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Books Which Influenced Our Lord and His apostles:  
Being a Critical Review of Apocalyptic Jewish Literature  
By **John E. H. Thomson**, B.D.,  
Sterling  
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(p. 41) CHAPTER II.  
THE SAMARITANS.

IT has been thought one of the peculiar felicities of our British Constitution that there should be always two leading political parties,—the party of advance and the party of stability. Between the extreme wings of each party there is an infinite gradation of changing opinion, and according as that middle portion swings forward or falls back, do we advance or stand still. So great was this advantage thought to be, that the framers of the Constitution of the United States introduced a similar element into it. There is the party that would broaden State rights, as against those of the central government; and there is the party that would increase the function of the central authority at the expense of State rights. Every form of government, except absolute despotism, has in these days political parties, and all these parties represent tendencies pointing to the future.

In the Greek cities there were also parties. The oligarchic and the democratic factions strove each to get the mastery over the other, and the long and fierce Peloponnesian war was really a conflict between oligarchy and democracy. Here it was two theories of the State that were at war. In the Middle Ages, when savagery in some respects came back upon the world, there were (p. 42) factions that had no basis of thought or theory, it was simply an individual's name or claim that formed the point of union. This affected even the republics of that period, as may be seen in the history of the Italian Republics, with their feuds between Montagues and Capulets, between Bianchi and Neri.

After the Greek cities became subject to the Macedonian rule they ceased to have sufficient political life to have parties. They had factions certainly, but these expressed themselves in riots and no more. The real life of Greece went out into philosophy, and the conflict of opinion occupied the minds of those whose ancestors had debated the questions of peace and war, and had entertained the envoys of the great king. This conflict of opinion was, however, in the region of the purely abstract, and these parties had no political meaning. In our own day we have, in religious matters, sects and parties that have mainly a basis of thought and opinion, and have certainly some political significance; but a significance that results from causes external to these sects themselves.

Sects among the Jews were unlike our political parties and unlike our denominations, and yet they had points which bring them in line with both. They were unlike the Greek political parties and unlike philosophic schools, and yet they had many points of resemblance to both.

We must bear in mind that each of the four sects of the Jews occupied the position it did in relation to its fellows from reasons peculiar to itself alone. There was no hard and

fast line of logical division on one side of which every one said "yes," and on the other every (p. 43) one said "no" to certain questions. They were not so much like separate branches of one and the same tree, as like separate trees in the same soil. The mention of the soil brings to remembrance the fact that, unlike our religious sects, which may roughly be said to embrace among them the whole population, those sects left the *Am haaretz*, the people of the land, greatly unaffected.<sup>1</sup> This is true of the strictly Jewish sects. It is, however, necessary, if one wishes to gain a notion of what really the tendencies of thought in Palestine were, to know not only the three sects, whose doctrines Josephus expounds to us, but also the doctrines of the Samaritans.

We have, then, to consider four different sections of those who inhabited Palestine, all claiming the same ancestry, all using the same sacred books, at least so far as the Pentateuch was concerned, and all claiming to worship the same God and in the same way. We have, first, the Samaritans, geographically distinct from the Jews, and distinct also from them in race, if the evidence of the Jews is to be received; next, we have the Sadducees, the party of the priestly aristocrats, holding views more by way of negation to those of the Pharisees, simply because the Pharisees advanced them, than as having been associated in order to defend those anti-Pharisaic views; next, we have the Pharisees or legal Puritans, who carried out to logical completeness the law as the people in general interpreted it. Last of all, we have the mysterious party, the Essenes, who represent, if their views have been correctly described, (p. 44) a development of Jewish thought totally unlike anything else in Judaism, and manifesting peculiarities which bring them specially within our sphere as investigating the origin of the apocalyptic writings.

When the ten tribes broke off from the Davidic kingdom they betook themselves to the old tribal worship which preceded the temple worship at the one great altar of the nation but with modifications; Jeroboam, falling back on some tradition of the golden calf, introduced image worship,— an addition which not improbably continued to shock religious people even among his own subjects, as we see from Hosea.<sup>2</sup> The Northern kingdom, despite its apostasy and the repeated revolutions to which it was subject, became very much more powerful than its southern neighbour, though it, by the continuance of the Davidic dynasty, was free from civil overturns. Powerful though Israel was as compared with Moab, Ammon, or Edom, it was still very inferior to the great empires of Assyria and Egypt. The latter had sunk from the warlike to the diplomatic stage, and endeavoured, by means of intrigues carried on in all the petty courts of Syria, to hamper the advance of its vigorous rival from the banks of the Tigris. After a season of comparative decrepitude, under Shalmaneser II., Syria was assailed by the Ninevite power. Ahab joined Benhadad to repulse the invader ; but at length under a later monarch, Tiglathpileser, a large portion of the country was overrun, and its principal inhabitants deported,—a process that was carried out to greater completeness by Shalmaneser IV. and Sargon.

(p. 45) Into a country left desolate thus by the tramp of Eastern armies and by the deportation of a large proportion of the survivors, colonists from distant parts of the Assyrian empire were sent by the conqueror to Samaria. During the interval between the final deportation and the sending the new colonists, the country had become savage, and wild beasts had multiplied. In their terror at the wrath of the god of the land, whom they

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<sup>1</sup> Most people who desired to be thought religious seem to have belonged to one or other of the sects as adherents.

<sup>2</sup> viii. 5, x. 8, xiii. 2.

considered they had excited against themselves, they prayed the Assyrian monarch to send them a priest to teach them "the manner of the god." At first they mingled the worship of Jehovah with the worship of their former gods; but gradually, through association with the inhabitants left 'in the land, they abandoned their idolatry wholly, and became worshippers of Jehovah alone. When the Jews of the Southern kingdom commenced to rebuild their temple, the Samaritans evidently had passed beyond the tribal standpoint, and were anxious to unite with the Southern kingdom in the worship of Jehovah. Until Ezra came it would appear that the Jews had no special objection to this idea, indeed they seem to have contemplated a complete fusion of the peoples. How far the action of Ezra and Nehemiah in resisting this was wise or right may be doubted. The result of it was that ere very long a temple was built in Mount Gerizim, to which the Samaritans attributed all the sanctity that the Jews ascribed to Mount Zion.

Of the history of the Samaritans during the later Persian period as little is known as concerning that of the Jews during the same time. Josephus represents them as trying to secure the favour of Alexander the (p. 46) Great for themselves, and to envenom the conqueror against their neighbours; and this failing, they declared themselves Jews. In this there is no inherent improbability. Under the Lagid princes the hatred between Jew and Samaritan seems to have continued unabated, but no overt acts of special malevolence are recorded. Both Samaritans and Jews had representatives among the colonists in Alexandria, and their feuds sprang out afresh there on the occasion of the Septuagint translation being made. The Samaritans had interpolated into the Pentateuch a statement that Mount Gerizim was the place where God was to be worshipped. This statement was not found in the Septuagint, hence the quarrel. During the Maccabean struggle the Samaritans were against the Jews; and when, finally, the cause of the Jews prevailed under John Hyrcanus, he wreaked the national vengeance on them by burning Samaria and overturning the temple in Mount Gerizim. The power of the Maccabean kingdom went down before the Romans in little more than a generation from this time, and the Samaritans had to some extent their national position restored to them by Gabinius; but only for a little while, for by Augustus, Samaria was added to the dominions of Herod. After Herod's death Samaria along with Judea formed the dominion of Archelaus. When Archelaus was deposed, and Judea became a procuratorship, Samaria was still united to Judea. Sometimes the bitter hatred of the one against the other expressed itself in outrage, as when the Samaritans defiled the temple during the feast of the Passover by scattering dead men's bones in the holy place.

(p. 47) On the outbreak of the war, which resulted in the fall of Jerusalem, they did not maintain their separation from the Jews, and thus did not escape altogether the destruction that befell their southern neighbours. In his march towards Jerusalem from Galilee, the fact that 3000 Samaritans had taken up a position on Mount Gerizim necessitated Vespasian to send a detachment to capture the place, which they did. The Samaritans are little heard of during the long period that followed. They are little referred to by the Fathers. Justin Martyr, geographically a Samaritan, takes no note of their religious position. He himself was a heathen by birth, but still their neighbourhood to his birthplace would lead one to expect him to know something of them. Simon Magus, mentioned in the Acts, if we may trust Irenaeus, had a considerable following among the Samaritans. After this, with the exception of Hippolytus and Epiphanius, the Samaritans may be said to disappear. There were edicts against them issued by several of the Christian emperors, and in consequence they were scattered over the Levant.

In the Jewish writings there are several accounts of the Samaritans, all disrespectful, and none of them trustworthy. Among other things they are accused of worshipping a dove, and disbelieving in angels and in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. In the beginning of this century M. Sylvestre de Sacy opened communications with the small surviving remnant of the Samaritans, and discovered that these Jewish accusations were utterly false. The only excuse for the assertion that they worshipped a dove seems to have been, that a dove was embroidered on the (p. 48) cloth that covered the ark where they kept the book of the law. They believed in good angels, but not in an Archangel. They reckoned the obligation to sacrifice had ceased with the disappearance of the tabernacle. Like the Jews, they had Messianic hopes; but it was of necessity not an anointed king, a descendant of David, but an anointed prophet, "one like unto Moses," that they expected. They still remain a small remnant in the neighbourhood of their old sacred place, still going through the rites of their old worship, and still maintaining their claim to be descendants of Israel. It seems their main points of difference from the Jews are now on matters of phylacteries and fringes.

They have a version of the Pentateuch and of Joshua which differs in several points from the Masoretic text. The claim made for this by the Samaritans themselves is, as may be supposed, that it has come to them directly from the ten tribes. It is asserted that appended to the ancient manuscript preserved by the remnant of the Samaritans in Sichem, is a declaration that it was the work of Abisha, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, in the thirteenth year after taking possession of the land of Canaan; but the scroll with these words has not been seen by any of the many scholars who have examined this ancient *codex*. There is no question that if such an inscription were found it would be a forgery. Not only is the manuscript much later than the date implied in this alleged inscription, but the recension itself is evidently of much later date. When it was first brought to Europe, scholars, especially belonging to the Romish Church, were inclined to put a high value on the (p. 49) readings of the Samaritan Pentateuch, regarding that recension far above the Masoretic. Closer examination destroyed any idea of superior antiquity, although the arguments from the mistaken letters which would go to prove that it was copied into the present Samaritan characters out of the square Hebrew may not be worthy of implicit credit. One thing may be noted, that, with the exception of the assertion above referred to, that Gerizim, not Zion, was the place where God would put His name, there is no evidence to be drawn of the opinions of the Samaritans from their recension of the Pentateuch. Some writers have seen traces of Samaritan influences in the Book of Jubilees; but this view is a mistaken one.

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**John E. H. Thomson** is **John Ebenezer Honeyman Thomson**, author of # 4812, 4813, 4814, 4815 of the *Bibliography of the Samaritans* mentioned above.