

literature, and taken straight from facts which every man might observe for himself. The vine, in its earlier stages especially, and always when it fruits, is very tender, very open to various forms of disease, in which its unripened grapes fall like leaves in autumn. And the Syrian olive, which bears copiously in its first, third, and fifth year, rests from bearing in its second, fourth, and sixth. But it blossoms even during the years of rest, the blossom falling off before the berry is formed. "In spring one may see the bloom, on the slightest breath of wind, shed like snowflakes, and perishing by millions." <sup>1</sup> Such, so transient and so unprofitable, is the life of the wicked; evanescence and unfruitfulness are written on his lot: so at least thought Eliphaz and the authorities on whom he leaned, surely with a strange blindness to many sufficiently patent facts.

According to him and them, too, as we learn from *Verse 34*, every trace of the wicked man perishes; not a vestige of him is left to tell of all the labour he did under the sun, or of the doom which fell upon him,—a statement even more untrue to the facts of human life and history than that which preceded it.

S. COX.

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THE SAMARITAN ELEMENT IN THE GOSPELS  
AND ACTS.

I do not purpose in this paper, tempting as the subject is, to take a general survey of the history of the Samaritans, or to discuss the many problems that connect themselves with their earlier or later history. I shall not touch the questions whether they might, as they

<sup>1</sup> Tristram's "Natural History of the Bible."

themselves boasted, claim Jacob as their father,<sup>1</sup> and trace their descent from him through Ephraim and Manasseh;<sup>2</sup> or were, as their Jewish enemies called them, aliens in blood, Cuthæans pure and simple;<sup>3</sup> nor whether, assuming that origin, there had been any later blending of races by marriage or migration; nor to what ethnic affinities the latter name pointed. I shall not inquire whether they were guilty of the three offences of which the later Rabbis accused them, *i.e.*, that they worshipped a golden dove, and denied the Resurrection, and had sacrilegiously despoiled the Hebrew alphabet by robbing it of three of its letters. I shall not even ask what weight we are to attach to the statements of Josephus, that they identified themselves with the Zidonians,<sup>4</sup> and requested Antiochus Epiphanes to allow their temple on Gerizim to be dedicated to Zeus, the god of the Greeks; nor whether that temple owed its origin to the Sanballat who appears in the Book of Nehemiah,<sup>5</sup> or, as Josephus<sup>6</sup> states, to a later apostate of the same name in the time of Alexander. I am content to start with the facts that meet us in the New Testament, and to inquire what inferences may be legitimately drawn from them.

And (1) there is the singular phenomenon of a people claiming to be of the same faith and lineage as their neighbours to south and north and east, and yet scorned and rejected by them. Their sacred books are the same, they keep the same feasts and Sabbaths, they have the same expectations of the Christ

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Jos. *Ant.* xi. 8, § 6.

<sup>3</sup> This name comes from the list of nations who are mentioned as having been brought by the king of Assyria "from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim" (2 Kings xvii. 24).

<sup>4</sup> *Ant.* xi. 8, § 5; xii. 5, § 5.

<sup>5</sup> Neh. ii. 10; vi. 1, *et al.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ant.* xi. 8, § 6.

who shall tell them all things;<sup>1</sup> and yet between them and the Jews, among whom they live, there is a profound and internecine antagonism. The main head and front of their offending is that they have set up a rival sanctuary to that of the temple at Jerusalem, as they pretended—pointing to passages in the Law, which, however, their rivals charged them with altering or interpolating—in accordance with the directions of the great Lawgiver. The antagonism became, as we know, more and more bitter as time passed on. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.<sup>2</sup> In deliberate scorn they changed, as many have thought, the name of their capital Sychem into Sychar, the city of lies. He who ate a morsel from the hand of a Cuthæan was as one who eats swine's flesh. They fulminated terrible anathemas against them as apostates who were worse than the heathen, prayed that they might have no portion in the resurrection of the dead, and would not even receive a proselyte from the accursed race. The Samaritans, in their turn, revenged themselves by attacking and murdering pilgrims who were bound for the Holy City;<sup>3</sup> and, with a grim sense of humour, deceived the Jews who lived at a distance from Jerusalem by giving false signals of the first appearance of the new moon, so that they might lead them to observe the festivals that depended on it on the wrong day.<sup>4</sup>

Every student of the Gospels is familiar with the contrast which the words and acts of the Lord Jesus presented to those of the Rabbis of Jerusalem in relation to this strange people. At the very outset of his

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Jos. *Ant.* xx. 6, § 1.

<sup>4</sup> Lightfoot, *Hor. Heb.* chap. iv. ; Winer, *R.W.B.'s. v. Neu Mond.*

ministry He passes through Samaria, and reveals to the Samaritan woman, sinner and outcast as she was, that He is the Christ whom she and her countrymen were expecting not less eagerly than the Jews themselves, and makes known to her the true universality of the worship of the Father.<sup>1</sup> He tarries for two days in the city which lay at the foot of the mountain on which their sanctuary—then, after its destruction by John Hyrcanus in B.C. 129, lying in ruins—had in the old days stood, and numbers its inhabitants among his earliest adherents.<sup>2</sup>

In the first mission of the Twelve there is, indeed, an express exclusion of the Samaritans from the good news of the kingdom of which the apostles were the bearers;<sup>3</sup> but that exclusion is adequately explained by the facts (1) that the law on which He acted gave a priority to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,<sup>4</sup> and (2) that the disciples, themselves Galileans, and sharing the prejudices of their brethren of Judæa, were not as yet able to receive the truth of the expansion of his kingdom beyond the barriers of race, or the special sanctities of holy places. But in his subsequent teaching we note step by step the gradual education which was to overcome their inherited prepossessions. Again and again He leads his disciples through the regions of Samaria. He singles out the Samaritan leper as one in whom He found an example of faith and gratitude which He had not found in Israel.<sup>5</sup> In the parable of the Good Samaritan—if indeed it be a parable, and not a history—the hated alien is brought before them as the true pattern of the love

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 21.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 41, 42.<sup>3</sup> Matt. x. 5.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xv. 24.<sup>5</sup> Luke xvii. 16.

which sees a neighbour in every man by virtue of his humanity, as contrasted with the narrow hardness of the priest and Levite.<sup>1</sup> When in the journeys of which I have spoken He was met with rejection and exclusion because it was known that He was on his way to Jerusalem, He represses the fiery zeal of the Sons of Thunder, who sought to call down fire from heaven upon the offenders, as Elijah had done on the soldiers of Ahaziah,<sup>2</sup> and tells them that they know not what manner of spirit they are of.<sup>3</sup> In one instance it would seem probable that He actually kept the early days of the Feast of Tabernacles, not in Jerusalem, nor in his own home in Galilee, but in the company of the alien people.<sup>4</sup>

The Jews, who, during that Feast, hurled their reproaches at Him as being Himself a Samaritan,<sup>5</sup> would seem to have had some suspicion of the fact, or, at least, to have known to what extent He had shewn his sympathy for the people whom they hated. We cannot be wrong in tracing a latent reference to them, as well as to the outlying nations of the heathen world, in the words, uttered, it will be remembered, during that very feast, which spoke of the "other sheep" who were not of the fold of the outward Israel, for whom, as for Israel, He, the Good Shepherd, was content to lay down his life, and whom He was one day to gather together, so

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 33.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings i. 10, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ix. 52.

<sup>4</sup> John vii. 10. When the brethren of the Lord bid Him go up to the Feast, He tells them that his time for doing so had not yet come. He then journeys secretly, and appears in the courts of the Temple on the third or fourth day of the Feast. It follows from this that if he went after them, taking the road by which the Galilean pilgrims usually travelled (*Jos. Ant.* xx. 5, § 1), He must, as at other times, have passed through Samaria. It is possible that the incident of Luke ix. 52, above referred to, may have been connected with this journey. In Tischendorf's harmonistic arrangement (*Synop. Evan.* § 77-79) the two incidents are placed in close juxtaposition.

<sup>5</sup> John viii. 48.

that there might be one flock and one Shepherd.<sup>1</sup> And when the final mission is given by Him to his apostles after his Ascension, they hear words that must have appeared to them as an express and formal withdrawal of the limit that had at first been set to their work as evangelists, and which had been already tacitly cancelled by its absence from the commission given to the Seventy.<sup>2</sup> They were told that they were to be "his witnesses" in "Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."<sup>3</sup> We know how, in a few months, the course of events brought about with unlooked-for rapidity the fulfilment of that command. In the dispersion that followed on the persecution of which Stephen was the victim, Philip, who, of the whole company of the Seventy, was obviously nearest to the martyr in spirit and power, went down to Samaria, and found in very deed that the good seed had been already sown, and that the fields were white already for the harvest.<sup>4</sup> The woman of Samaria may have been one of those who shared in the great joy of that city.<sup>5</sup> Where the wisest of the teachers of Israel had seen only those whom his heart abhorred, that "sat upon the mountains of Samaria," and the "foolish people that dwelt at Sychem,"<sup>6</sup> there was now planted an organized society as a living branch of the great family of God, the universal Church of Christ. The apostles felt, when they heard that Samaria had received the word of God, that the time had come for them to act on their Lord's command, and Peter and John went down, not now to call down fire from heaven to destroy, but to give to those that sought it that bap-

<sup>1</sup> John x. 16.<sup>2</sup> Luke x. 1-16.<sup>3</sup> Acts i. 8.<sup>4</sup> John iv. 35; Acts viii. 5.<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 8, 12.<sup>6</sup> Eccles. i. 25.

tism with the Holy Ghost and with fire which was to illumine, to kindle, and to purify.<sup>1</sup>

With the strange episode of Simon the sorcerer—except so far as it shews the craving of the Samaritans, a craving roused, we may well believe, by the impression which our Lord's visit had left behind it, for a higher knowledge of God than had satisfied their fathers—I am not now concerned; but it is important to remember that the work of the apostles was not limited to the single city, whether it were Sebaste (Samaria) or Neapolis (Sychem), to which they first came. "They preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." There was a Samaritan Church almost as numerous and influential as that of Judæa. We can well understand the effect that these tidings would have upon the Sadducean priesthood and the more zealous Pharisees. They would hear that the Samaritans had joined the Galileans in their acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ. The words of Stephen, that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," and the inference which had been drawn from this that he had taught that Jesus of Nazareth should destroy the temple, and that he had thus blasphemed the Holy Place and the Law,<sup>2</sup> were now seen in the light of the events that followed on them. We may well believe that a larger share than it is commonly credited with must be assigned to this admission of the Samaritans as working on the mind of Saul of Tarsus, already kindled into rage by Stephen's teaching, and rousing him to the white heat of the frenzy of fanaticism. If he followed the usual road to Damascus, as shewn in the Roman Itineraries,<sup>3</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 11; Acts viii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. vi. 13; vii. 48.

<sup>3</sup> See map in Conybeare and Howson's "St. Paul," vol. i. p. 92.

traditions of the scribes allowed that even the strictest Pharisees might take it without defilement, he must have passed through Sychem itself, and been stirred to the "exceeding madness," to which he himself afterwards pleads guilty, by seeing there and in every village in Samaria those who held the faith which he was commissioned to destroy. By that road he may have returned again, when he came to Jerusalem after his conversion. Once again, we know, he passed through that country, and on a very different mission. He and his companion Barnabas were going up to Jerusalem, to contend for the freedom of the Gentile Churches.<sup>1</sup> They went, as feeling that the Samaritans had a common interest with them, "through Phœnice and Samaria." They told them of the conversion of the Gentiles, and once again "there was great joy in that city," and throughout the whole region. We can scarcely doubt that they would return to Antioch by the same route when he and his fellow-travellers brought with them that decree of the Council of Jerusalem which was accepted as the Great Charter of the freedom of the Gentile Churches, and which, legitimately enough, was held to include the Samaritans in the range of its concessions. In emancipating all who were not of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh from any obligation to obey the ceremonial law of Moses, it practically left the Samaritans free to worship, if they thought fit, on the mountain of Gerizim—the temple, as we have seen, was no longer standing—as the apostles worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem; to eat their passover, and keep their other feasts, after the manner of their fathers. It

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 3.



invited them to join in that new and higher worship which was before long to supersede the ritual of both the sanctuaries, and to unite Samaritan and Jew alike with all who "worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

Here, so far as the New Testament is concerned, our knowledge of Samaria ends, and I do not now care, full of interest though they are to the student of Church history, to follow the legends of the Clementine "Homilies" and "Recognitions," which have transformed the sorcerer of Samaria into "the hero of the romance of heresy." I aim, however, at something more than a mere review of familiar facts, even though that review may have placed some of them in a light which may be comparatively new. We need here also, in dealing with the facts themselves, and with the channels through which we know them, that *prudens interrogatio* which is, as the Master of the Wise has taught us, as the *dimidium scientiæ*. In following the method in which the great scholars of Germany have led the way, not as accepting all the theories which they have elaborated as to the tendencies and aims of the books of the New Testament, but as thankful to them for having taught us how to work upon their lines, we may enter on that questioning process, and find that it leads us to results of no little interest

It is obvious on the surface that it is to St. John and to St. Luke, pre-eminently to the latter, that we owe nearly all that the New Testament brings before us as to these Samaritans. In St. Matthew the name meets us only in the command which forbids the apostles, on their first journey, to enter into any of their cities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 5.

In St. Mark it does not occur at all, nor, indeed, in any other of the canonical books but the Gospel of the beloved disciple and the two books which we owe to Luke the physician. Of the latter we know that he was not himself one of the eye-witnesses of the things which he relates,<sup>1</sup> and it is therefore a legitimate question to ask, Who were probably his informants? As far as much of our Lord's ministry is concerned, we get, as I have endeavoured to shew elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> a satisfactory explanation of many of the most characteristic features of his Gospel by supposing that he obtained his knowledge partly through the "devout women" who followed our Lord, or from members of the Herodian family and household. I do not exclude those informants here, but it is obvious that, as regards one large section of the facts which have come under our notice, there was another who, as having been a chief actor in the work, could give a report which a historian like St. Luke would welcome, as likely to be accurate. When the writer of the Acts accompanied St. Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem, they stayed "many days" at Cæsarea, in the house of Philip the Evangelist.<sup>3</sup> From him he may well have heard all the history in which he had played so prominent a part: the murmuring of the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebrews, the speech and the death of Stephen, his own mission in Samaria, the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and of Cornelius. In that mission he, the Evangelist in the old sense of that word, must have come across not a few who remembered our Lord's visits to their cities or villages; and it is surely not improbable that what

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to St. Luke, in Bishop Ellicott's "New Testament Commentary for English Readers."

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxi. 8, 9.

St. Luke thus heard from Philip led him, during St. Paul's imprisonment at Cæsarea, to travel into Samaria, and there to collect the materials his use of which made him an Evangelist in the later and more technical sense.

It is obvious, however, that this hypothesis does but carry us back to a yet further question. What, we ask, led Philip to take the lead in this work of evangelizing Samaria? The tradition of the early Church (I admit, however, that it is not known to be earlier than Epiphanius), that both he and Stephen had been of the number of the Seventy, is at least probable in itself, and it has the merit of explaining some of the phenomena that have come before us. It is hardly conceivable that men should have been chosen for a conspicuous work at that early stage of the Church's growth unless they had been of the number of the disciples who had been witnesses of the Resurrection. Those who had been chosen by their Lord to prepare his way were, next to the apostles, prominent above all other disciples. The number "seventy" implied, as I have shewn in a note on Luke x. 1,<sup>1</sup> that they represented those who were to be as the prophets of the new Society, corresponding to the seventy elders on whom the Spirit of the Lord came in the company of the older Israel;<sup>2</sup> and as such they would naturally be among those who would be recognized by the Church at Jerusalem as "full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom."<sup>3</sup> We are at no loss as to the occasion or the conditions of that mission of the Seventy. It came soon after that Feast of Tabernacles which our Lord had begun in Samaria,

<sup>1</sup> New Testament Commentary for English Readers."

<sup>2</sup> Num. xi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Acts. vi. 3.

and in which He Himself had been reproached as a Samaritan. It followed close upon the refusal of the Samaritan village to receive the Lord Jesus, and the request of James and John that they might call down fire from heaven.<sup>1</sup> It was followed almost as closely by the parable of the Good Samaritan,<sup>2</sup> as if He meant to shew that He was persuaded better things even of those who had thus rejected Him. The disciples were to learn that the law, *meliora latent*, was applicable there also. The very number seventy, reminding men as it did of the seventy oxen that were offered at the Feast of Tabernacles for all the nations of the world, was symbolic of an expansion from which Samaria would not be excluded. And the Seventy were sent, two and two before his face, into every city and place whither He Himself would come ;<sup>3</sup> and his journeyings at that stage of his ministry, while they tended ultimately to Jerusalem, led Him, we are told, "through the midst of Samaria and Galilee,"<sup>4</sup> and so it was that He was brought into contact with the Samaritan leper. It hardly admits of a doubt, accordingly, that Samaria was the chief mission field of the Seventy ; that it was there that they had seen the devils subject to them in their Master's name ; there that He had beheld in vision, "Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven."<sup>5</sup> On this supposition, then, Philip's mission work in Samaria was the continuation of the good work which He had then begun. As his namesake the Apostle had been the first to bring Greek, *i. e.*, Gentile, worshippers to the feet of Christ, so he felt himself called to bring in the outcast Cuthæans. He had no antipathies to over-

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 52.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. x. 33.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. x. 1.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xvii. 11.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. x. 17, 18.

come. He had already learnt to think of the Samaritans as those who, though in "the highways and hedges," were bidden by his voice to the marriage supper of the King.<sup>1</sup>

There was then, if this conclusion is legitimate, a Samaritan element in that company of the seven so-called Deacons, a Samaritan factor in the problem which at that time presented itself. But here the record of St. John comes in, and throws yet further light on the question with which we have to deal. The whole speech of Stephen is hardly more than a historical expansion of the truth which our Lord had proclaimed in his conversation with the woman of Samaria,<sup>2</sup>—"The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father; . . . but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." It is as though that great thought had sunk deep into his mind, as though his past work as one of the wider fellowship of the Seventy had given him manifold illustrations of its truth, and he felt that the time had come when it was right to proclaim it, regardless of consequences, even though it might stir up priests and people to the madness of rage or hatred, and even alienate the better portion of the Pharisees, who, like Gamaliel, had hitherto advocated a policy of moderation.

But, if I mistake not, the fact of these Samaritan associations offers also a more adequate explanation than any that are commonly received of at least one of the difficulties, which to some minds have been serious stumbling-blocks, in St. Stephen's speech. He states

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 21.

incidentally that Jacob went down into Egypt and died, "he, and our fathers," and "were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem."<sup>1</sup> We turn to the narrative of Genesis, and we find that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were buried, not in Sychem, but in the cave of Machpelah, which was bought of the "children of Heth;"<sup>2</sup> that, with the one exception of Joseph, there is no record of the burial-place of any of the sons of Jacob; and that the ground at Sychem was bought of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, not by Abraham, but by Jacob.<sup>3</sup>

I need not now discuss the explanations which have been given by many commentators of this apparent contradiction. It is not wise, on the one hand, to start in such an inquiry with a preconceived theory that there can be no historical inaccuracy in such a speech as Stephen's; nor to assume, on the other, that St. Luke's narrative must be throughout untrustworthy because he reports a speech that contains such inaccuracies. The more natural conclusion is that one who so reported what a moment's reference to the Greek version of Genesis would have enabled him to correct, must have been at least a faithful reporter, who reproduced the document that was placed before him, or took down what he heard from the lips of his informant. And if that informant, whether Philip or another or Stephen himself, had been brought into contact with the Samaritans, and come under the influence of their traditions, we have, at least, a natural explanation as

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxv. 9; xxxv. 29; 1. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xxxiii. 19; Josh. xxiv. 32.

to the source from which the statement, whether accurate or inaccurate, was derived. We know how the national pride of the Samaritans sought to enhance the reputation of their sacred places by manipulating the sacred text. To the Ten Commandments<sup>1</sup> they added an eleventh, that the Israelites were to write the words of the law on two tables of stone, and to set them on Gerizim, and there to build an altar and offer sacrifices. In Deuteronomy xi. 29 they read Gerizim instead of Ebal, as the place on which the memorial altar was to be dedicated. Gerizim, according to their traditions, adopted by many modern scholars, was identical with the Mount Moriah on which Abraham had offered his son.<sup>2</sup> On it Adam and Seth had offered sacrifices, and it had risen high, like Ararat, above the waters of the Flood. It was there that Abraham had had his memorable interview with Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God.<sup>3</sup> There was the well which bore Jacob's name, and the parcel of ground which he had given to Joseph.<sup>4</sup> There was the tomb of Joseph,<sup>5</sup> and, according to one tradition, which Stephen apparently followed, that of his brethren also. Popular unwritten history in the East is not careful about accuracy and consistency in such matters, is regardless of anachronisms and other chronological difficulties, and builds its conclusions on a slender groundwork of fact. Now what strikes one in the statement in Stephen's speech, with which we are now dealing, is that it is precisely such as was likely to have originated in a Samaritan tradition of the kind of those that have just been mentioned. Abraham had rested at the "place of Sychem" on his entry into the

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xx. 18, in the Samaritan Text.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xiv. 18.

<sup>4</sup> John iv. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxii. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Josh. xxiv. 32.

land of Canaan, and had built there an altar unto the Lord.<sup>1</sup> The land on which the altar was thus built must in some way have been transferred to him for that purpose. Men do not erect their sanctuaries on land which is exposed to daily desecration. The children of Hamor, the *B'nè Hamor*, of whom Jacob bought the land, are obviously not literally the sons of Hamor, but the tribe which bore that name; and the Hamor who appears in the history of Jacob must accordingly, in all probability, have taken the name of his ancestor, as Shechem took his from the town at the foot of Gerizim. In the patronymic promise of Jacob to Joseph in Genesis xlviii. 22 —“ I have given thee one portion (one *Shechem*) above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow ” — we have a reference to some unrecorded acquisition of land at Shechem, which was clearly distinct, on the one hand, from that for which the money was paid peaceably, and, on the other, from that which had been gained by the violence of Simeon and Levi, which Jacob lamented and condemned.<sup>2</sup> The act referred to implies the assertion of some ancestral rights, and if we suppose some such purchase as that which Stephen—following what there seems reason to regard as a Samaritan tradition—describes as having been made by Abraham when he first came to Shechem, and sought to secure the spot on which he had built his altar from desecration, we get an adequate explanation of what at first appears a grave and almost incompre-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xlix. 6, 7. The assumption made by many Commentators, that Jacob's words referred, not to the past, but to the future, and were prophetic of the future conquest of the land by his descendants, hardly calls for notice, except as an instance of the extent to which a non-natural method of interpretation is sometimes carried.



hensible inaccuracy. It is not without interest, in its bearing on this question, to note the fact that there were conflicting traditions even as to the burial-place of the Twelve Patriarchs. Josephus,<sup>1</sup> obviously reporting as from personal observation, states that they were interred at Hebron, and that their sepulchres, which he describes as being of marble and richly sculptured, were shewn in his time. On the other hand, Rabbinic writers, quoted by Wetstein and Lightfoot,<sup>2</sup> report them to have been buried at Sychem, and Jerome,<sup>3</sup> mentioning Sychem among the places to which Paula had made a pilgrimage, states that she turned aside to see their sepulchres. Here then we have abundant evidence that each locality had its traditions, diametrically at variance with those of its rival. If this were so as to the temple and the sepulchre, the sacrifice of Isaac and the meeting with Melchizedek, was it strange that there should be the tradition of the purchase of a piece of ground at Shechem by Abraham to set against the record of the purchase at Hebron of that piece of ground as taking in the sepulchre of the Patriarchs? The Samaritans were hardly likely to leave their Jewish enemies in undisputed possession of that prerogative. Was it wonderful that Stephen, with his Samaritan associations, should follow the former rather than the latter? May not this also have been one of the factors in the rage and frenzy which led the multitude of Jerusalem to gnash their teeth as Stephen spake, and rush on him and stone him to death? Were they not likely to see in his proclamation of the truth that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, a

<sup>1</sup> *Ant.* ii. 8, § 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Hor. Heb.* on Acts vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Epitaph. Paulæ.*

covert plea for the sanctity of Gerizim, where the temple had been destroyed, as against the claims of the temple at Jerusalem, which was still standing? Even the name of the Most High God, which Stephen thus uses, was identified more or less closely with Samaritan associations. It first appears in the history of Melchizedek, in the scene at Salem, which they identified with a spot close to Shechem. The Aramaic equivalent, *Elion*, was the name of a god worshipped at Tyre and Zidon,<sup>1</sup> and the Samaritans, as Josephus states, identified themselves with the Zidonians.

It will hardly be questioned, I think, that the conclusion which I have ventured to suggest as at least probable, adds much to the interest of the history of Stephen and of Philip, as representing the first great expansion in the growth of the Apostolic Church. It serves to shew how they had been trained for their work in that expansion, what natural leanings and past associations might make them active in it. It explains, in part at least, how it was that Pharisees who had acquiesced in the teaching of the apostles burst out in passionate hatred at that of Stephen. It brings before us the great Apostle of the Gentiles, not only as working on to the breaking down of barriers, and the freedom of St. Stephen's lines generally, in all that he taught as worship, and the equal sanctity of all places where men worship the Father; but as specially continuing the work in which Philip certainly, and Stephen probably, had taken an active share, and bringing himself to join in acts of brotherhood and kindness with the Samaritans, whom he and other Pharisees had once

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. *Præp. Evang.* i. 10.

anathematized. Knowing, as we do, that the Samaritans had a synagogue of their own at Damascus, it is not improbable that it was among them that he expected to find his victims, among them that he disclosed the wondrous tale of the vision that had changed the whole tenour of his life.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

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*A TALMUDIC CRYPTOGRAPHY; AND SOME OF THE RABBIS.*

I ENDED my last paper on "Christians in the Talmud" with an allegory, or cryptograph, which there was no space to explain. It was, briefly, the story that Abba Saul, while burying the dead, sank up to the nose in the eye-socket of a corpse, which was said to be Absalom's. Yet Abba Saul was the tallest man of his age; being a head and shoulders taller than Rabbi Tarphon; who was so much taller than R. Akibha; and he than R. Meir; and he than R. Judah; and he than R. Chija; and he than Rabh; and he than Rabh Juda; and he than Adda Dialah—each of these being the tallest men of their respective periods. Adda Dialah was a head and shoulders taller than the pistachio tree of Pumbaditha, and that pistachio tree was twice as high as common people.

This story occurs in Nidda (xxiv. 6; xxv. a),<sup>1</sup> and has often been made a subject of ridicule. Of course, if it were ever meant to be taken literally, nothing could be more revoltingly absurd, or contradictory to Scripture and to common sense. It has been adduced to prove the senseless character of the Talmudic stories;

<sup>1</sup> Nidda is the Seventh Mesikta, or treatise, of the Seder Taharoth ("Order of Purifications"), which is the sixth and last division of the Talmud.