

ARTICLE III.

THE SADDUCEAN CHRISTIANS OF DAMASCUS.¹

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IN an article which was commenced in the *Expositor* for December, 1911, and concluded in its number for March, 1912, I aimed at giving an answer to all the chief objections that have been raised by various writers against the interpretation of Dr. Schechter's Zadokite document which I offered in the *Athenæum* for November 26, 1910. Each of my principal critics had, however, written so exhaustively on the entire subject, and had, moreover, built up so elaborate a theory of his own on the meaning of the ancient text under consideration, that it was impossible to deal *seriatim* with all important details in an article that was designed as a defense of my own theory rather than as a special attack on any of the positions occupied by my learned opponents. When, therefore, the editor of BIBLIOTHECA SACRA offered me the opportunity of replying in a separate paper to Dr. W. H. Ward's article on the "Zadokite Document" in the number of this Quarterly for last July, I gladly determined to act on his suggestion as soon as time should permit.

I must, however, before taking up the various threads of the controversy, express my appreciation of the method followed by Dr. Ward in his effort to discover the true bearing

¹This article was finished before the end of 1911, but was delayed for the purpose of enabling the writer to refer to the pages of Part II. of his article on the same subject in the *Expositor* which appeared in March, 1912.

of the document. He started without the least prejudice against the theory advocated by myself, nor had he at the outset (with the exception, I think, of a partiality for the Pharisaic hypothesis suggested to him by Professor Louis Ginzberg) any special propositions of his own to defend. He did his best throughout to look consistently at every side of the complex problem, and he registered everything that he considered to favor the Judæo-Christian theory with as much readiness as the indications which appeared to him to point in the opposite direction. Criticism of this kind is always pleasant to read or to listen to. One remains throughout on a foundation of fact, and the duty of trying to interpret the extant data without bias one way or the other is never lost sight of.

But how is it that so excellent a method may, nevertheless, lead to results that must be described as untenable? The answer is, that criticism is, in some respects, not unlike the working of a problem in arithmetic or algebra. For just as it is possible to follow a perfectly correct method, say in a problem of compound interest or of geometrical progression, and yet miss the right answer by making a mistake in some detail of the calculation, or by neglecting to take account of one factor or another, so may one pursue a critical inquiry in a thoroughly approved general manner, and yet fail to find the true solution of the problem by unconsciously omitting this point or that, by assigning an incorrect value to one fact or another, or by misinterpreting a sentence here and a sentence there.

But now to the special task before us. It will be best to group the details of our investigation under the following headings: 1. Did the document emanate from a section of the Zadokites? 2. The question of date; 3. Dr. Ward's sum-

ming up of the pros and cons of the argument; 4. His identification of the characters spoken of in the document.

1. *Did the document emanate from the Zadokites?* The Judæo-Christian hypothesis would remain unaffected by any answer that might be given to this question, for early Christian discipleship of one form or another could be professed and cherished by members of any of the parties into which the Jews were at that time divided. But, in studying the document, one cannot escape receiving certain impressions as to the original religious views of the people who produced it. Dr. Schechter had no hesitation in declaring that they were Zadokites; that is to say, that they derived their "spiritual pedigree" from the sons of Zadok whom the prophet Ezekiel (xliv. 15) represents as the faithful upholders of true divine worship at a time when Israel, as a body, had fallen away. Other scholars of note, furthermore, had as little hesitation in identifying these Zadokites with a section, at any rate, of the Sadducees known to us—though only in a summary and imperfect way—through the New Testament and Josephus. But Dr. Ward, attracted by certain arguments offered by Professor Louis Ginzberg, of New York City, is strongly inclined to think that the teaching of the sectaries from whom the document emanated "much more nearly approximates the teachings of the Pharisees than of the Sadducees." "No special emphasis" was, in his opinion, laid by the author of the manifesto on his Midrashic identification of his community with Ezekiel's sons of Zadok. It is true that the question of the presence or absence of emphasis in any given passage must be very largely a matter of literary feeling; so that an absolute demonstration one way or the other, resting solely on the wording of such a passage, could not be easily furnished. But it is confidently suggested that, even apart from

the support which the idea of emphasis derives from the considerations to be mentioned presently, many would agree that stress does rest on the sentence: "And the sons of Zadok are the chosen of Israel, [men] of renowned name, who rise up at the end of the days. Behold the setting out of their names according to their generations, and the end of their priestly station, and the number of their sufferings, and the years of their sojourning, and the setting out of their deeds" (p. 4, ll. 3-6).¹ The author would hardly have packed the sentence with so many important details of the calling, vicissitudes, and final destiny of the people whom he was addressing, if the center of gravity did not lie, for him, in the fact of their being the sons of Zadok, to whom so great a religious importance was attached by the prophet Ezekiel.

Equally difficult is it to accept Dr. Ward's opinion that the mention of Zadok is purely incidental on p. 5 of the document, where we are told that David, who had married several wives, "had not read the Book of the Law that was sealed, which was in the Ark. For it was not opened in Israel from the day of the death of Eleazar and Joshua and the Elders who worshipped Ashtaroth. And it was hidden and was not² discovered until Zadok³ arose." Here, again, the question of emphasis must largely depend on literary feeling; but most readers will probably agree that the author of the manifesto intended to make a special point in drawing so marked a con-

¹ Some of the details mentioned are not easy to explain. If "the end of their [priestly] station" signifies the last services they were allowed to render at the Temple in Jerusalem, they would appear to have undergone persecution on account of the attitude of their belief in John the Baptist and Jesus. This would also explain the clauses that follow.

² Adopting Dr. Schechter's emendation of the text. There is no word for "not" in the MS.

³ Who this Zadok was it is difficult to say. Possibly confused with the high-priest Hilkiah of 2 Kings xxii.

trast between the unsealing of the Law by Zadok and the ignorance of it on the part of David, whose dynasty was, according to p. 4, ll. 10-11, to be superseded "after the completion of the end in accordance with the number of these years."

One point of emphasis which Dr. Ward has entirely overlooked is the rather frequent play on the name Zadok that is exhibited in the document. In the very first line we have: "And now hearken all ye that know righteousness" (צדק). Then again there is the important title "Teacher of Righteousness" that is given to one of the leading characters of the manifesto, and special stress also appears to rest on "the enactment of righteousness" in p. 20, l. 33 (very near the end of Part I. of the manifesto). For some further references bearing on this point, the reader may be asked to see the *Expositor* for March, 1912, pages 217, 232. But it may be here added that there are, in all, nine passages in which the root-meaning of the name Zadok was present to the mind of the author; and though it by no means follows that he was in each case actually thinking of his great religious hero, it seems natural to assume that, in some of his more important usages of the root צדק, and more particularly in the opening sentence of the manifesto,¹ emphasis does rest on the particular root on account of its connection with the name Zadok.

But the weightier part of the argument is yet to follow. Dr. Ward has clearly underestimated Dr. Schechter's position on this important point. On p. 433 he says: "The evidence that they opposed the Pharisees he [i.e. Dr. Schechter] finds in the passages which are supposed to refer to the 'fencing of the Law.'" His impression, therefore, was that Dr. Schechter's anti-Pharisaic view of the document was chiefly

¹ So also M. Israel Lévi in *Revue des Etudes Juives*, April, 1911. Vol. LXIX. No. 275. 4

based on the use of this particular phrase. But the fact is, that the supposed reference to the fencing of the Law was only used by him as a kind of auxiliary to this theory; and, in order to show of how little importance the phrase in question is to the theory, it is only necessary to point out that Dr. Kohler,¹ who rightly refuses to see in it an allusion to the "hedge" which the Rabbis purposely made around the Law, still strenuously upholds the view that the denunciations of the document are directed against the Pharisees, only dating it later than Dr. Schechter, and believing it to have emanated from Dosithean Samaritans instead of Dosithean Zadokites.

The real strength of Dr. Schechter's argument lies in the legalistic peculiarities of the manifesto, and more particularly in the Calendar, the Sabbath ordinances, and the Marriage Law. A Calendar which was in agreement with that of the Book of Jubilees,² and which, therefore, was not based on the observation of the moon, but had a solar year of twelve months of thirty days each, and four intercalary days in addition, could not possibly have been followed by the Pharisaic party in its early period.³ It is equally impossible that they could have had a marriage law which, on the question of divorce, appears to have been remarkably like that of the New Testament; nor could their Sabbath ordinances have been as strict as those presented in the document.

I am myself in agreement with Dr. Schechter on these

¹The American Journal of Theology, July, 1911, p. 407.

²See Schechter's Introduction, pp. xvi, xix.

³The present argument remains unaffected by Epstein's most acceptable suggestion (*Revue des Etudes Juives*, vol. xxii. pp. 10-13) that in Jubilees two kinds of years are used: a civil year of the kind mentioned in the text, and an ecclesiastical year of thirteen months of twenty-eight days each. For a fixed ecclesiastical year of this kind also excludes the need of calendric lunar observation.

special points. Only I hold that we have here to deal with a special section of the Zadokites (or, according to the more common view, which I share, Sadducees) who combined a certain kind of belief in John the Baptist and Jesus with their particular form of legalistic observances. As for the denunciations contained in the manifesto, Dr. Ward must, of course, believe them to have been directed against opponents of the Pharisees, presumably the Sadducees; but if the foregoing argument holds good, the body of people chiefly aimed at were either, as Dr. Schechter thinks, the Pharisees, or, if the Judæo-Christian hypothesis be accepted, the Apostle Paul and his followers, whom the sect regarded as the greatest enemies of the faith, on account of the anti-legalistic principles that were advocated by them.¹

2. *The question of date.* I have in the *Expositor* for December, 1911, endeavored to show that the 390 years after the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (p. 1, ll. 5-8, of the manifesto) may, in accordance with one of the

¹ In the *Expositor* for March, 1912, p. 229, I have stated my view that the fierce denunciation against St. Paul and his followers was mixed with bitter feeling against the Pharisees, and probably also "with a certain amount of vituperation against the laxities of the main body of the Sadducees, who had remained aloof from the higher aspirations of our sectaries." This can, I believe, be satisfactorily illustrated by passages in the document. But one instance must suffice in this place. On the lower part of p. 4, two persons are specially attacked. One of them, the Belial who is "sent" (the same root as that from which the Hebrew equivalent of *ἀπόστολος* is formed), I take to be the Apostle Paul (see the *Expositor* for Jan. 1912, p. 229). The other, bearing the nickname *Tsaw* (i.e. "Command"), whose followers are styled "the bullders of the hollow wall," may well represent the leader of the Pharisaic party of about A.D. 70, namely, Rabbi Yohannan b. Zakkal, who, after the destruction of the Temple by Titus, transplanted the ruling body of Pharisaic Judaism to Yabneh. It is this party against whom the reproach of marriage with a second wife whilst the first is still alive is leveled.

faulty chronologies prevalent among the Jews in early times, be reasonably referred to near the time styled *Anno Domini*, and that the time indication found at the end of p. 5 of the document ("At the end of the destruction of the land," etc.) favors the final conquest of the Holy Land by Titus, rather than any other period within the three hundred years or so preceding that catastrophe. The inference would therefore be that the manifesto was composed within a limited number of years after the event of A.D. 70, and that the historical reference near the beginning of the exordium takes us to the starting-point of the Messianic movement)—which began with the preaching of John the Baptist.¹

As Dr. Ward's view of the two time indications referred to differs *toto coelo* from that given by me in the *Expositor*, I must be content to leave our respective interpretations of these data in undisturbed juxtaposition to each other. It would, in the entire absence of common ground between us, be manifestly useless to argue the special questions raised by these two portions of the text. All that I can do is to make an attempt at forming some common standing ground for possible *future* discussions on the date of the document; and I think that I may, with a view to this, point out that several of Dr. Ward's own conclusions on certain points bearing on this part of the problem by no means clash with my view of the points in dispute.

On p. 430 he, to begin with, shows that, as the Book of Jubilees and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, which are referred to in the manifesto, are supposed to have been composed respectively not earlier than 125 B.C. and somewhat before 100 B.C., our document can be "hardly earlier than 80."

¹On the discrepancy between St. Luke's account of John the Baptist and the data of the document, see the *Expositor* for March, 1912, p. 221.

This is a definite statement with which I can have no serious quarrel. But it is, at the same time, clear that the *terminus a quo* thus postulated would leave the *terminus ad quem* an open question; and, supposing that the balance of evidence should, on further consideration, appear to Dr. Ward to incline decidedly towards the Judæo-Christian hypothesis, he might possibly be disposed to regard with some favor my interpretation of the two special time indications set out in the *Expositor*.

Another important matter bearing on the date is the evident need of some outside historical support for the settlement of our sectaries at Damascus; and on this point Dr. Ward himself states (pp. 440-441) that "whilst we have no definite knowledge of any Jewish settlement in Damascus" during the first century B.C., the account given in the Acts of the Apostles of the beginning of St. Paul's apostolate "implies that Damascus was a chief seat" of early Christian believers.¹ We have, therefore, to choose, as a date for the migration of our sectaries to Damascus, either a period in the first century B.C., in which no migration such as is mentioned in the document is historically attested, or a time in the first century A.D. during which settlements of a similar kind can be clearly shown to have taken place. But is it not sounder to base the interpretation of the document on definite and independent historical evidence rather than upon an assumption for which no outside support can be found?

On the interesting question as to Jewish belief at the beginning of the Christian era with regard to Davidic or Aaronic descent of the Messiah, I have set down certain remarks in the *Expositor* for March, 1912, pages 219-220.² But, as Dr. Ward's theory is partly based on a reading of the facts

¹ See the note on p. 514 in the *Expositor* for December, 1911.

² See, also, the *Jewish Review* for November, 1911, pp. 367-368.

relative thereto which differs from mine, it is necessary to refer to the topic in this place. "Another evidence," he writes, "that the Document was written before the overthrow of the Maccabean dynasty of priest-kings, is the fact that when it was composed the Messiah was expected still to come from the tribe of Levi, as John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannæus. The overthrow of that dynasty discredited such an anticipation, and before the dawn of the next century a Davidic Messiah was expected" (p. 451).

Now if this categorical statement corresponded exactly to historical fact, Dr. Ward's theory would, indeed, have a foundation to rest upon. But is it true that the fall of the Hasmonean dynasty brought about a universal return to the idea of a Davidic Messiah? Did the Temple hierarchy cease to exist with the overthrow of Maccabean rule, and would not the powerful body of Temple ministrants still be likely to cling to the expectation of an Aaronic Messiah, though not necessarily of Hasmonean descent? Did not, as a matter of fact, Herod himself seek to strengthen his position as Jewish king by alliances with the family of the Hasmoneans and that of Boëthus? But still more definite, Do not the Gospels themselves show that there was a strong disposition to acclaim John the Baptist as the Messiah (St. Luke iii. 15; St. John i. 19-20), although he was, according to St. Luke's account, of priestly descent both on his father's and his mother's side?¹ Dr. Ward has clearly drawn for himself too rigid a dividing line between the expectations of a Davidic and an Aaronic Messiah. There no doubt was a cleavage among the Jews on this part of Messianic belief at the beginning of the Christian era, and no wonder that a Judæo-Christian sect springing

¹ See, further, the *Expositor*, March, 1912, p. 219.

from the Sadducean party should have taken pains to emphasize the Aaronic side of the great belief.

One other important point before closing this part of the article. From an interesting passage on p. 6 of the document, where it is ordered that "all who were brought into the covenant are not to enter into the sanctuary to kindle its altar, but were rather to close its doors . . . if they will not observe to do according to the interpretation of the Law," etc., Dr. Ward infers (pp. 448-449) that the sectaries, dissatisfied with the existing state of things in the Holy City, left Jerusalem while the Temple was still standing, for the purpose of carrying a purer worship to Damascus. If this were so, the opinion that the migration to Damascus took place after the catastrophe of A.D. 70 would, of course, fall to the ground. But Dr. Ward's inference is entirely unwarranted. What the passage in question does insist on is the true inwardness of Divine worship. It is not enough, the manifesto declares, to have formally entered the Covenant, but those who have joined the new brotherhood at Damascus must be careful to obey the holy Law "to the ending of wickedness, and they must separate themselves from the children of destruction, and keep aloof from the wealth of wickedness," etc. Otherwise they will not be allowed to have any part or parcel in the worship of the sanctuary. It is reality on which the document in its own way lays special stress, and one may add that such insistence on reality¹ may fairly be regarded as additional evidence of the affinities of our sectaries with the early circles of Christian believers.

¹The same insistence of reality, though in a different form, is also found on p. 20 of the document. The closing of the door of the sanctuary in the passage on p. 6 is rather a disturbing element in any case; but it was, no doubt, suggested by Malachi i. 10, that verse being actually quoted in the passage.

3. We may now fitly consider *Dr. Ward's summing up of the arguments for and against the Judæo-Christian hypothesis* set out by him towards the end of his article (pp. 451-454). With the reasons adduced by him in favor of my theory I can, of course, have no quarrel. It is only the objections with which I am here concerned. Let us take these *seriatim*.

(1) On p. 451 Dr. Ward gives, as one of his grounds for rejecting my dating of the document, the absence of any reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. But it will be seen, from what has been said in the preceding section of this article, that the time indication for the migration of the sect to Damascus ("At the end of the destruction of the land," etc.) is, in reality, the reference which he desiderates. As I have shown in the *Expositor* for December, 1911 (pp. 507 ff.), the only two previous occasions which could possibly enter into competition with the catastrophe of A.D. 70 for the explanation of our text, namely, the disasters under Antiochus Epiphanes and the invasion of Palestine by Pompey, represent only an approach to the devastation suggested in the document. The omission of any special mention of Jerusalem and its Temple is no difficulty, as the sectaries, who were ready to build a sanctuary in Damascus, would hardly be desirous of referring to the Temple of the now abandoned city. Furthermore, in dealing specially with Dr. Ward's own theory in relation to this point I have (p. 509) pointed out that, if the document had been composed about 80 B.C., it would be quite impossible to give a satisfactory explanation of the sentence: "At the end of the destruction of the land."

(2) On p. 454 Dr. Ward makes a special point of the fact that there is no reference to the Lord's Day in the manifesto. To this objection a double answer can be given. It is, to begin with, pretty certain that the institution of the Lord's Day

was in early times confined to Gentile adherents of the faith living outside Palestine.¹ And there is, secondly, the important consideration that, even if the generality of Jewish Christians living in or near Palestine had in those early days already regarded the first day of the week in the light of another Sabbath, it would not at all follow that our sectaries would in any way be inclined to adopt the innovation. My claim is not that they were followers of the Twelve Apostles or that they were ready to give obedience to James of Jerusalem, but only that they, in a certain loose sense of their own, religiously venerated John the Baptist and Jesus, and that they can, therefore, be classed as belonging "to the outermost fringe of the society of early believers."²

(3) Dr. Ward's statement that the sectaries had a monthly collection for the poor, instead of a weekly one, rests on a doubtful passage;³ and it must be added that an administrative detail like this could not in any case be used as an argument against the Judæo-Christian hypothesis, the less so as the rule of weekly offerings is, for the earliest period, so far only known from a Pauline source (see 1 Cor. xvi. 2), and may, therefore, have formed part of a system introduced by the very man whom our sectaries would be least likely to imitate.

(4) Dr. Ward further argues that "their officers [the searcher and judges] are not of the early church." But an answer to this objection has been anticipated by the proposed rendering of מִבְּקֵר (translated "Searcher" by Dr. Ward) by ἐπίσκοπος.⁴

¹ See, e.g., Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, vol. iii. p. 140, col. 2.

² See the Expositor for December, 1911, p. 517.

³ See Schechter's note on p. 14, l. 13, of the document.

⁴ See the Expositor for March, 1912, p. 226, note 1.

(5) The argument from the retention of the oath by the sectaries must also be regarded as inconclusive, as all the extant indications of church rule with regard to this matter point to the fact, that whilst the command not to swear at all was regarded as the great ideal to be aimed at, the administration of oaths in legal procedure remained all along a practical necessity, more particularly so as only the less firm Christians would be likely to appear before a court as litigants.

(6) There remains Dr. Ward's statement that "there is no reference to the manner of the tragical death of either John Baptist or Jesus." But an answer to this difficulty has, as in the case of (4), already been given in the *Expositor* for March, 1912 (p. 223), where it is suggested that a graphic reference to the trial of Jesus should be recognized in the sentences at the end of p. 1 of the document; for we there read that "they justified the wicked one¹ and condemned the righteous one . . . , and they trooped themselves together against the life of the righteous one . . . and they goaded the people to hostility." There is, it is true, no mention of the tragic death of the Baptist; but why should such a reference be expected in a document which does not profess to give an ordered history of events, but is merely a manifesto, a call to arms, as it were, addressed to the sectaries by their leaders at a certain crisis in their history?

4. I have in the preceding sections of this article dwelt mainly on the differences between Dr. Ward and myself with regard to the general tendency and the probable date of the document. But questions of a closer and more definite kind still remain. It is only fair to test Dr. Ward's theory by his

¹By the wicked one who was justified by the ruling party, Barabbas is probably meant.

identification of the historical characters referred to in the text before us. There is, first of all, "the root of planting from Aaron and Israel," also called the Anointed one, the effect of whose ministry was such that people "contemplated their sin and knew that they were guilty men"; then there was the "Teacher of Righteousness," who came twenty years later; and, lastly, there is the rather frequent reference to "the man of scoffing," who is also styled Belial and "man of lies." Who were these three persons, according to Dr. Ward's theory?

The answer must, unfortunately, be that instead of order we find here nothing but chaos. He, first of all, seems to ignore the significance of "the root of planting," that came from Aaron and Israel, or he perhaps tacitly identifies the same with the Teacher of Righteousness, who came twenty years later. Yet he treats the "Anointed One from Aaron and Israel" who is mentioned several times later¹ as being different from the "Teacher" (though he does not do so consistently). In one place the mention of the Anointed One implies, according to him, no historical reference. In four other places he is spoken of as "yet to appear." He takes the "Holy Anointed one" mentioned at the beginning of p. 6 of the document to be the same as the Anointed from Aaron and Israel, and yet says of him that "it must be some priest like Ezra or Mattathiah of Modin, father of the Maccabee brothers" (p. 442).

Equally uncertain and elusive is his attempted identification of the Teacher of Righteousness. On p. 444 he says that the "most likely candidate is Mattathiah," whose possible identity with the "Holy Anointed One" he has, as has been men-

¹On "the Anointed One from Aaron and Israel" and "the Teacher of Righteousness," see the *Journal of Theological Studies* for April, 1911.

tioned, suggested before. The "Only Teacher" spoken of on p. 20 of the document he declares to have lived, and perhaps also died, at Damascus. In another passage (p. 6, ll. 10-11) the Teacher appears to him to be identified with the Anointed one, because "the appearance of the Teacher of Righteousness in the latter days" is there spoken of.

In a no less puzzling condition does Dr. Ward leave the question as to the identity of the "man of scoffing." He considers the bearer of this title to indicate Jeroboam; but he does not explain how the sin of idolatry, represented by the setting up of the golden calves at Dan and at Bethel, applies to the Israel of the first century B.C. As a matter of fact, the worship of idols is not one of the transgressions denounced in the manifesto. Nor is the identification consistently carried through. The "men of scoffing" mentioned on p. 20 are, on this hypothesis, not the followers of the "man of scoffing," but a class of men "who lived at the writer's time." The "man of lies," moreover, whom one would naturally identify with the "man of scoffing," is, again, not Jeroboam, but belongs to a period just before the writer's time. That there is chaos, instead of order, in all this, no one can doubt, and Dr. Ward would probably acknowledge that the difficulties of the subject as they presented themselves to him could result in nothing else. He has done his best to discover a clue to the problem; but can it be said that he has found one?

The result, therefore, of our investigation would seem to be:—

1. The document is Zadokite.
2. The most likely date of its composition lies between A.D. 70 and 80.
3. Dr. Ward's summing up of the arguments for and

against the Judæo-Christian hypothesis requires to be very considerably modified.

4. The identifications proposed in the *Athenæum* for November 26, 1911, represent a more coherent and orderly reading of the document than those suggested by Dr. Ward.