably to death.

A weird, plain token of its deadly effect rises grimly before the altar. A pole on which hangs coiled the likeness of a serpent tells of its awful origin and result. The people retain the tradition of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and its important lesson is continued by this visible replica in the solemn hour of their assembly before God. The penalty of sin is death.

An emblem of life stands over against this emblem of death. It equally excites interest. It is a white banner with (1) two holes in its upper surface indicative of the all-seeing eyes of God, and (2) with a bow and arrow of judgment. It is thus a banner of righteousness. At the instant the lamb is slain the arrow is removed. Then life and righteousness are communicated to men. Righteousness makes judgment essential to life, and judgment becomes the prelude of life. Could any thing be more eloquent or undeniable than this strange symbolism of this unique people? Its exact form may not be Biblical, but the thought behind it is certainly Biblical. And we may mention in passing that it was a leper who first told us that this righteousness was called the garment of God.

These emblems of death and life, moreover, have a personal signification. They represent the Messianic hope of the Chiang. Their sacrifices, they say, are provisional; all are to culminate in a supreme sacrifice yet to come. A Sin-Bearer is to appear from heaven who personally will put through the reality of their symbolic rites. He will be to men the Interpreter of the Father Spirit. As becoming this office He is called Abba Malach—the Malach (Messenger) of the Father, a name easy for us to identify as Malachi, the messenger of the covenant. Another name given Him is Je-Dsu, or Nee-Dsu. The names are interchangeable.

But the Sin-Bearer has a third emblem, expressive of His fullness and work. A sacred roll embodies His very Presence with men. The people had once their Scriptures. Though now, from the lapse of time, no longer extant, their form in this roll is preserved. So much is it venerated by the priests that no non-worshipper may see it. The people speak of it—of Him—with the most intimate affection and joy. At every sacrifice the roll accompanies them to the altar. Its presence is as essential as the lamb, for the persuasion is that at every sacrifice Je-Dsu, though unseen, is verily present. He comes down to the altar by way of the tree, to meet those who seek Him after the

appointed manner. And it is one of the first petitions of the priest that since all are assembled in obedience to the Divine will that He will come down to reveal His light and salvation. This light, they "see" in the refulgence of the white stone at the head of the altar. In the glow of the sacrificial fire which either consumes the offering, or is used to prepare it for eating, the white stone mirrors the shining of the mercy and blessing of God.

Truly it is here that the religious conceptions of the Chiang rise to their highest, and disclose their Old Testament origin. We are taken straight into the Holy of Holies to see Him who is invisible. We are face to face with the Father of all mercies and tender compassions. Theirs is not a formal religion, but purely a spiritual religion. It may be a pathetic copy outwardly of what their fathers left so long ago, but its spirit is still alive and strong.

That Je-Dsu gives life as well as light is again evidenced by the manner the priest brings the sacred roll to the grove. It—He—is planted in a measure of wheat-seed until the close of the ritual. As He returns to heaven by way of the tree, the life-giving seed is scattered over the worshippers who collect it to take back to their homes. This is the assurance of the life and prosperity granted to them at the altar:

It will be noted how the various parts of the ceremonial interlock as a whole. They present a co-ordinate system of truth, the several parts of which, like the Ten Commandments and the Levitical offerings, mutually interpret each other. To break one is to break all. Each amplifies its neighbour. The task of the critic, to discredit or discount their true significance, is hopeless.

The Jews spoke of their Messianic hope as the mercy promised to the fathers. They dated it from the vision given to Abraham on Mount Moriah, a vision confirmed by our Lord when He said: "Abraham saw My day and was glad." The Messiah was to be a second Isaac, of whom the first was typical. "In the Mount of Jehovah it shall be seen," became their greatest of proverbs. Or as the Seventy translate it: "In the Mount Jehovah shall be seen." The Chiang, too, express their hope as the mercy promised to the fathers. Abba Malach is to fulfil it.

They claim they are the descendants of the twelve sons of one patriarch. This means Jacob, though they seem to have lost his name. They have waited all these many centuries for their Sin-Bearer, envisaging the past and the present as linked up with the future in Him. What astonishing constancy they have shown to their hope! Think of the thrill they have when the missionary tells them that He has come. And with what joy do they claim the Pentateuch when given to them as their own long-lost Scriptures, and as the title deeds to their religion.

The question has been put whether the Chiang practise circumcision. The answer is indefinite. Time failed us to visit all their remote abodes. Those we knew did not. This was the more singular because among them were the faithful who refused to eat blood. Readers of my book will have traced the identity of so many of their customs to those of the Hebrews, and the wonder is that they have preserved so many in comparative purity. Certainly no deviation is lawful in the altar ceremonial. That being by Divine decree is immutable. High-handed disobedience brings certain retribution. God hedges up the misleading side-paths with thorns to keep their feet on His own royal highway. His judgments forbid change in the essentials of salvation. It is the sure working of cause and effect. This belief has operated strongly in the purification of the morals of the people. Their standard of conduct is much higher than among their neighbours. They have thus the substance, if not the outward symbol, of the removal of moral impurity which constitutes men as the people of God. Religion with them is not divorced from morality, but is its spring and mainstay.

Of their character in general, *The History of Lifan*, a Chinese work, bears this testimony: "The men are strong and resolute, but in disposition are simple and true. They make expert hunters. Their lands are hard to cultivate, and the people are poor. Frugality and diligence mark their habits. In their dealings they are honest, and litigation is rare. Their scholars are well informed and self-respecting." *The History of Wenchuan* says: "They are accustomed to hard work on their unproductive lands; nevertheless, they are correct in their moral principles. Their kindly disposition makes them respond quickly even to small acts of kindness. The men farm; the women weave; the husband sings, the wife responds; mirth

and laughter come naturally to them." From long observation we personally can say that these statements are true to the letter. They have a happy infectious way with them. Their primitive sing-song can be heard exactly at any time to-day on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias. We append this further testimony from a Chinese monument in Honan *re* the Jews who once lived there: "They excel in agriculture, in merchandise, in magistracies, and in warfare, and are highly esteemed for integrity, fidelity, and a strict observance of their religion."*

The Chiang have been in their present habitat for at least 2,500 years. This does not support the far-fetched theory of the post-exilic date of the Levitical sacrifices. Doctrinally, of course, no supposition is more intrinsically false than this, and does not need refuting to any man of true spiritual discernment; yet one welcomes more historical truth that the Divine mercy and the symbolic explanations of its efficacy did not wait until the days of Ezra to be given to needy men. The love of God shone forth from the beginning, and righteousness characterised its display. That it was written in pictorial language of stones, altars, and symbols when "books" were laborious to multiply, became the wisdom of God. By this method the divine salvation was not simply given in an appropriate form to the poor and unlettered for easy reading, but given in such a way as to preserve the truth of the Atonement from the perverting influence of fallen human reason, and science falsely so called. Those who dared to attack it, made known simply their bias against it and their sinful ignorance. Here the Chiang worship presents invaluable evidence of the utility of the Old Testament types and shadows; for it demonstrates how these have kept alive for milleniums the knowledge of the grace of God.

A favourite assertion of some is that the ancient Israelites were so mundane in their religious conceptions that they scarcely entertained the idea of eternal life. And this is often glibly repeated, despite the fact that the very atmosphere of the Psalms is the longing for the vision of God and the making of Jehovah Himself their dwelling-place. We mention this to point out that the Chiang have a lofty conception of the future life. At death a sacrifice of two birds is made, one to be slain, and the other to be liberated, the latter in token of the flight of the soul to paradise. The evidence once again is sure, for the life-giving

* *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, p. 34.

seed is carefully broadcast as at the altar. Heaven is a land of purity to which the cleansed are given entrance and life. The Chiang bride, in full faith of this, lays aside her wedding robe to be worn again on the day of her departure from earth to heaven; for the joyousness of the first occasion heralds the joyousness of the second.

We cannot claim that this ancient people, dwellers on these far-off mountains, simple farmers, shepherds, and hunters, have preserved entire all their ancient religious forms, or that all among them have risen to a uniform high level of faith, but we are deeply indebted to them for having preserved so much. They possess in germ, at least, the great vital essentials of revealed truth. Mercy and judgment balance each other as twin revelations of the saving righteousness of God. He who gave man life, takes care to renew it to all who call upon His name at the altar; and nowhere else can His holy name be invoked. Symbolic sacrifices are to pass away in an ultimate mercy to be revealed when the Messiah comes. There is a banner to be displayed because of the truth. The Rock of their salvation will never fail: He remains sure and steadfast for ever.

We assert that those who are well-versed in the spiritual lore of the Old Testament cannot fail to recognise how at every turn the Chiang religion bristles with allusions to its well-known truths, and explains much that to us was before hard to understand. The effect of our own travels among this people was to enhance enormously our respect for the earlier revelation, and give us fresh visions of the amazing love and mercy of God. It was among the great mountains and vast depths of the valleys of their land, with its peculiar climate so dependent on the rainfall, that we learnt the beautiful lessons of the thirty-sixth psalm. Its contrast of the sinner and the saint was exact to that of the Chiang with their pagan neighbours. And the statement of their faith in it was true to the letter.

Every year I paid the people a visit. They received me always as one of themselves. This gave me exceptional opportunities for intimate investigation which was aided by a knowledge of provincial history, and what archæological work I was able from time to time to carry out. My regret constantly was the lack of time to pursue investigation further, but I trust that what I have said will tend to confirm your joy in the Old Book of books on which our knowledge of the Eternal depends.

DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIRMAN (Lieut.-Col. F. A. MOLONY) said: The Chiang-min were much persecuted by the Chinese, and especially by Buddhists. Hence they became a very shy, reserved people. What an immense amount of courtesy, patience and tact Mr. Torrance must have exercised to win their confidence! To appreciate the importance of his discoveries you must bear in mind that there is an important controversy now going on amongst scholars as to whether Almighty God did, or did not, inspire the institution of the sacrifices. We must admit that there are a few texts which may be read as implying that He did *not*, but, after studying the passages, it seems to me that the position is well summed up by Chief Rabbi Hertz, who writes, "The prophet's call is not, Give up your sacrifices, but, give up your evil doing." The matter is of great importance for us Christians, for if God *did* inspire the sacrifices, it must have been with a purpose, and the traditional view has always been that that purpose was to tell of a Saviour who was expected to come down from heaven, and make atonement for sin like the lamb at the altar. And this is precisely what the Chiang-min maintain. This, surely, is the most important part of Mr. Torrance's discoveries. It affects our beliefs about our own salvation. It shows that the Church of England is right in saying that Christ "Made there, upon the cross, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice."

If the Chiang-min were not firmly convinced that their sacrifices were inspired by God, how are we to account for their keeping the essential points of the ritual unchanged through so many centuries?

There is another matter which I hope you will discuss. Are these Chiang-min descended from the so-called lost ten tribes, or from Jews? Mr. Torrance, being a cautious Scot, has never committed himself to a positive opinion. There are, apparently, two lines of evidence to show that they probably sprang from the ten tribes. Mr. Torrance quotes the thirteenth chapter of the second book of Esdras, which says: "These are the ten tribes which were led away out of their own land in the time of Osea the king whom Salmanasar the king of the Assyrians led away captive, and he carried them beyond the river, and they were carried into another land. 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 had not kept in their own land. And they entered by the narrow passages of the river Euphrates." Mr. Torrance has given us some of the evidence that they got to India. But that was not uninhabited. What more probable, then, that they held on eastwards through Central Asia into West China, and got to the upper reaches of the waters of the Yang-Tze and Yellow rivers? But these flowed generally east, and the travellers would reason that, if they went on, they would soon be stopped by an ocean. Also the country was getting more and more peopled; so they decided to stay where they were, and thence the Chinese pushed them back into the mountains where Mr. Torrance found them. All this seems to fit together well.

Mr. Torrance hints at another line of evidence when he states that the Chiang-min worship is "High place" worship. Presumably he means in contrast to the Jewish centralised Temple worship. There are several Old Testament precedents for the setting up of stones to mark the places where God ought to be worshipped. Now the kings of Israel would not allow their subjects to go to Jerusalem to worship. What, then, could Elisha do but encourage the setting up of local altars? We know that he went on circuit. Was not his object to teach the people the ritual pleasing to God, and to stop heathenish practices? Mr. Torrance traces the Chiang-min worship right back to Abraham.

When Abraham had been stayed from offering up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, he felt that what had happened was so important that he must give the place a significant name. "We are told that he called it Jehovah Jireh, which means "The Lord will provide," or, "The Lord will see." I prefer the former alternative, because those were the very words which Abraham had said to his son in the morning, and said, mark you, in connection with a proposed sacrifice: hence it seems to me perfectly legitimate to conclude that, in calling the place "Jehovah Jireh," Abraham meant to record his conviction that God would one day provide the real sacrifice for sin, of which the animal offerings were meant to be prophetic pictures.

We know from Deut. xviii, 15, that Moses looked forward to the coming of Christ. Isaiah liii, 10, reads, "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin," and in verse 6, "The Lord hath laid upon

Him the iniquity of us all." True, the prophet was doubtless a Jew, but in such a matter Elisha would probably share his views. Now we have Mr. Torrance's evidence that these Chiang-min have always looked for one who is to come down from heaven and make atonement for sin like the lamb at the altar. Thus we have Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and the Chiang-min all holding the same blessed truth. Surely it is legitimate to believe that this same truth was passed down through all the centuries, and to rejoice that the Israelite had more insight into spiritual truth than we have heretofore supposed.

Mr. SIDNEY COLLETT said: We have listened this afternoon to a most interesting lecture on what Mr. Torrance rightly calls the "astounding part the Jewish nation has played on the stage of the world's history." The lecture goes to prove the *truth* of the Bible and the *necessity* of the Bible. First it is quite evident that these Chiang people of West China *are of Jewish descent*, for they have so many of the ideas of the Pentateuch—unfortunately, in a corrupted form. Incidentally their existence proves the truth of God's Word, as found in Deut. xxviii, 64: "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth even to the other." Secondly, it proves the wonderful *influence* of the Bible. Here is an almost unknown tribe, largely cut off from other people, yet strangely influenced in their religion and morals by the *corrupted remains* of the Bible truth which they evidently once possessed. Thirdly, nevertheless their forms of worship are so far removed from the spiritual truths taught in the Bible that it proves the necessity of not only having a vague knowledge of the teaching of the Bible but of knowing and adhering to *its verbal teaching*. Fourthly, further they do not seem to have any true knowledge of the Jews' Messiah—our Saviour Christ—as taught in the Old Testament. Fifthly, hence the need for missionaries to *take the true Bible to them* as our lecturer himself has done.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION.

The Revd. Principal H. S. CURR wrote: There is an exquisite touch in the opening paragraph of Mr. Torrance's admirable paper. He compares the Jewish people scattered abroad to the four winds of heaven to bees "fructifying the races of the earth with the pollen

of a heavenly revelation." This is as true as it is felicitous. The Acts of the Apostles proves that the scattering of the Jews through the Roman Empire was a kind of *preparatio evangelica*. Their proselytes lent a ready ear to the preaching of the gospel.

It would, of course, be ridiculous to suppose that this truth is always and everywhere true. There are few things of which that can be said. I should gather from Mr. Torrance's paper that this pocket of Israelites in Western China have not done very much in the way of influencing their neighbours through the centuries, due, as he reminds us, to Buddhist persecution which has driven them in on themselves. It may be, however, that they have served some useful and beneficent purpose in the history of redemption in the Celestial Empire. If Mr. Torrance can give any information on the subject, it would be welcome. Failing any contribution in the past, I wonder if he thinks that God may have some unrevealed purpose in planting the Chiang where they are found. He is always moving in a mysterious way. Nothing surprises one in dealing with Divine things. They will help one day to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy that Israelites will come from the land of Sinim, which has for centuries been identified as China, to inherit again the Holy Land. (Isaiah xlix, 12.) It may be that their place of habitation has been chosen for them by the God of Israel for other reasons as well. What men call chance is the foolishness of heaven which is wiser than men.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

If an opinion is wanted regarding the relation of the West China Israelites to the so-called lost Ten Tribes, may we say that the question has not given us any concern? The fact that the Israelites were scattered over the face of the earth scarcely warrants the conclusion that, if we cannot distinguish as to who is who among them, the Ten Tribes were at any time lost. The thrill to us was that the Chiang-min were indeed of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and, moreover, that they had preserved for so long in such comparative purity their Old Testament beliefs and customs. Here was the miracle of the Jew over again.

Prof. Sayce, in his work, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, mentions an inscription of Sargon, King of Assyria, which says that when this monarch carried away the Israelites he yet left some in

their own land and appointed a governor over them. Naturally this remnant would cling to their native soil. How, then, were they ever wholly lost? Undoubtedly some of the Ten Tribes returned after the captivity. When we personally visited Palestine after becoming intimately acquainted with the Chiang-min we were amazed to find that the sing-song of the Galileans in its peculiar style and cadences was so exactly the same to the sing-song of the Chiang-min that we imagined ourselves for the time being back in the mountains of West China.

The sacred Tree with the Chiang-min is a fundamental part of their belief. But there is no corruption connected with it. In central Asia among the Mohammedans pieces of cloth after a sacrifice are tied to sacred trees. Heathen priests in China have copied this feature apart from sacrifice. We have heard how in Ireland a member of the Victoria Institute has, at one place, come across the same custom. To the sacred Tree of the Chiang-min nothing may be tied except the lamb previous to its being slain. And it is offered in judgment for the sin of the worshippers, even as the Patriarchs offered sacrifice on an altar beside a tree when they called on the Name of Jehovah. An administration of justice takes place before mercy is granted.

The use of sacred trees is still common among peoples of Semitic origin. In Palestine such trees are not uncommon. In Southern Arabia judges to-day sit under trees of justice to dispense justice, as, for instance, at San'a. At another place there is a tree of justice in close proximity to a rock called the Rock of Salvation.*

Neither is there any corruption attending the Nehushtan Pole of the Chiang-min. It represents a dead not a live serpent. It is, therefore, the antithesis of serpent worship, or the cult of Æsculapius. Moses, it is supposed, copied the Egyptian rod used in the worship of Thoth, but, being made the image of sin, judged and slain, the Israelites saw also in their Brazen Serpent the condemnation of this Egyptian form of idolatry.

The value of these religious customs of the West China Israelites lies in their wonderful testimony to the real significance of the Atonement. It is truly expiatory. In these days this is so largely

* Dr. Bernard C. Walker, *San'a*.

denied that probably a third of our ministers have no Atonement left unless in name. It has been evacuated of its vital force. But we find from this unique people that the expiatory meaning of sacrifice formed the basic belief in the worship of ancient Israel. It may be of interest to you to hear that the lecturer has actually eaten of a bloody sacrifice. He was once informally invited to a meal the lamb of which had been offered in sacrifice. But he asked no questions for conscience' sake.

Regarding the influence of the Chiang-min on their neighbours in West China, a reference to my book will make it plain how extensively this was exerted. The traveller and missionary can trace many usages to-day springing from the propagation of their monotheistic and sacrificial form of worship. These are too numerous to mention here. The Chinese copied largely from them though, like the Greeks and Romans, they confessed not the source of what they learned and appropriated. West China, we may say in conclusion, presents a fine field to the patient, sympathetic, religious investigator. The people of Togarmah who, as Ezekiel tells us, visited the Fairs of Tyre, now called the Turkomans, frequent West China even now, and are still famous for their horses and mules. A section of the Miao people, missionaries* have found, have an ancient song which traces their genealogy up to Japheth, one of the three sons of Noah and his wife Gawboluen. The Karens, the Nahsi, the Nosu and Bolo peoples have all their contributions to offer. There was in early times, as Prof. Max Müller suspected, a real historical intercourse between the East and the West. The religious customs common to both, he said, forbade an accidental explanation. You will now, we venture to believe, follow this opinion; and we trust that what we have now told you in our own faltering way regarding these Israelites in the land of Sinim will serve to enhance your estimation of the Old Book you so dearly love.

* Rev. E. A. Truax.