

THE SAMARITANS.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE character of the nationality and religion of the Samaritans has been a problem for centuries. They are said to be the ten tribes of Israel mixed with Gentile immigrants, and they possess the Pentateuch in a form which shows some slight but important differences from the reading of the Jewish Pentateuch. They recognize Moses as their prophet and believe in Yahveh as the God of Israel.

The Pentateuch of the Samaritans is now being edited by Dr. A. von Gall, and since the edition is critically made with a great number of text references we may expect that it will be of great use to archæologists, Hebrew scholars, and historians.

Articles by Dr. Wm. E. Barton on the Samaritans and the celebration of their passover on Mt. Gerizim, have appeared in former issues of *The Open Court*. Dr. Barton has been in Nablous, the capital of Samaria, and counts the High Priest of this ancient sect among his friends. It will be of interest to our readers to know that another scholar, who has also traveled through Samaria and studied most carefully Samaritan history, literature, and present conditions, has written a book on the Samaritans which is within our knowledge the best source of information on the subject. The author, Dr. James Alan Montgomery, is Professor of Old Testament Literature and Language at the Philadelphia Divinity School, and his book is an expansion of a lecture course which was delivered as a series of the Bohlen Lectures.*

The book is characterized by the author as follows:

"In large part this work is a digest of the labors of many scholars for over three centuries; in so far it is the result of painstaking investigation in a widely scattered and recondite literature. At the same time, while he has made no pretence at original hypotheses,

* *The Samaritans; the Earliest Jewish Sect*. By James Alan Montgomery, Ph. D. Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1907. Pp. 358.

the author believes that he presents ampler treatment of the subject as a whole than has yet been attempted. The difficult problem of the origin of the Samaritan sect has been here discussed in the light of modern criticism as a preliminary to the subsequent history. Their own Chronicles have been carefully explored for historical data, illustrating or adding to the foreign sources which up to within fifty years have been almost the sole means of information. The Jewish, Christian, and Muslim references have been collated, and a digested treatment of the Talmudic references is offered. The Samaritan theology has been treated formally and at some length, with a full apparatus of citations to the literature, especially the Liturgy, the theological importance of which has hardly yet been recognized."

The book is a stately volume of 358 pages containing twelve chapters, relating how the Samaritans had been forgotten, and how their existence was rediscovered. We find a description of the land and the ancient city of Shechem. The author introduces us to the life of the modern Samaritans, but the most interesting part of the book is Chapter 4 on "The Origin of the Samaritan Sect." The Jews looked upon them as Gentiles and called them Kuthim or Kuthæans because the Assyrians repopulated the country from the land of Kutha. They are said to have worshiped their own Gentile gods, but lions came among them and soon they were anxious to worship the god of the country. Thus it is said that they combined Gentile paganism with Jewish Yahveh worship. Josephus's descriptions of the Samaritans are self-contradictory and so are all those derived from Jewish sources. We learn from them only that a hatred existed between the two races in spite of their kinship. Judging from the Assyrian inscription of Sargon, 27000 natives were deported while the rest of the population, which is stated to have consisted of 60,000 landed proprietors, remained at home. There is a probability that more than one deportation took place, but the character of the country remained Israelitish and the religion appears to have always remained purely Mosaic. There is only this difference, that the Samaritans worship on Mt. Gerizim, the Jews on Mt. Zion, and in this very point the Samaritans follow the older tradition, for the exclusive worship on Mt. Zion dates from the temple reform under Josiah. The confession of faith of the Samaritans most assuredly contains nothing pagan. It reads thus:

"We say: My faith is in Thee, YHWH; and in Moses son of Amram, Thy Servant; and in the Holy Law; and in Mount Gerizim Beth-El; and in the Day of Vengeance and Recompense."

Their belief in a day of vengeance and recompense is not contained in the Jewish scripture but, according to the Talmud and other sacred traditions, the Jews believe in it as well as the Samaritans and the Christians. The hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans originated when Cyrus allowed the exiled Jews to return from the Babylonian captivity and restore the temple at Jerusalem. The Jewish reformers were very strict and enforced with great severity the statutes of Josiah's reform (commonly characterized as the Deuteronomy), thus causing quarrels among the Jews which resulted in driving out those who would not separate themselves from their Gentile wives. The discontented fled to Samaria, and the Samaritan, who would not accept the doctrine that Yahveh could only be worshiped on Mt. Zion in the temple of Jerusalem, received the discontented Jews with great hospitality. It would lead us too far to follow here the details of Samaritan history, and recapitulate the charges of the Jews against them as well as the views of the Christians. It will be sufficient to remind our readers of the part which the Samaritans play in the New Testament. There we find that in a disputation Jesus is called a Samaritan by the Jews (John viii. 48), where the word seems to be a synonym of fool. They say: "Do we not well say that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

Jesus when traveling through Samaria is refused admittance, but he himself uses the Samaritans to point out a moral to the Jews. Of the ten lepers that were healed there was but one who returned and expressed his gratitude to Jesus, and he was a Samaritan. Jesus said: "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." The original of this last word reads *allogenes* which is commonly referred to the members of another tribe within Israel translating the Hebrew *sar*. Thus the word is weaker than "foreigners" and implies that Jesus regards the Samaritans as Israelites. There is perhaps no more popular parable in the New Testament than that of the Good Samaritan which has given a good ring to the name "Samaritan" for all time. The Christian attitude toward the Samaritans finds expression in the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. Says Dr. Montgomery:

"The latter enters into a theological argument with the mysterious stranger: 'Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and thou sayest that the place to worship is in Jerusalem. Jesus says to her: Woman, believe me that the time is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship what ye know not, we

worship what we know; for salvation is of the Jews.' This theological depreciation of the Samaritans is exactly that of the Jewish Church, although deprived of all malice. The assertion of the peculiar privilege of the Jews was also the doctrine of the Christian Church, which followed its Master, being abundantly expressed by the broadest-minded apostle, Paul, e. g., Rom. iii. 1ff."

The Samaritans are dwindling away rapidly, and it is the last moment that we can still study their religion and traditions in living examples. They are at present about seventy souls. The main part of the population in Samaria consists of Mohammedans, Jews and Christians. The time is near at hand when the sect of the Samaritans will have died out.

Dr. Montgomery's book contains further the history of the Samaritans in the Hellenic period, under the Roman emperor, under the Christian rule in the time of Constantine, and finally under the sway of Islam. He describes the Samaritans at home and abroad, collects the opinions of others scattered through Josephus, the Talmud and other rabbinic literature. He describes their theology, their belief in God, angels, Moses, the patriarchs, priests and prophets, Mt. Gerizim and their eschatology. Small as the Samaritan Church is, it is split up into still smaller divisions but in spite of the tradition of Simon Magus, the rival of Simon Peter who lived in Samaria, gnosticism had exercised but small influence upon their development. Samaritan history has passed through several languages, the Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic, and its literature is quite extensive. The text of the Samaritan liturgy which is preserved in the British Museum fills twelve large quarto volumes of two thousand pages, and more matter can be found in other libraries of Europe. The Samaritans do not call themselves Samaritans except in a particular sense by attributing the meaning of the name to "observers" of the law. They usurp for themselves the old name of Israel, and in order to avoid the name "observers" (viz., of the law) in the Old Testament the word *Shomeronim*, the Jews call them Kuthim or Kuthæans or Kuthites. Dr. Montgomery's book contains a number of interesting illustrations, among them charts of the country, groups of Samaritans, Mount Gerizim, Samaritan coins and medals, Joseph's Tomb, Jacob's Well, rock cut inscriptions, the sacred scroll of the Pentateuch, etc.

The book will be interesting to any one who wishes to keep informed on the development of Judaism and Christianity, and will be indispensable to those who make a specialty of the significance of the Samaritans.

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